



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MS. SIRITHON WAIRATPANIJ, COUNCELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON AGENDA ITEM 134: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2016-2017, CAPITAL MASTER PLAN, AT THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, FIFTH COMMITTEE (New York, 18 October 2016)

Madam Chairperson,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 134: Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, in particular on the Capital Master Plan (CMP).

2. At the outset, the Group would like to thank Mr. Andrew Nye, Officer-in-Charge, Office of Central Support Services, for introducing the fourteenth annual progress report of the Secretary-General on the Capital Master Plan. We would also like to thank Mr. Salhina Mkumba, Director of External Audit from the United Republic of Tanzania and Chair of the Audit Operations Committee, Mr. Mario Baez, Chief, Policy and Oversight Coordination Service as well as Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing their respective reports.

Madam Chairperson,

3. The Group of 77 and China continue to be a strong supporter of the modernization and proper maintenance of all facilities across the United Nations system. It is our objective to appropriately improve the working conditions and safety of both Member State representatives and staff. This agenda item, therefore, remains a priority of the Group.

4. The Group welcomes the report of the Board of Auditors on the CMP and considers the Board's follow up on this matter of critical importance. The Group also highly values the comments and recommendations provided by the ACABQ.

5. The lessons learned from the CMP are of utmost importance for the ongoing and any future capital projects. In this context, the Group has expressed, since last session, its interest in the information developed by the Board based on its works since the beginning of the CMP. Therefore, the Group welcomes the inclusion of these lessons learned as an annex of the Board's report at this session.

Madam Chairperson,

6. The Group of 77 and China note that, after the closure of the Office of the Capital Master Plan, the Office of Central Support Services is fully responsible for the remaining activities from the CMP, including post-renovation, corrective activities and administrative tasks in support of the close-out of the project. The Group looks forward to continue receiving the follow up reports on these activities by the Secretary-General and the related reports from the Board of Auditors and the ACABQ in this regard. As the CMP is entering into its final phase after 14 years, we also look forward to the final completion of the remaining activities by April 2017.

7. Despite the delays, the Group would like to express its satisfaction with regard to the demolition of the temporary North Lawn Building. As expressed by the ACABQ, the Group also trusts that the remaining landscaping work on the North Lawn will be completed in a timely manner by 31 December 2016.

8. The Group, however, is not fully satisfied with the interim solutions related to the relocation of the functions formerly housed in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Building and in the South Annex Building, owing to the suspension of the renovation of those buildings due to security considerations. We intend to follow up on this matter during the informal consultations.

9. The Group is concerned on the difficulties faced by Member States in accessing the garage using 42nd Street. The Group seeks to understand as to why 42nd street has been chosen as the main entry considering that it is the same area qualified as high security risks. We have noted that 42nd street entrance remains unfavorable to many of garage users due to heavy traffic including those entering the South-bound FDR drive as well as narrow entry and unclear road sign and road mark for the vehicles entering the United Nations. The Group has also noted the difficulties in accessing 2B and 3B parking levels due to the new changes. In this regard, we would like to emphasize the need to ensure delegates enter and exit the United Nations campus freely without obstacles while respecting the original design of the campus. We will ask specific questions on this matter during the informal consultations.

Madam Chairperson,

10. Regarding the renovation of Dag Hammarskjöld Library Building and the South Annex Building, the Group is seriously concerned that there is still no new proposal presented to the General Assembly on the renovation plan of the Library and South Annex Buildings, which were removed from the scope of the CMP in 2015.

11. The Group stresses that in its resolution 69/274 A (section VIII, paragraph 14), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it for its consideration and approval future proposals relating to the renovation of Dag Hammarskjöld Library and the South Annex Buildings as separate project outside the scope of the CMP. The same mandate is also contained in the General Assembly resolution 70/239 (paragraph 9). The Group requests that such proposal is presented at the earliest possible opportunity.

12. Regarding the maintenance and management of the campus, the Group fails to understand why the Secretariat lacks the personnel that could provide these services to the systems installed during the CMP. The Group notes that the report of the Secretary-General indicates that in late 2018, the Secretariat will commission a specialized firm to undertake an external independent review of its maintenance practices and approaches and to assess the balance between outsourcing and the in-house provision of maintenance in order to ensure the cost-effective use of resources. In this connection, the Group is of the view that the General Assembly requests that the next progress report include an update on maintenance arrangements and costs.

13. The Group stresses that the CMP projected an anticipated final cost for a construction project to renovate five buildings at the amount of \$1,876.7 million; however, it ended up at a higher cost of \$2,309.3 million for a reduced scope of the project to three buildings. The Group recalls the Board of Auditors' recommendation regarding the need to report the full amount of any savings arising from contract closure. It is important that the next progress report provides full details on the closure of existing contracts.

14. The Group is also concerned by the low implementation rate of the Board of auditors' recommendations issued over the past three biennium. In this connection, it is important that the Secretariat must work closely with the Board to ensure that the outstanding recommendations are implemented. We expect a follow up of this matter in the forthcoming reports by the Secretariat and the Board.

Madam Chairperson,

15. The Group takes note of the proposal for the construction of a recreation facility at United Nations Headquarters. In this regard, the Group will pay close attention on some of the elements highlighted by the ACABQ such as the concerns about the architectural integrity and beauty of the complex and gardens at Headquarters, the full respect for the regulations, rules and policies of the United Nations and full compliance with United Nations procurement policies, procedures and practices. There are also concerns regarding any relationship with possible options for addressing long-term accommodation needs at Headquarters and on the operating and maintenance costs of the facility, including insurance costs.

16. It is the understanding that any initiative such as the one just described requires the consideration and approval by the General Assembly. The Group will certainly follow up on this matter very closely during the informal consultations.

17. In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China would like to assure you of our continued commitment to work constructively with other delegations in order to conclude consideration of this item in a timely fashion.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.

