

# WIPO



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**WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION**  
GENEVA

## **WIPO GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Twenty-First Session (13th Ordinary)**  
**Geneva, September 22 to October 1, 1997**

### PREMISES

#### *Memorandum of the Director General*

1. It is recalled that the planning for new premises for the International Bureau has been discussed by the Governing Bodies since 1989, at which time the staff of the International Bureau were entirely located in the WIPO and BIRPI I Buildings. With the growth of the number of staff, new premises have had to be acquired, and the staff are now dispersed in six buildings: the WIPO-BIRPI I-BIRPI II Buildings complex, the nearby Procter & Gamble Annex and UC/UNHCR Building, and the CAM Building located about 1.5 kilometers away.
2. It would obviously be advantageous to have the staff regrouped to be working in adjoining premises, and the Director General has repeatedly expressed the view during the last eight years that the best way to achieve that, and to provide for the additional premises needed to accommodate present and future needs, would be to construct a new building on the "Steiner lot," located directly across the street from the entrance of the WIPO Building. Indeed, that view was shared by the Governing Bodies which adopted resolutions in September 1993 to "request and urge the authorities of the Swiss Confederation, the Canton and Republic of Geneva and the City of Geneva to make it possible for WIPO to construct a new building on the Steiner lot" and to "request and urge the Director General of WIPO to petition and negotiate with the said authorities for the said purpose."

3. The Swiss authorities not only agreed that WIPO build on the “Steiner lot” but the federal authorities promised an interest-free loan for half (estimated at 48 million francs) of the building costs.
4. The International Bureau made an updated assessment last year of its needs for additional working places and conference facilities. At their May 1996 session, the Budget and Premises Committees (hereinafter referred to as “the two Committees”) recommended that an independent expert be engaged to give his opinion on that assessment. The independent expert essentially confirmed the International Bureau’s assessment.
5. At their September 1996 session, the two Committees noted with appreciation and approval the findings in the independent expert’s report. However, since there was a difference of opinion among the members of the two Committees, the two Committees recommended that the International Bureau organize and carry out the first stage of an international architectural competition for constructing a building on the “Steiner lot” and, at the same time, that an independent consultant be appointed to identify, evaluate and report on rental, purchase and construction options available in Geneva to WIPO for meeting its premises and conference facility needs.
6. The report of the independent consultant was presented to the April 1997 session of the two Committees. That report examined and rated a number of options available in Geneva and concluded that rental would cost considerably more than construction or purchase of a building, and that the costs associated with having staff located a distance from the WIPO Building meant that a building on the “Steiner lot” would have a cost advantage of 14,575,000 Swiss francs as compared to all the other building solutions considered. Although the independent consultant considered that, in comparison with the other projects it analyzed and rated, the project proposed by the Steiner firm had a relatively high construction cost and a relatively high ratio of gross to net floor space, its final conclusion was “that the advantages associated with building on the Steiner lot are incontestable, as much from the organizational and functional point of view as from the financial point of view, even if, for the time being, the project envisaged has not been proposed at a sufficiently competitive price.”
7. In their April 1997 session, the Budget and Premises Committees declared, for the reasons given in their conclusion (which appears in the Annex), that they were “unable to reach a consensus on whether or not to continue the international architectural competition for constructing a building on the “Steiner lot” and therefore refer[s] the matter back to the General Assembly for a decision, at its meeting in September–October 1997, as to the future procedure.”
8. The Director General observes that the continuation of the international architectural competition would be intended to determine the best possible project for a building on the “Steiner lot,” including the best use of space, and that numerous control mechanisms (including close supervision by the Swiss authorities) have been developed in order to ensure that the cost of the construction would be as low as possible. (It is again recalled that financing is available, including an interest-free loan offered by the Government of Switzerland to cover half of the construction cost, with the land being offered by the Geneva authorities free of charge.)
9. Hearing about the conclusion of the Budget and Premises Committees, the firm Karl Steiner SA, owner of the “Steiner lot,” wrote to the International Bureau on July 4, 1997, that

“in view of the postponement, for several years, of a decision by the WIPO organs, it is difficult for the Steiner Group to keep this lot without doing anything. Consequently, we inform you that we are applying for a building permit for an office building as foreseen in the District Zoning Plan (*plan localisé de quartier*). It goes without saying ... that the use of these offices would be reserved for you in priority.”

10. Were the international architectural competition now to continue, it would probably still be possible for WIPO to have the building that will be constructed built to WIPO's specifications to meet WIPO's needs.

11. Among several possibilities, one seen by the Director General would be to leave the question in suspense until the new Director General makes proposals. Another possibility would be to decide now that the international architectural competition take place and all other decisions should await the proposals of the new Director General.

12. The Director General realizes that, as recommended by the Budget Committee in respect of the program and budget for 1998-99—that is, that it will make a decision on the basis of the proposals of the new Director General—the Governing Bodies may prefer not to make decisions now and wait for the proposals (if he wishes to make any) of the new Director General.

*13. The General Assembly is invited to make a decision.*

[Annex follows]

ANNEX

The following conclusion was reached by the Budget and Premises Committees (paragraph 8 of document WO/BC/XVI/4 Rev.-WO/PC/VII/4 Rev.):

“The joint session of the Budget and Premises Committees (hereinafter referred to as “the two Committees”),

Notes with appreciation the report of the independent consultant, STG–Coopers & Lybrand Consulting SA,

Recognizing that there is a difference of opinion among the members of the two Committees as to how to proceed with regard to the premises requirements of WIPO and, *inter alia*, about the following matters:

- the impact that further computerization of the operations of the International Bureau and the establishment of an international network for the exchange of information between industrial property offices could have on the actual needs with regard to personnel and office space;
- the need to have more detailed information about the cost of a building that could be constructed on the “Steiner lot”;
- the urgency of the need to address the proposal of the International Bureau for the continuation of the international architectural competition for constructing a building on the “Steiner lot,” and
- the need to have further information on the possibility of enhancing office space available now, or expected to be available in the near future, to WIPO,

Notes that, after a lengthy discussion, the joint session was unable to reach a consensus on whether or not to continue the international architectural competition for constructing a building on the “Steiner lot” and therefore refers the matter back to the General Assembly for a decision, at its meeting in September–October 1997, as to the future procedure.”

[End of Annex and of document]