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Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

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

Thematic cluster I: special and personal envoys and special advisers of the Secretary-General

Twelfth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (thematic cluster I, [A/70/348/Add.1](#)). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 17 November 2015.

2. The main report of the Secretary-General ([A/70/348](#)) provides an overview of the proposed resource requirements for 2016 for 35 special political missions and related cross-cutting issues. Five addenda to the main report cover the specific requirements for thematic clusters I to III and the two largest missions, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) ([A/70/348/Add.1-5](#)). Issues of a cross-cutting nature pertaining to all special political missions will be covered in the main report of the Advisory Committee ([A/70/7/Add.10](#)), while the budget proposals for thematic clusters I to III, UNAMA and UNAMI will be covered in its related reports ([A/70/7/Add.11-15](#)). The budget proposal of the Secretary-General for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (cluster I) is contained in a

* Reissued for technical reasons on 24 November 2015.



separate addendum (A/70/348/Add.6)¹ and the report of the Committee will be issued as document A/70/7/Add.16.

3. The Advisory Committee recalls that a biennial provision of \$1,124.4 million for special political missions was included in section 3, Political affairs, of the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for 2016-2017 (see A/70/7, para. II.2). The comments and recommendations of the Committee on the level of the biennial provision, in particular a proposed reduction of \$6 million attributed to "efficiencies" (A/70/7, para. II.3 (c)), will be included in its main report (A/70/7/Add.10), along with its comments and recommendations on other cross-cutting issues relating to the proposed resource requirements, including air operations, travel and security arrangements, and ratios for, inter alia, vehicles and computing devices.

II. Resource requirements for 2016

4. Of the 11 special political missions under thematic cluster I, resources for 2016 for 10 missions are presented in the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/70/348/Add.1 (excluding the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, see para. 2 above). The resource requirements for the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar, the mandate for which emanates from the General Assembly, will be presented in a statement of programme budget implications in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, subject to action taken in the Third Committee of the Assembly. Those requirements are also included in the report of the Secretary-General so as to consolidate the overall resource requirements for the special political missions in cluster I.

Table 1
Summary of resource requirements for thematic cluster I^a
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Mission	2014-2015			Requirements for 2016		Total requirements for 2015	Variance 2015-2016
	Appropriation	Estimated expenditure	Variance	Total	Non-recurrent		
	(1)	(2)	(3)=(1)-(2)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)=(4)-(6)
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar	2 316.3	2 282.2	34.1	1 127.2	—	1 161.0	(33.8)
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus	6 115.3	5 390.8	724.5	2 564.6	26.9	3 139.2	(574.6)
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide	4 344.8	4 381.3	(36.5)	2 203.7	—	2 171.0	32.7
Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara	1 159.3	904.4	254.9	549.5	—	586.8	(37.3)
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)	1 234.3	977.7	256.6	624.9	—	654.3	(29.4)

¹ The Secretary-General provides the explanation for the separate addendum in paragraph 10 of his report contained in document A/70/348.

Mission	2014-2015			Requirements for 2016		Total requirements for 2015	Variance 2015-2016
	Appropriation	Estimated expenditure	Variance	Total	Non-recurrent		
	(1)	(2)	(3)=(1)-(2)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)=(4)-(6)
United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions	4 150.3	4 016.4	133.9	2 034.4	–	2 042.6	(8.2)
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria	21 528.7	21 453.6	75.1	12 211.6	99.5	10 877.7	1 333.9
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan	2 673.8	2 351.1	322.7	1 412.7	2.4	1 328.5	84.2
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel	6 843.3	6 056.9	786.4	3 865.0	–	3 987.7	(122.7)
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region	9 161.2	9 276.8	(115.6)	4 739.5	140.0	4 550.1	189.4
Total	59 527.3	57 091.2	2 436.1	31 333.1	268.8	30 498.9	834.2

^a Excludes requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (see para. 2 above).

5. For the biennium 2014-2015, expenditures through 31 December 2015 are projected at \$57,091,200 for the 10 missions under thematic cluster I, compared with the appropriation of \$59,527,300 for the biennium, leading to a projected unencumbered balance of \$2,436,100. The unencumbered balance of \$2.4 million for the biennium reflects underexpenditures by eight missions, offset in part by overexpenditures by two missions (lower actual vacancy rates for the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and higher actual international staff costs for the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide). A summary of the main factors contributing to the variances for each mission is provided in table 4 in the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/348).

6. The resources proposed for 2016 for the 10 missions under thematic cluster I amount to \$31,333,100 (net), representing an increase of \$834,200 compared with the resources approved for 2015 (see also para. 2 above). As shown in table 1 above, the increase in the resources proposed for 2016 is attributable to the higher requirements for four missions (mainly the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria), offset by decreased requirements for the other six missions in the cluster. A summary of the main factors contributing to the variances for each mission is provided in table 6 in the report of the Secretary-General (A/70/348), which includes justification for the increased requirements for the four missions as follows:

(a) Office of the Special Envoy for Syria: an increase of \$1,333,900, due mainly to a projected lower vacancy rate for international staff;

(b) Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region: an increase of \$189,400, due mainly to projected lower vacancy rates for all categories of staff;

(c) Office of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan and Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide: increases of \$84,200 and \$32,700, respectively, due mainly to increased international staff costs as a result of higher actual average step in grade and dependency status of current incumbents and common staff costs based on expenditure trends.

