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Proposed programme budget for 2021

Revised estimates for the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic relating to the programme budget for 2021

Eighteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the proposed programme budget for 2021

I. Introduction

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates for the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic relating to the programme budget for 2021 under section 27, Humanitarian assistance, and section 36, Staff assessment ([A/75/372](#)). During its consideration of the report, the Advisory Committee received additional information, concluding with written responses on 9 November 2020.

2. As the Secretary-General indicates in his report, the mandate of the Monitoring Mechanism was extended until 10 July 2020, pursuant to Security Council resolution [2504 \(2020\)](#), and was renewed until 10 July 2021, pursuant to Council resolution [2533 \(2020\)](#). He indicates that in its resolutions [2504 \(2020\)](#) and [2533 \(2020\)](#), respectively, the Council excluded the border crossing of Ya'rubiyah (Iraq) and that of Bab al-Salam (Turkey) from the list of authorized crossings for United Nations cross-border operations and that, in its resolution [2533 \(2020\)](#), the Council authorized the United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners to use the Syrian border crossing of Bab al-Hawa (Turkey), in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance reached people in need throughout the Syrian Arab Republic through the most direct routes, with notification to the Syrian authorities. The Secretary-General also indicates that, in accordance with resolution [2533 \(2020\)](#), in which the Council excluded the border crossing of Bab al-Salam from the list of authorized crossings for United Nations cross-border operations, all United Nations aid delivered into the north-western Syrian Arab Republic since February 2020 has been channelled through the border crossing of Bab al-Hawa. Further background information is provided in section I of the report of the Secretary-General.



II. Impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic

3. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the COVID-19 pandemic had had a limited impact on United Nations cross-border operations and on the ability of the Monitoring Mechanism to deliver its mandate. The Committee was informed that operations had continued without interruption owing to proactive operational continuity planning and the implementation of COVID-19 pandemic mitigation measures by the host country and by United Nations agencies and their implementing partners, as well as by the Mechanism. **The Advisory Committee recalls its comments and recommendations on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in its first report on the proposed programme budget for 2021 (A/75/7, chap. I, paras. 12–16).**

III. Budget performance for 2019 and 2020, and proposed resource requirements for 2021

4. In his report, the Secretary-General indicates that no provision was made in the proposed programme budget for 2021 for section 27, Humanitarian assistance, because, at the time of the preparation of the report, the mandate for the Monitoring Mechanism was valid through 10 July 2020. The Secretary-General also indicates that the additional resources have been aligned with the proposed programme budget for 2021, which showed the reduction of the 2020 appropriation in 2021 under technical adjustments as a non-recurrent item and that the 2021 requirements are therefore reflected under “new/expanded mandates”. A summary of the proposed resource requirements for 2021 for the Mechanism, compared with the approved resources for 2020 and the expenditure for 2019, is set out in the table below.

Budget performance and total resource requirements (net of staff assessment)

(Thousands of United States dollars)

	2019 expenditure	2020 appropriation	Expenditure 1 January to 30 September 2020	Changes					2021 estimate (before recosting)	Recosting	2021 estimate (after recosting)
				Technical adjustments ^a	New/ expanded mandates	Other	Total	Percentage			
Other staff costs	1 953.8	2 205.4	1 232.2	(2 205.4)	1 521.3	–	(684.1)	(31.0)	1 521.3	35.8	1 557.1
Hospitality	–	0.5	–	(0.5)	–	–	(0.5)	(100.0)	–	–	–
Consultants	12.3	8.2	–	(8.2)	–	–	(8.2)	(100.0)	–	–	–
Travel of staff	239.0	238.0	83.6	(238.0)	166.7	–	(71.3)	(29.9)	166.7	3.2	169.9
Contractual services	21.6	39.6	6.0	(39.6)	23.2	–	(16.4)	(41.4)	23.2	0.5	23.7
General operating expenses	168.9	245.2	96.0	(245.2)	152.8	–	(92.4)	(37.7)	152.8	3.6	156.4
Supplies and materials	15.0	23.1	15.6	(23.1)	22.2	–	(0.9)	(3.9)	22.2	0.6	22.8
Furniture and equipment	3.9	2.2	0.2	(2.2)	–	–	(2.2)	(100.0)	–	–	–
Improvements to premises	2.3	3.0	–	(3.0)	–	–	(3.0)	(100.0)	–	–	–
Fellowships, grants contributions	19.2	78.3	19.5	(78.3)	41.2	–	(37.1)	(47.4)	41.2	0.9	42.1
Total (net of staff assessment)	2 436.0	2 843.5	1 453.1	(2 843.5)	1 927.4	–	(916.1)	(32.2)	1 927.4	44.6	1 972.0

^a As presented in the proposed programme budget for 2021 (A/75/6 (Sect. 27)).

