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**Executive Board
Third Regular Session**

Rome, 20 - 23 October 1997

INFORMATION NOTE

E

Distribution: GENERAL
WFP/EB.3/97/INF/5
9 October 1997
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE NEW WFP HEADQUARTERS

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1. The Government of Italy approved the selection of the Parco de' Medici building as the new headquarters of WFP on 19 May 1997. In its evaluation of the premises, the Italian Government's Ufficio Tecnico Erariale (UTE) made two key recommendations. Firstly, the rental was assessed at Lire 7.31 billion per annum. The owners of the premises had previously requested a rental of Lire 8.4 billion on the basis of a nine-year initial lease period. The Representation of Italy to WFP subsequently advised that the lease should not exceed five years, based on the assumption that common premises could be found within that time for all United Nations organizations based in Rome. Secondly, UTE recommended that the owners arrange and pay for all works required on the building to ensure that existing safety norms are met. In an earlier study conducted by WFP's engineering consultants, the cost of essential works required to do this was estimated at Lire 2.5 billion. They also recommended additional "desirable" works, such as the provision of a high-capacity stand-by generator and the installation of a computerized maintenance control system, which amounted to a further Lire two billion.
2. In view of the substantial difference in the position of the Italian Government and that of the owners of the building, arduous negotiations were held. Agreement was reached and the lease signed on 27 June 1997. WFP was able not only to obtain the owners' agreement to the terms and recommendations put forward by UTE, but also to carrying out the totality of both essential and desirable civil works, totalling Lire 4.5 billion. The final agreement stipulated a five-year lease period at Lire 7.31 billion per annum. Rental will commence on 10 January 1998, subject to the completion of all the civil works agreed by the owners.
3. The six weeks following the signature of the lease were spent allocating space to organizational units within WFP and designing specifications for tenders related to specific projects and renovation works. These included the design for the installation of the LAN network, conference equipment and facilities, furniture and partitioning in conformity with a modern workstation concept, an electronic security system, acoustically insulated ceilings, and renovations to accommodate medical, catering, commissary, postal and banking services. In setting up these facilities, minimum-cost options were adopted. This resulted in an open-plan configuration for the general offices using movable half-height partitions instead of constructing walls.
4. An earlier plan by WFP's consultant architects for major civil works to place all public services (bank, post office, commissary) on the ground floor was discarded in favour of spreading such services over two floors, thus limiting the amount of structural renovations required. In the auditorium, initial plans to maintain the floor space by creating a new mezzanine floor to accommodate interpretation booths gave way to ground level arrangements, sacrificing some present floor space. Similarly, furniture purchased in recent years will be allocated to personnel occupying closed offices and to meeting rooms. In this context, it must be noted that until 1994, WFP was provided by FAO with essentially used furniture, for which there were no charges. As a result, a major portion of the furniture inventory dates back well over a decade and several items have been regularly refurbished by utilizing damaged ones.
5. In mid-August, all major design specifications were completed and tenders were issued. Because of time constraints related to the need to mobilize plant and equipment, all civil works were tendered to Italian-based companies. Rome-based multinationals were invited



to bid for LAN installation, and furniture and partitioning were tendered to major European suppliers. The full estimated budget for the new premises totalling Lire 11.3 billion (equivalent to 6.5 million dollars) was submitted to the Italian Representation to WFP on 3 September 1997.

6. It should be recalled that WFP entered a lease agreement with the owners of the building for three towers only out of the four available, as it was felt that space provided by the three towers should be sufficient to meet WFP's needs. Cost estimates as reported in the preliminary budget refer to essential expenditures only (i.e., civil works directly related to adapting the building for WFP's forthcoming exigencies and new furniture adapted to open-plan workstations). Equipment and furniture from WFP's existing headquarters will be used when possible. In line with Article II, section 3 (a) and (b) of the Headquarters Agreement, it is the obligation of the Host Government to meet costs related to the move, including the purchase of furniture. Therefore, it is anticipated that most of the expenditures outlined above will be reimbursed by the Host Government.
7. At the time of this report, all works appear to be on schedule. The major contracts - LAN installation, civil works and procurement of furniture - have been or will be finalized in the coming days. Barring any unforeseen developments, the physical move to the new building will take place in mid-January 1998.

