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**Agenda items 135**

**Seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project  
at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific premises in Bangkok**

**FIFTH COMMITTEE**

Statement by

Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan, Assistant Secretary-General, Controller

29 October 2019

Mr. Chairman

Distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to introduce the Secretary-General's progress report on the seismic mitigation and life cycle replacement project at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (A/74/317), which is submitted pursuant to section VII of General Assembly resolution 73/279.

While subject to risks, the project is on track and expected to be completed in 2023, within the overall maximum estimated cost of \$40.02 million. During the reporting period, ESCAP successfully completed the design phase of the project, ensuring that all key mandates including seismic code compliance and fire and life safety requirements are addressed. The on-site swing space is currently being constructed, and ESCAP is now finalizing the tendering phase related to the contract for the main construction works.

The project team has focused on governance and accountability in the management of the project to ensure the project objectives are achieved within budget and on time. The Executive Secretary of ESCAP is the project owner, and has assigned one of her Deputy Secretaries the authority to make strategic decisions about the project direction and to manage the interests of the stakeholders. This aims to ensure broad consensus and support from project clients.

As in the past, ESCAP has continued its close cooperation with the Host Country to seek assistance and support for the project. During the design phase, the project team continued its established partnership with the Thai Council of Engineers and the Local Technical Advisory Group, on local best practices and on key issues such as local laws, building codes and occupational health and safety standards for construction in Bangkok. I wish to extend our sincere appreciation to the Host Country for continuing to facilitate these fruitful partnerships.

ESCAP has also continued its close collaboration with the Global Asset Management Policy Service at headquarters for support and guidance with respect to risk management, leveraging best practices and lessons learned from other UN capital projects.

Focus has also been maintained on achieving the other key project objectives such as a 16-18 per cent reduction in energy consumption, 20 per cent efficiency gains in space utilization, the removal of hazardous materials from the premises, and delivering a fully accessible and inclusive Secretariat Building in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

The ESCAP premises have not had a construction project of this scale since the initial construction of the premises, and the project team is aware of the importance of a robust change management process. ESCAP has a Business Readiness Plan to manage all the activities of moving to the swing space and back to the office space after renovation, including a strong communication strategy.

ESCAP also continues to proactively seek voluntary contributions from Member States, including in-kind contributions, through the Junior Professional Officer programme, and through regular updates at the meetings of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission (ACPR).

Through the delivery of the project, ESCAP has great potential for becoming home to the largest UN presence in the region, able to meet the future requirements of its occupants and the Organization to effectively support in the delivery of shared goals and mandates. To that end, the Executive Secretary and the senior leadership of ESCAP remain committed to ensuring the successful delivery of this very important project.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

The General Assembly is requested to take note of this progress report and take note of the revised cost plan, approve the establishment of three temporary positions effective from 1 January 2020, and appropriate an amount of \$6,410,700 for project activities in 2020. The approval of the resources will enable the project to proceed with the commencement of the construction phase in 2020.