Fifth Committee, Concluding Session with Approval of 16 Texts, Recommends Increased Programme Budget Appropriations for 2016-2017 Biennium

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* [Fifth Committee](https://www.un.org/press/en/un-bodies/fifth-committee)

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<https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/gaab4224.doc.htm>

Human Resource Management, Special Political Missions among Topics

As it managed the first year of the current 2016-2017 budget cycle and zeroed in on ways to make the Organization run more efficiently in a world facing fiscal constraints, the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) today approved 13 resolutions and two decisions on a wide range of management and fiscal issues.

The Fifth Committee approved a comprehensive human resources resolution that many delegates believed was necessary to finish major reforms begun a half dozen years ago to overhaul how tens of thousands of staff around the world are being hired, trained and paid.

The reforms begun in 2010 aimed to eliminate inequities in the conditions of service between the Secretariat and the funds, programmes and specialized agencies and correct high vacancy and turnover rates in the field.  More recently, the Organization had started to streamline contractual arrangements, harmonize service conditions and initiated a staff mobility framework.

By the terms of the seven-part text approved today, the Assembly would ask the Secretary-General to investigate the reasons for delays at each stage of staff selection and recruitment process and present in his next overview report a comprehensive strategy aimed at achieving the 120-day target for filling a post.  It would decide to reduce the standard posting period for position-specific job openings from 60 days to 45 days for the Professional and higher categories on a provisional basis as a pilot phase.

As part of continuing efforts to ensure equitable geographic distribution of staff throughout the Organization, the Assembly would decide to retain the criterion of geographical status in the staff selection system.  Noting with concern that the Secretary-General had failed to present a proposal for a comprehensive review of the system of desirable ranges, it would ask him to do so by no later than at its seventy-third session.

Regarding the composition of the Secretariat, the Assembly, noting with concern the upward shift in the grade structure of the Secretariat and the relatively low number of junior level posts, would ask the Secretary-General to reverse that trend, while reiterating its concern over the increase in the use of consultants, especially in the Organization’s core activities.

On the new staff selection and managed mobility system, the Assembly would take note of progress in implementing the first managed mobility exercise for POLNET staff members and ask the Secretary-General to conduct further analysis and ensure cooperation among related departments and offices.

The Committee also focused on the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, sending the Assembly a resolution expressing its serious concern at the continued delays in paying beneficiaries and the need for the Pension Board to take suitable steps to ensure the Fund addressed the problem.  With equal concern for the underperformance of the Fund’s investments, the text stressed the importance of meeting the 3.5 per cent annual return rate target and asked the Secretary-General to make all efforts to improve investment performance.

As the entity charged with overseeing the Organization’s management and spending, the Fifth Committee also handled a variety of crucial fiscal issues this year and laid down a blueprint for its financial priorities for the next two-year budget cycle that starts in 2018.

As always, the Committee scrutinized the Secretary-General’s so-called first performance report on the budget numbers as the first year of the current 2016‑2017 budget cycle came to a close.  The primary aim of the performance report, discussed at the Fifth Committee’s 15 December meeting, is to pinpoint budget adjustments needed because of variations in rates of inflation, shifting exchange rates and standards used to calculate appropriations.  In a resolution approved today, the Committee asked the Assembly to increase the $5.4 billion approved in December 2015 for the 2016-2017 budget cycle to $5.61 billion.

In another consensus text, the Assembly would call for $1.57 million gross ($1.46 million net) before recosting to continue improving the Organization’s administration of justice system — which comprises informal and formal mechanisms to resolve disputes for tens of thousands of employees worldwide.  A series of changes were called for after an independent review last year concluded that despite increasing transparency, only about half of the workforce had access to the system and many were unaware of it.

The Fifth Committee also asked the Assembly to keep the 33 special political missions of the United Nations running smoothly by approving $639.53 million for them, including for a new mission in Colombia, despite some delegates’ repeated calls during the Committee’s session to create a separate funding mechanism.

The Committee also asked the Assembly to approve funding for the restructuring of the United Nations Office to the African Union, and continued maintenance of the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire.

In other financing issues, the Assembly was sent a resolution to approve the creation of 16 temporary posts to support implementation of the new blueprint for global advancement known as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as funding to advance Umoja, the Organization’s enterprise resource planning project.

Delegates also asked the Assembly to approve a cost-free restructuring of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) that shifts more of the Office’s work from its Geneva headquarters to existing and proposed regional offices.

The Committee also approved texts on financing of the International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and the Former Yugoslavia, as well as their International Residual Mechanism, among other things.

At the end of its meeting, the Fifth Committee adopted its draft report for the session.

Action on Drafts

The Committee first took up a draft on financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors (document A/C.5/71/L.7).  By its terms, the General Assembly took note of the audit opinions and findings, and endorsed the recommendations contained in the reports of the Board of Auditors.  It also endorsed the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ).

Also by the text, the Assembly would decide to consider further the report of the Board of Auditors on the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals under the respective agenda items, and the Board’s report on the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund under its related agenda item.

The text would also have the Assembly reiterate its request to the Secretary-General to provide in his reports on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors a full explanation for the delays in the implementation of the recommendations of the Board, in particular those recommendations not yet fully implemented that were two or more years old.  It would also have the Assembly request the Secretary-General to indicate in future reports an expected time frame for the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, as well as the priorities for their implementation and the office holders that would be held accountable.

The Committee approved that text without a vote.

Next, the Committee took up a text on the pattern of conferences (document A/C.5/71/L.12), by which the Assembly would approve the draft revised calendar of United Nations conferences and meetings for 2017, as submitted by the Committee on Conferences, taking into account its observations and subject to provisions of the present text.  It would authorize the Committee on Conferences to make any adjustments to that calendar that might become necessary as a result of actions and decisions made by the Assembly at its seventy-first session.  It would note with satisfaction that the Secretariat had taken into account Assembly resolutions concerning Yom Kippur, the Day of Vesak, Diwali, Gurpurab and Orthodox Christmas, and request that relevant intergovernmental bodies continue to observe applicable decisions when planning their meetings.  It would moreover request the Secretary-General to ensure that any modifications to the calendar of conferences and meetings be implemented strictly in accordance with the mandate of the Committee on Conferences and other relevant Assembly resolutions.

Also by the text, the Assembly would note that the overall utilization factor at the four main duty stations in 2015 was 80 per cent, unchanged from 2014 and meeting the benchmark of 80 per cent.  It would urge secretariats and bureaux of bodies that underutilized their conference-servicing resources to work more closely with the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management and to consider changes to their programme of work.  Moreover, it would urge those intergovernmental bodies with average utilization rates below the benchmark rate of 80 per cent to take that factor into account when planning their future sessions.

In the area of documentation and publications, the Assembly would emphasize the paramount importance of the equality of the six official languages and of multilingualism, and ask the Secretary-General to redouble efforts to ensure full parity in line with Assembly resolution 69/324.  Noting with concern that only 72 per cent of author departments had reached the 90 per cent compliance rate for submitting on time their reports to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the Assembly would again ask the Secretary-General to enforce the slotting system more rigorously.  While welcoming the modernization of the Official Document System and its accessibility in all six official languages, the Assembly would ask for the Department of Public Information to present a proposal for the digitization of important older United Nations documents for consideration by the Committee on Information no later than the main part of the seventy-second session.  Additionally, the Assembly would express concern that the anticipated lengthy digitization project may jeopardize the retention of historical knowledge and information in view of the delicate state and risk of breakage of many of the related documents.

The text was approved without a vote.

Next, the Committee took up a draft resolution titled “human resources management” (document A/C.5/71/L.11), which covered seven areas:  human resources management reform (I); mobility (II); assessment of desirable ranges (III); composition of the Secretariat (IV); practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and possible criminal behaviour ((V); amendments of the Staff Regulations and Rules (VI); activities of the Ethics Office (VII).

By its terms, the General Assembly would endorse the conclusions and recommendations in the Advisory Committee’s related report (document A/71/557).  On human resources management reform, the Assembly would request the Secretary-General to intensify efforts to develop a comprehensive and effective workforce and succession planning proposal, and to report thereon at its seventy-third session.  It would reaffirm the provisions of regulation 4.2 of the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and decide to retain the criterion of geographical status in the staff selection system as a key element to ensure geographical balance at each level for posts subject to geographical distribution.

By further terms, the Assembly would note with serious concern that the 120 days target for filling a post had not been reached and request the Secretary-General to investigate the reasons for delays at each stage of the staff selection and recruitment processes as well as present in his next overview report a comprehensive strategy aimed at achieving the 120-day target.  It would take note of paragraphs 36 and 84 of the Advisory Committee’s report and decide to reduce the standard posting period for position-specific job openings from 60 days to 45 days for the Professional and higher categories on a provisional basis as a pilot phase, keeping the measure under review and asking the Secretary-General to report on its full impact in the next overview report.

The Assembly would also take note of paragraph 41 of Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions’ (ACABQ) report and endorse the Secretary-General’s proposal to extend to 3 years the period of time during which successful candidates could remain on the roster for the Young Professionals Programme.  The Assembly would express serious concern about the slow level of progress towards 50-50 gender balance, especially in senior, policy-making and field positions.

In terms of mobility, the Assembly would take note of progress in the implementation of the first managed mobility exercise for POLNET staff members, requesting the Secretary-General to conduct further analysis and to report thereon to the Assembly at its seventy-second session, and urging him to ensure cooperation among related departments and offices in the implementation of the new staff selection and managed mobility system.  He would be requested to report thereon in the context of the next progress report, and to provide information on his proposal to include vacant positions at B, C, D and E duty stations.

On assessment of desirable ranges, the Assembly would note with concern that the Secretary-General had failed to present a proposal for a comprehensive review of the system of desirable ranges and in that regard, request him to present to the Assembly no later than at its seventy-third session, proposals for such.

Regarding composition of the Secretariat, the Assembly would note with concern the upward shift in the grade structure of the Secretariat and the relatively low number of junior level posts, requesting the Secretary-General to reverse that trend.  It would reiterate its concern over the increase in the use of consultants, especially in the Organization’s core activities.  Regarding amendments to the Staff Regulations and Rules, the Assembly would approve the proposed amendment to Staff Regulations and note the amendments to the Staff Rules set out in the Secretary-General’s report, deciding that the new staff rule 3.20 proposed to implement the new recruitment incentive approved in section III, paragraph 53 of resolution 70/244, should read as follows:  “An incentive payment for the recruitment of experts in highly specialized fields in instances in which the Organization was unable to attract suitably qualified personnel may be made under conditions to be prescribed by the Secretary-General.  The amount of the recruitment incentive shall not exceed 25 per cent of the annual net base salary for each year of the agreed appointment.”

Under activities of the Ethics Office, the Assembly would recall paragraph 146 of the Advisory Committee’s report and urge the Secretary-General to finalize and promulgate the revised policy on protection against retaliation by the end of 2016.

The text was approved without a vote.

Next, the Committee took up a text on the United Nations common system (document A/C.5/71/L.15), by which the Assembly, taking note of the International Civil Service Commission’s 2016 report (document A/71/30), would also welcome the work it had undertaken regarding the human resources management framework.  It would further take note of the Commission’s conclusions and decisions contained in paragraphs 28 (a) to (d) of its report.

Recalling the Commission’s recommendation on establishing end-of-service severance pay for staff serving under fixed-term, separating from the Organization upon the expiration of contract after 10 or more years of continuous service, the Assembly would regret that no decision had been made on that issue during its sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth sessions.  The Assembly would further recognize that a decision must be taken and request the Commission to undertake a comprehensive analysis on the effect of the adoption of that recommendation, including the updated financial implications and the distinctions between temporary, fixed-term and continuing contracts and to report thereon in its seventy-third session.

The Assembly would also approve, with effect from 1 January 2017, as recommended by the Commission in paragraph 122 of its report, the revised unified base/floor scale for staff in the Professional and higher categories, as contained in annex V of the present report.