Comments and recommendations on staffing requirements

7. Table 2 below presents positions approved for 2015, the vacancy situation as at 30 September 2015 and the proposed staffing requirements for 2016 for the 10 missions under cluster I.

Table 2
Thematic cluster I: staffing requirements^a

	<i>Approved for 2015</i>	<i>Vacant positions as at 30 September</i>	<i>Proposed for 2016</i>	<i>New positions</i>	<i>Abolishments</i>	<i>Reclassifications</i>
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar	5 (1 USG, 2 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 GS (OL))	—	5 (1 USG, 2 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 GS (OL))	—	—	—
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus	19 (1 USG, 1 D-1, 3 P-5, 5 P-4, 3 FS, 1 GS (OL), 5 LL)	2 (1 P-5, 1 P-4)	19 (1 USG, 1 D-1, 3 P-5, 5 P-4, ^b 3 FS, 1 GS (OL), 5 LL)	—	—	—
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide	10 (1 USG, 1 ASG, 1 P-5, 3 P-4, 2 P-3, 2 GS (OL))	—	10 (1 USG, 1 ASG, 1 P-5, 3 P-4, 2 P-3, 2 GS (OL))	—	—	—
Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara	2 (1 USG, 1 P-3)	1 P-3	2 (1 USG, 1 P-3)	—	—	—
Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)	3 (1 USG, 1 P-4, 1 GS (OL))	—	3 (1 USG, 1 P-4, 1 GS (OL))	—	—	—
United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions	7 (1 ASG, 1 P-5, 2 P-4, 2 P-3, 1 GS (OL))	—	7 (1 ASG, 1 P-5, 2 P-4, 2 P-3, 1 GS (OL))	1 (1 P-4)	1 (1 P-4)	—
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria	80 (1 USG, 1 ASG, 1 D-2, 2 D-1, 6 P-5, 9 P-4, 9 P-3, 13 FS, 9 GS (OL), 29 LL)	17 (2 P-5, 3 P-4, 6 P-3, 3 FS, 3 LL)	80 (1 USG, 1 ASG, 1 D-2, 2 D-1, 6 P-5, 11 P-4, ^c 7 P-3, 13 FS, 9 GS (OL), 29 LL)	1 (1 P-5)	1 (1 P-5)	2 (2 P-3 to P-4)
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan	8 (1 USG, 1 D-1, 2 P-4, 1 P-3, 2 NPO, 1 LL)	2 P-4	8 (1 USG, 1 D-1, 2 P-4, 1 P-3, 2 NPO, 1 LL)	—	—	—
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel	17 (1 ASG, 3 P-5, 5 P-4, 3 P-3, 1 FS, 1 NPO, 3 LL)	6 (2 P-5, 1 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 NPO, 1 LL)	17 (1 ASG, 3 P-5, 5 P-4, 3 P-3, 1 FS, 1 NPO, 3 LL)	—	—	—
Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region	27 (1 USG, 1 ASG, 1 D-1, 4 P-5, 6 P-4, 3 P-3, 1 FS, 2 GS (OL), 1 NPO, 7 LL)	6 (1 P-5, 1 P-4, 1 P-3, 1 FS, 1 GS (OL), 1 LL)	27 (1 USG, ^d 1 D-2, 1 D-1, 4 P-5, 6 P-4, ^d 4 P-3, 1 FS, 1 GS (OL), 1 NPO, 7 LL)	2 (1 D-2, 1 P-3)	2 (1 ASG, 1 GS (OL))	—

Abbreviations: ASG, Assistant Secretary-General; FS, Field Service; GS (OL), General Service (Other level); LL, Local level; NPO, National Professional Officer; USG, Under-Secretary-General; UNV, United Nations Volunteer.

^a Excludes requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (see para. 2 above).

^b Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus proposes the relocation of one P-4 position from New York to Cyprus.

^c Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria proposes the relocation of two positions: 1 P-4 from Damascus to Geneva and 1 P-4 from Geneva to Brussels.

^d Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region proposes the relocation of two positions, one Under-Secretary-General and one P-4, from Geneva to Nairobi.

Vacancy rates and vacant positions

8. The Advisory Committee was provided with information on the budgeted vacancy rates for 2015, actual average vacancy rates for the period from 1 January to 30 September 2015 and proposed vacancy rates for 2016 for the missions under cluster I.

