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Proposed programme budget for 2021

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Part II

Political affairs

Section 3

Political affairs

Special political missions

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Seventh report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for 2021

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on estimates in respect of special political missions that contains the proposed resource requirements for 2021 for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) ([A/75/6 \(Sect. 3\)/Add.5](#)). During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee received additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 14 October 2020.

2. The Secretary-General, in addendum 1 to section 3, Political affairs, of his report on the proposed programme budget for 2021 ([A/75/6 \(Sect. 3\)/Add.1](#)), provides an overview of the proposed resource requirements for 2021 for 39 special political missions and related cross-cutting issues. Detailed information in respect of each special political mission is contained in five addenda to section 3 of the proposed programme budget.¹ The addenda cover the specific requirements for thematic clusters I to III and the two largest missions, UNAMA and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The Advisory Committee's comments and recommendations of a cross-cutting nature pertaining to all special political missions

¹ [A/75/6 \(Sect. 3\)/Add.2](#), [A/75/6 \(Sect. 3\)/Add.3](#), [A/75/6 \(Sect. 3\)/Add.4](#), [A/75/6 \(Sect. 3\)/Add.5](#), [A/75/6 \(Sect. 3\)/Add.6](#) and [A/75/6 \(Sect. 3\)/Add.6/Corr.1](#).



are contained in its main report (A/75/7/Add.2), while its comments and recommendations on budget proposals for thematic clusters I to III, UNAMA and UNAMI are covered in its related reports.² The Secretary-General also indicates that he will present to the General Assembly separate proposals for any additional requirements emanating from additional mandates or changes in mandates (see A/75/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.1, para. 3). The Committee was informed that resource requirements for 2021 for the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS) (thematic cluster III), established on 3 June 2020 pursuant to Security Council resolution 2524 (2020), would be presented in a separate report (A/75/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.7). The Committee's comments and recommendations pertaining to the budget proposal for UNITAMS will be contained in its related report (A/75/7/Add.8).

3. In its first report on the proposed programme budget for 2021 (A/75/7 and A/75/7/Corr.1, chap. I, sect. A), the Advisory Committee made comments and recommendations on the budget methodology, format and presentation, which also apply to the reports of the Secretary-General on the estimates in respect of special political missions (A/75/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.1-7).

II. Budget performance for 2019 and 2020 and resource requirements for 2021

A. Mandate and planning assumptions

4. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, the mandate of UNAMA was extended by the Security Council in its resolution 2489 (2019) until 17 September 2020. In its resolution 2543 (2020), the Council renewed the mandate of the Mission until 17 September 2021. The Secretary-General indicates that Afghanistan will continue to face further political, security, socioeconomic, humanitarian and human rights challenges in 2021. The Mission's priorities and planning assumptions for 2021 and cooperation with other entities are described in paragraphs 12 to 38 of the report of the Secretary-General.

B. Information on resources for 2019, 2020 and 2021

5. A summary of the proposed resource requirements for 2021 for UNAMA, compared with the approved resources for 2020 and the expenditure for 2019, is set out in table 1.

² A/75/7/Add.3, A/75/7/Add.4, A/75/7/Add.5, A/75/7/Add.6 and A/75/7/Add.7.

Table 1
Budget performance and total resource requirements (net of staff assessment)

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Category of expenditure	2019		2020		2021		Variance
	Appropriation	Expenditure	Appropriation	Expenditure	Total	Non-recurrent	2021 budget vs. 2020 appropriation Increase/ (decrease)
				1 June to 30 September			
	(1)	(2)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(5)=(3)-(2)
Military and police personnel costs	41.5	28.2	41.5	17.0	41.5	–	–
Civilian personnel costs	96 271.2	98 448.7	94 377.4	72 339.8	98 007.0	–	3 629.6
Operational costs	44 382.1	45 235.1	40 371.3	18 898.4	39 872.5	–	(498.8)
Total requirements	140 694.8	143 712.0	134 790.2	91 255.2	137 921.0	–	3 130.8

