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## **HAVING MADE HARD CHOICES, FOUND SAVINGS WHILE PROTECTING UNITED NATIONS ABILITY**

### **TO GET JOB DONE, GENERAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS \$5.15 BILLION BUDGET FOR 2012-2013**

#### **All Budgets are Tough, but This Year Especially Difficult Given Financial Austerity, Says Secretary-General, Lauding Approval of New Budget Lower than Last**

The General Assembly closed its main session midday Saturday with the adoption of a \$5.15 billion United Nations budget for the 2012-2013 biennium and an unexpected intervention by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who commended Member States for having risen to that challenge with “energy, creativity and an indispensable willingness to make the hard choices”.

In a “collective achievement”, United Nations Member States “found savings, while protecting the Organization’s ability to “get the job done”, the Secretary-General said. “We worked together and made history,” he declared, by approving a budget by the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) that was lower than the one for the previous biennium.

“All budgets are tough, but this year was particularly difficult, as Governments and peoples everywhere are struggling in this time of financial austerity,” he said, praising the “compact” between Member States and the United Nations Secretariat and all United Nations staff. Today, member nations kept their promises — to each other and to the world’s people. In turn, he gave his pledge, and he would instruct all his managers to do the same, to do more and better with less, to make the most of “our precious resources”.

He would ensure that Member States contributions, and that all mandates given to the Secretariat, were fully and efficiently delivered and at a savings. “You can count on my commitment,” he said, concluding with his best wishes for a “Merry Christmas and a very healthy and happy New Year” for all.

At the meeting, begun yesterday afternoon and then suspended through the night to allow delegations more time for consultations, Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz al-Nasser had commended the “robust and constructive engagement” he envisaged of all delegations in reaching consensus on a financial plan and taking action on a range of vital issues throughout the main part of the world body’s sixty-sixth session that began in September.

“The negotiation process on the biennium budget has been particularly challenging this year in the wake of global financial challenges,” he said, acknowledging the intense discussions leading up to the Assembly’s action. He praised the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) for “working tirelessly” to reach agreement on issues of critical importance to the Organization, including funding for special political missions, the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, and law of the sea.

Prior to taking action on the 2012-2013 budget and other Fifth Committee reports, the Assembly adopted two postponed texts of its Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian, Cultural), and three plenary-generated resolutions, on culture of peace, strengthening the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, and assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence.

President Al-Nasser recalled that, in September, he had opened the session urging the Assembly to take concrete actions that would “define our place in this decisive moment in history”, when the world faced unprecedented environmental, economic and socio-political challenges and when people’s demands for good governance and prosperity were stronger and louder than ever before. “I firmly believe that you rose to this challenge,” he declared, noting that the 193-nation Assembly had “acted in concert on many of the major issues of our time” and had, thus far, adopted some 300 resolutions and decisions.

Highlighting key events of the past few months, many of which had been driven by the popular uprisings that had swept North Africa and the Middle East, he said Member States had restored the legitimate representation of the Libyan people to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. “As such, the international community is now responding to the aspirations of a new, free Libya,” he said, noting that he had visited the country in early November with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, to demonstrate the Organization’s strong support.

Turning to a troubling situation in the Middle East, he said the Assembly had expressed its concern regarding the ongoing developments in Syria with the adoption, on 19 December, of a resolution condemning the “grave and systematic human rights violations” being committed by the Syrian authorities. That text, forwarded by the Third Committee, had called on Damascus to implement the League of Arab States’ Plan of Action in its entirety. “I hope that the killing and violence in Syria will immediately come to an end, in keeping with the calls of the international community,” he added.

He went on to say that the issue of Palestine had been particularly central this General Assembly session and he recalled the “historic development” when, on 23 September, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had transmitted Palestine’s application for membership to the United Nations to the Secretary-General. In addition, a number of important resolutions on Palestine had been examined by several Committees and adopted once again this year. “It is my conviction that the General Assembly should continue to work collectively for the attainment of a just and comprehensive negotiated peace settlement in the Middle East,” he said.

