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The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/53/L.66

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions considered an advance copy of the statement of the Secretary-General submitted in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/53/L.66 (A/C.5/53/45).

2. Under the terms of the draft resolution A/53/L.66, the Secretary-General, among other things, would be requested to authorize the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan (UNSMA), established under the terms of General Assembly resolution 48/208 of 21 December 1993, to continue its efforts to facilitate national reconciliation and reconstruction in Afghanistan, specifically to bring about an immediate and durable ceasefire among the Afghan parties and to institute a negotiating process leading to the formation of a fully representative, broad-based transitional government of national unity.

3. In paragraphs 74 and 75 of his latest report on the situation in Afghanistan (A/53/695), the Secretary-General indicated that his Special Envoy would continue to play the primary role in conducting the United Nations peacemaking activities in Afghanistan, while UNSMA would continue to support the Special Envoy's good offices, monitor the overall political and military situation and maintain and strengthen

contacts with all Afghan factions, in particular the Taliban authorities, and other interested parties and organizations, including neighbouring States and others concerned about the situation in Afghanistan. Moreover, since reports of mass killings and other forms of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Afghanistan have become a source of major international concern, the Secretary-General proposed the addition of a new monitoring function to UNSMA, with the primary objective of promoting respect for minimum humanitarian standards and deterring massive and systematic violations of human rights in the future. To that end, the Secretary-General indicated, in paragraphs 6 and 7 of his statement of programme budget implications (A/C.5/53/45), that it is proposed to create a separate civil affairs unit, composed of monitors who would be deployed in major cities in Afghanistan. The Mission, therefore, would continue to operate in Islamabad and Kabul, with small offices and liaison outposts in Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif and Turkmenistan; an office would be opened in Tehran to facilitate dialogue with the Islamic Republic of Iran, and, in addition to Kabul, five outposts would be established for civil affairs monitors in major cities in Afghanistan, following the recommendations of an assessment team that the Secretary-General expects to send to the area towards the end of January 1999, security conditions permitting.

4. The Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly authorized, for the period from 1 January to 31 December 1998, an appropriation of \$4,007,700 under section 3, Peacekeeping operations and special missions, of the programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999. In addition, the Assembly authorized an appropriation of \$327,300 under section 32, Staff assessment, to be offset by a corresponding amount in the estimates of income under income section 1, Income from staff assessment. Of the authorized amounts, expenditures for 1998 are estimated at \$3,675,400, resulting in an unencumbered balance of \$332,300 under section 3. Expenditures under section 32 are estimated at \$269,200, resulting in an unencumbered balance of \$58,100 (A/C.5/53/45, paras. 1 and 2). The Committee was informed that these savings result mostly from the fact that hazard pay was not factored into the 1998 estimates of the salary costs of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General.

5. The Advisory Committee also recalls that the staffing component approved for 1998 consisted of 44 positions, in addition to the Special Envoy: a Head of Mission at the Assistant Secretary-General level, a Deputy Head of Mission at the D-2 level, 5 Political Affairs Officers at the P-5 level, 5 military advisers and 2 civilian police. These were supported by 6 international staff (2 General Service and 4 Field Service staff) and 24 staff at the Local level. The Committee was informed that the Assistant Secretary-General post was never filled, nor were the two civilian police posts. The Committee notes that the average vacancy rate for 1998 was 10 per cent for international staff and 16 per cent for local staff (see A/C.5/53/45, annex III.B, para. 4).

6. The staffing structure for UNSMA for 1999, and the changes proposed, are contained in paragraphs 9–13 of the Secretary-General's statement. The staffing structure would consist of 82 positions, besides the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, and would include a Head of Mission, now at the D-2 level; the upgrading to the D-1 level of a Political Affairs Officer (currently at the P-5 level) to perform the functions of Deputy Head of Mission and Senior Political Affairs Officer; 4 Political Affairs Officers; the reduction of military advisers from 5 to 4, based on past experience, and the elimination of 2 civilian police posts, which were not filled during the last two mandate periods. The Advisory Committee was informed, however, that if the need arises, the Secretary-General may propose to reinstate those posts in the future.

7. In paragraph 10 of his statement, the Secretary-General indicated that the proposed civil affairs unit would include provisions for 40 positions under general temporary assistance. The Office of the Coordinator of the unit would

include one P-5 post, one General Service and one Local level staff member, and would supervise the work of 12 civil affairs monitors, who would be placed in teams of two in six major towns (1 P-4 and 1 P-3 in each). Each team would be supported by four staff at the Local level. In addition, the unit would receive administrative backstopping from one Field Service category staff.

