

ARTICLE 21

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>
Text of Article 21	
Introductory Note	1—2
I. General Survey	3—6
II. Analytical Summary of Practice	7—44
A. Adoption and amendment of the rules of procedure	7—13
1. Question of the relationship of the rules to the functions and powers of the General Assembly under the Charter	7—9
2. Method and procedures employed in adopting and amending the rules	10—13
B. Some significant features of the rules	14—43
1. The agenda	14—19
<i>a.</i> Special sessions	14—15
<i>b.</i> Emergency special sessions	16
<i>c.</i> Powers of the General Committee	17—18
<i>d.</i> Allocation of items	19
2. Organization of sessions	20—24
<i>a.</i> Election of officers	20—21
<i>b.</i> Credentials	22—24
<i>i.</i> Special sessions	22—23
<i>ii.</i> Emergency special sessions	24
3. Voting	25—32
<i>a.</i> Correction of votes	25
<i>b.</i> Non-participation in a vote	26—28
<i>c.</i> Introduction of mechanical means of voting	29—32
4. Elections	33—37
<i>a.</i> Security Council	33—34
<i>b.</i> Economic and Social Council	35
<i>c.</i> International Court of Justice	36—37
5. Consensus	38—39
6. Deletion of statements from the record	40—41
7. Questions of participation	42—43
C. Election of the President of the General Assembly	44
** 1. Question of nominations	
2. Election of Vice-Presidents	44

TEXT OF ARTICLE 21

The General Assembly shall adopt its own rules of procedure. It shall elect its President for each session.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

1. During the period under review, the General Assembly amended its rules of procedure on three occasions. All the amendments were related to an increase in the membership of United Nations organs. They are dealt with in section II, A, 2.
2. As in previous studies of Article 21 in the *Repertory* and its *Supplements Nos. 1* and *2*, some significant features noted in the implementation of the rules of procedure are analyzed in section II, B.

I. GENERAL SURVEY

3. The General Assembly adopted the first amendment to its rules of procedure during the period under review at its sixteenth session when it decided to increase the membership of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions from nine to twelve.
4. At its eighteenth session, the General Assembly decided to increase the number of Vice-Presidents of the Assembly from thirteen to seventeen and adopted a pattern for the election of the President, the Vice-Presidents and the Chairmen of the Main Committees.
5. At its twentieth session, the General Assembly, following the entry into force of amendments to the Charter enlarging the membership of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, adopted consequential changes to its rules of procedure relating to elections to those bodies.
6. Questions regarding the interpretation of the rules of procedure were also raised, especially in connexion with the adoption of the agenda, the voting procedure and the procedure followed in the elections to the principal organs of the United Nations.

II. ANALYTICAL SUMMARY OF PRACTICE

A. Adoption and amendment of the rules of procedure

1. QUESTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE RULES TO THE FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY UNDER THE CHARTER

7. At its seventeenth session, on 30 October 1962, the General Assembly established an *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Improvement of the Methods of Work of the General Assembly.¹ The report of the *Ad Hoc* Committee, submitted on 27 May 1963,² was considered by the General Assembly at its eighteenth session.³ On 11 November 1963, the Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution⁴ in which it took note of the observations and approved the recommendations contained in the report. The text of the resolution has been reproduced as annex IV to the rules of procedure.⁵

¹ G A (XVII), Plen., 1162nd mtg., paras. 108–116.

² G A (XVIII), Annexes, a.i. 25, A/5423.

³ G A (XVIII), Plen., 1256th mtg., paras. 76–221.

⁴ G A resolution 1898 (XVIII).

⁵ United Nations publication, Sales No.: 68. I. 7.

8. In its report, the *Ad Hoc* Committee stated: "... it was clear that the issue was not that of a revision of the rules of procedure. The present rules provide an adequate framework for the Assembly's work".⁶ The Committee also "noted, however, that in many cases sufficient use is not made of the opportunities which are offered by the present rules of procedure if they are applied correctly"⁷ and pointed out that "in the course of its work it refrained from recommending any measures which might have reduced the opportunities for action available to the General Assembly under the Charter".⁸

9. One of the topics analysed previously under this heading⁹ dealt with the powers of presiding officers. In its observations, the *Ad Hoc* Committee, referring to the same subject stated in its report:

"While not wishing to restrict the free course of debates in the General Assembly and its committees, the *Ad Hoc* Committee considers that, under the rules of procedure, the presiding officers can,

⁶ G A (XVIII), Annexes, a.i. 25, A/5423, para. 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*, para. 12.

⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 13.

⁹ See *Repertory*, vol. I, under Article 21, para. 13.

with skill, find in the provisions of the rules of procedure many ways of speeding up the work of the Assembly. Rules 35 and 108 confirm that they are responsible for directing the discussions and that their role is by no means a passive one or confined to calling upon speakers requesting the floor. Those provisions reaffirm, for example, that the presiding officers may propose the limitation of the time to be allowed to speakers and the limitation of the number of times each representative may speak on any question, the closure of the list of speakers or the closure of the debate. In the opinion of the Committee, the presiding officers, while maintaining the impartiality that their functions require of them, should not hesitate to exercise those prerogatives when they feel that this would contribute to the good progress of the Assembly's work."¹⁰

2. METHOD AND PROCEDURES EMPLOYED IN ADOPTING AND AMENDING THE RULES

10. In the three cases in which it revised its rules of procedure during the period under review, the General Assembly, before taking action on any matter, referred it to a Main Committee for preliminary consideration and report.

11. At the sixteenth session, a number of Latin American delegations requested the inclusion in the agenda of an additional item entitled "Enlargement of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions".¹¹ On the recommendations of the General Committee, the General Assembly placed the item on the agenda and referred it to the Fifth Committee. In its report¹² the Fifth Committee recommended that the General Assembly should increase the membership of the Advisory Committee from nine to twelve and amend accordingly rules 156 and 157 of its rules of procedure. The recommendation was approved by the Assembly.¹³

12. At the eighteenth session, a large number of Member States requested the inclusion in the agenda of an additional item entitled "Question of the composition of the General Committee of the General Assembly".¹⁴ As in a case reported earlier,¹⁵ the item was referred to the Special Political Committee. In its report¹⁶ the Committee recommended that the General Assembly should increase the number of its Vice-Presidents from thirteen to seventeen and amend accordingly rules 31 and 38 of the rules of procedure. The recommendation was unanimously approved by the General Assembly.¹⁷ At the same time, the Assembly decided, also on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, that its President,

the seventeen Vice-Presidents and the seven Chairmen of the Main Committees should be elected as provided in the annex to the resolution, the text of which reads as follows:

"1. In the election of the President of the General Assembly, regard shall be had for equitable geographical rotation of this office among the regions mentioned in paragraph 4 below.

"2. The seventeen Vice-Presidents of the General Assembly shall be elected according to the following pattern, subject to paragraph 3 below:

- (a) Seven representatives from African and Asian States;
- (b) One representative from an Eastern European State;
- (c) Three representatives from Latin American States;
- (d) Two representatives from Western European and other States;
- (e) Five representatives from the permanent members of the Security Council.

"3. The election of the President of the General Assembly will, however, have the effect of reducing by one the number of vice-presidencies allocated to the region from which the President is elected in accordance with paragraph 2 above.

"4. The seven Chairmen of the Main Committees shall be elected according to the following pattern:

- (a) Three representatives from African and Asian States;
- (b) One representative from an Eastern European State;
- (c) One representative from a Latin American State;
- (d) One representative from a Western European or other State;
- (e) The seventh chairmanship shall rotate every alternate year among representatives of States mentioned in subparagraphs (c) and (d) above."

13. Finally, at the twentieth session, taking into account the entry into force of amendments to the Charter enlarging the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council,¹⁸ the Secretary-General requested the inclusion in the agenda of an additional item entitled "Amendments to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly consequent upon the entry into force of the amendments to Articles 23, 27 and 61 of the Charter of the United Nations".¹⁹ The item was referred to the Sixth Committee. In its report,²⁰ the Committee recommended that in rule 8 (b) of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, dealing with emergency special sessions, the word "seven" should be replaced by "nine" so that such a session might be convened on the vote of any nine members of the Security Council. It also recommended amending rules 143 and 146 of the General Assembly's rules of procedure so as to increase the number of

¹⁰ G A (XVIII), Annexes, a. i. 25, A/5423, para. 41.

