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Chairman: Mr. Torres Lépori (Vice-Chairman) (Argentina)
*Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Ms. McLurg

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In the absence of Mr. Ali (Malaysia), Mr. Torres Lépori (Argentina), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 128: Programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 (*continued*)

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/62/7/Add.37 and A/62/512/Add.6)

1. **Ms. Van Buerle** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), introducing the Secretary-General's report on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/62/512/Add.6), said that the report contained the budget proposals for 2008 for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas, the United Nations Representative to the International Advisory and Monitoring Board and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Future Status Process for Kosovo (UNOSEK), and the revised budgets for 2008 for the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) and the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS).

2. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas had been established pursuant to the exchange of letters between the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council dated 21 November 2007 (S/2007/719) and 6 December 2007 (S/2007/720) respectively. Its proposed staffing resources for 2008 provided for a total of 10 positions, comprising eight international staff and two national staff. The total proposed financial resource requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy in 2008 amounted to \$2,536,600 net (\$2,738,400 gross).

3. The most recent extension of the mandate and membership of the International Advisory and Monitoring Board was contained in Security Council resolution 1790 (2007), by which the mandate of the Board had been extended to 31 December 2008. The total requirements for the Board in 2008 amounted to \$64,600 for non-post requirements.

4. Given recent developments in Kosovo, it had been decided not to extend UNOSEK beyond 31 March 2008. The following month would be set aside for liquidation. The proposed staffing resources for UNOSEK in 2008 provided for a total of 11 positions. The total proposed financial resource requirements for UNOSEK amounted to \$620,800 net (\$707,100 gross) for three months of operations and one month of liquidation.

5. The Security Council had established UNMIN pursuant to its resolution 1740 (2007) and had decided to extend the mandate of the Mission for six months by its resolution 1796 (2008). The proposed staffing resources for UNMIN in 2008 provided for a total of 887 positions, comprising 263 international staff, 385 national staff and 239 United Nations Volunteers. The total additional resource requirements for UNMIN in 2008 amounted to \$40,236,700 net (\$43,840,700 gross).

6. The substantive staffing complement would be phased out at the end of July 2008, and liquidation would be completed by end-December 2008.

7. With regard to UNPOS, in his most recent exchange of letters with the President of the Security Council dated 24 December 2007 (S/2007/762) and pursuant to Security Council resolution 1772 (2007), the Secretary-General had recalled his letter dated 20 September 2007 (S/2007/566) recommending an integrated strategy for Somalia. The Security Council had taken note of that information in a letter dated 27 December 2007 from the President of the Security Council to the Secretary-General (S/2007/763).

8. The proposed staffing resources for UNPOS in 2008 provided for a total of 72 positions, comprising 44 international staff and 28 national staff. That would represent an addition of 33 positions to the approved budget for 2008. The total additional resource requirements for UNPOS in 2008 amounted to \$8,392,200 net (\$9,313,900 gross).

9. The total additional requirements for the aforementioned special political missions in 2008 amounted to \$51,850,900 net (\$56,652,000 gross). The General Assembly was requested to take note of the balance of \$17,322,800 in the overall provision for special political missions under section 3, Political affairs, of the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009, and to appropriate an additional amount of

\$34,528,100 net (\$39,329,200 gross) under section 3 (A/62/512/Add.6, para. 147).

10. The Advisory Committee had requested, in paragraph 62 (a) of its related report (A/62/7/Add.37), that the adjusted amount should be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals. The Advisory Committee's recommendations against the approval of four substantive positions for UNMIN would entail a reduction of \$154,300 net (\$183,200 gross).

11. Lastly, bearing in mind paragraph 57 of the report of the Advisory Committee, further information on UNPOS would be provided in informal consultations.

12. **Ms. McLurg** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/62/7/Add.37), said that the report contained the Advisory Committee's comments and recommendations on the additional requirements for the five special political missions included in the Secretary-General's report (A/62/512/Add.6) for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2008.

