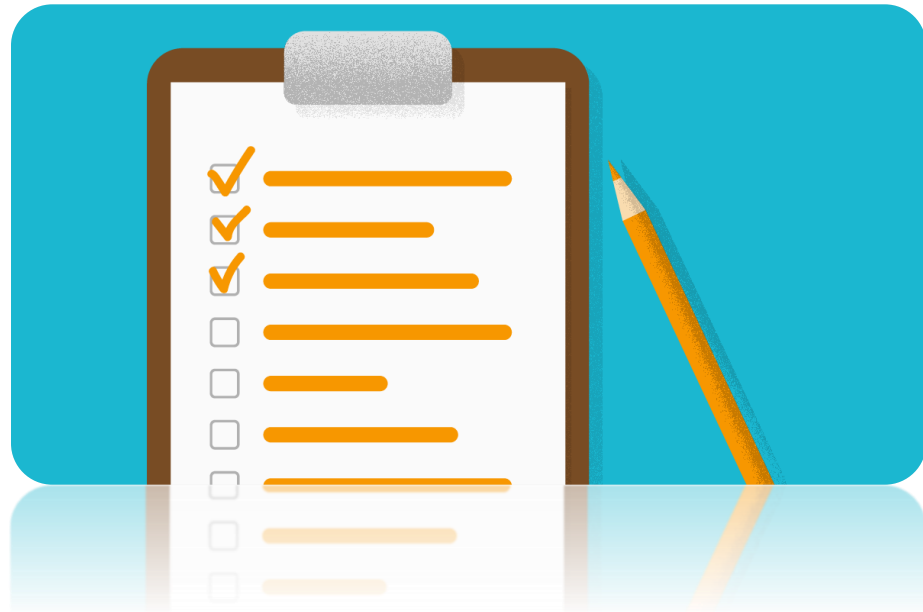




# Informal briefing by UNOG on conference servicing

United Nations Economic  
Commission for Europe

**24 November 2021**



---

Conference servicing  
arrangements, mandates and  
related budget allocations

---

Planning parameters for 2022  
calendar

---

Hybrid meetings (arrangements  
foreseen, including technical  
moderation)



