

Statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 123: Programme Budget for the Biennium 2002-2003, in the Plenary of the General Assembly of the United Nations

New York, 27 March 2002

Mr. President,

The Group of 77 and China in due course expressed its concern over the implementation of the measures announced by the Secretariat through note verbale dated 28 February 2002 and the information circular ST/IC/2002/13, for being to a large extent in contravention of the 2002-2003 budget resolution, as well as the resolution on pattern of conferences, and because it was essentially affecting the Member States, the functioning of the regional groups (in particular the Group of 77 and China) and of the Organization itself.

Within the framework of said resolutions, the General Assembly had already rejected proposals aimed at reducing the services that directly affected the Member States and the regional groups, in particular conference services, as well as of substantive departments such as for example the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services.

The Group of 77 and China is also concerned about the negative impact of the achievement of certain arbitrary budget levels for implementation of the activities and programmes of the Organization that have been mandated by the Member States themselves.

The Group of 77 and China also is of the view that the above-mentioned measures ignore the importance and validity of the current practices and procedures for the provision of conference services, services for Member States and other services included in the note of the Secretary-General that must be provided for the Member States, the General Assembly and its Main Committees, as well as for regional groups, which are vital for the efficiency and success of the work of those groups and bodies as well as essential for the work of the Organization as a whole.

The measures that were implemented “with immediate effect”, three months into a two-year budget exercise, without the approval of the General Assembly and in contradiction to the general desire of the members of the Organization, have brought about as a result the reduction of conference services, the impossibility of concluding the work programme of a number of bodies, the postponement of meetings in an unplanned way, the holding of meetings without the minimum required conditions such as local sound, interpretation, air conditioning and heating, or in buildings outside of the Headquarters, the impossibility of adopting decisions pursuant to the conference schedule and the cancellation of several meetings of Group of 77 and China which is in practice limited in its operation.

In this connection, the Group of 77 and China tabled a draft resolution on the subject within the framework of the Fifth Committee given the lack of adequate answers to its reiterated demands for reestablishing of the services that were suspended, particularly the conferences services for the committees, bodies, regional groups and mission support in the case of the Internet.

Mr. President,

The Group of 77 and China attaches particular importance to the resolution that was just adopted in connection with the measures contemplating cuts for several services that are vital for the Member States, as well as the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 54/253, 54/254 and 54/242, and hopes that it will be implemented comprehensively and without delay by the Secretariat.

The resolution adopted, following an intense negotiation process, expresses concern over the implementation of cutback measures and the impact on the services provided for Member States and requests the Secretary-General to implement the budget resolutions and the resolution on pattern of conferences in such a way that the Member States will not be affected negatively.

Especially important are the paragraphs calling for provision of adequate conference services to the bodies, committees and regional groups pursuant to the resolution on pattern of conferences, and reducing to a minimum the impact of the implementation of the referred measures in accordance with existing practices and the availability of conference services.

The resolution also restores immediately Internet services to the Missions through an amount of about \$750,000 approved from the savings produced by suspending, on an exceptional basis, the honorariums payable to the members of the International Law Commission, the International Narcotics Control Board, the United Nations Administrative Tribunal, the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as of April 6.

This, Mr. President, was not the optimal solution favored by the Group of 77 and China, but it was the only one possible to be able to reestablish the Internet services given the lack of adequate proposals by the Secretariat to provide a solution for that matter within the framework of the budget.

The Group of 77 and China hopes that the proposals to be presented by the Secretariat in the May session of the General Assembly will make it possible to have comprehensive implementation of the provisions of the resolution on pattern of conferences within the framework of the resources approved in the 2002-2003 budget, and that it will make possible also to reestablish conference services for the committees and bodies as well as the regional groups, and in particular for the Group of 77 and China.

Furthermore, in the resolution adopted the General Assembly expressed its desire that within the framework of the first budget performance report special attention be provided to the need to restore all the services that are necessary for the Member States.

Mr. President,

If the situation and the unfortunate environment created in the Organization due to the implementation of the referred measures continues, the Group of 77 and China as well as other regional groups will be kept from making a positive contribution to the work leading up to the forthcoming summits and meetings of the UN organs, which is unacceptable given the international nature and multilateral character of the Organization and the equality of rights of all Member States.

In this sense, the Group of 77 and China hopes that the Secretariat will find other ways to carry out the budget cuts which will not be at the expense of the Member States and the resolutions of the UN General Assembly, which we know can be done within the framework of budget procedures, and that measures that affect the operation of the main committees, other bodies and regional groups, in particular the Group of 77 and China, be eliminated as soon as possible since this is indispensable for the efficiency and the success of the work of the Organization.

Thank you.