



INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION

REPORT 2022/017

Audit of the response of the United Nations Office at Geneva to the COVID-19 pandemic

Adequate measures were implemented to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure continued operations

**3 June 2022
Assignment No. AE2021-310-03**

Audit of the response of the United Nations Office at Geneva to the COVID-19 pandemic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the response of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) to the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of measures implemented by UNOG to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure continued operations. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021 and included a review of risk areas relating to: (a) governance; (b) business continuity; (c) workplace arrangements and staff well-being; and (d) procurement and management of contracts affected by the pandemic.

The audit showed that UNOG implemented sufficient measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure continued operations. UNOG put in place adequate governance structures, communication strategies, business continuity plans and a flexible back-to-office strategy and plans that took into account the epidemiological situation and the host country guidelines and restrictions. There were also adequate arrangements to provide staff with medical and psycho-social support. Some lessons learned were identified by various offices and UNOG needs to develop an action plan to address them to further strengthen its resilience.

OIOS made two recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, UNOG needed to:

- Prepare an action plan for applying the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance its resilience; and
- Establish a documented plan to optimize its capacity for hosting conferences requiring interpretation in six languages as it implements the Strategic Heritage Plan project during the ongoing pandemic.

UNOG accepted the recommendations and has initiated action to implement them. Action required to close the open recommendation is indicated in Annex I.

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Audit of the response of the United Nations Office at Geneva to the COVID-19 pandemic

I. BACKGROUND

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the response of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Pursuant to this, UNOG designated a P-5 staff as Senior Coordination Officer for COVID-19 and established a COVID-19 response team. UNOG coordinated its response with the host country (Switzerland) as well as France since some of the staff live across the border in France. UNOG also coordinated with more than 30 Geneva-based United Nations secretariat organizations, agencies, and other international entities such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN).
3. By 31 December 2021, more than 400 Geneva-based United Nations staff had contracted COVID-19, all of whom recovered. In 2020, UNOG spent \$1.6 million to respond to the pandemic. This included additional cleaning services, installation of plexiglass barriers, equipment to enable meetings with Remote Simultaneous Interpretation (RSI), and operational support for RSI.
4. Comments provided by UNOG are incorporated in italics.

II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

5. The objective of the audit was to assess the adequacy and effectiveness of measures implemented by UNOG to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure continued operations.
6. This audit was included in the 2021 risk-based work plan of OIOS due to risks associated with the potential adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic to business continuity and staff well-being.
7. OIOS conducted this audit from October 2021 to January 2022. The audit covered the period from 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2021. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered risk areas relating to: (a) governance; (b) business continuity; (c) workplace arrangements and staff well-being; and (d) procurement and management of contracts affected by the pandemic.
8. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) review of relevant documentation; (c) analytical review of data; (d) physical observation; (e) surveys; and (f) sample testing.
9. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

III. AUDIT RESULTS

A. Governance

Adequate governance structures were in place

10. The Organizational Resilience Management System (ORMS) was approved by the General Assembly in 2013 as the emergency framework for the Organization. ORMS requires that a proper

governance system be in place to enable any United Nations secretariat entity to respond effectively to an emergency. UNOG had implemented the ORMS framework prior to the pandemic and established a Crisis Management Team whose terms of reference and membership were listed in a playbook. Most members of the Crisis Management Team were selected to be part of the UNOG COVID-19 response team.

11. The COVID-19 response team was chaired by the UNOG Director-General and comprised of UNOG management and staff drawn from all the critical functions. The team managed all response actions related to the pandemic. The Security Management Team (SMT), chaired by the UNOG Director-General, provided guidance and oversight to help ensure that response to the pandemic was coordinated with the host country, other United Nations common system entities and other international organizations in Switzerland. Representatives of the host country, usually at the ambassador-level, and representatives of neighbouring France, attended the SMT meetings.

12. Between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2021, the SMT met 26 times depending on the urgency of the pandemic situation in the host country and in neighbouring France. Attendance in all meetings was high with all Geneva-based secretariat organizations and offices and other United Nations agencies and international organizations, well represented. Recommendations and decisions made by the SMT were minimum standards to ensure inter-agency coordination and alignment to the host country's recommendations. Each organization could adopt enhanced levels of safety depending on its needs.

13. UNOG also set up a local inter-agency Human Resources Coordination Network. The group served as a platform for sharing common human resource practices and lessons learnt among United Nations common system entities based in Switzerland, as well as for benchmarking with other Geneva-based international organizations that were not part of the United Nations common system. All members of the network who responded to an OIOS survey expressed satisfaction with the coordination process.

