



# General Assembly

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Proposed programme budget for 2020

## **Revised estimates relating to the programme budget for 2020 under section 27, Humanitarian assistance, and section 36, Staff assessment**

**Office of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator**

**Twenty-eighth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for 2020**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered an advance version of the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates relating to the programme budget for 2020 under section 27, Humanitarian assistance, and section 36, Staff assessment ([A/74/544](#)). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information, concluding with written responses received on 26 November 2019.

### **II. Background**

2. Information on the Office of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator, including on the mandate, background, recent developments, strategy and planned transition is provided in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.13 of the report of the Secretary-General. The Advisory Committee recalls that the tenth outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in the Democratic Republic of Congo was declared on 1 August 2018 and that the Office was established on 23 May 2019, under the authority of the Secretary-General, and that, on 17 July 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Ebola outbreak a public health emergency of international concern.

3. The Secretary-General also indicates that the Office, which is led by a United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator at the level of Assistant Secretary-



General, implements a programme of coordination support, as follows: (a) to coordinate international support for the Ebola response; (b) to ensure coherence in the United Nations system; and (c) to lead the implementation of two of the five pillars<sup>1</sup> of the United Nations system scale-up strategy for the Ebola response, with a focus on security and safety and community ownership and acceptance. The Advisory Committee recalls that the aforementioned scale-up strategy is aimed, inter alia, at ensuring security access in order to allow for quick detection, treatment and vaccinations to stop the spread of the virus.

4. In his report, the Secretary-General states that the epidemic peaked during April and May 2019 and that the number of confirmed Ebola cases has decreased since then, from a weekly average of more than 100 cases in July to a weekly average of 21 cases in October, but that the outbreak has now shifted to more rural and hard-to-reach communities in the northern part of the country. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, from 28 October to 17 November 2019, a total of 31 confirmed cases were reported. The Committee was also informed that, as at 17 November 2019, there had been a cumulative total of 3,296 cases (3,178 confirmed cases and 118 probable cases), with 2,196 of those cases (67 per cent) having resulted in death. The Committee was furthermore informed that the proposed resources for the Office (see paras. 12–17 below) had been based on the planning assumption that the current Ebola outbreak would end by the end of March 2020.

5. The Secretary-General indicates that the Office would draw down by 30 June 2020 and hand over responsibility for the implementation of the “getting to zero” strategy, which is currently being developed, to the United Nations country team and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The “getting to zero” strategy would include: (a) robust surveillance to manage any Ebola outbreaks; (b) support for Ebola survivors; (c) essential services for affected communities; (d) enhanced basic health services; and (e) reconciliation and stabilization. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the gradual transition to the United Nations country team and the humanitarian country team would be a key task of the Office during the second quarter of 2020, so as to ensure its closure without leaving a capacity gap in the ability of existing United Nations resources in the country to assume any remaining tasks of the Office. No resources or positions would therefore be transferred from the Office to other United Nations entities.

**6. The Advisory Committee welcomes the timely initiative aimed at coordinating the efforts in support of the Ebola response and the fact that those efforts are now leading to the containment of the Ebola virus disease. The Committee acknowledges the fluidity of the situation on the ground and trusts that the Secretary-General will provide an update on the latest developments, including on the impact of the security situation on the work of the Office of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator and on the Ebola**

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<sup>1</sup> The Advisory Committee recalls that, with regard to the coordination and collaboration activities of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator, an integrated approach was envisaged and an Ebola Emergency Response Team, co-chaired by the Assistant Secretary-General, acting as Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator, and the Assistant Director General for Regional Emergencies at the World Health Organization (WHO), would guide the implementation of the integrated strategy, consisting of five pillars: (a) the public health response in support of the Ministry of Health of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (led by WHO); (b) political engagement, security and operational support (led by the Coordinator); (c) support to communities affected by Ebola (led by the Coordinator); (d) financial planning, monitoring and reporting (led by the World Bank); and (e) preparedness for surrounding countries (led by WHO and supported by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). The Coordinator would be directly responsible for the implementation of the second and third pillars.

response effort overall, to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.