6. As shown in table 1, the appropriation for 2019 amounted to \$140,694,800, with expenditure of \$143,712,000, resulting in overexpenditure of \$3,017,200 (2.1 per cent). Overexpenditure in 2019 was incurred under civilian personnel costs and operational costs, and underexpenditure under military and police personnel costs. The overall overexpenditure was attributable mainly to national staff costs for higher actual salary rates and the application of a higher percentage of common staff costs, and for expenditure for 12 months for 39 Field Security Radio Operators (Local level), compared with 7 months budgeted in 2019 (see also para. 28 below). **The Advisory Committee trusts that every effort will be made to absorb any additional costs to the extent possible in future budget implementation.**

7. The Advisory Committee was also informed upon enquiry that, as at 30 September 2020, expenditure amounted to \$91,255,200 (or 67.7 per cent) compared with the 2020 appropriation of \$134,790,200. **The Advisory Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will provide updated information on actual expenditure in 2020 to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.**

C. Proposed resource requirements for 2021

8. As shown in table 1, the resource requirements proposed for UNAMA for 2021 amount to \$137,921,000, reflecting an increase of \$3,130,800, or 2.3 per cent, compared with the appropriation for 2020, owing mainly to increased requirements for civilian personnel costs attributable to the adjustment of the average grade and step levels for National Professional Officer and Local level staff to reflect actual average costs in 2019; the provision for 39 existing Field Security Radio Operator positions (Local level) for 12 months in 2021, compared with 7 months budgeted in 2020, and for seven existing Security Officer positions (Field Service) for 12 months in 2021, compared with 3 months in 2020; and the application of a lower vacancy rate of 6 per cent, compared with 8 per cent in 2020 for international staff; partly offset by reduced requirements for operational costs mainly under air operations resulting from the discontinuation of one rotary-wing aircraft, and under official travel owing to increased reliance on virtual technology for meetings and telework. A summary of the main factors contributing to the variances between the approved resources for 2020 and the proposed resources for 2021 is provided in section I.B.4 of the report of the Secretary-General.

1. Military and police personnel

9. The proposed requirements for military and police personnel for 2021 for the costs related to the deployment of one senior military observer amount to \$41,500, representing no change compared with the appropriation for 2020 (A/75/6 (Sect. 3)/Add.5, para. 40). **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve the proposals of the Secretary-General for military and police personnel for 2021 for UNAMA.**

2. Civilian personnel

Table 2
Staffing requirements

	Positions	Level
Approved positions for 2020	1 204	1 USG, 2 ASG, 1 D-2, 7 D-1, 28 P-5, 55 P-4, 58 P-3, 6 P-2, 142 FS, 1 GS (OL), 125 NPO, 710 LL, 68 UNV
Proposed positions for 2021	1 163	1 USG, 2 ASG, 1 D-2, 7 D-1, 28 P-5, 55 P-4, 58 P-3, 6 P-2, 137 FS, 1 GS (OL), 125 NPO, 674 LL, 68 UNV
Proposed abolishment	41	5 FS, 36 LL
Proposed reassignment ^a	2	2 LL
Proposed redeployment ^b	8	4 LL, 3 UNV, 1 P-3

Abbreviations: ASG, Assistant Secretary-General; FS, Field Service; GS (OL), General Service (Other level); LL, Local level; NPO, National Professional Officer; UNV, United Nations Volunteer; USG, Under-Secretary-General.

^a Reassignment of one position of Administrative Assistant (Local level) to Programme Management Assistant (Local level) in the Mission Planning Unit of the Office of the Chief of Staff and one position of Driver (Local level) to Administrative Assistant (Local level) in the Field Coordination Team of the Office of the Chief of Staff.

^b Redeployment of two positions of Driver (Local level) from the Transport Unit to the Security Section, one position of Security Logistics Officer (United Nations Volunteer) from the Security Section to the Herat regional office, one position of Administrative Assistant (United Nations Volunteer) from the Office of the Chief of Supply Chain Management to the Centralized Warehousing Unit in the supply chain management pillar, one position of Procurement Assistant (Local level) from the Procurement Unit to the Acquisition Management Unit in the supply chain management pillar, one position of Supply Assistant (Local level) from the Centralized Warehousing Unit in the supply chain management pillar to the General Supply and Fuel Unit in the service delivery management pillar, one position of Medical Doctor (United Nations Volunteer) from the Medical, Staff Counselling and Welfare Section to the Bamyán provincial office and one position of Political Affairs Officer (P-3) from the Baghlan (Pul-e Khumri) provincial office to the Kunduz provincial office.