14. In addition, there was a Security Cell for security chiefs of the United Nations common system entities and also for other international organizations in Geneva. The Security Cell shared ideas on how to operationalize decisions made by the SMT and also how to handle any emerging situations. There was also a local interagency network of medical directors in Geneva which shared common approaches and advised the SMT accordingly.

15. UNOG had not yet established an Occupational Safety and Health Standing Committee as recommended by the United Nations Office of Human Resources. Nonetheless, the functions of the Committee as stipulated in the draft terms of reference were handled by the COVID-19 response team and the inter-agency coordination aspects by the SMT. COVID-19 related risks and measures were a standing item in the UNOG Senior Management Team meetings and the meetings of the Human Resources Coordination Network.

16. Based on the above, OIOS concluded that the governance mechanisms established by UNOG in response to the pandemic were adequate and operating satisfactorily.

UNOG's response was aligned with the Three-Phase Response Activation System

17. A Three-Phase Response Activation System (three-phase system) to manage and coordinate health emergency responses in the United Nations was promulgated by the United Nations Medical Directors on 9 March 2020. Phase one is the readiness mode; phase two is the active risk reduction mode; and phase three is the emergency mode which requires full implementation of risk management and medical response measures. For each of the three phases, the guidance in the three-phase system spells out key activities recommended to be undertaken at a duty station to ensure an efficient and effective response.

18. UNOG's response to the pandemic aligned with the guidance in the three-phase system. Broadly, the response included: (a) adoption of a flexible back-to-office strategy and plans that took into account the epidemiological situation and the host country guidelines and restrictions; (b) simulation and implementation of the business continuity plan; (c) implementation of measures to help ensure physical distancing requirements were maintained in the premises, conference rooms and individual offices; (d) distribution of disinfectants and hand sanitizers in strategic places; (e) sensitizing staff about COVID-19 prevention strategies; (f) establishment of procedures to be followed in case a positive COVID-19 case is identified at or following a conference; (g) use of an electronic tracking system to identify, manage and report COVID-19 positive cases and close contact cases; (h) promotion of the annual seasonal influenza vaccination programme; (i) provision of training to medical staff; and (j) enhancement of psycho-social support building on the efforts that were already ongoing towards implementing the Secretary-General's strategy on mental health.

19. Further, UNOG's response was risk-based. COVID-19 related risks and risk treatment plans were addressed in the UNOG risk register. In addition, the Medical Services Section undertook risk assessments for 45 offices and functions such as interpreter booths, laundry services, drivers, and open spaces. The Medical Services Section identified risks associated with each place or function and made recommendations accordingly. For example, for interpreters, they identified the risk of exposure to COVID-19 in shared interpretation booths and recommended installation of a plexiglass partition to divide such booths, among other things. For the Cafeteria, the risk assessment was done by representatives of the COVID-19 response team and the mitigation measures were discussed in the UNOG Senior Management Team meetings.

20. Staff and managers were generally satisfied with the way UNOG responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. A 2020 end-user satisfaction survey showed an average positive satisfaction rate of 89 per cent while a 2021 client entity survey showed an average positive rate of 93 per cent. Interviews with UNOG client focal points showed high levels of satisfaction.

Need for an action plan to apply some of the lessons learned

21. There was evidence that UNOG used lessons learned from the results of surveys to refine some aspects of its response. For example, UNOG used the results of the staff survey on remote working done in July 2020 to refine its communication to staff. Based on the same survey, the Staff Counsellor's Office issued tips for looking after one's health and well-being while telecommuting to help address concerns raised by some staff about feeling isolated and anxious. Further, following the 2020 end-user satisfaction survey, among other things, the UNOG Human Resources Management Service started issuing regular reports on the use of uncertified sick leave and annual leave, coupled with advice to managers to help them improve their support to staff.

22. Various UNOG offices also identified and documented lessons learned from their response to the pandemic. Some of the lessons focused on what worked well. For example, the installation of smart lockers for the distribution of mails and parcels reduced the risk of exposure between client and logistics operators. Another lesson was the importance of rigorous and diligent application of the prescribed protection measures by all members of staff. Other lessons learned had actionable points which, if implemented, could enhance UNOG's resilience. Highlights of such lessons are discussed below.

