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**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP BY  
MR. JUSTIN KISOKA, MINISTER COUNSELLOR AT THE  
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF  
TANZANIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON AGENDA ITEM 137:  
PATTERN OF CONFERENCES AT THE MAIN PART OF THE  
SEVENTIETH SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
[New York, 21 October 2015]**

**Mr. Chairman,**

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Africa Group on agenda item 137 entitled "Pattern of Conferences".

At the outset, the Group would like to thank Mr. Marcelo Eliseo Scappini Ricciardi, Chairperson of the Committee on Conferences for 2015, Mr. Tegegnetwork Gettu Under-Secretary General for General Assembly and Conference Management as well as Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for introducing the respective reports under this agenda item.

The Group aligns itself with remarks made by the representative of the Republic of South Africa on behalf of Group of 77 and China.

**Mr. Chairman,**

The African Group welcomes the outcome of the work of the Committee on Conferences at its 2015 substantive session and wish to commend the Committee for the high quality report which contain useful and important recommendations including those outlined in the proposed draft resolution which we believe will greatly facilitate the Fifth Committees deliberation on this important agenda item.

The Group would like to reaffirms its attachment on the importance to the principle of multilingualism in the organization and in this regard we would like to stress the need for promotion of this principle for effective delivery of quality conference services, in line with the equal treatment of the six official languages of the United Nations. The Group continue to pay close attention to the issues

related to utilization of conference services, documentation and publication matters, translation and interpretation, career development, as well as the calendar of conferences and meetings for the effective and efficient functioning of the Organization in particular the deliberations of the intergovernmental bodies.

**Mr. Chairman,**

With regard to the conference utilization, the group has taken note with satisfaction that, the overall utilization factor at the four main duty stations in 2014 was above the established benchmark of 80 per cent and we welcome the efforts undertaken to increase the utilization rates of conference-servicing resources.

The Group would like to urge those intergovernmental bodies whose average utilization factor has for the past years been below the benchmark of 80 per cent to take appropriate measures including proper planning of their future sessions in order to achieve that benchmark.

The African Group welcomes the ongoing efforts and initiatives including the marketing strategy aimed at improving the utilization of the conference facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa, and in this regard encourages the Secretary General to continue his efforts including modernization of the [conference] facilities in particular the Africa Hall. The Group would like also to stress the need for the Organization to continue to modernize other facilities at all duty stations in particular at the UN Office in Nairobi. The Group will follow on these issues during our informal deliberations.

With regard to the use of United Nations premises, the African Group shares the concern of the Group of 77 and China that the United Nations conference facilities and premises should be used only for the activities that promote multilateralism and in line with the objective of the organization. We strongly discourage any activities including those by the non-governmental organizations and other non-state actors that are in contradiction with the values and principles of the Organization including those which undermine the efforts of any of the Member States. The Group would like to request the Secretary General to ensure that, the use of conference and UN facilities are in strict compliance with the established principles related to the use of those

facilities. The Group will continue to monitor this matter in different fora.

**Mr. Chairman,**

With regard to the digitization of important older documents, the African Group has taken good note of the deliberations conducted in the Committee of Conferences. We welcome the work conducted so far by the Department of Public Information under extra-budgetary arrangement.

The Group would also like to stress the need for timely presentation of the comprehensive proposal on the digitization of all important UN documents including parliamentary documents at all duty stations. We look forward to consider this matter favorably at the seventy-first session.

With regard to the careers development, the African Group notes the difficulties in identifying and retaining qualified language professionals and the need to replenish the pool of language experts in order to prevent further negative impact on the capacity of the organization to provide services in the six official languages of the United Nations. We would therefore like to encourage the continued effort including enhancing partnership with Universities in Africa as well as internship programme at the United Nations Offices including in Addis Ababa and Nairobi.

In conclusion, the African Group would like to assure you of the Group's readiness to engage constructively during the deliberations of this important agenda item.

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