



**Agenda item 138  
Proposed programme budget for 2022**

**Addressing the Deteriorating Conditions and Limited Capacity of the  
Conference Services Facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi**

**FIFTH COMMITTEE**

Statement by

Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan  
Assistant Secretary-General, Controller  
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Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished delegates,

1. The Secretary-General's third report on the deteriorating conditions and limited capacity of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) is submitted pursuant to Section III of General Assembly resolution 75/253B. It highlights the progress achieved following the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/75/716), in particular the outcome of the additional preparatory work that was conducted in 2021, which included the development of: (i) a project implementation strategy and cost estimates for the two options for the project, options A and B, and (ii) a project governance framework.

2. In April 2021, UNON engaged the services of a multidisciplinary consultancy firm with extensive conference facilities construction experience and industry knowledge of conferencing trends to develop comprehensive cost estimates for the two project options and to prepare an initial project implementation strategy.

3. Option A would meet the immediate and short-term projected capacity requirements for events with 7,000 in-person participants. Option B would meet longer-term projected capacity requirements, as an expansion of Option A, for events with 9,000 in-person participants.

4. As you may recall, the last major investment in UNON's conference facilities was undertaken over 35 years ago, and the conditions of the current facilities are not compliant with international standards with regard to safety, fire protection, access for persons with disabilities and mitigation for hazards posed by overcrowding at the facility, and thus need to be urgently addressed. The current conferencing technology is also becoming a major risk with aging equipment that is becoming difficult and costly to maintain and does not support modern conferencing requirements.

5. As described in the last report of the Secretary-General, the limited capacity of less than 2,000 delegate seats within the existing facilities makes it increasingly difficult to host even the calendar bodies mandated to meet in Nairobi, such as the United Nations Environment Assembly, the UN-Habitat Assembly, and their subsidiary bodies. Trends show a growing demand in terms of number of participants, extending to up to 7,000 in the next few years alone, and up to 9,000 beyond that.

6. Another risk is the continued need for temporary facilities that do not meet all standards for operations, safety, efficiency and accessibility. In addition, these large conferences introduce significant security, crowd control and circulation risks. This unfortunately means that Nairobi is increasingly overlooked as a conference venue for other major UN meetings, most notably the World Urban Forum and the many governing bodies of the multilateral environmental agreements established under the auspices of UNEP.

7. The issues above highlight the current gap between the current capacity of the conference facilities in Nairobi and the needs of conferencing events, while the complexity of these events also continues to grow, requiring more temporary multi-functional space to support their success. In 2019, 42% of meetings related to the Environment Assembly were held in temporary structures or other spaces adapted as meeting rooms. Similarly, 27% of meetings for the inaugural Human Settlement Assembly were held in temporary structures or other spaces adapted as meeting rooms. There is a significant reputational risk for the UN to try to continue supporting conferences of this size and complexity using existing, ageing and inadequate conference facilities.

8. The actions recommended to be taken by the General Assembly are indicated in Section VIII of the report.

Thank you.