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Chair: Mr. Ružička (Slovakia)
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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

Item 132: Programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 (*continued*)

Information and communications technology
(A/69/517 and A/69/610)

1. **Mr. Takasu** (Under-Secretary-General for Management), introducing the Secretary-General's report on information and communications technology in the United Nations (A/69/517), said that the Secretariat, the General Assembly and regulatory bodies had acknowledged that the information and communications technology environment at the United Nations was fragmented, and that the delivery of such technology lacked unity and was not fit for purpose in modern times. To ensure that delivery was aligned with the business and priorities of the Organization, the fragmented environment needed to be addressed urgently under the leadership of the Chief Information Technology Officer. More robust information security, clearly defined governance structures, a better balance between operational freedom and central control, and a common vision for and leadership in such technology across the United Nations were needed.

2. Following thorough evaluation over the previous 18 months and broad consultation in the Secretariat, the Administration had finalized a revised information and communications technology strategy and established the drivers necessary to improve such technology in the short and long term. To transform the status quo, the United Nations must support existing modernization efforts, such as the Umoja enterprise resource planning system, and consider further innovation. Full transformation, however, could not be achieved without robust foundations through the leadership of the Chief Information Technology Officer, governance, accountability and a commitment to optimizing the resources available.

3. The Secretary-General had defined his common vision as the unified global provision of information and communications technology to enable successful delivery of United Nations mandates. The revised strategy encompassed all Secretariat activities. It was driven by modernization, transformation and innovation and supported by governance, leadership and optimal financial management. It was based on a phased approach designed to ensure that the United Nations had a solid foundation in information and

communications technology for the immediate future: a detailed implementation plan had been prepared for the biennium 2016-2017 and beyond. The leadership role of the Chief Information Technology Officer was essential in ensuring consistency in fragmented information and communications technology structures, providing direction for all activities related to such technologies and representing the common vision articulated.

4. The strategy would harmonize and vastly improve United Nations information and communications technology services through the effective delivery and smooth operation of Umoja; improved information security and resiliency; updated information and communications technology systems and structures; and greater expertise and professionalism, all resulting in better quality, efficiency and customer satisfaction.

5. The fragmented delivery of information and communications technology services was not cost-effective. While the Secretary-General's intention was to ensure that such delivery was worthy of the Organization, the current environment made a solid information security framework impossible. The business of the United Nations required the Secretary-General to lay the foundations for the reliable and harmonized delivery of information and communications technology, and the immediate action needed was outlined in the strategy, including the establishment of a unified service desk as Umoja was mainstreamed.

6. Early endorsement of the high-level statement of overall direction represented by the strategy was critical in order for the Secretariat to undertake project management and benefit analyses for the strategy's implementation. Immediate actions and early measures for the biennium 2016-2017 must be taken to ensure a seamless information and communications technology landscape which remedied the current limitations and resulted in better service and a more visible and accountable governance structure.

7. The delivery of comprehensive, reliable and efficient information and communications technology services was essential and urgent. The demands on the Organization's workforce were increasing, the threat to information security was mounting, Umoja was at a pivotal juncture and the Secretariat relied on such technology in unprecedented ways. The strategy would ensure that existing inefficiencies were immediately

remedied and that, ultimately, high-quality information and communications technology services of which the United Nations could be proud were delivered.

8. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/69/610), said that the Advisory Committee was of the view that the proposed revised information and communications technology strategy constituted a good basis for the future development of such technology at the United Nations. It supported the overall direction of the strategy, which was focused on supporting the work of the Organization, prioritizing in particular the activities required to support Umoja implementation and mainstreaming, and was based on a consultative approach involving all Secretariat information and communications technology units.

9. The proposed strategy presented a pragmatic approach to reducing the fragmentation of information and communications technology capacities by building on and developing the existing strengths of units providing services in such technology across the Secretariat while taking into account the decentralized nature of the United Nations and its complex organizational structures. At the same time, the distribution of responsibility for the delivery of such technology at the many, geographically dispersed, enterprise and regional technology centres would require effective governance, management and accountability arrangements. In particular, strong central leadership for the establishment and enforcement of corporate information and communications technology policies and standards would be required, with the commitment of senior managers in fully applying the strategy.

