



Seventieth session

Agenda item 134

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

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

Eleventh report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

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Special political missions and abbreviations

Special political missions

Thematic cluster I

Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar

Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus

Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide

Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara

Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region

Thematic cluster II

Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea

Panel of Experts on Liberia

Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire

Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Panel of Experts on the Sudan

Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Panel of Experts on the Islamic Republic of Iran

Panel of Experts on Libya

Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic

Panel of Experts on Yemen

Panel of Experts on South Sudan*

Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1526 (2004) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities

Support to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) on the non-proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction

Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate

* Missions established during 2015.

Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism*

Thematic cluster III

United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA)

United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA)**

United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS)

United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL)**

United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)

United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)

United Nations support for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission

United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB)**

United Nations Electoral Observer Mission in Burundi (MENUMB)***

Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL)

United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA)

United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL)

Joint Mission of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the United Nations for the Elimination of the Chemical Weapons Programme of the Syrian Arab Republic (OPCW-United Nations Joint Mission)**

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

Other abbreviations

United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia (UNSOA)

United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS)

** Missions discontinued during 2014.

*** Mission to be discontinued by the end of 2015.

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the reports 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/70/348 and Add.1-6). During its consideration of the reports, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 4 December 2015.

2. The estimated requirements of \$566,321,700 net proposed for 35 continuing special political missions are contained in the reports of the Secretary-General (A/70/348 and Add.1-6; see also para. 3 below). The main report of the Secretary-General (A/70/348) provides an overview of the proposed resource requirements for 2016 for the 35 missions and related cross-cutting issues, and the five addenda to the main report cover the specific requirements for thematic clusters I to III and the two largest missions, UNAMA and UNAMI (A/70/348/Add.1-5). The budget proposal of the Secretary-General for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (cluster I) is contained in a separate addendum (A/70/348/Add.6).¹ In the present report, the Advisory Committee addresses issues of a cross-cutting nature pertaining to all special political missions, while the specific comments and recommendations of the Committee related to the budget proposals for thematic clusters I to III, UNAMA and UNAMI, as well as for the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen, are presented in its related reports (A/70/7/Add.11-16).

3. Additional resource requirements in the amount of \$5,030,800 for a new mission, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (cluster II), are presented in document A/70/348/Add.7 and Corr.1. The related report of the Advisory Committee will be issued in document A/70/7/Add.17. The estimated requirements for the new mission are not included in the estimates of \$566,321,700 net for 35 continuing missions contained in the main report of the Secretary-General (A/70/348; see para. 2 above), and are therefore not discussed in the present report. The Committee notes that if those additional resource requirements were included, the overall estimated requirements for 2016 would amount to \$571,352,500 net for a total of 36 special political missions, comprising 35 continuing missions and 1 new mission (see also table 1 below).

Status of mission mandates and missions established and to be completed in 2015

4. In his report, the Secretary-General provides information with respect to the status of the mandates of the 35 continuing missions for which budgetary requirements are requested for 2016 (A/70/348, paras. 5-7; see also para. 3 above), as follows: (a) 12 missions have open-ended mandates; (b) 21 missions have

¹ The Secretary-General provides an explanation for the separate addendum in paragraph 10 of his report (A/70/348).

mandates expiring in 2016 or later; (c) 1 mission is under consideration by the General Assembly;² and (d) 1 mission has a mandate that will expire in 2015.³

5. One new mission, the Panel of Experts on South Sudan (cluster II), was established by the Security Council in its resolution 2206 (2015) of 3 March 2015 for an initial period of 13 months. The General Assembly, by its resolution 69/274 B, approved the budget of the Panel of Experts for 2015 (A/70/348, para. 8).

6. MENUB (cluster III) is not included in the 35 special political missions that are anticipated to continue during 2016, as it is expected to complete its operations by the end of 2015. It was established effective 1 January 2015 to observe and report to the Security Council before, during and after the elections in Burundi in accordance with the Council resolution 2137 (2014) (A/70/348, para. 9).

II. Proposed biennial provision for 2016-2017

7. The Advisory Committee recalls that in its resolution on the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2016-2017 (resolution 69/264, para. 6), the General Assembly decided that the preliminary estimate of resources for the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 should include a provision for special political missions, in the amount of \$1,130,400,000, which should be reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, and that additional requirements would continue to be treated in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/213.

8. In this connection, the Advisory Committee notes that a biennial provision of \$1,124,400,000 for special political missions was included in section 3, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017 (see A/70/7, para. II.2). This amount reflects a reduction of \$6,000,000 compared with the preliminary estimate of \$1,130,400,000 decided by the General Assembly in its resolution on the budget outline. According to the Secretary-General, this reduction is part of a net reduction of \$30 million relating to efficiencies that have been distributed to the programme support components in line with General Assembly resolution 69/264 (A/70/6 (Introduction), para. 31). The Committee has made comments in this regard in its report on the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017 (A/70/7, paras. 42-45). Upon request for a breakdown of the \$6,000,000 reduction proposed for the special political missions, the Committee was informed that the proposed reduction of \$6,000,000 related to efficiencies was not broken down by mission. The Committee notes that of the total reduction of \$6,223,900 for efficiencies proposed for section 3, an amount of \$223,900 was proposed for the Department of Political Affairs under post and non-post resources, while an amount of \$6,000,000 was proposed for special political missions under non-post resources (A/70/6 (Sect. 3), paras. 3.23-3.25).

² The resource requirements for the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar, whose mandate emanates from the General Assembly, will be presented in a statement of programme budget implications in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, subject to action taken by the Third Committee of the Assembly. Those requirements are also included in documents A/70/348 and Add.1 so as to consolidate the overall resource requirements of all special political missions.

³ For the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, the 2016 budget proposal is included on the assumption that the Security Council will extend the mandate into 2016.

9. Concerning the biennial provisions for 2012-2013 and 2014-2015, the Advisory Committee recalls the following:

(a) For 2012-2013, a biennial provision of \$1,083 million was included in section 3, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget, which included a reduction of \$35 million for the ongoing missions as a result of the expected delivery of objectives and mandates in a more cost-effective and efficient manner (see A/66/7, paras. 26, 27, and II.14-II.18). Total expenditures for the biennium amounted to \$1,179.2 million (see table 1 below);

(b) For 2014-2015, a biennial provision of \$1,081 million for special political missions was included in section 3 of the proposed programme budget, which reflected a reduction of \$32 million to the amount of \$1,113 million proposed for special political missions by the Secretary-General in the budget outline for 2014-2015 (see A/68/7, paras. II.2 and II.22-II.27). According to the Secretary-General, this reduction was in response to the General Assembly resolution on the budget outline for that period (resolution 67/248), reflecting reductions under consultants and the travel of staff and experts (see A/68/7/Add.10, paras. 14 and 15). The projected expenditure amounts to \$1,177.5 million (actual expenditure for 2014 and projected expenditure for 2015) (see table 1 and para. 12 below).

10. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with a table showing the total number of missions, the levels of civilian personnel, approved budgets and expenditures for the period from 2008 to 2015, and the corresponding proposals for 2016 (see table 1).

Table 1
**Overview of financial and human resources for special political missions,
2008-2016**

(Millions of United States dollars)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016 ^a (Proposed)
Number of ongoing missions	30	27	27	32	33	38	38	36	36
Approved civilian personnel	4 929	4 690	5 186	4 836	4 800	4 080	4 302	3 740	3 648
Approved budget	402.0	474.7	516.1	676.5	600.3	599.9	597.8	590.1	571.3
Actual expenditure ^b	405.4	447.9	549.0	627.2	613.9	565.3	581.9	595.5 ^c	To be determined

^a Reflects requirements for the 35 continuing missions (A/70/348 and Add.1-6), as well as the additional requirements for a new mission (A/70/348/Add.7) (see para.3 above).

^b It should be noted that, in some cases, annual expenditure exceeds the approved budget; however, the biennial expenditures take into account the revised appropriation for the biennium as a whole.

^c Projected expenditure for 2015.

11. **Taking into account the information contained in paragraphs 7 to 9 above, the Advisory Committee is of the view that the proposed reduction of \$6 million under efficiencies for special political missions for 2016-2017 should have been justified. Furthermore, the Committee reiterates that funding for special political missions during the biennium will be dependent on decisions of the General Assembly and/or the Security Council to establish or renew mandates. As such, the provision is subject to change. In view of past experience, which**

indicates an inability to make precise predictions about such missions, the Committee is of the view that the level of reduction reflected in the Secretary-General's projections for special political missions for the biennium 2016-2017 may prove optimistic (see A/66/7, para. 27).

III. Overview of resource requirements for 2016

Performance for 2014-2015

12. As shown in table 3 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/348), the projected expenditure for 2014-2015 amounts to \$1,177.5 million, compared with the total appropriation of \$1,187.9 million.⁴ The projected overall unencumbered balance of \$10.4 million is mainly related to balances from the missions of cluster I (\$2.6 million), cluster II (\$5.2 million) and UNAMI (\$2.2 million). Table 4 of the report provides a summary of the main contributing factors to the significant variances between the 2014-2015 appropriation and projected expenditures for the 35 missions that are anticipated to continue into 2016.

Proposed requirements for 2016

13. The proposed requirements for 2016 for the 35 continuing special political missions amount to \$566,321,700 net (see para. 3 above), representing a decrease of \$12,071,600, or 2.1 per cent, compared with the approved resources of \$578,393,300 for 2015 (A/70/348, table 5). The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the proposed estimates for 2016 had taken into account resources required for safety and security of staff and would not therefore have a negative impact on the safety and security of staff. The comments and recommendations of the Committee on the proposed resource requirements for specific missions are contained in its related reports (A/70/7/Add.11-16).

14. A summary of the resource variances by cluster is provided in table 5 and explained in paragraphs 69 to 71 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/348). As indicated in the report, compared with the approved budget of 2015, the estimated resource requirements for 2016 reflect increased requirements under cluster I (\$2.4 million, or 6.7 per cent) and cluster III (\$7.1 million, or 3.9 per cent), and reductions under cluster II (\$1.4 million, or 3.9 per cent), UNAMA (\$4.1 million, or 2.2 per cent) and UNAMI (\$16.1 million, or 11.8 per cent). A summary of main contributing factors to the variances for each mission is provided in table 4 of the report.

15. A summary of the estimated resource requirements for 2016 by major category of expenditure, compared with the provisions for 2014-2015, is provided in table 2 below. As shown in the table, the overall reduction of \$12 million in the proposed resources for 2016 reflects reduced resources under operational costs (\$21.6 million), offset in part by proposed increases under military and police personnel (\$1.6 million), and civilian personnel (\$7.9 million) (see A/70/348, table 9).

⁴ Inclusive of the five missions discontinued or to be completed (BINUCA, BNUB, MENUB, UNIPSIL and the Special Coordinator of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Mission), but exclusive of \$2.6 million for MENUB in commitment authority authorized by the Advisory Committee (\$1.5 million) and by the Secretary-General (\$1.1 million), which will be reflected in the second performance report for 2014-2015.

Table 2
Summary of estimated requirements by major category of expenditure

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Category of expenditure	2014-2015			Total requirements for 2015	Requirements for 2016 ^a		Variance from 2015 to 2016
	Appropriation	Estimated expenditure	Variance		Total	Non-recurrent	
	(1)	(2)	(3)=(1)-(2)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)=(5)-(4)
I. Military and police personnel	36 926.4	35 532.8	1 393.6	21 326.6	22 880.4	–	1 553.8
II. Civilian personnel	631 228.0	632 298.6	(1 070.6)	314 931.9	322 875.0	–	7 943.1
III. Operational costs	460 609.8	450 756.2	9 853.6	242 134.8	220 566.3	14 826.9	(21 568.5)
Total (net requirements)	1 128 764.2	1 118 587.6	10 176.6	578 393.3	566 321.7	14 826.9	(12 071.6)
Discontinued missions^{b,c}	59 108.3	58 863.1	245.2	11 697.9	–	–	(11 697.9)
Grand total	1 187 872.5	1 177 450.7	10 421.8	590 091.2	566 321.7	14 826.9	(23 769.5)

^a Excludes the additional requirements of \$5 million for the new mission OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism.

^b Includes BINUCA, BNUB, MENEUB, UNIPSIL and the Special Coordinator of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Mission.

^c The appropriation for MENEUB does not include \$2.6 million in commitment authority authorized by the Advisory Committee (\$1.5 million) and the Secretary-General (\$1.1 million), which will be reflected in the second performance report for 2014-2015.

