



STATEMENT BY MR. NIRUPAM SEN, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE, ON
AGENDA ITEM 118 – PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2008-2009
DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ACTIVITIES AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE 63RD
SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 16,
2008

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you on assuming the Chairmanship of this important Committee. We also extend our best wishes to the other members of the bureau.

We thank the Deputy Secretary-General for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on "improving the effective and efficient delivery of the mandates of development-related activities and revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (A/62/708). Our appreciation also goes to the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for introducing her Committee's report. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Distinguished Deputy Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. Chairman,

Showing foresight and wisdom, the General Assembly, in its resolution 62/236, on questions related to the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009, requested the Secretary-General to present a comprehensive proposal with a view to improving efficient and effective delivery of the mandates of the development-related activities of the United Nations Secretariat, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Regional Commissions and the Development Account. At a time, when we are confronted by perhaps the worst economic and financial crisis since the Great Depression, the Secretary-General's proposals, placed before us, for strengthening the development pillar of the UN Secretariat are both relevant and timely. If anything, these modest proposals have been overtaken by the global financial crisis of the last few months and can only be welcomed as a good first step towards further strengthening of the UN, as the

principal source of normative and analytical work on development and as the chief provider of development cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

We concur with the Secretary-General's observation that the Charter of the UN, especially through Articles 1 to 55, recognizes that economic and social development is crucial to building the foundations of a peaceful and cooperative world, where security, human rights and fundamental freedoms are guaranteed for all. Against this background, it is unfortunate and inexplicable that, in the midst of the implementation phase of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, which were reaffirmed by the 2005 World Summit, appropriations for the development-related Sections of the UN's regular budget, as a percentage of the total UN regular budget appropriations, decreased from 21.8% in 1998-1999 to 17.8% in 2008-2009. In addition, during the same period, the proportion of posts under these budget sections went down from 33.5% to 29.9%. By approving the present proposal for 152 new posts at a cost of \$25.57 million for development-related activities, we would be merely increasing the percentage of development-related appropriation to 18.2% and the percentage of posts to 30.2%, a level that would still be below the 1998-1999 figures. For this reason, we have called the proposals "modest" and "a good first step".

Mr. Chairman,

The Secretary-General in his report has rightly declared that "leadership on development is a hallmark of the United Nations". However, for this leadership to be real and effective, the UN's mandated responsibilities for development have to be matched by provision of adequate, sustained and predictable resources. The Secretary-General has informed us that critical gaps have arisen in the capacity of the UN Secretariat's development pillar, especially in (i) efforts to achieve MDGs; (ii) economic development, trade and finance; (iii) South-South economic cooperation; (iv) gender and development; (v) environment, climate change and sustainable development; (vi) regional dimensions of development; and (vii) support to intergovernmental processes. Given their importance and the pressing need to address these issues, which have been affirmed and reiterated by intergovernmental processes at the highest levels, urgent action is required by Member States to plug these capacity gaps in the UN Secretariat. We believe that the proposals before us, even though modest, would nevertheless contribute towards that goal.

Mr. Chairman,

We often hear arguments that resources dedicated to development-

related activities in the regular budget do not reflect the real picture because a large chunk of resources for development is channeled through the UN Funds and Programmes on a voluntary basis. The UN Board of Auditors in its report on the UNDP for the biennium ending 31 December 2007 [A/63/5/Add.1 (para 26 & 27)] noted *"the proportionate decrease in regular resources and increase in other resources (extra-budgetary) meant that projects were being executed on the basis of donor requirements and few projects were being executed through voluntary contributions in fulfillment of the objective and mandates of UNDP"*. The Board went on to express *"concern that UNDP may be seen to be shifting more towards being driven by specific requirements of donors and less on its objectives and mandate as established by the GA and its Executive Board"*. This could be true for any Fund or Programme where voluntary funding is predominant.

While we acknowledge the development-related work being undertaken by the Funds and Programmes, especially on the operational side, the strengthening of UN's analytical and normative functions for poverty eradication and sustainable development cannot be ignored. The strengthening of the UN Secretariat's development pillar, including through recruitment of high-quality human resources in economics, statistics, finance, etc. would lead to establishment of an alternate and credible source for Member States, particularly the developing countries, to draw upon for policy options, research, analytical and normative advisory services.

Mr. Chairman,

The monopolization of economic advice by the Bretton Woods institutions and their policy prescriptions have only aggravated past crises in developing countries (a matter of record, confirmed by leading economists) and been irrelevant to the present financial crisis in the developed countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Every challenge presents an opportunity. We could use the current global financial crisis for bringing about much required reforms of international economic governance, which will give a leading oversight role to the UN and lead to a fundamental reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions. The legitimacy and neutrality of the UN, based on its universal membership and the democratic nature of the General Assembly, would ensure the acceptability and success of policy formulation. To attain these objectives, it would be essential that once the General Assembly approves the resources proposed by the Secretary-General, the Secretariat should be held accountable for hiring high-quality human resources in economics and other social sciences, which would in turn produce outstanding work in development-related areas and be an adequate technical

resource for Member States in their efforts to promote both development and the reform of the Bretton Woods Institutions. I would emphasize this point because we find the process of recruitment in the Secretariat somewhat dysfunctional.

Mr. Chairman,

We concur with the ACABQ's observation that the organizational changes proposed for the merger of the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Land-locked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) with the Office of the Special Adviser for Africa (OSAA) are inconsistent with the relevant decisions of the General Assembly. Moreover, the Secretary-General in his report has not provided supporting analysis and rationale for the realignment. Given the special needs of Africa and other LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS Member States, we are also concerned that this initiative could undermine the required dedicated high-level attention necessary for adequate advocacy and mobilization of international support for the most vulnerable of the Member States.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, my delegation fully and categorically supports the approval of all the resources proposed in the Secretary-General's report. We are convinced that this would make a valuable contribution in making the UN somewhat better equipped to face the formidable challenges of eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development in the world.

Thank you!

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