



General Assembly

Seventieth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
30 December 2015

Original: English

Fifth Committee

Summary record of the 18th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 1 December 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Bhattarai (Chair) (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 160: Financing of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (A/70/443 and A/70/575)

1. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the cash position of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) as at 9 October 2015 (A/70/443), recalled that, in addition to the amount of \$830.7 million previously appropriated for the maintenance of MINUSMA for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015, the General Assembly had, in its resolution 69/289, approved a commitment authority of up to \$80.3 million for the same period to enable MINUSMA to support an action plan to counter improvised explosive devices, improve force protection capabilities and enhance the national capacity of the Malian defence and security forces to counter improvised explosive devices.

2. The performance report for MINUSMA for 2014/15, currently being finalized, indicated that total expenditure for the maintenance of MINUSMA had amounted to \$906.2 million, reflecting net utilization of \$75.5 million of the commitment authority and an unencumbered balance of \$4.8 million. Actual expenditure under the commitment authority was in line with the level of resources originally requested by the Secretary-General. The current cash position of the Special Account for MINUSMA indicated that sufficient cash reserves were available to cover operating costs until end-December 2015, as well as scheduled payments to Governments in respect of troops and formed police personnel and reimbursements for contingent-owned major equipment and self-sustainment. Lastly, assuming timely receipt of assessed contributions for assessments raised in January 2016 for January-June 2016, it was envisaged that sufficient cash reserves would be available to meet disbursement needs until end-June 2016. The General Assembly was requested to take note of the Secretary-General's report.

3. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/70/575), said that the Advisory Committee had examined the cash position of MINUSMA, including its unliquidated obligations and monthly expenditure patterns. The Advisory

Committee considered that the General Assembly's authorization of a commitment authority had been borne out by the review of the Mission's cash position as at 9 October 2015 and recommended that the Assembly should take note of the Secretary-General's report.

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: (continued)

Thematic cluster I: Special and personal envoys and special advisers of the Secretary-General (A/70/7/Add.11, A/70/7/Add.16, A/70/348/Add.1 and A/70/348/Add.6)

Thematic cluster III: United Nations offices, peacebuilding support offices, integrated offices and commissions (A/70/7/Add.13 and A/70/348/Add.3)

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (A/70/7/Add.14 and A/70/348/Add.4)

4. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the Secretary-General's reports on the proposed resource requirements for 2016 under thematic cluster I (A/70/348/Add.1 and A/70/348/Add.6), said that the missions grouped under thematic cluster I were global instruments through which the Organization pursued and sustained negotiated political settlements. In 2015, cluster I missions had contributed to conflict prevention and the maintenance of international peace and security through early warning, mediation, preventive diplomacy, support for electoral processes, good offices and peacebuilding. Many of the missions were mandated to promote political solutions in conflict-affected areas. In that connection, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria was leading United Nations efforts to achieve a settlement of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, a conflict with significant implications for the country, the surrounding region, and beyond. Similarly, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region had been coordinating and assessing implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region by providing support to the Kampala Dialogue and follow-up processes.

5. The proposed resources for 2016 for special political missions under cluster I, with the exception of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, amounted to \$31.3 million, representing an increase of approximately \$0.8 million compared with the approved resources for 2015, a difference attributable primarily to an increase in the proposed resources for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria.

6. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen had been established to support implementation of the Agreement on the Implementation Mechanism for the Transition Process in Yemen in Accordance with the Initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The conflict had escalated since March 2015, leaving 21 million Yemenis in need of humanitarian assistance. With the support of the Security Council, the Special Envoy was working with the interested parties, including the Saudi Arabian-led coalition, to put a timely end to the conflict and set the stage for the resumption of Yemen's political transition process.

7. The proposed resources for 2016 for the Office amounted to \$6.9 million, representing an increase of approximately \$1.6 million compared with the approved resources for 2015.

8. Introducing the Secretary-General's report on the proposed resource requirements for 2016 under thematic cluster III (A/70/348/Add.3), she said that several cluster III missions faced increasing demands for support and cooperation from national, regional and international actors. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL) had been carrying out its mandate under deteriorating domestic conditions, compounded by an influx of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) was responding to increasing demand from countries in the region for assistance in the prevention of conflict. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) had been carrying out its multidimensional mandate in a volatile environment that required it to strengthen its security capacity to support the enhanced regional presence requested by the Security Council in its resolution 2232 (2015.)

9. The proposed resources for 2016 for cluster III missions amounted to \$190.1 million, representing an increase of approximately \$7.1 million compared with

the approved resources for 2015, a difference attributable primarily to increases in the proposed resources for UNOCA and UNSOM, partially offset by reductions in the proposed resources for the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

10. Introducing the Secretary-General's report on the proposed resource requirements for 2016 for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (A/70/348/Add.4), she said that, by its resolution 2210 (2015), the Security Council had extended the mandate of UNAMA until 17 March 2016. Pursuant to that resolution, UNAMA had initiated an examination of the role, structure and activities of all United Nations entities in Afghanistan by establishing a tripartite working group, co-chaired by UNAMA and the Government of Afghanistan and with the participation of international stakeholders. The review would likely inform deliberations on the renewal of the Mission's mandate for 2016. Subject to its outcome, UNAMA would continue to focus on the provision of political support, the advancement of human rights and the promotion of coordinated support on the part of the international community for the Government of Afghanistan.

11. The proposed resources for 2016 for UNAMA amounted to \$183.3 million, representing a net decrease of approximately \$4.1 million compared with the approved resources for 2015, attributable primarily to the proposed closure of one provincial office, the proposed consolidation of functions and reductions in military and personnel costs.

