



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. EPHRAIM LESHALA MMINELE, MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON THE ORGANISATION OF WORK OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE FOR THE MAIN PART OF THE 70TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 8 October 2015)

Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the organisation of work of the Fifth Committee for the main part of the 70th session of the General Assembly.

Mr Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China wishes to congratulate you and the other members of the Bureau on your election. The Group looks forward to the timely conclusion of this session under your able guidance and skilful leadership. We wish to assure you that you can count on the support and cooperation of the Group throughout the 70th Session. The Group would also like to express deep appreciation to the outgoing Bureau for the excellent work done in the 69th session. The Group further reiterates its appreciation for the invaluable work done by the Advisory Committee and the Secretariat in supporting the work of the Fifth Committee and look forward to again being able to count on them during this session.

The 69th Session has again proved that by respecting the existing mechanisms for negotiations, and the sovereign right of every Member State to pronounce on budgetary and administrative matters, we are able to adopt decisions that are in the interest of the entire Organisation. The Group also looks forward to continuing the positive atmosphere in which we ended the second resumed session in July of this year, by engaging constructively with our partners and carefully considering the concerns and views of all delegations.

Mr Chairman,

During the recent high level events, we have reflected on the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. For the Fifth Committee, it will also be a rather extraordinary session, which only happens every six years, with both the budget and the scale being negotiated during one session.

The Committee will soon be facing the challenges of dealing with a workload that is becoming increasing heavier and complex from one session to the next. Member States will be required to consider hundreds of reports running into thousands of pages in the next three months. It is therefore crucial for the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee to ensure that Member States receive the reports well in advance. Whilst we appreciate the recent improvements, as well as efforts by the Secretariat to deal with the number of demands before it, we wish to stress that the ability of Member States to consider the reports and to adequately prepare for the negotiations is being undermined by the late issuance of reports.

Unfortunately, we are still witnessing a situation where the issuance of reports is determining the priorities for Member States and thus the work programme of the Committee. We believe that the reverse should be true. We look forward to reaching a stage where the programme of work is

determined by the importance accorded to an item by Member States and not by the date on which reports are issued and made available for introduction by Member States.

Mr Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China appreciates the efforts of the Bureau to prepare the programme of work and aiming at balancing the numerous items before the Committee. We recognise that the Bureau, as during previous sessions, will amend the programme throughout the session to mirror the progress made in the negotiations. The Group trusts that careful consideration will be given to the scheduling of items so as to ensure that, to the extent possible, the introduction of items consisting of a large volume of reports will be distributed evenly. We also trust that the Bureau will continue to strive towards ensuring that the programme of work is realistic and reflecting the interests of the collective membership. We further trust that sufficient time will be allocated for the effective consideration of important items. The Bureau also has the very important task to properly coordinate with the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee to ensure timely presentation of reports.

The Fifth Committee will consider numerous items that are important for the effective functioning of the United Nations. Among these are the various proposals aimed at strengthening the United Nations, the performance reports of the Tribunals and the regular budget, revised estimates and other budget-related items as well as the respective reports of the Committee on Conferences and the Committee on Programme and Coordination. The Committee also has to act on the request of Member States for exemption under Article 19 of the United Nations Charter and adopt the scale of assessment.

The Group stands ready to consider and conclude on all the agenda items before us and view them all as equally important for the effective functioning of the Organisation. To deal with numerous and complex issues within a specific period of time is not new to this Committee and the Group will again endeavour to deal with them in an expeditious and considered manner. We believe that as Member States, we have a collective responsibility to take decisions that are beneficial to the organisation and enable it to perform its mandates effectively and efficiently. The Group has always stressed the principle of conducting the negotiations in an open, inclusive and transparent manner rather than in small group configurations. The Group of 77 and China will approach this Session too, with a view to ensuring a successful outcome.

We support a proper and timely involvement from every negotiating partner, on every agenda item, so as to successfully conclude our work within a reasonable timeframe, aiming to finally avoid unnecessary extensions of the Committee's main session.

I thank you Mr Chairman.