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Chairman: Mr. MacKay (New Zealand)
*Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Kuznetsov

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05-33373 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 153: Financing of the United Nations Operation in Burundi (*continued*) (A/59/736/Add.12 and A/59/748)

Agenda item 154: Financing of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (*continued*) (A/59/736/Add.15 and A/59/750)

1. **Mr. Sach** (Controller) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on the budget for the United Nations Operation in Burundi for the period from 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006 and expenditure report for the period from 21 April to 30 June 2004 (A/59/748) and the report of the Secretary-General on the budget for the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire for the period from 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006 and expenditure report for the period from 4 April to 30 June 2004 (A/59/750). The reports included the justification, under the executive direction and management and relevant frameworks components, of the posts identified in General Assembly resolutions 59/15 and 59/16, including proposed grade level adjustments, where applicable.

2. The proposed budget for the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) for 2005/2006 amounted to \$296.7 million, a reduction of \$33 million, or 10 per cent, compared with the apportionment for 2004/2005. The budget provided for the deployment of 200 military observers, 5,450 military contingent personnel, 120 civilian police and 1,050 civilian staff, including 406 international staff, 446 national staff, and 198 United Nations Volunteers. The resources under the political process component included provision for 125 staff in the Electoral Assistance Office who were to be retained until 1 October 2005. The actions to be taken by the General Assembly were set out in paragraph 56 of the report.

3. The expenditures of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) for the period from 4 April to 30 June 2004 had amounted to \$83.1 million against an appropriation of \$96.4 million, leaving an unencumbered balance of \$13.3 million. Resources in the amount of \$371.8 million were requested for 2005/2006, representing a reduction of \$6.6 million, or 1.8 per cent, compared with the current period. That was attributable to significantly reduced requirements for the acquisition of various items of equipment, for

which provision had been made in 2004/2005. The budget estimates showed increased requirements under personnel costs owing to projected full deployment of military, civilian police and civilian personnel.

4. **Mr. Kuznetsov** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)), introducing the related reports of ACABQ (A/59/736/Add.12 and Add.15), said that the Advisory Committee's recommendation regarding the budget of ONUB took account of its position on posts and of several observations and recommendations it had made regarding opportunities for savings. ONUB continued to experience high vacancy rates for civilian police and civilian staff. Notwithstanding the review recently undertaken by the mission, the Advisory Committee was of the opinion that further efforts should be made to address the top-heaviness of its staffing structure. Moreover, the establishment of new units for additional functions should be avoided.

5. ONUB should review its inventory management practice and encourage careful use of assets by civilian and military personnel so that United Nations-owned equipment could be utilized to its full life expectancy. In addition, the mission, which maintained a fleet of 15 representational vehicles, should develop a prudent policy with a view to vehicle sharing.

6. He noted with satisfaction that, in response to observations in the Advisory Committee's previous report (A/59/412), ONUB had presented its budget in a user-friendly format, with clear and concise language, and had made effective use of quantitative and qualitative performance indicators to measure its achieved and planned outputs. The Advisory Committee trusted that the mission's efforts in that regard would continue and that its results-based-budgeting presentation would be further refined.

7. The Advisory Committee's recommendation regarding the budget of UNOCI reflected its observations on delayed deployment of military observers and civilian police and on the aviation transport unit. Its recommendations on posts would, if accepted, also result in reduced requirements. In terms of operational costs, the mission had moved beyond its initial start-up phase, during which significant investment had been made in equipment and infrastructure. Prudent management of those resources should lead to savings. Another area where economies might be realized was official travel: the Advisory

Committee recommended that UNOCI staff visiting Headquarters should optimize their trip by combining a variety of purposes, while individuals travelling from Headquarters should combine visits to different missions in the same subregion during the same trip. With regard to ground transport, UNOCI was requested to monitor the composition of its fleet with a view to reducing the high number of representational vehicles and to promote standardization in order to lower the costs of maintenance and spare parts.

8. Concerning the structure of the mission, he noted with appreciation that UNOCI had made a serious effort to address the recommendations made in the Advisory Committee's previous report (A/59/419 and Corr.1) and that the review of the functions of the posts identified for rejustification had led to proposals for the downgrading or abolition of certain posts. The Advisory Committee encouraged UNOCI and other missions to undertake that type of review as an ongoing exercise and to adapt and determine the level of posts whenever possible according to changing operational requirements as well as the actual responsibilities and functions performed, exploring the potential for integrating some of the functions in order to ensure the most cost-effective use of resources.

