

# UNITAR BRIEFING TO NEW DELEGATES ON THE WORK OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE (2020)

## REMARKS FOR THE CHAIR-ELECT OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE, HER EXCELLENCY KATALIN ANNAMÁRIA BOGYAY

Distinguished delegates,

It is my pleasure to brief you today on the work of the Third Committee, in my capacity as the Chair-elect of the Committee at its seventy-fifth session. I will offer an introduction and overview of the work of the Committee. The Secretary of the Committee is also here today to brief you on additional organizational issues related to our work.

At the outset, I would like to recall that a conference room paper describing the methods of work was prepared by the Bureau of the Committee at the 65th session and was most recently updated by the Bureau of the 74th session. The document provides a good reference in relation to the working methods of the Committee.

The Organization of work of the Committee (document A/C.3/74/L.1) contains the **draft programme of work** for this session. The Bureau, in consultation with the membership, has proposed revised modalities for the work of the Committee, on an exceptional basis, to take into account the physical distancing guidelines and constraints related to the COVID-19 pandemic. These modalities were circulated to Member States through the e-deleGATE portal in my letter dated 8 September 2020.

Since the issuance of the draft programme of work, we were advised that main committees will no longer hold in-person meetings during the week of 28 September. Therefore, the consideration of organizational matters and the election of the two vacant vice-chair positions at the in-person meeting on 2 October will now take place in the morning of 5 October before the start of the general debate. A revision to the draft programme of work will be issued shortly.

The work of the Third Committee will therefore comprise in-person formal meetings to consider organizational matters, to hold the organizational meeting, a single general debate, as well as to take action on draft proposals; and virtual informal meetings, to hold the interactive dialogues with the special mandate holders and other experts as well as with United Nations representatives. The single general debate over a period of 3 days will replace the general discussions of individual items as part of the exceptional measures taken to accommodate the work of the Committee within the limited number of in-person meetings available in light of the COVID-19 situation. Delegations may make only one national statement during the debate. The statement may cover any or all items allocated to the Committee. Action on draft proposals that do not require voting would take place through a silence procedure or in a formal in-person meeting, depending on further discussion and developments.

The Committee will start its work on 5 October. This way, the Committee will not overlap with the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing + 25), which is taking place on 1 October. With your support and diligence, we expect to finish the Committee's work on 20 November.

Based on the revised modalities, 45 proposed plenary and informal virtual meetings are planned, which is slightly less than the 52 plenary meetings held at the last session.

In terms of its **resolutions and decisions**, last year, the Committee adopted 63 proposals. We would expect a similar or possibly lower number for the 75th session.

Regarding its **agenda**, 14 items (including 13 sub-items for the 75<sup>th</sup> session) are traditionally allocated to the Committee; all items are considered annually in a pattern that has been followed for many years. The submission of some reports and draft resolutions has been progressively biennialized in the past few years, and I understand it is the intention of the Committee to proceed further in this direction.

As a result of the intense programme of work, the Committee is under pressure to use its time efficiently. Strict adherence to the agreed time-limits and to the timely opening of meetings will make all the difference in helping ensure we finish our work on time. Delegations are encouraged to participate actively in the interactive dialogues with questions and unscripted comments, and to limit interventions to 2-3 minutes. Pursuant to the practice, microphones will be automatically cut off whenever allotted speaking times elapse.

I would also note a practice that emerged in recent sessions, whereby the Chair and the Bureau strongly discouraged the introduction of draft proposals (unless it was in respect of a new non-recurrent draft resolution) and encouraged main sponsors to only make a single short statement prior to action on the draft. Out of 62 draft resolutions, only two were formally introduced last session, allowing the Committee to

proceed expeditiously with its work. I would strongly recommend that we continue this practice for the seventy-fifth session.

Over the years, some items have been clustered, and others considered jointly. Most recently, the **human rights-related cluster of items**, which take up the majority of the Committee's time, were clustered whereby the Bureau encouraged delegations to make only one statement under the sub-items (a) – (d) of item 72, "Promotion and protection of human rights", in the interest of time.

Turning to the presentations by the special rapporteurs and other special mechanisms/procedures of the Human Rights Council to the Third Committee, I would recall that around ten years ago, the Committee had around 25 presenters. That number doubled and today has reached 62 at the 74<sup>th</sup> session. The number of presenters has increased considerably while the number of meetings allocated to the Committee remains unchanged. In light of the restrictions emanating from the COVID-19 situation and the associated limitations to the Committee's work, it is therefore imperative that we adhere to the time limits during the general debate and interactive dialogues as well as ensure the most effective use of our time.

I look forward to working with each of you to ensure a successful session of the Committee during these challenging times.

Thank you.