The role of the media – Le rôle des médias

ENTRETIEN/INTERVIEW
Martin Roberts, a freelance journalist

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Le rôle des médias
Le reflet du miroir

Grâce à la diversité des supports médiatiques, en quelques clics il est possible de suivre l’actualité en direct, participer à des forums de discussion, publier des vidéos sur la toile, informer et s’informer. En relayant l’information en un temps record, chacun peut apporter sa pierre à l’édifice, et élargir ainsi sa sphère d’influence.

En apportant un éclairage divers et de plus en plus varié, les médias offrent une richesse de points de vue sous une multitude de facettes. Alors que certains se sentent noyés sous ce flux constant d’information, d’autres s’en saisissent pour aiguiser leur esprit critique et se forger leur propre opinion.

Comme tout vecteur d’influence, les médias comportent leur zone d’ombre et les dérives sont nombreuses, comme en témoigne la législation sur la cybercriminalité.

Que les médias soient critiqués ou décriés, ils font partie intégrante de notre modèle sociétal. Depuis longtemps surnommés le quatrième pouvoir dans leur rôle de garde-fou, ils dénoncent les abus et les irrégularités et sont parfois la cible de régimes politiques.

Leur présence et leur rôle sont un baromètre de l’état de santé d’une démocratie. Ils nous rappellent notre responsabilité individuelle et citoyenne en tant qu’acteur et récepteur de l’information. Ils nous renvoient dans le miroir le reflet de notre propre engagement envers la société.

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Reaching out to a ‘connected’ youth

In a world where one in seven are on Facebook, and YouTube has over 1 billion unique visitors per month; we are a ‘connected’ youth, to say the least. Born the year that the Internet went viral, it is hard to imagine a time when an answer wasn’t a Google search away.

With the onset of globalization, and the consequent converging of time-space, youth are more interconnected and in turn, politically exposed than ever before. An event is no longer localized, as social media has proven to have the power to mobilize whole communities in bringing political reform and societal change – just look at Twitter in the Arab Spring. In a world embodying a multipolar yet interdependent character, the need for the United Nations (UN) as a unifying force to facilitate discussion and solve global conflicts is ever increasing. The need to involve youth, as the ones affected by the ‘decisions of today, tomorrow,’ is undeniable. As Mr. Kofi Annan states, ‘Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace.’ This leads us to ask: to what extent is the UN reaching out to youth, and using social media as a tool to connect with us?

Knowledge ‘gap’

Among fellow students today, the mere mentioning of the UN tends to bring quizzical looks; one friend even asked what it did. Aside from the youth living and breathing the ‘international sphere,’ and those in crisis directly affected by UN efforts, the majority of youth have little or no exposure to this realm. What presence does the UN have in their lives? How can they become wholly informed? Mainly appearing in the media in times of crisis with its shortcomings tending to be at the fore; the general view of the UN is not always positive. However, as is sadly the case, despite the great work that is being done: ‘good news is [unfortunately] no news;’ it is hard to rely on the media for positive publicity.

Nonetheless, there are further reasons for this misinformation among youth. Upon
reflecting this issue with Mr. Holger Postulart, Executive Director of Global Alliance against Female Genital Mutilation, perhaps it is the feeling that as civil society, one is not involved that has garnered the view of the UN as being ‘intangible’ and ‘exclusive.’ Or, perhaps it is the lack of focus that education programs place on teaching about international institutions, which hampers awareness of its necessity today. However, we believe that above all, it is direct communication with youth and the greater need for active dialogue and engagement that is hindering the current view of the UN.

Successes

Despite this lack of awareness, effective attempts have been made to render the UN a more accessible institution in the eyes of the public, especially the youth. A wonderful example is the “I Was Here” campaign initiated by Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, which featured Beyoncé performing at the UN General Assembly in an attempt to, as the Secretary-General states, “bring together one billion people from around the world to advance a powerful and proactive idea: people helping people.” The campaign engaged the public through social media, with people pledging to carry out a humanitarian action, thus embodying Ban Ki-moon’s global outlook of inspiring small but collective change.

A relevant example of this is Goodwill: a social network where young people stand out by doing good. This UN campaign not only brilliantly acknowledges the power that influential individuals can have in stimulating change, but also highlights how iconic figures can inspire and engage the youth. The involvement of Goodwill Ambassadors, like Angelina Jolie, has proved greatly effective in promoting specific issues being tackled by the UN, as well.

Creating a ‘dialogue’

The importance of social media as a way to engage the public, especially the youth, cannot be stressed enough. It is the dominant means of communication not only among people, but also to the people. As the Huffington Post’s Live news director Basel Hamdan explains, “not everyone has a TV, and not everyone has cable, but everyone is online.” Yet, while these social media platforms provide unprecedented access to millions, the digital ‘arena’ is noisy and sharing a message does not necessarily ensure that it will be widely spread. This highlights the importance of ‘thunderclap’ campaigns, which allows you to put forward a message simultaneously on many social media platforms, in a sense creating an ‘online flash mob.’ With youth often connected to several platforms, from Twitter, Facebook to Pinterest, a message can ‘go viral’ in a simple and widely accessible manner.

This crucial focus on social media to create dialogue was embodied in the sensational UN campaign recently launched for World Humanitarian Day on the 19 August this year. In collaboration with the Huffington Post, a live stream panel was held in which wide-ranging individuals in the humanitarian sphere were interviewed. The campaign was incredibly engaging, with crowd-sourced questions asked, the promotion of the hashtag: #humanitarianheroes, and the use of Twitter chats to allow the young viewers to discuss humanitarian issues. Utilizing social media to create ‘two-way’ dialogue between the UN and youth, as Mr. Belanger, strategic communications officer at OCHA remarks, is an effective manner to “hear the public’s opinion and inspire them to take action.” Having the opportunity to share our thoughts here attests to just that.

The Future

What strikes us as most appealing to youth, has been integrating the UN into the daily online content that we consume. The majority of young people’s time on the Internet is spent on content created by specific users on websites like YouTube, Facebook and Upworthy. This content is packaged in a way that appeals most to the youth: concise, uncomplicated and immediately gratifying. By tapping into familiar outlets with a large pre-existing audience, the UN can make their work relatable and relevant.

A model example is the UN’s involvement on Humans of New York. A wildly popular Facebook page with almost 10 million fans, photographer Brandon Stanton posts portraits of people taken at random on the streets of New York with an accompanying quote, allowing a real glimpse into their daily life. To raise awareness of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) soon to end, the UN has partnered with Mr. Stanton. Sending him to ten countries where the issues surrounding the MDGs are at play, he continues his project to humanize the people. This innovative initiative appeals to young people as it gives a human face to the UNs work through means that we’re familiar with, truly bringing it home.

As young people, we feel that the work of the UN is increasingly pertinent given the changing world we live in. Informing us on your work by using inspiring individuals, creating a dialogue through social media and raising mass awareness, are all very effective means and should continue to be implemented. However, we think that to really make the UN relatable and a less ambiguous concept, not only do we need the creation of UN-run content, but also the collaboration and integration of the UN into our popular content.
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UNOG and communication
my personal experience

GISELLA LOMAX, SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER AND ASSOCIATE PRESS OFFICER, UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION SERVICE AT GENEVA

In less than five years social media has fundamentally changed the way the world – including the United Nations – communicates. Social media is now the first choice of media for our most urgent messages.

For example, Twitter is very helpful to the UN in times of crisis, because tweets are easily shared and can reach a large and diverse audience quickly. Social media is growing exponentially, and there are no signs of it abating – either in size or potential for influence. In the last three years I’ve seen our@UNGeneva Twitter account grow from 300 to 65,000 followers, including many Permanent Missions.

For staff, Twitter and Facebook are engaging and efficient ways to get an overview of what’s happening at UNOG, to read what senior leaders are saying – and to have their own say, as well. For the general public, the UN’s everyday work can be a bit of a mystery – here at UNOG we’re using Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and other platforms to get the message out in easily digestible ‘bite-size’ tweets. UNOG’s social media outlets publish an interesting and fast-paced mix of news, campaigns, unique photos and live-tweeted events, in both English and French.

Social Media is the only media that is not only interactive but positively demands a two-way conversation, and we embrace our followers. I try to respond to every reasonable question or criticism, usually with statistics or informative links. We have a growing digital community at UNOG, including@UNOG_DG,@UNOGLibrary,@UNOGPolitical,@UN_ECE and the latest addition,@GenevaImpact. I try to use our sizeable@UNGeneva following to highlight system-wide campaigns and events. We work closely together, especially on cross-sector events such as World Humanitarian Day.

