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BIENNIAL SUPPORT BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR 2002-2003

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Executive Director on the estimates for the biennial support budget for 2002-2003 (DP/FPA/2001/10). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with the Executive Director and her colleagues, who provided additional information.

Format and presentation

2. The Advisory Committee notes that, as requested by the Committee in prior reports, an attempt has been made to include in the executive summary a brief indication of the implementation and follow up of its recommendations and that use has been made of tables and bar and pie charts throughout the document to illustrate and highlight key issues. The Committee welcomes these improvements. However, the Committee recalls that, in its report on the budget estimates for 2000-2001, it indicated that the executive summary contained a great amount of detail that could have been explained in the main part of the report (DP/FPA/1999/14,

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para. 3). The Committee also cautioned, in the context of reviewing harmonized presentations of support budgets, against lengthy executive summaries. **It, therefore, reiterates its view and requests that in the next budget submission the executive summary be considerably shortened to avoid unnecessary duplication and promote clarity and understanding of the estimates.**

3. Moreover, in the opinion of the Advisory Committee, the document should be less verbose and more specific on the issues that affect the budget estimates. For example, the document makes numerous references to “realignment of headquarters units,” as the basis for staff changes and reclassification. The nature and extent of such functional realignment is not transparent from the presentation. The document also makes reference to results-based management without specifying the activities for which results would be expected, i.e., whether the discussion makes reference to results-based management in terms of programmes and/or in terms of support services.

General observations

4. The Advisory Committee notes the objectives of the workforce planning exercise at headquarters on the related proposed changes in the UNFPA headquarters structure that “are expected to have a significant impact on how UNFPA will work in the future” (DP/FPA/2001/10, paras. 68-70).

5. As indicated in paragraph 28 of the budget document, UNFPA has decided to conduct a Field Needs Assessment Survey (FNAS) in 2001 of the specific needs of field offices. In accordance with the findings, UNFPA would be requesting any necessary revisions to the support budget for 2002-2003 that may result from the field study. The revised budget estimates for 2002-2003 would be submitted to the Executive Board at the second regular session 2002, with the purpose “to integrate the needs of field offices with the restructuring of headquarters that is laid out in the proposals for the biennial support budget and to balance the staff levels and costs between headquarters locations and the field. The FNAS will therefore provide critical information on the emerging needs of field offices and constitute a reference point for reviewing the realignment of headquarters” (DP/FPA/2001/10, para. 29).

6. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 105 of the budget document that, since the FNAS was under preparation at the time the budget document was being finalized, none of the findings of the field study have been reflected in the budget proposal. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the field study of selected prototype offices was in progress and the results and recommendations would be ready by the beginning of August 2001. The Committee was informed that, once the results of the study are known, the realigned positions at headquarters would be “validated” to be either appropriate, inappropriate or in need of adjustment and that the exercise would also lead to the adoption of a human resources

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development strategy to ensure succession planning, especially in view of the number of staff who will be retiring beginning with 2002. **The Advisory Committee recommends that prior to its adoption, UNFPA submit to the Executive Board through the Advisory Committee a report on the implementation of a human resources development strategy, in conjunction with the revised estimates for the biennial support budget for 2002-2003.**

7. The Advisory Committee was informed that the biennial support budget estimates for 2002-2003 were prepared in the context of a realigned structure at headquarters implemented under the leadership of the previous Executive Director. Changes in the organizational structure of the Fund were implemented at headquarters as a result of the first and second phases of the workforce planning exercise. The first phase that started in 1998 reviewed job descriptions and functions performed by headquarters staff and some field offices. It was followed by the second phase in 2000 to identify the new functions that would be required at the field and at headquarters levels. This was followed by a restructuring of headquarters in the second half of 2000. Under the realigned headquarters structure, a new Strategic Planning and Coordination Division was created that reports directly to the Executive Director, comprising four branches, namely Strategic Planning, Coordination, Results-based Management, and Knowledge Sharing (see DP/FPA/2001/10, paras. 71 and 72). Upon request, the Committee was provided with a copy of a UNFPA circular, dated 10 August 2000, on realignment of UNFPA's structure and procedures. The Committee was informed that the document was for internal use of the Fund and had not been submitted to the Executive Board. The Fund has implemented the new organizational structure but will not implement the proposed reclassifications of posts until the Executive Board issues a decision on the proposals.

8. The Advisory Committee notes from the organigram shown in the budget document that operational units reporting directly to the Executive Director also include the Office of Human Resources and the Office of Oversight and Evaluation. The Advisory Committee recalls that in response to the need for increased accountability in late 1996, UNFPA established an Office of Oversight and Evaluation, formerly the Evaluation Branch of the Technical and Evaluation Division, being the only operational unit reporting directly to the Executive Director (DP/FPA/1997/14, para. 20, and DP/FPA/1999/11, para. 40). The Committee also recalls that the post of Deputy Executive Director (Programme) was upgraded from the D-2 to Assistant Secretary-General level in the biennium 1998-1999, on the basis of the scope and responsibilities required to assist the Executive Director in the functional areas covered by the new Strategic Planning and Coordination Division (DP/FPA/1997/14, para. 26). **Accordingly, the Advisory Committee cautions against the increasing number of units reporting directly to the Executive Director. In the Committee's view, this may lead to a situation of converting the Office of the Executive Director into another operational unit, to the detriment of the work of the operational divisions and of the overall policy guidance and oversight functions of the Executive Director (see also paras. 32 and 33 below).**

9. Paragraphs 30 to 32 of document DP/FPA/2001/10 address the subject of the Technical Advisory Programme (TAP) arrangements, approved by the Executive Board in decision 1999/19 for the period 2000-2001. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that a total of 137 personnel were involved in the Country Technical Services Teams and Technical Advisory Services. The Committee notes from paragraphs 32, 104 and 105 that, in addition to being a reference point for reviewing and validating the realignment of headquarters, the Field Needs Assessment Survey will be used to prepare proposals on realignments of the Technical Advisory Programme and that a report on these realignments and options for strategic and technical assistance to UNFPA country programmes will be submitted, as requested by the Executive Board, at its first regular session 2002. Upon request, the Committee was provided with a table with number of posts, post levels and location of personnel involved in Country Technical Services Teams and Technical Advisory Services at the headquarters and regional offices of the participating agencies and organizations (see annex I to this report).

10. The Committee recalls that for the biennium 2000-2001 the cost of TAP was to be apportioned according to a revised distribution of 75 per cent and 25 per cent to programme and programme support, respectively, on the basis of estimates of the actual time that advisers and specialists would devote to their functions. For the biennium 1998-1999, the apportionment between programme and technical programme support was 60 and 40 per cent (DP/FPA/1999/11, paras. 47 and 48). **The Committee believes that the rationale for this distribution is not clear and should be re-examined and that further clarification and explanation of the rationale be given in the context of the report to be submitted to the Board in 2002.**

Income and expenditure

11. As indicated in paragraph 5 and table 1 of the budget document, total resources income for the biennium 2002-2003 are projected in the amount of \$702.5 million, reflecting an increase of 1.3 per cent, as compared with planned resources income of \$693.7 estimated for the biennium 2000-2001. For 2002-2003, regular resources are projected at \$580 million, reflecting a decrease of 6.6 per cent, as compared with the regular resources estimate of \$621 million for 2000-2001. Other resources income for 2002-2003 is projected at \$122.5 million, or 68.5 per cent higher than the other resources estimate of \$72.7 million for 2000-2001. The Advisory Committee notes that income projections for 2002-2003 of other resources in the multi-year funding commitments report of the Executive Director, submitted to the Executive Board in document DP/FPA/2001/5, are lower than those included in the budget document and that the terminology used in that report is inconsistent with that of the budget document and with that approved by the Executive Board in decision 2000/5 on the revision of the UNFPA financial regulations (see, for example, DP/FPA/2001/5, para.11 and table 7).

12. The Advisory Committee was informed that UNFPA would not attain the resource income projections planned for 2000-2001. Given the strength of the United States dollar, the current estimate of regular resources for 2000-2001 is \$532.8 million (\$262.5 million in 2000 and \$270.3 million in 2001). The Advisory Committee notes that the declining trend in regular resources income during the last five years reversed modestly in 2000, increasing by some 3.0 per cent, as compared with regular resources income in 1999, while other resources have increased by more than 550 per cent over the period from 1995 to 2000. Furthermore, in 1995, other resources accounted for about 5 per cent of total resources available to the Fund, while in 2000 other resources accounted for almost 29 per cent of the total resources available to the Fund (see DP/FPA/2001/5, table 9A).

13. **In this connection, the Advisory Committee shares the view expressed in paragraph 123 of DP/FPA/2001/4 (Part II) that “the lower than expected income for regular resources in 2000, compared to the average level of needs identified in the multi-year funding framework, is of great concern to the Fund.”** The Committee was informed, however, that the lower regular resource projection for 2002-2003 was due to the decision to be more realistic as the previous projections had been too optimistic and that renewed efforts in fund-raising activities could lead to higher level of regular resources income than currently projected.

14. As shown in table 1 of DP/FPA/2001/10, for the biennium 2002-2003, estimated reimbursement for services from other resources amount to \$2.5 million, or some 2.1 per cent of other resources income, estimated at \$120.0 million. **The Advisory Committee is of the view that in the light of the decrease in general resources, every effort should be made to have other resources be charged a fair share of overhead for the related operations that are funded by these resources. The Committee recalls that, at its first regular session 2000, the Executive Board endorsed the standard rate of 7.5 per cent for reimbursement of administrative and operational support (AOS) costs for UNFPA execution of co-financing trust-fund activities (see E/2000/35, para. 198). Upon enquiry the Committee was provided with a table on recovery rates (see annex II to this report). The Committee emphasizes that the adequacy and fairness of these rates need to be monitored and that the Fund should be vigilant to ensure proper cost recovery, with the view to ensuring that regular resources do not subsidize activities funded from other resources. The Committee requests that in the next budget estimate information be provided on these rates including, in particular, cost recovery rates charged to other resources.**

15. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraph 7 and table 1 that UNFPA has not estimated any carry forwards from the biennium 2000-2001 into 2002-2003 for both regular resources and other resources. The Committee recalls that in the context of the harmonization of presentation of biennial support budgets of UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA, estimates of closing balances of biennial resources that would be available for expenditure in the ensuing biennium would also be shown in the resource plan, with adequate explanations on the assumptions made

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in the projections (DP/1999/7, DP/FPA/1999/3, E/ICEF/1999/AB/L.4, para. 5). **The Committee requests that estimates of opening balances be provided in future budget submissions.**

16. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraphs 6 and 58 of the budget document that as a result of cost-containment efforts, the gross support budget expenditure in 2000-2001 would not exceed \$141.4 million, some \$8.0 million or 5.4 per cent less than the approved appropriations. Taking into account estimated income and adjustments to the support budget of \$25.6 million, the net support budget expenditure in 2000-2001 would amount to \$115.8 million, or 9.1 per cent lower than the approved budget. Upon request, the Committee was provided with a table showing the status of implementation of the biennial support budget for 2000-2001 by major categories of expenditure (see annex III to this report). **The Committee recommends that in the future UNFPA prepare a progress report on the implementation of the its biennial support budget in a format similar to the progress report on the implementation of the 1998-1999 biennial support budget in document DP/FPA/1998/12.**

II. BIENNIAL SUPPORT BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR 2002-2003

17. As shown in table 1 of the budget document, under regular resources, the proposed biennial support budget for 2002-2003 amounts to \$168.3 million gross (\$146.5 million net), as compared to \$149.4 million gross (\$127.4 million net) for the support budget for 2000-2001. Estimated income and adjustments to the support budget for 2002-2003 amount to \$21.8 million (including \$4.4 million for staff tax reimbursements credited to the biennial support budget), as compared to estimated income to the support budget for 2000-2001 of \$22.0 million (including \$4.0 million for staff tax reimbursements credited to the biennial support budget) (DP/FPA/2001/10, paras. 9 and 13 and table 1).

