In this era of globalization, characterized by increasing interdependence among nations, economies and individuals, people across the globe seek constructive exchange to confront shared threats and challenges. At UNOG, a global centre for dialogue, diverse voices, views and aspirations are integrated into the multilateral process to shape a better future for all. As a platform for multilateral diplomacy and global governance, UNOG facilitates cooperation among Member States and other stakeholders. In this way, UNOG contributes to the realization of the goals and objectives of the United Nations.

Promoting disarmament and non-proliferation

Against a backdrop of increasing global military expenditure, disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are of deep concern to all. Hosting the Conference on Disarmament and various other disarmament-related conferences and events, UNOG continues to be an important venue for United Nations disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.
Disarmament and non-proliferation are closely associated with the very mission of the United Nations. They are widely recognized as indispensable to achieving the maintenance of international peace and security, a core principle in the Charter of the United Nations. Let us make this a breakthrough year.

The Secretary-General’s statement at the opening of the 2008 session of the Conference on Disarmament on 23 January 2008

The Conference on Disarmament is the world’s only multilateral disarmament negotiating body. The Director-General, in his capacity as Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference, is responsible for overseeing the operational support and assistance provided to it. Following the Secretary-General’s address at the opening of the 2008 session and his call for strengthened political support, a total of 18 dignitaries addressed the Conference. On 12 February 2008, Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, formally presented a draft Treaty on Prevention of the Placement of Weapons in Outer Space and the Threat or Use of Force against Outer Space Objects, co-sponsored by China. He also circulated elements of a multilateral agreement on medium- and short-range missiles, based on the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

The 2008 session was concluded in a largely positive atmosphere, although without any major breakthrough. Members are determined to sustain the momentum generated over the past three years to reach agreement on the Conference on Disarmament’s top priorities. Following a fresh round of deliberations on the substantive agenda items under the guidance of seven coordinators, the Presidents for 2008 – Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States and Venezuela – tabled a draft presidential decision contained in document CD/1840. This document, which evolved from a proposition suggested

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery pose a growing danger to us all. Together with the spread of international terrorism, it is deemed the pre-eminent threat to international security. This global challenge requires a multifaceted solution. We need to tackle this challenge both individually and collectively – working together and with other partners, including through relevant international institutions, in particular those of the United Nations system.

Opening remarks by the Director-General of UNOG, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to the Conference, at a seminar entitled “Working Toward a World Free of Nuclear Weapons”, organized by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) on 2 May 2008.
in 2007 by the Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament, has been seen as a further attempt to overcome long-standing differences over the priorities that have prevented Member States from coming to a substantive agreement. Under the new draft decision, the Conference would, *inter alia*, appoint a coordinator to preside over negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. Furthermore, three other coordinators would preside over substantive discussions on nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space, and international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons (“negative security assurances”).

It is expected that the Conference will continue to build on the momentum that has been developing since 2006 to enable the Member States to agree in 2009 on a mandate to begin substantive negotiations, thus allowing the Conference to break its decade-long impasse.

Media coverage of the Conference on Disarmament increased substantially in 2008, evidence of the increasing political visibility and public role of the Conference.

UNOG also provides organizational support to the Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).

---

### Nuclear Non-Proliferation

UNOG hosted the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Progress achieved included decisions on several outstanding procedural issues:

- The Chairmanship of the third session
- The dates and location of the third session and the 2010 Review Conference
- Measures to address the pressing financial issues which nearly prevented this year’s session from taking place

The Committee adopted a procedural report, but was unable to attach the Chairman’s factual summary of matters of substance. As in 2007, the document was instead submitted as a Chairman’s Working Paper. This outcome contrasted with the fact that the general and cluster debates took place within an open and generally constructive atmosphere in which a wide range of substantive issues were covered.

---

### Small Arms and Light Weapons

The “Geneva Process” continued in 2008 to address the illicit trade, proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons. The process has made a number of important contributions to international efforts to monitor and promote implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action. UNODA, through its Geneva branch, is an active participant in “Geneva Process” meetings.

- The process was initiated by the Geneva Forum, a joint initiative of the Quaker United Nations Office, UNIDIR and the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding Studies of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies.
- The process has no formal role in the United Nations conference process and its meetings do not fulfil any official preparatory function.
UNOG contributed to the United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament (www.unog.ch/disarmament/fellowship), which was implemented by the Geneva branch UNODA. The programme was launched by the General Assembly at its first Special Session on Disarmament in 1978 and is aimed at the training of national officials, particularly from developing countries, to allow for more effective participation in international disarmament deliberation and negotiation forums. In 2008, 25 fellows participated in the 10-week-long programme.

