

11 November 2019

Seventy-fourth session

Sixth Committee

Agenda item 109

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Oral report of the Chair of the Working Group

Chair: Mr. Rohan Perera (Sri Lanka)

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 73/211 of 20 December 2018, on 7 October 2019, at its first meeting, the Sixth Committee decided to establish a working group to finalize the process on the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism and to discuss the item included in its agenda by General Assembly resolution 54/110 concerning the question of convening a high-level conference under the auspices of the United Nations.

2. At the same meeting, the Sixth Committee elected Mr. Rohan Perera (Sri Lanka) as Chair of the Working Group. Pursuant to paragraph 9 of General Assembly resolution 51/210 and consistent with past practice, the Working Group was open to all States Members of the United Nations or members of the specialized agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

3. Further to established practice, the Working Group decided that members of the Bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee, to the extent of their availability, would continue to act as Friends of the Chair during the meetings of the Working Group.

4. The Working Group had before it for discussion the report of the Ad Hoc Committee on its sixteenth session (A/68/37), which contains as Annex I the preamble and articles 1, 2, and 4 to 27 of the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism (hereinafter the

“draft comprehensive convention”), prepared by the Bureau, incorporating the various provisions contained in A/C.6/65/L.10; and written proposals relating to the outstanding issues surrounding the draft comprehensive convention, contained in the report as Annex II.

5. The Working Group also had before it the letter from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, dated 1 September 2005 (A/60/329), and the letter dated 30 September 2005 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the Chair of the Sixth Committee (A/C.6/60/2). The Chair also drew to the attention of the Working Group last year’s oral report by the Chair of the Working Group, contained in document A/C.6/73/SR.33.

II. Proceedings of the Working Group

5. The Working Group held three meetings, on 21 and 24 October and 7 November 2019, convened against the backdrop of the plenary debate at the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th meetings of the Sixth Committee, held on 8, 9 and 10 October 2019. At its first meeting, the Working Group adopted its programme of work and decided to hold its discussions in the framework of informal consultations. The Working Group paid tribute to Mr. Angel Horna who was one of the Friends of the Chair and coordinator of the outstanding issues relating to the draft comprehensive convention for his contribution to the work of the Working Group.

III. Informal summary

6. The present informal summary is for reference purposes only and is not an official record of the proceedings.

7. Consistent with previous practice, the informal consultations were devoted to discussing the outstanding issues on the draft comprehensive convention and the proposal made by Egypt concerning the question of convening a high-level conference under the auspices of the United Nations.

8. During informal consultations held on 21 October, the Chair of the Working Group, who also chaired the informal consultations, provided an overview of the work undertaken over the years in the context of the Working Group and the Ad Hoc Committee established pursuant to resolution 51/210 and an update on the status of the negotiations regarding the outstanding issues surrounding the draft comprehensive convention. Work proceeded on the general understanding that further consideration would be given to all written amendments and proposals that are on the table, together with all other written and oral proposals, in future discussions, including on outstanding issues. During informal consultations held on 24 October, attention was drawn to the informal non-paper prepared by the former coordinator on a possible pathway to overcoming differences on the outstanding issues relating to the draft comprehensive convention and comments were invited thereon. The Chair of the Working Group also held informal bilateral contacts with interested delegations, during which several delegations, while reiterating long-standing positions, and preference for proposals they had made, expressed their continued interest to remain engaged in the efforts of the Working Group.

9. At the informal consultations held at its second meeting on 24 October, the Working Group considered the question of convening a high-level conference under the auspices of the United Nations to formulate a joint organized response to terrorism. The sponsor delegation of Egypt reiterated its position on the continued relevance of its proposal. While some delegations reiterated their support for convening a high-level conference, others indicated that, without achieving consensus on the draft comprehensive convention, holding a high-level conference would be premature.

10. During informal consultations held on 7 November, the Working Group considered a proposed recommendation by the Friends of the Chair, based on operative paragraphs 24 and 25 of General Assembly resolution 73/211, that the Sixth Committee, at the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, establish a working group with a view to

finalizing the process on the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism as well as discussions on the item included in its agenda by Assembly resolution 54/110 concerning the question of convening a high-level conference under the auspices of the United Nations. The recommendation would also have recognized the valuable dialogue and efforts of Member States towards resolving any outstanding issues, and encourage all Member States to redouble their efforts during the intersessional period.

11. The Working Group held a wide-ranging exchange of views on the recommendation, with particular focus on the possible establishment of the Working Group during the seventy-sixth session in 2021 instead of 2020. Quite a number of delegations saw merit in the possible reconvening in 2021 stating that this would allow more time for reflection on the outstanding issues and engagement of the issues during the intersessional period, as well as offer an opportunity to revitalize work on the subject, bearing in mind also the related questions concerning the need to avoid overlap within the same year of discussions on the United Nations Global Strategy and on measures to eliminate international terrorism. Other delegations expressed their flexibility and wish to be afforded more time for consultations with capitals. Some other delegations expressed support for the reconvening of the Working Group for a focused discussion annually.

12. Given that the proposed recommendation was linked to discussions on the draft resolution on measures to eliminate international terrorism., it was agreed that further consideration of the issues be continued and completed in the context of informal consultations on the draft resolution

13. As Chair of the Working Group, I welcome the continued commitment expressed by delegations, and I remain encouraged by the interest of delegations to continue their discussions on the draft comprehensive convention during the inter-sessional period. The Friends of the Chair had an opportunity to consult on the possibility of

replacement of a coordinator of the outstanding issues relating to the draft comprehensive convention, Mr. Angel Horna. [I am pleased to report that ...has agreed to assume the role of coordinator on the outstanding issues. I call upon all delegations to give the new coordinator all the support that is required to help us advance in our work.][The Friends of the Chair are still in the process of consulting with delegations on the matter. I intend to continue to hold consultations on this important matter and will inform the membership of the outcome so as to allow the coordinator so designated to commence intersessional work].

14. I look forward to continued efforts on the part of delegations to engage on these issues.