12. The resource requirements for the special political missions covered by the reports before the Committee 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.

13. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the reports of the Advisory Committee on the proposed resource requirements for 2016 under thematic cluster I (A/70/7/Add.11 and A/70/7/Add.16), said that the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the proposed resources, subject to the recommendations referred to in chapter III of its reports, and requested that detailed information on the reductions arising from its

recommendations should be provided to the General Assembly.

14. Noting the lack of justification for some of the Secretary-General's proposals, particularly the significant increases requested, the Advisory Committee recommended reductions in the proposed provisions for consultants, ground transportation and official travel for some missions. The Advisory Committee also reiterated its previous recommendations regarding additional resources to accommodate changes in the location of heads of missions derived from personal preferences.

15. The Advisory Committee concurred with the proposed reclassification of the position of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen from the Assistant Secretary-General level to the Under-Secretary-General level, pursuant to the request by the Security Council in its resolution 2216 (2015) that the Secretary-General should intensify his good offices role in Yemen. In that connection, the Advisory Committee noted that the title of the Special Envoy position reflected a change from its previous title, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Yemen.

16. Introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the proposed resource requirements for 2016 for UNAMA (A/70/7/Add.14), he said that the Advisory Committee noted the reduction of 2.2 per cent compared with 2015, and recommended approval of the resources, subject to adjustments pursuant to its recommendations on the application of a separate vacancy rate in respect of the National Professional Officer position proposed for 2016 and on the provision of resident audit services for UNAMA and the United Nations Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

17. With regard to the services provided to UNAMA by its Support Office in Kuwait and the Kuwait Joint Support Office, the Advisory Committee questioned the repeated transfer of functions back and forth between Kabul and Kuwait within a relatively short period of time, with financial implications arising from each transfer. It recalled its previous concerns about the lack of clarity with regard to the structures, functions and capacity of the two Offices.

18. Introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the proposed resource requirements for 2016 under thematic cluster III (A/70/7/Add.13), he said that the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the requirements, subject to the recommendations referred

to in chapter III of its report, and trusted that detailed information on the reductions arising from its recommendations would be provided to the General Assembly.

19. With regard to the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the Advisory Committee recommended against the proposed separation of the Office of the Chief of Staff from that of the Special Representative, as well as the related staffing proposal, as they undermined the mission's overall cohesion. It reiterated its view that a separation should exist between the mandates and budget proposals of UNSOM and the United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia (UNSOA), and recommended against the proposed establishment of three United Nations Volunteers positions of Medical Officer for UNSOM, which should instead be provided for under the 2016/17 budget for UNSOA. However, as there was a need to ensure medical support for United Nations staff, the Secretary-General could use his exceptional authority to approve temporary positions during the six months prior to the commencement of the 2016/17 UNSOA budget cycle.

20. With regard to UNSMIL, the Secretary-General should have sought the concurrence of the Advisory Committee prior to establishing the extrabudgetary position of Senior Adviser at the Assistant Secretary-General level. As the basis for the level of the position was not clear from the information provided, the Advisory Committee recommended that it should be established at the D-2 level. However, should the Secretariat have adequate grounds for establishing the position at the Assistant Secretary-General level, it should submit the relevant information.

21. **Mr. Kisoka** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Group attached great importance to the vital role of special political missions in fostering international peace and security. Those missions frequently carried out their complex mandates in conflict and post-conflict environments, where transnational organized crime, drug trafficking and extremist activities were key drivers of instability. The allocation of adequate resources was therefore critical.

22. Aware of the importance of adequate staffing of special political missions, the Group took note of the proposed resource requirements for 2016 indicated by the Controller. It would seek clarification of the

rationale for certain proposed staffing changes, including those pertaining to UNSMIL, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), as well as for proposed changes in the location of certain positions. The Group would also examine other issues relevant to specific missions, including vacancy management, consultancy, the degree of automaticity in requests under operational costs, particularly with respect to procurement-related matters, information and communications technology, and repairs and maintenance.

23. The Group was deeply concerned that the position of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel remained classified at the Assistant Secretary-General level, despite the complex and evolving environment in that region, and was unconvinced by the arguments advanced. It would present proposals for the reclassification of the position at the original Under-Secretary-General level as well as for the strengthening of specific functions to enable the Office of the Special Envoy to deliver its mandate. The Group rejected the application of a double standard with regard to the level of representation accorded to the Special Envoy's mission and that of other missions.

24. The Group was encouraged by the level of collaboration between special political missions, particularly in Africa, and regional and subregional organizations, and underscored the importance of utilizing local knowledge and expertise to strengthen national and regional capacities. It was concerned that the proposed resource requirements reflected increased reliance on consultants and external capacities and would propose specific adjustments. Lastly, it would seek clarification of a number of issues relating to the financing of special political missions.

25. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his Government had consistently supported the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria to arrive at a Syrian-led political solution to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, in the interest of the country and its people. In line with its support for his predecessors, the Government had received multiple visits from the Special Envoy and expressed a willingness to implement a number of his initiatives, with a view to promoting the national reconciliation process referenced in the Secretary-General's report

(A/70/348/Add.1). The progress made in many parts of the country was an encouraging starting point for a broader intra-Syrian dialogue aimed at reaching a political solution, without foreign interference.

26. Notwithstanding its modest scope, his Government had accepted the Special Envoy's proposal for the suspension of aerial bombardment of the city of Aleppo for a period of six weeks to allow for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the launch of a pilot project to restore public services in the Salaheddin neighbourhood, as a step towards safeguarding the Syrian people against the threat of terrorism. However, the proposal had not been implemented because certain States of the region that sponsored terrorism in the Syrian Arab Republic had rejected it. Similarly, although his Government had formed a delegation to participate in the four working groups led by the Special Envoy, those groups had not been convened because the States sponsoring terrorism had failed to put together a group of representatives from the so-called opposition to engage in talks with the Government.

