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CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES  
TO THE CONVENTION ON  
BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
First meeting  
Nassau, 28 November - 9 December 1994  
Item 11 of the agenda

## LOCATION OF THE SECRETARIAT

### Offers from Governments

Note by the Interim Secretariat: The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties has before it document UNEP/CBD/COP/1/9 (Selection of a competent international organization to carry out the functions of the secretariat of the Convention). Section 4 of that document refers to location of the secretariat, and in paragraph 18 it is suggested that the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties might consider inviting Governments who have expressed interest in hosting the secretariat to submit details of their offer.

The Governments of Kenya, Spain and Switzerland have requested the Interim Secretariat to make available to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties, for information, the offers which are attached to the present note.

I. OFFER FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF KENYA

Letter dated 18 November 1994 from H.E. Professor S.K. Ongeri, Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya to UNEP, Nairobi, Kenya to Ms. A. Cropper, Executive Secretary, Interim Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity

I have the honour to refer to the directive given by the Government of the Republic of Kenya through the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, that the Government has given a preliminary offer to host the Permanent Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

As you may be aware, the first Conference of the Parties (COP1) on the Convention on Biological Diversity is scheduled to shortly take place in Nassau, the Bahamas, and among some of the important issues to be discussed and resolved at the Conference will be the physical location of the Permanent Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Republic of Kenya wishes to officially make a preliminary offer for consideration by the first Conference of the Parties to host the Permanent Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. This is in fulfilment of the requirements of Article 25 para 2 of the Convention. Details of this offer to follow. In the same breath, the Republic of Kenya wishes to request the Interim Secretariat to circulate this offer as part of an Information Paper to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties due to take place in the Bahamas.

The conservation and sustainable utilization of biodiversity resources is an issue so dear to humankind and Kenya in particular. The world's largest reserve of biological diversity is found abundantly in the South. Kenya happens to be the only developing country from the South that has in place, a major United Nations System (UNEP) that handles all UN environment related issues such as biodiversity. It would, therefore, be only fitting for the Permanent Secretariat for the Convention to be located in the South in general and Kenya in particular. This also is in line with Agenda 21 article 38.22 (h) which strongly supports the idea of co-location of the secretariats established by UNEP in the future to ensure most efficient use of resources. It is Kenya's hope that the first Conference of the Parties will take these reasons amongst others into account when the issue of location of the Permanent Secretariat is addressed.

II. OFFER OF MADRID AS HEADQUARTERS FOR THE SECRETARIAT  
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY  
(SUBMITTED IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH)

Communication dated 11 October 1994 from Ms. Cristina Narbona Ruiz,  
Secretary of State for the Environment and Housing, Madrid, Spain  
to Ms. Angela Cropper, Executive Secretary, Interim Secretariat  
for the Convention on Biological Diversity

Background

As a result of its favourable strategic situation, its geography and its history, Spain represents an essential link between the European Community and Africa, the Middle East and Latin America, having especially intense relationships with all of them with regard to cooperation at all levels, including culture, economy, science, information, training, etc. Likewise, the most recent Spanish foreign policy of good-will, peace and cooperation has made it possible for excellent relationships to develop with the countries of North America, Eastern Europe, the Far East and the rest of the world with which there is a common approach to handling international affairs.

This excellent position of Spain represents a very positive contribution to the worldwide promotion of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, were it to be located in Madrid.

As regards the preamble and substantive provisions of the Convention which deal with the importance of research and training in the subject, access to technology and to its transfer and scientific and technical cooperation, the following considerations should be taken into account in assessing this candidature:

Spain is the Community country with the greatest biological diversity in the whole European Union.

The Spanish Administration has set up 30 plasma banks, and their management means that the basic genetic nutritional resources are controlled by the Administration and the scientific world, with more than 25,000 ecotypes.

Spain cooperates through FAO with various developing countries, both from the point of view of the exchange of improved equipment and from a scientific and technical perspective since, in the last 10 years more than 3,000 nutritional scientists and technicians have been trained in Spanish centres. The administrative experience in the control of Spanish biodiversity on a scientific basis (Universities, Higher Council of Scientific Research, National Agrarian Research Institute, etc.) has been carried out in 338 protected Parks, which represents 5% of the national territory.

Spain attaches great importance to cooperation with the developing countries in the area of biological diversity and is at present developing, in cooperation with other countries, research projects in the following ecosystems: tropical and subtropical mountains; pastures and savannas; coasts, dunes and mangrove swamps; and wet forests.

