

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

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**Statement to the Fifth Committee  
by H.E. Mr Peter Thomson  
President of the 71st session of the General Assembly**

**15 December 2016**

*Madame Chair,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,*

It gives me great pleasure to address the Fifth Committee today.

Let me begin by congratulating Ambassador King on her election as Chair of this Committee, and for the leadership she has been providing to your work.

Ambassador King is the second woman to have presided over the Fifth Committee, and the first to have done so since the turn of this Century.

In many ways, Ambassador, your work in this Committee is trailblazing, and I wish you all the more success as you steer the committee towards a timely and positive conclusion.

I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election, and for the gender balance reflected in its composition.

It is my sincere hope that in future sessions such parity will become so regular in this Committee, so as to no longer be noteworthy.

*Distinguished delegates,*

Three days ago, many of you would have watched the historic moment of UN Secretary-General-designate, Mr. Antonio Guterres, taking his Oath of Office.

In seventeen day's time when he assumes office, he will face an enormous set of complex global challenges that need his urgent attention.

With the scale of challenges facing the organisation, and the changes underway at the top, the work of the Fifth Committee in helping to facilitate a smooth transition cannot be overstated – particularly by ensuring that adequate resourcing and administrative frameworks are in place for when the new Secretary-General takes office.

*Distinguished delegates,*

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As the Main Committee tasked with administrative and budgetary matters, you wield considerable influence over the work this organisation.

In addition to defining the financial responsibilities of Member States, the decisions taken by this Committee affect the lives of thousands of UN staff around the world, and shape the way the organization responds to the peace and security, sustainable development, and human rights challenges of our time.

As you know, delivering momentum for implementation of the 2030 Agenda is my number one priority for this session. Here too, the 5<sup>th</sup> Committee has a significant role to play, including in ensuring that the United Nations works efficiently and is able to effectively support Member States implementation efforts.

The delegates of this Committee therefore have a special responsibility in ensuring that the UN is fit-for-purpose and performing to the high standards that are expected.

*Distinguished delegates,*

As I address you at this crucial stage of your work, I am conscious that the Fifth Committee has been burdened with a very heavy agenda which has been made all the more challenging by the late availability of documents.

Clearly this is regrettable.

To help relieve the situation, my office has been communicating with relevant parties for some time, urging them to speed up their work.

I recognize that longer-term solutions are required to address the root causes of what I see as systemic delays. But for now, I appeal to all involved to do what they can to help this Committee bring its work to a timely conclusion.

Despite the limited days left at your disposal, I am confident that with your combined talents and best efforts, there remains sufficient time to conclude your work before Christmas.

But, with ten days to go before Christmas, it is time to switch from position-taking to deal-making and for all to move with common endeavour in the best interests of the United Nations as a whole.

I speak from experience when I say that the prospect of spending Christmas in Committee rooms away from loved ones is a bleak one. As Chairman of G77 in 2013 that is exactly what I had to do and I do not wish it upon

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you. It doesn't have to be that way for you this year. We are bureaucrats and we understand that the administration and budgetary provisions must be put in place in a timely fashion if our system is to function. And distinguished delegates, happily we are also diplomats, and deal-making is in our blood.

My team and I stand ready to assist and support your important work in the days ahead.

I thank you, Madam Chair.