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Chair: Mr. Mnguni (Vice-Chair) (South Africa)
*Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative
and Budgetary Questions:* Mr. Chuasoto

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In the absence of Mr. Kridelka (Belgium), Mr. Mnguni (South Africa), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 138: Proposed programme budget for 2023 (continued)

Construction and property management (continued) (A/77/7/Add.12, A/77/7/Add.13, A/77/7/Add.14, A/77/94, A/77/330, A/77/349, A/77/349/Corr.1 and A/77/492)

1. **Mr. Hamzaoui** (Programme Planning and Budget Division), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific premises in Bangkok (A/77/330), said that the report contained an update on the progress made on the project since the issuance of the Secretary-General's previous report on the matter (A/76/313), in particular with regard to the award of the contract for the main construction works, change management and business readiness, the completion of the movement of staff to swing-space facilities and the start of the main construction works.

2. Despite previous setbacks, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) had successfully concluded the tendering of all key contracts and had commenced construction works at the end of 2021. Those works were progressing well, and the project was expected to be completed by the end of 2023, as originally scheduled, and within the overall approved maximum budget of \$40 million. The recommended actions to be taken by the General Assembly were set out in paragraph 95 of the report (A/77/330).

3. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on progress on the replacement of office blocks A–J at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (A/77/349 and A/77/349/Corr.1), he said that the report contained information on the progress made in relation to the project's three main components since the issuance of the Secretary-General's previous report on the matter (A/76/330). Those components were: the early works, aimed at repurposing and making better use of the publishing services building and constructing an annex to accommodate the operational functions of the United Nations Office at Nairobi; the implementation of flexible workplace strategies across all remaining offices in the Gigiri complex in order to improve space utilization; and the construction of new buildings to replace the depreciated office blocks A–J, construction that was in the design phase.

4. An updated implementation schedule had been provided in the report (A/77/349). Construction was still expected to end in 2024, with project close-out activities continuing until the end of 2025. The likelihood of the project being completed within the approved maximum project cost of \$66.2 million had increased to 66 per cent, 19 percentage points higher than in 2021. The recommended actions to be taken by the General Assembly were set out in paragraph 84 of the report (A/77/349).

5. Introducing the ninth annual progress report of the Secretary-General on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva (A/77/492), he said that the report contained an update on progress made during the reporting period, and on cost and schedule estimates. Despite challenges resulting from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, geopolitical instability and global economic uncertainty, significant progress had been made with regard to the construction and renovation works. In particular, the complex and intensive procurement process for the building E renovation works had been successfully concluded within the allocated budget, and the construction of building H had been substantially completed in October 2021. In his report, the Secretary-General had indicated that the works were expected to be completed by December 2024, and that the overall forecasted financial position of the project had improved by approximately 38.5 million Swiss francs since the issuance of the previous progress report (A/76/350), with the likelihood of the project being completed within budget having increased to 53 per cent from 16 per cent since the previous year.

6. However, following the issuance of the Secretary-General's current report (A/77/492), the contractor responsible for the renovation of the historic building had provided a revised estimated work schedule indicating that there would be a six-month delay in the completion of the renovation works, a delay that would affect the overall project schedule. The revision to the work schedule was mainly attributable to supply chain disruptions, local labour shortages and the recent identification of additional variation requirements and related change management processes. It was nevertheless not anticipated that proposed reductions to the approved scope of the project would be necessary in order to ensure that it remained within the approved budget. The strategic heritage plan team would provide further details in that regard during informal consultations. The recommended actions to be taken by the General Assembly were set out in paragraph 119 of the report (A/77/492).

7. **Ms. Monasterio Gálvez** (Chair of the Audit Operations Committee of the Board of Auditors), introducing the report of the Board of Auditors on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva, transmitted to the General Assembly by means of a note by the Secretary-General (A/77/94), said that the strategic heritage plan involved both the renovation of the Palais des Nations and the construction of a new building in order to meet the requirements of the Organization and improve health, safety and working conditions. The new building had been completed in October 2021 and was now in use, while the renovation of the Palais des Nations had been ongoing during the Board of Auditors' most recent visit, conducted in February 2022. In its reports, the independent risk management firm commissioned for the project had indicated that the likelihood of the project being completed within budget had declined almost continuously from 66 per cent in August 2018 to 2 per cent in January 2021, but had subsequently increased slightly to 20 per cent by December 2021. The Board, however, was of the view that the upward trend might not be sustainable without further improvements.

8. Substantial completion represented the stage at which the whole of the construction works or their relevant sections or parts were complete, except for minor omissions and defects, which were set out in a punch list. Management should ensure that the works related to the punch list for the strategic heritage plan were carried out as expeditiously as possible, and should closely supervise the operational and maintenance activities carried out by the contractor.

9. The Secretary-General's bulletin on employment and accessibility for staff members with disabilities in the United Nations Secretariat (ST/SGB/2014/3) had entered into force in June 2014. The Board had assessed the compliance of the new building with international standards, especially International Organization for Standardization standard 21542 (Building construction: accessibility and usability of the built environment), and had found some issues that must be addressed.

10. In addition to the implementation of the strategic heritage plan, the Board had reviewed the benefits management approach for the project. In order to ensure more efficient building maintenance, management must track maintenance costs resulting from the project, starting with the new building and continuing with each building being renovated, following the completion of its renovation.

11. Building information modelling involved the in-depth use of computer technology in the design, engineering, construction and operation of built

facilities. When data from such models were not completely transferred to facility management systems, the subsequent entry of the data into those systems required enormous effort, which might also lead to additional costs. Management should therefore start the necessary data import tests as soon as possible.

12. In requests for information on construction projects, contractors sought clarification on some aspect of the project, including design plans, drawings, specifications, site conditions and agreements. The monthly reports on the status of the renovation of the historic building indicated that, in January 2022, there had been a total of 797 requests for information, and 27 approved and in-progress design variations. Management should improve its oversight of the work of the project's design services firm and its quality control procedures.

13. The procurement procedure for the works related to building E had started significantly later than scheduled in 2020, and the Board saw the risk of further delays in that procedure. Management should verify whether the internal human resources and communication processes for the remainder of the procurement procedure and for the pre-construction services phase were sufficient and timely enough to avoid further delays.

14. Of the 43 recommendations made in the Board's previous reports on the strategic heritage plan, 39, or 91 per cent, had been implemented. The Board made 22 recommendations in its current report.

15. **Mr. Chuasoto** (Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific premises in Bangkok (A/77/7/Add.12), said that the Advisory Committee noted that the solicitation activities for all key contracts, including the award of the contract for the general construction works after a revised multistage procurement strategy, had been concluded, and trusted that further information on the lessons learned from that process would be included in the next progress report.

