



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA  
BY SAED KATKHUDA, SENIOR ADVISOR, MISSION OF THE STATE OF  
PALESTINE TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 146:  
ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AT THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE FIFTH  
COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
(New York, 11 November 2019)**

Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 146 entitled "Administration of Justice at the United Nations".
2. The Group expresses its appreciation to Ms. Alayne Frankson-Wallace, Executive Director, Office of Administration of Justice, and to Ms. Shireen Dodson, United Nations Ombudsman, as well as Mr. Cihan Terzi, the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing their respective reports. The Group also welcomes the report of the Internal Justice Council.

Mr. Chair,

3. The Group of 77 and China attaches great importance to the United Nations internal system of justice as an independent and transparent system operating to ensure respect for the rights and obligations of staff members as well as the accountability of both managers and staff members. We believe that an adequately resourced and decentralized system is necessary for an effective management of human resources, which is the most valuable asset of the Organization.
4. In that connection, the Group wishes to reaffirm that the Secretary-General, as the chief administrative officer, has a responsibility to ensure that the internal justice system of the Organization functions properly and to keep the General Assembly fully informed on the operation of the system. We also reaffirm the independence of the Office of the Administration of Justice, its operational and budgetary autonomy, and its mandate to ensure the institutional independence of the formal system of internal justice.

Mr. Chair,

5. The Group takes note of the data on the trends relating to the operation of the formal system of administration of justice in 2018 as follows:
  - i. The Management Evaluation Unit received its third highest volume of requests in 2018, totalling 1,182, of which 1,087 requests were closed by 31 December 2018;

ii. The Office of Staff Legal Assistance received 3,216 new requests for assistance and closed 2,483 requests during the reporting period. In 2018, the Office filed 173 requests for management evaluation and 119 applications to the Dispute Tribunal and represented staff in eight proceedings before the Appeals Tribunal. The Group particularly notes that 68 percent of requests for assistance from the Office related to benefits and entitlements, reflecting changes made to the staff salary and benefits package that came into effect during 2017;

iii. For the United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT), the number of pending applications at year end increased from 372 in 2017 to 404 in 2018, which is interestingly the highest number of pending applications since the system was introduced in 2009.

Mr. Chair,

6. With regard to the implementation of the case disposal plan in January 2019, it is observed that this plan contributed to the Dispute Tribunal caseload reducing by 29.45 percent, from 404 to 285, and the caseload pending over 401 days reducing by 52.68 percent, from 205 to 97 cases;

On UNDT dual presidency, the Group of 77 and notes with concern that it led to the suspension of the implementation of the case disposal plan, and calls for a quick and effective resolution of the issues associated with the UNDT Presidency. The Group also encourages exploring institutional mechanisms to avoid any such recurrence.

7. Despite the positive results spurred by the case disposal plan, there still remains a valid concern for the length of time it takes to dispose of some cases. The Group enjoins that efforts be strengthened to reduce the length of time for case disposal and the number of ageing cases.

On the issue of outreach, the Group of 77 and China acknowledges the Secretary-General's response to a request on the subject in resolution 73/276.

8. The Group in this regard welcomes the outreach efforts, including the availability of the handbook "A staff member's guide to resolving disputes" in all six official languages, as well as its dissemination to staff in the field. We urge the Secretary-General to continue efforts in disseminating information to staff both at Headquarters and in the field.

Mr. Chair,

9. With respect to the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Services, we note the overall upward trend of cases with the Office opening 3,577 cases in 2018, including mediation cases, representing an increase of 10 per cent compared with 2017.

10. The Group reiterates the importance of the informal dispute resolution process in the Organization and acknowledges the cost-efficiency of this method for dispute resolution in comparison with the formal process. Efforts in encouraging this route of dispute resolution should be continued.

11. The Group also welcomes the initiative of the pilot project to offer access to informal dispute resolution services to non-staff personnel by the Office of the Ombudsman as "part of the Office's mandate". We look forward to having a quantitative and qualitative analysis of this initiative during informal deliberations.

12. Lastly, the Group welcomes the report of the Internal Justice Council, which provides useful views and recommendations to the Assembly on the implementation of the system of administration of justice. We will give this report a thorough assessment and analysis.

In conclusion, Mr. Chair, I wish to assure you of our commitment to engage constructively with a view to concluding the agenda item in a timely manner.

I thank you.