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English only

**Commission on Crime Prevention
and Criminal Justice**

Twenty-fourth session

Vienna, 18-22 May 2015

Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda*

Working methods of the Commission

**Working methods of the Commission on Crime Prevention
and Criminal Justice**

Summary

The present conference room paper provides information for consideration under sub-item (c), entitled “Working methods of the Commission”, of item 3 on strategic management, budgetary and administrative questions for the twenty-fourth session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. It has been prepared by the Secretariat in response to a proposal made during the regular twenty-third session of the Commission.

* E/CN.15/2015/1.



Introduction

1. At the twenty-third session of this Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, held from 12 to 16 May 2014, a number of speakers noted that the Commission should continue improving its methods of work, especially as they pertained to the consideration of draft resolutions. In this connection, the principle of multilingualism was emphasized. Furthermore, a proposal was made to discuss the matter further at the twenty-fourth session of the Commission under item 3(c) of its provisional agenda for that session. It was agreed that the Secretariat would seek the views of Member States on ways to improve the consideration of draft resolutions by the Commission and would make the information received available to the Commission at its next session.

2. In a note verbale dated 10 September 2014, the Secretary-General invited Member States to provide their views by 17 October 2014 on ways to improve the methods of work of the Commission in general, as well as on ways to improve the consideration of draft resolutions by the Commission in particular, for the consideration by the Commission at its twenty-fourth session under item 3(c) of its provisional agenda.

3. By 1 December 2014, replies were received from the following countries: Pakistan, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Those replies, which were presented for the consideration of the Commission at its reconvened twenty-third session in December 2014 in a conference room paper E/CN.15/2015/CRP.9, are contained in Chapter II of this paper. The additional response received from Canada on 16 December is contained in Chapter III of this document.¹

4. Additional information on the working methods of the Commission is included in the conference room paper, entitled “Working methods and documentation of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice” (E/CN.15/2013/CRP.12), which contains a summary of the views provided by Member States on the report of the Secretariat, entitled “Documentation prepared for the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice” (E/CN.15/2013/13) and related documentation, as well as on methods of work in general.²

II. Comments received from Member States

Pakistan

5. Pakistan provided the following views/comments on ways to improve the consideration of draft resolutions by the Commission:

- The number of draft resolutions to be considered at any Commission may be restricted to a certain number;

¹ The comments are reproduced in the form and the language in which they were received by the Secretariat.

² The document is available at the following website: www.unodc.org/documents/commissions/CCPCJ/CCPCJ_Sessions/CCPCJ_23/E-CN15-2013-CRP12_E.pdf.

- The number of resolutions to be submitted by a country or countries of a certain Regional Group may also be restricted. It would imply that the number of resolutions from a certain Regional Group would also be restricted. There could be an equal number of resolutions allocated to each Regional Group.
- It must be ensured that the resolutions remain most relevant to the main theme of discussions at the Commission. A strict criterion should also be followed to ascertain if a certain resolution falls within the mandates of the Commission.
- All the draft resolutions may be submitted at least one month in advance of the Commission.
- While determining the number of resolutions to be submitted by a Regional Group, weightage should also be accorded to the size of the region as well as the relevance of the issue to that particular region.

Russian Federation

6. The Russian Federation provided the following comments:

The Russian Federation proceeds from the necessity of a more effective use of the Committee of the Whole and to translate draft resolutions into all United Nations official languages in time. To this end, it is reasonable to consider the possibility to commence the meetings of the Committee of the Whole in advance of the main session (for example, a week in advance).

It is also advisable to circulate in advance draft resolutions to the States members of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice for their further efficient examination and endorsement by the national experts and agencies before the meetings organized by the Commission.

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

7. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland provided the following views concerning ways to improve the methods of work of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. This takes into consideration the report tabled at the foresaid commission reconvened twenty-second session in December 2013 (E/CN.15/2013/CRP.12).

Reiterating some of the views expressed in that report, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland would like to make the recommendations provided below concerning pre-session and in-session documentation and informal considerations of resolutions.

(a) It was suggested that draft resolutions and documents subject to discussion during the Commission should be circulated electronically in English at least three weeks prior to the start of the session, and in all six United Nations languages at least one week prior to the start of the session. Without affecting the multilingualism of the Organisation, this will afford Member States more time to thoroughly consider resolutions in advance of the session.

