

GENERAL ASSEMBLY – THEMATIC DEBATE
“TOWARD A COMMON UNDERSTANDING ON
MANAGEMENT REFORM”

STATEMENT

BY

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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

NEW YORK, 8 APRIL 2008

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Mr. President

We would like to thank you for taking the initiative to convene today's thematic debate on management reform. It provides a good opportunity to review the current status, in particular since the adoption of the World Summit Outcome in September 2005. The Summit has led to a number of processes in the area of management reform, some of which have already brought about important improvements, such as the establishment of the Ethics Office and related policies, the establishment of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee, the re-structuring of DPKO, etc. In other areas, progress has been slow and requires renewed commitment, such as the reform of oversight, procurement, information technology, and most importantly, human resource reform. Each of these areas are very complex in nature and would merit separate debates. I will therefore focus on those areas which you, Mr. President, have suggested as issues of crucial importance for this debate:

Improving the mandate-generation cycle is one of the prime challenges this organization faces. The concept may sound technical at first, but it is in reality a most practical proposition: Both Member States and Secretariat, in their current practice, do not employ the required diligence and cooperation in the formulation and implementation of mandates. This problem has been amply illustrated in the reports of the Four Nations Initiative, and it has put forward valuable recommendations in this regard. In our current practice of mandating and delivering, there is often a disconnect between the intergovernmental negotiations leading to the formulation of a mandate and its subsequent implementation in the Secretariat. We are of the view that both parts of the system must make a stronger collaborative effort for the actual implementation. On the one hand, those countries acting as the main sponsors of resolutions could play a more pro-active role in linking the two parts of the system, in particular through the inclusion of Secretariat experts during the formulation phase of mandates. On the other hand, the respective departments of the Secretariat dealing with the implementation of

such mandates could equally make a greater effort to reach out to Member States when faced with problems in the implementation, which might in turn influence the formulation of mandates in the next cycle. The mandate registry could, in our view, be a useful permanent tool in support of a more efficient mandate cycle, and it should be kept updated to this effect.

The planning and budgetary process of the organization has equally been subject to much discussion. Despite some improvements in the last few years, results-based budgeting and management is still more of an aspiration than a reality. This is to some degree due to the complexity and number of mandates, many of which are difficult to evaluate in their implementation, and sometimes politically sensitive. We agree with many of the practical recommendations of the Four Nations Initiative, which put much emphasis on the need for the Secretariat to provide programme and budget information in a manner which gives Member States better strategic guidance. At the same time, there is today a certain gap between the work of the Fifth Committee on programmatic and budgetary matters and the work of the other Committees, where many of the substantive mandates are formulated. In our view, the strategic quality of the planning and budgetary process of the organization could improve considerably, if these different parts of the system would be better connected. A necessary first step in that direction would be improved coordination within our respective delegations here at UN Headquarters, as well as better coordination among the respective parts of the Secretariat.

Regarding the reform of UN human resource management, we note with great concern that once again, major decisions on this matter have been delayed. A great number of useful recommendations have been made by the Secretary-General in his report "Investing in People" of August 2006, which have been the subject of extensive debate. We generally support these proposals aimed at updating the UN's policies, bearing in mind that the great majority of UN personnel today are deployed in the field. The continued lack of progress in these negotiations stands in

stark contrast to the high priority attached to this matter in the World Summit Outcome.

Mr. President

When looking back at our achievements in management reform over the last two and a half years we should from time to time go back to the Summit Outcome Document, and compare the current processes and priorities to the decisions taken and mandates given to us by our Heads of State and Government. It appears that on a number of issues, we must re-invigorate the reform process. That process has in the recent past repeatedly been difficult to square with the extremely tight work schedule of the ACABQ and Fifth Committee, and has at times been overtaken by other urgent and time-bound budgetary decisions to be made. Given the importance and urgency of some parts of management reform, informal intersessional consultations could be undertaken to speed up the process. We would also like to encourage the Secretariat, the ACABQ and the Fifth Committee to improve the coordination and timely issuance of relevant reports with a view to ensuring that management reform proposals are thoroughly discussed and necessary decisions taken in due course.

I thank you.