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Summary record of the 4th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 15 October 2019, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus)
later: Mr. Feldman (Vice-Chair) (Brazil)
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
 and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Terzi

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Organization of work

1. **The Chair** said that the Secretary-General had put in place a number of emergency measures in response to the liquidity crisis affecting the United Nations, with a view to enabling the Organization to continue functioning. Effective 14 October 2019, hard copies of official documents would no longer be distributed in meeting rooms; interpretation services would only be provided from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.; publication of the paper and PDF versions of the *Journal of the United Nations* would be suspended; and air conditioning and heating would be reduced outside the hours of 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Draft resolutions and decisions would need to be submitted for processing at least five business days in advance; word limits for reports of the Secretary-General and post-session reports of intergovernmental bodies would be strictly enforced; and the production of summary records for the Main Committees of the General Assembly would be significantly delayed.

2. Those measures, which would remain in effect until further notice, would inevitably delay the issuance of reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and further complicate the work of the Fifth Committee. He urged the Member-State delegations to make efficient use of the limited time available and to work together to ensure that the Committee could conclude its work in a timely manner.

3. *Mr. Feldman (Brazil), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

Agenda item 135: Proposed programme budget for 2020 (continued)

Special political missions

Thematic cluster I: special and personal envoys, advisers and representatives of the Secretary-General (A/74/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.2 and A/74/7/Add.2)

Thematic cluster II: sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels, and other entities and mechanisms (A/74/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.3 and A/74/7/Add.3)

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (A/74/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.5, A/74/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.5/Corr.1 and A/74/7/Add.5)

4. **Mr. Ramanathan** (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed resource requirements for 2020 for special political missions

under thematic cluster I (A/74/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.2), said that the proposed resources for special and personal envoys, advisers and representatives of the Secretary-General for 2020 amounted to \$57.1 million, an increase of \$2.1 million compared to the approved budget for 2019. The increase was attributable mainly to the requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi (\$0.2 million) and the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions (\$0.3 million), owing to higher common staff costs, and to the requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (\$1.4 million), owing to higher security costs.

5. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed resource requirements for 2020 for special political missions under thematic cluster II (A/74/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.3), he said that the proposed resources for sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels for 2020 amounted to \$57.5 million, an increase of \$0.8 million compared to the approved budget for 2019. The increase resulted mainly from the requirements for the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) (\$0.8 million), for the implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) (\$0.4 million), for the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (\$0.1 million) and for the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (\$0.1 million), and was primarily due to the application of lower vacancy rates in 2020 and a proposed net increase of 14 positions. The overall increase in resources was offset in part by reduced requirements for the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities.

6. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed resource requirements for 2020 for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (A/74/6 (Sect.3)/Add.5 and A/74/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.5/Corr.1), he said that the proposed resources for the Mission for 2020 amounted to \$136.2 million, a decrease of \$4.5 million compared to the approved budget for 2019. The decrease was attributable to a proposed net reduction of seven positions, the cost-sharing of seven positions of Security Officer with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and reduced requirements under operational costs.

7. Given the liquidity crisis affecting the United Nations and its regular budget operations, special political missions had been requested to align their expenditures with liquidity forecasts. To avert a bigger

crisis, managers had been instructed to adjust their hiring and non-post expenditures.

8. **Mr. Terzi** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related reports of the Advisory Committee on the proposed resource requirements for 2020 under thematic cluster I ([A/74/7/Add.2](#)), thematic cluster II ([A/74/7/Add.3](#)) and UNAMA ([A/74/7/Add.5](#)), said that the Advisory Committee trusted that the Secretary-General would provide the General Assembly with updated information on expenditures for 2019 and on the status of long-vacant positions proposed for retention. In addition, the Advisory Committee expected that recruitment for positions encumbered by staff members in receipt of a special post allowance for extended periods would be completed without further delay. The Advisory Committee's comments and recommendations of a cross-cutting nature were contained in its main report ([A/74/7/Add.1](#)).

9. Concerning cluster I, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the resources proposed by the Secretary-General, subject to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 9, 10, 15, 16, 17 and 18 of its report. Those recommendations related to proposed staffing requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, and to proposed resource requirements for operational costs, including consultants, for the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, the Office of the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen. The Advisory Committee trusted that detailed information on the reductions arising from its recommendations would be provided to the General Assembly. Concerning cluster II, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the resources proposed by the Secretary-General.