9. For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, the Advisory Committee notes from the information on actual incumbency that of the total of 17 (13 international and 4 national) positions approved for 2015, only 11 (9 international and 2 national) were encumbered as at 30 September 2015. Compared with the budgeted vacancy rate of 20 per cent for 2015 for international staff, the actual average vacancy rate was 36 per cent for the period from January to August 2015, and the actual vacancy rate was 31 per cent as at 30 September 2015. The Committee notes from the information it received that a vacancy factor of 20 per cent is applied to the estimates for international staff in Dakar. **Taking into account the actual vacancy rates experienced from January to September 2015, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly apply a 25 per cent vacancy factor to the estimates for 2016 for international staff in Dakar for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel.**

10. Single vacancy rates are applied in estimating staff requirements for 2016 for the special political missions. The Advisory Committee recalls that in its review of the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017, it expressed the view that, given the persistently long recruitment timelines for the filling of newly established posts, there was merit in maintaining a different budgetary treatment for new and continuing posts and it remained unconvinced of the benefits of applying a single vacancy rate (A/70/7, para. 57). **The Advisory Committee reiterates its recommendation that the General Assembly apply vacancy rates of 50 per cent for new Professional positions and 35 per cent for new General Service positions in the budget for 2016 for special political missions (A/70/7, para. 57).**

11. With respect to positions vacant for two years or longer for missions under cluster I, the Advisory Committee notes from the information provided to it that the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria has four such positions (one P-4 Human Rights Officer and one P-3 Political Affairs Officer vacant since 1 January 2013 and two P-3 Security Officer positions vacant since 1 November 2012), and that recruitment is currently under way only for one of the Security Officer positions. The Committee recalls that the Office had four vacant positions last year (A/69/628, para. 80).

12. The Advisory Committee reiterates the view that, as a matter of overall policy, the continuing requirement for posts that have been vacant for two years or longer should be reviewed and justifications provided for their retention in the proposed programme budget. Otherwise, they should be proposed for abolishment (A/69/628, para. 18).

13. As shown in table 2 above, the staffing changes proposed for 2016 for the 10 missions under cluster I include the following (A/70/348, annex V, and A/70/348/Add.1, paras. 40, 130, 157, 233, 235 and 236):

(a) Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus (one relocation): to relocate the Special Assistant position (P-4) from New York to Nicosia;

(b) Office of the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions (one abolishment and one new position): to abolish the position of Police Adviser (P-4) and to establish a new position of Humanitarian/Civil Affairs Officer (P-4);

(c) Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria (one abolishment, one new position, two relocations and two reclassifications):

(i) Abolishment of the position of Spokesperson (P-5) in Geneva and establishment of a new position of Senior Political Affairs Officer (P-5);

(ii) Relocation of the P-4 position of Public Information Officer from Damascus to Geneva;

(iii) Relocation of the P-4 Special Assistant position from Geneva to Brussels;

(iv) Reclassification of two Military Adviser positions from P-3 to P-4;

(d) Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region (two relocations, two abolishments and two new positions):

(i) Relocation of the positions of Special Envoy (Under-Secretary-General) and Special Assistant (P-4) from Geneva to Nairobi;

(ii) Abolishment of the position of Special Adviser (Assistant Secretary-General) in Nairobi;

(iii) Abolishment of the position of Administrative Assistant (General Service (Other level)) in Geneva;

(iv) Establishment of a position of Chief Political Affairs Officer (D-2) in Nairobi;

(v) Establishment of a position of Political Affairs/Liaison Officer (P-3) in Kinshasa.

14. The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the staffing requirements proposed by the Secretary-General for the 10 special political missions under thematic cluster I, with the exception of (a) the proposed establishment of the P-3 position of Political Affairs/Liaison Officer for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, and (b) the proposed relocation of the P-4 Special Assistant from Geneva to Brussels for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, and subject to the adjustment of the vacancy rate for new positions (see para. 10 above and paras. 17 and 23 below).

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region

15. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region proposes the establishment of a P-3 position of Political Affairs/Liaison Officer to be based in Kinshasa. The position would be embedded within a unit of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which is dedicated to supporting the implementation of the national commitments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, and the incumbent would work closely with the staff of that unit ([A/70/348/Add.1](#), para. 236). It is indicated that the Security Council, in its resolutions 2098 (2013), 2147 (2014) and 2211 (2015), called upon the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region and the Special Representative of the Secretary-

General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to collaborate in order to support, coordinate and assess the implementation of national and regional commitments under the Framework. The Advisory Committee notes that the Office of the Special Envoy currently has five Political Affairs Officer positions (one P-5, two P-4 and two P-3) located in Nairobi, and that the Office is proposing one new D-2 position for Chief of Political Affairs for 2016 (see para. 13 (d) (iv) above).

16. The Advisory Committee recalls that in the proposed budget for MONUSCO for the period 2015/16 (A/69/797), the Secretary-General proposed to establish a dedicated Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Unit in Kinshasa with the redeployment of nine posts to the Unit (four international posts and five national posts), including a P-2 post for Associate Political Affairs Officer from the Political Affairs Division (the proposal was approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/297). The Secretary-General has indicated that the Unit is the entry point of MONUSCO for liaison with the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and for supporting capacity-building and partnerships with the national oversight mechanism, other State institutions and civil society, and for ensuring a coherent approach between the various governmental and United Nations strategic plans and programmes (ibid., paras. 120, 121 and 126 and tables 24 and 25). In addition, the Committee recalls that MONUSCO proposed 946 international staff posts with a projected vacancy rate of 13 per cent for 2015/16 (ibid., summary and para. 179 and table).

