



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MRS. NORMA TAYLOR ROBERTS, PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 124: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2006-2007, REGARDING THE CAPITAL MASTER PLAN, AT THE MAIN PART OF THE 60TH SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 12 December 2005)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Group wishes to thank the Assistant Secretary-General, Mr. Louis Reuter, for his introduction of the third annual progress report of the Secretary-General A/60/550 on the implementation of the capital master plan. We also thank the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the representatives of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and the Board of Auditors for the presentation of their respective reports.

Mr. Chairman,

When the General Assembly, in December 2002, approved the comprehensive approach to refurbishing the UN Headquarters through the CMP, it was on the basis of an offer by the city of New York of a swing space building (UNDC-5) which would involve vacating the complex to the greatest extent possible. The decision of the General Assembly to approve this option was based on the findings of a comprehensive design plan which highlighted certain concerns for renovation during occupancy, namely, safety and health hazards, extended duration of work and additional cost.

The availability of swing space was therefore indispensable for the implementation of the refurbishing programme and consequently the offer of UNDC-5 was fundamentally integral to the option that was approved for the CMP. The design development work started on the basis of that approved scope and the projected funding was also on that basis.

The Group therefore expresses its deep disappointment at the failure of plans for the UNDC-5 building and, as advised by the Secretary-General, that it is no longer a realistic option for swing space in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China appreciates the report of the Secretary-General which outlines the overall review that was undertaken following this development which has had a serious impact on the viability of the first approach to implementing the CMP. We also note with concern the consequent increase of over \$500 million in the projected budget. We recognize the work that has been done by the Secretariat in elaborating the various alternative strategies and are conscious of the urgency in taking a decision on a new approach to implementing the CMP. We had looked forward to a detailed discussion of the project during the main part of this session in order to agree on the way forward. In this regard, we have taken note of the four strategies presented by the Secretary-General and the Group is open to discussing the merits of each of the proposals. We regret, however, the late submission of the report which seriously hampers any detailed consideration and therefore it is hardly possible for a determination to be made so close to the end of the main session and with the very heavy work schedule still to be completed by this Committee.

In addition to the time constraints, it is recognized also that more detailed information would be required on the proposed strategies in order to take an informed decision on a particular option. The ACABQ points out, for example, strategy III which involves the construction of a new permanent office building on the North Lawn and which could possibly have more long-term advantages.

These factors and other related questions, Mr. Chairman, would unfortunately not facilitate a decision during the main part of this session. Conscious, however, of the urgency of the project, the Group is prepared to take up the issue with highest priority in the first resumed session. We would nevertheless be prepared at this time to consider any appropriation that may be required, without prejudging any of the strategies that will be chosen for the CMP.

With respect to financing options, the Group would like to know the current status of the loan offer by the host country, while reaffirming, however, the approach for direct assessment of Member States.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group takes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to the CMP and the urgent need to commence implementation in order to resolve the unacceptable health and safety deficiencies of the UN Headquarters.

I thank you.

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