

**Second Committee Bureau's Paper
on the work of the Committee at the
seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly**

1. Introduction

The constraints resulting from physical distancing requirements associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted the work of the General Assembly throughout the seventy-fifth session, will continue to impact the work of the main part of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, including with respect to its six main committees. With a focus on the health and safety of the delegates and secretariat staff, this paper outlines the options for the business continuity of the Second Committee for the seventy-sixth session under the continued extraordinary circumstances. They shall apply only to the seventy-sixth session and would not set a precedent for any future sessions.

As was the case during the seventy-fifth session, it is necessary for each Main Committee to reduce the number of in-person formal plenary meetings convened during the seventy-sixth session and to coordinate the duration and timing of such meetings.

Taking into account the advice regarding business continuity and suggested provision of conference services during the main part of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly circulated with the letter of the President of the General Assembly addressed to all Permanent Representatives and Permanent Observers dated 27 September 2021, the Bureau recommends that the work of the Committee proceed on the basis of the option, whereby the meetings for the general debate and for action on draft resolutions will be held in person, while meetings for the general discussions will be held as informal meetings on a virtual platform. Subject to the availability of a conference room, the joint meeting of the Committee and the Economic and Social Council will be held as an in-person meeting, which would mark an improvement compared to the seventy-fifth session.

The informal paper will be updated considering the feedback and comments received from Member States. The measures suggested here are subject to revision based on the evolving situation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and related safety and health guidelines of the UNHQ.

2. Programme of work of the Second Committee

In light of the implications of the measures surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and expected continued limitations on the convening of in-person meetings at UN Headquarters, it is proposed that the meetings for the general debate of the Committee and for action on draft resolutions will be held in person, while meetings for the general discussions on specific agenda items will be held as informal meetings on a virtual platform. The draft programme of work based on this scenario is contained in document A/C.2/76/L.1.

3. Informal briefing and organizational meeting

A virtual informal organizational briefing to discuss the substance of the Committee's work, as well as its programme of work was held on 15 September. An in-person organizational meeting will be held in the morning of 1 October, to consider and take decisions on the Committee's programme of work and other procedural matters.

Following established practice, approval of the organization of work will be on the understanding that the programme will be adjusted as necessary taking into account developments during the session.

4. General debate

Subject to the medical guidance and availability of conference services, a general debate will be convened where delegations can deliver a statement either in person or remotely via VTC on the theme and on any or all items before the Committee. Speakers in the general debate are encouraged to deliver their statements in person, as far as possible.

In accordance with General Assembly decision 74/537 B on the revitalization of the work of the Second Committee and following consultations, the Bureau proposes the following theme for the general debate taking into account the theme agreed by the General Assembly for the 2022 session of ECOSOC and the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF): *“Crisis, Resilience and Recovery – Accelerating Progress towards the 2030 Agenda”*.

Under the special circumstances prevailing at the seventy-sixth session, the Bureau proposes that the time limits for statements in the general debate be reduced by one minute, namely to 9 minutes for statements made on behalf of groups and to 6 minutes for national statements.

While time limits will need to be strictly implemented, including through microphone cut-off as necessary, delegations participating in the general debate will have the opportunity to circulate longer versions of their statements through Second Committee Place in the e-delegate portal.

In order to make the necessary arrangements for in-person and virtual meetings, the e-list of speakers for the general debate was opened on 22 September. The Bureau encourages Member States to inscribe no later than 30 September and to state their preference to deliver a statement at an in-person meeting or, if necessary, via VTC.

Each delegation will decide whether they wish to deliver their statements in person, or via VTC.

As mentioned above, these modalities will apply only to the seventy-sixth session and will not set a precedent for any future sessions

5. General Discussions on agenda items:

5.1 Virtual general discussions: General discussions on agenda items will be conducted in virtual meetings, also considering the overall calendar and avoiding overlap of schedule with informal consultations on draft resolutions. Delegations wishing to do so may opt to participate in the general discussions through the circulation of written statements to be posted on Second Committee Place on the e-deleGATE portal

In order to make the necessary arrangements for virtual meetings for general discussions and to accurately plan the number of meetings needed, the e-lists of speakers for the general discussions were opened on 23 September. The Bureau encourages Member States to inscribe no later than 30 September. Member States intending to submit written statements do not need to inscribe through the e-list of speakers.

Under the special circumstances prevailing at the seventy-sixth session, the Bureau proposes that the time limits for statements in the general discussions be reduced by one minute, namely to 6 minutes for statements made on behalf of groups and to 4 minutes for national statements. For joint discussions referred to below, the time limits of 7 minutes, and 5 minutes, respectively, would be maintained.

5.2 Joint-Consideration of Agenda Items: Taking into account the recent decisions of the Second Committee on the revitalization of its work, consideration has been given to streamlining general discussions through joint consideration of two or more agenda items. In accordance with existing practice, a joint general discussion is held on the items on macroeconomic policy questions and financing for development. For the 76th session, the Bureau will also arrange for the joint consideration as follows: (i) Information and communications technologies for sustainable development and Globalization and interdependence; (ii) Eradication of poverty and Agriculture development, food security and nutrition; (iii) Groups of countries in special situations and Towards global partnerships.

5.3. Introduction of reports and related interaction: The reports of the Secretary-General will be introduced through short oral statements (of no more than six minutes¹). The Secretariat is encouraged to focus on updates since the last report was issued, critical issues and actions and recommendations for the Committee's attention. In accordance with decision 75/548B, the Bureau would like to propose that, to increase interaction in a virtual setting on the reports of the Secretary-General, the Secretariat, in advance of the meeting, shares a very short paper highlighting selected points or recommendations from the report that may require a discussion among delegations. Delegations are strongly encouraged to keep the meeting interactive and to participate in question-and-answer sessions following the introductory statements. This approach would not without prejudice or limit the discussions of Member States regarding the content of the report and the scope and content of the debate on the item.

¹ Some flexibility may be exercised when two or more reports are introduced in one statement.

6. Joint meeting of the Committee with the Economic and Social Council, dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions and side events

The annual joint meeting of the Committee with the Economic and Social Council will be organized as an in-person meeting (final date to be confirmed and subject to conference room availability). The annual dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the Regional Commissions will be organized in the morning of 18 October as an informal virtual meeting. The dates of these meetings have been reflected in the Programme of Work.

Pursuant to decision 74/537 B, the informal side events of the Committee would be limited to a maximum of three, on themes to be selected by the Bureau after consultation with the wider membership and with the support of the Secretariat, taking into account the themes of ECOSOC, the General Assembly and the Second Committee for any given session and current and emerging issues of interest.

Under the current constraints, during the main part of the session, only one side event on the theme of “Energy Transition for Sustainable Development and Climate Action” will be organized on a virtual platform in the morning of 19 October.

7. Informal consultations on draft proposals

The holding of in-person informal consultations on draft proposals also presents challenges due to the fact that physical distancing measures will not allow the Committee to organize consultations in the alphabet, medium-sized or Secretariat board rooms used for such consultations in previous sessions.

The Bureau listened carefully to the views expressed by delegations at the briefing on the work of the Committee convened by the Chair on 15 September. On the basis of these and further discussions, the Bureau suggests the way forward elaborated below.

8. Format and organization of the informal consultations

All resolutions will as a rule be discussed in three informal consultation sessions, unless the facilitator and delegations consider that more would be needed and make a request to the Bureau for its consideration. In principle, consultations will be held through a virtual platform.

The Bureau has almost finalized the identification of facilitators or co-facilitators and will liaise with them regularly. It will organize a comprehensive calendar of informal consultations, within regular UN working hours, while avoiding parallel negotiations to the extent possible, considering the limitations for delegations and secretariat to work under the extraordinary circumstances.

8.1 Options for draft resolutions:

Based on interactions with delegations, in order to limit the time to be spent in negotiations, due to the limitations imposed by the measures related to COVID-19, while recognizing the need for the Committee to provide critical policy guidance, the Bureau recommends the arrangements below for the resolutions to be considered by the Committee at its seventy-sixth session. While these arrangements build on the modalities of the seventy-fifth session, it should be clear for all that they will only apply to the seventy-sixth session and do not set a precedent. They will also be without prejudice to the right of Member States to state their position on redline issues contained in any resolution.

For all recurring resolutions, the following would apply:

Draft proposals would present all paragraphs as adopted in previous resolutions, with technical updates, to include:

- One cross-cutting preambular paragraph on recognizing the impact of COVID-19 on economic and development aspects. The text of this cross-cutting preambular paragraph will be updated compared to the version of the seventy-fifth session. The Bureau will circulate separately its proposed amendments.
- No more than one preambular paragraph for substantive COVID-19 related aspects as they pertain to the resolution. The text of this preambular paragraph will replace the text of the preambular paragraph on COVID-19 contained in resolutions adopted during the seventy-fifth session.
- Up to two operative paragraphs, including but not limited to COVID-19 related aspects of the resolution, identifying action-oriented solutions and way forward to deal with the challenges related to the theme of the resolution. The text of [one of these]/[this] operative paragraph [s] will replace the text of the operative paragraph on COVID-19 contained in the resolutions adopted during the seventy-fifth session.

In the same fashion, for the resolutions that were not on the agenda of the Second Committee during the seventy-fifth session, the only new text to be added compared to the text of the latest resolution on this topic, will be: i) the cross-cutting preambular paragraph, ii) a new preambular paragraph for substantive COVID-19 related aspects as they pertain to the resolution and iii) up to two new operative paragraphs, including but not limited to COVID-19 related aspects of the resolution, identifying action-oriented solutions and way forward to deal with the challenges related to the theme of the resolution.

Updates that are of a technical or factual nature and are critical to the resolution would be made as follows:

- reflecting elements that are factual in nature, such as the change of the number of people living in poverty;

- updating the paragraph requesting a report from the Secretary-General to include, inter alia, COVID-19 related aspects, effects and/or responses or other major developments
- changes in the number of the session and the number of resolutions and their footnotes
- updating the paragraph that requests the allocation of the agenda item to the specific session depending on each resolution's periodicity

The identification and inclusion of those updates will not prejudice any upcoming discussions of the Committee to determine a common definition of technical rollovers, as mandated in General Assembly decision 75/548 B on the revitalization of the work of the Second Committee.

All substantive negotiations would be limited only to the new paragraphs tabled by the proponents of the draft proposals. It is also understood that the new paragraphs will be subject to regular negotiations, and therefore, all parties to the negotiations will have the right to introduce amendments to these paragraphs.

In addition, all language adopted in previous resolutions would be considered as a package that could not be reopened, with the exception of making technical or factual updates, as mentioned above, and to introduce updates reflecting previous agreements between the proponents and negotiating stakeholders. Such updates will be subject to transparent and inclusive consultations.

The Committee, in its work, will be mindful of other major on-going UN processes related to issues on its agenda, such as the three Rio Conventions, and the LDC-5 Conference, including consultations on its Outcome Document.

8.2 New draft proposals: Without prejudice to the right of Member States to submit draft proposals in the Committee, the Bureau strongly encourages delegations to defer the submission of new draft proposals to a time when the Committee can negotiate the resolution in a comprehensive manner. The Bureau thanks delegations for their understanding in this regard.

8.3 Implementation of the decision on revitalization:

The suggestions on draft resolutions made in paragraph (j –i to ix) of General Assembly decision 74/537 B on the revitalization of the work of the Second Committee should also be considered while submitting the draft proposals. This would also apply in connection with the options and parameters suggested in section 8.1 and 8.2.

Other provisions of General Assembly decision 74/537 B and decision 75/548B should also be implemented, if this has not yet been done, and the Bureau will make proposals where needed.

8.4 Other matters: The use of the e-deleGATE portal for circulation of updated draft proposals and messages from facilitators is important and will be retained to ensure transparency.

Pursuant to GA decision 65/530, the multiple mandatory deadlines for the submission of draft resolutions approved by the Committee as part of its programme of work at the beginning of the

session will need to be strictly implemented, and in accordance with the paragraph j (i) of decision 74/537 B, in order to facilitate negotiations, proposers of draft resolutions will be invited to share the drafts early in an editable format and in track changes where possible, with sources of new language.

9. Introduction of and action on draft proposals

9.1 Introduction of draft proposals: Introductions of draft resolutions will be made through written statements, on an exceptional basis, circulated through the Second Committee Place and posted on the e-deleGATE portal.

9.2 Adoption of draft proposals:

In-person meetings will be arranged for adoption of draft resolutions towards the end of the session. This would require the scheduling of up to six in-person meetings in November.

In the course of those meetings delegations will have, as per usual practice, the possibility to deliver explanations of position or general statement(s) in connection with the adoption of draft proposals. Alternatively, explanations of position or general statement(s) could also be circulated in writing and posted on the e-deleGATE portal by those delegations opting to do so.

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