



**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: SEISMIC MITIGATION RETROFIT AND LIFE-CYCLE REPLACEMENT PROJECT AT THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC PREMISES IN BANGKOK, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**(NEW YORK, 29 OCTOBER 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 in relation to the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacement project in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) premises in Bangkok.
2. The Group wishes to thank Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan, Controller, Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacement project at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific premises in Bangkok. We also thank Mr. Cihan Terzi, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for introducing the Committee's report.

Mr. Chair,

3. The Group of 77 and China would like to express its appreciation to the Government of Thailand, the host country of ESCAP, for its continued support to the work of ESCAP and this project. The Group would like to underscore the importance of close coordination with the host country which is an important key to success for any projects of this kind. We therefore encourage ESCAP to continue engaging closely with the host country and local authorities throughout the implementation of the project.
4. All along the past 7 decades, ESCAP has played a crucial role in advancing sustainable and inclusive development agenda as well as serving as a platform for knowledge-sharing and dialogue on issues critical to the region. In spite of the growing demands of its regional Member States in the past years, the Commission remains steadfast in carrying out its

mandated tasks and duties. For this reason, it is imperative that this project be completed successfully and in a timely manner to ensure the continuity of work and activities of the Commission.

Mr. Chair,

5. The Group welcomes the overall progress on the implementation of the project since the issuance of the last report. Particularly, we are pleased that important elements such as efficient building performance, energy conservation and sustainability, accessibility, as well as space efficiency have been taken into account in the planning and design phase to increase overall efficiency gains. We are also pleased that ESCAP has paid due regard to utilizing local knowledge and practices in construction projects as well as lessons learned from other capital projects, including the UNICEF capital project in Bangkok. The use of local materials and construction techniques are also welcomed as it is believed this would entail the added value in terms of cost efficiency.
6. The Group attaches importance to risk management and notes the report by the 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 delivery 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.
7. Project governance, oversight, cost-effectiveness and accountability are key drivers to ensure proper management and achieve the overall goal of the construction project. The Group appreciates in this regard the work of the Office of International Oversight Service (OIOS) and its guidance. We are pleased that ESCAP has implemented all of the recommendations from the previous audit in 2018 and trust that it will continue to do the same this year.

Mr. Chair,

8. The consideration of the capital projects in the United Nations duty stations remains a priority for the Group. We underscore 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 the participation of all Member States. It is therefore imperative we support successful implementation of other construction and property management projects under this agenda item. This includes 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.
9. In closing, the Group of 77 and China reiterates its support and commitment to work constructively with all delegations towards a timely conclusion of this important agenda item.