



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA
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OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE INFORMAL
THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE THEME
“TOWARD A COMMON UNDERSTANDING ON MANAGEMENT REFORM”
New York, 8 April 2008**

Mr. President,

I have the pleasure to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the issue of Management and Secretariat Reform. At the outset, we wish to thank you, Mr. President, for holding this thematic debate among the series of debates requested by the General Assembly, in the context of its resolutions on “Revitalizing its Role and Authority”. We also wish to thank the Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon for being with us today, as well as the senior officials of the Secretariat who are present in this meeting.

Mr. President,

2.. The G-77 and China considers it important and relevant to highlight the work done by a group of four countries comprising the members of the Four Nations Initiative, particularly the document entitled “Towards a Compact” and the proposals it contains, which deals with key areas linked to the functioning of the United Nations which are human resources management, the planning and budgetary process and the generation of mandates. These constitute a valuable contribution to the reform process as a whole.

3. While admitting that the three areas of focus of today’s meeting, as indicated in your invitation letter, are important to the management of the Organization, we wish to make general comments on all areas of reform. Member States have dedicated the past three years to reflecting on measures to strengthen the ability of the Organisation to meet the ambitious agenda that we have set for its staff and ourselves at the Millennium Summit. We have placed great emphasis on the functioning of the Secretariat and measures to enhance the accountability of staff to the Organisation.

4. We strongly believe in the importance of Management Reform as an ongoing exercise. However, reform should not be seen as an aim in itself rather than a crucial tool to ensure the effective functioning of the Organisation. We also believe that successful reforms hinge on three important elements. These are primarily the holistic approach of reform since all reforms are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. Secondly, clear and strong lines of accountability in order to evaluate and monitor the effects of reforms. And thirdly, the adequacy of resources to undertake reforms, which should be seen as an investment in the Organisation.

5. The Group of 77 and China remains committed to efforts to strengthening the United Nations and enabling it to implement its mandate more effectively and using its resources more efficiently. We are also committed to providing the Organisation with sufficient resources to meet the mandates bestowed upon it, as well as our share of the additional resources that may be needed to finance reform proposals, including for development activities. We believe that the reform process should lead to a more democratic, effective and representative United Nations.

6. While welcoming the progress achieved since the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, particularly in areas such as human resources reform; adoption of the terms of reference of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee (IAAC); strengthening of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS); creation of the Ethics Office; development of the “whistle-blower” policy; creation of the post of the Chief Information Technology Officer (CITO); procurement reform; undertaking of several external audits on the oversight structures of the Organization (OIOS; Board of Auditors and Joint Inspection Unit), we believe that more still needs to be done.

7. As regards the human resources management reform, we wish to emphasize that the reform of the Secretariat also means reform in the staffing of the Organization, in order to allow the participation of nationals of all countries be represented in the United Nations. The Secretariat should be increasingly more representative and legitimate. The current decentralized system of recruitment still requires our careful consideration. While recruitment revolves around managerial discretion, programme managers for years have not been held accountable for failure to meet human resources action plans’ targets for appointing staff who did not meet the core competencies. We emphasize that this aspect should be addressed.

8. The Group of 77 and China remains seriously concerned over the continued failure of the Organisation to meet the agreed benchmarks on equitable geographic and gender distribution in the Secretariat. We expect to see affirmative proposals to really foster an equitable geographical distribution of posts in the Secretariat. In 2006, 61.9% of all the Global Secretariat (40,000 people) come from only 20 Member States. Six Member States have more than 1,000 staff. As for gender balance, the Group expresses concern over the low number of women from developing countries in the Secretariat. In 2006, 63.7% were men and 36.3% women. At the higher level (USG and ASG), women were only 18.8% of the total. Unfortunately, today, the situation has not improved much.

