

Statement by Dr. Ashwani Kumar, Member of Parliament and Member of the Indian Delegation, on Agenda Item No. 134 “Proposed Programme Budget: Biennium 2014-15” at the Fifth Committee of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on October 28, 2013

Mr. Chairman,

It is an honour to have the President of the General Assembly, and the Secretary-General among us today for the presentation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-15



I wish to thank the Secretary-General for the presentation of the budget for the next biennium. I thank the ACABQ Chair for introducing their relevant reports.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished permanent representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

The biennium budget reflects the priorities of United Nations and the willingness of the international community to make necessary resources available to achieve them. The budget document is a link between our ambitions and the actions we are ready to undertake.

It is our firm belief that under your able guidance the committee will successfully deliberate Secretary-General’s proposed programme budget amounting to 5.4 billion USD. We also hope it will lead to a balanced allocation of resources across the key priorities of the organization in the fields of peace, security, and development.

Important subjects pertaining to staff-mobility, special political missions, and numerous ongoing reform initiatives are also before the committee at this session.

Mr. Chairman,

More importantly, the committee will also have to carry the burden of the past-indecisions that can no longer be deferred anymore. Recosting decision to the tune of USD 170 million remains outstanding before the Committee. Unresolved staff-compensation issue is likewise a carryover from the past sessions.

Mr. Chairman,

Although the budgetary allocations to the Special Political Missions have increased steadily through the last decade, the regular budget has maintained a zero-growth in real terms for the last few bienniums. Investments on ICT, renovation and reconstruction have also been substantial.

The widening-gap between the initial appropriations and the revised estimates is a pointer to the infirmities of the budgetary process we have adopted.

Our ability to address unforeseen expenditures also continues to be ad-hoc and, therefore, is unsustainable from a budgetary perspective.

Expectations that additional expenditures will always be absorbed within the existing resources are ill-founded and must not define the process of budgetary formulation.

Mr. Chairman,

Last few bienniums were heavily focused on reforms & renovations. Much of the expenditures therefore went to headquarter-based structures and processes. The member states' meager resources should go to the poor and the deprived and not for the creation of hardware and assets at the headquarters.

It is our sincere hope that we can now re-focus our attention to the core priorities in the field of development, peace and security, all the more when budgetary resources have streamed thin.

Mr. Chairman,

In this regard, we are deeply anguished to note secretary-general's proposed reduction of posts under the developmental pillar. This will further aggravate the neglect of the developmental needs of the poor citizenry of the world.

Mr. Chairman,

Ballooning extra-budgetary contributions defy the belief that the prevailing fiscal-climate has adversely impacted member-states ability to contribute to the regular budget. Moreover, an excessive shift towards voluntary contributions pre-empts a judicious and consultative allocation of resources.

We believe that the regular budget is not to cater to the administrative expenses of the organization alone, with extra-budgetary contributions taking over the programmatic component.

Mr. Chairman,

The paramount need today is to anchor the budgetary process once again in the democratic ethos and to dedicate it visibly to vindicating the role of this organization as custodian of global peace and well-being of the disadvantaged.

Mr. Chairman,

Secretariat staff are the drivers and carriers of our mandates. Their ability is our capacity. Our workforce must be true to the global character of the organization. A restricted catchment of workforce will continue to throw up challenges that the proposed mobility-framework seeks to address. It is our sincere hope that the Secretary General's proposals will contribute to correcting the geographic imbalance in the composition of the present secretariat.

Mr. Chairman,

The special political missions are now a prominent tool in the domain of peace and security. From a mere 200 million USD, the SPM today require an estimated 1.2 billion USD. The arrangements for their backstopping and funding have generated much debate in the past sessions. Streamlining of their budgetary and associated processes will render them nimble and cost-effective.

Mr. Chairman,

Programme delivery is the sole yardstick for the success of the budgetary process. Our sights must therefore be firmly focused accordingly. Efficiency gains & cuts suggested at the headquarters are essentially management practices that can in no way substitute the field-based assessment of mandate implementation.

Faced with mounting challenges to global peace & security, our ability to make a difference in people's lives is directly proportionate to our willingness to spare resources and to use them judiciously. An aspiration, therefore, to freeze budget-levels artificially ahead in time will end up exposing its limitations as the biennium unfolds.

Mr. Chairman,

Expensive reform initiatives have been undertaken in recent bienniums. ICT project UMOJA alone cost us USD 360 million. The cost of secretariat renovation amounted to USD 2 billion. The logistical and support arm of peacekeeping stands relocated today in far-off lands away from the member states, thus enhancing the cost of arbitrage many times. Cost overruns, project-governance, hidden-costs, and implementation-delays

have been some of the routine features the member-states had to grapple with during the past sessions

The case for strict monitoring and greater transparency has, therefore, never been this strong. Our experiences must be built into the lessons we learn. The ambition for transformation must not risk derailment on account of lack of administrative and management oversights.

Mr. Chairman,

Concern for the well-being of the poor and the under-privileged must be the first charge on the resources of the organization while we adopt corporate efficiencies and standards at the headquarters. Our housekeeping expenses must necessarily be moderated so that we are not found wanting in the discharge of our primary responsibility.

Mr. Chairman,

India believes that an overly cost-conscious approach, dominated by few big donors hurts the deliberative space so far as the programmatic elements of the mandates are concerned. It also weakens the collaborative character that defines the United Nations.

Lastly, **Mr. Chairman,**

This process is not about the aspirations, resources, and mandates alone. It is also about the manner in which we deliberate together to make it work. Imbalances, therefore, impart strength neither to the process nor to its outcome. This session must make manifest and eloquently visible our collective response to faithfully vindicate the trust reposed in this organization for ensuring distributive and inter-generational equities in the cause of global peace and inclusive development.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.

BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS