

M

is for meetings
by Giovanni Verlini

The Vienna International Centre gets a dedicated conference facility.

A new building serving as a dedicated conference facility for the IAEA and the other Vienna-based organizations, such as United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), was officially handed over to its new owners. The 'M building', as it is known, was donated to the United Nations by the Austrian Government and the city of Vienna.


The building, which can host up to 2,700 delegates, is an environmentally friendly facility using state-of-the-art technologies to save as much energy as possible. Some of the building's characteristics include:

- ◆ The building façade is made of high-security windows that also feature so-called 'screens'. On cold days the sun light is allowed to go through the glass to heat the building or reduce the amount of heating needed. On warm days the sun light is reflected back to reduce the temperature;
- ◆ Sensors located in the main conference rooms and foyers allow to control the air ventilation system. They regulate the amount of hot or cold air needed during conference sessions or coffee breaks;
- ◆ Throughout the building hot and cold air is used to reheat or cool down the internal environment. The hot air that rises up from the floor is pumped through to a heating system lying underneath the floor; and
- ◆ The building is heated with warm air produced by burning ecological garbage — from Vienna's 'Fernwärme'.

A Step Back in Time

When the Vienna International Centre (VIC) was handed over to the IAEA and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in 1979, it contained generous and, for the time, luxurious meeting rooms in the cylindrical C building. These could accommodate all but the largest conferences, which at first were held in the Hofburg, and later in the Austria Center Vienna (ACV).

Subsequently, the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) were also housed in the VIC, and the number of meetings — both large and small — grew from year to year.

When it was discovered, in 1998, that the VIC contained asbestos which would need to be removed, it was realized that the C building would be rendered unavailable for some two to three years, leaving no space for meetings to be held at the VIC. To solve this problem, the Republic of Austria generously offered to build a new conference centre on the VIC premises which would serve as a swing space while building C undergoes asbestos removal, and thereafter would be used largely by the IAEA, while the other VIC-based organizations would take over the C building. The result is the splendid, new Conference Building M. 

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Top: The new conference facility at the Vienna International Centre in Vienna, Austria.

Middle: The interior of the new conference facility.

Bottom: Children in the Junior Choir of the Vienna International School (VIS) entertained guests at the opening ceremony of "M Building" at the Vienna International Centre on 25 April 2008. (Photos: D.Calma/IAEA)