Projects
One of the most exciting projects I’m involved in is the Geneva Perception Change Project. Spearheaded by the Office of Director-General, and Michael Møller himself, it’s a joint initiative to publicize the value of the work carried out not only by UNOG, but International Geneva as a whole. We believe that the vital work carried out in this city, which can be classified under the tagline ‘peace, rights and wellbeing’ has an impact on every single person in the world.

Communications is at the heart of the project, and together with partners, UNIS is coming up with innovative ways to spread that message. We will soon be launching a mini-campaign called ‘ten things you didn’t know about the UN in Geneva’, followed by a ground-breaking new UNTV documentary which will capture how the work of the UN in Geneva touches the lives of people all over the planet over a single day. If you want to know more, check out the #GenevaMeans and #GenevaImpact hashtags on Twitter and Facebook.

UNOG press corps
UNIS has a very amicable and mutually supportive relationship with the 500 permanently accredited journalists and auxiliaries at the Palais des Nations. We support the press in covering UN stories and campaigns. Ways in which we enable that include organizing popular bi-weekly press briefings by spokespersons for UN organizations in Geneva, as well as some 250 specific press conferences annually. We provide journalists with press releases, office space and technical facilities for radio and television broadcast. UNIS also issues temporary accreditation for special events: for the
Geneva Peace Talks on Syria, held here and in Montreux at the start of the year, exceptionally accredited over 1,100 foreign journalists – a mammoth task.

Relationship building is a key part of UNIS’s work: the broader our network, the more effectively we can spread UN messages. Our partners include Geneva academic institutions, such as the Graduate Institute with whom we run our new Ciné ONU Geneva initiative, local schools where we deliver pedagogical programmes on a range of ‘peace, rights and wellbeing’ themes, as well as Permanent Missions, non-governmental organizations, and other UN and international organizations in Geneva, such as CERN. A really exciting up coming collaborative event is the first UN Geneva TEDx, to be held here in December.

**Local and international media – collaboration**

Both national and local media have a Palais presence, and we work closely with them to provide a more global view of the impact of the work carried out by International Geneva organizations. When news breaks and New York is still sleeping, we tend to be the first point of contact for the media, and try to provide answers and direct them to the relevant spokespersons. Another way is a weekly feature on English-language radio station WRS titled ‘What’s on at UN Geneva’ – tune in at 4.45 p.m. every Monday to listen! And Acting Director-General Michael Møller often schedules meetings with key international media organizations in cities he travels to, to strengthen those relationships and spread the word about ‘Geneva Impact’.

**10 PRIORITIES OF UNIS’S COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

- To communicate on priority UN issues, including peace-making and peace-building, as well as humanitarian assistance, human rights and sustainable development;
- To facilitate the work of the press and media, both permanent and temporary;
- To provide radio, television and photo coverage, and documentary films;
- To devise and deliver educational outreach programmes on UN priority issues;
- To provide coverage of the Human Rights Council, Conference on Disarmament and other meetings;
- To expand our presence on social media and digital platforms and share best practice with International Geneva partners;
- To provide multilingual guided tours to target audiences from tourists to diplomats to students;
- To coordinate and support media-related aspects visits of the Secretary General and other senior officials;
- To improve communication and processes within the Service and UNOG, and to promote multilingualism;
- To assist the Director-General in promoting increased awareness of the role of International Geneva and strengthening coordination among UN agencies.

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**THE TIP**

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Interview with a freelance journalist

The United Nations is accountable to everyone

Maria Angeles Martin Gil

In the course of his career he has reported on everything from guerrilla wars to the World Cup finals, he has quizzed both George W. Bush and Fidel Castro, and interviewed the Dalai Lama and Benazir Bhutto, amongst many others. He is currently based in Madrid, Spain.

Martin, how do you see The United Nations in your work as a foreign correspondent?

In the course of more than twenty years’ experience as a foreign correspondent based in five countries – and who has reported from many more – I prize objectivity and reliable sourcing, and find the United Nations as being an essential reference in both cases.

The United Nations (UN) is particularly useful when writing about issues such as international affairs, conflict resolution, development, human rights, international law or humanitarian work.

I say this because while many other reliable international bodies exist, none has the same global reach as the United Nations, was specifically set up with such a broad remit or is accountable to literally everyone.

To repeat, objectivity and reliability are essential in my work because I do not write opinion pieces or editorial columns; my task is to report, to tell readers exactly what has happened and put it in context, so that they may make their minds up about issues and have some idea of where events may lead.

To this extent, my first port of call, as it were, when writing about an international conflict is to see what the UN has to say on the matter, what resolutions it has passed, and what reports its specialist divisions have produced.

Furthermore, there are few events of any kind in today’s globalised world that can be written about which do not have international ramifications, and I have to put events into perspective for an international readership in any case. So in this light, the UN again comes in handy, with its wealth of readily available and specialised information.

To cite three examples of stories I have written on current events in the country where I live, although the setting was local, they all concerned cross-border issues i.e. the Ebola outbreak, drug trafficking and migration.

To this extent, I respectively consulted the World Health Organisation’s Global Alert and Response page, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Do you think the UN can develop a more active role in influencing the implementation of its principles in society? Should they get closer to the private sector or do you think this is not their main purpose?

As a journalist I would say that the main challenge is one of raising public awareness of the UN, because I feel it is a great story but the message is not getting across; media coverage of the enormous range of its vital activities is still very limited, and journalists rarely tap the vast amount of information available. The potential is enormous, and I think journalists would benefit from working as closely with the UN as we have long done with governments and businesses, and vice-versa.
In fact, journalists and the UN almost live in separate worlds; in more than 20 years as a foreign correspondent for the most reputable media outlets, I can tell you I have received just two ‘phone calls from UN agencies, and they obviously had little experience of working with the media. I therefore think UN agencies need to reach out more to the media, and employ far more people who understand the kind of work we journalists do.

On this subject, I was delighted to see that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed as his spokesperson Martin Nesirky, who is a career journalist, rather than a functionary. I once had the pleasure of working with Martin in the Republic of Korea, and have never known a more thoroughly conscientious professional communicator.

As for the private sector, I have often reported on its increasing involvement over the years in many areas previously controlled by governments, but never yet in governmental institutions themselves. I thus see no reason why the ultimate inter-governmental institution should have private sector involvement.

Is there any specific area that is more interesting for you (professionally or personally speaking) where you think the UN is going to be a key player in the next decade? I think the UN is going to be a key player in all the areas I have previously mentioned, because no other organisation is up to such essential tasks. However, as someone who has often written about food and the environment, I have long been anticipating the Millennium Development Goals in particular, whose target date is now only months away.

Finally, is there any anecdote related to the UN that you can share with the readers? I could give you lots of anecdotes, but will settle for two. A friend of mine who works as a translator for the UN in New York once took me around the Headquarters there. I was overwhelmed to see the whole world under one roof. I also recently had a modest involvement with Malala Yousafzai and the campaign for literacy she has taken to the UN, by transcribing an interview in English to help out a Spanish colleague who writes for a major newspaper.

To conclude, I would say that while the world we journalists write about is clearly such a troubled place that it often depresses readers, the UN does more than anyone or anything else to make it better, and has achieved a huge amount that often goes unnoticed; without it we would have nothing to tackle such vital issues as the Millennium goals. I think it is often forgotten that UN is all of us, so it is up to us to get more involved; as the saying goes, “many hands make light work!”

For more details about Martin Roberts, please visit https://sites.google.com/site/madridcorrespondent/home
Opinion internationale
Précautions d’emploi

Les acteurs internationaux, qu’ils représentent des gouvernements, des organisations internationales, des ONG, des médias ou autres, se réfèrent régulièrement à la communauté internationale.

Olivier Borie
Cette dernière, malgré une appel- lation plutôt englobante, est géné- rallement plus restreinte qu’on ne veut bien le laisser entendre. De fait, elle se limite généralement aux gouvernements membres d’une organisation internationale ou d’une coalition.

Parallèlement, on prend aussi de plus en plus à témoin l’opinion internationale. Au-delà de l’opinion publique, sensée représenter un ensemble d’idées partagées, de jugements portés par la majorité d’un groupe social, l’opinion internationale concerne la prise de position commune et simultanée d’acteurs internationaux.

Comme pour les opinions nationales, l’opinion internationale est rarement un phénomène spontané. Elle résulte plutôt d’une évaluation partagée d’un événement ou d’une situation donnée pour laquelle on cherche à mobiliser, produire une action concertée, exercer des pressions ou obtenir un consentement.