27. His Government had stressed the need to combat terrorism and achieve national reconciliation with a view to reaching a Syrian-led political solution, a position shared by other interested parties. A political solution could only be reached by acknowledging the aspirations of the Syrian people, the clearest expression of which had been the outcome of the multi-party presidential elections. The achievement of a political solution, as well as the success of the Special Envoy's mission, would depend on the consolidation of international efforts to combat terrorism at the national, regional and international levels.

28. The recent terrorist acts across the globe demonstrated that terrorism was not constrained by borders, religion or moral values. He called on those States that sponsored terrorist groups in his country to cease arming, funding and harbouring terrorists and inciting terrorist acts, and to withdraw the foreign mercenaries and extremists that they had dispatched to the Syrian Arab Republic. They must cease their destructive practices, aimed at blocking implementation of the Special Envoy's mandate and the achievement of a political solution. His Government would continue to serve as the voice of reason until the entire world was aware that certain

States were sponsoring terrorism and attempting to use it as a political weapon to effect regime change.

29. In that connection, his delegation regretted that, although it had requested their inclusion, the Secretary-General's report (A/70/348/Add.1) did not contain references either to the terrorism from which the Syrian Arab Republic suffered or to Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015), in which the Council condemned Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Nusrah Front and related terrorist organizations, and prohibited States from funding such organizations and purchasing oil and antiquities from them. The Special Envoy himself had consistently stated that priority must be given to combating terrorism and implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions.

30. Further, the Secretary-General's report contained a number of unusual phrases that had not been used in previous reports. For example, the phrase "use good offices aimed at bringing an end to all violence and human rights violations" contained in paragraph 158 of the 2014 report (A/69/363/Add.1) had been replaced by the phrase "use good offices to promote and support a political solution to the war" contained in paragraph 149 of the current report (A/70/348/Add.1).

31. The concept of war entailing conflict among States, covered by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, was fundamentally different to the war against terrorism being undertaken by his Government on behalf of the international community with the support of allies committed to upholding international law and the purposes and principles of the Charter, a fact that the international community had only just begun to understand. The Secretary-General should have included the phrase "without any foreign interference" in the definition of the objective of the Special Envoy's mission, following the words "political solution to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic". The addition of that important phrase would have limited the potential for misinterpretation of the objective, as the current situation in the Syrian Arab Republic was the result of flagrant interference by certain States in its domestic affairs, in violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

32. His delegation was also concerned that the report referred to General Assembly resolutions on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, as those

resolutions had not been adopted by consensus. The resolutions were biased, reflecting a single perspective, and were intended to draw attention away from the proxy wars being waged on Syrian soil. Countering the Wahhabist terrorist agenda would help stop the wave of ideologically motivated attacks that had swept the world. His Government would continue to cooperate with the Special Envoy so as to reach a political settlement that would safeguard the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and ensure non-interference in its internal affairs. He hoped that the adoption of the budget proposed by the Secretary-General would contribute to the achievement of that objective.

33. **Mr. Sánchez Azcuy** (Cuba) said that his delegation shared a number of the concerns expressed in the Committee relating to resource requirements for special political missions. The funding of those missions under the regular budget was unsustainable, particularly given that 34 of the 36 missions currently in operation had been created by decisions of the Security Council and should therefore be funded under the peacekeeping budget, using the applicable scale of assessments.

34. He recalled that an initial proposed programme budget outline of \$5,741.2 million had been presented to the General Assembly, which, on the basis of a distorted interpretation of the principle of consensus-based decision-making in the Fifth Committee, had invited the Secretary-General to prepare the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 on the basis of a preliminary estimate of \$5,558.4 million. The proposed programme budget level amounted to \$5,568.6 million before recosting, representing an increase of only \$10.2 million, or 0.2 per cent, above the budget outline figure set by the Assembly in its resolution 69/264.

35. In a context in which a minority of delegations were in favour of imposing a zero-growth policy, \$1,124.4 million had been earmarked for the financing of special political missions under section 3, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget, representing 20 per cent of the regular budget, a proportion that reflected the general upward trend in those resource requirements. Those figures were not a balanced reflection of the priorities established by the General Assembly in its resolutions on the proposed programme budget outline. Moreover, a number of the issues addressed by special political missions did not

fall strictly within the scope of their mandates and the current procedure for approving and monitoring the missions denied the General Assembly oversight of them.

36. With regard to cluster I missions, his delegation was opposed to the inclusion of the responsibility to protect in the estimates for special political missions under the mandate of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. There was no intergovernmental agreement justifying the position of Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect under the aegis of the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report (A/70/348/Add.1, para. 47), the position of Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect had been established by the Secretary-General; the General Assembly had had no say in the decision. In a letter to the President of the Security Council (S/2007/721), the Secretary-General had stated that creation of the position would strengthen the operational impact of the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, in recognition of the link between large scale atrocities and threats to peace and security.

37. His delegation was opposed to attempts to address the complex problems resulting from large scale atrocities through a confrontational approach: historic injustices and inequalities, poverty and underdevelopment could not be tackled through sanctions and interventions, which often contributed to further violence. Worse still were attempts to manipulate those unfortunate realities to promote such concepts as the responsibility to protect, which undermined international law, State sovereignty and the fundamental responsibility of States to ensure the well-being of their citizens.

