



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. MOHAMED FOUAD, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 136: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2018-2019: PROGRESS IN THE RENOVATION OF AFRICA HALL AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW OFFICE FACILITIES AT THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA IN ADDIS ABABA AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 7 December 2018)

Madame Chairperson,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 136: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019, Progress in the Renovation of the Africa Hall and the Construction of the New Office Facilities at the Economic Commission of Africa.
2. The Group would like to thank Mr. Christian Saunders, Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Central Support Services, and Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing their respective reports.
3. The Group of 77 and China expresses its gratitude to the Government of Ethiopia for the continued support to the ECA. We trust that the Secretary-General will take necessary steps to strengthen further engagements with the host country for the successful completion of the project and beyond.
4. The Group notes with satisfaction the effective conclusion of the construction project of the New Office Facilities (the Zambezi Building) in the ECA compound during the third quarter of 2017 at the approved cost of \$15,333,200. This project had included improvements to the facility's access, safety as well as the construction of a generator house. We believe the standard set by the project will be exemplary to improve other facilities in the ECA compound.
5. The Group looks forward after the completion of the Zambezi building in addition to its related ancillary works, to closing this project. We'll be interested in receiving an update in this regard as well as further information including lessons learnt during informal deliberation.

Madame Chairperson,

6. Turning to the Africa Hall project, the Group reiterates the historical significance of the Africa Hall and the importance to conserve the heritage of this landmark site. It is crucial to renovate the building in a manner that respects the original design and appearance of spaces while ensuring compliance with best practices with respect to current international building standards and codes.
7. The Group attaches great importance to project accountability and takes note in this regard of the third annual audit conducted by the OIOS earlier this year. We will be interested to learn more during informal consultations about steps taken to implement these recommendations.
8. We are particularly pleased with the cooperation Collaboration between ECA and the host country Government that resulted in the signature of a project-specific agreement that between the United Nations and the Government of Ethiopia that sets out the operational arrangements for

ensuring smooth and rapid processing through customs and importation of materials, while also conferring other privileges related to project implementation.

9. With respect to the visitor centre, the Group reiterates its position that admission options should be aligned with the need to ensure accessibility to students, academics, residents and tourists regardless of the capacity to pay. We will explore these options in our discussions in the ensuing informal consultations.

10. The Group of G77 and China welcomes cooperation between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the African Union, and the host country Government for defining specific themes for the proposed permanent exhibition spaces, especially in terms preserving the historical aspects of Africa Hall.

Madam Chairperson,

11. The Group commends member states that provided voluntary contributions to the project and welcomes the establishment of the trust fund to account for Voluntary and in-kind Contributions. In this connection, the Group of G77 and China appreciates ECA's efforts of developing a comprehensive strategy and an action plan to mobilize resources from the private sector. We encourage the Secretary-General to continue his engagement with all Member States to seek voluntary contributions and other forms of support for the renovation of Africa Hall.

12. With respect to risk management, the Group takes note of the result of the quantitative risks analysis simulation and trusts that the Secretary-General will take the necessary mitigation measures to ensure that total cost of the project through its completion in 2021 will remain within budget.

Madam Chairperson,

13. In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China supports the appropriation of the funds proposed by the Secretary-General for project activities in 2019 and stands ready to engage constructively during the informal deliberations with all stakeholders with a view to conclude this agenda item in a timely manner.

I thank you.