

Comparative Analysis of Holding Programme Board Meetings Outside of Geneva

This document is submitted to the Program Board for discussion.

1 ISSUE

At its 11th meeting on 29 October 2018, the Programme Board requested that the Secretariat provide information regarding a comparison of costs of holding Programme Board meetings in Geneva and in other locations (Action PB-11.01). This document responds to this request.

2 METHODS AND ASSUMPTIONS

The first question to be addressed in answering the request is: costs for whom? There would appear to be two main responses: costs to the GEO Secretariat (that is, to the GEO Trust Fund) and costs to Programme Board members attending the meetings (that is, to the participants' home organizations). Ultimately, all such costs are borne by GEO Members and Participating Organizations, but given the limited resources available through the GEO Trust Fund it is important to consider these separately. This analysis will provide estimates for both of these categories.

A second question concerns the type of costs to be included in the analysis. There are two main kinds of costs associated with holding Programme Board meetings: travel costs and hosting costs.

Hosting costs in Geneva are relatively low, as there is no separate charge to the Secretariat for the use of meeting rooms. However, the Secretariat does generally pay for refreshments at coffee breaks, water service in the room, and for a technician to manage the teleconference service and projector. The total of these costs is approximately CHF 600 per day or CHF 1200 for a typical two-day meeting. For meetings in other locations it is assumed that the hosting costs will be covered by the host organization, particularly since hosting costs are generally lower than the costs of travelling to another location. Hosting costs are therefore only included with respect to Secretariat costs.

Travel costs represent, for the Secretariat and for Programme Board members, the large majority of the costs of attending Programme Board meetings and thus this is the focus of the analysis. Travel costs are split, for this purpose, into two components: airfare and a daily subsistence cost which includes accommodation, food and other related costs. The daily subsistence cost (DSA) has been estimated based on the UN rates to provide a standardized approach.

Airfare is estimated based on the lowest-cost major airline fare for non-stop flights, where available. Where no non-stop flight exists, or where the lowest-cost economy non-stop flight is much more expensive than a single-stop flight, the lowest single-stop flight cost has been used. In some cases, an average of the lowest non-stop and single-stop fares was used. While many Programme Board members may be permitted under their organizational rules to fly in business class, for simplicity and consistency only economy class fares were used. This obviously underestimates the actual travel cost to the funding organization, although the actual cost will depend on many other factors, such as the time of the booking relative to the trip, that are not possible to include in such an estimate. For Secretariat travel costs, the UN travel rules have been applied and so the estimates are closer to the

actual amounts that would likely be incurred. The dates used for estimating airfares were 2 to 6 September, as that is the only meeting in 2019 which is yet to be confirmed. It was also used because it is within the year but not too close to the travel date.

To estimate the range of likely airfare costs, the analysis uses a set of 10 meeting locations, including Geneva, that represent the locations of most Programme Board members and which include four continents. Locations of some Programme Board members (such as Canberra and Pasadena) that are relatively distant from most members have been excluded, as it was assumed that they would be even more expensive than the most expensive locations included in the analysis. While other locations could be added, doing so would not be expected to significantly change the results of the analysis. Costs for travel between the airport and the meeting location were not included in the analysis.

To estimate the origin of the flights, the analysis used the locations of the 32 principal representatives of Programme Board members (that is, not including alternates), plus the Secretariat. For meetings outside of Geneva, the travel costs are based on four Secretariat staff attending the meeting.

3 RESULTS OF THE ANALYSIS

The results of the analysis are summarized in two tables shown below. Table A summarizes the total estimated costs to Programme Board members to attend meetings in the 10 locations. Table B summarizes the costs to the GEO Secretariat for the same 10 locations. The locations are sorted in order of cost from lowest (top) to highest. The percentage column compares costs in relation to Geneva (which is shown as 100%). Hosting costs are only included with respect to Geneva in Table B.

Table A – Costs to PB Members (CHF)

Bonn	50,108	83%
Pretoria	50,645	84%
Reading, UK	51,010	85%
Beijing	51,857	86%
Silver Spring, MD	55,879	93%
Rome	59,770	99%
Geneva	60,270	100%
Tokyo	61,574	102%
Montreal	62,676	104%
Sunyani	70,510	117%

Table B – Costs to Secretariat (CHF)

Geneva	1,200	100%
Bonn	4,052	338%
Rome	4,676	390%
Reading, UK	4,760	397%
Sunyani	7,640	637%
Silver Spring, MD	9,804	817%
Montreal	10,072	839%
Beijing	13,788	1149%
Tokyo	13,816	1151%
Pretoria	15,180	1265%

4 DISCUSSION

The results of this analysis suggest that the costs to PB members are similar for most locations, except for Sunyani which is not close to a major airport. Proximity to major airports appears to be a significant factor in airfare costs. In some cases, higher airfare costs are offset by lower daily subsistence rates.

In contrast, costs to the Secretariat vary by more than an order of magnitude, particularly for locations at great distance from Geneva. The absolute amounts at the high end are similar to the total difference in costs for Programme Board members.