

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICA GROUP BY MRS CAROLINE NALWANGA MAGAMBO COUNSELOR AT THE PERMANENT MISSION OF UGANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE AGENDA ITEM 136 PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2018–2019: ESTIMATES IN RESPECT OF SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS, GOOD OFFICES AND OTHER POLITICAL INITIATIVES AUTHORIZED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND/OR THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND THEMATIC CLUSTER III: REGIONAL OFFICES, OFFICES IN SUPPORT OF POLITICAL PROCESSES AND OTHER MISSIONS (12 December 2018)**

Madame. Chair,

I have to honor to speak on behalf of the African Group on agenda item 136 proposed program budget for biennium 2018-2019 in particular, estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council and Thematic Cluster III: Regional Offices, Offices in support of political processes and other missions.

At the outset, the Group wishes to thank Mr. Chandru Ramanathan, Acting Controller of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts (OPPBA), as well as Mr. Babu Sene Vice- Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing their reports.

Madame Chair

The Group wishes to reiterate the importance it attaches to the vital role special political missions( SPMs) continue to play in fostering international peace and security through early warning, mediation, preventive

diplomacy, support to electoral process, good office and peacebuilding efforts.

The varied and complex mandates of SPMs are often delivered in situations of active and in post-conflicts environment. Increasingly today, most of the SPMs operate in environments where transnational organized crime and drug trafficking and extremist activities constitute the main drivers of instability.

In this regard, the African Group strongly believes that the allocation of adequate resources to the SPMs is a critical element for the efficient and effective discharge of their given mandates.

Madame Chair,

With regard to the resource requirement, the Group has taken note the proposed resource requirements for 2019 for nine SPMs under cluster III in the amount of US\$ \$302,315,000 million representing an increase of \$9,758,000 (3.3 per cent) compared with the resources approved for 2018.

The Group is mindful that the resource requests by the Secretary General include staffing requirements, Consultancy costs including positions in the fighting of Drugs and related crimes in Guinea-Bissau, supporting of elections in Somalia, support of the Resident Coordinator system, support of the mission activities in Tripoli and Benghazi as well as follow up and verification by the Mission in Colombia.

The Group will support the requests made by the Secretary General in the staffing requirements required for the mandate implication and as such will seek more information about the Mission requirements.

The African Group will be examining in details of the other key elements including those related to vacant positions, consultancy, and costs for the maintenance of infrastructure as well as travel resources.

Turning to Crosscutting issues we note that now funding will be required for 36 missions only with the termination of the mandate of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, with effect from 16 December 2018 by the Security Council.

We also take note of the appointment of a Special Envoy on Myanmar on 26 April 2018, and a Special Adviser to head UNITAD on 31 May 2018, the establishment of the Panel of Experts on Somalia established on 14 November 2018 as well as the expansion of the remit of the Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan to cover the Horn of Africa region and posts attributed to the resident coordinator system.

We further note that the financing of 36 special political missions for 2019 are estimated by the Secretary-General at \$663.3 million net exceeding the undistributed balance of \$476.1 million in the biennial provision by \$187.2 million and we also wish to note that a reduction of \$14.8 million to planned Umoja-related efficiency gains across all special political missions for 2018-2019 was undertaken.

The Group will therefore seek to examine the Umoja related efficiencies as projected by the Secretary General during our informal discussions as well as the impact of the new resource requirements on the overall budget request. We note that for existing mandates the budget requests exceed the request by only 6.4 Million attributed mainly to the lower vacancy rate.

The Group will examine other resource requirements such as the trend of higher-than-standard allocations of vehicles, information technology equipment and spare equipment with a view of obtaining efficiencies.

The Group also takes note of the 39 Backstopping posts proposed for 2019 as well as the proposals to continue providing backstopping for Missions at the Headquarters, Regional Service Center Entebbe and in the Kuwait Joint support Office.

The African Group continues to be encouraged by the collaboration efforts between the various SPMs in particular those in Africa and the respective regional and sub regional organization and we would like to underscore the importance of the utilization of local knowledge and expertise so as to strengthen national and regional capacities.

Therefore, the Group continues to express concern over the increased on the reliance of consultancies and other outside capacities in the SPMs in particular those in Africa and therefore the Group will seek a clear justification for all consultancy activities.

We look forward to constructive deliberations with the aim of concluding this part of the agenda item in a timely and constructive manner.

I thank you, Madame Chair