



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MS. LOURDES PEREIRA SOTOMAYOR, FIRST SECRETARY, PERMANENT MISSION OF ECUADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON AGENDA ITEM 139, PATTERN OF CONFERENCES, AT THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 6 November 2017)**

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 139, entitled "Pattern of Conferences".
2. At the outset, the Group of 77 and China would like to thank Mr. Abbas Yazdani, Vice Chair of the Committee on Conferences, for introducing the report of the Committee on Conferences for 2017 contained in document A/72/32. The Group also thanks Ms. Catherine Pollard, Under Secretary-General, for General Assembly and Conference Management, as well as Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), for introducing the respective related reports.
3. The Group would like to take this opportunity to also express its gratitude to Ambassador Lewis Brown, Permanent Representative of Liberia to the United Nations, for his consummate leadership as the Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences for the current year.

Mr. Chairman,

4. The Group of 77 and China commends the Committee on Conferences for the work undertaken during its substantive session for 2017 and for the resultant high quality of its report. The Group is convinced that the consideration of this agenda item by the Fifth Committee will benefit from the outcome of the extensive deliberations held in the Committee on Conferences, and therefore welcomes recommendations contained in the report for the current year. Similarly, the relevant proposed draft resolution will serve as an excellent framework for our efficient and timely conclusion of this item.
5. The Group of 77 and China continues to attach great significance to the effective delivery of quality conference services in accordance with the equal treatment of the six official languages of the United Nations, particularly in support of the work of the intergovernmental and expert bodies of the Organization. In this context, matters related to the utilization of conference services as well as resources, documentation and publication, translation and interpretation and the calendar of conferences and meetings are all equally crucial for the effective and efficient functioning of the Organization.

Mr. Chairman,

6. The Group commends the efforts of the Secretariat to address underutilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities by United Nations organs. The Group notes that the overall utilization factor for all calendar bodies in the four main duty stations met the established benchmark of 80% in 2016. However, the Group takes note that for the period under consideration, the duty station in New York recorded a utilization factor of 79%. The Secretary-General is

requested to urge those intergovernmental bodies whose average utilization of allocated conference services and facilities has been below the benchmark of 80% to take this into account when planning their future sessions, with a view to achieving the benchmark.

7. The Group also notes, with satisfaction, the increase to 93% in 2016 from 84% in 2015 of the average occupancy of the conference centre at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) which marked a noticeable reversal, of a previous trend of underutilization as when compared to the paltry 53% in 2011, marks a significant turnaround. We urge the Secretary-General to continue reviewing the methodology for calculating utilization rate of conference facilities and further to reflect on how best to report on the occupancy rate of conference facilities.

8. In view of the importance of information and communication technology in the Organization's work, particularly with respect to the application of the integrated global management, the Group reiterates its position that the purpose of this initiative is to integrate information technology into the management of the provision of conference services and documentation processing, thereby facilitating a balanced division of labour between the UN Headquarters and the other main duty stations. In this regard, the Group takes note of the Secretary General's report that in the application of the rule, consideration was given to proximity, quality of services, hidden administrative costs, replacement costs and expertise when assembling a service team.

9. With respect to documentation and publications, the Group of 77 and China emphasizes the need for the timely and simultaneous distribution of documents in all official languages without exception. The Group also emphasizes the need for improvement in the quality of documentation which will facilitate effective and efficient deliberations of the intergovernmental and expert bodies, in particular the Administrative and Budgetary Committee of the UN General Assembly. The Group therefore encourages the interdepartmental task force on documentation to ensure that the perennial challenges related to documentation are duly addressed.

10. The Group welcomes the continuous improvement of the translation interface e-Luna by the DGACM. The Group finds provision of access to previously translated documents, terminology records and machine translation systems essential to the improvement of the Organisation's translation services and material.

11. In this vein, the Group anticipates further updates on the development of e-Luna, the transformation of the e-delegate portal and the integration of the cost benefits into the cost parameters for both the production of documents and their interpretation into the six official languages.

12. More specifically, the Group of 77 and China expects to receive details on the new calculative methodology to be applied across the four duty stations with respect to the cost parameters for the production of documents and the impact of newer initiatives such as e-Luna on determining the calculation of cost parameters.

Mr. Chairman,

13. In light of the point raised previously, the Group wishes to once again reiterate the importance of multilingualism and the equal treatment of all six official languages. The Group finds it imperative to provide high quality meeting and documentation services in the six official languages to all Member States in all four duty stations and all other international conferences held by the Organisation as this would ensure an effective and increased participation of Member States in the work of the UN. In this regard, the Group expresses its disappointment at the tendency shown by

the Secretariat to determine the relevance of some of the 6 official languages over others, expressed through media coverage and delivery of official documentation in advance in the indicated languages, which can imperil not only the implementation of multilingualism but also of other given mandates.

14. Also, we continue to emphasize that outreach programmes, such as traineeships, internships and other partnership approaches similar to the Pan African Masters Programme, should be used to target institutions in all regions, in particular to close the wide gap of qualified candidates from African and the Latin American and Caribbean regions. We are convinced these programmes will further improve the Organization's capacity to address its interpretation and translation deficiencies.

Mr. Chairman,

15. The Group calls on the Secretary-General to take all necessary measures, in accordance with the Regulations and Rules of the Organisation, to ensure that requests to organize events, especially those events sponsored and conducted by non-governmental and civil society organizations, are properly vetted with due scrutiny of the nature and content of the event, consistent with a spirit to uphold the principles and purposes of the United Nations that promotes multilateralism.

16. The Group notes the commitment of the Secretary-General in mainstreaming accessibility considerations within the work and operations of conference services and urge for continued efforts at all duty stations in this regard.

17. We value attainment of high quality of conference services and facilities and hence to ensure continued quality assurance of these services there is need to improve the current survey mechanism established to receive the necessary feedback on these services.

18. In closing, the G77 and China assures you of its commitment to engage constructively on this important agenda item with a view to concluding in a timely manner.

I thank you Mr. Chair.