### III. Resources for the Office of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator

#### Resources for 2019

7. The current requirements for the Office from June to December 2019 amount to \$6,282,400<sup>2</sup> and comprise the following (see A/74/544, tables 1.2 and 1.3):

(a) Initial funding of \$774,600, which was authorized by the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 1 (a) of resolution 72/264 relating to unforeseen and extraordinary expenses, in order to meet the costs of the initial deployment of the Office from 19 June to 31 August 2019;

(b) An amount of \$5,507,800, from 9 August to 31 December 2019, under the commitment authority approved by the Advisory Committee.

8. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee received information on actual expenditures of the resources provided under the authority of the Secretary-General, indicating that a total of \$491,499 of the authorized amount of \$774,600 had been spent as at November 2019, resulting in an unused balance of \$283,101 (37 per cent) of the total available amount. The Committee was informed that a number of expenditures had been recorded between September and November 2019, which was beyond the time frame authorized by the Secretary-General, but that those were related to the travel of staff in July and August and to staff and security costs pertaining to the months of June, July and August 2019 and that they had been recorded late. **The Advisory Committee notes that funds under the authority provided by the Secretary-General are still being used, even though the initial funding for the Office of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator expired on 31 August 2019. The Committee also considers that the practice of expending those funds after the duration of the commitment authority of the Secretary-General has resulted in an overlap of funding authority, specifically with regard to the funds that were provided by means of the commitment authority approved by the Committee for the period from 9 August to 31 December 2019 (see also paras. 9 and 10 below). The Committee is of the view that there is a need to clarify this practice and trusts that an explanation thereof will be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.**

9. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with the information in the table below on the expenditures in connection with the aforementioned commitment authority approved by the Advisory Committee from 9 August to 31 December 2019:

<sup>2</sup> The Secretary-General has reported the amounts pertaining to the financing of the Office of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator in the context of the second performance report on the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (A/74/583).

**Actual and projected expenditures of funds provided under the commitment authority approved by the Advisory Committee from 9 August to 31 December 2019**

	Approved by Advisory Committee	Actual expenditures			Projected expenditures		Total
		August	September	October	November	December	
Other staff costs	2 680 400.00	5 730.00	226 069.95	483 574.86	466 925.72	866 925.72	2 049 226.25
Consultants	67 500.00	–	–	–	–	–	–
Travel of staff	183 000.00	–	15 378.80	91 477.55	120 953.95	120 953.95	348 764.25
Facilities and infrastructure	235 300.00	–	–	–	252 570.00	123 570.00	376 140.00
Ground transportation	113 400.00	–	–	–	21 350.00	21 350.00	42 700.00
Air transportation	522 600.00	–	–	–	271 713.07	271 713.07	543 426.14
Information and communications technology	526 100.00	–	–	–	308 219.00	308 219.00	616 438.00
Other supplies, services and equipment	1 179 500.00	30.00	–	268 171.83	656 524.83	267 940.00	1 192 666.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 507 800.00</b>	<b>5 760.00</b>	<b>241 448.75</b>	<b>843 224.24</b>	<b>2 098 256.57</b>	<b>1 980 671.74</b>	<b>5 169 361.30</b>

10. The Advisory Committee notes that, of the total amount provided under its commitment authority, only \$1,090,433 (20 per cent) was expended from August to October 2019, but that expenditures were projected to increase significantly during the remainder of the year, with \$4,078,928 (74 per cent) to be spent during November and December, resulting in an overall expenditure for 2019 in the amount of \$5,169,361 (94 per cent). **Taking into account that the work undertaken by the Office of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator in support of the Ebola response has led to a significant drop in identified cases in October and November 2019 (see also para. 4 above), the Advisory Committee considers it unlikely that the operational requirements of the Office would increase nearly four-fold during those two months, in comparison to the previous three months when the epidemic was just past its peak.**

11. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with a list of commitment authorities granted by the Secretary-General, as at 25 November 2019, under paragraph 1 (a) of General Assembly resolution [72/264](#) relating to unforeseen and extraordinary expenses. The Committee intends to address matters related thereto in the context of its report on the report of the Secretary-General on the second performance report on the programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 ([A/74/583](#)).

