



## **General Conference**

### **Twentieth session**

Vienna, 27 November–1 December 2023

Item 25 of the provisional agenda

### **Date and place of the twenty-first 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 Saudi Arabia in hosting the twenty-first session of the General Conference in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 2025, in line with rules 4 and 8 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference. The report also includes information on the financial implications, as well as all aspects covered during a preparatory mission to Riyadh, such as conference facilities, security, local infrastructure, and financial arrangements.

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## I. Introduction

1. In June 2022, the Director General met His Excellency Mr. Bandar Alkhorayef, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources of Saudi Arabia during his visit to UNIDO HQ in Vienna.
2. During this meeting, the Minister proposed to host the UNIDO General Conference in Saudi Arabia. This request was confirmed during the Director General visit to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in January 2023 at a meeting with the Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources. Following this confirmation, a meeting then took place between the Secretariat and a high-level delegation from Saudi Arabia on 18 May 2023 in Vienna to discuss the implications and procedure for hosting a General Conference. On 22 May 2023, The Director General met His Excellency Mr. Jasem Mohamed al-Budaiwi, the Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) who expressed the GCC Secretariat support for Saudi Arabia hosting the General Conference. In a letter dated 18 August 2023, His Excellency Mr. Bandar Alkhorayef, Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources of Saudi Arabia reiterated its proposal to host the General Conference. On 1 September 2023, a note verbale was received from the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia offering to host the twenty-first session of the General Conference of UNIDO.
3. The Secretariat provided the Permanent Mission with a sample cost estimate and an initial requirements paper for transmission to the authorities in Riyadh. 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 following a positive decision by the General Conference, 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 Saudi Arabia notified the Secretariat on 13 September 2023 of the nomination of Mr. Saif Alharthi, Project Manager at the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources, as the focal point of the Government for the preparations of the General Conference. Following an invitation from the Government of Saudi Arabia, 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 Riyadh from 16 to 19 September 2023. His Excellency Mr. Mohammed Alswailem, Deputy Minister for Industrial Services, Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources, and his team organized a comprehensive programme, which covered various aspects including conference facilities, security, transportation, visa requirements and hotel facilities.
5. The UNIDO/UNOV/UNDSS delegation was accompanied throughout by Mr. Alharthi of the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources. All counterparts assured the delegation of their interest, full commitment and strong support for hosting the General Conference in Riyadh. The Government representatives underlined that holding the General Conference away from Vienna Headquarters would allow the Government of Saudi Arabia to further build on the cooperation with UNIDO. It would also provide an opportunity to share with all Member States the experience of Saudi Arabia in building and diversifying its economy as a result of the country’s Vision 2023 and its inclusive and sustainable industrial development achievements and plans.
6. Since UNIDO became a specialized agency in 1985, the General Conference has been held away from Vienna four times. The second session took place in Bangkok (1987), the fifth session in Yaoundé (1993), the fifteenth session in Lima (2013) and the eighteenth session in Abu Dhabi (2019).

## II. Conference facilities

7. During the preparatory mission, the UNIDO/UNOV/UNDSS delegation visited the King Abdul Aziz International Conference Center, which had been identified by the host country as their preferred venue for the Conference. Following the on-site inspection and discussions with the management team of the venue, the UNIDO/UNOV/UNDSS confirmed that the location would be suitable for holding the General Conference, fulfilling the infrastructure requirements.

8. The UNIDO/UNOV/UNDSS delegation assessed the venue 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. It was found to have the capacity for installing the IT infrastructure required for conferences of such magnitude, including, inter alia, for simultaneous interpretation. Sufficient office space would be available for the elected officers and Secretariat staff with direct support functions. In terms of accommodation, 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 reasonable proximity to the venue (paragraph 16 refers).

## III. Security

9. As regards the question of safety and security, it is to be noted that the current security threat level for Riyadh is designated by UNDSS as LOW according to the Security Level System methodology.

10. 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. In line with what is agreed in the Host Country Agreement, UNDSS and the Government authorities will draft a memorandum of understanding (MoU) that sets out the security specific 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.

11. The UNIDO/UNOV/UNDSS delegation noted that the proposed conference site, with some basic modifications to support a completely closed and access-controlled area of operations, 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. Of note, the United Nations World Tourism Organization and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization both held successful events during this calendar year.

## IV. Local infrastructure

12. There is an international airport in Riyadh, which is roughly 40 km from the city centre. There are several connections with international commercial airlines servicing Riyadh. Arrangements will be made for a shuttle service to be available from the airport to the identified conference venue and a selection of hotels. The Government

of Saudi Arabia assured the Secretariat that access to Riyadh by representatives of all Member States of UNIDO will be facilitated in terms of entry requirements at any of the ports of entry into Saudi Arabia.

13. The Government of Saudi Arabia expressed its willingness to negotiate with 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**

14. 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 Riyadh were explained to the representatives of the Government. The requirements 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.

15. It should be noted that the sum representing the total estimated costs of holding the Conference in Saudi Arabia would need to be deposited in euros with UNIDO at least ten months before the start of Conference, to facilitate a timely start of preparation activities. In addition, the cost of any additional preparatory missions to be undertaken by the Secretariat in 2024 and 2025 would need to be advanced no later than one month before the relevant missions take 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**

16. Should the Conference decide to hold the twenty-first session of the General Conference in Riyadh, rule 54 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Conference requires the Director General to conclude a Conference agreement with Saudi Arabia, 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**

17. During its interaction with the representatives of the Government of Saudi Arabia, the Secretariat was requested to explore the possibility of scheduling the twenty-first session of the General Conference from Sunday, 23 November to Thursday, 27 November 2025. This was found to be possible.

## **VIII. Action required of the Conference**

18. The Conference is invited to take note of the information contained in the present document; to decide on the date and place of the twenty-first session of the General Conference; and, should it decide to hold the session in Riyadh from 23 to 27 November 2025, to request the Director General to finalize the identification of the venue and negotiate and conclude an appropriate Conference agreement with the Government of Saudi Arabia.