(b) Furthermore, it has been considered that distribution of printed copies of reports and conference room papers before and during the meeting should be rationalised as far as possible. In this regard, it has been noted the amount of printed documents being left unattended and not used, and the concurring practice by interested Member States to independently print relevant documents in advance of relevant discussions. Therefore, it is proposed that updated reports and conference room papers are made available electronically during the Session, available to interested parties to download and print. On the other hand, we support the practice by the Secretariat of providing printed resolutions for their final consideration at the Committee of the Whole.

(c) It has been considered the need to improve the central planning of informal considerations of draft resolutions to be tabled at the Commission. Notwithstanding the considerations expressed by Canada in 2013, about the importance of ensuring inclusive discussions in the Committee of the Whole prior to informal considerations, it is suggested that:

1. The Secretariat allows for short time-bound slots in the Committee of the Whole at the beginning of the session for sponsors to present their resolutions and for member states to provide initial views. These should be kept to a maximum of 30 minutes per resolution.
2. Following the above consideration, the Secretariat should proactively allocate venues and timing for informal consideration of all resolutions starting as soon as possible following consideration in the Committee of the Whole. The Secretariat should ensure as much as possible that informal considerations are not delayed and make most use of existing logistical resources, to ensure that all resolutions can be considered in such setting in good time, thus reducing the risk of last minute informal considerations at the end of the session.

(d) Use of interpretation resources. The Secretariat and the Chair of the Committee of the Whole should plan ahead to avoid night sessions. At the 2014 session, the Committee of the Whole was adjourned at Tuesday lunchtime, and then there were night sessions later in the week, some of which took place without interpretation. It would be preferable, where possible, for Committee of the Whole sessions not to be missed during the day, and for resolutions to be considered in the Committee of the Whole during all the available time. The Chair should seek the resolutions that are most ready to be brought to the Committee of the Whole when there is time to be used, rather than all the resolutions carrying on in informals.

III. Additional comment received from a Member State

Canada

8. Canada provided the following comments: Canada is pleased to submit this reply to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) note verbale CU 2014/199 on improving the methods of work of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) as they pertain to the consideration of draft resolutions.

Canada's views on the methods of work of the CCPCJ, including as it relates to the tabling and consideration of draft resolutions, were previously communicated to the UNODC in 2013, in response to UNODC note verbale CU 2013/178 on the methods of work of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). These views were summarized in the conference room paper, entitled "Working methods and documentation of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice" (E/CN.15/2013/CRP.12) presented to the Reconvened twenty-second session of the CCPCJ in December 2013.

Canada remains strongly convinced of the need to improve the methods of work of the CCPCJ, particularly in terms of consistency and efficiency and including as it relates to the tabling and consideration of draft resolutions. As a country with two official languages, Canada is also strongly committed to the principle of multilingualism.

Insofar as the tabling and consideration of draft resolutions is concerned, Canada offers the following comments and suggestions:

- The firm one month deadline for the tabling of draft resolutions provides Member States with the opportunity to come to the CCPCJ better prepared, with a clear sense of what work lies ahead and with preliminary instructions on all draft resolutions before the CCPCJ. For these reasons, the firm deadline should be maintained.
- On the timeline for the availability/distribution of draft resolutions in all six official United Nations languages, Canada would like to recall that by way of its decision 20/1, the CCPCJ decided that the Secretariat should ensure that all draft resolutions are made available in all six official languages at least three weeks before the start of the session. This decision should be maintained. In view of the one-month deadline for the tabling of draft resolutions, this leaves at least one week for the Secretariat to ensure that each draft resolution is translated into the other five languages.
- Better planning on the part of the Secretariat and the Chair of the Committee of the Whole is needed in order to make full use of day sessions and to avoid night sessions. At the 23rd session of the CCPCJ, the Committee of the Whole was adjourned at mid-day on the second day (despite objections by Canada and others) and the interpreters were sent home with pay. It turned out that there were night sessions later in the week, some of which took place without interpretation and went on until the late hours of the morning. Given scarce resources, planned sessions of the Committee of the Whole should not be cancelled and a waste of resources should be avoided. All efforts should be made to proceed with the formal negotiation of draft resolutions in the CoW while translation is available. In the event that this cannot be done and that all draft resolutions are currently proceeding in informals, then the conference room allocated to the Committee of the Whole should be used for the informal consideration of one of the draft resolutions, chaired by one of the co-sponsors of this resolution and with the benefit of interpretation services normally planned for the Committee of the Whole.
- On how best to deal with the increasing number of draft resolutions tabled every year before the CCPCJ, we would reiterate our concern vis-à-vis the recent practice of discussing draft resolutions in informals before they are

