



General Assembly

Distr.: General
26 February 2021

Original: English

Seventy-fifth session

Agenda items 141 and 67

Programme budget for 2021

Report of the Human Rights Council

Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council: revised estimates resulting from the statement by the President entitled “Methods of work of the Consultative Group of the Human Rights Council”, adopted at the organizational session for the fifteenth cycle of the Human Rights Council

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

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered an advance version of the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates resulting from the statement by the President of the Human Rights Council entitled “Methods of work of the Consultative Group of the Human Rights Council”, adopted at the organizational session for the fifteenth cycle of the Council ([A/75/588/Add.2](#)). During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee received additional information, concluding with written responses received on 23 February 2021.

2. Under the terms of the President’s statement, the Human Rights Council decided to adopt the methods of work of the Consultative Group of the Council as set out in the annex to the statement, including the following:

(a) The working languages of the Secretariat shall be the working languages of the Consultative Group;

(b) The call for applications shall be published by the Secretariat in all six official languages;

(c) The Secretariat shall make available on its website, and attach to the call for applications, public information material on the application and selection process of mandate holders in all six languages;



(d) The interview process should, wherever possible, take place via video call. In a situation in which an interview cannot take place via video call, it shall be conducted via telephone;

(e) The Secretariat shall make the recordings of the interviews available to the members of the Consultative Group;

(f) Candidates shortlisted by the Consultative Group may request to be interviewed in any official language, and persons with disabilities may request that interviews be conducted in an accessible format.

3. The estimated additional resource requirements for 2021 arising from the statement pertain to the translation, in the six official languages, of the calls for applications, the translation and reproduction of related public information material, 10 days of simultaneous interpretation, including sign language interpretation, of the interviews (see paras. 5–7 below) and sound technicians, recording services and videoconference facilities (see para. 8 below), in addition to a short video production on special procedures mechanisms (see para. 9 below), as follows: (a) \$126,800 (comprising annual requirements in the amount of \$101,100 and one-time requirements in the amount of \$25,700) under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management; (b) one-time requirements in the amount of \$10,000 under section 24, Human rights; and (c) annual requirements in the amount of \$18,000 under section 29E, Administration, Geneva.

4. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, while every effort was being made to absorb additional requirements within existing resources by closely monitoring projected expenditure, it was not possible to determine at that early stage of the budget year that the aforementioned amounts could indeed be absorbed.

5. The additional requirements for 2021 for interpretation amount to \$86,700 and comprise \$85,000 for simultaneous interpretation in the six official languages and \$1,700 for sign language interpretation (see [A/75/588/Add.2](#), table). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that simultaneous interpretation would not be provided from all the official languages but only from the language requested by the candidate into English, as one of the two working languages of the Consultative Group. Furthermore, it was indicated that interpreters were budgeted for and hired on a daily, rather than hourly, basis. Upon further enquiry, the Committee was informed that the cost assumption for official United Nations meetings, with simultaneous interpretation in the official languages, had been applied, on the premise that there would be two 3-hour interview sessions per day. The Committee was also informed that actual expenditure would be based on the specific requirements for each interview, which would be known in advance, and interpretation services would then be provided in accordance with the language or languages required.

6. The Advisory Committee considers that the additional requirements for simultaneous interpretation during interviews are calculated on the cost assumption used for official United Nations meetings, which require interpretation coverage for all six official languages. The Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will provide a breakdown of the actual requirements for simultaneous interpretation, and further explanations, in the context of the next budget submission.

7. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the availability of simultaneous interpretation during interviews was aimed at broadening gender and geographical balance, as well as the representation of different legal systems and, in accordance with the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the interview process. The Committee was also informed

that one candidate had requested sign language interpretation for an interview but, because of the lack of provision for that specific activity, had had to pay for the service. **The Advisory Committee welcomes the initiative to ensure simultaneous interpretation in all six official languages, as well as sign language interpretation, during interviews and recalls that, in resolution 73/346, the General Assembly emphasized the importance of multilingualism in the activities of the United Nations (see also A/75/7, para. 16). The Committee trusts that, with respect to the aforementioned case where a candidate paid for sign language interpretation out of pocket, the relevant office has reimbursed the related expenses.**

8. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the costs of technical support during interviews (see para. 3 above), in the annual amount of \$13,800 for one technician, were calculated on an hourly basis of \$86 for 20 days, each of eight hours, with the technician's support and presence required before, during and after interviews to ensure the functionality of the platform.

9. With regard to the short video production (see para. 3 above), the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that related additional resources were required as the Department of Global Communications at the United Nations Office at Geneva was unable to assist owing to the existing demands pertaining to its mandated work programme and the related support being provided to a range of activities. The Committee was also informed that the production of a video programme on special procedures mechanisms lasting between two and three minutes would require eight workdays, as follows: (a) two days of filming interviews and B-roll (supplemental or alternative footage intercut with the main shot); (b) three days of editing content; and (c) three days of post-production and subtitling in the official languages.

10. **The Advisory Committee expects that, as is usual practice, a breakdown and explanation of the actual expenditure for the totality of the additional requirements will be provided in the next performance report.**

11. The actions to be taken by the General Assembly, as proposed by the Secretary-General, are set out in paragraph 5 of his report. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly:**

(a) **Approve an additional appropriation, representing a charge against the contingency fund for 2021, in the amount of \$154,800, comprising \$126,800 (of which \$25,700 is non-recurrent) under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, \$10,000 (of which the full amount is non-recurrent) under section 24, Human rights, and \$18,000 (of which none is non-recurrent) under section 29E, Administration, Geneva, of the programme budget for 2021;**

(b) **Approve an additional appropriation in the amount of \$17,400 (of which \$3,100 is non-recurrent) under section 36, Staff assessment, of the programme budget for 2021, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.**