



Statement on behalf of the Member States of the European Union

By

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to the United Nations**

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**Item 134J: Operational arrangements
and conditions of service of the ACABQ**

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-- AS DELIVERED --

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing his report on the operational arrangements and conditions of service of the Committee, and Ms. Carole Wamuyu Wainaina, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, for introducing the Secretary-General's comments on the recommendations relating to the conditions of service of the members of the Advisory Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

The EU Member States have the highest respect and appreciation for the crucial role of the Advisory Committee, an independent expert body, in advising our Committee on matters that fall within our prerogatives, and in performing other functions of great importance for the United Nations and its specialized agencies. For this reason, we consider it essential to ensure that the Committee is equipped with the necessary tools to perform its tasks effectively and to respond to the changing needs of the General Assembly in full independence.

* *The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

During the 69th session, the General Assembly recognised the need to review key aspects of the functioning of the Advisory Committee, and mandated it, through resolution 69/274, to elaborate a comprehensive assessment of its operational arrangements. For this purpose, the General Assembly requested the Advisory Committee to formulate recommendations for improving the conditions of service of its members, but also to formulate measures to strengthen efficiency in its working practices, in particular by reviewing its internal procedures, including its organisation of work, and by establishing a code of conduct for all its members.

Mr. Chairman,

Regretfully, the report before us does not appear to fully respond to the mandate of the General Assembly.

We have closely scrutinized the report, as well as the related comments and views of the Secretary-General that are included therein. To our disappointment, we note that the report, rather than presenting a truly comprehensive assessment of the Committee's operational arrangements, takes a rather narrow approach and focuses primarily on the conditions of service and the status of the Committee's members. It neglects what should constitute, in accordance with the General Assembly resolution, the primary objective of this exercise, that is to say a review of the working methods and of the organization of work of the Committee, which lie at the core of its operational arrangements. We were expecting an analysis of options to integrate innovative practices into the working methods the Committee, options such as recourse to parallel meetings, quality-control mechanisms over the reports, measures to fully exploit the benefits of modern technology, and ways to make the handling of the scheduling and planning of agenda items more effective. Our expectations simply have not been met.

Furthermore, in the context of the Advisory Committee's operational arrangements, we consider a strong and comprehensive code of conduct to be a vital tool to ensure the full independence and impartiality of the Advisory Committee and its members. In this regard, we note the inclusion of elements of a code in an annex to the report. However, we are equally not satisfied with the scope of the code that is presented to us. The absence in the code of conduct of requirements on "cooling-off" or "stand-down" periods is particularly unsatisfactory, as well as the lack of any provisions on terms limits, aimed at limiting the number of terms of office of Committee members. The Chairman merely invites us to consider the introduction of such requirements in the course of our deliberations. Moreover, no mention is made of possible measures to reinforce the professionalism of the members of the Committee, especially on technical matters. Finally, we regret that no consideration is given to the importance of gender balance within the Committee, while only one member out of 16 will be female as of 1 January 2016.

Mr. Chairman,

While recognizing that the Advisory Committee has faced an increased workload in recent years, we ultimately do not concur with the view expressed by the Chairman that this calls for the need to change the status of the members. The current workload of the Committee does not in any way provide any justification for the creation of full-time positions. On the contrary, the implementation of IPSAS, amongst other things, has led to significantly expediting the processing of financial statements and will thereby contribute even more in the future to better management of the growing number of reports to be issued by the Advisory Committee. This and other reform initiatives, like Umoja, will have a positive impact on the Committee's workload. We encourage it to make best use of such

innovations and reforms in order to instil more efficiency and productivity into its work.

Moreover, granting the status of “officials other than Secretariat officials” to the members would not only be unwarranted under the present circumstances, but it would also essentially place the members on the payroll of the United Nations, the Organisation which they are tasked to advise as independent experts, at the price of jeopardizing their very independence.

Mr. Chairman,

The EU Member States have deep concerns about the direction taken by this report. We stand ready to engage constructively on this agenda item, but we call for caution regarding any discussion that would jeopardize the full independence of the Advisory Committee and its members.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.