

Real estate: update on the Geneva buildings renovation strategy

Report by the Director-General

1. This report summarizes the history of the project to renovate WHO's buildings in Geneva. It also describes developments since the Health Assembly adopted decision WHA67(12) in May 2014, the steps being taken to provide the facilities to meet the future needs of the Organization, and the estimated costs of the refurbishment.
2. WHO headquarters at Geneva comprises 100 000 square metres of occupied office space distributed between 10 separate buildings. The main building, the product of a design competition won by architect Jean Tschumi, accommodates around half the staff members at headquarters (about 1000 out of a total of 2100). It is widely regarded as a modern architectural masterpiece but needs complete renovation.
3. Since the WHO headquarters building became operational in 1966, nine additional buildings have been constructed. They were designed and built in response to the Organization's increasing need both to undertake additional activities and to respond to public health crises. Seven were constructed as provisional or temporary structures and as such did not require compliance with architectural or urban planning guidelines. The WHO/UNAIDS building is the most recent. Inaugurated in 2006 following an international design competition, this and the main building are the only structures on the site that meet modern construction standards.
4. In 2008, WHO prepared a renovation project for the ageing main building that included extensive maintenance and repairs, but during the initial planning phase it became apparent that the proposed approach neither allowed for complete refurbishment nor considered the renovation of all other existing buildings. As a consequence, work began on a site-wide renovation and refurbishment strategy. In 2012, a steering committee with representation from WHO and the Swiss authorities assessed and validated the proposed options.

5. In May 2013, the Health Assembly considered four options¹ that had formed the basis for the elaboration of a cost-effective and efficient long-term strategy for the renovation of the buildings on WHO's headquarters site:

- Option 1. Construction of a new 1100-desk low-energy, low-maintenance building; demolition of three existing annex buildings; refurbishment of the main building; and sale of three other annex buildings
- Option 2. Construction of a new 300-desk temporary building; rental of space for 300 desks externally; renovation of the main building and existing annexes; and demolition of the temporary building at completion
- Option 3. Rental of space for 600 desks externally; and refurbishment of the main building and existing annexes
- Option 4. Vertical extension of L and M buildings to provide 260 desks; rental of space for 300 desks externally; and floor-by-floor refurbishment of main building and existing annexes.

6. The Health Assembly noted the Secretariat's report, which specified option 1 as the preferred option.²

7. The Swiss federal authorities have considered the project and agreed in principle to provide 140 million Swiss francs as a 50-year interest-free loan to cover the construction of the proposed new building. In February 2014, the Swiss federal authorities approved the release of 14 million Swiss francs, an advance of 10% of the loan, to support the planning phase associated with the construction of the new building.

8. In May 2014, the Health Assembly considered the report of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee on the update of the Geneva buildings renovation strategy³ and adopted decision WHA67(12) in which, inter alia, it authorized the Director-General to proceed with the initial planning phase of the updated renovation strategy for WHO's buildings in Geneva, including the organization of an architectural competition. It also requested the Director-General to accept the initial interest-free loan of 14 million Swiss francs from the Government of Switzerland, subject to conditions, and to continue to plan the site-wide renovation project. It further requested the Director-General 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.

9. In June 2014, the Secretariat launched a global architectural competition for the design for a new building. The 251 proposals that were received were reviewed in October 2014 by an international jury, comprising mainly architects, together with representatives of the Host State and the Secretariat. The candidates remained anonymous to the jury, which selected the 13 projects that best respond to the defined specifications and with the highest potential architectural value. The authors of

¹ Contained in document A66/42.

² See document WHA66/2013/REC/3, summary record of third meeting of Committee B of the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly, section 1, pp. 215–216.

³ Document A67/61.

those projects will now be invited by a notary to develop them further. The jury will then select, at its second session in March 2015, the winning project recommended for construction. The results of the competition will be presented to the Sixty-eighth World Health Assembly.

10. Following the jury's selection of the winning project, a document detailing the specifications and more accurate costs to construct the building within budget will be prepared. This *devis général* will form the basis for the proposal to the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly, through the Executive Board, to take the final decision on acceptance of the loan of 140 million Swiss francs from the Swiss authorities and initiation of construction work. An oversight committee will be established once the final project has been agreed.

11. The plans for the renovation of the main building will be refined during the planning and construction phase of the new building, in order to ensure that (1) the best possible working conditions are provided for staff members in the Organization both during the course of, and at the end of, the project, and (2) all the buildings operate as one site with the same environmentally-friendly technical installations.

MEETING THE FUTURE NEEDS OF THE ORGANIZATION

12. When renovation is finished, the entire facility must be able to adjust to:

- rapid responses to health emergencies (increases and reductions in staff numbers)
- flexible working arrangements, such as part-time and teleworking
- new ways of meeting, such as by video conference
- the inclusion of consultants and interns as part of the workforce
- meeting the access needs for all people, including those with reduced mobility
- initiatives that improve the well-being of staff at work, such as sporting and recreational activities
- the mobility plan of the Canton of Geneva (improved use of public and shared transport and a smaller number of parking spaces).

13. In order to ensure that the site is a suitable size, projections have been made to incorporate changes in the Secretariat's working behaviours and advances in building technology. These changes should bring cost efficiencies and generate space savings. However, operational requirements have increased in some areas, such as the Strategic Health Operations Centre. Significant improvements also are needed to the building design in order to improve access for people with reduced mobility, which is currently substandard.