Mr. Al-Nasser said that “enormous efforts” had been made and further progress was under way on the key pillars he had earlier outlined as the focus of the current session: peaceful settlement of disputes; United Nations reform; improving disaster prevention and response; and promoting sustainable development and global prosperity.

Highlighting activities aimed at accelerating progress on the Millennium Development Goals, and preparations for the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development — Rio+20 — he also noted that, given the Assembly’s pre-eminence as the legitimate centre of global decision-making, he had convened pre- and post-G20 Summit briefings and encouraged all major groups to cooperate in addressing key macroeconomic issues.

Reiterating his strong belief in partnership, he said the Assembly had much work ahead of it. He would soon inform Member States of the activities he had planned for 2012 and would work closely with all delegations in preparation for the Assembly’s sixty-seventh session, including the high-level event on the rule of law planned for September 2012.

“As members of the chief deliberative and policymaking organ of the United Nations — not to mention the most representative and universal body in the world and the birthplace of international law — it is our shared responsibility to make peace and prosperity a reality for all,” he declared.

### Background

The General Assembly met today to take action on recommendations of its Third (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) and Fifth (Administrative and Budgetary) Committees, as well as a number of plenary-generated texts. For background and more complete summaries of the Fifth Committee reports, see Press Release [GA/AB/4021](#).

### Action on Plenary Texts

When the Assembly opened the meeting, on Friday, it first took up a draft resolution on the [promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace](#) (document A/66/L.32). Jointly introducing that text, LIBRAN N. CABACTULAN ([Philippines](#)) said that the

resolution before the Assembly built upon the collective efforts to achieve just and lasting peace throughout the world. He recalled that, since his delegation had first introduced a resolution on the promotion of interreligious dialogue in 2004, resolutions on that topic had been passed unanimously in the General Assembly. He described updates and additions to this year's resolution, including, among other things, a mention of the recent adoption by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which proclaimed an international decade of cultures and the adoption of its new programme of action on a culture of peace and non-violence.

Also co-sponsoring and co-introducing the draft resolution, RAZA BASHIR TARAR (Pakistan) added that, in a world afflicted with divisive ideologies, mutual suspicion and mistrust, there was a need to engage closely with one another. Interfaith and intercultural dialogue must be pursued in an organized manner at all levels, including religious leaders, local and national Governments, regional and international organizations, civil societies and media. In that context, he urged all Member States to support the resolution with a view to fostering greater understanding and cooperation between cultures and faiths, contributing to achieving a global culture of peace.

The Assembly then adopted that draft resolution by consensus.

Speaking in explanation of position on behalf of the European Union, the representative of Poland said she appreciated the efforts of the main sponsors of the text to take into account some of the concerns raised in previous years, including regarding language on the importance of civil society in intercultural dialogue. The European Union was convinced that such dialogue could make a significant contribution to mutual understanding among persons with different cultures, regions and other identities, as well as deepening the understanding, promotion and tolerance of overall relations among peoples and societies.

Nevertheless, she said the European Union continued to have reservations regarding some of the elements included in the text, and the delegation regretted that intra-religious dialogue was not mentioned as one of the efforts deserving more understanding and collaboration. Further, the Union emphasized that intercultural, interreligious and intra-religious dialogue were processes that comprised an open and respectful exchange, especially within societies, between individuals or representatives of groups, organizations or communities with different backgrounds. Moreover, contrary to the image presented in the text, the Union did not believe that individuals could be categorized exclusively by their religion or belief.

"Religion may indeed constitute part of the multiple identities of an individual, but it is important that the diversity of identities is reflected in the global dialogue efforts as a whole," she said, stressing that the idea of "monolithic religious blocks" should also be avoided, as religious diversity, as well as the multiplicity of individual identity should be recognized at all times. She hoped that such concerns would be taken into account during future deliberations on the text.

Acting again without a vote, the Assembly then adopted a draft resolution on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development (document A/66/L.33).

As he introduced that text on behalf of the Group of 77 developing countries and China, MARCELO CESA (Argentina) said his delegation believed that the transition from relief to development was an important stage at which "disasters count be transformed into opportunities for sustainable development". The resolution, therefore, aimed to mainstream a comprehensive approach into humanitarian assistance to bolster global cooperation in relief assistance in the field of natural disasters, risk reduction and disaster recovery. Through four rounds of negotiations, delegations had this year agreed to enhance the text by improving language regarding the impact of global challenges, including climate change, as well as by inserting new language on, among other concerns, the civilian nature of humanitarian assistance and on the guiding principles of displacement.