10. While the strategy presented a set of goals for the future of information and communications technology and a high-level plan for transforming the delivery of such technology over the next five years, a more detailed analysis should be carried out, including clear identification of the activities to be managed at the central, regional and local levels; proposals for the establishment of enterprise and regional technology centres; information on the final geographical structure envisaged for the delivery of information and communications technology; an implementation plan for the strategy; and details of the expected qualitative and quantitative benefits.

11. The Advisory Committee recommended that, subject to the comments and recommendations in its report, the General Assembly should take note of the Secretary-General's report (A/69/517) and request him to submit for consideration at its seventieth session a refined proposal for the strategy.

12. **Ms. Rios Requena** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group had always supported management reforms designed to increase efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, credibility and accountability at the United Nations. All reforms, including those of information and communications technology, must support the Organization's work in peace, security, development and human rights. The United Nations should not be a mere consumer of information and communications technology, but should ensure through the revised strategy that such technology was used to support its mandate and help Member States to take decisions in the most efficient, user-friendly, secure, reliable and cost-effective manner.

13. The Group was concerned about the fragmentation of the United Nations information and communications technology environment. Despite many initiatives, various offices and departments maintained independent units responsible for such technology, leaving a legacy of decentralized, non-standardized and fragmented environments which had built up over the decades and resulted in the proliferation of duplicate, incompatible and outdated systems, a limited ability to share and process information, incomplete coverage of user requirements and a lack of transparency regarding expenditure and staffing. Fragmentation also drove up the cost of operations and prevented the Organization from making economies of scale.

14. In its report on the handling of information and communications technology affairs in the Secretariat (A/67/651), the Board of Auditors had stated that the strategy adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 63/262 placed insufficient emphasis on Umoja; information security; and peacekeeping activities, which accounted for 75 per cent of expenditure related to such technology.

15. The Board had also made observations regarding the absence of an effective governance and accountability framework for managing information

and communications technology; the lack of clarity regarding the ways in which the changes envisaged were essential to United Nations business needs and core objectives; the lack of a clear definition and understanding of the role of the Office of Information and Communications Technology and the Chief Information Technology Officer; the insufficient number of staff in the Office with the skills required to lead business transformation; the insufficient consideration of the autonomous nature of Secretariat entities; and the lack of understanding of which activities were Organization-wide and required strong central control and which required operational freedom. She requested clarification of how those observations had been addressed in the current proposed strategy.

16. Some of the ongoing activities of the Office of Information and Communications Technology were interrelated and interdependent. Their implementation should be harmonized and rationalized to ensure coherence and synergies. The Secretary-General should ensure that future proposals, including the global service delivery model, were harmonized with ongoing activities under the revised strategy and other initiatives to avoid waste and duplication.

17. The Group looked forward to detailed discussion of the main features of the revised information and communications technology strategy and related strategies, to be implemented over a five-year period. It would seek further information regarding the alignment of the strategy with Umoja, the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), the global field support strategy and human resource management reforms. It would scrutinize information and communications technology training programmes to ensure that in-house capacity was available to perform mandated activities.

18. Although the revised strategy was based on consultation of all Secretariat information and communications technology units, further consultation and collaboration were required with offices away from Headquarters and with peacekeeping and other field offices. She requested further information regarding the extent to which stakeholders in the field, such as agencies, funds and programmes, had been consulted.

19. The distribution of responsibility for the delivery of information and communications technology at numerous geographically dispersed centres could

present challenges. Robust governance, management and accountability arrangements, strong leadership, comprehensive standards and procedures, and effective communication and coordination were needed to mitigate risks and successfully implement the proposed strategy.

20. The Group looked forward to detailed discussion to ensure that the Chief Information Technology Officer could assume responsibility for the overall direction and performance of information and communications technology activities in line with her mandate.

21. Although cost-benefit analysis of the strategy would evolve as it was implemented, it would be an important tool in evaluating and determining the feasibility of projects and should be incorporated at the outset. Information on the projected costs and benefits of the initiative should be presented to Member States in a timely manner and the savings used to support development-related activities.

