Mr. Chairman -

My delegation expresses sincere appreciation for your leadership during this session. I would also like to thank the Bureau, the Secretary of the Committee and her team, and the many members of the Secretariat who assisted the Committee during this session.

Mr. Chairman, this has been an extraordinary session. The Committee dealt with a large number of difficult issues. We experienced some long days and late nights to conclude the business of the Committee. We engaged at multiple levels from experts to Permanent Representatives, including at times when otherwise we would have been celebrating the holidays with family and friends. We made an extraordinary effort because of our shared commitment to upholding our collective responsibility to address the numerous administrative and budgetary matters that come before this Committee.

Mr. Chairman, while we were able to conclude our work and address most of the issues before us, we did not do so in the most effective way. As the Committee entrusted with overseeing the resources of the Organization, the Fifth Committee could do a better job of managing our own time and resources. In that regard, I would like to say a few words about the way in which we reach agreement in this Committee.

Mr. Chairman, for over two decades the customary practice of the Fifth Committee has been to make decisions by consensus. With rare exceptions, this practice has served the Committee well, ensuring that member states work together constructively in the spirit of cooperation.

Mr. Chairman, consensus ensures that one group of member states cannot force decisions against the will of any other group. Consensus also ensures that every member state has a voice that can be heard before agreement is reached. Consensus also requires us to balance our often competing national interests with our mutual interest in ensuring that the United Nations is well positioned to perform its mission.
But one thing is sure, holding the threat of a vote over one side's head is not the way to reach consensus or to manage issues in this committee.

Mr. Chairman, the agreements that we reached during this session did not meet all of my delegation's objectives. I know that the same is true for many other delegations. That is the essence of compromise - we walk away pleased with some results and not so pleased with others. But, in the end, we collectively upheld our responsibility for reaching agreement on how best to provide the Organization with the resources and tools that it needs to accomplish its mission.

Mr. Chairman, in recent sessions of this Committee, including this one, there have been a few occasions when we came to the brink of deviating from our customary practice of agreeing by consensus. Fortunately, with very few exceptions, we have been able to work through our differences and preserve the constructive manner in which we work together. My delegation does not want to see the presenting of L documents become a common practice in this or any other Committee. We are truly saddened that this has become the method of choice in the past year once serious negotiations begin. Over 15 years ago this committee agreed to handle budgetary issues by consensus because the alternative would have been destructive not only to the work of this committee but to the UN as a whole. It is our hope that we can revert to that approach next year.

Going forward, my delegation commits to working to address the issues which we were not able to resolve fully in this session. We also commit to an ongoing dialogue about how the Committee can improve its working methods and preserve the spirit of cooperation which is the essence of consensus-based decision-making. We would do a huge disservice to the Organization, if we were to do otherwise and allow divisions and disagreement to become the lasting hallmark of the Fifth Committee.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to reiterate my delegation's sincere appreciation for your excellent leadership and extend our congratulations to the entire Committee for having been able to work through some significant differences and reach agreement on sustaining the important work of the United Nations.