

Statements of the Chairman

Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

6 March 2017

Lessons learned exercise on the coordination activities of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response *(ACABQ report: A/71/810, related report: A/70/737)*

Madam Chairperson,

The Advisory Committee notes that the findings of the lessons learned exercise highlight the need for: using and building upon existing rather than creating new mechanisms, entities or structures; supporting local actors on the ground rather than assuming responsibility for their tasks; a country-level presence and mission structures that are tailored to the exigencies and local needs of each country; strengthened capacity at the district level; and greater coordination and collaboration among the different United Nations system entities on the ground.

The Advisory Committee also notes that many of the issues identified during the lessons learned exercise had been identified by the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the initial budgetary proposals for UNMEER.

In view of the compressed timeline for addressing the Ebola health crisis, with operational targets to be achieved over 30, 60 and 90 day periods, the Committee had questioned several aspects of the approach taken. For instance: (a) the need for such a large, organizational structure for UNMEER, which appeared to be modelled on the requirements of a more typical field operation with a long-term perspective; (b) the rationale for a large presence at the Mission's Headquarters rather than in the affected countries (c) the reason why the functions of the Head of UNMEER could not have been performed by an incumbent at the Assistant Secretary-General level under the strategic guidance of the Special Envoy; and (d) the reason why existing institutional arrangements such as the framework for emergency humanitarian assistance adopted by the Assembly in its resolution 46/182 were not used, including OCHA. The Advisory Committee had also stressed the need for close cooperation with United Nations system entities and strengthening of existing inter-agency capacities rather than creating new structures.

The Committee is of the view that the approach taken was not thoroughly analysed and fully justified, and resulted in resources being expended to build administrative structures and layers rather than on operational activities.

Madam Chairperson,

The Advisory Committee is also of the view that the report of the Secretary-General does not provide the detailed information requested by the General Assembly on the final performance, liquidation and disposal of the assets of UNMEER and the Office of the Special Envoy. At the request of the Advisory Committee, the Board of Auditors will present its findings of UNMEER's expenditures in the context of its report of the financial statements on the United Nations for 2016. The Advisory Committee will revert to this matter at the time of its consideration of the Board's forthcoming report.

Thank you Madam Chairperson