10. Concerning UNAMA, the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction in the proposed resource requirements for 2020, given the level of underexpenditure in the current and previous years under official travel, facilities and infrastructure, ground transportation, information and communications technology, and other supplies, services and equipment. The Advisory Committee trusted that the Secretary-General would provide the General Assembly with updated information on expenditure for 2019. The Advisory Committee welcomed the efforts made by UNAMA to review and adjust its staffing needs as a result of the implementation of the reforms of the resident coordinator system and the relevant provisions

of General Assembly resolution [72/279](#). The Advisory Committee had provided comments and recommendations regarding the resident coordinator system in its main report ([A/74/7/Add.1](#)).

11. **Mr. Mmalane** (Botswana), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Group attached great importance to the role played by special political missions in the Organization's efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, sustain peace and promote reconciliation, economic reconstruction and development. Special political missions operated in extremely difficult environments and had to contend with such challenges as conflict escalation, arms proliferation, transnational organized crime, extremism, the mass displacement of civilians and post-conflict reconstruction.

12. Special political missions must be provided with adequate resources to enable them to discharge their mandates effectively. The resources proposed for 2020 for cluster I amounted to \$57,073,400, an increase of 3.8 per cent compared to 2019, while the proposed resource requirements for cluster II amounted to \$57,453,200, an increase of 1.4 per cent. Given the increase in the scope and complexity of the work of the special political missions, in practical terms the proposed requirements constituted real-value reductions. The Group intended to analyse the Secretary-General's proposals further, with a view to making an informed decision.

13. The Group would seek clarification regarding the operational requirements of the missions, in particular those located in Africa; the cost-sharing arrangements with respect to transport, facilities and medical services; and the application of best practices in the use of renewable energy for power generation and the associated efficiency gains.

14. With regard to air travel, the complex challenges faced by special political missions and rapidly changing realities on the ground might prevent missions from being able to comply with the advance booking policy. Nonetheless, the Group was concerned at the low level of compliance with the policy and encouraged all missions to do their utmost to increase their compliance rates. More efforts were required, in particular in areas where travel could be better planned. Specific plans and strategies to improve adherence to the policy should be developed.

15. Given that staffing was a major factor in the performance of special political missions, the Group would be interested to know the rationale for the proposed staffing changes and movements. The quality and timely delivery of mandated programmes and activities should be the overriding factor in determining

the resource requirements and staffing needs of such missions. Accordingly, the Group would seek clarification regarding the proposed resource reductions, which came at a time when the mandates and activities of special political missions, particularly those operating in Africa, were ever more complex.

16. Proactive and concerted efforts must be made to promote strategic workforce planning, which had been undermined by the overuse of temporary job openings. The Group would examine the granting of special post allowances and the link between the granting of those allowances and continued vacancies. The Group would be interested to know the geographical status of mission personnel and experts; given that much of the work of the missions was focused on Africa, individuals with local knowledge and expertise should make up a considerable proportion of mission staff.

17. The Group welcomed the collaboration among the special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives, in particular those based in Africa, and their cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. Multiple United Nations entities were involved in addressing conflict prevention and mediation in the region, and the Secretary-General should continue to consolidate the Organization's efforts with a view to promoting synergies and efficiencies.

18. **Ms. De Armas Bonchang** (Cuba) said that although special political missions were established by decisions of the Security Council, they were funded under the regular budget, a practice that had become unsustainable in the light of the serious liquidity problems facing the United Nations. The resources assigned to special political missions amounted to more than 20 per cent of the regular budget. That situation reflected an imbalance in the allocation of resources to the priorities established by the General Assembly. Given the Council's particular responsibilities, and its ability to establish mandates for peacekeeping operations and special political missions, it was logical that special political missions should be funded in the same way as peacekeeping operations, using the applicable scale of assessments.

19. In addition, her delegation was concerned at the fact that all the Secretary-General's reports on the proposed resource requirements for 2020 for special political missions presented the proposed resource requirements for each individual mission under section 3, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget, despite the fact that the Advisory Committee, in its report on shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations (A/72/7/Add.24), had recommended that

the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to maintain the current structure of the budget parts and sections. Her delegation would welcome clarification from the Secretariat in that regard.

20. With regard to cluster I missions, while Cuba fully supported the functions of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, reflecting its firm condemnation of that crime, it was totally opposed to the inclusion of activities and outputs relating to the responsibility to protect in the estimates for special political missions. Paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome did not justify the creation of a position of Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, financed from the regular budget, nor had the General Assembly adopted a resolution mandating the establishment of such a position, which meant that no resources should be allocated to it.

