

Statement of the Chairman
Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ)
16 December 2011

Review of arrangements for funding and backstopping special political missions
(Secretary-General's report, A/66/340, ACABQ report A/66/7/Add.21)

Request for a subvention to the Special Court for Sierra Leone
(Secretary-General's report, A/66/563, ACABQ report, A/66/7/Add.19).

Mr. Chairman,

I am pleased to present the Advisory Committee's report (A/66/7/Add.21) on the report of the Secretary-General entitled 'Review of arrangements for funding and backstopping special political missions' (A/66/340) and also its report (A/66/7/Add.19) on the report of the Secretary-General on the request for a subvention to the Special Court for Sierra Leone (A/66/563).

Review of arrangements for funding and backstopping special political missions

Mr. Chairman,

I will first address the Committee's report on arrangements for funding and backstopping of special political missions.

The Advisory Committee considers that the increasing utilization of the mechanism of special political missions, as well as their expanded scope and size, justify a reassessment as to what arrangements for their funding and backstopping would most facilitate the effective and efficient delivery of their mandates. In this regard, the Committee is of the view that although current arrangements have proven serviceable, they are no longer optimal.

The Committee has, however, pointed out a number of shortcomings of the report of the Secretary-General and it would have expected a more in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of existing arrangements and also a breakdown of which issues impact on the individual, respective special political missions thematic clusters.

The Committee was informed, during its consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals, that the implementation of the options for revised funding and backstopping arrangements would not, in themselves, engender additional costs. The Committee, however, notes that the analysis by the Secretary-General is incomplete with respect to the potential costs associated with a change in the financial period for special political missions to 1 July to 30 June.

Mr. Chairman,

With regard to funding arrangements, the Committee recommends the creation of a separate and special account for the funding of special political missions, together with a change in the applicable financial period to 1 July to 30 June. Although the information received does not fully justify how such a change would comprehensively address all the problems enumerated in the Secretary-General's report, the Committee considers that it would bring a number of benefits, which are summarized in paragraph 31 of its report.

With regard to the proposed change in the financial period to 1 July to 30 June, the Committee has requested that further information on the implications on General Assembly processes of such a change be provided to the Assembly during its consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals.

The Committee also recognizes the importance of the Secretary-General being able to respond in a timely manner to decisions taken with regard to the start-up, expansion or transition of special political missions. As such, and taking into account the historical pattern of their requirements, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve access to the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund of up to \$25 million, with the concurrence of the Advisory Committee, per decision of the General Assembly or Security Council in respect of field-based special political missions.

The Committee further recommends that, in respect of decisions of the General Assembly or the Security Council relating to the start-up or expansion phase of a special political mission, that the Assembly authorize commitments of up to \$25 million, with the concurrence of the Advisory Committee, for strategic deployment stocks in advance of the corresponding budget appropriation.

With respect to the backstopping of special political missions at headquarters, the Committee is of the view that the current arrangements are not optimal and, as such, that benefits would accrue if variable backstopping requirements were consistently resourced through one accepted mechanism. Accordingly, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly make the support account available to all departments and offices to fund their variable backstopping requirements in relation to the field-based special political missions while maintaining the existing arrangements for the financing of the support account and the Global Service Centre.

The Advisory Committee emphasizes that allowing the peacekeeping support account to be used to fund variable backstopping requirements of special political missions should not, at current levels of activity, lead to additional requirements under the support account.

Request for subvention for the Sierra Leone Court

Mr. Chairman,

I turn now to the Advisory Committee's report on the request for a subvention to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is contained in document A/66/7/Add.19.

The historical background to the financing of the Special Court and the progress made towards the achievement of its mandate were discussed in the Committee's previous report on this issue (A/65/603). Since the submission of that report, however, the Secretary-General indicates that unforeseen developments have resulted in a shift in the judicial milestones, meaning that the Special Court does not foresee completing its work until July 2012, rather than February 2012 as previously anticipated.

Accordingly, the Secretary-General states that the approved budget for 2012 has increased from approximately \$2.4 to \$9.1 million. Since there have been no voluntary contributions or pledges for 2012, the Secretary-General is seeking the Assembly's approval for a subvention of up to \$9,066,400 to the Special Court so that it can complete its mandate. In this connection, the Advisory Committee notes that any subvention approved by the Assembly would be disbursed to the Special Court in the same way as for previous subventions, i.e. the funds would be transferred by the Controller on an incremental basis and adjusted according to the status of voluntary contributions. With regard to the latter, the Advisory Committee regrets the situation whereby, to date, the Special Court has been unsuccessful in securing voluntary funding for 2012. The Committee expects that the Management Committee and other senior officials of the Court will engage in vigorous fundraising efforts for as long as the Court remains operational. The Committee also encourages the Court to do more to broaden its donor base.

In view of the importance of the activities undertaken by the Special Court, and bearing in mind the progress it has made to date towards the achievement of its mandate, the Advisory Committee is recommending, as an exceptional measure, approval of the requested subvention. The full text of the Committee's recommendation is contained in paragraph 11 of its report. The Committee stresses that its recommendation is made on the basis that, first, any regular budget funds appropriated for the Special Court will be refunded to the United Nations at the time of the Court's liquidation; and, second, the United Nations Secretariat, the Management Committee, the Registrar and other senior officials of the Special Court will intensify their efforts to fund its activities through voluntary contributions. The Advisory Committee expects that there will be no further requests for subventions to the Special Court.

Section III of the Advisory Committee's report addresses the residual and legacy activities that will take place in preparation for and after the closure of the Special Court. The Committee notes, in particular, that the Residual Special Court, which was established pursuant to an agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone, is to be funded by voluntary contributions from the international community. The Committee trusts that effective fundraising methods will be adopted so as to ensure that sufficient voluntary contributions are secured for the Residual Special Court.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