5. The Advisory Committee was informed that, as at 30 September 2020, total expenditures amounted to \$1,453,100 (or 51.1 per cent), compared with the 2020 appropriation of \$2,843,500, comprising expenditures under: (a) other staff costs of \$1,232,200 (or 55.9 per cent) of the apportionment of \$2,205,400; and (b) non-post costs of \$220,900 (or 34.6 per cent) of the apportionment of \$638,100. **The Advisory Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will provide updated information on actual expenditures in 2020 to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the present report.**

6. The proposed additional resource requirements for the Monitoring Mechanism for 2021 amount to \$1,927,400, reflecting a decrease of \$916,100 (or 32.2 per cent), compared with the appropriation for 2020 in the amount of \$2,843,500, attributable mainly to the abolishment of 11 positions in Iraq and Turkey owing to the aforementioned exclusion of the border crossings of Ya'rubiyah and Bab al-Salam pursuant to Security Council resolutions [2504 \(2020\)](#) and [2533 \(2020\)](#), as follows: 2 Monitoring Officers (P-4 and P-3), 1 Security Officer (National Professional Officer), 1 Administrative Analyst (National Professional Officer), 1 Administrative Assistant (Local level), 2 Drivers (Local level) and 4 Associate Monitoring Officers (United Nations Volunteer) positions.

7. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that three positions, all located in Gaziantep (Turkey), were vacant as at 30 September 2020, namely, two Associate Monitoring Officers (United Nations Volunteer) and one Administrative Assistant (Local level). The Committee was also informed that one of the aforementioned United Nations Volunteer positions and the local level position were among the positions currently proposed for abolishment. **The Advisory Committee notes the proposed abolishment of a national position and considers that national positions should be retained, when operationally feasible. Furthermore, the Committee recalls that further to its resolutions [61/276](#) and [66/24](#), the General Assembly, in resolution [74/263](#), had requested the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to promote the nationalization of positions, whenever appropriate (see also [A/75/7/Add.2](#), para. 53).**

8. The proposed resources provide for the continuation of 19 positions, as follows: 1 Chief (D-1), 1 Monitoring Officer/ Team Leader (P-4), 1 Administrative Officer (P-3), 2 Monitoring Officers (P-3), 1 Special Assistant/ Associate Monitoring Officer (P-2), 2 Monitoring Officers (P-2), 1 Security Officer (National Professional Officer), 1 Administrative Assistant (Local level), 5 Drivers (Local level), 3 Monitoring Officers (United Nations Volunteer), all located in Gaziantep, and 1 Liaison Officer (P-4), located in New York. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the position of Chief was proposed to remain at the D-1 level in view of the fact that, notwithstanding the conduct of cross-border operations through only one border point, the nature and complexity of the Monitoring Mechanism were unchanged. The Committee was also informed that, despite a reduced managerial workload, the substantive role and functions of the Chief, with a daily presence at the border point, were required for liaising with the authorities of the host country and for working with senior humanitarian coordination leaders and United Nations agency representatives to ensure mandate delivery. In addition, the Committee was informed that the Team Leader (P-4) was responsible for the day-to-day management of the monitoring team and was also present on a daily basis at the border point. Furthermore, the Secretary-General proposes that the existing pool of five Drivers (Local level) be retained to ensure that they can rotate, in view of the unchanged pace of cross-border operations and limits to the number of vehicle occupants in order to reduce the risk of possible exposure to COVID-19. **The Advisory Committee considers that in order to ensure that the operational needs of the Monitoring Mechanism are met and that mandate delivery is assured, there is a continued**

need to review and adjust the staffing structure and the functional levels of the positions. The Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to include information thereon in the next report.

9. The proposed non-post resources amount to \$406,100, representing a decrease of \$232,000, or 36.4 per cent, compared with the apportionment of \$638,100 for 2020. As indicated in the table and in paragraph 5 above, expenditure for non-post costs amounted to \$482,200 in 2019, and to \$220,900 in the first nine months of 2020. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the low level of expenditure was due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the liquidity situation, and that the proposed requirements for 2021 were based on the assumption of a normal year of operations. **Given the level of expenditure in 2019 and during the first nine months of 2020, the Advisory Committee recommends a reduction of \$40,610 (10 per cent) in the proposed non-post resources for 2021.**

10. **Subject to its observations and recommendations above, the Advisory Committee recommends approval of the proposal of the Secretary-General for post and non-post resources.**

IV. Conclusion

11. The actions requested of the General Assembly are set out in paragraph 18 of the report of the Secretary-General. **Subject to its observations and recommendations above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly:**

(a) **Appropriate an additional amount of \$1,922,600 (net of staff assessment) for the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 1 January to 31 December 2021, under section 27, Humanitarian assistance, of the programme budget for 2021, which would represent a charge against the contingency fund;**

(b) **Appropriate an additional amount of \$194,900 under section 36, Staff assessment, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment, of the programme budget for 2021.**
