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Summary record of the 17th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 28 November 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon)
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 136: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (continued)

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

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (A/72/371/Add.4 and A/72/7/Add.14)

Thematic cluster II: sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels, and other entities and mechanisms — Panel of Experts on Mali (A/72/371/Add.6 and A/72/7/Add.16)

1. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (A/72/371/Add.4) and on the Panel of Experts on Mali (A/72/371/Add.6), said that, in response to the request made by the Security Council in its resolution 2344 (2017) for a strategic review of UNAMA, with the outcome to be reported to it by July 2017, the Secretary-General had issued his special report on that review on 10 August 2017 (A/72/312-S/2017/696). The recommendations in the special report had provided input for the proposed budget for the Mission for 2018, and had led to its reorientation away from supporting a post-conflict peacebuilding agenda towards supporting an Afghan-owned peace process.

2. The proposed 2018 resource requirements for the Mission amounted to \$140.4 million, a net decrease of \$23.7 million compared to the approved resources for 2017. That resulted from lower requirements for military and police personnel, reflecting the disengagement of military and police advisers in the context of the strategic review; the proposed net decrease of 291 positions; and lower requirements to cover operational costs, mainly reflecting the proposed reconfiguration of the Mission's air fleet and the decrease in requirements for fuel and for alteration and renovation projects.

3. Recalling that the Security Council, by its resolution 2374 (2017), had established sanctions in connection with the situation in Mali and had requested the Secretary-General to create, for an initial period of 13 months, in consultation with the sanctions committee, a panel of up to five experts along with the necessary financial and security arrangements to support the latter's work, indicated that the estimated resource requirements for 2018 were \$1.3 million. That amount would cover salaries and common staff costs for three positions, as well as operational requirements. The

initial requirements of the Panel of Experts on Mali for the period from 1 October to 31 December 2017 were being funded through the authority granted to the Secretary-General under paragraph 1 (a) of General Assembly resolution 70/250 relating to unforeseen and extraordinary expenses for the biennium 2016–2017.

4. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related reports of the Advisory Committee (A/72/7/Add.14 and A/72/7/Add.16), said that the Advisory Committee was recommending approval of the staff resources requested for UNAMA, but was not convinced of the need for three additional posts for the Mission's Donor Coordination Section, given the existing resources to be deployed to that Section. It also took the view that greater clarification was needed regarding the redeployment of the gender-advisory capacity, as recommended in the strategic review (A/72/312-S/2017/696). It acknowledged the efforts of the Mission to resolve the issue of loaned positions.

5. The Advisory Committee recommended reductions in the provisions for ground transportation and consultancy resources, considering in the case of the latter that the Mission should build and use in-house capacity rather than rely on external consultants. It acknowledged the efforts of the Mission to provide information on resource requirements in respect of security services.

6. While details of the Advisory Committee's discussion of the Kuwait Joint Support Office and other structures could be found in its main report on the estimates in respect of political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council, it wished to point out at the current stage that it questioned the ongoing validity of maintaining in Kuwait separate structures with different reporting lines and accountability.

7. With regard to the proposed three positions (one P-5, one P-3 and one General Service) to support the Mali sanctions committee and panel of experts, the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the P-3 and General Service position, but not the P-5 position, on the grounds that no such support positions were currently funded for cluster II home-based special political missions. In addition, the Advisory Committee recommended that vacancy rates of 50 per cent and 35 per cent respectively should be applied to the cost estimates for the proposed P-3 and General Service positions.

8. **Mr. Burity** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that although the Member

States had repeatedly appealed to the Secretariat to ensure early issuance of official documents in order to allow Member States and the Advisory Committee enough time to study thoroughly the various issues dealt with in those documents, those appeals had received no response. In the light of the significance and impact of the Fifth Committee's oversight role for the good reputation and smooth functioning of the Organization, it was unacceptable for the members of the Committee to be given very little time to consider and adopt important decisions on over one billion dollars of resource allocations for special political missions.

9. The Group was aware that the Advisory Committee had taken longer than expected to consider the matter of those resources, but could not blame the Advisory Committee for examining them carefully and thoroughly, given their magnitude. The Group called on the Secretary-General to accelerate the delivery of reports on special political missions, in line with the requests made by the General Assembly in section I, paragraph 4, of its resolution [67/246](#); to establish a mechanism to hold to account those responsible for the late issuance of official documents; and to report thereon to the Committee at the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. Within that mechanism, senior managers' compacts should include a clear benchmark regarding late issuance of official documents.

10. The Group had taken note of the proposed resource requirements for special political missions for the biennium, and was mindful that staffing formed a major part of the inputs affecting the performance of the missions. However, it would be interested in learning the rationale behind the staffing changes in certain missions, particularly staff movements from one location to another.

11. The Group reiterated its position that the quality and timeliness of delivery of all mandated programmes and activities must be the overriding factor determining the resource requirements and staffing structures of special political missions. It would therefore be seeking clarification regarding the proposed resource reductions, given that the mandates and activities of those missions, particularly missions in Africa, were growing more complex. In the context of informal consultations, it would be examining in detail other key elements, including vacancy management, consultancy services, the degree of automaticity in responding to resource requests under operational costs, including procurement, information technology, repairs and maintenance.

12. Believing that all peace missions should be adequately funded, in order to avoid jeopardizing the

Organization's efforts to preserve peace, security and stability in various parts of the world, the Group reiterated the importance it attached to the continuing vital role of special political missions in fostering international peace and security through early warning, mediation, preventive diplomacy, electoral support, good offices and peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts. Another reason for the need for missions to be allocated enough resources to discharge their mandates efficiently and effectively was they often operated in environments of active conflict, or in post-conflict situations, and in circumstances in which transnational organized crime, drug trafficking and extremist activity were the main drivers of instability.

13. The Group had noted with concern the exponential increase in the complexity and financial requirements of special political missions over the previous decade, but acknowledged those missions' unique characteristics in terms of establishment, financing and backstopping, given that they did not follow the cycle of the Organization's regular budget, despite being financed from that budget. In order to make the budget process more efficient and transparent, and in the light of the approval, functioning, scope and mandate of special political missions, the Group strongly supported the Advisory Committee's proposals for the funding of such missions, set out in its report on the review of arrangements for funding and backstopping special political missions ([A/66/7/Add.21](#)), including the establishment of a special and separate account that would have an annual budgeting, funding and reporting cycle of 1 July to 30 June.

The meeting rose at 10.25 a.m.