
Real estate: update on the Geneva buildings renovation strategy

Report by the Director-General

1. The Executive Board at its 134th session noted an earlier version of this report.¹ The version of the report that follows, in particular paragraphs 7–14, has been updated in the light of comments made during the session and new information available.

2. 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.² 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. The Health Assembly also authorized the Director-General, inter alia, (i) to initiate work on urgent renovation projects identified in document A63/36 (namely, improvements to 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 (ii) to proceed with the technical studies required to undertake a full refurbishment of the headquarters main building.

3. In May 2013, the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board at its eighteenth meeting considered a report presenting an updated refurbishment strategy for the headquarters premises.³ The Committee requested further clarification of certain assumptions made in the document and of the definition of real estate needs at headquarters.⁴

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, low-energy, low-maintenance annex 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

¹ See document EB134/41 and the summary records of the Executive Board at its 134th session, tenth meeting, section 2.

² Documents A63/35 and A63/36.

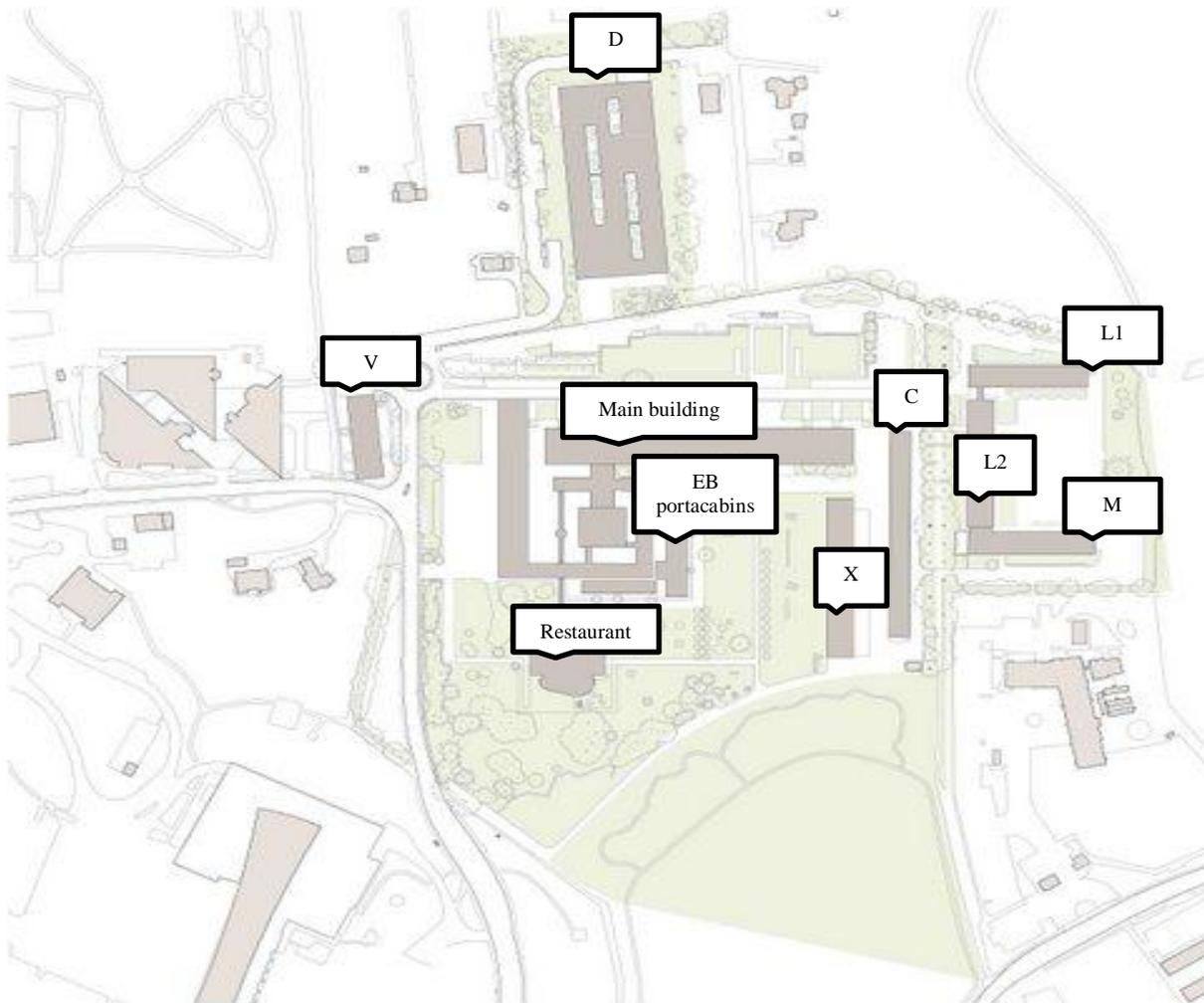
³ Document A66/42.

