

Chapter 6

Working better:
embracing innovation

New ways, #NewWork: reshaping our workplace culture for the future

Staff are building a bright future for the UN, where innovation, collaboration, learning, empowerment and flexibility are an integral part of our workplace culture. In 2020, several projects were rolled out to help achieve this goal as part of the staff-driven [#NewWork](#) initiative.

At UN Geneva, this included improving teamwork against the backdrop of COVID-19 by adapting the popular “huddles” meeting technique for remote participation, and delivering virtual training on how to run “huddles”. We developed a new online tool to manage staff requests for flexible working arrangements, and to enable the gathering of important human resources data on the flexibility of staff and managers.

#NewWork – which was pioneered in Geneva in 2018 – went global in 2020, being adopted by groups at Headquarters in New York and at several other duty stations. This led to the launch of global projects. For example, a pilot of [modern agile methodology](#) was run, in which teams from New York, Geneva and Bangkok came together virtually to learn about the principles, tools and benefits of an agile approach to our work. These participants relay what they have learned to their colleagues, so the knowledge gained can be applied widely.



An end-of-year highlight was the live finale of the [Reimagine the UN Together challenge – the “Dragons’ Den”](#). This UN system-wide ideas-generating event tapped into the creativity, experience, and skills of colleagues, providing an opportunity for them to share, innovate and scale solutions to common business challenges. It was held entirely virtually, with teams pitching their ideas from numerous locations, and participants in every time zone. The event demonstrated the UN’s firm commitment to innovating to help solve global challenges.

#NewWork is creating a positive impact across the UN system and UN Geneva colleagues are excited to continue in this spirit in the years ahead.

Scan the QR code to watch the Reimagine the UN Together challenge.



conecta: matching skills and volunteers across the UN



[conecta](#), a joint venture by UN Geneva’s [Centre for Learning and Multilingualism](#) and [Young UN: Agents for Change](#), won the finale of the 2020 [Reimagine the UN Together challenge – the “Dragons’ Den”](#). [conecta](#) is a collaboration space and platform for linking people, skills and projects across the UN system. Created by staff for staff, this project also won the Jury’s Award at the 2019 Dragons’ Den event. The [conecta](#) prototype was launched in September 2020, and already hosts more than 350 staff profiles from over 35 organizations and 20 duty stations. The next step for [conecta](#) is to attract more users to the platform and gather their feedback as a basis for continuous improvement.

In May 2020, the [conecta](#) team launched [conecta4covid](#), to rapidly support the UN’s COVID-19 response and recovery by matching UN staff members needing extra help with colleagues willing to volunteer their skills and time. More than 140 volunteers signed up, and the initiative garnered 20 project proposals, from which 10 projects were successfully matched with enthusiastic volunteers.

Security upgrades at the Palais des Nations

Innovation and technological developments enabled UN Geneva to implement a number of improvements to security at the Palais des Nations in 2020. Thanks to the support of colleagues from UN Geneva's Facilities Management Section, the old system of security bollards was replaced with a new anti-vehicle-ramming system that has been installed at the two main vehicle gates. These new "wedge barriers" can stop a 75-ton truck travelling at a speed of 65 km/h. In addition, the Palais des Nations video surveillance systems have been upgraded with new digital cameras to provide enhanced images, even in the dark.

Further improvements planned will cover protection of personnel, training of security officers and use of technology, so that the safety and security of everyone at the Palais des Nations continues to be assured into the future.



Protecting the UN against cyberattacks

Digital technology and data make the work of UN Geneva faster, more efficient and more effective, but, like all organizations, we know we are not immune to digital crime and cyberattacks.

UN Geneva works hard to reinforce prevention and protection against cybercrime. One such effort was the implementation this year of multifactor authentication for accessing digital resources such as email, online files and collaboration platforms. Multifactor authentication is a two-step procedure to confirm the identity of a user before he or she can access electronic tools, which makes it much more difficult for cybercriminals to break into our systems.

The deployment of multifactor authentication has reduced the exposure of our staff to the risks of cybercrime, particularly phishing attacks, which have been all but eliminated. Before it was introduced, compromised accounts had to be immediately closed to avoid damaging consequences, however the risk of such attempts succeeding with multifactor authentication in place is extremely low, or possibly eliminated.

The full migration to multifactor authentication was completed in less than two months, thanks to the work of our seasoned IT professionals and the cooperation of all Secretariat offices and colleagues.

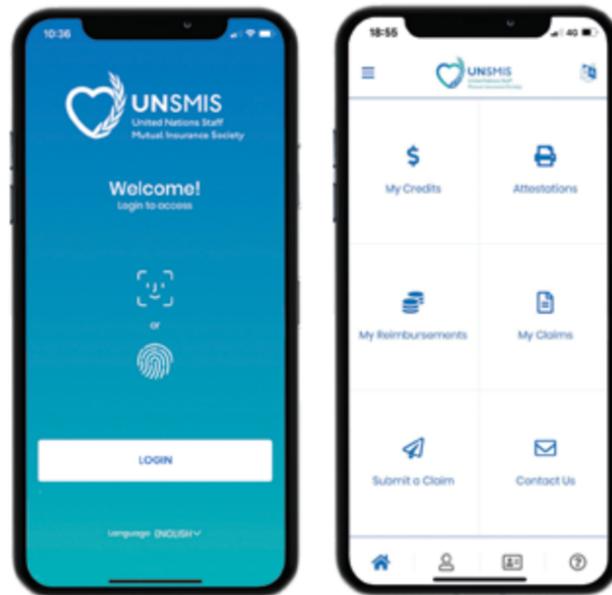


Bringing medical insurance one step closer to clients

Improving efficiency and quality of service for clients through digitization and automation is a goal that UN Geneva hotly pursues. One such example was rolled out by the UN Geneva medical insurance team in August 2020: a mobile application to further improve the services provided to staff, retirees and family members insured with the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society against Sickness and Accidents.

Available on both the App Store and Google Play, the application improves the client experience by allowing for quick, simple and almost instant submission of claims from anywhere, including remote locations, thereby reducing the turnaround time for reimbursements. The app eases the administrative burden on the insured: claims can be submitted and checked in real time using the inbuilt document scanner that digitizes prescriptions and receipts, attestations can be immediately issued and easily forwarded, and the amounts of dental and optical credits available are at the client's fingertips. The app also has an inbuilt virtual insurance card, which means reduced costs and less environmental impact than with plastic cards which need to be regularly reprinted.

To develop the app, UN Geneva's finance and IT services collaborated closely with the International Computing Centre, using a flexible and agile approach to deliver a home-grown application in less than 10 months, from conception to delivery. All at a fraction of the cost of outsourcing the development of such a tool.



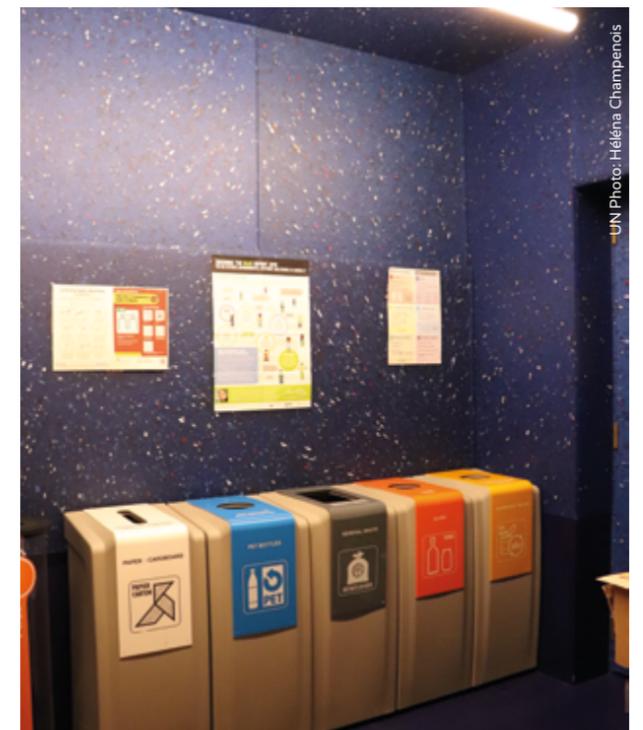
New Eco Point, made of recycled plastic, inaugurated at the Palais des Nations

As part of a range of initiatives aimed at greening the Palais, in 2020 UN Geneva launched the innovative Eco Point – a space where staff can give new life to office products and recycle waste items. The Eco Point also creatively encourages staff to reduce their consumption and consider the environmental impact of their actions.

The Eco Point is not only made of fully recycled plastic but is fully recyclable itself. Designed to give prominence to the issue of marine plastic pollution, the Eco Point features LED lights and blue panels that serve as a visual reminder of the amount of plastic in our oceans, of how vulnerable our ecosystem is, and, more positively, of the fact that even small actions can help to improve our environment.

