



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA
BY H.E. AMBASSADOR BOUBACAR DIALLO, G-77 COORDINATOR OF
THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUINEA TO THE
UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 141: ADDRESSING THE
DETERIORATING CONDITIONS AND LIMITED CAPACITY OF THE
CONFERENCE SERVICES FACILITIES AT THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE
AT NAIROBI, AT THE FIRST PART OF THE RESUMED 75TH SESSION OF
THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(NEW YORK, 5 MARCH 2021)**

Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 141: Programme budget for 2021: 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. Chandramouli Ramanathan, Controller, Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General. We also thank Mr. Abdalla Bachar Bong, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), 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 notes with appreciation the report of the Secretary General submitted pursuant to paragraph 29 of General Assembly resolution 73/270 on the Pattern of Conferences which laid the foundation towards addressing the deteriorating conditions and limited capacity of the conference service facilities in UNON. The Group therefore welcomes the current report, which has been prepared in line with the General Assembly resolution 74/263, section XIV and which builds on the previous report of the Secretary General.

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. The analysis contained in the Secretary-General's report provides a compelling case to urgently and conclusively address the deteriorating condition of the UNON conference facilities, which is long overdue. The Group concurs with the Secretary General and notes with appreciation that the objective of the project is to bring the United Nations Office at Nairobi up to par with New York Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Vienna as an exemplary conference centre. The proposed project is also expected to address the risks posed by an ageing building nearing the end of its design life. Equally important, the conference facility will be able to service the governance and intergovernmental programmes of the two United Nations organizations headquartered in Kenya as a fully accessible and modern conference centre.

6. The Group notes that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office was already struggling to meet the demands associated with the mandated calendar meetings and the non-calendar meetings of intergovernmental and multilateral forums on the environment, urbanization and human settlements that could be hosted at the Office.

7. It is evidently clear from the analysis contained in the Secretary General's report that participation in, and the complexity of hosting, both the United Nations Environment Assembly and the UN-Habitat Assembly meetings have increased at every session before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. 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.

8. 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 during meetings. 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 and the associated reputational risks.

9. 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.

10. 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 constant failure. This situation is made worse by the fact that Nairobi is not able to attract UN language experts compared to other UN stations.

Mr. Chair,

11. The Group therefore welcomes the proposed establishment of the post of a Project Coordinator and the proposed next steps, bearing in mind the urgent need to actualize the project in order to realise the ultimate objective of bringing the Nairobi duty station up to par with New York, Geneva and Vienna as a center for multilateralism.

12. 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.