Qui l’opinion internationale représente-t-elle ou sert-elle? Son existence semble contestée. On la personifie, elle est même capable de s’émuvoir, de s’indigner ou de s’enthousiasmer. Est-elle bien réelle, ou ne serait-ce qu’un subterfuge de techniques de manipulation des masses? L’idée qu’un peuple ait besoin d’être dirigé pour son propre bien par une élite est ancienne et toujours bien répandue. La majorité des individus se laisse- rait trop facilement aller à ses émotions et à ses impulsions. Les comportements grégaires, les déchaînements de violence des groupes ou les mouvements de panique des foules doivent être canalisés et maîtrisés. Dans la même logique, l’opinion publique est souvent critiquée, voire méprisée, pour sa versatilité et sa superficialité. Mais elle reste pourtant indispensable pour assurer une légitimité, même si elle n’est qu’apparente.

Les enquêtes d’opinion, par le simple fait de leur conduite, peuvent renforcer l’existence-même des opinions sur lesquelles elles portent, pour être ensuite relayées et amplifiées dans les médias. Bien entendu, si les résultats obtenus ne sont pas ceux escomptés, on évitera alors de les communiquer.

Les campagnes visant à la formation d’une opinion publique internationale adoptent le plus souvent des discours qui font référence à des principes universalistes. On fait appel à la solidarité internationale, à la protection de l’environnement, aux droits de l’homme. On cherche à inspirer un sentiment d’appartenance à une société, à un mouvement international. En invoquant l’opinion internationale, on s’arroge parfois une représentativité auto-préclaa- mée qui facilite également, par effet d’entraînement, la formation-même de cette opinion.

Son émergence requiert un accès à l’information, ainsi qu’une communication et des échanges internationaux. L’apparition de nouveaux médias a considéra- blement augmenté la disponi- bilité et le flux d’informations, favorisant de la sorte la consti- tution de réseaux transnationaux. Ce sont de formidables accélérateurs de mobilisation et de visibilité mondiale en temps réel. Ils ont permis aux acteurs internationaux, tels que les ONG, de multiplier leurs campagnes.

Mais seuls quelques mouve- ments locaux bénéficient d’un accès à la scène internationale. Une sélection s’opère en fonction de leur compatibilité avec les intérêts que l’on défend, le discours dominant du moment, et aussi pour leur potentiel en termes de levée de fonds.

Reste qu’une grande partie du monde n’a pas, ou peu accès aux informations internationales, ne serait-ce que pour des raisons de langue. De plus, les différences de contexte peuvent générer autant d’opinions hété- rogènes. Différentes cultures, histoires, religions, visions du monde sont autant d’obstacles à des prises de positions communes. Pouvoir s’identifier ou s’intéresser à des sujets loin de nos intérêts et besoins immé- diats ne va pas forcément de soi.

La notion d’opinion internatio- nale n’est cependant pas une construction artificielle. Les réseaux qui la composent la justifient. Mais cette expression dépasse souvent largement le cadre des acteurs qu’elle repré- sente, évoquant un ensemble plus grand, une majorité. Si l’opinion publique est fluctuante, parfois difficile à discerner, que dire de l’opinion publique inter- nationale? C’est un concept à manipuler et, surtout, à prendre avec précaution.
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The Rolex Awards for Enterprise will be held in London in November to reward five extraordinary young individuals who possess the courage and conviction to take on major challenges and carry out innovative projects that advance human knowledge or well-being since 1976. Every two years, an international Jury of independent experts selects Laureates with a new or ongoing project anywhere in the world – a project that deserves support for its capacity to improve lives, or protect the world’s natural and cultural heritage. Since 2009, Rolex directed its attention to young leaders and established its first set of Awards devoted to Young Laureates, aged between 18 and 30 years. The institution recognized young people’s “refreshing approach” to solving problems and has since then sought to promote young innovators from around the globe who share Rolex’s vision. Once selected, each Young Laureate receives 50,000 Swiss Francs for their respective projects. Rolex has throughout the years rewarded numerous talented individuals for their independent thinking in developing their projects, and has offered its support to enable the Laureates reach their goals. Moreover, Rolex ensures winners receive access to its network of more than 100 former Laureates. Finally, the Laureates receive publicity through media coverage and on the Rolex Awards website. The media plays an important role in the development of the young innovators’ projects as it enables them to raise awareness about their work and share their vision for the future. The Rolex Awards for Enterprise bring forward pioneering work in five specific areas: applied technology, cultural heritage, environment, exploration and discovery, and science and health. Projects are assessed on their originality, potential for impact, feasibility,
and, above all, on the candidates' own spirit of enterprise.

This year, the Ceremony unites five young visionaries who provided the international jury of experts with a variety of cultural heritages, as well as innovative projects dedicated to the advancement of human knowledge and well-being.

The youngest visionary for the 2014 Awards is 27-year old Arthur Zang from Cameroon. He has invented what is probably Africa’s first medical device. He has invented what is known as Cardio Pads to other regions around the globe in an attempt to improve and facilitate the diagnosis of heart diseases. With fewer than 50 heart specialists in the country, most of whom are based in the cities, people in rural areas have difficulties accessing care. Zang’s medical tablet enables healthcare workers in the countryside to send results of cardiac tests to heart specialists via a mobile-phone connection. He has planned to use his Award funds to produce an additional 100 tablets, 10 for each of Cameroon’s provinces. In the future he hopes to export his Cardio Pads to other regions around the globe in an attempt to further improve and facilitate the diagnosis of heart diseases in the world.

Neeti Kailas from India has presented a project with the objective of increasing the screening of newborn babies for hearing loss. Every year approximately 100,000 hearing-impaired babies are born in India and unless treated, the babies will face difficulties in their development of speech, language and cognition. Kailas’ desire to transform healthcare in India combined with her experience as a designer has led her to develop a non-invasive portable device that screens newborn babies for hearing impairment. Her device is currently a prototype and being tested. Its low cost as well as its portability allows it to be mobile and easily distributed. The funds received will enable Kailas to start clinical trials later this year. The Laureate hopes to launch her device in 2016 and aims to screen two percent of hospital births in the first year with ambitions to scale up annually.

Italian explorer and scientist, Francesco Sauro, aims to explore ancient quartzite caves in the table-top mountains of South America. Having led as many as five expeditions to South America’s tepuis since 2009, Sauro plans to further discover “the lost world” in the Amazonian caves in Brazil and Venezuela. The Laureate has planned to lead four expeditions between November 2014 and 2017. With the support of Rolex, Sauro intends to use his funds for a reconnaissance mission to assess the locations for the coming expeditions. Furthermore the funds will financially support a multidisciplinary team of up to 15 scientists and cavers to undertake surveys of the caves. Sauro’s passion for the environment has pushed him to share the discovered knowledge and to further explore the region.

Hosam Zowawi from Saudi Arabia wants to develop faster superbug tests and to raise awareness of antibiotic resistance. Drawing from his experience in microbiology Zowawi seeks to expose the growing ability of bacteria to resist antibiotics leading to death of patients with treatable diseases and infections. The Rolex Laureate has developed a Rapid Superbug test that gives fast results, allowing doctors to avoid prescribing antibiotics using the trial and error identification method and thus overcome misuses of antibiotics. Zowawi intends to use his obtained funds for a campaign including educational documentaries, flyers and infographics, as well as content for television, radio, social media and newspapers. His attempt to raise awareness regarding bacteria resistance will provide a Middle Eastern perspective with data and additional research from the Gulf countries.

Finally, Olivier Nsengimana has presented an environmental project, with the objective to save endangered grey crowned-cranes in Rwanda. Determined to put the conservation of wildlife in an important place on the Rwandan Government’s agenda, Nsengimana aims to start with the protection of endangered animals such as the grey crowned-cranes. The primary aim of the project is to reintroduce captured cranes to their natural Rwandan habitat, as well as to establish a rehabilitation center in the Akagera National Park. The Young Laureate plans to further launch campaigns to raise awareness and to educate people in pursuing livelihoods that do not threaten endangered species. Nsengimana has as a long term mission to foster a younger generation of Rwandan conservationists.

For its 2014 Awards ceremony, Rolex is proud to present this year’s five ambitious Young Laureates and is eager to help them achieve their goals. Each project provides a unique story and new perspectives of the world we live in, in the hope to improve both human life and the environment on the planet.
Still a new Face
in the Executive Office of the Council of UNOG

Interview with the
Deputy Executive Secretary
Catherine Peck Arif

EVELINA RIIOUKHINA
AND CRISTIAN OLAREAN

You have been elected as Deputy Executive Secretary for a second term, and we are delighted you are willing to give us an interview. Please tell us about yourself.

My name is Cathy and I have been working for United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) since 1988. I am currently in the Budget Project and Finance Section.

How did you end up in the Council?

I became involved in staff issues a few years ago, after I joined the Hope Team. I joined Hope purposely because its members believe in hard work, commitment to work without ‘politics’ and more importantly for me, the group has a positive outlook on life.

What exact role do you play and how is it different from a Bureau member?

I was extremely honoured when several members of the Council asked me to consider taking on the position of Deputy Executive Secretary (DES) and I accepted to do so without hesitation. Becoming DES has been a learning experience. In the beginning, I needed to move from understanding how my small unit works to understanding more about the United Nations (UN) works as a whole. The DES whilst in principal is a position that provides support to the ES working on the subjects agreed in the programme of work set by the Council, this position also requires that I deal with issues that pop up along the way. It differs from being a regular Bureau member, in that this is a full time position. Further whatever decisions are taken by the Bureau as a whole, a large part of the related work leading to them falls on the shoulders of the Executive and Deputy Executive Secretaries.

Do you think the staff representation is important?

I believe that staff representation is extremely important, as it gives staff the opportunity to express an opinion on issues of mutual interest to them and management. If used wisely staff representation is beneficial to both staff and management as it allows for comprise to be found on sticky issues, and this ensures that the organization has a happy and motivated staff.

If you could have a magic wand, what would you do?

If I could wave a magic wand and change something dramatic in the UN it would be for the recognition of the work of General Services (GS) staff. Some of them in my opinion, are the unsung heroes of the UN. Many of them are performing professional functions, with no hope of ever being recognized. I would like the Organization seek out these exceptional staff and tap into their motivation, experience and dedication. Over the years, I have witnessed time and time again, fantastic staff frustrated by the ceiling on their position. The current grading system for an international civil service organization is based predominantly on that, of any military but even in the military you can change from one category to another without all these obstacles being put in your way. Why not simply allow GS staff to compete on an equal footing for a post with external professional candidates, without having to go through the whole process of the G to P examination? If this were taken on board, it would prove cost effective for the Organization in that the money spent on induction programmes, basic training etc. could be invested elsewhere. The Organization would also benefit in that its staff would be highly motivated. They would also be in the position to provide realistic inputs based on institutional memory.

Would you like to be re-elected, and if so, what plans do you have for 70th anniversary of the UN for UNOG staff?

I have greatly enjoyed my experience as DES, and would love to continue if my colleagues would like to have me, but whether I am still here as DES or not, I would like to be involved in throwing a very large party in the park for the staff in UNOG to celebrate our 70th birthday. The UN will be organizing many official events, but I would like to help recognize staff as they are the UN, and deserve to be celebrated as well on the UN’s birthday.

What would you say to all those who would like to work with the Council? What qualities in your opinion should they have?

I think that all staff should be involved to a certain extent in the Council work. This can be as simple as attending Council Town hall meetings, becoming a dues paying member, joining one of the Council election lists, volunteering to be part of one of the many joint bodies, boards, committees or panels. It really doesn’t matter. What matters is participation, and most importantly a positive attitude.

What would you do for UN, especially in view of its 70th jubilee?

That’s simple, I would love to be able to open the doors during the UN’s 70th birthday year to our very own UNOG Crèche. This is a project I have been working on for several years now. It is a project that has taken many twists and turns but is still going forward, although at a slower pace than I would have liked. But we are getting there! A piece of land has been identified, initial plans have been established, funds have been found, and now an architect is in touch with the Ville de Genève, finalizing details. We hope to start works and literally “digging” before autumn is out.

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** Le service Lexus Premium comprend la maintenance et le véhicule de courtoisie gratuits jusqu’à 10 ans ou 100 000 km (selon la première éventualité).
Les défis sécuritaires des reporters de guerre

Les reporters qui couvrent des conflits placent le sort de millions d’êtres humains sous les yeux du monde. En Syrie, Centrafrique ou Somalie, ils travaillent dans des conditions d’insécurité extrême et prennent des risques immenses pour mener à bien leur mission d’information.


Pourtant, les dispositifs et textes internationaux ont été

Au niveau international, la protection juridique du journaliste est garantie notamment par la Déclaration universelle des droits de l’homme, le Pacte international relatif aux droits civils et politiques, les Conventions de Genève de 1949 et leurs Protocoles additionnels I et II de 1977, la Convention internationale pour la protection de toutes les personnes contre les disparitions forcées.


En 2012, un « plan d’action sur la sécurité des journalistes et la question de l’impunité » a été adopté, sous l’égide de l’Unesco, pour “œuvrer à la création d’un environnement libre et sûr pour les journalistes et les professionnels des médias, dans les situations de conflit et de non conflit, en vue de renforcer la paix, la démocratie et le développement”. Ce plan a pour vocation de favoriser la coopération entre les agences onusiennes, les gouvernements, les organismes de médias, les associations professionnelles et les ONG et de mettre en place des mesures concrètes, des législations et des mécanismes protecteurs de la liberté d’information. Ce plan a permis au Pakistan la création d’une coalition de journalistes et de médias, the Pakistan Coalition of Media on Safety (PCOMS), qui a élaboré une charte sur la sécurité des journalistes locaux.


Force est de constater que l’application de ces dispositions et leur périmètre demeurent largement insuffisants. Ces avancées juridiques ne sont pas traduites dans les faits. Le nombre de journalistes tués sur le terrain ne décline pas, faute d’un réel engagement des États.

Le 13 décembre 2013, lors d’un panel du Conseil de sécurité consacré à la sécurité des journalistes, Reporters sans frontières prenait la parole pour réclamer la mise en place d’un mécanisme de contrôle du respect de la résolution 1738 et pour appeler les États à adopter des dispositions pénales spécifiques afin de lutter contre l’impunité. L’organisation préconise en particulier la nomination d’un conseiller spécial auprès du secrétaire général des Nations Unies et l’adoption d’un amendement à l’article 8 du Statut de la Cour pénale internationale afin que les attaques délibérées contre les journalistes soient qualifiées de crimes de guerre.
The current Ebola outbreak in West Africa is the first the region has ever faced. Yet it is already the largest outbreak ever encountered since the disease was formally discovered in 1976. More than 2000 people have died so far, with health workers making up almost a third of the casualties.

EBBA KALONGO
This current outbreak is unlike any other Ebola outbreak ever seen. Already fragile national health systems have buckled under the sheer scale, scope and complexity of the outbreak’s rapid trans-border jump from its remote rural epicenters in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia to urban capitals. Christina Banluta was the first Communications Officer deployed by WHO’s Emergency Communications Network to Liberia in July at the onset of the outbreak. At the time Monrovia was still untouched by the virus and cases were still confined to the epicenter in rural Lofa county. “I visited the epicenter of the outbreak in Foya district. Talking directly with people is key during emergencies. This way we learn how they feel and we get to know their concerns. This immediately helps us to address what’s on their mind and help communities to act in an informed way. Immediately and with a sense of urgency,” Ms Banluta said.

Since WHO declared this outbreak a Public Health Event of International Concern under the International Health Regulations (IHR (2005) on 8 August, the urgency of this event took on a global nature. The priorities are many and interlinked, and it is clear that no one government or agency can battle this outbreak alone.

Experience has taught WHO to be sensitive of cultural and social perceptions when reaching out to audiences. For WHO, emergency communications is made up of several strands of communications work. Crisis communications, media communications, advocacy, health promotion, social mobilization and behavioral change are all cogs in the wheel of any health and...
humanitarian emergency response. Communication harnesses the efforts of the response operation. Providing those affected and at risk with the best available public health knowledge facilitates the work of responders. This also empowers those affected and infected and helps them to make informed decisions.

“The fight against Ebola is not just a fight against the disease – it is a fight against fear, denial and panic,” former WHO Representative to Liberia, Dr. Nestor Ndayimirije, emphasized.

WHO integrates these realities to bolster country capacities not only in disseminating credible, practical information but also in addressing critical issues that prevent people from identifying risky behavior and making informed decisions on how to best protect themselves, their families, and communities.

“When you communicate for change, it is important to know what communities are thinking, to understand the real issues that affect them, and to listen to what they are saying. In my interaction with communities in Liberia, I realized how essential these were to properly craft health messages. Messaging should be dynamic – they need to change as the situation evolves,” said Ms Banluta.

Increased participation of local leaders and other figures with moral authority in communities is also key. They are often the most listened-to voice in communities paralyzed by fear and despair.

“It was particularly important because in July – no vaccine or whatever treatment was being tested. The context then was – there was a killer disease, more than half of those affected died. Those who we interviewed all said the same thing – they went to the clinics early for care.”

“After talking to people and to locals working with communities, I realized that communicating risks or communicating to change behavior is a challenging task. No matter how well-crafted the messages are they are not taken seriously, unless they take into account traditions, beliefs, religious and cultural practices. And one way to address this is through local leaders,” Ms Banluta noted.

It is also important to tell the stories of Ebola survivors.

“During my deployment, I also observed that testimonies of survivors are extremely powerful. We managed to interview three survivors in Foya. We asked them to share their stories and what they thought helped them survive.
Family farming

Key to ending hunger and rural poverty

Despite significant progress in recent years, nearly 805 million people still suffer from hunger according to FAO’s most recent estimations.

