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Construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa (A/59/444). During its consideration of the report, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification.

2. The report of the Secretary-General was submitted pursuant to the request in General Assembly resolution 56/270 of 27 March 2002 for the Secretary-General to report on an annual basis on progress made in the construction of additional office facilities at ECA.

3. The Advisory Committee notes the reported delays, vis-à-vis the original implementation schedule contained in the Secretary-General's report A/56/672, resulting from the need to rebid the design component of the project and to negotiate with the host country on measures required to mitigate security risks in compliance with the guidelines of the headquarters minimum operating security standards (H-MOSS). The decision to rebid the design contract, considered in the best interest of the Organization, was reported in the progress report of the Secretary-General of 15 July 2003 (A/58/154), at that time resulting in a 10-month delay. In this connection, the Committee notes that the process has now been completed and that a formal contract with a design firm was signed in April 2004 (see A/59/444, para. 8). The Committee also notes that the allocation of additional land by the host Government has resulted in an increase to approximately 27,260 square metres (from the initial 21,066 square metres) and that following the adoption of the H-MOSS guidelines at the end of 2003, it became necessary to reposition the new building and to request the Addis Ababa Town Planning Authority to re-route roads around the allocated land extension and to close public parking lots, thus allowing the ECA compound to be enclosed within secure boundaries (ibid., paras. 3-5). The

Committee was informed that an addendum to the host country agreement is currently being finalized by the Ethiopian Government and the Office of Legal Affairs.

4. The new project schedule is contained in paragraph 9 of A/59/444. In line with that schedule, construction is to start in June 2005 and completion is targeted for May 2007 — 20 months after the original targeted completion date (see para. 3 above). The Advisory Committee further notes the indication that the additional security requirements were “kept in mind during the preparation of the revised design brief and the design exercise that followed” and that “the full impact of those changes will be better known upon receipt of the final construction estimates in December 2004” (A/59/444, para. 10).

5. Furthermore, the Secretary-General indicated that every effort would be made to keep costs within the initial budget approved in resolution 56/270 (see A/59/444, para. 12), which amounted to \$7,711,800. The Advisory Committee recalls that, in accordance with resolution 56/270, the construction project is to be financed from within the available balance of the construction-in-progress account.

6. In this connection, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that the balance of the construction-in-progress account as at 30 September 2004 was \$9,480,000. Of this total, \$7,711,800 is committed to the ECA construction project, as approved in General Assembly resolution 56/270, \$736,900 was committed to the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (see General Assembly decision 57/578) and \$1,020,000 was committed to the modernization of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (see resolution 58/272), leaving a fund balance of \$11,300.

7. The Advisory Committee recalls that in its report A/56/711 it requested that in the formulation of the comprehensive design plan and detailed cost plan preparation a re-examination be made of the use of the space proposed in order to maximize office space and minimize common temporary space, taking into account existing standards. In this connection, the Committee notes that office space standards approved in General Assembly decision 31/425 of 22 December 1976, on the basis of the Committee’s recommendation in its report A/31/8/Add.4, require 9.11 square metres per staff member. Upon enquiry, the Committee was provided with information regarding space utilization in the existing buildings and the new office building (see annex). The Committee notes that the proportion of usable office space is 62 per cent of total available space for the new building, compared with 51 per cent in the existing buildings.

8. In this connection, the Advisory Committee notes from the annex below that it is intended to provide for additional meeting rooms in the new building. The Committee recalls that the purpose of the new building was to provide office space for the use of staff. **Given the unavoidable additional requirements for security, as well as the cost of delays experienced thus far, it is, in the opinion of the Committee, imperative to make maximum use of the building for the purpose for which it was initially intended.**

9. The Advisory Committee recalls that the Secretary-General, in paragraph 18 of A/56/672, indicated that a 20 per cent increase in staff over the next 10 to 15 years had been taken into account (see also A/56/711, para. 3). The Committee was

informed that the ECA compound currently houses 1,994 people, including 1,012 secretariat personnel, 651 personnel of United Nations system agencies and 331 contractors, representing an increase of 5.8 per cent from the situation described in A/56/672. The Committee was further informed that the need for additional space is more acute today than at the time of that report, since the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, World Food Programme, International Monetary Fund, World Bank and International Organization of Migration offices, and parts of the World Health Organization and United Nations Development Programme offices, are now located outside the ECA compound. In addition, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime offices are also located outside. All of the above involves approximately 11,000 square metres of office space. All of these organizations have expressed interest in being relocated within the ECA compound in the interests of security.¹

10. The Advisory Committee recommends that clear understandings be reached in advance with the various United Nations agencies, funds, programmes and other entities, in order to allow priority-oriented planning and to ensure the most efficient and realistic allocation of space. Information in this regard should be included in the next report.

11. The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly take note of the Secretary-General's report.

¹ Since the ECA expansion project will be finalized only in 2007, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea has reportedly indicated that it is under the obligation to identify another location to which to relocate its headquarters by mid-2005.

Utilization of space in Economic Commission for Africa office buildings

	<i>Offices</i>		<i>Meeting/ conference rooms</i>		<i>Circulation corridors</i>		<i>Stairs</i>		<i>Elevators</i>		<i>Lavatories</i>		<i>Cafeteria, stores, other</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>m²</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>m²</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>m²</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>m²</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>m²</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>m²</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>m²</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>m²</i>	<i>%</i>
Existing office buildings ^a	16 200	51	1 008	4	7 068	23	1 153	4	816	3	1 147	4	4 324	11	31 716	100
New office building	4 321	62	754	11	1 305	20	74	1	140	2	226	3	40	1	6 770	100

^a Old office building, extension office and auxiliary building.