



United Nations Headquarters, 1960 © UN Photo

CONSTRUCTION STARTED: 24 October 1949

COST: \$65 million





SECRETARIAT BUILDING

The exterior facings of the 550-foot tall Secretariat Building are made exclusively of aluminum, glass and

They had to integrate the needs of delegation and Secretariat personnel.

Because the chosen site was relatively small, a tall building would be required to house offices. The planners determined that the presence of firm bedrock near the surface—the Manhattan schist on which most New York skyscrapers rest—would facilitate construction. (The bedrock dips to 60 or more feet below sea level between 46th and 47th Streets—an area which now lies beneath the broad lawn to the north of the General Assembly Building.)

To accommodate the greatly expanded membership of the United Nations, the General Assembly in 1976 approved a set of major alterations to refurbish and enlarge the seating capacity of the General Assembly Hall and all the large conference rooms. Alterations were completed in 1980.

Since the growth of the staff could not be accommodated in the existing Secretariat Building, it has been necessary to rent office space in adjacent buildings. A large number of staff, including the personnel of the United Nations Development Corporation (UNDC), is located across First Avenue on 44th Street. The Corporation is a public-benefit, non-profit Organization created by New York State to provide facilities for the United Nations and related Organizations.

A third building was erected in early 1987 by the Corporation to house the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

RENOVATION

Another project was a 750-seat cafeteria for staff and delegates, located in a two-storey building at the south-east corner of the Secretariat Building overlooking the East River. This structure was finished in 1982. It is currently closed.

The most ambitious renovation to date was launched with a ground-breaking ceremony on 5 May 2008, marking the beginning of a five-year, \$1.9 billion overhaul of the UN landmark complex. It was completed in late 2014 with a final cost of \$2.15 billion.

COST

The buildings as originally planned were estimated to cost nearly \$85 million. Under the direction of Secretary-General Trygve Lie, however, the designers cut the cost by \$20 million, largely by reducing

the height of the Secretariat Building from 45 to 39 stories. They did this by reducing the size of the conference areas and by utilizing an existing building on the site for the United Nations Library. The \$65 million plan was approved by the General Assembly in 1977.

