



**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 PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR 2021: 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- FIFTH SESSION
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

(New York, November 13th, 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, 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. At the outset, the Group would like to thank Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan, Controller, Assistant Secretary-General for Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, for introducing the fourth progress report of the Secretary-General as contained in the document A/75/235. 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 reiterates its strong support to the comprehensive implementation of the ESCAP project.
4. The Group would like to express its gratitude to the Government of Thailand, the host country of ESCAP, for its ongoing support in facilitating the implementation of the project, including its support in organising a business seminar with ESCAP in July 2020 to attract potential local vendors for the project. It is within this context that the Group wishes to reiterate that close coordination with the host country is key to the success for projects of this kind. We trust that the Secretary-General will continue to engage the host country to ensure the successful completion of the project.

Mr. Chair,

5. Since the inception of ESCAP in 1947, the Commission has played a crucial role in promoting inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in the Asia-Pacific region. It is the most comprehensive UN regional commission, serving as a platform for cooperation and dialogue among 53 Member States and 9 associate Member States. The Commission is also an important regional think-tank, providing

policy advice and capacity building to Member States to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. It has further engaged actively in assisting Member States in their response and recovery efforts to the COVID-19 pandemic through the ESCAP Framework on Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19.

6. The Group of 77 and China stresses the importance of a successful and timely completion of the ESCAP renovation project in order to ensure the continuity of work and activities of the Commission. The Group takes note that the project implementation continues in accordance with the previously reported project objectives, including key procurement activities, change management and business readiness and the construction of on-site swing space facilities. While acknowledging the challenges posed by the COVID-19 and the unexpectedly low market response for the tendering of a general construction contractor, we request the Secretary-General to make every effort to abide by the original schedule of construction phase.
7. The Group also reiterates that the key features of the project, particularly energy and space efficiencies as well as accessibility must continue to be considered according to the project design plan, also taking into account best practices and lessons learnt from other capital projects. We further welcome the use of local materials and construction techniques which can be advantageous in terms of cost efficiency.
8. 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. In terms of risk management, despite the relatively high project risks at this stage, the Group of 77 and China recognise the efforts of the project team in closely monitoring those risks and consequently putting in place relevant mitigation actions, including the implementation of an accelerated construction schedule so that the project can maintain the overall completion date. The Group requests that project risks continue to be closely monitored and mitigated to ensure the project completion within the approved scope, budget and timeline. We would also like to learn more about the risk mitigation measures with respect to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the next progress report of the Secretary-General.

Mr. Chair,

9. In closing, the Group welcomes the ACABQ recommendation and supports the Secretary General's proposal for the ESCAP project in 2021. The Group would also like to reiterate that it is imperative that we continue to support the successful implementation of other construction and property management projects under this agenda item. We stand ready to work with all delegations towards this end while ensuring the timely conclusion of this important agenda item.

Thank you.