



Industrial Development Board

Forty-sixth session

Vienna, 26–28 November 2018

Item 17 of the provisional agenda

Date and place of the eighteenth session of the General Conference

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Report by the Director General

The present document provides information on the consultations undertaken by the Director General in relation to the interest expressed by the Government of the United Arab Emirates in hosting the eighteenth session of the General Conference in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, in 2019, in compliance with decision GC.17/Dec.21. The report also includes information on the financial implications, as well as all aspects covered during a preparatory mission to Abu Dhabi, such as conference facilities, security, local infrastructure, and financial arrangements.

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I. Introduction

1. At its seventeenth session, the General Conference adopted decision GC.17/Dec.21 on the date and place of its eighteenth session and requested the Director General to undertake the necessary consultations with any Member States expressing interest to host the forthcoming session of the Conference, with particular regard to rule 8 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference. The Conference furthermore delegated to the Industrial Development Board, in accordance with Article 8 (2) (b) and Article 8 (4) of the Constitution of UNIDO, the authority to consider and determine at its forty-sixth session the venue and date of the eighteenth session of the General Conference.

2. In April 2018, the Director General met H.E. Mr. Suhail Mohamed Al Mazrouei, Minister of Energy and Industry of the United Arab Emirates, at the Hannover Messe in Germany. During this meeting, the Minister proposed to host the eighteenth session of the General Conference in Abu Dhabi. In a letter dated 7 June 2018, the Minister reiterated this proposal. Subsequently a meeting took place between the representatives of the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates and the UNIDO Secretariat in Vienna. On 21 September 2018, a note verbale was received from the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates, nominating the contact point in the United Arab Emirates for matters related to hosting the General Conference. On 25 September 2018, a bilateral meeting between the contact point and the UNIDO Secretariat took place in New York, United States of America, in the margin of UNIDO's participation to the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly.

3. The Secretariat provided the Permanent Mission with a tentative cost estimate and a requirements paper for transmission to the authorities in Abu Dhabi. It was underlined that the basis for determining the financial arrangements for holding a session away from Vienna was rule 8 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, which states that "the actual costs directly or indirectly involved in holding a session away from the seat of the Organization shall be borne by the host Government." It was also explained that a host country agreement would need to be concluded, setting out the financial obligations of the Government, as well as its contributions in kind, such as conference and other facilities, office space, transportation, police protection, and local staff.

4. The Government of the United Arab Emirates notified the Secretariat of the nomination of Mr. Badr Al-Olama, Director of Aerospace at the Mubadala Investment Company, as the focal point of the Government for the preparations of the General Conference. Following an invitation of the Government of the United Arab Emirates, a preparatory mission by a delegation, composed of UNIDO staff and representatives of UNOV Conference Management Service and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), was undertaken to Abu Dhabi from 9 to 11 October 2018. Mr. Al-Olama and his team organized a comprehensive programme, which covered various aspects including conference facilities, security, transportation, visa requirements, protocol arrangements, and hotel facilities.

5. The UNIDO/UNOV/UNDSS delegation was accompanied throughout by Ms. Sabiha Majid Belyouha AlMheiri, Director of Planning and Management in the Events and Conferences Office of the Ministry of Energy and Industry. All counterparts assured the delegation of their interest, full commitment and strong support for hosting the General Conference in Abu Dhabi. The Government representatives underlined that holding the General Conference away from Vienna Headquarters would allow the Government of the United Arab Emirates to further build on the cooperation with UNIDO, already initiated through the co-chairing of the Global Manufacturing and Industrialization Summit. It would also provide an opportunity to share with all Member States the experience of the United Arab Emirates in building and diversifying its economy.

6. Since UNIDO became a specialized agency in 1985, the General Conference has been held away from Vienna three times. The second session took place in Bangkok, Thailand (1987), the fifth session in Yaoundé, Cameroon (1993) and the fifteenth session in Lima, Peru (2013).

II. Conference facilities

7. During the preparatory mission, the UNIDO/UNOV/UNDSS delegation was offered several potential venues for the Conference and visited the St. Regis Saadiyat Island, the Emirates Palace and the Ritz Carlton Grand Canal. The host country representatives confirmed their readiness to provide a suitable location with the required infrastructure for holding the General Conference. General requirements for facilities, services and equipment were discussed jointly with the Government of the United Arab Emirates and the respective hotel management teams.

8. The UNIDO/UNOV/UNDSS delegation assessed the venues from the point of view of accommodating the official meetings of the General Conference, side events and regional group meetings, as well as other activities that were previously held in the context of the General Conference, such as exhibits and networking areas. They should have the capacity for installing the IT infrastructure required for conferences of such magnitude, inter alia for simultaneous interpretation. Sufficient office space should be available for the elected officers and Secretariat staff with direct support functions. The host Government will need to secure acceptable room rates for core support staff, who will have to be relocated from Vienna for the Conference. The UNIDO/UNOV/UNDSS delegation was also informed by the host country authorities that arrangements would be made for delegates to stay in hotels of different price categories in close proximity to the venue (paragraph 16 refers).

9. As a follow-up to this first mission, a delegation from the United Arab Emirates visited Vienna on 17 and 18 October 2018 for further discussions with UNIDO, UNOV and the United Nations Security and Safety Services in Vienna regarding the requirements, such as meeting rooms, staff-related travel and accommodation.

10. In terms of infrastructure for delegates, all three venues offer 24-hour business centre services and wireless Internet access in all event rooms, public areas and guest rooms.

III. Security

11. As regards the question of safety and security, it is to be noted that the current security level for Abu Dhabi is designated by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security at minimal (Level 1) according to the Security Level System methodology.

12. The United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) has the mandate to enable the effective and efficient conduct of United Nations activities while ensuring the security, safety and well-being of staff, delegates and visitors to the conference. The enforcement of this mandate places UNDSS under the responsibility of ensuring the coordinated action of United Nations security entities and officials with the relevant host country authorities. The provision of security services for the General Conference would be a combined effort by UNDSS and the host country. UNDSS and the Government authorities will draft a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that sets out the responsibilities and cooperation between the two parties before, during and after the event. The MoU will facilitate the preparation and execution of an event-specific operational security plan.

13. The UNIDO/UNOV/UNDSS delegation noted that the proposed conference sites appeared capable of providing a sufficient level of safety and security for the Conference within the confines of its premises. The delegation had various meetings regarding the issue of security at the General Conference. Assurances were given that

the host country authorities would provide all necessary security and safety services for the Conference. It was noted that the host country authorities are experienced in providing security for similar large-scale events.

IV. Local infrastructure

14. There is an international airport in Abu Dhabi, which is roughly 35 km from the city centre. The second closest international airport is in Dubai, which is roughly 160 km from Abu Dhabi city centre. There are several connections with international commercial airlines servicing Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Arrangements will be made for a shuttle service to be available from both Dubai and Abu Dhabi airport to the conference venue and the identified venue. The Government of the United Arab Emirates assured the Secretariat that access to Abu Dhabi by representatives of all Member States of UNIDO will be facilitated in terms of entry requirements at any of the ports of entry into the United Arab Emirates.

15. The Government of the United Arab Emirates expressed its willingness to negotiate with the final agreed venue and other hotels in the area, to secure room rates at the level of United Nations rates, which should be significantly lower than the normal room rates.

V. Financial arrangements

16. In accordance with rule 8 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference, the actual additional costs directly or indirectly involved in holding a session away from Headquarters shall be borne by the host Government. During the UNIDO/UNOV/UNDSS mission, the financial implications of holding the Conference in Abu Dhabi were explained to the representatives of the Government. This was further discussed during the follow-up mission by the delegation from the United Arab Emirates on 17 and 18 October. Reference was made to the preliminary cost estimate and requirements paper which had already been transmitted to the authorities in Abu Dhabi via its Permanent Mission in Vienna. The requirements specified cover, inter alia, such facilities as conference rooms; offices for the officers of the Conference, the substantive Secretariat and conference services; and other facilities, including facilities and equipment for six-language interpretation, service areas, local transportation, a documents reproduction centre, local short-term support staff, and equipment, including personal computers, printers, telephones, and photocopiers.

17. UNIDO, UNOV and UNSSS in Vienna were informed by the delegation from the United Arab Emirates on 17 and 18 October that they would continue to explore further possibilities for in-kind contributions rather than cash payments, especially with regard to staff-related travel and accommodation requirements, as well as shipments from Vienna to Abu Dhabi. It should furthermore be noted that the sum representing the total estimated costs of holding the Conference in Abu Dhabi would need to be deposited in euros with UNIDO no later than 1 May 2019. In addition, the cost of two additional preparatory missions to be undertaken by the Secretariat during the first and second half of 2019 would need to be advanced no later than one month before the mission takes place. Should other expenses be required prior to the session, the requisite funds would also need to be advanced no later than one month before.

VI. Conference agreement

18. Should the Board decide to hold the eighteenth session of the General Conference in Abu Dhabi, rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference requires the Director General to conclude a Conference agreement with the United Arab Emirates, specifying the arrangements to be made and the obligations to be undertaken by the host State and the Secretariat in connection with the session.

VII. Date of the session

19. During its interaction with the representatives of the Government of the United Arab Emirates, the Secretariat was requested to explore the possibility of scheduling the eighteenth session of the General Conference from 3 to 7 November 2019. This was found to be possible.

VIII. Action required of the Board

20. The Board is invited to take note of the information contained in the present document; to decide on the date and place of the eighteenth session of the General Conference; and, should it decide to hold the session in Abu Dhabi from 3 to 7 November 2019, to request the Director General to finalize the identification of the venue and negotiate and conclude an appropriate Conference agreement with the Government of the United Arab Emirates.