Next, it took up a draft resolution on assistance to survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, particularly orphans, widows and victims of sexual violence (document A/66/L.31), adopting it without a vote.

Taking up a note by the President of the General Assembly on the appointment of members of the Joint Inspection Unit, the Assembly decided to name, on the nomination of Honduras, Jorge Flores Callejas to a five-year post beginning 1 January 2012 and expiring on 31 December 2016.

Resuming after an all-night suspension, the Assembly turned to addendum 1 to the Third Committee's report on implementation of human rights instruments (document [A/66/462/Add.1](#)), as well as a related report of its Fifth Committee containing programme budget implications (document [A/66/640](#)).

It then adopted without a vote draft resolution IV on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto, which was considered along with a related resolution on its programme budgetary implications.

It next turned to addendum 3 of the Third Committee's report on human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives document [A/66/462/Add.3](#)), as well as a related report of the Fifth Committee containing programme budget implications (document [A/66/639](#)).

It adopted draft resolution II on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, by a recorded vote of 83 in favour to 21 against, with 39 abstentions, which was considered along with a related report on its programme budgetary implications.

Following the vote, the representative of Myanmar expressed appreciation for those Member States that had voted against or abstained from the resolution out of consideration for his Government's transformation efforts into a democratic State with human rights values. The Government had already taken concrete, visible and, where possible, certain key initiatives. The international community had duly recognized the developments taking place in Myanmar, which was determined to move forward in a "dynamic and sustained manner". In his delegation's opinion, the Universal Periodic Review carried out by the Human Rights Council, therefore, was the best way to assess such human rights situations. The resolution deviated from the promotion and protection of human rights and was counterproductive to that coordinated effort. For that reason, Myanmar had voted against it and dissociated itself from the text. Despite those views, he reaffirmed that his country would continue to cooperate fully with the United Nations and good offices of the Secretary-General.

The Assembly then turned to a plenary-generated draft on oceans and the Law of the Sea (document [A/66/L.21](#)) – which was considered along with a related report of the Fifth Committee (document [A/66/642](#)). By its terms, the Assembly called upon States to harmonize their national legislation with the provisions of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and to ensure that urban and coastal development projects and related land-reclamation activities were carried out in a responsible manner.

Further by that text, the Assembly invited States, in particular those States with advanced technology and marine capabilities, to explore prospects for improving cooperation with, and assistance to, developing States, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as coastal African States, with a view to better integrating into national policies and programmes sustainable and effective development in the marine sector.

Speaking ahead of action, the representative of Venezuela reaffirmed her delegation's commitment to coordination in areas part and parcel to oceans and law of the sea, pursuant to international law. It confirmed its willingness to promote projects aimed at managing the sustainable use of oceans and the preservation of the ecosystem. Nevertheless, she underscored her country's position expressed in various international forums, that the Convention on the Law of the Sea should not be seen as the "single" instrument to address such issues. Indeed, that treaty did not have universal membership. The issues that prevented Venezuela from being party to the treaty remained in place so it would not support the resolution, the content of which would compel her delegation to abstain.

Next, the Assembly, by a recorded vote of 134 in favour to 1 against (Turkey) with 6 abstentions (Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Venezuela), adopted the draft.

Speaking after the vote, the representative of El Salvador said his country was aware of the importance of oceans, yet understood their rational exploitation, in an organized manner, within the framework of sustainable development, as that was necessary to ensure food security for all. While capacity had been developed in such areas as sustainable fishing, transportation, preservation and the sustainable use of marine biodiversity, and pollution control, more remained to be done. He, thus, called for continued work on those issues to bring better programmes and legal and political agreement between States. But as El Salvador was not a party to the Convention on the Law of the Sea,



agreements arising from it should be supported bearing in mind international law. His delegation did not share affirmations that contravened the sovereignty of El Salvador in its maritime territory. El Salvador called on all Member States to continue to work for the protection of oceans to ensure that future generations had food and assistance through sustainable use of those resources. That could only be achieved through the cooperation of all countries of the world.

