



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA
BY MS. LOURDES PEREIRA SOTOMAYOR, FIRST SECRETARY, PERMANENT
MISSION OF ECUADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 136:
PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2018-2019,
PROGRESS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW OFFICE FACILITIES AT THE
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA IN ADDIS ABABA, AND UPDATE ON
THE RENOVATION OF CONFERENCE, INCLUDING AFRICA HALL, AT THE
MAIN SESSION OF THE SEVENTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY, FIFTH COMMITTEE
(New York, 5 December 2017)**

Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 136: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019, Progress in the construction of new office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, and update on the renovation of Conference, including Africa Hall.

2. The Group would like to thank Mr. Mr. Patrick Carey, Officer-in-Charge, Office of Central Support Services, for introducing the Secretary-General's report on progress in the construction of new office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, and update on the renovation of conference facilities, including Africa Hall and also thanks Mr. Babou Sene, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), for introducing the related report (A/72/7/Add.26).

3. The Group also notes with appreciation the support of the people and Government of Ethiopia in support the work of the Commission and other regional and multilateral entities in Addis Ababa, including facilitating the construction and modernization of the facilities.

Mr. Chairman,

4. The Group congratulates the Secretary General and his team for their dedicated efforts and commitments that contributed to the final completion certificate of the construction of the new office facilities of Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, renamed the Zambezi building, and its full occupancy with over 650 staff. The Group as well notes that the ancillary projects also achieved substantial completion in the third quarter of 2017 and trust that the final certificate will be issued by the third quarter of 2018.

5. Turning the Africa Hall project the Group reiterates the historical significance of the Africa Hall. It is a historic project that symbolizes the abiding ties among African Nations and the global community at large and in this regard. The Group notes the intention of the Secretary-General to create a recognizable branding identity in order to generate tourism and academic interest in Africa Hall as an African heritage site. The Group looks forward to receiving more information on this strategy.

6. The Group of 77 and China has taken note of the information provided including the project schedule and progress, procurement activities, governance and oversight, the

management of contingencies, the status of voluntary contributions towards the project, and the business case for the visitors' centre.

7. With regard to the project schedule the Group would like to emphasize the need for timely completion of the Africa Hall project, in this regard the Group welcomes the progress of this project, according to schedule, and encourages to maintaining its quality and scope in order to avoid any escalated of the costs.

8. The Group of 77 and China joins to the Advisory Committee's recommendation and trust that a refined estimation for contingency provisions of the project will be established once the project's of Monte Carlos risk analysis is completed, we will be interested to receive updates on this matter during informal deliberations.

9. With regard to oversight and governance, the Group of 77 and China once again stresses the need for full and timely implementation of all the issued recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The Group also welcomes the establishment of the Stakeholders Committee and the Advisory Board.

10. The Group has taken note of information provided on the proposed visitor center, including on expected numbers. The Group has also taken note of the comments and observations of the Advisory Committee. We will study them carefully and will seek clarification on specific issues as appropriate.

11. With regard to the renovation of the Conference Center, the Group of 77 and China would also like to emphasize the need for expeditious completion of the renovation as mandated and that all efforts should be made to avoid additional delay. We will seek specific information on the scope and timelines for the project during informal consultations.

12. The Group of 77 and China reiterates the need for local materials, technology and capacity throughout implementation of these projects, and will examine how these elements have been incorporated in the project's implementation.

13. In conclusion, the Group would like to assure you of our readiness to engage constructively on this important agenda item with the aim of concluding in a timely manner.

I thank you Mr. Chairman.