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Chairman: Ms. Samayoa-Recari (Vice-Chairman) (Guatemala)

*Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Kuznetsov

Contents

Agenda item 108: Programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005

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

Other matters

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In the absence of Mr. MacKay (New Zealand), Ms. Samayoa-Recari (Guatemala), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 108: Programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (A/58/886; A/59/411 and Corr.1)

1. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division), 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 (A/58/886), recalled that the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission had been established to implement the ruling of the International Court of Justice on the border dispute between the two countries. The United Nations was providing assistance to the Mixed Commission in carrying out that task. Having considered the proposed resource requirements for United Nations support to the Mixed Commission for the seven-month period from 1 June to 31 December 2004, as set out in document A/C.5/58/20/Add.1, the General Assembly, in its resolution 58/294, had authorized the Secretary-General to enter into commitments in the amount of \$6 million and had requested him to submit a comprehensive financial report by the end of its fifty-eighth session. The report before the Committee contained the revised requirements under the regular budget for the seven-month period and information on those elements of the Mixed Commission's mandate that were or would be funded from sources other than the regular budget.

2. The Secretary-General had initially sought an amount of \$6.9 million for United Nations support to the Mixed Commission, whereas the revised requirements amounted to \$5.4 million. The decrease in requirements reflected the actual pace of activities on the ground and reduced expenditures for civilian observers. Nearly \$8.3 million in extrabudgetary resources had been pledged or contributed. In addition, the Governments of Italy, Norway and Senegal were providing in-kind support. While no specific pledges

had been received with respect to joint projects, the World Bank and the African Development Bank had indicated their interest in supporting such activities. The action requested of the General Assembly was set out in part V of the report.

3. **Mr. Kuznetsov** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/59/411 and Corr.1), said that background information was provided in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the report, while details of the revised requirements were contained in paragraphs 7 to 13. He recalled that neither the Advisory Committee, nor the Fifth Committee, had had sufficient time to consider the proposed resource requirements submitted in May 2004. Accordingly, it had been decided to grant commitment authority instead of charging the expenses against the existing appropriation under section 3 (Political affairs) of the programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005.

4. Subsequent to its consideration of the Secretary-General's initial request, the Advisory Committee had received additional information on staffing requirements. However, it had been constrained in its consideration of the report on the revised requirements (A/58/886) by the fact that 13 international staff positions had already been filled, another two were under active recruitment and all local staff were on board. The Advisory Committee had effectively been presented with a *fait accompli*. Although it had no objection to the staffing for the Mixed Commission, it did expect that any future presentation for a special political mission would, in the first instance, contain detailed information and justification for the proposals, both post and non-post, in the same manner as the presentations for peacekeeping missions.

5. In paragraphs 11, 12 and 13 of its report, the Advisory Committee made a number of recommendations for potential savings, which should be reflected in the first performance report for the biennium 2004-2005. In paragraph 14, it recommended that the General Assembly should approve the revised requirements for United Nations support to the Mixed Commission for the period from 1 June to 31 December 2004. In order to ensure consistency of treatment, the amount approved should be charged against the unallocated balance of the provision for special political missions appropriated under section 3

of the programme budget. He noted that there appeared to be a technical error in paragraph 19 of the Secretary-General's report, in which a different course of action was indicated; the error had been reproduced in the Advisory Committee's report.

6. **Mr. Al-Ansari** (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group strongly supported the Secretary-General's request to appropriate the reduced commitment of \$5.4 million under section 3 of the programme budget in the context of the action to be taken on the first performance report. It wished to commend those countries that had made voluntary contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for the financing of the boundary demarcation process, including Cameroon and Nigeria, which had given \$3 million each, and to urge donor countries to contribute to the Trust Fund.

7. **Mr. Elkhuisen** (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Turkey), the stabilization and association process countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) and, in addition, Iceland, said that the European Union recognized the importance of the Mixed Commission's work and its contribution to conflict prevention and to the peaceful settlement of disputes. When the Committee had considered the proposed resource requirements for United Nations support to the Mixed Commission in May 2004, delegations had posed a number of questions concerning the staffing requirements and the level and functions of the posts concerned; the requirements for consultants and experts; possible savings under transportation and air operations; participation by regional bodies and cooperation from United Nations offices; and the plans for obtaining voluntary contributions. The report before the Committee (A/58/886) contained the revised requirements for the period from 1 June to 31 December 2004 and information on the voluntary contributions and pledges received as of 31 August 2004. Additional information on staffing requirements had been shared with delegations at the second part of the resumed fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. However, not all of the questions raised had been answered. The European Union would seek further clarification in informal consultations.

