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Proposed programme budget for 2023

Revised estimates on United Nations activities to mitigate global food insecurity and its humanitarian impact

Twenty-seventh report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for 2023

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 on United Nations activities to mitigate global food insecurity and its humanitarian impact ([A/77/576](#)). The Committee received additional information and clarification from the representatives of the Secretary-General, concluding with written responses dated 25 November 2022.

Background

2. The Secretary-General indicates that, in order to mitigate the adverse effects of high international food and fertilizer prices, due in part to the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and exacerbated by the armed conflict in Ukraine, two initiatives were signed on 22 July 2022: the memorandum of understanding between the Russian Federation and the Secretariat of the United Nations on promoting Russian food products and fertilizers to the world market (referred to as the memorandum of understanding on trade facilitation); and the initiative on the safe transportation of grain and foodstuffs from Ukrainian ports among Türkiye, the Russian Federation and Ukraine (referred to as the Black Sea Grain Initiative), with the United Nations signing as a witness. The memorandum of understanding on trade facilitation is in effect for a period of three years, while the terms of the Black Sea Grain Initiative stipulate that it will remain in effect for 120 days from the date of its signature by all parties (22 July 2022) and can be extended automatically for the same period, unless one of the parties notifies the other of the intent to terminate the initiative or modify it ([A/77/576](#), summary and paras. 2 and 3).

3. The Advisory Committee recalls that the two initiatives relate: (a) to international cooperation in solving international problems of a humanitarian



character which, as stated in Article 1 (3) of the Charter of the United Nations, is among the purposes of the Organization; (b) to General Assembly resolutions [46/182](#) and [76/124](#) on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations; and (c) to resolution [76/264](#) on the state of global food insecurity, in which the Assembly recognized the fundamental role of the United Nations system in coordinating a comprehensive global response and called upon Member States and other relevant stakeholders to keep food and agriculture supply chains functioning ([A/77/486](#), paras. 2, 3 and 8).

4. The Advisory Committee further recalls that, subsequent to the signing of the two initiatives, the Secretary-General submitted revised estimates to cover the period from 22 July to 31 December 2022 ([A/77/325](#); see also para. 6 below), including \$848,600 to support the implementation of the memorandum of understanding on trade facilitation (under section 12, Trade and development) and \$2,481,700 (under section 27, Humanitarian assistance) to support the Black Sea Grain Initiative. The Secretary-General also indicated at that time that he intended to submit a revised estimates report for consideration by the Assembly during the main part of the seventy-seventh session that would include the budgetary requirements for 2023. The observations of the Committee relating to the revised estimates for the period from 22 July to 31 December 2022 were contained in its related report ([A/77/486](#)).

5. In its resolution [77/3](#), the General Assembly endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the Advisory Committee; approved the additional resource requirements for sections 12 and 27; authorized the Secretary-General to enter into commitments in an amount not exceeding \$3,524,600 (gross); and noted that the use of the commitment authority of \$3,524,600 for 2022 would be reported in the financial performance report for 2022.

Submissions of the revised estimates

6. With respect to the submission of the revised estimates for the period from 22 July to 31 December 2022 ([A/77/325](#)), the Advisory Committee recalls that the request was unique in terms of its circumstances and aspects and that the Secretary-General deemed it necessary to put forward a revised estimates report to the General Assembly on the basis of his assessment that the Assembly should be involved owing to the sensitivity of the proposals and the fact that future requests in this area were probable and could grow in volume and nature.¹ The Committee noted the exceptional nature of the submission process and expressed the view that it should not set a precedent ([A/77/486](#), para. 3).