10. A summary of the staffing requirements and the proposed changes is presented in paragraphs 45 to 69 and table 9 of, and annexes II and III to, the report of the Secretary-General. As summarized in table 2, the total proposed staffing of 1,163 positions, which comprises 296 international positions (158 Professional and above, 137 Field Service and 1 General Service (Other level)), 799 national positions (125 National Professional Officer and 674 Local level) and 68 United Nations Volunteers, represents a reduction of 41 positions compared with the approved staffing for 2020. Organizational charts showing the proposed staffing grades and levels are set out in annex IV to the report of the Secretary-General. The proposed allocation of the positions by location is presented in annex III to the report and is summarized as follows:

- (a) UNAMA headquarters in Kabul: 716 positions;
- (b) Six regional offices: 268 positions;
- (c) Five provincial offices: 125 positions;

(d) UNAMA Support Office in Kuwait and Kuwait Joint Support Office: 40 positions;

(e) Liaison offices in Islamabad and Tehran: 9 positions;

(f) Backstopping at Headquarters: 5 positions.

11. The Secretary-General indicates that the proposed staffing changes include: (a) abolishment of 41 positions (5 Field Service and 36 Local level) (ibid., paras. 45, 49, 62, 68, 69, 72 and 74); (b) redeployment of eight positions and the reassignment of two positions, primarily under the mission support structure (ibid., paras. 43, 45, 49, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 61, 62, 68 and 69).

12. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the abolishment of four positions of Security Officer (FS) and 34 positions of Field Security Guard (Local level), and the outsourcing of their functions to a private security company working for UNAMA, had been proposed after a thorough review of security arrangements in October 2019 and in a manner that would not affect safety and security. The Committee notes that the Secretary-General highlights in his report the volatile security situation and ongoing high levels of civilian casualties in the mission area (ibid., foreword and para. 7 (c)). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the security situation was increasingly deteriorating in the mission area and was expected to worsen with the drawdown of the international military forces in Afghanistan, until such time as a peace agreement was implemented. **The Advisory Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will undertake the necessary measures to ensure the continued safety and security of all UNAMA staff. Furthermore, the Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will provide information on the most recent security risk assessment to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.**

Vacant positions and vacancy rates

13. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, as at 30 September 2020, there were 73 vacant positions: 19 Professional and above positions (1 ASG, 4 P-5, 6 P-4, 6 P-3 and 2 P-2), 15 Field Service positions, 20 Local level positions, 8 National Professional Officers and 11 United Nations Volunteers.

14. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee received information on the approved positions and vacancy rates, actual vacancy rates as at 31 August 2020 and average vacancy rates from January to August 2020, as well as the proposed positions and budgeted vacancy rates for 2021 for UNAMA, as follows:

Table 3
Number of positions and vacancy rates, 2020–2021

<i>Category</i>	<i>Approved positions 2020</i>	<i>Approved vacancy rate (percentage) 2020</i>	<i>Vacancy rate as at 31 August 2020</i>	<i>Average vacancy rate (percentage) Jan–Aug 2020</i>	<i>Proposed positions 2021</i>	<i>Budgeted vacancy rate (percentage) 2021</i>
International staff	301	8	10.3	8.0	296	6
National Professional Officer	125	3	6.4	6.0	125	3
National staff (Local level)	710	3	2.8	2.8	674	3
United Nations Volunteer	68	7	13.2	13.2	68	7

Special post allowance

15. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that three positions were currently encumbered temporarily by staff members receiving a special post

allowance, all three for more than one year. The recruitment process for one position is under way, while the two staff members with liens against the other positions are expected to return to their functions in November 2020 and February 2021, respectively. The Committee discusses the use of special post allowances further in its report on the proposed programme budget for 2021 (A/75/7, chap. I, paras. 56 and 57).

16. Taking into account its comments in the paragraphs above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve the staffing proposals of the Secretary-General for 2021 for UNAMA. The Committee discusses vacant positions and vacancy rates further in its main report on the estimates in respect of special political missions (A/75/7/Add.2).

