

Governing Body

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FOURTEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Report of the Director-General

Fifth Supplementary Report: Arrangements for the International Labour Conference during the renovation work in the Palais des Nations from 2020 to 2023

1. The Palais des Nations, where the ILO holds its annual session of the International Labour Conference (ILC), is undergoing substantial renovation work until 2023 in the context of the Strategic Heritage Plan. This document summarizes the impact that such renovation work will have on the organization of the ILC between 2020 and 2023, and seeks guidance from the Governing Body on possible solutions to the reduced availability of facilities during this period.

109th Session of the Conference in 2020

2. In 2020, the Assembly Hall, room XVI (where the Employers' group meets) and all adjacent office space in building A of the Palais des Nations will not be available to the ILC. All other meeting rooms, including meeting rooms in building E (where large committees meet), as well as meeting rooms for smaller committees, regional groups or bilateral meetings, should remain unchanged.¹
3. In order to replace the Assembly Hall in 2020 with a meeting room of similar capacity (1,900 people), the Office has booked the Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG) for the duration of the Conference, tentatively scheduled from 25 May to 5 June 2020. The CICG is walking distance from the Palais des Nations, across from the Place des Nations.² The World Health Organization (WHO) will also be using the CICG for the plenary sittings of its annual World Health Assembly the week prior to the ILC.

¹ For more details on the layout of the Palais des Nations and its meeting rooms, please consult the [map](#).

² See area [map](#).

4. Although the CICG could accommodate the Conference plenary, its capacity does not allow for any group meetings or large committee meetings to be held in parallel. The CICG could therefore be used only for Conference plenary sittings. However, in order to limit commuting between the CICG, the Palais des Nations and the ILO, where the groups and committees usually hold their meetings, the use of the CICG could be restricted to the most attended Conference plenary sittings. These would cover the opening ceremony and the two last days of the Conference (including the World of Work Summit, the adoption of committee reports and the closing ceremony). Plenary sittings for the discussion of the reports of the Director-General and the Chairperson of the Governing Body could be held in room XX of the Palais des Nations (also known as the Human Rights Council room). While the capacity of this room is significantly smaller than that of the Assembly Hall (750 seats opposed to 1,900), room XX may be sufficient for the plenary sittings, given past attendance patterns.
5. The Office is discussing with the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) an alternative to room XVI and the offices in building A which will be unavailable.
6. The holding of some or all of the plenary sittings in the CICG in 2020 should have limited cost implications, as the CICG offers its premises and services free of charge. There will probably, however, be some increase in costs related to security and transport between the different Conference locations, which the Office expects to cover with existing resources. The Office will report to the Governing Body on these adjustments in further detail in November 2019 or March 2020, prior to the finalization of arrangements for the 109th Session of the Conference by the Governing Body.

110th Session of the Conference in 2021

7. While the renovation of the Assembly Hall and room XVI is expected to be completed in time for the June 2021 session of the Conference, UNOG has already informed the ILO that office space in building A will be very limited. Some small meeting rooms in building A will not be available either, but alternative meeting rooms can be provided by UNOG in building E. These limitations should impact only the Conference secretariat and should not involve any additional costs.

111th and 112th Sessions of the Conference in 2022 and 2023

8. UNOG has confirmed that during the two last years of the Strategic Heritage Plan, 2022 and 2023, none of the meeting rooms and office spaces in building E will be available, as the entire building will be under renovation. Building E is where the three technical committees, the Workers' group and their respective secretariats meet and work. The Assembly Hall and all other meeting rooms in building A will be available, as well as a temporary meeting room with a capacity equivalent to one of the larger meeting rooms in building E used for technical committees. Despite this, the rooms available in the Palais des Nations, combined with ILO premises, will be insufficient to hold a session of the Conference in its current format (i.e. plenary sittings, standing committees and three technical committees, in addition to the Committee on the Application of Standards, which meets at ILO headquarters).
9. No other conference centre in Geneva has adequate facilities to accommodate in a single location the equivalent of the committees and groups currently working in building E. In light of these circumstances, the Office has been exploring various options in consultation with UNOG and the Swiss authorities.

