



**STATEMENT BY MR. SARTAJ SINGH CHHATWAL, MEMBER OF
PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA
ITEM 122: REVIEW OF EFFICIENCY IN THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE
60TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 13, 2005**

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to thank the representatives of the Secretariat and of the Advisory Committee for the presentation of the various reports before us on this agenda item. This is also an opportunity for us to offer our warm congratulations to the new Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight on her appointment and to state that we look forward to her stewardship of this very important Office.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Jamaica in her capacity as Chair of the G-77.

Turning first to the Report of the Secretary General on Measures to strengthen accountability at the United Nations (A/60/312), we wish to make a few observations.

Firstly, it is after five years that the Secretariat has produced a report on accountability. The last such report was issued in 2000 which was preceded by the report in 1994. Henceforth, we would like to see at least a biennial report on accountability starting with a comprehensive report at the 61st session on measures presently underway.

Secondly, the report on accountability that was issued five years ago had concluded as follows, and I quote, "the comprehensive system of accountability now in place ensures that accountability mechanisms are effectively used, are seen to be used, and ensure that staff at all levels are held accountable for both their actions and inaction". Clearly, that assertion rings very hollow today.

While we welcome the Secretary-General's recent initiatives on accountability, we also recognize that much work remains to be done and that the setting up of committees and working groups in themselves cannot ensure that a system of accountability is in place. We are informed that the Accountability Panel has been replaced with a Management Performance Board, that the Senior Management Group's

role will be supplanted by two committees – the Policy Committee and the Management Committee, that a new Oversight Committee is being set up, an Independent Oversight Board is being proposed, a corruption and fraud prevention committee is being set up which has itself constituted a working group, that the High Level Committee on Management has set up another working group to examine accountability mechanisms in other organizations and so on. Various task-forces and reviews are also underway. It is obvious from this that the work on creating a credible accountability structure has just begun.

The report recognizes that the accountability framework should be based on a hierarchy headed by the General Assembly, that flows through the Secretary-General, senior managers and middle management to all other staff. Unfortunately, the measures and initiatives outlined in the report almost entirely pertain to accountability of programme managers to their superiors within the Secretariat structure. As for the tools available to the General Assembly, the Programme Performance Report, as we all know, has proven to be inadequate. The General Assembly had, in resolution 58/269 requested the Secretary General to improve the format and timing of programme performance and evaluation reports and we trust that action is being undertaken in that direction. We look forward to the consideration of the joint OIOS-JIU report on strengthening and monitoring of programme performance and evaluation.

The report also rightly identifies transparency as an essential feature of any system of accountability. Transparency cannot however be defined purely in terms of availability of information through the use of internet technology. Transparency has to exist at every level of management decision-making and in the implementation of mandates. We welcome the beginning that has been made in achieving greater transparency in the selection and appointment of senior officials. Like the European Union, we would like to know whether the new selection and appointment procedures outlined in the report would also apply to the selection of all USGs, ASGs, as well as Special Representatives of the Secretary General.

We agree with what others have said about the importance of effective oversight as a pre-requisite for accountability. We view the need for the strengthening of expertise and capacity of the OIOS from this perspective. It is important for OIOS to have a say in the areas in which it needs strengthening. This is not only because that Office is best placed to comment on this issue but also as a measure for ensuring the independence of OIOS. We therefore call on OIOS to complete its self-evaluation so that we have the benefit of its views before we take decisions on the issue of its strengthening.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, we observe that follow-up and implementation of audit recommendations leaves much to be desired. It is disconcerting that as many as 45 of the 69 recommendations of the Board of Auditors remain outstanding. The General Assembly in resolution 59/272 had called for a high-level follow-up mechanism to fulfill such a need. The recent creation of an Oversight Committee composed of Secretariat staff may not serve the purpose due to reasons such as potential conflict of interest, as set out by the Advisory Committee. We will no doubt consider this aspect in the context

of the comprehensive review of governance arrangements, going also by the experience of other bodies in the UN System and other international organizations.

On the report of the Secretary General on the contribution made by the Department of Management to the improvement of management practices (A/60/342), we would tend to agree with the Advisory Committee that in the absence of any quantification of the impact of the measures enumerated, it is difficult to comment on what concrete contribution these have made. For example, in the area of procurement, it has been stated that the use of interagency systems contracts have resulted in the ability to negotiate better prices and take advantage of economies of scale in the procurement of communications and IT equipment. However, as we learnt earlier this year in the context of procurement for peacekeeping, the UN purchases computers at prices higher than that available in the market. It would therefore have been useful for us to know how and where these economies have been arrived at. We nevertheless welcome the report as the first ever such effort on the part of the Department of Management and look forward to future periodic follow-up reports.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS