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General and complete disarmament: follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019

Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament

Programme budget implications of draft resolution [A/C.1/72/L.45/Rev.1](#)

Thirty-eighth 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.5/72/12](#)) on the programme budget implications of draft resolution [A/C.1/72/L.45/Rev.1](#) on the follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament, 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, concluding with written responses received on 12 December 2017.

2. It is indicated in the statement of the Secretary-General that the First Committee of the General Assembly adopted draft resolution [A/C.1/72/L.45/Rev.1](#) on 1 November 2017, and that under the terms of operative paragraphs 5, 6, 7 and 12 of the draft resolution, the Assembly would:

(a) Decide to convene, in New York from 14 to 16 May 2018, a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament to review the progress made in this regard;

(b) Decide that the United Nations high-level international conference shall include a one-day organizational meeting, to be held in New York on 28 March



2018, which shall be conducted under the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, to decide on all relevant procedural matters;

(c) Request the Secretary-General to send letters to all States Members of the United Nations and members of specialized agencies inviting them to participate in the conference, and encourage all States Members of the United Nations and members of specialized agencies to participate in the conference at the highest level;

(d) Request the Secretary-General to provide the conference with the assistance necessary for the performance of its work, including full conference services, essential background information and relevant documents.

II. Resource requirements

3. It is indicated in the statement of the Secretary-General that pursuant to the requests contained in operative paragraphs 5, 6 and 12 of the draft resolution, the following requirements would arise and would entail additional one-time resource requirements in the amount of \$250,000 under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (see [A/C.5/72/12](#), paras. 4–6 and 8 and table):

(a) Meetings services (\$144,000): a total of eight meetings (four days) would require simultaneous interpretation along with summary records in all six languages and would constitute an addition to the meetings workload for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in 2018;

(b) Documentation services (\$95,300): there would be an addition to the documentation workload for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management of two pre-session documents (total of 5,300 words), five in-session documents (total of 13,250 words) and one post-session document (10,700 words) to be issued in all six languages in 2018;

(c) Webcasting and conference website (\$10,700): the amount would be required under section 4, Disarmament, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 to cover webcasting of the conference (\$1,900) and production and maintenance of a dedicated conference website in 2018 (\$8,800).

4. Noting the higher rates proposed for 2018 under meetings services, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had further reviewed the requirements for meetings services (simultaneous interpretation) and determined that the amount would need to be revised from \$144,000 to \$139,000. The breakdown of the revised meeting servicing costs in 2018 is presented in table 1. **The Committee notes that the revised amount for meetings services reflects a reduction of \$5,000 owing to the application of the other of the two costing parameters for interpretation (see para. 5 below).**

Table 1
Revised meeting requirements and servicing costs

(United States dollars)

Meeting requirements	
Year	2018
Number of days	4
Number of meetings	8
Venue/location	New York
Languages	Six official
Estimated cost	
Simultaneous interpretation (12,000 x 1 day + 17,000 x 3 days)	63 000
Summary records (19,000 x 4 days)	76 000
Total cost of meeting requirements	139 000

Note: One-day meeting scheduled for 28 March 2018 and three-day meeting scheduled from 14 to 16 May 2018.

5. Concerning the two rates for simultaneous interpretation indicated in table 1 (\$12,000/day and \$17,000/day), the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that in 2016 the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management decided to present the costing parameters for interpretation on the basis of a per day rate (rather than the per assignment/meeting¹ rate used before 2016),² but has continued to provide the equivalent costs for each meeting for information purposes (based on two meetings per day (morning and afternoon)). The Committee was also informed that while the 2016 costing parameter for meetings in New York continued in 2017 (\$12,000 for a team of 14 interpreters),³ the Department established another costing parameter in 2017 for meetings longer than two days by having a team of 20 interpreters at a cost of \$17,000, taking into account the workload benchmarks for interpreters of no more than seven assignments per week and no more than four consecutive assignments.⁴ The Committee was informed that the number of interpreters required is determined by the number of assignments during a session. **The Committee notes that while the Department changed the costing parameters from per assignment/meeting to the per day rate in 2016, the new and parallel costing parameter for a team of 20 interpreters, established in 2017, is in fact based on the number of assignments/meetings (as it had been before 2016). The Committee questions the rationale for maintaining two parallel costing parameters, one of which is**

¹ One assignment is for a meeting of up to three hours.

² The Advisory Committee was informed that the change of rates from per assignment to per day was made after a review of the costing parameters for conference services and to synchronize the rates with those established by the International Association of Conference Interpreters, whereby freelance interpreters are paid a daily rate rather than on an assignment basis.

³ The Advisory Committee was informed that for a one-day meeting (morning and afternoon), the Arabic and Chinese booths require six assignments each, which translate into three interpreters each. The English, French, Russian and Spanish booths require four assignments each, which translate into two interpreters each. The total number is therefore 14 interpreters.

