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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 10.10 a.m.

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

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

Thematic cluster II: sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels (A/70/348/Add.2 and A/70/7/Add.12)

1. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (thematic cluster II) (A/70/348/Add.2), said that, over the previous six years, the Security Council had expanded the use of sanctions monitoring groups, teams and panels as part of its toolbox for maintaining international peace and security. There were 14 such panels, comprising 78 experts, deployed around the world to act as the eyes and ears of the Council. Considerable efforts were made to ensure that the most qualified experts were recruited and were provided with high-quality administrative and advisory support. Moreover, the Department of Political Affairs, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate promoted cooperation across those diverse sanctions panels and ensured, where appropriate, that they collaborated with other special political and peacekeeping missions.

2. To ensure consistency in the performance of cluster II missions, the results-based budgeting framework continued to be revised and harmonized to the extent possible, but inherent differences in the sanctions regimes had been retained. Ongoing efforts were being made to improve the way in which information was presented to the General Assembly.

3. The total requirements of the 14 cluster II missions for 2016 amounted to \$34.5 million, which represented a decrease of \$1.4 million, or 3.9 per cent, compared with the resources approved for 2015. That was mainly due to a reduction in the average fees of the experts and a reduction in travel requirements of experts and staff. No changes were proposed in the composition or levels of staff. Those requirements would be charged against the provision of \$1.1 billion proposed for special political missions under section 3, Political affairs, of the

proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.

4. **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.12), said that the Advisory Committee recommended a reduction of \$121,000 in the proposed requirements for the Panel of Experts on Liberia for 2016. Subject to that recommendation, as well as the recommendations in its main report (A/70/7/Add.10), the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the Secretary-General's proposal for the resource requirements for 2016 for the 14 special political missions under thematic cluster II.

5. No provision under consultants was proposed for 2016 under cluster II. The Advisory Committee welcomed the efforts made to reduce reliance on external consultants and to recruit experts with the requisite professional and language skills.

6. Concerning the presentation of the reports of the Advisory Committee, issues of a cross-cutting nature pertaining to all special political missions would be contained in its main report (A/70/7/Add.10), while the budget proposals for thematic clusters I to III, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) would be presented in its related reports (A/70/7/Add.11-15). The budget proposal of the Secretary-General for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (cluster I) was contained in a separate addendum (A/70/348/Add.6) and the report of the Advisory Committee would be issued as document A/70/7/Add.16.

7. **Ms. Tan** (Singapore), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN fully supported the indispensable role played by special political missions in the maintenance of international peace and security, and their optimal functioning should be a priority for Member States. However, over the previous five years, Member States had failed to reform the funding and backstopping arrangements for those missions, despite recommendations by the Advisory Committee dating back to 2011. It was time to implement those recommendations to avoid jeopardizing the efficiency and capability of the Organization.

8. The regular budget was shrinking in real terms but the share of special political missions in that budget had

increased. Even if no new missions were created over the following two years, their provision was still expected to increase by \$8.4 million, which would mean that they would account for over 20 per cent of the regular budget. In the context of an overall budget that some Member States insisted on keeping stagnant, each increase in the budget for special political missions inevitably cannibalized funding for other equally important parts of the budget such as development, which was a key priority for many developing countries.

9. The Advisory Committee's recommendations concerning the funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions should be implemented immediately. In addition, a separate account should be created for those missions, which should be aligned with the budgetary cycle for peacekeeping operations. That would facilitate the implementation of recommendations concerning transfers between special political missions and resources currently accessed only by peacekeeping operations, such as the support account for peacekeeping operations and strategic deployment stocks. The solution to the funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions should be holistic, and a piecemeal approach based on satisfying political interests rather than on what would work best for those missions risked creating more problems in the future.

10. ASEAN noted that 34 out of the 36 special political missions currently in existence had been created by decisions of the Security Council and they included large field missions that had more in common with peacekeeping operations than with traditional special political missions. The General Assembly had reaffirmed that the special responsibilities of the permanent members of the Security Council for the maintenance of peace and security should be borne in mind in connection with their contributions to the financing of peace and security operations. ASEAN would keep that principle in mind while working with other delegations to ensure a constructive outcome on that agenda item that was in the best interests of special political missions.

11. **Mr. Morejón Pazmiño** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that the budgets of special political missions had grown dramatically over the previous decade and were distorting the regular budget. The missions now accounted for a considerable portion of the Organization's regular budget, and the current funding and backstopping arrangements meant

that the mandates of those missions could not be discharged effectively and efficiently. The permanent members of the Security Council had special responsibilities to ensure the proper functioning of the Organization's peace and security pillar through adequate funding, oversight and accountability. The arrangements for special political missions must be reviewed as a matter of urgency taking into account the recommendations of the Advisory Committee.

12. It was disappointing that, over the previous four sessions of the General Assembly, some delegations had shown a lack of willingness to engage constructively to improve the current arrangements for special political missions in a comprehensive manner. The current session was a valuable opportunity to demonstrate flexibility and goodwill in order to move forward on that central issue for the benefit of the people around the world who were served by those missions.

