

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROGRAMMES AND FINANCE

Thirtieth Session

PLANS FOR THE IOM HEADQUARTERS BUILDING:

UPDATE 6

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Background

1. At its 109th Session, the Council adopted Resolution No. 1373 of 27 November 2018 on a plan for the Headquarters building. Following the development of the project, at its 111th Session, the Council adopted Resolution No. 1391 of 24 November 2020 on the new Headquarters building, which (1) approved the final budget level of 72.0 million Swiss francs and (2) authorized the Director General to prepare and submit a study loan application in the amount of 5.7 million Swiss francs – which forms part of the total project budget – for consideration by the host Government.
2. The Administration is committed to providing regular information to Member States and this document provides information on the progress of the project since the last update (S/28/12).

Study loan application and approval

3. The Director General submitted the study loan application to the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva on 30 November 2020. The study loan was approved by the host State in December 2021. The contract for the study loan of 5.7 million Swiss francs was then signed by the Director General and the Building Foundation for International Organizations (FIPOI) on 7 March 2022.
4. The study loan covers the cost of the following activities up to the end of 2025:
 - (a) Organization of an international architectural competition resulting in the selection of a final project design for the new Headquarters building by July 2022;
 - (b) Development of the project with the architect, engineers and consultants to determine the precise construction cost;
 - (c) Submission of an application for a total construction loan to the host State;
 - (d) Preparation of the tender document and the full description and terms of reference for construction;
 - (e) Procurement of a building permit.

Project activities completed to date

5. A detailed description of the project components was developed and validated by the end users, the Director General, the Deputy Director General for Management and Reform, and the steering committee, as well as the host State.
6. A longlist of 34 architectural firms – including recognized professionals from a broad range of cultural, ethnic and geographical backgrounds – was invited to participate in the SIA 142 architectural competition for the project design. Some of the firms selected are well-established architectural firms with an extensive and impressive portfolio of completed projects, while others are at the forefront of a new generation of international architects, meaning that the IOM Headquarters building would be one of their first large projects if they were selected. Having such a broad selection of architects allows IOM to assess a wide range of solutions tailored to its programme and needs, and the constraints of the project site.

7. Each candidate was reviewed and evaluated according to five main criteria:
 - (a) Quality of research and achievements;
 - (b) Experience of collaboration with United Nations agencies, IOM country offices or non-governmental organizations;
 - (c) Equality, diversity and inclusion within the structure of the firm and/or achievements in this area;
 - (d) Regional diversity, influence on regional development and/or knowledge transfer;
 - (e) Environmental approach, including experience delivering environmentally friendly buildings.
8. The independent assessments of each candidate by the IOM project team and specialist service providers were averaged to obtain a final score. The three candidates with the best scores in each region were then shortlisted to ensure fair representation from each geographical zone (North America, Central and South America, Europe, Africa and the Middle East, and Asia and the Pacific).
9. This selection process made it possible to shortlist 15 candidates from the longlist of 34. The shortlisted candidates were then asked to partner with a local firm to ensure that their proposal would be compliant with Swiss regulations. These partnerships were subjected to internal due diligence before the candidates could participate in the competition and have been endorsed by the Director General based on the recommendation of the steering committee.
10. A jury has been established to assess each of the 15 proposals submitted by the invited candidates and select a winner. In line with SIA 142 regulations, independent architects make up the majority of the members, who have been selected to obtain a balanced, diverse and professional jury able to undertake a fair appraisal of the anonymous competition entries. The composition of the jury is as follows:
 - (a) IOM representatives, including the Director General, the Deputy Director General for Management and Reform, senior members of the Administration and staff representatives;
 - (b) Member States, represented by the First Vice-Chairperson of the IOM Council;
 - (c) Representatives of FIPOI;
 - (d) Representatives of the Canton of Geneva and Commune of Grand-Saconnex for the host State;
 - (e) Experienced and recognized architects with diverse cultural backgrounds;
 - (f) Technical experts to independently assess the feasibility of each proposal.
11. Following the validation of the documents by all jury members, the architectural competition was launched on 9 February 2022. A site visit was organized for the invited candidates, followed by a question-and-answer period, to highlight the challenges and context of the project. A video presentation was provided for jury members and candidates who were unable to visit the site.
12. The 15 invited candidates have been asked to submit their proposals anonymously by the end of May 2022. The final review by the jury is scheduled for the end of June 2022.
13. The project team also organized visits to the headquarters of other international organizations and administrative buildings used by private companies to allow staff representatives and other stakeholders to learn about best practices and the latest workspace environments. Various hybrid and adaptable work environments were discussed and observed during these visits with a view to learning lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic.

14. The Staff Consultation Group – comprising staff representatives and IOM experts in the fields of diversity and inclusion, environmental sustainability and staff welfare – met regularly to discuss key considerations for the design. Based on the results of these consultations, a programme description has been submitted to the Director General for approval, while the key considerations were also included in the documents provided for the architectural competition.

Issues identified and ways forward

15. The Administration is discussing with the relevant authorities of the host State the possible impacts of the construction on the two remaining buildings of the adjoining Centre Administratif des Morillons (CAM), including ways to mitigate risks, options for shared services, and the potential mutual benefits of existing and future outdoor spaces. A joint agreement has been reached regarding the project boundaries for the architectural competition, providing an overall vision of the site.

16. It has become clear that the heating system serving all three buildings is in need of refurbishment or reconstruction. IOM and neighbouring building owners are discussing options with Services Industriels de Geneve (SIG), which provides clean energy that meets the sustainable energy requirements of the host State. SIG, which is a local State-owned company, invests in the infrastructure that provides energy to all the international organizations in the Quartier des Nations, sourcing the power used to heat and cool the buildings from lake water, and could provide IOM with sustainable energy at a competitive price.

17. Studies and reports on how the COVID-19 pandemic might affect the design and workplace layout are being closely monitored by the Administration and consideration is being given to a more flexible and adaptable building configuration. Future workspace scenarios will be trialled in selected areas of the Headquarters premises in close collaboration with the Executive Office, heads of department and staff representatives.

Coordination with the Swiss authorities

18. A working group comprising representatives of FIPOI, UNESCO and IOM has been set up to discuss operational and technical issues concerning CAM in relation to the project. This group will continue to meet at regular intervals to ensure effective communication and coordination between the users and owners of the CAM site.

19. There continue to be regular exchanges between IOM, the Canton of Geneva and FIPOI related to IOM's building project development, the study loan and the land lease agreement.

20. As the future IOM Headquarters building will not be in exactly the same position as the current premises, a revision of the land lease agreement between IOM (as building owner) and the Canton of Geneva (as landowner), which dates back to 1984, will be necessary. Discussions are ongoing with regard to the proposed changes, which mainly concern the duration of the lease, the rent payable by IOM and the conditions regarding the transfer of the land lease to a third party, as well as the obligations upon the return of the building at the end of the contractual term. The Administration will continue to work with the host State to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement.