

GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUMMARY RECORD OF SEVENTH MEETING

Held at the Capitolio, Havana, Cuba, on 9 January 1948

Chairman: M. Max SUIJLERS (Belgium), First Vice-President

1. Proposal of El Salvador (E/CONF.2/BUR/20)

(a) Hours of Meetings

Mr. WILCOX (United States) supported the proposal to return to two meeting periods daily as he did not believe that the new method hastened the work and considered it unduly exhausting for the small delegations.

Mr. WILGRESS (Canada), Chairman of Committee III, appreciated the difficulties but pointed out that it was easier to avoid conflicts with so large a number of sub-committees when there were three meeting periods. Since the coming week would probably be critical as far as the sub-committees were concerned, he proposed the retention of the present system for at least that period.

Mr. HAKIM (Lebanon) Chairman of Committee V, said that the delegate of El Salvador had first protested against the present system in his Committee and he had noticed considerable support for this stand among the smaller delegations. He proposed that, if the old system were reverted to, afternoon meetings should last for at least four hours.

Mr. COLBAN (Norway) Chairman of Committee VI, asked the Executive Secretary to explain how the meetings would be arranged if the system were altered.

Mr. WYNDEHAM WHITE (Executive Secretary) stated that the system of three meeting periods per day had been proposed on the assumption that it was the wish of delegations to finish the Conference within a reasonable period of time and also that, in reducing the number of simultaneous meetings, the smaller delegations would, in fact, have less difficulty in following the work. If the old system were reverted to, the purpose of assisting the smaller delegations could only be accomplished by reducing the number of meetings per day from twelve to at most eight. He also questioned whether a three to four hour meeting was more efficient than a two and a half hour one.

/Mr. NASH (New Zealand),

Mr. NASH (New Zealand), Vice-President, considered that the main question was whether a two and a half hour meeting or a longer one was the more efficient, since the proposed change would result in a very slight reduction in the hours of meetings per week and no reduction in the number meeting simultaneously and seemed therefore, in any case, of little benefit to the smaller delegations.

Mr. JIMENEZ (El Salvador) was invited to address the Committee and explained that he had made his proposal because the present system allowed very little time for study and for consultation with governments. This was particularly important for delegations which had not formed part of the Preparatory Committee. Consequently their contribution to committee work was limited and they had found it necessary to reserve their positions on many questions. He stated that he would, however, be willing to accept three meeting periods daily if the time of each meeting were reduced to two hours. It appeared to him that this question was connected with his proposal for machinery to settle the basic conflicting issues, as such a settlement would immediately accelerate the sub-committee work.

Mr. HOLMES (United Kingdom) considered that the suggested compromise should be accepted and meetings be scheduled from 3 - 5 and from 6 - 8 in the afternoon. He hoped that the morning meetings might remain at 10.30 - 1.00 as they were frequently and unavoidably unpunctual in starting.

Mr. DEDMAN (Australia), Chairman of Committee I, wished the present system retained without shortening the meetings and pointed out the need for ending the Conference as quickly as possible because of the effect of a delay on one of the major countries and the repercussions of this effect on others.

Mr. STUCKI (Switzerland), Vice-President, had previously supported the proposal of El Salvador, but for reasons other than those expressed by the Salvadorean delegate, that is, in order to reduce the number of simultaneous meetings. If this were not accomplished, he would prefer to retain the present system.

Mr. COLBAN (Norway), Chairman of Committee VI, and Dr. AUGENTHALER (Czechoslovakia), Vice-President, expressed themselves in favour of shortening the afternoon sessions to two hours.

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that this would involve a daily loss of only three quarters of an hour and suggested that this formula might be adopted.

This was agreed.

/(b) Ad Hoc Committee

(b) Ad Hoc Committee to reconcile conflicting views

The CHAIRMAN pointed out that this question had already been discussed in the preceding meeting of the General Committee and it had been decided that Committees and Sub-Committees would present an interim report for distribution on 14 January and consideration by the General Committee. It had been understood then that the General Committee might, if it considered it desirable, refer such reports to ad hoc committees. He considered that, in view of the above, this matter might be left until the meeting of the General Committee on 14 January.

This was agreed.

2. Final Act. Note by the Executive Secretary (E/CONF.2/BUR/21)

Mr. WYNDHAM (Executive Secretary) explained that, after he had withdrawn his earlier paper on this subject, at the last meeting of the General Committee, he understood the Committee to have adopted a proposal by the Cuban delegation that there should be a Final Act signed at the close of the Conference rather than the Charter itself. He had, consequently, drafted this text, with which he did not agree, but which he felt might meet the objections raised in the previous meeting of the Committee. The effect of such an Act would be to make it possible for anyone to sign even a delegate who was opposed to any or all of the Articles of the Charter. The signature of such an Act would not commit a delegate to anything.

