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**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING:
1st FORMAL MEETING OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE
3 October 2022**

**Statement by HE Mitch Fifield, Ambassador and Permanent
Representative, Australian Mission to the United Nations**

Check against delivery

Thank you Mister Chair [Permanent Representative of Belgium, Philippe Kridelka]. I have the honour today to speak on behalf of Canada, New Zealand and, my own country, Australia.

Acknowledgements

Congratulations on your appointment as Chair of the Fifth Committee. We look forward to working with you and the new Bureau to ensure the efficient, effective, accountable, and timely resourcing of UN mandates.

In particular, we appreciate Belgium's publication of the Fifth Committee Manual to help guide new delegates and your focus on improving the Committee's working methods.

Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Mister Chair, this year the 2023 programme budget is being negotiated in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its consequences for the global economy. The Secretary-General has made it clear that, “The impact of the war in Ukraine on food security, energy and finance is systemic, severe and speeding up.” This has security, economic and humanitarian ramifications for Member States and puts the UN under immense strain. CANZ strongly supports Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and we call on Russia to immediately withdraw its forces.

Annual Budget Reform

Mr Chair, under the Secretary-General’s management reforms, we moved from a biennial to an annual budget on a trial basis. Over the last three years we have witnessed greater financial agility, more concrete results and improved accountability. This was particularly valuable in navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and now the war in Ukraine. We strongly support the continuation of the annual budget.

Proposed Programme Budget 2023

We welcome the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for 2023. We acknowledge the delicate balance between new or expanded mandates and containing growth. And we recognise that recosting is being exacerbated by inflation, high food and energy costs, and fluctuating currency exchange rates.

We support the Secretary-General's proposal to "frontload" resource requirements for ongoing Human Rights Council mandates for budget efficiency. The proposal responds to a recommendation by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). We are dismayed that the ACABQ has subsequently recommended against it, putting at risk \$35 million of human rights funding. We remain deeply concerned about the chronic underfunding of the UN's human rights pillar.

Following the GA Plenary's resolution on peacebuilding financing, CANZ looks forward to returning to this item to find consensus in the Fifth Committee. Investing in peace now, reduces costlier responses to crises and conflicts later. The Peacebuilding Fund has delivered impressive results around the world, driven by its flexibility and responsiveness. A critical funding gap now exists between Member States' requests and the voluntary funding available. We consider some assessed funding for the Peacebuilding Fund would provide a valuable contribution to delivering the UN's core mandate of conflict prevention.

Mister Chair, there are a growing list of competing demands for regular budget funding, but, unfortunately, not everything can be included. We will need to carefully consider each proposal on its merits, noting that moving 95 posts from extrabudgetary to regular budget funding is a large request.

We acknowledge that all Member States, including our own, are facing increased fiscal constraints following the global impact of COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. We are committed to working with other Member States to identify savings to offset increases in other areas of the budget.

Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) Reform

Mr Chair, the Fifth Committee looks to the ACABQ to provide critical advice on budget matters to help us assess proposals. It is vital that we do everything we can to ensure it remains a technical and transparent body. When we consider ACABQ conditions of service, it would be pertinent to also review ACABQ's work more broadly, including its working methods and expert qualifications.

Liquidity Situation

Finally, Mister Chair, while the regular budget is often considered the ideal solution, it does not always receive adequate and predictable funding from its Member States. While CANZ continues to pay in full, on time and without conditions, only two-thirds of Member States have paid their regular budget contributions in full [due in February]. We urge all Member States with outstanding assessments to prioritise these payments and advise the Secretariat on timing. The later Member States pay, the less likely the money can be committed, and the less likely the UN can deliver on the mandates we have set it.

Conclusion

Mister Chair, we look forward to working constructively with all Member States to achieve a timely adoption of the 2023 budget with adequate resources for efficient, effective, relevant, and accountable mandate implementation.

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