13. CELAC noted that \$1,124.4 million had been earmarked for the financing of special political missions in the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017, and it reiterated its concern at the distortion caused by the financing of those missions from the regular budget given that they represented more than one fifth of the Secretary-General's total budget proposal for the biennium. The current funding arrangements were inadequate and unsuited to the special and volatile nature of peace and security mandates. As a result, the budgets approved for those missions rarely addressed the needs of the missions for the entire biennium and often required revised appropriations. The changes outlined in the Secretary-General's proposals were holistic and inseparable measures that would strengthen and improve the functioning of those missions.

14. CELAC strongly supported the establishment of a special and separate account for special political missions that would be budgeted, funded and reported on annually with a financial period of 1 July to 30 June and financed on the same terms as peacekeeping operations, in order to enhance the efficiency, transparency and fairness of the Organization's budgetary process. As an important contributor to the budgets of special political missions, CELAC was particularly interested in improving the management of those missions through adequate oversight, accountability and transparency at all stages of the missions. Lastly, on the basis of the new scale of assessment proposed, the contribution of CELAC

members to the regular budget would increase from \$207,981,601 the previous year to \$240,452,774.

15. **Mr. Kisoka** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the financing of special political missions was one of the Group's priorities, as mediation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution were at the top of the African agenda.

16. The Group noted that the proposed resource requirements for 2016 for the 14 special political missions under thematic cluster II amounted to \$34.5 million, which represented a decrease of \$1.40 million compared with the resources approved for 2015. It also noted that no extrabudgetary resources had been requested in 2015 or were projected for the groups of experts for 2016, except for the support to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction and the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

17. It was positive that, as at the end of September 2015, most positions had been filled, and the Group encouraged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to ensure that all remaining posts were filled expeditiously in full compliance with the principles of gender balance and equitable geographical representation. The Group noted that, for the year 2016, there would be no changes to the approved staffing structure of any of the groups of experts. It also noted that no provision under consultants was proposed for 2016 under cluster II, which reflected the efforts to reduce reliance on external consultants and to recruit experts with the requisite professional and language skills, and it welcomed continued efforts in that regard.

18. Concerning results-based budgeting, the Group welcomed the efforts by the Department of Political Affairs to harmonize, to the extent possible, expected accomplishments, indicators of achievements and outputs, as well as to ensure consistency in performance measures and management, and it encouraged continued efforts in that regard.

19. The Group sought detailed information on the composition of the different groups of experts, the appointment process and the cost effectiveness for operational costs, and it highlighted the need to rely more on home-based groups. It also sought clarification on the support provided by the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Safety and Security and the

Department of Field Support to the work of the groups of experts.

20. Consultation, collaboration and partnership were needed among the countries and regional and subregional organizations concerned, and the United Nations should continue to strengthen its partnership with the African Union and with subregional organizations. Lastly, the Group hoped that the question of funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions would be settled by consensus by the end of the current session.

21. **Mr. Al-Kuwari** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, said that special political missions operated in an increasingly complex environment and had increasingly diverse mandates. In addition to the political tasks entrusted to them, they were now addressing human rights, the rule of law and the prevention of sexual violence in conflict zones. The multidimensional mandates of those missions and the increase in the number of missions required additional resources and that would inevitably have a knock-on effect on the regular budget and the implementation of programmes. It was therefore important to maintain a balance in the budget appropriations so that the objectives of the United Nations were not undermined and to enable special political missions to discharge the functions assigned to them.

22. The Gulf Cooperation Council was deeply concerned that the Committee had been unable to reach a decision on the funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions and had not addressed the flaws in the current arrangements taking into account the recommendations of the Advisory Committee dating back to 2011. Measures must be taken urgently given that the financial resources required by those missions had increased significantly and their needs were not subject to the regular budget cycle. In order to enhance the efficiency and transparency of the Organization's budgetary process, a special and separate account should be established for special political missions.

23. **Mr. García Landa** (Mexico) said that the estimates for special political missions that were currently before the Committee represented only a small proportion of the total requirements, which would amount to over 20 per cent of the regular budget of the Organization for the biennium 2016-2017. The current

funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions had serious shortcomings. Given the Committee's failure to reach a consensus on that critical issue over four previous sessions, it was urgent that a solution be found during the current session.

24. The Board of Auditors had expressed concern at the negative effect that the funding of special political missions was having on the regular budget, an effect that was magnified by the considerable growth of resource requirements for such missions, accounting for more than 20 per cent of the budget. The Board's concern could largely be addressed through the adoption of the comprehensive reform proposed in 2011, which included creating a separate account for such missions with an annual cycle that matched the one used for peacekeeping operations. Such reform proposals emanated from technical and political experts from all regional groups and had not been made by individuals wishing to advance a particular programme or agenda.

25. Comprehensive reform of special political missions on the basis of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee was widely supported by Member States. Urgent action was required to reach a negotiated solution to correct the unjustifiable anomalies, as such a solution was a condition for the proper functioning of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.