14. The Table compares the current facilities available in the eight provisional and temporary buildings with the facilities being proposed for the new building, and between the total facilities currently available and those expected at the end of the project.

Table. Current and proposed facilities for core services

	Facilities being replaced	2020 new building*	Reduction in facilities (%)	Total facilities 2013	Total facilities 2025	Reduction in total facilities (%)
Total floor area (m²)	28 235	20 572	27.14	70 772	63 217	10.67
Core service areas:						
Archives (m ²)	1 137	790	30.51	2 133	1 786	16.26
Office space (m ²)	11 639	9 172	21.20	30 828	28 361	8.00
Workstations (number)	1 210	770	36.36	2 658	2 377	10.57
Meeting facilities (m ²)	581	1 660	- 185.85	2 347	3 426	- 45.98
Conference rooms (number)	-	2	-	5	7	- 40.00
Meeting rooms (number)	14	9	35.71	17	12	29.41
Print services (m ²)	496	240	51.56	1 425	764	46.37
Storage and service areas etc (m ²)	3 329	330	90.09	8 770	5 772	34.19
Technical rooms (m ²)	1 311	2 022	- 54.26	6 287	5 330	15.21
Strategic Health Operations Centre (m ²)	-	850	-	173	850	- 391.33
Cafeteria capacity (number)	534	450	15.73	1 128	580	48.58
Cafeteria (m ²)	2 288	2 070	9.53	3 080	2 862	7.08
Concessions (m ²)	597	-	-	1 578	981	37.83

* It should be noted that not all the current facilities are fully occupied when making the transition and rationalizing the use of the existing premises.

15. The new building and the renovation of the main building will focus on a modular office concept, which facilitates a combination of collaborative workspaces with individual offices, meeting rooms and other common areas. It is expected that, upon completion of the construction and renovation, at least 25% of the office floor area will be designated and used as collaborative workspace for nearly 2400 workstations, using 30% less floor area than is currently available.

16. The initial projection for the new building was for a low-energy, low-maintenance structure with 1100 workstations. This projection has been revised and the capacity reduced to 700 workstations. The basis for the reduction is a more in-depth look at future needs, especially concerning the Secretariat's working practices.

17. The WHO headquarters site supports more than 550 external meetings each year, plus many internal meetings. This figure does not include the Health Assembly and other intergovernmental meetings that are held off-site. The four conference rooms with interpretation facilities (Salles A, B, C

and D) will not be available for the duration of the renovation, but it is expected that the Executive Board room will be available much sooner. It is therefore important to integrate sufficient facilities into the new building project design to ensure continuity of activities, while preventing any duplication at the end of the project.

18. The Secretariat has proposed to consolidate the meeting facilities in closer proximity to each other and to use a modular concept for the rooms, thereby achieving greater flexibility. This arrangement is more practical when dealing with three buildings than with the 10 buildings currently.

19. The overall strategy must meet the Organization's key functional requirements of energy efficiency, environmental performance, cost-efficient maintenance, security and fire safety. Operations will be concentrated in three buildings instead of 10, in new or wholly renovated premises covering a much smaller area. Operational efficiency and cost efficiency will be increased through:

- integrated support systems for the new and the two remaining main buildings
- adoption and maintenance of up-to-date standards in facility management
- key functions (such meeting rooms and Strategic Health Operations Centre room) equipped with up-to-date technologies and equipment
- adoption and maintenance of up-to-date information technology services and building maintenance technology.

20. The design and construction of the new building will lead to cost savings. The current costs and savings forecast will be calculated and submitted to the Executive Board at its 138th session, in January 2016.

21. Construction of the new building will be so organized as to provide space into which staff members can be relocated during renovation of the main building, thus mitigating the health and safety risks inherent in construction work in an occupied building and decreasing the time and cost of this element of the work. The updated strategy also eliminates the need to renovate the obsolete and inflexible temporary buildings, which have been used beyond their expected lifespan.

22. WHO continues to be in regular contact with other Geneva-based United Nations entities, notably ILO, WIPO, WTO and the United Nations office at Geneva, concerning their recent and ongoing construction and renovation projects. The Secretariat has also approached the United Nations Office for Project Services to ensure the WHO takes into account the lessons learnt from other such projects. This collaboration will be strengthened throughout the life of the project once approved.

COSTS OF REFURBISHMENT OF THE SITE

23. The current estimated cost for the construction of the new building with the specifications presented in the 2012 feasibility study is 140 million Swiss francs. This figure will be qualified during the course of 2015, when final design will have been selected and the detailed studies are undertaken.

24. Aspects such as the integrated support systems (heating, electricity, information technology and security) will affect both the cost of the construction of the new building and the renovations to the main building. The final plan for the new building will make it clearer what the impact will be on the

cost of renovations. The current estimate for the renovation of the main building is 110 million Swiss francs.

25. The total cost of the 10-year project is estimated to be 250 million Swiss francs, 140 million of which is proposed to be financed through an interest-free loan from the Swiss authorities to be repaid over 50 years. The repayments on the loan would commence at the end of construction and the amount of 2.8 million Swiss francs per year has been incorporated in the calculations for financing of the Real Estate Fund.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

26. The Executive Board is invited to note the report and request the Secretariat to update it by including the outcome of the architectural competition for consideration by the Sixty-eighth World Health Assembly, through the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, in preparation for submission of a comprehensive technical and financial report to the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly for decision.

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