3. Operational costs

17. The proposed resource requirements for operational costs for 2021 amount to \$39,872,500, reflecting a decrease of \$498,800, or 1.2 per cent, compared with the appropriation for 2020. The Advisory Committee was provided with information on the operational costs for UNAMA, including 2019 expenditure, 2020 appropriation and proposed requirements for 2021, as shown in table 4.

Table 4
Operational costs
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Category of expenditure	2019		2020		2021		Variance
	Appropriation	Expenditure	Appropriation	Expenditure	Total requirements	Non-recurrent requirements	2021 budget vs. 2020 appropriation
				1 January to 30 September			Increase/ (decrease)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)=(3)-(2)	(5)=(3)-(2)	
1. Experts	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
2. Consultants and consulting services	186.8	44.1	176.3	16.3	145.4	–	(30.9)
3. Official travel	1 406.8	648.3	1 293.1	189.7	1 185.0	–	(108.1)
4. Facilities and infrastructure	24 326.8	26 556.5	22 898.7	10 304.2	23 385.2	–	459.5
5. Ground transportation	730.0	2 443.2	656.0	112.3	576.3	–	(79.7)
6. Air operations	8 741.9	8 333.9	7 591.0	3 900.3	6 950.8	–	(640.2)
7. Marine operations	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
8. Communications and information technology	7 116.8	6 493.6	6 303.0	3 552.8	6 271.6	–	(31.4)
9. Medical	285.5	14.2	227.1	199.2	214.4	–	(12.7)
10. Special equipment	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
11. Other supplies, services and equipment	1 587.5	701.3	1 226.1	623.7	1 170.8	–	(55.3)
12. Quick impact projects	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Total	44 382.1	45 235.1	40 371.3	18 898.4	39 872.5	–	(498.8)

Consultants and consulting services

18. The proposed resources for consultants and consulting services amount to \$145,400, representing a decrease of \$30,900, or 17.5 per cent, compared with the appropriation of \$176,300 for 2020. Information provided to the Advisory Committee indicated that expenditure for consultants and consulting services in 2019 amounted

to \$44,100. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, as at 30 September 2020, expenditure for 2020 amounted to \$16,285, or 9.2 per cent of the total appropriation, reflecting the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as most consultancy projects had not been undertaken. **The Advisory Committee reiterates that the use of consultants should be kept to an absolute minimum and that core activities should be performed by in-house capacity (see also A/74/7/Add.6, para. 18). Taking into account the existing capacity and the level of expenditure in 2019 and during the first nine months of 2020, the Committee recommends a reduction of 20 per cent, or \$29,100, to the proposed resources for consultants and consulting services.**

Official travel

19. The proposed resources for official travel amount to \$1,185,000, representing a decrease of \$108,100, or 8.4 per cent, compared with the appropriation of \$1,293,100 for 2020. Information provided to the Advisory Committee indicated that expenditure for official travel in 2019 amounted to \$648,300. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, as at 30 September 2020, expenditure for 2020 amounted to \$189,706, or 14.7 per cent of the total appropriation, reflecting the impact of travel restrictions owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. **The Advisory Committee reiterates its view that greater use should be made of virtual meetings and online training tools (see also A/75/7, para. 62) and, considering that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to continue to have an impact on travel in 2021, as well as the level of expenditure in 2019 and during the first nine months of 2020, the Committee recommends a reduction of 20 per cent, or \$237,000, to the proposed resources for official travel.**

Facilities and infrastructure

20. The proposed resources for facilities and infrastructure amount to \$23,385,200, representing an increase of \$459,500, or 2.0 per cent, compared with the appropriation of \$22,898,700 for 2020. Information provided to the Advisory Committee indicated that expenditure for facilities and infrastructure in 2019 amounted to \$26,556,500. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, as at 30 September 2020, expenditure for 2020 amounted to \$10,304,184, or 44.9 per cent of the total appropriation, reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and liquidity constraints, which had resulted in lower expenditure for generator fuel as many staff were telecommuting, which had resulted in lower consumption of fuel and the cancellation or deferment of the acquisition of equipment.

21. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, of a total of 108 generators, 94 generators (or 87 per cent) would reach the end of their useful life expectancy by 2025 and that UNAMA was planning to acquire five small capacity generators in 2020 to be installed in field offices. The Committee was furthermore informed that the incremental replacement and rejuvenation of the Mission's aged and increasingly inefficient generators with more efficient generators was planned. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to develop a multi-year generator replacement plan, including detailed requirements, such as those pertaining to energy efficiency, and projected costs, and to present this information in the next budget proposal.**

Air operations

22. The proposed resources for air operations amount to \$6,950,800, representing a decrease of \$640,200, or 8.4 per cent, compared with the appropriation of \$7,591,000 for 2020, attributable mainly to the discontinuation of one rotary-wing aircraft, partly offset by the replacement of one fixed-wing aircraft with another aircraft type for the purpose of the travel of senior mission management. The Advisory Committee provides its observations on the use of aircraft for senior management and other high-

level persons in its main report on the estimates in respect of special political missions (A/75/7/Add.2).

Communications and information technology

23. The proposed resources for communications and information technology amount to \$6,271,600, representing a decrease of \$31,400, or 0.5 per cent, compared with the appropriation of \$6,303,000 for 2020. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, as at 30 September 2020, expenditure for 2020 amounted to \$3,552,759, or 56.4 per cent of the total appropriation, reflecting the cancellation or deferment of the procurement of information technology and communications equipment owing to liquidity constraints. **Taking into account the level of expenditure in 2019 and the first nine months of 2020 and the need for a consolidated presentation of information technology and communications resources, the Advisory Committee recommends a reduction of 15 per cent, or \$940,700, to the proposed resources for communications and information technology. The Committee makes observations on communications and information technology resources and satellite imagery in its main report on the estimates in respect of special political missions (A/75/7/Add.2).**

Other supplies, services and equipment

24. The proposed resources for other supplies, services and equipment amount to \$1,170,800, representing a decrease of \$55,300, or 4.5 per cent, compared with the appropriation of \$1,226,100 for 2020. Information provided to the Advisory Committee indicated that expenditure for other supplies, services and equipment in 2019 amounted to \$701,300. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, as at 30 September 2020, expenditure for 2020 amounted to \$623,708, or 50.9 per cent of the total appropriation, reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as most activities had not been undertaken, resulting in lower expenditure, for example, under training fees, hospitality and official functions and freight-related charges owing to the cancellation or deferment of the procurement of related equipment and supplies. **Considering the level of expenditure in 2019 and during the first nine months of 2020 and that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have an impact on expenditure for stationery and office supplies, training fees and hospitality and official functions, as well as freight-related charges, during the remainder of 2020, and also in 2021, the Advisory Committee recommends a reduction of 10 per cent, or \$117,100, to the proposed resources for other freight and related costs.**

25. **The Advisory Committee recommends the approval of the proposals of the Secretary-General for operational costs for 2021 for UNAMA, subject to its recommendations in paragraphs 18, 19, 23 and 24 above.**

D. Other matters

Cost-sharing arrangements

26. The Secretary-General indicates that UNAMA shares the cost for joint medical services with agencies, funds and programmes located in Kabul and that the medical emergency response team comprises medical doctors with emergency expertise, with UNAMA covering 60 per cent and the agencies, funds and programmes covering 40 per cent of the cost. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, as a result of cash constraints, the related payments had not been made in 2019. **The Advisory Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will provide to the General Assembly, at the time of its consideration of the present report, an update on payments made. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the**

Assembly request the Secretary-General to include an update thereon in the next budget proposal.

27. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that UNAMA would support 14 international staff from the Department of Safety and Security and that, effective 1 June 2018, all international staff in that Department fell under the Secretariat administrative framework and were therefore considered Field Mission staff members.

28. With respect to the national staff costs for 39 Field Security Radio Operators (Local level) for 12 months in 2021, compared with 7 months budgeted in 2020 (see [A/75/6 \(Sect. 3\)/Add.5](#), para. 74 (b)), the Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the costs would now be covered in their entirety by UNAMA, as the agencies, funds and programmes had indicated that their own security arrangements were in place and that they would therefore not share in the related resources and costs. **The Advisory Committee trusts that UNAMA will continue its efforts to ensure cost-sharing arrangements of security-related support provided to agencies, funds, and programmes and is of the view that the Secretary-General, in his role as Chair of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, would be best placed to support UNAMA in these efforts. The Committee looks forward to an update thereon in the next budget proposal.**
