

*** CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY ***



Seventy-second session main part: Agenda item 134

**Fifth Committee of the General Assembly
5 December 2017**

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

**Remarks by Mr. Patrick Carey, Officer-in-Charge, Office of Central Support Services,
Department of Management**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

Good morning.

I am pleased to introduce 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 the Africa Hall.

New Office Facility/Zambezi Building

With regards to the Zambezi Building, I am pleased to report that since its occupancy, the building continues to function well. The final completion of the project was achieved in June 2017 and the final 5% retention payment released to the contractor at that time. Minor project close-out activities for ancillary works are still in progress and are expected to be completed within budget in early 2018.

Africa Hall Renovation Project

With regard to the renovation of the Africa Hall, the project is considered vital, both to provide for the health and safety of delegates, staff, and visitors, and also to recognize and celebrate the historical significance of the building as a monument to modern African history.

Project Scope

The project scope remains unchanged, and continues to be grouped into 5 major components as previously reported: (i) structural upgrade, essential life and health safety, and building works; (ii) Plenary Hall and associated works; (iii) external works and landscaping; (iv) heritage conservation; and (v) Visitors' Centre.

The Visitors' Centre is expected to promote Africa Hall as a desirable destination for those who wish to learn about the continent's history, highlighting the Africa Hall's significance in modern African history, allowing for conservation and restoration of the prominent stained glass and other artworks that are part of Africa Hall. The Visitors Centre will also include a permanent exhibition space and lecture gallery.

Solicitation of Voluntary Contributions

As requested by the General Assembly, work on the solicitation of voluntary contributions will remain ongoing through the life-span of the project. I am pleased to note that our efforts are beginning to yield some results, with Switzerland pledging 100,000 Swiss Francs, joining Mali who had already provide a contribution. We will continue to report on further progress.

Project Governance

With respect to project governance, I am glad to report that an **Advisory Board** has been established, with wide geographical representation and relevant expertise. In accordance with recent General Assembly resolutions regarding the role of the Office of Central Support Services in providing oversight for the project, I am pleased to report that the **Administrative and Coordination Agreement** with ECA has been finalized and signed, clearly outlining roles and responsibilities.

Further, the contract with the independent risk management firm was signed in early November this year, and the recruitment of the project coordinator at headquarters has been concluded and the staff member is on board.

Finally, we are pleased to inform that significant progress has been made in negotiations with the Host Country to ensure an agreement will be signed to frame the project implementation as well as to grant donation of additional land for visitors' parking.

Progress update

Now turning to a general progress update -- Stage 3 of the project, technical design and tender action, is well advanced and ECA is already in the process of soliciting bids from qualified vendors, with the bid deadline scheduled for mid-January 2018. We are therefore confident that the completion of the project in 2021 remains achievable. With resolution 70/248, the General Assembly approved the maximum overall project costs of \$56.9 million; the project owner remains fully committed to ensuring that the project is completed within budget.

Conference Facilities at UNCC

With regard to the UN Conference Centre, utilization has increased consistently from 85% since 2014 to 93% by the end of 2016 and this sustained trend is continuing.

Renovation works on the conference centre roof started in October 2016 and substantial completion was achieved by 31 December 2016.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished members of the Committee,

To conclude, the General Assembly is requested to take note of the progress made, including the completion of the project governance structure and the revised cost plan for the renovation of the Africa Hall, which remains within the overall approved maximum amount of \$56.9 million.

During the informal consultations, colleagues here at headquarters will be joined by colleagues at ECA via videoconference to answer questions and provide any clarifications that you may require.

I thank you.