(a) As a viable long-term solution for personal protective equipment (PPE), the establishment, or access to multiple long-term agreements for essential PPEs should be considered. UNOG only had one contract for masks, disinfectant sprays, and gels. There was no contract for hand sanitizers, wet wipe dispensers and COVID-19 testing services. Such long-term agreements should ideally be with local vendors in case of border closure during the pandemic.

(b) As the pandemic progressed, the Procurement and Transportation Section started receiving individual requests from different client offices and entities for various PPEs. These requests were submitted to different procurement buyers at different times, which made it difficult to consolidate the needs. There was a need to streamline the requisitioning process by, for example, designating one or more focal points to monitor PPE stock available in the Palais, and to be responsible for receiving all requests for PPEs and testing. The Procurement and Transportation Section already partially addressed this through the integration of COVID-19 supplies in the internal online ordering tool to facilitate the ordering of such supplies from the warehouse by client entities.

(c) The de-densification exercise to reduce the occupancy levels at the Palais des Nations and ensure compliance with the established physical distancing requirements made UNOG realize that space information such as layouts and level of occupancy need to be constantly monitored and verified at least once a year.

(d) Operating hybrid conferences requires significantly more human resources than operating on-site meetings. A regular on-site meeting would normally require two sound operators and, if special functionalities are required, an audio-visual technician as well. In addition to these requirements, hybrid meetings with remote simultaneous interpretation would need additional time to coordinate and plan with the client, some time to test connections before the meetings, and two more moderators during the meetings. The Division of Administration and the Controller were in discussion for a possible cost recovery mechanism from clients.

(e) The Facilities Management Section noted that it will need to implement service contracts for sanitization and for decontamination of spaces.

23. While UNOG had done well to identify and document these lessons, there was a need for an action plan to apply some of the lessons learned, with a view to further strengthen its resilience.

(1) UNOG should prepare an action plan for applying the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance its resilience.

UNOG accepted recommendation 1 and stated that it will identify lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic starting 3 May 2022 when most measures will be lifted and UNOG transitions to the 'next normal'.

B. Business continuity

Core activities continued during the pandemic

24. According to the United Nations Secretariat Guidelines for Business Continuity, every United Nations secretariat organization is required to have a business continuity plan. The aim of the plan is to enable delivery of core services during or following a period of disruption. UNOG had a business continuity plan that was outlined in its Crisis Management Team playbook. In early February 2020, UNOG carried out a simulation exercise that utilized a pandemic crisis scenario to ensure that its Crisis Management Team was ready to respond accordingly.

25. Since the COVID-19 pandemic broke out in March 2020, UNOG experienced disruptions in many areas. Conferences could not be held between March and June 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions put in place by the host government, and only a limited number of hybrid conferences could be supported thereafter. There were delays in construction and maintenance activities, including those under the

Strategic Heritage Plan (a major renovation project) due to the strict COVID-19 health and safety regulations. Non-emergency updates and upgrades to existing information technology systems also had to be postponed for a few months.

26. UNOG was however able to continue providing administrative and information technology support services and the client support centre continued to provide support to staff remotely. Conference documentation also transitioned effectively to remote processing with output in 2020 and 2021 comparable with pre-COVID years. On conference servicing, efforts were made to manage the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 restrictions. The Division of Conference Management (DCM) supported clients with planning and rescheduling of calendar meetings and kept a table which tracked all cancelled and postponed meetings and events. DCM collaborated with the Division of Administration to ensure that some conference rooms were upgraded to support virtual and hybrid conferences. Table 1 is an overview of the meetings DCM supported during the pandemic and two years prior to the pandemic. The number of virtual and hybrid meetings supported shows the progress made in equipping conference rooms with the technology needed for remote participation.

Table 1: Meetings supported by DCM

Number of meetings	2018	2019	2020	2021
In person	12,073	12,371	2,915	2,382
Virtual	0	0	466	436
Hybrid	0	0	893	2,480
Total	12,073	12,371	4,274	5,298
With interpretation	3,139	3,216	983	2,172

27. With regard to the virtual and hybrid meetings, the 2021 OIOS audit of support provided to the human rights treaty body system (A/76/197*) noted that there were lingering challenges including, among others: (a) the need for platforms to be tailored to meet the special needs of people with disabilities; (b) poor communication systems; and (c) insufficient interpretation services. DCM had engaged the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on these issues, and efforts to resolve them were ongoing. In addition, DCM embarked on a project called Conferencing Today and Tomorrow to understand the changing needs and realities of clients related to COVID-19, and to help prepare conference provision at UNOG for a prolonged COVID-19 reality and a potential post-COVID world.