Staffing requirements for 2016

16. For the 35 continuing special political missions (see para. 3 above), the Secretary-General proposes a total of 3,621 positions for 2016 under civilian personnel, compared with 3,650 positions approved for 2015, reflecting a net reduction of 29 positions. This net reduction results from decreases under UNAMA (60), UNAMI (21) and UNSMIL (8), offset in part by increases under UNSOM (35), UNOCA (14), the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen (5), UNIOGBIS (4), UNSCOL (1) and UNOWA (1). Tables 7 and 10 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/348) contain information on the proposed civilian staffing requirements for 2016 by cluster, category and level for each mission. Annex V to the report contains a summary of the changes proposed for the missions. The comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the proposed staffing requirements for specific missions are contained in its related reports (A/70/7/Add.11-16).

17. The Advisory Committee recalls that, during its review of the proposed budget for the support account for peacekeeping operations for 2015/16, it was informed that with the harmonization of conditions of service and the designation of missions as family and non-family duty stations in 2010, the requirement for classification of posts/positions had been expanded to all peacekeeping operations and special political missions (A/69/860, para. 59). The Committee requested information on the status of the classification exercise for special political missions, including the number of positions that had been upgraded or downgraded by one or two levels, and the financial requirements involved. The Committee was informed that preliminary classification of positions in 18 special political missions had resulted in the change in the levels within the National Professional Officer, Local level and Field Service categories. The number of positions that had been classified, on a preliminary basis, a number of levels above or below the original levels were as

follows: (a) 192 positions classified at one level above; (b) 3 positions classified at two levels above; (c) 6 positions classified at one level below; and (d) 5 positions classified at two levels below. The Committee was further informed that the financial impact associated with these changes would be taken into account in the context of the proposed budget for 2017. **The Advisory Committee will revert to the issue of the classification exercise for positions in special political missions in the context of its upcoming review of human resources management.**

Vacancy rates and vacant positions

18. The Advisory Committee was provided with information on the budgeted vacancy rates for 2015, actual average vacancy rates for the period from 1 January to 31 August 2015, actual vacancy rates as at 30 September 2015, projected average vacancy rates for 2015 and proposed vacancy rates for 2016 for special political missions. The comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on vacancy rates for individual missions are contained in its related reports (A/70/7/Add.11-16).

19. A single vacancy rate for new and continuing positions is applied in estimating staff requirements for 2016 for the special political missions. The Advisory Committee recalls that in its review of the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017, it indicated that, given the persistently long recruitment timelines connected to the filling of newly established posts, it believed there was merit in maintaining a different budgetary treatment for new and continuing posts and remained unconvinced of the benefits of applying a single vacancy rate (A/70/7, para. 57). The Committee recommended that the General Assembly apply the vacancy rates of 50 per cent for new Professional positions and 35 per cent for new General Service positions in the budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (A/70/7, para. 57). **Consequently, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to apply different vacancy rates for new positions in the estimates for 2016 for the special political missions, as is the case for posts and positions established for the programme budget, and to provide the related information to the General Assembly.**

20. The Advisory Committee was also provided with information on positions vacant for two years or longer, which reflected a total of 16 vacancies across three missions (3 in UNAMA, 9 in UNAMI and 4 in the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria). **The Committee reiterates the view that, as a matter of overall policy, the continuing requirement for posts that have been vacant for two years or longer should be reviewed and justifications provided for their retention in the proposed programme budget. Otherwise, they should be proposed for abolishment. The Committee reiterates that, in his future budget proposals, the Secretary-General should continue to provide information on vacancies, if any, that have existed in the special political missions for two years or longer (see A/69/628, para. 18). The Committee reiterates its view that, as a general principle, all positions should be filled expeditiously.**

Methodology for calculation of standard staff costs

21. In its review of the proposed requirements for special political missions for 2015, the Advisory Committee noted the application of different methodologies to the calculation of staff costs for the missions administered by the Department of

Political Affairs and the Department of Field Support. It expressed the view that the methodologies should be improved and that a consistent approach should be followed for all special political missions and peacekeeping operations, while any differences in the application of the methodologies should be clearly explained in the budget proposals, with a view to improving budgetary transparency (A/69/628, paras. 19 and 20). In this regard, the Committee notes that in response to its recommendation, the methodology used for calculating standard salary costs for staff in peacekeeping missions has been applied to all international staff in the 2016 requirements for the special political missions, while for the standard common staff costs, the percentage of costs to net salaries was determined on the basis of the actual expenditure for common staff costs and net salaries (including post adjustment) for the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 March 2015. The estimates of national staff costs continue to be based on the actual level and step for salaries and historical expenditures for common staff costs in a particular duty station (A/70/348, paras. 54-57). **The Committee welcomes the application of the same methodology in calculating standard salaries for international staff for all special political missions, for the purposes of transparency and comparison of costs across missions.**

Ratios for vehicles and information technology equipment and spares

22. In paragraph 58 of his report (A/70/348), the Secretary-General indicates that the Department of Field Support has reviewed the vehicle and information technology equipment holdings in special political missions and aligned such holdings, where possible, with the standard ratios it has established and promulgated in the Standard Cost and Ratio Manual. In that context, the holdings of vehicles and information technology equipment have been proposed on the basis of the proposed personnel incumbency levels planned for 2016, rather than on the full authorized level of personnel. Tables 1 and 2 of the report of the Secretary-General provide information on ratios for vehicles and information technology equipment for all field-based special political missions that are supported by the Department of Field Support. It is shown in the tables that the proposed vehicle holdings for special political missions (671) are 8.2 per cent higher than the standard allocation (620), and that the total proposed computing device holdings plus spares (3,763) are 1 per cent higher than the standard allocation plus spares (3,729) (see para. 27 below).

23. Concerning ratios for vehicle holdings proposed for 2016, the Secretary-General indicates that the proposed vehicle holdings of several special political missions vary significantly from the standard allocation, both in nominal terms and as a percentage of the standard allocation. Information on the variances is provided in paragraph 59 and table 1 of the report of the Secretary-General, including for those missions with higher-than-standard allocations (the Offices of the Special Envoys for Syria and for the Sahel, UNIOGBIS, UNSOM, UNAMA and UNAMI) and for those with lower-than-standard allocations (the Offices of the Special Envoy for Yemen and UNSMIL (see para. 24 below)). The comments and recommendations of the Committee on the vehicle holdings of specific missions are contained in its related reports (A/70/7/Add.11-16).

24. The Secretary-General indicates that UNSMIL has been relocated to Tunis, which is a family duty station; therefore, the standard ratios are no longer applicable to the mission (the proposed holdings for UNSMIL for 2016 are 21, compared with the standard allocation of 55). However, the Advisory Committee notes that for the

Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, which is based in Nairobi, the proposed holdings for 2016 (10) are consistent with the standard allocation (A/70/348, table 1). The Committee was informed that while the holdings of vehicles by the United Nations Office at Nairobi were guided by the policy for all established United Nations offices,⁵ there was no standard ratio specific to special political missions located at family duty stations, and the vehicles were allocated based on the operational requirements of the mission (see A/70/7/Add.11, para. 31). **The Committee notes the anomalies in the vehicle holdings by those special political missions located at family duty stations, for which neither the standard ratios established in the Standard Cost and Ratio Manual for peacekeeping operations, nor the policy on the provision and use of official cars for all established United Nations offices, are applicable. The Committee considers that a coherent policy is required for special political missions at family duty stations.**

25. The Advisory Committee notes the absence of clear overarching policy guidelines covering all missions at different categories of duty stations. While the Committee notes that the report of the Secretary-General provides information on ratios for vehicles for 15 field-based special political missions that are supported by the Department of Field Support on the basis of the standard ratios in the Standard Cost and Ratio Manual (see para. 22 above), information on vehicle ratios for the other missions, and the applicable policies involved, is not provided in the report. **The Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to develop a policy with respect to the vehicle holdings by all special political missions at all duty stations, taking into consideration the mandate, size and operational requirements of individual missions, and to report thereon in the proposed budget for 2017. The Committee expects that the Secretary-General will clearly indicate the applicability of such a policy to each special political mission.**

26. In addition, the Advisory Committee notes the lack of criteria for stocking spare parts and replacing vehicle parts for special political missions. In the case of UNAMA, the Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the provision for spare parts for 2016 (\$558,100) under ground transportation would cover spare parts and repairs and maintenance for 309 vehicles, based on a monthly average cost formula for each type of the vehicle. **The Committee is of the view that the Secretary-General should improve the methodology for the formulation of budgetary requirements for stocking spare parts and replacing vehicle parts for special political missions.**

27. According to the Secretary-General, the total proposed computing device holdings (3,763) are 1 per cent higher than the standard allocation plus spares (3,729) (A/70/348, para. 60, and table 2). **However, the Advisory Committee notes that if compared with the standard allocation (3,255), the total number of the proposed computing device holdings, including spares (3,763), is 15.6 per cent higher.**

28. The Secretary-General indicates that the higher percentage of computing device holdings proposed for 2016 is due mainly to the higher-than-standard holdings in missions such as UNAMI (205), UNAMA (102) and UNSOM (68),

⁵ Administrative instruction ST/AI/2006/1 entitled "Policy on the provision and use of official cars", which does not apply to peacekeeping operations.

which require such equipment for, inter alia, training facilities, Internet cafés, information technology maintenance services and car log systems for vehicles (A/70/348, para. 60). It is nonetheless not clear to the Advisory Committee how these requirements are determined. In its review of the financing of peacekeeping operations for 2015/16, the Committee considered that the ratios for computer holdings should include provisions relating to the recommended quantities of devices set aside for general purposes and for emergency security situations. The Committee also questioned the need to continue to procure new computer devices in view of the large numbers of devices in missions that were not currently designated to individual staff (see A/69/839, para. 121). **The Committee is of the view that any policy guidance to be developed in this regard for peacekeeping operations should also apply to special political missions.**

Air operations

29. Annex IV to the main report of the Secretary-General (A/70/348) provides information, by mission, on appropriations and expenditure for 2014, the approved budget for 2015 and the proposed budget for 2016 for air operations, as well as actual flying hours for 2014 and budgeted flying hours for 2015 and 2016. He indicates that this information is provided in response to the request by the Advisory Committee for improvement in the presentation of information on air operations (A/69/628, para. 33), which was endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/262 (A/70/348, para. 61).

30. The proposed resources for air operations amount to \$45.2 million for 2016, compared with the approved budget of \$59.7 million for 2015 and the expenditure of \$48.4 million for 2014 (ibid., paras. 62-65). The proposed resources for 2016 represent a decrease of \$14.5 million, or 24.3 per cent, compared with the appropriation for 2015. At the same time, the total flying hours will increase from 5,810 hours actually flown in 2014 and 7,493 budgeted flight hours for 2015 to a projection of 8,060 hours in 2016. The resources proposed for UNAMI, UNAMA and UNSOM represent 81 per cent of the overall resources requested under air operations in 2016. It is indicated that the reductions in the proposed resources for air transportation in UNAMA, UNAMI and UNSMIL are slightly offset by a new requirement for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen owing to the current unavailability of commercial flights to Sana'a (see A/70/7/Add.16, para. 14), and by an additional requirement for the newly mandated activities of UNSOM. While in Somalia, UNSOA (renamed as UNSOS by the Security Council in its resolution 2245 (2015)) and UNSOM have revised their cost-sharing ratio from 70:30 to 52:48 in the latter part of 2016 as the result of the expanded mandate of UNSOM in the region, the 2015 ratio is maintained for the four missions located in West Africa (65:20:10:5 for UNOWA, UNIOGBIS, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel and United Nations support for the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission). **The Advisory Committee stresses that the Secretary-General should continue to review the resource requirements for air operations for the special political missions and report thereon in future budget proposals.**

Travel

31. The Advisory Committee recalls that, during its consideration of the proposed budget for 2015, it received, upon request, a detailed breakdown of the travel

requirements proposed for each of the special political missions for 2015 (see A/69/628, para. 31). The Committee subsequently requested, but did not receive, detailed information on actual trips taken during 2015, compared with the trips planned for the year. The Committee was informed that there is no mechanism or process currently in place that allows compilation of the detailed breakdown of actual travel costs without investing significant staff resources and time in the preparation of such information. **The Committee expects that with the implementation of Umoja, comparative information related to trips planned and actually taken during 2016 will be made available in the context of the proposed resource estimates for special political missions for 2017.**

32. The resource requirements proposed under official travel amount to \$17.5 million for 2016, representing a decrease of \$2.9 million compared with the appropriation of \$20.3 million for 2015 (see A/70/348, table 9). The Advisory Committee requested a detailed breakdown of the travel requirements proposed for each of the special political missions for 2016, but only received the information at a very late stage of its consideration of the budget for 2016, which does not allow an in-depth analysis of the information by the Committee. **The Committee understands that a detailed breakdown of planned trips is prepared as part of the budget preparation process and considers that it should be made available to the Committee along with the supplementary information to budget proposals.**

33. From the limited analysis that it was able to undertake, the Advisory Committee notes a number of issues related to the resources requested under travel, which are similar to what it identified in its previous report on the related requirements for special political missions in 2015 (A/69/628). The Committee found examples where airfare estimates for trips between the same destinations lacked consistency. For trips between Nairobi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, the unit cost of \$1,200 is budgeted under gender affairs, while \$3,400 is budgeted under political affairs. Similarly, the projected cost of trips between New York and Brindisi for political affairs officers varies considerably, with a per-trip cost of \$6,800 budgeted under the panels of experts on the Sudan and Libya, \$6,070 under the Panel of Experts on Yemen and \$5,400 under the Panel of Experts on South Sudan.

