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## Fifth Committee

### Summary record of the 7th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 18 November 2020, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Amorín . . . . . (Uruguay)  
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative  
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Bachar Bong

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Agenda item 140: Programme budget for 2020**

*Review of the implementation of the peace and security reform (A/75/202 and A/75/596)*

1. **Ms. Ribeiro Viotti** (Chef de Cabinet), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the implementation of the peace and security reform (A/75/202), said that the Secretary-General had, in his first week in office, declared his intention to improve the peace and security architecture of the Secretariat and the coordination between that architecture and other activities of the Organization. Through an internal review launched in January 2017, the key goals of the reform had been identified as prioritizing prevention and sustaining peace, enhancing the effectiveness and coherence of peacekeeping operations and special political missions, making the peace and security pillar more coherent through a whole-of-pillar approach, and aligning the pillar more closely with the development and human rights pillars. The General Assembly had endorsed that vision and had subsequently approved the restructuring of the peace and security architecture at Headquarters. The Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Peacebuilding Support Office had been reorganized into the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations. The two departments shared a single political-operational structure under three Assistant Secretaries-General with regional responsibilities, as well as resources for coordination and shared services.

2. The most visible elements of the peace and security reform were structural, but those changes had improved collaboration in the areas of political expertise and technical capacities. The pillar now produced joint analysis and integrated strategies, and could draw on a range of tools to be used in mission and non-mission settings. A benefits management system had been established to measure progress across the three tracks of the reform. That progress was illustrated by a number of case studies highlighted in the report. In Papua New Guinea, the United Nations had worked with the population of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and the national and subnational governments to support the peaceful holding of the non-binding referendum on the political future of Bougainville, held in late 2019, and continued to provide assistance in the post-referendum period. Technical services from across the pillar had worked in a coordinated manner; the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political and Peacekeeping Affairs had supported the Bougainville Referendum Commission, the Mediation Support Unit

of that Department had facilitated the work of the ministerial-level post-referendum planning task force, and the Mine Action Service of the Department of Peace Operations had provided technical advice and strengthened capacities to help the Autonomous Region prepare for the referendum.

3. The development of the comprehensive regional prevention strategy for the Horn of Africa had been led by one of the geographic divisions of the Department of Political and Peacekeeping Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations, and had involved all three pillars of the Organization to ensure alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. The reforms had helped to make peacekeeping operations more effective, including through the peacekeeping performance and accountability framework and the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, in order to facilitate mandate fulfilment and support political processes. In the Central African Republic, the single political-operational structure had strengthened engagement with the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and bilateral partners, engagement that had been essential to the signature of the peace agreement. The reform had also increased the support provided by the peacebuilding architecture to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), with the disbursement of \$23.9 million from the Peacebuilding Fund to the United Nations country team and civil society partners following the signing of the peace agreement.

5. The integration of the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs had improved political analysis and strategy in Peacebuilding Fund programming, as in the case of the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC), which worked closely with the country team to implement peacebuilding activities. The integration had also improved both the engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission with nationally led peacebuilding efforts and the provision of advice to the Security Council.

6. The reform built on previous work with resident coordinators to facilitate collaboration with the development pillar, including the Development Coordination Office, and to improve the advice and support provided by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations to resident coordinators and country teams in responding to specific country challenges, particularly in missions in which a deputy special representative of the Secretary-General also served as

the resident coordinator. The two departments continued to effect culture change in the peace and security architecture, and to standardize and simplify administrative processes.

7. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic was a challenge to the implementation of the reforms and an opportunity to demonstrate the improvements made possible through them. The new arrangements ensured that the two departments supported peacekeeping and special political missions in a coordinated manner at a time of crisis. Through the COVID-19 field support group, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations worked closely with the Department of Operational Support to develop unified guidance for missions and find cross-cutting solutions to address issues faced in the field. As a result of the restructuring, the peace and security architecture was better positioned to play its central role in preventing violent conflict and reducing human suffering. The vision of a whole-of-pillar approach to peace and security remained as valid as it had been three years previously. No specific action was requested of the General Assembly, as the implementation of the peace and security reform was in progress and the expected benefits were being realized.

8. **Mr. Bachar Bong** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), speaking via video link and introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/75/596), said that the General Assembly, in its resolutions 72/199 and 72/262 C, had supported the Secretary-General's vision for reforming the peace and security pillar, welcomed the whole-of-pillar approach to integrating political and operational responsibilities, and endorsed the establishment of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations. Progress had been made in implementing the peace and security reform, and a number of tools, including an online benefits tracker, had been introduced to report on the results.

