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Resolution on the Strategic Heritage Plan

The UNOG Staff Coordinating Council, meeting in plenary on Tuesday 10 October 2017 in Geneva:

Noting the Strategic Heritage Plan, a renovation and construction project currently budgeted at 837 million CHF,

Recalling General Assembly Resolution 71/272 on the Strategic Heritage Plan, that the “application of flexible workplace strategies at the Palais des Nations takes into account staff welfare and productivity...”,

Recalling the professed commitment of UNOG administration in 2015 to work with the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council in deciding the best form of workspace and to take into account staff views and concerns,

Noting the strong concerns of staff, based on experience, regarding the impact of open space and hot-desking on staff welfare, and that these were expressed in two staff surveys (2015 and 2016) and in one petition signed by almost 900 staff,

Noting that the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council was asked to work with UNOG administration in designing elements of a study on workspace needs by US consulting firm, Gensler,

Noting that UNOG administration informed the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council on 6 October 2017 that it had recommended the use of hot-desking space in the new building to be constructed (H building),

Strongly regretting that this decision was made without any consultations with the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council, despite UNOG administration’s earlier commitments,

Noting that this recommendation was made prior to the publication of the results of the study by Gensler, itself commissioned by UNOG administration,

Noting the assurance of UNOG management on multiple occasions, most recently on 5 September 2017 that no hot-desking is planned for the existing buildings (A, B, C, D, S buildings) given their architectural features,

Noting with regret that funds are now being sought to implement hot-desking in the existing buildings (A, B, C, D, S),

Noting with concern that the draft version of the Secretary-General's report on the Strategic Heritage Plan was not shared with the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council despite multiple requests, earlier promises from UNOG administration and the provisions of ST/AI/2014/3 on the Staff Management Committee that require draft Secretary-General reports on issues concerning staff welfare be shared with staff representatives,

Noting that the current costs of the new H building and related consultancies are over \$150 million (A/70/394) while annual space savings are estimated at only \$10 million (A/68/585) and further noting the poor price to rent ratio,

Noting that studies of the type of hot-desking envisaged for the new building report an expected decline in productivity of between 10 to 15 percent, and that using average staff costs for the 1,400 staff to be housed there, a 4 percent decline in productivity or increased sick leave would be enough to eliminate those savings,

Further noting that if productivity were to decline or sick leave increase by only 10 percent over six years, this loss would be equivalent to the entire cost of the new building,

Noting that the likelihood of such scenarios is confirmed by a recent survey of UN staff in New York working in hot-desking spaces:

- 47 percent reported that hot-desking affected productivity negatively against 26 percent positively;
- 58 percent reported that it affected concentration negatively against 8 percent positively;
- 25 percent reported increased exposure to contagious illness;
- 58 percent reported that productivity was negatively affected by background noise against 8 percent positively;
- staff also reported losing time at the start and end of the day setting up and clearing their desks,

Noting that a number of staff working in connection with the Strategic Heritage Plan have come forward with concerns about how the project is being implemented,

Noting with concern that SHP will increase overall costs of UN operations in Geneva at a time when posts in Geneva and staff salaries are under threat,

Noting that the UN's Board of Auditors have raised the issue of conflict of interest in the implementation of the Strategic Heritage Plan,

1. *Affirms* the Council's letter to the Secretary-General of 6 October 2017 (in annex), stating these same concerns and calling for the implementation of meaningful and genuine staff-management consultations at UNOG;

2. *Agrees to pursue* the establishment of genuine and meaningful consultations to ensure productive workspace and necessary amenities for staff;

3. *Decides* that in the absence of genuine and meaningful consultations, it has no confidence in the current implementation of the Strategic Heritage Plan;

4. *Calls* for a full audit of the Strategic Heritage Plan examining among other aspects: the cost-effectiveness of the project; the manner of its implementation; conflicts of interest raised by the Board of Auditors; and the absence of consultations with staff; and for the results of the audit to be implemented;

5. *Requests* the Executive Bureau to circulate the resolution and bring these concerns to the attention of all interested parties.
