



# General Assembly

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## Seventieth session

Agenda items 9, 133 and 134

### Report of the Economic and Social Council

#### Programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015

#### Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

## **Revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council during its 2015 session**

### **Twenty-fourth 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 considered the report of the Secretary-General on revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council during its 2015 session (21 July 2014-23 July 2015). During its consideration of the report ([A/70/430](#)), the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information, concluding with written responses received on 12 November 2015.

2. During its 2015 session, the Economic and Social Council adopted six resolutions in which it approved additional activities requiring modifications to the programme of work.<sup>1</sup> A summary of the additional requirements arising from the resolutions adopted by the Council during its 2015 session is annexed to the Secretary-General's report ([A/70/430](#)). The total requirements for these resolutions are estimated at \$3,347,000 ([A/70/430](#), table 7).

3. The requirements for four resolutions<sup>2</sup> amounting to \$262,900 have been accommodated or included in the current and the proposed biennium budgets (see

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<sup>1</sup> Economic and Social Council resolutions 2014/32, 2014/35, 2014/37, 2015/18, 2015/30 and 2015/33.

<sup>2</sup> Resolutions 2014/32, 2014/35, 2014/37 and 2015/18.



[A/70/430](#), paras. 6-19). Two resolutions (2015/30 and 2015/33) would give rise to net additional requirements in the amount of \$3,084,100 over and above the resources in the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. These two resolutions would require an additional appropriation for the biennium 2016-2017 to be approved by the General Assembly and as such would represent a charge against the contingency fund.

## **II. Resolutions requiring net additional appropriation for 2016-2017**

### **A. Resolution 2015/30: Restructuring the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific to be fit for the evolving post-2015 development agenda**

4. The Secretary-General indicates in his report that Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/30 on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to be fit for the evolving post-2015 development agenda would have financial implications under section 19, Economic and social development in Asia and Pacific, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 amounting to \$1,503,400. The Secretary-General further indicates that this requirement was not included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. Therefore the amount would be charged against the contingency fund ([A/70/430](#), para. 33). The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that ESCAP was the only economic commission whose governing body adopted a resolution on the establishment of a Committee on Energy.

5. Resolution 2015/30 implies that the following modifications will be made to the conference structure of ESCAP: (a) a Committee on Energy will be established and (b) two committees will be reconstituted, namely, the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation and the Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Financing for Development.<sup>3</sup>

6. The additional requirements for the implementation of resolution 2015/30 are reflected in table 5 of the Secretary-General's report ([A/70/430](#)), which is reproduced as table 1 below.

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<sup>3</sup> These Committees were previously known as the Committee on Information and Communications Technology and the Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Development, respectively ([A/70/430](#), para. 20).

Table 1  
**Proposed additional requirements for the implementation of resolution 2015/30  
in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

(United States dollars)

<i>Total requirements 2016-2017</i>	
<b>Section 19. Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific</b>	
Posts (1 D-1, 2 P-4, 1 P-3)	1 315 400
Other staff costs	35 000
Consultants	40 000
Experts	75 000
Travel of staff	14 000
Contractual services	24 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 503 400</b>

*Staffing requirements*

7. The Secretary-General indicates in his report that the implementation of resolution 2015/30 would require the establishment of four posts: one post of Chief, Energy Division (D-1); two posts of Economic Affairs Officer (P-4); and one post of Economic Affairs Officer (P-3). In 2016-2017, the requirements for these proposed new posts will amount to \$1,315,400 and the non-post requirements will amount to \$188,000. These resources would be allocated within the structure of ESCAP as follows:

(a) Subprogramme 1, macroeconomic policy and inclusive development (post \$316,700 and non-post \$52,000). The proposed post of Economic Affairs Officer (P-4) would be required to assist with the identification of issues related to financing for development for consideration by the Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Financing for Development. The incumbent of the post would also service an expert group meeting on financing for development and draft studies for the publication on financing for development in Asia and the Pacific ([A/70/430](#), para. 23);

(b) Subprogramme 2, Trade and investment (post \$316,700 and non-post \$37,000). The proposed post of Economic Affairs Officer (P-4) would be required to assist with the identification of policy, technical and legal issues related to science, technology and innovation for consideration by the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation. The incumbent would also service an expanded programmed expert group meeting on science, technology and innovation and draft studies for the publication on science, technology and innovation in Asia and the Pacific ([A/70/430](#), para. 25);

(c) Subprogramme 9, Energy (post \$682,000 and non-post \$99,000). A proposed post of Chief, Energy Division (D-1) would be required to support the work of the Committee on Energy. The incumbent would manage the preparation of substantive reports, the servicing of the Committee, preparations for the Asian and Pacific Energy Forum and the overall implementation of the subprogramme. In addition, a proposed post of Economic Affairs Officer (P-3) would be required to

assist with the identification of issues related to energy for consideration by the Committee on Energy. The incumbent of the post would also service an expert group meeting on energy and draft studies for the publication on the challenges and opportunities with regard to regional energy connectivity. Moreover, one P-5, two P-4, one P-2 and four Local level posts would be redeployed from subprogramme 4, Environment and development, to subprogramme 9, Energy (A/70/430, paras. 27-32).

**8. The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the proposed staffing changes for the implementation of resolution 2015/30.**

*Consultants*

9. With respect to the proposed requirements for consultants (\$40,000), the Advisory Committee was informed upon enquiry that, given the wide range of issues covered under financing for development, science, technology and innovation, as well as energy, consultants are required to provide specialized knowledge unavailable within the secretariat. The Committee was also informed that these consultants would provide expertise which complements that existing within ESCAP so as to fully respond to the emerging needs of Member States. The consultancies would be distributed among the subprogrammes as follows:

(a) In subprogramme 1, Macroeconomic policy and inclusive development, consultancies would be required to prepare technical studies on selected themes on financing for development for consideration by the Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Financing for Development as well as the publication on financing for development in Asia and the Pacific;

(b) In subprogramme 2, Trade and investment, consultancies would be required to prepare technical studies on selected themes on science, technology and innovation for consideration by the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation as well as the publication on science, technology and innovation in Asia and the Pacific;

(c) In subprogramme 9, Energy, consultancies would be required to prepare technical studies on selected themes on energy for consideration by the Committee on Energy as well as the publication on the challenges and opportunities with regard to regional energy connectivity.

10. The Advisory Committee notes that the Secretary-General is proposing the establishment of four posts in the Professional and higher categories for the implementation of resolution 2015/30 (see table 1 above). In the view of the Committee, those recruited for these posts should already have, or be in a position to rapidly acquire, most of the specialized knowledge and skills needed to implement the resolution. Moreover, the Committee considers that such external expertise should not be needed at the initial phase of the restructuring of ESCAP, and recalls the concern of the General Assembly over the increase in the use of consultants, especially in core activities of the Organization.<sup>4</sup> **Therefore, the Advisory Committee is of the view that a 30 per cent reduction in the requirements for consultants is warranted and, consequently, recommends that the General Assembly approve a requirement for consultants amounting to \$28,000 under resolution 2015/30.**

<sup>4</sup> See General Assembly resolutions 65/247, para. 70 and 67/255, para. 67.

*Expert group meetings*

11. With regard to the requirements for expert group meetings (\$75,000), the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that an expert group meeting is costed at \$30,000 in order to ensure a full review of the technical documents required for consideration by the subsidiary bodies of ESCAP. The proposed expert groups under subprogrammes 1 and 9 are therefore budgeted at \$30,000 each. The additional amount of \$24,000 referred to in paragraph 31 of the Secretary-General's report ([A/70/430](#)) reflects the proposed redeployment from subprogramme 4 to subprogramme 9. Moreover, under subprogramme 2, Trade and investment, an expert group meeting on science, technology and innovation has been included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 in the amount of \$15,000. In order for this expert group meeting to fully review the technical documents for the newly reformulated Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation, additional resources of \$15,000 (making a total of \$30,000) was therefore requested ([A/70/430](#), para. 26). **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the requested requirements for the expert group meetings.**

12. **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of additional requirements arising from Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/30 in the amount of \$1,491,400 (\$1,315,400 under post requirements and \$176,000 under non-post requirements), over and above the resources in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 under section 19, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific.**

## **B. Resolution 2015/33: International arrangement on forests beyond 2015**

13. The Secretary-General indicates in his report that Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33 on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015 would entail financial implications in the amount of \$1,580,700, including \$1,299,100 under section 9, Economic and social affairs, and \$281,600 under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. These requirements were not included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. Therefore the total amount would be charged against the contingency fund ([A/70/430](#), para. 48).