17. Taking into account the existing and proposed additional staff capacity in the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, as well as the capacity of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Unit in MONUSCO, the Advisory Committee recommends against the approval of the proposed establishment of a P-3 position for Political Affairs/Liaison Officer, to be based in Kinshasa, for the Office of the Special Envoy. Any related non-post resources should be adjusted accordingly.

18. The Advisory Committee notes the proposed relocation of the positions of Special Envoy and Special Assistant from Geneva to Nairobi in 2016 for the Special Envoy to lead the Office and perform his functions in the region, in response to the observations and recommendations contained in its previous report (A/69/628, paras. 85, 86 and 88). The Committee further notes that the costs for trips undertaken by the Special Envoy and his support staff between Geneva and Nairobi during the period that they were based in Geneva up to 31 December 2015 are estimated at \$411,500 (A/70/348/Add.1, paras. 233 and 234). **The Advisory Committee has previously pointed out that given the location of the Special Envoy in Geneva through to the end of 2015, the expenses related to the round trips between Geneva and Nairobi undertaken by the Special Envoy and his support staff are additional expenditures that have to be borne by the Organization (A/69/628, para. 89 (c)).** With relation to the relocation from Geneva to Nairobi, the Committee requested information on the methodology in estimating staff costs in Geneva in 2015 and Nairobi in 2016. The Committee intends to discuss the matter under the question of methodology for calculation of standard salaries for special political missions in its main report (A/70/7/Add.10).

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria

19. The Advisory Committee recalls that the proposed 32 positions for the substantive component of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria would

be in four distinct locations in 2015: Brussels (one Under-Secretary-General), Geneva (14 positions, including one Assistant Secretary-General), Damascus (14 positions) and New York (3 positions). While the Committee had no objection to the position of the Special Envoy for Syria being based in Brussels for 2015, it expressed the view that the Secretary-General should keep the arrangement for the location of the Special Envoy for Syria under review (A/69/628, paras. 77 and 78). In this connection, the Committee notes from the budget document that the Office proposes to relocate the P-4 position of the Special Assistant to the Special Envoy from Geneva to Brussels for 2016, in order to ensure continuous and regular support to the Special Envoy in Brussels (A/70/348/Add.1, para. 157 (c)).

20. As part of its review of the budget proposals, the Advisory Committee requested information on the number of actual working days that the Special Envoy spent in Geneva, Damascus and Brussels in 2015, which is reflected in table 3 below. The Committee requested, but did not receive upon finalization of the present report, related information on actual working days at all locations for the same period. The Committee requests that the information be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report. Upon enquiry, the Committee was also informed that it was expected that the Special Envoy would be spending as much time in Geneva in 2016 as he did in 2015, or possibly more, depending on how the political process progresses in 2016. Given the possibility of increased political activity in Geneva in 2016 relating to the work of the Special Envoy, the Committee requested, but did not receive, additional justification for the proposed relocation of the Special Assistant position from Geneva to Brussels. The Committee was informed that the current incumbent of the position of Special Assistant had already been recruited in Brussels. **The Advisory Committee stresses that the proposed relocation of the Special Assistant position from Geneva to Brussels for 2016 is yet to be considered by the General Assembly. The Committee notes with concern that the incumbent for the P-4 Special Assistant position has already been recruited in Brussels during 2015 (see para. 23 below).**

Table 3
**Working days of the Special Envoy in Brussels, Damascus and Geneva,
January to August 2015**

Month	Working days		
	Brussels	Damascus	Geneva
January	7	—	5
February	2	3	2
March	5	—	5
April	2	—	1
May	1	—	24
June	2	3	7
July	—	2	1
August	—	—	5
Total	19	8	50

21. A related issue is the additional costs associated with the location of the Special Envoy in Brussels. The Advisory Committee recalls that it was provided with a comparative summary of relevant annual costs specific to Geneva and Brussels for 2015, which showed that the reduced requirement under staff costs in Brussels would be partially offset by higher costs under travel costs from Brussels to Geneva by the Special Envoy (A/69/628, para. 78).² For travel between Brussels and Geneva in 2016, two official trips per month are planned at an estimated cost of approximately \$5,300 (including daily subsistence allowance) per month/person in economy class (which would lead to an estimated annual cost of \$127,200 for 2016 for the Special Envoy and his Special Assistant).