7. Concerning the submission of the revised estimates for 2023, along with the request for the authorization of a commitment with assessment ([A/77/576](#)), upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the request of the Secretary-General for 2023 via the approval of a commitment authority with assessment, rather than via the approval of an additional appropriation, had been due to the volatile nature of the related operations on the ground. As a result of the uncertainty around the armed conflict in Ukraine, the volatility may lead to a higher probability that activities may shift, with corresponding shifts of the budget classes under which funds are needed. It was indicated to the Committee that, with such volatility of operations, a commitment authority would add needed flexibility, while the commitment authority with

¹ The Advisory Committee was informed at that time that the proposals were also submitted pursuant to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, with specific reference to regulation 2.8 and rule 102.4, which indicate that revised and supplementary programme budget proposals may be submitted by the Secretary-General whenever necessary, including when they relate to activities that the Secretary-General considers to be of the highest urgency and that could not have been foreseen at the time the initial programme budget proposals were prepared.

assessment would support the liquidity of the operations. According to the Secretariat, there was no difference for Member States between the commitment authority with assessment and an appropriation, as both would be assessed. **The Advisory Committee stresses that the Fifth Committee is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters, and also reaffirms the role of the Fifth Committee in carrying out a thorough analysis and approving human and financial resources and policies, with a view to ensuring full, effective and efficient implementation of all mandated programmes and activities and the implementation of related policies.**

8. The Advisory Committee sought, but did not receive, further clarification on any precedents of requests, following an initial commitment authority, for commitments with assessment for a period of 12 months; instead, the Committee was provided with information on three examples concerning the authorization to enter into commitments with a corresponding assessment, none of which covered a full financial period of 12 months, including that for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan for the period from 1 January to 31 October 2022. The Committee notes that the three examples cited by the Secretariat did not represent the same scenario as the current request of the Secretary-General for the two initiatives for 2023. **Taking into consideration the established practice for approving resource requirements of a full budget period and the level of expenditures, and in order to avoid setting a precedent for a full-year commitment authority with assessment, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve an appropriation for the additional resource requirements requested under the revised estimates for the two initiatives for 2023 (see also para. 14 below).**

9. Upon enquiry on the presentation, the Advisory Committee was informed that the request submitted to the General Assembly as formulated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/576) was the standard formulation for a request for a commitment authority with assessment. The Committee notes that Financial Regulation 2.9 stipulates that the Secretary-General shall prepare supplementary programme budget proposals in a form consistent with the approved programme budget.

II. Expenditures for 2022 and impact of the initiatives

Impact of the initiatives

10. Information on the transportation of food commodities out of the designated Ukrainian ports and the beneficial impact of the Black Sea Grain Initiative was provided in the report of the Secretary-General (A/77/576, para. 29). It is reported that, as at 16 October 2022, of the total cargo transported under the Initiative, some 24 per cent had gone to countries defined as low-income or lower-middle-income economies by the World Bank. The Advisory Committee was also informed that around 6 per cent of the overall cargo was for the least developed countries.

11. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, as at 11 November 2022, the total volume of foodstuffs moved under the Black Sea Grain Initiative had reached 10.2 million metric tons. Of the total, 3 per cent, or 314,099 metric tons, had been transported directly to countries defined by the World Bank as low-income economies (Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen), including 220,800 metric tons of cargo transported by the World Food Programme (WFP) to support ongoing humanitarian operations in Afghanistan, Yemen and the Horn of Africa. A further 19 per cent of the total, or 1,923,662 metric tons, had been transported to countries defined as lower-middle-income economies (Algeria, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Tunisia and Viet Nam). Live data on vessel movements and cargo totals by destination and commodity

continued to be made available on the website of the Black Sea Grain Initiative (www.un.org/en/black-sea-grain-initiative/vessel-movements).

12. The Secretary-General indicates that the impact of the Black Sea Grain Initiative also extends beyond the initial destinations, as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reports that the resumption of exports from Ukrainian ports has contributed to a continuing decline in its food price index, which measures the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities ([A/77/576](#), para. 29). The Advisory Committee was also informed that, in the context of great uncertainty, the mere prospect of the signature of the Black Sea Grain Initiative had in July led to record declines in the index and that the index was 15 per cent down in November from its peak in March. It was indicated to the Committee that, given that the World Bank estimated that more than 10 million people fall into extreme poverty for every one percentage point increase in food prices, that decline suggested a global welfare effect that could be measured in more than 100 million people not falling into poverty. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the implementation of both initiatives had already helped to stabilize markets and bring food prices down. While the index had decreased for six months in a row, more needed to be done to avoid the reversal of those gains.

