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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP BY H.E AMBASSADOR H.E. Mr. MOHAMED FATHI AHMED EDREES, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF EGYPT TO THE UNITED NATIONS, DURING THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE SECOND PART OF THE RESUMED SEVENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**(New York, 4<sup>th</sup> August 2020)**

**Mr. Chairman,**

- 1.** I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group at this closing session of the second resumed part of the seventy-fourth session of the Fifth Committee.
- 2.** At the outset, I wish to commend Ambassador Andreas Mavroyiannis and the Bureau of the Committee for their incredible work, their guidance and their inexhaustible dedication. Mr. Ambassador, your indispensable leadership during the 74<sup>th</sup> Session is much appreciated.
- 3.** I would also like to thank Mr. Lionel Berridge and the Secretariat of the Fifth Committee for their tireless dedication and efforts in facilitating the Committee's work. They have had to, as usual, combine their enormous tasks here with those of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC).
- 4.** A special mention also goes to Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan and his team as well as Ms. Vivian Van de Perre and her team.

**Mr. Chairman,**

- 5.** The African Group aligns itself with the comments and remarks expressed by the Representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and would like to make a few additions in this regard.
- 6.** As mentioned in our statement during the organization of work, it was our genuine and strong determination to have this second resumed session concluded with a budget commensurate with the mandate of each peacekeeping mission.
- 7.** With that we have come to the close of an unprecedented second resumed part of the seventy-fourth session in which we have had to negotiate a peacekeeping budget of \$6.6 billion during one of the worst pandemics of recent memory.
- 8.** These results have come about as a result of working remotely. Though challenging, I would like to commend all delegations for their dedication, commitment and flexibility towards achieving positive outcomes.
- 9.** While the Group shares the consensual outcome reached today, we would like to note that the tools for conducting meetings online where in-person sessions would be simulated did not come forth despite previous assurances.
- 10.** The African Group is particularly concerned that the interpretation services which are vital for the participation of our group especially during a peacekeeping session were lacking and that this has limited the active participation of many delegations.
- 11.** That notwithstanding the Committee has been able to finalize its work getting the agreement of delegations on issues of high priority to the continent such as addressing the safety and security of troops and civilian personnel, nationalization of posts, mine action; partnerships between the UN and regional and sub-regional entities as well as missions' support for elections and programmatic activities to mention but a few.
- 12.** The Group further wishes to highlight that apart from achieving the peacekeeping budget, as a whole, the resolution on the triennial review of the rates and standards for reimbursement to the Member States for contingent owned equipment as well as adoption of the resolution on closed peacekeeping operation after a long period of time were among this sessions great achievements.

**13.** We welcome the resolution on the closed peacekeeping operations. However, the Group regrets that claims payable to the troop and police-contributing countries and outstanding dues to the Member States from closed peacekeeping operation budgets have not been settled. We encourage the Secretary-General to continue to take every necessary measure to reimburse troop and police-contributing countries before the closure of any peacekeeping mission, to avoid the current practice of delaying reimbursements to the troop and police-contributing countries.

**Mr. Chairman,**

**14.** While we have managed to secure the fundamentals of the budget, the African Group still believes that substantial cuts continue to have a negative impact on mandate implementation and, a dent on the credibility and capacity of the United Nations to deliver on its promises to the global citizens.

**15.** Agreement reached during our deliberations saw the budget reduced by about \$74 million below the resources requested by the Secretary General was achieved with sacrifice and painful concessions from our Group.

**16.** The level of the peacekeeping budget had to be painstakingly negotiated in a way that has necessitated the African Group to express its concern of the increasingly dwindling resources allocated to peacekeeping operations whose primary objective is to support member states' efforts for peace and security while ensuring the protection of often vulnerable civilians, especially women and children, particularly on the African continent.

**17.** Going forward, the Group strongly urges individual Member States and groups of countries to avoid any further attempts of making arbitrary cuts in the budget in the name of seeking efficiency.

**18.** The Group further wishes to encourage all Member States to fulfill their financial obligations as set out in the Charter of the United Nations on time, in full and without conditions, and to make every possible effort to ensure payment of their assessed contributions in full.

**19.** It is no secret that most challenges faced by missions as well as troop- and police-contributing countries are occasioned by the late and non-payment of assessed contributions by the Member States for some missions, including closed ones that stands to disrupt the operations of the organization and put United Nations peacekeepers in peril.

**Mr. Chairman,**

**20.** Looking into the future, the African Group looks forward to receiving in the context of the Secretary General's next performance reports how Missions responded, what lessons can be learned from past and present epidemics and pandemics, and options for improving future preparedness for epidemics and pandemics including for business continuity. It is also important to avoid the accumulation of arrears and the repercussions of dwindling coffers for the Organization.

**21.** Last but not least Mr. Chairman, I wish to take this opportunity to thank my own Group, the African Group, their chair, Katlego Mmalane and the Bureau of the Africa Group, Mr. Theodore Yeboah of Ghana; Mohamed Traore of Mali and Mohamed Fouad of Egypt, for their immense contribution, sacrifice as well as their high level of cooperation, professionalism and constructiveness in getting us to where we are today.

**22.** Furthermore, I wish to warmly welcome the incoming Chair of the Fifth Committee, H.E Mr. Carlos Daniel Amorín Tenconi, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations, who will guide us during the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly. The African Group pledges its support and looks forward to a fruitful relationship with him and his Bureau.

**Mr. Chairman,**

**23.** Despite all the challenges that we faced during the course of this session, the Group would like to reaffirm its commitment to engage constructively in the work of the Fifth Committee in the next seventy-fifth session, and hopes that the spirit of cooperation, flexibility and compromise that has benefitted us in the past year will carry on in our work during the next session.

**I thank you Mr. Chair.**