9. The Board of Auditors had identified areas for improvement in the implementation of the reform. The Advisory Committee concurred with the Board's recommendations and emphasized the importance of their full and expeditious implementation. In relation to the monitoring of the benefits of the reform, the Advisory Committee trusted that further clarification would be provided to the General Assembly regarding the apparent lack of clarity with respect to the correlation between the four goals initially proposed by the Secretary-General in his report on the restructuring of the peace and security pillar (A/72/525) and the nine

benefits under the three objectives presented in his report on the review of the implementation of the reform (A/75/202).

10. With regard to the enhancement of effectiveness, efficiencies and coherence, the Secretary-General indicated in his report on the review of the implementation of the reform (A/75/202) that measures were being taken to review processes, improve coordination and avoid duplication after the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), in its report on the evaluation of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (IED-20-001), had found that that Department and the Department of Peace Operations had inconsistent operating procedures and duplicative processes, and that shortcomings in the integration of regional divisions, and in work processes and knowledge management, had created challenges in conflict prevention. The Secretary-General should continue to ensure effective and efficient integration into the single regional political-operational structure with a view to maximizing the potential of his restructuring of the peace and security pillar.

11. The Advisory Committee had been informed that no formal cost-benefit analysis of the restructuring of the pillar had been presented because none had been required by the General Assembly in the relevant resolutions. The Advisory Committee was of the view that a cost-benefit analysis and efficiency gains should be part of any reform initiative as a norm, along with improved effectiveness and coherence. It would have expected efficiencies to be derived from an initiative of such magnitude.

12. The Secretary-General should continue to promote culture change through the reform of the pillar. The Assembly had recognized, in its resolution 72/262 C, the complementary roles of cultural change, leadership and accountability in the success of structural changes. Closer alignment with the development pillar had been one of the four goals outlined by the Secretary-General in his report on the restructuring of the peace and security pillar (A/72/525). The Advisory Committee was of the view that coordination between the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations and the resident coordinator system was essential to achieving that goal.

13. Although the Secretary-General indicated, in his report on the review of the implementation of the peace and security reform (A/75/202), that his goal was to transition from management of the benefits of the reform to continuous improvement by the end of 2020, it was not clear when the reform would be completed and what type of continuous improvement mechanism

would be introduced. In addition, no information had been provided on the ways in which reform activities would be reported in the future. The Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide a progress report on the implementation of the reform during the main part of the seventy-sixth session. It also recommended that the Assembly take note of the report of the Secretary-General, subject to the observations and recommendations in its report.

14. **Ms. Austin** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group attached the utmost importance to the Secretary General's reforms, especially the restructuring of the peace and security pillar. The Group noted the progress made in the implementation of the reform and recognized the joint work of the Under-Secretaries-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations to monitor progress and take corrective measures as needed.

15. The two departments were operating with a single political-operational structure, with regional responsibilities for the management of all peace and security activities. The Group looked forward to reviewing whether the structure was performing in accordance with General Assembly resolution [72/262 C](#), including in terms of the effectiveness of the reporting lines and the impact of the Peacebuilding Support Office. The two departments worked closely with the development pillar, including through the Office in its role as the "hinge" between the peace and security pillar and the other pillars. Given the recent establishment of the Development Coordination Office, the single political-operational structure should be strengthened so that it could play its role in supporting resident coordinators and country teams and help to realize nationally defined priorities.

16. A balanced approach to the different pillars of the United Nations underpinned the Group's political commitment to peacebuilding. While the pillars were interdependent, each pillar's intrinsic value and specific mandates should be acknowledged. A rational division of labour must be preserved in the cooperation among thematic forums and among different types of United Nations field presence, on the basis of their specific political mandates.

17. The Group would follow up on the Secretariat's efforts to produce evidence of the impact of the reforms, including through the establishment of the benefits management system to ensure transparent achievement of the overarching objectives of the three tracks of the reform.

18. The Secretary-General's report contained case studies related to prioritizing prevention and sustaining peace in Burkina Faso, needs-based peacekeeping operations focused on political processes in the Central African Republic, the systematic adoption of a holistic approach to the pillar in Mali and Papua New Guinea, and the increased impact of the Peacebuilding Commission. Those examples, while important, had already been reflected in the proposed programme budget for 2021, and some of the related programme narratives had been the subject of recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

19. The Group was concerned about the overloading of such offices as the shared Executive Office of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Africa, whose responsibilities and workload had increased significantly. The situation must be examined carefully and the necessary corrective measures must be taken.