34. Another observation relates to possible instances of overestimates of official travel in special political missions. For example, an average of four trips for two staff per month from Brussels to Geneva is budgeted under the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria at a total projected cost of \$163,978 (25 trips of three days for two staff and 24 trips of two days for two staff), while the Advisory Committee was informed that two official trips per month are planned for the Special Envoy and his Special Assistant for an estimated annual cost of \$127,200 in 2016 (A/70/7/Add.11, para. 21). Similarly, although travel is planned for quarterly briefings of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, seven trips of five days from Nairobi to New York are budgeted for two staff from the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region.

35. Finally, the Advisory Committee notes that multiple trips are budgeted to the same destinations for the same purposes, some of which could potentially be combined, such as those planned for UNAMA for purposes of mission support review and consultations (3 trips of eight days for one staff and 1 trip of seven days

for six staff from Kabul to New York), and those planned for the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region for the purpose of assessing the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (10 trips of three days for two staff).

36. In its consideration of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, the Advisory Committee recalled that the matter of official travel for staff had been under review for several years (A/70/7, paras. 106 and 107). The General Assembly endorsed a number of measures for the effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel, including a recommendation in its resolution 65/268 (annex, para. 2 (e)) that the Secretary-General instruct staff to purchase tickets at least two weeks in advance of travel, where possible (see para. 37 below). In addition, in resolution 67/254 A, the Assembly endorsed a number of related recommendations of the Advisory Committee, including more frequent use of videoconferencing, telephone conferencing or webcasting; heavier reliance on staff assigned to local duty stations or to nearby regional or subregional offices to fulfil tasks and provide support, rather than bringing in staff from central locations; and reducing the requirements for accompanying staff in the event that a senior official needs to travel. **The Advisory Committee reiterates its view that missions should, wherever feasible, balance increased requirements for travel in certain areas by seeking alternative means of communication in others (A/69/628, para. 31).**

37. Concerning the rates of compliance with the policy of 16-day advance booking of tickets by the special political missions, the Advisory Committee notes from the information it received upon request that compliance rates of less than 50 per cent have been recorded for more than half of the missions, thereby leading to travel costs that are considerably higher than necessary. **While recognizing that for some missions, the nature of the work involved and the related travel requirements can vary along with the predictability of certain types of trips, the Committee would have expected a higher overall rate of compliance across the missions. The Committee therefore recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to ensure monitoring of and compliance with the advance booking requirements and that additional efforts be undertaken to improve the planning of official trips and the related use of travel resources (see A/70/7, chap. I, para. 114). Furthermore, the Committee is of the view that information on the annual compliance rates of the special political missions should be provided in the context of the budget for 2017.**

38. A related matter under travel is the travel costs for expert panels devoted to recruitment for all special political missions. The Advisory Committee was informed that the Department of Field Support uses roster-based recruitment to fill field-related positions (as mandated by General Assembly resolution 63/250) and that roster-based recruitments represent 85 to 90 per cent of all field recruitments. Expert panels composed of at least three members, who are subject matter experts drawn from staff serving in the field, together with occupational group managers, conduct competency-based interviews for applicants to the generic job openings published by the Department. As the rosters resulting from these global exercises are used by all missions, the costs of the exercise are apportioned among the missions on the basis of the number of authorized international positions. Each mission's share of the cost is included as a separate item in its budget submission. The Committee was also informed that the total projected expenditures in this

regard amounted to \$1.084 million for 2014-2015 and that the requirements were estimated at \$1.702 million for 2016-2017. In its report on cross-cutting issues related to peacekeeping operations, the Advisory Committee recommended that future overview reports on peacekeeping operations contain full information concerning the work of these expert panels, including the number of panels, the details of the trips to be undertaken and workload statistics such as the number of individuals assessed and selected for the different rosters (A/69/839, para. 64). **The Committee is of the view that similar information on the expert panels for recruitment to special political missions should be provided in the budget proposal for 2017.**

Consultants

39. The proposed resources for consultants amount to \$4,379,700 for 2016, a decrease of \$714,500 compared with the provision for 2015. The Committee received a breakdown of the requirements for 2016 upon request and notes from the information provided that the presentation of the resource requirements could be improved by detailing the component costs, such as the specific fees and the resources allocated for the travel of the consultants, in a clear and consistent manner.

40. The Advisory Committee recalls that no provision for consultants is proposed for 2016 under missions of thematic cluster II, as a result of the efforts made since 2010 to gradually reduce the reliance on consultants engaged in support of the panels of experts, as well as to strengthen the related roster and to recruit experts with the requisite professional and language skills. The Advisory Committee has welcomed the efforts made in this regard (A/70/7/Add.12, para. 13). **While recognizing that the use of external consultants may be necessary to acquire specialized expertise not readily available in-house, the Advisory Committee stresses its view that reliance on the use of external consultants should be kept to an absolute minimum and that the Organization should build and use its in-house capacity to perform core activities or to fulfil functions that are recurrent over the long term (A/70/7, para. 116). The Committee has also made comments and recommendations on resources proposed for consultants in UNOCA for 2016 (see A/70/7/Add.13, para. 29).**

Security-related services

41. The Advisory Committee recalls that in its resolution 69/274 B, the General Assembly recalled paragraph 44 of its report (A/69/628/Add.2) and requested the Secretary-General to provide information on the use of private security companies in all future budgets for special political missions. The Committee notes that annex VI to the main report of the Secretary-General (A/70/348) provides information on security-related resources, including those for close protection, United Nations guard units and private security services (see also paras. 48-50 below).

