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## Fifth Committee

### Summary record of the 4th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 11 October 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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Agenda item 136: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019  
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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)**

*Introduction of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (A/72/6 (Introduction), A/72/6 (Introduction)/Corr.1, A/72/6 (Sect. 1), A/72/6 (Sect. 2), A/72/6 (Sect. 3), A/72/6 (Sect. 4), A/72/6 (Sect. 4)/Corr.1, A/72/6 (Sect. 5), A/72/6 (Sect. 5)/Corr.1, A/72/6 (Sect. 6), A/72/6 (Sect. 7), A/72/6 (Sect. 7)/Corr.1, A/72/6 (Sect. 8), A/72/6 (Sect. 8)/Corr.1, A/72/6 (Sect. 9), A/72/6 (Sect. 10), A/72/6 (Sect. 11), A/72/6 (Sect. 12), A/72/6 (Sect. 12)/Corr.1, A/72/6 (Sect. 14), A/72/6 (Sect. 15), A/72/6 (Sect. 16), A/72/6 (Sect. 17), A/72/6 (Sect. 18), A/72/6 (Sect. 19), A/72/6 (Sect. 20), A/72/6 (Sect. 21), A/72/6 (Sect. 22), A/72/6 (Sect. 23), A/72/6 (Sect. 24), A/72/6 (Sect. 24)/Corr.1, A/72/6 (Sect. 25), A/72/6 (Sect. 26), A/72/6 (Sect. 26)/Corr.1, A/72/6 (Sect. 27), A/72/6 (Sect. 28), A/72/6 (Sect. 29), A/72/6 (Sect. 29A), A/72/6 (Sect. 29B), A/72/6 (Sect. 29C), A/72/6 (Sect. 29C)/Corr.1, A/72/6 (Sect. 29C)/Corr.2, A/72/6 (Sect. 29D), A/72/6 (Sect. 29E), A/72/6 (Sect. 29F), A/72/6 (Sect. 29G), A/72/6 (Sect. 29H), A/72/6 (Sect. 30), A/72/6 (Sect. 31), A/72/6 (Sect. 32), A/72/6 (Sect. 33), A/72/6 (Sect. 33)/Corr.1, A/72/6 (Sect. 34), A/72/6 (Sect. 35), A/72/6 (Sect. 36), A/72/6 (Income sect. 1), A/72/6 (Income sect. 2), A/72/6 (Income sect. 3), A/72/7, A/72/16, A/72/84, A/72/84/Corr.1, A/72/84/Corr.2, A/72/84/Add.1, A/72/85, A/72/92, A/72/92/Corr.1, A/72/118 and A/72/118/Add.1)*

1. **The Secretary-General**, introducing the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019, said that the budgets of the United Nations, which reflected the priorities established by the General Assembly and the Organization's commitment to delivering results, were a roadmap for fulfilling the promise of its Charter.

2. The Assembly had invited him to prepare the 2018–2019 proposed programme budget on the basis of a preliminary estimate of just under \$5.4 billion. For the biennium 2018–2019, his proposed budget level of just over \$5.4 billion before recosting was around \$200 million, or approximately 4 per cent, below the appropriation for the biennium 2016–2017, and \$10 million above the budget outline figure set by the General Assembly. The increase resulted from a request for additional resources by the International Court of Justice and the inclusion in the budget proposal of the estimates for the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic, in line with General

Assembly resolution [71/272 B](#). Despite the continuous expansion of mandates, the regular budget, excluding special political missions, had not grown in real terms over the past 17 years. During that same period, the number of posts within the Organization had increased by just over 1,000, largely owing to the necessary strengthening of its safety and security capacities following the attacks of 11 September 2001.

3. The previous seven years had seen the establishment of a number of new special political missions, including those in Yemen, the Syrian Arab Republic, Burundi and Colombia, and the discontinuation of others, including those in Sierra Leone and Nepal. Consequently, the proposed budget level for special political missions for 2018–2019 remained in line with level of resources allocated to such missions since 2010, which had ranged between \$1.1 billion and \$1.2 billion per biennium.

4. The 2018–2019 proposal included preliminary recosting of \$128 million, mainly related to inflation, which would bring the regular budget requirements to \$5.53 billion. It also reflected a net decrease of 92 posts compared to the 2016–2017 programme budget. Extrabudgetary resources for 2018–2019 were estimated at \$21.3 billion, representing a decrease of approximately \$178 million compared with the estimated resource level for 2016–2017. In addition, a number of revised estimates and statements of programme budget implications to be presented for the Assembly's consideration at the main part of the current session would have an impact on the proposed programme budget.

5. He expressed gratitude to Member States for their contributions to the development of an agenda for reforming the United Nations, including the budget process, as such reform was vital to fulfilling the Organization's mission of building a better world for all. In that context, efforts had been made to identify systemic weaknesses in order to improve the Organization's responsiveness and effectiveness in managing its staff and resources and in supporting Member States, and an extensive review of its internal policies and administrative instructions was under way with a view to eliminating duplication, reducing fragmentation and streamlining procedures.

6. The proposed budget included resource requirements for a number of planned reform initiatives, including the strengthening of whistle-blower protection in line with international best practices, in particular through bolstering the capacities of the Ethics Office in that area. He had requested an internal working group to consider additional areas for improvement and

would solicit feedback from staff and management in that regard. The General Assembly had approved his proposal to establish an office of counter-terrorism, which was now operational. In addition, he had submitted supplementary regular budget proposals to the Assembly relating to the implementation of a new strategy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the United Nations system, which included provisions for the establishment of a Victims' Rights Advocate post.

7. As mandated by General Assembly resolution [71/243](#) on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, the Organization was repositioning development at the centre of its work and pursuing other changes to the United Nations development system at the Headquarters and country levels, in order to support the efforts of Member States to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals and implement the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In June 2017, he had presented his first report ([A/72/124-E/2018/3](#)) to the Economic and Social Council in response to the requests contained in that resolution, with a second report due for submission in December 2017.

