



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR VANU GOPALA MENON, PERMANENT  
REPRESENTATIVE OF SINGAPORE  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS,  
ON THE SG'S RESTRUCTURING PROPOSALS,  
INFORMAL PLENARY MEETING,  
16 FEBRUARY 2007**

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1 Thank you Madam President for giving me the floor. I ask for your indulgence today because it is my intention to be candid. This restructuring issue has tied us up in knots. I do not think it is a knot of Gordian proportions. But even if it is, we should make like Alexander and slice through it.

2 I believe that we are dealing with three basic issues. The first is the substance of the SG's proposals. To put it simply, are we convinced that changes are necessary? If so, are we convinced that what is being proposed makes sense? Second, there is a question of process. Finally, there is the question of politics. Is it in our interests to agree to the proposals, or do we continue to delay them whatever the cost?

3 Let me begin with the substance. We have before us two revised non-papers on the proposals. These papers are more detailed than what was circulated before. They present stronger arguments for the SG's suggestions. In tandem, the SG and his senior staff have made efforts over the past weeks to better explain the rationale behind their proposals.

- For instance, it is now being proposed that the Office for Disarmament Affairs will come directly under the SG's Office, but with a separate budget. The new office will inherit the DDA's mandate intact. The Office will be headed by a High Representative who is also a USG. In short, the SG has taken on board many of the concerns that we previously expressed.
- With reference to the DPKO, the SG's ideas also seem like less of a split of DPKO, than of the establishment of a new Department, i.e. the Department of Field Support (DFS). As we understand it, it is the SG's intention that after he has created the two departments – the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) – he will strengthen both with more people and resources. If so, the current DPKO would not be hollowed out but rationalised and strengthened.

- In tandem, I understand that the new DFS will provide support not only to the new DPO for peacekeeping, but also to DPA for political missions and OCHA for humanitarian operations. In short, the DFS would support all UN field operations. We have also been informed that on the ground, the SRSG would be the final arbiter and the point man, with the Chief Finance Officer reporting to him and only him. In turn, the SRSG would report to the USG for the DPO and to the SG. This is to address concerns about unity of command. Finally, we understand that to ensure coordination between DPO and DFS, unified teams involving officers from both departments will be created. As I see it, the success of DPO and DFS would ultimately depend on the quality of the people asked to perform the jobs in these two departments as well as in ensuring the effective implementation of the measures put in place to ensure horizontal and vertical integration, including having clear lines of command and a clear delineation of responsibilities.

4 While these explanations have shed more light than before, I must say that the Secretariat has taken some time to provide us with the information. In fact, it has been provided in a piecemeal fashion. This had created the unfortunate perception that the proposals had not been well thought out. Indeed, this has given rise to a sense that it was only because of our persistent questioning that the Secretariat was forced to think through the issues and flesh them out in detail. It could have been handled better.

5 This leads me to the question of process. I think we all have to admit that we are dealing with slightly unorthodox procedures with us being asked to consider framework resolutions which would in-principle approve the thrust of the restructuring proposals even prior to detailed discussions. But, perhaps, sometimes on the rare occasion, I suppose we have to take an unorthodox approach in order to achieve results. Notwithstanding this, I note that the SG intends to consult the C34, as well as engage the ACABQ and 5th Committee on his proposals.

6 This brings me to the final issue - politics. Substantially, the arguments for the proposals are now clearer and more comprehensive. The SG has also taken on board a number of our stated concerns. So what do we do? Should we continue to insist on full details before acting? Should we give the SG some leeway to try out his proposals? For my delegation, the fundamental question we have to ask ourselves is whether it is in any of our interests to continue to hold this up?

7 I am inclined to give the SG the flexibility that he is asking for. However, as my delegation had pointed out before, flexibility should be accompanied by accountability. As my good friend Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo of South Africa put it at the last informal Plenary meeting on 5 February 2007, the SG was elected by acclamation. He should be given the authority, where applicable, to make some changes to the Secretariat provided that there is accountability at the end of the day. If we

obstruct him this time around by insisting on all details before agreeing to his restructuring plans, we will delay him and perhaps undermine him as well. If we tie him up in knots - we not only do him a disservice, we also do the United Nations a disservice. By extension, we do ourselves a disservice because the UN is important to all of us, particularly small and developing countries, which make up the vast majority of this Organisation. However, as accountability would demand, the Secretariat must provide member states with reports that are comprehensive and geared towards strengthening the functioning of the UN.

8 My sense is that we should move on. We have conveyed our concerns and the SG has not been deaf to them. He has listened to us on the DDA and adjusted. He has asked us for approval to allow him to try ways to make the DPKO and field missions in general run better. These moves are not etched in stone. The SG's intention is to review the functioning of the restructured Secretariat after two years. My view is that while a formal review can be undertaken after two years, I hope that the SG and the Secretariat will not wait for that long to fix things if problems arise. He and his staff should be prepared to continuously review the restructured Secretariat and make necessary changes before problems get out of hand.

9 The SG has indicated that he would like us to approve the thrust of his proposals via framework resolutions. This is on the understanding that his detailed proposals, when ready, will be subject to consideration and approval in accordance with established procedures, including the ACABQ, the Fifth Committee and other relevant legislative bodies. I understand that the actual restructuring of the Secretariat will only take place after this detailed scrutiny is completed. This should further allay our concerns. Every reform is a bit of a leap of faith. Maybe we should take that leap.

10 If you will allow me one final comment. Any in-principle, broad approval from member states should not be seen as a precedent for future reform exercises. We would expect the SG and his staff to consult more thoroughly and to provide information more quickly and comprehensively and to respect and adhere to established procedures on future issues of similar importance.

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