13. The Advisory Committee had made a number of comments and recommendations, both in its earlier report on special political missions (A/62/7/Add.29) and in its report on the strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs (A/62/7/Add.32). The Advisory Committee was recommending acceptance of the resources proposed by the Secretary-General for the United Nations Representative for the International Advisory and Monitoring Board and also for UNOSEK. With regard to the latter, the Advisory Committee noted that the budget proposal provided for a three-month operational budget for the period from 1 January to 31 March 2008 and a one-month liquidation budget from 1 to 30 April 2008. The Advisory Committee was also recommending approval of the additional resources proposed for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas, in order to support the efforts of the Special Envoy in facilitating the negotiations and supporting the implementation of the peace agreement during the current critical phase.

14. However, the Advisory Committee questioned the need for new positions at UNMIN at the present juncture, given the current vacancy situation and the length of time it normally took to recruit personnel. Elections were scheduled to take place in mid-April,

following which the Mission planned to completely phase out the substantive component by the end of July 2008. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee was recommending that some of the new proposed positions should be accommodated through redeployment and the flexible use of vacant positions.

15. With regard to the additional resources proposed by the Secretary-General for UNPOS, the Advisory Committee noted the Secretary-General's view that recent developments in Somalia presented a unique opportunity for the United Nations to provide enhanced political support to the peace process. However, the Advisory Committee was equally aware of the complex security situation on the ground, which precluded it from relocating to Somalia at the current time. Given the experience of 2007, it was still difficult to ascertain when it would be possible for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team to eventually relocate from Nairobi to Somalia.

16. In that connection, the Advisory Committee noted that the Department of Safety and Security had been requested to assess the security situation in Somalia, the outcome of which would be taken into account in the envisaged phased relocation. At the same time, the Advisory Committee stressed the need to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel and to ensure that conditions permitted them to carry out their work. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee trusted that the structure of the Mission would be kept under review in the light of experience gained. It had requested that the recruitment of new staff should be evaluated in the context of the security situation in Somalia and that their deployment should be based on operational requirements.

17. The Advisory Committee had no objection to the budgetary proposals of the Secretary-General for UNPOS. However, in view of the observations just made, the Advisory Committee considered it unlikely that the totality of resources requested could be fully utilized. The Advisory Committee had therefore recommended that the Secretary-General should provide directly to the General Assembly, at the time of the consideration of his report, any updated information on the financial requirements for 2008, so as to enable the General Assembly to make a fully informed decision.

18. The recommendations outlined in the Advisory Committee's report would involve a reduction of

\$154,300 from the total additional requirements for special political missions proposed by the Secretary-General (\$51,850,900 net). The reduction was related to the Advisory Committee's recommendation concerning four of the 15 new positions proposed by the Secretary-General for UNMIN.

19. **Ms. Tomita** (Japan) expressed her delegation's concern regarding the late submission of the reports on special political missions, which made it difficult for the Fifth Committee to discharge its responsibilities. The Committee should not be placed in such an awkward situation in the future.

20. The rapid growth in special political mission budgets had undeniably been one of the driving forces behind the increase in the United Nations regular budget in recent years. However, the constant increase in special political mission budgets could lead to the mistaken belief that an expansion of the regular budget was inevitable. Her delegation would therefore examine the proposals carefully in the pursuit of budgetary efficiency.

21. She wished to express her sincere condolences to the families and colleagues of the staff members of UNMIN who had lost their lives in the recent helicopter crash in Nepal. With regard to that Mission's proposed budget, she noted that elections were scheduled to take place in mid-April and that the Mission's substantive component would be drawn down by the end of July 2008. In that context, the rationale behind the request for new positions at the current juncture had not been substantiated. Given the current vacancy situation of 159 positions and the length of time required for recruitment, the new proposed positions should be accommodated through redeployment and the flexible use of vacant positions.

22. With respect to operational costs, her delegation requested detailed information about the relevant facilities and infrastructure, especially concerning the breakdown of some equipment, in order to ensure sound planning and to mitigate such risks in future.

23. Her delegation intended to consider the proposed budget for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas while taking fully into account the role that the United Nations might play following the signature of the final peace agreement. To that end, it requested the Secretariat to provide detailed information on the specific role that the United Nations

would play in supporting the implementation of the final agreement.

24. Owing to the complex security situation on the ground in Somalia, her delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that the recruitment of new staff for UNPOS should be evaluated in the context of the security situation and that their deployment should be based on operational requirements. She also sought a detailed explanation of how UNPOS would address the situation in Somalia while still based in Nairobi.

