

Agenda item 137: Improving the Financial Situation of the United Nations

CANZ statement

Delivered by Ambassador Richard Arbeiter, Deputy Permanent Representative of Canada
to the United Nations

October 18th, 2019

Mr Chair,

Thank you for giving me the floor, I have the honour to speak today on behalf of Australia, New Zealand and my own country, Canada.

Allow me to thank the PGA for his words of encouragement to the committee, we too are confident that by striving together we will succeed in delivering for all.

Thank you to Under Secretary-General Pollard for her statement and presentation on the financial situation which underlined the worsening liquidity crisis facing the United Nations.

In our previous statements on this topic, CANZ has called for General Assembly action in response to the liquidity crisis.

We welcome that the pooling of peacekeeping cash and annual letters of assessment, which were agreed in the second resumed session, have already helped the organization to better meet its obligations to troop and police contributor countries.

However, as the Secretary General emphasized in his introduction of the Proposed Programme Budget for 2020, the worsening Regular Budget cash position of the UN is putting mandate delivery and implementation of reforms at risk.

Mr Chair,

The Proposed Programme Budget for 2020 includes funding for important new and expanded mandates from the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council and Human Rights Council. This includes strengthened measures to enable the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, staff training and capacity development to support reforms, and three investigative mechanisms.

Cash shortages are already undermining the UN's ability to implement mandates, to pay staff and use non-staff resources to implement budgeted activities. At this critical juncture in the first year of implementation of reforms, managers should not be forced to focus on just keeping the lights on but rather on genuine operational improvements in headquarters and in the field.

It is critical that all Member States support the Organization by fulfilling their financial obligations.

It is regrettable that the number of Member States that have yet to fully pay their assessments, and the amounts owed to the Organization, have both grown compared to this time last year.

This is despite the multiple warnings of the likely impacts on mandate delivery.

Now SPMs are being asked to align spending with liquidity, distorting the intentions of the Programme Budget.

We are now beginning to see impacts on our own daily work, with support from the Secretariat being rationed and the normal business of the General Assembly being hampered. While not ideal, we should take the opportunity to make improvements to the working methods of the committees while saving valuable resources.

CANZ appreciates that a number of Member States have made efforts to provide additional cash to the organization beyond paying their assessments in full and on time, by paying the full year Peacekeeping assessments.

We welcome the information conveyed by the USG with regard to the most recent payments, which we hope to see accelerate and increase.

We are, however, cognizant that these measures by a few, while helpful, cannot be a substitute for timely payment of assessments by all Member States.

Monsieur le Président,

CANZ continue d'appuyer la demande de flexibilité budgétaire formulée par le Secrétaire général afin de régler les problèmes systémiques qui contribuent aux problèmes de liquidité.

Le Secrétaire général, en sa qualité de plus haut fonctionnaire de l'Organisation, a indiqué que les contraintes budgétaires, conjuguées à de graves problèmes de liquidités, avaient déjà entraîné des retards dans les activités. En tant qu'États membres nous ne pouvons tolérer que cette situation continue, ni à la considérer comme normale.

CANZ supports addressing both parts of the problem and freeing managers to manage, to allow the full and efficient implementation of all mandated activities.

Je vous remercie