

STATEMENT BY ETHIOPIA 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: DELIVERED BY LEMLEM FISEHA (New York, 24 November, 2021)

Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honor to speak 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 Abeba.
2. My delegation thanks the Secretary General and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for their respective reports.
3. My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the G77 and China and the African Group and will make few additional remarks in our national capacity.

Mr. Chair,

4. Ethiopia has the great honor of hosting Economic Commission of Africa and other UN Offices in Addis Abeba. We thank the Secretary General and staff of ECA for the effective coordination with the concerned government institutions. On the renovation project of the historic Africa Hall, we are happy to pronounce the Government of Ethiopia has fulfilled all the requirements on its part and made a kind contribution to the project. We plan to maintain this momentum until the successful and timely completion of the project.
5. The Africa Hall is found on a historic ground where the forefathers of the OAU convened to debate and chart the birth of the first and the only continental organization for Africa. It also witnessed many political developments that has defined the political, economic, and social landscape of our continent and our world. The Africa Hall also houses African architecture and art proudly gifted by African leaders. As a result, conservation of the heritage of the landmark site and respect for the original design and appearance of the building is critical. Furthermore, there is a great need to make sure the project complies with environmental standards and contribute to the ongoing efforts in Addis Abeba to promote green urban development. Energy saving and renewable energy utilization should also be given the necessary focus, also by applying relevant lessons from other projects.

6. With respect to the services to be availed by Africa Hall and revenue generation, we would like to emphasize, full accessibility for all income groups is second to none. This being said, the Government of Ethiopia will coordinate with the ECA in support of the income mobilization efforts. In this regard, Addis Abeba provides a number of opportunities that should be exploited by a deliberate and concerted effort in increasing the visibility of Africa Hall. We look forward to learn more details on the recommendations of the Advisory Board on income mobilization.

Mr. Chair,

7. We reiterate the calls for the timely completion of the project within the revised project schedule. Ethiopia welcomes the completion of the decanting work. We believe continuation of the actual renovation work is overdue and we call on ECA to promptly finalize all outstanding procurement and other matters and resume the project for finalization within the revised timeline. Considering the trend of the COVID-19 global pandemic in Ethiopia and the prevailing best practices in ensuring continuity of work in several other sectors, we expect the project to resume in normal terms with the necessary mitigation measure against the pandemic.
8. We also encourage the project team to scale up the efforts towards utilization of local knowledge, material, technology and capacity. Most of the art works in the Hall are of African origin and preservation of historical, cultural, and architectural integrity of the Hall is of paramount importance. As a result, the Secretary General must make sure, knowledge and expertise from the continent is utilized. Coordination with heritage and arts institutions at national and regional levels and with UNESCO is also necessary.

Mr. Chair

9. Ethiopia requests member states to approve the budget proposed by the Secretary General for project activities in 2022. We also encourage member states to make voluntary contributions to the project following the examples set by Mali that has paid its full contribution and Switzerland that pledged to make financial contribution.
10. We look forward to constructive engagement and timely conclusion of the deliberations.