



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR LYLE DAVIDSON, COUNSELLOR AT THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE AGENDA ITEM 134: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2016-2017: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY IN THE UNITED NATIONS AT THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTIETH SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 17 November 2015)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 134: programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017: Information and Communications Technology Strategy.

The Group would like to thank Ms. Atefeh Riazai, Chief Information Technology Officer and Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Information and Communications Technology, for introducing the report of the Secretary General on the status of implementation of the information and communications technology strategy for the United Nations, contained in document A/70/364 and Corrigendum 1, as well as Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing the related report contained in document A/70/7/Add.18.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China continues to support management reform initiatives which aim at strengthening efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, oversight and accountability in the Organization. The Group also continues to underscore the view that all reform measures including that of information and communications technology, must be geared towards supporting the work of the United Nations in the areas of peace and security, development and human rights. In this regard, the Group believes that a secure, reliable and user-friendly ICT infrastructure is not only critical to ensure that the Organization delivers on its mandates, but will facilitate Member States during the decision-making process. The Group observes with interest, the efforts of the Secretary-General to align the ICT strategy to United Nations goals and will seek further clarity in this regard during the informal consultations. The Group is particularly concerned about the lack of relevant detail in the Secretary-General's report which will negatively impact on the full and timely consideration of the item by the Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China notes that the distribution of responsibility for ICT delivery across multiple geographically dispersed centres has presented management challenges. In this regard, the Group emphasizes the need for robust governance, management and accountability arrangements, strong leadership, comprehensive standards and procedures and effective communication and coordination. The Group notes, in this regard, new entities such as the ICT Executive Management and Policy Committees, the ICT Board and the software development coordination group, but cautions that against duplication of structures and extra administrative levels.

The Group regrets the lack of adequate cost-benefit analysis of ICT initiatives. A cost-benefit analysis an important tool for evaluating projects and should evolve over time as the implementation strategy progresses. In light of the significant resources being dedicated to the ICT strategy implementation, the Group will focus on ICT investment related decisions. The Group therefore welcomes initiatives being put in place to maximize transparency in ICT investments and major acquisitions across the Secretariat. The Group believes that the Organisation should be outcome-focused and evidence-based in decision-making on major technology investments.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China notes the summary provided of risks associated with the strategy and encourages the Secretariat to ensure that risk management is properly embedded within the strategy so as to give much needed and consistent effect to the implementation of requisite risk mitigation activities.

The Group welcomes the progress in mainstreaming Umoja and notes the information provided on the functions to be transferred from the Umoja team to the Office of Information and Communications Technology, as well as the applications that can potentially be decommissioned. The Group will seek further information on an in depth evaluation of the progress made in achieving the stated milestones.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance to initiatives aimed at addressing information security in the Organization and supports the measures outlined in the ten point action plan. The Group notes that a number of policies, guidelines and technical procedures have been promulgated and supports the view of the Advisory Committee to apply the common security policy across the Secretariat, including in all peacekeeping entities.

With regard to disaster recovery, the Group is concerned about the continued systemic weakness identified in 129 critical systems and applications supporting critical processes. The Group is concerned that further significant investment and substantially increased annual operations and maintenance costs will be required to provide advanced disaster recovery capabilities. In this regard, the Group will request further information on the disaster recovery requirements and capabilities during the informal consultations.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China believes that the issue of fragmentation of ICT applications and infrastructures throughout the Organization must be addressed in a targeted and inclusive manner. In this regard, the Group welcomes the establishment of enterprise application centres in New York, Vienna and Bangkok as part of a multi-phase harmonization plan. The Group regrets that this was not adequately dealt with in the report and, therefore, urges the Secretary-General to continue to refine and expand the analysis of UN applications in keeping with the principles that have been identified, placing special emphasis on the need to reduce duplication, inefficiency and ineffectiveness.

The Group notes the efforts underway to harmonize ICT functions across areas of the Secretariat. The Group emphasizes the need for further harmonization and rationalization in order to ensure coherence and synergies with other systems, with a view to driving a comprehensive process of transformation. The Group believes that, through these efforts, the Organization can become a much more effective and responsive service provider. In this regard, Group sees merit in the need,

expressed by the Advisory Committee, for a comprehensive picture of the harmonization and consolidation efforts, including an update on progress achieved and a plan for the harmonization and consolidation of the remaining ICT functions across the Secretariat.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group is further concerned about the level of under-reporting on the indicative five-year overall ICT budget projection for the Secretariat. Of particular concern to the Group, is the lack of information and analysis on ICT peacekeeping resources in the report, which account for 75% of overall ICT expenditure. The Group also finds it difficult to comprehend the reasons provided for the omission and this raises concerns as to whether the overall direction and performance of ICT strategy implementation has been compromised.

The Group therefore supports the recommendations of the Advisory Committee to avoid a "two-track" approach for the development of the ICT strategy of the UN, namely one for ICT in peacekeeping and one for ICT in the remaining Secretariat entities. A two-track approach would serve to undermine the other major reforms being implemented towards the establishment of an integrated global Secretariat. The Group will seek further clarity in this regard during the informal consultations.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China notes that training and recruitment of qualified staff and experts remains a challenge. The Group emphasizes that the training element of the ICT strategy should ensure that in-house capacity is adequately enhanced and available to deliver mandated activities. The ICT Strategy should not only introduce new equipment and delivery models, but also support the acquisition and retention of new skills and capabilities. In this regard, the Group anticipates the promised overview of the ICT workforce as well as a comprehensive assessment of the proposals that will be developed in collaboration with the Office for Human Resources Management.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China remains committed to the Secretary General's efforts to reform and modernize the ICT landscape of the Organization and we look forward to engaging constructively during informal consultations with the aim of reaching a positive outcome in this important agenda item.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.