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## Fifth Committee

### Summary record of the 40th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 21 May 2015, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Coto-Ramírez (Vice-Chair) . . . . . (Costa Rica)  
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative  
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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*In the absence of Mr. Ružička (Slovakia), Ms. Coto-Ramírez (Costa Rica), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

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

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

*Revised estimates:*

*Office of the Special Envoy on Ebola and the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (continued) (A/69/842 and A/69/903)*

*Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council:*

*United Nations Support Mission in Libya (A/69/363/Add.6 and A/69/628/Add.1)*

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*Panel of Experts on South Sudan (A/69/363/Add.8 and A/69/628/Add.3)*

1. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing revised estimates for the biennium 2014-2015 for the Office of the Special Envoy on Ebola and the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) (A/69/842), said that UNMEER had been deployed as the first-ever emergency health mission to coordinate and scale up the response to the Ebola outbreak in support of nationally led efforts. As a temporary crisis management mechanism, the Mission had been intended to cease operations once the outbreak had been contained and the national Governments of the countries concerned were capable of transitioning into prevention and response activities, with continued support from the United Nations system.

2. Considerable strides had been made towards that critical juncture by harnessing the strengths of the United Nations system, through UNMEER and other partners. Overall, the number of new Ebola cases had declined significantly in the three affected countries. Liberia had been declared Ebola-free on 9 May 2015,

and the geographical dispersal of the outbreak had shrunk to a narrow belt along coastal Guinea and Sierra Leone. Although weekly case totals had fallen to single digits over the previous month, there had been an increase in cases, particularly in Guinea, over the previous fortnight.

3. The United Nations had begun planning for a transfer of functions, capacities and assets from UNMEER to United Nations country teams and national partners. The Mali and Liberia offices had closed, and the Accra headquarters had been significantly downsized and would be further reduced in the coming months. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General maintained a roving presence between the affected countries to ensure a regional perspective on the outbreak and a clear operational focus among responders, and the Special Envoy on Ebola and the World Health Organization continued to provide strategic and technical direction, respectively, on reaching and remaining at a resilient zero cases. The sustained support of Member States over the last mile of the response to finish the job was essential.

4. United Nations country teams, under the leadership of resident coordinators, had taken the lead in preparing for the post-Ebola recovery phase, and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes were preparing to assume several of the functions of UNMEER to sustain the response effort ahead of the transition. Throughout the transition, the Special Envoy on Ebola would focus on mobilizing the funds needed to ensure that United Nations entities were equipped with the resources to reach and maintain a resilient zero and to support attainment of the recovery phase. The Special Envoy on Ebola was expected to carry out those functions until 31 December 2015. The collective investment by stakeholders was too great to allow the progress achieved to be undone: the affected countries must be helped to reach and stay at zero cases.

5. The revised estimates for the Office of the Special Envoy and UNMEER, as well as the related backstopping requirements at Headquarters, amounted to \$88.1 million net of staff assessment for the period from 19 September 2014 to 31 December 2015, including \$81.9 million for field-level support to the Ebola-affected countries and implementing partners, as well as positions at the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe.

6. The Office of the Special Envoy continued to support advocacy and resource mobilization for the Ebola response and strategic coordination with United Nations and non-United Nations stakeholders. Once UNMEER had drawn down by September 2015 and handed over operations to United Nations country teams, the Office would provide strategic guidance in the final stage of the response. Resources for the Office of the Special Envoy amounted to \$2.7 million for the period until 31 December 2015.

7. An amount of \$3.5 million was requested for backstopping support at Headquarters to finance 25 positions of varying duration in the Department of Field Support, Office of Legal Affairs, Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, Medical Services Division of the Office of Human Resources Management, Procurement Division of the Office of Central Support Services and the Department of Safety and Security through September 2015.

8. Turning to the proposed resource requirements for 2015 for the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) and additional resources for 2015 for the United Nations Electoral Observer Mission in Burundi (MENUB) ([A/69/363/Add.6](#)); the proposed resource requirements for 2015 for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) ([A/69/363/Add.7](#)); and the proposed resource requirements for the period from 1 May to 31 December 2015 for the Panel of Experts on South Sudan ([A/69/363/Add.8](#)), she said that total requirements for 2015 amounted to \$237.1 million net of staff assessment.

9. The General Assembly, in its resolution 69/262, had approved an interim funding requirement of \$31.4 million for UNSMIL for the first six months of 2015 in lieu of a comprehensive 12-month budget. The current proposal of \$48.1 million for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2015 was based on the recommendations of a recently conducted strategic assessment of the Organization's presence in Libya ([S/2015/113](#)), as noted in Security Council resolution 2213 (2015).

