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ON BEHALF OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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PERMANENT MISSION OF AUSTRIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**Item 124: Programme Budget for the Biennium 2006-2007 – Capital
Master Plan**

FIFTH COMMITTEE

New York, 16 June 2006

Capital Master Plan

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Serbia, and the EFTA countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this declaration.

At the outset, we would like to thank the Secretariat for their presentation on the Capital Master Plan.

The EU underlines again that the Capital Master Plan is a project of utmost importance, which has to be approached with a sense of urgency. The United Nations headquarters, erected in 1951, has outlived its natural life-span. It is now a safety hazard for staff, delegates and visitors alike, wastes energy and is in constant need of repair. A decision on the strategy is needed to avoid the postponement of the construction start, scheduled for summer 2007.

We, therefore, hope that the Fifth Committee is now finally in a position to make a strategy decision. The EU strongly supports the realisation of Strategy IV, which in our opinion constitutes the most sensible approach with the least obstacles. We also invite countries which have not yet done so to express their support for Strategy IV. It is in all our interest to avoid any further delays, not only because of the related cost-escalation but because of the life-endangering conditions of the building.

Our deliberations on this agenda item must be guided by the firm principle "no further delays". The EU is committed to transform the vision of the Capital Master Plan into reality. Thus, we call upon the entire membership of the Organisation to work together swiftly towards the completion of this project.

Finally, it is with regret that we have to say good-bye to ASG Reuter who has played a key role in bringing this project forward. We would like to express our sincere thanks for all your efforts and wish you all the best for all your future plans and endeavours. While it will not be an easy task to find an equally capable and dedicated person to fill the gap which has been created by your resignation, we have confidence that the Secretariat will spare no effort to identify a suitable successor as a matter of priority.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.