8. In line with his commitment to women's empowerment and equal rights, he had launched a system-wide strategy on gender parity in September 2017, to provide a roadmap for reaching parity at the senior leadership level by 2021 and across the Organization by 2028. The strategy was broadly aimed at transforming institutional culture within the United Nations in order to harness the potential of all staff and create a working environment free of bias and underpinned by the principles of inclusivity and equality. He also attached great importance to diversity of regional representation, as reflected in the composition of his Executive Office.

9. He would submit specific proposals relating to human resources management and conditions of service for the Committee's consideration in 2018. He had also finalized a review of the Organization's peace and security architecture and would submit an initial report on his findings for consideration by the General Assembly at the current session. A detailed costed proposal related to the implementation of the new peace and security architecture would be submitted for the Committee's review in May 2018.

10. Management reform within the Secretariat would be critical to reducing fragmentation and duplication. He had recently met with the Advisory Committee to discuss his management reform agenda, which focused

on bringing decision-making closer to the point of delivery, decentralizing authority and simplifying rules, policies and procedures. Achieving those goals would require improving transparency and accountability, including to Member States, at the global and country level, in order to better support intergovernmental and governance processes at Headquarters.

11. The support of Member States was required to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization. To that end, he had submitted two reports for the Committee's consideration at the current session, the first outlining the principles that would guide his reform efforts and the second containing concrete proposals to strengthen the planning and budgetary process and to allow him to redeploy resources in support of mandate fulfilment. Both reports were under review by the Advisory Committee.

12. His management reform proposals — which would not affect the 2018–2019 budget proposal — included a measure to delegate managerial authority to programme managers and make them more accountable for mandate fulfilment; changes to management and support structures; initiatives to streamline and improve the planning and budget processes; and measures to enhance his ability, as Chief Administrative Officer of the Organization, to redeploy resources within parts of the budget. With regard to proposed changes in the management structure, a breakdown of functions and a costed proposal for the establishment of the two new departments that would comprise the structure would be provided in 2018. Some of the changes would be reflected in the 2018/19 budget proposals for the support account, while others would be accommodated within the approved staffing table for the regular budget. If approved, the proposed changes to the planning and budgeting cycles and documentation would come into effect in 2020. In conclusion, he looked forward to working with Member States to fulfil the aims of the Organization and meet the public's expectations, while ensuring that optimal use was made of the resources contributed by taxpayers.

13. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the first report of the Advisory Committee on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 ([A/72/7](#)), said that the report was the outcome of an extensive examination of the Secretary-General's proposal and drew upon clarification provided by the Secretary-General and his representatives during the Advisory Committee's deliberations. The proposed budget represented an increase of 0.2 per cent over the budget outline level of \$5.395 billion set by the General Assembly in its

resolution [71/274](#). The Advisory Committee recognized the efforts of the Secretary-General to propose a budget that was broadly consistent with the indicative level established by the General Assembly. That level was not a pre-approved ceiling, however, as the Assembly recognized the authority of the Secretary-General to request the resources that he deemed necessary to ensure effective mandate implementation.

14. Implementation of the Advisory Committee's recommendations would entail an overall reduction of \$42.9 million in the proposed programme budget for 2018–2019. In particular, the Advisory Committee had recommended a reduction of \$13.3 million in the proposed Secretariat contribution for the resident coordinator system, given that the related cost-sharing arrangement had not yet been determined by the General Assembly and that a number of proposals for reform under the development pillar of the Organization's activities would be submitted for the Assembly's consideration at the current session. It had also recommended, on the basis of past expenditure patterns, a reduction of \$17.2 million in the resource requirements for contributions to after-service health insurance.

15. The Advisory Committee did not object to the proposals aimed at achieving organizational efficiencies in the amount of \$64.3 million, given the Secretary-General's assurance that they would not affect mandate fulfilment. However, the Advisory Committee had been unable to determine whether the proposed reductions could be specifically attributed to efficiency measures, in particular the implementation of the Umoja enterprise resource planning project, the benefits of which had still not been demonstrated in terms of provision of clear and complete information.

16. Under nearly all sections of the budget, the Secretary-General's proposals provided for only minimal changes in staffing levels and structures compared with those approved for the biennium 2016–2017, as the 2018–2019 proposals did not yet reflect the impact of his anticipated reforms. The main exception concerned the proposed resource requirements for section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, which reflected a net reduction of 40 posts and a proposed reorganization of the Translation Services in New York. The Advisory Committee recognized the efforts made by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in that regard, and was of the view that the reorganization should be implemented in a phased manner, initially limited to Headquarters.

17. The Secretary-General's management reform initiatives would have an impact on the 2018–2019 budget proposal, and would significantly affect the ways in which budgetary bodies, the General Assembly and the Secretary-General worked together. The Advisory Committee would finalize and submit its related report to the Assembly as soon as possible.

18. **The Chair** drew attention to the report of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee on internal oversight: proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 ([A/72/85](#)), the Secretary-General's tenth progress report on the implementation of projects financed from the Development Account ([A/72/92](#) and [A/72/92/Corr.1](#)), and the Secretary-General's report on the consolidated changes to the biennial programme plan as reflected in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 ([A/72/84](#), [A/72/84/Corr.1](#), [A/72/84/Corr.2](#) and [A/72/84/Add.1](#)).

19. **Mr. Flores Callejas** (Joint Inspection Unit), introducing the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) entitled "Safety and security in the United Nations system" ([A/72/118](#)), said that, in preparing the report, JIU inspectors had experienced different safety and security scenarios and had had the opportunity to witness first-hand the difficult conditions endured by United Nations personnel working in high-risk locations. Cognizant that the United Nations security system would continue to be challenged by risks in all of the environments in which the Organization operated, he expressed gratitude to those personnel, in particular safety and security personnel, who, often at the risk of their own well-being, continued to uphold United Nations values in support of local populations.

