

Agenda Item 151: Administrative and Budgetary Aspects of Financing of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

Statement by Mr. Kamallesh Sharma, PR on May 16, 2000

Madam Chairman,

We are happy to see you chairing our deliberations on this important agenda item which, along with the negotiations on the regular scale that are to be taken up later in the year, would constitute the most important, as well as the most difficult, issues for the Fifth Committee and this organization at large.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the delegation of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77.

Before we proceed with discussions on the subject, we feel it is pertinent for us to remind ourselves that peacekeeping has been, for much of the past decade, globally, the most visible and commented form of UN activity. It is imperative that peacekeeping activities continue to receive, on priority basis, the required attention, energy and resources. It is our firm view that there cannot be a substitution of the UN's primary responsibility in peacekeeping. In keeping with this thinking, the member States of the United Nations have agreed, in the context of the medium-term plan (MTP) for the period 1998-2001, that maintenance of international peace and security would constitute, along with the promotion of sustained economic development, the foremost priority areas of work of the United Nations, as with the proposed MTP for the period 2002-2005.

The statement made by Under Secretary General Joseph Connor on March 23 this year characterized the financial situation of the organization during the past year as "a step back from financial brink", while duly highlighting the fact that during 2000, 'there is a potential to slip back'. As of December 31, 1999, the UN was short of US \$ 1.48 billion as a result of unpaid assessed peacekeeping contributions. If considered along side figures contained in Secretariat's note A/C.5/54/61 of May 8, 2000 pertaining to the estimated budgetary requirement for peacekeeping operations for a period of one year starting July 1, 2000, which is a massive US \$ 2.02 billion, it is not difficult to deduce the fate of existing and future peacekeeping operations. The recurrent theme in the Fifth Committee, when the Financial Situation of this organization is discussed, is the bankruptcy of the UN, its operating in the red or its switching money between budget accounts to keep itself afloat, but the financial predicament of the UN appears to be receiving progressively lesser sympathy. In so far as individual PKOs are concerned, as per a statement of contributions to the UNIFIL as of April 30 this year, circulated in the Fifth Committee last week, only 32 countries have paid their assessed contributions in full. This is a pity.

The reason I have cited these statistics is only to stress the point that if peacekeeping is indeed a priority area of work for this organization and its membership, its financing must be addressed in a more concerted, serious and purposeful manner.

It is indeed a sad spectacle that, along with the other constraints that surround peacekeeping operations, financial constraints also now determine, circumscribe, and often undermine these activities. Needless to add, we would all need to put in efforts to see whether peacekeeping activities can be streamlined, both administratively and financially, in a better fashion so as to ensure not only their very survival but also smooth implementation. The current state of the UN finances is so parlous that every new approach must be explored. The peacekeeping function of this organization should not be threatened, as it has been in recent years, with effective collapse from members not meeting their commitments. It is our hope that an amelioration will be found in good time to this building crisis.

We are willing to listen to the views of member States on all aspects of peacekeeping, including the peacekeeping scale.