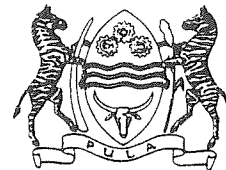


REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP

BY

**MR. KATLEGO MMALANE,
FIRST SECRETARY, PERMANENT MISSION OF
BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**ON AGENDA ITEM: 135, PROPOSED PROGRAMME
BUDGET FOR 2020: SPECIAL POLITICAL MISSIONS
(SPMs) Cluster I, II, UNAMA, AT THE MAIN PART OF
THE SEVENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY-FIFTH COMMITTEE**

**15 OCTOBER 2019
New York**

Please check against Delivery

Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the African Group on agenda item 135: programme budget for 2020, estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council, ***thematic cluster I: special and personal envoys, advisers and representatives of the Secretary-General and thematic cluster II: sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels, and other entities and mechanisms.***
2. At the outset, the Group would like to thank Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan, ASG Controller, as well as Mr. Cihan Terzi, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for introducing their respective reports.

Mr. Chair,

3. The African Group attaches great importance to the critical role played by Special Political Missions in the United Nations efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, to sustain peace, champion reconciliation and ultimately promote economic reconstruction and development.
4. While the Group acknowledges that progress is being made year-by-year in achieving the objectives of these offices, we are also cognizant that Special Political Missions (SPMs) operate in extremely difficult environments which are associated with escalation of conflicts, arms proliferation, transnational organized crime, extremist activities, the mass displacement of civilian populations, especially women and children, as well as dealing with the pitfalls of post-conflict reconstruction.
5. In light of this, the Group underscores that adequate allocation of resources for SPMs is crucial for the effective and efficient discharge of their mandates.

Mr. Chair,

6. The African Group notes that the proposed requirements for 2020 for the 11 continuing missions grouped under thematic cluster I amount to \$57,073,400 (net), representing an increase of \$2,073,700, or 3.8 per cent, compared with the 2019 appropriation.
7. For cluster II, the proposed requirements for 2020 for the 15 continuing missions amount to \$57,453,200 (net), representing an increase of \$779,500, or 1.4 per cent, compared with the 2019 appropriation.

8. Though the proposals present marginal increases, the increase in scope and complexity of the work of SPMs means that we have, in practical terms, been presented with real value reductions. Proposals will be further analysed with a view to enabling a more informed and responsible decision-making exercise.

Mr. Chair,

9. With respect to operational requirements, the Group will seek clarification on requirements related to the works of these missions in general and specifically with regard to those operating in Africa. The African Group looks forward to discussing and understanding cost-sharing arrangements in the areas of transport, facilities and medical services as well as the application of best practices in the use of renewable energy for power generation and their impact on efficiency gains.
10. With specific regard to air travel, though the Group is mindful of the legislation passed by the General Assembly on the subject, the group takes note of the complex challenges encountered by SPMs and the rapidly changing realities on the ground which may present obstacles for compliance with the advance purchase policy.
11. Despite acknowledging the above, the Group wishes to nonetheless express its concern at the generally low compliance with the advance purchase policy and encourage missions to give their utmost attention to increasing the rate of compliance. The African Group wishes to emphasize that more efforts are required, in particular in areas where travel can be better planned, including through the development of concrete plans and strategies in order to improve adherence to the policy.

Mr. Chair,

12. On staffing, the Group is mindful that staffing forms a major part of the inputs for the performance of SPMs. Therefore, we have taken note of the proposed requirements for 2020. The Group will be interested to learn the rationale for changes and movements in the staffing of several SPMs.
13. We also do reiterate our position that the quality and timeliness of the delivery of all mandated programmes and activities must always be the overriding factor in determining the Secretariat's resource requirements and its overall staffing structure for Special Political Missions.
14. To this end, the Group will seek clarification on the resource reductions proposed for Special Political Missions while the mandates and activities of these Missions become more and more complex, particularly those Missions operating in Africa.

Mr. Chair,

15. On workforce planning, the Group wishes to state that the over-reliance on temporary job openings has undermined the Organization's endeavor in this regard and that proactive and concerted measures are required for the establishment of a strategic workforce planning. As usual, the African Group is open to having a constructive and result-oriented exchange.
16. Also, we will carefully examine how the granting of special post allowances to staff is being applied or misapplied and what linkages there are of these allowances to continuing vacancies.
17. Last but not the least on staffing and personnel, the African Group will seek details on the geographical status of missions' personnel and experts while anticipating that the considerable high amount of the work of Special Political Missions in Africa would be commensurate with the recruitment of local knowledge and expertise.

Mr. Chair,

18. The Group continues to urge the enhancement of the collaborative work between various SPMs, good offices and other political initiatives, in particular those in Africa and relevant regional and sub-regional organizations. We note that there are multiple United Nations entities involved in addressing conflict prevention and mediation in the region and reiterate our request to the Secretary-General to continue to consolidate these efforts to bring about synergies and efficiencies.
19. To conclude, Mr. Chair, the African Group wishes to assure you of its readiness to engage constructively.

I thank you