

Deputy Secretary-General pledges broad effort to further improve United Nations

(Statement at the Second Committee on 08 October 2007)

“We will not shrink from our responsibilities of seeking continuous improvement, and to deliver more effectively and efficiently in the discharge of mandates you have entrusted us with, but we expect your support in providing adequate resources in implementation of the mandates,” Deputy-Secretary-General of the United Nations, Asha-Rose Migiro, told the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) this morning.

Addressing the Committee during its organizational meeting, she said urgent action was needed to further improve the Organization’s work and effectively discharge its mandates. Among the main issues that would be central during the session, she listed the need to strengthen the United Nations’ work in the areas of development, peace and security, and human rights; effective and efficient use of resources; legislative mandates; budgets; accountability and oversight; and management reform. She said Member States had also called for improved managerial performance, including improvements in work processes, greater transparency and the highest standards of ethical conduct among staff. The Secretary-General and she were fully committed to working on a number of fronts to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the United Nations. That was particularly true in peacekeeping. She was encouraged by Member States’ willingness to substantially invest in bolstering the Secretariat’s capacity in that critical area. The Secretary-General was putting equal prominence in conflict prevention.

Through the Ethics Office, the Organization was committed to implementing new policies and training initiatives to foster a working climate steeped in a culture of ethics and transparency, she said. In the context of strengthening the accountability

framework, the Secretary-General attached great importance to the completion of Performance Compacts with his senior managers. In July and August, she had been engaged, for the first time, in dialogue with each of the senior managers on their 2007 and 2008 Performance Compacts.

The Secretary-General and she were also fully committed to strengthening the internal management bodies, such as the Management Performance Board and the Management Committee. Those mechanisms were a means of building managerial commitment to reform and were important for ensuring adequate institutional follow-up to the recommendations of oversight bodies. They would also serve to keep the momentum of reform on track, in a coordinated manner. That would be particularly critical as the Organization sought to deliver and manage proposed improvements in various reform areas, including a new system of internal justice, proposed introduction of the Enterprise Resource Planning System or the changeover to the new International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

Among the priorities for the session, she listed the approval of the proposed budget for 2008-2009, including “a number of add-ons, which are essential elements of the reform scheme”. The Secretary-General would also submit a number of important reports outlining the efforts to improve systems of internal controls and accountability, including an update of the various in-house efforts to improve procurement and management of risks. That was particularly important in view of the expansion of the United Nations’ peacekeeping activities. Also of interest to the Committee would be a comprehensive report on procurement reform. “In this report, we will be accountable for the resources you provided to us in the last session, and we will have to update you on the advances performed in setting up our systems of controls,” she said.

Moreover, Member States would be asked to move ahead on reforms relating to the management of human resources and have before them the details and resource requirements of the new system of internal justice approved last spring.

The Committee would also have before it the requested information on scope and resource requirements of the global resource-management system, which the Assembly had approved in principle last year. Progress on all those fronts would be critical to transforming the human resource base of the Organization. It would also be important for the enhancement of managerial decision-making tools, including better financial controls, and more accurate and timely management reporting. Progress in those areas would provide for a better functioning of the Secretariat.