¹¹ G A (XVI), Annexes, a. i. 94, A/4916.

¹² *Ibid.*, A/4973.

¹³ G A resolution 1659 (XVI).

¹⁴ G A (XVIII), Annexes, a.i. 81, 82 and 12, A/5519.

¹⁵ See *Repertory Supplement No. 2*, vol. II, under Article 21, para. 12.

¹⁶ G A (XVIII), Annexes, a.i. 81, 82 and 12, A/5675.

¹⁷ G A resolution 1990 (XVIII). For the discussions relating to the resolution, see G A (XVIII), Plen.; 1285th mtg., paras. 70-187; Spec. Pol. Com., 417th to 429th mtgs.

¹⁸ See this *Supplement* under Articles 23, 27 and 61.

¹⁹ G A (XX), Annexes, a.i. 103, A/5973.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, A/6132.

members of the Security Council to be elected each year from three to five and the number of members of the Economic and Social Council from six to nine, respectively. The General Assembly approved those recommendations unanimously.²¹

B. Some significant features of the rules

1. THE AGENDA

a. *Special sessions*

14. In the absence of any rule to the contrary, the procedure followed for the adoption of the agenda of the first two special sessions was similar to the one observed for regular sessions and, therefore, was governed by rule 40 of the rules of procedure, which provides, *inter alia*, that the General Committee "shall, at the beginning of each session, consider the provisional agenda, together with the supplementary list, and shall make recommendations to the General Assembly with regard to each item proposed".

15. At the third special session, however, the representative of Iran suggested, at the first meeting, "that the General Assembly should meet only in plenary session and that it should immediately begin considering the only question on the agenda, without first referring it to the General Committee, or to any other Committee".²² His proposal was adopted without objection. A similar procedure was followed at the fourth special session.²³

b. *Emergency special sessions*

16. The fourth emergency special session of the General Assembly had been convened at the request of the Security Council in accordance with rule 8 (b) of the rules of procedure of the Assembly. As the President was calling upon the General Assembly to adopt its agenda, which consisted of only one substantive item, the representative of the United States, on a point of order, requested "that the General Assembly decide as an extraordinary measure to suspend rule 19 of its rules of procedure to permit the Assembly to consider now the applications of those States which have been recommended by the Security Council for membership in the United Nations".²⁴ The proposal was adopted and the item entitled "Admission of new Members to the United Nations" was included in the agenda.²⁵

c. *Powers of the General Committee*

17. At the fourteenth session, in a draft resolution contained in its first report to the General Assembly, the General Committee recommended, *inter alia*, that the General Assembly should decide "not to consider at its fourteenth regular session any proposals to exclude the representatives of the Government of the Republic of China or to seat represen-

tatives of the Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China".²⁶ In the course of the discussion on the draft resolution submitted by the General Committee, it was argued by some representatives that the above-mentioned paragraph of the draft was not in conformity with rule 40 of the rules of procedure and that the Committee had exceeded its mandate under that rule. Other representatives spoke in favour of the draft resolution and expressed the view that the General Committee was empowered to recommend to the General Assembly the inclusion or the non-inclusion of an item in the agenda. The draft resolution submitted by the General Committee was adopted by 44 votes to 29, with 9 abstentions.²⁷

18. Similar action was taken at the fifteenth session.²⁸

d. *Allocation of items*

19. At the fifteenth session, the General Committee had recommended that an item on disarmament should be allocated to the First Committee.²⁹ During the debate in plenary meeting on the adoption of the agenda, the representative of the U.S.S.R. proposed that the item be considered directly in plenary meeting.³⁰ In putting the recommendation of the General Committee to the vote, the President suggested that those representatives who were supporting the Committee's recommendation that the matter be dealt with in the First Committee should vote in favour and that those who opposed that recommendation and supported the draft resolution submitted by the U.S.S.R. should vote against. In support of that argument, the President stated that adoption of one of the proposals automatically implied rejection of the other. Following a debate in which objection was raised to the procedure outlined by the President, the recommendation of the General Committee and the proposal of the U.S.S.R. were voted upon separately. The Committee's recommendation was adopted by 62 votes to 12, with 24 abstentions, and the proposal submitted by the U.S.S.R. was rejected by 54 votes to 13, with 31 abstentions.³¹