⁴ The Advisory Committee was informed that for a five-day meeting, the Arabic and Chinese booths require 30 assignments each, and the English, French, Russian and Spanish booths require 20 assignments each. With a workload standard of seven assignments per week and no more than four consecutive assignments, 30 assignments for Arabic and Chinese translate into four interpreters each, and 20 assignments for English, French, Russian and Spanish translate into three interpreters each. The total number is therefore 20 interpreters.

per day and the other per assignment. The Committee trusts that more clarification will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the relevant statements of the Secretary-General on the draft resolutions before the Assembly.

6. Upon request for a comparison of the costing parameters for 2018 against those for 2016 and 2017, the Advisory Committee was informed that the rate for 2018 is under review and that as costing parameters for conference services are updated once at the beginning of a year, it is expected that the next update will be available in January 2018.

7. With regard to the costing parameters that had been taken into account in section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the overall cost put forward for section 2 was based on an incremental budgeting methodology, by which the estimate had been prepared using the budget for the previous period as the basis, with incremental amounts added for the new budget period. It was not based on the number of meetings held or the number of documents processed. In this regard, the review of the costing parameters in 2018 will not affect the estimates contained in the proposed programme budget for the Department. **The Committee is of the view that the methodology, including the costing parameters applied, to determine resource estimates for simultaneous interpretation lacks clarity and consistency.**

8. With regard to the daily rate of \$19,000 requested for summary records included in table 1, the Advisory Committee, upon request, was provided with a breakdown of the requirement (see table 2).

Table 2
Requirement for summary records

(United States dollars)

<i>Cost of summary record</i>	<i>New York</i>
Cost for preparation of summary record	6 700
Documentation cost for translation of summary record (six languages, based on estimation of 5,000 words)	12 300
Total	19 000

9. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that in general summary records are provided in accordance with legislative mandates and established practices. Accordingly, the entitlement for summary records is reflected in the calendar of conferences and meetings of the United Nations. In line with existing practice, there is no difference between the organizational session and the main session with regard to the provision of meeting records. Upon request for further clarification, the Committee was informed that in accordance with established practice, meeting records are provided to meetings in the areas of disarmament and nuclear, for instance, meetings of the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission, the Conference on Disarmament and the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament held on 26 September 2013 was also provided with meeting records. **The Committee considers that there is a need to further clarify the criteria by which meeting records are provided.**

10. With regard to the request for production and maintenance of a dedicated conference website in 2018 (\$8,800), the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that a dedicated website for the United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament would contain all essential background information and relevant documents for the conference, such as relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, organizational documents, working papers and statements made. The website would be an addition to the website of the Office for Disarmament Affairs. The Committee was also informed that other similar events, such as the annual International Day against Nuclear Tests and the annual International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, have dedicated websites maintained by the Department of Public Information that contain essential background information and relevant documents. While the Office for Disarmament Affairs has the technical capacity to produce a basic website in English, it does not have the technical capacity to produce a website in all six official languages of the United Nations. **The Committee is of the view that essential background information relevant to the international conference can be shared by other means of communication and therefore is not convinced of the need for the provision for a dedicated website for the conference. The Committee recommends a reduction of \$8,800 of the requested resources for the production and maintenance of a dedicated conference website in 2018.**

11. With regard to webcasting services, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that similar high-level events, such as the annual International Day against Nuclear Tests and the annual International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, are webcast. With respect to the potential for absorption, although in previous resolutions the General Assembly called for a high-level conference to be held in 2018, no requirements were elaborated until the tabling of the draft resolution. Consequently, the Office for Disarmament Affairs did not budget for the conference.

12. Upon request for clarification as to why the requirements for webcasting and the conference website would be required under section 4, Disarmament, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (see para. 3 (c) above), the Advisory Committee was informed that at the time of the finalization of the statement of programme budget implications, it was understood from the submission of requirements by the Office for Disarmament Affairs that webcasting and website services would be provided by the Office itself and that the Department of Public Information would not be involved. However, the provision for webcasting and website services could have been proposed under section 28, Public information, of the proposed programme budget had it been clear at that time that those services would be provided by the Department of Public Information but paid for by the Office for Disarmament Affairs.

13. The Secretary-General indicates that no provisions have been made in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 for the implementation of the activities requested in operative paragraphs 5, 6, 7 and 12 of the draft resolution. It is also indicated that it is not possible at present to identify activities within the relevant sections of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 that could be terminated, deferred, curtailed or modified during the biennium, and that it is therefore necessary that the additional one-time resource requirements in the amount of \$250,000 for 2018 be provided through an additional appropriation for the biennium 2018–2019 (see [A/C.5/72/12](#), para. 9).

III. Conclusion

14. Taking into account its observation and recommendation in paragraphs 4 and 10 above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Fifth Committee inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution [A/C.1/72/L.45/Rev.1](#), additional resource requirements in the amount of \$236,200 for 2018, including \$234,300 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, and \$1,900 under section 4, Disarmament, would arise under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019. The amount of \$236,200 would require an additional appropriation for the biennium 2018–2019 to be approved by the Assembly and, as such, would represent a charge against the contingency fund.
