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Statement by

Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan  
Assistant Secretary-General, Controller  
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Mr. Chairy

4. Despite some initial challenges and delays, partly resulting from the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the project has made significant progress, especially in the areas of procurement and business readiness. While still subject to risks, the project remains on track, with construction estimated to be completed in 2023 within the overall approved maximum cost of \$40,019,000.

5. Achievements during the reporting period include:

- The rebidding exercise for general construction services, which incorporated lessons from the previous tender, attracted significantly more interest and resulted in the selection of an established general contractor and the signature, on 14 October, of the contract for the general construction works, within the approved budget.

Mobilization works began on 8 November and the main construction works will begin on 22 November.

- In preparation for construction, all ESCAP staff have relocated to the on-site swing space while staff from other UN entities have moved to their respective swing spaces, without any reduction in rental footprint.

- In addition to its Occupational Safety and Health framework, ESCAP is introducing a comprehensive Covid-19 response plan and will require all contractors to fully comply with the Covid-19 safety measures in place, as a part of its multi-layered risk mitigation measures.

6. I would like to take this opportunity to express my most sincere appreciation to the host country, who has provided invaluable advice on local construction methods, building codes and regulations, as well as occupational safety and health.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.