

*** CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY ***



Agenda item 141

**Revised estimates relating to the proposed programme budget for 2021 under
Section 11, United Nations Support for the New Partnership for Africa's
Development, and Section 36, Staff assessment
(A/75/541)**

FIFTH COMMITTEE

Statement by

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9 December 2020

Mr. Chairman

Distinguished members of the Committee,

1. I am pleased to introduce the revised estimates relating to the proposed programme budget for 2021 under Section 11, United Nations Support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development and Section 36, Staff assessment: Office of the Special Adviser on Africa.
2. In 2019, the Office of Internal Oversight Services conducted an evaluation of Programme 9, United Nations Support for NEPAD, which is led by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA). In addition, the Secretary-General commissioned a functional review of OSAA aimed at identifying and reinforcing the Office's strengths and comparative advantages and addressing any gaps in the delivery of its mandate.

3. The high level objective and strategy contained in the 2021 proposed programme budget, that already built on some of the earlier review findings, and that were recommended for approval by the CPC, subject to some modifications, continue to apply.

4. However, the specific recommendations regarding the changes in the structure and resources of the Office necessary to implement such strategy were not received until after the 2021 Programme Budget proposal had been submitted. Taking into account the need to address the identified shortcomings of the Office as a matter of urgency, as well as previous practice as in the case of previous reform initiatives, the Secretary-General decided to submit the proposed changes for the consideration of this Committee.

5. Thus, the revised estimates report that is before the Committee today identifies three key areas of change for unlocking OSAA's full potential. It also underlines that the proposed reorientation and reorganization of OSAA will lead to greater effectiveness of the Office, which in turn will enable it to produce more deliverables within the approved programme.

6. First, in order to achieve greater coherence, effective engagement with stakeholders and greater impact, the internal management of the Office needs to be strengthened and formal coordination structures among the three Subprogrammes need to be established. This is a key recommendation that the OIOS has reiterated as result of its evaluations of the Programme in 2008 and 2019. To address this recommendation, it is proposed to establish an "Executive Direction and Management" (EDM) component under Section 11 to enhance coherence and coordination within Programme 9 through joint planning, monitoring and performance review. The EDM will also address the critical leadership and management challenges of Subprogramme 1 (OSAA). It is thus proposed to redeploy resources to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General to enable it to perform these functions.

7. Second, OSAA has a mandate to provide high-quality advice on critical and emerging issues affecting Africa, to promote global advocacy in support of Africa, to enhance coherence of UN action in Africa and to monitor commitments toward Africa's development. In order to succeed in implementing such an ambitious mandate, nimbleness and flexibility are critical qualities for a small office like OSAA. The proposed creation of a single Division, instead of the current structure in two branches, would promote internal coherence, avoid siloes and prevent unnecessary duplication. This reorganized structure would also allow to better specialize the

Office's management capacities, a requirement that both assessments signalled as critical for ensuring the success of the change process. It would in addition promote a more horizontal cross-functional working method that is able to react swiftly to critical and emerging issues.

8. Finally, given the nature of its mandate, functional diversification is indispensable for OSAA to be able to perform a broad range of functions which, in some cases, require a high degree of specialization. OSAA's high reliance on consultancy services is a consequence of the absence of functional diversification within the Office. To address this shortcoming, a thorough review of the need to realign and reprofile job descriptions has been launched. In six cases, the required realignment to ensure that the Office has the necessary expertise on internal management, data analysis and the production of evidence-based policies and analyses on development-related issues, entailed a substantive change in functions compared to the Office's existing job descriptions. Thus, in line with previous proposals from the Secretary-General, which have been approved by the General Assembly, six posts, four of which are encumbered, have been proposed for reassignment. OSAA is working closely with the Office of Human Resources and the Staff Union to provide support to the affected staff members in accordance with the policies of the Organization.

9. The proposed restructuring would make the Office a more effective and impactful entity that delivers on all its existing mandates in support to the implementation of Agendas 2030 and 2063 and Africa's sustainable development. Reform in OSAA is long overdue and carries some urgency. This proposal responds to the many calls from Member States to make OSAA more impactful and effective. Further delaying reform would not benefit the renewed sense of motivation in the Office.

I look forward to your comments and guidance.