13. **The Advisory Committee trusts that more detailed information on the accessibility and beneficial impact of the initiatives for the Member States, in particular the least developed countries and low-income food-deficit countries, will be included in the next report of the Secretary-General ([A/77/486](#), para. 9).**

Expenditures for 2022

14. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with information on the actual and projected expenditures for 2022 for the implementation of the activities associated with the two initiatives under sections 12 and 27 (see table 1 below). The Committee notes that, as at 31 October 2022, actual expenditures represented 48 per cent and 50 per cent of the approved resources for sections 12 and 27, respectively, while the projected expenditures by the end of 2022 would represent 75 per cent and 78 per cent for the two sections, respectively. **The Advisory Committee trusts that updated information on expenditures for 2022 will be provided to the General Assembly during its consideration of the present report.**

Table 1

Actual and projected total expenditure for 2022 and estimated additional resource requirements for 2023 by budget section

(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Programme budget section</i>	<i>Commitment authority (22 July–31 December 2022)</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 October 2022</i>	<i>Projected total expenditure by 31 December 2022</i>	<i>Estimated requirements 2023</i>
Section 12, Trade and development	848.6	407.9	633.0	2 328.8
Section 27, Humanitarian assistance	2 481.7	1 251.4	1 941.3	7 898.7
Total (net of staff assessment)	3 330.3	1 659.3	2 574.3	10 227.5

III. Revised estimates for 2023

15. Additional resource requirements for 2023 amount to \$10,227,500 (net) for the continued implementation of the United Nations activities to mitigate global food insecurity and its humanitarian impact under the two initiatives ([A/77/576](#), summary).

The Secretary-General indicates that, at this stage, it is not possible to identify activities within the relevant sections of the proposed programme budget for 2023 that could be terminated, deferred, curtailed or modified during 2023 (*ibid.*, para. 39). According to the Secretary-General, it is therefore necessary that the additional resources be provided through a commitment authority, with assessment, for 2023 (see paras. 7 and 8 above).

A. The memorandum of understanding on trade facilitation

16. The Secretariat will oversee and coordinate activities for the implementation of the memorandum of understanding on trade facilitation, with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as the lead entity ([A/77/576](#), para. 8, 9 and 15). UNCTAD has established a task team to support the memorandum of understanding, with the following activities:

(a) Establishment of channels for the mutual exchange of information between the Russian Federation and the Secretariat of the United Nations for the purposes of implementing the agreement and informing the Secretariat on any impediments to the access of food and fertilizers originating from the Russian Federation to global markets;

(b) Facilitation of and support for the efforts of bilateral and multilateral sectoral working groups, involving relevant actors from the government and private sectors;

(c) On the basis of in-scope requests received from the Russian Federation, liaison with the private sector, including business associations, industry groups and companies, to address issues arising from non-sanctioned trade related to the memorandum of understanding.

17. It is further indicated that the task team is currently: (a) working on arrangements for a trilateral agreement among WFP, Uralchem and recipient countries in Africa for the export of fertilizers that are stored in European ports; and (b) considering two additional requests regarding access to maritime registries and trade arbitration facilities (*ibid.*, paras. 18 and 19).

18. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the UNCTAD task team had undertaken specific actions to help ease the fertilizer shortage and to alleviate obstacles to the free flow of Russian food and fertilizers to global markets, mainly through efforts to facilitate payments, shipping insurance and access to ports in European countries for grains and fertilizer. Since the signing of the two agreements on 22 July 2022, grain and fertilizer trade had increased steadily. While exports of fertilizers were still at around 30 per cent below 2021 levels, the trend since July was moving in the right direction and the gap was closing. The task team had engaged intensely with the European Union and its member States to seek various clarifications and facilitations, such as the facilitation of the issuance of clarifications from the European Union through FAQs issued in September and October 2022 that the transfer of fertilizers to third countries is permitted, including the provision of insurance and financial services. Another point of concrete progress was the support provided for the release of the donations of Russian fertilizer products stored in ports in European countries and the facilitation of their shipment to developing countries – notably with the first ship set to sail from the Netherlands to Malawi in November 2022.

