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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE FEDERAL
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statment

By

H.E. Ambassador Aman Hassan

Deputy Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic

Republic of Ethiopia

On Agenda Item 137: Pattern of Conferences

At the Fifth Committee of the 66th Session of the United Nations General

Assembly

New York,

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Mr. Chairman,

Since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time, let me start by extending my warmest congratulations to you on your election to chair the Fifth Committee. My felicitation also goes to the members of the bureau. We have every confidence in your wisdom and ability to guide successfully the complex and challenging work of this Committee.

Likewise, Mr. Chairperson, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to Ms. Woineshet Tadesse, Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences for the lucid presentation of the report on the activities of the Committee as contained in document A/66/32. Our gratitude also goes to Mr. Shaaban Muhammad Shaaban, the Under-Secretary-General for the General Assembly and Conferences Management for the elaborate presentation of the Secretary-General's report on the pattern of conferences Committee as contained in document A/66/118 and Corrigendum 1 as well as Mr. Collen Kelapile, Chairperson of the ACABQ for presenting the Committee's report as contained in document A/66/397.

My delegation wishes to associate itself with the Statements made by distinguished representatives of Argentina and Cote D'Ivoire on behalf of the Group of G-77 and China and Africa respectively.

We greatly admire the work done by the Committee on Conferences and wish to commend the Committee for the exemplary initiative it took to make the Committee's work paper smart.

Mr. Chairman,

We are taking the floor to make brief remarks on the agenda item under discussion, with particular focus on the Conference Center at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, in Addis Ababa. My delegation takes note of the marketing activities by the Secretary-General aimed at increasing the occupancy rate of the Conference Center at the UNECA as explained in paragraph 17 and 18 of document A/66/118. The continued promotional activities, such as participation in high profile international conventions and exhibitions as well as featuring the center in annual publications and websites of those well-known global organizations involved in conference and exhibition marketing should be commended. We also wish to congratulate the leadership of the ECA for establishing partnerships with the Addis Ababa Tourism Commission, Ethiopian Airlines and other stakeholders to promote Addis Ababa as a conference and tourism destination.

However, Mr. Chairman, we wish to express our concern that the utilization rate of the conference center at the Economic Commission for Africa has significantly dropped from 76 per cent in 2008 and 2009 to 70 per cent in 2010. This considerable reduction in utilization clearly indicates that much needs to be done in improving the current utilization rate so as to reach the benchmark of 80 percent. It is also regrettable to note that the ECA conference facilities are not getting the appropriate maintenance. Unless rectified, I am afraid the conference center will be less competitive.

The construction boom in Addis Ababa, which includes state of the art conference facilities, makes the need for aggressive and innovative marketing as well as timely maintenance of the center even more important than ever before. We strongly believe that the United Nations system has yet to fully exhaust all available options to increase the utilization rate of the Conference Center as requested by resolution 65/245 of the General Assembly.

In this regard, we are of the view that important lessons can certainly be drawn from the management experience of other UN Conference Centers that are located in cities where there are higher number of alternative and competitive conference facilities. I also wish to raise the issue of the need to renovate the African Hall, which occupies a unique place in Africa's political history. In this regard, we wish to recall resolution 65/259, section III, paragraph 3, which called on the Secretary-General to expeditiously assess the status of conference facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa, in particular Africa Hall and Conference Room 1, to ensure that they are in strict

compliance with the highest international standards for conference facilities, and to report thereon in the context of his annual progress report on the construction of additional conference facilities at the Commission. We look forward to consider this report under the relevant agenda item.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation, finally, would like to request the Department of General Assembly Conference Management, in collaboration with the leadership of the ECA, to continue to explore all available means to enhance the occupancy rate of the Conference Center and maintain excellent standards in order to remain competitive. It is our considered view that clear strategies should be devised in order to achieve the above stated objectives as well as the required resources that are needed to maintain the competitiveness of the Conference Centre.

Thank you for your attention!