16. The Advisory Committee noted the efforts of the Secretary-General to consolidate the office furniture requirements for ESCAP and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in a single solicitation exercise in order to achieve economies of scale and trusted that the lessons learned from that exercise would be documented for possible application to other United Nations construction projects. Notwithstanding the increase in the likelihood of the project's completion within the

approved budget and without further mitigation action, the likelihood of such an outcome remained low, even as the project progressed towards completion. The Advisory Committee recommended that project risks be continuously monitored in order to ensure that the project was completed within the scope, budget and timeline approved by the General Assembly.

17. The Advisory Committee recommended the continuation of the active management of owner-directed changes and reiterated that any additional project costs resulting from late-stage changes initiated by tenants, which might result in claims, should be borne by the relevant tenants rather than by ESCAP. The Advisory Committee also reiterated its recommendation that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to include, in his next progress reports, information on the formalized arrangements, including financial reporting, concerning late-stage changes made by tenants.

18. The Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General be requested to provide further information on the proposed mainstreaming of close-out activities into the ESCAP Division of Administration after the completion of the project and to ensure that no additional requirements would arise under section 19, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific, of the proposed programme budget for 2024.

19. The Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly appropriate \$10,902,400 for 2023, comprising \$556,500 under section 19, Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific, and \$10,345,900 under section 33, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance, of the proposed programme budget for 2023, representing a charge against the contingency fund. The Advisory Committee was grateful to the host country for its continued support for ESCAP and trusted that the Secretary-General would continue to engage with that country and other Member States in order to ensure the timely completion of the project.

20. Introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on progress on the replacement of office blocks A–J at the United Nations Office at Nairobi ([A/77/7/Add.14](#)), he said that the Advisory Committee noted that the refinements made to the master plan for the project formed the basis of its current scope, costs and implementation strategy, and that a new annex building, which was part of the early works component, had been built on the site previously occupied by block J. The Advisory Committee also noted that office blocks A–J would remain functional in order to eliminate the need for additional swing space and that the new annex

building would also be used as swing space for the next two years in order to support the office moves required to complete the project to replace office blocks A–J. The Advisory Committee therefore trusted that information regarding the actual cost of the project, the plan to convert the area currently occupied by blocks A–I into an environmental park, and the planned use of swing space, including the potential financial implications of any additional swing space, would be provided.

21. Despite a certain degree of management coordination and the master plan's increased focus on the conference facilities project, there was no shared administrative or operational support between the construction project related to blocks A–J and the conference facilities project. The Advisory Committee trusted that additional information on the potential efficiencies to be achieved through increased coordination between the two projects would be provided, and stressed the importance of close coordination between the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the Secretariat in New York in order to ensure proper oversight and governance in all aspects of the project.

22. With respect to the project schedule, the three components of the project related to blocks A–J were considered on track for completion by the end of 2024. With regard to the early works component, which included the completion of the annex building in August 2022, the Advisory Committee noted that the second phase of the refurbishment of the publishing services building was scheduled to be completed on 31 December 2022, three months later than indicated in the Secretary-General's previous report ([A/76/330](#)), and trusted that updated information regarding the impact of that slippage, including on resources, would be provided to the General Assembly.

23. Taking into consideration the increase, from 47 per cent in 2021 to 66 per cent in 2022, in the likelihood of the project being completed within the estimated resources, as well as the proactive risk management measures taken by the project management team of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the Advisory Committee noted the risk associated with owner-directed changes and trusted that the Secretary-General would continue to closely monitor and mitigate project risks in order to ensure that the project was completed within the scope, budget and timeline approved by the Assembly.

24. The Advisory Committee noted that the location in which the Secretariat planned to build four new office blocks could accommodate the two additional office blocks to be used by the United Nations High

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), thereby enabling the co-location of the blocks on a single site and facilitating economies of scale. UNHCR would be responsible for all costs associated with the design of the two additional blocks, including those arising from prior design work stages and all related costs, and the Secretariat would bear no liability during the full life cycle of the new UNHCR buildings. The Advisory Committee was of the view that the planned UNHCR buildings could benefit both projects of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, as they could promote efficiencies, including in the fulfilment of physical security requirements, and trusted that updated information on the memorandum of understanding to be established between the Office and UNHCR concerning the buildings would be provided.

25. With regard to staffing, the Advisory Committee noted that a number of positions, including those of Project Manager (P-5) and Structural/Civil Engineer (P-3), were vacant. While the Advisory Committee did not object to the proposed position of Safety and Security Officer (P-3), it attached great importance to the coordination of services, which it considered further in its report on addressing the deteriorating conditions and limited capacity of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi (A/77/7/Add.15).

26. With regard to environmental and sustainability considerations, the annex building would be used as swing space for the next two years in order to support the implementation of the flexible workspace strategies component and the new building component. It would only be possible to confirm whether a net zero building had been achieved once the annex had fully transitioned to operational and logistical functions at the end of 2024. The Advisory Committee therefore looked forward to continued updates on the energy produced, used and redirected annually by the building's photovoltaic panels, as well as further information regarding the application of sustainable technologies in the three project components.

27. Locally sourced and manufactured materials, as well as local labour and expertise, should be integrated into the project. Noting that the procurement process for construction services would take the form of a traditional rather than a multistage request for proposals exercise, the Advisory Committee requested that General Assembly be provided with further information on that process and, specifically, on its advantages and disadvantages.

28. With regard to the proposed resources for the project, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Assembly appropriate \$13,196,200, comprising

\$1,214,800 under section 29G, United Nations Office at Nairobi; \$11,748,100 under section 33, Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance; and \$233,300 under section 34, Safety and security, of the proposed programme budget for 2023, representing a charge against the contingency fund. The Advisory Committee was grateful to the host country for its continuing support for the United Nations Office at Nairobi in order to ensure the success of the project and encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to seek voluntary contributions, including in-kind contributions, and other forms of support for the project from other Member States.

29. Introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva (A/77/7/Add.13), he said that the Advisory Committee noted the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, including on accessibility and the implementation of variations from the original scope of the work. The Advisory Committee trusted that the Board's recommendations would be implemented fully and expeditiously, and that an update in that regard would be provided in the Secretary-General's next progress report.

30. In his report on the strategic heritage plan (A/77/492), the Secretary-General provided an update on the status of activities under the project, and on the project schedule, risks and costs. The Advisory Committee welcomed the progress made, while noting the one-month delay in the schedule and the possibility that the full approved baseline scope of activities for the project might not be achieved within the approved budget. The Advisory Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to continue to closely monitor and mitigate project risks and to ensure the implementation of the project within the scope, budget and timeline approved by the Assembly.

