



**Opening remarks by Mr. Sergei A. Ordzhonikidze
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva
Inauguration of the *Genève-Lac-Nations* Project**

**Palais des Nations, *Passerelle*, 3rd floor
Wednesday, 29 July 2009, at 13:00**

**Mr. State Councillor
Mr. President of the SIG Council Mr. Daniel Mouchet
Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all today for the official launch of *Genève-Lac-Nations at UNOG*, and for the opening of our exhibition on this project and on the ongoing “greening” efforts at the Palais des Nations.

Allow me, first of all, to thank the State Council and the *Services Industriels de Genève* for the outstanding collaboration throughout the process. This project is an illustration of our Host Country’s determined action to combat this threat through greater and better use of renewable energy sources. We are proud that, *Genève-Lac-Nations* has been operational since late June. I hope that this can serve as a good example to others because there is no doubt that we need to make an early and effective start to be able to confront climate change.

The warming of our planet is one of the defining challenges of our time. But, as this project demonstrates, climate change also represents a unique opportunity for new approaches and partnerships – such as ours – that can help stimulate growth and transform the global economy into one that is cleaner, greener and more sustainable. As in the case of *Genève-Lac-Nations*, this requires an initial investment, which will pay dividends in terms of additional green house gas reductions, new low-carbon technologies and fresh employment opportunities. It simply makes good business sense.

***Genève-Lac-Nations* is a logical continuation of our efforts – even before climate change rose to the top of the global agenda – to save energy and change our energy mix, for instance by introducing natural gas. As you can see from the exhibit here, over the past eight years, the United Nations Office at Geneva has reduced electricity consumption by 20%, water**

consumption by over 40% and fuel consumption by close to 20%. This also represents savings of almost 4,5 million dollars.

Only last month, we were awarded a *Certificat* by the well-known Swiss non-profit organization *Fondation Nature & Economie* for maintaining our park areas in a natural manner. We are proud to put this *Certificat* on display also. These accomplishments have come about through the contributions and commitment of our staff, and I am glad to pay tribute to their initiative and imagination. They have worked consistently and in a practical way to “green” our daily work, conserving energy wherever possible.

We look forward to building on these achievements. Together with the rest of the United Nations family, we are now measuring our “carbon footprint” across our activities, which will provide baselines for measuring progress. And we plan to put in place a strategy over the next year to improve further.

At the Palais des Nations, we do face particular challenges in reaching climate neutrality. Close to 80 years old now, the Palais was built long before climate, carbon and emissions became part of the political and public vocabulary. This is another reason that we are committed to the implementation of our Strategic Heritage Plan for the sustainable preservation of the Palais. An initial study, which will provide the basis for the next phase in our Plan, will be ready later this year, and we are grateful to our Host Country for funding this first important step.

Dear Friends:

In December 2009, world leaders will come together in Copenhagen for the United Nations Climate Change Summit. The stakes are high, and the need for action urgent. As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has pointed out, we must ensure that emissions peak no later than 2015 if we are to limit the temperature increase to 2 degrees. The *Genève-Lac-Nations* project and our “greening” efforts sends a powerful message that change is possible – and provides a model for how to do it. Here, we have already sealed an important deal. Let us now work together to make sure that our leaders also seal the deal in Copenhagen. Our collective future depends on our shared resolve. Thank you very much.