

General Conference

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Sixty-fourth regular session

Plenary

Record of the Sixth Meeting

Held at Headquarters, Vienna, on Wednesday, 23 September 2020, at 11 a.m.¹

President: Mr FARHANE (Morocco)

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¹ In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Conference decided that delegations so wishing could attend in a virtual manner using the Interprefy IT platform or make their statements by means of a pre-recorded video.

² GC(64)/19.

Abbreviations used in this record

MESA Middle East and South Asia Group

UAE United Arab Emirates

1. Election of officers and the appointment of the General Committee (resumed)

1. The PRESIDENT, recalling that the General Conference had deferred election of a Vice-President of the General Conference and Chair of the Committee of the Whole until MESA had completed its consultations, asked whether there had been any developments.
2. Mr MAZUMDAR (India), speaking as its Chair, said that, despite MESA's best efforts, there was no consensus regarding the two elective places to be filled.
3. The PRESIDENT noted that, under Rule 34 of the Rules of Procedure, the President must, having due regard to equitable geographical representation, propose to the General Conference the names of eight Vice-Presidents and the name of the Chair of the Committee of the Whole. He asked whether there were any candidates from MESA for the two positions in question.
4. Mr ALKAABI (United Arab Emirates) announced that his country wished to nominate its delegate for the position of Vice-President of the General Conference for MESA.
5. Mr ALNASSAR (Saudi Arabia) said that his country's delegation wished to put his name forward for the Chair of the Committee of the Whole.
6. Mr GHARIB ABADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) thanked the Chair of MESA and his colleagues and the President of the General Conference for their laudable efforts to find a solution to the ongoing lack of consensus within the Group. The arrogant and confrontational approach taken by certain members of the MESA group, however, ran contrary to the operational principles and practices of regional groupings in international organizations, which were based on cooperation, flexibility and inclusivity. The rationale behind equitable representation in the Agency's Policy-Making Organs was under serious attack by a few members of MESA, who were trying to kill off the Vienna spirit. The current situation would mark a turning point in the history of the General Conference and the Agency; how the issue was resolved would have a significant impact on future sessions.
7. Whereas his delegation had submitted its candidacy for the Chair of the Committee of the Whole on 26 June 2020, the delegation of Saudi Arabia had waited until the day before the start of the Conference session. Such a politically motivated and unconstructive approach had rendered MESA dysfunctional. Iran had no choice but to object to the candidacies of the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Both posts should be filled by candidates that enjoyed the support of all participants in the Conference. In the absence of consensus within MESA, no country should nominate itself independently. Any step not based on consensus risked damaging the integrity of the Conference and undermining all areas of its work. Iran was confident that, if the Office of Legal Affairs were consulted, it would prove possible to apply established practice to the appointment of Vice-Presidents of the General Conference and the Chair of the Committee of the Whole.
8. The PRESIDENT, noting the objection expressed by the representative of Iran, asked whether the General Conference agreed to elect the delegate of the UAE as Vice-President of the General Conference and Mr Alnassar of Saudi Arabia as Chair of the Committee of the Whole.
9. Mr GHARIB ABADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) reiterated his objection to the two candidacies.
10. The PRESIDENT asked the representative of Iran whether his objection constituted a request for a vote.

11. Mr GHARIB ABADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, from a legal standpoint, his delegation's objection to the two candidacies implied a lack of consensus. It was up to the President to determine how to proceed.

12. The PRESIDENT said that, as there was no consensus despite every effort, the Conference would need to take the unprecedented step of electing the Vice-President of the General Conference and the Chair of the Committee of the Whole by secret ballot, under Rule 79 of its Rules of Procedure.

13. Mr MARAFI (Kuwait) sought clarification as to the origin of the request for a vote.

14. The PRESIDENT said that an objection had been expressed by the representative of Iran.

15. Mr GHARIB ABADI (Islamic Republic of Iran) reiterated his position with respect to both the candidacies and how to proceed.

16. Mr ALKAABI (United Arab Emirates) pointed out that Iran had not requested a vote but merely expressed an objection to the candidates for the two posts.

17. Ms JOHNSON (Director, Office of Legal Affairs) said that, as an objection had been expressed, it was impossible to elect the candidates by acclamation in the usual way. There would consequently have to be an election by secret ballot.

18. Mr MARAFI (Kuwait) requested a no-action motion on the proposal made by the representative of Iran.

19. Ms JOHNSON (Director, Office of Legal Affairs), having sought clarification as to exactly what was intended by 'no action motion', clarified that, although it had expressed its opposition to the consensus, Iran had not called for a vote or made any other motion, and therefore, in that context, there appeared to be no basis for an adjournment of the debate motion under Rule 59 of the Rules of Procedure.

20. Mr GHARIB ABADI (Islamic Republic of Iran), confirming that he had not requested a vote, said that various options were open to the President as to how to resolve the issue.

21. Ms AL-HADID (Jordan), regretting the lack of consensus within MESA despite considerable efforts, asked why Rule 79 had been invoked while there were other options.

22. Ms JOHNSON (Director, Office of Legal Affairs) said that, if consensus could not be reached, the consistent practice at the Agency, and in the United Nations system as a whole, was to elect officers by secret ballot. Any other form of election would be unprecedented.

23. The PRESIDENT, deciding on the procedure in accordance with Rule 79 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, invited the General Conference to elect a Vice-President of the Conference from the MESA area by secret ballot. In accordance with Rule 74 of the Rules of Procedure, explanations of vote would not be allowed before or after the vote.

24. A vote was taken by secret ballot.

25. At the invitation of the President, Mr Moeller (Norway) and Mr Srisukwattana (Thailand) acted as tellers.

26. The PRESIDENT said that the result would be announced once the votes had been counted.

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.