



PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**STATEMENT BY MR LUKE TANG, COUNSELLOR (LEGAL),
PERMANENT MISSION OF SINGAPORE TO THE UNITED NATIONS,
ON AGENDA ITEM 165, ON
THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH THE HOST
COUNTRY, SIXTH COMMITTEE, 6 NOVEMBER 2019**

[Please check against delivery]

Mr Chair,

Singapore thanks the Chair of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, H.E. Andreas Mavroyiannis, for presenting the comprehensive report.

2 The United Nations was established at a time when the world needed an international order governed by law. Today, it continues to be the centre and the embodiment of the rules-based multilateral system. At the United Nations, we have to consciously and thoroughly examine every issue from the perspective of international law. The Charter of the United Nations is the foundation of this organisation, and the Headquarters Agreement, read in conjunction with the Charter, must be respected and implemented.

Mr Chair,

3 We have listened very closely to the concerns expressed by a number of delegations, including on issues relating to entry visas and travel restrictions. In our view, these issues must be resolved in accordance with international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, the Headquarters Agreement and the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

4 A rules-based multilateral system requires that all countries are treated equally. Equally important, every country has the sovereign right to choose its representatives to the United Nations and its delegates to UN meetings. This principle of sovereign equality is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, which also guarantees the right of representatives of Member States to such privileges and immunities as are necessary for the independent exercise of their functions in connection with the Organisation. Indeed, it is in the interest of the United Nations and all Member States that these privileges and immunities are observed, and that appropriate conditions are maintained for the normal work of delegations and missions accredited to the United Nations. It is of paramount importance that we, as Member States, remain committed in our collective effort to fulfil the purposes of this Organisation, and to address all issues in a spirit of cooperation, and in accordance with international law.

Mr Chair,

5 We are concerned that, in recent months, the issuance of visas for diplomats attending UN meetings has become a political issue. We are also concerned that this issue will impact negatively on the work of different Main Committees. We cannot allow this issue to undermine the substantive work of the UN. We take note of the statement of the United Nations Legal Counsel, addressed to the Committee on 15 October 2019¹, in which the Legal Counsel confirmed that the legal position of the United Nations regarding the host country's obligations on this issue remains unchanged from that provided by the then-Legal Counsel to the Committee in 1988². We call on the host country and other countries involved to engage with each other with seriousness and seek a resolution in accordance with the Headquarters Agreement and the UN Charter. In this regard, we wish to underline the importance of the active engagement by the United Nations Secretary-General with the host country, as well as with relevant Member States, regarding the implementation of the Headquarters Agreement. The United Nations is party to the Headquarters Agreement, and the Secretary-General, as its representative, plays a direct and central role in ensuring its effective implementation. In this regard, we welcome the regular contact between the Office of Legal Affairs and the authorities of the host country. We also endorse the Committee's recommendation to encourage the Secretary-General to more actively engage in the work of the Committee with a view to ensuring the representation of the interests concerned.

6 Thank you.

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¹ A/AC.154/415

² A/C.6/43/7