



AUSTRALIA



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FIFTH COMMITTEE FORMAL MEETING ON PROGRAMME PLANNING AND PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET 2022

13 October 2021

Statement by H.E. The Hon. Mitch Fifield, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations

Check against delivery

Thank you Mister Chair. I have the honour today to speak on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and, my own country, Australia.

Acknowledgements

Congratulations on your appointment as Chair of the Fifth Committee. We look forward to working with you to ensure the efficient, effective, accountable, and timely resourcing of UN mandates.

Thank you to the Secretary-General for the Proposed Programme Budget for 2022, Mr. Buttigieg for the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination, and Mr Bong for the reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

Proposed Programme Budget 2022

We welcome the Secretary-General's proposal for the third annual regular budget proposal and his efforts to increase its results orientation.

We appreciate the budget proposals that ensure meaningful support for Human Rights and for Small Island Developing States, including those in the Caribbean and Pacific. We also value adequate resourcing for the UN oversight functions to ensure the UN remains accountable, transparent, and fit-for-purpose.

We will carefully consider proposals to increase regular budget funding for some entities which are primarily funded through voluntary contributions. While adequate and sustainable resourcing is essential to mandate delivery, not everything can be funded from the regular budget and innovative financing mechanisms should be encouraged.

We acknowledge that all Member States, including our own, are facing increased fiscal constraints following the global impact of COVID-19. We are committed to working with other Member States to identify savings to offset increases in other areas of the budget.

We appreciate the financial discipline shown by the Secretary-General in maintaining a similar budget bottom line to 2021. We also welcome the efficiencies enabled by lessons learned from COVID-19. This includes more virtual meetings and training, reducing the need for travel and allowing broader participation.

Programme Plans

We continue to be concerned by the Committee for Programme and Coordination's lack of consensus on some programme plans. We would be interested in the views of other Member States on how to ensure the CPC is able to complete its mandated work as a subsidiary body.

If open programme plans are taken up by the relevant Main Committees for consideration, it will be crucial that they consider them early and provide any conclusions and recommendations to the Fifth Committee in a timely manner. Otherwise, we risk delays in adopting the 2022 budget. This could create an unwelcome precedent which could undermine the role and the value of the CPC.

Reform

We congratulate the Secretary-General on the effectiveness of the management, development, and peace and security reforms, to date, which have better enabled the UN to adapt and respond to the extraordinary circumstances of COVID-19. We continue to support the annual budget cycle which has been more responsive to emerging needs, improved engagement with programme managers, and enhanced accountability and results.

UN Financial Situation

As we head into the review of the annual budget cycle next year, during UNGA77, it is important to underscore that liquidity challenges facing the UN due to late and non-payment of assessed contributions by some Member States, remains the biggest challenge to mandate delivery.

The hiring freeze and delayed procurement by the Secretariat in the last year hampered mandate delivery and created a situation where the UN returned unspent balances to Member States, not because the funds were not needed, but because they came too late.

CANZ's long-standing record of paying our assessments in full, on time and without conditions is an indication of our commitment to the UN. We want the UN to have the resources to deliver on the mandates that we, the Member States, set. We want the budgets that we negotiate, not the cash on hand, to guide UN spending.

Conclusion

We look forward to working with all colleagues this session to reach a timely consensus on a budget which provides the necessary resources to implement mandated activities.

It is crucial that consideration of the budget not be delayed by other issues to ensure that the UN is able to deliver on our shared objectives.

Thank you, Mister Chair.

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