### Global management of meetings

As one of the largest international conference centres, UNOG provides intergovernmental and expert bodies in Geneva and at other venues with the necessary infrastructure for negotiation and dialogue. Often working behind the scenes, interpreters, translators, verbatim reporters, revisers, terminologists, editors, reference assistants, précis-writers, copy editors, proofreaders, text processors, and printing and distribution officers make an essential contribution to the work of the United Nations.
Demand for conference services continues to increase. The number of meetings serviced by UNOG has grown from 17,266 for the 2000–2001 biennium to an estimated 23,120 for the 2008–2009 biennium.

While UNOG remains committed to providing high-quality conference services and facilitating the work of Member States, the meetings of the Human Rights Council and its bodies continue to require UNOG to stretch its current resources to meet rising demands. The creation of new human rights treaty bodies (see table) generates an increased conference workload and other servicing challenges. In addition, UNOG has started servicing all activities related to the preparation of the Durban Review Conference to be held at UNOG from 20 to 24 April 2009.

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Committee on Enforced Disappearances
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review
Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of Complementary Standards (in the field of racism)
Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture

To address these challenges in a strategic and coherent manner, a joint UNOG/Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) task force was established, co-chaired by the Deputy Director-General of UNOG and the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights. The task force developed a comprehensive picture of needs and resource requirements for the human rights-related bodies so that a strategy for addressing the existing problems can be devised. UNOG continues to seek additional allocation of resources to handle the surge in documentation and other demands of the Human Rights Council.

Planning for optimal use of facilities and Services

The full range of global conference management services includes conference planning, coordination, documentation, interpretation, logistics and other support functions that are required to ensure the effective conduct of meetings. Consultations with United Nations bodies and organs are undertaken on a regular basis in order to estimate and forecast conference servicing needs and entitlements so that permanent resources and facilities may be used in the most efficient manner.
The results of recent client satisfaction surveys have not only showed clients’ overall satisfaction with the UNOG conference services, but also provided valuable insights for the planning and implementation of future conference management practices. These efforts have led to an increase in the overall planning accuracy level. The ratio of services planned to services actually used rose from 88.1 per cent in 2006 to 95 per cent as at the end of July 2008.

In 2008, UNOG provided conference and documentation support to a large number of intergovernmental meetings. High priority was accorded to clearing the backlog of the Yearbooks of the International Law Commission (ILC). Requests for proofreading and editing of publications from the Human Rights Council, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and UNIDIR were also promptly met.

The UNOG Deputy Director-General signed the Protocols with ILO for the Ninety-Seventh Session of the International Labour Conference. This streamlined process of a single signature from UNOG after completion of the internal clearance processes, which replaced the previous practice of multiple signatures from several UNOG services, was welcomed by ILO and will be institutionalized.

**Facilitating multilingual dialogue**

In resolution 61/266 of 16 May 2007, the General Assembly proclaimed 2008 as the International Year of Languages to promote diversity and cross-cultural understanding through multilingualism. As a global platform for negotiation and discussion, UNOG actively facilitates multilingualism in the multilateral process. Documentation is produced in the Organization’s six official languages. Interpretation services are provided, permitting speakers of different languages to negotiate and reach consensus in the language of their choice.

**Improved conference servicing through technological advances**

For a number of years, UNOG has been striving to improve the utilization of conference servicing resources and facilities. To this end, UNOG emphasizes strengthening its technological capabilities and enhancing coherence in coordinating, streamlining and standardizing conference services workflow. In June 2008, the Director-General led the UNOG delegation to the Ninth Coordination Meeting
of Senior Conference Managers held in Strasbourg, France. He noted in his opening address: “The Secretary-General has made system-wide coherence a key policy priority, which also applies to conference management. In this area, the need for system-wide coherence means that solutions across work programme issues must be consistent with the new global management structure, which is aimed at achieving coherence and eliminating duplication and fragmentation across the United Nations system.”

To ensure easy access to meeting-related information, UNOG replaced its old display screens and systems with a new system, designed to provide comprehensive and up-to-date meeting information in a user-friendly manner. New specialized software tools have also been installed as part of the efforts to enhance servicing capability. These new applications match the needs of clients and are maintained according to users’ requirements and local specifications.

