

Closing remarks by Mr. Prayono Atiyanto, the Representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the Regular Session of the Fifth Committee of the 53rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly

New York, 18 December 1998

Mr. Chairman,

It would be remiss for my delegation not to say a few words as closing remarks at the Regular Session of the Fifth Committee of the 53rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

At the outset, allow me on behalf of the member states of the Group of 77 and China to express our thanks to the Bureau of the Fifth Committee in facilitating the work of the Fifth Committee during the 53rd Session of the General Assembly. I would also like to express our thanks to all the coordinators of the various agenda items, for their efforts. Furthermore, I would also like to thank all the staff of the Fifth Committee Secretariat, the conference officers, the interpreters, the precis writers, the document officers, the staff of the press releases of the Department of Public Information and the sound engineers for their valuable support, assistance and cooperation during the meetings of the Fifth Committee as well as the deliberations of the Group of 77 and China during this session.

Mr. Chairman,

Once again a sense of satisfaction would not be the most appropriate way of characterizing the present session. Rather, the Group of 77 and China continues to feel strongly that the delay in concluding the regular session of the Fifth Committee of the 53rd Session of the General Assembly should not set a precedent for future deliberations. This is particularly relevant since the Fifth Committee began its meetings always on schedule throughout this current session. This brings us to express another concern that despite the provision that was adopted by consensus, as contained in General Assembly resolution 521220 paragraph 93, the Committee still had to resort to night and week-end meetings.

We are concerned that many of the agenda items that are included in the programme of work could not be concluded in this session. This may have taken place due to the over-ambitious programme of work of the Committee. Or it could be due to the lack of political will, despite the constructive spirit which permeated the discussions among member states throughout the decision-making process in previous sessions.

We also deeply regret the fact that the Committee continues to be confronted by the chronic problem of late submissions and issuance of documents and reports of the Secretariat, as well as the poor quality of the content of some of these documents and reports, which hampers the smooth functioning and decision-making process of the Fifth Committee.

This situation obstructed the Committee from taking timely and necessary action on some important issues such as human resources management and development account and its utilization, review of the General Assembly resolution 48/218B, Joint Inspection Unit and reports of the OIOS. It even left the Committee with very little time to discuss urgent matters such as the outline of the proposed programme budget for the biennium and the First Performance Report. This brings us to the important need for having the necessary resumed sessions for the Committee conclude its work allocated during the 53rd Session of the General Assembly. We hope that the Fifth Committee during its resumed sessions could comprehensively address all matters which remain pending.

Mr. Chairman,

While having the floor, let me also express a brief personal note. As you may be aware this formal meeting is probably the last occasion for my co-chair and myself, on behalf of our Permanent Representative, the Chairman of the Group of 77 and China, to address the formal meeting of the Fifth Committee as spokesperson of the Group of 77 and China for 1998. In this regard, I would like to wholeheartedly thank all of my colleagues, distinguished members of the Group of 77 and China, for their hard work, full support and great understanding of which without all of whose generosity I simply could not accomplish my task as the Chairman and the spokesperson. Let me also extend my sincere and deep appreciation and thanks to Arturo Lozano from the Office of the Group of 77 for his valuable technical support.

We would like also to thank all of our negotiating partners for the dynamic interaction that we had during the Indonesia's Chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China since January 1998. I hope that under the leadership of my dear friend and colleague, the Distinguished Representative of Guyana, the interaction between the Group of 77 and China and its negotiating partners could be improved in 1999.

Although we very much enjoyed the interaction with various negotiating partners, we would like to say that in Indonesia there is an appropriate saying "tak ada gading yang tak retak" which means nothing is perfect in this world. But again we strongly believe that if there is a will there always will be a way to solve many problems in a concerted manner. In this context, at least as the outgoing Chairman, I would like to reiterate that the Group of 77 and China is committed to continuing the goodwill, cooperation and friendship with other members of this Committee and also with all the staff of the Secretariat during the first resumed session.

Thank you.