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Financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

Budget performance for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 and proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Appropriation for 2017/18	\$52,000,000
Expenditure for 2017/18	\$51,424,700
Unencumbered balance for 2017/18	\$575,300
Appropriation for 2018/19	\$52,350,800
Projected expenditure for 2018/19 ^a	\$52,350,800
Projected underexpenditure for 2018/19	\$0
Proposal submitted by the Secretary-General for 2019/20	\$56,369,400
Adjustment recommended by the Advisory Committee for 2019/20	(\$22,000)
Recommendation of the Advisory Committee for 2019/20	\$56,347,400

^a Estimates as at 31 January 2019.



I. Introduction

1. During its consideration of the financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 22 March 2019. The documents reviewed and those used for background by the Committee are listed at the end of the present report. The comments and recommendations of the Committee on cross-cutting issues related to peacekeeping operations, including those pertaining to the findings and recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the United Nations peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018, can be found in its related report ([A/73/755](#)).

II. Budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018

2. By its resolution [71/309](#), the General Assembly appropriated an amount of \$52,000,000 gross (\$49,868,100 net) for the maintenance of MINURSO for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018. Expenditures for the period totalled \$51,424,700 gross (\$49,183,400 net), reflecting a budget implementation rate of 98.9 per cent. The resulting unencumbered balance of \$575,300, in gross terms, represents 1.1 per cent of the appropriation, reflecting the combined effect of: (a) higher-than-budgeted expenditures under military and police personnel (\$1,184,800, or 16.2 per cent) and civilian personnel costs (\$791,600, or 4.2 per cent); and (b) lower than budgeted expenditures under operational costs (\$2,551,700 or 9.9 cent). A detailed analysis of variances is provided in section IV of the report of the Secretary-General on the budget performance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 ([A/73/617](#)).

3. In the budget performance report, it is indicated that during the 2017/18 period a total amount of \$1,976,900 was redeployed from group III operational costs, to group I, military and police personnel (\$1,185,200) and group II, civilian personnel, (\$791,700) (*ibid.*, para. 33). It is further indicated in the report that the increased requirements under military and police personnel were mainly due to the greater than budgeted number of military observers permanently deployed in Laayoune and to the military observers visiting Laayoune from team sites for various operational reasons and thus qualifying for higher mission subsistence allowance, as well as the lower actual average vacancy rate of 6.9 per cent compared with 10.0 per cent applied in the budget (*ibid.*, para. 36). The additional requirements for military and police personnel were offset by reduced requirements for air operations, attributable primarily to the lower number of flight-hours used by the Mission's fleet of aircraft (2,958 actual flight-hours compared with 3,743 hours anticipated in the budget) owing to adverse weather conditions, the suspension of the contract for two fixed-wing aircraft and the postponement of the deployment of a third helicopter (*ibid.*, para. 45).

4. The comments of the Advisory Committee on the information presented in the performance report on individual objects of expenditure can be found, where relevant, in the discussion of the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 in section IV below.

5. In considering the reports of the Secretary-General on the financing of MINURSO, the Advisory Committee also had before it the report of the Board of Auditors on the accounts of the United Nations peacekeeping operations for the financial period ended 30 June 2018 ([A/73/5 \(Vol. II\)](#), chap. II).

III. Information on performance for the current period

6. With respect to current and projected expenditures for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, the Advisory Committee was informed that, as at 31 January 2019, expenditures amounted to \$35,422,700 (gross), and that at the end of the current financial period, the estimated total expenditures would amount to \$52,350,800, reflecting full utilization of the appropriation for 2018/19.

7. The Advisory Committee was provided with information on the incumbency of MINURSO uniformed and civilian personnel as at 31 January 2019, as follows:

<i>Category of personnel</i>	<i>Authorized/approved 2018/19^a</i>	<i>Encumbered</i>	<i>Vacancy rate (percentage)</i>
Military and police personnel			
Military observers	218	206	5.5
Military contingent personnel	27	26	3.7
United Nations police personnel	12	1	91.7
Civilian personnel			
Posts			
International staff	82	77	6.1
National staff ^b	163	159	2.5
United Nations Volunteers	18	15	16.7
Government-provided personnel	10	–	100

^a Represents the highest authorized strength for military and police personnel and the number of approved posts for civilian personnel.

^b Includes National Professional Officers and national General Service staff.

8. The Advisory Committee was informed that claims for the reimbursement of troop costs up to October 2017 had been settled, leaving an outstanding balance of \$391,000 as at 31 December 2018. As at 31 December 2018, contingent-owned equipment had been certified up to September 2018 and paid up to September 2017, leaving an outstanding balance of \$256,000. With regard to death and disability compensation, as at 31 December 2018, an amount of \$80,000 had been paid to settle two claims since the inception of the Mission, and no claims were pending.

9. The Advisory Committee was also informed that, as at 21 February 2019, a total of \$1,290,870,000 had been assessed on Member States in respect of the Mission since its inception. Payments received as at the same date amounted to \$1,234,295,000, leaving an outstanding balance of \$56,575,000. The Committee was informed that the situation regarding outstanding assessed contributions of MINURSO had deteriorated since 31 December 2015, as shown in the table below.

Outstanding assessed contributions

(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>As at 31 December 2014</i>	<i>As at 31 December 2015</i>	<i>As at 31 December 2016</i>	<i>As at 31 December 2017</i>	<i>As at 31 December 2018</i>	<i>As at 12 March 2019</i>
40 998	39 611	41 591	42 862	44 831	48 778

10. The Advisory Committee was further informed that as at 11 March 2019, the cash available to the Mission amounted to \$7.1 million, including loans in the amount of \$11 million from the accounts of closed peacekeeping operations. The cash

available is not sufficient to cover the three-month operating reserve of \$12.9 million (excluding reimbursements to troop- and police-contributing countries). The Committee was informed that historically, MINURSO has been affected by a negative cash position owing to delays in receiving the payments of assessed contributions from Member States, which has resulted in the Mission being unable to fully meet its liabilities. As indicated above, the Mission is in arrears with respect to the reimbursement to the troop-contributing countries for services rendered by their contingents at MINURSO from November 2017 to December 2018 and contingent-owned major equipment and self-sustainment from October 2017 to December 2018.

11. The Advisory Committee reiterates its concern regarding the continuing deterioration of the cash position of the Mission (see [A/72/789/Add.1/Rev.1](#), para. 11). The Committee recalls that the General Assembly has repeatedly urged all Member States to fulfil their financial obligations, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations, on time, in full and without conditions (see Assembly resolution [71/303](#), para. 3).

IV. Proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020

A. Mandate and planning assumptions

12. The mandate of MINURSO was established by the Security Council in its resolution [690 \(1991\)](#). The most recent extension of the mandate of the Mission, until 30 April 2019, was approved by the Security Council in its resolution [2440 \(2018\)](#).

13. Information on the planning assumptions and mission support initiatives for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 is provided in paragraphs 6 to 20 of the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed budget for MINURSO for 2019/20 ([A/73/737](#)). As indicated, the Mission will, inter alia: (a) improve the living conditions and security installations at nine military team sites, including the replacement of old prefabricated accommodation the upgrade of the gym and welfare facilities; (b) construct a paved helipad at one remote team site in Tifariti; (c) focus on two high-priority environmental projects, namely the installation of one hybrid solar-diesel power system at one military team site to reduce reliance on generators during daylight and the construction of fuel leak and spill containment basins to eliminate soil contamination; and (d) implement the final phase of the restructuring of the Mission Support Division in line with the harmonization of mission support structures in field missions (see paras. 15–16 below). It is further indicated that as a result of a review of the Mission's hardship classification conducted by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) in August 2017, which took into consideration both security and socioeconomic factors in the Mission's area of operations (Western Sahara and Tindouf, Algeria), the hardship classification of MINURSO was changed from C to D, effective 1 January 2018. In addition, the risk for Mission locations is assessed as high and security continues to be a concern. However, the ongoing mitigation and prevention measures are expected to bring the risk level down to medium and allow the Mission to better implement its mandated activities.

14. In the report, it is also indicated that an independent review of MINURSO was undertaken during 2018 as part of the Secretary-General's comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations. The review determined, inter alia, that there is significant scope for technical improvement in the Mission's monitoring and conflict mitigation activities. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the principal recommendation of the independent review of MINURSO as regards achieving the

proposed technical improvement was that the Mission should make greater and better use of air patrols and reduce its reliance on ground patrols. The Mission has commenced the planning and implementation of a range of actions to increase the use of new techniques and technologies in its planning and direction of operations and also deployed a third helicopter in January 2019 to increase the quality and effectiveness of its monitoring activities (see [A/73/737](#), para. 11).

Restructuring of the mission support component

15. In the budget document, it is stated that the Mission will complete the organizational restructuring of its mission support component in line with the harmonization of mission support structures in field missions. The proposed restructuring involves the separation of the Supply Chain and Service Delivery Management pillar under two new pillars, Service Delivery Management and Supply Chain Management, each headed by a Chief at the P-5 level. The relevant posts and functions needed in the new support structure are proposed to be established, redeployed or reassigned from within the Mission staffing complement to the respective pillars to reflect the new reporting lines ([A/73/737](#), para. 20). In the budget document, the Secretary-General provides a summary of the proposed changes to offices within the support component (figure below para. 38), an organizational chart of the restructured Mission Support Division (annex II C), and details on the proposed post changes (paras. 39 to 55). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Service Delivery Management and Supply Chain Management pillars needed to be separated so as to ensure the segregation of duties in maintaining internal control and avoiding conflict of interest, as well as proper oversight and management.

16. The Advisory Committee notes that, in his previous report, the Secretary-General proposed to reorganize the Mission's support component in line with the harmonization of mission support structures in field missions, under which the Chief of Mission Support is supported by two pillars: (i) Operations and Resource Management; and (ii) Supply Chain and Service Delivery Management ([A/72/731](#), para. 30). **The Committee recalls that multiple restructuring exercises of the support component have been undertaken in peacekeeping operations in recent years. The Committee considers that after the completion of the ongoing restructuring exercises, there is a need for a period of stabilization and an assessment of the effectiveness of the reorganized structures.** The Committee comments further on this matter in its report on cross-cutting issues related to peacekeeping operations ([A/73/755](#)).

B. Resource requirements

17. The proposed budget for MINURSO for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 amounts to \$56,369,400 gross (\$53,985,800 net), representing an increase of \$4,018,600, or 7.7 per cent, in gross terms, compared with the appropriation of \$52,350,800 for 2018/19. The proposal reflects proposed increases under civilian personnel (\$1,111,700 or 5.6 per cent), and operational costs (\$3,057,500 or 12.2 per cent), offset in part by a decrease under military and police personnel (\$150,600, or 2.0 per cent). Detailed information on the financial resources proposed and an analysis of variances are provided in sections II and III of the budget document ([A/73/737](#)). The increased requirements are primarily attributable to: the lower vacancy rates for civilian personnel; the operating costs over 12 months for a third helicopter, compared with the six months provided for in the 2018/19 period; higher aviation fuel costs; the improvement of accommodation facilities; the reinforcement of security installations; environmental initiatives; the replacement of six light passenger vehicles; and higher requirements for the maintenance of communications

and information technology equipment and support services. The overall higher requirements are partly offset by the reduced requirements for military observers owing to the higher vacancy rates.

1. Military and police personnel

<i>Category</i>	<i>Authorized 2018/19^a</i>	<i>Proposed 2019/20</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Military observers	218	218	–
Military contingent personnel	27	27	–
United Nations police	12	12	–

^a Represents the highest level of authorized strength.

18. The proposed resources for military and police personnel for 2019/20 amount to \$7,311,400, reflecting a decrease of \$150,600, or 2.0 per cent, compared with the appropriation for 2018/19. As indicated in paragraph 69 of the budget document (A/73/737), the reduced requirements are attributable primarily to the application of a higher average vacancy rate of 15.0 per cent compared with 8.0 per cent applied in the 2018/19 period. The decreased requirements would be offset in part by increased requirements for mission subsistence allowance owing to the projected higher number of military observers who are permanently deployed at and/or visiting Laayoune from other team sites.

19. **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Secretary-General's proposals for military and police personnel.**

2. Civilian personnel

<i>Category</i>	<i>Approved 2018/19</i>	<i>Proposed 2019/20</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Posts			
International staff	82	82	–
National staff ^a	163	163	–
United Nations Volunteers	18	18	–
Government-provided personnel	10	10	–
Total	273	273	

^a Includes National Professional Officers and national General Service Staff.

20. The proposed resources for civilian personnel for 2019/20 amount to \$20,891,500, reflecting an increase of \$1,111,700 or 5.6 per cent, compared with the appropriation for 2018/19. In the budget document, it is indicated that the increase reflects higher requirements under: (a) international staff (\$671,000 or 4.9 per cent), attributable to the application of a lower vacancy rate of 7.0 per cent instead of 10.0 per cent applied in 2018/19, combined with the change in the duty station classification for the Mission from C to D; (b) national staff (\$392,400 or 7.2 per cent), attributable primarily to the application of a lower vacancy rate of 2.0 per cent instead of 6.0 per cent applied in the 2018/19 period and a higher average grade level of national General Service staff posts, arising from the Mission's internal post classification review exercise (see para. 30 below); and (c) general temporary assistance (\$59,900), attributable to the provision for the Mission's share of general temporary assistance related to the support activities for Umoja Extension 2 and other cross-cutting initiatives (see A/73/737, paras. 70–72). The increased requirements

would be offset in part by reduced requirements under United Nations Volunteers (\$11,600 or 2.1 per cent).

Recommendations on posts and positions

21. A total of 273 civilian posts and positions are proposed for 2019/20, comprising 82 international posts, 163 national staff posts, 18 United Nations Volunteer positions and 10 Government-provided personnel positions. The 2019/20 staffing proposals reflect the establishment of 3 posts, the abolishment of 3 posts, the reclassification of 1 post, the reassignment of 8 posts and the redeployment of 14 posts. The total number of posts and positions would remain unchanged.

Establishment

22. A total of three posts are proposed to be established as follows:

(a) One Chief, Supply Chain Management (P-5) post is proposed to be established in the Office of the Chief of Supply Chain Management to oversee the Acquisition Management Unit (including the subsumed Contracts Management Unit), the Procurement Section, the Centralized Warehousing Unit, the Movement Control Unit and the Supply Chain Performance Management Section (formerly the Property Management Section) ([A/73/737](#), para. 50). The Advisory Committee requested further justification for the proposed requirement for an additional post at the P-5 level given that the current combined supply chain and service delivery management pillar is headed by a Chief at the P-5 level, and that the existing staffing and functions are to be distributed under the proposed two new separate pillars. The Committee was informed that the Chiefs of the Service Delivery Management and Supply Chain Management pillars will provide leadership, supervision and guidance to 87 subordinates and 40 subordinates, respectively, including section chiefs/heads of units. Each of the Service Delivery Management and Supply Chain Management pillars needed to be headed by a Chief at the P-5 level in order to ensure a sustainable and appropriate level of leadership within Mission Support, as well as to strengthen and reprioritize the logistics and service delivery effort;

(b) One Administrative Officer (P-3) post is proposed to be established in the Office of the Chief of Mission Support, to provide oversight of audit, boards of inquiry and risk management, in addition to the operational duties of the front office of the Chief of Mission Support. In the report, the Secretary-General proposes simultaneous abolishment of one Administrative Officer (Field Service) post (see para. 23 (b) below), indicating that the reclassification (consisting of the abolishment and creation of one post) is proposed in view of the strategic nature of the functions of the post ([A/73/737](#), para. 40);

(c) One Property Management Officer (P-3) post is proposed to be established in the Supply Chain Performance Management Section, responsible for ensuring compliance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, the policies and procedures for property management, as well as oversight and execution of the delegation of authority for property management. In the report, the Secretary-General proposes the simultaneous abolishment of one Property Management Officer (Field Service) post (see para. 23 (c) below), indicating that the reclassification (consisting of the abolishment and creation of one post) is proposed in view of the strategic nature of the functions of the post as well as its added responsibilities and accountability ([A/73/737](#), para. 55).

Abolishment

23. A total of three posts are proposed for abolishment as follows:

(a) Abolishment of one Procurement Officer (P-3) post in the Procurement Section, with redistribution/absorption of the workload of the post partly by the Procurement Officer (P-4) post and partly by the Acquisition Management Unit under the Supply Chain Management pillar, which will be responsible for some of the functions of the Procurement Officer (P-3), such as reviewing requisitions and shopping carts (ibid., para. 51);

(b) Abolishment of one Administrative Officer (Field Service) post in the Office of the Chief of Mission Support ([A/73/737](#), para. 40; see also para 22 (b) above);

(c) Abolishment of one Property Management Officer (Field Service) post in the current Property Management Section ([A/73/737](#), para. 55; see also para. 22 (c) above).

Reclassification

24. One Property Management Assistant (national General Service) post is proposed to be reclassified as a Logistics Assistant in the Mission Support Centre. In the budget document it is indicated that the Centre aims to provide timely, coordinated and efficient logistics support for operational priorities to all Mission components. The Centre will also ensure that budgetary and human resources are properly allocated for mandated operations and activities and manage the Contingent-Owned Equipment Unit ([A/73/737](#), para. 44).

Redeployment and reassignment

25. Upon request for further explanations on the proposed reassignment of one Administrative Assistant (national General Service) post from the Field Technology Service Section as a Nurse Assistant (national General Service) to the Office of the Force Commander (ibid., para. 43), the Advisory Committee was informed that the Mission does not have a civilian Medical Officer, and that the Force Medical Officer covers both military and civilian personnel. A field review conducted by Medical Services at United Nations Headquarters determined that, in view of the constant rotation of Force Medical Officers, a civilian Nurse Assistant with the requisite language skills and clinical background is required in the Office of the Force Commander to assist the Force Medical Officer in ensuring continuity and providing administrative services such as the maintenance of records, the processing of sick leave of the Mission's civilian personnel and the coordination of medical evacuation cases (see also para. 46 below).

26. With regard to the two posts that had been previously loaned to the Tindouf Liaison Office (see [A/73/737](#), para. 25), the Advisory Committee was informed that the Political Affairs Officer (P-3) post had been on loan from the Political Affairs Section since 11 May 2017 and the Field Security Assistant (national General Service) since 1 July 2012 from the Security Section.

Vacancy rates and vacant posts

27. The table below provides a summary of the vacancy rates for civilian personnel, including: (a) for 2017/18, the budgeted and actual average vacancy rates; (b) for 2018/19 the budgeted rate, the actual average rate for the 7-month period between 1 July 2018 and 31 January 2019 and the actual rate as at 31 January 2019; and (c) the vacancy factor applied in estimating the requirements for 2019/20. The Advisory

Committee notes that the proposed 2019/20 vacancy rates are: (a) for international staff, lower than the actual average rate but higher than the actual rate as at 31 January 2019; (b) for National General Service staff, higher than the actual average rate but lower than the actual rate as at 31 January 2019; (c) for United Nations Volunteers, lower than the actual average rate but higher than the actual rate as at 31 January 2019; and (d) for Government-provided personnel, lower than both the actual average rate and the actual rate as at 31 January 2019.

Vacancy rates

(Percentage)

	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20	
	Budgeted	Actual	Budgeted	Actual average vacancy rate from 1 July 2018 to 31 January 2019	Actual vacancy rate as at 31 January 2019	Proposed vacancy rate
International staff	15.0	12.0	10.0	7.3	6.1	7.0
National Professional Officers	—	50.0	—	—	—	—
National General Service staff	4.0	5.5	6.0	1.9	2.5	2.0
United Nations Volunteers	40.0	16.7	20.0	22.2	16.7	20.0
Government-provided personnel	90.0	100.0	90.0	100.0	100.0	90.0

28. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that a total of nine posts were vacant as at 5 April 2019, comprising six international posts (2 P-5, 1 P-3, 3 (Field Service)) and three national General Service posts. None of the posts have been vacant for more than two years.

29. **The Advisory Committee recalls the General Assembly's request, expressed consistently in its resolutions on peacekeeping budgets, that the Secretary-General ensure that vacant posts be filled expeditiously (A/71/836, para. 108). The Committee also reiterates its view that budgeted vacancy rates should be based, as much as possible, on actual vacancy rates. In cases where the proposed budgeted rates differ from the actual rates at the time of budget preparation, clear justification should be provided in related budget documents for the rates used (A/70/742, para. 45).**

Internal post classification review

30. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that based on the recommendations emanating from the Mission's internal post classification review exercise conducted in November 2017, eight Field Service and nine national General Service posts had been reclassified effective 1 July 2017. Furthermore, all the reclassified posts had been upgraded, and the financial implications of the reclassification of posts amounted to an annual increase of \$85,883 in the requirements for salaries (see A/73/617, para. 40; A/73/737, para. 71; see also para. 20 above).

31. **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Secretary-General's proposals for civilian staff.**

3. Operational costs

(United States dollars)

	<i>Apportioned 2018/19</i>	<i>Proposed 2019/20</i>	<i>Variance</i>
Operational costs	25 109 000	28 166 500	3 057 500

32. The proposed resources for operational costs for 2019/20 amount to \$28,166,500, reflecting an increase of \$3,057,500 or 12.2 per cent compared with the appropriation for 2018/19. In the report, the Secretary-General proposes increases under most categories of expenditure, including: air operations (\$2,015,800 or 17.8 per cent); facilities and infrastructure (\$456,600 or 11.0 per cent); communications and information technology (\$294,600 or 12.3 per cent); other supplies, services and equipment (\$245,900 or 4.9 per cent); and ground transportation (\$45,400 or 3 per cent). The increases would be offset in part by slightly lower requirements under consultants (\$800 or 2.3 per cent).

Official travel

33. The resources for official travel for 2019/20 are proposed at the maintenance level of \$538,300. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that only 15.2 per cent of official travel in 2017/18 was undertaken in compliance with the advance ticket purchase policy. **The Committee recalls that the General Assembly, on a number of occasions, has expressed concern at the low rate of compliance with the advance purchase policy directive. The Committee reiterates that stronger efforts are required, in particular in areas where travel can be better planned (see also A/73/779, para. 16).**

Air operations

34. The proposed resources for air operations amount to \$13,327,400 representing an increase of \$2,015,800 or 17.8 per cent over the appropriation for the 2018/19 period. The budget document indicates that the higher requirements are attributable primarily to the increase in guaranteed fleet costs with respect to the rental and operation of the Mission's aircraft fleet, combined with the increase in the provision for rental of a medium utility helicopter for 12 months, as compared with a 6-month period in the approved budget for 2018/19, as well as higher requirements for fuel resulting from higher fuel prices and the planned procurement of additional fuel to build an emergency reserve for Jet A-1 aviation fuel (see A/73/737, para. 75). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the reserve for the Jet A-1 aviation fuel is required in order to mitigate the high risks relating to the disruption of the fuel supply and to provide for contingencies in case of emergencies or unforeseen events, which could include, for instance: (a) delays in fuel deliveries owing to bad weather conditions, road blockages or floods; (b) fuel embargo by the host country or territory; (c) a failure in the transport infrastructure; (d) strikes at the depot storage facility; or (e) a border closing, preventing the resupply of fuel. **The Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will provide further information to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of this item on the rationale for the reserve as well as on the calculation of its projected level.**

Facilities and infrastructure

35. The proposed resources for facilities and infrastructure amount to \$4,612,800, representing an increase of \$456,600 or 11 per cent over the appropriation for the 2018/19 period. The budget document indicates that the increased requirements are attributable primarily to: (a) the replacement of six generators that have exceeded

their useful economic life; (b) the replacement of a water purification plant and a wastewater treatment plant; (c) increased acquisitions of safety and security equipment; and (d) non-recurrent construction projects to improve accommodation, perimeter walls and recreation and ablution facilities at nine military team sites; to create a paved helipad in a remote team site; to install containment basins for fuel leaks and spills; and to install a hybrid solar-diesel power system (ibid., para. 73).

36. With regard to the construction of the paved helipad, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Mission had experienced some difficulties in identifying vendors in the past owing to the limited infrastructure facilities and dispersed population in the area east of the berm. The Mission indicated that it will continue its efforts by initiating vendor registration and business conferences as well as publishing expression of interest advertisements in local media outlets, and also seek guidance and expertise from United Nations Headquarters, as required.

Ground transportation

37. The proposed resources for ground transportation amount to \$1,583,200 reflecting an increase of \$45,400 or 3.0 per cent compared with the appropriation for 2018/19. With regard to vehicles received from closed peacekeeping operations, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that during the performance period, MINURSO had received 92 vehicles from the United Nations Mission in Liberia and 2 vehicles from the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire. The Committee was further informed that as a result of obtaining light passenger vehicles in class 1 serviceable condition (fully operational) from closed missions, MINURSO had been able to minimize its requirements for the acquisition of new vehicles and to address its backlog of overdue replacements.

38. In the budget document, it is indicated that the Mission plans the acquisition of six light passenger vehicles to replace team site vehicles that have exceeded their useful life cycle (ibid., para. 18). Upon enquiry as to whether the proposed resource requirements for the acquisition of new vehicles and fuel would decrease following the deployment of a third helicopter for a full 12-month period and corresponding reductions in ground patrols, the Advisory Committee was informed that, while the length of ground patrols will decrease, the number of shorter and targeted ground patrols is expected to increase, and that the overall number of ground patrols would remain consistent with previous periods.

39. The Advisory Committee was further informed that, as a result of the reconfiguration of the military observers' ground patrols, the Mission is projecting a decrease of 25,000 litres (15 per cent) in fuel consumption relating to ground patrols conducted from team sites, from 171,000 litres in 2018/19 to 146,000 litres in 2019/20. However, the proposed provision of diesel (litres) for vehicles would increase for 2019/20 owing to the inclusion of 60,000 litres of diesel to maintain a 90-day emergency fuel reserve at five team sites east of the berm. **In view of the planned reduced length of ground patrols and taking into account also the high level of the proposed fuel reserve, the Committee recommends that the proposed 2019/20 requirements for petrol, oil and lubricants under ground transportation be reduced by \$21,975 (5 per cent), from \$439,500 to \$417,525.**

Mine action

40. The Secretary-General proposes resources at the maintenance level, in the amount of \$3,265,200, for mine detection and mine-clearing services in 2019/20. Details of the planned activities are provided in paragraphs 65 to 67 of the budget document.

41. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Mission's mine action programme was established in 2008 for mine action activities east of the berm in support of the Mission's mandate. During the 2008/09 and 2009/10 periods, the approved resources for mine action were used to conduct a survey assessment east of the berm with clearance activities commencing in the 2010/11 period. From the inception of the mine action programme up to 28 February 2019, a total of 146,879,061 m² of land had been released east of the berm (which includes mine clearance and survey), and that 39,815 landmines and explosive remnants of war had been located and destroyed. The Committee was also provided with the following table summarizing the expenditure incurred for mine action activities since the inception of the programme.

Expenditure since the inception of mine action activities

(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Period</i>	<i>Expenditure</i>
2008/09	672.0
2009/10	532.8
2010/11	1 183.7
2011/12	2 306.9
2012/13	2 894.3
2013/14	3 100.0
2014/15	3 128.6
2015/16	3 178.2
2016/17	3 264.6
2017/18	3 265.2
2018/19 ^a	3 265.2
Total	26 791.5

^a As at 28 February 2019.