31. Following the finalization of its report (A/77/7/Add.13), the Advisory Committee had been informed by the Controller that, as a result of worsening economic conditions, supply chain disruptions, local labour supply limitations, variation requirements and related change management processes, there would be a further delay of up to six months in the renovation of the historic building complex, a delay that would, in turn, lead to delays in the building E renovation works and in the overall project schedule. The latest financial forecast indicated that expenditure would exceed the approved budget level by approximately 1.3 per cent. The Controller had indicated that, although it was not currently anticipated that proposed reductions to the approved scope of the project would be necessary, the

Secretary-General might, if required and in order to mitigate the risk of cost overruns, include such proposals in future reports for the consideration of the General Assembly.

32. The Advisory Committee noted that the revised energy consumption reduction target was 11.5 per cent, compared with the initial target of 25 per cent, and encouraged the Secretary-General to continue to ensure lower energy consumption in view of the potential rise in energy costs. The Advisory Committee also trusted that more detailed information on the installation and related costs of technologies for remote simultaneous interpretation and hybrid meetings, as well as lessons learned from the pandemic, would be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of the Secretary-General's current report (A/77/492), and included in his next progress report.

33. The Advisory Committee was of the view that the establishment of an assessment scheme and currency of appropriation and assessment, and the establishment of a multi-year special account for the strategic heritage plan, were policy matters to be decided upon by the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee had previously seen merit in the proposal, set forth in the eighth annual progress report of the Secretary-General on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva (A/76/350), to carry out consultancy work in order to facilitate the updating of the valorization strategy, and had recommended that the proposed related requirements of \$55,800 be funded using the increased rental income generated by the additional entities that had been relocated to the Palais des Nations campus during the period covered by the eighth annual progress report. However, the Advisory Committee was not fully convinced that the proposed increased requirements of \$75,000 for 2023 were justified and therefore recommended that the General Assembly approve, for 2023, the requirements of \$55,800 previously proposed for the valorization consultancy work in 2022, as well as a corresponding reduction in the total income estimates under income section 2, General income. The Advisory Committee was grateful to the Government of Switzerland for its support for the strategic heritage plan since its inception, and to other Member States for their contributions to the project.

34. **Mr. Durrani** (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group was grateful to the host countries of ESCAP and the United Nations Offices at Nairobi and Geneva for their continued support for the implementation of the construction projects being conducted on those entities' premises.

35. For the past 75 years, ESCAP had been the most inclusive intergovernmental platform in the Asia-Pacific region, supporting countries' efforts to achieve inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery and to resume progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The successful and timely completion of the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project was therefore critical. The Group welcomed the fact that the main construction works had commenced in November 2021 and that the project was progressing well and was projected to be completed in 2023.

36. The ongoing engagement between ESCAP and the host country had enabled the harnessing of local expertise and technical knowledge in support of the project. The use of local materials and construction techniques was welcome, as it promoted cost-efficiency and enabled ESCAP to better manage the risk of global supply chain disruptions resulting from the pandemic. The Group also welcomed the regular consultations held between ESCAP and project stakeholders in order to gather feedback on the operational requirements for planning and design activities. Those consultations had mitigated the risk of further late changes that might potentially result in additional costs during construction.

37. Effective project governance, oversight, cost-effectiveness, transparency and accountability were important for ensuring that the project was implemented within the approved budget and timetable. The Group recognized the efforts of the project management team and encouraged it to continue its close engagement with the Global Asset Management Policy Service. The Group also hoped that the relevant risk mitigation measures would be adopted in a timely manner and that the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) would be fully implemented.

38. The Group attached great importance to progress on the replacement of office blocks A–J at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, whose special role in the global United Nations system could not be overemphasized. The only United Nations headquarters duty station in the global South, the Office comprised thousands of national and international United Nations staff members, who worked on a daily basis to advance the goals and values of the Organization in the region and around the world, sometimes in a very challenging office environment.

39. While noting with satisfaction that the three components of the project to replace office blocks A–J were on track for completion by the end of 2024 within the approved overall schedule, the Group was concerned about the delays in the implementation of the flexible

workplace strategies component and the new building component. The Secretary-General should make every effort to mitigate the delays associated with the procurement process and the construction planning phase. The Group also welcomed the efforts of the project management team to closely monitor and mitigate project risks in order to ensure that the project was implemented within the approved scope, budget and timeline.

40. Effective oversight and coordination in project management were critical to ensuring that the project was completed on time and within budget. The Group welcomed the coordination and oversight work carried out by the Global Asset Management Policy Service at Headquarters, including the Service's continuous consultations with the project management team and regular visits to the project site in order to assess progress. The Group also acknowledged the regular quantitative assessments conducted in order to review the project risk register and provide guidance on the management of project risks. It noted with appreciation the outcome of the June 2022 assessment, which showed a steady increase, from 27 per cent in 2019 to 47 per cent in 2021, and to 66 per cent in 2022, in the likelihood of the project being completed within the estimated cost of \$66.2 million.

41. The Group welcomed the ninth annual progress report of the Secretary-General on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva (A/77/492), and the voluntary financial contributions made by the Government of China and other countries to the project. The Secretary-General should solicit contributions to the project from other Member States, including contributions that would be applied to reduce Member States' assessed contributions to the project.

42. The Group noted the progress made in the implementation of key project activities, including the completion of the new permanent building H, the temporary conference building, the pre-construction phase for the renovation of the main 1930s and 1950s historic buildings, and the contract procurement process for building E. The Group also noted that, owing to the implementation of value engineering measures and the outcome of the building E procurement process, the overall forecasted financial position of the project had improved. As stated in the Secretary-General's report (A/77/492), the current forecast indicated that expenditure would exceed the level of the budget by less than 1 per cent, with the likelihood of the project being completed within the approved budget having increased to 53 per cent from 16 per cent since the previous year.

43. Close monitoring, rigorous project management, effective internal controls and comprehensive risk mitigation measures were essential to ensuring the project's completion within the approved scope, timeline and budget. The Group noted that, in the report of the Board of Auditors on the strategic heritage plan, transmitted to the General Assembly by means of a note by the Secretary-General (A/77/94), the Board made 22 recommendations, which were under implementation. All approved recommendations of the Board must be implemented in order to facilitate business transformation. The Group noted with appreciation that 91 per cent of the recommendations made in the Board's previous audit reports had been implemented.

44. The Group was concerned at the lack of a decision on a scheme of appropriation for the project, considering its size and complexity. The Group supported the Secretary-General's recommendation, set out in his recent reports on the matter, that the scheme of appropriation for the project be a one-time upfront appropriation, with a mix of one-time and multi-year assessments.

45. While the Group appreciated the merits of the valorization strategy, it reiterated that valorization income was not related to the nature of the construction project. Moreover, the overall amounts that could realistically be generated from the valorization strategy were likely to be reduced in the short to medium term, owing to the withdrawal of a proposal by the United Nations Office at Geneva for a 90-year lease with the Fondation pour la Cité de la musique de Genève and the Canton of Geneva for the Villa Les Feuillantines site.