2. ORGANIZATION OF SESSIONS

a. *Election of officers*

20. At the opening meeting of the third special session, the representative of Iran proposed³² that the officers elected to the General Committee for the fifteenth regular session — the President of the General Assembly, the Vice-Presidents and the Chairmen of the Main Committees — should

²⁶ G A (XIV), Annexes, a.i. 8, A/4214, para. 7. See also this *Supplement*, under Article 9, para. 13.

²⁷ G A (XIV), Plen., 803rd mtg., para. 54. The draft resolution was adopted as G A resolution 1351 (XIV).

²⁸ G A (XV/1), Plen., 895th mtg., para. 72. The draft resolution was adopted as G A resolution 1493 (XV).

²⁹ G A (XV), Annexes, a.i. 8, A/4520, para. 18, 1st Com., item 3.

³⁰ G A (XV/1), Plen., 900th mtg., para. 5.

³¹ *Ibid.*, paras. 248 and 249.

³² G A (S-III), Plen., 996th mtg., para. 8.

²¹ G A resolutions 2046 A—C (XX).

²² G A (S-III), Plen., 996th mtg., para. 9.

²³ G A (S-IV), Plen., 1203rd mtg., para. 10.

²⁴ G A (ES-IV), Plen., 858th mtg., para. 15.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 21.

continue to carry out those functions during the third special session. The General Assembly adopted that proposal without objection.

21. A similar procedure was adopted at the fourth special session.³³

b. *Credentials*

i. *Special sessions*

22. Rule 28, which provides that a Credentials Committee shall be appointed at the beginning of each session, was applied at the first and second special sessions. At the opening meeting of the third special session, however, the General Assembly decided, on the proposal of the temporary President, that the Credentials Committee should consist of the same members as those appointed for the fifteenth regular session.³⁴

23. A similar decision was taken at the fourth special session.³⁵

ii. *Emergency special sessions*

24. At the fourth emergency special session,³⁶ the General Assembly continued the practice of deciding that the Credentials Committee should consist of the same members as those appointed at the previous regular session.³⁷

3. VOTING

a. *Correction of votes*

25. At the fifteenth session, a representative, speaking on a point of order after the names of the delegations had been called and before the announcement of the result of the vote, asked for the vote of his delegation to be rectified. The President authorized the correction on the ground that the result of the vote had not yet been announced.³⁸

b. *Non-participation in a vote*

26. At the eighteenth session, in the course of a vote on a draft resolution submitted by the Fourth Committee regarding the question of Southern Rhodesia, the United Kingdom was recorded as not having participated in the voting.³⁹ It was pointed out by one of the representatives that the expression "not participating" was not provided for in rule 89. The President then explained that this was a practice which had been accepted by the General Assembly on a number of occasions and that, as far as the counting of the vote was concerned, a delegation which declared that it was not participating in a vote was regarded as being absent.

27. The same question having been raised a few days later at a meeting of the Fourth Committee,

the Chairman of that Committee proposed to refer the matter to the President of the General Assembly.⁴⁰ Two days later, the Chairman reported that he had discussed the question with the President at a meeting at which the Secretary-General and the Chairmen of the other Main Committees had been present and informed the Fourth Committee that the following procedure had been agreed upon:

"Firstly, a delegation which wished its nonparticipation in a vote to be recorded in the summary records or verbatim records of the relevant meeting should make a statement to that effect either before or after the vote. Secondly, when such a statement appeared in the summary record or verbatim record of a meeting, it would also appear in the Committee's report to the General Assembly if the delegation so desired, subject to the Committee's approval. Thirdly, during the roll-call, the names of all delegations, including those absent, would be called even if any delegation had already stated its intention not to participate in the vote. Fourthly, as far as the counting of the votes was concerned, those delegations which answered the roll-call by stating 'Not participating' would be regarded as absent and their names would not be entered either in the summary records or verbatim records or in the Committee's report to the General Assembly. In other words, the results of the vote would contain only the names of the delegations under the three following headings provided for in rule 128 of the rules of procedure: 'In favour'; 'Against'; 'Abstaining'. There would not be another heading 'Present and not voting'."⁴¹

