



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY
MS. LOURDES PEREIRA SOTOMAYOR, FIRST SECRETARY AT THE
PERMANENT MISSION OF ECUADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON
AGENDA ITEM 136: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM 2018-2019: CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT:
ESCAP, DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY SECOND SESSION
OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY (New York, 1 November 2017)**

Mr. Chairman,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 136: Proposed Program Budget for the Biennium 2018-2019: Seismic mitigation retrofit and life cycle replacements at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

2. At the outset, the Group of 77 and China would like to thank Mr. Stephen Cutts, Assistant Secretary-General for the Office of Central Support Services, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the Proposal for the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project at the ESCAP premises in Bangkok. The Group would also like to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing its related report.

Mr. Chairman,

3. Consideration of the capital projects in United Nations duty stations, ESCAP within this context, is a priority for the Group. The Group emphasizes the need for the Organization to continue to address the health and safety of staff and visitors at all premises in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the Organization as well as the participation of Member States, and to avoid any potential loss of life and damage.

4. The Group wishes to express its appreciation to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Thailand for its continual support to the Commission and other multilateral bodies within the region.

5. In this regard, the Group wishes to indicate that it holds a positive expectation with respect to the discussions being held for a provisional office to be used as an off-site swing space to temporarily accommodate UN staff. The Group trusts that the study of swing space requirements would include cost-benefit analysis of off-site vis-à-vis on-site options as well as their operational feasibility.

6. Additionally, the Group is appreciative of the host government's liaison work with local entities as well as of its in-kind contributions to the work of the Commission.

7. In this regard, the Group encourages the Secretary-General to continue his interactions between the Organization and the host country throughout implementation of the project.

8. The Group also encourages the Secretary-General to continue engaging with Member States to seek voluntary contributions for the project.

Mr. Chairman,

9. The importance of accessibility in all UN capital projects, including that of ESCAP, is not subject to compromise. In this connection, the Group of 77 and China urges the ESCAP project to finalize its compound-wide accessibility assessment while ensuring conformity with UN and global best practices as well as with requirements of General Assembly resolution 70/170.

10. Further regard to staff welfare and productivity should be taken in the context of flexible workplace strategies. While undertaking this initiative, the Group believes that stakeholder feedback and local context ought to be taken into account with a view to concretizing this initiative beyond the pilot project.

11. The Group wishes to encourage the use of local materials and construction techniques as it believes this would introduce the added value of cost efficiency. Also of critical importance to the Group in the project planning and implementation are the elements of energy efficiency and greening. We anticipate progress in this regard and a report thereof.

12. With regard to project management, the Group takes note of efforts to realize efficiencies, in particular, the cost shared with the Africa Hall project of the Economic Commission of Africa on the P4 position of Project Coordinator located in the Office of Central Support Services at HQ. The Group requests the Secretary-General to continue exploring avenues of possible synergies that would enable the optimal use of resources.

13. The Group would also like to acknowledge the extensive outreach efforts of ESCAP to attract qualified female candidates and encourage such measures in future endeavors.

Mr. Chairman,

14. The Group is of the conviction that adherence to the project schedule is important for the timely completion of the project and particularly within the approved cost plan. In this connection, the Group expects that expedite action will be taken on the final contract negotiations with both of the recommended bidders for the lead consultant firm and the independent risk management firm. The Group requests that the next progress report include methodology used in determining the project schedule, including details involving any revisions to the schedule.

15. Going forward, the group reiterates that all efforts be made to ensure accurate budget planning and management.

16. Also, the Group requests the Secretary-General to refine the estimation of project contingencies by using the identification of risks associated with the different phases of the project as a basis. As part of the Group's anticipation of transparency in

reporting, the Secretary-General is requested to include in his next progress report, a clear separation of estimated contingencies from the base project cost.

17. The Group attaches great importance to the project governance and oversight as a key driver of the successful implementation of this project. In this regard, guidance, interaction and close coordination between the Secretariat in New York, including the Office of Central Support Services (OCSS), and the Commission in Bangkok, with clear reporting lines, remain essential for the smooth implementation of the project.

18. In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China would like to assure you of our continued commitment to work constructively with other delegations and to engage in constructive deliberations on this item in order to reach a positive outcome in a timely manner.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.