



**Statement on behalf of the Member States of the European Union**

**By**

**Mr. Gerton van den Akker**

**Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations**

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**Fifth Committee**

**Strategic Heritage Plan of the United**

**Nations Office at Geneva**

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**– CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –**

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the European Union.

I would like to thank Under-Secretary General for Management, Mr. Yukio Takasu, for introducing the report of the Secretary General on the Strategic Heritage Plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva, contained in document A/68/372. Our thanks also go to the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, for introducing the related report of that committee, contained in document A/68/585.

Mr. Chairman,

The Member States of the European Union recognise the need to refurbish the Palais des Nations to ensure that structural deficiencies are rapidly addressed. That said, an important priority will be to ensure this is done in the most cost efficient way.

Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to make a couple of observations on 4 issues: (1) sequencing of capital expenditure projects, (2) office space utilisation, (3) resource requirements and (4) oversight.

On the sequencing of capital expenditure projects and the linkages between the Strategic Heritage Plan and the UNHQ long-term accommodation needs, we concur with ACABQ that all planned major capital projects and related resources requirements should be included in the strategic capital review to allow for a comprehensive analysis and planning by the Organisation. In this regard, the Member States of the European Union would like to reiterate that it is only the General Assembly that can take a decision on the initiation of capital projects and can agree on distinct funding modalities in order to consider the concurrent implementation of major capital projects.

With respect to the issue of office space utilisation in general and the implementation of flexible workplace strategies in particular, we believe that the results of the ongoing study on this matter - also on our agenda for this session - should be taken into account in all

planned major capital projects. It has been a missed opportunity that this principle could not be taken into account at the beginning of the CMP project; we therefore welcome the views expressed by the ACABQ that the Secretary General should optimise the current occupancy of the renovated Secretariat building. In addition, the implementation of Umoja and a possible new global service delivery model could also involve extensive reengineering of business processes and will most likely have an impact on the evolution of the staffing and skill requirements of the Secretariat. We welcome the fact that the ongoing work on the Strategic Heritage Plan will allow the Secretariat to take the long term evolutions into account during the design phase of the project.

With regard to resource requirements, we agree with the ACABQ that these need to be further adjusted according to real needs, especially with regard to the duration of the design phase as well as the size of the project team. In this regards, we note with concern that, based on the proposed strategy c) that still needs to be endorsed, the total estimated project requirements increased by CHF 219 million since the conceptual engineering and architectural study completed in 2011. Accordingly, the Secretary General should adjust and re-submit project costs estimates at the 69<sup>th</sup> session and he should ensure that proposed requirements are based on actual needs, including through reprioritization if needed.

Furthermore, it is extremely important that the Secretariat takes into account lessons learned from the Capital Master Plan, especially with regard to the associated costs, contingency funding and cost forecasting. In parallel, alternative funding mechanisms should be more adequately explored. This should include details regarding the exact terms under which a loan can be granted by the Host State, and the possibility of public private partnerships for certain parts of the project. We also want to see more detail on possible sale of land. Our final decision must be based on sound assumptions and guided by the will to maintain costs while ensuring the good delivery of the project, bearing in mind the lessons learned from the CMP.

On the issue of oversight, we believe Mr. Chairman that it would be important to establish formal, independent external oversight mechanisms with thorough expertise to support and independently challenge the project team and to scrutinise project costs, schedule and scope and to actively engage member states through updates on project progress.

Rest assured Mr. Chairman that the Member States of the European Union are looking forward to discussing these issues further with all other Member States as well as the Secretariat in the upcoming informal consultations.

I thank you, Mr Chairman.