

STATEMENT TO BE DELIVERED BY THE CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVE IN
THE FIFTH COMMITTEE, MR. LLOYD FRANCIS, ON THE UNITED NATIONS
PATTERN OF CONFERENCES (ITEM 75), DECEMBER 18, 1967.



Mr. Chairman,

My delegation has studied with great interest the Report of the Committee on Conferences contained in Document A/6991. We wish to commend the Committee for producing a very useful report and to thank them for their hard work in coping with the difficult task of considering the meetings and conference schedule of the United Nations.

We are naturally disappointed that the Committee has not been able to recommend reductions in the 1968 conference calendar through postponing or shortening the length of some meetings, particularly when the Secretary-General himself has expressed doubts as to whether all of the conferences scheduled for 1968 can be staffed adequately both from a qualitative and quantitative standpoint. However, we fully appreciate the difficulties which confronted the Committee in trying to recommend reductions, particularly in this its first year of existence when it was faced with a conference calendar which by and large was already firmly determined. We would, however, like to join with the Committee in emphasizing that the 1968 calendar should be considered exceptional and in appealing to member states to cooperate in measures to ensure a more reasonable distribution of conferences and meetings in future years.

We believe that the difficulties which confronted the Committee this year in considering the 1968 calendar of conferences could be



considerably mitigated if the Committee were to meet early in 1968 to begin its examination of the 1969 and 1970 meeting and conference programmes. The Committee would then be in a position to propose changes in the programmes before the schedule of meetings and conferences for those years had solidified. We, therefore, welcome the request contained in operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution proposed by the Committee on Conferences that it meet as early as possible during the first quarter of 1968 to begin examination of the schedule of meetings and conferences of the United Nations for 1969 and to examine the schedule for 1970. I would, however, like to emphasize again what I said in my statement during the general budget debate, namely, that in the end it is up to member Governments as a whole, not the Committee on Conferences, to resolve this problem of proliferation of conferences and meetings. To use the words of the Committee on Conferences in paragraph 10 of its report: "discipline and occasional self-denial" are necessary on the part of all member states if the schedule of meetings and conferences is to be kept within manageable proportions.

Mr. Chairman, while we are disappointed with regard to the accomplishments of the Committee in its consideration of the 1968 conference programme, we, nonetheless, believe that the Committee has approached its task correctly by concentrating this year primarily on acquainting itself with the dimensions of the problem confronting it and on formulating general principles upon which an orderly calendar of conferences and meetings could be established in future years. As a consequence of this approach, the Committee's report contains, particularly in paragraphs 20 to 25, a number of useful recommendations which if applied by the Committee in

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future years should be of great assistance in rationalizing the United Nations conference programme.

My delegation would like to draw attention in particular to the comment of the Committee in paragraph 23 of its report that it "can envisage a situation in which a regular session of a main organ may have to be postponed in order to ensure that a special conference scheduled at the same time may not suffer through lack of resources or facilities". The Committee goes on to say that "it is only by proceeding in this manner and adhering to an order of priority that the conference resources available to the United Nations may be allocated to the most pressing needs." My delegation strongly supports this point of view. We fully recognize the difficulties inherent in attempting to establish an order of priorities amongst meetings and conferences, but we regard it as important that the Committee, nonetheless, attempt to do so in order that conference facilities will be deployed so as to meet the most important tasks first. Under such a scheme the timing of conferences and meetings of lesser importance would depend on the availability of conference resources at any particular time and in any given year.

I would also like to express my delegation's concern that close attention be paid by the Committee both to the location and dates of individual meetings and conferences to avoid unnecessary bunching in the conference programme and corresponding pressure on conference resources. In this regard, we wish to affirm our support for the Committee's statement in paragraph 20 that while it is within the competence of various organs

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

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to make recommendations and even take decisions to convene new meetings, the final decision as to the location and dates of such meetings should be left to the General Assembly; otherwise all attempts to establish an orderly conference programme will be self-defeating. We note from paragraph 38 of the report that the Committee decided to address a letter to the President of the General Assembly inviting him to draw the attention of the Chairman of each of the main Committees to the provisions of resolution 2239 (XXI) and to ask them to refer proposals for new conferences and meetings to the Committee on Conferences. However, since decisions to initiate conferences are taken by various bodies throughout the year and not just during the course of the General Assembly, we believe that it would be helpful in attempting to establish an orderly conference programme ^{if} ~~that~~ all resolutions establishing new conferences included a paragraph requesting the organ responsible for the conference to seek the advice of the Committee on Conferences with regard to the timing and location of the proposed conference.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to indicate that my delegation supports the draft resolution on page 27 of the Committee's report. Let me add that in doing so, it is our hope that the Committee will be more successful next year in making firm recommendations with regard to the 1969 calendar of conferences and meetings.

