



Statement by H.E. Mr. Nirupam Sen, Permanent
Representative, on Review of Mandates at the Informal
Plenary Meeting on Secretariat and Management Reform on
January 25, 2006

We thank the Co-Chairs for organizing these informal consultations. This gives us a timely opportunity to convey our views and to address some concerns regarding the listing of mandates that the SG is presently preparing. The template of the document that will be submitted to the General Assembly and which was circulated by you also provides a useful point of reference to focus our discussion.

We strongly support the statement made by South Africa which forcefully and with clarity summarizes the position.

We are encouraged by the guiding principal, particularly relevant for the mandate review, which the Co-Chairs laid down at the first informal plenary meeting on Secretariat and Management Reform on December 6, 2005. The Co-Chairs had then stated that this is not a cost-cutting exercise, but rather a review that takes into account the political and intergovernmental nature of the United Nations, its purpose and proceedings and that above all, the United Nations is not a commercial operation.

One delegation has stated that the UN has to compete with other bodies in carrying out its work. The United Nations as the only universal inter-governmental body has a

unique legitimacy that has been proven time and time again. Therefore, we do not believe that the UN has to compete with any other body. Rather, all other international bodies and organizations have to work in cooperation with the UN and under its leadership. This matter is also operationally important. For instance, the Bretton Woods Institutions have strayed far from their original mandate (when they were set up) to encourage Keynesian demand management policies to promote full employment. This is still the Charter mandate of ECOSOC. Moreover, globalization and liberalization have frequently, in some developing countries (notably in sub-Saharan Africa) increased unemployment and income disparities. It is therefore extremely important for UN to set the international agenda and provide leadership. Hence we cannot accept the argument that the UN should leave such matters to other organizations that allegedly can do better.

In accordance with the World Summit Outcome embodied in Resolution 60/1, the timeline that has been set by the collective membership is that the GA and the other organs should complete and take the necessary decisions arising from the mandate review during 2006. This is a complex exercise involving all the principal organs of the UN and extending to every area of its work. It would require detailed consideration and discussion among Member States if it is to really achieve its stated objective, which is to "to strengthen and update the programme of work of the United Nations so that it responds to the contemporary requirements of Member States".

We welcome the fact that the Secretariat has proceeded with a sense of urgency in this complex task. However, a mere listing of mandates is not enough. The information has to be presented in a form that the membership is able to analyze and absorb. The Secretariat had stated at our meeting on December 14 last year that the information would be organized in such a way as to

facilitate the review of mandates by Member States. In our view, it is essential that the information and observations of the Secretary General be presented in a manner that makes it possible to sort the information in terms of the following criteria:

- The organ that is to undertake the review of each mandate.
- Categorization in terms of the broad purposes of the Organisation. Rather than in terms of thematic clusters as has been suggested by the Secretariat, this could be in terms of the agreed priorities of the Organisation such as development, human rights, peace and security etc.
- Whether it is a general mandate or relates to a region or a particular Member State or States.
- Whether it is older than five years and reaffirmed subsequently, or it has not been reaffirmed or if it is a new mandate.

In order to be usable, such a presentation has to also be made available in an electronic format that permits sorting on the basis of each of the above criteria to facilitate analysis and informed consideration. This would be especially useful for smaller delegations. An illustration of this would be that if the General Assembly wishes to review the number of reports it is requesting from the Secretariat on the issue of social development, it should be possible, by searching electronically, to extract the number of reports on social development that have been requested by the GA, ECOSOC and ECOSOC's subsidiary machinery.

In addition to the information corresponding to each mandate that has been indicated in the template that the Co-Chairs have kindly circulated, the template should also include information on:

- The intergovernmental body that originated the mandate (it could be a principal organ or a subsidiary body, since many mandates owe their origin to subsidiary bodies)
- The intergovernmental body that is responsible for overseeing the mandate
- Whether the mandate is currently being implemented and if not the reasons for non-implementation.
- Linkage to other mandates, if applicable.

The Secretariat should bring out clearly in explanatory notes to each mandate exactly what each mandate seeks to accomplish and how it is being implemented. If there has been any shortfall in implementation, the reasons for such shortfall whether they be lack of adequate resources for implementation, whether a mandate has been overtaken by a subsequent mandate, or any other reason should be clearly indicated.

We do not see the logic of the argument that there are only five weeks till the deadline and hence the information to be provided may not be comprehensive or detailed as possible. This is a deadline that seems to have been set by the Secretariat. The General Assembly has never called for any such deadline. As stated earlier, the Outcome Document states that this review be conducted in 2006. We were looking forward to the report in end-February. However, if the report is to be incomplete or inaccurate as a consequence of the rush to complete the job, we would rather wait until the Secretariat can assure us of a good report.

Here, I would like to make a brief comment on how the rush to complete against a deadline creates problems as seen in the case of the Peace Building Commission. We will be condemned to repeat history if we do not learn lessons from that. In the discussions on the Organizational

Committee of the Peace Building Commission, we have seen the problems created by the Resolutions. In Hegel's phrase, in the case of the Peace Building Commission it was a tragedy, in the case of the mandate review it may be a farce: we should avoid such an outcome.

On programmatic shifts, such an exercise would only be possible after Member States have determined which mandates can be discontinued and hence what resources can be released. This is a subsequent process which will follow this exercise. In any case, that is for Member States to determine and not for the Secretariat to undertake. In both conceptual and practical terms, we cannot put the cart before the horse.

Administrative mandates should not be subject to this exercise as that would complicate the process relating to the review of policies, rules and regulations that is the subject of another report which will be considered by the ACABQ and the Fifth Committee.

On the issue of indicating in the template the budgetary implications of each mandate, this is neither practicable nor desirable. It is not practicable for the reason that the budget of the United Nations is allocated among programmes and sub-programmes, each of which are tasked with implementing dozens or even scores of mandates. There is no way of disaggregating resources allocated to a sub-programme among the many mandates that it seeks to implement. The Secretariat cannot be expected to indulge in such a fruitless exercise.

Nor is this exercise desirable. Mandates have to be considered on their intrinsic merit and based on the value that Member States attach to their continuance, not on the basis of costs associated with them. It is only once the review has been undertaken that the Secretariat can be

tasked with identifying the resources that could be freed from the discontinuance of identified mandates.

One delegation has stated that if the budgetary implications of each mandate cannot be indicated, the number of work days involved could be used. It may be satisfactory but is certainly ironic that we are shifting from the monetary to the Marxist concept of labour time. However, from a practical point of view, we do not see how this would be feasible.

Some have advocated that by indicating resource allocations against each mandate, Member States would be able to determine whether they receive value for money. The question is of course, value for whom. We should not lose sight of the fact that the Organisation exists for the good of its collective membership. It goes without saying that the Organisation's programme of work has to be based on what the vast majority of its membership considers to be of value.

This brings me to my final point which is that above all, the process of mandate review has to be a democratic one whereby the continuation or otherwise of mandates is determined by the majority of the membership of the Organisation. This would ensure that such a review is based on the value that the larger membership of this Organisation attaches to its work rather than on any monetary cost that some Member States may like to weigh. Since a few cannot determine what is of value to the many, consequently the results of the review have to be determined through the normal democratic process where every Member State has an equal say.

I thank you, Mr. Co-Chair.

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