



United States Mission to the United Nations

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Statement by Ambassador Mark Wallace on Items 47, 113, 116, 117, 122, 123, 124, 132 and 149: Governance and Oversight Review

Before the Fifth Committee
December 12, 2006

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

The United States Delegation welcomes this morning's introduction of the long-awaited reports on governance and oversight prepared pursuant to the request of world leaders as called for in paragraph 164 (b) of General Assembly resolution 60/1. Given the critical importance of the comprehensive review undertaken of governance arrangements and the independent external evaluation of the auditing and oversight system of the United Nations, the United States deeply regrets that this information is coming before the Fifth Committee for our analysis and consideration so late in the current session of the 61st General Assembly. Our leaders recognized during the September 2005 World Summit that in order to comply effectively with the principles and objectives of the Charter, that we need an efficient, effective, transparent, and accountable Secretariat. The reports now before us, including the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), offer a variety of proposed reform measures designed to improve management and oversight at the UN which merit our careful review. It is imperative that we expedite our consideration of these proposals with a view to achieving at least some tangible results by the end of the current session.

The Report of the Steering Committee on the Comprehensive Review of Governance and Oversight represents an ambitious undertaking carried out by external experts in order to improve key UN oversight mechanisms and governance structures. While the United States shares a number of concerns noted in ACABQ's report (A/61/605) regarding the organization, presentation, and analytical basis for a number of the Steering Committee's key recommendations, we nevertheless welcome the report of the Steering Committee as providing useful ideas for addressing the improvements envisioned by our leaders.

The ACABQ has provided us with an insightful analysis of the recommendations on governance and oversight offered in the Steering Committee report, including several areas where it recommends a different course of action from that proposed by the Steering Committee report. In particular, ACABQ has identified several areas for early decision by the Fifth Committee. One involves putting into effect the Independent Audit Advisory Committee, which the General Assembly agreed to establish nearly one year ago. We must act now to finalize the mandate, composition, selection process, and qualifications of experts for the IAAC, which is intended to assist Member States in discharging our oversight responsibilities. In this instance, we share the concerns reflected in the recommendations of the ACABQ regarding the size of the IAAC and the advisory rather than operational character of its function. The United States supports

prompt General Assembly approval of revised terms of reference for the IAAC so that this important body can begin its work as quickly as possible. It is in the UN and Member States' best interests to take action on this key reform measure without delay.

In addition, the United States endorses ACABQ's recommendation for expedited General Assembly consideration of proposals to ensure the operational independence of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. We concur with the ACABQ that the Secretary-General should prepare a plan in this regard, drawing upon the experience gained from cost-sharing mechanisms currently in place.

The United States further agrees with the ACABQ that stricter attention needs to be paid to monitoring progress on management's implementation of recommendations made by all oversight bodies. The General Assembly, as the supreme oversight body of the United Nations, must play a more active role in ensuring that program managers enact recommended improvements in procedures and performance. The General Assembly should follow up on non-implemented recommendations by demanding more frequent updates and holding management accountable for changes not made. As ACABQ notes, continued emphasis needs to be placed on the implementation of recommendations if reforms in oversight and governance are to be as effective as possible.

Concerning the basic structure and functions of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the United States notes ACABQ's frequent reference to resolution 48/218 B, which established OIOS and defined its responsibilities. We agree with ACABQ that any changes to the organization and structure of OIOS should be considered in light of this resolution, and that the core functions for which OIOS bears primary responsibility be maintained, with the exception of the management consulting function. The United States also supports the recommendation that OIOS be ensured adequate funding arrangements to provide its services to the UN funds and programs.

The United States looks forward to the Fifth Committee's detailed discussions on governance and oversight so that we can build a culture of integrity and accountability within the UN and empower the Secretariat to carry out the decisions of the General Assembly as efficiently and effectively as possible. We share a collective responsibility to act promptly and decisively to fulfill the commitments made by heads of state and government to enhance the relevance, accountability and credibility of the UN system through the strengthening of our governance and oversight systems.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.