



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA
BY MS. SONDR CHEONG, FIRST SECRETARY OF THE PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE CO-OPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON
AGENDA ITEM 141: PROPOSED PROGRAM BUDGET FOR 2021: PROGRESS ON
THE RENOVATION OF THE NORTH BUILDING AT THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR
LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN IN SANTIAGO, CHILE,
AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-FIFTH
SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

(NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 13, 2020)

Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 141: Proposed programme budget for 2021, Construction and property management, in particular, the progress on the renovation of the North Building at the Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).
2. At the outset, the Group wishes to thank Mr. Chandramouli Ramanatha Controller, Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/75/347. We also thank Mr. Abdallah Bachar Bong, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for its related report.
3. The G77 and China also note with appreciation the continued support of the Government of Chile, the host country of ECLAC, to the work of the Commission in Santiago and for facilitating the implementation of this project. The Group reiterates the importance of close cooperation between the Organization and the host country and we trust that the Secretary-General will continue to take steps to engage the local Government to ensure the success of the project.

Mr. Chair,

4. The Group emphasizes the relevance of the five regional commissions to the Organization. ECLAC was founded in 1948 with the purpose of contributing to the economic development of Latin America and the Caribbean and has been headquartered in Santiago, Chile since 1965.
5. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is responsible for promoting the economic, social and environmentally sustainable development of the countries in this region. It is a reference for Latin America and the Caribbean since it

a hub for the gathering of information, the creation of ideas and multilateral cooperation for the sake of development. The Commission has been relentlessly active through various political moments in the region and has been a bastion for the developing countries that give life to it. Thus, ECLAC is not only a physical presence translated into a building, but it has also a historical significance.

Mr. Chair,

6. The Group takes note of the second progress report by the Secretary-General on the seismic mitigation and renovation project of the North Building at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and the subsequent report by the Advisory Committee.
7. The Group stresses the importance of effective governance, oversight, internal control and accountability to ensure that the project is implemented within the approved budget and timetable. The Group also notes with concern that the construction process, due to start in January 2022, is 12 months behind the original project schedule. Keeping this in mind, we request the Secretary-General to abide by the approved scope, budget and timeline for the completion of the project by the end of 2023.
8. The G77 and China take note of the recent quantitative analysis of risks conducted in May 2020 and welcome the increase in the level of confidence to 40 percent as compared to 30 percent in 2019, for the project to be completed within the approved budget, without any further mitigation action. However, the group stresses that the level of confidence still remains relatively low. Thus, and in line with the recommendations of the ACABQ, the Group encourages the Secretary-General to closely monitor and adopt the necessary measures to mitigate risk in a timely manner in order to ensure the successful implementation of the project.
9. The Group also acknowledges that the Covid-19 pandemic is a disruptive factor that must be considered and therefore, we welcome the measures described by the Secretary-General to mitigate the potential impact of the pandemic on the project.

Mr. Chair,

10. The G77 and China attach great importance to the different dimensions of this project, such as seismic mitigation measures, energy efficiency, compliance with health and safety standards. On this subject, we welcome that the related architectural and engineering components are under development, and that the projected costs and

quality of the proposed solutions are continuously being monitored by the project management team in order to achieve and comply with United Nations objectives and standards.

11. Keeping in mind the importance of energy efficiency, the group also welcomes the passive and active strategies of the project aimed at achieving high standards of energy efficiency, energy generation and wastewater treatment, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and achieving savings in operating costs. We take note of the Secretary-General's indication that ECLAC's energy efficiency report shows that the new building will consume between 41 per cent and 48 per cent less energy than the current building.
12. Furthermore, and in line with the Advisory Committee, the G77 and China welcomes the sustainability and energy-efficiency approach of the planned renovation of the ECLAC North Building, that would transform the renovated structure into the first net-zero building within the United Nations system. In conjunction with this and with respect to the sharing of best practices and applicable lessons learned in all aspects of the project, we encourage the Secretary-General to continue sharing the knowledge gained among other United Nations construction projects.

Mr. Chair,

13. The Group welcomes the ACABQ recommendation and supports the Secretary General's proposal for the project in 2021.
14. In conclusion, the Group of 77 and China would like to assure you of our continued commitment to work constructively with all delegations and to engage in constructive deliberations on this item in order to reach a positive outcome in a timely manner.