

**STATEMENT BY MR. JAIDEEP MAZUMDAR, COUNSELLOR ON
ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF
UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS (AGENDA ITEM 126) AT FIFTH
COMMITTEE ON MAY 13, 2003**

Mr. Chairman,

We are happy to see you chairing our deliberations during this, the second resumed session of the 57th General Assembly. This session of the Fifth Committee is of considerable significance for it focuses on one of the most visible areas of operation of the United Nations – peacekeeping, and which is, in large measure, also an area in which it has proved its effectiveness. My delegation avails of this opportunity to welcome Mr. Movses Abelian, the new Secretary of the Committee, and to record our appreciation to Ms. Nora Benary for her able stewardship of the Secretariat of this Committee in the interim.

My delegation would like to thank Ambassador Mselle for his presentation of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and Mr. Jean-Pierre Halbwachs for his presentation of the various reports related to peacekeeping.

We would also like to thank the Board of Auditors for their Report on United Nations peacekeeping operations which, while being rigorous and comprehensive, is yet concise, and has proved a valuable input for the report of the ACABQ.

We note with appreciation the presentation of the Secretary General's report A/57/723 on the Overview of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations and the fact that such an overview is being presented for the first time. We would seek continued presentation of the report in this format, with the inclusion of additional cross-cutting issues as recommended by the ACABQ in para 42 of its report A/57/772. This would certainly assist member states in their consideration of the subject in a holistic manner.

For the purposes of brevity, we shall restrict ourselves to some comments on the Secretary General's Overview Report A/57/723, and the Report on the Consolidation of Accounts of peacekeeping operations A/57/746.

One comment on the extent of detail in the information provided in the reports: while it is true that it is difficult to determine how much information is adequate for member states to make informed decisions, the fact that the ACABQ has been provoked to comment on the inadequacy of detail regarding expenditure or savings variances indicates that more rather than less information may be what should be prescribed, especially in the case of budget documents.

While we welcome the new results-based approach in the presentation of peacekeeping budgets, we agree with the comments of the ACABQ on mandate objectives and results-based budgeting used for peacekeeping missions.

It is evident from Table 1 of SG's Report A/57/723 that for the financial period 2003-04, projected troop deployment and the number of military observers, civilian police monitors and civilian staff in peacekeeping missions all show a significant decline from that which prevailed in 2002-03. At the same time, the actual number of active missions is also projected to come down from the present 13 to 11. Curiously, in the case of civilian staff posts at headquarters, there is a projected increase in post requirement from 700 to 761. Even if we exclude the 27 posts for resident auditors formerly budgeted under individual peacekeeping operations, we find that the net requirement for back stopping at HQ to be 734 - in effect, an increase of 32 posts.

While we agree with ACABQ's comment that there is no direct link between the size and complement of peacekeeping operations and the level of support account, the decrease in both the number and the scale of peacekeeping operations (which is as much as 20 percent) should have some effect on back-stopping as well. Back-stopping should not take on a life of its own, quite divorced from and independent of the missions it is meant, in the first place, to back-stop. One would have assumed that in the logic of things, the number of posts required at headquarters to support a draw-down of not only the number of missions, but

also of significant numbers of personnel, be they troops, civilian police or civilian personnel, would also come down, but quite the opposite has happened.

It is often pointed out to us that the complexities of peacekeeping operations are to be taken into account while approving the current levels in the support account and the UNLB. However, it is to be noted is that many of the peacekeeping operations are becoming less complex (e.g. UNMIK, UNMISSET etc.) and as such, we strongly feel that the resources released from work related to such missions could easily be redeployed instead of projecting more and more post and non post requirements.

A few words on training; while we do not wish to belittle the importance of training, the focus should be on training to upgrade skills and not routine training for the sake of training. We are happy to note that the ACABQ has made very pertinent observations on both the appropriateness and effectiveness of training in paras 131 and 132 of its general report. In the absence of both appropriateness and effectiveness of training, we are of the view that if training is intended as a period of R&R, and is in fact a perquisite, it should be so stated. This would facilitate member states' consideration of training budgets.

We note with concern that delays and deficiencies continue to plague recruitment and placement activities. In several missions, the vacancy rate is as high as 40 percent in certain categories. The required average recruitment time of a year is an unconscionably long time, especially considering that the OHRM's target is four months. Even for the posts that

were authorized by the General Assembly for filling on an emergency basis in resolution 55/238, the average time required to fill these posts was all of nine months. A number of those emergency posts, in whose absence, we were assured, the entire edifice of peacekeeping operations would collapse, have still not been filled. In this regard, we entirely agree with the Advisory Committee's recommendation that in future, any posts that remain vacant and new posts that are not filled for 12 months shall be deemed to have lapsed.

In the post-Brahimi period, member states have contributed substantial funds creating an impressive edifice. We would now like to see results. For example, improved communications should bring about lower travel costs and greater efficiency. Moreover, the budget for communication activities should not show an ever-increasing trend from year to year as it is presumed that such time-bound completion of projects would result in overall improvements. Similarly, global procurement and increase in the number of systems contracts should result in decrease in the workload of the procurement department. Planned logistics support should reduce the time and cost of mobilization. For example, the Advisory Committee observes (in para 103 of its report) that on a number of subjects, including property management, write-offs and the working of Local Property Survey Boards, the full value of the Organisation's investments in technology is yet to be realized in a comprehensive manner. In the case of expenditure on IT, we hope that the proposals are fully dovetailed with the organization-wide IT strategy that we will be discussing later this year in the

context of the programme budget so that existing overlapping and redundancies pointed out by the ACABQ are not repeated.

Then again, the perpetuation of peacekeeping should not be an end in itself. Peace and security infrastructure is essential but not enough. We notice from Table 8 of the SG's Report that of the US \$ 2181 million budgeted for peacekeeping operations in 2003-4, quick impact projects which could have a strong stabilizing impact in mission areas have been allocated less than 0.01 percent or a mere US \$240,000. Development is the best guarantee for peace, and we would like to see peacekeeping budgets come down over time, freeing up funds for development.

On the subject of timely reimbursement of dues to member states for their participation in peacekeeping operations, Table 15 in Secretary General's Report A/57/723 shows a marked reduction in outstanding liabilities for troop payments by 25 percent in 2002 over 2001. This, however, does not show how long it took to pay these dues. In the case of reimbursement for COE and self-sustainment, the situation has deteriorated quite dramatically and outstanding liabilities have actually gone up by as much as 77 percent. Non-payment of assessed contributions by some member states is the oft-cited reason for the delay in payment of dues; however, we have instances when even the processing of claims has taken more than two years.

While much has been made about the need for rationalization and reform of other aspects of the UN's functioning, it is strange that on the

question of consolidation of accounts of peacekeeping missions, only a half-hearted attempt has been made to present a case for reform of what is frankly quite a ridiculous situation whereby member states receive assessments in bits and pieces throughout the year. Such consolidation would not only result in rationalization and greater predictability, which will assist member states in their financial planning, but will also ameliorate the present anomalous situation in which we find that some missions are more equal than others. It will also free the UN from its paralyzing dependence on the unpredictable payment of individual mission's assessments when making

disbursements of dues owed to member states for their participation in peacekeeping operations. Sadly enough, neither the report of the Secretary General nor that of the ACABQ sheds much light on the full implications of such consolidation in order for member states to decide one way or another.

These are some of the issues on which we look forward to further deliberations during the informal consultations.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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