



General Assembly

Seventieth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
4 December 2015

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 15th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 17 November 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal)
Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 134: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (continued)

Strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva (A/70/7/Add.8, A/70/394 and A/70/394/Corr.1)

1. **Mr. Møller** (Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva), introducing the Secretary-General's second annual progress report on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva (A/70/394 and A/70/394/Corr.1), said that the strategic heritage plan was intended to protect the Palais des Nations, the foundation stone of which had been laid in 1929 by the League of Nations. Geneva had been chosen as the headquarters of the League in recognition of its tradition of international diplomacy. The Palais had been handed over to the United Nations in 1946 and had become the headquarters of the United Nations Office at Geneva in 1966. The complex was 600 m long, with an area of 234,000 m², and contained 34 conference rooms and 2,800 offices. It was the largest United Nations centre after Headquarters. Over 10,000 meetings, attended by 60,000 participants, were held there each year. A world centre of excellence for diplomatic conferences and a base for many economic and social activities, it was the operational hub of the international system.

2. Geneva had an important role in implementing the universal, integrated and transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, since many of the agencies mandated to help Member States achieve the Goals were based there, including more than 30 international organizations, hundreds of non-governmental organizations and many private and academic institutions. The Committee's approval was needed to ensure that the Palais, which must be fully functional and cost-effective to support collaboration among and integration of United Nations entities and partners, could foster peace, human rights and well-being for generations to come.

3. The report detailed the elements of the project and the action that had been recommended by the General Assembly. Significant progress had been made since the approval of the implementation strategy at the sixty-ninth session. The project team had incorporated lessons learned from other capital projects undertaken

by the Organization, including the capital master plan. An in-depth site assessment and surveys, the design master plan, the feasibility study and the concept design had been completed. The project objectives set out in previous reports of the Secretary-General on the strategic heritage plan (A/66/279 and A/68/372) remained the central organizing principles. The renovation would safeguard the historic site and ensure that it met modern building and life safety standards.

4. The plan would preserve the site through upgrades that would allow it to function properly for many years to come; correct fire safety deficiencies and remove hazardous materials from the buildings; improve accessibility for persons with disabilities; reduce operating costs through energy efficiency and the consolidation of operations; and provide more functional and modern conference facilities and more flexible workplaces, with a 25 per cent increase in office space allowing 700 additional staff to be accommodated.

5. The project scope definition had advanced from the planning stage to the concept design stage. It had been confirmed that the implementation strategy approved in resolution 68/247 was feasible within the funding target of 836.5 million Swiss francs, of which 41.2 million had been spent under the regular budget for the biennium 2014-2015, leaving a residual estimated cost of 795.3 million Swiss francs. The cost estimates had been updated and realigned in accordance with the information collected during the detailed surveys and assessments and the expert recommendations of the design team. The budget and scope had not increased, and the implementation time frame had been reconfirmed on the assumption that the project would be authorized by the end of 2015.

6. Adequate contingency funding was essential to such a major multi-year capital project. The Secretary-General's proposals were in line with international industry standard practice in dealing with procurement risk, unforeseen site conditions and other issues. As the design had developed, the scope of the project had become clearer and uncertainty had decreased. Accordingly, contingency funding had been reduced from previous estimates and reallocated on the basis of in-depth risk analysis. Unused contingency funding would be returned to Member States at the end of the project rather than used for discretionary changes outside the current scope or objectives. Such funding

must, however, be available for the full duration of the project so that the objectives could be achieved.

7. The report contained an update on project financing and alternative funding mechanisms, including the outcome of the negotiations with the host country to obtain the most favourable loan package. Subject to approval by the Swiss parliament, Switzerland was willing to grant a zero-interest loan package of 400 million Swiss francs, covering the construction and renovation parts of the project. Since such approval typically took one year, the formal application must, with the approval of the General Assembly, be submitted in January 2016 so that the funding could be provided in January 2017, when the construction was scheduled to begin.

8. The Secretariat would intensify its search for alternative funding sources when the overall project was approved. He had made it a priority to encourage Member States to take direct responsibility for specific renovation projects or make voluntary contributions. In recent years, substantial donations had been received from China, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates, and discussions with other Governments that had expressed an interest in renovating conference rooms were ongoing. He would seek to raise funds from the private sector and foundations subject to the approval by the Committee of the donation policy proposed in the report.

9. The fundraising objectives were to meet the request of the General Assembly to find innovative financing mechanisms to reduce the overall cost of the project to Member States; to renovate the smaller office buildings not covered by the proposed budget; and to establish a maintenance fund to protect the investment in the coming decades. Before the Secretariat could discuss specific donations, however, the project must be approved by the Member States.

10. The Office was exploring land valorization as another potential funding mechanism. It had increased the rental income from one of its parcels of land and was renegotiating the lease on another. It was working with Headquarters to make progress in the area. To ensure that the income generated through alternative funding mechanisms was used to reduce the assessment on Member States, the General Assembly would need to authorize the Secretary-General to credit the project

as proposed in his previous report on the strategic heritage plan (A/69/417).

11. The workplace strategy would increase the number of workspaces from 2,800 to 3,500. The work environment would improve, with the establishment of collaboration spaces and flexible office space easily adapted to changing work styles and strategies, and the needs of individual units. Fire safety and accessibility would be improved, and office space would be allocated more equitably and better aligned with overall United Nations standards. Open office space plans would be incorporated fully into the new building and to the greatest possible extent in the existing buildings, where a hybrid approach would be taken to work within heritage, structural and cost constraints.

12. The design team had developed a “kit of parts” approach for the old and new buildings, allowing work units to customize their spaces in accordance with their functional needs and supporting hot-desking. The more efficient use of space would result in cost avoidance, since other United Nations entities would be relocated to the Palais, enabling the cancellation of leases and the sharing of such support infrastructure as security.

13. In accordance with the request of the General Assembly for a robust governance structure to be established as early as possible, the Advisory Board, on which Member States from all the regional groups in Geneva were represented, had met once and would, with the approval of the Assembly, continue to meet at least quarterly. The Steering Committee, co-chaired by himself and the Under-Secretary-General for Management, comprised United Nations stakeholders from New York and Geneva. It had met twice and would, subject to General Assembly approval, continue to meet quarterly. The two bodies would oversee the project and advise him as project owner.

14. The report described the measures taken to expedite the start of construction; ensure integrated and independent project assurance; handle works of art, masterpieces and other gifts appropriately; preserve the architectural heritage and integrity of the Palais; and reuse the existing furniture.

15. The designs and tender documentation for the new building, to be used as temporary swing space prior to final occupancy, would be completed in 2016. Procurement for the selection of a construction contractor for that building would start in that year; the

contractor would be selected in 2017. A contractor for the renovation of the existing buildings would be selected in 2018. The new building would be completed in 2019 and its use as swing space would begin. The renovation of the existing buildings would start no later than 2019. The building E tower would be dismantled when the swing space was no longer needed. The overall project would be completed in 2023.

16. The strategic heritage plan was proceeding in line with the cost and schedule targets adopted by the project team as explicit objectives. Since the current funding would expire at the end of 2015 and delays in the design and tendering process would probably result in additional costs, including that of dismantling the project team, the General Assembly must decide urgently on the actions recommended by the Secretary-General. The Assembly was asked to approve the scope and schedule of the project and the estimated cost of 795.3 million Swiss francs, and to decide whether the project should be financed in part through a loan from the host country or solely through appropriation and assessment on Member States; on the scheme and currency of the appropriation and related assessment; on the establishment of a multi-year special account for the project and a working capital fund in the amount of \$20 million; and on the proposed donation policy.

17. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/70/7/Add.8), said that the Secretary-General had provided updated information and proposals regarding the governance framework, schedule of works, cost estimates and financing of the strategic heritage plan. Although the Secretary-General had aligned his proposals with General Assembly resolutions on the project, several of them required further analysis and refinement.

18. The Advisory Committee supported the establishment of the Advisory Board, but recommended that the roles and responsibilities of the Board and the Steering Committee in the overall governance framework should be delineated more precisely and clearly. The Steering Committee should continuously monitor the project and ensure that the established timeline was respected.

19. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/247 A, the Secretary-General had provided revised

overall cost estimates for the strategic heritage plan. The estimated maximum overall cost was 836.5 million Swiss francs.

20. The Advisory Committee made several observations and recommendations concerning the management, reporting and use of the estimated project contingency. It recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to refine the estimate by basing it on the identification of risks associated with the various phases of the project, and to present the estimated contingency and the base project costs separately in his next progress report.

21. Subject to the implementation of its recommendations regarding the project contingency and further review of annual budget performance and cost estimates in the Secretary-General's progress reports, the Advisory Committee recommended the approval of the proposed project cost as the maximum overall cost.

22. With regard to the financing of the project, the Advisory Committee recalled the offer of support for the strategic heritage plan made previously by the host country. Subsequent to the authorization in General Assembly resolutions 68/247 A and 69/262 for the Secretary-General to negotiate with the host country regarding loan arrangements, the Secretary-General had presented financing options including the offer of a loan package from the Government of Switzerland in the amount of 400 million Swiss francs, to cover both the construction and renovation parts of the project, at a zero per cent interest rate. The Advisory Committee welcomed that offer, noted the preferential terms of the loan and reiterated its appreciation for the continued support of the Swiss Government.

23. The Advisory Committee was of the view that the establishment of the proposed working capital reserve in an amount of \$20 million was not merited, and recommended against its approval.

24. The Secretary-General had proposed other mechanisms for funding the strategic heritage plan, including voluntary contributions from Member States and rental income from the Palais des Nations. The Advisory Committee reiterated its view that the General Assembly might wish to request the Secretary-General to propose ways of factoring future rental income into the overall scheme for financing the strategic heritage plan project in his next progress report.

