



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MRS. NORMA TAYLOR ROBERTS, PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 122: REVIEW OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL FUNCTIONING OF THE UNITED NATIONS (New York, 13 October 2005)**

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the issues of accountability and oversight presented in the following reports: A/60/312, A/60/120, and A/60/418.

The Group wishes to thank Ms. Inga-Britt Ahlenius, Under-Secretary-General for the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), Ms. Nancy Hurtz-Soyka from the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Management, and Ambassador Besley Maycock of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for their respective reports on this item.

- We welcome the current efforts to strengthen accountability at the United Nations. To this end, we recognize that this is the first report of this nature to be submitted to the General Assembly and provides a reflection of the various mechanisms that have already been put in place.
- It is regrettable, however, that such efforts did not commence as a result of the numerous calls by the membership, but rather as a reaction to wide spread allegations that negatively reflected on the image and credibility of the Organization.
- We cannot over-emphasize that any accountability framework or oversight system has to be founded on the principle that the General Assembly is the primary oversight body, and that the Secretariat is accountable to it. This is the paramount consideration in our approach to the entire issue of accountability and oversight.
- The G77 and China underlined on numerous occasions, the need to establish an effective system of accountability that defines clear lines of authority and responsibility, with the GA at its helm. We are equally convinced that addressing the problems that arise in the Organization should not be through merely creating additional structures and providing additional resources. Resources and new structures must be well thought out and carefully examined, with a clear vision of their objectives and value added. The functioning and contribution of these structures towards greater accountability and improved management will have to be validated. This validation can only be done within the context of the long-overdue comprehensive governance review called for by the General Assembly three years ago.
- Such an approach cannot be more evident than in the case of accountability and oversight. The creation of committees, groups and working groups does not by itself provide the answer unless they are created in accordance with a vision that sets out the placement, functioning and responsibility of each component of such a vast network. We fear that such a vision is not evident. In this context, the Group would like to have further clarifications on how the new structures would enhance accountability and transparency in the Secretariat, and whether the oversight bodies were consulted in the process.
- The Outcome Document of the 60 th Session of the General Assembly is not the only reference document on Oversight and Accountability. The General Assembly made numerous requests in this regard, and these must be met by the Secretariat. One of the most important elements is the comprehensive review of the governance structures, principles and accountability throughout the United Nations System. This review is referred to in paragraphs 36 to 38 in the report of the Secretary-General. It is, therefore, of much concern that such a comprehensive review is predicted to be submitted in the 61 st session, and not earlier. We call on the Secretary-General to undertake the necessary measures to ensure that such a review be submitted as soon as possible, in order to expedite our consideration of the whole issue.
- We welcome the report of the OIOS on the inspection of programme and administrative management of the subregional offices of the Economic Commission for Africa (A/60/120) and note its importance in the context of the significant role Member States assigned to the ECA in support of NEPAD. The key role that subregional offices should play in that whole process must be emphasized. It is therefore important that those subregional offices have clearly stated mandates and understand their responsibilities. It is equally necessary that they have staff with requisite skills for the job. Further they need the tools and wherewithal to discharge those functions. Proper training, adequate infrastructure and coordination between them and ECA so that synergies could be created. We as Member States should not only demand excellence but ensure that we make it possible for excellence to be delivered. We are encouraged with the comments we heard from the Under-Secretary-General yesterday that ECA is cooperating fully with her Office towards the implementation of the recommendations of OIOS. We look forward to receiving details in this regard in the next report of OIOS.

Turning to specific elements of the report of the Secretary-General on measures to strengthen accountability (A/60/312), the Group wishes to make the following preliminary remarks:

## **Accountability framework**

- We believe that the Organization has to establish accountability measures that will hold staff accountable not only for the use of the Organization's resources in the most effective and ethical manner, but also to illustrate that their actions are geared towards attaining the objectives and implementing the mandates of the Organization in a timely manner. We also expect that the comprehensive governance review will be able to validate the processes and measures whereby accountability is being measured to provide us with reasonable assurances that the mechanisms work and are not just additional bureaucratic layers.
- The Group notes the establishment of the Management performance Board, as outlined in paragraphs 5 to 7. The Group is not clear as to the functioning of such a Board in relation to the functioning of the Oversight Committee, referred to in paragraphs 24 to 28. Furthermore, while, the Oversight Committee is supposed to ensure actions by Managers on recommendations of oversight bodies, the Board is also entrusted to ensure that managers act on serious managerial issues identified by oversight bodies. This seems to create a measure of duplication in functions. We would therefore appreciate a clarification on this matter.
- With regard to the creation of the Policy and Management Committees, the Group would appreciate an elaboration on the differences between the two Committees and the Senior Management Group, a part from the size of their composition. Furthermore, we would like to seek more information on the relationship between both Committees and the issues discussed at the level of the Chief Executive Board for Coordination and the High-Level Committee. We further wish to obtain an explanation of the benefits of separating policy setting and management functions, especially in light of the need to ensure coherence and coordination between the various entities of the United Nations system on these matters.
- On measures to evaluate programme delivery, we emphasize the need for an transparent process to assess and validate the achievements of managers regarding programme delivery. This assessment should also address the effectiveness of the established monitoring system and reasonableness of the self-evaluation exercise. In this context, it is important to develop a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of managers and that of the oversight bodies with regard to monitoring and evaluation.