38. His Government's position should not, however, be interpreted as a rejection of the work of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. Yet the creation of the position of Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect represented a departure from the letter and spirit of paragraphs 138 and 139 of General Assembly resolution 60/1. There was no legal basis for carrying out activities and identifying outputs related to the responsibility to protect, as the Assembly, in its resolution 63/308, had decided to continue considering the concept. As the concept had not been reviewed in intergovernmental forums, and no

definition had been approved by the General Assembly, reference to it was not appropriate.

39. The presentation of the estimates made it impossible to distinguish clearly and transparently between the resources allocated to the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect and those allocated to the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. The Secretary-General's report did not provide a full picture of the work to be performed by or the proposed resource requirements for the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. His delegation requested the Secretary-General to provide the General Assembly with information regarding those resources. Furthermore, the majority of the information provided on the performance of the Special Advisers did not distinguish between their activities. Such ambiguity made it difficult for Member States to ascertain whether the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide was fulfilling his mandates or pursuing objectives not approved by Member States. Bearing in mind those concerns, his delegation would propose changes to the presentation of the estimates in respect of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide.

Progress in the construction of new office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, and update on the renovation of conference facilities, including Africa Hall (A/70/7/Add.21, A/70/363 and A/70/363/Corr.1)

40. **Mr. Cutts** (Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on progress in the construction of new office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa and in the renovation of conference facilities, including Africa Hall (A/70/363 and A/70/363/Corr.1), said that the new Zambezi Building had become fully operational and had been occupied in 2014, with related ancillary projects completed in time for a major conference to be held at the Commission in July 2015. Most ancillary projects had, in fact, been completed in 2014, with the remaining works substantially completed by August 2015, within approved resources.

41. The main objective of the Africa Hall renovation project was to address inadequacies related to building safety and functionality and to make Africa Hall a rejuvenated facility complying with the highest international standards for conference facilities. The design and planning component of the project had

focused on ensuring that the building complied with health and safety regulations and on preserving the historical and cultural values embodied in its architecture. Once restored, it would continue to be used as a major conference centre and would host educational and cultural programmes for visitors to the Commission.

42. The Africa Hall renovation project would be implemented in five stages. The first and second stages, assessment and design, had been completed, and the third stage, the tender documentation phase, would commence shortly. Once a contractor had been selected, the fourth stage, construction, would begin in the third quarter of 2017 and be completed by 2021, to be followed by the final close-out phase. The renovation work would entail structural upgrades, essential safety improvements and building work; the renovation of Plenary Hall; external work and landscaping; heritage conservation; and the creation of a visitors' centre.

43. Following the necessary structural and safety upgrades to the building, the visitors' centre would make Africa Hall a leading tourist destination, particularly for those interested in the genesis of the African Union, and would highlight its significant role in modern African history. Africa Hall would be promoted as a tourist destination through the Ethiopian Tourism Organization, as well as in schools and the media and during conferences. A business case study had been developed by the Commission's Public Information and Knowledge Management Division. The works would comprise construction of a visitors' screening building and a reserved parking area adjacent to the Commission compound; the necessary consultations with the host Government were under way. Conservation of stained glass and other artwork would be a key component of the project. The centre would include an exhibition space and lecture gallery, while tours would be conducted in Africa Hall itself.

44. Regarding the governance structure, the Executive Secretary of the Commission was the project owner, with the Chief of Staff designated to manage oversight and governance, including liaison and interaction with stakeholders, as well as strategic issues requiring senior-level decision-making. A stakeholders committee, led by the Executive Secretary, would provide guidance. The Director of Administration was project director, responsible for managing a dedicated project team. The Director

coordinated with the Office of Central Support Services on all significant project-related matters, including regular reporting to Member States. Day-to-day project execution was under the leadership of a dedicated project manager.

45. Recruitment of the dedicated project management team was under way, and would be completed during 2016-2017, subject to approval of resources. Lastly, in order to implement a robust approach to project risk management, an independent risk management firm would be incorporated into governance of the project, as with other capital projects undertaken by the Organization.

46. The total cost of the project was estimated at \$56.9 million at current rates, as estimated in the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/69/359), for implementation between 2015 and 2021. The Office of Central Support Services would ensure that project supervision and management, including the risk management strategy, were in line with best practices. Specifically, it would ensure that the risk management strategy included measures to contain the scope, cost and duration of the project. Project tasks to be undertaken during 2016-2017 included detailed assessments prior to finalization of design and tender documentation; establishment of the stakeholders committee; recruitment of the remainder of the project management team; procurement of the independent risk management firm; finalization of the design and tender documentation; and procurement of the construction contractor.

47. Utilization of the renovated United Nations Conference Centre had increased by 15 per cent to 85 per cent during the biennium 2014-2015. The increase was the result of proactive marketing on the part of the Executive Secretary to other United Nations entities in Addis Ababa, of occupancy of the Zambezi Building by five additional United Nations entities, and of partnership with non-United Nations regional organizations. The return to full capacity of conference rooms 3 to 6 had increased overall capacity and a competitive pricing structure for conference services had been introduced. Lastly, the renovation of the Centre's roof was scheduled to be completed by end-2015.

48. The General Assembly was requested to approve the overall project scope, schedule and estimated cost, to approve the related resources for the biennium 2016-

2017, and to establish a multi-year construction-in-progress account. Annual progress reports would be submitted to the Assembly.

49. **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.21), emphasized the need to keep the Africa Hall renovation project on schedule and to ensure monitoring of progress by the project governance mechanisms. The Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to present any change affecting the scope of the project for the consideration of the Assembly.

