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Summary record of the 2nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 7 October 2020, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Amorín (Uruguay)
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Bachar Bong

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 145: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations
(A/75/11 and A/75/67; A/C.5/75/L.2)

Draft resolution A/C.5/75/L.2: Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

1. *Draft resolution A/C.5/75/L.2 was adopted.*

2. **Mr. Suárez Moreno** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation had joined the consensus on the draft resolution in view of the need to permit the Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe and Somalia to fully exercise their rights and privileges as United Nations Member States and, in particular, to vote in the General Assembly until the end of its seventy-fifth session. However, his delegation's support for the draft resolution should not be interpreted as an endorsement or acknowledgement of the report of the Committee on Contributions on its eightieth session (A/75/11), given that, despite the technical nature of that body, some of its members had deliberately used the internal discussions relating to the request of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for an exemption under Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations to advance petty national political interests and prevent his delegation from participating, by voice and vote, in the proceedings of the General Assembly. Those members had thus blocked the consensus in favour of recommending the granting of an exemption to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela under Article 19 of the Charter.

3. In January 2020, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had had its right to vote in the General Assembly suspended pursuant to Article 19 of the Charter. It continued to be unable to fully exercise its rights and privileges as a United Nations Member State, including its right to vote in the General Assembly, because it had not fulfilled its financial commitments to the United Nations for reasons clearly beyond its control, despite having the financial capacity to do so. The economic, commercial and financial blockade that had been illegally and unilaterally imposed by the Government of the United States of America against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela since 2015 – in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law – had had devastating socioeconomic consequences for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In particular, it had negatively affected the daily lives of the Venezuelan people and the realization of their human rights, including the right to life, food, health and development. It had also adversely affected the Venezuelan oil industry: revenue from that sector, which accounted for 90 per cent of the national

budget, had declined by over 90 per cent, from \$42 billion in 2013 to nearly \$4 billion in 2018.

4. The magnitude and broad scope of the criminal and unilateral coercive measures to which the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had been subjected had resulted in losses of over \$116 billion. In addition, their extraterritorial implications had led to a phenomenon known as overcompliance, exacerbated by the fear of possible “secondary sanctions” for engaging in legal trade and other transactions with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Those illegal policies were preventing the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from having regular access to the international financial system, making it practically impossible for the country to successfully transfer funds in order to pay its dues to the United Nations.

5. The Secretary-General had been informed of the situation in 2019, and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was grateful to him for his efforts to resolve the situation. During a videoconference held by the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the margins of the high-level week of the current session of the General Assembly, the matter had again been addressed, and the Secretary-General had reiterated his interest in finding a timely solution. His delegation had also brought the situation to the attention of Committee on Relations with the Host Country, the President of the General Assembly and the Committee on Contributions and had requested that they take steps to resolve the problem. Unfortunately, no concrete or practical solutions had yet been found.

6. Six weeks earlier, the Government of the United States had issued a new licence aimed at putting an end to the situation. However, like the two licences issued previously, it had had no effect in practice, because of the phenomenon of overcompliance and the fear of “secondary sanctions”. For example, during the first quarter of 2020, when the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had attempted to transfer funds to United Nations bank accounts, the transaction had either been rejected or the funds had been confiscated, as a result of the unilateral coercive measures illegally imposed by the United States.

7. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was not requesting forgiveness of its debt or exemption from fulfilling its international obligations; it had the necessary funds and political will to pay its dues to the Organization. However, it was clear that the impasse in which the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela found itself, in which it had the funds to pay its annual contributions to the United Nations regular budget but was being prevented from doing so through any channel,

was well beyond its control. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela therefore called for the full and immediate lifting of all the unilateral and restrictive coercive measures to which it was subject, and which prevented it from fulfilling its responsibilities and furthering the objectives of the United Nations.

8. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela would continue to take all necessary steps to halt those measures and requested that the Fifth Committee, in coordination with the Secretariat, engage with the relevant authorities of the host country to find a financial route whereby his Government could safely and successfully transfer funds to pay its dues to the United Nations. In the midst of the worst pandemic in 100 years, his Government could not allow its funds to be jeopardized and confiscated for illegal and arbitrary reasons, as those funds were needed more than ever to save lives and combat the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

9. **Mr. Alyakin** (Russian Federation) said that, although the Committee had decided to restore the right of the Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe and Somalia to vote in the General Assembly until the end of its seventy-fifth session, the case of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela remained undecided. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had been unable to pay on time its contributions to the regular budget owing to conditions beyond its control, specifically, illegitimate unilateral sanctions, which ran counter to the Charter of the United Nations. However, the Russian Federation was encouraged that, during the informal consultations on the scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations that had been held at the current session of the General Assembly, Member States had been informed that the debt of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations would soon be settled. His delegation trusted that the Secretariat would assist the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in resolving the matter.

10. **Ms. De Armas Bonchang** (Cuba) said that her delegation had joined the consensus on the draft resolution in view of the need to exempt under Article 19 of the Charter, without delay, the Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe and Somalia. However, the Committee on Contributions should have considered the request of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela without political bias and in strict compliance with Article 19 of the Charter, given that that country's current situation was the result of circumstances beyond its control. The Organization was facing a chronic shortage of funds, mainly owing to the withholding of contributions by the United States. It was thus shameful that that country was preventing other Member States from providing the United Nations

with the resources that it desperately needed; the Organization could not be expected to fulfil its role as a forum for multilateral dialogue under such conditions. Her delegation acknowledged the steps taken by the Secretariat to ensure the settlement of the debt of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations. However, the Secretariat must engage actively with the host country, as it was ultimately the host country that was preventing the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from fulfilling its obligations, in violation of the Agreement between the United Nations and the United States of America regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations and the principle of sovereign equality enshrined in the Charter. The failure of the United Nations to hold the United States accountable would be tantamount to complicity, as any Member State could, in the future, find itself in a situation similar to that imposed by the United States on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

11. **Mr. Ajeeb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he commended the Committee's decision to exempt under Article 19 of the Charter the Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe and Somalia. All Member States that faced difficulties beyond their control that prevented them from paying their dues were entitled to such exemption on an equal basis. The inhumane policy of unilateral coercive measures and the selective application of the United Nations Headquarters Agreement undermined the sovereign rights and privileges of Member States under the Charter, precluded Member States from fulfilling their financial obligations to the United Nations and prevented them from exercising their rights, including the right to vote in the General Assembly. Such policies also had a major impact on the livelihoods of people in the targeted States under conditions such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela was entitled to a fair resolution of the matter and to be enabled to pay its contributions to the United Nations, as the conditions that prevented it from doing so, specifically, the sanctions, blockade and coercive measures imposed on it in violation of Charter of the United Nations, were beyond its control. He hoped that the situation would be resolved equitably in accordance with the principles of the sovereign equality and equal rights of Member States.

12. **Mr. Cheng Lie** (China) said that China had supported the adoption of the draft resolution in order to ensure that the Comoros, Sao Tome and Principe and Somalia could vote in the General Assembly during its seventy-fifth session. China opposed the unilateral and coercive economic sanctions imposed against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which had prevented it from paying its contributions to the United Nations,

although it had the financial capacity and political will to do so. That situation affected not only the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela but the United Nations as a whole, as it set a bad precedent. He hoped that the Secretariat would help the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to resolve the matter, including in the context of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, in order to enable that country to exercise its rights as a United Nations Member State.

13. **Mr. Tavoli** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation commended the decision of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to join the consensus on the draft resolution. As the Committee on Contributions was a purely technical body, it was unacceptable to bring political considerations to bear on its decisions. Like COVID-19, unilateral coercive measures were a virus that affected countries' economies and required a common solution.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.