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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP BY  
MR. JUSTIN KISOKA, MINISTER COUNSELOR IN THE PERMANENT  
MISSION OF UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA TO THE UNITED  
NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM134: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET  
FOR THE BIENNIUM, 2016-2017: PROGRESS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF  
NEW OFFICE FACILITIES AT ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA IN  
ADDIS ABABA AND UPDATE OF THE RENOVATION OF CONFERENCE  
FACILITIES, INCLUDING AFRICA HALL AT THE MAIN PART OF THE  
SEVENTH SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED  
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
(New York, 1 December, 2015)**

**Mr. Chairman,**

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the African Group on agenda item134: Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017 in particular the progress in the construction of New Office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa and the updates on the renovation of conference facilities, including the Africa Hall.

The African Group aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Republic of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and we have few additions to make.

At the outset the Group would like to thank Mr. Stephen Cutts, Assistant Secretary-General for the Office of Central Support Service for introducing the report of the Secretary General on the progress of the construction of New Office Facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa and for the update on the renovation of conference facilities ,including Africa Hall, contained in document A/70/363.The Group would also like to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative for introducing the related report of that committee as contained in document A/70/7/Add.21.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The Group congratulates the Secretary General and his team for their dedicated efforts and commitments that contributed to the substantial completion of the construction of the new office facilities of Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa which is named after the fourth longest river of Africa, the Zambezi. The Group has also taken note with satisfaction the full functioning of the building which houses five United Nations entities, with over 650 staff.

The African Group also commends the support of the Government of Ethiopia that has contributed for the successful completion of the project as well as the support to the work of the United Nations and other regional and multilateral entities based in Addis Ababa.

The Group acknowledges that past construction projects had encountered significant delays, partly because of insufficient managerial attention and other factors that are beyond once control. In this connection, the African Group further notes the lessons learned from the construction of the new office facilities of the Commission as well as those implemented in the region such as at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and ongoing project in Arusha should be taken into consideration in the renovation of the African Hall and other conference facilities.

**Mr. Chairman,**

With regard to the renovation of the African Hall, the Group recalls by paragraph 3 of Section III of resolution 65/259, the Assembly stressed the need to assess the situation of the Africa Hall and Conference no 1, to ensure that they are in strict compliance with the highest international standards for conference facilities. The Group also recalls the General Assembly resolution 69/262 which recognized the historical significance of the Africa Hall. It is a historic project that symbolizes the abiding ties among African Nations and the global community at large.

The African Group notes with appreciation the ongoing preparations to ensure proper planning, which should facilitate timely completion of the project and urges that the time frame be kept under continuous review to explore the possibility for shortening the duration than the current planning assumptions.

The Group further notes the need for structured and continuous communication and coordination between the headquarters on one hand and the Commission on the hand as well with other key stakeholders to ensure successful completion of the project.

The Group has also taken note and supports a number of proposed elements including resource level in the amount of US\$ 56 million. The Group also in supports of the Advisory Committee's recommendation on the establishment of separate and multi-year account for the project for effective monitoring and governance.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Turning to the Visiter Center, the African Group would like to stress that there are many qualitative and quantitative benefits accrued on the visits of UN

facilities by stakeholders including general public, academia, researchers and delegates and we would like to remind that the United Nations is not-for-profit entity and Secretary General should avoid any plan that will make the organization a 'for-profit' entity. The Group stand ready to elaborate our views on this matter during informal consultations.

Before I conclude we would like to stresses that the renovation of the Africa Hall has to take into account the use local knowledge and capacity, enforce oversight, governance and accountability as well as preservation of unique historical elements of the facilities.

The Group reaffirms that it attaches high significance to this project and reiterates its readiness to engage constructively on deliberations on this agenda item with the aim of concluding the item in a timely manner.

**I thank you, Mr. Chairman.**