



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. LUKE DAUNIVALU, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF FIJI TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON THE AGENDA ITEM 134, "PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2014-2015: CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT: STRATEGIC HERITAGE PLAN, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE 68TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY. (New York, 22 November 2013)

Mr Chairman,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 134 entitled "Proposed Programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015: Construction & property management: Strategic Heritage Plan. We would like to thank the Under Secretary-General for Management, Mr. Yukio Takasu, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/68/372. We also wish to thank the Chairperson of the ACABQ, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

2. The Group of 77 and China has previously stated the great importance the Group attaches to the proper management of the Organization's property portfolio and the effective management of any construction undertaken by the Organization. The Group therefore continues to support measures to ensure the conservation of United Nations' properties and the establishment of proper mechanisms and management structures to oversee the effective implementation of the Organization's construction projects.

3. The report on the Strategic Heritage Plan at the United Nations Office at Geneva identifies a number of deficiencies of the Palais the Nations, including with regards to health and safety issues, structural weaknesses and the accessibility needs for persons with disabilities. The risks presented are of a great concern to the Group and we will look carefully on the proposals made to address them.

4. Having UN premises that do not fully comply with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is unacceptable. Having accessibility problems in the premises where most of the discussions on rights of persons with disabilities take place is even worse.

5. The Group of 77 and China noted the revised project estimated costs are significantly higher than the first estimates presented to the General Assembly. The Group further notes that the prolonged proposed design phase would lead to implementation of the project only in 2017. These, and other elements of the proposals, will be carefully considered by the Group during informal consultations.

Mr. Chairman,

6. The consideration of a public-private arrangement for the financing of the renovation of the Palais des Nations is a matter of great concern to the Group. We are glad to see that the Secretary-General recognizes the major risks in adopting such an approach at the intergovernmental level and consequently did not support further consideration of this funding

option.

7. The Group is also happy to notice that lessons learned from the Capital Master Plan are being applied to the Strategic Heritage Plan. Nonetheless, we share the concern of ACABQ on having the necessary arrangements that can guarantee proper oversight of the project, including through the establishment of an independent and external oversight mechanism. We also share the concern of ACABQ on having contingency management and planning that shows the necessary improvements over what we had in the CMP.

Mr. Chairman,

8. The Group of 77 and China would like to assure you of our continued commitment to participate in constructive deliberations with the aim of reaching a positive outcome on this important agenda item.

I thank you.