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Closed Peacekeeping Missions

Swiss Statement

presented by
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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Our delegations welcome the introduction of the Secretary-General's reports under this agenda item as well as the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

For several years now Switzerland and Liechtenstein have expressed their disagreement in this committee with regard to the dysfunctional accounting practices applied to closed peacekeeping missions. Our statement will focus on what we see as the three main flaws in this accounting system.

First and foremost we would like to reiterate our disapproval of the budgetary practice of retaining surplus cash from closed peacekeeping missions in order to provide liquidity for active missions. The disturbing record increase in cross-borrowing makes clear the urgency, as underlined by the ACABQ, of finding an alternative to a funding mechanism that is contrary to the requirements of a sound, transparent financial management system. Switzerland and Liechtenstein therefore ask the Secretariat to make concrete proposals for a sustainable alternative to the current practice.

Secondly, Switzerland and Liechtenstein recognize the urgent need to find a definitive solution concerning the sums owed to troop and police contributing countries in relation to closed peacekeeping missions. As of 20 June the cash deficit amounted to more than USD 63 million. We regret that the Secretary-General has been unable to devise a convincing structural solution and in this context we support the recommendations of the ACABQ. The Secretary-General needs to redouble his efforts and to submit to the General Assembly all possible options for solving this problem, including revisiting some proposals made in the past.

We feel it is important at this point to underline that to a great extent this situation is due to the non-payment of assessments by Member States. Unfortunately it is the troop-contributing countries and those that have met their financial obligations that continue to suffer from unpaid assessments which, as of 30 June 2011, amounted to more than USD 423 million. A Member State may of course have good reason for being temporarily unable to meet its obligations. That said, however, to invoke national legislation in a deliberate effort to withhold unpaid assessments over a period of years is not tenable.

Thirdly, concerning the return to Member States of cash surpluses from closed missions: we take note of the fact that the Secretary-General, holding fast to a certain interpretation of the UN's financial regulations and rules of financial management, continues to retain these surpluses. We find the uncertainty of the present situation unsatisfactory and in need of clarification.

Switzerland and Liechtenstein wish to emphasise the importance of efforts to find a global solution that addresses all of the above mentioned issues. To focus on just one aspect of the problem would be to neglect all the others, making it that much more difficult to put in place a system that is sustainable. We therefore call on the Member States to focus in the coming negotiations on the system as a whole. Swit-

zerland and Liechtenstein are ready to engage in constructive discussion of a kind that will bring us closer to a global solution.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.