



Statement on behalf of the Member States of the European Union

By

Mr. Jan De Preter

First Counsellor at the European Union Delegation to the United Nations

70th Session of the General Assembly

Fifth Committee

Item 134 j: Flexible Workplace Arrangements at the UNHQ

First Resumed Session

United Nations

New York

14 March 2016

As Delivered

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Member States of the European Union on agenda item 134 j: Flexible Workplace Arrangements at the UNHD.

At the outset, we would like to thank Mr. Stephen Cutts, Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services, for his introduction of the report of the Secretary-General and Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budget Questions (ACABQ), for his introduction of the related report.

We also would like to re-emphasize our position on the importance of timely submissions of all required documentation in all official languages to facilitate the quality and speed of our discussions. We are therefore concerned about the late issuance of the related reports on this issue and urge the Secretariat to perform necessary corrective actions in this regard.

Mr Chairman,

Member States of the European Union welcome all proposals by the Secretary General that aim at making this Organization more modern, adaptable and effective. We believe that the implementation of flexible workplace strategies is one of them.

We have therefore continually urged the Secretariat to implement this strategy in New York as well as in current and planned construction and renovation projects. We believe that flexible workplace strategies should be taken into account as early as possible in the design phase of such projects and deeply regret the missed opportunity of the Capital Master Plan in this regard. We believe, in particular, that the approval of the Strategic Heritage Plan in Geneva is a good opportunity to make this strategy work in a cost effective way.

Mr Chairman,

At the same time last year, Member States of the European Union demonstrated their support of the Secretary General's proposal on the implementation of flexible workplace strategies within the United Nations Headquarters in New-York. The General Assembly then approved a specific project, linked to a specific business case.

Mr Chairman

The Member States of the European Union attach great importance to budgetary discipline and proper budgetary procedures. In the report on the updated project presented to us, we note some concerning changes which need to be clarified in order for us to renew our support. These include the updated scope of the project, the revised real estate plans including the number of buildings that will be vacated and the additional financial requirements. In addition, based on the preliminary findings of the pilot project which ended this January, we look forward to hearing

from the Secretariat about the impact of flexible workplace on the overall productivity and well-being of staff.

Mr Chairman,

The Member States of the European Union would like to assure you of our readiness to engage constructively in the upcoming discussions with the aim of concluding this agenda item in a timely fashion.

I thank you,

Mr. Chairman