



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MRS. AICHA AFIFI, MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY, PERMANENT MISSION OF MOROCCO TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, ON AGENDA ITEM 126: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS (New York, 15 May 2003)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 126, "Administrative and budgetary aspects of financing peacekeeping operations".

In this regard, I would like to thank the representatives of the Secretariat for introducing last Monday the pertinent reports related to this important agenda item. We would also like to thank the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for the introduction of the Advisory Committee's report.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance to the significant role of the United Nations in peacekeeping operations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Group believes that the support account has played and continues to play a vital role in ensuring that field operations receive adequate support and guidance from Headquarters.

While the number and size of peacekeeping operations are being reduced, we noticed that the Secretary-General requested a 15 percent increase in expenditure for the support account, and in this regard the Group intends to carefully consider the various proposals.

The Group of 77 and China takes note of the efforts of the Secretariat in order to improve the presentation of its budgetary requirements in the context of results based budgeting. Nevertheless, the Group considers that there is a need for the Secretariat to fully justify its budget requirements in the context of the expected accomplishments. In this regard, the Group endorses the conclusions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee contained in paragraph 41 of its report A/57/772.

The Group notes with concern the persistent problems in recruitment and placement in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other support account posts. We stress that the continuous dependency on temporary staff as a result of not filling many of the support account positions is a managerial practice that is neither cost-effective nor performance-efficient.

While we remain concerned about the continuous delays in filling such positions, we are encouraged by the Secretariat's efforts aimed at hiring qualified candidates as soon as possible and hope that such efforts will materialize in the near future. The Group requests the Secretary-General to fully comply with the provision contained in paragraph 15 of General Assembly resolution 56/293 while filling these posts.

Mr. Chairman,

Concerning gender mainstreaming, the Group attaches importance to a coherent policy for gender mainstreaming in the context of peacekeeping activities and looks forward to receiving further information on how gender mainstreaming is being implemented in the field as well as in the

Headquarters.

As for the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, the Group notes that the proposed budget for the year 2002-2003 will have an increase of 63 percent. The Group believes that increasing resources for the logistics base together with the implementation of strategic deployment stocks (SDS) should contribute to improving the overall organization of peacekeeping logistics and creating a basis for effective future operations.

The Group welcomes the consolidation of the posts of resident auditors in peacekeeping missions under the support account as a logical step. On the increase in Office of Internal Oversight Services posts proposed under the support account, the Group looks forward to further discussions on these proposals.

Mr. Chairman,

On death and disability benefits, the Group of 77 and China notes that the new methodology for settlement of claims has simplified the process leading to almost all claims being finalized within three months from the date of submission. There is however a need for the Organization to continue improving its efforts and simplifying the documentation required for processing these claims as a way of honouring those who put their lives on the line to ensure peace and security for millions around the world.

The Group therefore calls on the Secretariat to continue assisting the Permanent Missions and working closely with the military advisers of the troop contributors as well as providing them with assistance whenever necessary, to ensure that all claims are properly filed and processed in a timely fashion. To this end, given the sensitivity of this issue and the progress made in the process, the Group would like to see this report continued to be issued on a biennial basis.

Mr. Chairman,

With regard to mission liquidation activities, while the Group notes that the recommendations of the original audit conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services were at various stages of implementation, it remains concerned that some liquidation activities have been going on at Headquarters for at least three years. Furthermore, the lack of a systematic planning and monitoring mechanisms for liquidation activities, not only causes the delays witnessed, but also contradicts the overall net reform efforts underway at various United Nations departments. It is of concern that the Department for Peacekeeping Operations did not accept the recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services to adopt a detailed liquidation plan setting out tasks and implementation time frame since it is the only way to remedy the deficiencies that the current liquidation process suffers from.

With regard to procurement of goods, the Group welcomes the findings and recommendations by the Office of Internal Oversight Services contained in its report A/57/718.

The Group attaches great importance to the issue of procurement and believes that the following principles should be fully taken into account, when procurement through letters of assist is to be conducted:

- There should be clearly defined guidelines for letters of assist, which would provide for, among other things, transparent procedures for selecting the providing Government, ensuring the competitiveness of goods and services obtained whereby and meeting prerequisites for their use.

- Efforts should be made to increase procurement opportunities for developing countries with a view to encouraging widest possible participation of Member States.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China welcomes the presentation, for the first time, of the overview report of the Secretary-General on peacekeeping operations, and trusts that the Committee will have an opportunity, in future sessions, to conduct informal consultations on the cross-cutting themes contained in the overview report.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.