



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. GLENTIS T. THOMAS, SECOND SECRETARY, DELEGATION OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA, ON AGENDA ITEM 125: UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM, IN THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE 63RD SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 27 October 2008)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 125, United Nations common system.

2. The Group of 77 and China wishes to thank Mr. Kingston Rhodes, the Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and Ms. Susan McLurg, the Chairwoman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), for introducing the reports of the Commission and Advisory Committee on this agenda item.

3. We also wish to thank Mr. Vladimir Belov of the Programme Planning and Budget Division, for presentation of the respective report of the Secretary-General, and also Mr. Edmond Mobio, President of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Association and Mr. Claude Jumet, Vice-President of the United Nations International Civil Servants Federation.

Mr. Chairman,

4. The Group of 77 and China would like to reaffirm its support to the ICSC's mandated role, and takes note of the report of the ICSC with appreciation. The Group highly values the important role of the ICSC in the UN system. Over the years, it continues to provide useful technical guidance to the General Assembly in dealing with common system issues, especially in ensuring the best possible conditions of service to the United Nations employees.

5. This year, the ICSC commissioned a survey to assess the perspectives of staff of the organizations of the common system on recruitment and retention issues. We consider some of its findings to be of high importance, in particular in the context of the reform of the human resources management proposal that the Committee has to review this fall. It is important to underline that lack of opportunities for career development was cited in most cases in headquarters locations as the main cause of voluntary turnover, together with limited development opportunities and work-related stress. While we will pay a lot of careful consideration to the findings of this survey, the Group will also listen to the views of staff associations to analyze this issue. It is clear to us that the UN has to develop effective strategies to address these problems; we will have an opportunity to do so during the consultations on human resources management. The Group would like to see the results of this survey that apply only to the United Nations to further understand the challenges the General Assembly needs to tackle.

6. It is indeed very gratifying to learn that most UN staff wants to stay because they believe in the goals and objectives of the organization, and also because it provides a chance to be a part of a good cause. Although salaries are not the highest of most UN staff priority, we should not disregard our responsibility to provide the staff a very well deserved and respectable pay, with enough incentives and allowances to allow our people to perform their duties with efficiency in a rapidly changing and evolving world.

7. The Group agrees with the ICSC's recommendation on the adjustment of the current base/floor salary scale for staff in the professional and higher categories by 2.33 %, as well as the proposed increase in hardship allowance, mobility allowance, and non-removable allowance from 1 January 2009. The Group of 77 and China also appreciates the various ICSC's inputs contained in the report, in particular those related to gender balance policies.

8. In relation to the methodology and the level of the education grant, we thank the ICSC for its recommendations although we would like to seek further clarifications during the informal consultations. Likewise, regarding the children and secondary dependant's allowances, although we commend the ICSC for introducing a transitional scheme, we note some reservations expressed by staff associations and we would like to better understand the proposed changes during the informal consultations.

9. The Group notes the concern that despite the various gender-sensitive policies and measures to improve the representation of women, it seemed that those policies had not yielded the expected results towards achieving the 50/50. Therefore, concurs with the Commission that there is a need for organizations to make greater efforts in enforcing existing policies effectively with appropriate monitoring systems.

10. The Group of 77 and China notes the Commission's activities in monitoring the improvement of management capacity and performance among senior staff by Chief Executives Board and to make recommendations to the Assembly as appropriate. We hope that the Commission will continue to play a pivotal role in the development of the senior management network as well as the evaluation of its leadership development programme.

11. Finally, in relation with the pilot study on broad banding/reward for contributions in the five volunteer organizations, we regret that the project has not met the Commission's expectations mostly for lack of support and lack of involvement by all stakeholders. We would like to better understand the causes of the failure of the project and try to apprehend what lessons learned, if any, were gained from the experience.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.