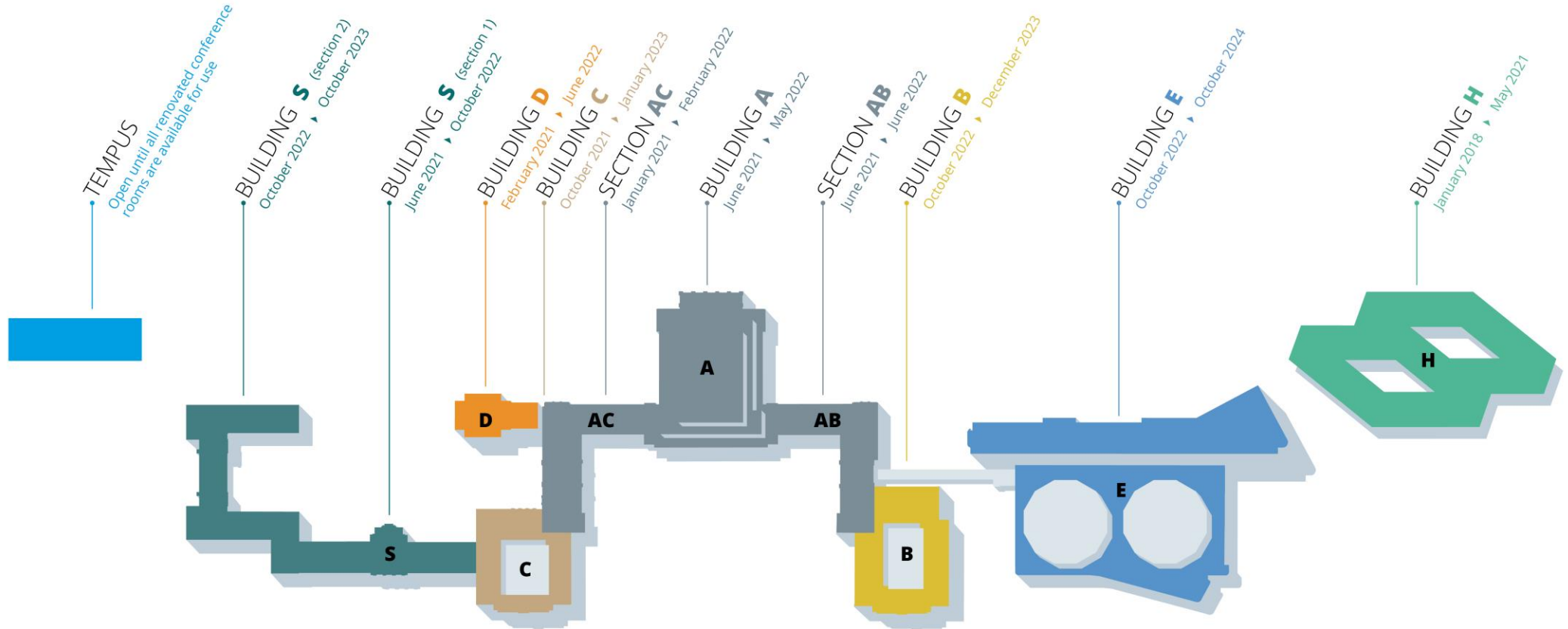
# → Business continuity

- UNOG established a cross-functional group on remote conferencing.
- Ongoing investment to upgrade rooms for RSI.
- Today there are 10 conference rooms which can support multilingual remote participation.
- Constraints:
  - possible changes in COVID measures
  - SHP room closures
  - high demand for rooms for conferences
  - equipment availability
  - limited staff for implementation.





# S H P C O N S T R U C T I O N A N D R E N O V A T I O N T I M E L I N E



\* the dates shown represent the planned start and finish dates for the works in each building



# → SHP is in its most active phase

- From now until end 2024 significantly reduced availability of conference facilities
- Until end 2024, UNOG will only be able to effectively accommodate meetings with interpretation, as per the official calendar meetings approved by the General Assembly.
- Alternative options have been explored and has not led to a reservoir of spare meeting capacity that UNOG could tap into.
- Some conference facilities in Geneva have been pre-booked until 2026.





## ➔ Need for Mandate post business continuity

- A mandate is required from Member States to move beyond business continuity to a new method of conferencing. This would give the opportunity to properly define the servicing parameters, technical, legal and possible financial implications.
- Bodies have been encouraged to address RSI individually in the absence of a global approach
- Some bodies have expressed interest in ensuring that they have access to hybrid conferencing in future years and related oral statements have been issued



# Meetings planning parameters for 2022

- 2022 has been planned using the full year's calendar of meetings
- Changes are assessed on a quarterly basis in the calendar month preceding the quarter e.g., early December for the first quarter of 2022, reflecting the evolution of the COVID situation
- Due to SHP closures, UNOG does not have enough rooms to meet everyone's requests for specific dates
- Dates for events should not be communicated until room availability is confirmed
- Room allocation will be finalized based on the requirements of all calendar bodies in session at the time.
- The specific room allocation is confirmed to meetings organizers one week prior to the scheduled event.
- Participants should check the screens located at Pregny gate, as well as at doors 6 and 40, to reconfirm the venue.



## ➔ Remote platforms – Zoom now fully available

- Three contracts remain in place for Remote Simultaneous Interpretation (RSI)
  - Interprefy, Kudo, Interact.io
- Zoom (4th platform) has been successfully tested for multiple organs; now approved by the Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT)
- Zoom is currently being supported only for meeting requests coming through MMS, but UNOG is working on a service that would be an alternative to WebEx. More details on this coming soon...
- All platforms require extra staff resources – including technical moderation
- The technology is moving fast and UNOG continues to test new options





## → Costs of RSI platforms

- ✓ Currently a two-hour meeting with 50 remote participants here in Geneva is estimated to cost to UNOG additional US\$ 1,100 in technical and organizational support alone.
- ✓ Costs increase with the number of remote participants and the duration of the meeting, which include:
  - RSI platform usage charges
  - moderators to support interventions in the meeting room as well as through the platform, monitor the chat, etc.
  - session set-up and coordination to organize and prepare the meeting with the substantive office and the RSI platform provider
  - room set-up and connection testing to ready the equipment and platform and ensure the connection of all participants before the beginning of a meeting
  - IT and technical support costs to troubleshoot any problems during the meeting
- ✓ Conference organizers are required to provide technical moderation