20. OIOS, in its report on the evaluation of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (IED-20-001), had found inconsistent operating procedures and redundant processes between that Department and the Department of Peace Operations. The Secretary-General's request that the two departments review, in relation to their management teams, the role of the Office of the Director for Coordination and Shared Services, which included the Executive Office, should therefore be acted upon as soon as possible.

21. The areas for improvement in the implementation of the peace and security reform identified by the Board of Auditors in its report on the financial statements of the United Nations for the year ended 31 December 2019 ([A/75/5 \(Vol. I\)](#)) must be taken into account. Those areas included planning and implementation, change management, the revitalization of the Peacebuilding Support Office and the financing of the Peacebuilding Fund.

22. The Group shared the concerns of the Advisory Committee about the end date of the peace and security reform process, and would request clarification regarding when the reform activities would be completed and what type of continuous improvement mechanism would be introduced. It would seek updated information on the impact of the reform, particularly in terms of improved effectiveness and coherence.

23. **Mr. Traore** (Mali), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the reform was essential to honouring the commitment made in the Charter to save succeeding generations from the scourge

of war, a goal that, 75 years after the founding of the United Nations, remained as urgent as ever. The shifting global landscape required a more coherent, nimble and effective Organization, capable of collaborating with partners inside and outside the United Nations system, including regional and subregional entities, to prevent conflicts and sustain peace.

24. The Group commended the Secretary General on implementing the reform despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, and acknowledged his efforts to promote culture change through that implementation. It also recognized the complementary roles of cultural change, leadership and accountability in the success of structural changes. Tools such as the online benefits tracker would enable better reporting on the results of the reform. The Group appreciated the restructuring of the peace and security pillar into the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations, and the two departments' shared vision of working together to improve efficiency.

25. Challenges were inevitable in the implementation of a project of such magnitude. The Group looked forward to discussing the monitoring of benefits, and would request clarification regarding the correlation between the four main goals outlined by the Secretary-General in the initial reform proposal (A/72/525) and the nine benefits presented under three objectives in his report on the implementation of the reform (A/75/202). With regard to enhancing effectiveness, efficiencies and coherence, the Group would discuss the cost-benefit analysis and efficiency gains that could have been part of the reform initiatives. It would also discuss the dual reporting lines, noted by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/262 C, between the Assistant Secretaries-General heading the single political-operational structure and the Under-Secretaries General for Peace Operations and for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs; alignment with the development pillar; the achievement of equitable geographical representation in the two departments; and the areas for improvement identified by the Board of Auditors.

26. While the Organization was at the early stages of implementing the reform, the Secretary-General had responded to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure business continuity for the Secretariat and the intergovernmental processes. The lessons learned should be captured to inform any further rethinking of the systems.

27. **Ms. Salaj** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process

country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that, when the Secretary-General had launched his reform agenda, he had pledged to unify the peace and security pillar and align it with the development and human rights pillars in order to improve coherence and coordination. The States members of the European Union supported his vision, in particular the commitment to conflict prevention and sustaining peace, and the move towards a coherent, pragmatic, nimble and effective peace and security pillar.

28. The restructured pillar was better positioned to play its central role in preventing violent conflicts. Its focus on effective conflict prevention and sustaining peace ensured that peace and security engagements were undertaken early, and helped it respond to the Secretary-General's call for a surge in diplomacy for peace. The unified pillar had a more effective and coherent field presence, from peacekeeping to special political missions, and had contributed to tailored, political solutions, in line with the Action for Peacekeeping initiative and the women, peace and security agenda. It had also enhanced the prospects for more sustainable mission transition, which had been particularly important in 2020 given the downsizing of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the establishment of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS). The unified pillar improved the alignment between peace and security, human rights, and development. Internal barriers to collaboration within the peace and security pillar and with the development pillar had been reduced. The States members of the European Union welcomed the closer alignment with the United Nations development system, and the strengthened partnership with the World Bank and other development actors, including the European Union. While the reform had already yielded benefits, its implementation was ongoing. Changes in practices, culture and processes took time and required continuous learning. Further realignment and re-engineering of administrative processes would be necessary to increase the impact in the field.

29. The progress of the implementation of the reform must be monitored, and regular reviews were needed to achieve better results. The States members of the European Union welcomed the planned introduction of a mechanism for continuous improvement to help the Organization adapt to global needs. The COVID-19 pandemic had devastated economies worldwide, reversing development and peacebuilding gains, aggravating existing conflicts and fomenting new ones. All the improvements resulting from the reform of the

peace and security pillar had proved essential during the pandemic; they had enabled the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations to address needs in the field consistently. Conflict prevention, sustaining peace and cross-pillar complementarity were more important than ever in ensuring that the engagement of the peace and security pillar in the field was impactful.