20. The report covered the United Nations, its funds, programmes and specialized agencies, and, in particular, the organizations represented by the Inter-Agency Security Management Network. It focused on five strategic areas of critical importance for ensuring the security of United Nations personnel and premises and for mitigating the evolving risks and threats faced by the Organization: security culture; security-related information management; safety and security standards; security crisis management and surge capacity; and resources. It also contained eight recommendations for remedying weaknesses and improving safety and security system-wide: one addressed to the General Assembly, four addressed to the Executive Heads of United Nations organizations; two addressed to the Department of Safety and Security; and one addressed to the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security, in his capacity as Chair of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network.

21. JIU recommended that the General Assembly should request the Secretary-General to prepare, for consideration at its seventy-third session, a proposal for a revised safety and security funding model that would enable harmonization of security resources system-wide and provide the Department of Safety and Security with a transparent, sustainable and predictable budget and the flexibility necessary to address unforeseen crises. That recommendation, which was based on the findings detailed in the report (A/72/118), had been formulated with an awareness of the financial and structural difficulties faced by the United Nations and an understanding that the Organization's staff were the greatest asset for achieving its development and peace and security objectives. The recommendation had also been endorsed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and should be approved by the Assembly as a matter of priority, in order to ensure a unified, effective and efficient security management system that reduced the vulnerability of United Nations and associated personnel deployed throughout the world.

22. **Ms. Petrova** (United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination), introducing the note by the Secretary-General transmitting his comments and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/72/118/Add.1), said that, while the organizations of the United Nations system had identified many relevant recommendations and useful points for action in the report of JIU (A/72/118), they had noted several areas that could have been improved through further in-depth analysis, in particular of the role of the security management system in facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance. It had also been suggested that a more comprehensive analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the security management system would have been useful, particularly as such an analysis had been included in the original terms of reference for the report.

23. While organizations supported the spirit of recommendation 1, which called for adapting existing host country agreements to changes in the respective security environments, they questioned whether those agreements provided the flexibility needed to respond to such changes. They had further noted that the recommendation was predicated on the assumption that arrangements in host countries could be updated contemporaneously with changing security situations and had expressed concerns regarding the feasibility of implementing the recommendation, particularly by the proposed deadline of April 2018. In addition, while organizations had welcomed the timeliness of

recommendation 6, which called for the United Nations system to strengthen its capabilities to analyse data from social media and other relevant "big data" sources in support of safety and security activities, they questioned some of the practical details regarding implementation that had been included in the recommendation.

24. **Mr. Morejón Pazmiño** (Ecuador), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the proposed programme budget was not merely a financial and accounting tool but also an authoritative statement that should reflect the Secretary-General's strategic vision of how to implement the mandates and priorities determined by the Member States. The Secretariat and Member States should abide by the decisions of the General Assembly specifying that no changes to the established budget methodology, procedures and practices or financial regulations should be implemented without the approval of the Assembly. Given the importance of the budget proposal, the Bureau of the Committee should ensure that sufficient time was provided for informal consultations.

25. The Group was deeply concerned at the series of arbitrary cuts proposed by the Secretariat on the basis of a creative interpretation of General Assembly resolution 71/274. It recalled that the budget outline was an indicative and preliminary estimate of the resources required during the biennium and did not constitute a pre-approved ceiling. It therefore fully supported the Advisory Committee's related recommendations, in particular the view that effective and efficient mandate fulfilment must always be the overriding factor in determining the Secretariat's resource requirements and its overall staffing structure.

26. While the Group was in favour of true efficiency-related savings that improved the Organization's effectiveness, it was puzzled by the lack of justification for most of the efficiencies proposed by the Secretary-General, in particular the savings attributed to Umoja, a promising, transformative and expensive project that would likely continue to incur significant costs for Member States. The Group shared the Advisory Committee's view that the proposed budget appeared to place greater emphasis on the achievement of resource-reduction targets than on the expected impact of the proposed reductions on the respective programmes.

27. The achievement of the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda would require determined effort, political will and, critically, adequate financial resources. Member States must therefore provide the United Nations with the necessary resources to ensure its successful implementation. The Group questioned whether the proposed budget would be adequate to meet the



ambitious requirements of the Agenda, particularly as no provision had been made in it for the strengthening of the development pillar. He recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution [70/247](#), had requested the Secretary-General to present a proposal for the provision of financial support to Secretariat entities involved in implementing the 2030 Agenda, and, at its seventy-first session, had agreed on a modest increase in the resources allocated to a number of departments. It was therefore troubling that arbitrary cuts had been proposed to the budgets for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, regional commissions and the regular programme of technical cooperation. In particular, the Group could not understand how the Secretariat had produced an estimate of \$603,900 in efficiencies from the regular programme of technical cooperation, considering that the programme was a demand-driven initiative that provided support for capacity development in response to requests from Member States, and in view of the political sensitivity of the related discussions. The Group was deeply disappointed that such unjustified and apparently selective cuts continued to be proposed by the Secretariat. The Group called upon all Member States to engage in deliberations in a spirit of flexibility and responsibility and to maintain the tradition of consensus-based decision-making in the Committee in order to achieve an outcome that would serve the best interests of the Organization.

28. **Mr. Gafoor** (Singapore), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN supported the Secretary-General's efforts to improve the Organization's effectiveness and responsiveness in fulfilling its mandates; make it more transparent and accountable to Member States; and strengthen the link between resources and results.

