



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY
AMBASSADOR CONROD C. HUNTE, DEPUTY PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
ON AGENDA ITEM 123, HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT, AT THE MAIN
PART OF THE SIXTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 13 November 2008)**

Mr. Chairman,

1. The Group of 77 and China wishes to express its appreciation to Ms. Angela Kane, Under-Secretary-General for Management, Ms. Susana Malcorra, Under-Secretary-General of the Department for Field Support, Mr. Robert Benson, Director of the Ethics Office, for their introductions of the relevant reports of the Secretary-General on human resources management.

2. We also thank the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, Mrs. Inga-Britt Ahlenius, for introducing the report of the OIOS, as well as the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, Ms. Susan McLurg, for her introduction of the report of the Advisory Committee. We also wish to thank the Mr. Even Fontaine-Ortiz, Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit, for his video-conference presentation. The Group furthermore wishes to thank Mr. Kenneth Herman, Senior Adviser on Information Management Policy Coordination of the Secretariat of the United Nations Chief Executives Board or Coordination, for his presentation. We appreciate the statements by Mr. Stephen Kisambira, President of the Staff Union of the United Nations Secretariat, and Ms. Paulina Analena, Vice-President of the Staff-Management Coordination Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

3. The Group of 77 and China has pronounced itself on different occasions in favour of the efforts by the Secretary-General to continue the transformation of the human resources management. To us, the efficient and effective delivery of the UN mandates fundamentally hinges on the quality of its staff and the availability of resources. Ensuring the well-being of all international civil servants is of the utmost importance to the Group of 77 and China. The Group supports all reform measures aimed at establishing a satisfied, vibrant and dynamic workforce for our Organisation.

4. The Group has always been supportive to the need to honor long standing commitments of the General Assembly to enhance and improve the management of human resources by the Organisation. In this regard, the Group deeply regrets that the General Assembly could not reach a consensus over the relevant proposals of the Secretary-General during the last session. Although we have some reservations regarding details pertaining to these proposals, we, nevertheless, support the general orientation of creating better conditions of work and career perspectives for the staff.

5. Regarding the streamlining of contractual arrangements, we concur with many of the observations of the ACABQ, in particular regarding the need to better address the issue of termination of future continuing appointments, and the unfeasibility of establishing an artificial ceiling to the conversions of appointments.

6. Concerning the harmonization of conditions of service, we share the views of the ACABQ when it

points out that the impact of the Secretary-General's proposals on staff in the Field Service category should have been presented earlier. Furthermore, we totally agree with its opinion that "harmonization needs to be implemented in a manner that does not reduce the overall compensation of already serving staff". With this in mind, we would like to reiterate the need to put all our staff on an equal footing with that of the Funds and Programmes, with a view to improving its conditions of service in the field in order to make the work at the Organisation more appealing and rewarding than at present.

7. We hope the time has come for every Member State to commit itself to a substantive and meaningful reform of the way in which this Organisation manages its human resources, which we declared on numerous occasions, to be its most important asset. That step forward will not be achieved without concrete commitment and a willingness to decide on the financial cost. We are ready to assume the financial burden it will entail because we are committed to have an efficient Organisation equipped with well prepared and skilful staff, ready to face the changing nature of the challenges it is mandated to cope with.

8. In the same vein, the Group believes that these major steps need a similar advancement in the implementation of the new Administration of Justice system, which would constitute a safeguard against arbitrary decisions and will help put forward an accountability framework responsive to the new requirements we are envisaging. We must also make sure that the proposed Enterprise Resources Planning framework will be developed in conjunction and will be aligned with the new human resources policies we will adopt.

9. The Group notes with concern that 65 % of the staff is not represented in the Staff Management Coordination Committee and urges all parties to put an end to this lack of collaboration and to resume a constructive approach to the relations between staff and management. We are convinced that no significant reforms could ever take place and be effective without the participation and the engagement of the staff, its representatives, and management officers.

10. For a good human resources system to be successful, proactive, and strategically managed, we need to reflect upon the mechanisms in place for performance appraisal, which we do not consider to be rigorous or comprehensive enough, as the Secretary-General's report shows us.

11. We are also aware that one of the pillars of a solid human resources management plan is a well conceived and transparent recruitment system that allows the Organisation to attract and select the best people for each of its tasks. We note the efforts undertaken in the proposals presented by the Secretary General to achieve gender balance and geographical distribution, in this regard, we concur with the ACABQ that much remains to be done. In relation to the proposed rosters of candidates that will help accelerate the hiring of qualified personnel, we note that there are many details pending and we would like to seek clarifications during the informal consultations. Along with the ACABQ, we do not share the sentiment of the Secretary General on the need of reducing the period of advertising individual vacancies, and we feel that many other instances could be streamlined in order to continue reducing the number of days needed to fill vacancies.

12. The Group values the role of the NCE as a recruitment tool that allows the Organisation to have highly qualified professional staff from countries under represented in the Secretariat. Nevertheless, the mechanism has shown some flaws that need to be corrected. The JIU's comments on this particular issue highlight many areas that could be improved. We would like to further consider this issue during the informal consultations.

13. On mobility, the Group believes that it should help to increase the responsiveness of the

Organisation and its ability in programme delivery, and that ultimately, a good mobility policy would mirror the nature of a multilateral Organisation with a strong presence on the ground. We note the Secretary-General's intention to suspend the programmes in their current format and to undertake a comprehensive review of this policy. We agree that this review should be carried out in consultation with Member States and other stakeholders. We are of the view that mobility should be managed and should offer enough career advancement opportunities to make it feasible, while ensuring full accountability lines not be used as a coercive measure. The views of the JIU on this issue offer some analysis that we should take into account during the process of such a review.

14. The Group of 77 and China is still concerned over the failure of the Organisation to meet equitable geographic and gender distribution goals, in particular, in senior management positions. We continue to urge the Secretariat to make use of the future retirements so as to improve the international character of the Organisation.

15. Regarding the use of consultants, we urge the Secretariat to select them from the widest possible geographical base. Furthermore, the scope and objectives of the use of consultants and private contractors should be precisely defined and the Organisation should limit to a minimum the recourse to consultancy to deal with core activities of the and in this regards we stress the need for more use of in-house capacity in some of the areas in which consultants are routinely hired.

16. The Group notes the report on the employment of retirees also triggers a number of questions and shows the lack of a well planned succession mechanism in place. We would present our questions on the issue during the informal consultations.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

17. The Group of 77 and China concurs with the objective of the Secretary-General to have a multi-skilled, versatile and mobile workforce that would stand for managerial excellence and geographic diversity. To achieve this aim, the initiatives should be the result of a process of strategic planning that fosters career development, transparency, accountability, and gender and geographical representation. The Group would like to engage in a constructive debate to foster substantive progress on this pivotal agenda item. This agenda item constitutes a priority for our Group. We could not afford the luxury of differing again a decision on this item without affecting our credibility in front of our staff.

Thank you.