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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019

Situation of human rights in Myanmar

Programme budget implications of draft resolution [A/C.3/72/L.48](#)

Thirty-fourth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the statement submitted by the Secretary-General ([A/C.5/72/13](#)) on the programme budget implications of draft resolution [A/C.3/72/L.48](#) on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. During its consideration of the statement, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarifications, which were received on 7 December 2017.

2. Under the terms of operative paragraph 10 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to continue to provide his good offices and to pursue his discussions relating to Myanmar, involving all relevant stakeholders and including concerns addressed in this resolution, and in this regard to appoint a Special Envoy on Myanmar and to offer assistance to the Government of Myanmar. This relates to programme 2, Political affairs, of the biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2018–2019, and section 3, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (see [A/C.5/72/13](#), para. 3).



II. Resource requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy

3. The Secretary-General indicates that the estimated resource requirements for 2018 amount to \$1,541,100, which would cover the costs of: (a) the establishment of seven positions (1 Under-Secretary-General, 1 D-1, 2 P-5, 2 P-4, 1 Local level); and (b) other operational expenses (see [A/C.5/72/13](#), para. 12).

Budgetary assumptions

4. The Secretary-General notes that, of the seven positions mentioned in paragraph 3 above, 1 position (Under-Secretary-General) would be home-based, 4 positions (1 D-1, 1 P-5, 1 P-4, 1 Local level) would be based in the capital of a Member State in the region, and 2 positions (1 P-5, 1 P-4) would be based in New York (see [A/C.5/72/13](#), para. 13).

5. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Office of the Special Envoy is proposed to be based in two locations owing to the requirements for the implementation of the Special Envoy's mandate, which will demand regular interactions both in the region and in New York.

6. The Advisory Committee was informed that, in estimating the requirements for the Special Envoy, the Secretariat looked at different locations in the region where the Office could be based. The Committee was also informed that, while it was premature to identify specific locations given the current state of related discussions, the Office would be ideally located in a country in the region in order to ensure regular and close interactions with Myanmar, other Association of Southeast Asian Nations member States and neighbouring countries in Asia. The Committee was further informed that details on the regional presence would be clarified once the Secretary-General had carried out the necessary consultations with Member States.

7. The Advisory Committee reiterates its view that, in general, field-based special political missions should be located in or as close as possible to the countries to which their mandates are related (see [A/69/628](#), para. 65 and [A/67/604](#), para. 23).

8. Upon request, the Advisory Committee was provided with a breakdown of staff both in the field and in New York for 2018. For positions in the region, the midpoint level per grade of the revised base salary scales for 2017 were used, together with estimates of local salary scales and post adjustments based on those applicable to a country in the region. The Committee was also informed that it was not possible to provide a more accurate cost comparison, as this would require market estimates for costs such as the rental of office space and the acquisition of office furniture, which were not readily available.

9. The Advisory Committee is of the view that the report of the Secretary-General should have provided detailed information on major budgetary assumptions used in the preparation of cost estimates. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to include such information in future budget submissions.

10. The Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that the budgetary calculations for operational costs were mostly based on standard rates for New York. **The Advisory Committee recommends that resource requirements for field-based staff and field-based operational costs in 2018 be recalculated using standard rates for Bangkok, given its proximity to Myanmar and the fact that it has a large United Nations presence, as the exact location of the field-based Office is not yet known.**

11. The Advisory Committee was also informed upon enquiry that vacancy rates of 25 per cent were applied in the calculation of international and local staff costs. **The Advisory Committee reiterates its recommendation that, with the exception of the Under-Secretary-General position (see para. 13 below), vacancy rates of 50 per cent for the Professional and higher categories and 35 per cent for the General Service and related categories be applied (see, for instance, [A/72/7/Add.10](#), para. 26 (d)).**

Other staff costs

12. The Secretary-General indicates that an amount of \$1,069,200 would be required under other staff costs for the seven proposed positions mentioned in paragraph 3 above (see [A/C.5/72/13](#), table 2). The Under-Secretary-General post is proposed to be appointed on a when-actually-employed basis. Four staff are proposed to be based in a capital of a Member State: 1 Director (D-1), 1 Senior Political Affairs Officer (P-5), 1 Political Affairs Officer (P-4) and 1 Administrative Assistant (Local level) (see [A/C.5/72/13](#), para. 14). Two staff are proposed to be based in New York: 1 Senior Political Affairs Officer (P-5) and 1 Political Affairs Officer (P-4) (see [A/C.5/72/13](#), para. 15).

13. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, given the high level of political engagement of Member States on the situation in Myanmar, as well as the need to engage the authorities in Myanmar at the highest level, a Special Envoy position at the level of Under-Secretary-General would be required. The Committee was further informed upon enquiry that the cost estimates reflect a provision for nine months at that level, plus the application of a 25 per cent vacancy rate.

