Drafting of
General Assembly Resolutions

Joint Swiss-UNITAR Briefing on United Nations Budgetary Matters

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Drafting resolutions: Contents

- What is a resolution
- Legislative framework
- Role of the Fifth Committee
- Resolution process
- Structure of a resolution
- Costing resolution language
- Resolution case study
  - A/RES/75/252: Questions on PPB 2021
- Tips & Terms
- References and resources
What is a resolution

- Resolutions are the collective expression of sentiment, intent, views opinions and requests of Member States, which are agreed and documented in the context of an intergovernmental process.
- Resolutions may contain mandates to the Secretariat/other entities.
- Resolutions are issued by the General Assembly, the ECOSOC, the Security Council and the Human Rights Council.
  - Resolutions may also be issued by competent regional, sectoral or functional bodies.
- Resolutions and Decisions have the same legal status:
  - **Resolutions**: used for policy, mandates and budgets
  - **Decisions**: used for procedural matters.
The Charter of the United Nations: set out the guiding principles of the budgetary process.

General Assembly RoP 96-133: guide the functioning of the Main Committees of the General Assembly:

- RoP 125: Decisions/resolutions shall be made by vote; in practice, the Fifth Committee aims to reach decisions by consensus => many layers of consultations.

General Assembly RoP 153: No resolution with anticipated expenditures shall be voted on until the Fifth Committee examines the budgetary effect.

PPBME (ST/SGB/2018/3) and the FRR (ST/SGB/2013/4) guide the planning, programming, review and approval process of assessed budgets.

Various GA resolutions.
Role of the Fifth Committee

- **Drafts resolutions** relating to administrative and budgetary matters after considering:
  - Relevant reports, including reports of the Secretary-General, OIOS, BoA, JIU, IAAC
  - The conclusions and recommendations of the ACABQ; CPC
  - Statements from Member States
  - Statements/supplementary information from the Secretariat.

- **Recommends adoption** of draft resolutions to the General Assembly.

- **Considers the budgetary implications** resulting from mandates emanating from the other 5 Main Committees of the GA.
Evolution of a resolution document

1. Skeletal
2. Compilation of proposals
3. Provisional draft resolution
4. Draft resolution
5. General Assembly resolution

- Fifth Committee process
- General Assembly process
C5 holds formal and informal meetings on reports of the Secretary-General, CPC, ACABQ

C5 Coordinator formulates initial skeletal text of draft resolution endorsing position of ACABQ/CPC and conducts first reading

C5 Coordinator sets deadline for language subject to availability of supplementary information from the UN Secretariat

C5 Members submit language proposals to C5 Coordinator with copy to the C5 Secretariat

C5 Secretariat consolidates submitted language into Rev.1 and circulates to C5 after approval of C5 Coordinator

C5 conducts first and second readings of Rev.1 of the draft resolution

Are there any additional implications to the PPB?

Secretariat advises implications at the ACABQ level

Yes

No

Secretariat issues a paragraph by paragraph costing of the in-progress draft resolution, including on Alt text

C5 negotiates informally and normally adopts by consensus a draft text issued as provisional draft resolution L document

Provisional draft resolution is formally considered by the C5 and final "L" document is issued in Report of the C5 with recommendation for adoption by the GA

The GA approves the draft resolution or draft resolutions with amendments

A formal "A/RES" resolution document is issued with the final text adopted by the GA

Secretariat appropriates, implements programmes and/or take other action on the basis of the adopted GA resolution

Note: Provisional draft resolution are adopted, adopted with amendments, or rejected by the C5 or withdrawn by Sponsor

Note: Sponsors may also introduce provisional draft resolutions on the agenda item

C5 = Fifth Committee
C5 Secretariat = Secretariat of the Fifth Committee
Secretariat = UN Secretariat
PPB = Proposed Programme Budget
GA = General Assembly
* This is an example; the process is subject to decisions of the C5 Bureau
Structure of a resolution