The crucial role played by family farming

Today, out of 570 million farms around the world, 500 million are run by families. Together, family farms produce at least 56% of the world’s food and constitute the predominant form of agriculture in both developed and developing countries. Family farming includes all forms of agricultural activities in which food, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture production is managed by a family who controls the majority of production factors: land, labour, capital and technology. Family farms range from smallholders and medium scale farmers, to peasants, indigenous peoples, fisher folk, pastoralists and many other groups in any region of the world.

Family farming is key to sustainably respond to the food and nutrition security challenge in so far as:

- Family farms use sustainable ways of exploiting soils to safeguard our agro biodiversity and help mitigating climate change;
- Family farms spend their incomes mostly within local and regional markets creating jobs, generating income, stimulating and diversifying local economies;
- Family farms preserve traditional food products and contribute to a balance diet.

International Year for Family Farming and World Food Day

In order to recognize the importance of family farming in reducing poverty, improving global food and nutrition security and protecting natural resources, the UN General Assembly has declared 2014 “International Year of Family Farming” (IYFF). This year’s World Food Day (16 October) theme, namely “Feeding the World, Caring for the Earth”, has been also chosen to highlight the importance of family farmers worldwide.

FAO’s support to family farming

The UN General Assembly has invited FAO to facilitate the implementation of the IYFF
in collaboration and with the support of its partners. Among its initiatives, FAO is planning to publish a major study on family farming and agricultural innovation systems (AIS) in 2014 as part of its State of Food and Agriculture’s flagship publication. As a matter of fact, many developing countries don’t have sufficient capacity to innovate and to fully realize the potential of agricultural innovation in family farming. FAO therefore works to modernize the AIS of its Member states in order to increase agricultural productivity of family farms and thereby, reduce rural poverty and hunger.

Moreover, FAO has put in place a Medium-term Strategy Framework for Cooperation in Family Farming in Latin America and the Caribbean for the period 2012-2015. The framework is intended to facilitate the adoption of policies and programmes to increase the production of goods and services originating from family farming.

**FAO’s recommendations to address family farming challenges**

Despite being the main producers of food consumed locally, family farmers face major constraints. In fact, the majority of family farms are run under 2 hectares and work about 12% of the world land. In addition to limited access to resources, family farmers are particularly vulnerable to risks such as diseases, pests, drought, floods and unpredictable rainfall. Appropriate policies need to be put in place in order to reduce such risks so that small-holder farmers can quickly deploy their productivity potential.

At the global level, strengthening farm land regulation is also essential in order to address international trends such as urbanisation and land grabbing that constitute an important threat to family farming.

At the national level, there are a number of crucial factors, such as: agro-ecological conditions; access to markets, technology and finance; policy, demographic, economic and socio-cultural environment; availability of specialized education, in particular for women who play a crucial role in ensuring food and nutrition security.

Against this background, governments, international organizations, regional agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, academia, and research institutions have a crucial role to play in providing this support and creating the enabling environment family farmers need to thrive.

**FAO’s activities in Geneva celebrating World Food Day and the IYFF**

In a bid to commemorate World Food Day and the IYFF, the FAO Office in Geneva will organize, in cooperation with the International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies and the Geneva Red Cross, a “Family Farming Market” on 16 October during which local family farmers will present a broad variety of local agricultural products. The objective will be to promote bio products (“produits du terroir”) at each stage of processing, from field to plate.

Moreover, as part of a special “Food for Talk” series whose discussions will highlight the importance of agriculture, food and nutrition security and sustainable development in Geneva, FAO will host, in December 2014, a special discussion on “Family Farming” at the Palais des Nations with inspired thinkers and speakers from various fields of expertise who will give their perspective on this topic.
Bilan 2013 de la liberté de la presse, selon Reporters sans frontières: 71 journalistes ont été tués, 87 enlevés, 826 interpellés/arrêtés.

In 2013, according to Reporters sans frontières: 71 journalists were killed, 87 kidnapped, 826 arrested.
How WHO uses social media

No public engagement, no public health

MONIKA GEHNER, CHANTAL CLARAVALL, ANGELA PRATT, JIANI SUN

Packing sustained winds of 230 km/hour, super typhoon Haiyan was accompanied by storm surges of up to 5 metres. Six thousand people died. Sixteen million were affected. As the magnitude of the disaster became apparent, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a “Level 3” emergency. Level 3 emergencies are ones that have a substantial impact on the health and wellbeing of people and cannot be managed by a country or a region alone. A week after the typhoon hit the Philippines, the WHO office in the country established social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to continually inform and engage the public on the ongoing response to the natural disaster. Through social media, WHO was able to provide the public with important statistics such as the number of damaged health facilities and of children immunized, direct people to develop messages such as about life-saving breastfeeding and highlight the response of other UN agencies. Next month, we will mark the one-year anniversary of Typhoon Haiyan and we realize: to some extent, social media helped save lives.

Trusted provider of actionable health data, knowledge and advice

What makes people and organizations act upon WHO advice? Trust. Trust is the currency of risk communications, and any communication about health is about risk – bridging the gap between how experts define a health risk and how the public perceives it. Trust is an outcome of levers such as consistency, integrity, sharing and demonstration of concern.¹ To be a trusted provider of accurate, accessible, understandable and useable information on a wide variety of health issues in a timely fashion, WHO must walk that talk on social media. For example, for its standards and norms to be taken up, WHO has to be a neutral convenor on social media as well.

A social media metric that is important for WHO is engagement – through demonstration of concern, acknowledgement of people’s contributions, asking and answering their questions. Indeed, the Twiplomacy Study 2013 on “How international organizations tweet” ranked WHO among the five most conversational international organizations out of 101 surveyed.² Engagement also seems to work in attracting more people to follow WHO on social media. On Twitter, @WHO will soon rally 1.58 million followers, compared with about 311,000 in January 2012. On Facebook, WHO has currently more than 1.57 million fans who “like” the page, up from 40,520 in January 2012.

WHO China Office opens Weibo account

China is the biggest producer and consumer of tobacco in the world. In April this year, the WHO China Office therefore launched a Weibo account, the Chinese equivalent of the micro-blogging service Twitter. “Tougher tobacco control policies are one of WHO’s biggest priorities in China,” says Dr. Bernhard Schwartländer, WHO Representative for China. "We see social media as a hugely powerful tool: we can engage with potentially hundreds of millions of people in China, sensitize them about the risks involved in tobacco use, help them make healthier choices and build public support for stronger tobacco control policies.” WHO China’s foray into Weibo followed a period of extensive preparation such as analysing the public opinion vis-à-vis tobacco, developing a roll-out strategy and training at Geneva headquarters.

A global social media policy for One WHO

When WHO dedicated its first-ever team to social media on 1 January 2012 as part of its ongoing reform, one of its first tasks was to develop a policy for WHO headquarters and staff that frames its content and conduct on social media, in line with WHO’s roles and principles and the standards of conduct for the international civil service. Among other things, WHO monitors and assesses health trends, articulates ethical and evidence-based policy options, sets norms and standards and disseminates valuable knowledge. And this is what the general public expects from WHO: evidence-based knowledge and advice on how to live long and healthy lives.

Some WHO regional offices already had a social media policy or guidelines in place before WHO headquarters, while others aligned theirs with headquarters. With more and more WHO offices and staff chartering new land on social media, it is increasingly important to ensure consistency and capacity across the Organization. A 20+ Task Force across WHO headquarters, regional and country offices is working together over the next months to develop a global policy for One WHO. The aim is to equip WHO offices and staff so they can responsibly and effectively use social media to help create public health – like the WHO Country Offices in China and the Philippines.


1 Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard & Werner, 1998

Après une longue carrière de journaliste, Josep Bosch a rejoint l’Organisation Mondiale du Commerce (OMC) en tant que porte-parole, poste qu’il occupe à ce jour. Il a commencé sa collection de journaux originaux en Mai 1968, après avoir été frappé par un titre à la une d’un journal français relatant la révolte des étudiants à Paris.

Passionné d’histoire et de journalisme, Josep Bosch a recueilli des journaux du monde entier sur les événements qui ont marqué l’histoire du XXe et du XXIe siècle plus spécifiquement lorsqu’il était correspondant et envoyé spécial de la presse espagnole sur les cinq continents.

En collectionnant les journaux publiés le jour même ou le lendemain des événements historiques qui ont eu lieu dans la ville et le pays concernés, Josep Bosch, en faisant une véritable archéologie de la presse écrite, a ainsi rassemblé plus de 10000 journaux en plusieurs langues allant de la fin du XIXe siècle à ce jour.

La Collection Josep Bosch a été exposée, sous divers formats, dans des musées, fondations culturelles, bibliothèques et autres institutions publiques et privées dans vingt villes et une douzaine de pays.