The Assembly would also reaffirm that the range of 110 to 120 for the margin between the net remuneration of officials in the Professional and higher categories of the United Nations in New York and officials in comparable positions in the comparator civil service should continue to apply.  Noting that the margin between the net remuneration of United Nations staff in grades P-1 to D-2 in New York and that of officials in comparable positions in the United States federal civil service in Washington, D.C., for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2016 was 114.5, the Assembly would further request that the Commission include information on the margin in an annex to its annual reports.  It would further note the Commission’s decision to continue monitoring the margin’s level and take necessary corrective action under the operation of the post adjustment system, should the trigger levels of 113 or 117 be breached.

The text was approved without a vote.

Next, the Committee took up a draft on the United Nations pension system, by which the Assembly would take note of the report of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board for 2016 and the report of the Secretary-General on investments of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, as well as measures undertaken to increase the diversification of the Fund.  It would also have the Assembly endorse the conclusions and recommendations of ACABQ’s related report (document A/71/621), subject to the provisions of the present resolution.

On actuarial matters, the terms of the text would also have the Assembly note the valuation results reporting a surplus of 0.16 per cent as at 31 December 2015, and stress the importance of continuing to earn the necessary 3.5 per cent annual real rate of return on a long-term basis for the Fund’s future solvency.  The Assembly would note that the Board of Auditors issued an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements of the Fund for the year ended 31 December 2015 and stress the need for the Fund to address all the weaknesses identified by the Board in relation to vacancies in key positions, risk management, investment management, management of external fund managers, benefits payment management and other administrative processes.

On governance and administration, the Assembly would approve an amendment to article 41 of the regulations of the Fund as provided in annex XIII to the report of the Pension Board to reflect the adoption of the medical standard of “fit for employment” for participation in the Fund.  It would also approve a technical amendment to clarify the language of article 24 of the regulations, as set out in annex XIII.  It would further approve an amendment to paragraph 26 of the Fund’s pension adjustment system to reflect that, in cases of reinstatement, a new local currency track benefit would be established as of the date of reinstatement using the 26-month average of exchange rates ending as of that date, as set out in annex XV to the report of the Pension Board.

Further, the Assembly would express its serious concern at the continued delays in the receipt of payments by some new beneficiaries and retirees of the Fund, and would once against stress the need for the Pension Board to take appropriate steps to ensure that the Fund addresses the causes of such delays, and would request an update in the context of the next report of the Pension Board.  It would also note with concern the high number of vacant posts in the Pension Fund, and request the Pension Board to ensure that the Fund takes appropriate measures to fill all the vacant posts in the Fund secretariat in full compliance with relevant provisions governing recruitment.  The Assembly would also decide to establish nine additional temporary positions for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017, and would approve the additional provision of $977,100 for general temporary assistance for the biennium 2016-2017.

It would also approve an increase in total resources for the biennium 2016-2016 from $179.08 million to $180.06 million, as a result of which the United Nations share of the cost of the administrative expenses of the Fund would remain unchanged at $21.87 million, and note that extra-budgetary costs would remain unchanged at $164,700.

On investments, the Assembly, expressing serious concern at the near-term underperformance of investments, would emphasize the importance of the Fund meeting its target annual real rate of return of 3.5 per cent over the long term and ask the Secretary-General to make all efforts to improve the Fund’s investment performance and to then report in the context of future reports on the investments.

Further, the Assembly would express concern that, for the biennium 2014-2015, foreign exchange losses recorded in the Fund’s financial statements amounted to $3.4 billion.  It would urge the Secretary-General to employ suitable procedures and tools to mitigate foreign exchange losses, as well as develop an internal mechanism to monitor, evaluate and manage losses or gains owing to foreign exchanges in addition to the regular monitoring of the fair value of the assets.  The Assembly would also note with serious concern the high number of vacant posts in the Investment Management Division, in particular at the managerial and senior levels.  In that regard, it would request the Secretary-General to take appropriate measures to fill all vacant posts as a matter of priority and in full compliance with relevant provisions governing recruitment.

On other matters, the Assembly would request the Secretary-General to entrust the Office of Internal Oversight Services with conducting a comprehensive audit of the Fund’s policies on risk management, investment management and other administrative processes.

The Committee approved the text without a vote.

The Committee then took up a text on the administration of justice at the United Nations (document A/C.5/71/L.13).  By its terms, the General Assembly would endorse the conclusions and recommendations contained in ACABQ’s related report (document A/71/436) and stress the importance of ensuring access for all staff members to the system of administration of justice, regardless of their duty station.  It would recognize that there was still room for further improvement in the administration of justice system at the United Nations, endorse recommendations 9, 13, 15, 33, 35 and 36 as contained in the report of the Interim Independent Assessment Panel, and request the Secretary-General to ensure their implementation within existing resources.

By further terms of that text, the General Assembly would emphasize the necessity and urgency of improving human resources management in preventing disputes and enhancing accountability and reiterate the importance of transparency and fairness in decision-making in preventing conflicts.  Moreover, it would ask the Secretary-General to take into account the observations and recommendations of the Panel on key causes of disputes and to continue to undertake all efforts to ensure the proper and consistent application of the Staff Regulations and Rules in order to reduce the need for cases to be brought to both the formal and informal systems.  Further, the Secretary-General would be asked to report in his next reports on measures taken to strengthen measures for protection against retaliation.

By other terms, the General Assembly would recognize the ongoing positive contribution of the Office of Staff Legal Assistance to the system of administration of justice and request the Secretary-General to continue to track the data on the number of cases received by the Management of Evaluation Unit and the Dispute Tribunal in order to identify any emerging trends and to include his observations on those statistics in future reports.  The Secretary-General would also be asked to continue to ensure the accountability of managers whose decisions had been established to be grossly negligent, according to the applicable Staff Regulations and Rules, and which had led to litigation and subsequent financial loss, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its seventy-second session.

Further, the General Assembly would approve the code of conduct for legal representatives and litigants in person and approve the proposal of the Secretary-General to amend the Statutes of the Dispute and Appeals Tribunal Article 4, paragraph 3(a) and 3(c); Article 4, paragraph 7; and Article 4, paragraph 4.  Further, the General Assembly would stress that the Internal Justice Council could help to ensure independence, professionalism and accountability in the system of administration of justice, and request the Secretary-General to entrust the Council with including the views of both the Dispute Tribunal and the Appeals Tribunal in its reports.

