



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

OPPBA / ACABQ

30 November 2007

Dear Mr. Chairman,

As you are aware, my report on harmonization of conditions of service (A/61/751), which proposes major human resources reforms for staff in the field, is currently before the General Assembly. The proposals to harmonize conditions of service are intended to systematically address the issue of inferior conditions of service for mission staff that currently contribute to persistently high turnover rates and vacancy rates among international staff in United Nations peace operations.

Without prejudice to the decision of the General Assembly to the proposals to harmonize conditions of service for staff in the field, there is an immediate need to provide financial incentives to attract and retain staff to serve with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). My recent report to the Security Council and the General Assembly on the Situation in Afghanistan (S/2007/555 – A/62/345) describes the worsening security situation and the increasing frequency of suicide bombings, ambushes and direct fire attacks. Attacks on international and national humanitarian workers have also increased, as have abductions and kidnappings. Against this background, UNAMA is expanding its presence in the regional and provincial offices, more than doubling its number of field offices in the last nine months. The Mission will be seeking an increase in international staff posts in its 2008 budget. This is not only in connection with the launch of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy in March 2008, but also to consolidate the newly established provincial offices and to meet an increasing demand by Member States for UNAMA to increase its presence in the provinces and strengthen its

Mr. Rajat Saha  
Chairman  
Advisory Committee on Administrative  
and Budgetary Questions  
New York

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coordination role in general. In this light, the strong presence of international staff will be particularly critical. However, attracting and retaining staff to serve in Afghanistan under the current conditions of service continues to pose a major challenge. UNAMA consistently experiences a 30 percent turnover of its international staff each year. The mission's current vacancy rate is 23 percent, and is expected to increase by the end of the year.


In an effort to reduce turnover rates and attract the qualified candidates needed to fulfil the expanded mandate as established in Security Council resolution 1746(2007), I propose to introduce a special allowance for Afghanistan, similar to the special Iraq allowance. The amount of the allowance would be \$1,620 per month, representing the value of the hardship element of the mobility and hardship allowance which is currently not payable to staff serving in special missions. The allowance would be payable under the same conditions as that applicable to the special Iraq allowance. The allowance would be payable to international staff assigned or appointed to UNAMA, Afghanistan, under 100 or 300 series appointments for the actual days spent in Afghanistan, to be pro-rated for any period of absence outside of Afghanistan. The allowance would not be payable to staff of the UN agencies, funds or programmes, or to staff from Headquarters or other offices on official business travel to UNAMA. The allowance would be implemented as of 1 January 2008.

The financial implications of introducing a special allowance for Afghanistan are estimated at \$4,230,000 for 2008. UNAMA would be expected to meet the additional cost of the special allowance from within existing resources.

Should the General Assembly decide to approve proposals to harmonize conditions of service at its sixty-second session, the special allowance for Afghanistan would be discontinued upon implementation of the harmonized conditions of service.

I would be grateful if the contents of this letter could be shared with members of the Advisory Committee. Should the Committee have no objections to this initiative, I would intend to proceed with introducing a special allowance for Afghanistan as of 1 January 2008, as an exceptional measure pending the decision of the General Assembly on proposals for the harmonization of conditions of service.

Please accept, Mr. Chairman, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ki Moon Ban". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Ban Ki-moon

Alicia Barcena/NY/UNO  
30/11/2007 07:40 PM

To nambiarv@un.org, "Jean-Marie Guehenno"  
<guehenno@un.org>, Jane Holl Lute/United  
Nations@UNHQ-DPKO  
cc Josiane Ambiehl/NY/UNO@UNHQ, Simona  
Petrova/NY/UNO@UNHQ  
bcc  
Subject Afghanistan Allowance

Dear all,

Attached please find the revised letter on the above subject as instructed.

Please be reminded that as I mentioned in the meeting, ACABQ has alerted against a piecemeal approach.

They are concerned about what are we doing in the cases of Somalia, Sudan and Congo.

SPMs have already been reviewed by ACABQ and it is not certain whether the proposal included in the letter for Special Measures for Afghanistan will taken up again and the chairman intends to spend a very brief session on the chapeau of the SPMs only.

Finally, they will probably questioned whether the mission can operate and preserve the programme delivery even if the above costs are provided in the context of existing resources.

I would recommend that you speak directly with the Chairman of ACABQ since we are concerned

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Yours sincerely,

Ban Ki-moon