

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP BY MR. KATLEGO MMALANE, PERMANENT MISSION OF BOTSWANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON AGENDA ITEM 135: CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT: PROPOSAL FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF OFFICE BLOCKS A-J AT THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT NAIROBI

(New York, 2 DECEMBER 2019)

Mr. Chair

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group on agenda item 135 Proposed Programme budget for 2020: **the replacement of office blocks A to J at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON).**
2. The African Group would like to thank Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan, ASG, Controller and Mr. Cihan Terzi, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for introducing their respective reports.
3. At the outset, the African Group wishes to align itself with the Statement delivered by the State of Palestine on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
4. The African Group wishes to express its appreciation to the Government of Kenya for the support it has lent and continues to lend to the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) over the years, including its demonstrated commitment and support for the successful implementation of the construction project at UNON. We as well acknowledge the coordination of the Government of Kenya with the host country liaison sub-committee on planned infrastructural development in the surrounding areas of the Gigiri Complex.

Mr. Chair,

5. The Group recalls that the assessment of blocks A to J was completed in 2014 with findings such as sagging roofs, wiring reticulation posing fire risks, problematic floor plate geometry, inaccessibility of the buildings, among others. These findings established that the office blocks, which were originally designed to be temporary, had long

reached the end of their useful lives and did not meet United Nations Security requirements.

6. Against this background, the group wishes to commend the Secretary-General for taking the necessary steps to bringing the facility in line with prevailing codes by addressing issues such as the industrial health and safety compliance, seismic code compliance, the presence of hazardous materials, accessibility and the optimization of energy efficiency through the construction project under consideration.
7. The Group welcomes the Secretary General's Progress Report, the second of such reports since the inception of the project. During the reporting period, the Group notes that the focus has mainly been on the first two phases of the project scope namely, the early works to repurpose the publishing services building for use as swing space during construction and the introduction of flexible work place (FWP) strategies across the Gigiri Complex. The Group notes the effectiveness of executing the project in such a phased manner and how this strategy could bring on cost-efficiencies.
8. With regard to FWP implementation, the Group notes that this is one of the main components of the 20-year strategic capital review of UNON. We also note that the underlying objective is the utilization of office space in the best possible way, taking into due account the pros and challenges that this may present. One challenge identified is the difficulty in gaining consensus among tenants to adopt the strategies due to, inter alia, the required investment, in particular by non-secretariat tenants, for ICT equipment and furniture. We do note that measures to address the issue are not presented in the present report and look forward to receiving information on these measures in the context of the third progress report.
9. Turning to project management, the Group acknowledges that the recruitment of most positions approved for the dedicated project team and project support staff has been concluded or is almost concluded. The Group will seek to be apprised of the statuses of those positions whose recruitment is still in progress. The Group also notes the staffing requirements for 2020 and will, as usual, be supportive of the proposals submitted by the Secretary-General.

Mr. Chair,

- 10.** On risk management, the Group welcomes the establishment of a risk management strategy and risk register for the project. The Group reiterates its call to the Secretary-General to continue to adopt risk mitigation strategies to ensure that costs and timelines are not unduly impacted.
- 11.** We are of the view that appropriate governance and oversight mechanisms are an overarching imperative and therefore reiterate the centrality of the coordination and oversight role of the Global Asset Management Policy Service at the UN Headquarters to achieve synergies and apply best practices and lessons learned from other capital projects.
- 12.** Among actions to be taken by the General Assembly for 2020, the African Group takes note of the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a multi-year construction-in-progress account for the project. The Group looks forward to discussing the proposal during informal consultations with a view to having a positive outcome.
- 13.** Last but not the least, the Group recalls that previous resolutions related to construction projects have underscored the need to use local capacity, including local materials and content for these projects and trust that measures are continually taken to meet this goal.
- 14.** In conclusion, Mr. Chair, the Group wishes to assure you of its readiness to engage constructively on this important agenda item.

I thank you