The text was approved without a vote.

Turning to the financing of the International Tribunals, the Committee first took up a draft resolution on the financing of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994 (document A/C.5/71/L.10).  By the draft text, the Assembly would, among other things, take note of the final performance report of the Secretary-General on the budget and the liquidation of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for the biennium 2016-2017 and endorse the conclusions and recommendations in the ACABQ’s related report (document A/71/5/Add.13).  The Assembly would then approve a final appropriation for the Tribunal of $2.09 million gross ($1.98 million net), as initially appropriated by its resolution 70/241.  It would moreover approve the transfer and charge of $3.73 million gross ($3.47 million net) as part of the estimated final expenditure.

The text was approved without a vote.

Next, the Committee took up a draft on the financing of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 (document A/C.5/71/L.8).  By its terms, the Assembly would endorse the conclusions and recommendations in ACABQ’s related report (document A/71/671), ask the Secretary-General to complete the work of the Tribunal’s work within the approved timeline and resources and decide that any residual liquidation activities remaining after completion of the Tribunal’s substantive work should be undertaken by the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.

The Assembly would decide on a revised appropriation to the Special Account for that Tribunal in a total amount of $98.06 million gross ($86.92 million net) for the biennium 2016-2017, as detailed in the text’s annex.  It would also decide for the year 2017 to apportion among Member States, in accordance with the scale of assessments applicable to the regular budget for the year, the amount of $25.05 million gross ($22.16 million net), including $1.16 million gross ($946,650 net), being the increase in assessments.  It would also decide for the year 2017 to apportion among Member States, in accordance with the scale of assessments applicable to the peacekeeping operations for the year, the amount of $25.05 million gross ($22.16 million net), including $1.16 million gross ($946,650 net), being the increase in assessments.

The text was approved without a vote.

The Committee then took up a draft resolution on financing of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (document A/C.5/71/L.9), by which the Assembly would endorse the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and decide that any residual liquidation activities remaining after the completion of the substantive work of the Former Yugoslavia Tribunal be undertaken by the Mechanism.  Noting the transfer of an over-expenditure of $3.7 million for the Rwanda Tribunal to the Mechanism, the Assembly would ask the Secretary-General to report on the treatment of the amount of the over-expenditure in the context of his second performance report for the biennium 2016-2017 on the budget of the Mechanism.

It would also have the Assembly decide on a revised appropriation to the Special Account for the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals of $135.75 million gross ($125.15 million net) for the biennium 2016-2017.  Further, the Assembly would decide for 2017 to apportion among Member States, in accordance with the scale of assessments applicable to the regular budget, the amount of $33.52 million gross ($30.84 million net), including $828,250 gross ($895,900 net), being the decrease in assessments.  In addition, it would decide to apportion among Member States, in line with the rates of assessments applicable to peacekeeping operations, those amounts, as well.

Concerning the review of the United Nations Office to the African Union (document A/C.5/71/L.14), the Committee approved a text by which the Assembly would endorse the conclusions and recommendations in the Advisory Committee’s related report (document A/71/646) and approve the proposed restructuring of the Office, the establishment of three new posts (two D-1 and one National Professional Officer), the abolishment of seven posts (two Field Service and five National General Service), the retention of one National General Service post and the redeployment or reassignment of posts as proposed by the Secretary-General.

The text was approved without a vote.

Next, the Committee took up a draft on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) (document A/C.5/71/L.18), by which the Assembly would take note of the status of contributions to UNOCI, including the outstanding amount of $25.8 million, representing some 0.4 per cent of the total assessed contributions; and note with concern that only 75 Member States had paid their assessed contributions in full and urge all other Member States, particularly those in arrears to ensure payment of their outstanding assessments.

The Assembly would also appropriate $171.94 million for the maintenance of the Operation from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017, inclusive of the $153.05 million previously authorized for 1 July to 31 December 2016 under the terms of Assembly resolution 70/272.  It would further decide to apportion among Member States the addition amount of $18.89 million in accordance with the levels update in resolution 70/146, taking into account the scale of assessments for 2017.

The text was approved without a vote.

The Committee then took up a draft decision submitted by the Chair on programme budget implications relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (document A/C.5/71/L.16), which contained implications for five draft resolutions.

Should the General Assembly adopt the resolution titled “taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations” (document A/C.5/71/L.41), additional resource requirements of $692,600 would arise under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, of the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.

Per the draft on the treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (document A/C.5/71/L.65/Rev.1), resources amounting to $289,000 would be required under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, would arise under the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 and charged against the contingency fund.

By the draft on the investigation into the conditions and circumstances resulting in the tragic death of Dag Hammarskjöld and of the members of the party accompanying him (document A/C.5/71/L.25), an extra $329,300 for 2017 would be needed, under section 1, Overall policy-making, direction and coordination, of the 2016-2017 programme budget and charged against the contingency fund.  An additional $29,400 would also be required under section 36, Staff assessment, and offset under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.

By the text on the New Urban Agenda (document A/C.5/71/L.23), an extra $770,500 would be needed, including $254,300 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, $500,300 under section 15, Human settlements, and $15,900 under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, of the 2016-2017 programme budget.

Per the text on oceans and the law of the sea (document A/C.5/71/L.26), the Assembly was requested to approve the establishment of two temporary posts (one P‑3 and one General Service (Other Level) under section 8, Legal affairs.  In addition, an extra $748,100 for 2017 would be needed — including $97,900 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management; $547,400 under section 8, Legal affairs; $102,800 under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services; and $18,500 under section 36, Staff assessment, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income, of the 2016-2017 programme budget, representing a charge against the contingency fund.

The Committee approved the text without a vote.

The Committee then turned to a draft resolution on special subjects relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (document A/C.5/71/L.19), which in 20 parts, took up the following:  International Public Sector Accounting Standards (I); subvention to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (II); request for a subvention to the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone (III); seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific premises in Bangkok (IV); progress in the construction of new office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, and update on the renovation of conference facilities, including Africa Hall (V); conditions of service and compensation for officials other than Secretariat officials (VI); revised estimates resulting from the decisions contained in General Assembly resolution 70/290, entitled “high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants” (VII); revised estimates relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 under section 7, International Court of Justice (VIII); financial implications relating to the administration of justice at the United Nations (IX); administrative and financial implications of the decisions and recommendations contained in the report of the International Civil Service Commission for the year 2016 (X).

Also:  the first performance report on the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (XI); supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development (XII); revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Economic and Social Council during 2016 (XIII); enterprise resource planning project:  Umoja (XIV); revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council at its thirty-first, thirty-second and thirty-third sessions and twenty-fourth special session (XV); progress on the implementation of a flexible workplace at United Nations Headquarters (XVI); Global Service Delivery model for the United Nations Secretariat (XVII); Strategic Heritage Plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva (XVIII); estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (XIX); and the contingency fund (XX).

On the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, by the terms of the text, the Assembly would endorse the conclusions and recommendations contained in ACABQ’s related report (document A/71/542).

On seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific premises in Bangkok, the Assembly would approve option C for the project, its proposed scope, timeframe, implementation plan and estimated maximum cost of $40.02 million.  It would also approve the establishment of six temporary positions related to the dedicated project management team and project support staff, under section 19, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific, of the 2016-2017 programme budget and an appropriation in of $877,400.

Concerning the financial implications relating to the administration of justice at the United Nations, the Assembly would decide to approve an additional amount of $1.57 million gross ($1.46 million net) before recosting, reflecting an increase of $1.43 million under section 1, Overall policymaking, direction and coordination, $31,800 under section 29D, Office of Central Support Services, and $106,100 under section 36, Staff assessment, to be offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1, income from staff assessment of the 2016-2017 programme budget.

Regarding the administrative and financial implications of the decisions and recommendations contained in the 2016 report of the International Civil Service Commission, the Assembly would endorse the ACABQ’s related recommendations (document A/71/564).

As for the first performance report on the budget for the biennium 2016‑2017, the Assembly would approve a net increase of $51.96 million in the appropriation approved for the biennium 2016-2017 and a net increase of $1.19 million in the estimates of income for the biennium, to be apportioned among expenditure and income sections as indicated in the first performance report of the Secretary-General.

On supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the third International Conference on Financing for Development, the Assembly would decide to establish 16 temporary posts, including four for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), two for Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), two for the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), three for the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and five for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.  The Assembly would also decide to approve $5 million for 2017 for the strengthening of the regular programme of technical cooperation under section 23, Regular programme of technical cooperation of the 2016-2017 programme budget.  It would ask the Secretary-General to reflect in his proposed programme budget for 2018-2019 an increase of $5 million under section 23, Regular programme of technical cooperation, and decide to appropriate $6.14 million in relation to 2016 expenditures of commitment authority as approved by the General Assembly in section XI of its resolution 70/248A.

It would also decide to appropriate $319,000 for section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management for 2017; $957,100 for 2017 under section 9, Economic and social affairs, $407,600 under section 12, Trade and development; $95,700 under section 18, Economic and social development in Africa; $148,000 under section 19, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific; and $195,200 under section 21, Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean.  It would also decide to appropriate $210,100 under section 36, Staff assessment, for 2017, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.

On the Enterprise resource planning project, Umoja, the Assembly would regret that inadequate training prior to deployment contributed to serious problems and delays in each phase of the project and note the steps taken thus far to address gaps in training.  Stressing the importance of effective and high-quality training for the successful implementation of Umoja, the Assembly would ask the Secretary-General to ensure that senior managers use a comprehensive and sustained approach to training and capacity development in their work units.  Regretting the delays in the planning and implementation of Umoja Extension 2 and the additional funding requirements, it would ask the Secretary-General to implement the full scope of the project as set forth in the eighth progress report, without further delays and cost escalation, and to provide detailed information on the implementation of all the remaining Umoja Extension 2 functions and processes, at the main part of its seventy-second session.  The Assembly would also approve the net additional revised requirements for 2016-2017 of $26.81 million, as presented in the eighth progress report, based on the reorganization, reprofiling and mainstreaming presented in section VI.

It would also request the Secretary-General to absorb $4.02 million within existing resources under section 29, Office of Management and Support Services, prioritizing section 29A, under the 2016-2017 programme budget, and note that $16.62 million would be included in the subsequent requirements for the support account for peacekeeping operations for the financial period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018, and that $4.17 million would be funded from extra-budgetary resources in 2017.

Turning to revised estimates resulting from resolutions and decisions adopted by the Human Rights Council at its thirty-first, thirty-second and thirty-third sessions and twenty-fourth special session, the Assembly would approve the establishment of ten posts under section 24, Human rights, of the 2016-2017 programme budget, with effect from 1 January 2017.  It would also approve an additional appropriation of $14.78 million, comprising $2,481,300 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, $12,259,500 under section 24, Human rights, $8,400 under section 28, Public information, and $35,300 under section 29F, Administration, Geneva, of the 2016-2017 programme budget, and $147,600 under section 36, Staff assessment, to be offset by an equivalent amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.

On implementing a flexible workplace at the United Nations, the Assembly would decide that flexible workplace strategies should not be implemented in rental properties where the rental contracts were due to expire without prospect of renewal and that flexible working arrangements should be an integral part of all such strategies, and ask the Secretary-General to update the Bulletin on Flexible Working Arrangements.  It would also authorize the Secretary-General to spend $10 million in 2017 for the application of a flexible workplace in the Secretariat Building to be funding from within existing resources.

Concerning estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council, on the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, the Assembly would approve $639.53 million for the 33 special political missions authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council, and $741,400 for the share of special political missions in the budget of the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe for the period 2016-2017.

It would also approve a charge of $548,525,100 (net of staff assessment), against the equivalent amount of undistributed balance in the provision for special political missions under section 3, Political affairs, of the 2016‑2017 programme budget.  It would also decide to appropriate an additional amount of $101.83 million under section 3, Political affairs, of the 2016-2017 programme budget, after taking into account the estimated over-expenditure in 2016 amounting to $10.09 million, and appropriate $4.69 million under section 36, Staff assessment, to be offset by a corresponding amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment.

Concerning the Contingency Fund, the Assembly would note that a balance of $10.28 million remained in that fund.

The Secretariat official then read out an amendment, explaining that under Section IV, paragraph 23 would be deleted; under section 19, inserting the wording “taking note of paragraph 20 of the Advisory Committee”.

The representative of Burkina Faso, speaking on behalf of the African Group, submitted a verbal amendment to resolution L.19, proposing an operative paragraph 2 *bis* as follows:  “decides to not allocate budgetary resources for 32/2 of the Human Rights Council against gender-related violence”.

The representative of Argentina, speaking also on behalf of Brazil, Chile, Colombia Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico and Uruguay, expressed concern at that oral amendment to include a new operative paragraph on the revised estimates of the Human Rights Council.  That would affect the work of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, who had been given a number of functions to address violence and discrimination.  Previous attempts to delay adoption of measures related to that text had been submitted to the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) and General Assembly.  In both cases, the majority of States, including representatives of the five regional groups, had recognized and defended integrity of the Council to put into place resolution 32/2.

The Fifth Committee was not the right forum to debate substantive issues relating to resolutions adopted by other bodies of the United Nations, he said.  A vote on the revised estimates of the Council would have no precedent and would contradict the principle that the Committee should approve resources for all programmes and activities.  As the main sponsors of 32/2 in Geneva, his delegation requested a recorded vote, he said, expressing concern at the implications for the integrity of the budget process and system for protecting and promoting human rights in the United Nations were the amendment to be adopted.  He would vote no on the amendment.

The representative of Norway said she would vote against the amendment regarding resolution 32/2, stressing that the Fifth Committee’s role was to decide on administrative and budgetary issues.  The mandates adopted by the Human Rights Council would be funded and she supported the draft resolution submitted by the Chair.

The representative of United States stated that her delegation would vote against the amendment.  Reaffirming commitment to the mandate of the Independent Expert, which represented a strong step forward for hundreds of thousands of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, and intersex people across the globe, she regretted that some delegations still wished to undermine its implementation.  Also, reiterating her delegation’s objection to re-litigating the issue, she added that such actions undermined the way the Organization conducted its business.

The representative of Slovakia, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Fifth Committee was entrusted with administrative and budgetary matters, and was not the forum for debating substantive issues that had been discussed by other Committees and organs of the United Nations.  Consensus-based decision-making was one of the long-standing working practices of the Fifth Committee.  Regretting that the Human Rights Council resolution was being singled out, he said that the amendment was not based on technical considerations but political ones.

The representative of Switzerland, also speaking on behalf of Lichtenstein, said that those delegations would be voting against the amendment since the Fifth Committee’s role was to ensure that the organization had the necessary resources to implement the given mandates.  The Committee was not the proper forum to discuss mandates that had been given.  Regretting the need for a vote in a Committee where decisions were taken by consensus, he encouraged other delegations to vote against the amendment.

The representative of Cameroon said that the amendment had been proposed simply in order to ensure that resources were not wasted.  That was the role of the Fifth Committee.  The representative of Burkina Faso had not raised any substantive issues and was entitled to say that the amounts represented a waste of resources.  Further, it was someone else who had asked for a vote.  If resolutions were normally adopted by consensus, it was not the Group that had broken with tradition.  All the same, “let’s not be afraid of a vote”, he said.  It was merely a practice and it was the right of every delegation to request a vote.

The amendment was rejected by a recorded vote of 82 against to 65 in favour, with 16 abstentions.

The representative of Burkina Faso, speaking in explanation of position, thanked the delegations who had voted in favour of the proposed amendment and said that they had reaffirmed the principles that guided the work of the United Nations.  Regretting that the resolution to be adopted would cause budgetary implications that would allow the designated Independent Expert to conduct activities that did not have any basis in international law, he said that the text was polarizing and did not enjoy consensus.  The African Group disassociated itself from the mandate of the Independent Expert.

The representative of Israel then proposed an amendment to Section XV, to add an operative paragraph, explaining that it was the same one presented during informal consultations:  “Decides not to approve any resources stemming from adoption of resolution 31/36 by the Human Rights Council”.

The representative of Thailand, speaking on behalf of the “Group of 77” developing countries and China, requested a recorded vote.

The representative of Cuba, speaking in explanation of vote, said it was important to have resources under that resolution.  A database of all companies participating in activities listed in the report was important.  She expressed hope that an update would be given during the Council’s thirty-fourth session.  She did not support the representative of Israel’s amendment and would vote against it.

The representative of Sudan, speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, supported the request made by Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The representative of Slovakia, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said the Fifth Committee was not the appropriate forum to discuss such issues.  A vote on revised estimates would be unprecedented.  Stressing that resolution 31/36 had been adopted by the Human Rights Council, he said consensus-based decision-making was among the long-standing practices of Fifth Committee.  He expressed regret that a resolution of the Council had been singled out in that regard.  That decision was not based on budgetary issues, but rather, political ones.  He expressed concern that introducing political elements would hamper the Committee’s ability to deliberate issues.  He would vote against the text and called on others to do the same.

The representative of Switzerland, also speaking on behalf of Liechtenstein, said she would vote against the amendment.  The Fifth Committee’s role was to rule on administrative and budgetary questions.  She regretted the request for a vote and encouraged others to vote no on the proposed amendment.

The representative of Norway said she would vote against the proposed amendment in regard to resolution 31/36, stressing that the Fifth Committee’s role was to decide on administrative and budgetary questions.  All mandates adopted by the Council should be funded.  She supported the resolution submitted by the Chair.

The Committee then proceeded to vote on the amendment rejecting it by a recorded vote of 6 in favour (Australia, Canada, Guatemala Israel, Palau and the United States) to 151 against, with 6 abstentions (Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Central African Republic, Georgia, Honduras and Ghana).

