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**Statement by Mr. Stephen Lieberman,
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before the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) Committee
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**Administrative and Budgetary Aspects of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations:
Cross-Cutting Issues**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

At the outset, I would like to thank the deputy Controller, Mr. Chandru Ramanathan; the Chair of the Working Group on Contingent-Owned Equipment, Ambassador David Donoghue; Under-Secretary-General Ms. Carman Lapointe, Assistant Secretaries-General Mr. Tony Banbury and Ms. Catherine Pollard; and Mr. Carlos Ruis Massieu, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for presenting the many reports that will be covered under the rubric of "cross-cutting issues".

Mr. Chairman,

The Fifth Committee often focuses on numbers. However, the Fifth Committee is also responsible for management policy and oversight. The work of our Committee has a direct bearing on the ability of the United Nations to improve the lives of the most vulnerable populations the world over. This is particularly true with peacekeeping, the flagship activity of the Organization. While a resolution on cross-cutting issues often eludes the Committee due to the lack of agreement on the various policies and issues, my delegation is optimistic that we will be able to make strides this year to ensure that the administrative policy framework which underpins United Nations peacekeeping and allows the Organization to effectively tackle the increasingly challenging mandates that it has been given in recent years. I will take this opportunity to touch upon some of the specific issues that are of particular interest to my delegation.

Global Field Support Strategy

The first set of issues pertains to the effectiveness of the Organization. Four years ago, this Committee approved the Global Field Support Strategy, which effected a paradigm shift in how

the United Nations supports its field operations. It is important to recognize what has been achieved so far. As a result of the Strategy, many duplicative support structures within missions have been eliminated, and missions are leaner and more efficient than ever. Missions are also now able to more quickly respond to new challenges, including through pre-defined modules and service packages and enhanced authorities to draw upon both the peacekeeping reserve fund and strategic deployment stocks. Yet questions remain, particularly with regard to some pillars of the Strategy that have changed from their initial conception. While course correction can be a positive development necessary to address issues that arise during implementation, my delegation would like to better understand these changes and their impact on operations.

Performance and readiness

Ensuring nimble support arrangements is only one aspect of ensuring that missions can deliver on their mandates. It is also imperative that missions have peacekeepers with the requisite tools and training to perform the tasks required. In approving the recommendations of the Senior Advisory Group last year, the General Assembly took important first steps in this regard, but more can be done to update the current architecture to ensure that the United Nations has the flexible and mobile capabilities that are required in twenty-first century peacekeeping.

Report of the Working Group on Contingent-Owned Equipment

My delegation notes that progress was made on this front during the last triennial meeting of the COE Working Group in January in which the working group adopted a report, by consensus, on recommendations that should enhance the ability of troops and formed police units to maintain high standards of unit readiness, including new modalities for rotating long-deployed equipment at United Nations expense and improvements to how mission factors are determined and reviewed. It also requested the Secretary-General to examine ways to better reflect both the intensity of operations and usage in the reimbursement system.

Integrated Assessment and Planning

Modern peacekeeping, however, goes far beyond contingent personnel; it is a multidimensional affair which overlaps many of the traditional roles and responsibilities of the agencies, funds, and programs. Therefore, ensuring effective cooperation between missions and United Nations country teams is critical not only to ensure a coordinated whole-of-system approach to post-conflict situations, but also to ensure the most effective use of limited resources. My delegation notes the issuance last year of a new policy on integrated assessment and planning and looks forward to receiving information on its implementation.

Vacancy Management

The second set of issues pertains to the efficient use of limited resources. Missions have limited capacity to absorb and engage personnel, particularly in early stages of mission deployment or

because of changing security situations. The result is that staff often become concentrated in mission headquarters and disconnected from the situation in the field, a problem raised by the Board of Auditors in its report. My delegation believes a more prudent approach is for the Secretary-General to rethink mission staffing plans to better align with the operational environment; to prioritize and fill posts as the situation permits; and to continuously review the need for vacant posts in the context of civilian staffing reviews.

Inter-Mission Cooperation

A number of delegations and the Advisory Committee have raised the issue of cross-borrowing, particularly in relation to inter-mission cooperation arrangements. My delegation agrees strongly with the need for transparency. However, we also recognize the need for pragmatic solutions to rapidly-changing circumstances. Inter-mission cooperation arrangements are approved by the Security Council for short-term requirements. For such temporary arrangements it is impractical to charge all costs to receiving missions when this guarantees that they will spend beyond their appropriations while contributing missions will be left with significant unencumbered balances. This Committee must find a solution which allows the United Nations to rapidly respond to crises while allowing this Committee to exercise its oversight function and assess whether resources are being used in the most appropriate manner.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

The third set of issues directly impacts the credibility of the Organization. My delegation commends the steps taken by the Secretariat to enforce the Secretary-General's policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, including through measures such as the vetting of personnel and enhanced reporting, and urges the Secretariat to strengthen these measures. However, sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and civilian staff continues to be an issue of concern, particularly since there was an increase in the number of allegations in peacekeeping missions in 2013 following three years of decline. Furthermore, the time it takes for sexual exploitation and abuse cases to be investigated continues to be unacceptably long as is the number of cases that remain pending.

Protection of Civilians

My delegation commends the Office of Internal Oversight Services for its frank evaluation of the implementation of protection of civilians mandates. The report noted that the UN has made considerable progress on providing guidance and structures for protection of civilians since a 2009 comprehensive review. While we recognize the protection of civilians strategies encompass more than physical protection and the use of force, these "tier 2" responses are generally the most visible and most tangible elements of missions' POC strategy, and become necessary when the lives of civilians are directly threatened. According to the report, missions only responded immediately to 20 percent of attacks on civilians and almost never used force

even as a last resort except when troops were engaged in self-defense or defense of United Nations personnel and property. The report indicates a broad lack of understanding by peacekeepers of what protection of civilians entails at the tactical level, a lack of commitment by mission leadership to use force in order to protect civilians, and persistent parallel lines of command between troop contributing countries and their capitals that precluded the warranted use of force to protect civilians. UN headquarters, TCCs, mission leadership, and contingents must all share a common understanding of POC policies and boundaries if missions are to achieve this mandate. These and other findings, warrant serious consideration, but as the issues addressed include many which lie beyond the competence of this Committee, a broader dialogue on protection of civilians is necessary.

Corruption, Waste, Fraud, and Abuse

The United Nations must also strengthen its measures to prevent and address instances of corruption, waste, fraud, and abuse. Reports in the news over the past year, as well as instances noted in the reports of the Board of Auditors and Office of Internal Oversight Services, indicate not only that these issues remain relevant, but that the systems in place within the Organization may not capture the full scope of the problem. The United Nations must take concrete measures to better assess the risk of corruption and take measures at every level to mitigate these risks.

Whistleblower Protection

Finally, the United Nations must ensure that it protects those who bring to light instances of misconduct in peacekeeping missions. A culture of accountability and the enforcement of sufficiently robust policies and procedures are as important to ensuring the credibility of the Organization as the absence of misconduct and the ability to meet the high expectations of local populations and the court of public opinion.

Mr. Chairman,

The ten priorities I have touched upon this afternoon are but a fraction of the issues covered under this agenda item. As such, it is imperative that the Committee be a paragon of the virtues of efficiency and effectiveness to complete our consideration of all of the reports before us and adopt a resolution on cross-cutting issues. Such a resolution affords the institution of United Nations peacekeeping the ability to successfully confront the challenges it is increasingly asked to tackle. To this end, my delegation looks forward to working with all members of this Committee under your able leadership to reach, by consensus, a positive outcome on cross-cutting issues in the weeks ahead.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.