

**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: ADDRESSING THE DETERIORATING CONDITIONS AND LIMITED CAPACITY OF THE CONFERENCE SERVICES FACILITIES AT THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT NAIROBI AT THE MAIN PART OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE SEVENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**(NEW YORK, December 15, 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: addressing the deteriorating conditions and limited capacity of the conference services facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.
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 Africa 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 their continued support to the United Nations Office in Nairobi and trusts that the Secretary-General will continue to engage with host country.

**Mr. Chair**

5. The current conditions at the UNON conference facilities have continued to negatively impacting the ability of the Secretariat to service the regular calendar meetings of the United Nations bodies headquartered in Nairobi. As indicated in the Secretary General's report, the conferencing needs of both UNEP and UN-Habitat have expanded exponentially in recent years and continue to do so. For instance, over 5,000 participants attended the

last in-person United Nations Environmental Assembly meeting held in 2019, with higher projections for the following meetings prior to the Covid-19 pandemic.

6. The risk of potential reputational loss that the United Nations faces by continuing to support the conference modalities required by UNEP and UN-Habitat using the existing aged and undersized conference facilities cannot be overemphasized.
7. The Group recalls that the necessity to expand the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi was consistently identified as one of the projects in the Secretary General's reports on strategic capital review. The reports systematically outline the long-term maintenance framework developed by the Secretary-General to ensure a comprehensive assessment of accommodation needs and the methodology that underpins the establishment of a strategic capital investment plan for the building and infrastructure assets owned by the United Nations.
8. The Africa Group welcomes the commitment of the Secretary-General in providing sufficient accommodation and related facilities for UN staff in various UN duty locations, and in particular his proposal on addressing the deteriorating conditions and limited capacity of the conference services facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. Through its various resolutions related to the pattern of conferences, the General Assembly has requested the Secretary General to upgrade the UNON conferences facilities not only by addressing the immediate risks associated with its dilapidated conditions, but also to support the continued and enhanced utilization of conference rooms in Nairobi. The proposal by the Secretary General is therefore a welcome step in this regard.
9. The Africa Group underscores the important role of project governance and effective oversight arrangements in ensuring that the projects objectives are achieved within the scope, budget and timelines approved by the General Assembly. In this regard, the Group welcomes the proposals on the establishment of the coordination mechanism among key stakeholders namely; the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance at Headquarters, as well as leading departments and offices operating both in Nairobi and at the UN Headquarters, establishment of a project management team, a steering committee as well as an advisory board.
10. The Group has carefully analyzed the proposals by the Secretary General on the two scalable options for renovation and expansion of the conference facilities, options A and B. It is notable that options A and B partially and fully, respectively, meet the additional capacity requirements of the conference facilities at the Office, and therefore the Secretary General has recommended option B for implementation.

The Group therefore supports the Secretary General's recommendation for option B which fully meet the additional capacity requirements for UNON conference facilities.

11. The African group further welcomes the overall proposed cost of \$278.9 million and the establishment of a multi-layer construction in progress account for the project as well as appropriation of an amount of \$1,995,900 under the proposed programme budget for 2022 for the initial activities.
12. The Group recalls that in previous resolutions related to construction projects, the General Assembly has impressed upon the Secretary-General the need to use local capacity, including local materials, knowledge and content. We hope that this will be taken into consideration during the implementation stages of the project.
13. In conclusion, Mr. Chair, the Group wishes to assure you of its readiness to engage constructively on this important agenda item

**Thank you**