

68th Session: Agenda item 134
Secretary-General's Report on Flexible Workplace
Introduction by Mr. Yukio Takasu
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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to introduce to you the Secretary-General's report on the Implementation of Flexible Workplace at the United Nations Headquarters. This report is submitted for your review pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/254. The General Assembly noted

more efficiently by implementing flexible working, for example through desk-sharing and other arrangements. Industry practices suggest that the resulting space savings from such measures could be up to 25%.

However, two significant factors need to be considered that are likely to impact the overall potential for space savings at UN Headquarters.

i) As regards the physical environment, flexible workplace needs to be implemented holistically through configuring a range of spaces better suited to flexible working. This would include designing a variety of meeting and common areas and spaces for collaborative working, and others for private focused working. It would take time and

ii) develop a business case for the implementation of flexible working at the United Nations.

As indicated in the report, the Secretary-General recognizes the importance of a comprehensive study needed to develop the business case for a holistic implementation of flexible working. To be comprehensive, the study should give sufficient time to observe space utilization at different periods of the year, engage with all departments and offices to fully capture their requirements, incorporate these into the flexible workplace solutions. We have to conduct some test and pilot environments for flexible working. Consequently the Secretary-General anticipates that this study, to be meaningful, will approximately take six to nine months to complete.

The Secretary-General invites the General Assembly to take note of the report and, in light of the need for a comprehensive study, to request the Secretary General to submit a further report to the main session of the 69th General Assembly containing a detailed business case for the implementation of flexible working at the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

Allow me to close with a few words on the timelines for further work to be undertaken by the Secretariat. Solid and thorough analysis is required for the business case on Flexible Workplace. Multiple dimensions need to be addressed, including the Human Resources policy framework, ICT requirements, and the set up of our facilities. We want to learn from Industry Best Practices and need to gather a reliable data set that reflects our current realities and explores future opportunities. None of this can be done in a rigid one size fits all approach: We need to engage Departments and offices to ascertain their specific operational needs and work styles, also taking into account fluctuating workloads at different times of the year.

In order to submit a business case report to the first resumed session to the General assembly through the ACABQ, we need to finalize the draft by the end of this year, which gives us too little time to conduct a comprehensive business case review. You will appreciate that with this scope of work before us, the Secretariat will not be in a position to produce a comprehensive business case in time for the first resumed session of the 68th General Assembly.

Equally, I hope you would appreciate it that it would be too early to expect a detailed assessment of the potential impact of Umoja and a Future Service Delivery Model in the context of the Flexible Workplace to be available to the next session. As Umoja deployment continues through next few years and a future service delivery model will emerge, we will keep the opportunities under review and will report them to the General Assembly for consideration whenever they are available.

I am personally committed to deliver in a timely manner but we need commensurate time to produce a sound assessment and implementation proposal.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, I thank you for your attention.