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**INTRODUCTION OF THE PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET
FOR 2021**

New York, 12 October 2020, 10:30

Chairman of the Fifth Committee,
Ambassador Carlos Amorin,
Excellencies, distinguished delegates

I welcome this opportunity to introduce the proposed programme budget for 2021.

We meet under extraordinary circumstances. Covid-19 has put the lives of billions of people around the globe in turmoil, inflicting grave suffering and destabilizing the global economy.

The United Nations continues to provide wide-ranging health interventions, advocate for a massive rescue package for the world's most vulnerable people and countries, and support work to accelerate work on a vaccine.

I have renewed my appeal for a global ceasefire, calling for a major push to make this happen by the end of the year.

We are working concertedly, comprehensively and collectively.

The scale and complexity of this crisis demand a coordinated global response, across all pillars of our Organization. Every one of our mandates is affected, in one way or another, by the pandemic.

Operating in a COVID-affected world is also a test of our reform agenda, and I am pleased to report that our new processes and structures have proven instrumental in enabling us to remain open and function effectively.

United Nations Resident Coordinators and Country Teams are supporting countries in combatting the pandemic and its socio-economic impacts.

Our Regional Economic Commissions and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs have provided policy advice at the regional and global levels.

Our peacekeeping operations and special political missions have adapted to working under new conditions and are supporting national authorities in their fight against the virus, in addition to other critical functions.

My Special Representatives and Envoys continue to pursue the implementation of ceasefires and other efforts to promote political solutions.

And staff at all duty stations, at all levels, amidst an overall climate of fear, anxiety and uncertainty, have shown themselves to be highly flexible and dedicated in adapting to telecommuting and other new working arrangements and requirements.

We are open for business.

We are running this Organization from thousands of dining tables and home offices.

We are not only interacting with each other and Member States in New York.

We are supporting our colleagues in duty stations and locations across the globe.

I am also grateful for the efforts of this Committee to work remotely. It has not always been easy to adapt but you have risen to the challenge. Your contribution is crucial for the work of the General Assembly and for the continued functioning of our operations.

Excellencies,

Before elaborating on the proposals, I would like to say a few words on the reform process.

We are well into the second year of implementation for our reforms of the peace and security pillar, the development system and the management of our Organization.

Resident coordinators covering 162 countries and territories now have a direct reporting line to my office, enhanced analytical capacities and coordination tools, and support from a strengthened development coordination office.

The enhanced coordination is beginning to yield results. Ninety-five per cent of Country Teams report that a joint approach has strengthened relationships with governments. Two thirds of involved governments have indicated that they can clearly see this increased capacity to support national priorities, in line with our basic principle of national ownership.

The peace and security reforms have allowed us to begin implementing comprehensive regional strategies that were formulated in 2019 and 2020, leading to greater harmonization of action with regional and subregional organizations and other stakeholders. There now is a single point of contact for peacekeeping and special political missions operating in the same region, with distinct but complementary mandates.

In non-mission settings, the peace and security pillar is now in greater alignment with the other pillars of the Organization, as in Bolivia, where an innovative programme strengthened the country team for its efforts in the areas of dialogue, elections, human rights and development.

And management reform has brought substantial changes, including in structures, accountability, delegation and internal operations. These have been critical to sustain business continuity during the pandemic. With better aligned responsibilities and accountabilities, we were able to quickly adjust internal policies and procedures to accommodate the new realities on the ground; at the same time, we had dedicated capacities that could focus on key areas of concern, such as health and supply chain management.

The new division of labour in human resources – between strategic and policy functions and operational functions – has proven especially useful.

Dedicated resources for policy were quickly able to adjust frameworks for home leave, rest and recuperation and other policies, while DOS was able to provide dedicated support to all entities in the UN Secretariat. The enhanced delegations of authority have provided critically needed operational responsiveness and flexibility on the ground.

And our unified information technology structure allowed us to jointly utilize corporate tools for communications and remote working arrangements. The Office of Information and Communication Technology is currently expanding our main communication tools to be accessible system-wide.

The proposals in the budget reflect the new approaches that have been introduced across all three tracks of reform. Detailed information on implementation of the reforms will be submitted in separate reports during the 75th session.

Excellencies,

The programme budget I am presenting today is the second since Member States approved, on a trial basis, the biggest change in our planning and budgeting processes since the 1970s.

The move from a biennial to an annual programme budget is a major step towards more realistic budgeting and a greater focus on results.

It has improved the accuracy of our resource estimates, enabled us to adapt more quickly to changes in mandates, and allowed us to adjust our planning based on actual programme performance, thereby improving mandate delivery and accountability for results.

