



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MS. SIRITHON WAIRATPANIJ, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 139: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT, AT THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 28 October 2016)

Madam Chairperson,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 139: Human Resources Management (HRM).
2. The Group wishes to thank Mr. Yukio Takasu, Under Secretary-General for Management for the introduction of the Secretary-General's reports on Human Resources Management, Ms. Elia Yi Armstrong, Director of the Ethics Office for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office as well as Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), for introducing the related report. The Group also thanks Mr. Rajab Sukayri, Inspector, Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), for presenting the report of the JIU and Mr. Kenneth Herrman, Senior Adviser on Information Management and Policy Coordination, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, for presenting the relevant note.
3. The Group would like to take this opportunity to recognize the exemplary and dedicated United Nations staff and their families and to pay tribute to staff who lost their lives in the line of duty.

Madam Chairperson,

4. The United Nations has been tasked with coordinating global efforts to address a wide array of challenges the world is facing, supported by evolving mandates, and closely monitored by world public opinion with high expectations. It is, therefore, of utmost importance to the Group to enhance the efforts of transforming the Organization's staff into a diverse, flexible and dynamic workforce that is motivated, adequately compensated, and able to better deliver the mandates of the Organization.
5. The Group takes note of the reports of the Secretary-General under this agenda item, especially on the overview of human resources management reform, and we note his intention to submit a detailed proposal on the evolving human resources framework at the 73rd session of the General Assembly. The Group believes that the framework must reflect a comprehensive impact assessment of all human resources reform initiatives undertaken over the last decade, and should address issues which have consistently proven challenging, many of which have been repeatedly discussed in the Organization, such as deficiencies in the staff selection processes, rejuvenation through external recruitment, performance management, and impediments to achieving gender and geographic balance targets.

Madam Chairperson,

6. The issue of equitable geographic representation in the Secretariat is of utmost concern for the Group of 77 and China. It is a Charter obligation as reflected in Article 101, paragraph 3, "The

paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible." The United Nations must therefore faithfully reflect the diversity and dynamism of staff from all regions of the world.

7. In this regard, the Group recalls that the General Assembly, in line with the Advisory Committee, had requested on many occasions, the Secretary-General to submit proposals for a comprehensive review of the system of desirable ranges, with a view to establishing a more effective tool to ensure equitable geographical distribution in relation to the total number of staff at the Secretariat. While we take note of the modest recommendations contained in his latest report, the Group once again regrets that the Secretary-General has not responded adequately to the General Assembly's request for concrete proposals to enhance the effectiveness of the system of desirable ranges and to include peacekeeping and extra-budgetary posts in the system.

8. At the same time, the Group is disappointed that developing countries remain under-represented at the Professional levels and above, and the gender balance continues to deteriorate. Such disparities in representation within the Secretariat, especially at senior leadership levels, continue to persist despite the clear direction provided by the General Assembly. The Group is also concerned about the lack of comprehensive responses on requests to take appropriate measures for the adequate representation of troop-contributing countries in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support of the Secretariat, considering their substantial contribution to United Nations peacekeeping.

9. The Group stresses, once again, the importance of the improvement of the arithmetic formula so as to address the necessary geographical balance needed.

10. The Group also concurs with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, which indicate that the efforts made to reach out to potential employees from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, including developing countries, have still been ineffective. The Group urges the Secretary-General and his successor to take more substantive actions to address these issues, and reiterates the need to increase his efforts to reach out to potential staff from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States, including developing countries, and defend a true and comprehensive strategy to improve geographical representation based on an in-depth analysis of the real causes of the current imbalances.

11. Bearing in mind the integrated nature of human resources issues, it may be difficult to achieve progress in other areas if this critical dimension is not sufficiently addressed. And if the United Nations is to succeed in implementing its global mandates, it must have a truly global Secretariat and a real international staff composition, truly representing the diversity of its Member States.

Madam Chairperson,

12. The Group notes the Secretary-General's intention to develop a comprehensive strategy to achieve gender equality at all Professional levels within the Secretariat by 2030, especially in light of Goal 5 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and we invite the new Secretary-General to continue the efforts in this regard. In implementing its global mandates, the United Nations speaks more credibly if gender equality, geographical and cultural diversity, are actually reflected in the Organization's own culture and management.

13. With regard to the continued challenges faced by the Young Professionals Programme (YPP)

as a tool to rejuvenate the Organization and to improve equitable geographic representation, the Group is of the view that for the programme to truly achieve its goals, the scope of the programme should focus on candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented developing Member States. The YPP should also go beyond examinations and take an approach that ensures adequate absorption of qualified participants into the Secretariat.