46. **Ms. Ho** (Singapore), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the regional commissions, of which ESCAP was the largest, enabled the implementation of internationally agreed development goals. ESCAP provided technical assistance and capacity-building support in the area of economic and social development to its 53 member States and 9 associate members in the Asia-Pacific region. ASEAN supported ESCAP and its Executive Secretary and appreciated the continued efforts of Thailand, the host country, to facilitate the work of ESCAP. To ensure the continuation of that work, ESCAP must have safe, suitable and accessible premises.

47. Good governance, effective oversight, transparency and accountability were essential to the timely completion of the project within budget. ASEAN noted with satisfaction that, as indicated in the June 2022 OIOS internal audit report on the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project, extensive value engineering had resulted in savings of

\$10.9 million owing to reduced contract prices, without undermining scope or quality. Moreover, the use of on-site swing space had not only helped to defray costs but had also enabled ESCAP staff to develop agile and innovative ways of working. The project team should continue those innovative methods. ASEAN noted the efforts of ESCAP to manage project risks and encouraged the timely adoption and implementation of relevant risk mitigation measures.

48. The environmental management strategies of ESCAP were to be commended, and ASEAN was pleased to note that the projected reduction in annual energy consumption after the completion of the project was 27 per cent, above the target of 16 to 18 per cent. ASEAN further commended the continued commitment of ESCAP to reducing its carbon footprint.

49. Local knowledge, materials, technology and in-house capacity should be used in the project. ASEAN therefore welcomed the efforts of ESCAP to engage with the host country, including by harnessing the engineering expertise of a local United Nations Volunteer graduate student and by using the services of a local design firm to supplement those of the lead design firm, representing a more cost-efficient solution. In addition to generating cost savings, those initiatives had enabled ESCAP to benefit from local expertise, while allowing locals to gain valuable experience of contributing to a major United Nations capital project.

50. ASEAN welcomed the assurances, contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/77/492), that the project was progressing well and that the construction works were still expected to be completed in 2023, within the overall approved maximum cost. ASEAN welcomed the measures taken to mitigate delays, including the close cooperation between ESCAP and the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority in the development of a robust COVID-19 response plan that had enabled the timely start of the main construction works at the end of 2021. ASEAN strongly supported the implementation of other United Nations capital projects, such as those being conducted on the premises of the United Nations Office at Nairobi, ECA and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

51. **Mr. Ainomuhisha** (Uganda), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, said that the Group was grateful to the Government of Kenya for its continued support to the United Nations Office at Nairobi, which was the United Nations headquarters in Africa and one of the Organization's four headquarters duty stations. Many United Nations agencies had a presence at the Office, which was the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme and the United

Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). The Group trusted that the Secretary-General would continue to engage with the host country to ensure the successful implementation of the project to replace office blocks A–J. The Group acknowledged the progress made on the construction works related to the early works component, particularly the completion of the annex building, the completion of the first phase of the refurbishment of the publishing services building and the subsequent handover of the building. The Group noted that the second phase of the refurbishment was on track for completion by the end of 2022; that would be a major milestone, as it would represent the successful completion of the entire early works component. The Group looked forward to the timely completion of the flexible workplace strategies component and the new building component.

52. The Group acknowledged that the recruitment processes for most of the positions approved by the General Assembly for the dedicated project team and project support staff had been concluded or almost concluded. The Group noted, however, that two positions had been vacated in the middle of 2022 and that efforts were under way to identify replacements. The Group would seek updates on the status of the recruitment processes for those and other vacant positions during informal consultations.

53. Regular quantitative project risk assessments must be carried out, in line with the risk management strategy and risk register established for the project in 2018. The Group called for the continued adoption of measures to mitigate risks affecting project costs and timelines. Effective governance, oversight and accountability mechanisms were essential. In that regard, the Group acknowledged the crucial coordination and oversight activities performed by the Global Asset Management Policy Service at United Nations Headquarters in order to achieve synergies and alignment with best practices and lessons learned from other capital projects.

54. Locally sourced and manufactured materials, as well as local labour and expertise, should be used in capital projects. The Group appreciated the efforts made in that regard and trusted that additional steps would be taken to achieve that goal. The implementation of United Nations capital projects remained a priority for the Group. It therefore supported other such projects, including the renovation of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the seismic mitigation retrofit and life-cycle replacements project at ESCAP, the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva and the renovation of Africa Hall at ECA. The Group would closely follow the discussions on those matters.

55. **Ms. Kiatbumrung** (Thailand) said that regional commissions played an indispensable role in ensuring that multilateral regional efforts in support of the Organization's economic and social objectives remained effective and dynamic. Thailand had therefore been proud to serve as the host country of ESCAP since 1949. ESCAP had a critical role to play in supporting its member States in the Asia-Pacific region in their efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in order to resume progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and prepare for the 2023 Sustainable Development Goals Summit. ESCAP was essential in highlighting the needs and priorities of the Asia-Pacific region, and Thailand would continue to support its work. In order to ensure that ESCAP could continue that work, its secretariat must have a safe, suitable and environmentally friendly workplace. Thailand thus attached great importance to the seismic mitigation and life-cycle replacements project. The close engagement of Thailand with ESCAP, including through the provision of assistance by relevant national authorities, academic institutions and other stakeholders, had enabled the harnessing of local expertise and technical knowledge in support of the project.

56. Project governance, oversight, cost-effectiveness, transparency and accountability were critical. Despite the many challenges faced, Thailand welcomed the fact that expenditure for the project was being maintained within the approved budget and that construction was largely on track to be completed in 2023. The project team should continue to manage risks, engage with the Global Asset Management Policy Service and ensure the implementation of OIOS recommendations.

57. Thailand supported the active outreach by ESCAP to local, national and foreign vendors in order to identify more cost-effective construction materials. Such outreach had enabled the project to remain within budget despite the delays and logistical challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. ESCAP should continue to harness local knowledge, expertise and supplies for the remainder of the project. Having hosted an initial seminar on business opportunities with the United Nations in 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, together with ESCAP and the Procurement Division, planned to host another such seminar in early 2023. That seminar would create further opportunities for vendors within and outside Thailand to provide goods and services to ESCAP and other United Nations entities. Thailand hoped that the Committee would continue to allocate adequate resources to the project.

58. **Ms. Chanda** (Switzerland) said that Member States must invest in multilateralism with a view to ensuring an effective and sustainable Organization. In order to be able to fulfil its objectives in the future, United Nations infrastructure must be built and maintained so as to ensure respect for staff, the environment and financial resources. Investment in the strategic heritage plan would improve productivity, well-being and efficiency at the United Nations Office at Geneva by facilitating the modernization of infrastructure and improving accessibility for persons with disabilities.

