



General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 December 2020

Original: English

Seventy-fifth session

Agenda item 141

Proposed programme budget for 2021

Revised estimates relating to the proposed programme budget for 2021 under section 11, United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and section 36, Staff assessment

Twenty-fourth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for 2021

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates relating to the proposed programme budget for 2021 under section 11, United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and section 36, Staff assessment ([A/75/541](#)). During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee had a virtual hearing with the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa and other representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses dated 23 November 2020.

II. Proposal of the Secretary-General

2. The Secretary-General states that if the United Nations is to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, it has to succeed in its support to Africa, and therefore the Organization has to adapt its Africa-focused structures and the orientation of its work to the changing needs and circumstances, with the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa having a critical role to play. It has been found in independent evaluations and reviews that the Office also needs organizational reform ([A/75/541](#), para. 2).

3. In his report, the Secretary-General indicates that in 2019, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) undertook a programme evaluation of programme 9, United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), of which the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa is the lead entity. In its



evaluation, OIOS highlighted that the programme was weakened by its inability to respond in a strategic and focused manner, and that the Office was not properly utilizing resources to strengthen its policy analysis, monitoring and research, intergovernmental support, advocacy and inter-agency coordination functions (ibid., para. 4).

4. The Secretary-General indicates that OIOS made four critical recommendations addressing: programme coherence and intra-programme management; engagement of stakeholders in strategic planning and workplan development; the relationship between United Nations global and regional coordination mechanisms; and the operationalization of the United Nations monitoring mechanism to review commitments made towards Africa's development. OIOS also produced an advisory memorandum in which it recommended addressing the root causes of workplace culture issues through leadership, innovation and teamwork (ibid., para. 5).

5. In addition, it is indicated in the report that the Secretary-General commissioned an independent in-depth functional review of the Office that took place from November 2019 to February 2020. The functional review team found that, of the functional responsibilities falling within the Office's mandated scope of work, more than half either needed improvement in performance or were not currently being performed at all. The team noted the lack of attention to producing value-adding policy and data analysis, and identified the following causes: the absence of adequate managerial structures to provide a meaningful and adaptive strategic focus; the inefficient allocation of resources; the lack of dynamic processes of internal analysis and review; inappropriate skill profiles; poorly defined or executed internal policies and procedures; and inadequate commitment to or collaboration around those procedures (ibid., paras. 6–8).

6. The Secretary-General states that the Office needs to become a centre of innovation, knowledge management and continuous improvement, and an entity that is more focused, strategic, impactful and relevant to its stakeholders. As a small entity with a mandate to promote coherence, integrate analysis and policy and promote global advocacy, the Office should not emulate the structures of larger programmatic and operational entities. Its strength should reside in its capacity to closely monitor Africa's dynamic environment and continuously changing context by leveraging its partnership networks, and to bridge potential gaps and promote a coherent response by the United Nations system and the international community in their partnership with Africa. The Secretary-General has taken steps to empower the Office, including by revitalizing the interdepartmental task force on African Affairs, and these efforts need to be reinforced by an organizational restructuring of the Office (ibid., paras. 9 and 10).

7. In his report, the Secretary-General proposes the creation of an executive direction and management component to empower the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa to drive high performance and continuous improvement, and a division for policy, monitoring and global advocacy responsible for the implementation of the work programme to allow for the flexible use and distribution of the capacities and resources of the Office (ibid., paras. 12 and 20).

8. The Advisory Committee acknowledges the Secretary-General's vision for the reorientation and reorganization of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa. The Committee further notes that the proposal was based on the findings of the OIOS programme evaluation and the independent functional review, which were intended to improve efficiencies, strengthen coordination, harmonize programme implementation, and provide support for the priorities of the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (see also para. 9 below).

9. Regarding the examination of the proposed reorganization of the Office by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that according to the Secretariat, the revised estimates presented after the annual session of the Committee for Programme and Coordination has ended are not reviewed by that Committee for recommendations to be considered by the Fifth Committee, but are considered by the Fifth Committee directly. **The Advisory Committee notes that the Committee for Programme and Coordination is mandated to review the plan outline and programme plan of the proposed programme budget, and is of the view that the proposed reform of the Office should have been submitted to the Committee for Programme and Coordination first for its examination and recommendations. Therefore, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to submit, through the Committee for Programme and Coordination, for its consideration, the programme implications of the reform of the Office in the context of a revised proposal (see also para. 20 below).** The latest recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the Office are contained in its latest report ([A/75/16](#), paras. 238–246 and 648–652).

10. **The Advisory Committee recalls that it recently provided its recommendations on the proposed programme budget for 2021, including on section 11, United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development, in its report dated 11 August 2020 ([A/75/7](#)).** The Committee notes that at that time, the relevant budget documents for section 11 did not include any indication of an upcoming proposal for the reform of the Office.

Proposed new structure and staffing of the Office

11. Under the new executive direction and management component, the Secretary-General indicates that the Office of the Under-Secretary-General will assist the Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa in the overall management of subprogramme 1 by providing close support on day-to-day administrative and budgetary matters, engagement with external stakeholders, communication and coordination with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and other United Nations entities and the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of mandates. To undertake these responsibilities, the Secretary-General indicates that the Office of the Under-Secretary-General would need to be strengthened and staffed with the appropriate capacity and be headed by a Chief of Staff ([A/75/541](#), paras. 25 and 27).

