Conclusions of the High-level Working Group on Programme Criticality

Statement by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions to the Fifth Committee

(ACABQ report A/66/720)

Mr. Chairman,

I am pleased to introduce the Advisory Committee's report on the conclusions of the High-level Working Group on Programme Criticality, which is contained in document A/66/720. The Committee has noted that the Secretary-General's report constitutes an interim update on the activities of the Working Group and does not contain its final conclusions, which have yet to be reached.

Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Advisory Committee's report provide a brief overview of the background to this issue. As for the work undertaken to date, the Committee notes that, since its establishment, the Working Group has developed a programme criticality framework, consisting of a methodology and a supporting electronic tool for decision-making, and a proposed implementation plan. The methodology and tool have been field-tested by United Nations country teams in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Somalia.

It is indicated that in September 2011, the High-level Committee on Management approved the programme criticality methodology and tool as a framework for decision-making within the guidelines for acceptable risk, and recommended that it be rolled out in at least 12 countries by April 2013. Indicative resource requirements for phase one of the roll-out, including training, amount to $595,500. For reasons of efficiency and timeliness, it is intended that those requirements will be met from extrabudgetary funds. The Advisory Committee was informed that, pending the receipt of voluntary contributions from donors, the humanitarian agencies and the Department of Safety and Security had each agreed to contribute $10,000 to initiate the roll-out.

Since work on the programme criticality framework is still at an interim stage, the Advisory Committee has no objection to the use of extrabudgetary resources to fund the initial 12-country roll-out. However, the Committee considers that, in situations where lives may be at risk, the United Nations has an obligation to ensure that predictable funding is available for ongoing initiatives designed to protect its personnel. It therefore recommends that, once the framework is finalized, consideration be given to establishing appropriate cost-sharing arrangements for its full roll-out that reflect the system-wide nature of the initiative and are similar to those used in respect of other jointly financed activities in the United Nations system.

In conclusion, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly take note of the report of the Secretary-General, bearing in mind its comments and recommendations and on the understanding that a further report, containing the final conclusions of the Working Group, will be submitted once the Group has reported to the High-level Committee on Management in 2013.