⁴ See document A66/62.

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 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.

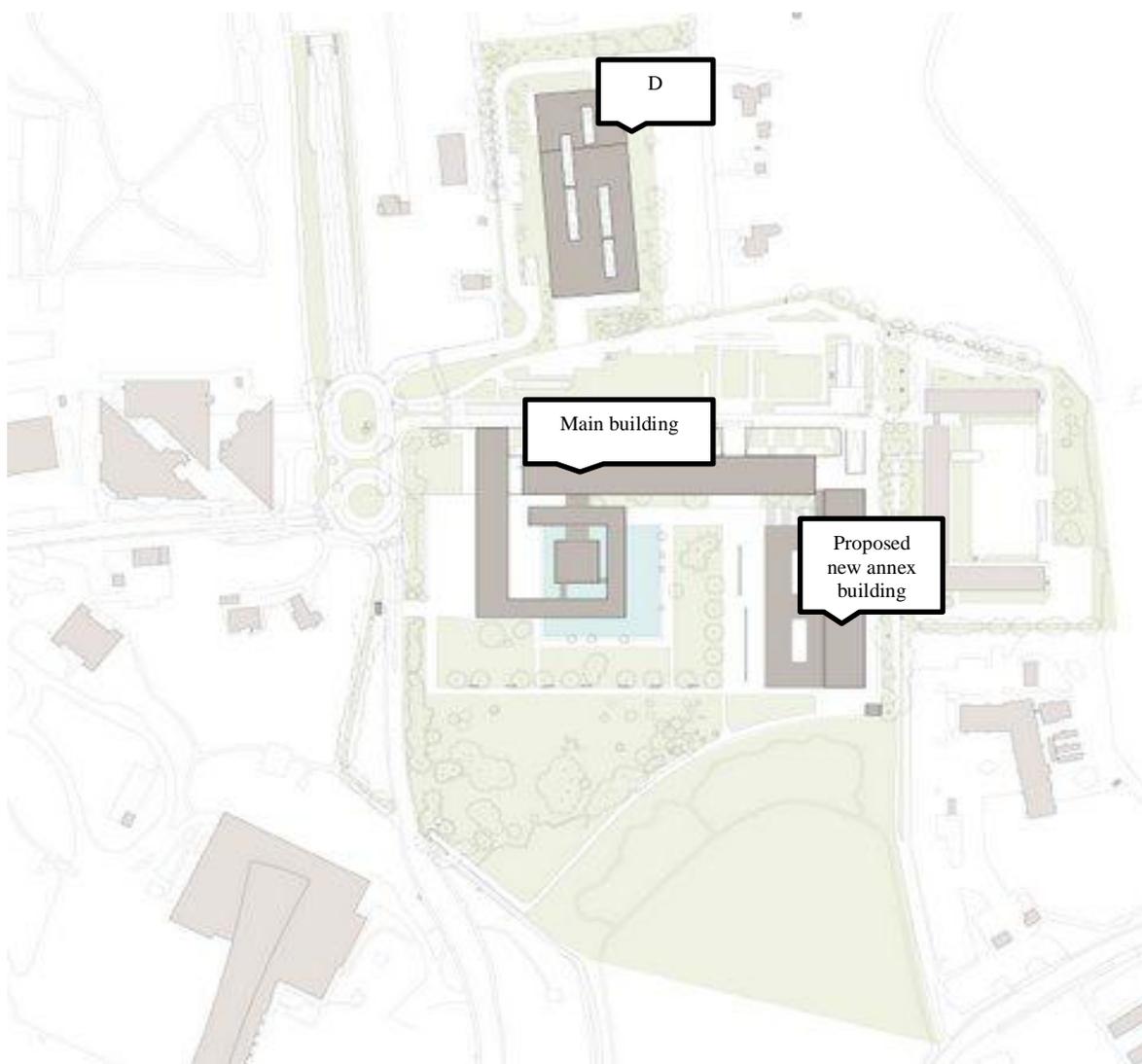
5. Figure 1 shows the existing layout of the buildings at headquarters, with WHO buildings highlighted in a darker shade and annotated with their respective identifiers.

