

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP BY MR MOHAMED TRAORE, SECOND COUNSELLOR AT THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC MALI TO THE UNITED NATIONS, DURING THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE FIRST PART OF THE RESUMED SEVENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

NEW YORK, 26 MARCH 2021

Mr. Chair

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the African Group at this closing session of the first part of the resumed seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly.
2. The first-resumed session was no exception to the latest sessions of the Fifth Committee as it has been conducted in particular circumstances that have necessitated to pursue the conduct of the work of the Fifth Committee in a virtual setting that has compounded the challenges associated with negotiations. As usual, the fifth committee has been able to deliver on its mandate amidst these challenges, and in this regard, we wish to recognize the resilience of the fifth Committee despite the most difficult of circumstances and environment.
3. We wish to extend our profound gratitude to the Chair of the Fifth Committee, the Bureau, Coordinators of various agenda items, as well as the fifth Secretariat for their unwavering support and assistance rendered to the Committee during the consideration of agenda items.
4. The Group aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Group of 77 & China and we wish to add a few comments.

Mr. Chair,

5. It is unfortunate that the Committee has once again been unable to reach consensus on most of the agenda items which are of paramount importance to us. Some of these agenda items have been outstanding for several years. This untenable situation should be addressed accordingly, and the Secretariat given sufficient guidance in the management of the human resources.
6. Key among these items include overview of human resources management and mobility, composition of secretariat and desirable ranges, among others.

7. We would have wished that the Committee had reached a consensus on widening the base figure of the current system of desirable ranges and factoring realities within the organizations in the 21st century. Nonetheless we expect the Secretary-General will put in place measures to ensure that the target of appointing at least 50 per cent of staff from unrepresented and underrepresented Member States to all posts subject to geographical distribution is met and ensure that the Secretariat fairly and adequately reflects the geographical representation of Member States through its workforce planning and staffing composition and the principle of geographical representation implemented as required by the Charter.
8. It is our position that a diverse, flexible, and dynamic workforce is essential for efficient and effective delivery of the Organization's mandate. After all, human resources is this organization's main asset. It is therefore regrettable that chronic geographical imbalance remains an issue up to date. We particularly note that the number of unrepresented and underrepresented states remains high.
9. We however applaud that the General Assembly has been able to adopt resolutions on other important agenda items with budgetary implication, such as Construction and property management: UNON conference facilities and Subvention for the Special Tribunal for Lebanon. This will enable the secretariat to receive guidance on the related matters.

Mr. Chair

10. As we have mentioned before, the extraordinary circumstances posed by Covid-19 have made it difficult to hold Fifth Committee in-person meetings.
11. Difficulty in negotiations has been made by worse by lack of interpretation services in all the official languages of the United Nations. As a result, equal participation of all member states has been hampered and at times it was impossible for many delegations to effectively participate in the deliberations of the Committee, even though they had vested interest in the agenda items. The continuation of this situation is just unacceptable, and we urge the Secretary General to ensure that simultaneous interpretation is made available in the forthcoming sessions, particularly during the negotiations on PKOs budgets.

Mr. Chair

12. The African Group also wishes to highlight the issue of racism and racial discrimination within the organization. We re-echo the words of the Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that racism has no place in the United Nations, an Organization founded on the principles of the dignity and worth of the human person, without distinctions of race, color, ethnic or national origin.

13. In the same spirit we invite the oversight offices to include the review of racial discrimination and the accountability mechanisms in their scope of work and reports going forward.

14. **In conclusion**, Mr. Chair, the African Group wishes to reaffirm its commitment to continue to engage constructively in the work of the Fifth Committee in the second resumed part of the seventy-fifth session and hopes that the spirit of cooperation, flexibility, and compromise from our distinguished partners that allowed us to conclude this session will be continued at the next session.

Thank you