

**STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR TAYE ATSKE-SELLASSIE,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED
NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 141:**

**PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR 2021, PROGRESS IN THE
RENOVATION OF THE AFRICA HALL AND CONSTRUCTION OF
THE NEW OFFICE FACILITIES AT THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION
OF AFRICA, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN
PART OF THE SEVENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

New York, 20 November 2020

Mr. Chair

1. I have the honor to present my delegation's statement on agenda item 141: Proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2021, Progress in the Renovation of the Africa Hall and the Construction of New Office Facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa.
2. Before my remarks, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report contained in the document A/75/319. We also wish to thank the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for its report contained in the document A/75/7/Add.15, and the OIOS for the report ref. 2020/013.
3. My delegation aligning itself with the statement presented by the Republic of Mali and the Republic of Guyana on behalf of the African Group and the G77 and China respectively, would like to make few additional remarks in its national capacity.
4. My country is honored to host the Economic Commission for Africa and we attach great importance to the Renovation Project of the historic Africa Hall. Beyond signifying a major presence of the United Nations in Africa, the Africa Hall is a ground where the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) is realized. Accordingly, the renovation of the building must respect the original design and appearance of spaces and it must adhere to international standards. The Government of Ethiopia will extend its support to the Secretary General in his encouraging efforts to accomplish such a crucial task.

Mr. Chair,

5. Despite the challenges the year 2020 had posed in the continuation of work at the renovation project, it has also been a year we had monumental achievements with respect to the relations with the ECA and my Government. We have signed the two agreements for the grant of 3000 square meters of land for the construction of the parking space to the visitor center of the Africa Hall. We have also finalized the signature of the revised host country agreement with the ECA. The close collaboration between my government and the ECA also allowed smooth implementation of the project specific agreement we had signed in 2019. The Government of Ethiopia is committed to work closely with the Secretary General and the ECA in advancing this successful coordination.
6. My delegation notes the concern of the ACABQ on the completion of the project within the assigned budget. The default of the lead contractor coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic are bound to pose challenges. In this connection, the measures the Secretary General plans to take with the aim of saving costs and remaining within the allocated budget is commendable.
7. My delegation also notes the recommendations, in the OIOS report. Project accountability and enforcement of guidelines on the work processes is of central importance. My delegation commends the Secretary General for accepting and agreeing to implement the recommendations of the OIOS and looks forward to learn the steps the Secretary-General takes to address the recommendations of the OIOS.
8. With regard to the recommendations of the OIOS to strengthen utilization of local labour, material and technology. Ethiopia commends the ECA for holding consultations with Addis Ababa University, the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage, and the African Union Commission. These and many other engagements are important and should be enhanced. Furthermore, considering the fact that most of the art works in the Hall are of African origin, this OIOS recommendation is critical to preserve the historical, cultural, and architectural integrity of the Africa Hall.
9. My delegation also notes the recommendation of the OIOS for the reinvigoration of the mandates of the Advisory Board and address the gaps in its coordination with the project owner. We encourage the Secretary General to finalize the review of the terms of reference of the Advisory Board and take all measures that ensure effective

coordination. We also encourage the project owner to seek and apply best practices in this regard from similar other projects.

10. On the development of the visitor's center, we thank the Government of Mali for the voluntary donation of above fifty-two thousand USD for the restoration of an art work and that of the Government of Switzerland for undertaking to provide the pledged one hundred Swiss francs for the start-up of the visitor's center. We call on other states to complement these supports. In addition, my delegation would like to encourage ECA to explore the available options in increasing the visibility of the Africa Hall. The works underway by the Government of Ethiopia to develop the tourist attractions of Addis Ababa and the greening and river side development efforts provide substantial opportunity for the ECA. We encourage the Secretary General to factor in these opportunities in the mobilization plan and business case.
11. On the request of the ECA for the endorsement of an additional position of a contract manager (at a P3 level), my delegation recognizes the need and supports the request. The renovation project involves numerous consultancies, construction contracts, individual expert hiring and art restoration works. In addition, the project owner is in the process of hiring a new contractor and will possibly face contractual issues linked to the interruption of works as a result of Covid-19. These circumstances call for a dedicated contract manager that will professionally handle the matter.
12. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Ethiopia attaches great value to the Africa Hall and the renovation project. We thank the General Assembly who approved a budget of USD 56.9 million along the establishment of a multi-year construction in-progress account. We also request the Secretary General to address the issues raised in the ACABQ report and the OIOS report as may be applicable and build on progress achieved so far.
13. My delegation reassures its readiness to engage constructively for a successful and consensual outcome of this agenda item.

Thank you