29. The Organization must be provided with the necessary resources to implement its mandates, which emanated from the decisions of Member States. The international community relied on the United Nations to address problems of international peace and security, development and humanitarian affairs, and to promote the visibility of the vulnerable. Given the need, amidst growing global challenges, to build a dynamic Organization that was equipped to tackle short-term threats while preserving the long-term foundations of peace and dignity for all, it was untenable to continue to demand more from the United Nations while seeking arbitrary cuts or threatening to withhold resources. Consequently, instead of hampering its ability to fulfil its mandates, Member States should encourage the Organization to work more efficiently and ensure

effective use of its resources. They should also demonstrate support, through their words and actions, for the Secretary-General's expressed commitment to delivering results on the ground.

30. The initial estimate for special political missions amounted to \$1.1 billion, which again accounted for over 20 per cent of the proposed budget for the biennium. While special political missions played an important role in strengthening peace and security, the time had come for the Assembly to conduct a serious discussion of the funding arrangements for those missions in comparison with the resources allocated to other development priorities. Such a discussion was all the more relevant in view of the Secretary-General's proposed reform of the Organization's peace and security architecture.

31. **Mr. Burity** (Angola), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the United Nations must be provided with adequate resources to implement its mandates and address global challenges effectively. In that regard, the Secretary-General should ensure that future budget proposals were based on the mandates agreed upon by the General Assembly; that they were presented in strict accordance with established procedures, including the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations; and that any changes in the budget preparation methodology were submitted for the Assembly's prior review.

32. Consideration of the proposed programme budget was of utmost importance at the Assembly's current session, as it presented an opportunity for Member States to reaffirm their commitment to addressing the priorities identified by the General Assembly for the biennium 2018–2019, in accordance with paragraph 7 of its resolution [71/274](#). The Secretary-General, in turn, had the opportunity to reflect those priorities in the proposed programme budget and to develop a strategic vision for the objectives, goals and policies that would guide mandate implementation. In that regard, the Committee must bear in mind that, under Article 17 of the Charter, Member States had an obligation to provide the Organization with adequate resources to facilitate the full implementation of mandated programmes and activities, and to ensure the timely and effective provision of services that were essential to the proper functioning of intergovernmental bodies.

33. With regard to the proposed level of resources for 2018–2019, the Group was deeply concerned at the repeated tendency to impose unjustified, across-the-board budget cuts that threatened mandate fulfilment. The continuous downward trend in budget growth did not reflect real changes or the additional mandated

responsibilities assumed by the Organization. The Group was particularly concerned at the unjustified reductions in the post and non-post resources allocated to key areas such as development of Africa; maintenance of international peace and security; effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts; disarmament; and drug control, crime prevention and combating international terrorism. It would therefore seek clarification on how mandates in those areas could be effectively implemented, in view of the proposed reductions and the increasing challenges faced.

34. The Group would closely examine all budget sections and elements to ensure that adequate resources were allocated for effective mandate fulfilment. Drawing on the observations of oversight bodies and the Advisory Committee, it would also seek to identify inefficiencies, with a view to proposing the redirection of resources towards, *inter alia*, development priorities. In particular, the Group urged the Secretary-General to place special emphasis on Africa's development agenda and intended to review carefully his proposals in the following areas, as they related to programmes in Africa: political affairs, including matters relating to disarmament, peacekeeping operations, mediation and conflict prevention; international cooperation for development, including support for Africa's development agenda and for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, trade and development, international drug control, crime and terrorism prevention, women's empowerment and United Nations support for the New Partnership for Africa's Development; regional cooperation in the areas of economic and social development, including support for regional economic integration in Africa; and implementation of capital projects, in particular at the Economic Commission for Africa. The Group would also pay particular attention to proposals relating to humanitarian assistance, the environment, the Development Account and human settlements.

35. The Secretary-General's proposals relating to the global service delivery model and to ongoing and future construction projects at offices away from Headquarters would be useful for strengthening the related infrastructure and facilities. Monitoring and evaluation of programmes played an important role in identifying areas for improvement, as well as in informing programme design and resource allocation. In that regard, the Group noted that the level of resources proposed under the regular budget for monitoring and evaluation activities was below the estimate for the biennium 2016–2017. It was also surprised that self-

evaluation had not been implemented by all Secretariat entities.

36. While the value of highly qualified and experienced personnel was undeniable, recruitment of entry-level personnel was indispensable to the rejuvenation of the Organization. Any proposal to eliminate posts should therefore take into account the need for such rejuvenation and its potential benefits for mandate implementation.

37. **Ms. Beckles** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that more needed to be done to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda. To that end, the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 must reflect the comprehensive and integrated approach required to fulfil the development mandates and priorities agreed upon by Member States and to enable the Organization to respond to the needs and challenges of its diverse membership, including small island developing States. In that regard, she noted the important role and comparative advantage of an adequately resourced, relevant, coherent, efficient and effective United Nations system in supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, as underscored in General Assembly resolution 70/1.

38. While the implementation of Umoja had resulted in efficiencies in some areas of the Organization, the direct costs of implementation were estimated to reach \$466.2 million by the end of 2017. CARICOM was concerned that, despite that significant investment, Umoja had not produced the anticipated improvements in the quality and timeliness of the information provided to the Advisory Committee in support of the Secretary-General's budget proposal for the biennium 2018–2019. The Assembly should therefore be provided with analysis outlining the distinction between the efficiencies specifically attributed to the implementation of Umoja and those achieved as a result of other factors. The Secretary-General's next annual progress report on Umoja should also contain detailed information relating to the qualitative and quantitative benefits of the project, including its impact on individual offices and departments.

39. CARICOM was concerned that, despite the expanded mandate established under the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the 2030 Agenda to support the sustainable development of small island developing States, the resources allocated to the Small Island Developing States Unit within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs remained unchanged from the previous biennium. The predictable and reliable allocation of

resources to the Unit and to the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries was essential, as overreliance on voluntary contributions made it difficult for those entities to implement their mandates. She called for all intergovernmentally agreed mandates to be supported by adequate regular budget resources.

