



STATEMENT BY MR. NIRUPAM SEN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON THEMATIC DEBATE 'TOWARDS A COMMON UNDERSTANDING ON MANAGEMENT REFORM' UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON APRIL 08, 2008

Mr. President,

I thank you for organizing this thematic debate "Towards a Common Understanding on Management Reform". I also thank the Secretary-General for his comments on the subject. I take this opportunity to convey our appreciation to the Members States of the Four Nations Initiative for their fruitful commitment to this important issue. My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Distinguished Permanent Representative of Antigua & Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. President,

Attempts to impose preconceived notions which are alien to the unique nature of the Organization are not only doomed to fail but are likely to undermine the very cause that we collectively seek to promote. Some of the reforms already implemented have been enumerated by the Chair of the G-77. Much more needs to be done. At best these are a work in progress. Strobe Talbott in his latest book "The Great Experiment" says that the mega threats of today "can be held at bay only through multilateralism on a scale far beyond any thing the world has achieved to date". To back this up we require a stronger and more efficient Secretariat machinery.

Mr. President,

We cannot just reform the Secretariat and think that we have reformed the UN. To do this would be to confuse the machinery of implementation with the conceptual business of decision-making, a change in apparatus with a change in structure. My friends in the G-77 quite rightly want a Secretariat responsive to the concerns of the developing countries. This cannot be accomplished by tackling personnel; only by tackling power. The reform package has to be looked at in a comprehensive manner:

there is no place for cherry-picking. This is not just conceptually but operationally the case. Management reform cannot be looked at in isolation from other pending reforms in the UN, particularly the reform of the Security Council and the revitalization of the General Assembly, as mandates emerging from these principal organs have a direct impact on the effective functioning of the Secretariat. For example, in peacekeeping operations, Security Council mandates often do not take into account capacity and resources available in the Secretariat for implementing these. These increasingly complex mandates with difficult timelines are given by the Security Council but it is the General Assembly that is left with the difficult task of raising the required resources, so essential to the Secretariat for its task. We cannot hold the Security Council accountable; it is much easier to blame the Secretariat.

Similarly, the proposal to make the budgetary period of peacekeeping missions a uniform one year and independent of the period for which the Security Council approves a mandate is excellent but would the permanent members accept it? So is the consolidation of peacekeeping accounts but would the biggest contributors go along?

However, it is the Secretariat's responsibility to ensure a balanced allocation of resources for the three pillars of the Organization, by giving the Member States resource proposals based on strategic planning and in-depth analysis, which takes into account risks and eventualities inherent in the activities of the Organization. It is this that distinguishes a dynamic management from an ordinary one. The fragmented or piecemeal nature of the regular budget proposals for the 2008-2009 biennium and its consequences are still fresh in our minds. It blighted even the first resumed session of the Fifth Committee in March 2008, when decisions on important agenda items like reform of the Department of Political Affairs, HRM, Procurement, Investigations etc. were deferred, creating a sense of paralysis in our decision-making. The responsibility for this unhappy situation rests partly with the Secretariat because of its inability to present, in a timely manner, a holistic picture of its budgetary requirements to enable Member States to take well-informed decisions. On the other hand, one cannot have reform on the cheap. Either we have to live in an unreformed condition or pay for reform. The EU emphasized the optimal use of resources but not the provision of the resources. I agree with the Nordic countries who called the provision of resources 'essential' in order to ensure 'legitimacy' and efficiency. I attribute this to their being reasonable rather than merely rich.

Mr. President,

Clear accountability across the Secretariat and at all levels, particularly at the senior management level, is of paramount importance for ensuring full implementation of mandates and efficient utilization of resources. It also impacts directly on the issue of budgetary discipline, human resources, programme delivery etc. The Secretary-General's report on the accountability framework (A/62/701), which has still not been

introduced in the General Assembly, mentions that transparency in the selection of senior management builds trust in management and management-level decisions among staff and other stakeholders. The absence of this transparency, or the perception of its absence, has a demoralizing effect on staff, who, in a survey conducted during the preparation of this report, have expressed a lack of confidence in the appraisal of their performance by senior management. They have pointed to the absence of a result-oriented culture in the Organization. An environment in which performance is not rewarded and under or non performance is not penalized can never shape an efficient and effective Organization. Most important of all, holding the senior management accountable would have to be the bedrock of the future accountability framework. In that context, we find the senior management compact system inadequate. Institution of a performance-linked penalty and reward system and a transparent selection process would be some important steps in the right direction. The Four Nations Initiative proposes hearings by expert panels. We would add confirmation hearings in the General Assembly on the pattern of US constitutional practice.

Mr. President,

My delegation supports the review of mandates not as a euphemism for cost-cutting based on indiscriminate elimination of mandates but as a process of consolidation and rationalization of mandates to ensure effective implementation, besides monitoring and evaluating partial or non-implementation. Rapid growth in mandates is a reality given the emergence of new and complex global challenges. Inadequacy of commensurate resources could be a major reason for our dissatisfaction with the Organization's inability to deliver what we expect of it, in terms of quality and quantity of outputs. This is particularly evident in the development-related mandates. The General Assembly in its Resolution 62/236 (paragraph 73) on the Programme Budget for 2008-2009 biennium recognized the need for strengthening the Secretariat's development pillar and asked for a comprehensive proposal with a view to improving the effective and efficient delivery of the mandates of the development-related activities of the Secretariat. The GA rightly judged that the development pillar had been sidelined in terms of budgetary allocations in the last 10 years. More so, when we are in the implementation phase of MDGs, which require provision of normative/analytical advice to Member States, an integral part of the mandate of DESA, the Regional Commissions and UNCTAD. Authoritative statistics available clearly indicate that the total budgetary allocation for development pillar has gone down from 22.2% in 1997-98 to 17.8% in 2008-2009 [DESA-4.6% to 3.8%; Regional Commissions-12.8%to 10.2%; UNCTAD-4.7% to 3.0%]. In terms of posts this translates into a decrease from 3,278 in 1996-97 to 3021 in 2008-2009. This decrease is all the more striking when we compare it to the challenges before the developing countries. The Secretary General has made reasonable proposals and we hope to arrive at a common understanding on adopting these. In the first 30 years of the UN, its golden period in economic terms, economic ideas emanating from it challenged orthodoxy and helped. The economic crisis of today shows that this is all the more needed today.

On the staffing of the Secretariat, the Chair of G-77 has already given a detailed statistical justification for correcting the imbalance in terms of equitable representation. I would only like to add that we sometimes hear the argument of competence when what is meant is patronage. We have been trading equity for efficiency. Has it given us efficiency? Let us, therefore, give equity a chance.

Mr. President,

I look forward to commenting on specific issues during the interactive session. However, before concluding, I cannot help feeling that the very fact that four countries took upon themselves the task of launching the Four Nations Initiative is another manifestation of Member States being forced to undertake (in fields like the budgetary process and human resource management) what should normally be the ongoing responsibility of the Secretariat, as a part of its regular management function.

Thank you Mr. Chairman

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