

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Sofiane Mimouni
Chair of the Committee on Conferences for its substantive session in 2020**

9 November 2020

Agenda item 144: Pattern of conferences

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is my privilege to introduce the Report of the Committee on Conferences for 2020 in my capacity as Chair of the Committee. The Committee report, as contained in document A/75/32, covers the work of the Committee in 2020 and was adopted at its substantive session held from 8 to 14 September 2020. The report also includes a draft resolution and a draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2021 for your approval and recommendation for adoption by the General Assembly.

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

Owing to the continuing health risks resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee agreed to hold its informal meetings in a virtual format, and to hold a formal in-person meeting on Monday, 14 September, to adopt the draft resolution and the report.

At the opening of the substantive session, on 8 September, the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences (A/75/89).

At the same meeting, Member States had an opportunity to engage actively with representatives of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) in New York and at the other three duty stations, i.e. Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, in a virtual meeting with interpretation in all six official languages.

During its substantive session, the Committee considered the report of the Secretary-General together with the statistical data presented as supplementary information. The Committee report (A/75/32) reflects these discussions.

On **matters related to the calendar of conferences and meetings**, the Committee approved the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations for 2021, as annexed to the report.

The Committee approved five requests for intersessional departures.

On **meetings management**, the Committee reviewed the statistical data on the utilization

of conference-servicing resources and facilities.

All four duty stations made efforts to improve the interpretation utilization factor, in accordance with section II, paragraph 18, of resolution 74/252, by engaging relevant intergovernmental and expert bodies, as appropriate.

The Committee commended DGACM for ensuring the continuity of conference services during the COVID-19 pandemic, while noting with concern the impact of the measures in response to the liquidity situation and COVID-19 on the provision of language services and the management of meetings.

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

On **documents management**, the Committee noted the improvement in the submission and processing of slotted documents and took note that all duty stations maintained 100 per cent in simultaneous issuance of documents in all six official languages in 2019.

The Committee also highlighted that the timely issuance of verbatim records constitutes an important part of the services provided to Member States.

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

On **staffing**, the Committee noted that as a result of the recruitment restrictions imposed in October in response to the liquidity crisis the vacancy rates by duty station in key occupational groups has increased, particularly in the translation services in New York.

The Committee requested the Secretary-General to continue to make efforts to ensure that multilingualism, as a fundamental value of the Organization, is not undermined by the measures in response to the liquidity crisis, as well as by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee supported the memorandums of understanding with education institutions as a way to strengthen the training of language professionals in order to facilitate the recruitment of qualified language staff and, as enshrined in the General Assembly resolutions on multilingualism, highlighted the importance of giving equal treatment and an equally favourable working conditions and resources to all language services.

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

On the **improvement of facilities and accessibility**, the Committee on Conferences welcomed the measures related to conference services for persons with disabilities and requested the Secretary-General to continue to address those issues as a priority.

On measuring the quality of conference services, the Committee was updated on feedback received from the global e-survey conducted by DGACM.

Before I conclude, Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the Bureau and the members of the Committee for their active and constructive participation during the substantive session, which enabled the Committee to have meaningful and productive discussions, particularly during this difficult time of the pandemic. I would also like to express our gratitude to Mr. Movses Abelian, Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Secretariat of the Committee and all the staff of DGACM, including the conference management staff at the other duty stations, for providing substantive and technical support to the Committee throughout the year.

I am confident that we will continue to work in the same spirit during the Fifth Committee's consideration of the item on the pattern of conferences.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.