Josep Bosch exposera du 4 octobre au 2 novembre à la Fondation Martin Bodmer à Genève.

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Alex Mejia

Amartya Sen, the Nobel Laureate and prolific author, argues that democracy and free press improve government performance and accelerate development.

Is this assertion more valid today, when our societies are highly interconnected and the press has been radically democratized? Will development be the same with the press evolving with an explosion of the media we use and the frequency of information? Below we give our point of view in Spanish, to invite you to practice your skills in the language of Cervantes!

Es fácil entender que el desarrollo de las naciones en el siglo XX y lo que va del presente siglo ha sido positivamente impactado por el rol de la prensa como vocero de una sociedad que está permanentemente observando lo que hace un gobierno, informada de lo que sucede con el desarrollo social y el bienestar individual, y de manera especial, que tiene la libertad para llamar la atención e influenciar la capacidad de un gobierno o de un partido político para permanecer en el poder.

Lo que es menos obvio, es entender desde cuándo la prensa ha tenido injerencia en el desarrollo de los pueblos, o cómo llegó a tenerla. Para ello, habría que recordar que en el siglo XVII el concepto de libertad de opinión empezó a ser concebido como un pilar del pensamiento político moderno y del sistema que pronto sería adoptado como resultado de la
lucha contra la monarquía: la democracia. Se asumía que un progreso más igualitario era el norte deseable para toda sociedad y como prueba de ello, todavía podemos ver en los museos escudos de varios países que exaltan: libertad y progreso. En el siglo siguiente, las primeras constituciones después de la Revolución Francesa demuestran que el concepto de libertad como base del progreso (parte de nuestra concepción actual de desarrollo), involucra libertad de pensamiento y de expresión.

A mediados del siglo XVIII, con la aparición de los ‘penny papers’ la prensa libre se convirtió en un medio de comunicación masivo, vocado por vendedores ambulantes, con noticias de interés local y práctico, y no solo con contenido para las élites. Esa primera ‘democratización’ de los medios de comunicación permitió que las masas se interesaran en lo que estaba pasando en la sociedad como un todo y que empezaran a ser actores de los grandes cambios sociales que crearon el mundo contemporáneo.

En el siglo XIX, Alexis de Tocqueville contribuye a este proceso con sus análisis sobre la importancia de la opinión pública y de la libertad de expresión, en la evolución de una sociedad democrática. Sin embargo, es también escéptico del beneficio que conlleva la libertad de expresión cuando escribe en su análisis sobre la libertad de prensa en los Estados Unidos de América que esta también tiene un lado obscuro y negativo (en Inglés): ‘I confess that I do not entertain that firm and complete attachment to the liberty of the press, which things that are supremely good in their very nature are wont to excite in the mind; and I approve of it more from a recollection of the evils it prevents than from a consideration of the advantages it ensures.’

Con este breve y parcial recuento de como la libertad de prensa ha evolucionado en la época moderna, y las posibles desventajas de la libertad de expresión, es menester mencionar también que en el siglo XX hemos visto los dos lados de la libertad de prensa, pues movimientos totalitarios, anárquicos, imperialistas y pro-bélicos, hicieron uso amplio de la prensa para afianzar sus objetivos. El desarrollo de la propaganda, si bien aparecido mucho antes en la historia, tiene un climax en la segunda guerra mundial y en la guerra fría de cercana data. Sin embargo, sería fallido argumentar que la prensa no ha tenido un papel positivo en el siglo pasado, pues la evolución del pensamiento liberal, la abolición de los imperios coloniales, la democratización de las naciones, el mantenimiento de la paz y el orden, la adopción generalizada del concepto de derechos humanos y sobre todo, el enriquecimiento y el empoderamiento del ciudadano común, han sido legados que no pueden ser ignorados. A eso se debe añadir el aporte de los medios de comunicación al desarrollo, en términos de movilización de la opinión pública, mantenimiento de la rendición de cuentas y lucha contra la corrupción, apoyo al comercio, a la educación, al desarrollo científico, concientización de las crisis humanitarias y de manera especial, su aporte a la popularización de la solidaridad y la responsabilidad social como temas que atañen a toda persona.

Finalmente, lo que conocemos como ‘new media’ o ‘revolución mediática’ en el siglo XXI conlleva un potencial todavía mayor para crear un impacto positivo en el desarrollo de las sociedades, pues la ‘Era de la Información’ debería coadyuvar a obtener un mejor balance entre las libertades del individuo y el poder del estado. Al estar todos nosotros informados sobre todo tema, todo el tiempo, en todo lugar, el nivel de conciencia sobre el entorno es mucho mayor y la gran mayoría de la sociedad pasa a ser activa en los designios sobre futuro, desarrollo y sociedad. No hay más pasividad a causa de censura, de control o de manipulación de la prensa. Solo basta recordar lo sucedido en el Medio Oriente con las revoluciones espontáneas que tumbaron dictadores en el año 2011 y que crearon opinión pública de manera proactiva vía Facebook y Twitter. Si los ‘penny papers’ hicieron su trabajo en su momento y en su siglo, hoy los smartphones han demostrado a sociedad ser mucho más eficientes para generar libertad y desarrollo. Amartya Sen continues to be right.
GEMMA VESTAL

Personally, I was profoundly affected, so much that when I boarded a flight from Geneva to Asia in August, I started to think about what Glenn was probably doing before he died and if he was ready. Then, I asked myself if I was ready, which led me to conclude that my affairs were not in order and there would be lots of untied loose ends. When I returned to Geneva, I contacted the WHO Staff Counsellor, Mrs. Nathalie Casalis, to know what happens when a staff member dies suddenly and/or dies in the line of duty. It was an eye-opener. Mrs. Casalis provides information, advice, and referrals to staff, their partner, and family from Headquarters, regional and country offices. As a representative of WHO, she stressed the importance of meeting the partner or family during the grieving process, so that the Organization can respond promptly, accurately, and in a professional manner to assess the immediate needs of the partner or family member. Some of the basic questions could be: how much money am I going to receive? How am I going to support my family now? Will the immediate family continue to have medical insurance?

Mrs. Casalis plays a critical role for WHO staff, their next of kin and loved ones. For example, in one very sad case, she had to organize the funeral and burial for a staff member who was found dead by Geneva Police and who did not have family or any beneficiaries. She was also the advocate for the family of a staff member who died suddenly leaving a wife and young children. The wife had no idea where the financial assets were located or the bank account numbers. The grieving family was not only in a state of anguish but financial chaos as well.

I left our conversation with answers, but I had further questions. On the internet I found helpful sites, such as the Digital Beyond which maintains a list of online services designed to help you plan for your digital death and afterlife or memorialize loved ones. Some of those services are mentioned below.

www.MyWonderfullife.com is a planning, messaging and
memorial site with features that will help you plan your own passing. You can leave letters, document your wishes, make sure your pets are taken care of, write your own obituary and even design your own headstone.

www.ProtectTheirMemories.com acts on behalf of a decedent’s estate or personal representative to delete social media account(s).

www.AfterSteps.com is an all-in-one end-of-life planning service. AfterSteps simplifies the process by guiding users step-by-step through the estate, financial, funeral and legacy planning. AfterSteps stores your plan and related documents, and then transfers them to your designated beneficiaries upon passing. AfterSteps provides peace of mind and control, and reduces the financial and emotional burden for surviving loved ones.

www.ToLovedOnes.com specializes in delivering letters to loved ones after your passing. Their system allows you to schedule your letters for any conceivable date, even those yet to be determined, such as the birth of your first grandchild. This all happens automatically as their system monitors for your passing from public records with 95% accuracy.

www.WebCease.com helps executors, trustees and administrators find online accounts that are digital assets for the estate of the deceased. WebCease’s Digital Asset Discovery™ services identifies the active online accounts and instructs on the different options for retrieval, closure or memorialization in accordance with the policies of each site. WebCease also helps reduce the risk of identity theft.

Although not a subject we wish to dwell on, death is nevertheless the single appointment in life we cannot miss. And given that some of us might check out suddenly and unexpectedly, it is worth considering how your financial, physical, and digital assets such as photos and other important documents stored in your computer or in the computing cloud are going to be passed on to your loved ones and designated beneficiaries.

If you do not have a will, financial disorganization in death can cause stress, frustration and even thousands of dollars in unnecessary costs to heirs. Probate and estate taxes, late fees when bills go unpaid and legal fees when you need help sorting it all out – these are some or all of these hurdles that will suddenly emerge to be dealt with by the next-of-kin.1

Remember, creating the documents isn’t enough. They must be properly executed and notarized, gathered, organized and properly stored safely (like the attorney’s office, safe deposit box, or fireproof safe in your home). Inform your partner about your assets and how they could be accessed. Or at least, let a trusted person know where to look.

