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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 12 May 2014, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Funes Henríquez (Vice-Chair) (El Salvador)
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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In the absence of Mr. Taalas (Finland), Mr. Funes Henriquez (El Salvador), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 159: Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East

(a) **United Nations Disengagement Observer Force**
([A/68/596](#), [A/68/725](#) and [A/68/782/Add.6](#))

(b) **United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon**
([A/68/618](#), [A/68/757](#) and [A/68/782/Add.12](#))

1. **Mr. Ramanathan** (Deputy Controller), introducing the Secretary-General's budget performance reports for the period 2012/13 and the budget reports for the period 2014/15 for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) ([A/68/596](#) and [A/68/725](#)) and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) ([A/68/618](#) and [A/68/757](#)), said that, as a pilot mission for the implementation of Umoja, in 2014/15 UNIFIL would continue to support the deployment and implementation of additional Umoja functionalities beyond the pilot, cluster 1 and cluster 2 Foundation phases. The comprehensive civilian staffing review had resulted in a net reduction of 80 posts in the 2014/15 UNIFIL budget. The 2014/15 UNDOF budget reflected the deployment of 34 additional military contingent personnel in the light of the prevailing security situation.

2. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report on UNDOF ([A/68/782/Add.6](#)), said that the Advisory Committee recommended the approval of the proposed budget for UNDOF for 2014/15, including the proposed staffing changes and related resources, subject to a \$22,200 reduction in the resources requested for national staff overtime. The Advisory Committee also recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to seek more comprehensive information concerning reported efficiency gains.

3. Turning to the Advisory Committee's report on UNIFIL ([A/68/782/Add.12](#)), the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of \$1,737,900 in the proposed budget for UNIFIL for 2014/15 in line with its recommendation that the General Assembly should apply an 8 per cent vacancy rate for international UNIFIL staff in 2014/15 rather than the proposed 5 per

cent rate. The Advisory Committee did not object to the Secretary-General's staffing proposals for 2014/15, and expected the new structure of the Mission Support Division to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.

4. **Mr. Ayzouki** (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed concern regarding the frequent delays in the issuance of documentation, which hindered the work of the Committee. UNDOF had been established some 40 years earlier by Security Council resolution [350 \(1974\)](#) to separate Syrian forces and the Israeli occupying forces in the Syrian Golan following the 1973 war. Despite resolutions calling for a withdrawal to the 1967 borders, the occupation continued; consequently, the financing of UNDOF should be borne by Israel.

5. The deterioration of the security situation on the Syrian side of the line of separation had resulted from attacks by armed terrorist groups on infrastructure throughout the Syrian Arab Republic, including UNDOF facilities. Israel's support for such groups in the area of separation in the occupied Syrian Golan constituted aggression against UNDOF, in flagrant violation of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement, the mandate of the Force, international law and Security Council resolutions. Israel had gone so far as to establish a field hospital near the line of separation, and the Prime Minister of Israel had visited injured terrorists who were being treated in Israeli hospitals before being sent back to the area of separation to continue their attacks. Israel's support for such terrorists endangered the lives of United Nations staff and undermined the work of United Nations forces.

6. Israel had not only provided logistical support for terrorists but had also engaged in direct military intervention. For example, in March 2014, Israeli forces had bombarded a school and a mosque in the village of Hamidiya, near the line of separation, a violation of international law which indicated that the occupying forces were coordinating with terrorist groups in the area of separation.

7. Since the establishment of UNDOF, the Syrian Arab Republic had fully supported the Force and had respected the Disengagement of Forces Agreement, recognizing it as a transition intended to last until the implementation of Security Council resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#) and [338 \(1973\)](#) and the end of the occupation of the Syrian Golan. His Government looked forward to the establishment of just and comprehensive peace in

the region through the implementation of all relevant United Nations resolutions and the withdrawal of Israeli forces to the 4 June 1967 line. It appreciated the work being done by UNDOF and the cooperation between the Force and the Syrian authorities and between the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations and the Controller, and expressed its gratitude to the troop-contributing countries.

8. **Mr. Goren** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Israel appreciated all United Nations peacekeeping forces and was grateful to the troop-contributing countries and all those who supported those forces. In his presentation of the financial situation of the United Nations at the 36th meeting of the Committee, the Under-Secretary-General for Management had listed the States that had paid all of their assessments as at 6 May 2014. The only Middle Eastern country in that group was Israel, the political and financial contributions of which represented its commitment to the operations, goals and values of peacekeeping. It was proud of its good relationship and long-standing cooperation with peacekeeping forces in the region.

9. The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, however, had hijacked the meeting to make baseless claims against Israel. Rather than address the agenda item, the Syrian Government had attempted to divert attention from its brutal and horrific crimes by trampling the Committee's democratic processes under foot, just as it did the rights of its own people. His delegation looked forward to constructive dialogue on the issues.

