



New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

United Nations General Assembly Sixty-Seventh Session Fifth Committee

Item 134: Proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2014 - 2015

Statement by H.E. Jim McLay

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Permanent Representative

on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand

28 October 2013



Mr Chairman, Secretary-General –

I have the honour to speak on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, who thank the Secretary-General and the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions [ACABQ] for their reports on the Proposed Programme Budget for the 2014-2015 biennium.

We particularly appreciate the personal engagement of the Secretary-General in this important process.

Mr Chairman –

Since this Committee met two years ago to consider the current biennium budget, we've witnessed many events which demonstrate the central role the UN continues to play in addressing regional and global challenges.

It is critical therefore that, as the catalyst for coordinating and implementing this Organisation's activities, the Secretariat should function as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Over those past two years, we have noted the progress achieved in the implementation of a number of the modernisation initiatives supported by this Committee; in particular, progress with regard to the Global Field Support Strategy, the UMOJA business process transformation project, and the move to International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS).

We must now seize on that momentum and look at further, more ambitious ways to transform this Organisation; to eliminate antiquated methods of operating and rigid hierarchical structures; and to ensure we invest the Secretary-General with the necessary flexibility to manage UN resources with maximum efficiency.

And so it is that we encourage the Secretary-General, and his senior team, to undertake a thorough, objective review of all areas where layers of instructions and directions imposed over the years by Member States might now impair efficiency and the Secretariat's ability to deliver mandates effectively.

And we ask that he come back to us with concrete proposals for addressing those constraints.

Mr Chairman –

One area where CANZ delegations see significant room for improvement is the budget process itself – a process which places a tremendous burden on both the Secretariat and Member States.

While we acknowledge this is a consequence of successive resolutions regarding presentation of the budget, we take the view that there must be a better way.

On the Secretary-General's budget proposal alone, this Committee has before it thousands of pages of documentation - and undoubtedly, thousands more pages will be requested before this session is concluded.

Collectively, we can do better than that; we must do better than that.

Another element of the budget process with potential for improvement is the system of re-costing.

We recognise that re-costing forms part of the current budget methodology; but we have serious concerns about its on-going appropriateness as a budgetary tool.

All that means, Mr Chairman, that, in the coming weeks, CANZ delegations look forward to a robust discussion on these and other issues related to the current budget process.

Mr Chairman –

As we are all aware, personnel costs represent the largest funding requirements of this Organisation.

CANZ delegations have noted the worrying trend of significant growth in these costs over a number of years; and so, in the context of our consideration of the budget, we intend to pay particular attention to personnel costs.

We must all act responsibly to bring these costs back to a level that is sustainable over the long term.

CANZ delegations share the concerns of the ACABQ at current deficiencies in a number of the performance measures contained in the budget presentation; and trusts this issue will be addressed in future budget presentations; because, if we are really going to hold the Secretariat accountable for its work, it is imperative that performance indicators are well-defined, realistic and achievable.

Mr Chairman –

As the main committee entrusted with responsibility for administrative and budgetary matters, this Fifth Committee plays a crucial role in ensuring the full, effective and efficient implementation of mandated activities - a responsibility we should all take very seriously.

We believe, Mr Chairman, that there is considerable scope to improve our working methods; and we look to all partners in this Committee to rethink the way we carry out our important work so that we truly can lead by example.

Mr Chairman –

In December of last year, by adopting Resolution 67/248, the General Assembly invited the Secretary-General to prepare the 2014-2015 biennium budget on a base line of \$5.392 billion dollars.

We note that we've now been presented with a proposed budget of \$5.404 billion dollars, reflecting an increase of 0.2 per cent against the level approved in the budget outline.

We can't continue simply to increase costs.

The UN must increase its efforts to find efficiencies and greater cost savings; strong budget discipline is in the interest of the whole Organisation.

We must focus on the fact that our financial contributions to this United Nations are ultimately investments in global peace, security, and prosperity.

And, Mr Chairman, we must continue to build on the current momentum to ensure the UN becomes the sustainable, responsive and results orientated organisation that the international community expects – indeed, demands.