25. **Mr. Davidson** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group attached great importance to the effective and efficient management of United Nations facilities. It noted the progress in the renovation and upgrading of the Palais des Nations to improve health and safety, usability and access, and the updated information regarding the governance framework, including the Steering Committee and Advisory Board; the proposed risk management mechanism; and the role of the Office for Central Support Services. At the informal consultations, it would seek clarification regarding the rationale for the use of an independent risk management firm instead of in-house or host government expertise.

26. With regard to the dedicated project team and contracted services, external contractual expertise should be selected in strict compliance with the rules and regulations governing procurement, and its use should be kept under review through the project oversight and monitoring mechanisms.

27. The flexible workspace strategy had been taken on board in the implementation of the strategic heritage plan. It should take into account not only real estate needs but also staff well-being and local norms and working cultures, since the project was intended to improve working conditions for staff and delegates. The Group would follow the matter closely at the informal consultations.

28. The project must stay on schedule to avoid cost overruns. Quality assurance and close monitoring of progress were of great importance in ensuring that the established timelines were respected.

29. The project team should pay due attention to the recommendations of the Advisory Committee and Board of Auditors on the application of the lessons learned from other capital projects, to avoid repetition of the errors, omissions and weaknesses that had arisen during the capital master plan. The Group welcomed the Secretary-General's close cooperation with the host country and other Geneva-based organizations that had conducted complex construction projects.

30. The project estimate had been reduced from 837 million to 836.5 million Swiss francs, with a contingency of 92 million Swiss francs. The contingency should be treated as part of the overall budget to mitigate any unexpected changes throughout the implementation. Mechanisms should be put in

place to avoid, as far as possible, drawing on the contingency fund. Any withdrawals made should be necessary and in line with the established principles.

31. The Group welcomed the revised loan offer made by the host country and noted the preferential repayment terms and modalities. The loan, however, would relieve Member States from assessment only temporarily, and the Group urged the Secretary-General to produce a timely payment plan. With regard to the other possible means of financing, including extrabudgetary contributions, advance rental income and valorization of land, the Group was prepared to discuss all options but was concerned about the sale of land. A number of host countries had donated land for the expansion of United Nations activities, and selling it for short-term gain when the future needs of the Organization were not yet clear appeared premature.

32. **Mr. Presutti** (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, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that action should be taken to remedy the late issuance of the documents related to the strategic heritage plan, in violation of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and the resolutions on multilingualism and the pattern of conferences.

33. The Secretary-General's report was a step towards the refurbishment of the Palais des Nations to address structural deficiencies. The States members of the European Union had requested the Secretary-General to resubmit detailed cost estimates based on real needs and sound assumptions and guided by the desire to contain costs while ensuring that the project was delivered. They looked forward to further discussion of the project costs during the Committee's deliberations, taking into account the lessons learned from the capital master plan.

34. They also looked forward to discussing in greater detail the steps taken by the Secretariat, taking into account the comments of the Advisory Committee, to secure alternative funding to reduce the assessment on Member States, and to receiving updated information on the Secretary-General's efforts to obtain detailed estimates as part of the land valorization exercise. They would examine ways of increasing rental income

from other United Nations entities to be hosted on the Palais des Nations site.

35. Good governance, ensuring not only transparency and accountability but also enough flexibility to achieve the agreed goals, was essential to the project, and would require strong internal and independent external oversight mechanisms to prevent cost escalation and manage the contingency provisions. His delegation welcomed the interim arrangements and looked forward to discussing the final arrangements in more detail, taking into account the comments of the Advisory Committee.

36. Flexible workplace strategies, the importance of which had been mentioned in the relevant General Assembly resolutions, had not yet been incorporated in the strategic heritage plan, and he looked forward to discussing the plans of the Secretariat to implement a flexible workspace programme, which would make accommodation at the Palais more attractive to United Nations entities.

37. His delegation thanked the Government of Switzerland for its support and the offer of a loan package, and looked forward to discussing the loan arrangements in greater detail, together with the scheme and the currency for appropriation and assessment. If it agreed to an assessment in Swiss francs, it would seek to ensure that negative interest rates did not adversely impact project financing.

38. **Ms. Norman Chalet** (United States of America) said that an improved United Nations campus in Geneva would greatly benefit staff and delegates. Given that the strategic heritage plan followed on the heels of the capital master plan, her delegation continued to focus on the cost of the project at a time of unprecedented financial demands on the United Nations system. It thanked the Government of Switzerland for the offer of a zero-interest loan, which would ease the initial financial burden on Member States. The loan principle would nonetheless need to be repaid using Member State assessments, and the financing of the project was therefore of particular interest.

39. The Secretariat had not undertaken a systematic feasibility study of such alternative financing mechanisms as public-private partnerships or applied such studies to the financing alternatives outlined in the Secretary-General's report. Although her delegation supported the project, it could not approve the

financing until it received specific, timely, and actionable proposals to reduce the cost to Member States through public-private partnerships, land sales, voluntary contributions from public and private sources, and rental income.

40. The ability of her Government to fund the project would be adversely affected if funds provided through Member State assessments were subject to negative interest rates. The United Nations Office at Geneva and the Government of Switzerland should resolve the issue before Member States were assessed.

41. Flexible workspace strategies had not yet been incorporated into the design of the proposed new building or the existing structures. The Secretariat should define a long-term road map to maximize space utilization while maintaining staff productivity, taking into account the potential impact of Umoja, the global service delivery model and other management initiatives. The flexible workspace programme currently being implemented at Headquarters could be a source of context and best practices for the strategic heritage plan.

42. **Ms. Uemura** (Japan) said that, with the capital master plan only recently completed, the Committee had reached the moment of truth in discussing in detail the scope, schedule and overall costs of the strategic heritage plan. Given the urgency of the matter, her delegation was ready to scrutinize the Secretary-General's proposal with a view to minimizing the financial burden on Member States.

43. She requested updates on the Secretary-General's efforts to explore all possible alternative funding mechanisms, including public-private partnership, to reduce the overall assessment on Member States, as requested by them in informal discussions.

44. Her delegation trusted that the Secretary-General had made a genuine effort to implement in a timely manner the request made by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/274 A for him to incorporate flexible workplace strategies in the strategic heritage plan at an early stage to avoid unnecessary additional costs to Member States.

45. **Mr. Lauber** (Switzerland) said that the Palais des Nations was the largest United Nations conference centre in Europe, hosting over 10,000 meetings a year, including those of the Human Rights Council and the human rights treaty bodies. It accommodated such

United Nations entities as the Economic Commission for Europe, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Conference on Disarmament, and was the headquarters of the United Nations Office at Geneva, which supported over 30 United Nations entities and 126 field offices in 83 countries.

46. In recent years, broad consensus had emerged among Member States that the Palais must be fully renovated to remain operational and safe. The General Assembly had approved the project implementation strategy, the establishment of the management team and the financial resources for the planning and design work, which had started three years previously and had progressed well. Construction would start in early 2017, according to the Secretary-General's schedule. A decision on the overall financing must now be taken.

47. The strategic heritage plan was an investment in a more modern and efficient United Nations and would ensure that the Palais remained functional and safe. It would improve accessibility for persons with disabilities, make more efficient use of space, and enable such entities as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to accommodate all their staff at the Palais. It would greatly reduce the costs of maintenance, energy and rental of office space outside the Palais.

48. While his delegation welcomed the progress made, the Secretary-General should take into account the lessons learned from other construction projects and the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on best practices. His delegation concurred with the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

49. As the host country, Switzerland was committed to the project. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/262, it was offering a revised loan package of 400 million Swiss francs to cover both the construction and the renovation at a zero-interest rate, which was above and beyond its donation of 50 million Swiss francs in 2011 to improve the energy efficiency of the Palais. Member States should assume their responsibilities as owners of the Palais and support the project.

50. **Mr. Yazdani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that United Nations property and construction projects should be properly managed. His delegation was concerned about the situation of the Palais des Nations,

which must be refurbished to address structural deficiencies. It welcomed the completion of the in-depth site assessment and surveys, the design master plan, the feasibility study and the concept design, and the confirmation of the project scope.

51. His delegation welcomed the revised cost estimates and encouraged the Secretariat to explore other means of reducing the assessments on Member States. The Secretariat must take into account the physical characteristics of and heritage sensitivities regarding the existing buildings, where the cost of conversion to open office space was high and the application of flexible workplace strategies should be reconsidered.

52. While the concept of an Advisory Board was in line with the lessons learned from other capital projects and would contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the strategic heritage plan, the proposed Board should be established on the basis of consultation with all interested Member States.

53. **Mr. Sánchez Azcué** (Cuba) said that the offer of a loan package by the Government of Switzerland was an example of good practice by the host country. While some delegations had understandable concerns regarding the project, Member States had a common and shared responsibility for preserving the historic property of the United Nations. The concerns expressed regarding financing alternatives applied also to other construction projects and plans related to accommodation and the long-term needs of the Organization.

54. **Mr. Kisoka** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the African Group, thanked the Government of Switzerland for supporting the United Nations and other multilateral organizations in Geneva. The African Group would closely monitor the strategic heritage plan, as it did other United Nations capital projects, and would provide expertise to ensure that the Secretary-General addressed the health concerns of Member States, including through the removal of asbestos from the Palais des Nations, since delegates should not be called upon to work in dangerous situations.

55. **Mr. Møller** (Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva) said that the planners were considering the implementation of flexible workspace. The new building would be more suited to such

workspace than the old one, which had structural, heritage and cost constraints.

56. The Secretariat had carefully considered alternative financing mechanisms. Although an approach based on public-private partnership was difficult, the Secretariat would make every effort to meet the request of Member States to reduce the overall cost through such mechanisms once the project was approved; it was difficult to convince potential donors to provide funds for a project that did not yet officially exist. More details would be provided at the informal consultations. He was personally committed to finding the most innovative ways of reducing the cost of the project to Member States.

