

Statement by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 114: programme planning, before the Fifth Committee of the 53rd session of the United Nations General Assembly

New York, 14 October 1998

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 114, programme planning.
2. Let me first of all express our deep appreciation to the Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), His Excellency Ambassador Bagher Asadi, of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his lucid introduction of the report of the thirty-eight session of the CPC as contained in document A/53/16. We would also like to thank the Controller of the United Nations, Mr. Halbwachs, for introducing the reports of the Secretary-General under this agenda item on programme planning.

Mr. Chairman,

3. The Group of 77 and China is pleased to note that, this time the Committee for Programme and Coordination was able to consider and make recommendations on all the issues before it. This is noticed from the quality of the report in both the discussion part and the conclusions and the recommendations. We also take note that the Committee this time has many agreed conclusions and recommendations as compared with past reports.
4. In this report, the Chairman of the Committee informed us also of the high attendance and participation in the Committee from both members of the Committee and Observers.
5. The report of the Committee proves that CPC can be effective and efficient with good political will and spirit of compromise and accommodation of each other's views points. Having said that, the Group of 77 and China would like to reaffirm its continued support to the important role of the CPC as the main subsidiary organ of the ECOSOC and the General Assembly for planning, programming and coordination. Therefore, the Group welcomes the fact that one of the conclusions and recommendations of the thirty-eighth session of the CPC is that the role of the CPC in all of its mandate should be strengthened.

Mr. Chairman

6. The Group of 77 and China notes that the CPC during the first part of its thirty-eighth session considered the Secretary-General's proposal on priority setting within the medium-term plan (document A/53/134). The Group of 77 and China would like to stress the importance it attaches to priority setting within the Medium-term Plan which is translation of mandates into programmes and serves as the principal policy directive of the organization. In this regard, the Group welcomes the conclusion and recommendation of the CPC as contained in paragraph 48, part one, chapter II B, of its report A/53/16, that priorities continue to be established in the medium-term plan, which is the principal policy directive of the United Nations. Furthermore, the priorities as determined by the General Assembly in the medium-term plan shall guide the allocation of resources in the subsequent programme budgets through the mechanisms provided for in General Assembly resolution 41/213.
7. We, therefore, concur that the priorities contained in the budget outline should be in conformity with the priorities in the medium-term plan. We also agree with conclusion of the CPC in paragraph 49, part one,

chapter II B of its report A/53/16, that priorities, once established by the General Assembly, can not be changed or altered unless the General Assembly decides otherwise.

8. The General Assembly in its resolution 51/219 of December 18, 1996 requested the Secretary-General to propose revisions to the Regulations and Rules of the United Nations Governing Programme Planning, the Programming Aspect of the Budget and the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. In this regard, the Group of 77 and China notes that the Committee for Programme and Coordination during its thirty-eighth session has considered the report of the Secretary General (document A/53/133) and proposed some modifications. Furthermore, the Group concurs with the conclusions and recommendations of the CPC, as contained in paragraphs 52 and 53 of Part Two, Chapter III B of its report A/53/16.

Mr. Chairman,

9. With regard to strengthening the role of evaluation in programme design, delivery and policy directives, the Group of 77 and China expresses regret that the guidelines on programme monitoring and evaluation does not conform with the regulations and rules governing Programme Planning. Moreover, the guidelines seemed to have been issued without regard to the due processes of consideration and approval of the issuance of such documents to programme managers. The Group attaches great importance to the full and effective delivery and implementation of all mandated programme and activities. It is therefore important that all the process of programme planning of the Organization are made effective and functional. We can achieve this, when the Regulation and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget and the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluations are implemented in all parts of the Organization.

Mr. Chairman,

10. Concerning **the programme performance for the biennium 1996-1997**, the Group of 77 and China notes the delay in submission of the Secretary-General's reports (A/53/122 and A/53/122/Add.1) which should have been issued in March 1998, in accordance with Regulation 5.3. Besides, the two reports before this Committee should have contained better analysis of the implementation of priority activities contained in the relevant medium-term plan rather than relying heavily on statistics and percentages.

11. The Group of 77 and China is seriously concerned that owing to the budgetary constraints, the rate of implementation in the mandated programmes and activities of particular importance like regional economic commissions, ITC/UNCTAD, UNEP and Habitat, etc., was very low. This issue needs to be addressed seriously to ensure that such regrettable situation does not recur in future.

12. The G-77 and China notes with concern that a number of outputs terminated under the subprogrammes designated as high priority areas remained too high. The report is unable to explain why resources have not been redeployed to ensure a higher level of implementation.

13. The Group of 77 and China has also noted with concern the termination of 18 per cent of total outputs due to lack of anticipated extra budgetary resources. This calls for the need to explore sound and predictable ways of financing the implementation of mandated programmes and activities, which are priority areas in the medium-term plan.

14. The termination of outputs because of reduction in resources called for in General Assembly resolution 50/214 is also a matter of great concern. We recall that the General Assembly in paragraph 6 of part II of the resolution, had decided that the proposed savings would not affect the full implementation of mandated programmes and activities. Despite the assurances given to us by the Secretariat, we have, however, noted that, mandated programmes and activities were affected. We also noted that some extra-budgetary activities

were financed from the regular budget. In this regard, we are concerned that 67 million dollars were spent on such activities. The Secretariat also saved about 10 million dollars in the biennium 1996-1997 whereas mandated programmes and activities were adversely affected. This reflects a disregard for the decision of the General Assembly.

15. Another factor which resulted in the termination of programmes and activities was a very high vacancy rate. The General Assembly, in paragraph 13 of its resolution 50/214 part II, had decided to keep a vacancy rate of 6.4 per cent which was higher than the normal management practice. The Secretariat did not respect this decision and kept a vacancy rate of over 13 per cent which in some cases reached around 40 per cent. The Group is particularly concerned at the very high vacancy rate in Economic Commissions, Habitat and UNEP. Hence, the mandates were terminated, curtailed or postponed as reported in Secretary-General's report A/C.5/51/53. In future the Secretariat should fully comply with the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly in order to avoid recurrence of such an unfortunate situation. We would like to underscore that vacancy rate should not be used to achieve budgetary savings.

16. The Group of 77 and China notes with concern that it was difficult to reconcile a high vacancy rate in the posts authorized and the programme budget with a high delivery rate of some programmed and additional outputs. This contradiction needs to be clarified in the negotiations on this issue.

17. The Group is further concerned with the observation contained in paragraph 65 of the Secretary-General's report A/53/122, that the ongoing efforts aimed at introducing the concept of results-oriented budgeting are a step in the right direction. This, in our view, is an attempt to prejudge the outcome of negotiations in the General Assembly on this proposal and we should, therefore, wait for the decision of the General Assembly in this respect.

18. Finally, we would like to seek clarification on paragraph 29.1 of document A/52/122/Add. I which states that in spite of operational independence, the Office of Internal Oversight Services could not avoid being affected by the precarious financial situation of the Organization.

Thank you.