Mr. DETMAN (Australia), Chairman of Committee I, felt that this draft would be acceptable to his Government.

Mr. HOLMES (United Kingdom) stated that, if the Committee agreed, he would like to circulate a redraft containing some minor drafting changes. He also proposed the addition in the second paragraph after the words "Trade Organization" of the words "to be submitted to governments for their acceptance" in order to make the purpose of the Act quite clear.

Mr. AUGENTHALER (Czechoslovakia), Vice-President, agreed with this but pointed out that it committed delegates signing to support the Charter. He suggested that perhaps two or three formulas might be prepared and delegations asked which they would prefer.

Mr. WUNSZ KING (China) agreed with Mr. Holmes' suggestion and thought that the substitution of the words "examination" or "consideration" for "acceptance" might meet Mr. Augenthaler's point. He also suggested the addition of square brackets around the third paragraph and their deletion in the fifth paragraph.

/The CHAIRMAN

The CHAIRMAN explained that this was unnecessary as the text could not be finally prepared for submission to the plenary session until the question of the Interim Organization and languages had been settled.

Mr. WILCOX (United States) suggested that the United Kingdom text be circulated and no decision be taken until a later meeting.

Mr. COLBAN (Norway), Chairman of Committee VI, considered that signature of the Final Act morally bound the signatories to support the Charter.

Mr. HAKIM (Lebanon), Chairman of Committee V, on the other hand, agreed with the Executive Secretary, and thought that there would be a moral responsibility only with the addition of the words proposed by Mr. Holmes. He suggested that, some delegations might find it easier to sign such a document if the phrase were altered to "submitted by the Secretary-General to governments for their acceptance". This would follow the regular procedure for submission of resolutions by the United Nations.

Mr. STUCKI (Switzerland), Vice-President, stated that his position remained as he had expressed in the previous meeting and that he would agree with Mr. Colban. He favoured the addition suggested by Mr. Holmes and did not support Mr. Hakim's proposal as he considered that the presentation of the Charter to their respective governments was the responsibility of each delegate.

Mr. WILCOX (United States) agreed with Mr. Stucki.

Mr. DEDMAN (Australia), Chairman of Committee I, was not convinced that Mr. Holmes' addition would be acceptable and said that he had prepared a draft in which he had used the words "for submission to their respective Governments", and "solely for the purposes of authentication", which he would be glad to circulate to the Committee if it so desired. He explained that in his position as a Minister in the Cabinet, he could not commit himself publicly to the Charter until he had consulted with the Cabinet and it had agreed.

Mr. HOLMES (United Kingdom) suggested that the omission of the words "for their acceptance" would meet this difficulty.

It was decided that both Mr. Holmes' and Mr. Dedman's texts would be circulated. It was agreed that the text of the Final Act would be produced in the five official languages.

3. Mr. WILGRESS (Canada), Chairman of Committee III, raised the question of the reports to be submitted on 15 January. He wished to point out that several sub-committees of Committee III had either only begun their work or only just set up working parties, and that, consequently, their reports would necessarily be incomplete and inconclusive. If the date were postponed to 18 January, they could be more informative. He did not wish, however, to make any definite proposal.

/Mr. WILCOX (United States)

Mr. WILCOX (United States) considered that, in this case, it would be advisable to wait.

Mr. AZER (Egypt), Vice-President, thought the word "report" misleading. He believed that the Committee wanted only a brief note of the issues on which there appeared to be no possible agreement or compromise in the sub-committees.

Mr. DEEDMAN (Australia), Chairman of Committee I, wished the original date retained.

Mr. AUGENTHALER (Czechoslovakia), Vice-President, agreed with Mr. Wilgress as far as the internal work of the Conference was concerned. However, he thought that a postponement might create an unfortunate impression in the press and thought that it would be preferable to receive at least such reports as could usefully be prepared on the agreed date. A note could then be made that the others would be prepared three or four days later.

Mr. AZER (Egypt), Vice-President, agreed with this, and Mr. RICHARD (France) pointed out that, if it were considered desirable, some of the ad hoc committees might then be established.

The CHAIRMAN stated that the original date of 14 January would be retained with the understanding that some of the reports would be ready some days later and that the reports would be presented in the form suggested by Mr. Azer.

This was agreed.

The meeting rose at 8.00 p.m.

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