The past year has been marked by global challenges of a magnitude that defies any solutions other than multilateral ones. Whether we are dealing with the continuing deadly conflicts in various regions, escalating military expenditure, economic instability, soaring food and energy prices or abuses of human rights, these are shared challenges that can only be addressed through joint efforts with a strong and effective United Nations at the centre.

As an expanding multilateral platform, the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) provides an indispensable infrastructure for collective action and helps to facilitate collaborative efforts with all stakeholders to confront these challenges. This Annual Report outlines UNOG’s role in the international community’s joint work towards a better future for all and provides an overview of our activities throughout 2008 in support of this objective. The Annual Report also identifies particular areas of concern and forward-looking priorities that will guide our work over the coming years.
As the Secretary-General's representative office in Switzerland, UNOG continues to promote and contribute to the Organization's activities across the three fundamental pillars: security, development and human rights. In line with the growing demand for United Nations involvement in all these areas, UNOG has experienced a steady increase in meeting activities and requests for administrative services. Our Annual Report documents both this continuous expansion in demand and how UNOG strives to address it.

Common to the challenges across the three pillars is that they can only be confronted through well-coordinated efforts, drawing on the strengths of the entire United Nations system. The Secretary-General has therefore identified system-wide coherence and strengthening management capacity as key priorities. Improved system-wide coherence and management throughout the worldwide Secretariat are imperative for optimal use of resources and for timely, efficient delivery of results for those in need. With the rich presence of United Nations entities, engaged across the wide spectrum of the Organization's agenda, there is major scope for taking these priorities forward within the Geneva context. To this end, the Secretary-General has appointed a Deputy Director-General to UNOG as part of his effort to strengthen coordination among the organizations of the Secretariat in Geneva, to address current cross-cutting managerial challenges, and to enhance the role of the United Nations in Geneva in advancing system-wide coherence.

As a conference centre, office building and operational base, the Palais des Nations is the very foundation and the embodiment of UNOG's efforts in support of the Organization's overall work. At the same time, this architectural landmark is a powerful symbol of the importance and value of the multilateral process itself. With age and active use, the functionality and the preservation of the building are now at stake. Against this backdrop, UNOG has made the development and implementation of a Strategic Heritage Plan for an urgently needed renovation and refurbishment of the Palais a priority. We are working closely with Member States in this regard. The Strategic Heritage Plan is indispensable for the long-term continuation of our work.

The need for the United Nations as a universal forum for formulation of global strategies has never been greater. UNOG remains committed to playing its part, within the United Nations system, to meet the challenges of our time.

Sergei A. Ordzhonikidze
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva