

**Proposal for the Replacement of Office Blocks A-J at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (A/72/375)**

**Fifth Committee**

**Introductory statement**

**By**

**Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde, Director-General,  
United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON)**

**11 December 2017**

**Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Delegates,**

The report before you today contains the proposal of the Secretary-General to replace office blocks A-J at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. You will recall that this was one of the near-term major construction projects identified in the report of the Secretary-General on the strategic capital review (A/70/697) and its preceding report (A/69/760).

Office blocks A-J on the UN Gigiri Complex were constructed in the late 1970s as semi-prefabricated buildings, intended as temporary accommodation. They comprise office space, medical and security functions, warehousing, contractors workshops, a cafeteria and other operational facilities. They are approaching the end of their useful life and, despite certain interior upgrades over the years, the buildings do not comply with prevailing life safety codes.

In fact, they are no longer safe: roofs are sagging, portions of the fabric are suffering from prolonged exposure to dampness, and the wiring presents a risk of fire. They are at risk of severe damage in a seismic event – and we are close to the Great Rift Valley. In addition, these buildings do not meet current UN security requirements, are not fully accessible for persons with disabilities, and have problematic floorplate geometry which preclude flexible furniture layouts. The strategic capital review determined that further investment in major maintenance of these buildings will in time cost more than their full replacement.

In addition to blocks A-J, there are also numerous prefabricated timber buildings on site originally constructed as swing space, but now serving as temporary offices. The expansion demands of existing tenants, and the need to accommodate new UN tenants within the UN's security perimeter, also need to be planned for.

The existing blocks A-J currently provide office space to a number of UNON offices (namely security, facilities and medical services), and in addition house some large Agencies, Funds and Programmes (AFPs) namely UNICEF, WFP and UNESCO. These AFPs have occupied space on the UN Gigiri complex for several decades. UNON has a duty of care to these organizations, who pay commercial-level rent, and

to ensure the office buildings they occupy are safe and fully comply with all required security, IT and structural standards, as would be the case at any other UN premises around the world. This project will address this obvious deficit.

Finally, let me say something about the wider role of Nairobi.

As you know, the United Nations and the organizations of the wider UN System do more work in Africa than anywhere else and as you also know, Nairobi is the only duty station in the global south that hosts the global headquarters of a UN organization (UNEP and UN-Habitat). It also hosts the regional offices of a number of AFPs and country and project offices of many more.

Nairobi is also the home of UNON. It is important to note in this regard that this project will create new office space for UNON and will therefore be designed to fully support UNON's secretariat functions, including provision of purpose-built facilities and infrastructure required for information technology, upgraded medical facilities, catering, consolidated warehousing, transport and vehicle facilities including workshops, maintenance and parking. As detailed in the current report, any new building would be constructed taking into account flexible workspace strategies (FWS) which would consolidate the current Secretariat footprint, allowing extra office space to be available for other UN tenants.

It must be further noted that in support of UN operations in Africa and beyond, the Government of Kenya has made a very significant donation of 140 acres of prime real estate - on which the General Assembly has made substantial investments in buildings, security and other infrastructure. The Government of Kenya has also made significant investments in the Gigiri area, including major road upgrades, introducing traffic light technology and slip lanes to reduce congestion and cycling/pedestrian lanes to improve safety, all in support of United Nations entities.

I would also like to say, with profound regret, that this continent is too often viewed as helpless; as a place where the peace must be kept and to where humanitarian assistance must be provided. While this is obviously and regrettably part of our African story, it is far from the whole story. Africa is a vast, dynamic and talented continent and the seat of its United Nations Headquarters is a place of business; a place that contributes more to global solutions than global problems. I look forward to working with you to contribute to changing the narrative about Africa as the Secretary General has emphasized as one of his own priorities to strengthen Africa's place in the UN and the UN's place in Africa.

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished delegates,

The proposed UNON project is extremely good value for money. The total project cost of US\$ 69.9 million would ensure that suitable and fully modernised office accommodation could be provided to all UN entities requiring secure office space in Nairobi, without any further need for major office upgrades or refurbishments at the UN Gigiri complex for twenty years. The project is scalable and flexible, allowing UNON to take into account any possible impact of ongoing business transformational initiatives.

Member States know that UNON can deliver. The last major office construction at UNON was the New Office Facility (NOF), completed in 2010 below the approved budget and on schedule, and was considered one of the most environmentally advanced office blocks in the region at that time.

In considering the report before you, the General Assembly is recommended to approve the proposed scope, cost and implementation strategy of option 2 for the replacement of Office Blocks A-J; approve the establishment of a dedicated project management team; appropriate an amount of \$604,000 for the project for 2018 for design and management costs; and approve the establishment of a multi-year construction-in-progress account for this project.

I hope that delegates will favourably consider the Secretary-General's recommended actions.

Today I am joined by my colleagues from UNON, together with colleagues from the Office of Programme, Planning, Budget and Accounts and the Office of Central Support Service in New York, who have been actively involved in the pre-planning activities of this project, and we will be available to answer any questions that you may have in the forthcoming informal session.

Thank you.