21. The existence of the position of Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect represented a departure from the letter and spirit of paragraphs 138 and 139 of General Assembly resolution 60/1. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report (A/74/6 (Sect.3)/Add.2), the position had been established on the basis of an exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council. There was no legal basis for carrying out activities and identifying outputs related to the responsibility to protect, as the Assembly, in its resolution 63/308, had merely decided to continue considering the concept. The concept had not been reviewed in intergovernmental forums and no definition had been approved by the Assembly.

22. Despite the significant changes to the programme budget documentation, the way in which the estimates were presented continued to make it impossible to distinguish clearly and transparently between the resources devoted to the activities and outputs associated with the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect and those devoted to the activities and outputs associated with the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. The same applied to the narrative description of the Special Advisers' functions. Such ambiguity made it difficult for Member States to ascertain whether the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide was fulfilling his mandates or pursuing objectives which did not have the approval of the Member States.

23. The supposed concept of the responsibility to protect was a source of concern for many countries, particularly small and developing countries, owing to the lack of consensus surrounding it, and the absence of a definition of its constituent parts. The fact that the General Assembly, on 20 September 2019, had voted on

the matter of whether or not the concept should be included in the agenda for the current session had confirmed that lack of consensus. Moreover, the concept of the responsibility to protect could be manipulated for political purposes, as demonstrated by its use throughout history to undermine the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, placing at risk State sovereignty and the fundamental responsibility of States to ensure the well-being of their citizens. In the light of its position, her delegation would take part in the debate on the matter, and would put forward specific amendments to the Secretary-General's proposals.

24. **Mr. Velázquez Castillo** (Mexico) said that special political missions played an important role in building sustainable peace on the ground by preventing conflict, promoting mediation and sustainable development and strengthening the rule of law and human rights. They must be provided with adequate resources to enable them to discharge their complex mandates in a timely and consistent manner.

25. The resources assigned to special political missions amounted to a considerable proportion of the regular budget of the Organization, which had led to lengthy discussions in the Committee. Given that special political missions had multidimensional mandates that included addressing the structural causes of conflicts, his delegation was of the view that special political missions should be considered in a holistic manner, as an integral part of the peace continuum, and in the context of the broader institutional setting and efforts to improve coherence and strengthen the links between the three pillars of the Organization.

26. His delegation looked forward to hearing about the results of the reform of the peace and security pillar, the synergies with the other reforms under way, and the implementation of the twin resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture, General Assembly resolution [70/262](#) and Security Council resolution [2282 \(2016\)](#), and the proposals set forth in the report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding and sustaining peace ([A/72/707-S/2018/43](#)). In the meantime, the missions should be provided with predictable and sustainable financing, which they must utilize in a responsible, transparent and accountable manner.

27. **Mr. Al Shaboot** (Iraq) said that his Government welcomed the international community's support in the war against global terrorism, in particular the gangs of Da'esh. From 2014 to 2017, the Iraqi people had, on behalf of the whole world, fought those extremist groups, which had committed serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, and

acts that could amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Accordingly, at the request of his Government, the Security Council, in its resolution [2379 \(2017\)](#), had requested the Secretary-General to establish an investigative team, headed by a special adviser, to support domestic efforts to hold Da'esh accountable by collecting, preserving and storing evidence in Iraq of such acts committed by Da'esh in that country. The Council had also requested that the investigative team conduct its work to the highest possible standards to ensure the broadest possible use of such evidence before national courts, complementing investigations being carried out by the Iraqi authorities.

28. At the request of the Government of Iraq, the Council, in its resolution [2490 \(2019\)](#), had extended the mandate of UNITAD until 21 September 2020. To ensure that the Investigative Team continued to involve all elements of Iraqi society in its activities and focused on listening to the people who had been most affected by the crimes of Da'esh, it should communicate with religious bodies, non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups. UNITAD should continue to give a high priority to holding accountable those most responsible for the crimes of Da'esh. It should focus on field activities, including the gathering of witness testimonies and of forensic evidence, for example through the analysis of mass graves.

29. For UNITAD to fulfil its mandate and perform the tasks entrusted to it, it must be highly mobile and have the capacity to conduct investigations in the field, where crimes had been committed and witnesses were located. To enable the Investigative Team to implement its activities as mandated by the Security Council, it should be provided with financial and human resources commensurate with those tasks. The amount proposed for the 2020 budget, however, might be insufficient to ensure fulfilment of the mandate.

The meeting rose at 3.40 p.m.