14. In accordance with resolution 2015/33, the international arrangement on forests will be strengthened and extended to 2030. Further, the United Nations Forum on Forests will hold annual sessions for a period of five days and will have an extended mandate. The secretariat of the Forum will perform additional functions, including the servicing of the new working group on forests and the management of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network (see [A/70/430](#), para. 37).

15. According to the Secretary-General, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs would need additional resources in relation to these additional mandates, which are estimated at \$1,738,300, including \$1,299,100 from the regular budget and \$400,000 from extrabudgetary resources ([A/70/430](#), para. 44).

16. The additional requirements from the regular budget for the implementation of resolution 2015/33 are reflected in table 6 of the Secretary-General's report (A/70/430), which is reproduced as table 2 below.

Table 2

**Proposed additional requirements for the implementation of resolution 2015/33**

(United States dollars)

<i>Total requirements 2016-2017</i>	
<b>Section 9. Economic and social affairs</b>	
Temporary posts (1 P-4, 2 P-3, 1 GS (OL))	1 141 900
Consultants	80 000
Travel of staff	60 000
General operating expenses	11 000
Supplies and materials	2 000
Furniture and equipment	4 200
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>1 299 100</b>
<b>Section 29D. Office of Central Support Services</b>	
General operating expenses	242 400
Furniture and equipment	39 200
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>281 600</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 580 700</b>

*Staffing requirements*

17. The Secretary-General indicates that, in order to deliver its mandate until 2030, the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests would need four additional posts: one Forest Affairs Officer (P-4), one Forest Affairs Officer (P-3), one Forest Policy Officer (P-3) and one Programme Assistant (A/70/430, para. 45). Details on the proposed new Professional posts are as follows:

(a) The Forest Affairs Officer (P-4) will, inter alia, provide substantive support to the development of the international arrangement on forests strategic plan and quadrennial programmes of work; design and manage interregional and/or global projects on forest financing/capacity development; carry out studies on forest financing at the global level; and participate in the formulation, development and management of strategies, policies and actions for adoption by member States/the international community related to mobilizing financing for implementation of the activities of the international arrangement on forests strategic plan;

(b) The Forest Affairs Officer (P-3) will, inter alia, provide policy advice to intergovernmental bodies and other relevant stakeholders and reporting on the forest-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets by the Forum and prepare periodic reports on these issues; and assess and synthesize reports and propose recommendations to the Forum on the implementation, follow-up and review of the post-2015 development agenda, including forest-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets;

(c) The Forest Policy Officer (P-3) will, inter alia, act officially as the Secretary of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, provide substantive support for the broadened scope of the work of the Partnership and follow up to ensure full implementation of the Partnership-related outcomes of the eleventh session of the Forum; and assist in providing substantive support to activities under the Partnership in support of the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests.

18. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the four additional posts, to be located at United Nations Headquarters within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, would be temporary posts established until 2030 (see also [A/70/430](#), table 6). **The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the proposed staffing changes in the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests.**

#### *Consultants*

19. The Secretary-General's proposal includes a requirement for consultants of \$80,000 covering 10 working months, to secure specialized expertise not currently available in the Secretariat to cover reports and studies on various topics (see [A/70/430](#), para. 46 (a)). As in the case of the requirement for consultants under resolution 2015/30 (see para. 10 above), the Advisory Committee notes that the Secretary-General is proposing the recruitment of four staff members, for the implementation of resolution 2015/33, and considers that these new staff should already have, or be in a position to rapidly acquire, the specialized knowledge and skills needed to implement the resolution. The Committee recalls, here also, the concern of the General Assembly<sup>4</sup> regarding the increase in the use of consultants, especially in core activities of the Organization. **The Advisory Committee therefore recommends a 30 per cent reduction of the requirements for consultants and, consequently, that the General Assembly approve a requirement for consultants amounting to \$56,000.**

#### *Resources for expert groups*

20. The Secretary-General indicates that a provision of \$400,000, from extrabudgetary resources, would be required to convene, in 2016, two open-ended intergovernmental expert group meetings to prepare proposals for the Forum's strategic plan for 2017-2030. Funding would also be required to support the participation of 75 governmental experts from eligible countries in each of these expert group meetings ([A/70/430](#), para. 46 (b)).

