



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H.E AMBASSADOR PETER THOMSON, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS, CHAIR OF THE GROUP OF 77, ON THE AGENDA ITEM 134, PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2014-2015 - CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT: FLEXIBLE WORKPLACE, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE 68TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 18 November 2013)

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 134: Proposed Programme Budget for the biennium 2014-2015: Construction & property management - Flexible workplace.
2. The Group of 77 and China wishes to thank Mr. Yukio Takasu, Under Secretary-General for Management for his introduction of the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of a flexible workplace at the United Nations Headquarters and the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budget Questions, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for his introduction of the related report of the ACABQ.

Mr. Chairman,

3. The Group of 77 and China recognizes the importance of organizational transformation initiatives that contribute to a modern, adaptable and effective United Nations. However, major transformation processes currently being implemented renovate our belief on the necessity of careful and thorough consideration before embarking on such new endeavors.
4. The Group of 77 and China took note of the preliminary findings of the Secretary-General and their proposed approach to the implementation of a flexible workplace at the United Nations Headquarters. While acknowledging the benefits, the initiative is expected to bring on staff satisfaction and productivity, enhanced cooperation and reduced real estate needs, the Group also took note of the significant risks associated with an eventual poor implementation: impaired staff morale, reduced productivity and reputational risks.
5. The Group concurs with the ACABQ that in the light of the significant impact a flexible workplace would have on the working environment of the Organization the focus of our questions and considerations should not only be placed on reducing space requirements, but rather on a more human resources management approach. Considerations related to human resources policies and specific requirements of different departments within the Organization are critical elements to determine if such an initiative can be successful in the United Nations.
6. Furthermore, the Group would like to have more information on the necessary steps the Organization would have to take before being able to fulfill the requirements to a successful implementation of a flexible workplace, in particular those in the field of information technology. Other requirements such as robust internal communications and training programs also need to be taken into consideration.

Mr. Chairman,

7. The implementation of flexible workplace at the United Nations would represent a significant shift in the organizational culture of the United Nations and its working methods. The Group will further enquire on the elements mentioned above in order to better assess if at the current stage the Organization it is well placed for the preparation and consideration of a business case for the implementation of flexible workplace.

8. The Group looks forward to discussing these and other issues during the informal sessions under this agenda item.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.