Need for a clearly documented plan for hosting conferences with interpretation in six languages

28. Prior to the onset of the pandemic, Member States had not mandated the secretariat to facilitate virtual or hybrid conferences. As such, to enable business continuity under COVID-19 conditions, UNOG needed to technically upgrade conference rooms to enable hosting of virtual or hybrid conferences. As of January 2022, UNOG had prepared 13 such conference rooms, including the three additional rooms in the Tempus (temporary conference building) which became operational in September 2020.

29. The E building of the Palais des Nations, which has four large conference rooms and seven smaller rooms was due to be closed for renovation, from October 2022 through to the end of 2024 as per the current Strategic Heritage Plan project timelines. With the closure of the building, UNOG's conference rooms that can accommodate simultaneous interpretation in six languages would be reduced by half, if the COVID-19 related physical distancing requirements (one interpreter per booth) continue. While newly renovated rooms in the historic part of the Palais des Nations are scheduled to be brought back into use progressively from February to September 2022, this would not be sufficient to offset the deficit that would be caused by the closure of the E Building, should the COVID-19 physical distancing measures remain in place.

30. Consequently, it would be necessary for UNOG to plan to equip at least another conference room to be able to accommodate calendar meetings needing simultaneous interpretation in six languages. Maintaining adequate capacity to support conferences is essential, given that it is a core part of UNOG's mandate. This would help to prevent the possibility of UNOG's clients exploring other options outside UNOG which may be inefficient to the United Nations secretariat as a whole in the long run. For example, when UNOG reduced the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's meeting servicing entitlement to one-third of its annual quota of meetings, the latter started considering a review of current arrangements with UNOG with a view to exploring alternative solutions with other service providers.

(2) UNOG should establish a documented plan to optimize its capacity for hosting conferences requiring interpretation in six languages as it implements the Strategic Heritage Plan project during the ongoing pandemic.

UNOG accepted recommendation 2 and stated that it considers it as implemented. Through the Strategic Heritage Plan, UNOG has a plan to ensure the capacity for hosting conferences is optimized. UNOG has also created a multistakeholder working group that meets regularly to plan, among other things, the space design and management of conference facilities.

C. Workplace arrangements and staff well-being

UNOG ensured staff had medical and psycho-social support

31. During the pandemic, the Medical Services Section provided support to personnel based in Geneva, and medical evacuation support to staff in the field. In addition, the Section provided guidance on workplace arrangements, and the nurses provided one-on-one support to staff who contracted COVID-19. The Medical Coordination Unit coordinated and provided non-medical support to COVID-19 patients who had been medically evacuated to locations that were not dedicated medical evacuation hubs.

32. With regard to psycho-social support, prior to the pandemic in 2019, the UNOG Staff Counsellor's Office had been strengthened by adding a new P-4 position to the existing staff counsellor post at the P-3 level. This improved the Office's preparedness to handle the increased workload associated with the pandemic. The pandemic response built on efforts that were ongoing prior to the pandemic that were aimed at shifting focus from individual psycho-social assessment to more preventive measures such as targeted interventions with teams, meditation sessions and resilience sessions.

33. The Staff Counsellor's Office provided a wide range of assistance on different mental health topics to help staff cope with stress and strains both at work and at home during the various phases of the pandemic. Self-help/care resources were disseminated widely through articles on the intranet (15 articles in 2020 and 10 in 2021) and in the "UN Today" magazine (one article in 2020 and another in 2021). In 2020 and 2021, the Staff Counsellor's Office held 2,275 and 1,940 individual psycho-social sessions, respectively. By comparison, there were 870 sessions in 2019.

UNOG implemented its communication strategy in an effective manner

34. UNOG established various mechanisms for communicating to staff and managers on COVID-19 related issues including regular broadcasts; managers' briefing sessions; and townhalls. In addition, UNOG had a dedicated page on the intranet which was a comprehensive repository for guidance, updates, and information on COVID-19 related issues.

35. OIOS' review showed that the various communications addressed important elements related to the COVID-19 pandemic including, among others: (a) links to important messages from the World Health Organization such as links to the myth busters page and to information on vaccines; (b) guidance on how and where to seek medical attention when needed; (c) importance of vaccination and where to get vaccinated (19 broadcasts); (d) guidance on use and disposal of medical and cloth masks (eight broadcasts); (e) UNOG's back to office plans and de-densification strategy; (f) situation reports and updates on measures by the host country, neighboring France and the cantons of Geneva and Vaud; (g) regular reminders to staff to record telecommuting in Umoja and vaccination status in the Earthmed portal; and (h) guidance on telecommuting and flexible working arrangements (16 broadcasts).

