

Agenda item 138

Strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva

FIFTH COMMITTEE

Statement by

Mr. Chandramouli Ramanathan, Assistant Secretary-General, Controller

2 December 2021

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to introduce to this Committee the Secretary-General's eighth annual progress report on the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva, which covers the period from 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021.

Construction and renovation works continued to advance during the reporting period, despite the many additional challenges resulting from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Several successful mitigation actions were taken to enable progress in the work and mitigate the impact of the pandemic, including a guaranteed maximum price contract for the renovation of the historic Palais des Nations buildings, which was successfully negotiated within the original budget level. In addition, by working with the contractor and internal stakeholders to re-sequence and optimize the work programme, the six-month delay to the pre-construction services period was mitigated and reduced to an overall three-month net delay to the overall strategic heritage plan project, reflecting an improvement of three months compared with the schedule outlined in the seventh annual progress report.

Construction work on the new building H was sufficiently completed during the reporting period to

allow occupancy to commence in May 2021. This enabled staff to be moved and ensured that the renovation work to building S1 would commence on time, with no further delays to the critical path of the project. The temporary conference facility was completed, commissioned and became operational in September 2020. Renovation work in the historic Palais buildings commenced in January 2021 and continues at a pace in line with the overall strategic heritage plan schedule. These factors contributed to the improvement in the financial position of the project, with an increase of approximately CHF 21.0 million of the contingency provision available to cover for any unforeseen future events, compared to what was projected in the previous progress report.

With regard to the valorization strategy of United Nations-owned land, considering the uncertainty that surrounds the long-term impact of the pandemic, it is proposed that further valorization studies be commissioned to re-examine and update the underlying assumptions and scenarios that underpin the strategy.

The actions to be taken by the General Assembly are presented in Section VII of the report.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.