

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF AFRICA GROUP BY MR. FELIX- FILS EBOA EBONGUE OF CAMEROON TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 138: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR 2022: CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY MANAGEMENT: PROGRESS IN THE RENOVATION OF THE AFRICA HALL AT THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA IN ADDIS ABEBA: THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-SIXTH SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE: THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 24 November, 2021)

Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Africa Group on agenda item 138: Proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2022, Progress in the Renovation of the Africa Hall at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa. The Group wishes to thank the Secretary General for his report contained in document A/76/308. We also thank the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for its report contained in A/76/7/Add.13.
2. The African Group aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the G77 and China and would like to make few additional remarks.

Mr. Chair,

3. The Africa Group also express its gratitude to the Government of Ethiopia for the continued support to the Economic Commission of Africa and other UN Offices residing in Addis Ababa. In this regard, we note with satisfaction the fulfilment of all outstanding requirements for the renovation project expected from the Government of Ethiopia. We trust that the Secretary General will take necessary steps to seize this progress and further his relations with the Government of Ethiopia for the successful completion of the project .
4. The African Group attaches great importance to the Renovation Project of the historic Africa Hall. The Africa Hall is a standing exhibit for the Pan-African Convention that led to the creation of the Organization of African Unity. It also signifies the strong affiliation between the United Nations and the African continent. As a result, the Group reiterates the need for conservation of the heritage of the landmark site and respect to the original design and appearance of the building. We also recognize the importance of ensuring compliance with best practices on current international building standards. The Secretary General shall make all the effort to work with the AU and member states that have put their cultural print in the

Africa Hall. In this respect, the contribution of the Republic of Mali to the renovation project is noteworthy.

5. With respect to the services to be availed by Africa Hall and generation of revenue, the Africa Group reiterates the indispensable need to make any applicable service fee at the Hall, affordable for the wide array of guests, including students and other low income visitors. The Group welcomes the reinvigoration of the Advisory Board and encourages the Secretary General to make use of the recommendations of the Board on resource mobilization. In this regard, while thanking Ethiopia and Mali for their contribution, the Group calls on Switzerland to disburse its pledge and call on other member states to make voluntary contributions in support of this project.

Mr. Chair,

6. The Group notes the completion of the decanting work. We call on ECA to finalize all outstanding procurement and other matters and resume the project for finalization within the revised timeline. We also expect the project team to find effective mitigation measures against the risks posed by Covid-19 to attain timely completion of the project. We hope, the regular consultation between the project team and Global Asset Management Policy Service will help attain these objectives.
7. The Africa Group stresses the importance of effective governance, oversight, internal control and accountability to ensure that the project is implemented within the revised project schedule. The Group further encourages the project team to scale up the efforts towards utilization of local knowledge, material, technology and capacity. Considering most of the art works in the Hall are of African origin and that there is a need to preserve the historical, cultural, and architectural integrity of the Hall, the Secretary General must make a deliberate effort and employ creative means to make sure, knowledge and expertise from the continent is utilized on a priority basis.

Mr. Chair

8. In conclusion, the Africa Group supports the budget proposed by the Secretary General for project activities in 2022 and looks forward to constructive engagement in the consideration of this agenda item with a view to reaching a conclusion in a timely manner.