40. CARICOM took the view that the proposed reductions in the resources allocated to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), including posts abolished or redeployed, would not affect the Commission's capacity to implement its mandate. Lastly, the Bureau should ensure that sufficient time was provided for informal consultations on the budget proposal, considering its importance and comprehensiveness.

41. **Mr. Funes Henríquez** (El Salvador), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that CELAC attached great importance to the budget of the United Nations and stressed that budget proposals should reflect the mandates and priorities agreed upon by Member States. In addition, the Bureau should guarantee that sufficient time was allocated for discussions on the current agenda item.

42. CELAC was firmly committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and underscored the respective obligations of the Secretariat and Member States to request and provide the resources necessary to ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. CELAC would study the reductions proposed by the Secretary-General, many of which were attributed to efficiencies, in order to ensure that they did not undermine mandate fulfilment. It was concerned at the proposed reductions in the resources allocated to regional commissions, and, in particular, rejected any reductions that would hamper the ability of ECLAC to implement its mandate.

43. CELAC supported the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee with regard to the increased number of senior posts at the level of D-1 and above and the reductions in the lower Professional-grade posts. Those trends could have a negative impact on ongoing human resource management initiatives, such as the young professionals programme, and other efforts to achieve important human resource targets, such as those pertaining to geographic and gender balance, as well as efforts to rejuvenate the workforce of the Secretariat.

44. Special political missions played a key role in strengthening peace in a number of regions, including his own. The Committee must conduct open and inclusive deliberations on the funding and backstopping

arrangements for those missions at its current session, in a manner befitting its competence as the sole Main Committee of the Assembly entrusted with administrative, financial and budgetary matters, while avoiding exclusive approaches that ran counter to the spirit of multilateralism.

45. **Mr. Vale de Almeida** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the United Nations must evolve in order to support the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda, address threats to international peace and security, and defend fundamental rights and freedoms. To that end, the Organization required a transparent planning and budgetary process that allowed it to allocate resources effectively to fulfil its mandates and respond in a flexible manner to pressing demands.

46. The 2018–2019 budget proposal represented an improvement over the proposals presented in recent years and reflected efforts by the Secretariat to increase transparency and streamline processes, including through the implementation of Umoja and the information and communications technology strategy. The presentation of resource requirements and performance measures had also been strengthened. The proposal nevertheless bore testimony to the Committee's longstanding incremental approach to budgeting, whereby it considered isolated requests for posts and resources each biennium, a practice that undermined the strategic nature of the budget and reduced Member States' oversight over how the Secretariat fulfilled its mandates. The current system also did not afford managers the flexibility to reprioritize and redistribute resources and staff according to emerging priorities and did not promote managerial ownership or responsibility for results. Moreover, the practice of recosting, which often resulted in the piecemeal addition of hundreds of millions of dollars to the budget, was not conducive to the strict budgetary discipline and predictability expected by Member States.

47. The European Union supported the Secretary-General's ambitions to reform the Organization's budget processes, responsiveness and strategic direction; to strengthen the link between resources and results; to enable more rigorous reprioritization of resources; to encourage innovative and streamlined working methods; and to grant senior managers the flexibility to shift resources within budget envelopes. In return, the European Union would hold managers accountable for the resources they used and the results



they achieved, in addition to promoting transparency and the provision of clear and precise information throughout the budget process.

48. In their deliberations on the proposed programme budget, Member States should strive to adhere to the budget outline figure set by the General Assembly. The European Union looked forward to achieving consensus on a strategic budget that ensured effective implementation of mandates and reflected a commitment to greater budgetary discipline, transparency, flexibility and accountability.

49. **Ms. Baumann** (Switzerland), speaking also on behalf of Liechtenstein, said that a strong United Nations was one that was capable of effectively implementing the mandates entrusted to it by Member States and fulfilling the goals set out in its Charter. The planning and budgetary process was the main strategic tool available to Member States for ensuring effective and efficient mandate fulfilment. Instead of becoming bogged down with micromanagement issues such as establishing or abolishing individual posts, Member States needed to provide strategic guidance, ensure adequate provision and efficient use of resources, and focus on results rather than inputs. The two delegations therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals to reform the planning and budgetary process by empowering the Organization's leadership while promoting full accountability and transparency.

50. On the whole, the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 reflected the decisions adopted by the General Assembly in 2016 concerning the budget outline. However, more strategic allocation of resources would allow the Organization to achieve its objectives more effectively. For example, the bulk of assessed contributions continued to be allocated to peacekeeping operations aimed at remedying existing conflict situations, when evidence frequently indicated that prevention was a more effective — and less costly — method of addressing conflicts. The Secretary-General's declared ambition to strengthen the Organization's capacities in the area of prevention and mediation was therefore welcome. Moreover, the protection of human rights was critical to anticipating and preventing conflict, and to achieving sustainable development, given that the 2030 Agenda was firmly grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The two delegations would therefore remain committed to providing adequate regular budget resources for the human rights pillar of the Organization's work, and to strengthening its links with the other two pillars of the Organization's work. Discussions on the budget should be guided by the need to strike a balance between

ensuring effective action by the Organization and seeking efficiencies in the use of resources.

51. **Ms. Bird** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, welcomed the reforms presented by the Secretary-General, in particular those aimed at achieving gender parity. The three delegations would work tirelessly to achieve consensus on the budget and looked forward to the timely conclusion of deliberations. They strongly supported the Secretary-General's proposals to strengthen budget preparation and implementation, as well as to enhance and streamline the programme planning and budgeting process, including by improving the presentation of budget materials and results in order to ensure greater transparency and accountability. Member States must support the Secretary-General's reforms under all three pillars of the Organization's work, including his proposed budget and management reforms, in order ensure that the Organization's processes were fit for purpose and contributed to effective mandate implementation. They must also re-examine their approach to negotiations, in particular in the Fifth Committee, by striving for ambitious reform and refusing to simply continue the practices of the past.