The representative of Cuba proposed an oral amendment to section XIX of the draft under discussion, stating that there was no intergovernmental agreement regarding the definition of the “Responsibility to Protect”.  The Secretariat had been asked if there was even a single General Assembly resolution that endorsed or referred to the Responsibility to Protect, but there were none.  While, his delegation fully supported the function of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Prevention of Genocide, he reiterated his request to submit an amendment to section XIX of the draft resolution.

The representative of Slovakia, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Fifth Committee was entrusted with budgetary and administrative matters and should refrain from political discussions.  It was the Committee’s responsibility to ensure that the Office of the Special Adviser was able to fulfil its mandate.  The proposed amendment would hamper its ability to do so.

The representative of Iran said that there was no consensual agreement among Member States on the concept of the Responsibility to Protect, its scope and possible ways of implementation.  Therefore, her delegation supported the oral amendment.

The representative of Nicaragua voiced support for the amendment and said that the concept should recognize the sovereignty of States.

The representative of Syria said that the principle of the Responsibility to Protect was one of the most controversial issues dividing the States.  The implementation of such a concept would be a flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter, especially concerning national sovereignty and respect for the territorial integrity of Member States.  Therefore, his delegation would vote in favour of the amendment.

The Committee then rejected the oral amendment submitted by the representative of Cuba, by a recorded vote of 82 against to 25 in favour, with 46 abstentions.

The Committee then approved draft resolution L.19 as a whole.

The representative of Israel, speaking in explanation of vote, said he objected to the funding of the resolution as it was against the State of Israel and went beyond the scope of the mandate of the Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.  Israel would not challenge the whole revised estimates, given its wider scope and that the international community must continue to respect the rights of all persons, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons.  Israel sat at the forefront of discrimination against individuals on gender identity.  Israel disassociated itself from the resource requirements in section XV of draft L.19, as today the funds that the Committee approved for Human Rights Council resolution 31/36 were being used to target the State of Israel.  It was time to remove resources for activities that had only one agenda, which was to politicize the work of the Human Rights Council.

The representative of the Russian Federation said he supported the amendment proposed by Cuba and believed that it was unacceptable to include in the mandate on the prevention of genocide some elements on the Responsibility to Protect.  He emphasized that position was established without preliminary consultation with Member States.  He further noted that the concept of Responsibility to Protect was, in itself, not approved by the leading bodies of the United Nations and could not be seen as one of the political mandates which possessed a legal position within the Organization.  The concern of many delegations was not reflected in the resolution of the General Assembly on the activities on the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide.

Next, the Committee took up its draft report on the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (document A/C.5/71/L.20), which was divided into two parts, with the first containing the narrative of the action taken by the Committee and the second containing the Committee’s recommendations.

INGA RHONDA KING (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Chair of the Fifth Committee, recalled that the Committee had just approved draft resolution I on the special subjects relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017 (document A/C.5/71/L.19).

It then took up draft resolution II of the same title as the report, which was divided into three sections and included revised budget appropriations for the biennium 2016-2017; revised income estimates for the biennium 2016-17; and financing of the appropriations for the year 2013.

By part A, on the revised budget appropriations for the biennium 2016-2017, the Assembly would resolve to adjust upwards the initial figure of $5.41 billion by $205.44 million to $5.61 billion.

By part B, on revised income estimates for the biennium 2016-2017, the Assembly would resolve to increase those estimates from the initial figure of $531.89 million by $6.82 million to $538.71 million.

By part C, on the financing of the appropriations for the year 2017, the Assembly would resolve that, budget appropriations totalling $2.91 billion being half of appropriations initially approved for the biennium 2016-2017, the additional $6.93 million appropriated in resolutions 70/248 B and C, as well as the $205.42 million increase approved in resolution A above, should be financed in accordance with regulations 3.1 and 3.2 of the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

Finally, the Committee recommended that the Assembly approve a draft decision on the United Nations Office for Partnerships, by which the Assembly would take note of the Secretary-General’s reports on that Office.

The Committee then approved its draft report without a vote.

Next, the Committee took up a draft resolution on the proposed programme budget outline for the biennium 2018-2019 (document A/C.5/71/L.17), by which the Assembly — taking note of the Secretary-General’s report on the matter (document A/71/428) and endorsing the observations and recommendations in the ACABQ’s related report (document A/71/634), and stressing that the budget outline was a preliminary estimate of resources — would invite the Secretary-General to prepare his proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 on the basis of a preliminary estimate of $5.4 billion at revised 2016-2017 rates, inclusive of a provision of $1.12 billion for special political missions.  It would also decide that the proposed budget for that biennium should contain provisions for recosting on the basis of the existing methodology.

Also by the text, the Assembly would decide that the priorities for the 2018-2019 biennium would be:  promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences; maintenance of international peace and security; development of Africa; promotion of human rights; effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts; promotion of justice and international law; disarmament; and drug control, crime prevention and combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.  The Secretary-General would be requested to reflect those priorities when presenting the proposed 2018-2019 budget.

Further, the Assembly would decide that the contingency fund shall be set at the level of 0.75 per cent of the preliminary estimate, namely, at $40.46 million, and that that amount should be in addition to the overall level of the preliminary estimate and be used in line with the procedures for the contingency fund’s use and operation.

The Committee approved the text without a vote.

The Committee then took up a draft decision on questions deferred for future consideration (document A/C.5/71/L.21), which would have the Assembly decide to defer consideration of several documents under the agenda item “programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017” until the first part of its resumed seventy-first session.  They included the reports of the Secretary-General and ACABQ addressing the proposed United Nations Secretariat contribution to the United Nations Development Group cost-sharing arrangement for the resident coordinator system, and their reports on the review of the experience of the utilization of the contingency fund.

It would also defer until the second part of its resumed seventy-first session consideration of a report of an independent review on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic, and the ACABQ’s related report.

In addition, it would defer to the main part of its seventy-second session consideration of the reports on the Capital Master Plan, review of arrangements for funding and backstopping special political missions, operational arrangements and conditions of service of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and proposed regional restructuring of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).  Also deferred would be the statistical report of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the budgetary and financial situation of the organizations of the United Nations system.

