

GENERAL
ASSEMBLYDistr.
GENERALA/2262
20 November 1952

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Seventh session
Agenda item 42

BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1953

Proposed exchange of properties between the United Nations
and the Government of the Canton of Geneva

(Section 20 - United Nations Office at Geneva)

Fourteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and
Budgetary Questions to the seventh session of the General Assembly

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered a memorandum by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/510) concerning the proposed exchange of two properties adjoining the Palais des Nations. The properties in question are "Le Chêne", at present owned by the United Nations, and "Le Bocage", which the Cantonal Government has recently purchased from a private owner.
2. Protection of the amenities of the Palais is a matter of considerable importance to Member States. With this purpose in view, representatives of the Secretary-General recently entered into negotiations with the Cantonal authorities, who have now formally agreed that, subject to the approval of the General Assembly of the United Nations, ownership of the two properties should be exchanged without other consideration.
3. The proposed scheme is set out in paragraphs 2 to 5 of the Secretary-General's memorandum. It would afford a safeguard against the commercial development of any part of the properties surrounding the Palais des Nations. Such a contingency would obviously impair the amenities of the Palais and cause a serious depreciation of property values. Except where "Le Bocage" is concerned, the interest of the United Nations in this respect is already fully protected. The belt of properties immediately surrounding the Palais and its grounds is unbroken except for one strip of land which comprises, in almost the whole of its area, the latter property. Commercial development on this belt is precluded.

4. The Advisory Committee has also examined the financial implications of such an exchange, and it notes that the two properties are considered to be of substantially the same value (A/C.5/510, paragraph 5 (b)). "Le Bocage" has an area of some 55,000 square metres (500,000 square feet), while that of "Le Chêne" is only 38,235 square metres (350,000 square feet). But the latter has the larger and better house (A/C.5/510, paragraph 5 (a)). "Le Bocage" was recently offered for sale either to the United Nations or to the Canton at the figure of 550,000 Swiss francs (\$128,500). Market valuation of "Le Chêne" stood in 1947 at 562,000 Swiss francs (\$131,300) excluding a strip of land not proposed for exchange (paragraph 5 (b)).
5. "Le Chêne", which is at present leased to the International Labour Organisation will be occupied as from December 1952 by ICITO - GATT, on the agreed terms for reimbursement of inter-agency facilities at Geneva. It is the understanding of the Advisory Committee that these terms would not be varied on change of ownership.
6. As regards "Le Bocage", the Committee was informed that the seventeen-room house standing in the property is suitable for conversion into office accommodation and that approximately twenty offices, together with two medium-sized conference rooms, could be provided.
7. Tentative enquiries for the renting of "Le Bocage" are reported by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/510, paragraph 6). The Committee therefore trusts that the possibility of establishing the permanent headquarters of the World Meteorological Organization within that property will not be overlooked. As compared with the project of housing WMO on the Place des Nations, such an arrangement would, in the opinion of the Committee, produce economy and a better co-ordination of administrative services.
8. On the information submitted, it appears that the necessary protection of the amenities of the Palais des Nations can be secured under the scheme without financial outlay. The Advisory Committee assumes that the conclusions set forth in the Secretary-General's memorandum have been corroborated by local technical experts, and on this basis it offers no objection to the proposed exchange of properties.