52. **Mr. Hoshino** (Japan) said that his delegation attached great importance to financing the Organization to enable it to function properly, but wished to stress that every dollar that the Organization spent came from the funds collected from the taxpayers of the Member States in order to serve humanity. The context for consideration of the proposed programme budget should always be the goal of a more efficient, leaner, and — ultimately — stronger, United Nations.

53. Recalling that the proposed level of the programme budget was subject to the addition of recosting and add-ons, he noted that the Organization had already begun to enter into forward foreign-currency contracts in Swiss francs and euros in order to manage exchange-rate fluctuations and inflation. His delegation looked forward to receiving from the Secretary-General a report on revised estimates that reflected those actions. Having also noted the proposed staffing levels for the biennium 2018–2019, his delegation was concerned at the high and increasing ratio of D-1 and higher posts to Professional posts, as well as the tendency for post reductions to focus on junior-level positions and to be presented as overall cost-reduction efforts and efficiencies. A more efficient and leaner Organization must be less top-heavy.

54. While his delegation would follow closely the developments associated with the proposals for changes to the formulation, structure and implementation of the

budget contained in the reports of the Secretary-General on management reform, it would base its comments on the proposed programme budget on current rules, regulations, relevant resolutions and the need for rigorous budgetary discipline. Strict adherence to the provisions of General Assembly resolutions [41/213](#) and [42/211](#) was required in order to ensure close scrutiny of budget proposals and requests for add-ons, and to monitor priorities, programme performance, avoidance of duplication and opportunities to absorb additional requirements. Member States must be able to take informed decisions in the appropriate committees and other forums, so the Secretariat was requested to provide information on those decisions' impact on the programme budget in a timely and appropriate manner.

55. **Mr. Sandoval Mendiola** (Mexico) said that the bold reforms that all wished to see could be implemented only with the combined effort of all the Member States, and, significantly, the Fifth Committee. Those reforms were aimed at building the United Nations of the twenty-first century. They would put an end, once and for all, to the deficit of trust between the Member States and the Secretariat. Accordingly, discussion of the proposed programme budget could not disregard the Secretary-General's reform initiatives for management and for the peace and security and development pillars of the Organization. Likewise, it could not disregard the paradigm shift brought by placing the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development at the centre of the Organization's efforts. The deliberations of the Fifth Committee must make a practical contribution to enabling the Organization to find a new and different response to the challenges of sustainable development and the maintenance of peace, security and human rights.

56. The Member States should get from the Secretariat more clarity of process and more detail regarding the core of the reform proposals, including their implementation, their timing, their expected results; methods of quantification and evaluation; and the practical implications of greater delegation of authority and subsequent accountability. His delegation would take every opportunity for dialogue with the Secretary-General and his team during the current session, which was a pivotal point in the existence of the United Nations.

57. The Fifth Committee should approve the resources required for the Secretariat to be able to approach its task responsibly, to increase transparency and accountability, to adopt a clear focus on prevention, inclusion and respect for human rights in the widest sense, and to lay the foundation for advancement of the change that the Organization needed.

58. **Ms. Sison** (United States of America) said that her delegation was concerned at the process used to establish the proposed programme budget. At a time of ongoing change, it was understandable that the proposal did not fully reflect the Secretary-General's vision of reform. However, the proposal had failed to take the budget outline agreed by the Member States in December 2017 as a starting point to build the budget from the bottom up. Without such an approach, the Secretariat could not determine strategic priorities or conduct long-overdue impact assessments. Budgets increased by millions of dollars each biennium. The essential nature of an approved budget must be reasserted: that the budget amount was a ceiling that could not be raised except in extraordinary circumstances. The practice of recosting, which had made responsible budgeting impossible, should be the subject of fundamental reform. It made no sense for the budget process to operate by looking backwards, saying that the budget was what had been spent in the past, rather than being what was available to spend in the future. The practice should be to balance unforeseen increases using strategic cuts and adaptation, rather than returning with more requests for funds. Effectively-managed organizations coped with change through a continual process of streamlining and innovation, and responsive and transparent planning and budgeting.

59. The United States would press for real reductions in the overall level of the budget and in staffing. It could not support unsustainable budget growth; the level of the budget must balance what the Organization needed to fulfil its mission with Member States' financial constraints. The only sustainable United Nations was an affordable United Nations. The Member States must work together urgently, with renewed focus, to place the Organization on a sound and sustainable financial path, even if that required a challenge to the status quo.

60. **Mr. Khalizov** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation was pleased that the level of the proposed programme budget for the forthcoming biennium, exclusive of recosting to reflect the effects of inflation and exchange rates, exceeded the level of the budget outline adopted by the General Assembly by an insignificant margin of 0.2 per cent. It should be remembered that, when compared against the level of the current programme budget, that amount represented a reduction of \$215.2 million, or 3.8 per cent. The Russian Federation believed that the reduction in expenditure reflected the welcome course of action adopted by the Secretary-General: making the Organization more efficient and maintaining rigorous budgetary discipline. It trusted that recosting proposals would be brought before the General Assembly, in line

with past practice, and that the use of forward exchange rates, approved by the General Assembly, would result in genuine savings.

61. The Russian Federation would pay particularly close attention during the discussion of the proposed programme budget to requests for additional financial and human resources associated with new activities. It would be premature to include in the regular budget allocations for activities on which the General Assembly had taken no decision. The Russian Federation was particularly concerned at the inclusion in the proposed programme budget of resources for the Human Rights Up Front initiative, a matter which the General Assembly had to date not taken up.