9. The reductions called for by the Advisory Committee in the budgets of ONUB and UNOCI could be made either in the areas identified by it, or elsewhere, since the entire budgets of both missions were administered as one line. Experience had shown that such recommendations encouraged serious thinking about administrative efficiency and, as far as he was aware, had not resulted in underfunding.

10. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the budget proposal for ONUB reflected the financial and human resources it would require to implement its complex multidimensional mandate. The approval of the requested resources would enable the mission to build on the solid foundation laid in its first year, during which it had successfully carried out a wide array of tasks and made an important contribution to the efforts to bring lasting peace to the region.

11. As the Secretary-General had stated, the link between conflict and development in Africa could be seen clearly in the case of Burundi. Accordingly, a comprehensive approach to peacekeeping and peacebuilding in that country must include a

willingness on the part of the international community to complement the investment in peacekeeping with a decisive input for sustainable development in order to avoid the re-emergence of conflict.

12. UNOCI, too, had been assigned a broad range of tasks. The Group therefore welcomed the level of resources proposed for the mission for 2005/2006. In that connection, it noted that the crises of November 2004 had delayed mission start-up activities, which had adversely affected the Operation's budget implementation rate. The political process was now back on track, and the parties had committed themselves to an unequivocal and immediate cessation of all hostilities. It was thus imperative for Member States to provide UNOCI with the financial and human resources it required to support Ivorians as they took the final steps towards the holding of elections in a peaceful and secure environment. Furthermore, every effort must be made to secure funding for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement (DDRRR) activities, which were crucial for the long-term stability of both the country and the region.

13. The Group remained concerned about the fragile humanitarian situation in Côte d'Ivoire. More than 3.5 million vulnerable persons were affected, including at least 500,000 internally displaced persons. In addition, the country was still host to tens of thousands of refugees, primarily from Liberia. The Group was therefore deeply disappointed by the international community's lacklustre response to the consolidated appeals launched by the United Nations in 2005. The Organization must intensify its efforts to resolve that dire situation.

14. The management of ONUB and UNOCI were to be commended for undertaking extensive reviews of the mission structures. Both operations should continue to assess their staffing needs in order to respond effectively to changing realities on the ground. The high vacancy rates at UNOCI, and at other African peacekeeping missions, were cause for concern. Clearly, the Secretariat must do more to recruit and retain staff. The Group wished to praise ONUB, which had significantly reduced its vacancy rates within a five-month period, and to urge it to continue those efforts.

15. While the promotion of synergies between peacekeeping operations in the same region was

welcome, such cooperation must not impede the ability of individual missions to implement their mandates, nor should it be seen as a way of reducing costs, and each operation must remain responsible for preparing and overseeing its own budget and controlling its assets and logistical operations. Conflict resolution must, nevertheless, be approached from a broader regional perspective, as demonstrated by the cross-border activities undertaken by ONUB and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) to ensure the safe movement of refugees, the curbing of insurgencies and the security of common borders.

16. Lastly, the Group had taken note of the recommendations of ACABQ, which it largely supported, and stood ready to consider them further in informal consultations.

17. **Mr. Mumbey-Wafula** (Uganda) welcomed the budget proposal for ONUB, the five main components of which were in line with the objectives of the Great Lakes Regional Peace Initiative on Burundi, chaired by President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, and with the mission's mandate. The resources requested were realistic, given the situation on the ground. Despite the overall progress made, there had been slippages in the electoral calendar. On 22 April 2005, a regional summit had been held in Entebbe to consider the road map for the elections in Burundi proposed by the National Independent Electoral Commission. The participants had agreed to extend the duration of the Transitional Government to 26 August 2005, when a post-transitional government was expected to take over. That development confirmed the Secretary-General's argument that among the largest contributing factors to resource variances were variances caused by parties or situations external to the control of the United Nations.

18. The provision of resources for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) was central to conflict resolution. A comprehensive, holistic approach was needed that took account of the situation not only in Burundi, but also in the trouble spots of the region, particularly the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

19. The international community was to be commended for its response to the recent Indian Ocean tsunami disaster. He trusted that it would support the

efforts to resolve the perennial conflicts in the Great Lakes region with the same generosity.

20. **Mr. Elji** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation supported the proposed budgets for ONUB and UNOCI for 2005/2006, which provided the human and financial resources necessary for the implementation of their mandates. It welcomed the Advisory Committee's praise for the management of the two missions. The international community must do more to support the efforts to bring peace to Burundi and Côte d'Ivoire. A rapid response by donors was essential in that regard.

21. The high vacancy rates in ONUB and UNOCI and in other African peacekeeping missions were cause for concern. While the promotion of regional cooperation among missions was to be commended, the budgets of peacekeeping operations must remain separate and each mission must retain administrative autonomy.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.