

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICA GROUP BY MR. FELIX- FILS EBOA EBONGUE, PERMANENT MISSION OF CAMEROON TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 138: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR 2022: CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT IN RELATION TO THE PROGRESS ON THE REPLACEMENT OF OFFICE BLOCKS A-J AT THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE IN NAIROBI (UNON) AT THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(NEW YORK, December 10, 2021)

Mr. Chair

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Africa Group on agenda item 138: Proposed Programme budget for 2022 in relation to the progress on the replacement of office blocks A to J at the United Nations Office in `Nairobi (UNON).
2. The Group would like to thank Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan, Controller, Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance for introducing the Secretary General's report. We would like to extend our appreciation to Mr. Abdallah Bachar Bong, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for introducing its related report.

Mr. Chair

3. At the outset, the African Group aligns itself with the Statement delivered by the distinguished representative of the Republic of Guinea on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and would like to make the following additional remarks.
4. The Africa Group expresses its gratitude to the Government of Kenya for its continued support to the United Nations Office in Nairobi and trusts that the Secretary-General will continue to engage with host country to ensure a successful implementation of the project.
5. The African Group attaches great importance to the United Nations Office in Nairobi, being the only duty station in Africa and the Global South. We appreciate the important role being played by UNON in the promotion of multilateralism, not only in the region but across the globe. It is our strong belief that successful implementation of this project will not only provide a conducive working environment for the UN Staff based in UNON, but will also increase productivity.

In addition, the project will go a long way in addressing the objectives for which the renovation is premised namely, health, safety and code compliance associated with the existing office blocks A–J.

Mr. Chair

6. The Group welcomes the Secretary-General report on the updated project schedule reflecting refinements in the implementation of early works, the implementation of flexible workplace strategies and the new building components. The Group takes cognizance of a revised schedule that now forecasts substantial project completion by the end of 2024 and final completion by the end of 2025 as a result of delays emanating from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and global supply chain challenges. The Group therefore requests the Secretary-General to closely monitor and mitigate the project risks to avoid further delays and to ensure its successful completion.

7. The Group stresses the importance of good governance, effective oversight, transparency and accountability in the management of the project to ensure its timely completion within the approved timelines and budget. In this regard, the Group continues to emphasize the importance of close coordination between UNON and the Secretariat in New York, in particular the Global Asset Management Policy Service.

Mr. Chair

8. The Africa Group recalls that in previous resolutions related to construction projects, the General Assembly has repeatedly requested the Secretary-General to include local knowledge, expertise and locally manufactured products in the construction projects. We take note with appreciation the efforts made by the Secretary General in this regard in relation to this project and trust that this momentum will be maintained and additional efforts made to explore further opportunities.

9. In conclusion, the Group will continue to support efforts by the Secretary General and the project management team for the successful implementation of this project.

10. As always, the African Group stands ready to engage constructively with a view to concluding this important agenda item in a timely fashion.

I thank you