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Pending Challenges Deteriorating Piping Systems and Building Structure

Overview and objectives

The Palais des Nations is one of Europe's most impressive and well known buildings and unquestionably the city of Geneva's most important landmark. It has come to symbolize the common heritage of the international community. The United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) holds this unique heritage in trust.

Today, the Palais des Nations complex covers 157,348 m2 (38 acres). This includes 34 conference rooms and 2,800 offices. Over 4,000 people work at the Palais des Nations complex every day. Almost 4,000 staff from permanent missions and over 1,000 representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have longer term ground passes, while another 70,000 delegates (from capitals and NGOs, without permanent access) are registered for conferences on an annual basis. Over 200 correspondents are accredited to the United Nations in Geneva and work at the Palais.

However, the extensive and diverse use, coupled with the age of the buildings, presents UNOG with a range of urgent maintenance challenges for the upkeep of the Palais des Nations. According to a preliminary study of infrastructural challenges of the Palais, which was conducted in 2009, the Palais des Nations and its annexes have undergone only the minimal maintenance since the date of its construction, which was 70 years ago for the Palais des Nations and 40 years ago for Building E, which currently houses a number of large conference rooms and UNCTAD, among other. The progressively dilapidated buildings of the Palais des Nations undermine the ability of UNOG to provide an important service to member States and other users in an adequate, safe and cost-effective manner.

Accordingly the scope and complexity of the structural problems necessitate a complete renovation and refurbishment. Such an initial investment would pay long-term dividends in

savings on maintenance and running costs, and it is essential to safeguarding the heritage of the Palais des Nations. Therefore, the Director-General has made the development of a Strategic Heritage Plan for the Palais des Nations a key priority and is working closely with member States and relevant parts of the Secretariat in this regard.

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