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Statement by Mr. Hiroshi Onuma
First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

On agenda item 137: Pattern of Conferences

Main Part of the Seventieth Session
United Nations General Assembly
21 October 2015

Thank you Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I wish to thank Mr. Marcelo Scappini Ricciardi, Chair of the Committee on Conferences, Mr. Tegegnetwork Gettu, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), for introducing their respective reports on this agenda item. In the following statement, I wish to share my delegation's views on these reports.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation reiterates that maintaining an appropriate quality of conference services across the United Nations is essential for proper decision making by the Member States. However, we also believe that those services should be provided in the most efficient and effective manner possible. The Secretariat should continue to seek efficiencies in delivering conference services through the introduction of new cost-saving measures.

At the same time, Member States should refrain from adding unnecessary conference resource requirements when deciding the modalities of new meetings in General Assembly resolutions. We believe it important that the issue of seeking efficiencies in delivering conference services continue to reside at the center of our discussions and to be discussed substantially.

Mr. Chairman,

In September, the 2015 Committee on Conferences (CoC) held fruitful and profound discussions on various subjects, including on improvement of the utilization of conference-servicing resources, the establishment of two document assistance centers and the increased use of digital recordings. On this point, allow me to make some brief comments on the key subjects which we would like to draw your attention to.

Mr. Chairman,

With regard to the utilization of conference-servicing resources, Japan welcomes all the various initiatives introduced by the Secretariat to increase the utilization rates of these resources; however, in addition to these initiatives, Japan deems it important to consider taking more concrete and practical measures to reduce the whole cost of conference services, such as planning fewer meetings and shortening the durations of meetings, taking into account the historical pattern of meetings.

With regard to digital support for meeting proceedings, while we enjoy the benefit of the increased capacity for the issuance of electronic publications for digital distribution via website and portable devices throughout the UN, my delegation commends the establishment of two documents assistance centers at UN Headquarters in New York to provide delegates with relevant documents on demand. We believe that the provision of these services addresses the concern that Member States could sometimes not obtain hard copies of documents despite their requests. We also welcome the fact that these services are provided within existing resources and we expect that these services will continue to be provided within existing resources.

With regard to digital recordings, Japan commends the use of this practice as a cost-saving measure. Its use has been enhanced in both the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) and the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and has been extended to other intergovernmental bodies including the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). We wish to encourage even more intergovernmental bodies to consider introducing such a good practice.

With regard to matters related to translation and interpretation, Japan welcomes the efforts made by the Secretariat to refrain from changing agreed texts of both draft and adopted resolutions beyond purely grammatical and editorial reasons, adhering strictly to the relevant guidelines, and Japan wishes to see the Secretariat continue such efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

With regard to the digitization of important older United Nations documents, we fully understand the importance of this project; however, in order to give this project further consideration, we need more information from the Secretariat on the definition of important older United Nations documents, as well as the scope, estimated quantity, cost and time frame of the project. At the same time, we deem it important that the Secretariat engage in further efforts to seek additional voluntary contributions for this project, including by broadening the donor base.

Mr. Chairman,

Japan is ready to engage in discussions on various subjects including the aforementioned issues, taking into account all the additional information that will be provided by the Secretariat.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate that my delegation will participate constructively in the discussions during the informal consultations on all aspects of this agenda item and I hope we will reach a positive outcome.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.