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Agenda items 79 (a) and 134

Oceans and the law of the sea

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Revised estimates resulting from the decisions contained in General Assembly resolution 69/292, entitled “Development of an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction”

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

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates resulting from the decisions contained in General Assembly resolution 69/292, on the basis of draft resolution [A/69/L.65 \(A/70/543\)](#). 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 24 November 2015.

2. As indicated in the report, in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General submitted a statement on the programme budget implications of draft resolution [A/69/L.65 \(A/69/922\)](#), in which he informed the Assembly that the implementation of the requests contained in the draft resolution would give rise to additional resource requirements in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017. Before the adoption of the draft resolution, the President of the Assembly drew its attention to the statement of programme budget implications and noted that the Fifth Committee would examine the revised estimates resulting from the draft resolution during the main part of the seventieth session of the Assembly. Consequently, the financial provisions, as appropriate, would be considered as an additional budget appropriation to be approved by the Assembly for the biennium 2016-2017 (see [A/69/PV.96](#)).

* Reissued for technical reasons on 2 December 2015.



Activities by which the requests would be implemented and financial implications

3. In his report, the Secretary-General stated that the activities by which the requests contained in paragraphs 1 (a), (b) and (c) of General Assembly resolution 69/292 would be implemented would consist of 20 meetings for each 10-day session — 1 in the morning and 1 in the afternoon — totalling 40 meetings in 2016 and in 2017, with a total of 80 meetings for the biennium. The meetings are to be held in New York, with interpretation in all six official languages. The Secretary-General further indicated that it has been confirmed that the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group to study issues relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction would not be remanded starting in 2016, and that the Working Group's entitlement to 10 meetings per year (already included in the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017) would therefore be used to cover 10 meetings of the Preparatory Committee per year. He further indicated that the remaining 30 meetings with interpretation in all six official languages would constitute an addition to the meetings workload for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management both in 2016 and in 2017, entailing additional requirements in the amount of \$670,000 for meeting services in the biennium 2016-2017. The Secretary-General stated that, at the current stage, it is not possible to identify activities within the section of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 that could be terminated, deferred, curtailed or modified during the biennium, and that the additional, non-recurrent requirements of \$670,000 must be provided through an additional appropriation for 2016-2017.

4. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the total requirements of the Preparatory Committee for the biennium 2016-2017 amounted to \$892,800 for a total of 80 meetings, comprising \$222,800 for the 20 meetings already included in the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017 and \$670,000 for the remaining 60 meetings proposed in the report of the Secretary-General. Furthermore, the total proposed amount of \$670,000 comprised \$630,800 for interpretation, \$26,000 for a conference officer and \$13,200 for a documentation clerk. The Committee was further informed, upon enquiry, that the documents requirements of the Preparatory Committee could be accommodated within the entitlement of 42,800 words per year of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Informal Working Group, for which a provision had been made in the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017.

5. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that it is important to provide, as a matter of routine, comprehensive information on the activities through which the requests of the General Assembly are implemented, as well as on the related requirements and financial implications, with a clear breakdown of the requirements for which a provision is included in the proposed programme budget and those for which a new appropriation is proposed. The Committee recommends that the Assembly request the Secretary-General to provide such comprehensive information systematically in future reports.**

6. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve an additional appropriation, representing a charge against the contingency fund, in the amount of \$670,000 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.**

Other matters

7. In its previous report ([A/69/656](#)), the Advisory Committee signalled its intention to examine the costing model for the processing of official documents by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management at the four duty stations, New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, in greater detail in the context of the consideration of the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017 (*ibid.*, para. 9). At the time of its consideration of the proposed programme budget for 2016-2017, the Committee was informed that a working group on costing had been established in the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to develop a unified methodology and coherent process for updating costings across all duty stations, and that the results and conclusions of the working group would be reported to the General Assembly at the main part of its seventieth session (see [A/70/7](#), para. I.62). Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the working group on costing was in the process of finalizing unit rates for submission to the Office for Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts for review and approval. Furthermore, it was expected that updated unit rates for conference services would be implemented in 2016. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be requested to provide the General Assembly, as soon as possible, with information on the unified methodology and coherent process for updating costings, as well as details on the unit rates to be applied across all duty stations.**