14. **With respect to the contractual status and location of the Special Envoy, the Advisory Committee recalls its general view that, 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. 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 (see [A/69/628](#), para. 66).**

15. Regarding other staff positions, the Secretary-General also indicates that the Director (D-1) would serve as a deputy and represent the Special Envoy at high-level meetings in Yangon, Myanmar, and outside the country. The Senior Political Affairs Officer (P-5) would be responsible for ensuring close cooperation between the Office of the Special Envoy, the United Nations country team in Myanmar and other United Nations entities. A Political Affairs Officer (P-4) would be responsible for preparing regular political updates, monitoring and reporting on the situation on the ground and preparing a wide range of material for the Special Envoy. The Secretary-General also notes that an Administrative Assistant (Local level) would provide administrative support to the office (see [A/C.5/72/13](#), para. 14).

16. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the previous mission of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar maintained a presence in Myanmar that was funded from extrabudgetary resources, and had been headed by a Senior Political Affairs Officer at the P-5 level starting from 2013. The Committee was also informed that, during 2016, the responsibilities of the position required an increased level of interaction with senior government officials and heads of missions, and was therefore temporarily upgraded to the D-1 level until the mission ended on 31 December 2016.

17. While acknowledging the need for high-level representation in the region, the Advisory Committee does not consider the justification for a Senior Political Affairs Officer at the P-5 level to be adequate. **The Committee therefore recommends against the establishment of 1 Senior Political Affairs Officer at the P-5 level in the Office of the Special Envoy in the region. Any related non-post resources should be adjusted accordingly.**

18. In addition, the Secretary-General proposes the establishment of 1 Senior Political Affairs Officer (P-5) and 1 Political Affairs Officer (P-4) at United Nations Headquarters to support United Nations system-wide coordination in Myanmar, as well as to maintain close links to the General Assembly and Member State representatives in New York (see [A/C.5/72/13](#), para. 15). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the presence of two substantive staff in New York would be required to ensure that the Office of the Special Envoy interacted on a regular basis with permanent missions, given the specific nature of the mandate. The Committee was also informed that the two posts would not serve in a backstopping capacity within the Asia and the Pacific Division of the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, but rather be an integral part of the Office of the Special Envoy and report to the Special Envoy, given the nature of the mandate and the need for close interactions with stakeholders in New York. The Committee was further informed that similar arrangements had been put in place for the Offices of the Special Adviser on Conflict Prevention, including in Burundi, and the Office of the Special Envoy for Yemen.

19. Nevertheless, the Advisory Committee considers that such posts should be fully justified based on a detailed description of responsibilities and projected workload. **Given the limited justification for two positions to be located in New York in 2018, the Advisory Committee recommends against the establishment of 1 Political Affairs Officer (P-4). Any related non-post resources should be adjusted accordingly.**

20. The Advisory Committee notes that the functions of the proposed position in New York are similar to backstopping functions performed for special political missions. **In line with its recommendation concerning the backstopping capacity for special political missions, the Advisory Committee considers that these requirements should be reviewed annually with a view to aligning the capacity with mandate changes of the missions (see [A/72/7/Add.10](#), para. 53) and to determine long-term backstopping needs.**

Operational costs

21. The Secretary-General indicates that an amount of \$471,900 would be required for operational costs, consisting of: consultants (\$36,800); official travel (\$162,500); general operating expenses (\$143,900); contractual services (\$16,100); supplies and materials (\$2,600); and furniture and equipment (\$110,000) (see [A/C.5/72/13](#), table 2).

22. With regard to consultants, the Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that one of the consultants proposed would undertake a mapping exercise of the international community's engagement with the Myanmar authorities, and the other would undertake an assessment on how to further improve cooperation between the United Nations country teams in Bangladesh and Myanmar. **The Advisory Committee is not convinced of the necessity for the services of the two consultants for functions that, in principle, should be performed by United Nations staff. The Committee therefore recommends a reduction of \$36,800 under consultants.**

23. With regard to the resource requirements proposed for travel, the Committee was also informed upon enquiry that \$21,300 of the \$162,500 for official travel had been allocated for travel from a country in the region to Myanmar but was not

provided with any further details with regard to the proposed travel for the Office. **In line with its cross-cutting recommendation pertaining to the travel requirements for special political missions, the Advisory Committee recommends a reduction of 5 per cent to the proposed resources under official travel for 2018 (see [A/72/7/Add.10](#), para. 40).**

III. Conclusion

24. Subject to its observations and recommendations above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Fifth Committee inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution [A/C.3/72/L.48](#), resource requirements amounting to \$853,800 net of staff assessment would be required for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2018 for the Office of the Special Envoy on Myanmar. Those requirements would be charged against the provision for special political missions included under section 3, Political affairs, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019.
