

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Andreas Mavroyiannis,
Permanent Representative of Cyprus to the United Nations,
Chair of the Fifth Committee at its 74th session**

**CLOSURE OF THE WORK OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE SECOND
PART OF THE RESUMED 74th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Distinguished delegates,

I wish to wholeheartedly congratulate you for successfully concluding the second resumed session, which was – as the cliché now goes – unprecedented on all counts. Your achievements are truly commendable, as against all odds - in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic – you managed to surpass the expectations by working remotely in a seamless and remarkably efficient manner. Notwithstanding the difficulties, you coped and persevered in an exemplary manner.

We will recall this session as one of the most extraordinary of the Fifth Committee. Online meetings became the norm – occasionally with sounds of crying babies and joyful children in the background, while with the consent of the Committee, formal meetings were omitted, informals were kept brief yet efficient and the adoption of draft decisions and resolutions was done virtually through silence procedures. You proved that if there is willingness and determination, the tradition of spending sleepless nights stranded in the UN basement can be circumvented. It is my hope that these changes instigated a paradigm shift, in a manner that could be transformative for the Fifth Committee.

In retrospect, the whole of the 74th session has been conspicuously eventful, to say the least, yet you collectively managed to turn adversity into opportunity. The unexpected turn of events helped debunk the common beliefs about the Committee's rigidity and resistance to change.

During the main session we encountered the culmination of the Organization's liquidity crisis and the emergency measures put in place by the Secretary General inevitably impacted the way we used to conduct our work in the UN. In effect, the Fifth Committee had to become more resource-conscious and introduced some long-overdue cost-saving practices, for example, the unnecessary printing of documents was halted and the formal working hours for the duration of the meetings were respected. Against the backdrop of the liquidity pressure, your great achievement was the successful adoption of the first annual budget. While transitioning to an annual budget, we realized the need to re-think the distribution of work between the sessions, including considering Human Resources Management reports during the first resumed instead of the main session, so that their consideration does not coincide with the annual budget deliberations. Moreover, making the Secretariat's answers to ACABQ questions available to the Fifth Committee and granting access to Umoja data, are some of the newly established practices aimed at enhancing the synergies, transparency and accountability, while – at least partially - addressing the pressing issue of the increasing volume of questions.

Also, following the vote in the General Assembly for the expansion of the ACABQ membership in the beginning of the year, I greatly appreciated the fact that you did not allow the polarization or the poisoning of the atmosphere in our Committee.

By the middle of the first resumed session, the coronavirus outbreak rendered physical meetings in the UN premises impossible and revealed that, regrettably, the UN was lacking the necessary tools to ensure business continuity for working remotely. This forced us to swiftly adapt and try to make working remotely a credible and viable option for our Committee. Thanks to your collective sense of responsibility and the pragmatism that prevailed, we were able to pursue inventive solutions and overcome procedural hurdles. Since then, the Fifth Committee has been praised on many occasions for being on the leading edge.

Coming to the current session, while still confronted with the constraints of working remotely and even in the absence of a voting mechanism, you managed to reach agreement on the peacekeeping budgets considerably earlier than in previous years. The timely decisions on peacekeeping enabled the adoption of those resolutions through lengthy silence procedures, before the end of the fiscal year. Had we missed the deadline, the repercussions from suspending the mandated tasks of the peacekeeping operations and curtailing the field missions' response to COVID-19 would have been unthinkable, especially considering the extraordinary challenges posed by the pandemic raging in some mission areas in Africa. With this opportunity, I would like to sincerely thank all delegations for your constructive engagement on these items and in particular, regarding the intricate case of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, on which we had to resort to a Chair's text for a commitment authority, as a means to enable the financing of UNIFIL.

Also, as last resort, I was compelled to submit two other Chair's texts this session, on the Global Service Delivery Model and the Seconded active-duty Military and Police Personnel, where consensus was proven impossible, in order to help the Committee reach a compromise. If there are some insights gained, I would say that the prevalence of consensus is not to be taken for granted, but should be cherished and nurtured with collective, sincere and persistent efforts.

Distinguished delegates,

Since this is our last meeting for the 74th session, I kindly ask for your indulgence as I ought to express my appreciation to all those who contributed to the successful outcome of the session.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for your steadfast support and constructive engagement throughout my tenure. Your zealous efforts and fortitude have been truly inspiring and made the daunting task of chairing the Fifth Committee more bearable.