42. **Subject to its recommendation in paragraph 39 above, the Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Secretary-General's proposals for operational costs.**

V. Other matters

Gender balance

43. The Advisory Committee was provided with the following table showing a breakdown of MINURSO personnel by gender (percentage). **The Committee notes the low level of female representation, in particular in the Field Service and National Staff categories, and encourages MINURSO to intensify its efforts to achieve gender balance among its civilian staff.**

Distribution of civilian personnel by gender as at 30 June 2018

(Percentage)

	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
P-5 and above	33	67
P-1 to P-4	25	75
Field Service	16	84
National Professional Officer	0	100
National General Service	19	81
United Nations Volunteers (International)	31	69

44. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, as a result of the appeal by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara to troop-contributing countries to deploy more women as military observers to MINURSO, as well as efforts made by the Mission to improve accommodation facilities and living conditions, the percentage of women among United Nations military observers had increased from 6 per cent to 18 per cent. **The Committee welcomes the progress made and encourages MINURSO to continue to pursue such efforts.**

Efficiency gains

45. In the budget document, it is indicated that the implementation of the hybrid solar-diesel power system at one military team site in line with the Mission's environmental action plan will reduce reliance on generators during daylight. Furthermore, once it is fully implemented, the system will generate annual efficiencies of approximately \$17,500 by reducing the power demand by 50 per cent and by lowering the costs for fuel, fuel transportation and the maintenance of generators (see [A/73/737](#), para. 57). The Advisory Committee encourages the Mission to continue to seek efficiency gains and savings in energy consumption.

Restructuring of medical facilities

46. The Advisory Committee was informed that MINURSO medical facilities had been restructured (without any budgetary implications) so as to allow the Mission to place paramedics in every team site with a view to improving the medical services provided by the Mission (see also para. 25 above). **The Committee welcomes the efforts made to improve the medical services provided by the Mission and trusts that the Secretary-General will include in his next report further details on the structures and functioning of MINURSO medical services (see also [A/71/5 \(Vol. II\)](#), chap. II, para. 313).**

VI. Conclusion

47. The actions to be taken by the General Assembly in connection with the financing of MINURSO for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 are indicated in section V of the performance report ([A/73/617](#)). **The Advisory Committee recommends that the unencumbered balance of \$575,300 for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018, as well as other income/adjustments amounting to \$510,300 for the period ended 30 June 2018, be credited to Member States.**

48. The actions to be taken by the General Assembly in connection with the financing of MINURSO for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 are indicated

in section IV of the proposed budget ([A/73/737](#)). Taking into account its observations and recommendations above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the proposed resources be reduced by \$22,000 from \$56,369,400 to \$56,347,400. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly appropriate the amount of \$56,347,400 for the maintenance of the Mission for the 12-month period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

Documentation

- Report of the Secretary-General on the budget performance of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 ([A/73/617](#))
- Report of the Secretary-General on the budget for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 ([A/73/737](#))
- Report of the Board of Auditors on United Nations peacekeeping operations for the 12-month period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 ([A/73/5 \(Vol. II\)](#), chap. II)
- Report of the Advisory Committee on the report of the Board of Auditors on the accounts of the United Nations peacekeeping operations and report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors concerning United Nations peacekeeping operations for the financial period ended 30 June 2017 ([A/72/850](#))
- Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors concerning United Nations peacekeeping operations for the financial period ended 30 June 2018 ([A/73/750](#))
- Report of the Secretary-General on the overview of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations: budget performance for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018 and budget for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 ([A/73/776](#))
- Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the budget performance for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 and proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara ([A/72/789/Add.1/Rev.1](#))
- General Assembly resolutions [71/309](#) and [72/301](#) on the financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
- Security Council resolutions [2440 \(2018\)](#) and [690 \(1991\)](#)