



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MS. KAREN LOCK, PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 124: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2006-2007 (ESTIMATES IN RESPECT OF SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS, GOOD OFFICE AND OTHER POLITICAL INITIATIVES, AUTHORISED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND/OR THE SECURITY COUNCIL), AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 21 March 2006)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 124, in particular on the "Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives, authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council".

The Group of 77 and China wishes to thank the Chief of the Political, Legal and Humanitarian Services of the Programme Planning and Budget Division, Mr. Dennis Thatchaichawalit, for introducing the two reports of the Secretary-General (A/60/585/Add.1 and Add.2), which provide additional financial information on the requirements contained in his budget proposal for 2006 (A/60/585), as introduced on 19 December 2005. We also wish to thank the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), Mr. Rajat Saha, for introducing the report of the Committee (A/60/7/Add.37).

Mr. Chairman,

It will be recalled that on 23 December 2005 the Fifth Committee decided to defer its consideration of the 2006 budget proposal for 26 special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and /or the Security Council until March 2006. In the interim, the Committee approved a charge of US\$100 million against the provision for special political missions under section 3 of the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007. This decision enabled the smooth and continued functioning of the missions until the end of April 2006. It also provided the Secretariat with an opportunity to improve on the quality of the financial and programme information submitted to Member States in support of the budget proposal for 2006.

The Group of 77 and China in 2005 joined this consensus decision following assurances by the Secretariat that the interim funding arrangement would be sufficient. The Group further shared the concern expressed by the Advisory Committee regarding "the submission of a proposal of such magnitude so close to the end of the year". The late submission prevented Member States and the Advisory Committee from embarking on a detailed consideration of a substantial portion of the overall resource level of the programme budget for 2006-2007. It was also felt that the budget proposal received in December 2005 lacked the detailed information requested by the Assembly in its resolution 59/276 on the financial and programmatic aspects of each and every operation and, in particular, of the larger ones.

The Group of 77 and China therefore notes that the results-based logical framework has been applied to all but one of the operations. Given the sensitive nature of some of the special political missions, we trust that every effort will continue to be made to ensure that budget submissions adhere strictly to the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 55/231 on results-based budgeting and, in particular to ensuring that the expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement are used to measure the achievements in the implementation of programmes of the United Nations and not those of individual Member States. We also expect the Secretariat to ensure that budget proposals for special political missions are submitted on time and with the requisite motivations and detailed information.

The Group of 77 and China recognizes the need to agree on the narratives and resources related to special political missions in a timely manner. We therefore look forward to a constructive consideration of the narratives with a view to ensuring that they are in conformity with the mandates originating from the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group largely supports the recommendations set out in paragraphs 9 to 16 of the Advisory Committee's report because they may improve the presentation of future budget submissions and enable Member States to better assess resource requirements. The Group looks forward to further consultations with the ACABQ and Secretariat on the scope of the management review called for in paragraph 16 and would also appreciate an indication as to how the Secretariat intends to implement the recommendations in paragraphs 12 and 13 of the report.

Turning to the resource level requested by the Secretary-General for the 28 operations to be financed as a charge against the provision for special political missions, the Group notes that the level of resources has increased significantly over the past few years. The provisional amount set aside for special political missions in the current and previous budget outlines has not provided an accurate forecast of the overall requirements needed for these operations during the previous and the current biennia. In this context, whilst we recognise that estimated resource requirements are subject to the extension of the mandates of the operations, reflection should be given to ensuring a more accurate forecast of the overall requirements for the entire two-year period of the programme budget.

The Group also notes the reductions in the resource level proposed by the Advisory Committee. In this context, we would appreciate an indication as to whether the reductions to travel and consultancy services would be applied across the board to all operations, and, if so, how this would impact on the smaller operations. We also wish to affirm that the use of experts and consultants for operations financed as a charge against the provision for special political missions should be in full compliance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China wishes to reiterate the importance that it attaches to the effective functioning of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and /or the Security Council.

We also attach great importance to the Charter mandated role of the General Assembly in considering the administrative and budgetary matters of the Organisation, including those related to special political missions. We further attach importance to the accountability of the Secretariat to the General Assembly, as the primary oversight Organ. We therefore wish to once again voice our concern regarding the tendency of the Security Council to discuss matters that fall within the purview of the Assembly and to request the Secretary-General to establish Secretariat structures without the prior approval of the Assembly.

I thank you.