10. Due to the configuration of the CICG, it could at best accommodate two of the three Conference technical committees, but not the group meetings held in parallel for each technical committee (Workers', Employers' and regional groups); or alternatively, one technical committee together with its group meetings. The CICG is already booked in 2022 and 2023 during the period when the Conference is normally held, but its availability at a later date could be explored.
11. In order to keep all three technical committees in a single location, one possibility would be to adapt the Geneva Exhibition and Convention Centre (Palexpo) so as to provide conference facilities equivalent to those in building E of the Palais des Nations. Such an arrangement (including the construction of meeting rooms and offices, the rental of furniture, IT and audio equipment, and the extra security and transport costs) could come at an additional cost of some 5 million Swiss francs per Conference session, part of which the host country would be willing to cover. It should also be noted that, in 2022 and 2023, Palexpo would be available only from late June. In view of this, and the work required to adjust Palexpo to the needs of the Conference, the ILC could be held during the first fortnight of July at the earliest.
12. A further option would be to consider holding the Conference at a location other than Geneva. The cost of this would be considerably higher as travel costs for the secretariat alone could be between US\$3 and \$6 million, depending on the location and length of preparatory work onsite, together with any costs of hiring venues and equipment. Apart from direct costs to the Office and the additional effort for the secretariat to organize a conference outside Geneva, such an option would also entail further costs and work for the group secretariats and permanent missions in Geneva that provide support to the work of the tripartite constituents prior to and during the ILC.
13. The Office has therefore also considered using existing conference facilities of other Geneva-based organizations. At present, only the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has a room that could accommodate a technical committee of the ILC. The WHO is also planning the construction of a meeting room on route des Morillons that would be large enough to also accommodate a technical committee. The combined use of these facilities, together with the ILO and the meeting rooms available at the Palais des Nations (see paragraph 8 above) could be sufficient to hold a plenary and three or four large committees.
14. A number of logistical and operational difficulties for both the Office and constituents would need to be overcome in the case of a multisite Conference. Such difficulties include the availability of office space in other organizations to host the committee secretariats, the size of other meeting rooms to hold parallel group meetings for each committee, commuting between the various sites and the additional costs for transport and security of a multisite Conference. Group and committee meetings should also begin earlier in order to provide for the same actual meeting time, meaning that interpretation costs may consequently increase. Mechanisms to ensure adequate coordination with central conference services would have to be put in place to ensure appropriate liaison between the various conference sites.
15. Despite these difficulties, keeping the Conference in Geneva and using existing conference facilities would appear to be the least disruptive and costly option. Once a decision is made on the agenda of the Conference for those two years, it would still be possible, if required, to exceptionally reduce the membership of some committees based on meeting room capacity. Similarly, if available meeting rooms in Geneva prove insufficient to host the number of technical committees retained on the agenda, it could be possible to convene preparatory conferences prior to the ILC, to be held at ILO headquarters, in lieu of one or two technical committees of the Conference. The report and draft conclusions prepared by the preparatory conference would be referred to the Conference plenary for discussion and

adoption. In this case, special measures would need to be put in place to ensure appropriate tripartite representation at those preparatory conferences.

16. Although a decision on the date, place and agenda of the Conference in 2022 and 2023 is not required at this stage, it is important that an indicative choice be made as soon as possible in view of the need, depending on the preferred option, to identify and book some of the facilities and to set up a project team in charge of Conference preparations.

Draft decision

17. *The Governing Body decided:*

- (a) to retain, in principle, the holding of the Conference in 2022 and 2023 at UNOG, the ILO and other possible locations in Geneva, including consideration of the possibility of holding one or two preparatory conferences in lieu of Conference committees, the details and estimated costs of which would be elaborated upon once a decision was made on the agenda of the Conference for those two years;*

[or]

- (b) to request the Office to further explore and cost one or several options and to present a report to the Governing Body at its 337th Session (October–November 2019).*