28. At a subsequent plenary meeting held during the same session, the President of the General Assembly confirmed the procedure outlined in the preceding paragraph.⁴²

c. *Introduction of mechanical means of voting*

29. Among the matters considered by the *Ad Hoc* Committee on the Improvement of the Methods of Work of the General Assembly⁴³ was the question of the introduction of mechanical means of voting. In its report to the General Assembly at its eighteenth session,⁴⁴ the *Ad Hoc* Committee indicated that an electric system for registering votes would have the advantage of speed, thus saving time and expense, and would also be accurate and convenient. The Committee recognized that the new system would not be applicable to secret ballots.

30. At the same session, the General Assembly, having considered the *Ad Hoc* Committee's report, authorized the Secretary-General to arrange for the installation of electrical voting equipment in the General Assembly Hall on an experimental basis for one year.⁴⁵

³³ G A (S-IV), Plen., 1203rd mtg., para. 23.

³⁴ G A (S-III), Plen., 996th mtg., para. 4.

³⁵ G A (S-IV), Plen., 1203rd mtg., para. 3.

³⁶ G A (ES-IV), Plen., 858th mtg., para. 11.

³⁷ See *Repertory Supplement No. 2*, vol. II, under Article 21, para. 29.

³⁸ G A (XV/2), Plen., 993rd mtg., para. 133.

³⁹ G A (XVIII), Plen., 1241st mtg., para. 73.

⁴⁰ G A (XVIII), 4th Com., 1455th mtg., para. 21.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1457th mtg., para. 3.

⁴² G A (XVIII), Plen., 1255th mtg., paras. 19-21.

⁴³ See para. 7 above.

⁴⁴ G A (XVIII), Annexes, a.i. 25, A/5423, paras. 57 and 58.

⁴⁵ G A resolution 1957 (XVIII).

31. In a note to the General Assembly at its twentieth session,⁴⁶ the Secretary-General clearly indicated that the use of the mechanical equipment on a trial basis was not intended to replace the existing rules of procedure or to modify them. He added that the equipment was only an auxiliary device designed to assist the President and the representatives in the conduct of the vote, and to assist the Secretariat in the prompt and accurate tabulation of the results of the vote.

32. At the end of the twentieth session, the General Assembly adopted the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the use of the mechanical device in the General Assembly Hall be approved for a further trial period of one year.⁴⁷

4. ELECTIONS

a. Security Council

33. According to rule 143 of the rules of procedure, which is directly based on a provision of Article 23 (2), of the Charter, non-permanent members of the Security Council are to be elected for a period of two years. At its fourteenth session, however, the General Assembly, after having cast fifty-one inconclusive ballots for the election of one of the non-permanent members of the Security Council, reached a compromise whereby one of the two leading candidates would be elected on the understanding that that State would withdraw after one year to allow the election of the other candidate for the following year.⁴⁸ That compromise solution followed a pattern agreed upon on previous occasions.⁴⁹ It was also applied at the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth sessions.⁵⁰

34. Rule 94 of the rules of procedure provides that all elections shall be held by secret ballot and that there shall be no nominations. Nevertheless, at the fifteenth session, one of the representatives, after a series of inconclusive ballots in the course of which his country had been one of the two leading candidates and before the following ballot was taken, announced the withdrawal of his country's candidature.⁵¹

b. Economic and Social Council

35. At the fifteenth session of the General Assembly, a deadlock existed in regard to a vacancy on the Economic and Social Council. As in the case reported in paragraph 33 above, the President announced the terms of an agreement which had been reached privately to break the deadlock. In his statement, the President said:

"The Western European group is prepared to agree that if Belgium and India decide not to

press their candidatures at this session of the Assembly, and another European candidate is elected now, then the Western European group will be prepared to support two candidates from among the members of the Asian-African group at next autumn's election for the seats now occupied by Afghanistan and Spain. I have been informed by the delegations of Belgium and India that this arrangement is agreeable to them. In keeping with this understanding, the candidature of Italy has been presented for the existing vacancy on the Economic and Social Council.

"Strictly speaking, the Assembly should now proceed to a restricted ballot in connexion with the vacancy, a ballot restricted to Belgium and India; but in view of the fact that neither Belgium nor India is any longer a candidate at the present session, in keeping with the understanding to which I have just referred, I now invite the Assembly, which of course is the master of its own procedure, to proceed to an unrestricted ballot for the vacancy. If this course is agreeable, I now ask the Assembly to proceed to an unrestricted ballot for the remaining vacancy on the Economic and Social Council."⁵²

c. International Court of Justice

36. At the fifteenth session of the General Assembly, after two candidates to the International Court of Justice had received an absolute majority, the President announced that for the three remaining vacancies the vote would be restricted, in accordance with rule 96 of the rules of procedure, to the six candidates who had received the largest number of votes.⁵³ The voting took place but before the results were announced a representative raised a point of order in which he stressed in particular that: (a) rule 96 was not applicable to elections to the International Court of Justice since that rule was not binding on non-member States which were parties to the Statute of the Court; (b) rule 151 in fact provided that elections to the Court should take place in accordance with the Statute of the Court, not the rules of procedure of the General Assembly; (c) nominations to the Court, as laid down by the Statute, were made by national groups so that each nominee should have a chance to be considered in the further voting; and (d) the Statute of the Court had no provision for restricted ballots. The President called upon the General Assembly to decide by a vote whether rule 96 applied to the case. The Assembly decided by 47 votes to 27, with 25 abstentions, that rule 96 did apply.⁵⁴ It proceeded, therefore, to elect the three remaining candidates by a series of unrestricted ballots.

37. At the same session, the General Assembly held its 915th plenary meeting in two parts on two consecutive afternoons in order to comply with rule 152 of the rules of procedure which provides that "Any meeting of the General Assembly held in pursuance of the Statute of the International

⁴⁶ G A (XX), Annexes, a.i. 25, A/INF/110/Rev. 1.

⁴⁷ G A (XX), Plen., 1407th mtg., para. 206.

⁴⁸ G A (XIV), Plen., 857th mtg., paras. 304 and 305. See also this *Supplement*, under Article 23, paras. 19 and 20.

⁴⁹ See *Repertory Supplement No. 1*, vol. I, under Article 23, para. 9 and *Repertory Supplement No. 2*, vol. II, under Article 23, para. 3.

⁵⁰ See this *Supplement*, under Article 23, paras. 21-28.

⁵¹ G A (XV/1), Plen., 959th mtg., para. 36. See also para. 38 below.

⁵² G A (XV/2), Plen., 987th mtg., paras 69 and 70. See also this *Supplement*, under Article 61, paras. 20-22.

⁵³ G A (XV/1), Plen., 915th mtg., para. 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 45.

Court of Justice for the purpose of the election of members of the Court shall continue until as many candidates as are required for all the seats to be filled have obtained in one or more ballots an absolute majority of votes”.

5. CONSENSUS

38. Although the principle of reaching decisions by consensus was not entirely new in the General Assembly, the special circumstances which prevailed at the nineteenth session⁵⁵ forced it to resort extensively to such a procedure. At the opening meeting of the nineteenth session, the Secretary-General stated that he had been in consultation with several delegations and that there was an understanding “to the effect that issues other than those that can be disposed of without objection will not be raised while the general debate proceeds”.⁵⁶ That procedure was approved and the General Assembly immediately proceeded to elect its President by acclamation. Similarly, it decided by consensus to forgo the usual balloting for the election of members of the Security Council and of the Economic and Social Council.⁵⁷ A number of other important decisions, including the adoption of interim financial arrangements and authorizations and the establishment of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development as an organ of the General Assembly, were taken by consensus.