42. The Secretary-General indicates that by February 2015, there were 15 units providing close protection services in eight field missions (UNAMI, UNAMA, UNSMIL, UNSOM, UNSCO, UNSCOL, Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen and Panel of Experts on Yemen); two units conducting security liaison operations in two missions (Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria and MENEUB); and a total of 210 posts/positions

authorized (A/70/348, para. 47). Further, the Department of Safety and Security has commenced an overall review and consolidation of the existing security resources within the Secretariat (Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Support and Political Affairs) in response to a separate recommendation of the Advisory Committee related to close protection in peacekeeping and special political missions (see A/68/7/Add.27, para. 7). This consolidation aims at optimizing the deployment of close protection officers and streamlining the protective operations and related processes (A/70/348, para. 45). Upon enquiry as to the impact of the consolidation exercise on the security-related positions, the Committee was informed that the exercise was currently in its initial planning phase and was expected to begin in 2016. **The Advisory Committee expects that the Secretary-General will report on the progress of the review and consolidation exercise related to close protection in his budget for special political missions for 2017.**

Nationalization of positions

43. The Secretary-General indicates that for 2016, several special political missions such as UNIOGBIS and UNAMI, as well as in the Global Service Centre in Brindisi, are proposing to nationalize positions in an effort to build local capacity in the country of operations (A/70/348, para. 53). He also indicates that circumstances relating to security or other factors may prevent or limit some missions, particularly the smaller ones, from implementing measures to nationalize certain positions.

44. In the context of its consideration of peacekeeping operations, the Advisory Committee has previously expressed its support for the increasing trend towards nationalization of posts and positions, whenever possible, in particular in terms of building local capacity within mission areas before the departure of the United Nations. The Committee acknowledged, however, that this would depend, in large part, on the given stage of a particular mission's life cycle and the specific characteristics of the local labour markets, which vary by mission. Any nationalization proposals would, in the view of the Committee, need to preserve the impartial nature of United Nations peacekeeping presences (A/68/782, para. 91). **The Committee reiterates its support for the nationalization of positions in special political missions.**

Other matters

45. In its consideration of the proposed estimates for UNAMI for 2016, the Advisory Committee welcomes the consolidation of similar functions under mission support and looks forward to receiving information on efficiencies to be achieved and lessons learned in the next report of the Secretary-General (see A/70/7/Add.15, paras. 20 and 21).

IV. General observations and recommendations

Format and presentation

46. The Advisory Committee notes the continued efforts made to improve the format and presentation of the proposed budget estimates in respect of special political missions for 2016 in response to its previous comments and recommendations (A/69/628, para. 33). The improved presentation includes, inter

alia, more comprehensive information on resources related to air operations (A/70/348, annex IV) and summaries of the main factors contributing to significant variances between the appropriations and projected expenditures for 2014-2015 (table 4) and approved resources for 2015 and proposed resources for 2016 (table 6). **The Advisory Committee, nonetheless, continues to believe that the presentation of the information, including the tables in the report of the Secretary-General, could be further improved, such as through the provision of the information on appropriations, expenditures and proposals in chronological order (see A/70/348, tables 5, 6, 8 and 9).**

47. The Advisory Committee commented on the results-based-budgeting frameworks related to the special political missions in its previous report (A/69/628, para. 35). In this regard, the Committee notes improvement in the frameworks for some missions, such as the improved presentation of performance information for the current financial period for UNAMA (A/70/7/Add.14, para. 6). However, the Committee continues to note that a number of expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement for some missions lack clarity or specificity regarding what could have been achieved and what can be specifically attributable to the concerned mission. For instance, indicators of achievement or performance measures should be more precise and measurable for UNSCOL and UNSMIL (see A/70/348/Add.3, table 17, indicators of achievement (a) (i)-(iii), and table 23, (b) and (c) (i)), as well as for UNAMI (A/70/348/Add.5, para. 37, indicator of achievement (e) (ii)). Furthermore, one of the indicators of achievement for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria (see A/70/348/Add.1, table 20, (b) (i)) still lacks clarity with respect to the whole spectrum of Syrian opposition groups, which does not include groups listed by the Security Council as terrorist organizations (see A/69/628, para. 35), even though an adjustment has been made in response to the comment by the Advisory Committee in its previous report (A/69/628, para. 37). In addition, in the case of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, following an enhancement of the Office's role by the Security Council, the related frameworks were not updated to reflect what the Office should accomplish in relation to the latest developments⁶ (A/70/348/Add.16, table 1 (a)-(c); see also A/70/7/Add.16, para. 10). **The Advisory Committee reiterates its view that certain expected accomplishments and related indicators of achievement can be improved in order to better reflect what could realistically be achieved by the respective missions and the activities for which the mission could be held accountable during the relevant performance period (A/69/628, para. 35).**

Close protection, United Nations guard units and private security companies

48. Information related to the provision of close protection services to special political missions is provided in paragraphs 47 to 49 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/348). Concerning the three types of personnel for close protection mentioned in paragraph 48, upon request for clarification, the Advisory Committee was informed that, while the mission security officers referred to in paragraph 48 (a) are staff members internationally recruited in both the Professional and Field Service categories for missions of the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and

⁶ In paragraph 13 of its resolution 2216 (2015), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to intensify his good offices role in order to enable a resumption of a peaceful, inclusive, orderly and Yemeni-led political transition process.

Political Affairs and administered by the Department of Field Support, those security officers mentioned in paragraph 48 (c) are, in contrast, staff members of the Department of Safety and Security in the Security Service or General Service categories assigned to the uniformed security and safety services at Headquarters, offices away from Headquarters, regional commissions and tribunals. Occasionally these officers are also assigned to field missions to support operational activities for a short period of time through a temporary loan arrangement.

