



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY
AMBASSADOR CONROD HUNTE, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON THE
QUESTION OF ACCOUNTABILITY UNDER AGENDA ITEM 117: REVIEW OF
THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL
FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE
DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SIXTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 8 October 2008)**

Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the question of accountability under agenda item 117, entitled "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations".

2. The Group would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Management, Ms Angela Kane, for introducing the Secretary-General's reports on the Accountability Architecture and the Secretary-General's note to the JIU report; the acting Vice Chair of the ACABQ for introducing the related reports; the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight, Ms Inga-Britt Ahlenius, for introducing the OIOS' report on Results-Based Management (RBM); as well as the Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), Mr Even Fontaine-Ortiz, for introducing the JIU's report on RBM.

Mr Chairman,

3. At the outset, the Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate its firm support for strengthening the accountability of the United Nations. Time and again, we have witnessed how deficiencies in accountability of the Secretariat have led to various crises small and large, from the Oil-For-Food scandal, to the failure to make progress on the construction of the new office facilities of the Economic Commission for Africa, and certainly not forgetting its failure to fully implement its mandates on development. As the premier inter-governmental body, there is a premium placed on the Secretariat to follow faithfully the mandates given to it by the respective legislative bodies. This a fundamental point of departure for all discussions on the accountability, even as we acknowledge the multidimensional nature of this subject.

4. In this context, the Group expresses its concern over a number of issues raised in the Secretary-General's proposals on the Accountability Architecture. We will no doubt discuss them in greater detail during the informal meetings, and look forward to a vigorous debate on this issue. But at this point, allow me to make the following points:

5. The Group would like to highlight the point made by the ACABQ on the use of in-house expertise versus consultants. We note that the Secretary-General's report did not mention any discussions with existing oversight bodies in the Organisation, even as some of their consultants' work had areas of overlap. We also note that the quality of the Secretary-General's report appears to have suffered partly due to the use of consultants who might not be familiar with the unique character of the United Nations as an intergovernmental body.

6. While the Secretary-General's report has highlighted several conceptual points on strengthening the accountability of the Organisation, we note that there are very few concrete proposals on actual

implementation. The Group is also concerned that the report does not appear to establish a clear relationship among the various frameworks.

7. The Group is similarly concerned that the Secretary-General's report did not fully respond to the request of the General Assembly in resolution 59/272 on measures taken to strengthen accountability in the Secretariat. While the report mentions some aspects of the measures that the Secretariat has adopted, they do not appear to illustrate coherence in the way accountability is being strengthened in the Organisation.

Mr Chairman,

8. The Group agrees with the ACABQ that the Secretariat's working definition of accountability is unclear. This does not lend itself to practical and measurable results. Notwithstanding the lack of clarity, the Group would also like to point out that the General Assembly had originally requested a specific definition of accountability as well as clear measures to apply and enforce accountability in its resolution 60/260, in return for agreeing to the ongoing experiment on limited budgetary discretion. It is the firm view of the Group that accountability and budgetary flexibility go hand in hand. This has also been raised by the OIOS in its report on RBM.

9. The Group is of the view that accountability is a question of management and organisational culture. Managers, including heads of programmes and department heads, should be fully accountable for their action or inaction. They also have the primary responsibility for ensuring that work done by their respective units respond to their mandates in an effective and efficient manner. Where appropriate, this includes utilising principles of risk management. The Group is therefore concerned about the establishment of a dedicated unit on accountability in the absence of a clear proposal to ensure that these primary responsibilities are retained by the managers. We also reaffirm our view that in any Secretariat proposal on administrative issues, it is necessary to state clearly the lines of accountability - in other words who is accountable to whom and for what.

Mr Chairman,

10. In conclusion, the Group would like to reiterate its willingness to engage on this issue of accountability, given its importance to ensuring the efficiency of the Organisation. We look forward to discussing this in further detail.

Thank you.