10. The assessment recommended that UNSMIL should focus its activities on key priorities and establish a small, defensible and continuous footprint inside Libya in partnership with the United Nations country team, and operate at the strategic level while handing over most programmatic activities to the

country team. The resource requirements for 2015 reflected a decrease of \$21.3 million compared to the approved budget for 2014 and a decrease of 179 positions from the previously authorized 384 positions. Since the evacuation of July 2014, the Mission had been operating and would continue to operate from Tunis, with up to 30 United Nations personnel deployed on a rotational basis, depending on needs.

11. The Mission would need dedicated aviation support to allow United Nations staff to travel in and out of Tripoli, and to the east, west and south of the country to assist in maintaining and facilitating security and services in those areas and to provide logistics. Consequently, the current proposal included the provision of two aircraft and the establishment of an air operations and movement control section pending resumption of commercial alternatives or the return of the Mission to Libya.

12. With regard to MENUB, further to an assessment by the Department of Safety and Security of the security situation in Burundi, an additional \$65,300 was required for the financing of two additional positions of Security Officer at the National Professional Officer level at the United Nations compound in Bujumbura. With the additional resources, the revised resources for MENUB for 2015 would amount to \$11,763,200 and would include 90 positions.

13. Given the uncertainty surrounding the political and security transition in Afghanistan in 2014, interim funding of \$93.5 million for the first six months of 2015 had been approved for UNAMA under General Assembly resolution 69/262, followed by a review and comprehensive budget proposal for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2015. As the bulk of the international community was scheduled to withdraw from Afghanistan in 2015, United Nations support would be critical.

14. The core mandate of UNAMA remained unchanged: it would continue to focus on good offices, prioritizing peace and reconciliation, electoral support, the promotion of human rights and human rights advocacy, and donor coordination. No further significant investment was required for 2015 for construction of offices and staff accommodation facilities, upgrading of information and communications technology equipment, procurement

of armoured vehicles or security-related upgrading works. However, security of staff and assets remained a priority. The current proposal amounted to \$188.0 million, which represented a decrease of \$3.4 million compared to the approved budget for 2014 and reflected 1,680 positions, a net reduction of 10 positions compared with the approved staffing for 2014.

15. The Panel of Experts on South Sudan had been established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2206 (2015) to oversee an asset freeze and a travel ban imposed on individuals or entities designated by the Security Council as engaging in or providing support for acts that threatened the peace, security or stability of South Sudan and to provide information relevant to the potential designation of such individuals and entities. The resource requirements of \$947,500 for the Panel covered the cost of three positions, fees and travel of experts, travel of staff and other operational requirements for 8 months from 1 May to 31 December 2015.

16. Taking into account the amounts already appropriated, it was requested that an additional amount of \$94,006,100 should be appropriated under section 3, Political affairs, of the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015, and \$8,777,200 under section 36, Staff assessment, for, UNSMIL, MENEUB, UNAMA and the Panel of Experts on South Sudan.

17. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the Office of the Special Envoy on Ebola and the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (A/69/903), said that the Advisory Committee welcomed the decline in the rate of transmission of the Ebola virus and acknowledged the assistance provided to the populations of the affected countries.

18. The Advisory Committee also welcomed the intention of the Secretary-General to conduct a specific lessons learned exercise. Given the unique nature of UNMEER, it was important to conduct an in-depth review of all the organizational, operational, administrative and planning aspects, and to document lessons learned. In its report, the Advisory Committee made suggestions regarding a number of specific areas which, in its view, should be covered in that context, including the organizational structure of UNMEER and

the need for a large number of high-level positions; the efficiency and effectiveness of UNMEER air services; the acquisition, transportation, distribution and disposal of vehicles; and compliance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

19. The report of the Advisory Committee also contained recommendations for adjusting the proposed resources for the Mission. The proposed additional requirements under certain budget sections could be accommodated within the existing appropriation, and the Advisory Committee recommended against approval of certain positions.

20. Introducing the reports of the Advisory Committee on the proposed resource requirements for UNSMIL, MENEUB, UNAMA and the Panel of Experts on South Sudan (A/69/628/Add.1, A/69/628/Add.2 and A/69/628/Add.3), for which the Secretary-General was seeking an additional appropriation of \$94,006,100 net for the biennium 2014-2015, he said that the Advisory Committee noted that, taking into account the additional resources of \$31,501,300 appropriated under General Assembly resolution 69/262 and the amount of \$94,006,100 currently requested, the total additional resources required would be \$125,507,400, or 11.6 per cent over the initial approved resources of \$1,081,089,900 for special political missions for 2014-2015 under section 3 of the programme budget.

21. Concerning the presentation of the resource requirements, in the context of the proposed resource requirements for the 35 special political missions for 2015 the Secretary-General had proposed interim resources for the first six months of 2015 for UNAMA and UNSMIL, representing a technical roll-over of 50 per cent of the levels of projected expenditures for 2014. The presentation of both the six-month financing arrangement and the 12-month full budget by the Secretary-General entailed the consideration of two proposals pertaining to the same financial period for a given mission, which unnecessarily complicated the budget review process.