Also explaining his country's position after the vote, Turkey's representative, whose delegation had opposed the resolution, recalled that the reasons that had prevented Turkey from signing onto the Law of the Sea Convention were still relevant. Turkey supported the international law of the sea regime based on principles acceptable to all States. However, the Convention did not provide sufficient safeguards for specific geographical situations or take into consideration conflicting interests and sensitivities stemming from special circumstances, or allow reservations to its articles. Although Turkey agreed with its intent and its relevant provisions, it was unable to become a party to the treaty, owing to its permanent shortcomings. It, therefore, could not support the call on all States to become parties or to harmonize their legislation in line with the Convention's provisions.

#### Action on Fifth Committee Reports

Ahead of its actions on the reports of the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary), Secretary-General BAN KI-MOON addressed the Assembly, commending the hard work of Member States to achieve a budget that was lower than the one of the previous biennium. He pledged to continue working with Member States to ensure the efficient use of the Organization's resources.

The Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary), NOEL GONZÁLEZ SEGURA (Mexico) introduced that body's reports.

The Assembly considered financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors (document [A/66/626](#)) and took up a related draft resolution, adopting it by consensus.

Taking up a report on the pattern of conferences (document [A/66/642](#)), it adopted a related resolution, without a vote.

Turning to a report on human resources management (document [A/66/627](#)), it adopted the related resolution contained therein, also without a vote.

It then considered a draft resolution on the United Nations Common System: report of the International Civil Service Commission, which was contained in a report (document [A/66/644](#)), adopting it without a vote.

Considering a report on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (document [A/66/643](#)), it adopted the related draft resolution contained therein without a vote.

It adopted, also by consensus, a draft resolution related to the administration of justice at the United Nations contained in the report on the same topic (document [A/66/628](#)).

The Assembly then turned to the matter of financing of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (document [A/66/629](#)), adopting the related draft resolution by consensus.

It considered a report on financing of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (document [A/66/630](#)) and adopted a draft resolution without a vote.

Considering a report on the international residual mechanism for the criminal tribunals (document [A/66/631](#)), it adopted a draft resolution on that matter, also by consensus.

Also adopted without a vote, a draft resolution was passed on financing of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), contained in a report by the same name (document [A/66/632](#)). By its terms, the Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to set up a special account for UNISFA for accounting purposes for income received and expenditure incurred, and to appropriate \$175.50 million to that account from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012 to maintain the Force.

It also adopted without a vote a draft resolution on financing of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, contained in a report by the same name (document [A/66/633](#)), by which the Assembly appropriated

to the special account of the Ivorian Operation \$159.24 million for the period from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012, in addition to the amount of \$517.85 million previously appropriated for the same period by resolution 65/294, inclusive of the \$486.73 million for the Operation's maintenance, \$26.37 million for the support account for peacekeeping operations and \$4.75 million for the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, Italy.

Adopting next a draft resolution on financing of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, contained in a report by the same name (document [A/66/634](#)), the Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to establish a special account for the Mission in South Sudan, and appropriate \$722.13 million for the period from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012.

The Assembly also adopted a draft resolution on financing of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, contained in a report by the same name (document [A/66/635](#)), by which it requested the Secretary-General to provide detailed information on the administration of termination indemnity in the context of the Mission's performance report. It would reduce the appropriation of \$482.46 million approved in resolution 65/257 B for the Mission's maintenance from 1 July to 31 December 2011 by \$344.93 million to the amount of \$137.53 million for the Mission's withdrawal and administrative liquidation for the period 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012.

Considering the financing of the United Nations, the Assembly then turned to a report on the programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011 (document [A/66/636](#)), which contained one draft resolution by the same name, and one draft decision on the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, adopting both without a vote.

Also regarding the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013, the Assembly considered a related report (document [A/66/637](#)), which contained five draft resolutions and one draft decision.