49. The Secretary-General also indicates that special political missions increasingly operate in volatile security environments, and that 454 protective operations have been conducted in medium- to high-risk environments since 2011, in a range of affected countries (*ibid.*, para. 46). The Advisory Committee sought information on the operational criteria for determining the use of close protection, United Nations guard units or private security companies. The information provided to the Committee can be summarized as follows:

(a) Close protection: decisions on the deployment and staffing of personal protection teams are based on detailed security threat and risk assessments, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General on the strengthened and unified security management system of the United Nations (A/59/365, para. 59). Within the current process and guidance, upon identifying a requirement for dignitary protection, the chief security adviser or security adviser is responsible for the personal security risk assessment and subsequent recommendations to the designated official on whether such protective services are required;

(b) United Nations guard unit: any decision to deploy a guard unit is based on a security risk assessment developed under the lead of the chief security adviser or chief security officer to ascertain (i) the need for guarding or protection services of any kind; (ii) the capacity and ability of the host Government to provide the required security and protection to United Nations personnel, premises and assets; (iii) the availability of other security options, such as peacekeepers or mission security personnel; (iv) the need for using a guard unit to fully or partially address the security requirements; and (v) which set of skills, such as police or military, is required to address the risks faced by United Nations personnel. Further, where the deployment of a guard unit is under consideration, the Secretariat will seek Security Council or, where appropriate, General Assembly authorization, depending on which body initially established or approved the mission;

(c) Armed private security services: the engagement of such services is an option when all other possibilities, including a United Nations guard unit, have been exhausted. When the host Government is unwilling or unable to provide protection for United Nations personnel, their eligible family members and the premises and property of organizations, armed security services will normally be provided by alternate member States or the appropriate security entity within the United Nations system. Exceptionally, private companies may be used to provide armed security services when the threat conditions and programme needs warrant it, and only when there is no possibility of adequate and appropriate armed security being provided by the host Government, alternate Member States or internal United Nations system resources.

50. The Advisory Committee recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution 67/254 A (sect. V, para. 17), requested the Secretary-General to provide clarification on the operational criteria for when the use of armed security services from private

security companies could be appropriate for United Nations operations at Headquarters and field locations and to report thereon in the relevant reports to the General Assembly. **The Advisory Committee requests that the Secretary-General provide the relevant information as requested by the General Assembly.**

Mediation support

51. The Secretary-General indicates that special political missions are among the main beneficiaries of Headquarters structures for mediation, good offices and electoral support. Special envoys and representatives supporting complex mediation processes have frequently relied on expertise from the Department of Political Affairs on a wide range of mediation activities (A/70/348, para. 25). The Advisory Committee recalls that, according to the Secretary-General, over the past few years, the United Nations has enhanced its operational readiness to implement and support mediation efforts. The Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political Affairs complements expertise available elsewhere in the United Nations system and serves as the central hub for mediation support within the system, with an important asset in the rapid response capability of the Organization being the standby team of mediation experts (see A/69/628, paras. 45-48).

52. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political Affairs currently has 10 posts funded from programme budget resources and 9 posts, in addition to the eight-member standby team of senior mediation advisers, funded from extrabudgetary resources, at a cost of approximately \$3.4 million annually in extrabudgetary resources. The Committee was also informed that the team has been mobilized thus far in 2015 in support of United Nations and regional processes relating to Afghanistan (in support of UNAMA), Burundi (working with the East African Community-designated facilitator, Uganda), Colombia (in support of the Delegate of the Secretary-General to the Subcommission on end-of-conflict issues within the Colombian peace process), Central African Republic (supporting the Economic Community of Central African States and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, particularly during the Bangui Forum), Georgia (supporting the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions), Guinea-Bissau (in support of UNIOGBIS), Honduras (alongside the Organization of American States), Lesotho (in support of the resident coordinator), Libya (to support UNSMIL efforts), Mali (to support the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali and the Algerian-led mediation process), South Sudan (to support peace talks led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development), Sudan (to support the African Union High-level Implementation Panel), Syria (to support the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria), Ukraine (in support of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the resident coordinator) and Yemen (in support of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen).

53. In its resolution 69/262 (sect. IV, para. 10), the General Assembly recalled paragraph 48 of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/69/628), underlined the importance of United Nations mediation activities and the need to maintain the operational readiness of the Organization to implement and support mediation efforts, including the flexible use of the rapid response capacity, and requested the Secretary-General to consider all funding options, including the existing ones. The Committee was informed upon enquiry that the proposed programme budget for the

biennium 2016-2017 does not include additional resources for the mediation activities of the Department of Political Affairs. **The Advisory Committee reiterates that the Secretary-General should consider all funding options for the mediation activities of the Organization in line with the General Assembly resolution.**

Knowledge management in support of special political missions

54. With respect to knowledge management in support of special political missions (A/70/348, paras. 29-35), the Secretary-General states that the overarching objective of knowledge management for the Department of Political Affairs is to help staff at Headquarters and the field to systematically create, share, retain and use knowledge. The Department has initiated several detailed lessons-learned exercises that focus on improving the way special political missions are to be established, reconfigured or withdrawn. For example, the Department of Political Affairs, in close collaboration with the Department of Field Support, conducted a lessons-learned exercise of the MENUB start-up in April 2015. It is hoped that the lessons drawn from this exercise will inform other start-up processes. **The Advisory Committee reiterates its view that the lessons learned from prior mission deployments should inform future planning of new special political missions (see A/69/628, para. 41).**

55. Furthermore, it is stated that, in recognition of the need to equip staff with the skills necessary to deliver on the increasingly complex and demanding mandates of special political missions, the Department of Political Affairs, in collaboration with the Departments of Field Support and Peacekeeping Operations, is conducting a review of the training needs of staff to be deployed to special political missions, taking into account the civilian predeployment training offered by the Global Service Centre in Brindisi, Italy (A/70/348, para. 34). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Department of Political Affairs is currently conducting a Department-wide training needs assessment that will inform its training strategy for 2016-2017. The current strategy originally covered 2013-2014 but was rolled over, with some small changes, into 2015, in order to align with the budget cycle. The needs assessment will cover both the Headquarters and field training needs and will address, inter alia, induction and predeployment training needs and will take into account existing training courses. **The Advisory Committee looks forward to receiving information on the training needs assessment, which should be completed in advance of the next budget proposal.**

Kuwait Joint Support Office

56. The Advisory Committee has discussed the matter relating to a full costs and benefits analysis of the Kuwait Joint Support Office in the past few years (A/69/628, para. 56; A/68/7/Add.10, para. 3). The Committee recalls that the General Assembly, in its resolution 68/247 A, endorsed its recommendation for the Secretary-General to provide the full costs and benefits analysis of the Office in the budget for 2015 for the special political missions. In its report on the 2015 budget proposal, the Committee noted that the analysis had not been provided in a comprehensive manner (A/69/628, para. 56). In his proposed budget for 2016, the Secretary-General provides a summary of the information in paragraphs 50 to 52 of his main report (A/70/348).

