

General Assembly  
Seventy-first session

Fifth Committee

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Agenda item 2:  
Organization of work

Statement by H.E. Mr. Geir O. Pedersen  
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I would like to congratulate Your Excellency Ms. Inga Rhonda King on your election and welcome you as Chair of the Fifth Committee. I am confident that you will be guiding this session to a successful conclusion. Last fall, the Committee was able to finish on time, before Christmas. We hope that this will be a tradition to keep.

I appeal to all of us involved to contribute to efficient and timely processes in the Committee. Without a cooperative and operative climate, the General Assembly will not be able to take the budgetary and administrative decisions necessary, that provide the UN Secretariat with necessary instruments to make the UN an agile and effective organization.

Madam Chair,

We will be entering a period of transition and change. Within the next few months we will be welcoming a new Secretary-General and a new leadership team at the helm of the UN

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Secretariat. The new Secretary-General will face the daunting task of adapting the organization to the serious challenges that lie ahead. We, as Member States, not least acting in the Fifth Committee, must do our utmost to support her or him, including by facilitating necessary reforms in the way the organization operates.

In the Fifth Committee, we are at the start of a new budget planning cycle with the programme planning for the budget 2018-2019. We are looking forward to work with you in setting priorities and drafting the budget outline for the next budget biennium.

Let me now turn to three issues inherited from previous sessions:

- the funding and backstopping of Special Political Missions
- the financing of the Secretariat's share of the Resident Coordinator for the UN's development system
- the regional restructuring of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Madame Chair,

Over the last 10 – 15 years, Special Political Missions have grown considerably, not only the number, but also in complexity and variety, as have the conflicts and the settlements that they have to tackle.

This session, the Fifth Committee will decide on the budget for the new mission in Colombia; a ground breaking, historical agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla that settles 52 years of conflict. Norway and Cuba has had the privilege to serve as facilitators to reach this agreement. Colombia is now off for a new start in developing sustainable peace.

All missions are different. The UN Mission in Colombia is yet another example of a Special Political Mission with its own characteristics and criteria for success. The role of the UN in the peace settlement process rely not only on the overall budget for each mission, but the right human resources and the right knowledge for the right purposes.

Madam Chair,

We remain concerned that the Secretariat has not yet been equipped with proper tools for the funding and backstopping for the Special Political Missions. Transparent, flexible and predictable funding that can also be adapted to volatile situations, is essential. Sufficient resources and a stable, competent staff for backstopping is critical in situations with high degree of uncertainties, and for these missions to be as effective as possible.

Norway urges all parties to be sensible and open-minded in the forthcoming discussions. I can assure you that Norway will contribute to, and support any creative and pragmatic solution that will enhance the function, efficiency and effectiveness of the Special Political Missions.

We believe that annual appropriations and a separate funding modality or modalities should form part of this solution. This is not least to give the UN and the Fifth Committee the needed overview of the financing, and make each mission accountable for its results and political outcomes.

Madam Chair,

The financing of the Resident Coordinator for the UN development system is critical for the UN to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The share of the Secretariat is small, but important for the financing of the RC-system. The Fifth Committee should

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respect the cost sharing agreement made by the UN agencies and offices of the Secretariat within in the framework of United Nations Development Group, endorsed by the Second Committee. This is not a matter of scarce resources; it is a matter principle.

Madam Chair,

I would now draw the attention to a third issue where the Committee was not able to make a decision in the previous session; the financing of the regional restructuring of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In general terms this is about strengthening human rights as UN's third pillar, and to promote a much needed balance between the three pillars of this organization.

In practical terms, this implies both securing a sufficient budget to the normative work and making the Secretariat work better on human rights. In setting priorities for the next budget we should address the underfunding of the human rights pillar, in particular when all mandates already adopted by the General Assembly is taken into account.

The regional restructuring has no budgetary implications, yet it is important because it is about how the Office of the High Commissioner works. The restructuring plan will bring the Office closer to the local level, boost the High Commissioners context knowledge and contact with regional stakeholders.

Madam Chair,

These three items may seem minor in the overall picture of the UN's budget cycle and some of the other major items on the agenda. However, they are all critical elements forming part of larger issues that are important for future reputation, credibility and operation of this

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organization. We should welcome a new Secretary-General on 1. January 2017 with the good news of having solved all these issues on the agenda of the Fifth Committee this fall.

I thank you.