

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP BY MRS. CAROLINE NALWANGA MAGAMBO, COUNSELOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 136: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR BIENNIUM 2018-2019: PROGRESS ON THE REPLACEMENT OF OFFICE BLOCKS A TO J AT THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT NAIROBI. MAIN SESSION OF SEVENTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY - FIFTH COMMITTEE

(NEW YORK, 18 OCTOBER, 2018)

Madame Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group on agenda item 136: Programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 in relation to the progress on the replacement of office blocks A to J at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON).
2. The Group would like to thank Mrs. Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, Director General of United Office in Nairobi (UNON) for introducing the Secretary-General's report and also extend our appreciation to Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for introducing its related report. The Group also acknowledges the presence of Mr Christian Saunders, Assistant Secretary-General for the Office of Central Support Services.

Madame Chair

3. At the outset, the African Group aligns itself with the Statement just delivered by the Arab Republic of Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
4. The Group expresses its gratitude to the Government of Kenya for their continued support of the United Nations Office in Nairobi and trusts that the Secretary-General will continue to engage with the Government of Kenya to ensure a successful outcome of the project.

5. We also take cognizance that the Government of Kenya has demonstrated its commitment to hosting of the Nairobi based United Nations Headquarters for Environment and Human Settlements by allocating the land on which UNON stands.
6. The African group welcomes the commitment of the Secretary-General in providing sufficient accommodation and related facilities for UN staff in the various UN duty locations pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/262 A and specifically the replacement of Blocks A-J at the UN offices in Nairobi.

Madam Chair,

7. The Group notes that the Secretary-General's report indicates that Office blocks A-J were constructed in the late 1970s as semi-permanent buildings and do not comply with the following prevailing codes: (a) industrial health and safety compliance; (b) seismic code compliance; (c) hazardous materials; (d) accessibility; (e) energy efficiency/ sustainability; and (f) space utilization.
8. The report of the Secretary-General on the Strategic Capital Review (A/70/697) also determined that further investment in the major maintenance of these buildings would over time cost more than their full replacement.
9. The African group welcomes the overall proposed cost of \$66,260,100 for the replacement of office Blocks A-J at UNON and the establishment of a multi-layer construction in progress account for the project and encourages the Secretary General to take measures to avoid delays in the timelines for current and future construction projects and to avoid escalation of costs.
10. The Group further welcomes the refined project proposal in terms of scope, implementation strategy and future activities to be undertaken as well as the repurposing of the publishing services building and application of flexible workplace strategies to the office blocks of the complex, which has resulted in cost savings from the optimization of the use of available space, leading to a 5.2% reduction in project cost.

11. The Group requests the Secretary General to make every effort to implement measures to avoid any errors in the timeliness of future construction projects given their potential impact on costs and completion of the project.
12. As noted by the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), the Group is of the view that the recruitment process for the various project positions should take into account the scheduled activities in the project life cycle and that due consideration should be given to recruiting for the positions on an “as need” basis.
13. In concluding, the Group recalls that in previous resolutions related to construction projects, the General Assembly had impressed upon the Secretary-General the need to use local capacity, including local materials and content. We hope that this will be taken into consideration during the implementation stages of the project.
14. The Group will continue to monitor how the health and safety issues across all UN premises are handled and more so at the UN Office at Nairobi (UNON), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago.
15. Finally, Madam Chair, the African Group will fully engage in negotiations on this agenda item as well as the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) premises in Bangkok among other construction projects with keen interest.

I thank you