19. Moreover, it was indicated to the Advisory Committee that the task team had also engaged with the Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States, as well as the European Union, with a view to providing further assurances to the private sector on their common approach to global food security and relevant exemptions for the export of food and fertilizer from

the Russian Federation. As a result of the facilitation and efforts of the task team, the United Kingdom, United States and European Union published a joint statement on global food security on 14 November 2022.

20. The estimated additional resource requirements to support the memorandum of understanding on trade facilitation for 2023 amount to \$2,328,800 (net) under section 12 of the proposed programme budget for 2023. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with information on the actual and projected expenditure for 2022 and the resource requirements for 2023 by object of expenditure (see table 2 below).

Table 2

Actual and projected total expenditure for 2022 and estimated additional resource requirements for 2023 by object of expenditure

(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Object of expenditure</i>	<i>Commitment authority (22 July– 31 December 2022)</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 October 2022</i>	<i>Estimated total expenditure by 31 December 2022</i>	<i>Additional resource requirements for 2023</i>
Other staff costs	206.6	141.5	206.6	936.8
Consultants	312.0	94.5	144.5	702.0
Travel of staff	260.0	165.5	225.5	480.0
General operating expenses	70.0	6.4	56.4	210.0
Total (net requirements)	848.6	407.9	633.0	2 328.8

Other staff costs

21. Under other staff costs, the amount of \$936,800 would provide for five general temporary assistance positions (1 D-2, 1 P-5, 2 P-4 and 1 General Service (Other level)) that would comprise the UNCTAD task team based in Geneva, representing an increase of two positions (1 D-2 position of Director/Special Adviser and 1 P-4 position of Private Sector Liaison Officer), compared with the authorized level of positions for 2022 (A/77/576, para. 21 and table 2). The organizational structure of the team, along with information on the functions related to the five positions, are reflected in annexes I and II to the report of the Secretary-General.

22. The Advisory Committee recalls that the task team is led by a Special Adviser at the D-2 level who is a staff member of WFP on non-reimbursable loan to UNCTAD until 31 December 2022 and that the Special Adviser liaises with the Governments concerned, relevant authorities and representatives of the United Nations, and oversees bilateral and multilateral sectoral working groups (A/77/486, para. 16). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the WFP had facilitated a first shipment intended for developing countries. UNCTAD had initiated the request for the extension of the arrangement for the non-reimbursable loan of the D-2 position. However, WFP was conducting internal consultations and had not yet confirmed its agreement; thus, a post at the D-2 level was proposed to ensure the continuity of the functions. **The Advisory Committee trusts that updated information on the consideration by WFP of an extension of the current arrangement for the non-reimbursable loan of the D-2 position will be provided to the General Assembly during its consideration of the present report (see para. 24 below).**

23. With respect to the proposed new P-4 position of Private Sector Liaison Officer, upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, as the efforts of the United Nations could only be brought to scale with the help of the private sector, the incumbent of the proposed position would ensure support for strengthened engagements with companies in the private sector in the next phase of the work of the task team. That

work would require two officers at the P-4 level (one current incumbent and one proposed) to bring expertise and experience in working with the private sector, especially given the complexities of various legal regimes across countries.

24. As for the budgeted vacancy rates for 2023, it is indicated that a continuing vacancy rate is applied for the three positions (1 P-5, 1 P-4, 1 General Service (Other level)) authorized for 2022 and the additional D-2 position provided in 2022 as a non-reimbursable loan by WFP, while a 50 per cent vacancy rate is applied to the additional P-4 position for 2023. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the General Service (Other level) position of Programme Assistant had been vacant and that the selection process was ongoing. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that, subject to a decision by the General Assembly (see para. 22 above), a 50 per cent vacancy rate should be applied to the proposed new D-2 position of Director/Special Adviser under the regular budget for 2023.**

Consultants

25. A provision of \$702,000 for consultants is proposed for 2023. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the proposed resources would provide the task team with short-term expertise with specialized knowledge pertaining to legal guidance and sanctions laws, and in other subject matters related to a specific trade sector or specific issue relating to the implementation of the initiative, such as payments and insurances. The Committee was provided with information and a breakdown of the proposed provision of \$702,000, as follows: (a) a Principal Legal Adviser (\$162,000), the role of which requires specialist sanctions expertise and extensive experience working with a sanction's regulator that does not currently exist in UNCTAD; (b) a Communications Specialist (also Russian-speaking) (\$189,000), to provide technical and policy advice on public information and communications issues related to the memorandum of understanding and to work in close coordination with the Communications and External Relations Section of UNCTAD; (c) two consultants to serve as subject matter experts (\$162,000 and \$189,000), each to provide advice, counsel and policy recommendations on a specific trade sector or issue relating to the implementation of the memorandum of understanding.

26. The Advisory Committee was further informed that, according to the Secretariat, the request of the Committee contained in its previous report ([A/77/486](#), para. 20) had been taken into account in the formulation of the consultancy requirements for 2023; however, the types of expertise required for the implementation of the memorandum of understanding were highly specialized, which were not available within UNCTAD and would be critical in supplementing the in-house capacity. **While acknowledging the special expertise required for the implementation of the memorandum of understanding on trade facilitation, the Advisory Committee reiterates its view that more efforts should be made to utilize in-house capacities, especially for core functions, such as those in the Communications and External Relations Section of UNCTAD. Furthermore, the Committee is of the view that the proposed functions of the Principal Legal Adviser as a consultant should normally be carried out by core staff to ensure the necessary level of accountability. The Committee therefore recommends a reduction of 5 per cent (\$35,100) to the proposed provision under consultants for 2023.**

Travel of staff

27. With respect to the proposed provision of \$480,000 under travel of staff, upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the implementation of the memorandum of understanding relied on close communication and coordination with partners, which required regular consultations, meetings and travel to the Russian Federation and other relevant countries and capitals in order to discuss and resolve

the impediments to the access and export of food and fertilizers, including the raw materials required to produce fertilizers (such as ammonia), originating from the Russian Federation to the global markets. The Committee was further informed that, whereas most of the positions authorized in the support of the Black Sea Grain Initiative were based in Istanbul, Türkiye, and the physical execution of their tasks was on-site at the Joint Coordination Centre (see para. 30 below), the UNCTAD task team was required to respond to requests from Governments and private sector entities that often required in-person consultations in various capitals. As the initiative relied on intense engagement and coordination with a wide array of partners, unforeseen travel for in-person consultations and meetings was often required.

28. The Advisory Committee was also provided with a breakdown of the budgeted travel estimates for 2023 based on standard costs, which may be subject to change in accordance with the priorities and needs during 2023 (see table 3 below). It was indicated to the Committee that, owing to a post-pandemic travel surge and the current limitations of air travel due to the Ukraine crisis, the actual costs were projected to be significantly higher. The Committee notes from table 3 that each of the planned trips for 2023 include a total of 12 participants.

Table 3
Official travel requirements for 2023

(United States dollars)

<i>From</i>	<i>To</i>	<i>Number of person-trips</i>	<i>Duration (days)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Geneva	New York	12	14	90 144
Geneva	Rome	12	14	54 480
Geneva	Riga	12	7	32 304
Geneva	Washington, D.C.	12	14	49 940
Geneva	Brussels	12	7	38 436
Geneva	Vilnius	12	14	44 064
Geneva	Berlin	12	7	25 504
Geneva	Moscow	12	14	79 368
Geneva	Kyiv	12	14	65 760
Total				480 000

29. The Advisory Committee is of the view that trips to nearby destinations should be combined to the extent possible, in particular those within the same country, and therefore recommends a reduction of 5 per cent (\$24,000) to the proposed resource estimates under travel of staff for 2023.