Status of implementation of the information and communications technology strategy for the United Nations (A/70/7/Add.18, A/70/364 and A/70/364/Corr.1)

57. **Ms. Riazi** (Chief Information Technology Officer), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the status of implementation of the information and communications technology strategy for the United Nations (A/70/364 and A/70/364/Corr.1), said that the goals of the strategy were to realize the potential of information and communications technology by modernizing and transforming the delivery of such technology throughout the Organization; redressing the fragmentation of legacy systems and processes through better governance and more efficient use of resources; and ensuring that such technology was used in a forward-looking, innovative and enabling way.

58. Fragmentation was the greatest challenge. The work, data, information, knowledge, services, systems and resources of the United Nations must be coherent. Defragmentation would result not only in more effective information and communications technology but also in efficiencies, greater effectiveness and better services, with no impact on the budget. The support of Member States was critical.

59. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/262, the Secretariat had made considerable progress in implementing the strategy in the face of significant challenges. The implementation was in its early stages and sustained efforts were needed to ensure its success. The initial stages could be characterized as transitional, because of the intensive efforts related to Umoja and the complexity of the task.

Internal flexibility had been necessary as the Secretariat had rationalized information and communications technology and resources through the established budgetary processes. The priority had been to respond to the decisions of the General Assembly and the conclusions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee, as endorsed in resolution 69/262. The implementation was based on comprehensive benchmarking data, with a view to validating the strategy and achieving the necessary business transformation.

60. The five-year information and communications technology budget horizon was a tool to help managers in the area plan future investments. An assessment conducted in early 2015 to establish the baseline for assets and resources had allowed information and communications technology focal points to analyse the potential impact of the strategy up to 2020; enabled the Office of Information and Communications Technology to identify the necessary business capabilities in conjunction with partners and to consider changes in investment priorities; and been critical in developing the five-year investment forecast for information and communications technology and the human capital management strategy. It had set the baseline against which progress in implementing the strategy would be appraised and had helped to assess risk and exposure. The Office looked forward to receiving all relevant baseline data as input for its further analysis.

61. In the first year of the implementation of the strategy, the standardization of information and communications technology through governance, central leadership and system-wide policy development had begun. The Management Committee had served as an independent internal challenge mechanism and had ensured oversight and accountability. Project assurance measures had been put in place to ensure that milestones, deliverables and objectives were met, and to track progress. The mainstreaming of Umoja was on schedule. Progress in the implementation of the 10-point action plan to strengthen information security had been rapid. After an analysis of existing arrangements, efforts had been made to improve disaster recovery throughout the Organization. Enterprise application centres had been established in Bangkok, New York and Vienna. The assessment had given a clear picture of the numbers of current applications and what the future landscape should look

like. The management of the development and harmonization of applications had been improved.

62. The infrastructure had been bolstered through the migration of the unmanaged legacy network to the standardized global network. Regional technology centres had been established and had helped standardize services and support them during the roll-out of Umoja. The security of the enterprise network would continue to increase over the following four years as a result of global monitoring. Enterprise data centres had been established, enhancing data hosting capacity. The Enterprise Service Desk, with locations in Bangkok; Brindisi, Italy; Geneva; Nairobi; and New York, was the single point of contact for service requests and the handling of calls related to Umoja and other enterprise applications.

63. Global engineering and conferencing capacity had been established to address the fragmentation of conference technology provision. Enterprise business intelligence and analytics capacity had been established to help decision-making through the provision of accurate and timely information and aggregated data. Defragmentation had started with the consolidation of information and communications technology functions in the Department of Management, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the Department of Safety and Security, and the plan was to pursue system-wide harmonization.

64. Information and communications technology at the United Nations was deeply fragmented, with over 70 information and communications technology shops, 44 data centres, 2,400 applications, 130 help desks and many other redundant structures. The strategy would address such fragmentation coherently, effectively and efficiently. The potential investment needs had been established and the accomplishments so far were encouraging.

65. In implementing the five-year strategy under the current project management arrangements and governance structures, the Office was heading in the right direction. The progress made in the first year was a step towards comprehensive, reliable and efficient information and communications technology services.

66. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/70/7/Add.18), said that the

Advisory Committee welcomed the progress made in the initial nine-month implementation period of the information and communications technology strategy. The development of capacities to support the roll-out of Umoja at cluster 3 and 4 entities, including the establishment of an enterprise service desk, had been prioritized, as had improvements in the connectivity and management of the global enterprise network.

67. The transformation of the highly fragmented information and communications technology environment of the Secretariat had commenced. Given that such technology enabled the development of other major business transformation initiatives, including Umoja and shared services, the strategy must be implemented in a timely manner.

68. With regard to the indicative budget projection requested by the General Assembly, the absence of analysis and information regarding information and communications technology resources in peacekeeping in the Secretary-General's report was a serious weakness. In the absence of a comprehensive analysis and holistic view of information and communications technology resource requirements across the Secretariat, the Advisory Committee could not pronounce on the merits of the indicative five-year budget projections. It recommended that the Secretary-General should be requested to submit in his next report a comprehensive indicative five-year information and communications technology budget projection for the Secretariat.

