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UN80 IWG
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Excellencies,

I wish to thank Ambassadors Schwalger and Wallace for inviting me to share our views.

We are certain that with your leadership, this will be a successful process.

Mandates are truly at the heart of everything the United Nations does.

Each mandate reflects an agreement among Member States on how to address an issue and what action needs to be taken.

Yet, the current context compels us to be more deliberate in how we create mandates.

I will share key observations from Costa Rica's experience in either chairing, co-facilitating, or presiding over different intergovernmental processes.

I will highlight pertinent experiences, which reveal both effective approaches and persistent challenges.

A positive example comes from the 2024 Conference to Review Progress in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

In response to new technological developments, such as modular and polymer-crafted weapons and 3D printing, Member States agreed to establish an open-ended technical expert group.

This mandate was need-driven. It emerged from real challenges, focused narrowly on actionable outcomes, and built on previous commitments while adapting to new contexts.

The SALW Fellowship Programme exemplifies a mandate designed for direct impact.

When a mandate is clearly justified, appropriately scoped, and linked to current realities, it strengthens the UN's capacity to respond.

A second experience I would like to share is the 2024 negotiation of the modalities resolution for the High-Level Meeting on Addressing the Existential Threats Posed by Sea-Level Rise.



The General Assembly decided to convene a High-Level Meeting “within existing resources,” but later, it became evident that those “existing” resources would not be enough.

Additionally, through the negotiation process, delegations recognized that the meeting alone would not suffice for the UN to properly start to address this issue.

So three additional mandates were created:

- a Secretary-General's Report with input from Member States,
- a political declaration,
- and the High-Level Meeting itself.

This case highlights two points:

First, new thematic areas often require new mandates to build institutional attention from the ground up.

Second, early coordination with DGACM was essential to anticipate budgetary implications and whether mandates can be realistically implemented and properly resourced.

When chairing the First Committee in 2024, we observed a third example with both potential and pitfalls.

During the 79th session, the Committee adopted 77 draft resolutions and decisions—up from 61 the previous year.

However, only 27 were adopted without a vote.

The remaining 50 required recorded votes, with 156 separate (specific for paragraphs) votes requested, leading to 201 total votes—compared to 148 the previous year.

Of course, not all resolutions create mandates.

Mandates are created by resolutions or decisions with operative or actionable elements.

Many resolutions have operative paragraphs that, in fact, do not invoke action.

And frequently, operative paragraphs that invoke action are unclear in their intent.



Sometimes this is a result of finely balanced negotiations; sometimes it is unintended.

Extracting mandates from resolutions and decisions can lead to the Secretariat and wider UN system, which implements them, to make subjective decisions about Member States' intentions.

Poorly constructed mandates can result in UN system resources being applied inefficiently.

As we all know, many resolutions are long, repetitive, and lack sunset or review clauses.

One-off resolutions are by far the exception rather than the norm.

Many also include rollovers, annual requests for compilations of States' views that carry production costs, while the compilations themselves garner little interaction, bringing into question the value of the requests themselves, while at the same time showing the difficulty for States to follow up on those requests.

This is a problem in several committees.

This combination of voting fragmentation, procedural inefficiency, and low-engagement outputs compels us to ask fundamental questions:

In a subsidiary body such as First Committee, when in 2024 only 27 out of 77 resolutions achieved consensus, should we pursue more resolutions annually, or would fewer, better-focused proposals on biennial or triennial cycles allow time for genuine consensus-building?

Similarly, we must question whether to continue commissioning Secretary-General reports and annual compilations at the rate we have been doing so when resources are constrained, and engagement remains minimal.

For instance, First Committee mandates that consistently receive fewer than 10 replies could transition to less frequent reporting cycles, allowing the Secretariat to focus resources on higher-quality, more impactful outputs, and provide States with more time to fulfill the reporting requirements

Another example is my experience as vice-president of the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment in 2024-2025.

We received divergent views about the annual resolution, particularly its overlap with the General Assembly omnibus humanitarian resolution.

Both segments traditionally produce negotiated outcome documents through repetitive annual discussions.



In 2025, Costa Rica took a different approach: instead of negotiating yet another formal outcome document, we issued a Call to Action.

This shorter, more strategic document—developed through streamlined consultations with Member States—sent a strong, collective message of support to those affected by humanitarian emergencies and to the humanitarian system itself.

The result: 151 States supported the Call to Action, a commitment beyond ECOSOC's membership?

How can we improve mandate creation?

Now turning to the question of improving mandate quality and discipline, I would like to make five points.

Firstly, mandates are more likely to be implemented and deliver quality outcomes for people and planet if they are created thoughtfully at the outset.

Secondly, there is a growing trend of resolutions commissioning SG Reports.

In my experience, the SG reports that actually get read and used are the ones with expert analysis.

We saw this with new topics like AI—they sparked real debate because they offered insight, not just aggregation.

A shift from compilation to analysis in SG reports would be transformative.

Thirdly, before we create more mandates, we need to map what we already have.

When we spotted the duplication between ECOSOC and the GA humanitarian resolutions, we addressed it.

But that was one case we happened to notice.

We need systematic visibility.

I welcome this finding in the SG Report on Mandate Implementation Review.

Fourthly, some simple tests might help us understand whether a mandate we have created is of sufficient enduring interest to the collective membership.

Does a mandate that commissions an SG Report get more than twenty responses?



Does a mandate that establishes an agenda item on the UN's books result in engagement from more than a dozen states?

Has a mandate produced something concrete in three years?

Are the costs reasonable for what the mandate produces, and how would we know unless a monitoring and evaluation mechanism is established in the process?

If we can't say yes to these questions, should it trigger a review of a mandate?

Fifthly, I welcome the proposal in the SG Report which suggests the Secretariat could do a better job of assisting Member States in creating higher-quality mandates.

I encourage the Secretariat to engage with Member States, including those who lead initiatives or who serve as co-facilitators or co-chairs for processes, on what this support could look like.

But this is also a shared responsibility.

All co-facilitators should seek that assistance from the start of each process.

Finally, I'd add one more thing: leadership makes a real difference in how mandates are created.

It matters who the PGA designates to run a negotiation, and it matters what experience those individuals bring.

We've seen skilled facilitation turn a contentious process into a productive one, and that preparation and institutional knowledge help Member States find common ground.

Getting the right people in these roles is how we create mandates that deliver meaningful outcomes.

I thank you.