59. Despite difficult circumstances, construction had progressed well over the past year. New building H was an outstanding example of a modern, sustainable and lasting work environment. The renovation of the main buildings of the Palais des Nations was an important milestone in the implementation of the strategic heritage plan. The successful conclusion of the tender process for the building E renovation work was also welcome.

60. Switzerland was grateful to the project management team for minimizing potential additional costs and optimizing timetables in order to complete the project on time. Switzerland also appreciated the team's efforts to take into account the recommendations of the Board of Auditors. In addition, Switzerland thanked the Secretariat and the Advisory Committee for their comments concerning the sustainable utilization of United Nations-owned land in Geneva. Switzerland welcomed the proposed valorization strategy and stressed the importance of taking into account both the potential income to be generated from utilization and the costs of under-utilization. In order for the Fifth Committee to take an informed decision and unlock the financial potential of valorization, the necessary analytical and preparatory work should begin without delay. As the host country, Switzerland was committed to supporting the strategic heritage plan, including through a zero-interest loan of 400 million Swiss francs. Switzerland was grateful to other Member States for their support for the project and counted on their continued assistance to ensure its completion.

Agenda item 118: Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments (*continued*)

(e) Appointment of members of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee (*continued*)
(A/77/105; A/C.5/77/9/Add.1)

61. **The Chair** said that he wished to draw the Committee's attention to the note by the Secretary-General (A/77/105) indicating the need to appoint three persons to fill vacancies that would arise in the

membership of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee (IAAC) on 31 December 2022. He recalled that, at its 11th meeting, held on 4 November 2022, the Fifth Committee had appointed two members, from Asia-Pacific States and Eastern European States, to IAAC, and that it had postponed the appointment of a member from Latin American and Caribbean States to fill the remaining vacancy. Drawing the Committee's attention to the note by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/77/9/Add.1) in which the General Assembly had been informed that the Government of Belize had nominated Ms. Bradley for reappointment to IAAC for a three-year term of office, beginning on 1 January 2023, he said he took it that the Committee wished to recommend the candidate's reappointment by acclamation.

62. *Ms. Bradley (Belize) was recommended by acclamation for reappointment to the Independent Audit Advisory Committee for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2023.*

Agenda item 145: United Nations common system
(continued) (A/77/7/Add.11 and A/77/30; A/C.5/77/4 and A/C.5/77/16; A/C.5/77/L.5)

Draft decision A/C.5/77/L.5: United Nations common system

63. *Draft decision A/C.5/77/L.5 was adopted.*

64. **Mr. Djacta** (Chair of the International Civil Service Commission), introducing the report of the International Civil Service Commission for 2022 (A/77/30), said that, in order to reflect the movement of salaries under the General Schedule scale of the comparator civil service, ICSC had recommended a 2.28 per cent increase in the United Nations base/floor salary scale, with effect from 1 January 2023. The increase would be implemented in the usual manner, using the no-gain/no-loss consolidation procedure, whereby the increase in the base/floor salary scale would be accompanied by a commensurate reduction in post adjustment multipliers, leaving overall net remuneration levels unchanged. In addition, ICSC had conducted its triennial review of the staff assessment rates used in conjunction with gross salaries and had recommended no change in the current rates, in view of the situation of the Tax Equalization Fund.

65. The report also included the response of ICSC to the request of the General Assembly, contained in its resolution 76/240, regarding the impact of the adjusted base/floor salary scale, approved by the Assembly in that resolution, on post-related expenditure for 2022, including separation payments, post adjustment payments and pension contributions from member

organizations. In its response, ICSC had confirmed that adjustments to the base/floor salary scale could only result in financial implications under the categories of net remuneration, specifically at duty stations where the post adjustment multiplier was too low to absorb the increase in the scale, and of separation payments. ICSC routinely reported to the Assembly the financial implications under those categories of any proposed adjustments to the base/floor salary scale. Adjustments to the scale had no impact on, and thus no financial implications for, other aspects of the compensation package of Professional staff. On the basis of the data available at the time of review, the United Nations/United States net remuneration margin for 2022 stood at 113.9. ICSC would continue to monitor the level of that margin in order to ensure that it remained within the established range.

66. In 2005, ICSC had first adopted the framework of guidelines for contractual arrangements, in which three types of appointments, namely, continuing, fixed-term and temporary, were set out. In its 2010 report (A/65/30), ICSC, in examining the broader use of appointments of limited duration, had indicated that such contracts no longer met the needs of the common system organizations, given that the compensation offered under them was not comparable to that offered under other types of contract. ICSC had therefore decided to remove the reference to appointments of a duration of up to four years from the framework for contractual arrangements. In its 2012 report (A/67/30), ICSC had stated that organizations were not required to implement all three types of appointments set out in the framework and could implement any combination of those appointment types in accordance with their specific needs. At its ninetieth session, ICSC had decided to establish a working group to review the implementation of the contractual framework by organizations and identify possible improvements. After holding a series of meetings in October 2021, the working group had submitted to ICSC its conclusions, which had been further discussed. On the basis of those discussions, ICSC had recommended to the General Assembly that the provisions for annual leave for temporary appointments across the common system organizations be harmonized at 2.5 days of leave per month.

67. ICSC had, once again, reviewed the methodology for the calculation of the children's and secondary dependants' allowances and the resulting levels of those allowances. Given the issues that had previously arisen concerning the methodology for the calculation of the children's allowance, ICSC had agreed on a revised methodology in order to establish a more stable

updating mechanism based on credible and pragmatic parameters. Under the new methodology, the level of the allowance would be set for all staff as a flat amount equivalent to 4 per cent of the base salary at the P-4, step VI, level, taking into account the general trends in child benefits worldwide. The level of 4 per cent had been agreed upon because 4 per cent had been the level of the allowance most recently approved by the Assembly. The new methodology would address many of the concerns previously raised, in particular regarding the dominance of one duty station in determining the level of the allowance. He hoped that the General Assembly would agree to increase the levels of the dependency allowances on the basis of the new methodology, as those allowances had not been updated since 2011.

68. ICSC had always viewed parental leave as an important issue for all families, affecting both the new parent and the newborn child, and had therefore kept the matter under consideration over the past few years. During its discussions on the matter, ICSC had examined reports prepared by its secretariat, the Human Resources Network, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other entities outside the common system. It had also decided to establish a working group composed of ICSC members and representatives of organizations and staff federations in order to comprehensively examine the parental leave entitlements of the common system and to develop a proposal for consideration by ICSC. The working group had met twice in the past year and had submitted a number of proposals for the Commission's consideration. On the basis of those proposals, ICSC had decided to replace the current maternity, paternity and adoption leave provisions with a parental leave provision of 16 weeks for all parents, and to provide an additional period of 10 weeks for birth mothers in order to meet their specific prenatal and postnatal needs.

69. The 2021 baseline cost-of-living surveys conducted at the headquarters duty stations and in Washington, D C., had been successfully completed in November 2021, thanks to the active collaboration of the administrations and staff associations of the United Nations common system through local survey committees established at each duty station. The Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions had confirmed that, in accordance with the methodology, procedures and guidelines approved by the Commission for the 2021 round of surveys, all aspects of the surveys had been conducted by the ICSC secretariat in all relevant duty stations, with the exception of a few modifications that the Advisory Committee had considered reasonable, correct and justifiable, given the stated circumstances. ICSC had therefore decided to

endorse the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Post Adjustment Questions, and the results of the surveys had been implemented in August 2022.

70. The roll-out of the 2021 round of surveys to all other duty stations, starting with group I duty stations, was also under way. The first tranche of such surveys would be conducted in November 2022 at the duty stations in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, and had been preceded by an ICSC mission to the region. The second tranche would be conducted in January 2023 at the six duty stations in Eastern Europe and would also be preceded by an ICSC mission to the region. The third tranche would be conducted in March 2023 at the duty stations in Western Europe and the fourth tranche would be conducted in April 2023 at the duty stations in Asia, to be followed by a fifth tranche of surveys to be conducted in Africa later in 2023. The survey round would then be rolled out to field duty stations in September 2023. The results of all the surveys conducted under the 2021 round would be implemented on the basis of the newly modified system of operational rules agreed upon by ICSC at its ninetieth session, a system that ensured greater transparency, stability and predictability in the adjustment of net remuneration.

71. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 72/626 B, ICSC had reviewed the system-wide standards of accommodation for air travel and had considered possible approaches to harmonizing and modernizing those standards across common system organizations. Following that review, which had been welcomed by staff and organizations, ICSC had decided to invite common system organizations to harmonize their standards of accommodation for air travel as much as possible and to pilot, in 2023, the application of revised criteria for travel on official business or mission, specifically upgrading from economy to premium economy class travel of over six hours' duration and upgrading to business class travel of over nine and a half hours' duration, including layovers. ICSC would report to the General Assembly again on the matter after the completion of the pilot study.

72. ICSC had successfully completed its review, launched at its eighty-seventh session, of the salary survey methodologies for the General Service and related categories, with the full participation of the organizations and staff federations. The new methodologies would take effect from 1 January 2023; one would be applied at the eight headquarters duty stations of the common system and the other would be applied at the other duty stations. In response to the request, contained in General Assembly resolution 71/264, that ICSC, during its next review of the General

Service salary survey methodologies under the Flemming principle, consider the possibility of further increases in the weight of the local national civil services among the relevant employers, taking into account the fact that the United Nations was a civil service organization, as well as the experiences of ICSC from the previous round of surveys, ICSC had decided, among other things, that the national civil service employer should be represented by a mainstream national ministry and not limited to the ministry of foreign affairs, as had previously been the case. In addition, in response to the request, contained in General Assembly resolution [76/240](#), that ICSC pilot the application of external data for salary surveys, taking into account the opinions of all parties concerned, ICSC had decided to implement at all duty stations a pilot project whereby salary assessments could be conducted, under certain circumstances, on the basis of salary data gathered from external vendors.

73. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolution [76/240](#), ICSC, in consultation with all stakeholders, was gradually and comprehensively reviewing the common system compensation package, taking into account the original principles underlying the package, as well as the package's impact on the Organization's ability to fulfil its mandates. The review would also be focused on geographical distribution, workforce rejuvenation, gender parity and multilingualism. The Secretary-General's report ([A/77/30](#)) also contained information concerning the reviews of the standards of conduct for the international civil service, of the implementation of the recruitment incentive approved by the General Assembly in its resolution [70/244](#), and of the level of the mobility incentive, the hardship allowance, the non-family service allowance and relocation shipment-related payments.

74. **Mr. Hamzaoui** (Programme Planning and Budget Division), introducing the statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly on the programme budget implications arising from the recommendations contained in the report of ICSC for 2022 ([A/C.5/77/4](#)), said that, in its report ([A/77/30](#)), ICSC made recommendations in which it called for decisions by the General Assembly that would lead to implications under the proposed programme budget and the peacekeeping budget. Those recommendations related to the harmonization at 2.5 days of leave per month of the provisions for annual leave for temporary appointments across common system organizations, an increase in the base/floor salary scale and a revision of the children's and secondary dependants' allowances.

The report also contained two ICSC decisions that would lead to budgetary implications. Those decisions related to an increase in the hardship allowance and a revision of the level of the mobility incentive.

75. Should the General Assembly approve the ICSC recommendations, the implications of those recommendations, together with those of the ICSC decisions, for the proposed programme budget for 2023 were estimated at \$4,071,800 and would be included in the 2023 report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates: effect of changes in rates of exchange and inflation. The budgetary implications of those recommendations and decisions for peacekeeping operations were estimated at \$1,744,200 for the financial period 2022/23 and at \$3,488,400 for the financial period 2023/24 and would be taken into account, as necessary, in the performance reports for the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 and in the proposed budgets for the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

76. **Mr. Chuasoto** (Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee ([A/77/7/Add.11](#)), said that the Secretary-General had indicated in his statement ([A/C.5/77/4](#)) that, in its report ([A/77/30](#)), ICSC made recommendations in which it called for decisions by the General Assembly that would result in budgetary implications related to the review of the framework for contractual arrangements, the base/floor salary scale, and children's and secondary dependants' allowances. The report also contained two decisions of the Commission that would result in budgetary implications related to the hardship allowance and the mobility incentive. ICSC also decided in its report to replace the current maternity, paternity and adoption leave provisions with a parental leave provision of 16 weeks for all parents, and to provide an additional period of 10 weeks for birth mothers. In his statement ([A/C.5/77/4](#)), the Secretary-General indicated that the annual estimated financial implications of that decision were \$5.9 million system-wide and that, while the financial implications for the proposed programme budget for 2023 were not yet known, information on any such implications would be provided in the financial performance report for 2023.

77. The Advisory Committee recommended that the Assembly take note of paragraph 14 of the Secretary-General's statement ([A/C.5/77/4](#)). Should the Assembly approve the recommendations set out in the ICSC report, the implications of those recommendations, together with those of the ICSC decisions set out in the same report, for the proposed programme budget for

2023 were estimated at \$4,071,800 and would be included in the 2023 report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates: effect of changes in rates of exchange and inflation. The Advisory Committee noted that the budgetary implications of those recommendations and decisions for peacekeeping operations were estimated at \$1,744,200 for the financial period 2022/23 and at \$3,488,400 for the financial period 2023/24 and would be taken into account, as necessary, in the performance reports for the period from 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023 and in the proposed budgets for the period from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

78. **The Chair** said that he wished to draw attention to a letter dated 4 November 2022 from the President of the General Assembly addressed to the Chair of the Fifth Committee, transmitting the letter dated 3 November 2022 from the Chair of the Sixth Committee concerning agenda item 145, “United Nations common system” ([A/C.5/77/16](#)).

79. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [35/213](#), he invited a representative of the Federation of International Civil Servants’ Associations (FICSA), a representative of the United Nations International Civil Servants Federation (UNISERV) and a representative of the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) to make statements.

80. **Ms. Quinn-Maguire** (Federation of International Civil Servants’ Associations) said that the review of the jurisdictional set-up of the United Nations common system was a matter of concern to all. FICSA noted with regret that its request to participate in the meetings of the working group of the United Nations Legal Advisers Network on the matter had been denied and that, instead, it had received briefings and had been invited to comment on proposals that had already been decided upon. FICSA requested permission to participate in further consultations on the matter in order to ensure staff trust in the transparent application of ICSC methodologies. FICSA believed that the proposal to establish a joint chamber of the ILO Administrative Tribunal and the United Nations Appeals Tribunal, as set forth in the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the jurisdictional set-up of the United Nations common system ([A/77/222](#)), would not address the root cause of the challenges of having two tribunal systems and would infringe on the independence and autonomy of the tribunals.

81. Draft decision [A/C.5/77/L.5](#), entitled “United Nations common system”, contained a proposal to amend the ICSC statute with a view to eliminating any

legal ambiguity that might have contributed to the post adjustment situation in Geneva. FICSA remained concerned that, despite agreement by all organizations at the ninety-fourth session of ICSC, the matter had not been resolved, and it noted with regret that the collective efforts made to improve consultation, transparency and communication in recent months had not ultimately yielded the expected results. FICSA looked forward to reviewing the legal advice of the Office of Legal Affairs on the matter, as requested in draft decision [A/C.5/77/L.5](#), in particular its opinion on whether the proposed amendment would permanently resolve the issue.

82. FICSA supported the proposal to harmonize the accrual of annual leave across the common system for staff on temporary appointments. With regard to the revised methodology for children’s and secondary dependants’ allowances, FICSA was concerned about the lack of adjustments to the allowances since 2011, as it ran counter to the legitimate expectations of staff. While FICSA would prefer to retain the current methodology, it supported the recommendations set out in paragraphs 170 and 171 of the ICSC report ([A/77/30](#)), as they represented a pragmatic attempt to resolve the issue.

83. The ICSC decision concerning parental leave, as set out in its report, would help the General Assembly to achieve its goals related to workforce rejuvenation and gender parity while requiring a relatively minor financial investment by organizations. FICSA fully supported the decision, as it provided for the equitable treatment of all parents across the common system and demonstrated the Organization’s commitment to modernizing its workplace for the benefit of future generations of staff, in line with their expectations.

84. The common system organizations were continually being requested to do more with less. Notwithstanding the prolonged crisis situation and the economic reality facing the world, the consistent lack of available resources affected programme implementation and placed ever-greater pressure on staff, directly undermining their mental health and well-being, putting them at risk of burnout or worse. United Nations staff made considerable sacrifices and sometimes risked their lives in order to carry out the collective commitments of the international community. For organizations to fulfil their duty of care, a modest investment must be made, as recommended by the Commission, in order to enable the common system to remain fit for purpose and implement its mandates.

85. **Mr. Polane** (United Nations International Civil Servants’ Federation) said that UNISERV appreciated

the high-quality and inclusive consultations held between ICSC, the common system organizations and staff federations at the ninety-third and ninety-fourth sessions of ICSC and fully endorsed the resulting decisions and recommendations. While welcoming the recommendation to harmonize leave provisions for staff on temporary contracts, UNISERV remained concerned by the fact that some common system organizations used contractual arrangements that fell outside the contractual framework and provided for the individual negotiation of salaries and emoluments. That had led to situations in which United Nations personnel performing the same or similar functions had different incomes and conditions of service. That practice fell far outside the common system approach, and he wondered why it had been allowed to continue.

86. As earmarked funding continued to place pressure on United Nations organizations to “stay and deliver” while offering conditions of employment in accordance with the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, organizations were increasingly concluding framework contracts providing for the wholesale outsourcing to private companies of core and mission-critical functions, including those relating to supply chain activities and logistics, aviation, administration, and specialist services such as those pertaining to human rights, the rule of law, constitutional outreach and the provision of support to civil society. For years, the United Nations had relied on outsourced services, subject to scope limitations and falling within the area of technical, non-core functions. Heavy dependence on such services posed organizational risks. Given the recent qualitative changes in the nature of the contracts providing for such outsourcing, the Committee should carefully determine whether the relevant activities continued to meet the criteria established by the General Assembly and whether it was desirable for Member States’ financial contributions to be channelled towards corporations and their shareholders at the expense of employment stability for the Organization’s staff.

87. UNISERV welcomed the first meeting of the working group established to review the standards of conduct for the international civil service, to be held in November 2022. UNISERV appreciated the consideration of the matter by ICSC and looked forward to contributing to that work. The standards of conduct should promote a “speak up” culture, in which staff were encouraged to report wrongdoing and reassured that they would be protected from retaliation. Existing policies in that area had failed to address the prevailing culture throughout the common system, in which staff were afraid to speak up and organizations gave priority to avoiding bad publicity and minimizing reputational

damage in the short term, rather than addressing underlying issues of corruption and mismanagement. Recent high-profile scandals had demonstrated that internal monitoring and ethics functions were not robust enough to remain independent when corruption was prevalent at senior levels, particularly in small organizations. As a scandal affecting one United Nations organization tarnished the entire system, UNISERV called on the General Assembly to promote the strengthening of accountability and whistle-blower protection from a system-wide perspective. UNISERV would do its part in that regard.

88. UNISERV supported the draft amendment to article 10 of the ICSC statute, contained in draft decision [A/C.5/77/L.5](#), as it represented a legally consistent and practical means of resolving the underlying issue. However, UNISERV was sceptical of the experiment in jurisdictional engineering represented by the proposal, developed by the working group of the United Nations Legal Advisers Network and set out in the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the jurisdictional set-up of the United Nations common system ([A/77/222](#)), to establish a joint chamber of the ILO Administrative Tribunal and the United Nations Appeals Tribunal to issue interpretative, preliminary and appellate rulings in cases involving ICSC recommendations and decisions, as that proposal would increase delays, confusion and costs in the future. UNISERV trusted that the clarification, through the amendment, of the nature of the authority of ICSC with respect to post adjustment-related issues would obviate the need to tamper with the jurisdictional structure.