8. The European Union was ready to approve the revised requirements, but it concurred with the Advisory Committee that costs should be closely monitored. Any savings identified should be reflected in the first performance report. It trusted that the temporary setback in the third and final phase of withdrawals and transfers of authority in the Bakassi peninsula would not lead to further delays in the implementation of the Mixed Commission's mandate and invited all parties to comply with the agreed time frame. Lastly, noting that the requirements for United Nations support to the Mixed Commission for 2005 were to be included in the consolidated report on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council, to be submitted by 31 December 2004, he expressed the hope that the Committee's comments would be given due consideration in the preparation of that document.

9. **Ms. Lock** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that the Group wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It noted with satisfaction that the revised requirements for United Nations support to the Mixed Commission represented a reduction of \$580,700 compared with the amount of the commitment authority, the result of efficient management. It also welcomed the prompt deployment of the necessary staff. It supported the Secretary-General's request to appropriate the amount of \$5.4 million under section 3 of the programme budget and endorsed the recommendations contained in paragraph 14 of the report of ACABQ. It commended those countries that had made voluntary contributions in cash or in kind. However, it noted that, while more than \$8 million had been received, a further \$4 million was needed to fund the boundary demarcation activities, which were estimated to cost approximately \$12 million. It wished to appeal for voluntary contributions to support those activities and to fund joint projects and other confidence-building measures.

10. **Ms. Taylor Roberts** (Jamaica) said that her delegation had taken note of the Advisory Committee's observation that presentations for special political missions must contain detailed information and justification for the proposals. It supported the appropriation of the revised amount of \$5.4 million requested for United Nations support to the Cameroon-

Nigeria Mixed Commission. It noted with satisfaction that the two countries had taken ownership of the process, as demonstrated by the specific financial commitments they had made. It also wished to commend those countries that had made voluntary contributions in cash and in kind. Notwithstanding the delays in the final phase of withdrawals and transfers of authority, significant progress had been achieved. Her delegation welcomed the pledge by the Governments of Nigeria and Cameroon to maintain the spirit of cooperation and friendship that had characterized the work of the Mixed Commission. That process should be encouraged and supported.

11. **Mr. Ekorong à Dong** (Cameroon) said that his delegation supported the appropriation of the requested amount, which, it trusted, would be sufficient to ensure the effective functioning of the Mixed Commission. As the Secretary-General had stated in his report on the work of the Organization (A/59/1, para. 29), significant progress had been achieved by Cameroon and Nigeria, with the assistance of the United Nations, in the implementation of the ruling of the International Court of Justice on the land and maritime boundary between the two countries. The withdrawal of the civilian administration, military and police forces by each of the two States from areas falling within the sovereignty of the other and the corresponding transfer of authority, as called for by the Court, would enhance cooperation between Cameroon and Nigeria. The official visit by the Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to Cameroon had demonstrated the two countries' determination to continue to strengthen their bilateral relations through peaceful cooperation and dialogue. The process initiated by the Commission was unique in Africa and was already bearing fruit. He therefore wished to urge the entire international community to encourage and support it so as to bring it to a successful conclusion.

12. **Mr. Kozaki** (Japan) recalled that, in his previous report on the matter (A/C.5/58/20/Add.1), the Secretary-General had stated that the work of the Mixed Commission was gaining momentum. However, according to the report now before the Committee (A/58/886), the proposed resource requirements for United Nations support to the Mixed Commission for the period 1 June to 31 December 2004 had been revised downwards because the pace of activities on the ground had been slower than expected. He asked whether the initial momentum had indeed slowed and,

if that was the case, whether the Mixed Commission would be able to complete its work by the end of 2005. He also wished to know why the estimated cost of deploying 32 civilian observers had been reduced from \$2.8 million to \$1.2 million. If the saving was attributable to a reduction in the level of their fees, as was stated in the report of ACABQ (A/59/411, para. 7), that information should have been included in the Secretary-General's report. Noting that the initial phase of United Nations support to the Mixed Commission had been funded from sources other than the regular budget, he enquired how much had been spent and how many staff had been employed during that phase. Lastly, he would welcome additional information on the duration of the boundary demarcation exercise and the status of the Working Group on the maritime boundary.

13. **Mr. Sach** (Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the decrease of \$580,700 in the estimated requirements had been mostly due to the reduction in the fees of the 32 civilian observers. While the report of ACABQ had gone into greater detail on that point, the information contained therein had been provided by the Secretariat. In addition, the difference between the amount of the commitment authority approved in June 2004 and the level of resources requested in the report before the Committee (A/58/886) reflected the difficulty of predicting the actual cost of new activities. It did not imply a change in the scope of United Nations support to the Mixed Commission. He would respond to the other points raised in informal consultations.

Other matters

14. **Mr. Abelian** (Secretary of the Committee) read out a note from the Chief of the Interpretation Service, which had been approved by the Director of the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division. The note reminded delegations that, in order for the interpreters to meet their expectations, all statements should be made at a pace that allowed the statement to be clearly understood and that any text that was going to be read in the meeting room should be provided to the interpreters before it was presented.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.