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Agenda item 134

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015

Revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 under section 22, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and section 33, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance

FIFTH COMMITTEE

Statement by

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to introduce the Secretary-General's report on revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015 under section 22, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and section 33, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance.

The report describes proposed mitigation measures to strengthen the safety and security of United Nations staff at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), based in Beirut and sets out resource requirements for the proposals of the Secretary-General for the biennium 2014-2015.

Since 2005, when the security situation in Lebanon started to deteriorate, ESCWA, in collaboration with the Department of Safety and Security, has implemented a series of measures that included installing: T-walls, crash barriers and a state-of-the-art perimeter access control system. Recently, the security situation witnessed further deterioration, evidenced by the recent and sustained series of targeted explosions throughout the country and the capital region.

In late 2013, under the authority vested in him by the General Assembly in resolution 66/249, paragraph 1 (c), relating to unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for security measures, the Secretary-General initiated a comprehensive blast assessment at the United Nations House in Beirut. To this end, a specialist firm was commissioned to perform the blast assessment.

The report and findings of the assessment were received on 17 January 2014. The assessment identified a number of structural reinforcement measures aimed at mitigating the increased exposure of higher intensity blasts. The implementation of these measures can be expected to substantially decrease the impact of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. It should be noted that these are interim measures, since possible future increased risks to the Commission at its current location cannot be fully mitigated. However, as explained in the Secretary-General's report, given the circumstances, these measures are the best solution at this time.

The overall timeline for completion of the proposed project is estimated at 18 months. The resource requirements for the proposal for the biennium 2014-2015 under the programme budget amount to \$7,306,900 of non-recurrent costs, comprising increases under section 22, Economic and social development in Western Asia (\$399,100) and section 33, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance (\$6,907,800) and under section 36, Staff assessment (\$53,600), to be offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment. The non-recurrent amount of \$7,306,900 would represent a charge against the contingency fund for the biennium 2014-2015.

Resource requirements include the proposed establishment of two general temporary assistance positions (1 P-4 and 1 Local level).

Thank you Mr. Chairman.
