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Construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa and the United Nations Office at Nairobi*

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In section I of its resolution 63/263, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session on progress made in the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa and at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The present report provides updates on the current status of those two construction projects since the last updates provided in the previous reports of the Secretary-General (A/63/303 and A/62/794, respectively).

* The present report also provides a final update on the construction of additional conference facilities at the Vienna International Centre and on the improvement and modernization of the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, both of which projects are now completed.



Contents

	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	3
II. Progress in the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa	3
A. Host country addendum for duty-free and tax-free status	3
B. Site works to be executed according to the host country agreement	4
C. Procurement	4
D. Management review	5
E. Current status of the project	6
F. Car parking	7
G. Project schedule	7
H. Cost estimates	8
I. Conclusion	9
III. Progress in the construction of additional office facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi	9
A. Management review and strengthening of oversight and guidance	9
B. Construction progress	10
C. Project schedule	10
D. Cost estimates	11
IV. Actions to be taken by the General Assembly	12
Annexes	
I. Update on the completion of additional conference facilities at the Vienna International Centre	13
II. Update on the completion of improving and modernizing the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi	14
III. Revised cost plan for the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa	15
IV. Revised cost plan for the construction of additional office facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi	16

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in two parts. The first part provides an update on the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, and the second part provides an update on the construction of additional office facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

2. By its resolution 56/270, the General Assembly approved the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa at Addis Ababa. Subsequently, in section VII of its resolution 60/248, the Assembly endorsed the expansion of the scope of the project to include the construction of two additional floors. In section IX of its resolution 62/238, the Assembly took note of the 2007 report of the Secretary-General (A/62/487) and endorsed the related recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (see A/62/7/Add.11), for a total revised estimated project cost of \$14,333,100. In accordance with the request made by the Assembly in its resolutions 56/270 and 63/263 that progress reports be submitted annually, section II of the present report provides information on the progress made and issues encountered in the implementation of the project at the Commission since the most recent annual report (A/63/303).

3. By its resolution 63/263, the General Assembly approved the revised estimated cost of \$25,252,200 for the construction of additional office facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. In accordance with the request of the Assembly in its resolution 63/263 for a progress report to be submitted at the sixty-fourth session of the Assembly, section III of the present report provides information on the current status of the project, including the award of the construction contract within the approved cost and the start of construction in April 2009.

4. As regards the construction of additional conference facilities at the Vienna International Centre and the project to improve and modernize the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, both projects were successfully completed in early 2009. Two updates providing the status of each project are included as annex I and annex II to the present report.

II. Progress in the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa

A. Host country addendum for duty-free and tax-free status

5. In his previous report, the Secretary-General informed the General Assembly that the addendum to the host country agreement gave the Economic Commission for Africa rights to the duty-free and tax-free import of services and materials and other related privileges that would allow the efficient and cost-effective implementation of the project. In accordance with a directive issued by the host country in 2008, however, a 15 per cent value added tax (VAT) was to be levied, and subsequent reimbursement would be subject to the submission of applicable customs declarations, clearances and related local purchases. In the previous report, the Secretary-General informed the General Assembly that the Commission was negotiating with the host country authorities for a waiver of that requirement.

6. A series of negotiations was conducted between the Commission and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development of the host country. In November 2008, the host country issued a directive that enabled the Commission to purchase goods and services free of VAT by issuing vouchers printed for such purpose. In accordance with that directive, the waiver of VAT normally levied on purchases related to the construction of new office facilities would be executed through a voucher system. Thus, the issue was successfully resolved.

B. Site works to be executed according to the host country agreement

7. The Economic Commission for Africa continues to collaborate with local authorities on the construction of the alternate public access roads, including the removal of storm-water drains and relocation of service utilities. The Commission has communicated formally and has met with local authorities on these issues. The public road intersecting the Commission compound is closed, as is the whole extended compound. Alternate roads have been constructed, and nearly 40 per cent of gravel roads have been completed. The remaining alternate road works and relocation of storm-water drains are being completed as a matter of priority. Owing to major construction projects by private companies, embassies and non-governmental organizations on the land in the immediate vicinity of the Commission, the layout of alternate public roads is changing, but the outcome will not have an adverse effect on the additional office facilities construction project, as the site is accessible from two points, the north-east and north-west corners. The relocation of service utilities is finished, with the exception of a telephone line installation that has yet to commence.

