



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR BURHAN GAFOOR,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE
TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 168, ON THE REPORT
OF THE COMMITTEE ON RELATIONS WITH THE HOST COUNTRY,
SIXTH COMMITTEE,
4 NOVEMBER 2024**

1 Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for giving me the floor. Let me begin by thanking you and the Bureau for the work and for your leadership on this very important agenda item. My delegation also thanks Ambassador Maria Michail of Cyprus for her service as Chair of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country, and for her able stewardship of the Committee and for her presentation of the Committee's report.

2 Singapore has continued to follow the work of the Committee very closely. My delegation agrees with the Committee's recommendations and conclusions, which make clear that it is in the interest of the United Nations and all Member States, including the host country, that appropriate conditions for ensuring normal functioning of delegations and missions be maintained. We have listened carefully to the issues that have been raised in the Committee and have also listened carefully to the responses of the host country. In this connection, we wish to make three points.

3 First, my delegation wishes to emphasise that the United Nations is an organisation that was created, as indicated in the Charter, to promote justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law. Any aspect of the organisation and its work that is inconsistent with international law, undermines the organisation and the rule of law at the international level. This includes any inconsistencies with international law relating to the host country's relationship with the organisation and the host country's relationship with Member States. The relevant body of international law for host country-related issues, which includes the Charter, the Headquarters Agreement and the Convention

on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations, must be fully respected and implemented by all relevant parties, including the host country.

4 Second, my delegation notes that it has been a number of years already that the Committee has, in its recommendations and conclusions, expressed “serious” concern on issues of denial and non-issuance of entry visas. Visa issues are a matter that has to be addressed as a matter of priority. The issuance of entry visas is a responsibility of the host country that is founded on its international law obligations under the Headquarters Agreement. Any denial or non-issuance of entry visas by the host country that is contrary to its obligations, as with any other breach of international law, undermines the rule of law at the international level, and this is not in the interest of any delegation, including the host country. The denial or non-issuance of entry visas can also have a serious negative impact on the proper functioning of the United Nations, a view that, based on the discussions in the Committee, is also shared by the Secretariat. A weakening of the functioning of the United Nations would not be in the interest of any delegation, including the host country. We are particularly concerned that at this session, visa-related issues had delayed the work of the First Committee. It is our hope that all visa-related issues are adequately addressed before the beginning of the main session so that these issues do not become a source of distraction or delay in our work during the main session or the work of the different Main Committees.

5 My delegation reiterates its call on the host country and other relevant countries to resolve issues regarding entry visas, as well as other matters raised in the Committee, in accordance with international law and to do so in a spirit of cooperation. We note that the discussions in the Committee indicate that there has been consistent engagement and dialogue between the host country on the one hand and the Russian Federation on the other as an example, with meetings reportedly taking place on almost a weekly basis to discuss host country matters, including visa applications of Russian representatives. We encourage the host country and other relevant countries who may be similarly impacted, to build on these types of engagement to find solutions to the outstanding issues.

6 Third, my delegation welcomes the Secretary-General’s continuing leadership on and personal involvement in host country issues. We note from the report that engagements during the period of review between the Secretariat and the host country on host country-related issues included high-level discussions in Washington, DC in December 2023 and a meeting in June 2024 between the Secretary-General and the US Secretary of State. The leadership of the Secretary-General on host country issues is essential, given the central and direct role that he

plays as representative of the United Nations, which is party to the Headquarters Agreement, in ensuring the effective implementation of this Agreement.

7 My delegation takes note of the Secretariat's view, as reflected in the discussions in the Committee, that dialogue with the host country had resulted in some incremental progress, albeit not at the pace that the Secretariat had wished, and that the Secretary-General continued to believe that the best way forward remained through constructive engagement with the host country and affected Member States although the ongoing process could not continue indefinitely and that all relevant options remained under consideration.

Mr Chairman,

8 My delegation will continue to follow the work of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country very closely and we will do so fundamentally from the point of view of the rule of law at the international level. To conclude, my delegation wishes to express our thanks to the United States for taking on the burden of serving as the host country of the United Nations; but it is also a great privilege to host the United Nations. And in this regard, we wish to thank the United States Mission to the United Nations for all the assistance that it has provided to the diplomatic community in New York, and, in particular, all the assistance that it has rendered to my own mission.

9 I thank you very much for your attention.

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