



UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS
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**Statement by Ambassador Joseph M. Torsella,
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on agenda item 146:**

Cross-cutting issues and support account for peacekeeping operations

Before the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) of the UN General Assembly
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thanks also to the Controller, Under-Secretary General Haq, Chief of the Human Resources Policy Service de Miranda, the Under-Secretary General for OIOS, and ACABQ Chairman Massieu for presenting the many reports that will be considered by this Committee under cross-cutting issues and the support account for peacekeeping operations. The United States looks forward to working closely and constructively with all delegations on these issues in order to arrive at a positive outcome by consensus during this session.

Mr. Chairman,

Starting with cross-cutting issues, I would like to highlight several issues of particular importance to my delegation. First, as I noted last week, my delegation notes with concern that the comprehensive staffing review requested by the General Assembly last year in resolution 66/264 has not yet been initiated, and we expect the Secretary-General to address this lapse as a matter of priority.

Second, while my delegation sees the reduction in the overall number of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations over the past year as a promising development, even one instance is deplorable and one too many. Sexual exploitation and abuse is a pernicious problem for all categories of personnel. It is not just that sexual exploitation and abuse undermine the confidence of local populations in peacekeepers, without which missions cannot deliver on their mandates, or that such reprehensible behavior undermines the credibility of the United Nations as a whole in the court of public opinion. More fundamentally, it is simply indefensible for peacekeepers to exploit and abuse the very people they are there to help. Such abuses are a betrayal of the ideals of the United Nations, in the deepest and most consequential sense. Member States and the Secretariat have taken steps to strengthen the Organization's response to

this issue, but more needs to be done by all stakeholders, for example in the areas of victims' assistance, improving the timeliness and quality of investigations, extending vetting procedures to all categories of personnel, and enhancing Member State accountability.

Regarding the Global Field Support Strategy, my delegation shares some of the concerns raised by the Board of Auditors in its report on peacekeeping operations, in particular the absence of a benefits realization plan and cost capturing mechanism. While the United States remains a strong supporter of the overall goals and concepts of the Strategy, we expect the Secretariat to be able to systematically present quantifiable benefits from this business transformation process. While we acknowledge that the full benefits of the Strategy will not be realized until implementation is completed, we note that the establishment of a new United Nations mission in Mali provides an opportunity for the Secretariat to demonstrate improvements in the quality and timeliness of support across all four pillars of the Strategy.

Finally, my delegation stresses the importance of ensuring that the Organization can draw upon the right expertise at the right place at the right time, though we note from the overview report that there are structural impediments that prevent the Organization from drawing upon the full range of expertise available, particularly in regards to uniformed personnel serving against staff contracts. My delegation hopes to address these obstacles this session, and reaffirms the language from the UN Charter that "the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity"¹.

Mr. Chairman,

Turning now to the support account, the United States welcomes the proposal by the Secretary-General to establish, within the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, a Director for Evaluation of Field Uniformed Personnel. Peacekeeping today includes contingents representing 116 contributing countries. This broad representation is the very strength of peacekeeping. At the same time, this diversity presents challenges when different contingents serve side-by-side with different operating procedures. The Director for Evaluation of Field Uniformed Personnel will assist all contingents to operate together seamlessly and to learn from the best practices brought to peacekeeping by various contingents. My delegation notes that the functions proposed for this office are akin to those found in militaries and police services around the world. As such, we expect that the work of this office would help the United Nations better understand the challenges facing uniformed personnel operating in the field and permit the United Nations and Member States to better support troops, formed police units, and military observers during their consideration of peacekeeping questions in the various intergovernmental bodies.

¹ United Nations Charter, Article 101.3

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation will present our views on all of the other proposals of the Secretary-General for the support account during the course of informal consultations on this agenda item, but I would like to take this opportunity to comment generally on the support account request.

The United States believes that the Committee's consideration of the support account must be guided by the original purpose of the account. As indicated in the justification provided by the SYG in the 45th session, the support account was established to more effectively address requirements for what was originally termed "overload posts", defined as posts at headquarters funded from the budgets of individual missions which were solely responsible for supporting those specific missions.

My delegation notes that, over time, the principles underpinning the establishment of the support account have not been rigorously adhered to by the Secretariat, leading to unchecked growth in the account. The support account was not intended to fund every post with a function related to peacekeeping. It is true that peacekeeping today is much more complex and missions are now mandated with new functions that were not envisioned when the support account was established. We recognize that these functions need to be backstopped at headquarters. However, many of the posts and positions currently funded under the support account or which are proposed for inclusion do not appear to meet the basic test of directly supporting missions or for planning and preparing for potential new missions.

Indeed, requests for support account resources over the past few years have had little direct correlation with the overall requirements for peacekeeping operations. To see how bloated the support account has become since its establishment, one need only recall that the support account was originally set at 8.5% of the civilian requirements for peacekeeping missions. Today, the support account has now grown to about 18% of those total costs.

The Board of Auditors and ACABQ have both previously drawn attention to the need for a sounder approach to determining staffing requirements under the support account, and the Secretary-General acknowledged in his report on the support account during the sixty-fourth session that the Secretariat lacks a conceptual staffing model for the support account.² My delegation believes that the original basis for the support account remains valid, including the need for the account to scale with requirements for peacekeeping missions. We therefore believe that a proper assessment of whether the functions performed by the individual posts and positions funded from the support account are in fact tied to individual peacekeeping missions or to potential new requirements is overdue.

Mr. Chairman,

² Paragraph 5 of A/64/697/Add.1 (Re-justification of Support Account posts)

I would like to take the opportunity of the presence of representatives of the Secretary-General to raise a number of questions pertaining to some of the issues raised previously.

- First, with regard to the comprehensive staffing review requested last year, has the Department of Field Support finalized how it will undertake the review, how it will sequence the reviews of the individual missions, and when it will generate staffing benchmarks for all of the different elements of peacekeeping missions?
- Second, with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse, what elements of this issue does the Secretariat believe should be prioritized in order to make the most progress in addressing sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions?
- Finally, with regard to the Board of Auditors observations regarding the Global Field Support Strategy, what steps does the Secretariat intend to take in order to implement a benefits realization plan and cost-capturing mechanism, and within what timeframe?

I look forward to hearing the views of the Secretariat on these points, and my delegation intends to follow up on the responses during informal consultations.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.