8. The Commission issued a note verbale to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the host country in April 2009, conveying its appreciation for the support provided by the local authorities and stressing the importance of finalizing the remaining issues. Since that time, increased efforts have been made by the Commission. A response from the local authorities was received in July, which advised that the concerned authorities had been requested to take the appropriate measures. The Executive Secretary of the Commission met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the host country in early September. Renewed initiatives have been taken to finalize the issues.

C. Procurement

9. Following the delays experienced in this project, as indicated in the previous report of the Secretary-General, a construction tender was issued by the Procurement Division at Headquarters on 20 May 2008. A bidders' conference followed at the Economic Commission for Africa on 6 June 2008. Owing to requests from the bidders for an extension of the submission date, the period was extended by six weeks to 12 September 2008. The technical evaluation was concluded on 29 September 2008. The commercial evaluation followed, which revealed that all submitted bids were significantly over the available budget and not within scope of resolution by negotiation.

10. In order to avoid further lengthy delays, a flexible approach was adopted within the procurement rules. The qualified contractors were asked to submit

proposals for the facilities that they could build within the available budget, according to the overall design provided, by incorporating cost-reduction measures and value-engineering options acceptable to the United Nations. The revised construction tender was issued on 23 December 2008 to the participants in the original tender process. Again the vendors requested an extension of the submission date, and the original deadline was extended by two weeks to 6 February 2009. The technical evaluation commenced immediately following the receipt of proposals and concluded on 12 February. The commercial evaluation followed, resulting in the recommendation to award the construction contract to a selected vendor upon the completion of final negotiations.

11. Additionally, owing to the difficulties encountered in the coordination with the international architect, as outlined in the previous two reports of the Secretary-General, a local architect was contracted in July 2008 to oversee and supervise the day-to-day construction and administration of the project.

D. Management review

12. Parallel to the technical and commercial evaluation processes, a management review was undertaken by the Department of Management of the Secretariat in February 2009 in order to address the concerns expressed by the General Assembly during its sixty-third session, as reflected in resolution 63/263. The findings of this review, carried out by the Assistant Secretary-General of the Capital Master Plan and the Director of the Facilities and Commercial Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services of the Department of Management, observed that the Economic Commission for Africa was dedicated to the success of the additional office facilities but that it needed to strengthen the local project management team. Other recommendations from the management review included that the leadership of the project team be strengthened and that the local architect be made fully responsible for the building design. It was also recommended that the administrative and coordination arrangements between the Office of Central Support Services and the Commission be revised to establish clearer lines of responsibility and accountability through local delegation of authority for the construction phase of the project. Furthermore, it was recommended that the management structure include an independent technical adviser to provide an unbiased assessment of the construction works being performed.

13. Upon the completion of the management review in March 2009, a report of the Procurement Task Force was brought to the attention of the Secretariat. Based on the findings and recommendations contained in that report, the vendors involved in the construction tender for the additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa were suspended by the Vendor Review Committee. In accordance with the recommendation of that Committee, the tender for the additional office facilities was subsequently cancelled.

14. As a result of the findings contained in the report of the Procurement Task Force, the Headquarters Procurement Division conducted another management review at the Economic Commission for Africa in late March 2009 to determine the risks associated with the construction of additional office facilities. Several immediate actions were recommended, with the objective of rapidly advancing the construction project as a matter of priority. Those recommendations included

strengthening the project team, enhancing the procurement section resources within the Commission and confirming that the solicitation process for the construction of additional office facilities continued to be handled through the Procurement Division at Headquarters.