14. Regarding contractual framework initiatives, the Group underscores the importance of ensuring fair and consistent criteria for conversion to continuing appointments, as well as the need to closely monitor the overall ratio of continuing and permanent appointments to total staff, so as to achieve the appropriate balance needed. The Group will seek clarification during informal consultations regarding the guidelines used in the formulation, approval, execution and assessment of pilot projects in various human resources areas to ensure credibility and consistency of the reported results.

15. With respect to the implementation of the new staff selection and managed mobility system, the Group notes the limited scope of the first semiannual staffing exercise conducted in 2016 and the low rate of placement. Taking these into consideration, the Group will seek further details regarding lessons learned as well as the impact of the policy on the opportunities for external candidates. The Group will also seek statistical data related to the use of the new recruitment tool, with the aim of analyzing how it has addressed gender balance and equitable geographical representation. The Group reiterates the importance of ensuring equal opportunities for both internal and external applicants. The Group wishes to emphasize the importance of verifying all data reported on the annual number of geographical moves and their costs, so as to assess the impact of implementing the mobility framework and determining its cost.

16. With regard to the proposal to increase the duration of temporary duty assignments from 3 to 6 months, the Group will examine and analyze its implications, including its potential impact on costs as well as recruitment in the field.

Madam Chairperson,

17. The Group expresses serious concern over the increase of the number of senior professional posts and the reduction of junior professional posts, and requests the Secretary-General to address these issues as a matter of priority in his comprehensive workforce and succession planning framework. In formulating this comprehensive strategy, we also reiterate our call for the Secretary-General to take a system-wide approach, taking into account best practices. The Group believes that the General Assembly should address duplication and overlapping functions in the Organization, which have also contributed to the mushrooming of certain senior positions and posts.

18. The Group notes with concern the relatively high average age of the Secretariat staff members and the low replacement rate of retirees, replaced without a gap of service, which could be counterproductive to efforts to rejuvenate the Organization.

19. During informal consultations, the Group will also be interested in the details of the Secretary-General's proposal for the earning limits for retired staff members in receipt of pension benefits at the monetary equivalent of up to 125 working days per calendar year, at the level at which the individual had separated from service.

20. Regarding the issue of Gratis Personnel, the Group would like to once again reiterate its concern over the imbalance in gratis personnel posts occupied within the United Nations, to the

detriment of personnel from developing countries. The Group stresses the importance of finding ways to contribute towards efforts to rejuvenate the Secretariat, without further widening the representation gap between developed and developing countries.

Madam Chairperson,

21. The Group takes note of the proposed amendments to the Staff Regulations contained in Annex I of the Secretary-General's report, and the request for the General Assembly to approve the proposed implementation and effective dates for the amendments to the Staff Regulations and Staff Rules, as well as the issue of requiring staff members to renounce permanent resident status in a country other than the country of their nationality. The Group will seek more information on these issues, including on compensation in the event of death, injury or illness attributable to the performance of official duties on behalf of the United Nations, during informal consultations. In the meantime, the Group wishes to emphasize, as pointed out by the Advisory Committee, that proposals to amend the Staff Regulations and Rules must follow the decisions of the General Assembly, without preempting actions or decisions that the Assembly may take in the future.

22. With regard to the activities of the Ethics Office, the Group notes with appreciation the work done by the Office in the last 10 years of its operation to provide transparency, accountability and corporate compliance. The Group also takes note of the reluctance by some senior managers to participate in the public disclosure of their assets and liabilities and will engage with the Committee during our consideration of this matter to ensure full compliance in this regard.

23. At the same time, the Group wishes to express concern over the delay in the consultative process relating to the finalization of the revised Protection against Retaliation policy, which has been under development for the last two years, and the lack of independence of the Office which compromises its ability to function effectively. In this regard, the Group will request further detail in order to strengthen the Office during the informal consultations.

Madam Chairperson,

24. Taking into consideration the need for more human resources for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Group will also be interested to learn in detail about the deployment of junior professional officers across the Secretariat offices and departments, including in peacekeeping missions and not only in the economic and social arena as envisaged by the ECOSOC resolution 849 (XXXII).

25. The Group also stands ready to consider the reporting cycle of the presentation of the report of the composition of secretariat staff demographics, as mentioned in the report of the Advisory Committee.

Madam Chairperson,

26. People are the most important asset of the Organization and are the ultimate driver for the effective and efficient delivery of the Organization's mandates. We reaffirm our commitment to engage in a constructive debate to foster meaningful progress on this important issue of human resources management.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.