Our common heritage: our collective responsibility

The Palais des Nations embodies the origins and history of our multilateral system and represents the common heritage of the international community. As the custodian of this outstanding architectural and historical heritage, UNOG strives to maintain and improve the buildings, annexes, parks and gardens of the Palais complex, covering some 164,482 m² and including 2,800 offices, to ensure its continued functionality as a multilateral platform and as the representation of the shared vision of a better world.

The deteriorating state of the Palais des Nations, from age and active use, poses an ongoing challenge and requires a strategic approach to ensure appropriate renovation of the buildings in an efficient and effective manner. UNOG has implemented a centralized system to enable all utilities such as heating, ventilation and lighting to be controlled and managed remotely. This is updated on a regular basis to improve utilities management. Over the past nine years, utilities consumption has been reduced by over 40 per cent for water, 20 per cent for electricity and 20 per cent for fuel. Despite the age of the buildings – the original quarters of the Palais having been built between 1929 and
1938 and the E building between 1968 and 1973 – UNOG managed to improve its energy efficiency and as a result reduce its carbon emissions. The replacement of heating fuel with gas contributed to this achievement.

UNOG continues to work in close cooperation with permanent missions in Geneva to renovate rooms of historical value. In addition to the conference rooms renovated with the support of Member States, a number of these rooms have been renovated through the regular budget. The programme of modernization and renovation of conference rooms is progressing, thereby improving the working conditions of the numerous delegates who attend meetings at the Palais des Nations. Room IX was completely revamped in 2010. Replacement of outdated technical equipment in Room VIII will follow. In addition, UNOG is carrying out a plan to renovate the lifts, to ensure better reliability and safety for users at the Palais.

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<th>Conference rooms renovated with the support of Member States since 2000</th>
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<td><strong>Rooms</strong></td>
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<td>XX, E building</td>
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<td>French room</td>
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<td>Delegates’ lounge</td>
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UNOG is working closely with Member States and relevant United Nations entities to implement a Strategic Heritage Plan for the renovation, restoration and rehabilitation of the Palais des Nations to preserve its unique heritage, enhance its functionality as one of the busiest multilateral conference centres in the world – with close to 9,000 meetings every year – and contain maintenance and operating costs, as well as reduce the carbon footprint of UNOG.

A preliminary study, with the financial help of Switzerland, was completed in 2009 involving the preparation of an initial basic assessment of the status of the building complex of the Palais des Nations. In 2010 this preliminary study has served as the basis for the subsequent step: a conceptual engineering and architectural study. This study will outline the challenges, describe appropriate remedial action and likely time frames, provide possible options and estimate costs for the consideration of Member States in early 2011.

In accordance with United Nations rules, the scope of the actual renovation will be determined on the basis of the outcome of the 2010 engineering and architectural study, of subsequent discussions of the options among Member States and of the results of the individual Requests for Proposals to be launched.

**Objectives of the study**

1. Establishment of key performance objectives in terms of functionality of the premises, energy performance, quality of interior environment and security, as well as longevity and durability.
2. Identification of major operational issues, critical security risks and strategies to mitigate the impact on operations.
3. Comprehensive, high-level assessment of the renovation, rehabilitation and restoration needs of the Palais des Nations.
4. Exploration of various options and technical alternatives.
5. Evaluation of the impact of failure to complete the necessary work in terms of:
   (a) Financial effects on current operating and maintenance costs;
   (b) Potential escalation of the costs of future rehabilitation work;
   (c) Disruption of operations;
   (d) Safety, security and environmental considerations, including risks to occupants and users of the site.
7. Recommendation of the concept deemed most appropriate for necessary renovation, rehabilitation and restoration works, including project priorities, high-level outline of a project plan with organization and management of the project, provisional timeline and rough order of magnitude of the possible project cost.
The Strategic Heritage Plan represents the foundation of a sustainable future for the many activities of the Palais des Nations.

■ **Building on the lessons of the past for a better future**

> Though they are a testimony of the tragic failure that ensued by not addressing conflicts, these historical documents and materials send us a powerful message on the need for multilateralism. We must learn lessons from the past and work together to make the United Nations a more effective and efficient organization.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, after his visit to the newly renovated League of Nations Museum at the UNOG Library in July 2010.

On 28 April 2010, a ceremony celebrated the inscription of the League of Nations archives in the Memory of the World Register of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in recognition of their historical value to the international community. The ceremony also marked the reopening of the refurbished and re-developed League of Nations Museum.

The new permanent exhibition in the Museum chronicles the key developments and achievements of the League of Nations with the aim of placing its failure and some of its achievements in a broader context. It traces the political activities of the League and its operational work, which form the basis of many of the current activities of the United Nations. By presenting the origins of the Organization, the Museum illustrates the enduring relevance of the mission of the United Nations.

The inscription of the archives in the UNESCO Memory of the World Register is a recognition of the unique value of the archival material of the League of Nations. Many of these remarkable documents are now on display in the Museum, with a number of exceptional pieces presented for the very first time. Together they highlight how the lessons of the League have shaped the United Nations. The renovated Museum also includes a multimedia zone where excerpts from newsreels from the period of the League and an interactive timeline can be seen.

Two exhibitions were displayed in 2010 in the temporary exhibition space. "Building for peace", presented from 28 April to 29 October, outlined the construction and history of the Palais des Nations. "Pollution/Petroleum – a short transnational story" is being presented in cooperation with UNEP from 10 November 2010 to 27 May 2011.
This exhibition outlines the background to multilateral environmental diplomacy, drawing lessons for ongoing efforts towards sustainable development and fighting climate change.

The exhibits are a powerful reminder of the potential of multilateralism and also illustrate the need to strengthen multilateral disarmament efforts. By placing the work of the United Nations in its historical context, the Museum makes a compelling case for continuously reinforcing the Organization.