30. **Mr. Dai Bing** (China) said that the reform should remain true to its original aspiration, and adhere to the purposes and principles the Charter. It should strengthen the capacities of peacekeeping operations and special political missions to implement General Assembly and Security Council resolutions so as to better fulfil their mandates, improve their efficiency and effectiveness, and make sound decisions on the allocation of resources and staff, and on institutional structure.

31. The reform should remain transparent, open and fair. The Secretariat should provide timely updates to Member States on its implementation. The monitoring of the reform by Member States should be ensured, Member States' comments and concerns should be taken into account, and reform measures should be adjusted in a timely fashion in line with Member State recommendations to cope with challenges in the implementation. Although the single political-operational structure had a rational basis, internal coordination should be strengthened to ensure that the structure worked smoothly under the leadership of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations.

32. Through the reform, the two departments, together with peacekeeping operations and special political missions, should address the imbalance in geographical representation among staff, implement related General Assembly resolutions and increase the number of international staff from developing countries and troop-contributing countries at all levels. The promotion of gender parity was not a replacement for addressing the imbalance in geographical representation.

33. Closer alignment with the development pillar was an inherent requirement of the peace and security reform. Conflicts could be prevented and peace sustained only if the host country was given help to enhance its capacity for self-development. Cooperation with the resident coordinator system should be strengthened and development should be given high priority.

34. The security of peacekeeping personnel was threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic and other risks. Through the peace and security reform, steps should be

taken to implement the related General Assembly and Security Council resolutions to protect those personnel.

35. **Mr. Suzuki** (Japan) said that his delegation appreciated the efforts of the Secretariat and field missions to implement the peace and security reform on the basis of General Assembly resolution [72/262 C](#). In his report, the Secretary-General reviewed the implementation of the reform and showed the benefits that had materialized so far. However, reform was an evolving process that involved both structural and cultural changes, and required the continuous engagement of Secretariat staff. The progress of the implementation should therefore be monitored and reviewed so that the four goals outlined by the Secretary-General in his report on the restructuring of the peace and security pillar ([A/72/525](#)) could be achieved. The reform should also improve effectiveness and efficiency in the fulfilment of mandates, and strengthen fiscal discipline and the judicious use of resources. His delegation looked forward to further information from the Secretariat on the ways in which the reform had improved effectiveness and efficiency by avoiding overlap and duplication in the policy structures of the peace and security pillar, making smoother transitions from peacekeeping operations to special political missions or non-mission settings, and enabling closer collaboration among peacekeeping and special political missions in the same region.

36. Japan also welcomed the Secretariat's efforts to improve transparency and provide accountability through the benefits management system. Appropriate evaluation was contingent upon adequate indicators and targets, clear linkages with quantitative and qualitative evaluation, and proper reflection of the voices of field missions. His delegation trusted that Member States would be given full, timely information on the implementation of the reform and related achievements.

37. **Mr. Velázquez Castillo** (Mexico) said that the reform of the peace and security pillar was essential to enabling the Organization to honour its commitments and respond nimbly and effectively in an increasingly complex world, in which the links between peace and security, sustainable development and human rights must be strengthened. Mexico therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's report, in which he set out the progress made and the challenges remaining. Adjustments would need to be made and innovative steps taken in order to fulfil the Organization's mandates in a comprehensive, harmonized manner.

38. The objectives of prioritizing prevention and sustaining peace, enhancing the effectiveness and coherence of peacekeeping operations and special

political missions, and facilitating a more coherent, nimble and effective peace and security pillar, aligned more closely with the development and human rights pillars, were particularly important because the Organization must work in a coordinated way, through interaction among its constituent parts and the analysis of system-wide data, in order to provide multisectoral responses.

39. The changes in the peace and security pillar must not only prevent the structural causes of conflicts but also sustain peace. The case studies in the Secretary-General's report illustrated the benefits of the reform for field operations; the Secretary-General should continue to improve the mechanism for tracking benefits and capturing the achievement of objectives.

40. His delegation welcomed the increased collaboration between the peace and security pillar and the human rights pillar, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, and the human rights components of peacekeeping and special political missions. It also welcomed the change from a work culture based on administration, containment and reaction to one based on prevention. The change should be promoted in a sustained manner; given the COVID-19 pandemic, the partnership with the United Nations System Staff College would foster best practices in telecommuting and improve the workplace paradigm after the pandemic.

