
Real estate: update on the Geneva buildings renovation strategy

Report by the Director-General

1. In May 2010, the Sixty-third World Health Assembly considered reports reviewing the safety and security of staff and premises and the Capital Master Plan.¹ This review included the immediate and continuing needs of the Organization in respect of the repair and refurbishment of its ageing real estate facilities. The Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA63.7, in which, inter alia, it resolved to appropriate US\$ 22 million from Member States' non-assessed income to the Real Estate Fund in order to cover the costs of urgently needed renovation. It was proposed that such renovation be undertaken to improve the Organization's facilities, with priority given to enhancing premises security, including urgently required refurbishment of fire safety infrastructure to ensure compliance with modern fire security norms and standards in the main building at headquarters, and to proceed with the technical studies required to undertake a full refurbishment of the headquarters main building.
2. The Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board, at its eighteenth meeting in May 2013, considered an updated refurbishment strategy for the headquarters premises.² The Committee requested further clarification of certain assumptions made in the document and of the definition of real estate needs at headquarters.³
3. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress made with respect to the comprehensive headquarters renovation strategy.

UPDATE ON THE HEADQUARTERS RENOVATION STRATEGY

4. The updated headquarters renovation strategy adopts a site-wide, comprehensive approach to WHO's future real estate needs in Geneva. It proposes the construction of a new 1100-desk, low-energy, low-maintenance building with facilities that would replace the existing obsolete annex buildings and provide space into which staff could be relocated during renovation of the main building. This would mitigate the health and safety risks inherent in construction work in an occupied building and decrease the time and cost of this element of the renovation works. The updated strategy also obviates the need to renovate the obsolete and inflexible temporary buildings that currently serve

¹ Documents A63/35 and A63/36.

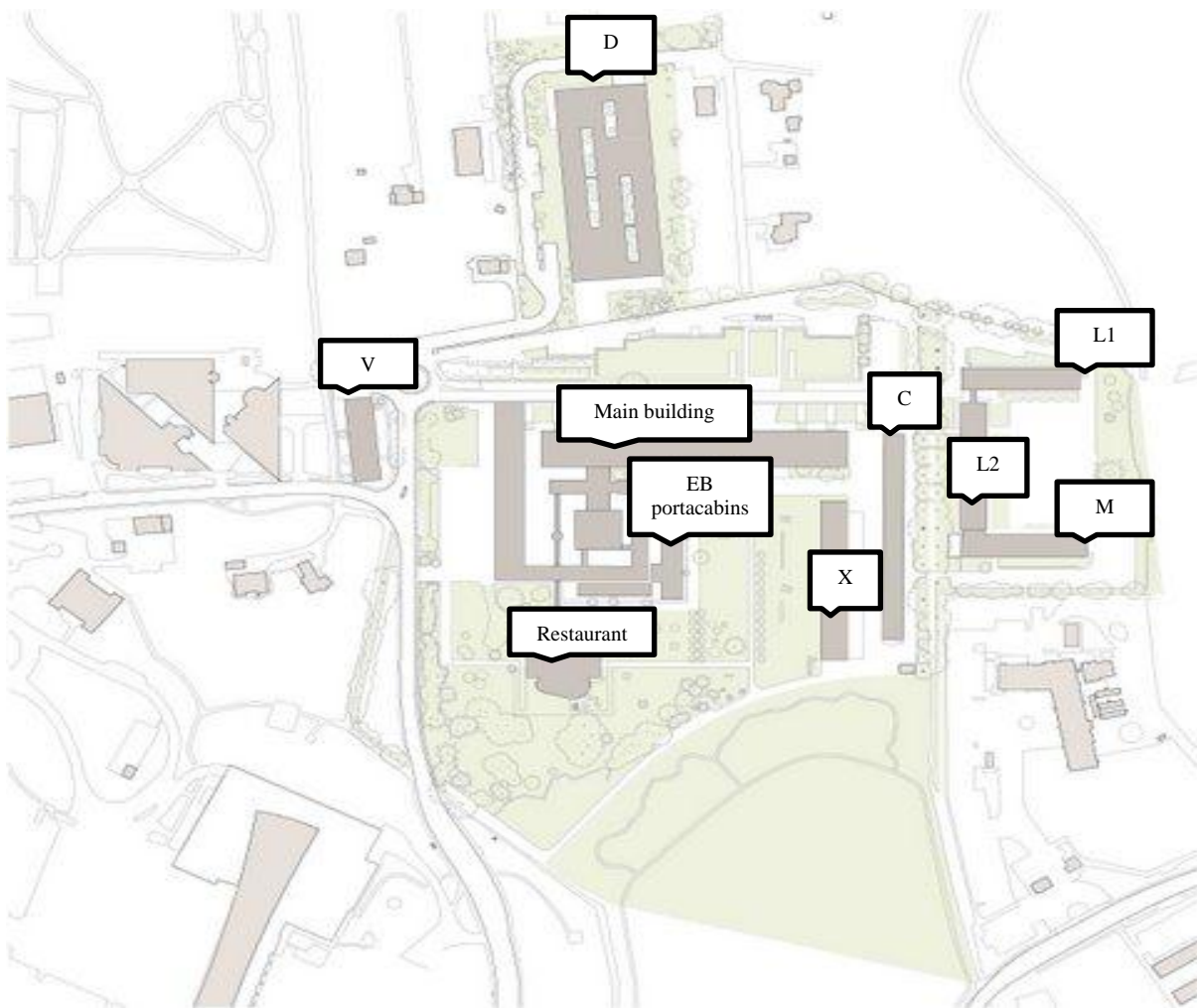
² See document A66/42.