10. **Mr. Ayzouki** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Israel had attempted to use the meeting to enhance his country's reputation by claiming that it was the only Middle Eastern State which had paid its assessments, whereas in fact Israel should, as the occupying Power in the Syrian Golan, not only pay its assessments but also pay for the total funding of UNDOF. The Israeli representative had distorted facts, saying that he represented peace-loving forces which had a good relationship with the United Nations, when in fact he represented occupying forces which had committed the worst kinds of atrocities against the Arab people in Lebanon, Palestine and the Syrian Arab Republic and had egregiously violated human rights, including by exterminating populations, Judaizing territories and attacking Islamic and

Christian holy sites, as documented by the United Nations since its establishment. The Israeli representative had tried to divert attention from the practices of the Israeli forces and their participation in acts of aggression against UNDOF through their support for terrorist groups in the occupied Syrian Golan, with a view to concealing Israel's black record and violation of United Nations resolutions. The Golan was occupied Syrian land to which the Syrian people had a right; it was the subject of many resolutions calling on Israel to withdraw to the 4 June 1967 line, stop violating international humanitarian law and end its settlement policy. He warned the Israeli representative against interfering in Syrian internal affairs and distorting facts.

Organization of work

11. **Mr. Sánchez Azcuy** (Cuba) said that his delegation regretted the absence of the Chair of the Committee, but would nonetheless ask him a number of questions to which it would insist on receiving official replies at formal meetings of the Committee. It had obtained a copy of an invitation by which the Chair on 9 May 2014 had convened a meeting at the Permanent Mission of Finland of a select group of delegations with the participation of the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support and the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

12. If the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had prevented the meeting from being held at Headquarters even though meeting space had been available, the Committee should submit a strongly worded complaint to the Secretary-General. In the light of rules 60, 61, 106 and 107 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, he asked whether the Committee had given the Chair a mandate to invite senior Secretariat officials to make presentations on the programme of work at private meetings held away from United Nations premises. He requested clarification of the reasons for the convening of the private meeting, the criteria used to select the delegations invited, and the basis for not having invited all delegations. He asked what additional information the secretariat could provide at such a meeting but not share with the full membership, and whether the Chair intended to present a summary of what had been decided at the private meeting.

13. He asked the secretariat whether the Secretary-General's bulletins on the organization of the

Department of Peacekeeping Operations (ST/SGB/2010/1) and of the Department of Field Support (ST/SGB/2010/2) authorized the Under-Secretaries-General for those departments to discuss, at private meetings held away from United Nations premises and outside the Committee's programme of work, questions which nevertheless fell within the Committee's remit and were of importance to those departments. He would welcome the opinion of the Office of Legal Affairs. When his delegation had received the Chair's replies through official channels, it would make a statement for inclusion in the record of the meeting.

14. **The Chair** said that the questions of the representative of Cuba would be referred to the Chair of the Committee through the secretariat.

15. **Mr. Saeed** (Sudan) said that his delegation wished to echo the concerns of the representative of Cuba. The Committee strove to conduct its work transparently and to ensure the participation of all Member States in discussions. He expressed surprise regarding the Chair's convening of a meeting of certain members at the Permanent Mission of Finland to discuss matters before the Committee while the Committee itself was holding informal consultations at the United Nations to discuss agenda items allocated to it.

16. His delegation had repeatedly emphasized through the groups of which it was a member that the convening of small, private meetings by specific countries complicated the work of the Committee. Although the Chair was responsible for reconciling members' views to reach consensus, there had been no need for the Chair to convene a private meeting to reconcile opposing views. In any event, there was nothing to bring together the countries that had been invited to the private meeting. Regardless of whether or not the Sudan had been invited to the meeting, the principle of transparency was at stake. The Chair was responsible for strengthening the Committee and its work rather than weakening it. The Chair's replacement of the Committee by a small group of Member States was unacceptable and did not help the Committee's consideration of agenda items. It seemed that some would like the Committee to simply rubber-stamp draft resolutions and endorse a consensus reached outside its formal meetings.

17. He expected the Chair to present a written clarification of the reasons for the convening of the private meeting and a summary of the deliberations.

Inviting senior United Nations officials to present information at a meeting which was not part of the Committee's programme of work set a dangerous precedent. The exclusion of even one or two Member States from meetings was inappropriate and would establish a system based on the assumption that consensus could be reached among certain States but not among others. It was regrettable that the Chair of the Committee was not present. The convening of private meetings, even with the best of intentions, would raise many doubts and differences of opinion and would make consensus difficult. The Committee was concerned that important decisions might have been taken at the private meeting and that the full membership would simply be presented with a fait accompli. The Committee should be open to all and should work transparently. His delegation was concerned that such practices would diminish the role of the Committee, and would revert to the matter in the light of the Chair's replies.

18. **Ms. Mukashyaka** (Rwanda) said that the discussions at the private meeting were of interest to all United Nations stakeholders, troop-contributing countries and financial contributors. The Chair should listen to the concerns of delegations and ensure that discussions were transparent. Members worked hard to reach consensus at the expert level, with all delegations able to voice their concerns. Information not discussed by the full membership must have been divulged at the private meeting, since it had been attended by senior officials and had been convened following the delivery of a comprehensive briefing to the Committee as a whole. Her delegation wished to know what had been discussed at the private meeting and requested a written response from the Chair.

19. **The Chair** said that the questions raised would be transmitted to the Chair of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.