The draft was approved without a vote.

Closing Remarks

SIRITHON WAIRATPANIJ (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, noting the considerable amount and complexity of the work in the Fifth Committee, said that by “working diligently and engaging constructively”, the Committee had been able to reach a successful conclusion.  In the past three months, the Committee had reached a number of milestones, including the provision of support for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.  In addition, since the new Secretary-General would assume office in January 2017, the resolutions on human resource management would provide timely guidance.  Welcoming the conclusion of the budget outline for the biennium 2018-2019, she said that it provided Member States with a preliminary indication of the resources required in the coming biennium.  She also expressed appreciation to the Chairperson of the Committee for steering it through many challenges, from delay in documentation and differences of opinions.  It was necessary to “have faith in women”, she said, also expressing gratitude to the Bureau and the Secretariat.

BACHAR BONG ABDALLAH (Chad), speaking on behalf of the African Group, expressed appreciation for the able leadership and stewardship of the Chairperson, highlighting her support in “allowing different delegations to articulate their positions in a fair and transparent manner”.  While the Committee had accomplished much in the current session, the Group regretted the delays in documentation, as well as “some negotiation approaches” that adversely affected the work of the Committee.  Despite those challenges, he hoped that the spirit of cooperation and compromise that benefited the Committee in the current year would carry on in the future sessions.

JAN DE PRETER of the European Union said that important results had been achieved by the Committee and he was content that it had managed to adequately finance new and existing special political missions.  More work should also be done to ensure that the Secretariat was able to support Member States with regard to implementing the 2030 Agenda.  He also looked forward to the implementation of Assembly resolution 70/299 with regard to its request to enhance the accountability and effectiveness of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.  Regarding human rights, he expressed disappointment over the Committee’s incapacity to engage on the Secretary-General’s proposal to change the structure of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and was concerned over the growing trend to question financing of resources stemming from the mandates of the Human Rights Committee.  The Fifth Committee was not the forum to discuss substantive issues already adopted by other United Nations bodies.

ISOBEL COLEMAN (United States) said that the timely issuance of documents was essential so that decisions could be made in an informed manner.  At the outset of the session, she noted that the upcoming change in United Nations leadership was an important opportunity for the Fifth Committee, which had taken important decisions on new, transformative initiatives.  She underscored that the budget outline of $5.395 billion for 2018-2019 reflected the level of resources required for that biennium.  In addition, with a new flexible workplace arrangement and Umoja, the Organization would achieve a more cost-effective global footprint.  On the Sustainable Development Goals, the decision should return to how the United Nations could leave behind a siloed approach to issues, and it should also focus on supporting Member States to achieve those momentous goals.

HIROSHI MINAMI (Japan) said the Chair’s indomitable resolve not to extend the deadline beyond 23 December had exerted a sound pressure on the negotiations, leading to the session’s successful conclusion.  Commending the negotiator’s diligent work, which had been based on mutual trust and understanding, he nevertheless said the late submission of relevant documents had seriously narrowed the margin of efforts and incentives to reach consensus by the deadline.  “Now is the time for us to consider seriously what we can do — and should do — to protect and enhance the sound environment for our negotiations,” he said, calling for a review aimed at improving the Committee’s working methods.  For example, a deadline for the submission of the Secretary-General’s reports could be set around the middle of the session.

FELIPE GARCÍA LANDA (Mexico) noted the Committee’s progress regarding agreement on areas such as human resources, construction and peacekeeping, as well as funding support for the 2030 Agenda.  Mexico welcomed the agreement to fund the United Nations Mission in Colombia so that it could fulfil its ambitious mandate as part of the tripartite mechanism to oversee the peace agreement, ceasefire and bilateral end to hostilities.  However, a number of themes had been left to future discussion, and he expressed concern of the risk that it would lead to the continued polarization of positions.  Consensual decisions and dialogue were the only way to continue the activities of the United Nations.

GUO XUEJUN (China) said the Fifth Committee had reached consensus on many matters during the current session, showing that Member States were committed to strengthening partnership in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.  Member States had also agreed on the resources required to ensuring that the special political mission to Colombia was able to fulfil its mandate.  His delegation looked forward to the Secretariat’s implementation of that consensus.

LEE EUNJOO (Republic of Korea) noting that the Chair’s able leadership had led to the conclusion of the Committee’s work before Christmas, thanked the Bureau and all the coordinators.  The Organization was at a critical juncture, with the new Secretary-General coming soon.  What the Fifth Committee had achieved during the current session expressed the delegates’ commitment to provide resources that would fully enable the work of the Organization.

CARLOS ARTURO MORALES LÓPEZ (Colombia) congratulating the Chair on her leadership, thanked all the delegations, “on behalf of 45 million Colombians” for their support for the special political mission.  Resources were fundamental to the fulfilment of its mandate and hopefully to bring about the lasting and sustainable peace, that was “so wished for in Colombia”.

KENT VACHON (Canada) also speaking on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, said he was pleased that the Fifth Committee had taken decisions that advanced United Nations mandates across the areas of peace and security, development and human rights.  He underscored that the special political mission for Colombia was given the strong start it deserved, and that the Human Rights Council would receive necessary resources.  He also welcomed the Global Service Delivery Model, which brought not just efficiency, but lower administration costs.  The United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, as well as many developing countries, had enjoyed benefits from that initiative over the last decade.  Much more remained to be done to bring the United Nations closer to the countries and people that sought its support.

SERGEY KHALIZOV (Russian Federation) said the programme of work showed the Committee was not able to hold meetings during 11 days in October and November, as it did not have the necessary documents to consider.  That was a serious problem that required close attention.  There were also problems due to the functioning of the Umoja system, and as such he welcomed the resolution on that system that reflected Member States concerns.

Ms. KING, in her capacity as Committee Chair, thanked delegates for their commitment, and said that despite delays and challenges beyond control, “we finished this year three hours earlier than we did last year”.  She also called for applause for all the coordinators and negotiators and Bureau members, as well as the “tour de force” of Secretariat members who had assisted the Committee.  Thanks were also due to all the support staff.  “May the force of greater good remain with you always,” she said.