formally introduced before the Committee of the Whole. While there is no perfect solution to deal with the increasing number of draft resolutions presented before the CCPCJ each year, sending everything to informals (and increasing the number of informal meetings taking place simultaneously as the number of resolutions increases) is not, in our view, a viable solution. As we have noted before, the solution to this challenge should not come at the expense of multilingualism, more inclusive discussions and thus better informed consensus.

- It has been proposed that the Committee of the Whole could allow for short time-slots at the beginning of the session for sponsors to present their draft resolutions and for member States to provide initial views, and that these time-slots should be kept to a maximum of 30 minutes per draft resolution. In recent years, sponsors have been invited to introduce their draft resolutions on the Friday prior to the start of the session. Strictly speaking, the Friday session (while conducted with interpretation) is an informal session, given that the CCPCJ has not yet been opened. If the proposal is to proceed with the introduction of draft resolutions during the Committee of the Whole rather than on the Friday informals, then the resources currently allocated to the Friday informals should be reallocated to the Committee of the Whole while the CCPCJ is in session.
- Others have suggested that the Committee of the Whole could start its work in advance of the main session, for example during the week before the start of the session. Aside from the procedural issue (noted above) of whether the Committee of the Whole can begin its work before the CCPCJ is officially in session, this proposal raises some additional concerns. One of the main reasons for which the CCPCJ decided in 2005 to limit the duration of its annual sessions to five days instead of eight is to limit costs. A significant number of Member States then argued that they could not afford to send their substantive experts from Capital to Vienna for more than a week. We doubt that the situation has changed and we would not be in favour of starting the negotiation of draft resolutions without having the necessary experts in the room. Perhaps, however, instead of starting the work of the Committee of the Whole one week in advance, we could explore the possibility of running more than one Committee of the Whole while the CCPCJ is in session. Perhaps the resources which were previously allocated to the three (3) extra days of the Commission (pre-2005), if still available, could be used for this purpose? Assuming one of those extra days is already being used for the Friday informals (before the start of the session) and bearing in mind our suggestion above to reallocate this time (resources) to the Committee of the Whole, then this would leave enough for three (3) full day sessions for a second Committee of the Whole to operate while the CCPCJ is in session. This second Committee could be chaired by one of the remaining Vice-Chairs. We recognize that this approach might be problematic for smaller delegations, but it is a problem that such delegations face in the current environment with the informals. The advantage of this approach is that it would allow the negotiations to take place in all six languages and in a more organized fashion.

- Another proposed avenue for dealing with the increasing number of draft resolutions is to limit the number of draft resolutions to be considered by the CCPCJ at any given session. The difficulty, however, is how to go about it.
- It has been argued that precedence should be given to draft resolutions that are linked to the substantive theme for any given session's thematic debate. However, we don't see how we can limit a Member State's prerogative to bring forward a draft resolution that addresses an issue of priority for them that falls under the CCPCJ's broad mandate. As for ascertaining whether a given draft resolution indeed falls under the CCPCJ's mandate, this can only be done by the Commission itself.
- Limiting the number of draft resolutions a given Member State can bring forward in any given session is also problematic, and unlikely to resolve the issue. Given the composition of the CCPCJ (40 Member States), even a limit of one draft resolution per Member State would be more or less double the number of resolutions currently being considered by the Commission. As for imposing a limit per regional groups, we don't see how that could work. Not all draft resolutions are tabled on behalf of a regional group or even pretend to represent the common views of a given group. Further, contrary to what one Member State has suggested, we don't believe the "size" of a region or the "relevance" of a particular issue to a given region could be considered relevant factors.