Statement of Mr. Shaaban M. Shaaban

Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly
and Conference Management

To

The Fifth Committee of the General Assembly

Presentation of the Annual Report of the Secretary-General
on Pattern of Conferences
(A/66/118 of 1 July 2011)

Wednesday, 12 October 2011

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

1)   Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of the Bureau, on your election, and by wishing the Committee a successful and productive session under your leadership. On 6 September 2011, I addressed the Committee on Conferences, some of whose members are present here today. The excellent work carried out by the Committee on Conferences under the able leadership of its Chair, Ms. Woinshet Tadesse Woldegiorgis, is contained in the report of the Committee on Conferences for 2011 (A/66/32 of 12 September 2011).

2)   It is my pleasure now to introduce the annual report of the Secretary-General on pattern of conferences (A/66/118 of 1 July 2011).

3)   Earlier in the year, I decided that the way this report was prepared and processed should not be business as usual. As a department responsible for conference management, DGACM itself must set an example of abiding by the relevant rules. So as pointed out by the Chair of CoC, Ms. Woinshet Tadesse Woldegiorgis, for first time in several years the report on pattern of conferences was issued six weeks before the meeting and within word limits, thus complying fully with the relevant rules of document management.

4)   DGACM also proposed to the Committee on Conferences at its organizational session in April that the substantive session be conducted in a "paper-smart" fashion. It is gratifying that the Committee was receptive to this proposal, therefore all official pre-session, in-session, information and reference documents were posted on a dedicated website. The Secretariat also provided laptops on loan and technical support in the meeting room, and print-on-demand

services as requested. This mode of conference service had proven successfully, and it's our hope that it should be emulated by other meeting bodies.

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Mr. Chairman,

5)   As I had indicated in my presentation of the report of the Secretary-General on pattern of conferences to the Committee last year, DGACM is ready to respond positively to requests for meetings that derive from discrete General Assembly resolutions. A prerequisite for successfully carrying out our mandate in an efficient and cost-effective way is clarity regarding the dates, duration and modalities for meeting and documentation requirements of the conference or meeting being envisaged, so that the necessary oral statement of conference-servicing implications, or statement of programme budget implications, as applicable, can be presented to Member States for consideration.

6)   As the Chairman of the Committee of Conferences has already pointed out, such clarity may not necessarily be available at the time of the adoption of the legislative mandate providing for such meetings, and its lack has proved to be a major impediment to the production of the relevant conference-servicing or programme budget implications. Our goal is that **both Member States and the Secretariat should strive to make meetings planning a collaborative exercise through which predictability would be ensured and resources would be utilized as efficiently as possible**.

7)   In support of the Secretariat's position the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) as well has stated in its report on pattern of conferences (A/66/397 of 4 October 2011) that **the Secretary-General's proposal should be considered by the General Assembly,**

bearing in mind the provisions of rule 153 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly which clearly lays out the procedure for dealing with decisions that have programme budget implications. *The Secretariat seeks the Committee's support of the position of the Advisory Committee.*

8)   The Secretariat nevertheless is encouraged by the outcome of the consultations of the Chair of the Committee on Conferences with the lone intergovernmental body that has utilized less than the benchmark of 80% of their allocated resources for the past three consecutive years, and welcomes the request made in the draft resolution **to intergovernmental bodies to review their meeting entitlements and to plan and adjust their programme of work on the basis of their actual utilization of conference-servicing resources in order to improve their efficient use of conference services.**

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Mr. Chairman,

9)   Cognizant of the challenge to conduct business in a "smarter" fashion with a reduced budget in the next biennium, while still delivering high quality and timely conference services to Member States, the Secretariat has proposed in the report of the Secretary-General on pattern of conferences for the Committee on Conferences' consideration several initiatives which promise to introduce a fundamental paradigm shift in the provision of conference services and to become an impetus for change in the Secretariat. Simultaneously, these efficiency and cost saving measures, were introduced in the relevant section [section 2] of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013.

10)   The Advisory Committee has first considered the cost saving measures in its first report (A/66/7) on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013. In the report, the Advisory Committee requested the Secretary-General to refer to the Committee on Conferences the Secretariat's proposals on summary records, translation services for funds and programmes, and page limits of treaty bodies' documentation. As the Committee on Conferences would not have officially been informed of those recommendations when it considered the Secretariat's proposals included in the report of the Secretary-General on pattern of conferences, given that the Advisory Committee's report was expected to come out only in early October, DGACM sought the release of the Advisory Committee's report on the proposed programme budget to the Committee on Conferences as an advance copy, and made it available on the Committee on Conferences' Website.   *I had brought these facts and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee to the attention of the members of the Committee on Conferences in my opening statement to the substantive session on 6 September 2011.*

11)   Whereas the Advisory Committee has requested the Secretary-General to refer to the Committee on Conferences the Secretariat's proposals which are based on initiatives subject to the approval of the General Assembly, the Committee on Conferences, in due consideration of the prerogatives and main responsibility of the Fifth Committee, has found it more appropriate to refer back to the Committee for consideration the initiatives proposed by the Secretariat which are **closely interlinked with specific proposals in section 2 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013**.   [Agree with LX suggestion to remove]

12)   *The Secretariat therefore seeks the Committee's support of its initiatives, including those referred by the Advisory Committee to the Committee of Conferences, specifically:*

1- *To continue the production of summary records in the original language only (English or French), supplemented by auxiliary systems (e.g., on demand, digital, ..), to be put in place to meet the needs of Member States;*

2- *To introduce a "pay-as-you-go" arrangement for the documentation needs of the funds and programmes;* and

3- *To request all treaty bodies to enforce the page limitations of documentation in harmonized and treaty-specific guidelines.*

4- *To support the proposed change from the current document processing schedule of 10-4-6 to 10-6-4 to allow for the sequential processing of documents within the Department, and the achievement of savings*

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Mr. Chairman,

13)   The Secretariat is in full agreement with the view of the Advisory Committee of the need to align the reporting lines in DGACM to afford the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management the authority required to fulfil General Assembly mandates, and welcomes its agreement with the Secretary-General's approach on this issue. Throughout last year, and following the finalization of the report of the Secretary-General on pattern of Conferences, the duty stations continued to engage in a constructive dialogue on unconcluded items, in particular concerning the matter of dual

responsibility of conference managers, with a view to exploring the boundaries of meaningful authority and establishing acceptable protocols for exercising such authority within existing mandates and organizational structures. Specifically, the discussion aims to delineate and codify a model of dual responsibility for conference management pursuant to the decision of the Management Committee of 6 May 2011.

14)   In such a model, policies, regulations, rules, procedures and standards – including global technological systems related to information and communications technology – are set by Headquarters, with implementation delegated to the Offices away from Headquarters (OAHs) and Regional Commissions (RCs). Under such a model, the head of a substantive division/office at OAHs/RCs would be accountable to the Head of Department or Office at Headquarters for the appropriate implementation of policies, regulations, rules, procedures and standards established at the Headquarters level, while at the same time being accountable to the Head of Department or Office at the local level for all other activities.

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

15)   I thank you for your kind attention this morning and wish the Committee a productive and successful session.

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