22. The Advisory Committee further recalls that there were no plans to incur any costs for the Organization with respect to office rental in Brussels. However, the Committee notes that for 2016 a provision of \$1,649,100 is requested for rental of premises for four office locations, including Brussels in addition to Damascus, Geneva and New York (see also paras. 27 and 28 below). Furthermore, the Committee was informed upon enquiry that the Office of the Special Envoy had already entered into a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme in Belgium at an estimated annual cost of \$27,900 for the provision of office space, information technology support, security support and other miscellaneous services for two staff members at the United Nations premises there. **The Advisory Committee notes with concern that prior to approval by the General Assembly for a related budgetary provision for 2016, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria has already signed a memorandum of understanding for the rental of an office in Brussels during 2015.**

23. **The Advisory Committee recalls that during its consideration of the proposed budget for 2015, it expressed the view that the Secretary-General should keep the arrangement for the location of the Special Envoy for Syria under review (A/69/628, para. 78). The Committee reiterates its view and expects that the Secretary-General will report in this regard in the context of the budget proposal for 2017 for the Office. Pending the result of this review, the Committee is not in a position to recommend approval of the proposed relocation of the P-4 Special Assistant position from Geneva to Brussels for 2016. In this connection, the Committee recommends against the proposed provision of \$27,900 for 2016 for the office rental in Brussels (see para. 22 above and para. 27 and table 5 below).**

Comments and recommendations on operational costs

24. The Advisory Committee was provided with information on the operational costs for cluster I, which is shown in table 4 below, including the appropriation and estimated expenditure for the biennium 2014-2015 and the projected requirements for 2016.

² According to the Secretary-General at that time, the annual total costs for an Under-Secretary-General position in Brussels were lower than that of Geneva, reflecting, inter alia, reductions under staff costs (owing to a lower post adjustment rate in Brussels compared with that of Geneva), which would be partly offset by higher costs under travel costs (two trips per month from Brussels to Geneva for a maximum of 10 days plus daily subsistence allowance: a total of 24 trips per year at a cost of \$14,400 and \$47,640 for daily subsistence allowance).

Table 4

Thematic cluster I: operational costs^a

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Category	2014-2015			Total requirements 2015	Requirements for 2016		
	Appropriations	Estimated expenditure	Variance		Total	Non- recurrent	Variance 2015-2016
	(1)	(2)	(3)=(1)-(2)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)=(5)-(4)
Operational costs							
1. Consultants	1 858.0	1 730.2	127.8	884.2	773.0	–	(111.2)
2. Official travel	8 008.9	7 449.3	559.6	3 901.9	3 712.4	–	(189.5)
3. Facilities and infrastructure	3 830.7	5 081.3	(1 250.6)	1 800.8	2 454.6	11.2	653.8
4. Ground transportation	1 064.9	1 265.5	(200.6)	398.6	631.2	108.3	232.6
5. Air transportation	904.5	920.6	(16.1)	702.5	664.3	–	(38.2)
6. Communications	2 108.8	1 516.4	592.4	1 084.5	857.1	46.0	(227.4)
7. Information technology	890.5	963.4	(72.9)	448.7	581.1	102.9	132.4
8. Medical	7.2	36.4	(29.2)	5.2	4.6	–	(0.6)
9. Other supplies, services and equipment	3 180.8	2 246.9	933.9	1 632.8	1 063.2	0.4	(569.6)
Total	21 854.3	21 210.0	644.3	10 859.2	10 741.5	268.8	(117.7)

^a Excludes requirements for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen (see para. 2 above).

Consultants

25. Under the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, a provision of \$91,000 is requested for consultancy services, a decrease of \$500 compared with the provision for 2015. The amount requested is for the implementation of a capacity-building project by the Office, which provides staff throughout the United Nations system, as well as Member States and civil society, with expert training on early warning and prevention of genocide and other atrocity crimes. The estimate provides for consultant fees (\$49,700 at a daily rate of \$700 for a total of 71 days), for 13 consultants engaged for eight planned seminars, for two additional consultants to conduct two research projects, and for travel of the consultants (\$41,300).

26. The projected expenditure for 2014-2015 amounts to \$130,400, compared with the appropriation of \$183,200, leaving an unencumbered balance of \$52,800 that reflects the consultants taking fewer than the number of budgeted trips. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the expenditure as at 31 August 2015 amounted to \$22,600, or 25 per cent, and that the remaining activities would take place in the last quarter of the year at a projected cost of \$58,300. Furthermore, the number of workshops planned for 2016 would remain unchanged from prior years. **In view of the foregoing, the Advisory Committee recommends a reduction of \$20,000 to the provision proposed for consultants in 2016 for the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide.**

Facilities and infrastructure

27. For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, resources amounting to \$1,649,100 are proposed to provide for rental of premises in Damascus, Geneva, New York and Brussels in 2016. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee received a breakdown of the proposed provision for the four locations of the Office with the staffing levels at each location (table 5 below).

