



STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR STAFFORD NEIL, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, ON AGENDA ITEM 128: SCALE OF ASSESSMENTS FOR THE APPORTIONMENT OF THE EXPENSES OF THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE 60TH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 18 October 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on item 128, scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations.

Allow me to express the Group's appreciation to the Chairman of the Committee on Contributions, Mr. Ugo Sessi, for introducing the report of the sixty-fifth session of the Committee, as contained in document A/60/11, and to the Controller, Mr. Warren Sach, for introducing the reports of the Secretary-General in documents A/60/66 and A/60/140. We also acknowledge the contents of the letter A/C.5/60/2 from the Permanent Representative of Niger, as presented by the Chairman of the Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group attaches great importance to the item on scale of assessments and we welcome the opportunity to discuss all pertinent issues during this session of the General Assembly.

We would like first of all to refer to the matter of requests by Member States for exemption under Article 19. Having carefully reviewed the requests and representations for exemption made by the Central African Republic, the Comoros, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Somalia and Tajikistan, as contained in the Report of the Committee on Contributions (COC), we agree with the recommendation of the COC that failure by these Member States to pay the full minimum amount necessary to avoid the application of Article 19 is due to conditions beyond their control. Similarly, the Group considers that the request of Liberia, Niger and Sao Tome and Principe for exemption, warrant favourable consideration under the terms of Article 19. The Group therefore supports the request of these States for permission to exercise the right to vote and feel that they should be permitted to vote until the beginning of the succeeding session of the General Assembly instead of until June 30 as at present.

The Group of 77 and China, at the same time, reaffirms that Member States have a legal obligation to bear the financial expenses of the Organization, in accordance with the Charter. However, we acknowledge that some Member States may temporarily not be able to meet their financial obligations as a consequence of genuine economic difficulties.

Mr. Chairman,

Regarding the report of the Secretary-General on multi-year payment plans, the Group notes the information provided in respect of those States that have submitted such plans and the efforts that have been made to meet the payments which, in some cases, have exceeded the scheduled payments. At the same time, we note that no new payment plan has been submitted since the last report of the Secretary-General to the 59th session and we would encourage Member States with significant arrears of contributions that are in a position to do so, to consider submitting a multi-year payment plan.

The Group reiterates its position that such plans should remain a voluntary mechanism to be used to help Member States to pay their arrears. The Group also wishes to restate that this mechanism must not be used to pressure Member States, already in a difficult situation, and definitely not in relation to the granting of waivers under Article 19.

Mr. Chairman,

We have noted the report of the Committee on Contributions and the various issues for consideration at this session. This will require comprehensive discussions and we hope that the Committee will work in a constructive manner in order to provide the Committee on Contributions with clear guidelines to facilitate their technical review and formulation of recommendations to the Fifth Committee at the 61st session of the General Assembly.

A fundamental principle in determining the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations is that of the capacity to pay. The main element that has affected the application of this principle is the ceiling on assessed contributions.

As this Committee will recall, the rationale for establishing a reduced ceiling of 22 percent was to facilitate the payment of arrears, in the particular case, in order to improve the financial situation of the United Nations. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 55/5C, the Assembly should have reverted to this matter at the end of 2003 to determine all appropriate measures to remedy the situation, including adjustment of the ceiling.

Having regard to the experiences manifested following the implementation of the decision on the ceiling, it is appropriate for such a review to be effected as soon as possible.

In this context, Mr. Chairman, we would request that the Secretariat provide this Committee with information regarding the application of the current methodology without the element of the ceiling of 22 percent.

The Group notes from the report of the Committee on Contributions that a query was raised by some members as to the rationale for the LDC ceiling based on the fact that only two Member States in the current scale had benefited and also the small size of the adjustment. This is rather disturbing given that no corresponding concern was expressed regarding the other ceiling which gives rise to a much higher rate of adjustment.

With respect to the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations, one of the major concerns of the Group has been the abrupt and sharp increases experienced by developing countries in the rates of their assessments from one scale period to another, especially having regard to the guidelines of General Assembly resolution 55/5B concerning the application of different elements of the scale methodology where there are excessive fluctuations and distortions.

In this context, the Group would urge the Committee on Contributions to pay closer attention to ensure that in its forthcoming deliberations and in the application of any methodology approved by the General Assembly, careful attention be given to avoid such exorbitant increases between one scale cycle and another. Similarly, efforts should also be made to reduce to the barest minimum possible, anomalies arising from the application of the existing methodology especially in relation to the relative contributions of the developed as opposed to developing countries.

In the context of this intergovernmental framework, the Group would also urge the General Assembly through the Fifth Committee to review measures that could be applied to address cases of excessive increase, particularly for developing countries.

The Group notes that the question of annual recalculation of the scale was raised in the report of the Committee on Contributions, but we doubt that such a discussion would be fruitful at this time.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group intends to follow up on all the issues raised in this statement in the course of the informal consultations with a view to provide the Committee on Contributions with guidance in preparation for the consultations at the 61 st session of the General Assembly.

I thank you.