I don’t know about you, but for me, having some solid plans for my personal, financial and digital assets in the event of my death gives me that sense of reassurance that if I were to die suddenly, at least my loved ones and beneficiaries would not be unduly burdened.

NB: If you have comments or suggestions for future articles, please contact Gemma Vestal at vestalg@who.int.

1 www.smartasset.com/blog by Kimberly Rotter.

Sept années se sont déjà écoulées, depuis que nous avons accueilli les survivants et les familles de l’attentat en 2007. Sept ans semblent beaucoup, mais peu, en même temps.

Les souvenirs des différents moments de ces quelques jours passés avec les survivants et les familles restent vivaces. L’accueil à l’aéroport, le premier contact, l’appréhension!

L’appréhension d’être gaie dans nos attitudes. Que dire? Que faire? Appréhension de ne pas trouver le mot juste face au papa et à la maman qui ont perdu leur fille dans sa trentaine, après avoir savouré seulement quelques mois la satisfaction et la fierté de la voir décrocher un travail au siège de l’ONU à Alger.

Que dire à celui qui a perdu un être cher?

Comment aborder les uns et les autres? Chacun vit une histoire, un parcours, des rêves de fonder une famille, des projets pour l’avenir… Puis en quelques secondes, plus rien… comme si la terre s’arrêtait de tourner… et les cœurs s’arrêtent de battre!

Des liens se sont tissés entre notre groupe d’accompagnateurs, les survivants et les familles petit à petit au fil des jours, parfois sans mots. Les langues qui se délient, certains parviennent à mettre des mots sur leur vécu.

Nos vécus respectifs se mêlent alors: nos pays d’origine, nos pays d’adoption, nos langues, nos fonctions, nos familles et petit à petit, nos histoires de vie.

Apprivoiser la mort pour se réconcilier avec la vie
A la question de savoir si je j’avais vécu des événements similaires, je répondais que ma rencontre avec les disparitions des miens a commencé dès l’âge de trois ans! Ma vie a été jalonnée de morts de proches. Un chemin de vie qui m’a permis d’apprivoiser la mort pour me réconcilier, aujourd’hui, avec la vie.

Nos cœurs liés, et nos carapaces aux vestiaires
Un moment de grande intensité, un vécu commun qui nous rapprochait surtout de l’autre dans son humanité. Nos cœurs étaient désormais liés et nos carapaces aux vestiaires!

Nous ne sommes qu’au deuxième jour. Nous avons perdu notre enfant, disait, en signe d’au revoir, un de nos hôtes, « ces quelques jours passés avec vous ne nous le rendront pas, mais votre chaleur est un vrai baume sur nos cœurs! Merci! »

ONU/UN

© Oleksander Svirchevsky

La communion: 1800 personnes debout dans la Salle des Assemblées
Nous nous préparons pour la cérémonie solennelle. Nous rentrons dans la Salle des Assemblées, les uns après les autres. Mille huit cents personnes debout pour nous accueillir. La communion était au rendez-vous! Les larmes qui coulaient ignoraient les titres, les grades et les échelons!

La lumière pour transcender l’instant
La lueur des 17 bougies, allumées l’une après l’autre, éclairait nos esprits et nous accompagnait pour transcender l’événement.

Ce fut l’image captée par les caméras des télévisions et relayée dans les foyers, de Los Angeles à Tokyo et d’Helsinki à Sydney.

A cache-cache dans les couloirs du Palais
Nous sommes déjà vendredi, jour de départ des survivants et des familles. Les enfants sont accrochés à Anna. Ils ne veulent pour rien au monde quitter leur nounou de quelques jours, qui leur a fait découvrir le Palais en jouant, parfois, à cache-cache dans ses couloirs. Nous tenons tous à accompagner nos familles à l’aéroport.

Ce n’est qu’un au revoir
Les étreintes et les accolades prenaient de longues minutes, au seuil des portillons magnétiques. « Nous avons perdu notre enfant », disait, en signe d’au revoir, un de nos hôtes, « ces quelques jours passés avec vous ne nous le rendront pas, mais votre chaleur est un vrai baume sur nos cœurs! Merci! »

HECHMI FERJANI 1

In 2007, while commemorating, in the United Nations Office at Geneva, the Algiers bombing which took away the lives of seventeen of our colleagues, the Secretary-General unveiled in the Palais, the framed pieces of the tattered fabric of the UN flag as a result of the explosion as a symbol of hope for millions of people around the world and a sacrifice of our departed colleagues.

This flag is now placed near the Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Room. This year, next to the ripped flag, the plaque was unveiled to remember each fallen colleague by name (see photo). Two plaques, side by side today, commemorate two tragic events in the history of UNOG and other international organizations in Geneva, as well as all UN family. This second plaque is to commemorate the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Sergio Vieira de Mello together with 21 colleagues killed in the terrorist attack against the UN Headquarters in Bagdad.

It is not by coincidence that both plaques are inaugurated in the same location. They are inter-linked, they are connected. They both represent our deepest tribute and eternal remembrance. The day of unveiling of the plaque is also symbolic – 19 August, designated as World Humanitarian Day. This Day was designated not only as remembrance of the tremendous tragedies, but also to give example to the future generations, it holds special significance for our UN family and our humanitarian partners. On this day, while we come together to pay tribute to colleagues who have lost their lives in humanitarian service, we also celebrate the spirit of survivors. We admire courage and dedication of all those who serve in humanitarian missions all over the world, in the most difficult places, despite of the risk and danger, and who bring relief and provide help to the most vulnerable, to all those who are in need across the world.

This year, the Geneva World Humanitarian Day commemoration included screening of the film on the UN humanitarian work “Voices from the Field” and an interactive, high-level debate in the context of the global campaign entitled “Messengers of Humanity” that was focused on how each individual in different contexts can act as a humanitarian. The debate was moderated by Dr. Rick Brennan, Director/WHO, Ambassador William L. Swing, Director General/IOM was among the panellists.

The above moment of reflection and sharing was followed by the Plaque unveiling ceremony, opened by the Master of Ceremonies, Rashid Khalikov, Director of OCHA/Geneva. Michael Moller, Acting Director-General of UNOG, Athar Sultan Khan, Chief de Cabinet/UNHCR and former UNHCR Representative in Algiers and Coordinator for Western Sahara, Jamshid Gaziyev, President/UNOG Staff Coordination Council and Farida Djeddou, staff representative from Algiers and a survivor of the attack with the emotional remarks addressed the audience, represented by the staff, members of the diplomatic corps, Permanent Missions, other organisations and agencies, and our humanitarian partners in Geneva.
Jorg Weber, Head of Investment Policies Branch, DIAE

“Le Forum mondial d’Investissement de l’ONU est l’événement le plus important de la communauté internationale de l’investissement et de ses stakeholders” – UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, qui ouvrira le Forum 2014.

Du 13 au 16 octobre 2014, le Forum mondial d’Investissement de l’ONU, reconnu comme le plus important et le plus important de la communauté internationale de l’investissement, se tiendra au Palais des Nations.

Sous le thème Invest in Sustainable Development, les leaders mondiaux du secteur public et privé discutent des besoins, des opportunités et des stratégies pour atteindre les objectifs de développement durable (ODD).

Mr. Zhan, qui est également directeur de la division des investissements et de l’entreprise de l’ONU, qui organise l’événement, dit que les investissements dans le développement durable sont un engagement pour demain.

L’ONU a vocation à être le leader mondial dans la promotion des investissements dans le développement durable.

Les sessions sont ouvertes au public et sont structurées pour favoriser le débat interactif et maximiser la participation de l’audience.

“Nous avons cherché à rendre ce Forum d’investissement une expérience d’investissement pour demain.”

Osez l'action !

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MARGARETA STROOT (PRÉSIDENTE CSP)

Depuis près de quatre décennies l’île de Chypre est divisée en deux parties, l’une grecque, la République de Chypre, indépendante et membre de l’Union européenne, et l’autre turque, la république autoproclamée de Chypre du Nord, qui n’est reconnue que par la Turquie.

Dans la multitude de conflits, anciens et nouveaux, de ces dix dernières années, le monde a tendance à oublier ceux d’il y a 40 ans. Fort heureusement, les chercheurs, les universités et d’autres organismes n’oublient pas l’île de Chypre, ni surtout son héritage culturel – première victime de tout conflit.

La Mission permanente de Chypre auprès de l’ONU, épaulée par les associations grecques et gréco-suisse de Genève, organise début octobre une série de conférences et de projections, ainsi qu’une exposition de photos pour rappeler les tragiques événements de 1974. A cette occasion certains pourront découvrir l’existence du Musée d’Art chrétien, situé à Chambésy et qui abritera cette exposition consacrée au patrimoine religieux de la partie occupée de Chypre.


