

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICA GROUP BY MR. MOHAMED TRAORE,  
COUNSELOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALI ON AGENDA ITEM  
141: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 2021, PROGRESS IN THE  
RENOVATION OF THE AFRICA HALL AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW OFFICE  
FACILITIES AT THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION OF AFRICA, AT THE FIFTH COMMITTEE  
DURING THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

New York, 19 November 2020

Mr. Chair

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Africa Group on agenda item 141: Proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2021, Progress in the Renovation of the Africa Hall and the Construction of New Office Facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa as presented in the reports of the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, and the Office of Internal Oversight Services.
2. The African Group wishes to thank xxx and Mr Abdallah Bachar Bong, Chair of the Advisory Committee, for introducing their respective reports.
3. The African Group aligns itself with the statement just delivered by the distinguished representative of Guyana on behalf of the G77 and China and would like to make few additional remarks.
4. The African Group attaches great importance to the Renovation Project of the historic Africa Hall. T standards.

*Mr. Chair,*

5. The African Group notes with appreciation the close coordination between the ECA and the Host country. In this regard, we note the continued implementation of the project specific agreement. We also recognize the conclusion of the additional land grant agreement and hand over of the land as an in-kind contribution by the Government of Ethiopia. It was also a year where the Host Country agreement of the ECA is renewed

and signed. These instruments will certainly facilitate the successful completion of the renovation project.

6. It is our sincere belief that the Secretary-General will continue to work with the host country to ensure the success of the renovation project.

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12. Regarding the visitor's center's business case for the Africa Hall, it indeed is necessary to explore options to strengthen outreaches for the promotion of the heritage. The Group thus wishes to reiterate that admission options should take into consideration accessibility to students, academics, residents and tourists regardless of the capacity to pay. In this connection, the Group welcomes cooperation between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the African union and the host country Government for defining specific themes for the proposed permanent exhibition spaces, especially for preservation of the historic and artistic component of the Africa Hall.
13. On the development of the visitor's center, we thank the Government of Mali for the voluntary donation of above fifty-two thousand USD for the restoration of an art work and that of the Government of Switzerland for pledging to contribute one hundred thousand Swiss francs and call on other states to complement these supports.
14. On the request of the ECA for the endorsement of an additional position of a contract manager (at a P3 level), the Group wishes to assert that the request is reasonable and necessary. Considering the renovation of the Africa Hall involves numerous consultancies, construction contracts, individual expert hiring and art restoration works. These pressing circumstances justify the need for a professional handling of the contracts by a dedicated contract manager. It is for this reason that the Group supports the endorsement of a P3 level contract manager position by the General Assembly.
15. In conclusion, the Group wishes to reiterate that the renovation of the Africa Hall is a priority project for the African Group as well as for the General Assembly who approved a budget of USD 56.9 million along the establishment of a multi-year construction in-progress account. The Group finds it imperative to build on progress achieved and supports the budget proposed by the Secretary General for project activities in 2021.
16. The African Group wished to assure you of our readiness to engage constructively for a successful and consensual outcome of this agenda item.