**Proposed resources for 2020**

12. Information on the proposed post and non-post resource requirements for the Office, which amount to \$6,454,600 (net of staff assessment) for a six-month period, from 1 January to 30 June 2020, is provided in paragraphs 1.19 and 1.23 of the report of the Secretary-General. The Committee notes from supplementary information provided to it that the proposed requirements would comprise the following:

(a) \$4,312,100 under other staff costs for 51 general temporary assistance positions (1 ASG, 1 D-2, 2 D-1, 5 P-5, 7 P-4, 6 P-3, 1 P-2, 14 Field Service, 2 National Professional Officer and 12 Local level) and 9 United Nations Volunteers (see also paras. 14 and 15 below);

(b) \$20,000 under hospitality and related costs, to cover the cost of official functions;

(c) \$96,600 for three consultants (see also para. 16 below);

(d) \$143,000 under travel on official business for national, regional and international trips;

(e) \$418,100 under contractual services in connection with the establishment of further presences of the Office;

(f) \$1,375,800 under general operating expenses, including \$476,800 for communications and maintenance; \$17,600 for maintenance, furniture and equipment; \$259,200 for general insurance, freight and related costs, petrol, oil and lubricants and welfare; \$161,000 for the rental of premises and rental of equipment; \$88,400 for the rental of vehicles, petrol, oil and lubricants and spare parts; \$265,500 for air transportation; \$14,400 for utilities; \$71,000 for security services and construction materials and field defence supplies; and \$21,900 for software, licences and fees (see also para. 17 below);

(g) \$11,700 under supplies and material;

(h) \$77,300 under furniture and equipment.

### **Comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on resource requirements**

13. The Advisory Committee was provided with a break-down of the proposed resource requirements for 2020. The Committee notes that, even though it is currently expected that the Ebola outbreak would end by March 2020 and the Office would close by 30 June 2020, the resulting slowdown of operations on the ground has not been reflected in the overall proposed requirements for 2020 under a number of budget lines, as described below.

#### *Staff costs*

14. The proposed resources for other staff costs for 2020 amount to \$ 4,312,100 for 51 general temporary assistance positions (1 ASG, 1 D-2, 2 D-1, 5 P-5, 7 P-4, 6 P-3, 1 P-2, 14 Field Service, 2 National Professional Officer and 12 Local level) and 9 United Nations Volunteers. As indicated in paragraph 1.22 and table 1.4 of the report of the Secretary-General, the Assistant Secretary-General position would be discontinued after January 2020, while the remaining 50 positions would be drawn down to 41 positions for the period between April and June. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that 4 positions (1 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 Field Service and 1 National Professional Officer) of the 62 funded under the commitment authority granted by the Committee (see paras. 7 (b) and 9), were vacant as at 22 November 2019. **In view of the impending drawdown of the Office of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator, the Advisory Committee considers that there is no operational need at this stage to pursue the recruitment and onboarding process for all of the proposed positions. The Committee therefore considers that the levels of the estimated requirements under other staff costs may not be fully justified.**

15. The Secretary-General indicates that the Assistant Secretary-General would continue to act as Coordinator during the month of January 2020 during the transition to the new Coordinator. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, starting from February 2020, the day-to-day operations of the Office would be undertaken by a Director at the D-2 level. Furthermore, an Assistant Secretary-General from MONUSCO would provide guidance to the D-2-level Director and to the Office overall, until the closure of the Office on 30 June 2020. **The Advisory Committee trusts that the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General at MONUSCO, in his role as United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, will be involved in all aspects of the activities of the Office of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator until its closure.**

*Consultants*

16. The proposed resources for consultants for 2020 amount to \$96,600. The Advisory Committee was informed that an amount of \$48,330 would provide for one international consultant and an amount of \$48,270 for two national consultants, for expertise on matters relating to sexual exploitation and abuse, including training and awareness-raising. The Committee notes from the table above that, under its commitment authority, an amount of \$67,500 was included for those three consultants but that the provision would not be utilized in 2019. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that other United Nations entities (funds, programmes and agencies) had internal relevant capacities within the overall network on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and that the network intended to train all staff working on the Ebola response, including international and national staff of United Nations entities and international non-governmental organizations, as well as government personnel. The Committee was furthermore informed that the work of the consultants would be in support of that effort. **The Advisory Committee considers that the role of the consultants would be limited, in particular in view of the fact that an overall network on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, including capacity at MONUSCO, is already in place. Therefore, the Committee is not convinced of the operational need for the three consultants.**

*General operating expenses*

17. The proposed resources under general operating expenses for 2020 amount to \$1,375,800, including resources relating to ground transportation (\$88,400 for rental of vehicles, petrol, oil and lubricants and spare parts) and air transportation (\$265,500). The Advisory Committee notes from the table above that an amount of \$113,400, under ground transportation, and an amount of \$522,600, under air transportation, was provided under the Committee's commitment authority. While no expenditures were recorded from August to October, all expenditures would be recorded in November and December 2019, with an amount of only \$42,700 for ground transportation and \$543,426 for air transportation expended over the entire period. With respect to ground transportation, the Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the Office intended to rent 24 vehicles (22 general purpose and 2 armoured vehicles) from MONUSCO. With respect to air transportation, the Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the commitment authority provided by the Committee was for 160 estimated flight hours, and that that amount had been reduced by 50 per cent, to 80 flight hours, as there would be limited need for special flights, since several locations had been accessible by road and, furthermore, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service was operating an extensive regular flight network in support of the Ebola response. **The Advisory Committee notes that no resources were utilized from August to October 2019, even though the need for significant ground and air transportation would have appeared to be an operational necessity, since the epidemic was just past its peak at that time. The Committee considers that, in view of the impending drawdown of the Office of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator, the proposed resources under both ground transportation and air transportation may not be fully utilized during the time period.**

## IV. Other matters

*Lessons learned*

18. The Advisory Committee recalls its observations and recommendations contained in its report on the lessons learned exercise on the coordination activities

of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (A/71/810),<sup>3</sup> inter alia, on the need for: (a) coordination and collaboration with local, regional and international partners, including, but not limited to, WHO, the United Nations country team and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; (b) an organizational structure with a light footprint, to be located in the immediate area of concern; (c) the prudent acquisition and management of operational resources, including vehicles; and (d) the economical use and transparent reporting of financial resources. The Committee notes that some of the lessons learned contained in the aforementioned report have been taken into account with respect to the Office. **The Advisory Committee reiterates its observations and recommendations presented in the aforementioned report, which was endorsed by the General Assembly in section II, paragraph 2, of its resolution 71/272 B. The Committee reiterates in particular that existing institutional arrangements, such as the framework for emergency humanitarian assistance adopted by the Assembly in its resolution 46/182, could have been used, including the resources of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (ibid., para. 25). The Committee stresses that every effort should continue to be made to build on past experience and, in particular, to use the available financial resources in a judicious manner, and that a relevant lessons learned exercise will be undertaken as soon as possible.**

#### **Format and presentation**

19. In its first report on the proposed programme budget for 2020 (see A/74/7, chap. I, paras. 15–40), the Advisory Committee expresses numerous concerns with respect to the presentation and format of the budget and notes that its observations and recommendations thereon also apply to the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates for the Office. The Committee considers that some information, such as details on outputs and deliverables, should have been included in the report of the Secretary-General. **While the Advisory Committee continues to support the efforts made with respect to the Organization's Ebola response, the Committee considers nevertheless that the request for post and non-post resources for 2020 for the Office of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator does not provide adequate justification.**

## **V. Conclusion**

20. The action requested of the General Assembly is set out in paragraph 1.24 of the budget document. **Taking into account its comments and recommendations in the paragraphs above, in particular the insufficient justification in the proposed requirements and the lack of clarity in the budget presentation, and in view of the planned drawdown of the Office of the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly:**

(a) **Appropriate an additional amount of \$5,600,000 (net of staff assessment) for the Office for the period from 1 January to 30 June 2020 under section 27, Humanitarian assistance, of the programme budget for 2020, to be charged to the contingency fund;**

(b) **Appropriate an amount of \$295,100 under section 36, Staff assessment, to be offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment, of the programme budget.**

<sup>3</sup> The United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response was mandated on 18 September 2014 by the Security Council in its resolution 2177 (2014), established on 19 September 2014 by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/1 and closed on 31 July 2015 (see, in particular, A/71/810, paras. 5–7).