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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY LOURDES PEREIRA SOTOMAYOR, FIRST SECRETARY, PERMANENT MISSION OF ECUADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS DURING THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE SECOND PART OF THE RESUMED SEVENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
New York, 29 June 2017**

Madam Chair,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at this closing session of the second part of the resumed seventy-first session of the Fifth Committee.
2. This has been a particularly intense and challenging session, running almost to the end of June. However, the Group of 77 and China expresses our great appreciation to you, Madam Chair, for your calm, able, and impartial leadership, in guiding us to a successful conclusion. The Group is pleased that the Committee was able to finish its work before the end of the fiscal year on 30 June 2017, and takes this opportunity to also acknowledge the spirit of constructiveness and flexibility that allowed us to reach consensus.

Madam Chair,

3. From the first, the Group of 77 and China have reaffirmed our strong belief that peacekeeping budgets must provide the necessary resources to enable the United Nations to fulfill its mandates. The Group does not believe in arbitrary, across-the-board cost-cutting exercises that do not take into consideration the situation on the ground. We acknowledge that our negotiations over the last two months have been difficult at times. We hope that the conclusions we have reached will enable the Secretariat to carry out its work effectively and efficiently.
4. On substantive issues, the Group is pleased that we have made progress towards addressing sexual exploitation and abuse. The Group reiterates that the United Nations must continue efforts to harmonize its approach to this issue, prioritizing the needs of victims. The zero-tolerance policy must also apply equally to all whether they are uniformed personnel or civilians, including all non-United Nations forces authorized under a Security Council mandate.
5. The Group of 77 and China also recognizes the invaluable contribution of troop and police contributing countries to the maintenance of international peace and security. We emphasize the importance of continued close consultation between the Secretary-General and troop and police contributing countries on all matters related to peacekeeping operations.
6. The Group notes the progress that the Secretariat has made over the past year in making peacekeeping more field-focused and effective. The Group looks forward continued efforts in this regard, including the full utilization of the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe to maximize efficiency gains and benefits.

Madam Chair,

7. The Group of 77 and China regrets that once again, we could not reach agreement on addressing closed peacekeeping missions. We trust that when we next consider this issue, there will be new options for a sustainable solution to address claims payable to Member States, particularly troop and police contributing countries from closed peacekeeping operation budgets.

Madam Chair,

8. The Group of 77 and China reiterates our sincere appreciation for your professional leadership and guidance during this entire Seventy-first session, especially through the most intense period of work for the Committee. Your constant engagement on all levels was highly appreciated.

9. We also wish to extend our appreciation to all members of the Bureau for their contributions, and to all facilitators and burden-sharers who played key roles in our difficult negotiations. We thank our colleagues for their flexibility and constructive engagement to reach consensus during this session, and look forward to building on this positive momentum during the main part of the seventy-second session.

10. The Group of 77 and China expresses our highest gratitude to the members of the Secretariat, especially Ms Sharon Van Buerle and her team, for their dedication and effective work that made possible to adopt a large number of resolutions, as well as to the conference officers and interpreters, and the other members of the Secretariat staff who supported the work of this Committee. The Group would further like to thank the Secretariat of the Group of 77 and China for its dedicated and tireless support to the Group.

Madam Chair,

11. As always, there comes a time to wish some of our colleagues adieu as they continue to a different phase of their lives. In this regard, we would like to extend our warmest wishes for continued success in their future endeavors to the distinguished and valued delegates who will be leaving after the conclusion of this session. We also extend a warm welcome to all the new colleagues who have joined us and reassure them that all the rumors about the Fifth Committee are true.

12. Finally, the Group reaffirms our commitment to engage constructively in the work of the Fifth Committee in the next seventy-second session. We hope that the spirit of cooperation and flexibility will continue guiding our work at the next session.

I thank you, Madam Chair.