

Statement by Richard Croker, Minister Counsellor of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Mission to the United Nations on the closing of the Main Session of the 75th General Assembly Fifth Committee

Mr Chair

The United Kingdom would like to thank you and your Bureau for directing the work of this Committee throughout this session, as well as all the facilitators who have supported and guided us.

We also wish to thank the Fifth Committee Secretariat and members of the United Nations Secretariat for their tireless efforts during this Committee's deliberations under testing circumstances.

This Session was always going to be challenging, both in terms of the remote working methods demanded by the ongoing COVID pandemic and the scale and complexity of the agenda before us.

We sincerely appreciate the efforts made by delegates to reach constructive compromises, demonstrating once again the great pragmatism that underpins this Committee's essential work. However, we regret the late conclusion of this session and the division and indecision we have seen on many items, and that the spirit of compromise was not always universal. As the President of the General Assembly reminded us, all member states share an obligation to support the United Nations in fulfilling the mandates that we have given it, and this year, the global impact of COVID made reaching a timely consensus more urgent than ever.

Our deliberations must be careful, but they should not jeopardise the continuity of mandated activities. Closing so late in December has done just that. The Committee must learn lessons from the past weeks and months, and in future sessions demonstrate we can arrive at consensus decisions in a timely manner.

Mr Chair,

We welcome the good outcomes we have reached across many items, including the Common System and OIOS, but in particular the annual programme budget, where the lessons learned from this pandemic can be factored into next year's budget. Indeed the decisions we reached this session provide the Organisation with the means to deliver its mandates effectively and efficiently in 2021.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the United Kingdom's strong support for the Secretary-General's reform agenda. We heard this session how the reforms are

already having a positive impact on the United Nations' operations, including enabling a more agile and timely response to the COVID pandemic.

We also heard clearly the Secretariat's and Member States concerns about the impact of the continuing liquidity challenges the UN faces. We regret however that delegations could not agree any new measures to help mitigate these pressures. We continue to encourage the Secretariat to propose new and innovative options in future.

We appreciate the initial discussion this session on the working methods of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budget Questions. Given the importance of ACABQ recommendations to our deliberations, we believe the ACABQ should continue to refine its working methods and collaborate with the Secretariat and this Committee to ensure we receive the technical advice we need.

The United Kingdom commends the staff of the United Nations for all their hard work and commitment during this challenging year, and wish them every success in fulfilling the United Nations mandates in 2021.

Finally, we hope all colleagues can enjoy a restful and happy New Year.