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## Article 15

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## Text of Article 15

1. The General Assembly shall receive and consider annual and special reports from the Security Council; these reports shall include an account of the measures that the Security Council has decided upon or taken to maintain international peace and security.
2. The General Assembly shall receive and consider reports from the other organs of the United Nations.

## Introductory note

1. Except as described below, there were no changes in the application of this Article. From the fiftieth to the fifty-fifth sessions, inclusive, the General Assembly considered and dealt with the reports according to the standard procedure described in the *Repertory*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *Repertory*, volume I, under Article 15, pp. 481-500.

### A. Reports of the Security Council

2. During the period under review, the importance of the annual reports of the Security Council was reaffirmed: “The debate on the report of the Security Council is one of the most important items on the agenda of the General Assembly because, under the terms of the Charter of the United Nations, the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly is unique”.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the format of these reports was at issue. In 1995, the representative of the Republic of Korea stated: “the question arises whether the current format of the report is appropriate for a body that is fulfilling a central role in the maintenance of international peace and security. An overwhelming majority of Member States, including the Republic of Korea, have called for the report to be a more analytical and substantive account of the activities undertaken by the Council rather than a simple compilation of resolutions, statements and various communications which have already been made available to them”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Mr. Fowler (Canada), A/53/PV.41, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> A/50/PV.73.

3. In a note dated 12 June 1997, the President of the Security Council set out new guidelines for the annual report. For example, the report must now include, “for the period covered by the report, a description in chronological order of the consideration by the Council of the matter in question and of actions taken by the Council on that item, including descriptions of the decisions, resolutions and presidential statements, and a list of communications received by the Council and reports of the Secretary-General; factual data, including dates of formal meetings and informal consultations at which a subject was discussed.”<sup>4</sup>

4. The report of the Security Council for the period 16 June 1997 to 15 June 1998 was the first to follow this format.<sup>5</sup> The annual report of the Council is now designed to provide a detailed account of the Council’s activities, practice and documents.<sup>6</sup>

5. The General Assembly, at its fifty-second session, made the following statement with regard to the new guidelines: “The improvements that have been introduced into the annual reports in recent years deserve to be acknowledged as a positive development

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<sup>4</sup> S/1997/451.

<sup>5</sup> See GA (52), Suppl. No. 2.

<sup>6</sup> S/1997/451.

from the point of view of the advancement of transparency and accountability in the Council's work, which has come to represent a universally shared objective".<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, since 1997, it has been possible for brief summaries of the work of the Council prepared by former Presidents of the Security Council — but under their own responsibility — to be included for the first time in the annual report of the Security Council<sup>8</sup>. In this regard, the Assembly wished to "thank in particular all those former Presidents of the Council who have taken up the responsibility of circulating a summary of the activity during their presidencies".<sup>9</sup>

6. The new guidelines contained in the note of 12 June 1997 do not apply to special reports. Paragraph six of the note states only that: "The members of the Security Council will continue to consider and to review ways to improve the Council's documentation and procedure, including the provision of special reports as referred to in Article 24, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations".<sup>10</sup>

7. During the period under review in the present *Supplement*, the General Assembly did not receive any special reports from the Security Council; however, in 1996, at the initiative of the members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Assembly adopted resolution 51/193, in which it encouraged the Security Council to provide special reports in accordance with Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter.<sup>11</sup> This failure of the Security Council to submit special reports has, on occasion, been called into question, particularly in connection with international crises such as the crisis in Kosovo.<sup>12</sup>

## B. Reports of the Economic and Social Council

8. The tendency to expand the number of topics covered during consideration of the report in plenary session and to reduce accordingly the number of topics referred for consideration by a Main Committee, which started with the forty-ninth session, continued during the period under review in the present *Supplement*. The

scope of the General Assembly's deliberations in plenary session continued to grow and that of its Committees continued to decrease. In fact, since the fifty-first session, high-level Council meetings, coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized institutions and other bodies of the United Nations, and the entire operational activities segment have also figured among the issues considered by the Assembly.<sup>13</sup>

9. On occasion, this expansion of coverage has led to changes in the working methods of the General Assembly. Thus, during the fifty-first session, the President of the Assembly requested the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations to undertake informal soundings on the section of the report pertaining to non-governmental organizations "in order to make a proper determination on the methodology, as well as on the substantive issue of facilitating the participation of non-governmental organizations in all areas of the work of the United Nations".<sup>14</sup>

