



**Programme budget for the biennium 2012-2013  
Progress in the construction of additional office facilities  
at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa**

**68<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly**

**Introductory statement to the Fifth Committee  
by  
Stephen Cutts, Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services**

**13 December 2013  
Conference Room 4, North Lawn Building, 10:00am**

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

I am pleased to introduce the Secretary-General's report which summarizes the progress made since last year on the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa contained in A/68/517.

In terms of the physical construction progress, significant advancements have been made. Following the achievement of the 'topping out' of the building structure in February 2012, installation of the finishing materials, including exterior stone cladding, exterior window frames and glazing, as well as interior works such as electrical, mechanical, ceilings, lighting and flooring, have all progressed well since the previous reporting period. The main building was 92 percent complete as of 30 November 2013.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, while these developments are positive, the project completion and occupancy of the building has been delayed since the previous

report. This is mainly due to the extremely late delivery of construction materials on the part of the contractor, coupled with their inability to meet the construction schedule. While 99 percent of the required materials are now on site, my office has recently been informed of anticipated further delays in relation to the substantial completion and occupancy of the building. Having said that, I would like to assure the Committee that my colleagues and I are closely monitoring the progress and developments and will ensure a swift completion of the project. Moreover, the project management team in the Commission continues to work proactively with all project constituents to make certain that the project can be completed as soon as possible; steps have already been taken in this regard: for example, office furniture systems have been installed ahead of schedule as spaces are completed to reduce the time it will take to occupy the building.

Five tenants have confirmed their intention to take up occupancy, namely the United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Liaison Office to the African Union and ECA, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

In its resolutions 56/270 and 62/238, the General Assembly approved the required project components related to access, safety and functionality of the office facility. The ancillary projects include external electrical, civil and landscaping works. The design work for these items has been completed and mitigation measures have been implemented to ensure projects are within budget, such as sequencing and prioritizing critical works to allow for the building to be occupied, while non-critical works continue on site with minimal disruption.

Mr. Chairman, though the challenges with the construction schedule for both the main building and the ancillary projects persist, I am pleased to report that the project is expected to be completed within the approved budget and scope. Due to the ongoing cooperation of the Commission and the Office of Central Support Service teams, as well as the contractors, value engineering continues to be implemented as a continuous cost

control strategy. While the team has identified savings (or cost avoidance) on electrical and site works, they have done so without reducing the approved project scope, and without adversely affecting the functionality of the project. As the project nears completion, cost control and project work schedules remain key focuses for the team. The team is monitoring construction output closely and working with the contractors daily to develop resourceful ways of expediting the work progress while maintaining quality.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, with regards to these project delays caused by the consultants and contractors, be assured that upon the substantial completion of the construction works, the Office of Central Support Services and the Commission, in close collaboration with the Office of Legal Affairs, will determine the most appropriate course of action to ensure that damages incurred by the Organization are recouped to the fullest extent possible, and that the results will be reported in the next report of the Secretary-General

### **Renovation of conference facilities**

In its resolution 65/259, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to expeditiously assess the status of conference facilities at ECA, in particular Africa Hall and Conference Room 1, to ensure strict compliance with the highest standards for conference facilities.

As reported last year, emergency repairs to the roofing and electrical infrastructure have been completed. However, more work would be required to modernize the conference facility of the Africa Hall to include disability access, exhibition and museum spaces and upgrade all furniture and conference support installations.

At the end of 2012, the Commission concluded that the work of the consultancy firm initially hired to assess the Africa Hall premises and develop the scope of works for the renovation was unacceptable as it was not in line with the scope of the assignment. Therefore, the Commission plans to utilize the remaining resources to engage a

consultant with relevant expertise to carry out the detailed assessment. The tender process for this consultant is in its final stages, and the contract scheduled to be signed in January 2014 to develop the detailed assessment, design and cost analysis to be included in the Secretary-General's report for submittal to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. The Office of Central Support Services continues to provide the necessary technical support and guidance required for this project.

An assessment of United Nations Conference Centre at the Commission has been conducted and renovation works are being implemented. Weather proofing and emergency repairs of the roof were successfully completed in December 2012. Replacement of floor carpets is currently in progress, as well as an upgrade of the plumbing and drainage system to reduce the risks of internal leaks in the building. Resource requirements for structural works for building safety and security have been included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2014-2015.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Committee.