

REMARKS BY H.E. AMBASSADOR TAYE ASKE-SELASSIE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 135: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2020 PROGRESS ON 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, 06 DECEMBER 2019)

Mr. Chair,

1. As I am taking the floor for the first time at the 74th General Assembly Session of Fifth Committee meeting, I wish to congratulate you and members of the Bureau on assuming this important responsibility. I wish to also assure you of my delegation's fullest cooperation for successful conclusion of the work of the Committee.
2. Let me now turn to my remarks under agenda item 135: Proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2020, Progress in the Renovation of the Africa Hall and the Construction of the New Office Facilities at the Economic Commission of Africa as presented in the Secretary General and ACABQ Reports A/74/328 and A/74/7/Add.19 respectively.
3. I wish to thank and Mr. Cihan Terzi, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing their related reports. My remarks align with the statement just delivered by the Representative of

Republic of Botswana on behalf of the African Group, and the Representative of Observer State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chair,

4. It gives me a great pleasure to note the completion of the construction of the Zambezi Building and the ancillary works. Ethiopia remains committed to support the work of ECA. In this context, we are working closely with the Commission and the project team to facilitate the renovation of the historic Africa Hall. We will provide all the necessary support to ensure the timely completion of the project. In this connection, last year, we signed a project-specific agreement with ECA on customs processing, importation of goods and construction materials, as well as the issuance of visas for expatriates, to facilitate for the timely implementation of the project.
5. We are also ready to sign a lease agreement for the plot of the land as in-kind contribution for the construction of vehicle parking. We see the project as part and parcel of the “Greening Addis Ababa initiative” and we believe, once completed, the Africa Hall would be a great addition to the tourist attraction sites in Africa’s diplomatic capital. *Mr. Chair,* if I may, let me take this opportunity to encourage the ECA and the project team to coordinate with the Addis Ababa City Administration to align the Africa Hall renovation project with the

“*Beautifying Sheger*” initiative and the recent renovation works of the national palace.

Mr. Chair,

6. Let me also echo the calls of the Africa Group on the Visitors Center business case development regarding the need to raise awareness about the significance of the Africa Hall as an African heritage and history, including through partnerships with academic institutions and regional and international museums. We also fully agree that this historic landmark must be open to all categories of visitors, such as tourists, researchers, students and residents and guests, regardless of their ability to pay an entrance fee. It is important that children and students – the future leaders of Africa – be permitted to visit or tour the site through fee exemption.
7. Finally, Mr. Chair, Ethiopia is pursuing a climate-resilient green economy strategy. We encourage the ECA and the project team to ensure the utilization of clean energy sources. It is also my hope that appropriate precautionary measures will be taken during the removal of debris and possible hazardous materials. Equally important, as stated by both Representatives of the Africa Group and the G77 and China, we would like to emphasize the need to use available local knowledge, material, and capacity during renovation and construction works. *I thank you!*