

USG Khare's remarks to the AFICS Annual Assembly

Tuesday, 21 May 2024

Conference Room 1

It is a pleasure to be here with you today and I am pleased to welcome you back for this year's meeting.

As you are aware, my department, the Department of Operational Support (DOS), touches on a few areas that may be of interest to your membership. I am pleased to update you on our work over the last year.

First of all, DOS is responsible for the management and upkeep of the UN campus and associated buildings. Last year, one of the most significant initiatives of our department was vacating the DC1 building, as another step in our moves to modernize the office environment. My department is now in the process of planning for the renovation of all 26 floors of the DC2 building once a new lease is signed in the next few weeks. AFICS has also played its part in this transition, as we moved AFICS from its cramped offices on the 5th floor of DC1 to larger and more open space on the 4th floor of the Unitar building. This space was painted and carpeted, and we provided new furniture and a new VTC system before AFICS moved in. More recently, in late February we were notified of some heating issues that we quickly addressed without delay.

I understand there was some concern about how liquidity has affected operations in the building. The liquidity situation has and continues to be a challenge. For DOS this means having received a significant lower allotment for non-post costs which

has a ripple effect for operations of the building complex here in NY. While we are making sure to pay salaries and entitlements, we have to hold back on recruitments and delay purchases, maintenance and upkeep as well as rent payments where possible. We continue to monitor the situation and to ensure the smallest impact possible on operations.

In our conversation last year, you had also requested pre-retirement seminars and I understand these were organized with the Staff Union, both in 2023 and early in 2024. I want to reiterate that DOS is committed to supporting these sessions and that various DOS sections have provided briefings during these sessions, including HR Operations, Payroll, Travel (Passport & Visa Unit), and Income Tax Unit. My department will reach out to the Staff Union and to Narda Cupidore the new President (and DOS staff member) to encourage continuation of this important initiative and will extend all necessary support.

I was told that there were questions on the engagement of retirees during certain crisis situations. We recognise the very important support provided by retirees. Your support has been important also to my own Department as retirees have brought expertise and help for example with the Boards of Inquiries or senior mission reviews. All engagements of retirees must of course be in line with the UN Rules and Regulations and GA resolutions and we encourage and welcome this continued engagement.

Colleagues, last year, I briefed you on the work of my department which, beyond New York, focuses on areas such as supply chain, training, human resources advising and healthcare management among other areas.

DOS supported the effective mandate implementation of ten peacekeeping operations and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS). One of the major focuses of the department has been supporting the withdrawal and liquidation of the peacekeeping mission in Mali, MINUSMA, after the decision of the government to request the withdrawal and liquidation of the mission. You will recall that last year I mentioned the complexities of the withdrawal from UNAMID. With MINUSMA, the challenges were even greater as we were still in the process of deploying capacities and equipment to the mission at the time of the adoption of the Resolution last June. This process has been one of the most complex undertaken by my department, and we anticipate completing in-situ liquidation by the end of this year.

In addition to special political missions, Regional Coordinators offices and other clients around the world, during this last year, the department also supported the closure and liquidation of UNITAMS (the follow-on mission from the peacekeeping operation in Darfur, UNAMID), and assisted in various crisis around the world, including in Ukraine and Sudan. One of our priorities at the moment is Haiti. Security Council Resolution 2699 (2023) mandated the deployment of the Multinational Security Support (MSS) to Haiti, a non-UN Mission which is to support the Haitian police re-establish security in the country and build security conditions. DOS serves as the implementing office of the Trust Fund established in support of the MSS, and in this role is responsible for coordination of the Trust Fund.

The Department also continues to enhance our partnership with the African Union, including through joint training, capacity building, and exchanges of personnel. In Somalia, UNSOS continues to deliver the mandated support to the African Union

Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), and is working with key partners including the Federal Government of Somalia, ATMIS to understand the requirements, scope and shape of continued operational support. To inform this, UNSOS recently concluded a workshop in Mogadishu which engaged its partners on best practices and lessons learnt from the operational partnership.

Again, it is my pleasure to be here with you today and update you on a few of the activities undertaken by the Department of Operational Support. I would be pleased to take a few questions if time allows.