10. Generally speaking, on matters submitted for its consideration, the General Assembly limits itself to "taking note of" or "recognizing" the report without discussing it, with some notable exceptions. During the fifty-second session, a draft resolution on chapter I of the report of the Economic and Social Council, proclaiming 2000 as the "International Year for the Culture of Peace",<sup>15</sup> was introduced by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire<sup>16</sup> and adopted by the General Assembly.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, during the fifty-third session, the representative of Kyrgyzstan introduced a draft resolution on chapter VIII (5) of the report, proclaiming 2002 as the "International Year of Mountains",<sup>18</sup> which was also adopted by the Assembly.<sup>19</sup> On one occasion, during the fifty-third session, the Secretary-General, on his own initiative, informed the General Assembly in a note<sup>20</sup> that the Economic and Social Council, by its resolution 1999/3 of 25 March 1999, had recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution entitled

<sup>7</sup> A/52/PV.39.

<sup>8</sup> S/1997/451.

<sup>9</sup> A/52/PV.39.

<sup>10</sup> S/1997/451.

<sup>11</sup> See GA resolution 51/193.

<sup>12</sup> A/54/PV.35, pp. 28-29, Mr. Rodríguez Parilla (Cuba).

<sup>13</sup> A/51/PV.87, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> A/51/PV.65, p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> A/52/L.15.

<sup>16</sup> A/52/PV.50, pp. 16-21.

<sup>17</sup> See GA resolution 52/15.

<sup>18</sup> A/53/L.24.

<sup>19</sup> See GA resolution 53/24. See also A/53/PV.54, pp. 5-8.

<sup>20</sup> A/53/89.

“Revision of the General Regulations of the World Food Programme”. In order for the Assembly to consider the draft resolution, it was decided to reopen consideration of agenda item 12 and to adopt the resolution.<sup>21</sup>

### C. Reports of the International Court of Justice

11. During the period under review in the present *Supplement*, the Presidents of the Court, after noting that the significant activity of the Court was leading to increased budget costs, highlighted the shortfall of resources in the reports submitted to the General Assembly. The States that spoke during the consideration of this agenda item expressed grave concern<sup>22</sup> and the Assembly asked the Court and the Member States for a report.<sup>23</sup> Thus, in resolution 52/161, the General Assembly “Invites Member States, the States parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice, and the International Court of Justice if it so desires, to present, before the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, their comments and observations on the consequences that the increase in the volume of cases before the Court has on its operation, on the understanding that whatever action may be taken as a result of this invitation will have no implications for any changes in the Charter of the United Nations or the Statute of the International Court of Justice”.<sup>24</sup> The Court replied to this question in its annual report to the Assembly.<sup>25</sup>

### D. Reports of the Secretary-General

12. During the period under review, the Secretary-General’s decision to distinguish, in his report, between operational and institutional aspects and to outline the guiding principles for future activities was met with criticism in view of the resulting proliferation of reports.

13. For this reason, during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, the delegation of the United States of America introduced a draft resolution setting out the

“modalities for documents”,<sup>26</sup> which provided, inter alia:

“[...] That documents originating in the Secretariat for submission to the General Assembly or its subsidiary bodies should not exceed sixteen pages in length, except when the Secretary-General certifies that a document represents a special case, such as reports dealing with human rights violations and others warranting reporting at greater length, or a non-recurrent comprehensive report on an issue not routinely addressed [...]

[...] That reports should not include descriptions of the history of the subject that are contained in other documents, but rather make reference to those other documents, and should not, in general, include a narrative of substantive discussions [...]

and requested “the Secretary-General to present oral, rather than written, reports where appropriate, in particular in the case of progress reports”.

14. No resolution resulted from this draft, which was referred to the Fifth Committee for consideration.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, the proposals that it contained, supported in part by the Secretary-General in his most recent report,<sup>28</sup> were taken up by his successor. The latter, beginning with his first report,<sup>29</sup> limited the scope of that document to operational aspects and abstained from all discussion of the activities of United Nations bodies. This far more succinct written presentation was accompanied for the first time<sup>30</sup> by an oral introduction of the report before the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. This new approach, which the President of the Assembly called “very important”,<sup>31</sup> was repeated at the fifty-third<sup>32</sup> and fifty-fourth sessions.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>26</sup> A/50/L.5.

<sup>27</sup> See A/50/PV.32, pp. 1ff.

<sup>28</sup> See GA (51), Suppl. No. 1.

<sup>29</sup> See GA (52), Suppl. No. 1.

<sup>30</sup> While the Secretary-General addressed oral remarks to the General Assembly during the second, fifth and sixth sessions of the General Assembly (see GA (II/1), Plen., 90th mtg, pp. 267-272; GA (V/1), Plen., 289th mtg, pp. 175-175; GA (VI/1), Plen., 348th mtg, pp. 171-192), this presentation was intended solely to complement the written report.

<sup>31</sup> A/52/PV.5, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> A/53/PV.7.

<sup>33</sup> A/54/PV.4.

<sup>21</sup> See GA resolution 53/223. See also A/53/PV.97, pp. 8-9.

<sup>22</sup> A/52/PV.36.

<sup>23</sup> The Assembly expressed its concern regarding the financial difficulties of the Court on multiple occasions. See, for example, GA resolution 54/249, para. 89.

<sup>24</sup> GA resolution 52/161, para. 4.

<sup>25</sup> A/53/4, annex I.

## Annex

**Reports of the principal organs to the General Assembly  
with the relevant official records**

	<i>Secretary-General</i>	<i>Security Council</i>	<i>International Court of Justice</i>	<i>Economic and Social Council</i>
1995	Report: A/50/1 Official records: A/50/PV.32; A/50/PV.33	Report: 94/95; A/50/2 Official records: A/50/PV.72; A/50/PV.73	Report: 94/95; A/50/4 Official records: A/50/PV.30	Report: A/50/3; A/50/3/Add.1; A/50/3/Add.2 Official records: A/50/PV.99; A/50/PV.100
1996	Report: A/51/1 Official records: A/51/PV.31; A/51/PV.32	Report: 95/96; A/51/2 Official records: A/51/PV.65; A/51/PV.66	Report: 95/96; A/51/4 Official records: A/51/PV.34	Report: A/51/3 (Part I); A/51/3 (Part II); A/51/3 (Part III); A/51/3 (Part IV) Official records: A/51/PV.82; A/51/PV.83; A/51/PV.85; A/51/PV.86; A/51/PV.87
1997	Report: A/52/1 Official records: A/52/PV.5; A/52/PV.47	Report: 97/97; A/52/2 Official records: A/52/PV.38; A/52/PV.39	Report: 96/97; A/52/4 Official records: A/52/PV.36	Report: A/52/3; A/52/3/Rev.1 and Add.1 Official records: A/52/PV.50; A/52/PV.69; A/52/PV.70; A/52/PV.77; A/52/PV.79
1998	Report: A/53/1 Official records: A/53/PV.28; A/53/PV.27; A/53/PV.7	Report: A/53/2 and Corr.1 Official records: A/53/PV.40; A/53/PV.41; A/53/PV.42	Report: A/53/4 Official records: A/53/PV.44	Report: A/53/3; A/53/3/Add.1 and Corr.1 Official records: A/53/PV.54; A/53/PV.72; A/53/PV.91; A/53/PV.85; A/53/PV.78; A/53/PV.97; A/53/PV.92

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	<i>Secretary-General</i>	<i>Security Council</i>	<i>International Court of Justice</i>	<i>Economic and Social Council</i>
1999	Report: A/54/1 Official records: A/54/PV.4; A/54/PV.27; A/54/PV.29; A/54/PV.32; A/54/PV.33	Report: A/54/2 Official records: A/54/PV.35; A/54/PV.36; A/54/PV.37	Report: A/54/4 Official records: A/54/PV.39	Report: A/54/3/Rev.1 and Add.1 and 2 Official records: A/54/PV.71; A/54/PV.83; A/54/PV.87; A/54/PV.88
2000		Report: A/55/2; A/55/(SUPP) Official records: A/55/PV.35; A/55/PV.36; A/55/PV.37	Report: A/55/4 Official records: A/55/PV.41	

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