- **Name of the adopting organ**
- **Preambular paragraphs**
  - Present the background or motive for the resolution; introduce the operative text
  - Normally begin with an italicized verb ending in -ing (e.g. *Recalling...*)
  - Usually factual, are not numbered, end with a comma.
- **Operative paragraphs**
  - Express opinions, decisions or request action; may give mandates
  - Usually begin with italicized verb in the present tense (e.g. *Decides...Requests*)
  - Are action oriented, numbered, end with a semicolon.
- **Annexes**
  - Resolutions may have annexes with additional information.
## Preambular text

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affirming</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bearing in mind</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Confident</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Convinced</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Deeply concerned</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Emphasizing</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Expressing appreciation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Fully alarmed</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Guided by</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Having examined</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Endorses</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Encourages</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Further requests</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Notes</strong></td>
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*Examples in red are examined for possible budgetary implications*
Tips for drafting resolutions

- Using previously approved text may facilitate consideration of proposal; refer to text of the related previously approved resolution, as applicable.
- Consistent use of operative text supports interpretation: “Takes note” of a report may be neutral but “Takes note” of paragraph may convey disagreement.
- Expressing each new idea in a separate paragraph may facilitate consideration.
- Text with possible budgetary implications; e.g. “Requests the Secretary-General to …”; “Decides not to approve the request for abolition of posts..” may have to be costed.
- Clarity is important but non-specific text has a place in resolutions.
- The Secretariat will ensure adherence to the many editorial rules.
Terms for taking action on reports

- **SG reports:** “takes note of” an SG report is generally a neutral term that constitute neither approval nor disapproval - indicates report has been seen and is no longer on the list of documents to be considered by the Assembly.

- **ACABQ reports:** “endorses” the conclusions and recommendations contained in a report ... “subject to the provisions of the present resolution” indicate that the Assembly agrees with the bolded observations and recommendations contained in the referenced ACABQ report, except for as stated in the resolution.

- **OIOS reports:** when the GA “takes note” of an OIOS report, which contains the comments of the SG, the GA is effectively requesting the SG to implement the recommendations of OIOS, taking into account the comments of the SG. As a result, “takes note” is equal to “endorsement” of the report but any departure from the comments of the SG would need to be articulated in the resolution.
Terms for taking action on reports

- **BOA reports**: the GA *takes note* of the audit opinion and findings, and *endorses* the recommendations, contained in the report of the BoA; *except for* those contained in paragraph ..... 

- **CPC reports**: The GA *endorses* the conclusions and recommendations of the CPC contained in each chapter of its report. 

- **IAAC reports**: the GA *takes note* of recommendations of the IAAC related to the OIOS and may *request* the Secretary-General to implement them; *endorse* is used if IAAC proposes changes in the mandate of OIOS. 

- **ICSC reports**: the GA *takes note* of the report and ICSC decisions; *approves* the recommendations of ICSC.
## Costing resolution language

The default position is ACABQ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language proposal</th>
<th>Costing Interpretation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decides</strong> to reduce resources for .... by 5 per cent ...</td>
<td>Reductions will be made from the SG-level (and/or ACABQ if ACABQ agrees with SG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decides</strong> to reduce resources for .... by 1.5 million ...</td>
<td>Reductions will be made from the ACABQ-level (where ACABQ has already proposed cuts)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Decides to further</strong> reduce resources for .... by 5 per cent...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decides to further</strong> reduce resources for .... by 1.5 million ...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Takes note of paragraph xx of the report of the Advisory Committee</strong></td>
<td>Resource will be kept at the SG-level (where ACABQ has proposed cuts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Takes note</strong> of paragraph xx of the report of the Advisory Committee and decides to ...</td>
<td>Taking note of a recommendation of ACABQ means that resources would be kept at SG-level. If an adjustment to the SG amount is required a decision also needs to be added.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recalls</strong> paragraph xx of the report of the Advisory Committee;</td>
<td>Resource will be kept at the ACABQ-level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recalls</strong> paragraph xx of the report of the Advisory Committee and decides / <strong>decides to further</strong> ...</td>
<td>Recalling of a recommendation of ACABQ means that resources would be kept at ACABQ-level. If an adjustment to the ACABQ amount is required a decision also needs to be added (use <strong>further</strong> if adjustment is in addition to the ACABQ-level)</td>
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Case Study

Questions relating to the Proposed programme budget

GA resolution 75/252
Resolution 75/252 on Questions relating to the proposed programme budget for 2021 sets out:

- The collective expression of sentiment, intent, views, opinions, requests of Member States as regards the proposal made by the Secretary-General for the level of post and non-post resources that will be funded by the regular budget for the year 2021.
- The staffing table authorized for 2021 for the entities funded by regular budget.
The General Assembly,


- **Having considered** the proposed programme budget for 2021, the report of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee on internal oversight: proposed programme budget for 2021 and the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions,
1. *Reaffirms* that the Fifth Committee is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters, and also reaffirms the role of the Fifth Committee in carrying out a thorough analysis and approving human and financial resources and policies, with a view to ensuring the full, effective and efficient implementation of all mandated programmes and activities and the implementation of policies in this regard;

2. *Also reaffirms* rule 153 of its rules of procedure;

3. *Further reaffirms* the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation;

4. *Reaffirms* the established budgetary procedures and methodologies, based on its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211;

5. *Also reaffirms* the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations;

6. *Endorses* the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, subject to the provisions of the present resolution;
106. **Decides** to further reduce the resources for air travel by 10 per cent for each budget section whose 2019 average compliance rate for official and staff travel is below 50 per cent, by 15 per cent if the average compliance rate is below 30 per cent and by 20 per cent if the average compliance rate is below 20 per cent;

106.**alt.1** Decides to further reduce resources for travel of staff by 10 per cent;

106.**alt.2** Takes note of the likely impact of continued COVID-19 restrictions on the ability of staff to travel, recalls paragraph 62 of the report of Advisory Committee and decides to further reduce resources for travel of staff by 25 per cent;

106.**alt.3** Recalls paragraph 62 of the report of the Advisory Committee and **decides** to further reduce resources for travel of staff by 25 per cent;
Submitted language with financial implications is costed by the Programme Planning and Budget Division (PPBD)

224. **Decides to abolish** the post of Director, Secretariat of United Nations Forum on Forests (D-2), the post of Chief of Service, Statistics (D-1), two posts of Population Affairs Officer (P-4), the post of Statistician (P-2) and the post of Research Assistant (GS[OH]), that have been vacant for more than two years;

224.**alt.1** Notes that information provided to the General Assembly indicate that the post of Chief of Service (D-1) in subprogramme 4 has been vacant since at least January 2015 and has been vacant for more than two years, and **decides to abolish** the post of Chief of Service (D-1);

224.**alt.2** **Decides to abolish** the long-vacant P3, P4 and D1 posts in Section 9;

225. **Encourages** the Secretary-General to fill the long-vacant D2 post in Section 9 as a matter of priority;

111. **Decides to reduce resources for hospitality by 240,000 dollars**;

111.**alt** **Decides to reduce resources for hospitality by 20 per cent**;

112. **Recommends paragraph 68 of the report of the Advisory Committee and decides to further reduce resources for supplies and materials by 430,000 dollars**;

112.**alt** **Decides to further reduce resources for supplies and materials by 10 per cent**;
This provisional draft was submitted by the Chair after informal consultations, but a provisional draft may be submitted by a sponsor; if so, the names of the sponsoring MS will appear at the top of the resolution.
Amendment to Provisional Draft

- Amendments to the provisional draft are captured in the report of the Fifth Committee to the General Assembly: A/75/682

12. At its 8th meeting, on 30 December, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled “Questions relating to the proposed programme budget for 2021” (A/C.5/75/L.14), submitted by the Chair on the basis of informal consultations coordinated by the representative of Iraq.

13. At the same meeting, the representative of Germany (speaking on behalf of the European Union and Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine), orally proposed an amendment to the draft resolution A/C.5/75/L.14, by which two new operative paragraphs would be inserted into the draft resolution, relating to …

17. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.5/75/L.14, as orally amended (see para. 63, draft resolution I).
In the report of the Fifth Committee to the General Assembly, the Committee recommends adoption of the draft resolution; the final text of the draft resolution is included in the report of the Fifth Committee.
General Assembly Resolution

This is the formal resolution on the PPB adopted by the GA, indicating that adoption was made based on the report of the Fifth Committee.

The formal resolution carries the symbol A/RES/session/sequential number.
Interpreting resolution language (1)

24. *Emphasizes* the importance of comprehensive budgetary performance in the management of the programme budget, and *requests* the Secretary-General to clearly link the budget inputs to tangible results;

25. *Requests* the Secretary-General to *continue to* strengthen internal controls in programme planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting;

27. *Stresses* that results-based budgeting and results-based management are mutually supportive management tools and that improved implementation of results-based budgeting enhances both management and accountability in the Secretariat, and *encourages* the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in this regard;

- Interpretation: These are non-specific requests that carry no budgetary implications. These requests are to be implemented as much as possible within existing resources and structures.
29. *Decides* that a vacancy rate of 9.1 per cent for Professional staff and 7.4 per cent for General Service staff shall be used as a basis for the calculation of the budget for 2021;

30. *Also decides* that the staffing table for 2021 shall be as set out in the annex to the present resolution;

- Interpretation: These are clear and specific decisions that must be implemented; note that the General Assembly approves both on staffing table and resources; which may be in conflict due to the approved vacancy rate.
Interpreting resolution language (3)

38. **Decides** to further reduce resources for licensing and software by 250,000 dollars;
39. **Also decides** to further reduce resources for general operating expenditures by 1.6 million dollars;
40. **Further decides** to further reduce resources for training by 300,000 dollars;

- **Interpretation:** **Decides, also decides and further decides** are used to convey similar sentiment on a group of items; in the case above the three budget lines relating to licensing and software, GOE and training were all considered too high and were reduced.
14. Also stresses that extrabudgetary resources shall be used in consistency with the policies, aims and activities of the Organization, and requests the Secretary-General to provide information on the financial and human resource implications of the use of extrabudgetary resources in the Organization in his next proposed programme budget;

- Interpretation: The request has unclear language that may lead to subjective interpretations by the Secretariat that may differ from the intent of Member States; the Secretariat is expected to carry out some related actions within existing resources and structures.

- Non-prescriptive language is sometimes helpful to express a request without budgetary implications and/or to arrive at consensus text.
55. **Takes note** of paragraph VIII.57 of the report of the Advisory Committee, and **decides** not to abolish the P-5 post;

- **Interpretation:** The recommendation of the ACABQ to abolish the long-vacant post of Special Assistant (P-5) is not supported and the General-Assembly decides not to abolish the P-5 post.

- **In resolutions on the reports of the Fifth Committee** “**Takes note**” or “**recalls**” followed by “**decides**” or “**requests**” indicates lack of support.
Interpreting resolution language (6)

20. **Recalls** paragraph 15 of the report of the Advisory Committee, and requests the Secretary-General to report in the next budget performance report on the impact of COVID-19 on the programme budget for 2020 and 2021, detailing the recorded budget variances and flexible working arrangements, and to factor lessons learned for the working methods of the Secretariat, without prejudice to the work of intergovernmental bodies, into the proposed programme budget for 2022;

- Interpretation: The ACABQ’s analysis and recommendation to request the Secretary-General to provide more information on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the next proposed programme budget was considered, but not fully supported.  
  - Note that in this case the word “Recalls” is used where the ACABQ’s recommendation is not supported;
Interpreting resolution language (7)

12. *Takes note* of paragraphs 30 and 31 of the report of the Advisory Committee;

- Interpretation: When “takes note” is used with a specific paragraph with no further operative text, the interpretation is that General Assembly does not agree with the entire paragraph referenced.
Some major reports before the C5 requiring resolution in the main part of the GA 75:
- PPB 2022
- Financial Situation report
- Report on Managing ASHI
- Report on the Scale of Assessments
- The BOA report on the 2020 financial statements for Volume 1
- The Sequencing report
References/Resources

- Draft resolution A/C.5/75/L.14
- Report of the Fifth Committee A/75/682
- GA resolution 75/252
- GA Rules of procedures
- UN Financial Rules and Regulations ST/SGB/2013/4
- Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation: St/SGB/2018/3 (PPBME)