Last year, I indicated that this reform would be an ongoing process, and that I looked forward to receiving your comments on areas that we can improve for this year.

The General Assembly adopted resolutions 74/251 and 74/262, providing us with valuable guidance for our budget preparations during 2020.

Both resolutions emphasized the importance of engagement by Member States, including at the early stages of the process. With that in mind, we initiated engagement in February with all regional groups to see how best to implement these resolutions.

The feedback was taken on board, and additional guidance was issued to programme managers to ensure full implementation of all provisions.

As requested by the General Assembly, we have incorporated a full account of the regulations and rules that were suspended during the trial period.

Excellencies,

Every year, some 1,500 programme managers engage in the formulation of planning and budget proposals, assessing their work and performance.

In Part II, we are now reporting on the performance of our programmes in 2019. In instances where our performance was less than optimal, we make adjustments to ensure better results in 2021.

A major evolution from the first annual budget is the inclusion of a multi-year account of measurable results. Last year's proposal included only the planned results for 2020 and the programme performance for 2018. This year, we will not only present a new set of results, but also continue to report on the results we included last year.

Once this approach stabilizes next year, three measurable planned results and three measurable actual results for each of the 350 result frameworks will be presented on a rolling basis, offering a comprehensive picture of our programme delivery.

I am also pleased to announce the launch, this week, of the results.un.org portal, which will help you navigate through these results in all official languages, and filter them not only by programme and subprogramme, but also by type of result and geographical location. Let me turn now to the third part of the proposed programme budget: post and non-post resource requirements for 2021.

The presentation format for this part has fully taken on board the recommendations made by the Committee.

To fully implement the mandates entrusted to us, we will require a total of \$2.99 billion, which represents a net reduction of 2.8 per cent compared to 2020, despite additional initiatives and mandated activities.

In keeping with the budgetary methodology, this proposal includes \$49.2 million for preliminary re-costing, resulting in total requirements of \$3.04 billion.

This includes a net decrease of 25 posts.

A provision of \$707 million is included for special political missions. This reflects a net decrease of \$5 million compared to the approved budget for 2020, primarily driven by lower operational requirements, including the closure of UNIOGBIS.

The proposals include resources for new and expanded mandates and directives by the General Assembly, in particular for the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the human rights treaty body system and the expansion of the ACABQ.

Last year, I proposed an increase of funding by \$3.3 million, or about ten per cent, for technical cooperation projects. The draft proposal before you is maintaining the Regular Programme for Technical Cooperation at this higher level to maximize our support for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The projects will meet the increased demands of Member States in a responsive and agile fashion, and will complement the reformed Resident Coordinator system.

The budget numbers reflect a number of initiatives to catalyze mandate delivery in three essential areas:

First, \$1.9 million to deliver a new global communications strategy for the United Nations.

The COVID-19 crisis shows us more than ever the need for authoritative communications from the United Nations, countering misinformation and promoting solidarity.

With your support, we can use additional resources to acquire new communications tools and technologies; train staff, particularly in digital storytelling; and expand our reach and impact in multiple languages.

Second, \$0.7 million to improve risk management through strengthened staff development and training, which is part of my global human resources strategy. This includes organizational learning, organizational development and an online learning platform.

Third, \$7.0 million to strengthen the information technology enterprise network.

As our current alternative work arrangements demonstrate, the proceedings of intergovernmental bodies and the work of the global Secretariat rely heavily on our enterprise network. Our systems have been stretched, including core tools that we are using for this exchange today.

In addition, we face certain limitations. When the pandemic erupted, we were not able to provide interpretation for official meetings that were held virtually. Moreover, the increasing sophistication of cyberattacks requires us to invest in resilient infrastructure that can accommodate the scale at which we now operate.

Billions of people are looking to the United Nations for information on the COVID pandemic, and thousands of staff are working from home to implement the Organization's mandates. It is clear that the current situation has reinforced the need to take action in these three areas.

Excellencies,

At this crucial time for our work, it bears repeating that the Organization can only deliver on its mandates if Member States meet their financial obligations in full and on time.

The liquidity crisis has not abated and severely hampers the Organization's ability to fulfil its obligations to the people we serve.

We are being forced to operate not on the basis of strategic direction but rather on the availability of cash, which undermines mandate implementation.

It also remains crucial to resolve the structural issues that create and exacerbate this persistent and unacceptable situation.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was facing immense challenges that require the United Nations to have adequate resources.

Together, we must meet this global test with solidarity, determination and a budget that reflects our seriousness in serving the world's people.

I look forward to your full and enthusiastic support and am available to answer your questions.

Thank you.