

Seventy-second session main part: Agenda item 136

Fifth Committee of the General Assembly

1 November 2017

Report on the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific premises in Bangkok

Remarks by Mr. Patrick Carey, OIC Office of Central Support Services, Department of Management

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to be with you all today and to introduce the Secretary-General's progress report on the Seismic and Life Cycle Replacement Project at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (A/72/338).

The report before you is submitted pursuant to the section IV of General Assembly resolution 71/272, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a progress report for the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacement project.

Following approval of the project last year by the Assembly, the project is on track, with construction estimated to be completed in 2023, and within the overall estimated maximum cost of \$40,019,000, with minor revisions to the overall cost plan.

During the present reporting period, the project team has completed or nearly completed all of the planning activities set out as 'next steps' in the previous report of the Secretary-general, including: finalizing the project governance structure, establishing the stakeholders committee, recruiting the dedicated project management team, hiring

the lead consulting architect, and others. Focus has been maintained on achieving the key project objectives, ranging from ensuring compliance with relevant life safety regulations, building codes and removal of hazardous materials, accessibility for persons with disabilities and optimization of the use of available interior spaces by providing modernized functional spaces, and maintaining business continuity, as established in the Strategic Capital Review.

The Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has expeditiously established the governance mechanism for the project, which includes the Stakeholder's Committee and an administrative arrangement between the project office and our office in New York for the project implementation. In March and April of this year, OIOS carried out their first project audit and their report has assured us that we are making earnest efforts to take the project forward in the right direction and are adequately addressing potential risks.

Both the lead consulting architect and the project coordinator at headquarters were on board in early October; the contract for the independent risk management services is expected to be signed imminently. The project executive has ensured that the risk register is regularly reviewed and prompt mitigation action is planned and implemented, as needed. The focus has also been on developing change management initiatives, which are progressing well. At present, the ESCAP team is preparing a preliminary pilot project for Flexible Workplace; preparations are also underway to commence a space utilization study in line with similar studies undertaken at other duty stations. The project team is also further developing the project design with respect to accessibility for persons with disabilities, as well as sustainability initiatives.

Elements of local knowledge and lessons learned have been and will be utilized on several fronts. The Host Country continues to play an active role in providing

support, including significant collaboration with the local council of engineers. This communication channel provided valuable knowledge which facilitated further development of the seismic design, incorporating information on local requirements and best practices. Information collected has informed the planning phase of the project as preparations are in place for the on-boarding of the lead consulting architect, expected next month.

It is recommended that the General Assembly take note of the report, take note of the revised project cost plan, approve the establishment of two temporary positions in the project management team, and appropriate an amount of \$4,116,858 for the project for 2018. These costs, in addition to being used for design services and project management costs, mainly relate to the construction of swing space; and are in line with the projected amount indicated in the previous report.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Delegates.