57. The Secretary-General indicates that the establishment of the Office has enabled the Organization to realize ongoing savings from personnel-related costs as a result of the lower salaries and common staff costs prevailing in Kuwait compared to Afghanistan and Iraq, owing primarily to lower hardship allowances and ineligibility for rest and recuperation entitlement and danger pay. These savings, amounting to an estimated \$2.35 million each year, were first realized in 2013 and are a recurring benefit for the Organization. For 2015, the Support Office has projected a further reduction in its total costs of approximately \$1.6 million compared with the 2014 approved budget, which includes a 12 per cent reduction in the number of positions from 87 in 2014 to 76 in 2015 (1 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 P-2 and 8 Field Service). The costs of operating the Support Office are projected to be \$7.8 million in 2015. The Committee was provided with tables 3 and 4 below upon request. However, the Committee notes that for 2016, the Secretary-General proposes the return of the planning and budget functions for UNAMA from Kuwait to Kabul and the relocation of most support functions for UNAMI from Kuwait to Iraq (A/70/7/Add.14, paras. 22-26; A/70/7/Add.15, para. 27).

58. **The Advisory Committee has questioned the repeated transfer of functions back and forth between Afghanistan, Iraq and Kuwait within a relatively short period of time based on a variety of different arguments and with financial implications arising from each transfer. The Committee recalls its previous concerns with respect to the lack of clarity with regard to the structures, functions and capacity of the UNAMA and UNAMI support offices in Kuwait and the Kuwait Joint Support Office (A/70/7/Add.14, paras. 23 and 25). The Committee notes the information provided by the Secretary-General on the costs and benefits of the Kuwait Joint Support Office since its establishment. The Committee is of the view that an independent verification and review of the full costs and benefits, both qualitative and quantitative, of the Support Office would be useful and intends to request the Board of Auditors to undertake such a review.**

Table 3
Cost benefits and savings realized by the Kuwait Joint Support Office from 2013 to 2015

(Thousands of United States dollars)

	2013	2014	2015	<i>Cumulative total</i>
Cost avoidance: lower entitlements in Kuwait	2 350	2 350	1 700	6 400
Cost reduction: staffing level reductions	–	–	1 475	1 475
Cost reduction: reduction in operational costs	–	–	125	125
Total	2 350	2 350	3 300	8 000

Table 4
Costs associated with the Kuwait Joint Support Office from 2013 to 2015

(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Costs</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>Projected reduction in 2015 compared with 2014 provision</i>
Staffing cost	8 280	8 280	6 805	(1 475)
Operational cost	1 100	1 100	975	(125)
Total	9 380	9 380	7 780	(1 600)

59. The Secretary-General indicates in the report that the Support Office has increased its client base by assuming responsibility for the provision of human resource and financial transactional services to the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen, the Panel of Experts on Yemen and UNRCCA (A/70/348, para. 50). Upon enquiry concerning the impact on the Support Office arising from the provision of services to UNRCCA, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Support Office had provided transactional support services to UNRCCA since November 2012. Those services, limited to processing financial transactions and preparing financial statements, had previously been delivered by UNAMI. The need for outside provision of the services arose from the insufficient mission support capacities at UNRCCA. In July 2014, the Support Office was also granted the authority to provide certain staff administration services to UNRCCA. This support to UNRCCA, which is estimated to cost the equivalent of 10 per cent of the cost of one full-time staff member, is a role that is readily met by the Support Office within the existing capacities to support UNAMA and UNAMI.

60. The Advisory Committee was also informed upon enquiry that during the first half of 2016, the Support Office would evaluate its staffing requirements as a result of the deployment of Umoja. To the extent that there would be further changes in staffing, these would be presented as part of the 2017 budget proposals for the client missions of the Support Office. **The Committee expects that the Secretary-General will provide information in the budget proposal for 2017 on the result of the staffing requirement evaluation of the Support Office to be undertaken during the first half of 2016.**

61. As to the implications of the development of the global service delivery model for the entire Secretariat, the Committee was informed upon enquiry that the Department of Field Support is fully committed to working with the Department of Management to ensure that the model benefits from the lessons learned from the provision of shared-services support to field missions and integrates existing field service modalities where relevant, including those of the Support Office.

Location of heads of mission

62. The Advisory Committee recalls that in the context of the proposed budget for 2015 for the special political missions, it made comments and recommendations with respect to the location of heads of missions when the changes of duty station derived from personal preferences and with corresponding financial implications for the Organization in some cases (see A/69/628, paras. 63-66). The Committee has made further observations in its consideration of the proposed resource estimates for

2016 for the Offices of the Special Envoys of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and for Syria (A/70/7/Add.11, paras. 18-23).

63. **The Advisory Committee reiterates that, as a matter of principle, the locations for the heads of offices should be selected on the basis of the implementation of the mandates in the most effective and efficient manner, and in the best interest of the Organization. While the special envoys and advisers on “when-actually-employed” contracts may have other obligations and are therefore unable to be with the missions full-time, those senior representatives who work full-time for the Organization should, in general, be with the missions they lead (A/69/628, para. 66).**

64. **In addition, the Advisory Committee continues to recognize that, as the special political missions vary significantly in their mandate, size, operational conditions and situation on the ground, criteria for determining where a mission is located should take into account all variables in order to facilitate the maximum effectiveness and efficiency in the performance of each mission’s mandate. The Committee is therefore of the view that, in general, missions should be located in or as close as possible to the countries to which their mandates are related (ibid., para. 65).**

Premises provided by host countries

65. The Advisory Committee notes from the proposed budget for UNRCCA that the host Government provides premises and utilities free of charge to the mission (A/70/348/Add.3, para. 144). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, UNOWA and CNMC also receive premises free of charge from the host Government, while UNAMA and UNAMI are exempted from fees for aircraft landing, take-off and parking, in addition to receiving free premises. **The Committee expects that such information will be included in future reports of the Secretary-General.**

V. Recommendations for action requested of the General Assembly

66. **With regard to the Secretary-General’s proposal for action to be taken by the General Assembly, as set out in paragraph 74 of his report (A/70/348), the Advisory Committee recommends as follows:**

(a) **With regard to the 35 special political missions listed in table 6 of the report (A/70/348), that, for the period up to 31 December 2016, the General Assembly approve the resources requested by the Secretary-General, subject to its observations and recommendations as set out above, as well as in its reports (A/70/7/Add.11-16). The Committee requests that the adjusted amount be provided to the Assembly at the time of its consideration of the proposals of the Secretary-General;**

(b) **That the General Assembly approve a charge in the adjusted amount referred to in subparagraph (a) above against the provision for special political missions in section 3, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.**