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. 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.

8. The objective of the renovation project is to refurbish the main building and reduce the number of buildings at WHO headquarters from 10 to three, with all three buildings conforming to the latest standards of environmental performance and fire safety. The three buildings will also provide operational efficiency through common and integrated support systems, and will be designed around a modular office concept, combining well-designed collaborative workspace with individual offices.

The balance between collaborative workspace and modular offices will be flexible in order to meet the changing requirements of WHO staff.

9. It is anticipated that the three buildings will cover a smaller surface area and offer greater energy efficiency than the buildings currently on the site. Through more effective planning of space, 25% of the office floor area will be designed and used as collaborative workspace and desk capacity will remain at 2200. Service area will be reduced and modern technology optimized. Meeting and conference rooms will be integrated into the design to ensure business continuity during the renovation work. Throughout this process, the relevant decisions will also take account of the current availability of temporary facilities in Geneva.

10. In line with the request made by the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee in May 2013, the Director-General formally approached the Swiss federal authorities 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, constituting the funds required to complete the construction of the proposed new building.

11. In February 2014, the Swiss federal authorities approved the release of 14 million Swiss francs, which represents an advance of 10% of the interest-free loan requested by the Director-General. The 14 million Swiss francs are being released in order to support the planning phase associated with the construction of the new building.

12. An architectural competition (“*concours de projets*”) will be launched immediately as part of the initial planning phase, subject to approval by the Health Assembly. Participants will not simply be required to propose a design for a new building, using pre-defined specifications; they will also have to integrate the new construction into a single, site-wide renovation project that will include the refurbishment of the main building. A panel comprising architects together with representatives of the Host State, Member States (through the Chairman of the Executive Board) and WHO staff members will preside over the competition.

13. After the competition, a document detailing the specifications and estimated cost of the winning project (“*devis général*”) will be submitted to the Swiss federal authorities in order to facilitate the final decision to release the balance of the loan in 2016.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

14. The Health Assembly is invited to consider the following draft decision:

The Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly,

Having considered the report on real estate: update on the Geneva buildings renovation strategy,¹

1. APPROVED the updated Geneva buildings renovation strategy, including the organization of an architectural competition;

¹ Document A67/52.

2. EXPRESSED its appreciation to the Government of Switzerland for its offer to provide an initial interest-free loan of 14 million Swiss francs for planning purposes;

3. REQUESTED the Director-General:

(1) to accept this initial loan subject to the conditions described in paragraphs 10–12 of the report on real estate: update on the Geneva buildings renovation strategy¹ and to continue to plan the site-wide renovation project;

(2) to present to the Sixty-eighth World Health Assembly the selected design for the new building with an outline of the building specifications and a detailed financial update of the entire renovation strategy, with the expectation that a final decision will be taken by the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly regarding approval of the final project and acceptance of the full loan for the construction of the new building and initiation of construction work, subject to the Swiss federal authorities' final approval of the full loan in December 2016.

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¹ Document A67/52.