18. Table 1 and figure A present the framework for the use of resources for programmes, programme support and management and administration of the organization. The Advisory Committee notes that the ratio of total programme support to total planned use of resources has continued to increase during the last two biennia, with a sharp projected increase of 16.4 per cent between 2000-2001 and 2002-2003. Of particular concern is the programme support increase of 35 per cent between biennia at headquarters (see DP/FPA/2001/10, table I). Furthermore, the Advisory Committee notes that, while the ratio of resources for management and administration for 2002-2003 to total planned use of resources for 2002-2003 reflects a relatively small increase (6.1 per cent for 2002-2003, as compared with 5.8 per cent for 2000-2001), the increase between the two biennia is more pronounced (from \$39.5 million for 2000-2001 to \$42.3 million for 2002-2003 or 7.1 per cent) (see table 1).

19. With regard to planned use of resources for programmes, the Advisory Committee notes that for 2002-2003, the share of total resources for programmes (\$512.3 million) to total planned use of resources (\$694.4 million) decreases to 73.8 per cent for 2002-2003, as compared to 76.7

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per cent for 2000-2001. Under regular resources, the decrease in the relative share of resources for programmes is more marked, from \$455.4 million or 74.3 per cent of planned use of regular resources for 2000-2001 to \$393.4 million or 68.8 per cent of total planned use of regular resources for 2002-2003, or a decrease of 13.6 per cent. **The Advisory Committee is concerned with this trend and shares the view “that general resources are the bedrock of the Fund’s programme operations and are essential in maintaining the multilateral nature of UNFPA’s work” (DP/FPA/2001/5, para. 22).**

20. Volume increases to the net biennial support budget for 2002-2003 amount to \$5.4 million and are summarized in table 2 of the budget document. Paragraphs 42 to 45 of document DP/FPA/2001/10 discuss the main proposals of the Executive Director for 2002-2003. The proposed net changes in post requirements for 2002-2003 include the establishment of eight new Professional posts (six at headquarters and two in the field) and the abolition of six General Service posts at headquarters, resulting in a net increase of two posts, from 1,018 posts established for the biennium 2000-2001 to 1,020 proposed for the biennium 2002-2003. The proposed increase of two professional posts in the field reflects the proposed relocation of two Professional posts from headquarters to the field (see DP/FPA/2001/10, paras. 66 and 105 and tables 4 and 5).

21. The Advisory Committee was informed that, under the transition exercise for the human resources development strategy, UNFPA was requesting \$2.0 million under the support budget for staff outplacement costs. Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that about 40 staff would be separating during the biennium 2002-2003. Moreover, the Committee was informed that a vacancy rate of 6 per cent was assumed in the estimates. **In the light of the information provided, the Committee doubts the rationale to request \$2 million for agreed separations.** Upon enquiry, the Committee was informed that the amounts expended on voluntary separations (there were no involuntary separations) in 2000 and 2001 for internationally-recruited staff and local staff were \$0.5 million and \$0.3 million, respectively.

22. The Advisory Committee notes from paragraphs 23 and 74 of the budget document that the Executive Director proposes to shift two professional project staff under a Commodity Management Unit (CMU), established in 2000, to the biennial support budget for 2002-2003. In this connection, upon request, the Committee was provided with information on headquarters project staff funded from other resources, including source of funding and amounts recovered for administrative and operational support cost and managerial support costs (see annex IV to this report).

23. **The Advisory Committee is concerned at the rate of growth of project posts at headquarters and the attendant cost in accommodation and other costs that are not reimbursed by the other resources. The Committee requests that in future budget submissions all posts at headquarters whether funded from regular resources or from any**

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other source of funding should be shown in the budget document and their establishment be justified.

24. Furthermore, in the Advisory Committee's opinion, the nature of activities carried out at headquarters by project personnel that are funded from other resources should be re-examined, with a view to identifying those that can be undertaken at the country level and those that can be carried out by other partners in the United Nations system.

Reclassifications

25. As indicated in paragraphs 44 and 45 of the budget document, the Executive Director proposes the reclassification of 66 posts at headquarters for the biennium 2002-2003. These include the upgrading of 56 posts (24 Professional and 32 General Service) and the downgrading of 10 posts (6 Professional and 4 General Service). Paragraph 43 and table 2 of document DP/FPA/2001/10 show that the cost of the proposed reclassification of headquarters posts, both at the Professional and General Service level, would amount to \$1.1 million. Paragraphs 72 to 94 of document DP/FPA/2001/10 describe the reclassification proposals by organizational unit of the Fund. Annex V to this report shows the proposed upward and downward reclassification of posts at headquarters.

