

addition call a "special" session such as that summoned to discuss the Palestine question in March 1948; or alternatively, a second part of a session, such as that held in New York in April 1949 to complete items which had to be postponed from the Paris meetings in the autumn of 1948, may be arranged.

The General Assembly has six main committees which deal respectively with political, economic, social, trusteeship, administrative and budgetary, and legal questions. At the beginning of each session, the members elect their president, seven vice-presidents and the chairmen of the six main committees. (In 1948 and 1949 it was found necessary to establish a seventh, the so-called Ad Hoc Political Committee, to relieve the First Committee of part of its heavy work-load of political items). The officers thus elected become automatically members of the General (or Steering) Committee, which reviews the provisional agenda in the early days of each session and makes a report to the full Assembly recommending the items which in its view should be retained on the agenda. The first few meetings of the full Assembly take place for the purpose of allocating the various agenda items to the main committees. This done, several subsequent meetings of the Assembly are devoted to a general debate, in the course of which the chairman of each member delegation has the opportunity of making a general policy statement on any or all aspects of the international situation, and of foreshadowing the position which his delegation will take on matters with which it is especially concerned.

Within approximately one week of the opening of each session, the Assembly splits up into its six (or seven) main committees. Their first task is to decide upon the order in which they will consider the items allocated to them. Having done this, they discuss these items one by one, in an atmosphere which is much less formal and more conducive to the give and take of debate than that of the General Assembly itself. Frequently a number of proposals are submitted which are at variance with one another, and in the majority of cases in most committees the course of the debate reveals a marked cleavage between two or more opposing factions. Sometimes the subject matter is such that differences can to some degree be reconciled in the form of a compromise. More often, particularly on political items, the fundamental disagreements between the Communist and non-Communist delegations preclude the achievement of such compromises and result in the adoption of a proposal which is vigorously opposed by a small minority. Whatever the nature of the discussion on each topic, a committee concludes each item by voting on some or all of the resolutions or amendments which have been tabled, and by adopting one or more draft resolutions which it submits in the form of a recommendation to the full Assembly. These draft resolutions require approval by the Assembly, sitting in what is known as a "plenary meeting".

Plenary meetings and committee meetings are similar in the sense that all fifty-nine member states are represented in both. Here, however, the similarity ends. Committee meetings are the scene of detailed preparatory discussion where delegates attempt to reach solutions to the issues which divide their governments, and where proposals are prepared for consideration by the parent Assembly. It is in the plenary meetings that the Assembly gives its final stamp of approval or refusal to these proposals. Plenary decisions on important matters of substance, moreover, require a two-thirds majority of those members present and voting, in contrast to committee recommendations which may be passed by a simple majority.