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Fifth Committee  
Proposed Programme Budget for the biennium 2012–2013

H.E. Mr. Morten Wetland  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

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On behalf of Norway I would like to thank the Secretary-General for presenting the report on the programme budget for the biennium 2012–2013. I would also like to thank the chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), Mr Collen Kelapile, for introducing the committee's report.

I would like to make some general comments on this budget proposal. I will also briefly touch on some aspects that are relevant to this Committee's work and that may play a role in determining whether we are successful in contributing to a stronger and more efficient UN.

Norway remains committed to the UN and its operational effectiveness. Many events in the past year have demonstrated that the UN remains indispensable for solving global and regional challenges. The UN needs to move with the speed of our time. We know from experience that we will face situations, every year, which are unknown at the time we adopt the budget. We also know that every organisation needs to change and adapt on a continued basis and to be open to discontinue activities which are no longer as important as when they were initiated, or if a programme doesn't yield the expected return.

We remain convinced of the strategic importance of this Committee's work for the future of the UN as a whole, and its key role in ensuring progress on necessary reforms of the organisation. This Committee should assist the Secretary-General in reaching his reform targets. At a time where the need for the organisation to increase performance within limited resources is evident, we as a Committee must ensure that we give the Secretariat sufficient space to manage their resources effectively and to move resources in response to urgent needs. We should give more, not

(Check against delivery)

less flexibility to the executive level, and subsequently hold them accountable for the actual results delivered. A result oriented rather than an input based approach to the budget will help build a stronger organisation for all of us. Such an approach should guide our deliberations in the Committee.

It goes without saying that we should avoid excessive micro management. The fifth Committee has at times been notorious for this. The task of this Committee should be to give strategic advice and direction and provide oversight.

Mr. President,

We are all too familiar with the current economic hardship and budgetary constraints facing most Member States. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's understanding of these financial realities, and the way this is reflected in the budget proposal he has introduced today. Still, in times of crisis it is all the more important that we continue to invest in this organisation. We must ensure that the UN has the resources and flexibility to deliver according to reasonable expectations, and to deliver on mandates and programmes.

The Member States need to feel confident that resources are spent in a way that provides the best possible value for money. We must be willing to explore smart ways of doing better with less. Therefore the measure of success of this Committee's work this autumn should not be whether we have made budget cuts in the order of 3 or 5 or 7%. Its success should be measured on the basis of whether the Member States have been able to move in the direction of a budget that supports reform and that leaves the UN in better shape to face current and future challenges.

In our view this means that this Committee must adopt a long-term approach to its work on the proposed programme budget. Norway agrees with the view that the format of the budget proposal needs to be improved, to provide a more transparent overview for Member States, and to be a better working document. Efforts should also be made to achieve more results-based budgeting. The various oversight and control functions of the UN system are essential in the organisation's efforts to perform better. We support highlighting oversight and control functions as a priority area in the programme proposal.

Thank you