69. With regard to the enterprise application centres, the Advisory Committee welcomed the initial analysis of the existing applications in the Secretary-General's report. It had long emphasized the need to reduce fragmentation in the area and eliminate redundant, duplicative and obsolete applications. It recommended that the Secretary-General should be requested to further refine his analysis and to provide in his next report updated information on the total number of applications, those that could be decommissioned and those that could be replaced by Umoja.

70. The Advisory Committee had been informed that the regional technology centres were logical rather than physical structures, designed to ensure that regional information and communications technology services were aligned with the information and communications technology strategy. In contrast, such cooperation arrangements as the regional information

and communications technology service at the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe, Uganda, were intended to support the delivery of such services in peacekeeping. As the regional technology centres matured, they would collaborate more closely with peacekeeping information and communications technology services. The information and communications technology infrastructure should be optimized and integrated, and duplication should be avoided wherever possible.

71. The Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General should be requested to provide full details of the costs of the operations and cost recovery arrangements for the enterprise data centres at Brindisi, Italy, and Valencia, Spain, which were operated by the Department of Field Support and hosted such core Secretariat-wide enterprise systems as Umoja.

72. With regard to the enterprise service desk, Umoja tier-1-level support for peacekeeping entities was provided locally. The Advisory Committee was of the view that a unified Umoja support system should be established.

73. With regard to defragmentation, the Advisory Committee welcomed the harmonization and consolidation of information and communications technology functions in the Secretariat and the reduction in the fragmentation of the information and communications technology environment at the United Nations. It recommended that the Secretary-General should be requested to provide a comprehensive picture of such efforts and the progress achieved, as well as a plan for the harmonization and consolidation of the remaining information and communications technology functions across the Secretariat.

74. The human resources and skills assessment presented in the Secretary-General's next report should be based on a comprehensive analysis that included the information and communications technology workforce in peacekeeping and covered all categories of personnel under all funding sources, including posts, positions, consultants and contractual and other third-party personnel.

75. **Mr. Davidson** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group supported management reforms designed to increase efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, oversight and accountability at the United Nations. All reforms, including in the area of information and

communications technology, must support the Organization's work in peace, security, development and human rights. Secure, reliable and user-friendly infrastructure for such technology was not only critical to the fulfilment of mandates but would help decision-making by Member States. At the informal consultations, the Group would seek clarification regarding the Secretary-General's efforts to align the information and communications technology strategy with United Nations goals. The lack of detail in the Secretary-General's report adversely affected the Committee's consideration of the strategy.

76. The division of responsibility for information and communications technology delivery across multiple geographically dispersed centres called for robust governance, management and accountability arrangements; strong leadership; comprehensive standards and procedures; and effective communication and coordination. With regard to such new entities as the Information and Communications Technology Executive Committee, the Information and Communications Technology Board, the Information and Communications Technology Policy Committee and the software development coordination group, the duplication of structures and additional administrative levels should be avoided.

77. The Group regretted the lack of cost-benefit analysis regarding information and communications technology initiatives. Such analysis was important for evaluating projects and should evolve as the strategy was implemented. Given the significant resources dedicated to such implementation, the Group would focus on decisions related to investment in information and communications technology. It welcomed the ongoing initiatives to maximize the transparency of such investments and major acquisitions across the Secretariat, and believed that the Organization should be outcome-focused and evidence-based in taking decisions in the area.

78. With regard to the summary of risks associated with the strategy, the Secretariat should embed risk management in the strategy to ensure that risks were mitigated.

79. The Group welcomed the progress in the mainstreaming of Umoja and noted the information regarding the functions to be transferred from the Umoja team to the Office of Information and Communications Technology, and the applications that

could potentially be decommissioned. It would seek further information regarding an in-depth evaluation of progress towards the milestones mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

80. The Group attached great importance to information security and supported the 10-point action plan. A number of policies, guidelines and technical procedures had been promulgated, and a common security policy should be applied across the Secretariat, including in peacekeeping entities. With regard to disaster recovery, the Group was concerned about the weaknesses identified in 129 critical systems and applications supporting critical processes. Significant investment and substantially increased annual operations and maintenance costs would be required to provide advanced disaster recovery capabilities. The Group would request further information regarding disaster recovery at the informal consultations.

81. The fragmentation of information and communications technology must be addressed in a targeted and inclusive manner. The Group welcomed the establishment of enterprise application centres in Bangkok, New York and Vienna as part of a multi-phase harmonization plan. Such establishment had not been adequately dealt with in the report of the Secretary-General, who should refine and expand his analysis of United Nations applications with a view to reducing duplication and inefficiency.

82. With regard to the harmonization of information and communications technology functions in certain areas of the Secretariat, more coherence and synergies with other systems were necessary for a comprehensive transformation. A full picture of such efforts, essential if the Organization was to become a more responsive service provider, was needed, including a progress update and a plan for the harmonization and consolidation of the remaining information and communications technology functions across the Secretariat.

83. The Secretary-General's report contained no information or analysis regarding the indicative five-year overall information and communications technology budget projection for the Secretariat, in particular the resources for such technology in peacekeeping, which accounted for 75 per cent of all expenditure in the area.. The Group did not understand the reasons provided for the omission and was

concerned that the implementation of the information and communications technology strategy had been compromised.

84. A "two-track" approach to the development of the information and communications technology strategy in peacekeeping and in the remaining Secretariat entities should be avoided. Such an approach would undermine the other major reforms being undertaken to establish an integrated global Secretariat. The Group would seek clarification regarding the matter at the informal consultations.

85. The recruitment and training of qualified staff and experts remained a challenge. Under the strategy, in-house capacity should be enhanced so that mandated activities could be performed. In addition to the introduction of new equipment and delivery models, new skills and capabilities must be acquired and retained. The Group looked forward to the Secretary-General's promised overview of the information and communications technology workforce and comprehensive assessment of the proposals to be developed in collaboration with the Office of Human Resources Management.

86. **Mr. Presutti** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that his delegation continued to underscore the importance of information and communications technology in meeting the Organization's growing demands as it became increasingly reliant on its information and communications technology infrastructure, in increasing the availability of accurate and timely information to support decision-making and in strengthening oversight and accountability. The report of the Secretary-General ([A/70/364](#) and Corr.1) was an essential step towards achieving those goals, as well as towards improving service delivery by reducing fragmentation in the information and communications technology infrastructure; enhancing cybersecurity; supporting workforce mobility; and rationalizing the application landscape, including through the elimination of redundant, duplicative and obsolete applications. The European Union concurred with the Advisory Committee that comprehensive, secure, reliable and efficient information and communications

technology infrastructure enabled the development of other major business transformation initiatives, including Umoja. The streamlining and harmonization of that infrastructure was crucial for minimizing overlap, incoherence and redundancy, as well as for reducing the associated carbon footprint to ensure that the development and delivery objectives of information and communications technology were in line with organizational priorities. The strategy must therefore be implemented in a timely manner.

87. The members of the European Union attached great importance to the role of the governance framework in overseeing information and communications technology policies and guidelines, architecture, standards and investment choices to ensure standardized management of information and communications technology resources and welcomed the promulgation of guidance on managing data, resources and tools. Further efforts were nonetheless required; they looked forward to receiving updates in that regard. To that end, the European Union noted the comments of the Board of Auditors on the need for a common vision and commitment across the Organization with regard to the handling of information and communications technology matters contained in its related report (A/67/651) and its report on the operations of the United Nations Secretariat for the biennium ended 31 December 2013 (A/69/5 (Vol. I)). The members of the European Union looked forward to the Board's related follow-up report. They also looked forward to discussing the elements of the benchmarking assessment and planning assumptions for the five-year indicative budget projection and emphasized the need for clear and transparent information to support decision-making in that regard.

88. European Union concurred with the Advisory Committee on the need to ensure optimal management of information and communications technology resources as well as the return on related investments. It looked forward to receiving updates on efforts undertaken in the context of the global sourcing strategy to consolidate and leverage buying power in order to negotiate optimal rates and discounts for information and communications technology goods and services. The mainstreaming of responsibility for Umoja to the Office of Information and Communications Technology was critical for ensuring the full realization of the related benefits. The European Union agreed with the Board of Auditors that

the mainstreaming strategy should focus on enabling the delivery of Umoja and encouraged the Office and Umoja teams to continue to collaborate closely to ensure a successful transition and the creation of an effective Umoja support model.

89. **Mr. Dettling** (Switzerland), speaking also on behalf of Liechtenstein, said that, in endorsing the implementation of the information and communications technology strategy in its resolution 69/262, the General Assembly had emphasized the need to reduce fragmentation, strengthen central leadership, ensure more effective governance, upgrade information security and improve transparency with regard to information and communications technology expenditure.

90. Since the beginning of the implementation phase, a number of applications had been consolidated, harmonized or retired; many help desks had been consolidated into the Enterprise Service Desk; regional technology centres had become partially operational; and significant progress had been achieved towards the deployment of Umoja. However, a number of challenges remained. Future efforts must focus on ensuring maximum synergy between the implementation of the strategy and of the global service delivery model and ensuring that the Organization's future operational model took into account the need for strategic deployment of information and communications technology resources to support programmes. In that regard, their delegations recalled the suggestion contained in General Assembly resolution 69/262 that services should be harmonized and shared with other United Nations entities, in particular at field locations. Switzerland and Liechtenstein shared the Advisory Committee's concern that the new strategy failed to encompass the whole information and communications technology landscape of the Organization and therefore did not comply with General Assembly resolution 69/262. In particular, they regretted that the indicative budget projection contained no information regarding information and communications technology resources in peacekeeping, which represented some 75 per cent of the overall resources dedicated to information and communications technology. Noting that the limitations identified in the report of the Board of Auditors (A/67/651) continued to hinder the implementation of the strategy, they called upon the Secretary-General to address those issues as a matter of

priority and awaited the issuance of a revised budget projection for the entire Secretariat as well as a new bulletin on the Office of Information and Communications Technology. They also hoped that the next report of the Secretary-General on the strategy's implementation would be written in language that was more accessible to Member States and would feature a clearer business case. To realize the transformative potential of a more centralized information and communications technology strategy, senior management must undertake coordinated efforts to support-decision making and the development of a business culture. Their collective ownership and commitment were required to ensure the successful implementation of Organization-wide strategies to support the Chief Information Technology Officer; conversely, a silo approach would fail to ensure the effective deployment of resources to support mandate delivery.

