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UNGA76 FIFTH COMMITTEE FIRST RESUMED SESSION

4 March 2022

Statement by H.E. Dr Fiona Webster, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations, on behalf of CANZ

Check against delivery

Mr Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and, my country, Australia.

Ukraine

At the outset, let me say that CANZ condemns, in the strongest possible terms, Russia's unprovoked and unjustified attack on Ukraine. Its invasion is a wholesale breach of international law, including the UN Charter's prohibition on the use of force. We reiterate our call for Russia to stop this egregious violation and withdraw its military immediately. The protection of Ukraine's civilian population and infrastructure must be the highest priority.

Russia's bombardment of densely populated areas, reportedly including the use of so-called vacuum bombs, is a serious breach of international humanitarian law. And we are deeply concerned about Russia's shelling at Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. Any attack against peaceful nuclear facilities is a flagrant violation of IAEA norms and international humanitarian law. Both of these acts may constitute war crimes and Russia must be held to account.

First Resumed Session

Turning to the First Resumed Session of the Fifth Committee – this is an opportunity for us to increase the UN's efficiency and accountability, improve the financial situation and strengthen human resources management.

Human resources management

The most valuable asset of the United Nations is its staff. We are mindful of the difficult working conditions associated with COVID-19 and appreciate the UN's efforts to adapt its work practices and prioritise staff welfare over the last two years.

Now, more than ever, the UN needs a capable and agile workforce to deliver on its complex and challenging mandates – whether it is responding to COVID, climate change or conflict. We need a workforce that reflects the geographical diversity of its Member States, reaches gender parity, and empowers staff. Most importantly, we need a workforce that operates with the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity.

Mr Chair,

We regret that the Fifth Committee was unable to reach consensus on human resources management during the 73rd, 74th and 75th sessions. We must strive for an outcome on each report, considered on its own merits, to provide clear guidance to the Secretary-General. We look forward to building on the progress made last session, especially on those items which came very close to agreement.

Improving the financial situation

We are pleased that the liquidity crisis has eased over the last year and welcome the increase in Member States paying their assessments in full and on time. We are also aware, however, of structural liquidity problems which are undermining mandate delivery and require sustainable solutions.

First, we continue to urge all Member States to pay their assessments in full, on time and without conditions. This is both a moral and a legal obligation. Second, CANZ supports maintaining adequate liquidity reserves, making better use of existing funds and adopting less rigid budgetary procedures to improve the financial situation. We want the UN to be driven by the programmes Member States approve, not by the available cash on hand.

Mr Chair,

CANZ remains committed to constructive engagement with all Member States to deliver positive and tangible outcomes this session.

Thank you.

Word Count: 510