



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MS. KAREN LOCK,
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON
THE ORGANISATION OF WORK OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE AT THE FIRST PART OF ITS
RESUMED 60TH SESSION (New York 6 March 2006)**

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at this meeting of the Fifth Committee during the first part of the resumed 60th session of the General Assembly.

The Group of 77 and China wishes to reiterate our 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 wish to assure you that you can continue to count on the co-operation and support of the Group during this and future sessions. We also wish to welcome our partners and the members of the ACABQ and the Secretariat back to conference rooms 3 and 5, which have become a second home to all of us. We look forward to a close and constructive engagement with our partners during this session.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China believes that this is an opportune moment to reflect on recent unfortunate experiences in this Committee so that corrective measures may be taken to avoid their repetition during the current session. We believe that through open and frank dialogue with other Member States and the Secretariat we can help ensure that the interests of all Member States are reflected in the final decisions of the Committee and that the practice of consensus decision-making remains intact. We are also guided by our firm conviction that the established practices and the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, which provide a transparent inter-governmental framework for our negotiations, should be respected.

In 2005 the Fifth Committee dealt with an unprecedented workload. We were in session for most of the year, which placed Member States and the Secretariat alike under tremendous and constant pressure. However, we managed to end the 59th session in early-September 2005 in a position where the Committee was able to bring most - if not all - of the agenda items before it to a satisfactory conclusion. This not only resulted in good outcomes that benefited the Organisation, but also bore testimony to the professionalism and dedication of delegations and the Secretariat to complete the task at hand. We showed that although we may not always be able to satisfy every delegation's interest, we were willing to listen to each other and to work towards finding the best possible compromise and consensus solutions.

However, a frank assessment of the 60th session thus far would show that the results have been mixed. The Committee managed to deal with many important and time-bound items within a very short period of time, including some that were only introduced and considered during the last few days of the session. The Committee also adopted a good programme budget that will enable the Organisation to implement its mandates and programmes for the next two years. The unfortunate link, however, that some made between reform and the budget of the Organisation resulted in the unprecedented decision to impose a spending cap on the Secretary-General. The view of the Group of 77 and China on the spending cap and the automaticity thereof has been clearly expressed during the debates within the Informal Working Group of the Plenary on Secretariat and Management Reform and we do not wish to repeat them in this forum.

The Committee, furthermore, found itself in the unfortunate situation where it had to resort to a vote on a purely procedural matter, which could have been resolved through negotiations. It also had to defer negotiations on several draft resolutions that it would traditionally have been able to complete in its main sessions. At the same time, the Committee found itself in a position where several resolutions were put to it for a decision on the last day of the session without any prior informal consultations taking place on the draft texts or without any clarity on their origins or the sponsors thereof.

Towards the final stages of our session last year, there was a debate by some about allocating time to so-called "time-bound" items at the expense of some of the other items that were before us. We believe that, in addition to time-bound items, this Committee deals with many other important items that may not be time-bound but are still necessary for the smooth functioning of the Organisation. In our view, this aspect of the work of the Committee is equally as important as many of the budgetary and time-bound decisions that it has to take. The position of the G77

and China is that we were not doing ourselves, as Member States, or the Organisation a favour by deferring action on important “non-time-bound” items dealing with issues, such as planning, accountability, management and oversight of the Secretariat.

Mr. Chairman,

With these recent experiences in mind, the Group of 77 and China wishes to clearly express our expectations of the Secretariat, the Bureau and the Committee at the outset of this session, so as to ensure that we are able to hold constructive negotiations and bring the heavy workload of the Committee to a successful completion.

Firstly, we expect the Secretariat to make every effort to ensure that it provides Member States with complete and unbiased information and to submit its reports on time. We recognise that the Secretariat is faced with a heavy and additional workload, but there are several items that are standard in nature and reports thereon should be submitted earlier than in the last few days of the session.

Secondly, we have several important items before us, including the follow-up to the World Summit Outcome Document that will require sufficient allocation of time slots. We trust that the Bureau will continue to ensure that the programme of work is realistic, reflects the interests of the collective membership and allocates sufficient time for the thorough consideration of both the new and deferred items.

Thirdly, we hope that the Bureau will continue to engage with the Secretariat and the ACABQ to ensure that reports are submitted well in advance to the Committee.

Fourthly, we expect that the breach of procedure that occurred last year whereby several resolutions were put to the Committee for adoption without going through the usual processes will be corrected. The rules of procedure and practices of the General Assembly provide an important framework that guide our interaction and have to be respected.

Finally, we trust that Member States will be willing to engage in negotiations in informal and informal informal settings, as has been the practice of this Committee, in order to ensure that we reach consensus and complete all the agenda items before us. To this end, we stand ready to engage in negotiations from the start of the session. We trust that others are ready to do the same.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China firmly believes in the oversight role of Member States and the negotiating framework provided by the Fifth Committee. We believe that dialogue between Member States is crucial to ensuring that we take decisions that strengthen the Organisation.

The United Nations is important to us. We therefore remain committed to working very closely with each and every Member State, to listening to their views and to finding consensus solutions. We will only be able to do this if Member States are willing to constructively engage in negotiations and to actively participate in meetings. We trust that our attempt at having a frank dialogue from the outset will facilitate the work of this Committee and ensure that a constructive spirit prevails throughout the session.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.