B. The Black Sea Grain Initiative

30. The purpose of the Black Sea Grain Initiative is to establish a maritime humanitarian corridor to facilitate the safe navigation for the export of grain and related foodstuffs and fertilizers, including ammonia, from the Ukrainian ports of Odesa, Chornomorsk and Yuzhne (see [A/77/576](#), paras. 25–28). The Initiative provides for the establishment of a joint coordination centre set up in Istanbul, under the auspices of the United Nations that includes representatives of the three parties and the United Nations. The Centre exercises general oversight and coordination of the Initiative. Inspections of incoming and outgoing vessels are conducted by inspection teams consisting of representatives of all parties and the United Nations. It is indicated

that the implementation of the Initiative requires specialized capacities and expertise from across the Organization and the involvement of the commercial sector.

31. It is further indicated that the United Nations will continue to undertake the following activities, as part of the assistance in the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative that the parties have requested: (a) participation in the inspection teams checking incoming and outgoing vessels bound for or returning from the three ports on the Black Sea coast, operating on a daily basis, under the auspices of the Joint Coordination Centre; (b) comprehensive secretariat assistance for the work of the Joint Coordination Centre itself, including during daily plenary meetings; (c) high-level dialogue and engagement with the parties and a range of external actors and entities by the United Nations Coordinator for the Black Sea Grain Initiative; (d) establishment and maintenance of a maritime watch room operating on a 24-hour basis; and (e) support for various public information activities linked to United Nations assistance in the implementation of the Initiative, carried out in close coordination with the parties (*ibid.*, para. 32).

32. The estimated resource requirements for 2023 to support the Black Sea Grain Initiative amount to \$7,898,700 (net) under section 27 of the proposed programme budget for 2023. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with information on the actual and projected expenditure for 2022 and the resource requirements for 2023 by object of expenditure (see table 4 below).

Table 4

Actual and projected total expenditure for 2022 and estimated additional resource requirements for 2023 by object of expenditure

(Thousands of United States dollars)

<i>Object of expenditure</i>	<i>Commitment authority (22 July– 31 December 2022)</i>	<i>Expenditure as at 31 October 2022</i>	<i>Estimated total expenditure by 31 December 2022</i>	<i>Additional resource requirements for 2023</i>
Other staff costs	1 056.1	150.6	353.5	3 995.9
Hospitality	–	–	–	3.0
Consultants	–	–	–	48.5
Travel of staff	324.2	293.7	426.8	224.9
Contractual services	62.0	21.8	55.0	118.8
General operating expenses	51.3	20.3	38.0	59.4
Supplies and materials	8.1	1.8	12.0	39.5
Furniture and equipment	30.0	8.2	26.0	147.7
Grants and contributions	950.0	755.0	1 030.0	3 261.0
Total (net requirements)	2 481.7	1 251.4	1 941.3	7 898.7

Other staff costs

33. The proposed provision of \$3,995,900 for 2023 under other staff costs provides for 31 general temporary assistance positions (1 Assistant Secretary-General, 1 D-1, 4 P-5, 4 P-4, 8 P-3, 9 National Professional Officer, 4 Local level) for the United Nations support team to the Joint Coordination Centre. The proposal represents a net increase of three positions, reflecting four new positions (1 P-4 and 3 National Professional Officer) and one reduction (P-4), compared with the authorized level of positions for 2022 (*ibid.*, para. 34 and table 4).

34. Information on the functions of the proposed four new positions are contained in annex II to the report of the Secretary-General, including: (a) one P-4 position of

Joint Operations Officer/Deputy Head of Operations; (b) two National Professional Officer positions of Humanitarian Affairs Officer/Liaison Officer; and (c) one National Professional Officer position of Information Analyst/Watchkeeper.

35. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that it was proposed to abolish the P-4 position of Political Affairs Officer, with the envisaged functions to be performed by the incumbents of the two new National Professional Officer positions of Humanitarian Affairs Officer/Liaison Officer. This adjustment in the staffing structure of the secretariat of the Joint Coordination Centre was based on a clearer understanding of the nature of the secretariat support required after three months into the operation. The Committee was also informed that the proposed addition of one National Professional Officer position of Information Analyst/Watchkeeper would bring the total number of dedicated United Nations Watchkeepers to six, enabling the establishment of three two-person shifts and ensuring a more sustainable 24-hour coverage of watchkeeping functions.

36. With respect to the budgeted vacancy rates for 2023, it is indicated that a continuing vacancy rate is applied for the 27 positions (1 Assistant Secretary-General, 1 D-1, 4 P-5, 4 P-4, 8 P-3, 6 National Professional Officer, 4 Local level) authorized for 2022, while a 50 per cent vacancy rate is applied to the estimates for the additional 4 positions (1 P-4 and 3 National Professional Officer) for 2023. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, for the 27 positions authorized for 2022, the budgeted vacancy rate for 2023 was 5.4 per cent for positions at the Professional and higher categories and 4.5 per cent for positions at the General Service and related categories. However, the Committee notes from the information received that 12 positions (1 P-5, 2 P-4, 2 P-3, 3 National Professional Officer, 4 Local level) were vacant as at 31 October 2022, with the recruitment process still ongoing (see annex below). **The Advisory Committee considers that budgeted vacancy rates should be realistic and based on the actual vacancy rates experienced during the previous period (A/77/7, chap. I, para. 51). The Committee trusts that updated information on the recruitment status and actual vacancy rates for 2022 will be provided to the General Assembly during its consideration of the present report.**

Grants and contributions

37. An estimated amount of \$3,261,000 is proposed under grants and contributions for inspection services provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), as part of the United Nations assistance to the Joint Coordination Centre, including a team of 16 inspectors who are supported by a dedicated inspections coordinator/supervisor. The inspection capacity will be integrated into the operations team, under the management and oversight of the Head of Operations (A/77/576, para. 35 (h)). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, in line with the approved budget for 2022, UNODC was currently providing for a total of 12 inspectors (9 consultants and 3 staff), working on rotation. As part of the same grant agreement, UNODC had deployed a P-4 inspections coordinator to ensure ongoing line management and address any issues and challenge as they arise during daily inspections, as well as a dedicated administrative assistant to support the inspection team. Discussions were ongoing on increasing the number of inspectors from the current 12 to 16 immediately upon approval of the proposed resources for 2023.

38. The Advisory Committee was further informed that the budget line of grants and contributions included resource movements between internal United Nations funds for the provision of services. As the leading entity for the Black Sea Grain Initiative, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was utilizing UNODC as an implementing partner for the inspection services. It was indicated to the Committee that similar provisions had been made in other cases, for example, under section 7, International Court of Justice, whereby grants and contributions included

requirements for services provided by the United Nations system of administration of justice under section 1. The Committee was also informed that the provision of the inspection capacity as a package recognized the technical experience and competencies of UNODC and its existing networks involved. It had been agreed that this support should involve a combination of both core UNODC staff and consultants with specialized technical expertise, such as in the areas of customs and port management, and/or other areas of maritime affairs. This approach had proven efficient and highly effective to date, with the use of a pool of consultants having the additional benefit of enabling rapid deployment of additional capacity, if required.

39. While recognizing the essential role of the inspection services provided by UNODC in the implementation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative, and noting the ongoing discussions on increasing the number of inspectors for 2023, the Advisory Committee is of the view that further efforts could be made to rationalize the use of resources and recommends a reduction of 5 per cent (\$163,100) to the proposed resources under grants and contributions for 2023.

