

**Staff Union**  
of the United Nations Secretariat



**Syndicat du personnel**  
du Secrétariat des Nations Unies

HEADQUARTERS ROOM S-525 NEW YORK, NY 10017  
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15 December 2009

Dear Ms. Kane,

We have learned that beginning in January 2010, the Capital Master Plan (CMP) is planning to undertake asbestos abatement over the weekends while the staff are still in the building.

The staff and the General Assembly were previously assured that asbestos abatement in the Secretariat building would begin only after the relocation of all staff to swing spaces.

It is very alarming that the CMP has reneged on that assurance.

We request that all staff be relocated to the swing space before asbestos abatement begins.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Ginivan  
First Vice-President,  
United Nations Staff Union

Ms. Angela Cane  
Under-Secretary-General  
Department of Management  
United Nations, Room S-2700A

Cc: Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General  
Mr. Michael Adlerstein, Assistant Secretary-General for CMP  
Ms. Catherine Pollard, Assistant Secretary-General for OHRM  
43<sup>rd</sup> Staff Council

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24 December 2009

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

The remaining staff in the Secretariat building are anxious and very concerned that the Capital Master Plan renovations and especially asbestos abatement have been taking place while the staff are on site.

From 8 to 10 January 2010, the Capital Master Plan will remove asbestos in offices in the Secretariat building in preparation for the hoist, while the staff are still in those offices. These actions are contrary to previous promises given to both staff and delegations that the implementation of the Capital Master Plan would not begin until all staff were relocated to swing spaces.

The staff are questioning the probity of the Capital Master Plan and, by extension, your probity too, when assurances made previously are reneged because of concerns for cost overruns. It would appear that the health and safety concerns of the staff are being sacrificed to minimize costs.

We urgently request that you ensure all staff are relocated to swing spaces before asbestos abatement continues.

We have taken note of the General Assembly Resolution 64/228, concerning the Capital Master Plan in paragraphs 24 and 25 regarding the safety, security, health and well-being of staff, delegations, visitors and tourists at the United Nations.

I am attaching our letter to the Under-Secretary General, Department of Management, which she has yet to respond to.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Ginivan  
First Vice-President,  
United Nations Staff Union

Mr. Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary-General  
United Nations, Room S-3800

United Nations  Nations Unies

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received  
14 Dec 2009

REFERENCE:

31 December 2009

Dear Mr. Ginivan,

I refer to your letter of 24 December 2009 to the Secretary-General that has been sent to me for response. I also refer to your letter of 15 December 2009 regarding asbestos abatement work in the Secretariat building.

At the outset, let me mention that the Secretary-General is informed that the abatement work required in the Secretariat Building presents absolutely no danger to staff. The safety of the staff and all building occupants is our topmost priority.

Last week I spoke at length with Mr. Stephen Kisambira, President of the Staff Union emphasizing our priority to ensure safety of the staff members and building occupants while the abatement work is in progress in the Building. This issue was also thoroughly discussed between Mr. Michael Adlerstein, Assistant Secretary-General for Capital Master Plan and the Staff Union representatives on several occasions.

The Department of Management is using the strictest protocols possible while performing this work. Similar work was undertaken in the Dag Hammarskjold Library Building, and elsewhere on campus earlier this year, without incident. Videos of the abatement work were posted on the CMP's intranet website, and all staff had the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the technologies and processes used during asbestos abatement.

The United Nations has also undertaken abatement work prior to the CMP in New York as well as at offices away from Headquarters. The United Nations Office at Vienna was renovated recently while staff were still in the building, and abatement was undertaken without incident and without complaints or concerns by staff.

The Secretary-General has complete confidence in the ability of the CMP team to abate asbestos in the Secretariat Building, and wishes to advise all staff members that there is no cause for alarm or concern.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to further discuss this issue.



Angela Kane  
Under-Secretary-General for  
Management

Mr. Thomas Ginivan  
First Vice President  
Staff Union of the United Nations Secretariat  
New York