15. The recommendations of the Procurement Division were endorsed by the Office of Central Support Services and forwarded to the Economic Commission for Africa for implementation. In addition, the Office of Central Support Services recommended the revision of the administration and coordination arrangements entered into by the Office and the Commission in 2008 for the project, in order to establish clearer lines of responsibility and accountability and to realign the reporting of the local project so that it reported directly to the Director of the Division of Administration at the Commission. The revised administration and coordination arrangements also included appointing the local project team and local budget section, which would be jointly responsible for the financial management of the project during construction. The Executive Secretary of the Commission accepted the recommendations, and stressed the urgent need to restructure the management of the project and enhance the leadership of the local project team. The implementation of these recommendations is currently under way.

16. Accordingly, the Economic Commission for Africa project staff is currently reporting directly to the Director of the Division of Administration at the Commission. In addition, a senior-level project management position has been created. This position, responsible for day-to-day management of the project, is being filled on a priority basis. With guidance and assistance from the Office of Central Support Services, the Commission began recruitment in May 2009 for this position, and the selection of a candidate has been finalized. Further strengthening of the project team will include the recruitment of additional construction expertise, such as a professional-level planning and works engineer, two clerks of works (one for civil works and one for electrical/mechanical works) and a financial assistant. Additionally, an independent technical adviser, reporting to the Director of the Division of Administration, will be engaged to independently review and report on the quality and progress of the construction. Further, the Facilities Management Section at the Commission will provide support with an electrical engineer and a mechanical engineer at the Professional level.

E. Current status of the project

17. In parallel to the realignment and strengthening of the local project team, a new construction tender process was initiated immediately by the Procurement Division at Headquarters. To this end, a new expression of interest document was prepared in consultation with the Economic Commission for Africa and issued on 22 June 2009. In accordance with the updated project timetable, the selection of the vendors was completed in August. The new request for proposals was issued to the vendors on 4 September, and the bidders' conference was held on 24 September.

18. During this process, the existing tender documentation has been reviewed and updated. The local architect has been engaged to review the technical part of the tender documents (including drawings, standards and specifications) and to maintain all original criteria, such as accessibility for disabled persons. Further, the local architectural firm prepared a comprehensive "bill of quantities" in accordance with

local regional practices, which is included in the tender documents. The firm will also provide technical expertise during the tender review process to ensure that the construction contract remains within the approved budget.

19. Representatives from the Office of Central Support Services will continue to participate in the technical evaluation of the revised new tender for the construction, scheduled for November 2009. The local project team at the Economic Commission for Africa is, and will continue to be, accountable for the day-to-day management of the project. Further judicious and periodic construction reviews, as appropriate to the progress of the project, will be conducted by the Office throughout the construction phase in accordance with its coordination, guidance and assistance role to the project.

20. Now that the enhanced local project management team is being established and the new tender documents have been finalized and issued, the project is back on track to move rapidly towards construction.

F. Car parking

21. As outlined in the 2007 report of the Secretary-General and endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 62/238, supplemental parking and landscaping were to be incorporated into the designs for use of the land provided to the United Nations by the host country. Once the construction contract for the additional office facilities is finalized, the tender will commence for the design work, which would incorporate the approved supplemental parking and the associated landscaping.

22. In 2007, in accordance with the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, as indicated in its report A/62/7/Add.11, the Economic Commission for Africa reviewed the possibility of implementing a parking fee policy, to become effective in January 2008. The policy was being finalized when the process had to be halted owing to new security concerns that had come to light, which required the closure of the car-parking space located under the conference centre building in December 2008. This led to a reduction of 125 parking spaces. With that reduction, the Commission now has parking spaces for only 489 cars. The parking policy has become the subject of further negotiations with other United Nations organizations and their staff unions.

G. Project schedule

23. Two principal factors have contributed to the delay of this project. Firstly, because all the bids received in September 2008 were significantly higher than the approved budget, a revised tender process had to be pursued; tenders were resubmitted in February 2009, leading to a slippage in the project schedule of five months. Secondly, the cancellation of the procurement process in April 2009 following the findings of the Procurement Task Force meant that a new tender process had to be initiated, leading to a slippage in the project schedule of a further eight months.