Consequently, Spain is a country experienced in the administration and protection of and research into biodiversity, in cooperation with most of the countries of the world.

### Candidature of Madrid

Madrid, the capital of Spain, has diplomatic missions of the countries members of the Convention. As regards telecommunications, the Iberpac network and the Telefónica Conmutada network (R.T.C.), which can be accessed from Madrid, permit interconnection with the worldwide telecommunication networks. It is also possible to use the services of Ibertex, teletex, telefax, datafax, telealarm, telecontrol, telemedia, video-conferences and to connect with the satellites Hispasat I and II. Likewise, the Spanish Government is actively participating in the UNEP telecommunications project, called MERCURE, and will install one of the communication exchange stations in Madrid.

As for the intellectual and scientific context, there are four Universities in Madrid with 74 departments and chairs specializing in environmental subjects, and 55 more related to the environment, the total in Spain being 234 and 183 respectively. Similarly, in Madrid there are 49 Centres for research into environmental issues, and a total of 222 Centres in the whole country.

#### **Characteristics of the Spanish offer:**

A building located in Madrid's Campo de las Naciones, 3km from Barajas International Airport and 10km from the centre of Madrid. The Campos de las Naciones complex consists of:

- \* A 150.000m<sup>2</sup> Fairs and Exhibition zone
- \* A 57.188m<sup>2</sup> Conference Centre
- \* Two hotels
- \* Eight office buildings
- \* Gardens

The Secretariat Headquarters would be located in one of the buildings near the Conference Centre. It consists of:

- \* An entrance hall with a permanent security service and visitors control during working hours.
- \* Secretariat accommodation:

The area of these premises would be adequate for the foreseeable number of staff. For the moment, we can propose a basic offer of 644m<sup>2</sup> of surface area.

This 644m<sup>2</sup> surface area is well equipped, fully serviced with electricity, air-conditioning, telephones and optic fibre, and would be divided up according to the Secretariat's needs.

In the event of more space being needed, we could add 644m<sup>2</sup> more on the same floor.

The building has two floors of garages. The basic offer includes 10 parking places in the garage.

The building will have enough space to house also, if necessary the Secretariat of the Convention on Desertification.

The offices will be fully furnished and equipped, including advanced communications systems. All expenses will be met by Spain.

A residence, free of charge, will be provided for the Secretary of the Convention.

Financing of a Biological Diversity Seminar, which will be held from 11 October to 14 October 1994 and will constitute a contribution of the Convention by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

One million United States dollars per year as a Spanish contribution for biological diversity projects managed by the Secretariat in consultation with the Government of Spain, and which could be used in part for meetings of experts or technical assistance to the Secretariat.

### III. PHYSICAL LOCATION OF THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

#### SWISS POSITION AND OFFER

Communication dated 11 November 1994 from the Government of Switzerland, transmitted through the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations in Geneva to Ms. A. Cropper, Executive Secretary, Interim Secretariat for the Convention on Biological Diversity

At present, the Interim Secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention to Combat Desertification operate under the same roof in the Geneva Executive Centre. They share this location with a number of other institutions working in the field of environment and sustainable development, i.e. the UNEP Regional Office for Europe, the respective secretariats of CITES and the Basel Conventions, the International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC) and, in the near future, the Global Resources Information Database (GRID). Other international organizations have their headquarters in the close vicinity such as WMO, WHO, WIPO, IUCN as well as regional or liaison offices of numerous other intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations. There is no doubt that the international community has benefited and still benefits from such co-location: it eases cooperation among teams, allows for fast and informal spreading of information and increases working efficiency.

Switzerland has made significant efforts to facilitate the conclusion of these conventions, the work of their respective Interim Secretariats as well as the participation of developing countries and countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the negotiations: the total Swiss support for 1993-95 to the three Conventions amounts to US\$ 14.8 million. Furthermore, through the first and second phases of the Global Environment Facility, Switzerland is bringing new and additional financial resources (US\$ 9.5 million) to projects aimed at integrating environment into the development process of developing countries.

Though present secretariat settings are satisfactory, significant progress is still possible with a view to more effective rationalization of their work. In particular, a number of technical services could be shared, as the Secretary-General of the United Nations endeavours to achieve in various UN bodies. While retaining its autonomy, each secretariat would rely on a common operational basis at the technical level ("common services") entailing significant staff and materials savings and indeed a better utilization of the funds provided by Contracting Parties. Further, it would enhance coordination of activities leading to a more efficient utilization of government resources.

Switzerland wishes to emphasize that such an approach is fully in line with the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to restructure activities in the socio-economic field by concentrating activities regarding political matters and their institutions at the Headquarters in New York, while operational activities, which nowadays appear to be scattered in a number of places, should be transferred to the other Offices of the United Nations. There is no doubt that the implementation of Conventions regarding sustainable development and environment falls within the scope of operational activities. Further, Agenda 21 in Chapter 38, para 22 h, in addressing this issue, underscores "the need for the most efficient use of resources, including possible co-location of secretariats established in the future". Likewise, the

second session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, in spring of this year, underlined "the need for coordination and more efficient structural arrangements among the secretariats of Conventions related to sustainable development".

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Switzerland gave significant support to UNEP in providing the interim secretariat function for the Convention on Biological Diversity. More specifically, it granted US\$ 4.2 million in 1993 and US\$ 3.8 million in 1994 to cover, inter alia, the salaries and operating costs of the staff of the interim secretariat, office space as well as the expenses of ICCBD I and II and a significant share (US\$ 720,000) of the expenses incurred by the first Conference of Parties.

Switzerland is convinced that allowing the Permanent Secretariat to remain in Geneva would continue to prove beneficial for the international community:

- Firstly, this would allow smooth continuity in its work at the initial implementation phase of the Convention, which is indeed a particularly delicate and resource-intensive period: no moves, no staff fluctuations, no search for new homes, no loss of contacts and so forth, which undoubtedly hamper activities.
- Secondly, Geneva and its surroundings host a large number of governmental and non-governmental institutions which are directly relevant to the implementation of the Convention and to sustainable development in general. Switzerland is convinced that the mere presence of these organizations will foster new ideas and promote the synergies and the multidisciplinary approach required for the implementation of the Convention.
- Thirdly, about 140 permanent missions to international organizations are located in Geneva. Moving the Permanent Secretariat to another location would entail significant expenses for Governments: indeed, they would need to reinforce at that location their bilateral embassies - provided they have one - with specialists in multilateral affairs. Using existing specialized governmental networks and resources is the most logical and economical solution. In this context, Switzerland is aware of the fact that the work of government representatives who cannot rely upon a permanent mission in Geneva may sometimes prove arduous. The Government of the Canton of Geneva has therefore decided to erect in the vicinity of the Palais des Nations a "Maison Universelle" (Universal House), where some 5,000 sq. m. of office space will be available as of 1998 to the least developed countries, according to UN criteria. The Government of Geneva has also expressed willingness to provide the same countries with support in meeting rental costs for office premises located elsewhere in Geneva until the "Maison Universelle" is operational. Other supportive measures for other countries could be considered, upon request.

Switzerland wishes to stress at this juncture that Geneva is readily and directly accessible by air from most countries in the world. It enjoys an efficient network of fast trains and highways as well as up-to-date telecommunications systems. There are virtually no safety problems in Geneva. In addition to French which is the official language, English, Spanish and Arabic are commonly used. Private and public multi-lingual

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schools ensure a high standard of education for the children of the international community. Further, Switzerland would grant the Permanent Secretariat and its staff the same privileges and immunities as those it has granted already to its host organization.

- Fourthly, Switzerland is ready to provide further support for the activities of the Permanent Secretariat: office premises and facilities in the Geneva Executive Centre will be available free of charge until at least April 1998. After that date, it will remain in the Geneva Executive Centre or move into the Palais Wilson, a prestigious and historic monument under renovation, where further premises will be available in 1998. Spacious conference facilities are available in and around the Palais des Nations and the "Centre International de Conférences de Geneve". Switzerland is ready to provide additional resources to those deriving from its obligations as Contracting Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity in an amount of up to 1.5 million Swiss francs (US\$ 1.2 million) if the Permanent Secretariat remains in Geneva. As of 1999, the relevant Swiss authorities will endeavour to maintain such support which will be subject to Parliamentary endorsement, as in any democratic country.

The Swiss Government draws attention to the attached Annex which provides further detailed information.



