



Industrial Development Board

Fifty-second session

Vienna, 25–27 November 2024

Item 18 of the provisional agenda

Preparations for the twenty-first session of the General Conference

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Report by the Director General

The present report provides information on the current status of preparations for the twenty-first session of the General Conference, to be held in Riyadh from 23 to 27 November 2025.

I. Introduction

1. The General Conference of UNIDO is the principal policymaking organ of the Organization, consisting of representatives of all Member States (articles 7.1 and 8.1 of the Constitution). The main functions of the Conference are stipulated in article 8.3 of the Constitution. In particular, the Conference should determine the guiding principles and the policies of the Organization. Unless it decides otherwise, the Conference is to hold a regular session every two years, at the seat of the Organization (article 8.2). The last regular session (twentieth) of the Conference was held in Vienna from 27 November to 1 December 2023.

II. Background information

A. Date and place of the Conference

2. In line with decision GC.20/Dec.17, the General Conference decided to hold the twenty-first session of the General Conference in Riyadh from 23 to 27 November 2025.

3. The twenty-first session of the General Conference will take place as an in-person meeting at the King Abdulaziz International Conference Center. The use of virtual conferencing platforms featuring remote simultaneous interpretation was

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discontinued for all mandated calendar meetings since June 2024, and is not foreseen to be reinstated by the time the twenty-first session of the General Conference takes place.

B. Budgetary matters and financial arrangements by the Government of Saudi Arabia

4. The Organization's resources available for holding the twenty-first session of the Conference, as provided for in the programme and budgets of UNIDO, 2024–2025, total € 1,066,500. The budget of the Conference is based on the following assumptions:

(a) The session will last five working days providing for ten plenary meetings, as well as meetings of the main committee and regional groups;

(b) Interpretation for plenary and main committee meetings, and pre-session documentation will be provided in six languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish); and

(c) As per Board decision IDB.46/Dec.3 (e), written summary records will be replaced with digital records for the twenty-first session of the Conference.

5. In accordance with rule 8 of the rules of procedure of the General Conference of UNIDO, the actual additional costs directly or indirectly involved in holding a session away from headquarters shall be borne by the host Government. In conformity with decision GC.20/Dec.17, UNIDO and the Government will finalize a Host Country Agreement. The Host Country Agreement breaks down the estimated financial commitment required from the Government of Saudi Arabia, one part of which will be directly covered by Saudi Arabia, whereas the Government will transfer funds to UNIDO to cover the other part thereof. The costs to be covered directly by the Government will be determined in consultation between the Secretariat and its Saudi Arabian counterparts. The outcome of these consultations will also determine the amount to be transferred from the Government of Saudi Arabia to UNIDO.

C. Agenda

6. In accordance with Article 9.4 (g) of the Constitution, the Board prepares the provisional agenda for each session of the General Conference. Rule 13 of the rules of procedure of the Conference provides guidelines for the contents of the provisional agenda of the regular session of the Conference. Furthermore, in accordance with rule 12, the Board shall prepare that provisional agenda for each session of the Conference on the basis of a list of items proposed for inclusion, submitted to it by the Director General.

7. The list of items proposed for inclusion in the provisional agenda for the twenty-first session of the Conference will be issued leading up to the fifty-third session of the Industrial Development Board, which is tentatively scheduled to be held from 30 June to 2 July 2025 (document [PBC.40/1/Add.1](#)). Annotations and a provisional schedule of work will be elaborated following the conclusion of the fifty-third session of the Board.

D. Documentation

8. In accordance with rule 23 of the rules of procedure of the Conference, documents required for consideration of items on the provisional agenda will be distributed by the Director General in all languages of the Conference to all recipients of the agenda not later than forty-five days before the opening date of the session.

III. Update on the preparations for the Conference

9. As outlined in document GC.20/19 on the date and place of the twenty-first session of the General Conference, a first preparatory mission was undertaken by the UNIDO Secretariat, representatives of UNOV Conference Management Service and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security to Riyadh from 16 to 19 September 2023 to assess aspects such as conference facilities, security, local infrastructure, and financial arrangements, as well as to hold initial bilateral meetings with Saudi Arabian counterparts on the implications of hosting the General Conference.

10. Conforming with decision GC.20/Dec.17, the Secretariat has undertaken two additional preparatory missions to Riyadh, from 11 to 16 February 2024, and from 3 to 7 March 2024. During these preparatory missions, the Secretariat engaged in high-level discussions with representatives of the Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior on issues of relevance to the organization of the twenty-first session of the General Conference in Riyadh. Moreover, the missions served to assess the King Abdulaziz International Conference Center, identified by the host country as their preferred venue for the Conference, and to discuss related technical matters. Additional preparatory missions are foreseen for the fourth quarter of 2024 and in 2025 to complement these initial consultations.

11. The Secretariat is working with its counterparts in Saudi Arabia to develop the concept and narrative of the General Conference, aligned with UNIDO's priorities and thematic areas of work, Saudi Arabia's structural economic transformation and the wider 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, the Secretariat and its national counterparts are working on an extensive side-events programme for General Conference participants, which will also be aligned with the aforementioned concept and narrative.

12. To initiate a collaborative dialogue on key issues to be addressed in Riyadh in November 2025, as well as to raise awareness, stimulate discussions and involve the membership in the various components of the General Conference, the Secretariat will, jointly with the Government of Saudi Arabia, promote the General Conference through co-organized appearances and events. A first high-level event was organized on 23 September 2024, in parallel to the Summit of the Future and preceding the high-level segment of the seventy-ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly. A briefing is foreseen for the fourth quarter of 2024 to apprise Member States of the preparations for the General Conference. Similar activities will be explored leading up to November 2025 and Member States will be kept abreast of relevant developments.

IV. Action required of the Board

13. The Board may wish to take note of the information contained in the present document.