36. In addition, DCM sent multiple communications to the client focal points updating them on the guidance and policies in place including updated versions of UNOG COVID-19 Meeting Guidelines for Organizers; information on suspension of meetings; and issues related to meeting platforms and interpretation services.

37. The survey results showed that staff were generally satisfied with internal communication. In the 2020 end-user survey, 92 per cent of the respondents rated internal communication positively (good or very good) while in the 2021 client entity survey, 95 per cent of the respondents rated internal communications positively. The client entities that OIOS interviewed also expressed satisfaction with the level of communication.

38. Based on the above, OIOS concluded that UNOG's communication strategy during the pandemic was implemented in an effective manner.

A significant number of staff had not reported their vaccination status

39. All Geneva-based secretariat staff were required to confidentially report their vaccination status (whether vaccinated or not vaccinated) in the Earthmed portal by 15 November 2021. Despite UNOG's numerous requests to staff, by 31 December 2021, more than 40 per cent of the staff it administered were yet to report their vaccination status. UNOG was provided with statistics of the staff that had declared their vaccination status by 31 December 2021 and they showed that 43 per cent of those who had reported their status were fully vaccinated. UNOG was however not provided with details of the staff who had not reported their status and was therefore not able to follow up with individual staff. The Medical Services Section indicated that confidentiality rules do not permit it to release details of staff who had not reported their vaccination status. Arrangements were however made for the Medical Services Section to provide the vaccination status of staff in functions where vaccination is mandated. The authority to mandate COVID-19 vaccination for functions that do not allow sufficient management of exposure was granted by the Secretary-General to the UNOG Director-General and other heads of entities in December 2021.

Physical distancing measures were not consistently complied with

40. Among other things, the Medical Services Section recommended avoiding placing staff face-to-face in open spaces unless there was a partition of more than 180 cm high between them. Entities and managers at the Palais des Nations were provided with relevant guidance through stickers on each office door indicating maximum occupancy and also through broadcasts, managers' briefing sessions, and the back-to-office plan published on the intranet. UNOG guided the entities on physical distancing, de-densification, as well as on telecommuting and rotation options in case staff had to sit across from each other. However, during the mandatory return to the office between 20 October and 30 November 2021, some staff still shared offices and sat face-to-face without a 180 cm partition between them as required.

41. For the cafeteria, UNOG put in place several measures to ensure the safety of staff including, among others, requirements for physical distancing and a vaccination certificate requirement effective November 2021. OIOS' visit to the cafeteria showed that physical distancing requirements were not observed on the queues and seating at the table was often more than four people and did not observe the physical distancing established. This happened despite UNOG issuing instructions to staff on the need to observe physical distancing in the cafeteria.

42. To implement the vaccination requirement, UNOG established an arrangement whereby through scanning their badges, staff declared that they had a COVID-19 certificate. The Medical Services Section sampled five randomly selected staff from the badges scanned and checked whether they were vaccinated. In the four weeks up to 31 December 2021, out of 20 randomly selected scanned badges, 19 were found to have been vaccinated, while one was not vaccinated. This was a five per cent non-compliance rate which could be considered low but there was a risk of it increasing if staff perceive that there would be no consequences for non-compliance.

43. The importance of rigorous and diligent application of the prescribed protection measures by all members of staff was one of the lessons learned identified by UNOG offices as noted earlier in the report in the section dealing with lessons learned. The gaps noted above show that staff, managers and heads of the various offices and entities located at the Palais des Nations need to be regularly sensitized of their role in ensuring compliance with the established safety measures. As this can be covered in the lessons learned review addressed in recommendation 1, OIOS is not raising a specific recommendation on the issue.

D. Procurement and management of contracts affected by the pandemic

UNOG documented and approved exceptions for emergency procurement of COVID-19 related needs

44. To ensure staff's safe return to the workplace, UNOG procured materials such as masks, disinfectant solutions, dispensers, and sprays. Because of the emergency nature of the procurement, sourcing was limited to Switzerland and neighbouring France to ensure expedited delivery. There were also other exceptions necessitated by the need to expedite the procurement process such as using emails to issue the Invitation to Bid rather than the usual platform (In-Tend) and not disseminating clarifications to all bidders. However, all bidders had the opportunity to submit requests for clarification and UNOG responded to all bidders who did so. All exceptions were documented and were duly approved by officials with the right level of delegated authority. The procurement exercises were competitive with sufficient number of vendors invited to bid. For example, in one of the cases to procure masks, gloves, hand sanitizers and disinfection spray for nearly \$60,000, UNOG reached out to 42 potential vendors.

Contracts affected by the pandemic were reviewed and changes managed

45. Due to the impact of COVID-19, UNOG waived rental fees for five commercial entities, one staff-affiliated entity, media agencies and journalists. For example, one entity that supplies catering services is normally charged 5 per cent of its turnover and utility fees of CHF 8,000 (\$8,500) per month. Since most staff members worked from home from mid-March 2020, UNOG waived the royalty and utility fees for 2020 and 2021. Some of the entities were granted a 50 per cent waiver, based on the business realities of the pandemic period. Documentation reviewed showed that these waivers were granted after internal consultation within UNOG on receipt of waiver requests from clients and were appropriately approved. With regard to contracts with vendors, there were no significant contracts affected by the pandemic except for the construction contracts under the Strategic Heritage Plan which were addressed in the OIOS report on the audit of the Strategic Heritage Plan (Report No. 2021/076, dated 23 December 2021).

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

46. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the Management and staff of UNOG for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

(*Signed*) Eleanor T. Burns
Director, Internal Audit Division
Office of Internal Oversight Services

STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Audit of the response of the United Nations Office at Geneva to the COVID-19 pandemic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical ¹ / Important ²	C/ O ³	Actions needed to close recommendation	Implementation date ⁴
1	UNOG should prepare an action plan for applying the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance its resilience.	Important	O	Evidence that an action plan has been prepared to address the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.	30 September 2022
2	UNOG should establish a documented plan to optimize its capacity for hosting conferences requiring interpretation in six languages as it implements the Strategic Heritage Plan project during the ongoing pandemic.	Important	C	Action completed.	Implemented.

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

³ Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

⁴ Date provided by UNOG in response to recommendations.

APPENDIX I

Management Response

Office des Nations Unies à Genève  United Nations Office in Geneva

MEMORANDUM INTERIEUR

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: Eleanor T. Burns,
A: Director
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

DATE: 13 May 2022

REF. OIOS-2022-00572

FROM: Clemens M. Adams 
DE: Director
Division of Administration, UNOG

SUBJECT: Draft report on an audit of the response of the United Nations Office at Geneva to the
OBJET: Covid-19 pandemic (Assignment No. AE2021-310-03)

1. UNOG acknowledges receipt of the draft report on an audit of the response of the United Nations Office at Geneva to the Covid-19 pandemic (Assignment No. AE2021-310-03).
2. We take note of the overall comments and of the recommendations made to UNOG. We would also like to show our appreciation to the OIOS audit team for their thorough analysis and recognition of the significant work performed by UNOG in response to the pandemic and for acknowledging these efforts in the audit report.
3. As requested, please find attached Appendix I duly completed.

Cc: Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General
Ms. Kira Kruglikova, Director, Division of Conference Management
Ms. Nataliya Myronenko, Chief Human Resources Management Service
Ms. Sophie Veaudour, Chief Financial Resource Management Service
Ms. Victoria Browning, Chief Central Support Services
Mr. Sandro Dessi, Chief Information and Communication Technology Service
Ms. Céline Noel, Chief, Finance Section
Ms. Daniela Wuerz, Senior Coordination Officer for Covid
Mr. David Nyskohus, OIOS
Ms. Maya Fridman, OIOS

Management Response

Audit of the response of the United Nations Office at Geneva to the COVID-19 pandemic

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical¹/ Important²	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	UNOG should prepare an action plan for applying the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to enhance its resilience.	Important	Yes	COVID Response Team (Lead: Daniela Wuerz)	Q3 2022	UNOG will identify lessons learnt during the COVID-19 pandemic starting 3 May 2022 when most measures will be lifted and UNOG transitions to the ‘Next Normal’.
2	UNOG should establish a documented plan to optimize its capacity for hosting conferences requiring interpretation in six languages as it implements the Strategic Heritage Plan project during the ongoing pandemic.	Important	Yes	UNOG Conferencing Coordination Meeting (Lead: Chief ICTS, Sandro Dessi)	Not applicable	UNOG considers this recommendation as implemented as evidenced by the supporting documentation provided to OIOS on 5 April 2022.

¹ Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

² Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.