³ See document A66/62.

as annexes to the main building. This comprehensive approach replaces the previous floor-by-floor plan to renovate only floors 1 to 7 of the main building.

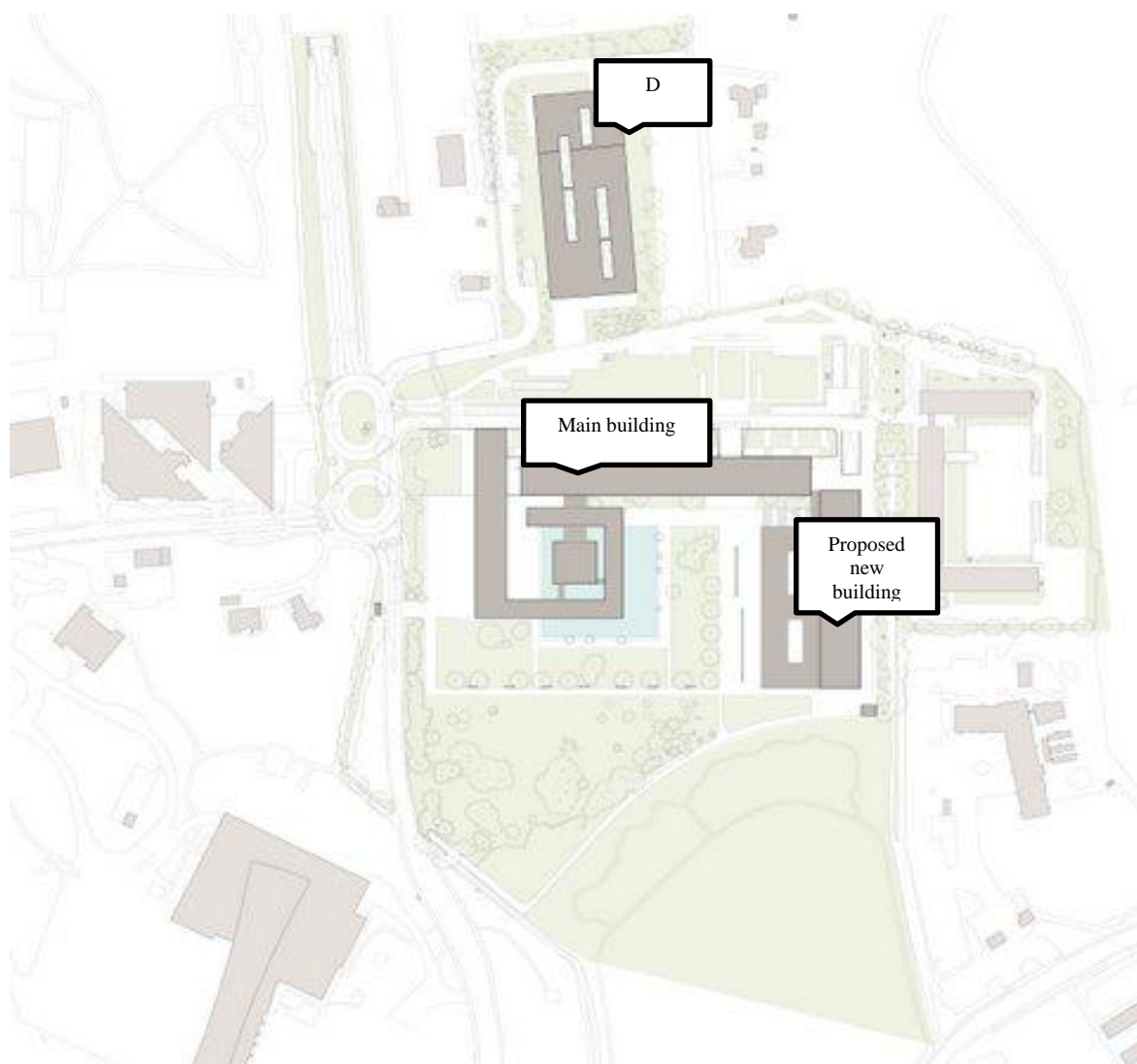
5. Figure 1 shows the existing layout of the buildings at headquarters, with WHO buildings highlighted in a darker shade and annotated with their respective identifiers.