22. With respect to the proposed 12-month budget for UNSMIL for 2015, the recommendations of the Advisory Committee would entail a reduction of \$293,300. The Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of 5 per cent in the proposed requirements for consultants, as some functions could be performed in-house. The Advisory Committee also recommended a reduction of 5 per cent in non-training-related official

travel outside the Mission area, and reiterated that resources for official travel should be utilized judiciously and that the primary consideration in authorizing official travel should be whether direct face-to-face contact was necessary for mandate implementation.

23. The Advisory Committee had been informed that UNSMIL operations on the ground had been interrupted as a result of the security situation and that, during July 2014, the Mission had relocated its international staff members to Tunisia and Italy. In January 2015, the Secretariat had conducted a review of the Organization's presence in Libya and had recommended that UNSMIL should focus on key priorities and establish a small, defensible and continuous footprint inside Libya. The Advisory Committee had been informed that the proposed budget for 2015 reflected UNSMIL operations based on those recommendations.

24. Concerning MENUB, the Advisory Committee did not object to the establishment of two Security Officer positions.

25. With regard to the proposed 12-month budget for UNAMA for 2015, the recommendations of the Advisory Committee would entail a reduction of \$501,900. For the backstopping of UNAMA in the Department of Political Affairs, the Advisory Committee recommended against the establishment of one of the six new positions proposed by the Secretary-General.

26. Lastly, the Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should approve the proposed two positions to support the Panel of Experts on South Sudan, but recommended against the proposed establishment of one position in the Executive Office of the Department of Political Affairs.

27. **Mr. Davidson** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group acknowledged the collective support of the international community in the efforts to eradicate the Ebola disease, and recognized the need for further support to local authorities in the affected countries to enable them to prevent further outbreaks by putting in place health-care infrastructure and early warning mechanisms.

28. The Group recognized the efforts made by the Secretary-General, in particular the significant progress in implementing critical lines of action: case-finding and contact-tracing; case management; safe and dignified burials; and community engagement and social mobilization. It welcomed the sharp decline in the rate of transmission of Ebola in the three most affected countries through the concerted efforts of stakeholders.

29. The Group noted the revised estimate for UNMEER in the amount of \$91 million gross, representing a decrease of \$103 million from the initial proposal, and the related comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

30. Given that the General Assembly, in its resolution 69/262, had regretted the proposed top-heavy structure of the Mission and Office of the Special Envoy, the Group was disappointed that the Secretary-General was now presenting similar proposals. The Group did not see the need for two positions at the Under-Secretary-General level for an operation that was drawing down: if necessary, the Head of the Mission could assume the functions of the Special Envoy.

31. **Mr. Dosseh** (Togo), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Ebola virus had caused major socioeconomic and humanitarian crises in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Moreover, the delayed detection of cases at the onset of the outbreak and the rapid rate at which the disease had spread in the Mano River basin had exposed the fragility of the health-care systems in those three countries. The Ebola outbreak had severely affected their economies and had caused a decline in public revenue, investment, employment and agricultural productivity. The outbreak had also disrupted academic calendars as schools and colleges had been closed for long periods.

32. The Group was pleased that the Ebola outbreak was coming to an end, that Liberia had been declared Ebola-free, and that the number of new cases in Guinea and Sierra Leone continued to decline significantly. The strong global support to the three most affected countries — and to the subregion as a whole — had made a significant difference to the effectiveness of efforts to eradicate the Ebola virus, while the contribution of UNMEER had been outstanding. The Group looked forward to continued support for the efforts to achieve and sustain zero cases.

33. However, the success in combating Ebola must be celebrated with caution given that Guinea and Sierra Leone had not been declared Ebola-free. It was important to remain focused on surveillance, contact-tracing and social mobilization until the entire region maintained zero cases. The exponential rate at which the Ebola virus had spread in the three most affected countries had revealed their critical level of fragility. As a result, the drawdown of UNMEER must be structured in such a way that the Governments of the countries affected and the implementing partners, including the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes working on the ground, were well positioned to address post-Ebola challenges, especially in terms of building resilient health-care systems. Adequate logistics and human and financial resources were required to ensure that hard-earned achievements in controlling Ebola were not reversed.

34. The Group noted that, as at 31 March 2015, a total of \$63.3 million had been spent and an additional \$24.6 million was projected to be disbursed by 30 September 2015 for the operations of the Office of the Special Envoy on Ebola and UNMEER. It also noted that, for the period from 19 September 2014 to 31 December 2015, the proposed additional resource requirements for the biennium 2014-2015 were estimated at \$90.9 million gross, or \$88.1 million net, which was \$13.6 million less than the level of the commitment authority granted to the Secretary-General under General Assembly resolution 69/262. If the initial proposal of the Secretary-General for revised estimates in the amount of \$189.6 million had been approved by the General Assembly, that would have led to an overassessment of more than \$100 million on Member States under the regular budget. The planning assumptions underlying the Secretary-General's initial budget proposal had therefore proven to be unrealistic.

