

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP BY MR.  
ABDALLAH BACHAR BONG OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF  
CHAD TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM134:  
PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM, 2016-2017:  
CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY MANAGENET AT THE  
ECONOMIC COMMCION FOR AFRICA IN ADDIS ABABA AND THE  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMISSION FOR ASIA PACIFIC IN  
BANGKOK, AT THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTH SESSION OF  
THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY**

(New York, 1st November, 2016)

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**Madam Chair,**

**1.** I have the honor to speak on behalf of the African Group on agenda item134: Programme Budget for the Biennium 2016-2017: Construction and property Management in particular (i) the progress in the construction of the new office facilities and the updates on the renovation of conference facilities, including the Africa Hall at Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa and (ii) proposal for the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific premises in Bangkok.

**2.** 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 reports of the Secretary General as well as Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee for introducing the related reports on this subject. We would like to send our appreciation to the governments and people of Ethiopia and the Kingdom of Thailand for the continued efforts to facilitate the work of the United Nations at the ECA and ESCAP, respectively.

**3.** The Group aligns itself with the remarks by the distinguished representative of the Kingdom of Thailand on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

**Madam Chair,**

**4.** With regard to the Economic Commission for Africa, the Group has taken note of the progress made on the ancillary work on the new office facilities and we would like to emphasize the need for finalization of the remaining work in a timely manner and within approved resources.

**5.** The African Group has also taken note on the finding of the oversight coverage by the Office for Internal Oversight Services of which partially satisfactory rating was awarded. The Group stresses the need for timely implementation of all the recommendations of the Office including by ensuring that risks are identified and managed so as to avoid re-occurrence of the identified weakness. The Group will follow up on specific elements on these matters during our informal consultations.

**Madam Chair,**

**6.** Turning to the renovation of the Africa Hall, the group recalls that, by section IX of its resolution 70/248 A, the General Assembly approved the project scope, schedule and maximum overall costs in the amount of US\$ 56.9 million for the Africa Hall.

**7.** The Group recalls that the project schedule was formulated with five main stages namely preparation, Design, Pre-Construction, Construction and Project Close-Out and that first and second stage has been completed while the third stage has been initiated.

**8.** The Group notes that formal expression of interest has been issued for stage 4 and that selection of eligible bidders is forecasted to take place by the end of the year. The Group has also taken note

with concern on the slippage of the project implementation due to contract negotiation and we would like to emphasize the need for continued efforts to ensure the time lost is recovered without undermining the quality and scope of the project.

**9.** With regard to the cost element, the Group notes that as result of splitting the construction phase into two parts, the Secretary General is proposing the revised cost plan for 2016-2017. The Group will be interested to learn the details of the proposed approach as connected to the mandate implementation, and we remain of the strong views that any unspent balance in the current biennium should be retained to the approved *multi-year construction-in-progress account* approved in paragraph 27, Section IX of General Assembly resolution 70/248 A.

**Madam Chair,**

**10.** On the matter related to project governance, the African Group welcomes the progress made including the finalization of the term of reference of the Stakeholders Committee, and the definition of the draft terms of reference for the Advisory Board and we would like to emphasize the need for timely establishment of the Stakeholders Committee and the Advisory Board in order to strengthen the governance arrangement for the renovation of the Africa Hall.

**11.** The Group would also like to emphasize the need for maximization the use of in-house expertise and institutional memory in the project implementation. Furthermore, we stress the need for the project to preserving the historic and architectural elements of the Hall. The Group will be keen to learn how these elements have been factored in the governance arrangement.

**12.** The African Group welcomes the voluntary contributions made to the project including from the Government of Mali and Switzerland. The Group notes the adopted a 3-tired strategy to solicit voluntary contributions which provide the host country,

African Member States and the African Union first opportunity to show ownership of the project.

**13.** The Group also notes that the second and third tiers will target the rest of the UN Member States private entities respectively. We would like to encourage continued efforts in raising voluntary contributions in line with given mandates and established policy, procedures, rules and regulations of the Organization.

**Madam Chair,**

**14.** The Group has also taken note of the information provided by the Secretary General as well as comments and observations of the Advisory Committee related to the visitor center and project number of visitors. The Group would like to emphasize that the operation of the visitor Center should not be treated on profit-orientated motive since the UN is not for profit organization. The Group will also be interested to learn the details of the renovation of the Conference facilities as well as management of the entire facilities at the ECA as connected to attracting higher utilization in the center.

**Madam Chair,**

**15.** Turning to Economic and Social Commission in Asia and Pacific, the African Group welcomes the Secretary General's proposal for the seismic mitigation retrofit and lifecycle replacements project in Bangkok, Thailand with supportive on the merit of Option C as the most viable option for the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project at ESCAP.

**16.** The Group engagement will be aimed at approving the maximum budget in the amount of US\$ 40.02 million, project scope, timeframe, and *multi-year construction in-progress account* for the effective and efficient implementation of the project. The Group will also be in advocating the establishment of the strong oversight, governance and accountability arrangement at the earliest stage of the project so as to ensure risks are identified and managed properly.

**17.** In conclusion, allow me to assure you of the African Group readiness to engage constructively with other delegations with the view to finalizing the consideration of the subjects under the agenda in timely manner.

I thank you,