

Check against Delivery

Remarks

By

H.E. Ambassador Mahlet Hailu

**Deputy Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic
Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations**

At

**The Fifth Committee on the Proposed Programme Budget for
the Biennium 2016-2017: Construction and Property
Management at the Economic Commission for Africa and the
Economic and Social Commission for Asia Pacific**

1 November 2016

New York

Madam Chairperson,

I wish thank Mr. Stephen Cutts, Assistant Secretary General for the Office of Central Support Service, and Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chairman of the ACABQ, for introducing the reports under consideration. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representatives of the Africa Group as well as G-77 and China.

Madam Chairperson,

I wish to note our satisfaction with the progress made in the completion of the New Office Facilities of the ECA, the Zambezi Building, which is confirmed by the reports of the SG and the ACABQ. Ethiopia spared no effort to ensure the successful completion of the project. We have witnessed how convenient the working environment became after the completion of the project. Let me add here there was a significant cost savings for the organization.

We are also aware that the one-year defects liability period, during which the contractor spent significant financial resources to respond to claims for correction after occupancy, has yielded benefits to the owner of the project. It is necessary to note with appreciation

the completion of the ancillary projects in due time for the major Conference of Financing for Development, held at ECA in July 2015. This would have not been possible without the strong support of my government.

I would also like to note that an independent assessment team was commissioned by the ECA to provide the necessary evaluation and verification of the project, with reference to the terms and specifications of the contract. The report of the SG showed that the independent body has confirmed that neither the Contractor nor the Consultant Design Firm had breached the contract. It is time that the SG ensured completion of all claims of correction, and paid the contractor funds held, in the amount of 5 per cent of the agreed contract that is 468,370 US dollars. It is necessary to judiciously consider cost implications on the side of the contract, and bring the project to closure.

Madam Chairperson,

Regarding the renovation of the historic Africa Hall, as approved by the General Assembly last year, we note with satisfaction that the first two of the five stages of the project, namely the preparation and

design works, are now successfully completed. We trust that the pre-construction and construction stage negotiations will be concluded according to the schedule, in order to avoid unnecessary delays. Both ECA and the Headquarters in New York should benefit from past experiences, and exercise necessary caution to remain within the approved time frame. We believe that the delay in recruitment is hard to justify, and similar practices in procurement should be avoided at all costs.

The importance of this renovation project cannot be overemphasized, both in terms of its historical significance and in rendering the facility compatible with established health and safety standards for delegates and staff alike. It is, therefore, imperative that member States support the project financially, and in-kind. ECA should, in this regard, exert further efforts to mobilize support from African countries, African entities, partners. On our part, I would like to assure you that we will do everything possible to support this important project.

Let me highlight one important component of the project and that is the business aspect of the Visitor's Center. I would like to

emphasize that, without doubt, the Visitors' Centre business side should not be seen in isolation, because it is part and parcel of the Africa Hall revamping effort. Indeed, the Africa Hall being re-crafted into a heritage center, which will bring together history and modernity, as it will include a state-of-the-art conference venue, a permanent African exhibition, and a museum. The renovated Africa Hall will regain its cultural, historic, and symbolic value, thus becoming a must-see landmark.

The ECA premises, ennobled by the presence of Africa Hall, are fortunately located in close proximity of the Africa Park and the remarkable Jubilee Palace of Emperor Haile Selassie. These adjacent landmarks complement each other, and form an outstanding ensemble, a central identifier of the city of Addis Ababa. Let us therefore not underestimate the powerful significance of this building, which will continue to fascinate because it embodies the vision of modern Africa. We should carefully consider these nuances before questioning the return on investment and the project's sustainability. We believe that it is a project with very high return in the long run. If we want the values embedded in the Africa Hall to

become profitable too, then the Visitors' Centre has to be included in the project, since it will become a prominent destination in Ethiopia, and on the continent.

I wish to conclude, **Madam Chairperson**, by reaffirming the determination of my government to support the successful completion of the project.

I thank you