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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE FEDERAL
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement

By

H.E. Ambassador Aman Hassan

Deputy Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic

Republic of Ethiopia

On Agenda Item 134: Construction and property management

At the Fifth Committee of the 66th Session of the United Nations General

Assembly

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New York

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, let me thank Mr. Warren Sach, Assistant-Secretary-General for the Office of Central Support Services, for presenting to us documents A/66/336, A/66/351, A/66/279 and A/66/349, containing the reports on property management and construction projects in progress in Nairobi, Addis Ababa and Geneva respectively, as well as feasibility study on the United Nations Headquarters accommodation needs 2014-2034. Our appreciation also goes to Mr. Collen Kelapile, Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for introducing the report of the Advisory Committee as contained in document A/66/7/Add.3.

My delegation fully aligns itself with the statements by the distinguished representatives of Argentina and Cote d'Ivoire on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and Africa respectively.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to take this opportunity to briefly outline a number of issues that are of particular interest to my delegation. In this connection, I am delighted to point out that significant progress has been made in the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa since the last report on the matter. As reflected in the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/66/351, several steps have indeed been taken to accelerate the implementation of the project.

In this regard, we are pleased to draw your attention to paragraph 7 of the report of the Secretary-General, which indicates that as a direct result of the close collaboration between the Economic Commission for

Africa and the host Government, as at the end of June 2011, 30 per cent of the construction work of the project had been completed. It is also worth noting that since April 2011, the contractor has put in place an accelerated programme of work, which has had a positive impact on the project.

Mr. Chairman,

No doubt, members of the Committee are cognizant of the commitment of Ethiopia to the UNECA which at the onset was demonstrated through the provision of the Africa Hall in 1958. It is as a continuation of this longstanding tradition that the Government of Ethiopia has granted to the UNECA the exclusive use of 28,995 sq meters of land located adjacent to the existing compound free of charge.

As elaborated in paragraph 11 of the Secretary-General's report, the ECA is given value added tax (VAT) free status in respect of local purchases of goods and services for the project. The Addis Ababa City Administration is also doing its level best to speed up the project, among others, by making periodic site visits, construction of alternative public access roads as well as relocating service utilities.

As indicated in paragraph 12 of the same report, in September 2010, the Addis Ababa City Administration, in consultation with the ECA, has diverted a storm drain system which crosses the compound in a north-south direction. In the same vein, as reflected in the reports of the Secretary General and that of the ACABQ, the Government of Ethiopia has continued to work closely with the ECA to ensure that all issues related to the timely and predictable delivery of needed construction materials, including cement, are adequately addressed. In this connection, I wish to reassure distinguished members of this Committee that this cooperation will continue in a same fashion.

On the other hand, I wish to congratulate the ECA, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the African Union, for launching the renovation of Africa Hall to make it a "monument to modern African history" in accordance with General Assembly resolution 65/259. We would like to see this historic hall be renovated, as illustrated in paragraph 34 of the Secretary General's report, in order to make it a modern conference facility, incorporating exhibition and museum spaces, upgrading all furniture and conference support installations, preserving and restoring historical and cultural values imbedded in the architecture, enhancing safety of the facility and incorporating accessibility for persons with disabilities. We, indeed, appreciate the efforts exerted towards this goal.

Mr. Chairman,

Regarding the United Nations Office in Nairobi, as reflected in both reports of the Secretary General and ACABQ, my delegation welcomes with appreciation the report that the new building was fully occupied by the end of March 2011, well within schedule and budget. In this regard, we would like to congratulate the Government of the Republic of Kenya, the United Nations Office in Nairobi, and the contractors for a work well done.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairperson, My delegation would like to express the appreciation of the Government of Ethiopia to the ECA and relevant divisions at the UN Headquarters for their unreserved efforts and understanding and reiterates its full support to expedite the construction of the project in line with the schedule.

I thank you!