Table 5
Rental costs for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria

Location	Name of building	2015		2016	
		Number of staff	Budget	Number of staff	Proposed budget
Damascus	Hotel A	57	900 000	56	1 520 640
	Hotel B		18 000		9 600
Geneva	United Nations Office at Geneva	18	19 800	19	43 260
Brussels	United Nations House	2	–	2	27 900
New York	United Nations Headquarters	3	42 900	3	47 700
Total		80	980 700	80	1 649 100

28. The Advisory Committee notes a significant increase of \$668,400, or 68 per cent, in the proposed provision for rental of premises for the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria for 2016. The Committee was informed upon enquiry that the rental increase in Damascus was mainly attributable to the increase in the room rates at Hotel A. The Committee was informed that following the mortar attacks on that hotel in August 2015, all United Nations staff staying there were instructed to move to Hotel C for security reasons.³ Upon further enquiry as to why the Hotel A rates are included in the proposed budget, the Committee was informed that the Office was occupying Hotel A at the time of the finalization of the proposed budget for 2016, and that the Office initially moved to Hotel C in September 2015 on a temporary basis; however, a long-term contract has not yet been concluded with Hotel C. **The Advisory Committee requests the Secretary-General to provide to the General Assembly the most up-to-date information on progress made towards concluding the contract with the Hotel where the Office intends to stay on a long-term basis at the time of its consideration of the proposed budget for special political missions for 2016.**

Ground transportation

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region

29. For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, a provision of \$215,400 is proposed for 2016 under ground transportation, representing an increase of \$178,700, or 487 per cent, compared with the appropriation of \$36,700 for 2015. The breakdown of the provision for 2015 and

³ The two hotels in Damascus with security clearance for offices and accommodation are Hotels A and C.

the request for 2016 under ground transportation is presented in table 6 below, based on the information provided to the Committee.

Table 6

Breakdown of requirements under ground transportation for 2015 and 2016 for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region

(United States dollars)

<i>Ground transportation</i>	<i>2015 provision</i>	<i>2016 proposal</i>	<i>Variance</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Acquisition of vehicles	–	108 300	108 300	–
Rental of vehicles	24 000	36 000	12 000	50
Repairs and maintenance	5 600	48 000	42 400	757
Liability insurance	1 200	2 200	1 000	83
Petrol, oil and lubricants	5 900	20 900	15 000	254
Total	36 700	215 400	178 700	487

30. The Advisory Committee notes from the information provided to it that the increase is mainly due to increased transport requirements as a result of the relocation of the Special Envoy from Geneva to Nairobi, including the need to replace six vehicles and acquire two additional vehicles. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that, in fact, it is proposed to replace four vehicles, which were previously transferred from the United Nations Political Office for Somalia and have now exceeded their useful life of 10 years. The Committee was further informed that although the operational base of the Special Envoy is in Nairobi, the Office remains a field mission with operational activities and with a mandate with responsibilities in 13 countries in the region. The Office also serves as the functioning secretariat of the Technical Support Committee (comprising principal representatives of Heads of State of the region), which meets periodically in Nairobi, and the vehicles are deployed to support those meetings. Furthermore, the vehicles facilitate the mobility of staff in their meetings with national and international partners. In addition, upon relocation to Nairobi on a full-time basis, the Special Envoy will require adequate transportation to perform his functions. Upon request, the Committee was provided with the cost estimates of the four vehicles planned for purchase in 2016 (see table 7 below).

Table 7

Cost breakdown for four vehicles planned for purchase in 2016

(United States dollars)

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number of vehicles</i>	<i>Unit cost per vehicle</i>	<i>Total cost of vehicles</i>	<i>Freight (15%)</i>	<i>Total cost</i>
4x4 general purpose, medium	3	24 600	73 800	11 070	84 870
Minibus (up to 15 passengers)	1	34 500	34 500	5 175	39 675
Total			108 300	16 245	124 545

31. The Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that the Office currently has eight vehicles in its fleet in Nairobi (for 22 staff based there),⁴ and that these vehicles provide support to the staff on the ground.⁵ Upon further enquiry, the Committee was informed that the United Nations Office at Nairobi currently has 29 vehicles, including 17 vehicles forming a car pool for staff (133 staff were approved for 2014-2015; see [A/70/7](#), tables I.1 and VIII.20) and 12 vehicles used by the Security and Safety Service. The Committee was further informed that while the holding of vehicles by the United Nations Office at Nairobi is guided by the policy for established United Nations offices set out in administrative instruction [ST/AI/2006/1](#) entitled "Policy on the provision and use of official cars", there is no standard ratio specific to special political missions located at family duty stations and the vehicles are allocated based on the operational requirements of the mission. **The Advisory Committee notes the lack of a coherent policy related to the holding of vehicles by special political missions at established United Nations duty stations, as well as the lack of criteria for the stocking and replacement of spare parts.** The Committee will discuss the matter further in its main report ([A/70/7/Add.10](#)).