## **Assessment of experience with audit and oversight committees within the United Nations system and other international organizations**

- We note that no clear distinction has been made between audit committees and oversight committees. It seems from the report that there is no standard model that could be applied across the system and that many organizations have established a hybrid of the two types of committees.
- The information contained in the report does not provide a clear assessment of the data collected. We look forward to an extensive expose of the experiences of the entities in the United Nations system and other international organizations during the informal consultations.

## **Strengthening the oversight mechanisms**

- We share the concerns of the ACABQ that it may not be appropriate for the Oversight Committee, on behalf of the Secretary-General, to provide advice and suggestions on the priorities, long-term strategy and annual audit workplans of the oversight bodies. We believe that the independence of the oversight bodies should remain paramount.
- We therefore believe that the Fifth Committee should reflect on the terms of reference of the Oversight Committee to ascertain whether or not its establishment and terms of reference fully addresses the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 59/272. In this context, we would also appreciate receiving an indication of the qualifications of the external expert, as well as an elaboration of how the Oversight Committee fits in with the Management Performance Board.
- We further believe that there should be a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of management vis-à-vis that of the oversight bodies. We maintain that management is responsible for assigning responsibilities for the implementation of recommendations, setting time-frames, prioritizing implementation and assessing the impact of its measures. The oversight bodies have to assess the reasonableness of management's response.
- In addition to our earlier comments, we maintain that the governance review should consider the structures, mechanisms and processes of the Organization, as well as its funds and programmes, in a comprehensive manner. It should meet international best practice whilst taking the unique international character and purpose of the United Nations into account. We are concerned that the Secretariat has take nearly three years to reach the stage of developing the terms of reference. This may be due to different understandings with regard to the

objective and the scope of the review. We therefore believe that it is imperative to provide the Fifth Committee with an explanation of the terms of reference for the review. We will further require an assurance that the Working Group will not only focus on financial aspects but also on the non-financial aspects that should be subjected to the review. The composition of the Working Group seems to suggest that the focus will be on financial and human resources management aspects.

### **Ensuring ethical conduct**

- With regard to the proposed establishment of the UN Office of Ethics, we look forward to receiving, through the established channels, the proposals for the establishment of the Office, as well as its terms of reference that are currently under preparations.
- We find the information on the codes of conduct and conflict-of-interest rules confusing. We would appreciate a detailed explanation thereof during the informal consultations.

### **Sexual exploitation and abuse**

- The Group wishes to stress that the General Assembly has not approved the establishment of a Conduct and Discipline Unit at Headquarters or in the field. We would appreciate a clarification of paragraph 48 (c).

### **Enhancing transparency**

- We believe that transparency is an important aspect of the system of accountability and decision-making. We therefore expect that the comprehensive governance review should validate whether or not information is managed in a transparent manner, can the accuracy of the information be verified, and is the information used properly by management when taking decisions.
- The Group welcomes any effort to make the recruitment, selection and appointment of senior officials more transparent and reflective of the international character of the Organization, as well as based on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. We would like to have a serious exchange on the details of the process, as outlined in paragraphs 53 to 55 of the report of the Secretary-General.
- The Group welcomes any effort to make procurement practices more transparent, efficient and effective. We also encourage measures to ensure that procurement policies and practices within the United Nations system effectively incorporate suppliers from all regions, especially from developing countries. We note that the Secretary-General commissioned an external validation of the procurement system. We would appreciate an elaboration of the terms of reference of the external review, as well as the status of the review and the timing of the submission of the findings to the General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China will be following up on all these points in the informal consultations with a view to formulating with our partners, an agreed approach to the entire issue of strengthening oversight and accountability within the Organization.

I thank you.