24. The latest project timetable is provided in table 1, indicating a construction completion date in December 2011, followed by an interior set-up of up to six months, the cost of which will be funded by future occupants. Construction of the

internal road, parking and landscaping will commence upon completion of the building. The costs of these elements are included in the total cost estimate of the project.

Table 1
Revised project schedule for the additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa

Time line	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Activities						
Tender for General Contractor		01.2008	12.2008	06.2009	02.2010	
Executive Secretary sign-off of request for proposals on 4 Sept. 2009			09.2009			
Construction Phase		01.2009		11.2010		
Interior Set-up			02.2010		11.2010	05.2011
Occupancy					01.2012	06.2012
					05.2011	06.2012

□ Project schedule envisaged in the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/63/303)

■ Current revised project schedule

H. Cost estimates

25. The total cost estimate for this project remains at \$14,333,100, as requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 63/263.

26. The approved cost estimates are based on the original submission in 2001, which was adjusted for inflation and currency fluctuations in 2005 (see A/60/532). During the ensuing four years, substantial currency fluctuations have occurred and affected the purchasing power of the approved funds. Additionally, the host country has been experiencing a high level of inflation, which affects local labour costs and materials such as aggregates and temporary facilities.

27. Nevertheless, the Commission is dedicated to completing the project within the approved funding level. Measures being taken include the strong management support and expertise to be received from the administration structure at the Commission, which would reduce the requirements for project management services that would otherwise need to be charged to the cost of the project. In addition, the Procurement Division at Headquarters, in coordination with the Commission, would conduct final procurement negotiations with the contractor before the awarding of the construction contract so as to minimize any adverse impact brought about by factors such as inflation and fluctuations in exchange rates. Furthermore, as a result of the cost-saving measures in place, contingency funding at the standard industry level has been retained to cover future cost overruns resulting from external factors.

28. The latest detailed cost estimate is provided in annex III.

I. Conclusion

29. As noted above, the need to cancel the original construction tender, in compliance with the recommendations and findings of the Procurement Task Force, and initiate a new construction tender process resulted in delays in the start of construction. Immediate action has been taken, however, to rectify the situation and start the new procurement process expeditiously. In addition, action has been taken to strengthen the local leadership and management capacity of the project. The local architect has also been engaged to assume legal responsibility for the project design and to provide guidance on the tender process so that bids will be consistent with the budget and local and/or regional construction practices. All of these measures will contribute to ensuring the successful implementation of the project within its revised time frame.

III. Progress in the construction of additional office facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

30. In resolution 63/263, the General Assembly approved an estimated total cost of \$25,252,200 for the construction of additional office facilities of 16,500 square metres of usable office space at the United Nations Office at Nairobi and approved the use of the accrued interest income and future interest income generated by accumulated rental income for the construction of the additional office facilities.

A. Management review and strengthening of oversight and guidance

31. In February 2009, a management review of the additional office facilities construction project at the United Nations Office at Nairobi was undertaken by the Assistant Secretary-General of the Capital Master Plan and the Director of the Facilities and Commercial Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services in order to address the concerns expressed by the General Assembly in resolution 63/263. The review concluded that the project was proceeding according to schedule and that a high level of professionalism existed within the facilities team at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. It also observed, however, that there had been a failure in the past to maintain appropriate communication between the additional office facilities project team and senior management at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. As a result of those observations, recommendations were made both to strengthen the local project management team and to form a senior-level management working group, composed of representatives from the United Nations Office at Nairobi, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, to provide independent technical advice to the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi with regard to the construction project. It was also recommended that the local project management resources include a “clerk of works” and other technical support reporting to the project manager and, furthermore, that an independent technical consultant be engaged who would report directly to the working group. Following this review, the revised project management structure and supervision mechanisms were agreed by the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the Office of Central Support Services at Headquarters.

32. The Office of Central Support Services continues to provide guidance, advice and direct support to the United Nations Office at Nairobi via weekly teleconference calls at the working level and monthly videoconference meetings at the senior-management level. The local project team at the United Nations Office at Nairobi is responsible for the management of the project. Representatives from the Office of Central Support Services also participated in the technical evaluation of the bids received for the construction held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi in February 2009. Further judicious and periodic construction reviews, as appropriate to the progress of the project, will be conducted throughout the project lifecycle by the Office of Central Support Services, in accordance with its coordination, guidance and assistance role.