39. Near the end of the nineteenth session, a ruling by the President that the Members of the General Assembly had agreed to a non-voting consensus for the conduct of the session was challenged by one of the representatives who formally requested that the General Assembly should immediately start its normal work and asked that a decision be taken on his proposal by a roll-call vote. That proposal was put to the vote on the understanding that it was purely procedural and did not prejudice the respective positions of Member States. The proposal was rejected by 97 votes to 2, with 13 abstentions.⁵⁸

6. DELETION OF STATEMENTS FROM THE RECORD

40. At the sixteenth session, in the course of the general debate, the representative of South Africa made a statement which was considered objectionable by a number of States. The representative of Liberia moved that the whole speech of the representative of South Africa be deleted from the official records of the Assembly.⁵⁹ Several delegations supported the motion submitted by the representative of Liberia. Other delegations, on the other hand, urged that, in view of the importance of freedom of expression in the General Assembly, the proposal should not be pressed. At the next meeting,

⁵⁵ See also this *Supplement*, under Article 18, para. 10, and Article 19.

⁵⁶ G A (XIX), Plen., 1286th mtg., para. 7.

⁵⁷ G A (XIX), Plen., 1312th mtg., para. 26, and 1327th mtg., para. 36. See also this *Supplement*, under Article 23, paras. 27 and 28, and Article 61, para. 3.

⁵⁸ G A (XIX), Plen., 1330th mtg., para. 103.

⁵⁹ G A (XVI), Plen., 1033rd mtg., para. 151.

the representative of Liberia made the following statement:

“Many of the African representatives have appealed to us to withdraw our motion. We do so not so much on account of South Africa but on account of the principle laid down in the Declaration of Human Rights that each Member has the right to say what he likes and to write what he likes — although South Africa has violated every clause in that Declaration.

“But in withdrawing our motion we make another one. We move that the Assembly pass a vote of censure against the Government of South Africa or its representative for a statement here today which was offensive, fictitious and erroneous, and of which the Assembly fully disapproves.”⁶⁰

The motion was adopted by 67 votes to 1, with 20 abstentions.⁶¹

41. At a meeting of the Fifth Committee held during the twentieth session, in response to a point of order by one of the representatives, the Chairman ruled that the subject raised by the representative of South Africa was not relevant to the matters under discussion and that he would be given an opportunity to discuss the matter at an appropriate time.⁶² At the following meeting it was formally proposed that, since the statement made by the representative of South Africa had been ruled out of order, it should be expunged from the record.⁶³ Two representatives supported the motion. It was argued, on the other hand, by one of the representatives that to omit any part of the Committee’s proceedings from the record was contrary to established practice and would constitute an unfortunate precedent. The Committee decided by 39 votes to 16, with 16 abstentions, that the statement by the representative of South Africa should be expunged from the summary record of the meeting.⁶⁴

7. QUESTIONS OF PARTICIPATION

42. In resolution 2011 (XX), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations to invite the Administrative Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity to attend sessions of the General Assembly as an observer.

43. By resolution 1995 (XIX), section II paragraph 11, the General Assembly authorized the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to make arrangements for representatives of inter-governmental bodies whose activities are relevant to its functions to participate, without vote, in its deliberations and in those of the subsidiary bodies and working groups established by it.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1034th mtg., paras. 35 and 36.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, para. 83.

⁶² G A (XX), 5th Com., 1086th mtg., para. 35.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1087th mtg., para. 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 4.

⁶⁵ According to a memorandum by the Secretary-General, this provision does not apply to the Special Committee on Preferences of UNCTAD, which was not established by the Board, *United Nations Juridical Yearbook*, 1965, pp. 226 and 227.

C. Election of the President of the General Assembly****1. QUESTION OF NOMINATIONS****2. ELECTION OF VICE-PRESIDENTS**

44. At the eighteenth session, following the consideration of the question of the composition of

the General Committee, the General Assembly decided to increase the number of Vice-Presidents from thirteen to seventeen.⁶⁶ Since no General Committee was constituted at the nineteenth session, that decision, which involved amendments to rules 31 and 38 of the rules of procedure, was not applied until the twentieth session.

⁶⁶ See para. 12 above.