



**STATEMENT DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MRS. AICHA AFIFI, MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY, AFTER THE INFORMAL ADOPTION OF THE DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET 2004-2005 IN THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 23 December 2003)**

Mr. Chairman,

It is with great pleasure that I speak this evening on behalf of the Group of 77 and China to say how happy we are that after three months of intense hard work, we have finally come to a successful completion of our work.

This would not have been possible but for your personal commitment and devotion to duty, at time at great sacrifice to your health and your family for this, the Group thanks you.

Similarly, we recognize that your tireless efforts would have been meaningless without the unfaltering support of the Secretariat. Mr. Warren Sach and his entire team went beyond the call of duty to provide us with a sound technical support night and day for the smooth conduct and completion of your work.

The technical support team attached to the Fifth Committee deserves our highest commendation. The interpreters, sound engineers and our Conference Room officers have been very supportive through this process and for that we thank them.

We also wish to acknowledge the moral support given to the entire process by the Under-Secretary-General Mrs. Catherine Bertini. We note in this regard the vigil she kept with us on a number of nights. That is leadership in action. We say thank you.

Our special gratitude and thanks go to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary and the team of the Fifth Committee secretariat. Their effort is highly appreciated by all of us.

There are faces we never see and may never see, namely, the translators that transcribe our documents. Their role is also critical to us and we want to express our sincere appreciation to them as well.

Mr. Chairman,

It will be remiss of me if I did not also acknowledge the cooperation and flexibility shown by our partners during the negotiations. This spirit of cooperation on all sides led to the successful outcome and facilitated the adoption of the draft budget resolution.

In this regard, I thank all our partners for their fruitful collaboration, particularly, my friend Roberto, the chairman of the European Union, for the vital role he played.

Now that we have concluded our work, and Christmas is only two days away, I wish to seize this opportunity to wish one and all a very merry Christmas and a happy year 2004.

To those who will travel, I say have a safe trip.

To all Bonne fête et à bientôt.

Thank you.