9. Currently, senior management positions in important departments seem to be the exclusive preserve of some Member States. This is contrary to several General Assembly resolutions and immediate remedial action is needed. We urge the Secretariat to use vacancies arising from the large-scale retirements that will occur in different categories by the year 2010 in a strategic manner so as to improve the international character of the Organisation. We also trust that the Performance Management Board will take effective measures to rectify the noted shortcomings. The Group of 77 and China, furthermore, requests that quarterly updates be submitted to the General Assembly on this issue.

10. Moreover, the Organisation has a proliferation of types of contracts which makes it difficult for the Secretariat to manage all those contracts. Moreover, the staff, in particular in the field, who work in the most difficult conditions, is not satisfied with the current conditions of service and this has a negative bearing in their moral on one hand and the ability of the Organisation to retain experienced staff members on the other hand. We wish to express our concern that the lack of will among some Member States prevented the General Assembly from taking concrete step towards addressing these shortfalls. It is our belief the UN today has to deliver more complex and difficult mandates in all fields. The efficient and effective delivery of these mandates fundamentally hinges on the quality of its staff. To this end, ensuring the well being of the international civil servants is of the utmost importance and has acquired our support of all reform measures aimed at establishing a satisfied, vibrant and dynamic workforce.

Mr. President,

11. Turning to the issue of planning and budgetary process, the Group wishes to underline the role of the General Assembly and its relevant intergovernmental and expert bodies within their respective mandates in planning, programming, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, we reaffirm the role of the General Assembly in carrying out a thorough analysis and approval of posts and financial resources, human resources policies and allocation as well as reallocation of resources, to all sections of the programme budget with a view to ensuring full and efficient implementation of all mandated programmes and activities and for the implementation of relevant policies.

12. The Group of 77 and China reaffirms its position that resources approved by the General Assembly should be commensurate with all the mandated programmes and activities in order to ensure their full implementation. There cannot be any arbitrary decision to lower the level of resources or to impose an artificial ceiling which could have an adverse impact on effective programme delivery. We believe that the United Nations cannot be expected to perform effectively if it is requested to undertake more tasks within stagnant budget levels, in particular in areas of economic and social development. Member States cannot, on the one hand, be calling for the reform of the Organization, whilst on the other hand, bring it to the brink of financial insolvency through their actions.

13. It is of some concern that the overall extra budgetary resources comprises over 60% of the requirements of the Organization, and that over 75% of the regular budget is allocated to staff and administrative expenditures and not directly related to the implementation of mandates, thus requiring such mandates to be met by extra budgetary resources. In this regard, the General Assembly will need to exercise more oversight in order to ensure appropriate balance in the implementation of all mandates and programmes, notwithstanding the nature of their sources of funding.

14. It should be recognized that most of the additional requests for resources result from new legislative mandates, mostly in peace and security issues, or reform proposals put forward by the Secretary-General. There is nothing amiss with the budgetary process and we cannot expect the Secretariat to undertake these tasks without providing them with new resources. Otherwise, reform runs the risk of becoming nothing more than a slogan. From the outset of the negotiations, Member States agreed that reform is not a cost-cutting exercise and cannot be done at the expense of other legislative mandates and programmes.

15. The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance the work performed by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) as the main subsidiary organ of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly for planning, programming and coordination. The CPC performs a fundamental role in programme design by ensuring that the Secretariat accurately interprets and translates legislative mandates into programmes and sub-programmes. The Committee also identifies programmatic changes arising from decisions taken by inter-governmental bodies, which is crucial for the smooth functioning of the Organisation.

16. The CPC provides Member States with assurances that the objectives and strategies of the Organisation have been derived from the priorities and goals set by Member States. These are crucial elements of the planning and budgetary processes of the Organisation and greatly facilitate the oversight role of the General Assembly. The Group consequently welcomes the detailed evaluation carried out by the CPC of the programmes of the Organisation, which is an important element of

ensuring the effective implementation of mandates. The guidance provided by the CPC to the numerous department and entities of the United Nations system regarding their respective programmes and activities contributes to our efforts to enhance coherence and coordination throughout the system.