26. The Advisory Committee notes that the upgrading of 24 Professional posts at headquarters "reflects the organization's thrust in taking a more strategic role in implementing its mandate, the creation of better management structure and a more progressively balanced framework for career mobility and development. Similarly, 32 posts for the support staff have been classified at a higher level...partly as a result of the increased use of information technology" (DP/FPA/2001/10, para. 98). The Committee notes from table 4 that although the number of posts proposed at headquarters for 2002-2003 remains, as for 2000-2001, at 242 posts (107 posts under programme support and 135 posts under management and administration), the reclassification exercise resulted in the upgrading of 23 per cent of the headquarters posts. The Advisory Committee notes a significant grade "creep" in the staffing proposals for 2002-2003. This is evident in the net changes in Professional post levels proposed for 2002-2003 at the higher post levels for each organizational units at headquarters, as shown in table 5 of document DP/FPA/2001/10.

27. The Advisory Committee discussed these changes with Executive Director and her representatives. **In the view of the Committee, the approach adopted for staff changes (new posts and reclassifications) at headquarters is questionable. In paragraph 102 it is stated that the field is the Fund's first and foremost management concern. The Committee believes that accordingly priority should have been given to completion of the Field Needs Assessment Survey; this would have determined the nature and level of support and leadership that headquarters should provide. Furthermore, the Committee is of the**

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opinion that reclassifications of Professional and support posts should have been proposed for the biennium 2002-2003 in terms of a change in the nature of the functions to be undertaken. This requirement is not clearly set out in the budget document.

28. The Executive Director informed the Advisory Committee that the reclassifications are to meet the strategic, advocacy and management role of staff at headquarters. The main purpose of the whole exercise, according to the Executive Director, was to update both functions and organizational structure, so as to reflect the changes that have been institutionalized, such as decentralization of authority to the field offices, establishment of the interagency Technical Advisory Programme at the regional level, adoption of result-based management approach, and the establishment of the new Strategic Planning and Coordination Division at headquarters as well as computerization. **These functions, in the view of the Advisory Committee, do not require the extensive reclassifications proposed in the Professional and General Service categories at headquarters. It is the opinion of the Advisory Committee that career prospects and promotion of staff are human resource management issues that cannot normally be handled through reclassification of posts. Indeed, extensive upward reclassification of posts has a tendency to temporarily remove pressure at lower grades only to re-establish, in a few years, bottlenecks at higher levels. Effective recruitment and placement planning, vacancy management, mobility and retirement management are the proper human resources instruments to handle career planning rather than the ineffective sporadic and intermittent reclassification of posts.**

29. As pointed out in paragraph 102, decentralization to the field has taken place in recent years. The Advisory Committee further notes that, in view of the Field Needs Assessment Survey, proposals for the field offices are at maintenance level (see DP/FPA/2001/10, paras. 28-29, 101-111 and tables I and II). **The Committee recommends that in the context of the Field Needs Assessment exercise, the role of geographical divisions at headquarters and the Technical Support Division should be fully reviewed and that further avenues for decentralization of functions from headquarters to the field should be explored.**

30. Under the circumstances, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Executive Board not approve at this time the request of the Executive Director for staff changes in the number of posts and their grade levels at headquarters for 2002-2003, as contained in document DP/FPA/2001/10. **In the view of the Committee, the staffing needs at headquarters of the Fund should continue to be met in 2002 within the approved establishment under the biennial support budget for 2000-2001 and through redeployment of posts, as appropriate.**

31. The Advisory Committee further recommends that the reclassification of headquarters posts and the request for additional posts at headquarters be re-examined in the context of the Field Needs Assessment exercise and that the Executive Director submit

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the results in the context of the revised support budget for 2002-2003, mentioned in paragraph 5 above, taking into account the views expressed by the Committee in this report.

