

Check against delivery

Statement of the Vice-Chairman

Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

15 December 2017

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council

(ACABQ report: A/72/7/Add.10; related report: A/72/371)

Mr. Chairman,

I am pleased to introduce the Advisory Committee's report (A/72/7/Add.10) on the Secretary-General's overall resource estimates for the special political missions (SPMs) for 2018 and related cross-cutting issues.

The resource requirements for individual missions are submitted by the Secretary-General in the addenda 1 to 8 to his main report A/72/371. Accordingly, specific recommendations on resource requirements for the missions are contained in the related reports of the Advisory Committee (A/72/7/Add.11-18). In view of the recent conclusion of the mandate of one mission under thematic cluster II, the proposed resource for 2018 now cover requirements for 34 missions, rather than 35 missions included in the report of the Secretary-General.

The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve the resources for the SPMs for 2018 requested by the Secretary-General, subject to its observations and recommendations set out in its reports (A/72/7/Add.10-18).

Mr. Chairman,

A few words regarding the Advisory Committee's recommendations on cross-cutting issues for the SPMs.

On the budget performance for 2016-2017, the Advisory Committee notes that the expenditures for 2016-2017 are projections made during the preparation of the budget and that the projections are only updated in the Secretary-General's second performance report. Thus, the Committee requests that the most up-to-date information be provided to the General Assembly now.

Regarding the level of resources required for 2018-2019, an amount of \$636.3 million is proposed for 34 missions for 2018, which would be charged against the proposed biennial provision of \$1,109.6 million for 2018-2019, thus leaving an amount of \$473.3 million for 2019 for SPMs. The Advisory Committee has pointed out that the level of resources approved for SPMs for recent bienniums was between 7 and 10 per cent higher than the amount set aside for the missions in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019.

Mr. Chairman,

Now let me turn to the proposed resources for 2018 for the SPMs.

On staffing requirements, the Secretary-General is proposing a net increase of 109 positions (2.9 per cent) for the 34 missions. That increase reflects the proposed establishment of 415 positions and a net reduction of 306 positions. The comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on the proposed staffing requirements for individual missions are contained in its related reports for the missions.

On the operational costs, there is a proposed increase of \$34.7 million for 2018, compared with the resources approved for 2017 for the 34 missions.

Under official travel, a total amount of \$20.3 million is proposed for 2018, representing an increase of \$2.4 million, or 13.6 per cent, compared with the resources approved for 2017. The Committee recommends a reduction of 5 per cent (\$1,013,655) to the proposed resources for official travel for 2018 based on its observation and analysis of the following three factors:

The first is on costing parameters for air tickets. The Committee notes that actual air fares experienced for some destinations during 2016-2017 are considerably lower than the estimates in the budget proposals for 2018. The Committee therefore considers that the resource estimates for official travel for 2018 contain a certain degree of overestimation. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the

Secretary-General to improve the methodology of determining air ticket estimates in all budget proposals.

The second factor is related to low compliance rates with advance purchase policy, which, when improved, will lead to savings.

The third one is regarding utilization of videoconferencing and alternative means of communication. Little information is made available concerning achieved or potential savings arising from the use of alternative means of communication. The Committee continues to be of the view that, given the ever-expanding and improved means of communication offered by available technology, larger reductions in resource requirements for official travel could have been made possible.

Mr. Chairman,

Concerning the holdings of vehicles and computing devices and spare devices of the SPMs, the Advisory Committee notes a trend of increasingly higher-than-standard allocations in recent years. The Committee is of the view that such a trend should be reviewed and reversed.

Regarding the holding of vehicles, the Advisory Committee welcomes the greater scrutiny and control to be exercised over the acquisition of vehicles planned for 2018 and the related redistribution of available vehicle stock across the missions. In addition, the Committee is of the view that vehicle holdings by the SPMs should reflect the revised

vehicle allocation ratios in 2018, rather than in 2019 and that adjustments should be made in this regard without delay.

Mr. Chairman,

The Advisory Committee has repeatedly discussed the matter relating to the costs and benefits of the Kuwait Joint Support Office in the past few years. The Committee notes that no independent validation of the cost and benefit of the Support Office is planned in the ongoing review of the shared service centres in the context of the preparation of the next report on the global service delivery model. Moreover, the Committee points out that the setup of the Kuwait Joint Support Office does not include a business case study, with independently validated cost-and-benefits analysis, for approval by the General Assembly.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

The Advisory Committee has discussed other cross-cutting issues in its report, such as updated information on the backstopping support to SPMs at Headquarters, the lack of progress in the nationalization of positions by the SPMs over recent years and mission support structure.

Thank you.