

# **United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea**

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24 February to 27 April 1958

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**A/CONF.13/L.2**

## **First report of the General Committee: organization of the work of the Conference**

Extract from the *Official Records of the United Nations Conference on the Law of The Sea, Volume II (Plenary Meetings)*

## DOCUMENT A/CONF.13/L.2

### First report of the General Committee: organization of the work of the Conference

[Original text: English]  
[27 February 1958]

1. At its first meeting, held on 27 February 1958, the General Committee considered a memorandum prepared by the Secretariat (A/CONF.13/BUR/L.1) relating to the organization of the work of the Conference. The following decisions were taken:

#### *Working schedule of the Conference*

2. It was decided to recommend that a five-day week be established; however, this schedule should be regarded as having sufficient flexibility to allow for variations when necessary.

3. It was also agreed that not more than three committee meetings should take place at the same time and that, in any case, simultaneous meetings of the First and Third Committees should be avoided.

#### *Closing date of the Conference*

4. It was decided to recommend that Thursday, 24 April 1958, be fixed as the closing date of the Conference.

#### *Discussion of the articles prepared by the International Law Commission*

5. The representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics suggested that a general debate be held in the plenary meeting in order to give all countries represented at the Conference, especially those with few representatives, the opportunity to present their viewpoint. He was supported by the representatives of Ceylon and Poland. The representative of India, supporting the proposal of the representative of the Soviet Union, was in favour of having a short general debate in the plenary meeting but with no general debate in the committees. He was supported by the representatives of Egypt, Czechoslovakia and, later, by the representative of the USSR, who considered such a solution a compromise.

6. The representative of Czechoslovakia, however, thought that it would be necessary to have a general debate in the Fifth Committee because the question of land-locked countries had not been studied by the International Law Commission.

7. The Soviet Union and Indian proposals were opposed by representatives of the United States of America, France, Panama, the United Kingdom, Guatemala, Italy, Australia, the Netherlands, Argentina and China, who expressed themselves generally in favour of the procedure outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8 of document A/CONF.13/BUR/L.1 (see below, paragraph 12, sub-paragraph (a) and (b)).

8. The Indian proposal was rejected by 11 votes to 6, with 1 abstention.

9. The Committee approved, without objection, a proposal by the representative of Mexico to add in the second sentence of paragraph 7 of document A/CONF.13/BUR/L.1, after the words "on the articles", the following: "(but would not be precluded from discussing articles referred to any other committee or committees if they consider this to be necessary in view of the connexion between such articles and those referred to their own committee)".

10. The Committee adopted, without vote, a proposal by the representative of the United Kingdom to delete in the third sentence of the same paragraph, between the words "would not" and "be made", the word "necessarily".

11. The Committee adopted, without vote, a proposal by the representative of the United States to delete the fourth sentence of the same paragraph reading "However, provisional votes could be taken when desirable and in so far as it should be necessary to take decisions of principle in order to facilitate subsequent stages of the work of the Committee."

12. The Committee therefore recommends that the main committees of the Conference organize their discussion of the articles prepared by the International Law Commission in two stages as follows:

(a) The first stage would consist of a short general debate on the articles referred to the Committee or a discussion of them article by article, or even a combination of both methods. Representatives would express their views on the articles (but would not be precluded from discussing articles referred to any other committee or committees if they consider this to be necessary in view of the connexion between such articles and those referred to their own committee), and put forward any proposals or amendments they may wish to make regarding them. A decision on the articles, or on the proposals or amendments, would not be made at this stage. The process of formulating texts or the consideration of particular problems might well be referred to sub-committees set up for those purposes. It may be hoped that this first stage would be completed by the end of the third week of the Conference.

(b) The second stage would involve taking the articles seriatim, when final decisions should be reached on the texts to be recommended to the plenary meeting. It would be desirable if, at this stage, each committee could indicate the extent to which reservations to the texts would be permissible if such texts were incorporated in a convention or other appropriate instrument.

## DOCUMENT A/CONF.13/L.4

### Note verbale, dated 7 March 1958, addressed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the President of the Conference

[Original text: English]  
[11 March 1958]

The Secretary-General of the United Nations presents his compliments to the President of the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea and has the honour to

inform him of the following, with the request that this information be made available to the members of the Conference: