

Turning to the new scale recommended by the Committee, my delegation accepts the judgement in favour of a two-year assessment. We also accept a further study of the formula for low per capita income allowances. However, any change in this formula should be such as to strengthen the role of capacity to pay as the ultimate criterion for determining the scale. This means that a mechanism should be proposed which can in time reduce the relative importance of special allowances in the scale in order to avoid arbitrary mitigation and thereby enhance the general acceptability of the scale.

The Committee mentions steps it took to safeguard its status as a subsidiary body solely responsible to the General Assembly. This is an important issue and my delegation agrees that these and further steps are appropriate to avoid creating new situations. The procedure for introducing statistical and other information to the Committee for its deliberations should be identical for all member states.

My delegation has studied with interest the separate opinions expressed in the report of the Committee on Contributions. It is indeed a serious matter that the Committee was unable to reach a consensus. The situation illustrates the need for strictest adherence to Assembly directives, in particular adherence to the fundamental criterion of capacity to pay. The debate in the Fifth Committee last year and the report before us now demonstrate that departures from set criteria, far from making the scale more acceptable, are likely to undermine it. While my delegation is prepared to support the recommended scale for 1978-79, there is an urgent need for the Committee on Contributions to eschew in future assessments which do not conform to approved criteria. We urge that all delegations accept the proposed scale in the best interest of the Organization. Continued questioning of the scale on grounds of perceived short-term national interest can only cause other states to follow the same practice, thereby weakening the institutional viability of the Organization.

2. Committee on Conference

Conferences are a major activity of the United Nations and take a large proportion of its budget. In 1974, following a Canadian suggestion, the General Assembly formed, as an experiment for a period of three years, a committee made up of twenty-two Member States specially charged to report to the General Assembly the annual calendar of conferences, recommendations as to the best utilization of resources, and the appropriate means for improving the co-ordination of conferences. However, the most important part of its terms of reference was to decide between sessions, on behalf of the General Assembly, what response should be made to requests to deviate from the calendar of conferences.