25. Lastly, she stressed that the recruitment and deployment of staff should be carefully planned on the basis of realistic assumptions and an accurate understanding of each stage during and after a conflict situation. It should also be borne in mind that an integrated approach might not be the optimal solution for every situation. Furthermore, the activities being undertaken by other United Nations bodies in Somalia should in no way be hindered by a premature deployment of the Mission.

26. **Mr. Butagira** (Uganda) recalled that, in his report on estimates in respect of special political missions (A/62/512), the Secretary-General had informed the Committee that new mandates for 2008 might arise for the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas, which would result in revised estimates. The progress achieved since then had resulted in the report now before the Committee, which included upgrading the Office of the Special Envoy to a special political mission. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the fact that the establishment of the special political mission was intended to ensure proper funding for UNPOS and stressed its continued support for the important role played by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in the Juba peace talks between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, under the mediation of the Vice-President of Southern Sudan.

27. However, while his delegation had noted the financial and staffing requirements proposed by the Secretary-General, as well as the comments of the Advisory Committee thereon, it would still require further clarification in order to make an informed decision on the proposals. Since the peace talks had almost concluded and only the implementation of the final peace agreement remained, his delegation wished to recommend the following actions: the present

skeletal staff should be maintained for the time being; the additional posts sought should be deployed as and when required, following the necessary consultations with the host Government; and the Kampala Liaison Office should be under the office of the Resident Coordinator.

28. Considerable progress had been made since the start of the Juba peace talks. Indeed, the final peace agreement was expected to be signed during the first week of April 2008. His delegation trusted that the Lord's Resistance Army leadership would show total commitment to the peace process by signing the agreement. For its part, his Government was fully committed to ensuring that the process bore fruit. It was equally committed to implementing all the aspects of previous accords, particularly with a view to the full implementation of the agreement on the principles of accountability and reconciliation, signed in June 2007. Naturally, the international community and development partners would also need to play their part in order to ensure the successful implementation of all the agreements.

29. His delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General announcing the intention to relocate UNPOS to Somalia, in view of the importance that it attached to peace, security and stability in that country. The deployment of a United Nations force to Somalia could go a long way towards addressing some of the challenges mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. In that regard, the United Nations should move quickly to finalize plans for the deployment of peacekeepers to replace the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). In the meantime, it called on the United Nations to support AMISOM by extending the necessary financial and logistical support and urged Member States to fulfil their pledges to provide troops to AMISOM. In that connection, his delegation noted with appreciation that one of the expected outputs for UNPOS in 2008 was the facilitation of six meetings between troop-contributing countries, the African Union and donors in support of the deployment of AMISOM. Uganda was proud that, by deploying its troops to Somalia, it had made a valuable contribution towards promoting peace and security in Somalia.

30. **Mr. Afifi** (Egypt) said that his delegation shared the concerns that had been expressed related to the continued late issuance of reports on special political missions. In that regard, he noted that the report of the Secretary-General on additional requirements for

special political missions for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2008 (A/62/512/Add.6) had been issued on 26 February 2008, which failed to comply with the six-week rule for the availability of documentation. Moreover, the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/62/7/Add.37) was dated 24 March 2008, which was only four days before the official end of the current session. In view of the fact that the already heavy workload was set to increase still further at the forthcoming sixty-third session, his delegation had decided to put forward proposals aimed at enabling the Advisory Committee to meet its deadlines for timely submission. Accordingly, his delegation would shortly seek constructive cooperation from other delegations in that regard.

Other matters

31. **Mr. Abdelmannan** (Sudan) recalled that the Committee, at its 27th meetings, had referred to a press release — subsequently confirmed as incorrect by the Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General — in which it had been announced that Mr. Edward Luck had been appointed as the new Special Adviser to the Secretary-General "on Responsibility to Protect". In that connection, he requested the Secretariat to clarify whether the error had been corrected in a subsequent press release issued in exactly the same manner as the erroneous one. If not, he requested the Secretariat to proceed accordingly. He also requested the Secretariat to provide Member States with a copy of the letter of appointment of Mr. Edward Luck so that they could verify the exact title of his post and the nature of his mandate.

32. **The Chairman** said that the Secretariat had taken note of those requests.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.