21. The Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that, as at 3 November 2015, no contributions had been received from donors for the intergovernmental expert group. Consequently, given that the first expert group meeting was scheduled to be held in January 2016, it was unlikely that the required amount of extrabudgetary resources would be obtained on time. The Secretary-General indicates that this situation would be very likely to affect the level of participation in these meetings, especially in the case of experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

22. The Advisory Committee was further informed, upon enquiry, that the interpretation services for ad hoc expert groups are generally provided on an "as available" basis, even though the documents for these expert groups are issued in all

six official languages, in the interests of multilingualism. However, to facilitate dialogue and the effective participation of experts in the discussion in the ad hoc expert groups, the past practice has been for the secretariat of the Forum to raise and use extrabudgetary resources to pay for interpretation services in the working languages of the Forum (English, French and Spanish). Consequently, unless sufficient extrabudgetary resources are obtained, the upcoming ad hoc expert groups in 2016 will have interpretation services only on an “as available” basis.

*Rental and alternation of premises*

23. The Secretary-General requests an additional amount of \$281,600 to cover common standard service costs under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, for rental and alteration of premises and for office furniture (A/70/430, para. 47). Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the exercise to determine the location of the office space would be undertaken only after the General Assembly has approved the four proposed posts and that the alterations to reconfigure new office space for these posts into usable condition were based on prevailing office space guidelines. The Advisory Committee was also provided with a breakdown of the proposed requirement of \$281,600 under section 29D, which is reflected in table 3.

24. With respect to the absence of similar requirements for the implementation of resolution 2015/30, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that all staff members of ESCAP are accommodated within owned properties. Accordingly, whenever there is an increase in the number of staff, ESCAP reconfigures the existing office space and provides the requisite furniture from within existing resources.

Table 3

**Breakdown of the proposed requirements under section 29D**

(United States dollars)

<i>Level of the proposed new posts</i>	<i>Rental of premises (recurrent)</i>	<i>Alteration to premises (non-recurrent)</i>	<i>Office furniture (non-recurrent)</i>	<i>Total</i>
P-4	31 800	31 400	10 300	73 500
P-3	31 800	31 400	10 300	73 500
P-3	31 800	31 400	10 300	73 500
GS-OL	31 800	21 000	8 300	61 100
<b>Total</b>	<b>127 200</b>	<b>115 200</b>	<b>39 200</b>	<b>281 600</b>

25. The Advisory Committee recommends approval of the additional requirements arising from Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33 on the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015, in the amount of \$1,556,700, including \$1,275,100 under section 9, Economic and social affairs (\$1,141,900 under post requirements and \$133,200 under non-post requirements) and \$281,600 under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, over and above the resources in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.



### III. Conclusion

26. The Secretary-General recalls in his report that, under the procedures established by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 and 42/211, a contingency fund is established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditure derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the programme budget. In accordance with paragraph 9 of annex I to resolution 41/213, if additional expenditures are proposed that exceed resources available within the contingency fund, such additional expenditures can be included in the budget only through redeployment of resources from low-priority areas or modifications of existing activities. Otherwise, such additional activities will have to be deferred until a later biennium ([A/70/430](#), para. 51).

**27. The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve an appropriation amounting to \$3,048,100 for the biennium 2016-2017 (\$1,491,400 arising from resolution 2015/30 and \$1,556,700 arising from resolution 2015/33), which would represent a charge against the contingency fund.**

**28. The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly take note that additional requirements of \$118,300 for the biennium 2016-2017, comprising \$97,100 under section 21, Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean, and \$21,200 under section 22, Economic and social development in Western Asia, have already been included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.**

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