



Statement on behalf of the Member States of the European Union
As delivered by Fiona Grant, Counsellor at the Delegation of the European Union to the
United Nations

71st Session of the General Assembly - Fifth Committee

Item 134L: Strategic Heritage Plan

28 November 2016

Madam Chair,

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 the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this Statement.

I would like to thank Mr. Michael Møller, Director-General at the United Nations Office at Geneva, for introducing the report of the Secretary General on the Strategic Heritage Plan. I would also like to thank Mr Babou Sene, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing the Advisory Committee's related report.

The Strategic Heritage Plan in Geneva is a landmark project, which will render the Geneva estate more fit for purpose, provide an enhanced, safer working environment for staff and offer opportunities to put into practice lessons learned from recent construction projects. The EU welcomes progress made in the initial phases of the project over the last year. We note with

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

satisfaction the Secretary General's update that the Strategic Heritage Plan continues to be implemented in accordance with previously agreed objectives, and in line with the overall schedule and overall costs.

Robust governance is crucial, particularly for a project of this complexity and scale. We note that there has been some slippage in the project schedule. Effective monitoring of the project's progress, including by the Steering Committee, alongside independent risk management and monitoring by the Board of Auditors, will underpin the project's success.

We welcome efforts to promote accessibility for persons with disabilities. We welcome also the Secretary General's plans to initiate a pilot programme for the use of flexible workplace in Geneva. This pilot will guide plans for the broader implementation of flexible workplace over the course of the project. The Member States of the European Union believe that flexible workplace can both enhance space utilisation and improve the working environment for staff, and we encourage progress in this area.

This session we will focus on the funding arrangements for the Strategic Heritage Plan. Once again, the EU Member States would like to thank the Government of Switzerland for the generous loan package it is providing. We look forward to discussing the funding options proposed by the Secretariat for the project, including the establishment of a dedicated project account, and the related options on currency for the appropriation and assessment scales. It is important that we make final decision on these issues during this session to avoid difficulties that could be prejudicial to the construction works and the project management later on.

The EU stresses the continued importance of identifying opportunities for land valorisation in Geneva, recognising that this matter requires expertise distinct from that needed for the main construction works. The financial benefits of valorisation should be applied directly to reducing assessments for the project. At the same time, the Member States of the European Union believe that the General Assembly's decisions must be guided by the necessity to preserve the long-term interests of the UN in relation to real estate values in Geneva. We are confident that solutions can be found to balance these two imperatives, and we call on all parties to make further progress on this matter.

Madam Chair, Allow me to end by stressing the readiness of the Member States of the European Union to work constructively with all Member States on this important issue. Thank you.