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Fifth Committee

10th formal meeting

Thursday, 1 November 2018

Conference Room 3, 3 p.m.

Agenda item 139, Pattern of Conferences: A/73/32, A/73/93\*, and A/73/458

*Introduction & general discussion*

**Statement of Ms. Catherine Pollard  
Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management**

Distinguished Chair,

Distinguished members of the Fifth Committee,

1. Good afternoon. Let me begin by congratulating you, Madam Chair, and the members of the Bureau, on your election, and I wish the Committee a successful session. It is a pleasure to be with you today to discuss the pattern of conferences and I am happy to interact with you on developments in the field of conference management, to discuss the way forward, and to receive your guidance and recommendations. In September, we met with the Committee on Conferences and then with the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in early October, and today I look forward to conferring further with you.

2. Considerable efforts have been made to present the information gathered from New York, Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna in a more strategic way. The report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/73/93) outlines several important developments, focusing on innovation. I would also like to highlight the delineation of responsibilities in the provision of conference services that was implemented by the four relevant duty stations.

3. Furthermore, the report underscores the increasing trend of non-calendar meetings at the four duty stations. The workload associated with the increased number of non-calendar meetings has been adding tremendous pressure on the existing resources allocated to the servicing of calendar meetings.

4. Finally, the report also addressed the worsening of the conditions of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The current conditions of the conference centre pose an immediate risk to the servicing of the main calendar events hosted in Nairobi: the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

Distinguished delegates,

5. In terms of processing and issuance of parliamentary documents and publications, we are pleased that the General Assembly welcomed the reorganization of the translation services which enables self-revision of translation, which is likely to improve timeliness of the language services, and also to ensure high-quality translation.

6. Every year, the General Assembly reiterates the importance of timely issuance of parliamentary documents. The situation has improved in recent years, yet it remains a challenge, particularly as it relates to the Fifth Committee. DGACM's issuance compliance for the documents of the Fifth Committee against the mandated 6-week benchmark has increased from 55 per cent during the 68<sup>th</sup> session of the General Assembly, to 72 per cent during its 72<sup>nd</sup> session. In this regard, we will continue to accord high priority to the processing of the reports of the ACABQ, as well as to work closely with all author departments.

Distinguished delegates,

7. The conference management operations at the four duty stations strive to continuously improve services provided to Member States. While the nature of our work is undergoing constant modifications, its main objectives remain unchanged: guaranteeing quality, timeliness, cost-effectiveness, sustainability and accessibility, as well as ensuring the implementation of the mandates on multilingualism.

8. In order to achieve these objectives, much attention is being devoted to innovation, in particular as it relates to new technological applications and refining our working methods. We are firmly committed to staying this course in 2019 and beyond.

9. The technological innovations in both meetings and documentation management have assisted with achieving additional efficiencies and quality gains. Among those, I could highlight the One-Stop-Shop application, the e-deleGATE portal, the digital version of the *Journal of the United Nations* and the e-Blue Book.

10. In addition, we are enhancing our document management system, expanding our computer-assisted translation and machine translation platform, upgrading the interpreter assignment software, examining the technical feasibility of remote interpretation and testing the improved speech-to-text technologies.

11. My colleagues and I look forward to our interaction. I wish to assure you of our full support in your work. Thank you.

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