A N N E X

to the Communication from the Government of Switzerland  
on  
the physical location of the Permanent Secretariat of  
the Convention on Biological Diversity

1. Office premises

The Interim Secretariat is at present based in the Geneva Executive Centre, one of the most modern office buildings available in Geneva. Its total useful floor area is 13,000 sq.m. It contains 6 meeting rooms, the largest accommodating 52 persons. It is a four-year-old, 7-storey building located close to the intercontinental airport with direct access to the Swiss and French highway networks. It is equipped with an advanced energy-saving heating/air conditioning system, elevators, cafeteria, underground parking lot and up-to-date telecommunications equipment, including direct world-wide satellite links, as well as an internal computer network system. Movable walls allow office space to be adapted to the needs of users.

At present, the following institutions are also located in the Geneva Executive Centre: United Nations Environmental Programme Regional Office for Europe, Information Unit on Climate Change, the International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals (IRPTC), the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes, the Interim Secretariat of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Interim Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification. In the near future, the Global Resources Information Database (GRID) will also move to the Geneva Executive Centre.

It is anticipated that some of these institutions will move later into the Palais Wilson. It is located on the shores of Lake Geneva close to the Place des Nations, in a district renowned for its prestigious hotels and beautiful parks. It will be converted with the help of the Swiss Federal Government into a "Maison de l'Environnement" (House of the Environment) where 4,700 sq.m. of office space will be available in April 1998. Renovation and conversion work began in October 1994. The final allocation of premises among users will be discussed later with their responsible officers. The Palais Wilson will primarily be made available to UNEP Regional Office and other secretariats dealing with environmental matters.

Switzerland endeavours to offer premises free of charge when a new organization commences its activities, in order to be of assistance in the initial phase of work. In the case of the Convention on Biological Diversity, office space has been and will continue to be made available free of charge until April 1998. As a matter of principle, it should then be up to Contracting Parties to accept the responsibility of meeting the expenses incurred by the secretariat. Office premises in Geneva are leased to international organizations at a discount rate. In the case of the Permanent Secretariat of the Convention, financial assistance to meet expenses connected with the rental of offices after April 1998 is under examination.

2. Conference facilities

In addition to the conference facilities of the United Nations Office in Geneva (the largest complex of this type in the world), the following premises could be used for large-scale conferences:

### The "Geneva International Conference Centre" (CICG)

The Centre is located close to the Place des Nations in the immediate vicinity of all major international organizations established in Geneva. Its infrastructure includes:

- \* 2,218 seats in conference rooms of various sizes;
- \* simultaneous interpretation facilities for 6 to 8 languages;
- \* a press centre and a studio for audio-visual conferences by satellite;
- \* a telecommunications network;
- \* underground parking;
- \* a large cafeteria, restaurant, post office, news stand, bank and other facilities.

### "Palexpo"

Palexpo is a huge exhibition and conference centre (70,000 sq.m.) located next to the airport, and where such exhibits as the Geneva Motor Show and Telecom take place. While not initially designed for UN-type meetings, it contains fully equipped conference rooms of various sizes which can be adapted at short notice due to the versatility of the building.

### New facilities in the President Wilson Hotel

New conference facilities (10 meeting and conference rooms with a total capacity of 2,000 seats with full simultaneous interpretation facilities) are being constructed in the President Wilson Hotel. This Centre is privately owned and will be operational in mid-1995.

### 3. Permanent missions established in Geneva

As of 1st November 1994, the following permanent missions and permanent observers' missions/bureaux to the United Nations were located in Geneva:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Australia, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Belgium, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Commonwealth of Dominica, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Holy See, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kampuchea, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Panama, Paraguay, People's Democratic Republic of Korea, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Sao Tome e Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tanzania (United Republic of), Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Ukraine, Uruguay, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The European Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Organization of African Unity also maintain Permanent Delegations in Geneva.

Switzerland wishes to emphasize that permanent missions are governmental channels specifically designed for multilateral activities such as the implementation of the Convention. In cities without such a network of permanent missions, Governments would have to rely on embassies - provided they have one - which perform bilateral diplomatic tasks and are staffed differently, and would need to introduce specialists familiar with multilateral questions. Hence keeping the Permanent Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Geneva would entail significant budgetary savings for Governments.

#### The "Universal House"

The Government of the Canton of Geneva has decided to provide a "Universal House" ("Maison Universelle") with a total floor area of some 5,000 sq. m. for the least developed countries according to United Nations criteria. The House would be located in the proximity of the Palais des Nations. Accommodation will be offered free of charge if the countries concerned so desire. Maintenance costs will be met by the Canton of Geneva. The Government of Geneva will implement this project in consultation with interested Governments. It has further expressed willingness to provide the same countries with support in meeting rental costs for temporary office premises elsewhere in Geneva until the "Universal House" is opened, probably in 1998. Other supportive measures for other countries could be considered, upon request.

4. Relevant international institutions which should be of benefit to the work of the Permanent Secretariat.

Numerous international organizations are located in or around Geneva. The following organizations, in addition to the Office of the United Nations in Geneva, are relevant:

- World Trade Organization (Headquarters)
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Headquarters)
- International Trade Centre (Headquarters)
- World Meteorological Organization (Headquarters) together with the Secretariat of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
- World Intellectual Property Organization (Headquarters)
- World Health Organization (Headquarters)
- United Nations Institute for Training and Research (Headquarters)
- Economic Commission for Europe (Headquarters)
- Food and Agriculture Organization (Liaison Office)
- International Monetary Fund (Regional Office)
- United Nations Organization for Industrial Development (Liaison Office)
- United Nations Development Programme (Regional Office)
- United Nations Environment Programme (Regional Office) together with the Information Unit on Climate Change
- United Nations Department for Policy Co-ordination and Sustainable Development (liaison office)
- UNEP/CITES Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Headquarters)
- UNEP/IRPTC International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals (Headquarters)
- UNEP/GRID Global Resources Information Database (Headquarters)
- UNEP/SBC Secretariat of the Basel Convention (Headquarters)

- Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar) (Headquarters)
- United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (Liaison Office)

Among the numerous intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations established in or around Geneva, the following deserve particular mention: International Union for the Conservation of Nature (Headquarters), Business Council for Sustainable Development (Headquarters), International Academy of the Environment (Headquarters), World Wildlife Fund (Headquarters), Centre for Our Common Future (Headquarters), the Green Cross International (Headquarters), Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique (Liaison Office) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Liaison Office).

5. International and local transport, travel facilities and opportunities:

By air: Geneva intercontinental airport is located 4 km from the city centre (1 km from the Geneva Executive Centre). It can be reached by bus or train. It serves 110 destinations throughout the world. Geneva has daily connections, directly or via Zurich, with most capitals making it easily accessible for many countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and Central and Eastern Europe. About 40 air companies offer flights to Geneva.

By train: Geneva is connected to the railway networks of Switzerland and France. Fast and comfortable trains depart at least once an hour from Geneva to other Swiss cities. Thanks to the French "Train à Grande Vitesse" (300 km/h), Geneva is only slightly more than 3 hours from the centre of Paris.

By road: Geneva lies at the junction of the European North-South and East-West highway networks. Although speed is limited for environmental and energy conservation purposes, Chamonix and the Mont Blanc are only an hour away, while Milan is easily reached within 4 hours by car.

Locally: Geneva enjoys a modern and comfortable bus, tramway and electrobus mass transit system. The local authorities are committed to further developing the public transportation system. From spring to autumn, there is also a most enjoyable small boat commuting system in the inner part of the city. There are virtually no safety problems in Geneva.

Geneva and Lausanne - which is only half an hour away by train - are centres of dynamic cultural life: numerous concert, theatre, opera and ballet performances take place every week. Both cities are also host to a number of museums and well-known art galleries. Further, Geneva lies in the heart of a region with extensive sport opportunities, in particular skiing, mountain climbing and water sports.

6. Telecommunications facilities

Switzerland possesses direct, fast, reliable and competitive international telecommunications facilities. It is also a member of the Natel C and D systems for cellular phones. A metropolitan network for high-speed interconnection of the various databanks used by the international organizations and permanent missions in Geneva is expected to become operational in mid-1995. Furthermore, international organizations are linked to the state-of-the-art Swiss optic fibre network.

About 40 television channels are available in French, German, Italian, English and Spanish with occasional broadcasting in several other languages. Official radio stations broadcast in French, German and Italian. There are also local private radio stations in French, English and Arabic. Numerous newspapers from all over the world and other mass media maintain permanent correspondents in Geneva who ensure wide coverage of international events held in the city.

