



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. SAED
KATKHUDA, SENIOR ADVISOR, MISSION OF THE STATE OF PALESTINE TO THE
UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 135: UNON CONFERENCE FACILITIES, AT
THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE 74th SESSION OF THE
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
13 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, addressing the deteriorating conditions and limited capacity of the conference service facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.
2. The Group wishes to thank Mr. Chandru Ramanathan, Assistant Secretary-General, Controller, Office of Programme Planning, Finance and Budget, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General. We also thank Ms. Julia Maciel, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing its related report.
3. From the outset, the Group of 77 and China acknowledges the Committee on Conferences for highlighting the condition of the conference facilities in UNON through its previous resolutions. In this regard, the group welcomes the Report of the Secretary General submitted pursuant to paragraph 29 of General Assembly resolution 73/270 on the pattern of conferences. The report contains a detailed analysis and findings of a review of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

Mr. Chair,

4. The Group remains concerned by the deteriorating condition of the Nairobi conference centre, which is severely hampering the capacity to provide conference services, especially for the regular calendar meetings of the United Nations bodies, headquartered in Nairobi namely; the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).
5. It is evidently clear from the analysis contained in the Secretary General's report that participation in, and the complexity of hosting, both the Environment Assembly and the UN-Habitat Assembly meetings have increased at every session. The Group has taken note that attendance at the fourth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly held in March 2019 surpassed the 5000 accredited participants and the 109 meetings were held in temporary structures or other spaces adapted for use as meeting rooms. Similarly, the inaugural UN-Habitat Assembly,

held in May 2019, drew more than 4,000 accredited participants and 43 meetings were held in temporary structures or other spaces adapted for use as meeting rooms. In both cases, the numbers in terms of participants and meetings are expected to grow in future within the context of implementing the new governance structures of both UNEP and UN-Habitat programmes.

6. This growth is essentially a sign of confidence and appreciation on the part of Member States and reflects the growing importance of environmental and urban-related multilateralism.

7. The United Nations Office at Nairobi has responded to this demand by using and converting corridors, walkways and car parks and installing temporary tented structures across the complex. This is not only unsustainable, but introduces unacceptable risk and additional cost to conference organizers, not to mention the disruption to United Nations offices and programmes in the complex.

8. The Group also takes note that these conditions in which the meetings are serviced pose considerable risks to the successful outcomes of the United Nations Environment Assembly, the UN-Habitat Assembly and the other intergovernmental meetings of the organizations in Nairobi, which due to these conditions, does not uphold the prestige and dignity that the United Nations is premised on.

9. Besides capacity concerns, considerable expenditure is incurred by those organizations, and the Member States are forced to conduct informal negotiations in substandard and inaccessible rooftop rooms in which the interpretation and audio-visual equipment is outdated and prone to failure. This situation is made worse by the fact that Nairobi is not able to attract language experts compared to other UN stations.

Mr. Chair,

10. The Group therefore emphasizes the need to approve the proposed next steps, bearing in mind the objective of bringing the Nairobi duty station up to par with New York, Geneva and Vienna as a center for multilateralism.

11. In closing, Mr. Chair, the G77 and China assures you of its commitment to engage constructively on this agenda item in order to reach a timely conclusion.

I thank you.