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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 13 May 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Sharma (Nepal)
later: Mr. Kendall (Vice-Chairman) (Argentina)
*Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 126: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (continued)

Support account for peacekeeping operations (continued) (A/57/725, A/57/732 and A/57/776)

Gender mainstreaming (continued) (A/57/731 and A/57/776)

United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi (continued) (A/57/670 and Corr.1, A/57/671, A/57/751 and A/57/772/Add.9)

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Reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services: Mission liquidation activities (continued) (A/57/622)

Procurement of goods and services through letters of assist (continued) (A/57/718)

1. **Mr. Zevelakis** (Greece), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, and, in addition, Liechtenstein, said that, since peacekeeping activity was declining, the level of the support account should reflect the number and size of active peacekeeping missions. Investment in training and in information and communications technology should also be matched to demonstrable needs and provide a demonstrable return on investment. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations should produce a comprehensive plan covering training and training-related travel costs to ensure that investment was proportional to demand. The results-based format of the budget for the support account for peacekeeping operations (A/57/732) was a positive step, but needed improvement, as the Advisory Committee had

recommended. The European Union would have liked more concrete information on workloads, and indicators of achievement as well as a clearer link between resources and expected accomplishments and output. It would look at resource proposals for the support account on a case-by-case basis, and take account of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee (A/57/776).

2. The European Union strongly believed that a senior gender adviser should be appointed to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, but wished to know how the adviser would promote closer cooperation between the Department and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues.

3. The United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi (UNLB) played a crucial role in the rapid deployment of and support for peacekeeping operations. In that connection, the increased resources for July 2003 to June 2004 requested by the Secretary-General (A/57/670) and the rapid establishment of strategic deployment stocks should improve peacekeeping logistics and operational effectiveness. The Base should be used to train peacekeeping staff who could not be trained within peacekeeping missions and should serve as a hub for procurement and for information and communication technology support.

4. The European Union saw merit in using regional investigators for field operations (A/57/494). The request for additional posts in Vienna and Nairobi would be given careful consideration. Such investigators would be close to missions and be operationally independent.

5. To improve the handling of contingent-owned equipment, the United Nations Board of Auditors should further review such matters as memorandums of understanding (which should be negotiated, approved and signed before deployment, wherever possible), pre-deployment inspections (which should be mandatory), arrival inspections, verification reports and personnel resources.

6. The Union was pleased that claims for death and disability benefits were usually processed within the 90-day deadline set by the General Assembly, but was concerned about the manner in which the Department of Peacekeeping Operations had recruited professional staff between the 1998 and 2002 audits by OIOS. The human resources management reforms, including the new web-based staff selection system, Galaxy, had

produced changes in the Department that had overtaken some of the findings of the OIOS report. A new audit should therefore be carried out and a report submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session. In the meantime, the Department should take steps to fill vacancies within 120 days. The 95-day recruitment target and the Advisory Committee's recommendation that posts remaining unfilled for 12 months should be considered to have lapsed were steps in the right direction.

7. The finding of OIOS that liquidation of missions was slow because of shortcomings in planning and monitoring (A/57/622) was disturbing and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations should provide more information on the issue. The European Union supported the recommendations of OIOS on the procurement of goods and services through letters of assist (A/57/718) and looked forward to a report from the Secretary-General on strengthening the procurement role of UNLB.

8. **Mr. Wittmann** (United States of America) said that his delegation welcomed the information which the Secretary-General had provided to help the General Assembly in its consideration of the proposal to appoint a senior gender adviser in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, but regretted that progress on the appointment had been delayed partly because of uncertainty over how that position would relate to other gender mainstreaming posts in the Secretariat.

9. On the subject of contingent-owned equipment, the dual system of accounting used was cumbersome and possible solutions should be further discussed. His delegation looked forward to the information it had recently requested regarding resident investigators. The fact that many positions relying on the support account were unfilled, under-filled or occupied by temporary staff, pending completion of recruitment procedures gave cause for concern and his delegation supported the Secretariat's efforts to speed up recruitment. On the other hand, while it advocated transferring OIOS peacekeeping oversight resources to the support account, it questioned the need for new positions to be established to help with the transfer.

10. His delegation would prefer the review of the reform process initiated by the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations to be presented to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session, instead of the fifty-ninth session, as the Special Committee on

Peacekeeping Operations had requested. The request of the Advisory Committee for a comprehensive examination of the merits of establishing a procurement hub for all peacekeeping missions at Brindisi was intriguing. However, while a sole depot model for procurement could be cost-effective, it raised questions about geographical participation in contracts and other supply activities.

11. Reductions in the number and complexity of peacekeeping missions called for a similar reduction in the resources required to support them. His delegation understood that the Secretariat had difficulty in planning for surges and retreats in peacekeeping activities, but the recent reforms had been intended precisely to improve the Organization's ability to react to such change so that Member contributions were spent more efficiently.

12. **Mr. Savua** (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Group, said that peacekeeping operations were a core function of the United Nations for which adequate resources must be provided. Member States must meet their obligations to pay their fair share of peacekeeping costs in full and on time.

13. While the report of the Secretary-General on the feasibility of consolidating the accounts of the various peacekeeping operations (A/57/746) raised a number of questions, the Group supported the proposal to streamline the frequency and number of peacekeeping assessments, which would be of particular help to smaller delegations.

