Remarks by

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Formal Meeting of the Fifth Committee on its consideration of the Secretary General's report on the Conclusions of the High-level Working Group on Programme Criticality

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- Mr. Chair, Distinguished Members of the Fifth Committee,

- I am honoured to present to you today the Secretary-General's report on the Conclusions of the High-level Working Group on Programme Criticality.

- This report contains information on the final conclusions of the High-level Working Group on Programme Criticality which were submitted pursuant to the General Assembly resolution 67/254.

- The Report of the Secretary-General recalls that the Programme Criticality Framework is an operational tool to assist managers in the field to take time-sensitive decisions in response to changes in local security conditions. The report also recalls how the Programme Criticality Framework was initiated and developed and gives an update on its current status.

- My introduction today will focus on three important aspects which relate to 1) how the Programme Criticality Framework was developed; 2) if the Programme Criticality Framework is mandatory in terms of its implementation by United Nations Country Teams; 3) whether the Programme Criticality Framework will affect the delivery of programmes already agreed with Member States.

- **Firstly**, as you know, the United Nations was in the past criticized for being too risk-adverse. The United Nations was also criticized for placing its personnel at unnecessary risk. In response, the United Nations decided to shift from a "when to leave" model to the "stay and deliver" approach; and this significant shift was marked by the adoption of the Guidelines for Determining Acceptable Risk in 2009.

- Under the Guidelines for Determining Acceptable Risk, two tools are required; one is a Security Risk Assessment which determines risk levels, and the second is a programme criticality level assessment. While the Security Risk Assessment tool already existed as a policy of the United Nations Security Management System, the programme criticality assessment tool was missing. A Working Group on Programme Criticality was subsequently established in 2010 by the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) to develop a common framework for informed decision-making within the Guidelines for Determining Acceptable Risk. Following field testing, the Programme Criticality Framework was approved by the HLCM and subsequently endorsed by the Chief Executives Board (CEB) in 2012. A year later, a slightly revised framework was approved by the HLCM and CEB.

- The Programme Criticality Framework details guiding principles, including applicability, accountability, quality assurance, approval and the programme criticality process.

- As one critical part of the Guidelines for Determining Acceptable Risk, the Programme Criticality Framework describes a process to determine programme criticality levels for specific activities of the United Nations. It serves to balance security against programmes. It constitutes an important part of the decision-making process in determining which risks are acceptable for conducting

specific United Nations programmes. In summary, while the United Nations needs to implement its "stay and deliver" approach, it also ensures that programmes are delivered within acceptable risk levels so that United Nations personnel take no unnecessary risks when delivering critical programmes.

- The programme criticality tool is designed to be used at the field level, which includes peacekeeping operations and Special Political Missions. It also applies to any country with medium residual risk levels, in anticipation of a change in the security situation. The Guidelines for Determining Acceptable Risk and programme criticality were introduced in the Secretary-General's report on Revised security management framework and revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 under section 5, Peacekeeping operations, related to a strengthened and unified security management system for the United Nations (A/65/320), and in his report on the Safety and Security of United Nations and Associated personnel (A/65/344).

- **Secondly**, the guiding principles of the Programme Criticality Framework states clearly that "undertaking a UN-wide programme criticality assessment is mandatory in areas with residual risk levels of 'high' and 'very high', as determined in the Security Risk Assessments". The Secretary-General's report also highlighted that the Programme Criticality Framework has been approved and endorsed by both the HLCM and the CEB. As highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, there has been a higher level of engagement in the field, since the last review, and between 2012 and 2013 the Programme Criticality Framework was rolled out in 12 countries with the number increased to 15 as of October 2014. As of today, programme criticality assessments have been conducted in Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of

Congo, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, South Sudan, State of Palestine, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

- Member States' concerns about the safety and security of UN personnel were reiterated in General Assembly resolution 68/101 on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and the protection of United Nations and associated personnel, wherein Member States expressed deep concern that the occurrence of attacks and threats against humanitarian personnel and United Nations and associated personnel is a factor that increasingly restricts the provision of assistance and protection to populations in need, and in that regard commended the commitment of the United Nations and other humanitarian personnel to stay and deliver the most critical programmes, even in dangerous environments.

- The General Assembly has indicated its support for the Programme Criticality Framework, and in General Assembly resolution 69/133 encouraged the Secretary-General to continue consistent implementation of the Programme Criticality Framework as an operational tool allowing informed decisions on acceptable risk to United Nations personnel.

- The United Nations Policy Committee, chaired by the Secretary-General, also gave strong support to the Programme Criticality Framework at its meeting held on 17 February 2015. The Policy Committee decided that all organizations of the UN system will reiterate the policy status of programme criticality and its mandatory application in areas with "high" and "very high" residual risk levels.

- **Thirdly**, the Programme Criticality Framework is an internal tool of the United Nations to allow programme managers to make informed decisions on acceptable risks for United Nations personnel. Therefore it does not affect intergovernmental oversight and accountability to legislative bodies, neither does it have impacts on human resources. As specified by the Secretary-

General's report, the Programme Criticality Framework is not a planning process, and as such it does not replace or amend the strategic priorities of the United Nations, which are determined through well-established processes.

- The programme criticality methodology uses existing UN planning documents/frameworks already agreed at the country level, such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF), and the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), to assess programme criticality levels. With the results of the programme criticality level assessment, country-level programme managers may need to establish if programme activities or implementation modalities need to be re-designed in order to be within known acceptable risk and/or to reduce the risk (this can include investing in security measures, relocating United Nations staff, using remote programming modalities, postponing activities or finding ways to lower risk through activity re-design, etc.). In essence, what programme criticality is actually doing is to identify programmes that require additional risk management measures so as to ensure that the United Nations can deliver its most important parts of the programmes that were agreed with Member States.

- As a way forward, the programme criticality managing and coordinating bodies are considering various options for future oversight and coordination functions. Details will be discussed at a Policy Committee meeting to be held before June 2015. The year of 2015 is envisaged as a transitional period during which there will be continued support to in-country roll-out, dissemination of E-learning, the E-tool, best practices, development of an online platform for managing results, and conduct of Training of Trainers programmes, while January 2016 is targeted for the full institutionalization of the Programme Criticality Framework. The overall aim is to make the Programme Criticality Framework a

self-sustaining part of the United Nations' functioning. In that regard, it is anticipated that by January 2016, the support required at the central level to the roll-out of Programme Criticality Framework will be minimal, with only a small part-time Secretariat to be maintained, and support to the field would be provided mainly through organising online resources and ad-hoc video-tele conferences between experts at United Nations Headquarters and the field.

- Mr. Chair and Distinguished Members of the Fifth Committee, before concluding, please allow me to take this opportunity to thank you for your presence today and for giving me the opportunity to share with you the Secretary-General's report on the Conclusions of the High-level Working Group on Programme Criticality. UNDSS, along with UNICEF, will stand ready to provide answers and clarifications to your questions.

- Thank you again.