



Report on plans for a crèche at the United Nations Office at Geneva

Introduction

Staff at UNOG have for a number of years reported difficulties in finding crèche places for their children, mainly due to local structural factors. The UNOG Staff Coordinating Council has become equally concerned that this has prevented staff with young children from participating fully in the workplace and has even led to parents having to forgo career opportunities in order to look after their child.

In April 2010, the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council took steps to see how this matter could be resolved. These steps included:

- The establishment of a working group on the issue
- A staff survey on childcare needs
- Meetings with the City of Geneva, the Canton of Geneva, the director of the Creche des Morillons and with the Swiss and US missions.
- A JNC meeting with UNOG administration

This paper presents the findings of the Council and a proposal on how to move forward so that a crèche can be established within two years.

Context

A number of factors make it difficult for parents at the United Nations to find crèche places. These include:

- A general shortage of crèche places in the local area. Staff have reported having to wait up to two years for a place. This has in many cases forced one of the spouses (UN or non-UN) to stop working beyond their maternity leave.
- The fact that while UNOG is in the City of Geneva, and the city is therefore the place of work for staff members, allocation of crèche places in the local system is done according to place of residence. Thus many staff who wish to have their children in close proximity to their workplace, are unable to do so unless they are residents of Geneva.
- Professional staff are expected to be internationally mobile. This means that the requirement for a crèche place for a parent assigned to Geneva is immediate.
- The fact that on average, every crèche place is subsidized by 2,000 CHF a month. The crèche budget is one of the city's biggest. The purpose of this subsidy is to make crèche places affordable to the poorest as crèche fees are related to net income. UN staff, with their higher salaries, effectively participate in this subsidy.
- The requirement in the local system for a very low child to adult ratio, starting at four children to every adult in the first two years.

For the reasons mentioned above, it is unlikely that the supply of crèche places will become adequate in the near future, nor will legislative obstacles that discriminate against UN parents, be removed.

Therefore, the Council is firmly of the belief that a dedicated crèche should be established for UN staff.

Needs of the Palais des Nations

The UNOG Staff Coordinating Council undertook a survey in September 2010 to assess the need for a crèche. We would like to thank all those who participated in the survey. We would like to also thank all those who shared with us their experiences and have volunteered their assistance.

Here are some of the results:

SCC Childcare facilities Survey		October 2010	
	Number	% of total	
Respondents (total)	436		
Gender			
<i>Female:</i>	253	58.0%	
<i>Male:</i>	183	42.0%	
Average age of respondents	39		
Children who are less than 48 months old	259		
<i>their average age</i>	20		
Average age of respondents with children less than 48 months old	37		
Respondents in favor of having childcare facilities	434	99.5%	
Respondents in favor of having childcare facilities within the Palais des Nations	396	90.8%	
Respondents who are currently in need of childcare facilities	197	45.2%	
<i>in need of the facility on a:</i>			
100% basis	137		
50% basis	50		
Occasional basis	34		
Respondents who would necessitate childcare facilities in the future	355	81.4%	
<i>their average age</i>	37		

Source: SCC, January 2011.

The most notable statistics are:

- The average age of the 259 children under the age of 48 months is 20 months.
- 91% favour having a childcare facility within the Palais des Nations
- The average age of respondents with children below the age of 48 months is 37 years.
- 45% of the respondents currently need a childcare facility.
- 81% would necessitate the facility in the future.

The survey's conclusions are:

- There are currently enough children to create a childcare facility
- Staff favour having the facility within the Palais des Nations
- The average age of both parents and children under the age of 48 months ensures the long-term need for such a facility

Stakeholder contributions

We have identified the principle stakeholders as UNOG, the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council and the Swiss authorities.

At a meeting of the JNC, UNOG management indicated that it would investigate the possibility of providing land for a dedicated building.

The Coordinating Council would be willing to provide the capital costs of the building and of the equipment.

The Swiss authorities have indicated their willingness to provide in-kind a director and one to two staff members.

Conclusions

The Council now has a much better idea of how to go forward on a crèche. It has on the hand, clear information as to the demand for a crèche within UNOG. Other agencies and diplomatic missions could add to this demand. It also has an idea of the resources available.

The next step is to bring the two together. The 29th Coordinating Council will be in a strong position to prepare a full strategy, mapping out how a crèche could be established within the next 24 months, which we believe is feasible.