Staff are encouraged to #SolveDifferent, for example by thinking twice about printing documents or by opting for less ink-consuming fonts. They can also drop off or collect used but still functional stationery and office equipment, helping to reduce our consumption of office materials. Finally, to lengthen the time before waste materials end up in landfill sites, recycling bins are provided for plastic, glass, paper, and cork, as well as for mobile phones and batteries. These items are collected by an external company and sent for recycling in Switzerland.

In 2020, only around 1% of waste collected at UN Geneva went to landfill. The other 99% was reused, recycled, composted or recovered, either directly on the premises or through contractors. We are also managing more waste on our own premises: from 2018 to 2020, the amount of organic waste recycled on-site increased from 40% to nearly 90%!



State-of-the-art H Building nears completion

The new H Building, an integral part of the [Strategic Heritage Plan](#), is nearing completion and will soon be one of the landmarks of International Geneva. This state-of-the-art construction has been designed as a healthy, highly efficient and cost-saving office building that is fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and sets the standard for new ways of working at UN Geneva.

Flooded with natural light and integrated into the Ariana Park landscape, the building will provide improved collaborative spaces and promote flexible and digital working. It will bring together, within the Palais des Nations complex, many UN staff who are currently housed in various sites in Geneva or in costly rented offices, enabling them to benefit from access to shared onsite amenities, including meeting spaces and support services.

Photographs chronicle the progress of this historic project and celebrate the lasting contribution of the men and women working on the construction of the building.

“These photographs will provide future generations with a glimpse into the Organization today, just as the photographs from the building of the Palais des Nations provide us with a window into the past and where we came from.”

Chief of the Institutional Memory Section at UN Library and Archives Geneva, Blandine Blukacz-Louisfert

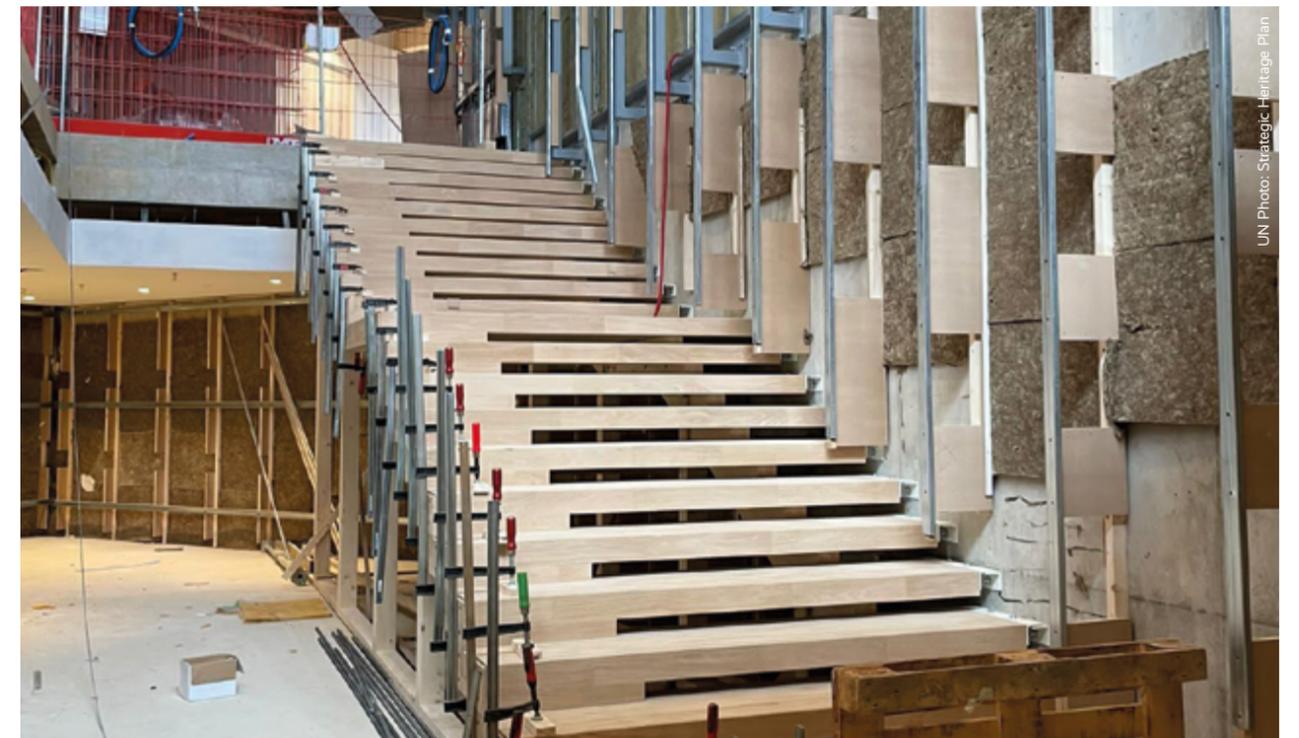
Scan the QR code to view a time-lapse video of the construction of the H Building.



