



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP BY MR. BROUZ RALPH COFFI, COUNSELLOR AT THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON AGENDA ITEM 134: ESTIMATES IN RESPECT OF SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS, GOOD OFFICES AND OTHER POLITICAL INITIATIVES AUTHORIZED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND/OR THE SECURITY COUNCIL, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SIXTY-SIXTH SESSION (New York, December 9, 2011)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group on the item number 134 entitled "Estimates in respect of Special Political Missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council".

At the outset, I want to thank Ms Maria Eugenia Casar, the Controller, for the introduction of the reports of the Secretary General on this agenda item as well as, Mr. Collen V. Kelapile, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/66/7/Add.12).

Mr. Chairman,

The African Group would like, once again, to express its deep concern for the timing of the introduction of this important item, owing to the late issuance of the relevant reports. This session was initially scheduled to end today, yet it is on the same day that we are starting our consideration of this very complex agenda item. It is not acceptable that even after members states expressed their rejection of the trend whereby the consideration of the SPMs reports is taken up by the General Assembly just a few days to the end of the session, it would appear that no concrete measures were taken to reverse the trend. This pattern cannot continue and should stop, as it impedes the discharge of the General Assembly mandate of effectively determining on all budgetary and administrative issues pertaining to SPMs. Once again we call upon the Secretary-General to institute measures to ensure a timely issuance of the documents to the Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretary-General has proposed a budget in the amount of 617,620,600 gross to finance the 30 Special Political missions for the year 2012. The budget proposals for SPMs were prepared on the backdrop of an instruction from the Secretary-General for all programme managers to identify 3% cuts in their resource requirements. The Group believes that SPMs should be adequately financed for effective mandate implementation. The Group will therefore scrutinize all the proposals and reject unfounded and unjustified arbitrary cuts.

The African Group notes that the two largest missions, namely the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), which account for approximately 70% of the resources proposed for special political missions, have significantly contributed to the exponential growth of the resources for SPMs in the last decade. Since the SPM budget is included in the overall level of the Regular budget, there has been an erroneous impression created that the Regular Budget has significantly grown during that period.

Mr. Chairman

The African Group concurs holds the view that a holistic view of the budgets for SPMs would entail the presentation of information on all resources available from different sources of funding. Accordingly, the level of extrabudgetary resources provided to SPMs should be fully disclosed, in order to allow for a clear and transparent analysis of the resources proposed as compared with capacity available from all types of funding and the needs identified.

The African Group notes that the overall vacancy rate in SPMs, as at 31st August 2011, was 19.4% for international staff and 9.9% for national staff, compared to 28% and 19% at the same time in 2010, for both categories of staff respectively. The Group appreciates the actions undertaken, in this regard, by the DPA, DFS and OHRM to address the issue of high vacancy rates.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past decade, SPMs have grown exponentially both in size and complexity. Special political missions clearly exhibit characteristics that set them apart from other activities of the United Nations financed from the regular budget. The structures in each of the missions do not form a part of the organizational structure of the United Nations Secretariat. Their activities are directed towards operational matters and as such do not lend themselves to full integration with the programme of work of the Secretariat.

Moreover, and because their unique characteristics, the procedures followed for the initiation of the SPMs, whether through the Security Council or the General

Assembly, do not follow the programme planning and the budgeting cycle of the regular budget. Furthermore, SPMs may be approved at any time of the year and have a tendency to evolve rapidly during the course of implementation, thus their timing and related resource requirements have consistently proven almost impossible to predict accurately.

The African group believes that there would be merit in separating the special political missions budget from the other parts of the regular budget, and that these SPMs should be dealt with financially in a way similar to the peacekeeping missions. Indeed, this separation would increase budget transparency and would provide more accurate picture of the budgetary situation of the Organization.

Therefore, the African Group looks forward to the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the current arrangements on the funding and backstopping arrangements for SPMs requested in resolution 65/259. The Group is informed that the ACABQ is currently deliberating on the report and we trust that the Advisory committee will issue its report in time to enable the Committee to consider it during the current session.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, I want to assure you that the African Group is ready to work constructively with other delegations during deliberations on this important agenda item with the view to achieving a favourable outcome.

Thank You Mr. Chairman