62. Increasingly frequent requests were being made for mandates which resolutions of the General Assembly had already determined should be covered in full by extrabudgetary contributions to be reassigned to the category of expenditure financed from the regular budget. While his delegation understood that many international organizations were facing a shortfall in voluntary contributions, and that competition for donor funds was forcing the United Nations to adapt to a changing situation and to improve its resource-mobilization efforts, the increasingly common tendency for activities funded from extrabudgetary sources to gradually acquire a “regular-budget” status was placing additional burdens on the regular budget. It was not clear on what grounds some mandates were chosen over others for “regular-budget” status, or why a lack of voluntary contributions led to the discontinuation of activities in some cases, but to a transfer of activities to the regular budget in other cases. The reasons for such choices, and their relationship with the strategic framework, must be clarified.

63. The Russian Federation concurred with many of the Advisory Committee recommendations for cost savings and rational use of resources, and shared that body’s views regarding the need to meet in full the Secretariat’s requests for funding for priority programme activities including counter-terrorism, trade and development, human settlements and regional cooperation for development. It trusted that the General Assembly would approve those allocations with no reductions.

64. **Ms. Tripathi** (India) said that the Committee was meeting at a time of introspection in the United Nations, introspection focusing on whether the Organization was able to fulfil mandates and meet expectations while facing a range of challenges, and on whether the Organization had sufficient resources to be effective, while also using those resources efficiently. Her

delegation welcomed the specific reform proposals that the Secretary-General had made to improve the Organization’s operation. A number of broad concerns had persisted and grown over the years. The availability of resources for the delivery of core mandates had stagnated while the demands made of the Organization had multiplied; a departure from its members’ collectively-determined priorities could be caused by the fact that earmarked and non-earmarked funding were increasingly out of step with each other.

65. Another long-standing concern was the imbalance in resources available for the Organization’s three pillars of activity: peace and security, human rights and development. The peacekeeping budget was three times greater than the regular budget, which itself contained peace-and-security-related funding, including that for special political missions. In contrast, the budget allocations for peacebuilding depended on voluntary contributions and were a fraction of the size of the peacekeeping budget. The United Nations development system budget represented only a small percentage of global development efforts and was estimated to channel only a third of global development assistance. In addition, much of that assistance was in earmarked funds, meaning that, while it ostensibly fell under the United Nations umbrella, its destination was little different from that of the funds of bilateral donors.

66. While the Member States had collectively adopted the ambitious 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the capacity of the United Nations system to assist national efforts remained at best marginal. The spirit of global partnership reflected in Sustainable Development Goal 17 seemed to be dissipating even before it had materialized fully. The Member States had a duty to ensure that, within the constraints of the context of operation of the United Nations, the allocation of resources was balanced. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals made necessary an appropriate level of funding from the regular budget to strengthen the development pillar. Management of extrabudgetary resources should also remain consistent with the mandates adopted by the Member States.

67. The budget outline was not a pre-approved ceiling on the resources available for the regular budget. The emphasis in the budget process must be on funding the core components of the regular budget, which was under the supervision of all of the Member States. In that connection, her delegation wished to recall that the creation of posts was not the only means of ensuring programme delivery. It also called for the Member States to be provided with sufficient information to show that all resources shown as being for new and expanded mandates did in fact derive from decisions of

intergovernmental bodies. The distinctions between reductions in resources due to verifiable efficiency measures, including those resulting from Umoja, and reductions due to other measures, must be duly reflected. In addition, a careful assessment should be made of how such reductions could be made without affecting mandate delivery. Her delegation welcomed the provision of information on performance measures spanning four bienniums, to reflect long-term trends.

68. Her delegation was aware that the Secretary-General's reform proposals held implications for resource allocation for various activities, and it understood that consequent adjustments to the budget proposals would be submitted as revised estimates. Its overriding concern would be to allocate adequate resources to enable the Organization to deliver on its mandates effectively and to safeguard its financial health. Member States must work together to ensure strategic oversight, to achieve results-based management of resources and to promote accountability in the functioning of the Organization.

69. **Mr. Arriola Ramírez** (Paraguay) said that the programme budget, which determined the ability of the Organization to carry out its functions and fulfil its mission, should reflect the strategic vision of the Secretary-General for the implementation of the mandates and priorities agreed by the Member States. As new and growing challenges were prompting the establishment of new functions and mandates which themselves led to a rethinking of the Organization's governance and management, his delegation welcomed the proposals of the Secretary-General in pursuit of more effective and efficient delivery of mandates. The aim of making the Organization more agile and efficient required maximum advantage to be drawn from management tools, in the form of information and communication technology, Umoja and the new global service delivery model.

70. While his delegation welcomed the efforts made by the Secretary-General to present a proposed programme budget that was in line with the budget outline adopted by the General Assembly, it regarded the outline as an indicative and preliminary estimate of required resources, and considered that the effective and efficient fulfilment of mandates must remain the foundation for determining the actual level of resources needed by the Organization for execution of the functions and mandates agreed by the Member States. The challenge presented by the 2030 Agenda was unprecedented, with the latter seeking to eradicate poverty and promote the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Accordingly, sufficient resources must be provided to

enable the Organization to play its key development role.

71. Believing that a stronger United Nations was a United Nations that was able to fulfil the mandates which the Member States had entrusted to it, his delegation recalled that, against the background of General Assembly resolution 70/247, the Member States had decided to request a proposal for the provision of financial support for the Secretariat entities involved in the implementation of the Agenda. The reduction in resources for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCTAD, the regional commissions and the technical cooperation programme were therefore worrying, and his delegation looked forward to receiving clarification of the reasons for them.

72. The programme of work of the Fifth Committee was particularly heavy at the current session, and sufficient time must be allocated for the informal consultations required for discussion of the proposed programme budget. His delegation urged all Member States to remain flexible and responsible, and to preserve the tradition of acting by consensus.

73. **Mr. Barros Melet** (Chile) said that the budget process, like all other democratic processes at the United Nations, should reflect the interests and positions of the Member States as a group. As the Organization was involved in a reform exercise and in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, decisions made at the current time would launch a new phase in which, his delegation recognized, the United Nations needed to emerge from its stasis and rigidity, and adapt to the new demands of the citizens of the world. While priority should be given to optimizing resource use, priority should also be given to ensuring that the budget was a responsible reflection of the wishes and mandates established by the General Assembly, and that it allocated sufficient resources for the proper implementation of those mandates. Doing otherwise would be detrimental to the Organization's responsibilities.

74. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) said that his delegation welcomed, and would lend its full support to, the Secretary-General's ambitious, innovative and transparent reform initiative, which focused on the three pillars of the Organization's activity, and on management. The initiative would give new impetus to the United Nations by improving its performance, effectiveness and efficiency, and making it more able to implement its mandates and respond suitably and rapidly to the expectations of the Member States and the many challenges of the world situation.

75. The Organization's objectives could not be met without adequate resources or a constructive, open and flexible approach on the part of the Member States. Morocco joined the Advisory Committee in welcoming the fact that the resources requested by the Secretary-General were largely in line with the budget outline approved by the Member States and that despite a 3.8 per cent reduction in resources compared to the current biennium, the proposed programme budget allocated considerably more funds to international and regional development cooperation. Once again echoing the views of the Advisory Committee, he had hoped that the Secretary-General, as the Organization's Chief Administrative Officer, would propose a budget able to lead to the implementation of all programmes and activities. However, the extrabudgetary resources included in the proposed programme budget amounted to over \$21 billion. Extrabudgetary contributions were often earmarked, and escaped supervision by the General Assembly.

76. The proposal to abolish 11 posts linked to social and economic development in Africa failed to reflect the importance accorded by the General Assembly to the African continent and its emancipation. It should be remembered that the development of Africa had been among the priorities identified in the budget outline already adopted by the General Assembly, as well as by the Secretary-General in the presentation of his vision of the future of the Organization. Similarly, the proposed reduction of 40 posts in General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management would increase the existing pressure on those entities, and risked preventing them from responding effectively to the increasing demands of the Member States.

77. The Secretary-General had wisely decided to reduce considerably the size of the delegation accompanying him when he travelled, setting an example with regard to disciplined use of the travel budget of his Office. The delegation of Morocco joined the Advisory Committee in calling on other managers to follow that example, which would undoubtedly lead to substantial efficiency gains.

78. **Ms. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that her delegation supported the efforts of the Secretary-General to promote the role of the Organization, and to make it more flexible, transparent, accountable and decentralized, in order to help it discharge its responsibilities as effectively as possible. The intergovernmental bodies, and particularly the Fifth Committee, played an essential role in programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation. Qatar also supported the efforts to modernize the operation of

the Secretariat, in line with the relevant resolutions. Human-resources policy was important to attract, train and retain high-calibre staff, and to speed up recruitment, maintaining equitable geographical distribution at all levels. The Secretary-General's promotion of gender balance, especially in senior posts at Headquarters and in the field, were welcome, and should enable the Organization to better fulfil its mandates in the areas of international peace and security, development, human rights and humanitarian assistance.

79. It was vital that the programme budget should provide sufficient resources for fulfilment of the mandates approved by the Member States, so that the United Nations could meet the expectations of everyone, everywhere, and pursue the objectives established in its Charter.

80. **Ms. Mejía** (Colombia) said that the challenges involved in implementing the reform of the Organization's management, development and peace and security architecture were many. The reforms would depend on the required financial resources being available, and on efforts being adapted to the strategic vision put forward by the Secretary-General. It should be remembered that the context of the proposed reforms was rational use of resources, with no excessive financial burden on the Member States. With regard to financial resources, her delegation was particularly concerned at the impact of reductions on the operation and mandate execution of the regional commissions, especially ECLAC, which, given the establishment of the Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development, played a vital role in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the region. With regard to human resources, it was essential to support the System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity put forward by the Secretary-General, and its target dates, to ensure that the United Nations reflected the reality of society, notably in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

81. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that the presentation of the proposed programme budget, an important phase in the Organization's cycle of work, must translate into practical terms the manner in which the mandates from the Member States would be implemented. The budget and related documents were among the most visible tools used to make the United Nations the depositary of the multilateral system that its Member States hoped it would be. For that reason, her delegation was opposed to the attempted use of the proposed programme budget to approve initiatives that not only lacked a mandate from the Member States, but also lacked a consensus view among the Member States.



That was the case with the Human Rights Up Front initiative, for which a D-1 post had been requested. Such proposals broke the vital trust between the Member States and the Secretariat.

82. Recalling that just over 20 per cent of the proposed budget was devoted to special political missions, her delegation reiterated the need to consider funding those missions using a different funding mechanism that did not affect the regular budget, especially as most of the missions were not approved by the General Assembly. The proposed budget must reflect a balance between the three pillars of the Organization's activity and the priorities agreed upon. Without a fair balance, the Organization and the Member States could not achieve ambitious goals such as those of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

83. The management reforms proposed by the Secretary-General were welcome. The reform process should seek to preserve the Organization's intergovernmental nature, and have as its fundamental purpose to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to fulfil its role and functions, especially in the area of development. Many of the reform proposals should be presented in more detail, so that the Member States could take duly substantiated decisions. One example needing further analysis was the proposal to simplify the budget structure, particularly in connection with the suggested appropriation by budget part rather than budget section. Successful reform would depend on the commitment of all Member States to meet their financial obligations to the Organization in full, on time and without conditions, enabling implementation in their entirety of programmes and activities, and provision of the essential services needed for the proper functioning of the intergovernmental machinery. Political statements should be matched by concrete action to provide the Organization with stable and predictable resources.

84. Her delegation reaffirmed the role of the Fifth Committee as the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibility for administrative and budgetary matters, and expressed concern at the tendency for some bodies to become involved in administrative and budgetary matters, thus failing to take account of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. It also urged that the programme budget should not be held hostage to political interests, as the Member States' decisions must lead to concrete improvements in the activities of the Organization.

*The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.*