32. The Advisory Committee notes the significant increase requested for 2016 under ground transportation and the lack of justification for some of the related requests for resources, including increases in repairs and maintenance (from \$5,600 for 2015 to \$48,000 for 2016 when the Office proposes to purchase four new vehicles), and in vehicle rental (from \$24,000 for 2015 to \$36,000 in 2016, while underexpenditures are reported for both 2014 and 2015). **Taking into account the above, the Advisory Committee recommends that for 2016 the General Assembly** (see also tables 6 and 7 above):

(a) **With respect to the proposed acquisition of four vehicles (three 4x4 vehicles and one minibus), approve the purchase of two 4x4 vehicles taking into account the relocation of the Special Envoy to Nairobi and postpone the acquisition of the other two vehicles pending a policy review on the holding of vehicles by special political missions at established duty stations (see para. 31 above);**

(b) **With respect to the proposed rental of vehicles, approve an amount of \$18,000 (a reduction of \$18,000), based on the lower expenditures for both 2014 and 2015 and the relocation of the Special Envoy to Nairobi which will obviate the current need for the rental of a vehicle during his visits to Nairobi;**

(c) **With respect to repairs and maintenance, maintain the amount at \$5,600, the level approved for 2015 (a reduction of \$42,400);**

(d) **With respect to petrol, oil and lubricants, approve an amount of \$11,800, which is an increase of 100 per cent over the provision of \$5,900 for 2015 (a reduction of \$9,100), taking into account the relocation of the Special Envoy to Nairobi and the related potential increase in the requirements.**

⁴ A total of 27 staff was approved for 2014-2015 for the Office, 22 in Nairobi, three in Geneva and two in New York.

⁵ The Office has seven general purpose, medium 4x4 vehicles and one minibus. The Deputy Head of the Mission (Assistant Secretary-General) and the Chief of Staff (D-1) each use a 4x4 vehicle, 12 international staff share the other five 4x4 vehicles and one minibus is used for eight national staff.

Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel

33. For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, resources amounting to \$32,300 are proposed for 2016 under ground transportation, an increase of \$10,100 compared with the provision for 2015. The proposed increase for 2016 is mainly due to the increased number of vehicles from three in 2015 to six in 2016 and the related increase in fuel and spare parts for the vehicles. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the office currently has three vehicles (general purpose 4x4) in Dakar as detailed in table 8 below (one is due for write-off in 2016 as it has reached the end of its useful life) and that there are currently 3.3 staff per vehicle.

Table 8

Vehicles held by the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel

<i>Model</i>	<i>Date of purchase</i>	<i>Transferred from</i>	<i>Date of transfer</i>	<i>Mileage (km)</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Toyota Prado*	2008	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone	2014	121 400	Dakar	Car pool
Nissan Patrol	2009	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon	2014	145 085	Dakar	Car pool
Nissan Patrol	2009	United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon	2014	95 040	Dakar	Car pool

* To be written off in 2016.

34. The Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that the anticipated overexpenditure in 2014-2015 reflects the projected higher-than-budgeted cost of the vehicle acquired for the use of the Special Envoy and the Office in Dakar in 2015 and the acquisition of two additional vehicles due to the increased operational requirement to travel within the region and to reduce reliance on air transportation in the future. Upon further clarification on the number of days undertaken for field trips, the Committee was informed that the vehicles are used mostly in Dakar, and that two of the vehicles were used for one day to go to Nouakchott (Mauritania) during the reporting period.

35. With respect to the three new vehicles, upon enquiry the Advisory Committee was informed that two of these vehicles are yet to be transferred from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the other vehicle for the Special Envoy is yet to be delivered, and that these three vehicles are not reflected in the current fleet holdings. They are, however, taken into account in the projected expenditures for 2014-2015 through to the end of 2015, as well as in the proposed holding of vehicles for 2016. Upon further enquiry, the Committee was informed that the transfer of the two vehicles from UNIFIL is not expected to occur in 2015. **Taking into account the information contained in paragraph 34 above, the Advisory Committee is not convinced of the operational need for two additional vehicles by the Office of the Special Envoy. The Committee is of the view that the proposed transfer of the two vehicles from UNIFIL should be cancelled and that the related resources under ground transportation, such as maintenance, fuel and spare parts, should be reduced accordingly. Furthermore, the future use of the**

two vehicles at UNIFIL should be considered on the basis of operational needs in accordance with established policies. In addition, the Committee notes that the combined resource requirements requested for 2016 for the Office amount to \$1,031,800 under official travel (\$465,000), ground transportation (\$32,300) and air transportation (\$534,500) for a total of 17 staff of the Office. The Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will review all travel-related requirements for the Office of his Special Envoy for the Sahel in the proposed budget for 2017.

Official travel

36. A provision of \$13,300 is requested for travel for the staff of the United Nations Global Service Centre to provide procurement support to the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that since the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and the Office of the Special Envoy have not been delegated procurement authority, all procurement activities for these missions are carried out by the Centre. As such, procurement staff need to travel from Brindisi to Dakar for procurement related matters, as well as to provide related training to requisitioners and briefings to local companies. In 2014, no costs were incurred by any of these missions for this purpose, while in 2015 only UNOWA incurred related costs of \$3,946. **The Advisory Committee notes that a total of \$40,100⁶ is proposed for the travel of procurement staff from Brindisi to Dakar for 2016 for the three missions, which is significantly higher than the expenditures incurred in the current biennium. Recognizing the need for procurement-related support from the Global Service Centre to the three missions involved and taking into account the expenditure pattern during the current biennium, the Committee recommends a total provision of \$10,000 in relation to such support for 2016 for UNOWA (\$4,000), the Mixed Commission (\$3,000) and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel (\$3,000). The Committee therefore recommends a reduction of \$10,300 to the proposed provision of \$13,300 for the Office of the Special Envoy.** The Committee will make recommendations concerning the related proposals for UNOWA and the Mixed Commission under cluster III ([A/70/7/Add.13](#)).

