



**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 REPLACEMENT OF OFFICE BLOCKS A-J AT THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE IN NAIROBI (UNON), AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(NEW YORK, 2 DECEMBER 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 relation to the Progress on the replacement of office blocks A–J at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) contained in document A/74/343.

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. We also thank Mr. Cihan Terzi, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for introducing its related report.

3. The Group of 77 and China would like to express its appreciation to the Government of Kenya as the host country of UNON, for its continued and unwavering support to the work of UNON especially the ongoing construction project. In addition to having made a very significant donation of 140 acres of prime land, the Government of Kenya has over the years made major investments within the Gigiri area where UNON is located. In addition, the host country agreement provides for privileges and immunities, including duty exemptions covering contracts, construction materials and equipment, which will lead to minimized costs for 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. The Group acknowledges with appreciation the establishment of a Host Country Liaison Subcommittee on infrastructure and development which is working closely with the Project management team to expeditiously implement host country led infrastructural improvement projects in the Gigiri. The Group reiterates the importance of close cooperation between UNON and the Government of Kenya throughout project implementation period.

5. The United Nations and the organizations of the wider UN System do more work in Africa than anywhere else and as you all know, UNON is the only duty station in a developing country and the host to the only two United Nations programmes headquartered in Nairobi, namely the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat). UNON also hosts the regional offices of a number of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

6. The Group attaches great importance to the provision of conducive work environment. In this regard, the construction of block A-J is instrumental in contributing towards proper management of the organization's property by promoting workplace safety and security as well as general improvements in working conditions. Furthermore, implementation of this project will go a long way in addressing issues of compliance with seismic mitigation codes and maximizing space utilization as well as efficiency optimization.

7. The Group takes note that the project is one of the main components of the 20-year strategic capital review of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the aim of which is not simply to construct a new office block. Rather, it aims at ensuring that the Office has sufficient office space to accommodate all foreseeable United Nations-related requirements and that both the new and existing office space is utilized in the best manner, taking into account flexible workplace strategies.

8. The Group strongly requests that the project be completed within the timeline and approved budget, and encourage the Secretary General to keep conducting regular rental studies in order to increase potential rental income.

9. Effective governance and oversight structure is paramount. This includes ensuring effective management and accountability measures are put in place. In this regard, the Group notes that the project governance structure proposed in the 2017 Report of the Secretary General remains unchanged. This is significant in ensuring consistency and continuity as we enter the critical construction phase for both the flexible work space and the new building.

10. Equally important is the coordination and oversight role being performed by the Global Asset Management Policy Service in ensuring seamless implementation of the project activities. It is the Group's conviction that the Secretary-General will continue to reflect and build on lessons learnt and best practices on matters of project governance in the implementation of this project. The group further encourages the Secretary General to use the lessons learned from the pilot projects in refining the scope of works and the cost estimate for the flexible workplace strategies component.

11. The Group underscores the importance of risk management as a critical component in any project implementation. The group notes the report by Secretary-General that there remains a relatively low but increasing level of confidence that the project will be completed within the approved budget. The Group also notes the Report of Secretary-General has identified the main risks that will most likely have an impact on the project implementation. The Group believes that the Secretary-General will closely monitor and mitigate risks with the aim of avoiding unnecessary delays as well as ensuring implementation of the project in a timely manner.

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

13. Thanks Mr. Chair