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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 12 December 2018, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Pedraza Torres (Vice-Chair) (Colombia)
*Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Sene

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In the absence of Ms. Bird (Australia), Mr. Pedraza Torres (Colombia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 136: Programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (continued)

First performance report on the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (A/73/493 and A/73/625)

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (continued) (A/73/352, A/73/352/Corr.1 and A/73/498)

Thematic cluster III: regional offices, offices in support of political processes and other missions (A/73/352/Add.3 and A/73/498/Add.3)

1. **Mr. Ramanathan** (Acting Controller), introducing the first performance report on the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (A/73/493), said that the primary purpose of the report was to identify the adjustments required at the end of the first year of the biennium because of variations between actual inflation and exchange rates, standard costs and vacancy rates and the assumptions used in the calculation of the initial appropriations. The report took into account the decisions of policymaking organs and unforeseen and extraordinary expenses.

2. Under the expenditure sections, the revised estimates reflected an increase of \$159.8 million compared with the appropriation approved by the General Assembly. The increase comprised \$23.4 million for commitment authorities approved by the Assembly to meet unforeseen and extraordinary expenses approved by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Secretary-General, and \$136.4 million related to recosting, including \$83 million resulting from updated average vacancy rates. The revised estimates under the income sections amounted to \$554.9 million, representing an increase of \$2.6 million.

3. The report included proposals to adjust the level of the Working Capital Fund and to replenish the Special Account, given the continued deteriorating experience in the availability of adequate cash reserves for the Organization to meet its financial obligations in a timely manner. Those measures were deemed necessary to mitigate the risk of programme delivery being constrained owing to lack of liquidity.

4. The report also included a proposal to adjust the recosting methodology for the International Trade Centre to ensure appropriate synchronization with the budgeting processes of both parent organizations – the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. He recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/266 A, had agreed that, in respect of the annual programme budget for 2020, the level of the contingency fund should be proposed in the context of the first performance report for the biennium 2018–2019. The Secretary-General proposed that the level of the contingency fund be set at 0.75 per cent of half the amount of the revised appropriation for the biennium 2018–2019.

5. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/73/352 and A/73/352/Corr.1), he said that the proposed resource requirements for the 37 special political missions covered in the report amounted to \$665.5 million, inclusive of the provision for the share of special political missions in the budget of the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda.

6. Subsequent to the issuance of the report, the Security Council had decided to terminate the mandate of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, with effect from 16 December 2018, and to establish a Panel of Experts on Somalia, bringing the total proposed resource requirements for the remaining 36 missions down to \$663.3 million. The resource requirements for 2019 for the newly established Panel of Experts on Somalia would be presented to the Committee at the first part of the resumed session.

7. The proposed number of civilian positions for 2019 for the continuing missions was 3,983, an increase of 158 positions, mainly as a result of the establishment of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) and net increases under the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

8. As in previous years, the proposals were organized in three thematic clusters, while the budgets for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq were presented in separate addenda. The budget proposal for UNITAD, under thematic cluster II, was presented in a separate addendum (A/73/352/Add.6), which had been introduced at the 23rd meeting of the Committee.

Efforts continued to be made to improve the format and presentation of budgets for special political missions, including with respect to information on the rates of compliance with the policy of 16-day advance booking of tickets and the number of backstopping positions funded from those budgets.

9. The General Assembly was requested to approve the budgets for the 36 continuing special political missions for 2019 in the total amount of \$663.3 million, which included the share of special political missions in the budget of the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe. In addition, the Assembly was requested to approve a charge of \$476.1 million, corresponding to the amount of the balance remaining in the provision appropriated for special political missions for the biennium 2018–2019.

10. The Assembly was also requested to appropriate an additional amount of \$194.0 million under section 3, Political affairs, of the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019, taking into account the estimated overexpenditure of \$6.8 million for 37 missions in 2018. Lastly, it was requested to appropriate an amount of \$12.7 million under section 36, Staff assessment, to be offset by a corresponding amount under income in section 1, Income from staff assessment.

11. Introducing the estimates in respect of thematic cluster III ([A/73/352/Add.3](#)), he said that the proposed resources for 2019 for the nine special political missions under cluster III amounted to \$302.3 million, an increase of \$9.8 million compared to the approved resources for 2018. The overall increase was mainly under two missions, UNSOM and UNSMIL and was primarily due to increased requirements for staff costs as a result of the application of lower vacancy rates in 2019 and the proposed establishment of new positions in UNSOM, UNSMIL and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. Given the projected overexpenditure of \$1.4 million in 2018, the Assembly was requested to approve net additional requirements for the nine missions in the amount of \$303.7 million.

12. **Mr. Sene** (Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the first performance report on the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 ([A/73/625](#)), said that the revised estimates under the expenditure sections amounted to \$5.5 billion, an increase of 3 per cent over the appropriation level approved by the General Assembly, while those under the income sections amounted to \$554.9 million, an increase of 0.5 per cent over the initial estimates for the biennium.

13. With respect to the amounts requested under section 8, Legal affairs, in particular relating to the subvention to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for 2018, the Advisory Committee noted that the combined level of voluntary contributions received and the amount of the subvention was very close to the level of the approved budget as at 30 September 2018. The Advisory Committee trusted that the Secretary-General would provide updated information to the General Assembly. Should the total funding provided for 2018 exceed the budgetary requirements, the excess should be refunded to Member States.

14. Regarding the decrease in income arising from services to the public, the Advisory Committee reiterated its previous observation that a review of the potential of the United Nations Postal Administration to generate revenue might be useful. Such a review could be broadened to include the sale of publications and the income potential of the guided tour operation at Headquarters.

15. With respect to the Secretary-General's proposals to increase the level of the Working Capital Fund and transfer unencumbered balances to the Special Account, the Advisory Committee considered that his report ([A/73/493](#)) did not sufficiently demonstrate a pattern of sustained liquidity challenges; therefore, it recommended against the proposals. However, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the revised recosting processes for the International Trade Centre and the proposal to maintain the level of the contingency fund for 2020 at 0.75 per cent of half the amount of the revised appropriation for the biennium 2018–2019.

16. Introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council ([A/73/498](#)), he said that the report covered the Secretary-General's overall resource estimates for special political missions and issues of a cross-cutting nature. The Secretary-General had presented the resource requirements for each of the special political missions in addenda to his main report ([A/73/352/Add.1](#), [A/73/352/Add.2](#), [A/73/352/Add.3](#), [A/73/352/Add.4](#), [A/73/352/Add.5](#) and [A/73/352/Add.6](#)) and the Advisory Committee had accordingly made specific recommendations on those resources in its related reports ([A/73/498/Add.1](#), [A/73/498/Add.2](#), [A/73/498/Add.3](#), [A/73/498/Add.4](#), [A/73/498/Add.5](#) and [A/73/498/Add.6](#)).

17. In view of the conclusion of the mandate of one mission, the proposed resources for 2019 included requirements for 36, rather than 37, missions. The Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly approve the resources requested by the Secretary-General, subject to its comments and recommendations as set out in its related reports.

18. With respect to the biennial provision of \$1,109.6 million for special political missions for 2018–2019, an additional appropriation of \$194 million was requested. Recalling the efficiencies that had been envisaged in the proposed programme budget for the biennium, the Advisory Committee noted that no such efficiencies were reported in the proposed budgets for special political missions for 2019. The Advisory Committee recognized that funding for special political missions during a biennium was dependent on decisions of the General Assembly and/or the Security Council with respect to establishment or renewal of mandates. Nonetheless, it considered that past experience indicated an inability to make accurate predictions about ongoing resource requirements. The Advisory Committee therefore recommended that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to make further efforts to present more accurate budget estimates for special political missions with the introduction of the annual programme budget for 2020.

19. The overall resource level proposed for 2019 amounted to \$663.3 million, an increase of \$27.9 million (4.4 per cent) compared with the overall resources approved for 2018. The Advisory Committee noted that, excluding the proposed resources in the amount of \$21.5 million for UNITAD, the resource requirements for the continuing missions would amount to \$641.8 million, an increase of \$6.4 million (1 per cent).

20. On staffing requirements, an overall increase of 158 positions (4.1 per cent) was proposed for the 36 missions. Excluding the proposed 135 positions for UNITAD, there was an increase of 23 positions for the continuing missions. Concerning temporary assignments of staff to higher-level vacant positions, involving special post allowances, the Advisory Committee had been informed that as at 30 September 2018, a total of 38 such assignments had been granted at special political missions. The Advisory Committee trusted that all vacant positions would be filled expeditiously and recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to complete promptly the recruitment process for posts currently encumbered by the use of special post allowances.

21. The Advisory Committee had made comments and recommendations on proposed requirements under operational costs for 2019 for individual missions in its related reports. Those comments and recommendations related to the use of consultants, official travel, facilities and infrastructure and ground transportation.

22. The Advisory Committee had discussed the budgeting for the positions of resident coordinators who also served as Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and for related support capacity in six special political missions. Given that the reinvigorated resident coordinator system was newly established, the Advisory Committee did not object to the proposed resources for those missions for 2019. However, it recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to undertake a review to ensure that the arrangements proposed for those missions were consistent with the provisions of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). Furthermore, the Advisory Committee expected that a consistent approach would be adopted for those positions in the peacekeeping operations concerned.

23. With regard to the Secretary-General's proposals concerning service provision by and funding arrangements for the Kuwait Joint Support Office and the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe for 2019, the Advisory Committee had been informed that the proposals relating to the Regional Service Centre were not intended to pre-empt the proposed establishment of global shared service centres in the context of the potential proposals of the Secretary-General relating to the global service delivery model. The Advisory Committee continued to be of the view that the Kuwait Joint Support Office was not a shared service centre approved by the Assembly. While it did not object to the proposals, the Advisory Committee recalled that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/248 A, any changes to the existing and future service delivery model must be approved by the Assembly.

24. Introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the proposed resource requirements for 2019 under thematic cluster III ([A/73/498/Add.3](#)), he said that the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the Secretary-General's staffing proposals for the nine missions under cluster III. The Advisory Committee trusted that all vacant positions would be filled expeditiously and that the recruitment process for posts currently encumbered by staff members receiving a special post allowance would be completed promptly. While noting the support that the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe would provide to the four special political missions based in Africa, the Advisory Committee reiterated that any changes to the existing

and future service delivery model must be approved by the General Assembly.

25. The Advisory Committee noted the proposal to establish a new unit on countering drug trafficking and transnational organized crime under the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS). The Advisory Committee trusted that the Secretary-General would provide further information to the General Assembly with regard to the relationship between the current mandate and the strengthening of that unit. The Advisory Committee further trusted that the Secretary-General would inform the Assembly of decisions taken by the Security Council regarding the assessment of the mission and its financial implications, and would provide such information to the Assembly at the time of its consideration of his report.

26. With regard to staffing requirements, under UNSOM the Secretary-General had proposed the conversion of 17 general temporary assistance positions to regular positions. The Advisory Committee recommended the approval of 12 of those positions and the abolishment of the remaining 5, which were vacant. As a matter of overall policy, the continuing requirement for vacant positions should be regularly reviewed and justifications provided for their retention, particularly in the case of posts that had been vacant for two years or longer. For the same reason, the Advisory Committee recommended the abolishment of two positions in UNSMIL.

27. The Advisory Committee also recommended reductions in the resources for consultants for UNSOM in the amount of \$44,600 and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia in the amount of \$25,900. While the use of external consultants might be necessary to acquire specialized expertise not readily available in house, reliance on the use of external consultants should be kept to an absolute minimum.

28. The Advisory Committee recommended reductions in the proposed requirements under facilities and infrastructure in the amounts of \$506,600 for UNSOM and \$750,000 for UNSMIL. With regard to the rental of premises by UNSMIL, the Advisory Committee was of the view that greater efforts should be made to improve the accuracy of the budget proposals. There might be further scope for sharing the cost of common services with those agencies, funds and programmes that would prefer to be hosted within the UNSMIL compound.

29. With regard to official travel, the Advisory Committee was concerned that significant non-compliance with the advance purchase policy had been allowed to continue and expected that the

necessary measures would be taken to improve the rate of compliance. The Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of \$438,000 in the proposed requirements under official travel for the missions in cluster III.

30. **Mr. Ahmed** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that performance reports were a particularly important benchmark in the budget process. The Group emphasized the importance of respecting the budgetary process as set out in General Assembly resolutions [41/213](#), [42/211](#) and [48/228](#) and reaffirmed in many others, including resolution [72/266](#) A. No changes to the budget methodology, to established budgetary procedures and practices or to the financial regulations could be implemented without the Assembly's prior review and approval.

31. The Group noted the Secretary-General's proposals regarding the Working Capital Fund and the Special Account. While the liquidity situation of the Organization needed to be closely monitored, it was the collective responsibility of Member States to pay their contributions in full, on time and without conditions. Member States must provide the Organization with adequate resources to implement mandates.

32. Savings on rental costs resulting from the implementation of flexible workplace strategies should be properly reflected in future performance reports. The Group would examine the measures introduced by the Secretary-General in 2018 to temporarily defer expenditures as a result of growing cash deficits. All mandates approved by intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations should be provided with adequate resources from the regular budget for their implementation.

33. **Ms. Nalwanga** (Uganda), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that special political missions played a vital role in fostering international peace and security through early warning, mediation, preventive diplomacy, electoral support, good offices and peacebuilding efforts. Many missions operated in environments of active conflict, or in post-conflict situations, and in circumstances in which transnational organized crime, drug trafficking and extremist activity were the main drivers of instability. Accordingly, missions must be allocated sufficient resources to discharge their mandates efficiently and effectively.

34. The Group noted the resources proposed for 2019 for the nine missions under cluster III, including resources for additional staff and consultants for a new unit on countering drug trafficking and transnational organized crime under UNIOGBIS; increased support during the lead-up to elections in Somalia; and support for the reinvigorated resident coordinator system,

mission activities in Tripoli and Benghazi, and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. The Group supported the Secretary-General's staffing proposals and would seek additional information regarding the requirements of the missions. Other key issues, such as vacant positions, the use of consultants, maintenance costs for infrastructure, and resources for official travel, would be examined closely.

35. The Group noted, in addition, the termination of the mandate of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea; the appointment of a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar; the appointment of a Special Adviser to head UNITAD; the establishment of a Panel of Experts on Somalia; the expansion of the remit of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan to cover the Horn of Africa region; and the establishment of additional posts under the resident coordinator system.

36. The Group noted that total requirements relating to the financing of the 36 continuing special political missions for 2019 were estimated at \$663.3 million, which exceeded by \$187.2 million the undistributed balance of \$476.1 million in the biennial provision. Recalling that that biennial provision for all political missions had included a reduction of \$14.8 million attributed to planned Umoja-related efficiency gains, she said that in informal consultations the Group would seek additional information on such gains and the impact of new resource requirements on the overall budget proposal. She noted that the estimated resource requirements for existing mandates exceeded the approved budget by only \$6.4 million, an increase that was primarily due to lower vacancy rates. The Group would review the trend of higher-than-standard allocations of vehicles, information technology equipment and spare equipment with a view to identifying efficiencies.

37. The Group noted the 39 backstopping support positions proposed for 2019 and the proposals to continue providing backstopping support to missions from Headquarters, the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe and the Kuwait Joint Support Office.

38. The Group was encouraged by the level of collaboration between special political missions, in particular those based in Africa, and regional and subregional organizations, and underscored the importance of utilizing local knowledge and expertise to strengthen national and regional capacities. It was concerned at the increased reliance on consultants and external capacities; clear justification should be given for hiring consultants.

39. **Mr. Fernández de Soto Valderrama** (Colombia) said that his delegation welcomed the appointment of Mr. Ruiz-Massieu as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia. His knowledge and experience would be instrumental in ensuring that the Mission could continue to implement its mandate, with a view to achieving a stable and lasting peace in Colombia.

40. His delegation was grateful to the Member States for their commitment to supporting the peace process. The unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution [2435 \(2018\)](#) and the extension of the mandate of the Mission sent a strong message that the Mission had the support of the international community and the United Nations system. It had been welcomed by all Colombians, who were working to bring about peace in their country.

41. The Mission would continue to verify the implementation of two key aspects of the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace. Those aspects were the political, economic and social reintegration of members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP) and the implementation of personal and collective security and protection measures for former fighters; and comprehensive security and protection programmes for communities and organizations at the local and regional level.

42. While his delegation was pleased with the progress made to date, significant challenges remained that must be addressed. The continued political and financial support of the international community was essential. The effective implementation of the Mission's mandate depended in large part on the allocation of sufficient human and financial resources. His delegation trusted that the Committee would fully support the Mission, with a view to enabling it to continue building peace in Colombia. His Government would continue to work tirelessly to implement the Final Agreement.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.