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STATEMENT
by
Mr. Troy Torrington
Representative of the Republic of Guyana
ON BEHALF OF THE RIO GROUP

On the Capital Master Plan

61st UNGA

NOVEMBER 30, 2006

Mr. Chairman,

On this Agenda Item 117 - Capital Master Plan, my delegation has the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the Rio Group: namely, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and my own country Guyana.

Our Group wishes to associate itself with the statement delivered by the Distinguished Delegate of South Africa, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

We wish, at the outset, to thank Acting USG for Management Mr. Warren Sach for introducing the CMP. We also thank Mr. Rajat Saha for introducing the report of the ACABQ on this Item. We have taken note of comments of the Chairman with respect to the report of the Board of Auditors and recall that relevant aspects of the OIOS on the CMP had been introduced in the context of the OIOS annual report.

Mr. Chairman,

The Rio Group has always recognized the need for expeditious action to renovate and refurbish UN Headquarters in order to comply with high standards of health and safety regulations. In this regard, we welcome action taken by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/282 to proceed with strategy IV of the CMP.

We have learnt by the report of the Secretary-General that the present estimate for construction has increased by \$4.5 million. We are concerned over the high escalation of costs each time the General Assembly delays a decision and, in this sense, we hope we can reach an agreement on the financing of the project by the end of our session.

The Group considers that the Secretary-General must abide, as far as possible, by the calendar of construction presented to us.

Mr. Chairman:

Our Group has taken account of the fact that the host country has benefited significantly and will continue to do so by virtue of its position as host country and are convinced that such a position has special responsibilities that attach to it. In this context, we regret that the host country has not complied with these responsibilities.

At this stage, our Group is persuaded that the funding of the CMP through assessed contributions offers the simplest option for the financing of the Project. The member states of the Rio Group are also favourably disposed to considering the payment of the associated cost through a number of installments.

From a principled position, the Rio Group has always been opposed to the introduction of interest on arrears in the payment of Member States. We therefore need to study carefully the proposal for the possibility of introducing a mechanism for charging credit utilization charges.

Mr. Chairman,

Our Group is seriously concerned that appropriate care is exercised by the Secretariat in the handling and preserving of the artifacts, gifts and other valuable works contained in the building. These invaluable pieces of art, express, in a meaningful way, the variety and uniqueness of cultures of all Member States. Our group will seek assurances that they are going to be handled in the most efficient and careful manner during the work of construction so that they are not damaged and that, if need arises, Member States that donated them could be appropriately consulted over their handling and storage.

I thank you