Voluntary contributions

40. The Secretary-General indicates in his report that voluntary contributions in kind will be provided by the Government of Türkiye, including office facilities for the work of the Joint Coordination Centre and daily transportation between the Centre and the port, and between the port and anchored vessels being inspected (*ibid.*, para. 36). Engagement with Ukrainian port authorities would continue to be supported through the WFP presence in Odesa on a non-reimbursable basis. **The Advisory Committee reiterates its gratitude to the Government of Türkiye for the support to the Black Sea Grain Initiative (see [A/77/486](#), para. 46).**

IV. Conclusion

41. The actions requested of the General Assembly are set out in paragraph 40 of the report of the Secretary-General, as follows:

(a) To approve additional resource requirements in the amount of \$10,939,500 under the programme budget for 2023, under section 12, Trade and development (\$2,328,800), section 27, Humanitarian assistance (\$7,898,700), and section 36, Staff assessment (\$712,000), be offset by an equivalent increase of \$712,000 under income section 1, Income from staff assessment;

(b) To authorize the Secretary-General to enter into commitments, with corresponding assessment, in an amount not exceeding \$10,227,500 (net of staff assessment), which would represent a charge against the contingency fund, for the continuation of United Nations activities to mitigate global food insecurity and its humanitarian impact in 2023;

(c) To also authorize the Secretary-General to enter into commitments, with corresponding assessment, in an amount not exceeding \$712,000 under section 36, Staff assessment, to be offset by an equivalent increase of \$712,000 under income section 1, Income from staff assessment;

(d) To take note that the use of the commitment authority of \$10,939,500 for 2023 will be reported in the context of the financial performance report for 2023.

42. Subject to its observations and recommendations above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve an appropriation for the additional resource requirements requested under the revised estimates for 2023.

Annex

Black Sea Grain Initiative: status of incumbency of general temporary assistance positions (as at 31 October 2022)

<i>Organizational unit</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Grade/level</i>	<i>Functional title</i>	<i>Incumbency status</i>
Office of the United Nations Coordinator for the Black Sea Grain Initiative	1	ASG	United Nations Coordinator for the Black Sea Grain Initiative	Encumbered
	1	P-4	Political Affairs Officer	Encumbered
	1	P-3	Special Assistant	Encumbered
	1	LL	Driver	Vacant; anticipated onboarding in November 2022
Office of the Deputy Coordinator	1	D-1	Deputy United Nations Coordinator/Chief of Staff	Encumbered
Secretariat to the Joint Coordination Centre	1	P-5	Senior Political Affairs Officer/Head of Unit	Vacant; anticipated onboarding in February 2023
	1	P-4	Political Affairs Officer	Vacant; proposed for abolishment in 2023
	1	P-3	Political Affairs Officer	Encumbered
Media and Communications Unit	1	P-5	Spokesperson	Encumbered
	1	P-3	Public Information Officer	Vacant; anticipated onboarding in January 2023
	1	NPO	National Media Officer (Istanbul)	Vacant; anticipated onboarding in December 2022
Reporting and Information Management Unit	1	P-4	Head of Reporting and Information Management	Vacant; anticipated onboarding in January 2023
	1	P-3	Reports Officer	Encumbered
	1	NPO	National Information Management Officer (Istanbul)	Vacant; anticipated onboarding in December 2022
Operations	1	P-5	Head of Operations	Encumbered
	3	P-3	Joint Operations Officer/Watchkeeper	Encumbered
Administration	2	NPO	Information Analyst/Watchkeeper	Encumbered
	1	P-5	Senior Administrative Officer	Encumbered
	1	P-3	Human Resources Officer	Vacant; anticipated onboarding in December 2022
	2	NPO	National Administration and Finance Officer	Vacant; anticipated onboarding of 1 in December 2022 and the other in February 2023
	1	LL	Operations Assistant (Istanbul)	Vacant; anticipated onboarding in November 2022
	1	LL	Informational and Communications Technology Assistant	Vacant; anticipated onboarding in December 2022
	1	LL	Teams Assistant	Vacant; anticipated onboarding in February 2023
Headquarters support	1	P-4	Humanitarian Affairs Officer	Encumbered
Total, Section 27	28			

Abbreviations: ASG, Assistant Secretary-General; LL, Local level; NPO, National Professional Officer.