12. **The Advisory Committee will provide further comments on the induction training for incoming staff members in the context of its report on human resources management.**

13. The Office of the Under-Secretary-General would comprise eight posts, as follows:

(a) Four posts previously approved in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General under subprogramme 1, with similar functions: one Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa; and three General Service (1 Principal level, 2 Other level);

(b) Two posts previously approved in the Coordination, Advocacy and Programme Development Branch under subprogramme 1, with similar functions: one Programme Management Officer (P-4); and one Public Information Officer (P-4);

(c) One post of Programme Management Officer (P-3) previously approved in the Policy Analysis and Monitoring Branch under subprogramme 1, with similar functions;

(d) One post of Chief of Branch, Economic Affairs (D-1), previously approved in the Policy Analysis and Monitoring Branch under subprogramme 1, to be reassigned as Chief of Staff (D-1) (*ibid.*, para. 38).

14. The Division for Policy, Monitoring and Global Advocacy of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa would be responsible for the implementation of the Office's core functions: to advise the United Nations leadership and Member States on crosscutting critical issues affecting Africa; to promote coordination and coherence in the United Nations' support for Africa; to review and monitor the implementation of commitments made towards Africa's development; and to coordinate global advocacy efforts in support of Africa's development (*ibid.*, para. 28).

15. The Division for Policy, Monitoring and Global Advocacy, under subprogramme 1, would comprise 23 posts, as detailed below:

(a) 6 posts previously approved in the Coordination, Advocacy and Programme Development Branch, with similar functions: one Senior Programme Management Officer (P-5); four Programme Management Officers (P-3); and one General Service (Other level);

(b) 12 posts previously approved in the Policy Analysis and Monitoring Branch to carry out similar functions: one Senior Economics Affairs Officer (P-5); one Senior Programme Management Officer (P-5); four Economic Affairs Officers (3 P-4, 1 P-3); four Programme Management Officers (2 P-4, 2 P-3); one Associate Economic Affairs Officer (P-2); and one General Service (Other level);

(c) 1 post of Director, Administration (D-2), previously approved in the Office of the Under-Secretary-General, to be reassigned as Director, Governance and Public Administration (D-2);

(d) 4 posts previously approved in the Coordination, Advocacy and Programme Development Branch, to be reassigned as follows: one Chief of Branch, Programme Management (D-1) to be reassigned as Principal Governance and Public Administration Officer (D-1); one Senior Programme Management Officer (P-5) to be reassigned as Senior Data Specialist (P-5); one Public Information Officer (P-3) to be reassigned as Governance and Public Administration Officer (P-3); and one Team Assistant (General Service (Other level)) to be reassigned as Data Analysis Assistant (General Service (Other level)) (*ibid.*, para. 39).

16. With respect to the proposed reassignments, the Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that during previous reform initiatives, such as the management and peace and security reforms, no staff left the Organization involuntarily as a result of the implementation of these reforms, as incumbents of posts reassigned were moved to other suitable vacant positions for which they were qualified. **The Advisory Committee notes that with previous reform initiatives, incumbents of reassigned posts were moved to other suitable vacant positions for which they were qualified. Taking this into consideration, the Committee is not convinced by the justifications provided for the number of proposed reassignments of staff in a small office of this nature, and recommends against the proposal of the Secretary-General. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to review the structure and staffing of the Office, and to explore other options, such as the accomplishment of the realignment of functions through the training, development and capacity-building of staff members.**

Related resources

17. In his report, the Secretary-General indicates that the proposal does not entail any increase in the overall budget resource levels of section 11, but does require the

redeployment of post and non-post resources between subprogramme 1 and the new executive direction and management component. A vacancy rate of 50 per cent has been applied to the costing of the six posts proposed for reassignment. A total amount of \$111,500 under non-post resources is proposed to be redeployed (ibid., paras. 40 and 41).

18. The Advisory Committee notes that the OIOS evaluation report¹ refers to costs incurred by the Office in the hiring of consultants, including to conduct consultations with stakeholders and write reports, totalling \$493,336, including \$228,605 for consultant fees and travel. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that such functions should be undertaken internally by staff members of the Secretariat, instead of external consultants, and trusts that every effort will be made to conduct such reviews internally in future (see also para. 20 below).**

III. Conclusion

19. The report of the Secretary-General indicates that the General Assembly is requested to:

(a) Approve the proposed restructuring of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, including the related redistribution of post and non-post resources and the reassignment of posts as described in the present report;

(b) Reduce the appropriation under section 11, United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development, by an amount of \$498,200;

(c) Reduce the appropriation under section 36, Staff assessment, by an amount of \$63,500.

20. **For the reasons above, the Advisory Committee recommends against the approval of the proposal of the Secretary-General. The Committee further recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to submit a revised proposal during its seventy-sixth session which takes into account the observations and recommendations above.**

¹ IED-19-018.