# → Duration of meetings

- The standard duration of a fully in-person meeting is three hours. Standard duration of a meeting with unlimited remote participation is two hours.
  - To provide unlimited remote participation for a three-hour meeting requires a reinforced team of interpreters.
- Significant capacity constraints for rooms, interpreters, technicians and technical moderators
- Entities in Geneva are holding meetings at the same time resulting in limited capacity in the freelance interpretation market
- From 1 November 2021, reduction of meeting length to two hours when remote participation exceeds 30 minutes
- Secretariats to plan meetings per these parameters including in 2022



# → 2021 Situation

- UNOG Division of Administration (Section 29E) funded to provide AV support only to in-person calendar meetings
- Now tasked with additional technical support for RSI without budgetary provisions
- Costs to Division of Administration: on average 4 times higher than in-person meetings (\$350 v \$1,450 for 2hr meeting)
- RSI requirements were funded centrally by exceptional decision of the Controller in 2021
- Section 29E facing additional budget cuts in 2022 – ACABQ recommendation to cut contractual services by additional 5% will impact UNOG's ability to provide AV support even for basic in-person meetings

# → 2022 Budget

- The proposed budget for 2022 is based on in-person meetings, i.e. no funding for remote participation in meetings and the attendant costs for RSI platforms and their operation
- Starting in January 2022, support for remote participation can only be provided on a cost recovery basis until such time as a central business continuity solution may be found for the remainder of the pandemic, or until a mandate is in place – whether specific to each body setting its own meeting modalities or subject to a global decision.
- In case the Controller does identify a central solution for business continuity in 2022, UNOG will be part of a that global solution.
- However, once business continuity measures are over, funding will need to be provided if remote participation is to be put on a sustainable footing, and this would need to come through mandates from member states



## → Conference servicing and Administrative budgets

- **The conference servicing and administrative budgets are not allocated at the level of each client – allocated and managed as a global envelope**
- Repeated across-the-board budget cuts over the past several years have resulted in underfunding for already mandated activities, particularly in the area of technical and IT support provided under section 29E (UNOG Administration).
- Accommodating additional meeting requirements will necessitate a specific mandate and related additional funding.



## → Poor Audio impacts everyone

- Poor audio from remote participants is a problem for everyone in the meeting. It can lead to stopping meetings and breaks in interpretation
  - Interpreters have experienced hearing issues and some are off for noise rest
- Specific equipment, connections and settings are required for better audio
  - Resources: <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/rsi/best-practices>
- Communication campaign to educate remote participants
  - Video explainers, visual messages for meeting screens, video announcement, how-to guides, social media posts
- Scripts for sound technicians for onboarding to manage expectations

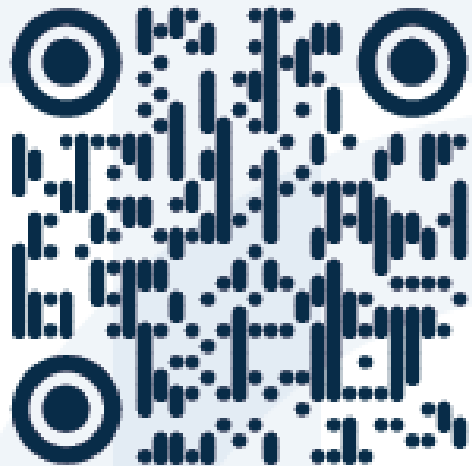
# → Conferencing Today and Tomorrow - 2

- To support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development while leveraging international Geneva's strengths, CTT-2 will **gather lessons learned to understand stakeholders experiences** of the business continuity measures in place and **identify what elements they may wish to keep** and **how they envision conferencing in the post-COVID environment** with the aim of ensuring UNOG is suitably equipped to position itself as a UN hub for modern conferencing, while respecting the framework established by the General Assembly.

**CTT2.** Conferencing  
today & tomorrow  
UN Geneva



# → Conferencing Today and Tomorrow - 2



**SHAPE THE CONFERENCES  
OF TODAY & TOMORROW!**  
Fill out the survey

[Ungeneva.org/ctt/survey](https://ungeneva.org/ctt/survey)

**CTT2.** Conferencing  
today & tomorrow  
UN Geneva







# Q A



UNITED NATIONS  
GENEVA

Conferences *i*beyond