



**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
ORGANIZATION OF WORK OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE
SECOND PART OF THE RESUMED SIXTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 5 May 2008)**

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the organisation of work for the second part of the resumed 62nd session of the Fifth Committee.

2. The Group wishes at the outset to reiterate its support for the work that you, Mr. Chairman, and the other Members of the Bureau are doing to ensure the smooth functioning of the Committee. We support, in this regard, the letter dated 22 April 2008 from the Chairman of the Fifth Committee and propose that it be issued as an official document of the General Assembly. We welcome the designation of the Coordinators by the Bureau and hope that they would guide us to conclude the consideration of all items reflected in the programme of work. The Group, furthermore, looks forward to a constructive engagement and frank dialogue with our partners during this session.

Mr. Chairman,

3. The Fifth Committee has a very heavy workload before it. Member States have to consider about one hundred reports in the coming weeks. It is regrettable that we once again have to register our concern with the late submission of reports by the Secretariat. The General Assembly in its resolutions 61/276, 59/265, 58/250, 57/283B, 56/242, 55/222, 54/248 and 53/208 has called for issuance of all documents, in all working languages, six weeks before the opening of the session. However, we regret to note that the six-week rule has not been complied with and that contrary to the General Assembly resolutions, very often no reason for the delayed issuance is given at the time of the introduction of these reports.

4. The Group is concerned that while the size of the peacekeeping budgets of the United Nations has increased significantly over the past few years, Member States, however, are put in a position where they have less and less time each year to complete our consideration of the resource requirements and policy aspects of peacekeeping operations. As of May 2 looking at the programme of work for this session, we are faced with a more acute situation than in previous sessions. For example, reports of one third of the United Nations Peacekeeping operations will be introduced in the last week of our work. Reports on four of those operations will be only introduced in the last couple of days. The ACABQ has not been able to prepare reports except on five peacekeeping operations so far. This unfortunate situation undermines the oversight role of the General Assembly and undermines the ability of Member States to have a detailed and informed consideration of the budgets of the peacekeeping operations, the total of which almost doubles the biennial regular budget of the whole Organisation,

Mr. Chairman.

5. The current practice of the late issuance of documents in breach of the General Assembly resolutions is unacceptable and needs to be rectified. We cannot just keep repeating the same

concern every session, while the situation only gets worse. The bottlenecks both in the Secretariat and in the ACABQ should be looked at in full detail among Member States, so as to reach a common understanding on how to address this long standing concern of the Group of 77 and China and other delegations. We furthermore, request the Secretary-General as well as the Chairperson of the ACABQ to respond formally to these concerns, in full accordance with paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 50/206 C.

6. An important aspect related to the problem lies in expecting the ACABQ to deal with almost double the number of reports within the same number of scheduled weeks of work that it had been allocated more than 10 years ago. The Group believes that the ACABQ should be enabled to meet on a 12 months basis in order to be in position to deal with all issues comprehensively, efficiently and on time. Similarly, there is a need to review the conditions of service of the ACABQ members, so as to eliminate number of serious difficulties faced by the majority of Committee members and to allow the Committee to submit quality reports that we expect from it. The Group of 77 and China will be presenting concrete proposals in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

7. Regarding the provisional programme of work, the Group of 77 and China wishes to stress the tentative nature of the programme of work and our expectation that the Bureau will amend it throughout the session to reflect the status of preparedness of the reports as well as the progress made in the negotiations. Subsequently, the Group is not in a position to accept the programme of work as presented beyond the first week at this stage. In this context, the Group wishes to reiterate its standing position that it is imperative to ensure that adequate time and conference services are provided to the Committee to consider the reports. We intend to carefully examine the budgets of the peacekeeping operations, to which we give utmost priority, in order to ensure that they are adopted in Plenary and that the Secretariat is able to issue assessment letters in time for the start of the new financial period.

8. While recognizing the budgets are time-bound, we still expect that the programme of work will provide Member States with adequate time to complete a thorough consideration of other issues of paramount importance, namely the Administration of Justice, where some pending issues need to be finalized before the start of the new system in January 2009, as well as Procurement which was deferred from the first resumed session and needs to be addressed more seriously so as to correct the shortfalls it witnesses. We believe that we have to send the right signals both to the staff members and to the Secretariat officials through the successful conclusion of these two items.

9. Finally, Mr. Chairman, in order to avoid recurrence of this situation, we request a formal clarification from the ACABQ and the Secretariat on the status of preparation of the reports to be submitted in the context of the main part of the 63rd session, and assurances that this will be in full compliance with the relevant provisions, in particular in relation to the development pillar.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.