

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICA GROUP BY MR. MOHAMED TRAORE, COUNSELLOR AT THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALI TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 141: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR 2021: CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT IN RELATION TO THE PROGRESS ON THE REPLACEMENT OF OFFICE BLOCKS A-J AT THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT NAIROBI (UNON) AT THE MAIN PART OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE SEVENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 19, 2020)

Mr. Chair

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group on agenda item 141 Proposed Programme budget for 2021 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 Mr. Chandru Ramanathan, Controller, Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts for introducing the Secretary General's report and extend our appreciation to Mr. Abdallah Bachar Bong, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for introducing its related report.

Mr. Chair

3. At the outset, the African Group aligns itself with the Statement delivered by the distinguished delegate from the Cooperative Republic of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
4. The Africa group expresses its gratitude to the Government of Kenya for the support provided to the United Nations Office in Nairobi including hosting of two important UN agencies headquartered in Nairobi; the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). As the

host Country, Kenya has continuously demonstrated its commitment to strengthening this cooperation. Besides allocating a large piece of land on which UNON stands the Government of Kenya has continued to support the activities of the organization in line with the host country agreement, by among other things, providing duty exemptions covering contract construction materials, equipment, furniture and infrastructure. We trust that this continued partnership and engagement will ensure success of the project.

5. The Group recalls the assessment by the Secretary General which revealed that Office blocks A-J are 42 years old and, as detailed in the previous reports, exceeded their useful life at end of 2018. Continued occupation of these offices therefore poses significant health, safety, and code compliance issues. The initial study performed under the auspices of the strategic capital review determined that constructing, operating and maintaining new office blocks was more economical than renovating, operating and maintaining the existing office blocks A–J. The group therefore remains seized of the urgent need to ensure that the project objectives are realized in order to provide the staff with not only secure and conducive work environment, but with ultra-modern offices befitting a United Nations headquarters, as is the case with the other UN Headquarters.

Mr. Chair

6. The report of the Secretary General indicates that the updated project schedule forecasts a phased project completion, with the new building component to be completed by the end of 2023 and the flexible workplace strategies implementation work due for completion by mid-2024. The report further indicates that the overall project will be delivered within the planned 2024 time-frame, but with an expected delay totaling approximately six months. While taking cognizance that the COVID-19 pandemic may have had an impact on project implementation, the Group notes that the project has once again experienced slippages in all the three components and trusts

that the Secretary General will put in place adequate mitigation measures to avoid further delays and without compromising the quality of the construction work.

7. On risk management, the Group recognizes the efforts of the project team in closely monitoring the identified projects risks and consequently putting in place mitigation actions to ensure that the project is implemented within the overall implementation schedule. The Group encourages the Secretary General to ensure that project risks continue to be closely monitored and mitigated to ensure the project completion is within the scope, budget and timeline. The Group looks forward to receiving an update about the risk mitigation measures put in place to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the next progress report of the Secretary-General.
8. In its resolution 73/279 A, the General Assembly approved the establishment of a dedicated project team General to oversee the successful implementation of the project. The Group had taken note of the delays in the recruitment of some of the key project personnel and will be seeking more details during the informal consultations on the progress made on the recruitment to fill the remaining positions and the justification for pausing of the recruitment process of some of the project personnel, when it's not related to the Covid situation and the impact this may have on the overall project implementation.

Mr. Chair,

9. In concluding, the Group welcomes the ACABQ recommendation and Secretary General's proposal to appropriate \$7,974,500 for the project for the 2021 period. The Group reiterates its support towards successful implementation of all the construction and property management projects under this agenda item.

10. As always, the African Group stands ready to engage constructively with a view to concluding this important agenda item in a timely manner.
11. I thank you