

TALKING POINTS BY H.E DR. MARTIN KIMANI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF KENYA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON AGENDA ITEM 141: ADDRESSING THE DETERIORATING CONDITIONS AND LIMITED CAPACITY OF THE CONFERENCE SERVICES FACILITIES AT THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT NAIROBI (UNON), AT THE FIRST PART OF THE RESUMED 75TH SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(NEW YORK, MARCH 5, 2021)

1. Thank you Chairman for giving me the floor.
2. From the outset, I wish to thank Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan, Controller, Assistant Secretary General for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on Addressing the Deteriorating Conditions and Limited Capacity of the Conference Services Facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON). I also thank Mr. Abdalla Bachar Bong, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for introducing its related report.
3. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by H.E Ambassador Boubacar Diallo, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Guinea to the United Nations on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and the distinguished representative of Mali on behalf of the African Group. My delegation would wish to make the following additional remarks.

Mr. Chairman

4. My delegation welcomes the concerted efforts by the Secretary General to address the deteriorating conditions and limited capacity of the conference centre at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The current condition of the UNON conference facilities is negatively affecting the ability of the Secretariat to service the regular calendar meetings of the United Nations bodies headquartered in Nairobi as well as the other major international meetings and conferences held there.
5. As indicated in the Secretary General's report, the last major investment in the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi was in the mid-1980s, more than 35 years ago. Furthermore, the idea to renovate the conference facilities was conceived in February 2015 in the strategic capital review. Six years following the conceptualization of this idea, there has been

limited progress despite the several requests by the General Assembly through the Pattern of Conferences resolutions. The said resolutions have been calling for modernization of the conferences facilities to bring them at par with other UN headquarter duty stations. It is evidently clear that the current conference facilities have become obsolete and cannot meet the demands and requirements of modern-day conferencing.

6. The United Nations Office at Nairobi is mandated to provide conference services to the two United Nations programmes headquartered in Nairobi; the UN-Habitat and UNEP. Both the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) and the recently instituted United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme have universal membership, of 193 member States, in contrast to their previous Governing Councils, which comprised only 58 members each. In addition, the conference centre in UNON provides a full range of conference facilities to the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in Nairobi with a noticeable growing demand respectively. There is therefore an urgent need to upgrade and expand UNON conference facilities..
7. The United Nations Office at Nairobi successfully hosted both the United Nations Environment Assembly and the UN-Habitat Assembly in 2019 having between 2000 to 3000 delegates participating in each of the UNEA and UN Habitat Assembly. Consequently, as a result of the unprecedented participation levels, the meetings faced significant challenges regarding both the condition of the facilities and their limited capacity. It is also important to highlight the risk and potential reputational loss that the United Nations faces by continuing to try to support conferences of that magnitude using the existing, ageing and inadequate conference facilities.
8. It is notable that each year prior to the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the number of participants attending the United Nations Environment Assembly had steadily increased and the demand for suitable conference facilities from UNEP and UN-Habitat has been growing. This has increased the pressure on existing facilities to provide additional space and modern facilities that meet current conference-servicing demands. This growth trend is expected to continue, if not accelerate, in the foreseeable future after the COVID-19 pandemic and once in-person meetings resume.

9. We reiterate the call by members States that UNEP and UN-Habitat comply with the headquarters rule, that all meetings of the Nairobi-based United Nations bodies be held in Nairobi, in order to further increase the utilization of the conference facilities at UNON.
10. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted by General Assembly in its resolution 61/106 in 2006, prescribes, inter alia, the removal of barriers in the physical environment and the provision of information and the availability of assistive devices to enable the full participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities. Given the commitment of the United Nations to promoting accessibility and the equal participation of persons with disabilities, we reiterate the call that the United Nations premises and facilities “walk the talk” and serve as examples of best practice in this regard.
11. My delegation looks forward to engaging constructively during the informal consultations on this important matter.
12. **Thank you.**