Air transportation

37. For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, resources amounting to \$534,500 are requested for 2016, a decrease of \$16,000 compared with the provision for 2015. The proposed provision provides for the rental of a fixed-wing aircraft based on a cost-sharing arrangement among UNOWA, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau, the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission and the Office of the Special Envoy. The decrease for 2016 is due mainly to: (a) the decrease in the number of flight hours from 72 hours in 2015 to 60 hours in 2016; and (b) the decrease in the cost of aviation fuel from \$1.90 per litre in 2015 to \$1.50 per litre in 2016, which are partially offset by the increase in: (a) the annual operating costs (shared among the four offices) from \$3,335,000 in 2015 to \$3,425,000 in 2016; and (b) the cost per flight hour from \$675 in 2015 to \$700 in 2016. The Advisory Committee will make comments and recommendations on air operations in its main report ([A/70/7/Add.10](#)).

⁶ A provision of \$13,400 for 2016 is proposed under both UNOWA and the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission.

Information technology

38. For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel, the resources requested for 2016 under information technology reflect a provision of \$54,100 for information technology services, including provision for an international individual contractor for six months to provide support for the information technology infrastructure of the Office. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that due to the lack of adequately skilled and experienced local technicians (a provision for a nationally contracted personnel for six months was approved for 2015), a provision is proposed in 2016 for the engagement for six months of an international individual contractor to maintain and repair hardware equipment, install network infrastructure and provide application software support. **The Advisory Committee questions the assumption that no qualified national expertise is available in Dakar and therefore recommends against the provision for an international individual contractor for six months. The Committee is of the view that the provision for one nationally contracted personnel for six months should be maintained.**

39. For the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, a provision of \$247,400 is proposed for 2016 under information technology, an increase of \$122,900, or 99 per cent, compared with the provision of \$124,500 for 2015. The increase for 2016 reflects primarily increased requirements for internationally contracted information technology personnel, including for videoconferencing and service desk requirements. The Advisory Committee notes that a projected unencumbered balance of \$58,900 is estimated for 2014-2015 against the biennial provision of \$320,900. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that it was planned to engage two internationally contracted personnel under the contractual arrangements in place for the United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia (UNSOA), in view of the need for round-the-clock and flexible support to the operations of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, which entailed travelling throughout the supported region including during weekends. Upon further enquiry, the Committee was informed that the United Nations Office at Nairobi provided common services to Nairobi-based special political missions, including information and communications technology services, while UNSOA provided administrative, logistical and technical services. **The Advisory Committee is not convinced by the justification provided for the proposed change of services from the United Nations Office at Nairobi to UNSOA for 2016.⁷ The Committee is therefore of the view that the information and communications technology services provided by the United Nations Office at Nairobi should be continued for 2016 for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve the provision based on the estimates for the services provided by the United Nations Office at Nairobi.**

⁷ In its resolution 2245 (2015) of 9 November 2015, the Security Council decided that UNSOA would bear the name of United Nations Support Office in Somalia.

Other matters

Justification and rationale for budget proposals

40. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with the expenditure by main category for thematic cluster I as at 31 August 2015, compared with the proposed resources for 2016, as well as expenditures for 2014 under some objects of expenditure. The Committee notes that in a number of cases, there appears to be a degree of automaticity in the requests under operational costs and that the requests do not seem to have taken into account expenditure patterns for the current biennium. The Committee has identified the following examples in this regard: (a) for the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar, there were no expenditure under ground transportation for 2014 and 2015 (as at 31 August 2015), while the same provision of \$2,700 is proposed for 2016; and (b) for the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), there were no expenditures under other supplies, services and equipment for 2015 (as at 31 August 2015), while the same provision of \$4,000 is proposed for 2016. The Committee will make further comments and recommendations on the budgeting and planning assumptions for special political missions in its main report ([A/70/7/Add.10](#)).

III. Recommendation

41. **The Secretary-General's budgetary proposals for the 35 special political missions for 2016, which require action to be taken by the General Assembly, are set out in paragraph 74 of his main report on estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the Assembly and/or the Security Council ([A/70/348](#)). The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the Secretary-General's proposal for the resource requirements for 2016 for the 10 special political missions under thematic cluster I, subject to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 9, 10, 17, 23, 26, 32, 35, 36, 38 and 39 above, as well as the recommendations in its main report ([A/70/7/Add.10](#)).**