91. **Ms. Norman Chalet** (United States of America) said that, as information and communications technology was essential for conducting the Organization's complex operations, an integrated strategy must be implemented to meet its diverse needs in an effective manner. It was clear from the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/364) that a comprehensive strategy had yet to be developed. To be successful, such a strategy would require strong leadership to break down silos and create a new governance framework with clear roles, responsibilities and accountability. The strategy must support the various parts of the Organization in fulfilling their mandates, while ensuring adequate oversight and coherence. Noting the conclusion of the Advisory Committee that the existing strategy would be unsuccessful in its current format, she said that her delegation could not accept that outcome, given the critical importance of information and communications technology and the significant share of resources devoted to it. The United States therefore called on the Secretary-General and senior leadership across the Secretariat to take the actions needed to ensure the success of the strategy as a matter of priority.

92. **Mr. Kishimori** (Japan) said that Japan had consistently supported the Organization's major business transformation initiatives, including the information and communications technology strategy, which had become all the more crucial since the roll-out of Umoja. His delegation concurred with the

Advisory Committee on the need for further consolidation and harmonization of functions across different departments of the Organization, including in peacekeeping and field missions. In that regard, he recalled paragraph 18 of General Assembly resolution 69/262, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure that all entities of the Secretariat reported to the Chief Information Technology Officer on all issues relating to information and communications technology activities, resource management, standards, security, architecture, policies and guidance. While additional time might be required for entities to adapt to those requirements, Japan trusted that the resolution would be fully implemented in due course.

93. Efficiency and transparency were key elements of a successful information and communications technology strategy. As suggested by the Advisory Committee, information and communications technology functions should be centralized to yield efficiencies in the provision of related services, which should be reflected as reduced requirements in the overall budget projections. In addition, more transparent information should be provided in the context of the indicative five-year budget projection.

94. **Mr. Goren** (Israel) said that, over the past decade, information and communications technology had revolutionized all aspects of daily life across the globe. As a country known for its high concentration of start-up companies, Israel had witnessed first-hand the transformative impact of that technology on business practices in the public and private sectors. The implementation of an innovative, comprehensive and well-managed information and communications technology strategy for the United Nations would contribute to the realization of administrative and financial efficiencies as well as to effective mandate delivery. The strategy should serve as a bridge, rather than a barrier, for mandate delivery efforts across the Secretariat. In that regard, Israel was encouraged by the commitment of the Office of Information and Communications Technology to working with all parts of the Secretariat to leverage the latest technological developments for the benefit of the entire Organization.

95. Efforts to develop a successful long-term approach to information and communications technology should continue to focus on harmonization, defragmentation and standardization, particularly in

view of the challenges faced by the Organization in the area of information security. Lastly, Israel agreed with the Advisory Committee on the need to apply a common security policy across the Secretariat, including in the field.

Request for a subvention to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research resulting from the recommendations of the Board of Trustees of the Institute on the work programme of the Institute for 2016-2017 (A/70/349 and A/70/7/Add.9)

96. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the note by the Secretary-General on the request for a subvention to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) resulting from the recommendations of the Board of Trustees of the Institute on the work programme of the Institute for 2016-2017 (A/70/349), said that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/248, the statute of the Institute and the recommendations of its Board of Trustees contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Advisory Board on Disarmament Matters (A/70/186), the General Assembly was requested to approve a subvention to UNIDIR of \$584,600 from the regular budget for the biennium 2016-2017. The related provision had been included under section 4, Disarmament, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.

97. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of Advisory Committee (A/70/7/Add.9), he said that the Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should approve the request for a subvention of \$584,600 (before recosting) from the regular budget for the biennium 2016-2017, for which the provision had already been included under section 4, Disarmament, of the proposed programme budget for the same biennium. The Advisory Committee expected that the Secretary-General would ensure that established procedures for recosting would be complied with in the future. The Advisory Committee's report also contained information related to the financial sustainability of the Institute, including challenges arising from the implementation of Umoja; that issue was currently under consideration by the General Assembly.

98. **Mr. Davidson** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group supported the proposed subvention to the Institute for the biennium 2016-2017 and reiterated the Advisory Committee's expectation that the recosting of the subvention would be in line with established procedures. The Group would participate constructively in the related deliberations to ensure the future financial sustainability of the Institute, a precondition for effective and efficient mandate delivery.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.