

Statement at the 76th General Assembly Sixth Committee
Agenda Item Number 147: Administration of Justice
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Thank you, Chair.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General, the Internal Justice Council, and the Office of the United Nations Ombudsperson and Mediation Services for their reports, which are a valuable resource for member states.

We also want to express our continued appreciation to all of the staff involved in the administration of justice at the UN for their resilience and adaptation to the new and sometimes difficult working conditions imposed by the global pandemic. We were gratified to see the notable progress made over the reporting period, in spite of these challenges, on some of the reforms that the Sixth Committee has most prominently encouraged in recent years.

We continue to appreciate the work of the Office of the UN Ombudsperson and Mediation Services, and its efforts to shift to virtual methods of service delivery in this unique time, such as online versions of key training workshops and the “virtual mission model.” We also appreciate the office’s further focus on facilitating diversity and inclusion throughout the UN system, including through its dialogue series as part of the Secretary General’s Task Force on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for all in the UN.

The Management Evaluation Unit and Office of Staff Legal Assistance (OSLA) have also continued important work in helping to resolve requests before they reached the litigation stage, which is a crucial part of maintaining efficiency and effectiveness of the entire system.

We would also like to highlight the high productivity of the UN Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) and UN Appeals Tribunal (UNAT) during the reporting period. We were pleased to see the significant reduction in the case backlog of the UNDT, particularly among cases pending for more than 400 days, a category that has now been almost entirely disposed of. Indeed, the number of applications pending is now at the lowest point in over 10 years. This success was enabled both by the hard work of tribunal staff, and by the valuable flexibility that the model of half-time judges, and remote work has provided, allowing leadership to dynamically assign judges to the geographic areas of greatest need. We hope that both the UNDT and UNAT can build on this momentum to surmount the lingering challenge of case backlogs.

We are also pleased that progress has been made on a searchable database of UN administrative jurisprudence, a resource that lawyers in this room have long requested, and one that will be a valuable tool for litigants and the public. Transparency of the system is critically important so that UN staff, their representatives, and the General Assembly can better understand how the tribunals are carrying out administrative justice. We also welcome the availability of a cause list of individual judges and case tracking dashboard, as well as the anticipated improvements to this system. We hope that all of these transparency efforts will soon come to

full fruition, and that awareness of the dispute resolution resources available will continue to expand.

Thank you, Chair.