17. Concerning mandate formulation, implementation and evaluation, it is our belief that the proliferation of mandates we are witnessing is merely due to the dis-satisfaction of Member States of the slow or lack of implementation of mandates. This is the main issue we should be looking at in this regard. We believe that a monitoring system needs to be elaborated and that periodic reports on the status of implementation can be useful as a monitoring tool. Similarly, periodic oral briefings or written notes from the Secretary-General can also be helpful.

18. While reaffirming the basic position of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Group of 77 and the Non-Aligned Movement regarding the review of mandates, as contained in the official document A/61/693 of 9 January 2007, the Group wishes to stress that the exercise is not intended to arbitrarily or selectively abolish any mandates. It is important to recall that mandates are established by a collective decision taken by Member States and can only be amended or abolished collectively. In this regard, defining specific time frame for implementation and results of a mandate is a counter-productive idea, since prioritization and allocation of necessary resources can be extremely difficult and contentious exercise, taking into account that no Member State is ready to the relegation of an issue of importance to it.

19. Similarly, the elements for determining a criteria for completion of a mandate can be very difficult and may involve political aspects hard to quantify in tangible terms. Moreover, we expect some delegations to invoke the need to consolidate and streamline reports. This proposal was submitted previously on different occasions and did not acquire enough agreement. We believe that reports are an important tool for Member States to make well-informed decisions on various issues. Given these constraints, there should be a way of enforcing a certain level of abidingness to the General Assembly resolutions and the implementation of its legislative mandates. We believe that self-evaluation of the Secretariat and strong accountability to Member States is a key issue in this regard.

Mr. President,

20. The Group of 77 and China is cognizant of the trend in recent times of the growth of procurement as a major activity within the United Nations, especially due to the expansion of peacekeeping missions. The emerging challenges arising from the increase in scale and operational diversities have naturally led to greater demands being placed on the capacities and resources of the existing procurement system. We believe that it is apt and timely that we are addressing the issue of procurement reforms at this juncture to enable the Organization to get the best possible return for its resources and at the same time deliver efficient services to the intended beneficiaries of United Nations programmes.

21. The Group of 77 and China has stressed the need for increasing efficiency, transparency and cost-effectiveness of the UN procurement. We have emphasized the importance of strengthened accountability of the Secretary-General to Member States for the full implementation of legislative mandates on procurement. We have also supported the training in ethics and integrity for the staff, including at the senior levels. The Group has strongly affirmed that increasing procurement opportunities for vendors from developing countries is an integral and fundamental part of the United Nations procurement reform.

No procurement reform will be complete or effective without a proper diversification of the origin of vendors in the UN procurement. We therefore request the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to explore additional and innovative ways to promote procurement from our countries.

22. On the issue of strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat to better deliver legislative mandates of the General Assembly, the Group, while supporting the Secretary-General's intention to strengthen the capacity of the Organization in the field of preventive diplomacy and mediation, reiterates that the General Assembly, in its resolution 62/236, recognized the need for strengthening of the development pillar in the United Nations, and requested the Secretary-General to provide a comprehensive proposal for its consideration in March 2008 with a view to improving the effective and efficient delivery of the mandates of the development related activities of the United Nations Secretariat, including DESA, UNCTAD, the regional commissions and the Development Account.

23. During the budget negotiations in 2007, we felt that there was an imbalance in reflecting the priorities of the international community in budget allocations, to the detriment of the development pillar. In order for our Organization to address the real causes of conflicts, the challenges of poverty and development must be met, we need to focus on a reform that increases the efficiency and the resources allocated to development related programmes. The Group of 77 and China looks forward to begin as soon as possible the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General A/62/708.

24. Finally, Mr. President, the Group trusts that outcome of this meeting will be similar to other previous Thematic Debates, in the form of a factual Chair's summary, that will have no bearing on the work and the role of the Fifth Committee, which is the Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with the responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters. The Group will not accept parallel tracks to negotiate issues that are already on the agenda of the Fifth Committee. We are looking forward to have a fruitful exchange of views with other Member States as well as the Secretariat during these two days.

I thank you.