



*Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations*  
866 U.N. Plaza, Rm 304, New York, NY 10017

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. MACHARIA KAMAU**  
**AMBASSADOR/PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE**  
**OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA TO THE**  
**UNITED NATIONS**

**ON**

**AGENDA ITEM 133**

***PATTERN OF CONFERENCES***

**NEW YORK – 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER, 2012**

***Please check against delivery***

**Thank you Mr. Chairman,**

Since my delegation is speaking for the first time during this session, allow me to join other delegations who have spoken before, to convey to you my warm congratulations to you on your election as Chairman of the Fifth Committee. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their elections and to assure them of my delegations support as they discharge their responsibilities.

I thank the Mr. Jean-Jacques Graisse, Acting Head of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management for introducing the report of the Secretary General contained in document A/67/127. I also thank Mr. Collen V. Kelapile, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative Questions (ACABQ) and Ms. Carolina Popovici, Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences for introducing the reports of their respective Committees.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the distinguished representative of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the statement made by the distinguished representative of Cote d' Ivoire on behalf of the African Group.

Mr. Chairman, allow me to highlight a few issues of particular concern to Kenya in the consideration of this agenda item. Kenya believes that the work of the Committee on Conferences is central to facilitating the intergovernmental process in the United Nations. In addition, we attach great importance to the recommendations of the Committee in its report contained in document A/67/32. The report and draft resolution contained therein provide a sound basis for our deliberations and a good basis for the final outcome on this agenda item during this session.

**Mr. Chairman,**

With regard to United Nations Office at Nairobi, this delegation has always championed the strengthening of this duty station. Consequently and to address some of the difficulties identified, the General Assembly in its resolution 52/220 requested the Secretary-General to bring the financial arrangements of the United Nations Office at Nairobi into line with those of similar United Nations administrative offices. In line with this request, the General Assembly has over the years approved measures to strengthen UNON, including the upgrading of posts to bring them to par with similar posts in the other main duty stations.

During the 64<sup>th</sup> session, the GA established a dedicated post of USG/ Director General for UNON in paragraph 53 of its resolution A/RES/64/243. The establishment of this post was in line with efforts to strengthen UNON and to address the factors that had contributed to high vacancy rates. The upgrade of 11 language posts from P4 to P5 at

UNON in the programme budget for 2012-2013 was also aimed at redressing the imbalances, and stemming the high vacancy rates.

My delegation is therefore very concerned to learn that notwithstanding all these efforts, vacancy rates in the language services are at a high of 35 per cent for interpreters and 30 per cent for translators. When we take into consideration the fact that overall vacancy rates for all regular budget posts stands at **3.1** per cent at the same duty station, then we recognize the gravity of the problem.

Mr. Chairman,

The high vacancy rates in the language services, among other vacancies at UNON, is a major problem that requires careful analysis if the situation is to be reversed.

To undertake this analysis it is important that member states are given credible and verifiable information that can be used to determine how best to resolve the problem of vacancies once and for all. Whereas that is what we would expect and demand of the Secretariat what has been presented by secretariat is neither technically credible nor does it reflect the reality in Nairobi as we know it.

The reasons that the Secretariat has given to the ACABQ to explain high vacancy rates in the language services simply do not stand up to scrutiny.

First of all, I think we can all agree that there exists a shortage of language services personnel globally, so their limited availability can be one of the causes of the problem at hand.

Sadly, however, what the secretariat has chosen to do, is to fall back on old habits, rather than find ways to address the scarcity challenge. They have ascribed the secretariat's failure to recruit staff to three reasons; security concerns, lack of educational and health facilities and, shockingly, lowered hardship allowances that were brought on by the legitimate upgrading of the Nairobi duty station.

Mr. Chairman, these tired and overworked reasons given by the Secretariat simply boggle the mind. After all it is universally known that Nairobi is host to over 3500 UN employees and approximately 7000 of their dependants, over 70 bilateral diplomatic missions, several multilateral and scientific organizations and regional institutions as well as scores of international NGOs, international companies and enterprises. All these organizations, companies and institutions have many foreign nationals who gladly and voluntarily call Nairobi home. So Nairobi as a choice destination for international professional personnel cannot be a reason for non-recruitment of staff at UNON.

The thousands of international personnel who live in Kenya do so because they have access to good and numerous international and multilingual schools for their children, excellent, accessible and internationally competitive health facilities to say nothing of a lifestyle that many consider second to none.

With regard to security, Mr. Chairman, this is a primary priority for the Government of Kenya and I challenge anyone to present data that would suggest that international personnel in Nairobi are, on a per capita basis, any less secure than in any other major UN or commercial capital on earth. In fact, Mr. Chairman, it is an open secret in Kenya that many of these international and foreign nationals at the end of their tours of duty decide to either remain or retire in Kenya rather than return to their countries of origin.

Finally the Government of Kenya and UNON have together established structures through which any concerns on the wellbeing of UN staff can be dealt with. During the many interactions with UN representatives in Nairobi of late, it has not been officially brought to the attention of the Government of Kenya that security, educational or health facilities in Nairobi were a deterrent to attracting staff to UNON. On the contrary, in our region, the very reverse has been the case.

We therefore request that the Secretariat put to rest these tired and unsubstantiated excuses once and for all.

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, this delegation is shocked and dismayed that the Secretariat would attribute its failure to recruit staff at UNON to the upgrading of Nairobi from category C to B citing lowered hardship allowances as a credible reason worth noting. That the upgrade of Nairobi is viewed from the perspective of the impact it had on levels of hardship allowance to UN personnel is unfortunate and rather distasteful. The categorization of duty stations is undertaken independently by UN bodies tasked with that mandate and the outcome is meant to reflect the actual situation obtaining in a duty station based on established criteria. That some staff would like the criteria compromised so as to afford them financial gain is not only unfortunate, but patently unprofessional. We expect the highest level of professionalism from all UN personnel.

**Mr. Chairman,**

In closing, let me assure you that Kenya remains committed to the strengthening of UNON as a UN headquarters station. We will continue to engage constructively with

other delegations with a view to find practical working solutions to the high vacancy rates and any challenges that impact on effective mandate implementation at UNON.

My delegation looks forward to working closely with other delegations to achieve a successful outcome on this agenda item.

Thank you.