

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICA GROUP BY MR. KATLEGO MMALANE, FIRST SECRETARY, PERMANENT MISSION OF BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON AGENDA ITEM 135: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR 2020 PROGRESS IN THE RENOVATION OF AFRICA HALL AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW OFFICE FACILITIES AT THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA IN ADDIS ABABA AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(NEW YORK, 6 DECEMBER 2019)

Mr Chairperson,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the African Group on agenda item 135: Proposed program budget for 2020, Progress in the Renovation of Africa Hall and the Construction of New Office Facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa. The African Group associates itself with the statement delivered by the State of Palestine on behalf of G77 and China.
2. The Group wishes to express its appreciation to ... and Mr Cihan Terzi, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing the related reports.

Mr Chair,

3. The Group attaches great importance to the Renovation Project of the historic Africa Hall as it holds symbolic significance as a historic African landmark.
4. At the outset, the African Group wishes in this regard to express its gratitude to the Government of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia for its continued support to the ECA, including the donation of the historic Hall and the operational arrangements conferring privileges and immunities related to the implementation of the project, as well as soon-to-be signed agreements concerning the use, at no cost, of a vehicle parking for a duration of 60 years, with the possibility of an extension of this time period.

5. It is our sincere belief that the Secretary-General will continue to work with the host country to ensure the success of the renovation project.
6. The Group also wishes to welcome the successful completion of the construction of the new office facilities, Zambezi Building, and auxiliary works in September 2018, including the car ramp, and site-specific electrical and sanitary works, which allowed the issuance of the final completion certificate.
7. In this regard, the Group looks forward to further progress pertaining to implementation of the renovation of the Africa Hall at the ECA and hopes that the lessons learned and the experience of setting benchmarks for projects of this nature would be replicated for other UN facilities on the continent.

Mr Chair,

8. The Africa Group appreciates the Secretary General's commitment to ensure the preservation of the historical and architectural integrity of the facility. At the same time, the Group stresses the need to continue to engage key stakeholders, including the host Government, the African Union and UNESCO. In parallel, the Group will seek further information about the utilization of local knowledge, material, technology and capacity throughout the implementation of construction and renovation projects, as requested by Resolution 73/279 A.

Mr Chair,

9. With regard to voluntary contributions, the Group expresses its appreciation to the Republic of Mali for the donation in the amount of \$52.192, despite the multiple challenges that this brotherly country is facing. The Group also welcomes the pledge of a voluntary contribution of the Government of Switzerland and encourages the Secretary-General to continue to engage with other Member States to mobilize further voluntary contributions and other forms of support for the renovation of Africa Hall. In that regard, the group will seek clarification on the intention of ECA to hire a consultant in order to provide expertise and support in developing a detailed resource mobilization plan.

10. With regard to timelines and schedules, while it takes note of the optimism of the Secretary General to be able to deliver to complete the project within the maximum overall budget of \$56.9 million approved by the general Assembly, the African Group reiterates its concern about the slippage by 11 months in connection with the main renovation works and the possible further delay. The Group will seek details about the measures taken in order to avoid the risks and to ensure that the project will be delivered within the approved scope, budget and timeline.

11. Access to larger number of visitors to the Center is of great importance for the African Group. In that regard, we will actively engage for further refining of the business case of the visitors' centre to incorporate different admission options for various visitor groups, especially African veterans, students, academicians, residents and guests from all over the world.

12. In conclusion, **Mr Chair**, the African Group wishes to assure you of our readiness to engage constructively for a successful and consensual outcome of this agenda item.

I thank you,