14. The support account played a vital role in ensuring that field operations received adequate support and guidance from Headquarters. The Group was generally satisfied with the allocation of resources to and the performance of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, but a number of matters required attention, including the proposal to establish the post of senior gender adviser in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, so that future peacekeeping operations could benefit from the Organization's considerable experience in gender mainstreaming.

15. It was a matter of concern that a small number of troop-contributing countries were owed large sums for troop or contingent-owned equipment costs. Although the arrears had been reduced in the last year, the Secretary-General should continue efforts to streamline reimbursement and encourage all Member States to meet their peacekeeping assessments in full.

16. **Mr. Onaner** (Turkey) said that, although Turkey had associated itself with the statement of the European Union, he wished to add that it viewed peacekeeping as vital to fulfilling the mandate of the Organization and had itself played an active role in peacekeeping operations in Asia, Africa and Europe. Peacekeeping activities had experienced a decline, which should be reflected in the peacekeeping budget and support account. Close attention should also be paid to the logistics dimension of peacekeeping. In that connection, UNLB fulfilled an essential function and his delegation supported the Advisory Committee's view that Brindisi could be transformed into an operations hub.

17. **Mr. Yamanaka** (Japan) noted that the Secretariat had requested a 15 per cent increase in expenditure for the support account for peacekeeping operations in spite of the fact that the number and size of operations were being reduced.

18. In view of the need to strengthen internal oversight, he supported the proposal to move resources for resident auditors from individual peacekeeping mission budgets to the support account. However, the criteria for the establishment of resident auditor posts were closely linked to the financial levels of the relevant peacekeeping operations, and, in that context, he requested clarification regarding the proposal to abolish two posts in the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) and one post in the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET) while creating three other posts at a higher level in separate missions. He supported the establishment of a regional investigation capacity in Nairobi.

19. As far as the gender adviser functions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations were concerned, he endorsed the recommendation contained in paragraph 31 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/57/776).

20. With regard to the proposed budget for UNLB, he had taken note of the Base's rapidly increasing budget allocation and shared the opinion of ACABQ that, if the decrease in peacekeeping operations were to continue, it would be difficult, during the next period, to justify the current levels of the support account and the Logistics Base. He was also concerned about the delay in the implementation of the budget for the establishment of the strategic deployment stocks and requested clarification in that respect.

21. The efforts of the Secretariat to present the proposed budgets for peacekeeping operations in a results-based format were commendable and he looked forward to further improvements in the future. He was concerned, however, about the criteria for preparing estimates for and charging items to miscellaneous expenses and, in that connection, supported the conclusions and recommendations contained in paragraphs 134 and 136 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/57/772).

22. With regard to the proposed model memorandum of understanding for the reimbursement of contingent-owned equipment, he agreed with the assessment of the situation provided in paragraph 11 of the report of the Secretary-General on the reform of the procedure for determining reimbursement to Member States for contingent-owned equipment (A/56/939) and took the view that a model memorandum of understanding should incorporate some options or elements to provide flexibility, in order to facilitate the finalization of the negotiation process and expedite reimbursements.

23. *Mr. Kendall (Argentina), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

Agenda item 112: Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (continued)

Salary and retirement allowance of the Secretary-General and salary and pensionable remuneration of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (continued)
(A/57/7/Add.25)

Conditions of service and compensation for officials, other than Secretariat officials, serving the General Assembly: full-time members of the International Civil Service Commission and the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (continued) (A/C.5/57/35)

Conditions of service and compensation for officials other than Secretariat officials: members of the International Court of Justice, judges of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and judges of the International Tribunal for Rwanda (continued) (A/C.5/57/36)

24. **Mr. Vassilakis** (Greece), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia,

Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia and the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, said that his delegation concurred with the recommendations of ACABQ concerning the salary and retirement allowance of the Secretary-General and the salary and pensionable remuneration of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme contained in paragraph 9 of document A/57/7/Add.25 and also endorsed the financial implications of those recommendations in respect of the gross and net salaries of the Secretary-General and the retirement allowance for the three former Secretaries-General as well as the proposed amendment to paragraph 1 of annex I to the Staff Regulations of the United Nations.

25. He took note of the proposals set out in paragraphs 4 and 6 of the report of the Secretary-General on conditions of service and compensation for officials, other than Secretariat officials, serving the General Assembly (A/C.5/57/35) and hoped to receive further clarification of the proposals during informal consultations.

26. Lastly, he endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in section IV of the report of the Secretary-General on conditions of service and compensation for officials other than Secretariat officials: members of the International Court of Justice, judges of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and judges of the International Tribunal for Rwanda (A/C.5/57/36) and supported the proposed amendments to article 1 of the respective pension scheme regulations of those organs. Since each organ had its own pension regulations, a common pension scheme should be designed that would take into account the Regulations of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund.

27. **Mr. Pulido León** (Venezuela) said he hoped that, in future, consideration of agenda items would not take place in the absence of relevant Secretariat officials. It was disrespectful to the Committee as a whole to proceed in that fashion.

28. **Ms. Beagle** (Director of the Specialist Services Division, Office of Human Resources Management) noted that written responses had been provided to the questions posed at the previous meeting.

29. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) requested the Secretariat to provide historical data on adjustments to the base salaries of officials other than

those periodic adjustments provided for under the mechanisms described in paragraph 2 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/57/35).

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.