89. **Ms. Chaoui** (Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations system), speaking via video link, said that CCISUA noted with regret the gender imbalance among the ICSC membership for 2022 and hoped that that issue would be addressed. Common system organizations should consider strictly adhering to the three types of contracts provided for in the contractual framework. Organizations were increasingly abolishing continuing contracts in favour of precarious contracts, threatening the independence and impartiality of the international civil servant function. CCISUA nevertheless fully supported the harmonization of the leave provisions under temporary, continuing and fixed-term contracts on the basis of the principle of equal pay for equal work.

90. The ICSC recommendations on parental leave were welcome, as they were aligned with best practices, contributed to workforce rejuvenation and promoted gender equality. CCISUA also welcomed the revised children’s and secondary dependants’ allowances, as

they mirrored the tax deductions granted for children in Member States. CCISUA supported the adjustments to the hardship allowance in order to ensure the continued attractiveness of the field for potential recruits. Although CCISUA also supported the adjustment to the mobility incentive, that incentive should apply to all duty stations and not just to those located in the field.

91. ICSC was to be commended for having improved the transparency of its cost-of-living surveys. A unified post adjustment multiplier for Geneva must be established; that issue could be usefully addressed through the clarification of the ICSC statute. The review of the salary survey methodologies for the General Service category was welcome. However, the results of the pilot project on the use of external data should be reviewed before such data were included in the final methodology. CCISUA had also requested ICSC to review the conditions of service for National Professional Officers.

92. CCISUA welcomed the review of the standards of conduct for the international civil service, as it would help to address emerging issues. The Organization should better protect whistle-blowers and respond to the rise in reprisals against staff representatives, as such reprisals prevented them from performing their functions under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations. CCISUA also called on ICSC to establish a working group to review ways to increase workforce diversity and eradicate racism. ICSC should fully adhere to the principles of social dialogue by consulting all stakeholders, including staff representatives.

93. **Ms. Guo Zhiqi** (China) said that, since its establishment, ICSC had played a central role in regulating and coordinating conditions of service in the common system. In recent years, ICSC had made commendable efforts to maintain the unity and cohesion of that system. More work was nevertheless needed to make the system more effective and manage human resources more scientifically. The geographical representation of developing countries in the international civil service system should also be further improved.

94. Over the past five years, the concurrent application of divergent post adjustment multipliers in Geneva had posed immense financial, legal and administrative challenges for common system organizations, an unsustainable situation. The Committee should take swift measures to resolve that issue in order to ensure the uniformity and cohesion of the common system and to prevent the recurrence of the problem.

95. Her delegation noted the new proposed standards in areas such as the base/floor salary scale, parental leave, children's allowances, the hardship allowance and the mobility incentive. Decisions on whether or not to increase entitlements for staff should take into account factors such as the appropriate comparators and the social and economic development levels and capacity to pay of Member States, and the incentive function of any such adjustments should be considered comprehensively. Standards should be adjusted incrementally and on the basis of verifiable evidence in order to ensure that Member States were prepared to assume the related additional financial obligations, and to guarantee the adjustment's effectiveness in boosting staff morale.

96. **Mr. Kawasaki** (Japan) said that his delegation fully supported the purpose of the common system, namely, to apply common standards, methods and arrangements to staff salaries, allowances and benefits, in order to avoid serious discrepancies in the terms and conditions of employment, preclude competition in the recruitment of personnel and facilitate the interchange of personnel. In order for stakeholders to maintain confidence in the common system, it must remain fair and sustainable through continuous review. Changes in economic situations, including in the cost of living, must be reflected. In that regard, ICSC played a key role in reviewing the system and in guiding system entities in order to ensure the coherence and effective management of the system.

97. Japan was seriously concerned about the continued application of two divergent post adjustment multipliers in Geneva, as it jeopardized the consistency and stability of the common system. The General Assembly should address that matter. His delegation would engage constructively in the discussions on the proposed solutions to the issue.

98. Significant resources would be required to implement the recommendations of ICSC regarding the revision of base salaries and allowances, including the children's and secondary dependants' allowances. Given that the remuneration of United Nations staff was funded by Member States, Japan looked forward to examining the rationale and justifications for the recommendations in order to ensure accountability for the efficient use of Member State resources and to maintain the motivation and confidence of the Organization's staff, its greatest asset.

99. **Mr. Devyatkin** (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation had consistently supported the mandate of ICSC and was committed to maintaining the cohesion and unity of the common system, which was

the basis for regulating and coordinating conditions of service. The benefits derived from the system should not be taken for granted by other international organizations and bodies; rather, they should be treated with the utmost respect. In considering the ICSC recommendations and decisions before it, the Committee must focus primarily on matters on which decisions had been pending for a long time.

100. **Ms. Romanova** (United States of America) said that the United States was committed to ensuring that United Nations staff were supported, empowered and compensated fairly and transparently. At the current session, the United States would follow up on the implementation of a number of reforms approved by the General Assembly at its previous session, including those relating to re-envisioning the structure and content of the next comprehensive review of the common system compensation package, obtaining access to detailed compensation data, piloting the use of external data for surveys concerning General Service salaries and improving consistency in job classification practices.

101. The compensation package must take into account evolving workforce priorities worldwide. That would require Member States to understand retention trends and challenges and to assess the ways in which those trends and challenges were affected by United Nations compensation practices, human resource policies and organizational culture.

102. In reviewing the recommended changes to benefits and allowances, her delegation would consider whether the relevant benefits and allowances were achieving their stated purpose. For example, for a working parent at the P-2 level, the children's allowance was barely enough to cover two months of daycare in New York City, while a D-2-level senior official receiving a tertiary education grant and a children's allowance could be viewed as receiving overlapping benefits. As structured, in some cases the children's allowance did not eliminate significant barriers for entry-level staff, a situation that could contribute to challenges in the retention of staff from some demographic groups. Her delegation would consider ways in which the allowance could be restructured so that it had a greater impact on those earning less.

103. While the improvements to the parental leave framework were welcome, the Organization's culture and other institutional challenges must not prevent staff, particularly those serving on temporary contracts or in the field, from gaining access to parental leave. As the United Nations system required evolving skills to respond to fast-paced global changes, her delegation sought to better understand the ways in which common

system organizations approached professional development and the ways in which best practices in that area could be replicated. In addition, as future generations of United Nations staff might not be interested in a 30-year career in the international civil service, preferring instead to enter and leave the system throughout their careers in order to facilitate dynamic exchanges of skills, experiences and expertise, a new discussion on entitlements might be necessary.

104. **Mr. Tur de la Concepción** (Cuba) said that the ICSC recommendations would have a positive impact on staff across the United Nations. The harmonization of the conditions of service for temporary staff and of the post adjustment multiplier in Geneva, as well as the improvement of maternity leave provisions, were particularly important for ensuring the efficiency and commitment of staff. Cuba supported ICSC and appreciated its efforts to ensure equitable geographical representation among staff.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.