41. **Mr. Al Haddabi** (Oman) said that Oman agreed with the Secretary-General's assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the United Nations and Member States, and with his view that recovery and reform could be achieved only through joint action and constructive international cooperation. Through the management and financial reform, equitable geographical representation should be ensured at all levels to reflect the universal membership of the Organization, which included States in the Gulf region and the Arabian peninsula, so that qualified staff familiar with the Arab region and its issues could be recruited, including to offices in that region.

42. His delegation would continue to support the Organization's mission of achieving security, peace and stability, but wished to draw the Committee's attention to the economic situation of many countries, a situation that required the reconsideration of the scale of assessments and the adjustment of those countries' contributions on the basis of real developments and documented information.

43. The Security Council should introduce restrictions and standards for peacekeeping operations, some of

which had become a financial burden on States because of open, ill-defined mandates. The peacekeeping budget, which was more than \$6 billion, could be a direct cause of the worsening of the financial crisis at the United Nations. His delegation endorsed the proposals introduced to the Committee in order to rationalize expenditure and make the Organization more flexible and capable of meeting real needs with a view to resolving, rather than merely managing, issues and crises.

44. **Mr. Mmalane** (Botswana) said that his delegation welcomed the progress of the reform of the peace and security pillar as an opportunity to strengthen conflict prevention. Despite the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the pillar had been restructured into the Department of Political and Peacekeeping Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations, and such tools as the online benefits tracker had been established. The Secretary-General had promoted cultural change, and had protected field personnel and continued field operations through the COVID-19 field support group.

45. Challenges in the implementation of the reform had been identified, however, and his delegation would seek further information on the composition of the two departments in the light of resolution [72/262 C](#), in which the Secretary-General was requested to address the issue of equitable geographical representation, in compliance with the Charter. His delegation would seek clarification regarding the recommendations and observations of the Advisory Committee and the Board of Auditors on the planning and implementation of the reform, change management, the revitalization of the Peacebuilding Support Office and the financing of the Peacebuilding Fund. Those recommendations must be expeditiously implemented.

46. Botswana was committed to the Secretary-General's vision of alignment between peace and security, human rights, and development. The structure and capacities introduced through the peace and security reform had strengthened the linkages among the pillars, especially through the peacebuilding work of the Organization, and deepened the connections with the resident coordinator system and other partners, including such regional and subregional organizations as the African Union.

47. **Ms. Ribeiro Viotti** (Chef de Cabinet) said that the reform was ongoing, and changes in practices and culture took time. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report, the Secretariat was focusing on changing the organizational and work culture. The Department of Political and Peacekeeping Affairs and

the Department of Peace Operations were fostering that long-term process, which required continuous improvement. She looked forward to discussing the matter further in informal consultations. The Secretary-General was committed to implementing the recommendations of OIOS and the Board of Auditors. Most of the issues mentioned in the OIOS report on the evaluation of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (IED-20-001), which had been prepared when the implementation of the reform was at an early stage, had been addressed, and the Secretary-General had asked the two departments to produce an action plan to implement the remaining recommendations. Many of the benefits monitored through the benefits tracker would be realized by the end of 2020, while others would require more time. The two departments kept the progress of such realization up to date in the tracker, for review by Member States.

#### **Other matters**

48. **Ms. Ioannou** (Cyprus), speaking in exercise of the right of reply in response to a statement made by the representative of Turkey at the Committee's 6th meeting (see [A/C.5/75/SR.6](#)), said that the statement, on the budget of special political missions, including the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus, along with similar remarks made subsequently in informal consultations, had been objectionable on the grounds of substance and relevance in the context of the Committee, whose deliberations should remain purely technical. The Secretary-General had been entrusted with his good offices mission in Cyprus by the Security Council, and no other body could challenge that mandate. Attempts to do so in the Committee, by a member of the Bureau no less, could only be perceived as an attempt to undermine the Organization's core objective, the peaceful settlement of disputes.

49. In terms of substance, since a long response would be incompatible with the object, purpose and material competence of the Committee, she would limit herself to rejecting the remarks of the Turkish representative in toto, in accordance with the many resolutions of the Security Council and of the General Assembly on Cyprus, which the Turkish representative had contradicted. The United Nations acquis regarding the reunification of Cyprus emanated from the relevant resolutions of the Organization, which could not be unilaterally challenged.

*The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.*