35. The Group expected the ongoing review of the organizational, operational, administrative and planning aspects of UNMEER and of coordination between partners, including actors outside the United Nations system, to lead to documentation of lessons learned to ensure that the Organization was prepared to deal with such crises. Concerning the staffing structure of the Office of the Special Envoy on Ebola and UNMEER, the Group deeply regretted that the Secretary-General had disregarded section X, paragraph 6, of General Assembly resolution 69/262 and that the staffing complement proposed for the

Mission still included a large number of positions at senior levels.

36. The Group attached great importance to the critical role of special political missions in preventing and resolving conflicts, building sustainable peace and reconciliation and paving the way for development. Special political missions delivered a wide range of complex mandates: the allocation of adequate resources was critical to the effective discharge of their mandates.

37. The Group was concerned at the ongoing reduction in staff for special political missions, including the proposed reduction of 47 per cent in the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, given the possible negative impact of such an enormous reduction on the ability of the Mission to fulfil its mandate, and requested details of the arrangements for the relocation of the Mission headquarters and its impact on the overall staffing structure and mandate delivery.

38. The Group noted that the total additional resources requested for special political missions would exceed the initial approved resources for 2014-2015 by \$125 million. A separate account should be established for the financing of special political missions to ensure transparency, good governance and accountability in the management of the resources allocated to them, as they distorted the regular budget.

39. Lastly, the Group sought an update on the status of implementation of section IV, paragraph 11, of General Assembly resolution 69/262 regarding the appointment of the Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union, as the vacancy was undermining mandate delivery.

40. **Mr. Presutti** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union strongly supported UNMEER and the United Nations coordination mechanism created to ensure that the United Nations system tackled the Ebola outbreak coherently, and the provision of the means required to ensure the success of those initiatives. Its member States played an important role in delivering assistance to the most affected areas and had joined national and international efforts to tackle the Ebola outbreak as swiftly and efficiently as possible.

41. Owing to the collective efforts of communities in and the Governments of the most affected countries, as

well as regional and international actors, the rate of transmission of the Ebola virus had declined dramatically and the acute phase of the crisis had passed. His delegation therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals concerning the transfer of the responsibilities of UNMEER to the Governments themselves, and to United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and other implementing partners, since those parties were best placed to respond to the medium- and long-term challenges. His delegation noted the important ongoing work of the Office of the Special Envoy in support of that transition.

42. **Mr. Koroma** (Sierra Leone) said that his delegation welcomed the establishment of the High-level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises and acknowledged the Secretary-General's determination to tackle the Ebola epidemic and ensure that the international community was prepared for global health crises. It was also grateful to the Office of the Special Envoy on Ebola for mobilizing extrabudgetary resources for the Ebola Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund, and to Member States for their contributions to that Fund.

43. The collective efforts of the Governments of the three most affected countries with the assistance of their development partners had achieved impressive results in controlling the Ebola outbreak. The World Health Organization had declared Liberia Ebola-free on 9 May 2015, but Sierra Leone was still struggling to reach zero cases. However, all new cases were traceable to known contacts, making it likely that they would receive prompter treatment and that the possibility of further spread would be reduced. Liberia had experienced similar periodic flare-ups even as the outbreak had waned in that country earlier in the year. Victory over the virus was in sight, but the international community must guard against complacency, as there would not be total victory until the three countries most severely affected had reached a resilient zero.

44. Ebola had not only ravaged the health and education sectors of the three countries concerned but had also pushed their economies into recession. Lasting recovery from the Ebola outbreak was possible only through an adequate response to the many ways in which the disease had rendered the three countries more fragile and vulnerable. Social services needed to be delivered more effectively than ever before.

45. His delegation therefore looked forward to a seamless transition strategy that would support the sustainable capacities of the three countries with the assistance of implementing partners, including the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes working on the ground. National awareness-raising and social mobilization campaigns should remain a high priority, while UNMEER should further enhance the capacity for cross-border surveillance, collaboration and coordination of the countries of the subregion, as Liberia would not be free of the Ebola virus threat while cases continued to occur in Guinea and Sierra Leone.

46. At the Mano River Union Extraordinary Summit in February 2015, the three countries had formulated a subregional socioeconomic recovery programme to promote a return to stability and prosperity; they looked forward to the continued support of their development partners for the effective and successful implementation of the programme. Lastly, his delegation paid tribute to the frontline workers who risked their lives to save those infected by the virus and urged Member States to continue supporting the affected countries to prevent future outbreaks.

*The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.*