



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA  
BY AMBASSADOR BOUBACAR DIALLO, G-77 COORDINATOR, PERMANENT  
MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF GUINEA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA  
ITEM 138: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR 2022: SEISMIC MITIGATION  
RETROFIT AND LIFE-CYCLE REPLACEMENT PROJECT AT THE ECONOMIC  
AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC PREMISES IN  
BANGKOK AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE DURING THE SEVENTY-SIXTH SESSION  
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**(New York, 11 November 2021)**

Mr. Chair,

1. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China under agenda item 138: Proposed programme budget for 2022, in relation to the Seismic Mitigation Retrofit and Life-Cycle Replacement Project at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) premises in Bangkok.

2. The Group would like to thank Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan, Controller, Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, for introducing the fifth progress report of the Secretary-General as contained in the document A/76/313. We also thank Mr. Abdallah Bachar Bong, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) for presenting the Advisory Committee's related report.

3. The Group of 77 and China would also like to express its gratitude to the Government of Thailand, the host country of ESCAP, for its continued support of the work of the Commission and for facilitating the implementation of this important project.

Mr. Chair,

4. Next year ESCAP will celebrate its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In this regard, the Group of 77 and China wishes to highlight the Commission's crucial role as the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in the Asia-Pacific regions that promotes cooperation among its 53 members States and 9 associate members in pursuit of inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in the region.

5. The Group therefore stresses the importance of successful and timely implementation of the Seismic Mitigation Retrofit and Life-Cycle Replacement Project to ensure the continuity of the Commission's work in a workplace that is safe, disaster-resilient, space efficient and environmentally friendly. The Group takes note of the Secretary-General's report and commends the progress made by ESCAP since the issuance of the last report, especially in the procurement of several key contracts required to commence the construction phase. We trust that the project will be successfully completed in 2023 as per the revised schedule and approved resources by the General Assembly.

6. The Group of 77 and China wishes to highlight the importance of continued engagement and collaboration between ESCAP and the host country. We acknowledge that the project continues to rely on the expertise and advice from local and national agencies in areas related to building codes, standards and procedures, occupational safety and health and construction management practices in the local context. In going forward, the Group trusts that the Secretary-General will continue to engage closely with the host country in other areas in order to ensure the success of the project.

7. In terms of project schedule, the Group of 77 and China is pleased that project implementation remains on track. Despite some delay, the Group is pleased to learn that the general construction contract is finally awarded. We hope that for the remainder of the project, the project team will continue to monitor the developments with respect to COVID-19 and potential impact on the construction works. We also trust that necessary efforts will be taken, including an accelerated construction schedule, to ensure that the project will be completed on time by 31 December 2023.

8. In terms of planning and design, the Group notes that while the design for the interior renovation works has not been changed, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemics and potential health risks to occupants in the workplace call for adjustment in design assumptions. We look forward to those necessary adjustments to ensure compliance with COVID-19 health and safety standards. Moreover, we wish to stress that other key features of the project, particularly energy and space efficiencies as well as accessibility for persons with disabilities be considered in line with project design plan, while also expediting the best practices and lessons learned from other capital projects.

9. The Group reiterates the importance of effective governance, oversight, internal control, cost-effectiveness, transparency and accountability in ensuring the successful completion of the project. While there are factors beyond control such as the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and fluctuation of currency exchange, the Group trusts that the Secretary-General will continue to carefully monitor and mitigate project risks to ensure the delivery of the project within the approved scope, budget and timeline. The Group encourages the project team to work closely with the Global Asset Management Policy Service (GAMPS) on risk management and alignment with lessons learned from other UN capital projects. The Group of 77 and China also appreciates the latest recommendations made by the Office of the Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on project management and oversight.

Mr. Chair,

10. In closing, the Group of 77 and China welcomes the recommendations of the ACABQ and supports the Secretary General's proposal on this important project in 2022. The Group would also like to reiterate our full support for successful implementation of other construction and property management projects under this agenda item. These include the UN Office at Nairobi (UNON), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Santiago.

11. We stand ready to work with all delegations towards this end while ensuring the timely conclusion of this important agenda item.

Thank you.