7. Schooling facilities

There are excellent state schools which are free of charge, with various schemes for higher education. As numerous children are of foreign origin, "adaptation courses" are organized in various languages (English, Arabic, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian are the most common) by the local authorities. 38 private schools offer various education programmes in different languages. The University of Geneva, founded in 1552, provides tertiary education in all the usual fields. Physics and international political sciences are particularly well developed thanks to the proximity of the European Centre for Nuclear Research (CERN) and the United Nations. Biochemistry and molecular biology have recently become new fields of excellence in scientific research. Geneva is also host to a well-known School of Interpreters. A private English-speaking university specializes in political sciences.

8. Health facilities

The Canton of Geneva, with a population of less than 400,000 inhabitants, has about 1,900 medical practitioners, 90 physiotherapists, 420 dentists and 3,000 hospital beds. It has a large public university hospital offering all the usual services. A number of private clinics also operate in Geneva and its surrounding area. There is no limit on access but since expenses are often high, private health insurance is recommended. Such insurance is compulsory for residents.

9. Housing, acquisition of real estate

The housing stock in Geneva and its surroundings offers a broad variety of facilities ranging from small apartments in a condominium (SFR 1,200 (US\$ 800) a month for a 3-4 room flat) to beautiful mansions with private harbour. The Swiss Government does not impose any restriction as to the area of residence of the international civil servants.

The Government of Geneva is willing to help permanent missions, their staff and international civil servants in their efforts to find living quarters and to resolve housing problems that might arise. It is examining the possibility of allowing access to subsidized housing.

Under present Swiss legislation, States and international organizations may acquire real estate in Switzerland for their official needs. Staff members of permanent missions and international civil servants may also acquire real estate under given conditions. The provisions governing ownership of real estate by international civil servants and staff of permanent missions are currently under review. It is envisaged that all persons residing in Switzerland will be allowed to acquire real estate as a principal residence without any prior authorization, with a view to easing access to land ownership.

10. Transfer of funds to and from foreign countries

Switzerland has a long liberal tradition in banking and financial matters. There is no restriction on movement of capital. Therefore, free and unlimited transfer of funds to and from foreign countries is allowed in

any type of currency or securities (notes, shares, bonds, gold and so on). Banking secrecy is guaranteed by law. It can only be lifted by juridical authorities within the framework of a criminal prosecution. Banks have agreed to identify individuals opening bank accounts or making large cash operations.

11. Privileges and immunities for the Permanent Secretariat and its staff

The Permanent Secretariat and its staff will enjoy the same privileges and immunities as those granted to the host Organization. In effect, if the Permanent Secretariat is hosted by a UN institution, the 1946 Headquarters Agreement concluded between the United Nations and Switzerland will govern the status of the Permanent Secretariat and its staff.

Within the context of the establishment in Geneva of the Headquarters of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Swiss Government has decided to improve the status of intergovernmental organizations in Switzerland. In this regard, once the WTO is established, the Swiss Government will grant officials of grade P-5 and above the status of senior official and the related privileges and immunities. In particular, the Permanent Secretariat will be exempted from all direct federal, cantonal and communal taxes as well as indirect taxes such as VAT and custom duties on all goods purchased for official use, within the limits of the legislation to enter into force in 1995.

Senior staff members will enjoy the privileges and immunities granted to diplomats. Hence, the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 18 April 1961 will apply by analogy, particularly as regards Article 34 relating to tax privileges. They will also be exempted from VAT and custom duties, within the limits of the relevant legislation.

With respect to tax privileges, other professional staff members (P-4 and lower) will be exempted from all direct taxes on salaries paid by the Permanent Secretariat.

12. Family reunification and access to the Swiss job market

Also within the context of the establishment of the WTO, the Swiss Government has decided to improve conditions of family reunification and access to the Swiss job market for international civil servants and members of permanent missions.

Unmarried children having a parent working as an international civil servant or member of a permanent mission will be entitled to accompany or re-join him or her, up to the age of 25, provided they live under the same roof as this parent. In exceptional cases, the Swiss authorities will allow children older than 25 to reside in Switzerland. They will receive a "carte de legitimation" from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Swiss Government has decided to facilitate access to the Swiss job market for spouses resident in Switzerland of international civil servants and of members of permanent missions. Furthermore, children who were admitted into the country on grounds of family reunification before the age of 21 and who reside in Switzerland will enjoy the same access even if they take up employment after that age. They will be subject only to the monitoring of working and salary conditions. This is intended to prevent possible misuse and ensure equal treatment with Swiss citizens. However, children joining their parents after the age of 21 who have a "carte de legitimation" from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs will be subject to the normal regulations on foreign labour if they wish to work in Switzerland.