50. Subject to its recommendations regarding project contingency and review of annual budget performance and cost estimates, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the estimated maximum overall cost of \$56.9 million for stages 3 to 5 of the project and of the seven additional positions proposed within the project governance structure. Those recommendations would entail an appropriation of \$13,438,600 under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. The Advisory Committee trusted that the Secretary-General would provide further details of the proposed visitors' centre, including cost projections for start-up, maintenance and operations, estimated revenue generation and anticipated overall benefits to the Organization.

51. **Mr. Davidson** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, noted with appreciation the support of the people and Government of Ethiopia for the work of ECA and of other regional and multilateral entities in facilitating the modernization of the ECA facilities. He reaffirmed the importance of addressing health and safety concerns in the implementation of the capital project at ECA and welcomed the completion and full occupancy of the Zambezi Building.

52. The Group noted the information provided in the Secretary-General's report regarding potential claims arising from contractor errors, omissions and delays, and requested the Secretary-General to ensure their amicable and timely settlement. The Secretary-General should ensure that such issues were addressed in the context of other capital projects, particularly the capital master plan, and hold responsible entities, including managers, accountable.

53. The Group supported the Secretary-General's proposal for the renovation of Africa Hall, including the proposed resource requirements, and looked forward to the commencement of the project after a number of setbacks. The Group would seek clarification of proposed implementation strategies, including measures for shortening the duration of the project without affecting the scope and quality of the work. Any change in the scope of the project should be presented to Member States for their consideration. The Group noted the comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee and of other oversight bodies on the use of the contingency fund and the business case, and would also address those issues. It noted with concern the proposed use of the visitors' centre as a means of generating revenue: no United Nations visitors' centre should be used solely for that purpose, as the Organization was a not-for-profit entity. The Africa Hall visitors' centre would yield benefits that could not be measured in terms of profit alone.

54. With regard to the renovation of conference facilities, the Group recalled paragraph 3 of section III of General Assembly resolution 65/259, and would seek further information on the planned renovation of other facilities, including conference room 1. As to governance, oversight and accountability, he stressed the need for a clear chain of command and for effective oversight arrangements throughout the various stages of implementation. The Secretary-General and senior managers at United Nations Headquarters and in Addis Ababa must demonstrate commitment to smooth implementation of the project. The Secretary-General must continue to maintain good relations and engage in close consultations with the host country and other stakeholders in the region.

55. **Mr. Kisoka** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, commended the Secretariat on the substantial completion of the Zambezi Building, which now housed over 650 staff. The Group also commended the Government of Ethiopia for its support for the work of the United Nations as well as regional and multilateral entities for ensuring completion of the project.

56. Significant delays had occurred in previous construction projects, sometimes unavoidably, but sometimes as a result of inadequate attention by managers. The lessons learned from the construction of the new ECA office facilities, as well as from other

projects in the region, including at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the new facility for the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals in Arusha, should be taken into consideration in the renovation of Africa Hall and other conference facilities. In the context of the significance of Africa Hall, the Group recalled General Assembly resolutions 65/259 and 69/262. The renovation project symbolized the enduring ties between African nations and the broader global community.

57. The Group welcomed the efforts to ensure timely completion of the project and emphasized the need for regular review of the timetable with a view to shortening its duration. Structured communication and coordination between ECA, United Nations Headquarters and other key stakeholders were essential in that regard. The Group supported the proposed resource requirements as well as the recommendation in the Advisory Committee's report for the establishment of a multi-year construction-in-progress account to ensure monitoring and governance.

58. With regard to the visitors' centre, the Group stressed the benefits to be gained from visits to United Nations facilities by stakeholders and the general public. The Secretary-General should avoid measures at odds with the Organization's status as a not-for-profit entity. Regarding the renovation of Africa Hall, efforts must be made to use local knowledge and capacities, ensure effective oversight and accountability, and preserve the facilities' historic elements.

59. **Ms. Norman Chalet** (United States of America) said that the support of the host country had been instrumental in the substantial completion of the new ECA office facilities; she urged ECA to complete the remaining work as soon as possible. Her delegation looked forward to discussion of the status of the Africa Hall renovation project, including its scope, cost and governance structure, and encouraged ECA and the Secretariat to guarantee close monitoring throughout its remaining stages to ensure that it was completed on time and within budget by 2021.

60. More detailed justification was needed of the contingency provision and business case for the visitors' centre: the proposed contingency amount was based on a fixed percentage of the construction cost and did not reflect a risk-based estimate, while the business case did not include a number of important

details, including estimated revenue generation and annual operating costs.

61. **Mr. Tessema** (Ethiopia) said that the completion of the Zambezi Building should be a source of pride for the Fifth Committee and Member States. The lessons learned from the project should be applied to future projects. He noted the progress achieved and the work that remained to be done, and emphasized the importance of the project in the context of the modern history of Africa and the decolonization process, as well as the significance of Africa Hall as a symbol of the shared values of Member States.

62. His Government was committed to working with ECA to facilitate completion of the Africa Hall renovation project. As part of the commemoration of the historical significance of Africa Hall, it would provide collections of audio, video and print materials and artwork highlighting the building's historical significance. While it reaffirmed the need to use local construction materials, his Government would facilitate the clearance and importation of all project materials, with tax exemptions, to avoid delays in implementation. With a view to making the visitors' centre worthy of its name, Africa Hall would be promoted as a tourist destination by his Government and through Ethiopia Airlines' in-flight entertainment system. The Government, while stressing the need to utilize local knowledge and capacities where appropriate, would ensure timely issuance of work permits for international consultants and contractors working on the project. He welcomed the involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the stakeholders committee and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to participate in a structured manner. He was optimistic that the goodwill demonstrated by all stakeholders would be maintained throughout the remaining stages of the project.

Study on the long-term accommodation needs at United Nations Headquarters for the period from 2015 to 2034 (A/70/7/Add.22 and A/70/398)

63. **Mr. Takasu** (Under-Secretary-General for Management), introducing the Secretary-General's study on the long-term accommodation needs at United Nations Headquarters for the period from 2015 to 2034 (A/70/398), said that long-term planning for the future real estate needs of the Secretariat was now critical given the time-limited opportunity of one of the

options that would significantly reduce long-term real estate costs.

64. A total of 4,042 Secretariat staff, or 5,342 including other offices, and funds and programmes, were working outside the United Nations campus in leased buildings, at an annual cost of \$56 million, a cost that was expected to rise significantly if urgent action was not taken. Even after implementation of flexible workplace strategies in New York it was anticipated that 3,242 staff members would still need accommodation outside the United Nations campus by 2018.

65. The report provided three population scenarios, extrapolated over the next 20 years: 1.1-per-cent growth, no growth, and a year-on-year annual decline of 0.5 per cent. All three scenarios took into account the net effect of changing mandates and programme activities, and changes resulting from efficiencies, including Umoja implementation and a new global service delivery model. However, even assuming a 0.5-per-cent decrease in the staff of the Organization in New York, the United Nations would still need to accommodate more than 2,500 Secretariat staff off-campus. Regardless of the assumptions, it was clear that the United Nations would need to accommodate significant numbers of staff in New York in the years to come, and that prudent planning was required to secure cost-effective solutions.

66. The Secretary-General had exhaustively considered 10 possible options on the basis of an extremely robust financial analysis and the results had remained consistent despite the evolution of assumptions and factors over time. The General Assembly had concluded that only four of those 10 options were viable: option 1, a new building on the North Lawn, funded through a special assessment on Member States; option 2, a new building on the North Lawn constructed using third-party financing; option 3, a new DC-5 building, through a lease-to-own arrangement with the United Nations Development Corporation; and option 4, a continuation of status quo leasing arrangements.

67. An architectural preservation firm had found, from the perspective of architectural integrity, that of the three options entailing a new building, option 3, DC-5, would be the preferred option, and that options 1 and 2, a new North Lawn building, even if taken forward, should be limited in height to 275 feet, in

accordance with the original design of the Board of Design Consultants. The General Assembly had urged the Secretariat to respect the architectural integrity of the United Nations complex.

68. As the Assembly had requested that all options should be considered equally, the Secretariat had studied further ways to undertake option 2, through third-party developer financing or public or private long-term fixed rate bonds as a direct debt of the United Nations. Other alternatives studied included a commercial construction loan and a loan or loan guarantee from Member States. However, those financing options had been deemed non-viable owing to the inability of the Organization to provide collateral to creditors, while no Member States had responded positively about providing a loan or loan guarantee. A commercial construction loan was the most expensive option and was therefore not recommended.

69. Concerning scheduling, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 68/247, stipulating that major capital expenditure projects should not be implemented simultaneously, option 1 could commence only after completion in 2023 of the strategic heritage plan for the United Nations Office at Geneva, whereas options 2 and 3 could commence at the earliest opportunity. It was urgent to determine the best option given that the Organization currently housed around 2,060 staff in DC-1 and DC-2 at rates significantly below current market rates. The leases on those buildings could be extended, but only until 2023, by which time the buildings would require major renovation and any lease would likely be double the current cost. The Secretariat needed to implement a long-term accommodation option that was available before 2023 to avoid significant financial and operational risks.

70. Following a comprehensive financial analysis of projected costs of the four options over the next 50 years, taking into account credit ratings, interest rates and commercial leasing rates, as well as non-quantifiable benefits, the DC-5 option had again been found the most cost-effective option on a net present value basis in all foreseeable future scenarios. Assuming a no-growth scenario, over a 50-year period, including project costs and operational cost, the DC-5 option would cost \$2.65 billion. The status quo option, which relied on commercial leases, was the most expensive of the four options, at \$3.56 billion.

71. If the DC-5 option were pursued further, the next steps would be for the United Nations Development Corporation to continue the required planning and design works with a view to completion of that work in 2017. The Assembly would then make a formal decision on DC-5 in 2017 and authorize conclusion of the lease agreement so that the Development Corporation could tender for construction in 2018. The building would be constructed between 2019 and 2021 under the supervision of the Development Corporation and in close cooperation with the United Nations, and would be ready for occupancy by the Secretariat by 2022. That timetable provided little leeway before the expiry of the leases on DC-1 and DC-2 in 2023. The United Nations Development Corporation had indicated that it would not be able to meet that timetable in the absence of an affirmation by the Assembly that DC-5 was the preferred option, so that it was now urgent for the Assembly to decide whether DC-5 should be pursued as the option for future development, without prejudice to a final decision on the project.

72. In order to pursue the DC-5 option, dedicated resources were needed for a small project oversight team over a period of 18 months during the biennium 2016-2017. The team would need to be supported by real estate advisory and financial services, and cost-estimating services. The investment was essential given the magnitude and importance of the project to ensure that the interests of the United Nations were properly safeguarded and risks appropriately managed.

73. It was therefore recommended that the Assembly should request the Secretary-General to develop further the DC-5 option as the feasible option to be pursued; authorize the Secretary-General to take the steps necessary for implementation, without prejudice to any future decisions of the Assembly; and approve three general temporary assistance positions effective 1 July 2016 and external consultancy.