22. The Group attached great importance to initiatives designed to improve information security and supported the urgent interim measures proposed by the Secretary-General. It expected updates on the implementation of recommendations. It noted that the first phase of the 10-point action plan to strengthen information security had been completed in 2013 and that implementation was ongoing, and looked forward to an update on the implementation of the action plan at the seventieth session of the General Assembly, including details of related expenditure.

23. **Ms. Power** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia and Ukraine, said that the European Union welcomed the efforts of the Chief Information Technology Officer and the Office of Information and Communications Technology to remedy the deficiencies highlighted in the report of the Board of Auditors on the handling of information and communications technology affairs in the Secretariat (A/67/651), and the proposed revised approach to infrastructure, information and systems security and information and communications technology services across the Organisation over the next five years and beyond.

24. The Secretary-General's report (A/69/517) represented a good basis for modernizing the United Nations system and addressing the fragmentation of the information technology environment in conjunction with other ongoing business transformation and change management initiatives, including the implementation and mainstreaming of Umoja. The European Union welcomed the recognition in the report of the need for a fundamental shift in the approach to and structure of that environment. The implementation of a strong strategy with the harmonization of the information technology environment to improve information security, data sharing and value for money would lead to both qualitative and quantitative benefits. Information security threats were continuously increasing, and, given the deeply fragmented infrastructure and lack of oversight of the current system, the United Nations must develop streamlined, reliable and efficient information and communications technology services so that it could carry out its mandates effectively and transparently.

25. Strong central leadership was essential to the establishment and strict enforcement of information and communications technology policies and standards. The European Union emphasized the importance of the Chief Information Technology Officer, who was responsible for the overall direction and performance of information and communications technology activities.

26. An accurate and comprehensive indication of the resources required to implement the proposals was necessary in order to make a decision on the refined approach to be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.

27. **Ms. Schweizer** (Switzerland), speaking also on behalf of Liechtenstein, said that the two delegations welcomed the Secretary-General's desire to reduce the fragmentation of the information and communications technology environment, which comprised almost 2,000 applications, 70 units, over 130 help desks, and 44 data centres. Such fragmentation was costly, reduced the effectiveness of the United Nations and weakened information security. In harmonizing that environment, the Secretary-General should strengthen central leadership in such technology, which should be supported by a more effective, transparent and coherent governance structure.

28. The two delegations requested clarification regarding the extent to which the strategy would be applied to peacekeeping. Such application would be essential to the strategy's credibility and success, as the Department of Field Support received 75 per cent of the overall information and communications technology budget. The Secretary-General should, in his next report, provide more details of the proposed arrangements for incorporating information and communications technology in peacekeeping into the strategy.

29. Switzerland and Liechtenstein welcomed the steps taken by the Office of Information and Communications Technology to coordinate its activities with Umoja. The two must work together and reinforce each other.

30. The United Nations could not modernize unless its computer tools were rationalized. More effort should be made to enhance effectiveness and innovation in information and communications technology. The revised strategy was a pragmatic basis for ensuring that technology met the needs of the Organization, its staff and ongoing business transformation projects. A sound, detailed implementation plan must be developed to ensure its success.

31. **Mr. Kisoka** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that information and communications technology was a cross-cutting element which must be applied to daily business at the United Nations. If properly managed and applied, it could improve efficiency, reduce the cost of operations and accelerate development initiatives. His delegation was concerned, however, that the United Nations had not fully exploited the potential of such technology since fragmentation, duplication, inefficiency, obsolescence and disconnectedness had increased over a long period and had driven up the cost of operations. Offices, departments and units operated in isolation; the Organization had been a mere consumer of technology rather than using it to support decision-making processes.

32. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's initiatives resulting from the Board of Auditors' recommendations and observations designed to transform the Organization's information and communications technology environment. The new strategy would connect offices, particularly

peacekeeping entities and regional commissions, generate efficiencies and reduce the cost of operations. All reform initiatives should be consistent with the strategy to ensure that the expected benefits were received. The savings made should be used to support development-related activities.

