



SECOND ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Ensuring optimal use of the ILO headquarters building

1. The Building Subcommittee will no doubt recall that the Governing Body in its 283rd Session (March 2002)¹ had requested the Office to undertake a review, with the Swiss Property Foundation for the International Organizations (FIPOI), of ways of ensuring optimal use of existing space at ILO headquarters. The report was to have been submitted to the November 2002 session of the Governing Body. Although favourable to any collaboration with the ILO in this area, the FIPOI was obliged to decline the proposal owing to the heavy programme of projects already in progress, in particular the construction of a new building for UNAIDS. The Office therefore decided to commission the Geneva architects Jacques Schaer and Christine Sjoestedt, who have considerable experience in this area, to undertake the review.
2. In addition to the problem of the shortage of space at headquarters as such, the architects' report draws the attention of the ILO's senior management to certain very important questions regarding the use which the Geneva authorities propose to make of the land bordering the ILO's site. Under these circumstances the Director-General considers it necessary to examine these questions in depth with the competent Genevan and Confederation authorities before acting on the conclusions of the review.
3. Nevertheless, it is useful to draw the attention of the Building Subcommittee to certain findings contained in the architects' report.
 - (a) The ILO headquarters building was designed at the end of the 1960s for occupation by 1,100 people, allowing for a maximum possible growth of about 50 per cent. The capacity of the headquarters building as originally designed has now been exceeded. Similarly, technological changes and other moves to adapt to the functional requirements of the Office have considerably altered the use of the premises, resulting in a greater demand for space and work places. An in-depth reorganization is urgently needed.
 - (b) *In the short term:* work on the construction of temporary premises (ground and first floors, some 1,000 m² of floor space) was completed during October 2002. This will meet the most immediate requirements.

¹ GB.283/9/1.

- (c) *In the medium term:* refitting on the different floors will increase the number of work places by between 3 and 5 per cent (between five and ten people on each floor). While the creation of open-plan offices might make a few extra work places available, this could create administrative difficulties; the design of the building is based on individual offices, a tradition to which the staff are attached. It should be remembered that any refitting work on the individual floors would entail major renovation costs of between 3 and 3.5 million Swiss francs for each floor (not including the cost of furnishings and fittings) owing to the major structural alterations that would be required. The architects emphasize the need to speed up efforts to bring the building into line with current building standards; the materials and fittings currently in use (carpeting, partitions, false ceilings, fire detectors, signalling systems, security equipment, etc.) no longer conform to the relevant Swiss or European directives.
 - (d) The architects note that a number of measures already envisaged by the ILO's senior management are leading in the right direction and would, if effectively implemented by all users, free up some multifunctional common areas and archive and storage space. However, these measures would not in themselves be sufficient in the medium and long term to meet the likely requirements of the Office. Nevertheless, the architects stress the benefits to the ILO of creating new multifunctional areas in terms of meeting its needs and allowing future development.
 - (e) The ILO's premises are included in a development plan on which the Genevan authorities are currently working. They would like to adopt the main features of that plan by the end of November 2002 (a request to put this process on hold has already been made by the ILO's senior management to the Genevan authorities). According to the architects, the ILO urgently needs to become actively involved, without delay, in talks with the Geneva authorities; failure to do so will mean that opportunities for construction and redevelopment of ILO premises may be subject to change or even lost to a large extent.
4. In the light of the above considerations, the Director-General proposes to contact the competent Swiss authorities without delay with a view to obtaining a more comprehensive view of the situation, and to report to the Governing Body at its March 2003 session.

Geneva, 17 October 2002.