



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MS. LOURDES PEREIRA SOTOMAYOR, FIRST SECRETARY, PERMANENT MISSION OF ECUADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 136: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2018-2019, FOURTH 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-SECOND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 29 November 2017)

Mr. 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 (SHP).
2. At the outset, the Group would like to thank Mr. Clemens Adams, Director, Division of Administration, UN Office at Geneva, for introducing the Secretary-General's fourth annual progress report on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva (A/72/521), and Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), for introducing the respective report on this agenda item (A/72/7/Add.25).

Mr. Chair,

3. The Group of 77 and China wishes to welcome the fourth progress report of the Secretary-General on the Strategic Heritage Plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva. It contains further information requested by the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/71/272 A and provides updated information on flexible workplace strategies, cost estimates and alternative funding mechanisms, including the utilization of future rental income and progress on the valorization of United Nations-owned land.
4. The Group takes note of the changes in the governance and oversight of the project and looks forward to receiving updates on the efficiencies these changes will bring on board as well as the risk mitigation measures that have been put in place.
5. The Group also notes the progress made during the past year, including the commencement of construction works in through an early works package for the new permanent building H; the conclusion of the procurement process for the new building H and the contract award for the construction contract; the issuance of contracts for the further detailed design work for the renovation phase; and the further development within the renovation design of measures to eliminate physical, communications and technical barriers to persons with disabilities and looks forward to a detailed discussion of this phase.

Mr. Chair,

6. The Group looks forward to hearing from the Secretariat about the measures undertaken to address the slippage in the overall schedule, and emphasises that the importance of adhering to the project timeline to mitigate the escalation of the initial project costs as rightly pointed out in the

report of the Advisory Committee.

7. The Group also takes note of the concept of Smart Working which seeks to allocate more staff to the same working space and to increase the overall number of staff to be accommodated by 400 and will seek to understand why this concept is proved to be important whilst the staff occupancy of the existing work space stood at only 51 per cent.

8. While taking note of the importance of staff comfort in a well ventilated, air conditioned space and best environmental practices, the Group notes that it is important to ensure that the project remains within the allotted budget estimates especially considering that the majority of members are constrained in ably meeting the increasing budget assessments.

Mr. Chair,

9. The Group wishes to reiterate the concerns of the Advisory Committee, which noted that the base project costs have increased by 13.4 per cent, from SwF 649,000,000 to SwF 736,103,000, and that the decrease in contingencies from SwF 108,470,000 to SwF 70,845,000 has not resulted in a decrease in the overall project costs, which have remained at the same level". The Group will need to seek further information from the Secretariat how the cost increase is going to be absorbed within the approved resources levels.

10. Bearing in mind the precedents set by and experiences drawn from past major projects, the Group looks forward to considering the scheme and currency of appropriation and assessment for the project, a multi-year special account for the Heritage plan and the proposal to have valorisation income.

Mr. Chair

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

I thank you, Mr. Chair.