It has been a real privilege being the Chair of the Fifth Committee during the 74th session and I am grateful for this to the **Group of Asia-Pacific States** and the confidence they placed in me and in my country, Cyprus. I would also like to express my thanks to the **European Union**, the negotiating block to which Cyprus inherently belongs, for their active support and encouragement.

My most heartfelt appreciation goes to my fellow Bureau members, the Vice Chairs: Mr. **Mohamed Fouad Ahmed** of Egypt, Mr. **Thiago Poggio Padua** of Brazil who succeeded Mr. **Luiz Feldman**, Mr. **Giorgi Mikeladze** of Georgia, and last but not least, the Rapporteur, Mr. **Yaron Wax** of Israel. Mohamed and Yaron have already concluded their assignment in New York and I know they will be greatly missed in the Fifth Committee. I warmly congratulate all the members of the Bureau and thank them for demonstrating excellent leadership qualities and for always being united, complementing each other and working with integrity in the best interest of the Committee.

Also, with this opportunity I would like to reiterate my gratitude to the **Coordinators** amongst you, who volunteered to help and support us throughout the session. I consider them an extension of our Bureau, as with their hard work and enthusiasm, they contributed decisively in advancing the Committee's work.

I would like to extend my profound appreciation and gratitude to the **Fifth Committee Secretariat**, led by Mr. **Lionel Berridge**, for supporting me and the Bureau every step of the way and for tirelessly assisting the Committee throughout the session.

I can attest that they are truly the heroes of the Fifth Committee for bearing this with a smile on their face year after year. Nothing would have been possible without them.

Also, on behalf of the whole Committee, I would like to express appreciation to the **wider Secretariat** for their vigorous efforts around the clock, despite the constraints while working from home. Our thanks go especially to **Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, Ms. Catherine Pollard; Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix; Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo;** and **Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support, Mr. Atul Khare**, as well as the respective departments under their leadership. I am also deeply grateful to **Assistant Secretary-General, Controller, Mr. Chandru Ramanathan** – who is attending today’s meeting - for his unwavering support and outstanding work.

My gratitude goes also to the **Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, Mr. Abdallah Bachar Bong**, for our excellent cooperation, including for the informal briefing he recently provided on “ACABQ matters pertaining to the Fifth Committee”. This informal interaction of the Committee with the ACABQ Chair was a first but if pursued further, could lead to much needed synergies. Also, I would like to thank the **previous ACABQ Chair, Mr. Cihan Terzi**, with whom I also had an excellent cooperation during his tenure. I acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of all ACABQ members, who managed to ensure an uninterrupted flow of work while working remotely and delivered more timely and concise reports. Adjusting the timing and focus of the ACABQ reports has been one of the long overdue changes that emerged in this adversity.

I would like to reiterate how deeply grateful I am to **President of the General Assembly, His Excellency, Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande**, for his unparalleled support to our Committee and comment on his leadership, especially during these

challenging times. I was truly humbled that the President of the General Assembly has been actively supporting the work of the Fifth Committee, as he has attended and addressed many of our meetings, engaged with numerous delegations on Fifth Committee issues and always showed interest in the progress of our work. Cooperating closely with his Office was the catalyst that enabled business continuity for the Fifth Committee and helped us manage with the pressing time constraints, in order to adopt the peacekeeping budgets by the end of June.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate the incoming Chair of the 75th session, the **Permanent Representative of Uruguay, His Excellency Mr. Carlos Amorín** - my dear friend - for his election, as well as the elected members of the Bureau of the 75th session, **Mr. Jakub Chmielewski (of Poland)**, **Ms. Armagan Ayse Can Crabtree (of Turkey)** and **Mr. Katlego Boase Mmalane (of Botswana)** as Vice-Chairs and **Mr. Terrence Teo of Singapore** as the Rapporteur. I would like to wish them best of success and assure them that my team and I will be by their side every step of the way, just like the Australian Chairmanship of the 73rd session so generously did for us. That is the essence of the Troika of Chairmanships I envisaged in order to ensure smooth transition and continuity and I truly hope that the tangible work of the Troika will be furthered in the sessions to come.