



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY  
AMBASSADOR CONROD HUNTE, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE  
OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM  
118: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2008-2009,  
AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE 63RD  
SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 7 October 2008)**

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on this agenda item.
2. The Group of 77 and China would like to thank the Secretariat for the introduction of the relevant reports under this agenda item. The Group of 77 would also like to thank the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Budgetary and Administrative Questions (ACABQ) for introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee.
3. The Group of 77 and China notes the Secretary-General's progress report on the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The Group considers the resources that were requested by the Secretary-General and approved by the General Assembly to be essential in addressing the additional requirements relating to safety and security, positioning of the elevators and the electrical work, design change and cost escalation. The Group of 77 and China would like to emphasize the need for strict adherence to the project budget as well as the time-line of 2010 for the completion of this project. We trust that the ECA would be able to accomplish the essential construction work on time and within the approved resource levels of \$14,3 million.
4. We further note that in recent times, the construction project at ECA faced challenges, including, the status of the contract with the architect, duty free and tax-free status and site works in relation to the host Government, and the building of an alternate access road. The Group believes that these issues need to be resolved as a matter of urgency.
5. The Group trusts that both projects the UN Office at Nairobi (UNON) and ECA in Addis Ababa will be completed within the envisaged time frame. The Group of 77 and China shares the concerns raised by the ACABQ in regard to the delays, lack of coordination and insufficient guidance from Headquarters and the poor management of the two projects. The Group regrets that there is a lack of internal controls and accountability. Owing to this situation, the Organisation is potentially exposed to significant risk. The Group finds this situation to be unacceptable.
6. The Group of 77 and China notes the progress report on the construction of additional conference facilities at the Vienna International Center.
7. The Group acknowledges the invaluable contributions made by the Governments of Austria, Ethiopia and Kenya, respectively, as the host countries, towards ensuring the successful implementation of the construction projects.

I thank you.