



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA
BY MR. SAED KATKHUDA, SENIOR ADVISER, MISSION OF STATE OF
PALESTINE TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 135: PROPOSED
PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR 2020: PROGRESS ON THE RENOVATION OF THE
NORTH BUILDING AT THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN IN SANTIAGO, CHILE, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE
DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE UN
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(New York, 13 November 2019)**

Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 135: Proposed programme budget for 2020, Construction and property management in particular the progress on the renovation of the North Building at the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

2. At the outset, the Group wishes to thank Mr. Johannes Huisman, Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division, Office of Programme Planning, Finance and Budget, for introducing the first progress report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/74/330. We also thank Ms. Julia Maciel, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for introducing its related report.

Mr. Chair,

3. The Group of 77 and China would like to express its appreciation to the Government of Chile, the host country of ECLAC, for its continued and significant support to the work of the Commission, an important key to successful implementation for this project, and sizes this opportunity to recognize the technical support provided by the host country to the ECLAC project team on integrated building information modelling since the project will be based on that approach. We also recognize the technical support and specific guidelines to develop a plan for reusing or recycling any components following the dismantling of the building. The Group reiterates the importance of close cooperation between the Organization and the host country throughout the planning and implementation of the project. We therefore encourage ECLAC to continue engaging closely with the host country and local authorities throughout the implementation of the project. It is also encouraged that the Secretary-General continues engaging with Member States to seek voluntary contributions and other forms of support for the project.

4. ECLAC is not only a physical presence translated into a building, but it also has a historical presence because it has been an immeasurable source of debate, thought and criticism,

hat has been present in different political moments of the region and has remained a bastion for the developing countries that give life to it. It is widely recognized that for the last seventy years ECLAC has been performing as a regional think tank on a wide variety of development issues, generating evidence-based knowledge for public policy development in the Latin American and Caribbean region. The Commission has built an impressive intellectual capability, networking and in-depth understanding of the region development actors, challenges and potentials.

5. In this line, the Group welcomes the overall progress on the implementation of the project since the issuance of the previous report. The Group attaches importance to risk management and notes the report by Secretary-General that there remains a relatively low level of confidence that the project will be completed within the approved budget. In line with the recommendations made by the ACABQ, we urge the Secretary-General to closely monitor and adopt the necessary measures to mitigate risk in a timely manner in order to ensure successful implementation of the project in 2023.

6. In relation with the planned seismic mitigation measures, the Group welcomes the lines of communication between ECLAC and ESCAP and ECA as capital projects that facing similar challenges, and encourage continuing with this effort. As well as trusts that detail information on set seismic mitigation measures will be received it in future progress reports on the renovation of the ECLAC North Building.

7. The Group confers great importance to 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 Santiago, with clear reporting lines, remain essential for the smooth implementation of the project.

8. Keeping in mind the importance of energy efficiency and cost effectiveness, the Group joins the Advisory Committee in welcoming the planned renovation of the ECLAC North Building as a sustainable and energy-efficient, net-zero building and looks forward to receiving more detailed information on this matter in the next progress report of the Secretary General.

9. Regarding the project accountability the Group would like to express our appreciation for the work of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and its guidance as well as our placement to know that its recommendations as a result of its 2018 audit have been implemented and completed and we trust that it will continue to do the same this year.

10. The Group notes the specific observations, comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee, including, for example those related to the safety concerns with respect to the North Building also pertain to fire protection and egress and that the three-level underground garage structure shall continue observance of the current seismic safety codes as well as with respect of the use of locally sourced and manufactured materials and labour.

Mr. Chair,

11. The Group of 77 and China welcomes the Advisory Committee's recommendation and supports the-Secretary-General's proposal for the project in 2020.

12. Finally, the Group emphasizes the need to continue addressing health and safety issues of the staff and visitors across all UN premises in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the Organization as well as ensuring more efficient building performance, energy conservation and space utilization. We also emphasize that it is imperative to support successful implementation of other construction and property management projects under this agenda item. In this regard, we reiterate that the capital projects in the UN Office in Nairobi (UNON), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago and the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok, remain a priority for the Group.

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

Thanks Mr. Chair.