



Statement on behalf of the Member States of the European Union

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Fifth Committee**

**Item 134B: Strategic Heritage Plan
of the United Nations Office at Geneva**

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-- AS DELIVERED --

Mr. Chairman,

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

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia^{*}, Montenegro^{*}, Serbia^{*} and Albania^{*}, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Mr. Michael Møller, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the Strategic Heritage Plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva, contained in document A/70/394 and Corrigendum 1. 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/70/7/Add 8.

At the outset, please let me register the concern of the Member States of the European Union for the late issuance of the documents related to this agenda item in all official languages of the United Nations as per the General Assembly Rules of Procedure and relevant resolutions on Multilingualism and Pattern of Conferences. We hope that the necessary actions will be taken to remedy this in the future.

^{*} *The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.*

Mr. Chairman,

The Member States of the European Union always recognised the need to refurbish the Palais des Nations to ensure that structural deficiencies are addressed and we welcome the report of the Secretary-General as a step towards these objectives. An impressive amount of preparatory work has been accomplished in recent years, and the time has come to take decisions on the way forward. The Member States of the European Union will therefore seek to reach an agreement on the pending issues during this session, including the elements outlined in this statement.

We requested the Secretary-General to revise and re-submit detailed project cost estimates at the 70th session, so as to ensure that the proposed requirements are based on real needs and sound assumptions, and are guided by the will to maintain costs while ensuring the good delivery of the project. We look forward to discussing the detailed project costs further during the course of our deliberations, bearing in mind the lessons learned from the Capital Master Plan.

We also look forward to discussing in greater detail the concrete steps taken by the Secretariat, while taking into account the comments of the ACABQ, to secure all possible alternative funding mechanisms in order to reduce the overall assessment on Member States as well as receiving updated information on the efforts taken with regard to the detailed estimates stemming from the valorisation exercise. We will also look into the possibilities of increasing rental income from other UN entities to be hosted on the site of the Palais des Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to ensure that the project proceeds smoothly - on target, on time and on budget – a good governance structure will be crucial. To this end effective mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure transparency and accountability, while providing enough flexibility to steer such a complex process towards the agreed goals. This will require strong internal and independent external oversight mechanisms which will help prevent possible cost escalation and ensure proper management of contingency provisions. In this regard we welcome the interim arrangements put in place and look forward to discussing the final arrangements in more detail, taking into account the ACABQ comments.

Let me also stress the importance of flexible workplace strategies, as mentioned in the SHP resolution of last year and the Flexible Workspace Strategies resolution of this year. We note with regret the observation of the ACABQ that the use of such strategies is not yet incorporated in the implementation of the Strategic Heritage Plan. The refurbishment of the UNOG headquarters should not be a missed opportunity and therefore we look forward to engaging further with the Secretariat with regard to their plans to implement a real Flexible Workspace Programme. This will also prove useful to attract additional United Nations entities to be accommodated at the renovated Palais.

Finally, the Member States of the European Union would also like to thank the Government of Switzerland for the support provided to the project and for the generous offer of a loan package. We look forward to discussing its modalities in greater detail, together with the scheme and the currency for the appropriation and assessment of the project. Should we agree to an assessment in Swiss Francs, we

will also be interested in discussing the issue of the negative interest rates to ensure that it does not adversely impact the financing of the project.

Mr. Chairman,

Rest assured 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.