

Conferences and the hospitality economy

*Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)*

International Geneva is also a city of conferences. According to the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office, the conferences held in Geneva, in person, by teleconference or in hybrid form, are attended by around 581,000 delegates from all over the world.¹ These meetings — assemblies of organisations, sessions of the Human Rights Council, trade negotiations, diplomatic conferences, scientific and professional congresses — generate stays, spending on hotels, restaurants and transport, and jobs in the hospitality economy.

The Centre international de conférences de Genève, the Palais des Nations and the meeting rooms of the organisations offer considerable hosting capacity. Geneva's hotels, some of which have a long tradition of welcoming diplomats, depend in part on this clientele. Conference periods translate into high hotel occupancy and intense activity for the service sector.

For the financial centre, conferences offer opportunities for contact with decision-makers, business leaders and public officials from around the world. The institutions and associations of the financial centre also organise their own events, which benefit from the city's reputation and its infrastructure. Economic diplomacy and business are often conducted on the margins of official meetings.

The pandemic of 2020 showed the fragility of this hospitality economy when conferences were suspended or held remotely. It also accelerated the use of hybrid formats, which reduce travel and local spending. International Geneva must come to terms with this development, which alters the balance between physical presence and remote participation.

1 Notes

1. Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office at Geneva, “La Genève internationale en faits et chiffres” (International Geneva in facts and figures), dfae.admin.ch (accessed September 2026).
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