



UNOG
Informational Meeting on
Conference Services

27 August 2020
Assembly Hall,
Palais des Nations, Geneva



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Agenda

- 1. Director-General's opening remarks**
- 2. COVID-19: Measures in place at UNOG**
- 3. Meeting planning for the remainder of 2020**
- 4. Challenges and potential solutions**
- 5. Q & A**





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➔ Adapting to COVID-19 – virtual participation

UNOG has adapted to meet public health requirements

Upon shutting down UNOG identified providing virtual/hybrid meetings as crucial to business continuity

- **Identified, procured, and tested IT platforms for virtual/hybrid meetings**
- **Upgraded four rooms to support such meetings**
- **Trained existing staff to provide moderation and technical support**
- **Is preparing training materials for meeting participants**



➔ Adapting to COVID-19 – access

Access

- Pregny, Nations and Chemin de Fer pedestrian and vehicle gates open for delegates and diplomatic vehicles with **permanent accreditation**
- Only Pregny pedestrian gate for delegates with **temporary accreditation**

Badges

- All Delegate badges scanned in order to register entry to the Palais des Nations, including all persons inside vehicles
- Collection of pre-printed badges for delegates with temporary accreditation can be arranged through Permanent Missions

Contact tracing

- All delegates including those holding UNOG permanent accreditation badges are required to **register in Indico.UN** in order to facilitate the conference organizer's obligations to adhere to the requirements related to contact tracing.



➔ Adapting to COVID-19 – in the meeting room

- All conference rooms are operational, but with reduced capacity due to physical distancing requirements
 - Only four rooms can accommodate six languages of interpretation
- Circulation of documents and statements is fully digital; paper is not used
- Delegates are encouraged to submit documents electronically to speeches@un.org monitored by the Meeting Room Assistants
- All delegates should be in possession of their personal protective face mask, which is to be worn in the meeting room
- Spontaneous/impromptu gatherings must comply with the applicable sanitary regulations
- Security Officers will monitor compliance with established sanitary provisions related to social distancing and hygiene measures



➔ Resumption of Meetings at UNOG

So far UNOG has accommodated all meetings requested since the re-opening of the Palais des Nations

- Major meetings held since mid-June include the Conference on Disarmament and the 44th session of the Human Rights Council
- UNCTAD Commission on Science and Technology
- UNCTAD Trade and Development Board
- UNECE Conference of European Statisticians
- 9th meeting of the Working Group on Environmental Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Espoo Convention and its Protocol on SEA
- CRPD hybrid meeting included with sign language and captioning



➔ Resumption of Meetings at UNOG

- Meetings have taken place in virtual/hybrid format
- Bodies have adjusted their working methods, including adopting different procedures to do their work
- Amongst the measures implemented by substantive entities to adjust to COVID-19:
 - HRC session included pre-recorded video messages,
 - UNECE opting for silence procedure,



➔ Meetings for the remainder of 2020

- UNOG has been closely working with the secretariats and bureaus to schedule calendar meetings through the rest of 2020
- Meetings that were cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19 cannot be fully accommodated within available in-house capacity
- In-person meetings are encouraged
- Virtual/hybrid events
 - are more expensive
 - require rooms equipped with specific infrastructure
 - are more complex to arrange
 - require more specially trained technical staff
 - are only for public meetings
 - fully hybrid meetings with interpretation are only two hours



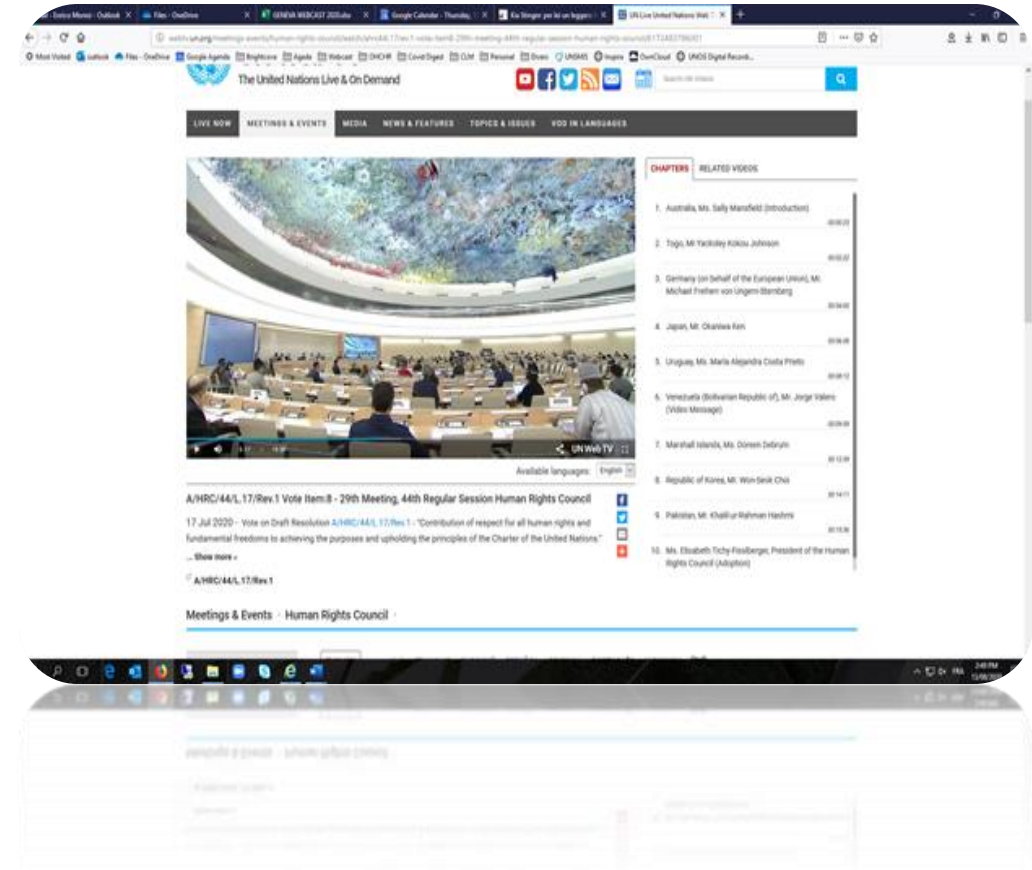
→ Use of meeting facilities – high demand

- UNOG's regular budget capacity is severely limited, due to the liquidity crisis and increased costs from COVID-19
- UNOG cannot fully meet the demand for meetings services through the rest of 2020
- UNOG cannot prioritize between mandated meetings and thus is using a proportional approach to fairly support each entity to the greatest extent possible
- UNOG meeting capacity will be made available to entities based on average prior year usage
- If additional regular budget funds are allocated later in the year, the resulting increase in capacity will also be utilized proportionally

➔ Webcasting meetings on UN Web TV

- Webcasting allows external audiences and delegates to view UN Geneva meetings live in remote, and for permanent video-on-demand on the UN platform webtv.un.org
- Webcasting is supported for mandated meetings and joint events with UN (not Member State side-events). Rooms XVII, XVIII, XIX and XX are configured for webcasting with camera activation via speaker microphone
- Webcasting fees will vary according to event duration, available staffing, meeting configuration, number of languages required
- Meetings to be webcast must be listed as public and always require an in-room audio operator
- Webcast can be delivered from almost all rooms plus Assembly Hall, using broadcasting technology and staffing but at higher cost

Note: the current liquidity crisis is deeply affecting webcast capacity and may lead to cancellation of human rights treaty bodies webcasts in the fall



➔ Availability of meeting rooms

- Strategic Heritage Plan (SHP) renovations will start on **building A/C in October 2020**, conference rooms there will be closed
- Temporary infrastructure for conferences (Tempus) will be operational as of September 2020
 - 3 new rooms will be available
 - 1 will be equipped for virtual/hybrid meetings (estimated for the end of September 2020)



→ Scheduling of meetings

For the remainder of 2020:

- The goal is to accommodate the mandated calendar meetings
- Capacity to accommodate side and parallel events will be severely restrained
- Meetings of regional groups can have interpretation only on “as available” basis
- Limited interpretation capacity will make it more difficult to arrange for servicing of such meetings

Work is ongoing for planning the 2021 calendar of meetings



➔ Financial and liquidity constraints

- No mandate and no resources included in 2020 budget for virtual/hybrid meetings
- Post resources reduced due to GA approved vacancy rates and hiring freeze
- Budget foresees both post and non-post resources to support conferences
- Allotments for non-post resources are severely restricted to meet liquidity challenges
- Expenses such as rent, utilities, internet, telephone, software licenses, maintenance of security systems, etc. far exceed the allotments received. When allotments are received UNOG will have to prioritize what bills to pay first.
- Temporary support for meetings (freelance interpreters, sound technicians, etc.) falls under non-post and is currently partially funded from September

→ COVID-19 impact on financial situation

COVID-19 did not result in expenditure reductions, rather created additional costs

- Contractual obligations for full schedule of meetings in spring 2020 needed to be honored
- Reduction in utility consumption, contractual sound engineers, and copier/printer usage, offset by additional cleaning/disinfecting requirements
- New requirements for sanitary supplies and materials increases burden on existing resources



➔ Significant additional requirements for virtual / hybrid meetings

- Charges for specialized platforms with different pricing models based on # of minutes, participants, languages and other services such as training and recording
- Technical moderation requires 2 trained staff per meeting
- ICT support requires 1 to 2 IT staff depending on complexity
- Additional costs for coordination, testing, infrastructure management, etc.
- Typical additional cost for 2hr meeting in 6 languages with 200 participants connecting remotely:
 - RB financed meeting – Add **USD 2,500** to normal cost of meeting
 - XB financed meeting – Add **USD 3,200** to normal cost of meeting

➔ Impact of financial constraints/efforts to overcome

- Financial constraints mean there is no room to re-programme activities to support additional costs of virtual/hybrid meetings
- Cross training staff to perform moderator function to support virtual/hybrid meetings is ongoing
- UNOG reprioritized some resources to cover equipment, start-up costs and initial meetings, now almost depleted
- Current limitation four concurrent meetings with interpretation of which no more than two virtual/hybrid meetings



→ Summary

- Cancelled/postponed sessions cannot be fully replaced with virtual/hybrid meetings
- Requests continue to be received, many of which are pending confirmation because the resource situation remains unclear
- Reduced two-hour duration of virtual/hybrid meetings with interpretation
- Cuts in services will be necessary, starting likely in October, and are likely to impact the availability of meeting rooms and related services at the Palais des Nations
- The COVID-19 and liquidity crises have a compounding effect



Summary

→ Moving forward

- **Only very limited accommodation possible for remainder of 2020**, due to UN liquidity crunch, total freeze on recruitment, and limited regular capacity of UNOG
- **Rescheduling of meetings based on the capacity available**
- **Multilateral bodies to review and prioritize their programmes of work** and adapt working methods and rules of procedure
- **Redeployment and repurposing of staff and resources**
- **If the liquidity crisis were to improve, UNOG could do more**
- **Voluntary contributions** towards the costs (remote platforms, webcast, technical support, etc.) would go a long way





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