



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY
AMBASSADOR CONROD HUNTE, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM
128: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2008-2009, IN
PARTICULAR ON STRENGTHENING THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL
AFFAIRS, AT THE FIRST RESUMED SESSION OF THE 62ND SESSION OF
THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 17
March 2008)**

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 128, related to proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009, in particular on Strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA).

2. The Group wishes to thank the Under Secretary-General for Management, Ms. Alicia Bárcena, and her homologue for the Department of Political Affairs, Mr. Lynn Pascoe, as well as the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), Ms. Suzan Mclurg, for their respective introductions of the reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on this important item.

Mr. Chairman,

3. The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance to the strengthening of the United Nations and efforts should continue to be made to develop the Organization's full potential on the basis of priorities and mandates approved by Member States. A reformed UN must be responsive to the entire membership, faithful to its founding principles and adapted to carrying out its mandate. The success of the UN reform can only be judged in terms of a collective assessment of the potential improvements in the functioning of the Organization while preserving the interests of all countries. A stronger UN that responds more effectively to their collective needs is in our common interest.

4. We share the view that improving the United Nations' capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts is a better investment than dealing with the costly aftermath of wars and armed conflicts. Clearly, prevention of conflict is key to the Organization's Charter obligation to maintain international peace and security.

5. However, any effort to enhance the role of the United Nations in preventing conflict should be balanced, comprehensive, and in full accordance with its Charter and international law, in order to be effective and result-oriented. These efforts will never be successful unless they go hand in hand with parallel efforts addressing the root causes of conflicts in particular by achieving sustainable development through a sustained economic growth and the eradication of poverty.

6. In this context, the Group of 77 and China expects to start the consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals regarding strengthening of the development pillar of the Organization and urges the ACABQ to present its relevant report as a matter of priority, taking into account the interrelation between the impact of these proposals and the proposals before us today on strengthening the capacity of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) in the areas of preventive diplomacy and resolution of conflicts. While this proposal for strengthening the capacity of the

Organization in the areas of peace and security, focused on the Organization's and its capacity to prevent and resolve conflict. The G77 and China firmly believes that a stronger United Nations needs a stronger development pillar because there can be no peace without development.

Mr. Chairman,

7. We have carefully considered the Report of the Secretary-General as contained in document A/62/521, and while welcoming some elements of the proposals we have also important concerns, which are reflected in the letter sent from the Chairs of the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) to the Secretary-General contained in the document A/C.5/62/24 dated 10 March 2008, asking for a corrigendum to address this concern. In this regard, the Group expresses its disappointment that the Secretariat did not meet the group's initial request.

8. We regret that the report submitted to the fifth committee, which by essence is to be exclusively of financial and administrative nature, contains, at time, approximate political judgments that might have counterproductive consequences in our interaction with the secretariat and that a number of these proposals have no intergovernmental mandate.

9. We would like to draw attention that the views, priorities and role of developing countries, including their contribution to conflict prevention and resolution are not adequately reflected in the report. We also note that some proposals in the report lack detailed information to allow Member States to make an informed decision, therefore more clarification is needed.

10. The Group of 77 and China reiterates that the objective of strengthening and rationalization of the Department of Political Affairs, including its supportive role regarding conflict prevention and resolution is to improve the Department's effectiveness and efficiency in fulfilling its mandate. We believe that the DPA has no mandate other than those provided by relevant resolutions and decisions of the United Nations. Therefore, any adjustment in the Department's mandate and structure should flow from the decisions of Member States.

11. We welcome in this regard the assurances of Mr. Pascoe contained in his letter to the chairmen of the JCC dated 11 March 2008 that the proposals of the Secretary-General do not entail any expansion of the functions already assigned to the DPA. However, the group would like more information from the OIOS on this issue as well as on their comments regarding which department in the Organization should be held accountable for special political missions.

12. As regards to the establishment of Regional Offices, the Group of 77 and China agrees fully with the observations of the ACABQ in this regard (para. 23) and stresses that the establishment of such Offices would require an appropriate mandate to be approved by the General Assembly, which doesn't cover any territories beyond the countries of the region concerned and after seeking the full views and agreement of all concerned Members. This should be done on a case by case basis, taking into account the different nature of various regions and the full respect of the principles of sovereignty and independence.

13. While we thank Mr. Pascoe for the assurances in his letter to the Chairmen of the JCC that no specific request for resources to establish Regional Offices is contained in the Secretary-General's report, and that there is no set formula for how these offices would conduct their work, we recall that in the Fact sheet dated 25 October 2007, the key elements of the plan to strengthen the Department includes "Rationalizing DPA's field presence through the establishment, in close consultation with Member States, of a limited network of regional offices that would assist Member States and regional organizations with preventive diplomatic efforts; these offices would be

modeled roughly on the current UN Office for West Africa". We expect explanations of this contradiction.

14. Similarly, The Group of 77 and China has concerns regarding some of the proposals for restructuring the Regional Divisions within the DPA. We fully concur with the view of the ACABQ that some Divisions do not warrant the proposed multiplicity of units and would benefit more from an issue-oriented approach. The replies made by Mr. Pascoe stating that DPA will continue the current practice of using flexible teams rather than dividing each regional division into formal sections and units seems to be insufficient. More clarity on this issue is required.

15. We also wish to reiterate the importance of the principle of equitable geographical representation regarding any decision taken by the Secretariat in terms of human resources, so as to ameliorate the current geographic imbalance in DPA. Citizens of the concerned regions are the most knowledgeable of the specificities and the needs of their regions. In this regard, giving priority to women and men from under-represented countries does not address the concerns of the Group. It might even lead to deepening the current imbalance in the geographical representation in the Department.

16. Turning to the issue of Policy Planning and Cross-Cutting issues, we note that the report of the Secretary-General lacks detailed information on the mandates of the DPA regarding this important issue, bearing in mind that the majority of these issues are dealt with by relevant UN bodies. In this context, the information contained in Mr. Pascoe's letter seems to be insufficient. We seek further information on the relevant mandates approved by Member States in regard to the DPA's expansion of functions and mandates in the area of cross-cutting issues, as well as the increase in demand on DPA for the political advice from United Nations' bodies that have established mandates in this area.

17. Finally, the Group recalls that the fact sheet of 25 October 2007 also refers to an important element to be submitted in a later stage as a follow on proposal for a support account. We believe that this proposal must be considered in the context of our follow up discussions on this issue.

Mr. Chairman,

18. The Group of 77 and China looks forward to a constructive consideration of the resource requirements for DPA. The Group of 77 and China wishes to express its readiness to work on this issue with a constructive approach and a spirit of cooperation and hopes that its views will be duly taken into account so as to facilitate a successful outcome of this process.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.