

# **United Nations cuts budget by USD 286 million; US claims credit**

The UN has approved a USD 286 million cut in its annual budget for the next year, a five per cent “historic reduction in spending” that the US said it had negotiated.

The General Assembly on Sunday approved the regular budget of USD 5.397 billion for 2018-2019, the UN said in a statement on Tuesday.

The amount sets the budget level around USD 286 million (or five per cent) below the final approved level for 2016- 2017, and USD 193 million below the initially proposed budget level for 2018-2019, including all “add-ons”.

The additional reductions come mainly from across-the- board cuts in non-post resources for most Departments and Offices, including the Special Political Missions, the UN said in a statement.

Taking credit for the budget cut, America’s Indian-origin Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said that she negotiated a reduction of over USD 285 million off the 2016-2017 final budget.

“In addition to these significant cost savings, we reduced the UN’s bloated management and support functions, bolstered support for key US priorities throughout the world, and instilled more discipline and accountability throughout the UN system,” she said in a statement.

“The inefficiency and overspending of the United Nations are well known. We will no longer let the generosity of the American people be taken advantage of or remain unchecked.

“This historic reduction in spending, in addition to many other moves toward a more efficient and accountable UN, is a big step in the right direction,” Haley said.

She said that while “we are pleased with the results of this year’s budget negotiations, you can be sure we will continue to look at ways to increase the UN’s efficiency while protecting our interests”.

According to the UN statement, the General Assembly approved resources in the amount of USD 88 million for the establishment and maintenance of the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH) for the period from October 16, 2017 to June 30, 2018.

It approved resources in the amount of USD 911 million for the maintenance of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) for the period from July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018.

This brings the total overall approved resources for peacekeeping operations for the 2017/18 period to USD 7.316 billion, which compares to approved resources for the 2016/17 period of USD 7.909 billion, a reduction of USD 593 million or 7.5 per cent.

The General Assembly granted a one-year commitment authority for the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, it said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the General Assembly's support to his management reform proposal aimed at enhancing delivery of all mandates and the performance of the Secretariat.

The General Assembly also provided guidance on the comprehensive proposals, including on the restructuring of the Departments of Field Support and of Management to be submitted by mid-2018.

In particular, the General Assembly endorsed the proposal to move from a biennial planning and budgeting period to annual programme budget on a trial basis, as of 2020.

This signals one of the most significant shifts in the programme planning and budgeting process of the Organisation since the 1970s, the UN said.

The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to undertake an assessment of the mechanisms and levels of discretionary managerial authorities that may be required in order to address unanticipated programmatic needs and to report in the 73rd Session, the UN statement added. — PTI.

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