Speaking ahead of action on those texts, the representative of Cuba stated his delegation's objection to attempts to integrate the concept of the "responsibility to protect" into the mandate of the Office of the Special Adviser on Genocide. Speaking only about part IX of the text contained in document A/C.5/66/L.19 on "special subjects relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013", he reiterated his country's commitment to international law regarding the prevention of genocide.

However, he said Cuba had serious reservations about including the concept, the application of which had not been agreed by the Assembly, into the mandates of United Nations officials. That concept had not been adopted and its insertion was counterproductive and contravened the rules and regulations of the General Assembly regarding budgetary measures. Cuba was concerned that the concept was being "manipulated", he added.

The representative of Venezuela said that her delegation's vote against part IX referred only to the integration of the responsibility to protect into that mandate of the Office of the Special Adviser on Genocide. Venezuela objected to the modification of the logical framework of that official's mandate, as the concept of the responsibility to protect had not been agreed by the Assembly. The only thing agreed was that delegations had pledged to consider discussion regarding the concept's definition and the ways it might be implemented. As such, the concept should not be presented as a "done deal" in a report of the Fifth Committee.

Also concerned about part IX of the resolution, the representative of Iran said that it should be made clear that the concept of the "responsibility to protect" had not been approved by the General Assembly. The change to create artificial mandates and to entertain that unapproved concept was a breach of the good faith expected of the United Nations. On the issue of the sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels, he said that the sanctions levied against Iran were unlawful and targeted the civilian population; furthermore, they were based on false allegations. Iran rejected such sanctions and the "unlawful" panel of experts.

Draft resolution I, questions relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013, was adopted without a vote.

Taking up draft resolution II, special subjects relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013, the Assembly first took a separate recorded vote on part IX of that text. It was adopted by a vote of 104 in favour to 8 against (Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba, Iran, Nicaragua, Sudan, Syria,

Venezuela) with 27 abstentions.

The text as a whole was adopted without a vote.

Adopting without vote draft resolution III, entitled programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013, the Assembly approved a budget of some \$5.152 billion.

Also adopted by consensus was draft resolution IV, entitled unforeseen extraordinary expenses for the biennium 2012-2013.

Draft resolution V, working capital fund for the biennium 2012-2013, was also adopted without a vote.

The Assembly then adopted, also by consensus, a draft decision on the Capital Master Plan.

After action on those texts, the representative of Syria said his delegation had voted against part IX because it had concerns about resources being allocated to the mandates considered therein. Indeed, Terje Roed-Larsen, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), had gone beyond the mandate given to him and had specifically shown bias towards Israel. That Envoy had “mocked” his mandate and had allowed Israel’s occupation of lands in Syria and Lebanon to “go on and on”. Mr. Larsen ignored his mandate and had taken no action to address illegal Israeli practices. He reiterated Syria’s reservations to the appropriation of funds for that mandate.

The representative of Belarus said his delegation supported the Committee’s work regarding the regular budget and other important issues on the Organization’s agenda. At the same time, on matters regarding the human rights situation in his country, Belarus would reiterate its objections. Indeed, as a matter of course, Belarus did not support any country-specific resolutions, all of which had financial implications for the wider United Nations. He urged careful use of budgetary resources and stressed that such funds be devoted to the Organization’s “real needs”, such as promoting sustainable development for all.

Also speaking in explanation of position on the budget programme for 2012–2013, the representative of the Russian Federation said that, with regard to sections of document A/C.5/66/L.19 dealing with human rights matters, it was unacceptable to insert such matters where a proposed programme budget did not conform to strategic frameworks. The opinion of the Committee on Programme Planning was being doubted, and the Secretariat was ignoring that opinion for its own interest.

The representative of the Solomon Islands, speaking on part IX, said that the General Assembly remained the chief policymaking body of the United Nations, and that all work should be transparent.

The Assembly then adopted, by consensus, a draft decision on the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, contained in document [A/66/638](#).

It then adopted, without a vote, a draft decision entitled “questions deferred for future consideration”.

Acting again by consensus, the Assembly decided to appropriate \$69.56 million to the special account for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012 to support the elections on MONUSCO’s financing through a resolution contained in the Fifth Committee report (document [A/66/584](#)).

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