Internal audit

32. Paragraphs 112 and 113 deal with the subject of internal audit. **The Advisory Committee notes with serious concern that in “the 2000-2001 biennium, the Fund was unable to implement in full the planned expansion of the Audit Section due chiefly to resource constraints. The Committee warns that audit and oversight functions should always be given priority regardless of the resource constraints being faced by any operation. Indeed, in the Committee’s view, it is at times of resource scarcity that adequate audit services become essential to assure that what is available is being managed properly. Reduction of audit resources in such situation is in the opinion of the Committee improper.** The Committee, for example had before it document DP/FPA/2001/8 on the Fund’s internal audit and oversight activities in 2000. This report presents a very poor picture in that it describes the inadequacy of the audit function for the Fund both at headquarters and in the field and the poor state of internal control, compliance and administrative management in country offices. “In 2000, less than half of the audited offices were found to have a satisfactory level of internal control, and 55 per cent of the audited offices were rated less than satisfactory” (DP/FPA/2001/8, para. 34).

33. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in its resolution 55/220 of 23 December 2000, the General Assembly approved all the recommendations and conclusions contained in the reports of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements of UNFPA for the period ended 31 December 1999 and endorsed the observations and recommendations of the Advisory Committee in its report of 16 October 2000 (A/55/487). The Board of Auditors qualified its opinion and the General Assembly did not approve the financial statements and accounts of UNFPA until its resumed fifty-fifth session (see A/55/487, paras. 9, 10, 29 and 30). **The Committee recommends that, as a matter of urgency, proposals be made, without further delay, to reorganize the audit and oversight functions for the Fund, as called for in Governing Council decision 91/36. Proposals should cover both headquarters and field arrangements. The Committee will offer more comments and recommendations once it receives the proposals of the Executive Director. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that once approved by the Executive Board, upon recommendations of the ACABQ, resources for audit and oversight should not be changed.**

Headquarters premises

34. The Advisory Committee notes that operating expenses are projected at \$6.5 million, reflecting an increase of 58.5 per cent, as compared with operating expenses in 2000-2001 of

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\$4.1 million, largely as a result of the impact of proposed additional rental space for 2002-2003 and the lease arrangement for UNFPA headquarters premises (DP/FPA/2001/10, para. 161 and table II). Table 2 of the budget document shows that \$1.6 million is requested for additional premises at headquarters. The Committee was informed that additional office space of approximately 10,000 square feet would be required to accommodate headquarters project staff and Junior Professional Officers funded from other resources and the UNFPA audit section currently located at UNDP premises. In addition, 8,164 square feet of additional office space would be required within a building located in the vicinity of UNFPA headquarters for six months during 2002-2003, with the purpose of accommodating staff during renovation work currently under way (DP/FPA/2001/10, paras. 119 and 120).

Office automation and information technology

35. Paragraphs 125 to 136 and table 6 of document DP/FPA/2001/10 discuss the Fund's office automation and information technology activities and plans. The Advisory Committee notes that requirements for recurrent maintenance and development of major systems are estimated at \$10.3 million for 2002-2003, as compared to \$5.2 million for 2000-2001. For the biennium 2002-2003, UNFPA is proposing to strengthen its information technology infrastructure both at headquarters and in field offices, encouraging the use of internet-based technology within UNFPA and the population community at large. UNFPA has set a target to connect all UNFPA field offices and headquarters by the end of the next biennium. **The Committee welcomes the priority being given to this tool for the operations and management of the operations of the Fund.**

36. The Advisory Committee notes that, under the Fund's current arrangements for sharing of administrative services with UNDP, the United Nations IMIS will continue to be used in administrative and financial operations; however, IMIS does not fully meet the requirements of UNFPA, particularly in the areas of programme monitoring, programme management and results-based programming questions. As indicated in paragraphs 128-130, UNFPA would meet its information systems requirements of programme activities through the development of a new Resource Management System (RMS). The overall cost is estimated at \$5.5 million over two biennia. Development of the system started in 2001 and planned completion time is about 3.5 years. The Committee was informed that the RMS, which is envisaged to be an integrated system, bringing financial and programmatic aspects together, would be installed at headquarters and in the field offices and that an amount of \$2.6 million has been earmarked for this purpose for 2002-2003. The actual cost of the development of the system would be determined after the completion of the systems requirements and design phase.