33. The strategy should not apply only to the Organization. Information and communications technology support for Member States' decision-making processes should also be improved at all duty stations and field offices. His delegation would welcome initiatives designed to improve such support in conference facilities, including through information technology kiosks providing equipment to Member States, whose decision-making processes should be connected to the digital world as efficiently as possible. Improvements in cybersecurity, videoconferencing and other electronic services were also essential.

34. Further consultation and collaboration on the revised strategy were necessary, in particular with bodies located away from Headquarters, such as peacekeeping offices, which accounted for 75 per cent of information and communications technology expenditure. Strong governance, leadership and accountability were needed, including by the Office of Information and Communications Technology under the Chief Information Technology Officer, to mitigate risks resulting from the complexities of the transformation and the implementation of the strategy. Under the "Delivering as one" principle, the inclusion in the strategy of all stakeholders such as United Nations system entities in the field would result in economies for Member States and the Organization.

35. **Ms. Riaz** (Chief Information Technology Officer) said that the fragmentation of the information and communications technology environment must be addressed to meet the needs of a secure United Nations. Harmonization was essential to ensure that Umoja received the necessary support. The Office of Information and Communications Technology would follow a pragmatic approach, working with all Secretariat bodies. The strategy included peacekeeping offices, with which intensive discussion had been held. In the interest of a cohesive strategy, no one must be left behind.

Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council (A/69/535 and A/69/609)

36. **Ms. Wong** (Programme Planning and Budget Division), introducing the Secretary-General's report on revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council during its 2014 session (A/69/535), said that the report contained the budgetary requirements resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Council at its 2014 session. The additional requirements for the biennium 2014-2015 arising from those resolutions and decisions were estimated at \$56,300, of which \$5,400 could be absorbed within the resources approved for the biennium 2014-2015. The remaining requirements of \$50,900 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, of the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 would represent a charge against the contingency fund.

37. The requirements of \$13,089,500 for the biennium 2016-2017, including \$89,500 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, and \$13,000,000 under section 9, Economic and social affairs, would be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.

38. The recommendations of the Secretary-General were set out in paragraphs 30 and 31 of the report.

39. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/69/609), said that in his report (A/69/535) the Secretary-General estimated the additional requirements for the biennium 2014-2015 arising as a result of the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at \$56,300, of which \$5,400 would be absorbed within resources approved under budget section 9, Economic and social affairs. The Advisory Committee had no objection to such absorption. The remaining \$50,900, related to section 2, General Assembly and Economic and social affairs and conference management, would be a charge against the contingency fund for the biennium 2014-2015.

40. Those requirements were related to the implementation of Council resolution 2014/12, in which the Secretary-General was requested to submit a

report to the Council. The Secretary-General indicated that such submission would constitute an addition to the workload of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of one document of 8,500 words in all official languages. The Advisory Committee recalled, however, that the Secretary-General had recently reported the estimated cost of producing a document of the same volume in all languages as \$35,100. The Advisory Committee therefore saw no reason why the additional documentation arising from the resolutions adopted by the Council could not be produced at the same cost. In addition, the amount represented only 0.04 per cent of the uncommitted allotment balance for 2014 under section 2 of the budget. The Advisory Committee recommended that the additional requirements of up to \$35,100 should be absorbed by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

41. With regard to the additional requirements of \$13 million in respect of the Secretariat's support for the resident coordinator system for the biennium 2016-2017, the Advisory Committee stressed that the General Assembly had not yet considered the cost-sharing arrangement reached by the entities of the United Nations Development Group for that system and the related United Nations contribution. Those requirements should therefore be submitted in conjunction with the proposed arrangement for consideration and approval by the General Assembly.

42. **Ms. Rios Requena** (Plurinational State of Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group supported the provision of additional resources of \$56,300 for the biennium 2014-2015 arising as a result of resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council. The requirements of \$13 million related to Secretariat support for the resident coordinator system should be fully reflected in the programme budget for 2016-2017.

43. The resources necessary to finance the decisions of intergovernmental organs of the United Nations relating to social and economic development should be provided. Adequate resources for the implementation of mandates arising from Council resolutions and decisions should be allocated.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.