B. Construction progress

33. The construction tender was issued in November 2008, and the vendor proposals were submitted on 30 January 2009. The evaluation was completed on 17 March 2009. A contract was signed on 3 April for a total contract sum of \$17,431,493. The effective date of the contract was 6 April 2009. Following four weeks of mobilization, construction commenced on 4 May as scheduled. According to the contract, the construction is scheduled to be substantially completed by 3 December 2010, a construction period of 19 months.

C. Project schedule

34. Table 2 shows both the original schedule envisioned in the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/62/794) and the current schedule, which was submitted as supplementary information to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly in October 2008. The tender was delayed until the end of 2008, pending final approval by the Assembly, in December 2008 of the above-mentioned report of the Secretary-General; however, an accelerated approach is envisioned for the construction phase, which will be reduced from 28 months to 19 months. This will allow the completion of the project by the end of 2010, in keeping with the original schedule. Agency interior office fit-outs are scheduled for the first half of 2011, with full occupancy of the new office facility expected from mid-2011. As at the end of August 2009, the construction was on schedule.

<i>Costs</i>	<i>April 2008</i>	<i>June 2009</i>
3.2 Consultant and supervision	1 423 000	1 423 000
4. Contingency — 10 per cent of building cost ^c	1 870 000	1 638 507
5. Security requirement	1 119 200	1 119 200
Total project cost estimate	25 252 200	25 252 200

^a Final construction cost based on approved and signed contract sum was \$17,431,493.

^b Access control and closed-circuit television cabling infrastructure are part of the construction contract.

^c In order to cover the total actual cost of the construction contract, the contingency funding had to be reduced by \$231,493, representing 12.4 per cent of the initial contingency provision of \$1,870,000.

IV. Actions to be taken by the General Assembly

36. **The General Assembly is requested to take note of the present progress report.**

Annex I

Update on the completion of additional conference facilities at the Vienna International Centre

1. The construction of new conference facilities at the Vienna International Centre (the M building) was completed in 2009. The building has entered into operation incrementally during the course of 2009. Several major conferences have taken place in the new facility, such as the high-level segment of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs and the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, along with many smaller meetings. Enhancements and refinements to the conference-servicing infrastructure of the new building have also been completed during the year.

2. With the M building becoming fully functional, most of the conferences and meetings of the Vienna-based organizations will take place in the M building for the next three years, while the original conference facility, the C building, will be vacated for asbestos removal. The removal process is scheduled to commence in October 2009 and be completed in 2012. During this process, the conference equipment will also be upgraded, since the original equipment was installed 30 years ago and spare parts for it are no longer available. In addition, procedures related to safety and environmental upgrading will be followed as in the M building. This process is funded by the host country.

3. After the completion of this process in 2012, the C building and the M building will both be jointly utilized and managed by the four Vienna-based organizations.

Annex II

Update on the completion of improving and modernizing the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

1. By its resolution 58/272, the General Assembly approved funding of \$3,479,000 for the project to improve and modernize the conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi in order to accommodate major meetings and conferences. In his previous report (A/62/794), the Secretary-General proposed a revision of the cost estimate to \$5,378,000 in order to cover additional technical requirements and address currency appreciation. Prior to the consideration of the report by the Assembly in September 2008, the Secretariat submitted a supplementary statement to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions informing it that, owing to pressing time constraints, to complete the modernization before the end of 2008 in advance of a number of major conferences that were already scheduled, the project would have to be implemented in a reduced scope but within the originally approved budget of \$3,479,000; thus the proposed cost revision would not be necessary. The General Assembly approved the proposal in resolution 63/263.

2. The project was successfully completed in January 2009, in accordance with the timetable schedule detailed in the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/794, table 1), in advance of the sessions of the Governing Councils of the United Nations Environment Programme in February 2009 and of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme in March/April 2009.

3. The implemented scope included a full upgrade of all required electrical infrastructure, the installation of new conference and interpretation equipment and the refurbishment of all conference room furniture. There was no significant impact from the reduction in scope, since the benefits of the project were predominantly to be derived from the installation of a fully upgraded, digital, state-of-the-art conference and interpretation system in all main conference rooms (rooms 1 to 8), which has been realized. The elements removed from the scope of the project included upgrades to the mechanical ventilation system, improvements to the acoustic ceiling and wall cladding, and repositionable interpretation booths in conference rooms 3 and 4 to support interpretation into six languages rather than the existing four-language interpretation. The removal of these elements does not have significant implications for the efficient operation of the conference facilities. The equipment and structures remain functional, and the United Nations Office at Nairobi already has six- and eight-language interpretation capacity in other conference facilities, including the two largest plenary rooms (rooms 1 and 2). In addition, the six semi-permanent meeting rooms located on the rooftop (rooms 9 to 14) have been equipped with mobile interpretation facilities, which allow multiple language interpretation in these rooms also.

Annex III

Revised cost plan for the construction of additional office facilities at the Economic Commission for Africa

(In United States dollars)

	Expenditure as at 30 June 2009	Projected expenditure			Total	
		July- December 2009	2010	2011		2012
Approved in resolution 56/270 and endorsed in resolution 60/248						
Construction costs	9 050	710 557	3 336 530	3 058 486	373 978	7 488 600
Design, consultancy services and project coordination	1 266 810	160 939	75 060	120 038	23 310	1 646 157
Site works	29 273	112 403	674 416	337 208	—	1 153 300
Workstations and furniture	—	—	—	262 800	—	262 800
Contingencies	—	—	166 489	332 977	332 977	832 443
Approved in the programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009						
Installation of information technology and telephone equipment	—	—	220 000	660 000	220 000	1 100 000
Endorsed in resolution 62/238						
Safety and security	—	—	396 417	363 383	—	759 800
Internal access roads	—	—	—	130 000	—	130 000
Parking and landscaping	—	16 500	379 500	264 000	—	660 000
Generators and generator house	—	7 500	202 500	90 000	—	300 000
Total	1 305 133	1 007 899	5 450 912	5 618 892	950 265	14 333 100

Annex IV

Revised cost plan for the construction of additional office facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

(In United States dollars)

	Expenditure as at 30 June 2009	Projected expenditure				Total
		July- December 2009	2010	2011	2012	
Income						
Balance brought forward	—	6 062 643	6 961 408	170 233	293 733	—
Rental income	11 871 471	2 900 000	3 300 000	4 600 000	6 009 000	28 680 471
Interest income	1 171 262	150 000	150 000	—	—	1 471 262
Total income	13 042 733	9 112 643	10 411 408	4 770 233	6 302 733	30 151 733
Disbursements						
Construction costs	5 122 430	719 063	8 310 500	3 844 500	935 000	18 931 493
Architects' fees						
Previous architect's fees	477 000	—	—	—	—	477 000
New architect's fees	600 000	300 000	450 000	150 000	—	1 500 000
Architects' fees subtotal	1 077 000	300 000	450 000	150 000	—	1 977 000
Project supervision and management						
UNON project management costs	583 335	256 916	435 000	14 000	—	1 289 251
OCSS project administration	34 325	—	—	—	—	34 325
UNON travel	—	13 000	19 000	—	—	32 000
OCSS travel	—	36 749	30 675	—	—	67 424
Supervision and project management subtotal	617 660	306 665	484 675	14 000	—	1 423 000
Other costs						
Borrowing costs	163 000	—	—	—	—	163 000
Contingencies	—	235 507	467 000	468 000	468 000	1 638 507
Additional security during construction	—	590 000	529 000	—	—	1 119 000
Other costs subtotal	163 000	825 507	996 000	468 000	468 000	2 920 507
Total Disbursements	6 980 090	2 151 235	10 241 175	4 476 500	1 403 000	25 252 000
Income less disbursements	6 062 643	6 961 408	170 233	293 733	4 899 733	4 899 733

Note:

UNON United Nations Office at Nairobi
 OCSS Office of Central Support Services.