74. Option 1, the North Lawn building, was a major capital expenditure project that would need to wait until 2023 once the strategic heritage plan had been completed, so that a decision on that option was not needed for several more years. Option 4, the continuation of commercial leases, was a default option that would need to be pursued if the Assembly did not decide on another option. However, neither of those two options would solve the issue to be faced in 2023, when the United Nations would lose office space

at favourable rates. DC-5 was therefore the most cost-effective option: the Secretary-General strongly recommended that DC-5 should be pursued further as the feasible option, but without any obligation to approve the project for another two years. The United Nations Development Corporation had worked with the competent authorities on an amendment of the memorandum of understanding concerning DC-5. However, that option was still time-bound, and the Development Corporation needed a positive sign from the Organization before it could make further significant expenditures on the schematic design and detailed design works. In order to accomplish the objective of rehousing United Nations staff working in many commercial buildings in a single building, DC-5 must be ready for occupancy in 2022.

75. The Secretary-General was responsible for prudent real estate planning for the Organization, based on the best available estimates, in order to avoid a steep increase in costs in 2023. If Member States waited until all unknown factors had been defined, they would lose the opportunity to make a decision in the best interests of the Organization. Delay would result in the continuation of the status quo, which over the long term was estimated to cost the Organization approximately \$1 billion more than the DC-5 option.

76. **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.22](#)), said that a significant number of uncertainties remained regarding the impact of business transformation initiatives on the number of staff and physical space requirements in New York; actual long-term accommodation needs could be assessed only once a clearer determination of staff and other resource requirements had been made. More must be done to explore all accommodation options. With regard to the cost of any future accommodation project, the Secretary-General, as chief administrative officer, should explore the options available, without prejudice, for financing, and should develop a more focused and formal approach when approaching the host country and other Member States.

77. Until actual long-term accommodation needs could be assessed and to ensure reasonable organizational flexibility, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Assembly should request the Secretary-General to explore interim solutions, including the possibility of extending the current leases

on the DC-1 and DC-2 buildings on the best terms possible. The Advisory Committee further recommended that the Assembly should request the Secretary-General to assess how the various business transformation initiatives might affect space needs at Headquarters and to develop the most feasible options for long-term accommodation, including funding possibilities, to be presented to the Assembly at the appropriate time. It also recommended, at the present time, that any related work should be undertaken using existing resources and therefore recommended against the appropriation of additional resources for the biennium 2016-2017 under the contingency fund or other funding mechanisms, as proposed in the report of the Secretary-General.

78. **Mr. Davidson** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, by General Assembly resolution 69/262, the Secretary-General had been requested to provide updated information on the four viable options for long-term accommodation needs at Headquarters and to ensure that all were treated equally. Further analysis was needed to obtain statistically substantiated estimations of the impact of a flexible workplace strategy on office space requirements. Oversight and audit coverage must also be guaranteed.

79. With regard to space requirements, the Group noted that the current population of staff at Headquarters, excluding agencies, funds and programmes, totalled 8,856, of whom 4,042 currently required seating outside United Nations-owned property. There were 1,748 staff funded under the programme budget or the support account for peacekeeping operations with administrative functions who might be affected by the transformational initiatives of the Secretary-General.

80. According to the Secretary-General, possible changes in staffing levels at Headquarters would be accommodated in one of three population scenarios, ranging from 0.5-per-cent decline to 1.1-per-cent growth. He noted that the Secretary-General was not in a position to determine the impact of business transformation projects on population projections and future space requirements. Alternative population scenarios should be considered when projecting future space needs and the related calculations substantiated.

81. The space requirements of New York-based agencies, funds and programmes had been included in

the calculations for long-term accommodation needs at Headquarters. However, future space scenarios and the related calculations should focus on the requirements of Secretariat departments and offices, while taking into consideration the possibility of accommodating agencies, funds and programmes on a space availability basis, given that the latter had not expressed a commitment as to future tenancy.

82. With regard to business transformation initiatives, the Secretary-General had indicated that Headquarters staffing levels could change over the next 20 years as a result of Umoja and the proposed global service delivery model. However, the Organization's space requirements would also be determined by other, equally important, business transformation projects, including the information and communications technology strategy, the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, and staff mobility initiatives. Other initiatives, including the capital master plan, the strategic heritage plan and flexible workplace arrangements, would also influence space requirements.

83. The Board of Auditors had highlighted that the Organization had no common methodology for management of different transformation projects and had recommended that the Organization should improve its capacity to coordinate such projects. He called for a harmonized approach to business transformation initiatives to ensure efficiencies in financial and staffing resources, including coordination of physical space needs at Headquarters, given likely cost increases.

84. Significant uncertainties remained regarding the impact of the Organization's business transformation initiatives on the number of staff and physical space requirements in New York. It was vital to have a clearer determination of staff and other resource requirements to assess actual long-term accommodation needs and therefore decide on a course of action.

85. With regard to the current long-term accommodation options, future planning assumptions and proper space requirement calculations would determine the most appropriate option. In the absence of sufficient data, all options continued to have merit. As the long-term viability of the options could not yet be properly assessed, the Assembly should request the Secretary-General to explore interim solutions,

including the possibility of extending the current leases on the DC-1 and DC-2 buildings on the best terms possible.

86. The possibility of constructing a new building through third-party financing should also be further explored. For the strategic heritage plan for the United Nations Office at Geneva the Secretary-General had negotiated a zero-per-cent-interest loan package with the host Government covering construction and renovation. A similar option should be considered for accommodation needs at Headquarters. The Secretary-General should explore the options available, without prejudice, for the financing of the project and should develop a more focused and formal approach when approaching the host country and other Member States.

