



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. LUKE DAUNIVALU, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON AGENDA ITEM 134: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR BIENNIUM 2014-2015 - PROGRESS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL OFFICE FACILITIES AT THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA IN ADDIS ABABA, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SIXTY-EIGHTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 13 December 2013)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item agenda item 134: Proposed Programme Budget for Biennium 2014-2015 in particular the progress in the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Allow me to thank Mr. Stephen Cutts, Assistant Secretary General for Central Support Services and Mr. Richard Moon, Vice Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for introducing the respective reports on this agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China recalls that the by its resolution 63/263 the Assembly endorsed the need for Secretary-General to report annually on the progress on this construction project. The Group also recalls that the project time frame has been adjusted regularly and is now projected for completion at the end of this month, with occupancy starting in January 2014.

The Group welcomes the progress made so far despite many challenges and delays that has faced this project from its inception. In this regard we would like to pay special thanks to the Government of Ethiopia for their continued role and support in ensuring that the project is on track.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group has also taken note of the reasons for delays in these projects including those related to errors on architecture and construction management consultants, materials importation, processing of payments to the bank and coordination by contractors. We have also taken note of the costs associated with the delays.

The Group is very concerned at the delays in the execution of this project and the financial implications for both the Organization and the prospective tenants and we look forward to clear explanations being provided during informal consultations on measures taken to handle these matters, including questions of accountability and supervision.

Mr. Chairman,

With regard to ancillary projects, the Group of 77 and China is also concerned on the continued delay resulting from technical shortcomings and in this regard, we concur with the ACABQ on the need for closer monitoring of the project to avoid any further delays. We also believe that issues of accountability and responsibility for the recruitment and supervision of the design consultant should be carefully examined.

The Group has also taken note of the information related to value engineering and commends the cost containment efforts of the project management team through the application of value engineering and stresses that value engineering should be continually pursued as a best practice rather than an ex post facto reaction to project implementation.

With regard to flexible use of the Office space, the Group of 77 and China encourages a cautious approach to this matter including the taking into account of the specific need and policy of each of the tenants, working culture of the respective organizations, local norms and standards as well as the human resource and other factors affecting productivity of human capital.

Mr. Chairman,

Turning to the status of the renovation of the conference facilities, the Group of 77 and China recalls that by its resolution 65/259 the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to expeditiously assess the status of conference facilities at the Commission, in particular the Africa Hall and Conference Room 1, to ensure that they were in strict compliance with the highest international standards for conference facilities.

The Group of 77 and China is deeply concerned on the slow progress of the project, in particular those related to failure by consultants, the omission of resource proposal for current biennia, assessment and design process for Africa Hall. The Group would like to request the Secretary General to take serious measure to put the project back on track as a matter of priority.

The Group will be seeking a number of clarifications in this regard including the resource requirements for the current biennium. We would also like to learn the extent of UNESCO's involvement in this important project.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group would like to once again stress the need for commitment and accountability by senior managers both at headquarters and in the field. We also stress the need for close and regular oversight on this and other capital projects. We are also concerned that the OIOS did not provide annual oversight coverage for this project as mandated by paragraph 16 Part I of resolution 63/263.

In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China would like to assure you of our readiness to engage constructively in deliberation on this agenda item with the aim of concluding it in a timely manner.

I thank You Mr. Chairman.