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JAPAN

Press Release

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Statement by Ambassador Kenzo Oshima
Management Reform
Fifth Committee, June 19, 2006

Mr. Chairman,

Japan is strongly committed to strengthen the United Nations through serious reforms aiming at enhanced transparency, accountability and a more effective and efficient administration of its human and financial resources. Our leaders at the World Summit last September agreed on the need to achieve these objectives and it is incumbent upon us to implement them in a process that is consistent and within a reasonable timeframe.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Investing in the United Nations" and wishes to thank Mr. Warren Sach, Controller, and Mr. Saha, Chairman of the ACABQ, for introducing their detailed reports to the Committee. The Fifth Committee bears a crucial responsibility in this regard and must make an utmost effort to deliver concrete results in the short term, before June 30, and in the mid- to longer-term.

Issues of management reform to which my delegation attaches particular importance and a high priority include, (a) reform in the procurement area, (b) modernizing the information and communication technology (ICT) architecture, and (c) limited discretion to the Secretary-General in the redeployment of resources and posts.

We regard to the procurement reform, we look forward to the Secretary-General's detailed report that is expected later this month, and we look forward to a serious discussion on this important item as soon as possible. On the ICT systems modernization, which is an essential tool for efficient resource management of the Organization, we recognize the need for a senior

manager as the focal point of all ICT activities throughout the Secretariat. To this end, we support the proposal to establish the post of Chief Information Technology Officer to lead planning and implementation of new ICT system. The person should have strong professional experience and managerial ability.

Mr. Chairman,

Today my delegation would like to focus on the issue of discretionary authority of the Secretary-General in budget implementation, accompanied by increased accountability. This is a matter that my delegation, along with other delegations, has argued for over the last several months as an important pillar in the overall Secretariat management reform. The General Assembly in its resolution 60/246 “recognized the need for limited discretion in budgetary implementation for the Secretary-General within defined parameters to be agreed by the General Assembly along with clear accountability mechanisms to the Assembly for its use.”

Member States recognized the need for some discretionary authority for the Secretary-General over budget. The question is over to what extent, under what conditions, and with what accountability. The authority currently granted to the Secretary-General under General Assembly resolution 58/270 and 60/246 is redeployment of up to 50 posts, which was necessary to meet the emerging need of the Organization.

This authority, however, is not being fully utilized, largely due to a lack of funding to support it. Instead, its implementation is in effect left to bureaucratic wheeling and dealing among program managers in which they are expected to give up voluntarily the posts they control. We all know from experience that, in reality, such an arrangement is, even with the best of intentions, unlikely to produce the desired outcome. And some practical ways will need to be found to address the gaps for effective implementation of the discretionary authority of the Secretary-General.

In his detailed report, the Secretary-General presented proposals that include: (a) transfers between budget sections within parts of the budget, by up to 10%, within a budget period; and (b) redeployment, reclassification and conversion

of posts to be authorized by up to 10% of posts within and between three broad categories of posts.

While appreciating the desire that prompted those proposals, in our view they appear to be rather ambitious and broad in scope to be generally acceptable. At this juncture, we believe a more discreet and modest approach is more likely to lead to a consensus agreement, if a formula strikes a right balance between the Secretary-General's aspiration to be more managerially responsible and Member States' call for more accountability to the General Assembly.

Guided by this consideration, my delegation would like to make a concrete proposal along the following lines: first, the Secretary-General should be given a modest discretion in budget implementation to utilize the savings that derive from vacancy rate gaps between projected vacancy rates and actual vacancy rates; second, the resources in the savings that the SG is authorized to utilize would be within a ceiling of up to 1- 2% of post costs; third, the SG can use these resources to meet the emerging priority needs of the Organization, such as filling temporary posts and providing general temporary assistance and related operational costs, in order to attain the mandated programs and activities; forth, this flexibility would be exercised with prior concurrence of ACABQ, which acts on behalf of the General Assembly, and Secretary-General will report on the utilization of this authority to the General Assembly in the context of the performance reports; fifth and finally, this limited discretion would be granted on an experimental basis.

My delegation hopes that this proposal will be considered favorably in the Committee, and we look forward to a constructive dialogue and negotiations among Member States so that we will be able to reach agreement on a specific measure to provide the Secretary-General with limited discretion in budgetary implementation accompanied by a clear mechanism for accountability.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like now to briefly touch upon another aspect contained in the Secretary-General's report included in paragraph 112 (b) to (i) of A/60/846/Add.3 and in other related proposals, in regard to the consolidation

of peacekeeping accounts. My delegation has serious doubts about the proposed consolidation. We also have concern that that consolidation of peacekeeping accounts could also have negative effect on some Member States' obligation to pay their arrears.

While the consolidation of peacekeeping accounts could have some beneficial effect, up to a certain degree, in terms of timely reimbursement to troop- and police-contributing countries, my delegation would hasten to add that the more fundamental and underlying cause of delayed reimbursement to TCCs has been the non-payment of assessed contributions by Member States. Without payments by Member States this issue cannot be solved.

Peacekeeping operations have a unique budget and assessment arrangement. Assessed contribution for each peacekeeping mission is justified by individual Council decision to create a mandate. A Council decision on a peacekeeping mandate then allows the issuance of assessment letters to Member States for each mission. In other words, the requirement of both individual Security Council decision for a mandate and assessments corresponding to such action must be strictly observed and any blurring of this requirement would create difficulties for certain Member States, including my own, to justify payment of assessments.

Treating individual peacekeeping operation as a section of the total peacekeeping budget, as if in the case of the regular budget is, in our view, unfounded and lacks justification. Furthermore, as the ACABQ correctly points out, the scope and quality of information provided on the financing of peacekeeping operations should not be diminished. This applies to both the budgets and the performance reports on PKO.

My delegation would not be ready to accept the proposals as contained in paragraph 112 (b) to (i) of the report of the Secretary-General for the reasons stated above. We would, however, be open-minded on efforts to find technical adjustments to enable the Secretary-General to utilize assessed contributions for peacekeeping operations in a more efficient and optimal way.

Thank you.