8. The Advisory Committee also notes that the Secretary-General proposed provisions, under general temporary assistance, for a P-4 and a General Service staff member at Headquarters. As indicated in paragraph 12 of the statement, the P-4 staff member would be assigned to follow the political developments in Afghanistan and to provide political guidance to UNSMA in the Secretary-General's efforts in conducting peacemaking activities in the area. The Committee cautions against the proliferation of political officers at Headquarters for field missions. It points out that resources already available at Headquarters, including those financed from the support account, can be called upon to provide the services envisaged in the case at hand.

9. Paragraph 14 and annex I of the statement indicate that the estimated cost of extending the mandate of UNSMA for the period from 1 January to 31 December 1999 would amount to \$7,399,600 gross (\$6,883,600 net). The increase is directly related to the establishment of the new civil affairs unit as well as the new offices, which in turn affect costs in the categories of civilian personnel, premises and accommodation, transport operations, air operations, communications, other equipment and supplies and services.

10. Under budget item 2, Civilian personnel costs, an amount of \$4,321,400 is indicated (see A/C.5/53/45, annex I). The Advisory Committee notes that provisions are made for the salary of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on a "when actually employed" basis, using the short-term salary scales for staff at the Under-Secretary-General/Assistant Secretary-General level, with the assumption that he would work for a maximum of nine months (see A/C.5/53/45, annex III.B, para. 3). The Committee also notes that the costing of salaries and common staff costs for 1999 reflects a vacancy rate of 20 per cent for international and local staff, assuming that the new positions proposed would not be filled immediately (*ibid.*, para. 4). However, the Committee is of the opinion that in view of the security situation and the uncertainty of the timing of the establishment of the civil affairs unit until the visit of the assessment team at the end of January 1999, this provision and other related estimated expenditures may prove to be somewhat ambitious.

11. The Advisory Committee further notes that total costs for premises and accommodation are estimated at \$181,400.

This includes an amount of \$88,000 for the rental of premises. As indicated in the statement, because of cramped and sub-standard conditions, the headquarters office has been relocated to new premises that meet the Mission's requirements (*ibid.*, para. 7). The Committee was also informed upon enquiry that \$18,000 is estimated for the rental of premises of the other five new locations, and \$7,200 is estimated for the rental of the office in Tehran. Included in the \$41,200 estimated for utilities, an amount of \$1,200 would correspond to the office in Tehran and \$3,000 would correspond to the estimated cost of utilities for the new offices.

12. A provision for \$590,200 is indicated under budget item 4, Transport operations. This provision includes an amount of \$395,600 for the replacement of 3 vehicles and the purchase of 16 new vehicles to support the civil affairs monitors and related staff in the new locations. The provisions for repairs, spare parts and maintenance are estimated at \$100 per month for each of the 37 vehicles of the Mission (*ibid.*, paras. 9 and 10).

13. The Advisory Committee also notes that in view of the anticipated increase in the activities in the area, provision has been made for 10 additional hours per month under air operations, increasing the estimated hire/charter costs for fixed-wing aircraft from \$630,000 in 1998 to \$672,000 in 1999 (A/C.5/53/45, annex I and annex III.B, para. 11). An amount of \$223,200 is also provided under budget item 6, Communications, for the acquisition of additional equipment, which is essential to create a reliable link between offices and outposts in the Mission area (A/C.5/53/45, annex II).

14. The Secretary-General proposed to offset the estimated requirements for 1999 of \$6,883,600, under section 3 of the programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999, by the unencumbered balance of \$332,300 from the appropriation granted for 1998 (see para. 4 above). The requirements under that section would therefore amount to \$6,551,300. The Secretary-General also proposed to offset the 1999 requirements under section 32 of \$516,000 by the unencumbered balance for 1998 of \$58,100, resulting in additional requirements under that section of \$457,900. The latter would be offset by a corresponding increase in the estimate of income from staff assessment under income section 1 (A/C.5/53/45, para. 17).

15. The Secretary-General indicated that should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/53/L.66, an additional appropriation of \$6,551,300 would be required under section 3, Peacekeeping operations and special missions, of the programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999, for the activities of UNSMA for the period from 1 January to 31

December 1999. The Advisory Committee notes that an additional appropriation of \$457,900 would be required under section 32, Staff assessment, to be offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment (*ibid.*, para. 18).

16. In view of the comments made in paragraphs 8 and 10 above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the amounts estimated by the Secretary-General be reduced by 10 per cent; the corresponding additional appropriation would be \$5,896,200 under section 3 of the programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999. An additional appropriation of \$412,100 would also be required under section 32, offset by the same amount under income section 1.