The use of the Electronic Meeting Planning and Resource Allocation System (e-Meets) database for the management of meetings, as mandated by the General Assembly, has been enhanced throughout the Secretariat, as well as in permanent missions and specialized agencies, to submit requests for meetings and facilities electronically. The interface between the database and the calendar of the UNOG website is now fully operational, which allows relevant data on meetings in the Palais des Nations and Palais Wilson, in both English and French, to be automatically transferred to the UNOG Web calendar. UNOG also actively participates in the work of the various joint task forces and working groups of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management (DGACM) towards the goal of having a comprehensive new conference management system used in the future by all four headquarters duty stations – United Nations Headquarters, Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna.
To ensure cost-effective production of high-quality conference documents and publications, UNOG has installed the latest digital equipment using computer-to-plate technology. Additional computer-assisted translation tools have been tested to assess their viability. Documents were printed in the six official languages for major conferences such as those held by the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council and the ILC. Several flagship publications were printed and bound for clients such as UNCTAD, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNIDIR.

**Documentation Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing of official records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy preparation and proofreading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sharing information and expertise**

UNOG not only focuses on improving conference management, but also shares its expertise. UNOG acts as the primary interlocutor with Governments offering to host United Nations conferences, advising on physical and human resource requirements for holding the conferences. These activities continue to reinforce collaboration with Member States in this area.

**Meetings Serviced outside of UNOG**

- **UNCTAD XII Conference, Accra**
  - April 2008
- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Subsidiary Bodies, Bonn, Germany**
  - June 2008
- **United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), seventh session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention, Istanbul, Turkey**
  - November 2008
- **United Nations Climate Change Conference, Poznani, Poland**
  - December 2008

UNOG has engaged more actively in staff exchanges with the three other headquarters duty stations – United Nations Headquarters, Nairobi and Vienna. By the end of August 2008, UNOG had sent 31 interpreters (equalling 187 man-days) to other duty stations. For the same period, UNOG received 28 interpreters (equalling 183 man-days) from other duty stations. These exchange efforts have not only resulted in more efficient use of the Organization’s resources by avoiding replacement costs, but also provided training and learning opportunities for a more versatile workforce.

UNOG continues to support special rapporteurs and holders of special procedures mandates of the Human Rights Council. From 1 January to 31 August 2008, UNOG supported human rights missions and field visits to 16 countries or regions, and reports of these trips fed directly into decisions made by the Council.

In the same period, UNOG also provided interpretation services to the Secretary-General during his two visits to Africa and three visits to Europe.

In January 2008, UNOG hosted a forum of the International Permanent Conference of University Institutes of Translators and Interpreters (CIUTI) entitled “Enhancing translation quality: ways, means, methods”, which focused on the collaborative role of international organizations and educational institutions in the area of translation. In addition to organizing the forum, UNOG language staff shared their expertise in areas such as enhancing quality through editing, improving and evaluating the quality of translation, and terminology. Contributions will be published in the Proceedings of the 2008 CIUTI Forum.

In April 2008, UNOG and the International Annual Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications (IAMLADP) Liaison Committee jointly organized the annual Joint Inter-Agency Meeting on Computer-Assisted Translation and Terminology (JIAMCATT) in Tunis, sponsored by the African Development Bank. More than 120 participants from over 60 different international organizations and ministries took part in the event. In June 2008, UNOG representatives participated in IAMLADP 2008, an event hosted by the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France. In addition, UNOG continued to make valuable and substantive contributions to DGACM global information technology projects by providing various facilities and assistance and leading Project 3 on Document Planning and Processing. UNOG also developed a Web-based documents processing system called DCS for the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).
Improving conference facilities

The Palais des Nations constitutes a precious infrastructure for the multilateral process, and UNOG is committed to maintaining the full functionality of the premises to service all stakeholders. The development and implementation of a Strategic Heritage Plan for the Palais is an important component of these efforts (see Special Feature 1 on pp. 1–6).

On 18 November 2008, the former Room XX was inaugurated as the Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Room by His Majesty King Juan Carlos I of Spain and the Secretary-General. The room containing 754 seats has been fully renovated and refurbished as a gift from the Government of Spain and constitutes one of the largest ever single donations to the United Nations. The conference room includes a new dome, a unique artwork by prominent Spanish artist Miquel Barceló, and has become an artistic and architectural landmark. The Spanish gift has been a valuable addition to a list of similar contributions from Member States over the years.

As part of a phased renovation plan for conference rooms, UNOG submitted detailed proposals for the renovation of several of these, including rooms V and IX. The proposed room renovation projects are carried out in accordance with International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards in terms of appropriate room dimensions, although full compliance with the room dimensions as specified in ISO 2603 standards will only be possible with the implementation of the Strategic Heritage Plan. Compliance with ISO standards not only contributes to better working conditions for interpreters, but also helps to keep UNOG at the same level as other modern conference facilities in terms of sound quality and webcasting, which are available, for example, at the European Union, United Nations Headquarters, and the International Conference Centre Geneva.

Within its budget constraints, UNOG managed to replace 3,288 earphones in meeting rooms with mercury-free devices as part of the overall efforts to improve conference facilities.