UN Photo: Strategic Heritage Plan



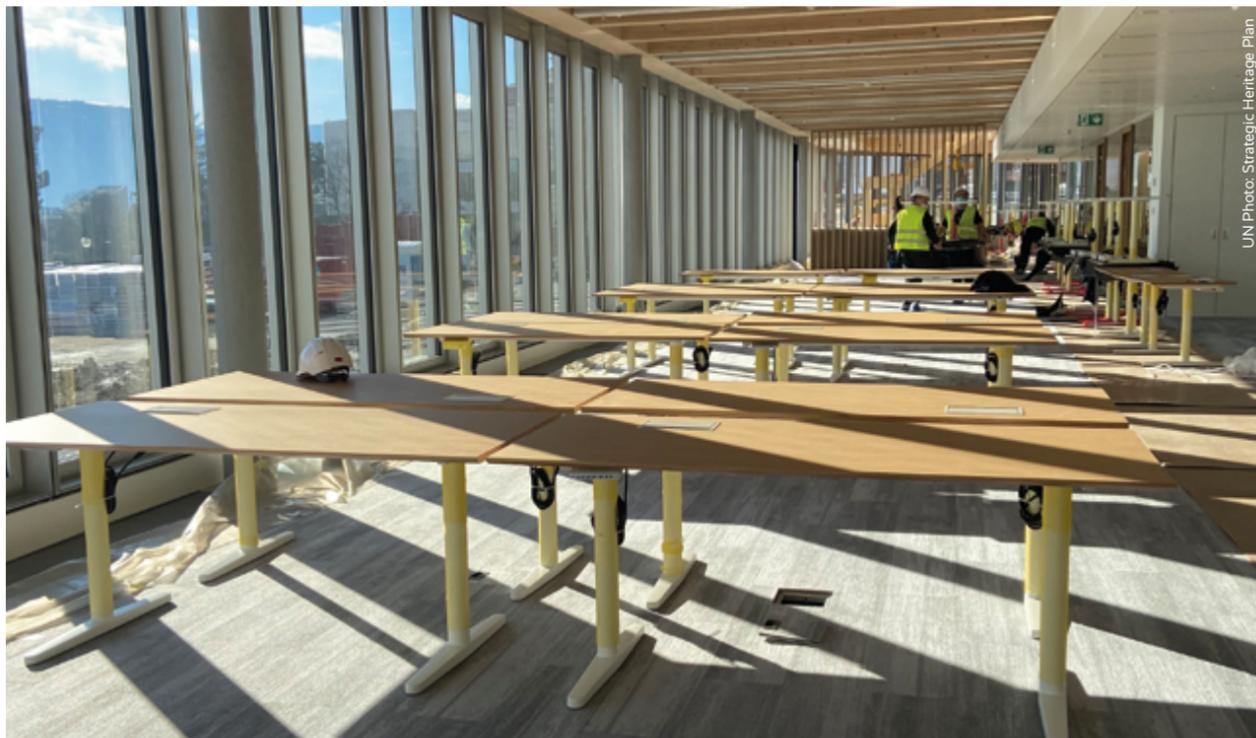
UN Photo: Strategic Heritage Plan



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UN Photo: Strategic Heritage Plan



UN Photo: Strategic Heritage Plan

Valuable cooperation on construction projects between Headquarters, UN Geneva and other duty stations

The Strategic Heritage Plan project has been an example of the value of close collaboration among UN entities and duty stations.

Best practices on topics such as accessibility, sustainability, waste management and maintenance are shared through the UN's Inter-Agency Network of Facilities Managers. The Strategic Heritage Plan team also benefits from lessons learned during the Capital Master Plan project at Headquarters in New York and from cooperation with New York-based entities. It shares its own experiences with colleagues, too, working closely with those overseeing UN construction projects in Addis Ababa and Bangkok.

The Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support, Atul Khare (front row, second from right), and the Assistant Secretary-General for Support Operations, Lisa M. Buttenheim (front row, second from left), visit the construction site of the new H Building with Strategic Heritage Plan team members.



UN Photo: Elodie Sabau