87. **Ms. Coleman** (United States of America) said that in 2014 the Secretary-General had warned that the Organization would face a steep increase in rental costs in 2023 and had presented ten options to avoid that outcome. Given the many demands on the regular budget, a long-term accommodation plan was needed to optimize the use of resources. Of the options analysed further at the request of the Assembly, her delegation agreed that DC-5 was the most compelling in both quantitative and qualitative terms. It was almost \$1 billion better value than continued commercial leasing over the next 50 years and offered a unique opportunity to expand the existing campus. DC-5 should therefore be developed further and the next stage of design work and necessary agreements should be finalized by 2016 so that the cost of the project could be more clearly evaluated and the risk of cost escalation minimized.

88. However, it must be borne in mind that the evaluation was taking place while the United Nations was in the midst of a transformative reform agenda which should result in a smaller footprint in New York as functions were streamlined or relocated to more cost-effective locations. The potential of those efforts still needed to be analysed, but it was possible that substantial space outside the Secretariat Building might not be necessary. Still, given the projected steep increase in rental costs in 2023 and in anticipation of high commercial rents elsewhere in Manhattan and the limited availability of commercial space in the Turtle Bay area, the United Nations must have a cost-effective plan for the space that was still needed. DC-5 was clearly a leading option. The United Nations should also continue to monitor the market, including

options in the greater New York City and tri-state area so that the Assembly could be certain, if DC-5 was approved, that the best option had been selected at the time a decision must be made.

89. A long-term accommodation plan must be put in place in the interest of financial prudence – it was important not to simply watch rents escalate. Her delegation agreed that more information was needed before a final decision could be made, but Member States would eventually have to make a decision even with imperfect information as the cost of inaction was too high.

90. **Mr. Nagao** (Japan) said that office conditions were an issue of great importance to staff members working in New York as they spent such a large portion of time in their offices, sometimes longer than they spent at home. Member States must therefore consider which accommodation option would best serve the interests of the United Nations.

91. The Secretary-General had identified DC-5 as the most cost-effective option for long-term accommodation needs. However, the Assembly had not been requested to decide on DC-5 or any other option at the current stage, and Member States were not in a position to choose between the four viable options. Yet, while inaction was usually easier than action it should be remembered that inaction sometimes had grave consequences.

92. The preferential leases on DC-1 and DC-2, which currently housed more than half the population outside the United Nations campus in New York, would expire in 2023, and no more time could be wasted. Otherwise, the Organization could face outrageously expensive commercial rents or, even worse, the unavailability of office space. However, for now, it was important to keep all four viable options open.

Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council during its 2015 session (21 July 2014-23 July 2015) (A/70/7/Add.23 and A/70/430)

93. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council during its 2015 session (21 July 2014-23 July 2015) (A/70/430), said that, in July 2015, the Economic and Social Council had adopted six resolutions with programme

budget implications. Of those six, resolutions 2015/30 and 2015/33 would give rise to additional requirements in the amount of \$3.1 million over and above the resources in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, and would require an additional appropriation representing a charge against the contingency fund.

94. With regard to resolution 2015/30, on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to be fit for the evolving post-2015 development agenda, the additional requirements of \$1.5 million, including four new posts, primarily related to the establishment of a new subprogramme 9, Energy, as well as to additional mandates under subprogramme 1, Macroeconomic policy and inclusive development, and subprogramme 2, Trade and investment. Implementation of the resolution would also require programmatic modifications to programme 16, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific, of the approved biennial programme plan for the biennium 2016-2017, and to section 19, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific, of the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017, which would be subject to approval by the General Assembly.

95. With regard to resolution 2015/33, on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, the additional requirements amounted to \$1.6 million, including four temporary posts, in line with the duration of the mandate until 2030.

96. **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.23](#)), said that the Secretary-General had indicated that the implementation of resolution 2015/30, on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to be fit for the evolving post-2015 development agenda, would have financial implications under section 19, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 amounting to \$1,503,400. The resolution would entail the establishment of a committee on energy and the creation of four posts.

97. The Advisory Committee recommended approval of the proposed staffing changes for the implementation of resolution 2015/30. Regarding non-

post requirements, a 30-per-cent reduction in the \$40,000 requirement for consultants was warranted, as the new staff members should be in a position to perform some of the proposed functions.

98. With regard to resolution 2015/33, on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, the Secretary-General had indicated that the resolution would entail financial implications in the amount of \$1,580,700, including \$1,299,100 under section 9, Economic and social affairs, and \$281,600 under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. Implementation of resolution 2015/33 would require the establishment of three Professional posts on a temporary basis until 2030. The Advisory Committee recommended approval of the post requirements. Regarding non-post requirements, a 30-per-cent reduction for consultants was warranted, as the new staff members should be able to perform some of the tasks assigned to consultants.

99. Overall, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Assembly should approve an appropriation amounting to \$3,048,100 for the biennium 2016-2017, to represent a charge against the contingency fund.

100. **Mr. Davidson** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the mandates approved by intergovernmental bodies of the United Nations must be provided with adequate funding so that the Organization had the financial and human resources required to deliver as expected by Member States. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 68/1, the Economic and Social Council had undergone an overhaul designed to make its work more relevant, more efficient and more responsive to the needs of Member States, particularly in the area of social development. Member States had a duty to continue working for a stronger, more effective Council and the full implementation of its resolutions and mandates.

101. The Group noted that the additional requirements related to the resolutions approved by the Council in 2015 amounted to \$3,347,000, including an additional appropriation of \$3,084,100 to be charged against the contingency fund. The additional requirements stemmed from activities relating to the establishment of the Regional Conference on Social Development in Latin America and the Caribbean; the intergovernmental committee on technology for

development of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia; the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti; the restructuring of ESCAP to be fit for the evolving post-2015 development agenda; and the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015.

102. By its resolution 69/264, the Assembly had decided that the promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development would be a top priority of the United Nations in 2016-2017: the Group supported provision of the resources required to finance the resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its 2015 session.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.