Figure 1



6. Figure 2 depicts the new layout on completion of the works presented in the updated renovation strategy, including the construction of the new building, the demolition of the existing temporary and prefabricated annexes (X, C, V, EB portacabins, restaurant), and the sale of one parcel of land owned by WHO, along with the existing buildings (L1, L2 and M).

Figure 2



7. On completion of the renovation project, the number of WHO headquarters buildings would be reduced from 10 to just three, as depicted in Figure 2, with all three buildings conforming to the latest standards of environmental performance, fire safety and flexible working arrangements.

8. WHO has been working closely with the Swiss federal authorities and the Canton of Geneva on the development of this strategy. A renovation steering committee with representation from WHO and the requisite Swiss administrative organs was established in 2012 to assess and validate the options available to WHO.

9. In line with the request made by the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee in May 2013, the Director-General formally approached the Swiss Government to assist WHO with the validation and verification of the assumptions contained in the updated strategy, including confirmation of the willingness of the Host State to provide 140 million Swiss francs as a 50-year interest-free loan of the funds required to complete the construction of the proposed new building.

10. Should the Host State agree in principle to this loan and if it is ready to release at its own risk funds for the costs of the planning phase, against the total loan amount, planning for the new building can then be initiated. As part of the following phase, the Secretariat will prepare a draft renovation and construction strategy that will include both the concept for the new building and plans for renovation of the main building. The draft strategy will then be submitted to the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly for approval, through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board.

11. If the Health Assembly approves the strategy and is in agreement with the principle of accepting a loan, an architectural competition will be launched. The architect selected will elaborate the site-wide concept into a proposal that will include a detailed plan for the construction of the new building, integrated with the renovation of the main building and decommissioning of the provisional buildings.

12. Subject to confirmation of the loan by the Parliament of the Host State, and if it is in agreement with the proposal made by the architect, the Sixty-eighth World Health Assembly could authorize the Director-General to accept the remainder of the full loan and go ahead with construction of the new building.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

13. The Executive Board is invited to endorse the comprehensive headquarters renovation strategy and to request the Director-General to continue with the planning. Subject to timely approval in principle of the requested loan by the Swiss Government, the concept for the new building and renovations will be submitted through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board, to the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly for its approval.

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