



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, FIFTH ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT ON THE STRATEGIC HERITAGE PLAN OF THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 16 November 2018)

Madame Chair,

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, in particular on the Strategic Heritage Plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva.
2. At the outset, the Group would like to thank Mr. Christian Saunders, Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Central Support Services for introducing the Secretary-General's fifth annual progress report on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva ; Mr. Bernard Holstein, Deputy Director, External Audit - Germany, United Nations Board of Auditors for introducing the Board's report, and Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing its respective report on this agenda item.

Madame Chair,

3. The Group of 77 and China wishes to welcome the fifth progress report of the Secretary-General on the Strategic Heritage Plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva. The Group further welcomes the second report of the Board of Auditors and will seek further clarity on the status of implementation of the recommendations during the informal consultations.
4. The Group notes the progress made during the past year, including the awarding and signing of a contract and the start and continuation of construction works for the new permanent building H, and the completion of the works to reinforce the roof slab of the underground car park in building E.
5. However, the Group is concerned by the delays to the project and emphasises the need for comprehensive mitigation measures in order to ensure the project is completed on time and within budget. In this regard, the Group will seek further information on related projects and assessments that may impact on the scope and budget of the Strategic Heritage Plan, including the security master plan and maintenance plan for the United Nations Office in Geneva.
6. The Group looks forward to the launching of the tender for the renovation of the 1930s historic buildings during this last quarter of 2018. In this regard, the Group notes the outreach made through permanent missions, business seminars, international industry forums and advertisements on the United Nations Global Marketplace to attract the best possible pool of international bidders.
7. The Group welcomes the voluntary contribution by the Government of China and encourages other member states to finance projects within the scope of the Strategic Heritage Plan, particularly in preserving the heritage of the Palais des Nations.

Madame Chair,

8. With regard to the implementation of flexible workplace strategies, the Group notes that the General Assembly supported flexible workplace in the new buildings and called for the preservation of the heritage of the Palais des Nations. The report of the Secretary-General again notes the technical challenges of implementing flexible workplace in the Palais and the Group will explore the new proposals in this context, particularly the significant increase in consultancy costs due to the technical challenges of renovation in the Palais. The Group will also seek further clarity on the current and future space needs of the Organisation during the informal consultations, including concrete details on the interest of entities in moving to the campus in the future.

9. The Group welcomes the study by the United Nations Office in Geneva on the impact of climate change on the operations of the Organisation. The Group remains committed to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and looks forward to receiving more information on the impact of climate change on United Nations operations globally and mitigation measures in this regard. The Group notes that a proposal has been made in this regard to introduce mechanical ventilation with cooling as part of an extended scope of the Strategic Heritage Plan. The Group will seek further clarity on the business case for this proposal as well as other alternative environmentally friendly measures that could be implemented.

Madame Chair,

10. The Group emphasizes that the time has come to make a decision on the scheme and currency of appropriation and assessment of this major construction project, as well as on the establishment of a multi-year special account. The Group believes that the best practices of previous large and most complex projects should be applied to the Strategic Heritage Plan.

Madame Chair,

11. In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China stands ready to engage constructively during the informal deliberations on this agenda item.

I thank you, Madame Chair.