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**Statement by Isobel Coleman,  
Ambassador for United Nations Management & Reform  
At the Opening of the Main Session of the Fifth Committee  
71st General Assembly  
September 29, 2016**

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Thank you, Madame Chair. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Chair of this Committee. We also wish to recognize the bureau members, and the dedicated Secretariat staff, ably led by Ms. Sharon Van Buerle, for their service. We look forward to working collaboratively with you all this session.

Madame Chair, we embark today on the main session of the Fifth Committee at a time of consequential transition. Never before has the UN's Secretary General and the host country president completed their terms within days of each other, as will happen at the end of this year. This changeover marks an important opportunity to take stock of UN reform, which the Secretary General has made a consistent priority of his tenure, and which the United States has strongly supported. We greatly appreciate the Secretary General's efforts over these past 10 years to streamline activities, increase accountability and transparency as well as promote efficiency. The Secretary General's support for budget discipline has helped us level off the unrestrained growth in budgets that occurred for too long. Notably, the initial budget we approved for 2016-2017 was, for just the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in the last half century, less than the starting point of the previous biennium's budget. Such budget discipline must continue, but further efficiency gains depend on realizing the full potential of the change initiatives that have been started.

The Secretary General is commended for embarking on a long-overdue process of modernization that has resulted in important advancements in how the organization deploys its resources. Importantly, the implementation of IPSAS and Umoja is beginning to deliver new transparency and accountability regarding resource allocation decisions. But the real potential of these tools is to enable the organization to adopt new, more streamlined and more effective ways of doing business that promise significantly greater efficiencies. We, the member states, have invested heavily in these initiatives and expect a commensurate return on our investment. The work of the UN – delivering life-saving services and resolving conflicts around the world – is simply too important not to strive for the greatest efficiencies possible so that resources can flow to where they are most needed.

This session provides an opportunity to consider several important reforms that will be crucial to achieving the longer-term promise of a more effective UN. We will comment on individual items when they are introduced, so today I will just highlight a few overarching priorities. First, with personnel accounting for more than 70% of the UN's costs, it is absolutely imperative that the organization shift toward a set of human resource management policies that enable it to attract and retain the best talent possible. This demands a modern talent management system. Second,

with Umoja in place, the UN must re-evaluate how it delivers services. Governments around the world have realized huge efficiency gains by moving to shared services in more cost effective locations. The UN should be no different. The Global Service Delivery Model must build on the lessons learned from the Global Field Support Strategy and result in a much fuller, and long overdue, restructuring. Third, reform will never be achieved if the UN does not address the issue of overlapping, redundant and obsolete processes and mandates. Too many parts of the organization continue to compete with each other for resources, even as mandate delivery is never scrutinized for effectiveness. The UN must undertake a process of prioritization that shifts resources from activities that have run their course or fail to deliver to those that deserve greater investment.

Madam Chair, in conclusion, we are very cognizant of the fact that we have a full agenda this session and the need to be efficient and constructive in all areas if we are to conclude on time and adopt key decisions. With this in mind, we look forward to working with all colleagues to achieve these goals as we embark on another important session.

Thank you.