A l’heure où les médias consacrent toute leur attention à d’autres conflits, ces manifestations auront le mérite de rafraîchir quelques mémoires au sujet d’un problème qui est encore loin d’avoir été résolu.


**Chypre, 40 ans après**

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The five featured soloists are young talents comprising pianist Audrey Vigoureux, sopranos Jennifer Kressmann and Marion Grange, tenor Jérémie Schütz, and bass Mkhanyiseli Mlombi. Proceeds from the concert will benefit the Bilifou Association, which provides medical assistance to support the people of Yatenga province in Burkina Faso.

The United Nations Orchestra, founded in 2011 on the original idea of the conductor Antoine Marguier jointly with Martine Coppens, brings together some sixty talented and enthusiastic musicians, the majority of whom are international civil servants at the United Nations and specialized agencies based in Geneva, joined by musicians from the area. In line with the objective set out in Article 1.4 of the United Nations Charter, the Orchestra aims to support, through music, those who have fallen victim to humanitarian crises, and has raised in excess of CHF100,000 to date for numerous charities. With a unanimously recognized quality, it performs 6 to 8 annual concerts in prestigious venues in support of humanitarian causes and at official occasions. More recently, Michael Møller, Interim Director-General of UNOG, has stepped up to become the Honorary President of the Orchestra. According to Antoine Marguier, “after three years of existence, the Orchestra enjoys the status of the symbolic cultural bridge between the city of Geneva and its international community”.

The Orchestra is continuously looking to attract new musicians in order to offer greater repertoire possibilities and challenging performances, and rehearses weekly in the Kofi Annan Conference Room at UNAIDS. The Orchestra’s first international date will be marked by a repeat of the programme at Madrid’s esteemed Auditorio Nacional on 15 November 2014. Further upcoming concerts include events for the celebration of Geneva’s Bicentenary in March 2015, as well as a planned tour in China in 2016.

The United Nations Orchestra will unite with the Choir of the Universidad Politecnica de Madrid for an exceptional Mozart concert on Saturday, 8 November 2014 at 20:00 at Victoria Hall. The concert, conducted by Antoine Marguier, will bring Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 23 and the Mass in C minor to life.

The Mozart concert
By the United Nations Orchestra

The United Nations Orchestra and the Choir of the Universidad Politecnica de Madrid, 8 November 2014 at 20:00, Victoria Hall, Geneva.

For more details visit www.unorchestra.ch.
Le concert Mozart
Par l’Orchestre des Nations Unies

L’Orchestre des Nations Unies se produira prochainement avec le Chœur de l’Université Polytechnique de Madrid pour un concert Mozart exceptionnel le samedi 8 novembre 2014 à 20 heures au Victoria Hall de Genève. Dirigé par Antoine Marguier, le programme inclut deux œuvres maîtresses de Mozart, le concerto pour piano No. 23 et la Grande Messe en Ut mineur.


D’une qualité musicale unaniment reconnue et à raison de 6 à 8 fois par an, l’orchestre se produit dans des salles de concert prestigieuses afin de soutenir des actions caritatives et lors de célébrations officielles. Récemment M. Michael Møller, Directeur général par interim de l’UNOG, a accepté de devenir Président d’Honneur de l’orchestre. Antoine Marguier précise qu’« après trois ans d’existence, l’orchestre représente désormais un pont culturel symbolique entre la ville de Genève et sa communauté internationale ».

En constant mouvement, l’orchestre recrute ses musiciens en permanence; ses répétitions ont lieu chaque semaine en la salle de conférence Kofi Annan à ONUSIDA.


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**SPECIAL OFFER**

Lunchtime Exhibitions

Within walking distance of the Palais there are 4 museums that are all open at lunchtime. The 4 temporary exhibitions currently on offer are very varied and could provide an alternative to the cafeteria for a midday break.

SARAH JORDAN, UNOG
You can even have lunch at all 4 venues. Information about opening hours and entrance rates (if applicable) can be found by following the links.

SOMBRE – All too human – International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum – until 4 January 2014

The first temporary exhibition the Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum has held since its renovation and the inauguration of its permanent collection in 2013 is not for the faint-hearted. Organised in collaboration with the MAMCO, its theme is the suffering inflicted on human beings by other human beings and includes works from the 20th and 21st centuries. Parents with children under 10 are warned that some of the exhibits can shock, and rightly so. For United Nations employees in the present context (Syria, Gaza, Ukraine, South Sudan...) this exhibition is a must-see, but you will need to be in the right frame of mind. The exhibition space is quite small but dense in the emotions it provokes. If you have the time, watch the 4 films screened – the 2 on post-traumatic stress disorder are very thought provoking and the 2 others, shorter and mute, speak a thousand words.

www.redcrossmuseum.ch
The Ethno Palmes exhibition in the Jardin Botanique is ideal for a sunny day. Ethno botanics is the science of the relationship between mankind and the usage of plants. The palm family is the third biggest family of plants used by man today and throughout history. The contexts of this usage are numerous: food, protection, construction, arts and crafts, medicine, symbols and ornaments. As you walk through the garden, you encounter exhibits – explanatory panels in French or English, glass presentation cases with objects linked in some way to palms, and, from time to time, hung between trees, large-scale photos of palms in different contexts all over the world. The green houses are luxuriant and there is even a sandy beach with palm trees, deck chairs and a pond full of giant goldfish as a substitute for the sea.

This exhibition at the Musée du Château de Penthes is far more profound than its title might suggest. Peter Knapp is a Swiss photographer, famous for having given the French magazine *Elle*, of which he was Art Director in the 1960s and 70s, its “look”. In this exhibition, there are some great fashion photos from *Elle* but a lot more too. A 20-minute Arte film about the photographer is worth watching. One discovers a man who questions the cult of the image and cares about women. For this exhibition, Peter Knapp wanted to present something new to the public – something about contemporary Switzerland and about women. He considered photos of singers in a Calvinist choir or lady bankers, but finally opted for “ordinary” ladies: a sequence of life-size photos of pregnant women, nude but in no way provocative; a work to which he has given the title “the future of Geneva”.

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**SUNNY – Ethno Palmes – Jardin Botanique – until 19 October 2014**

**SUPERB – Musée Ariana – Contemporary Art and Patronage – A Sustainable Alliance – Tribute to Gisèle de Marignac – until 16 November 2014**

**SURPRISING – Peter Knapp – Elles – 101 regards sur les femmes – Musée des Suisses dans le Monde – Château de Penthes – until 9 November 2014**

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http://institutions.ville-geneve.ch/fr/ariana

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www.italindia.ch
Depuis sa création en 1997, la Société Frédéric Chopin accomplit, année après année, un travail considérable pour promouvoir la musique de Chopin sur la scène genevoise et internationale. Chaque saison confirme l’importance de sa présence et de son impact dans la vie culturelle, fortement appréciée par le public.

Les plus grands pianistes, interprètes actuels de la musique de Frédéric Chopin, répondent présents pour se produire lors du Festival Chopin – devenu un événement incontournable du paysage musical automnal genevois.

Cette année, et pour la dix-septième fois, le Festival Chopin aura lieu du 6 au 14 novembre.


• Un concert de musique de chambre comprenant des œuvres de Chopin, Brahms et Dvorak.
• Deux concerts symphoniques dans lesquels seront interprétés les Concertos pour piano op. 11 et op. 21. Le programme de ces deux concerts sera complété par un choix d’œuvres symphoniques de compositeurs polonais et ukrainiens.
• Un récital de piano entièrement chopinien.
• Une conférence sur “La danse – Polonaise”.
• Deux projections de films sur Chopin.
• Chopin Masterclass.

Pendant la Masterclass, de jeunes pianistes, futurs virtuoses, bénéficieront en séances publiques des précieux conseils de Krzysztof Jablonski, éminent interprète de la musique de Chopin. Durant ces seize dernières années, chaque Festival a été une véritable réussite et il en sera sans doute de même pour cette nouvelle édition!

Le Comité de la Société vous invite chaleureusement à prendre part à toutes les manifestations du Festival Chopin 2014.

Tous les détails pouvant vous intéresser sont disponibles sur le site www.societe-chopin.ch
MARGARETA STROOT (PRÉSIDENTE CSP)

Si le Club suisse de la presse (CSP) a été inauguré le 22 octobre 1997, c’est à la suite d’une longue gestation, car l’idée avait été lancée au moins dix ans plus tôt. Il a en effet fallu de longues années de négociations, de consultations et de réunions de travail pour que le projet aboutisse enfin.

Les fondateurs étaient au départ un petit groupe de réflexion animé par Danielle Maillefer, qui fut responsable de la communication à la Ville de Genève, et composé de journalistes locaux et étrangers accrédités à l’ONU, de représentants d’éditeurs et d’organisations internationales, ainsi que de personnalités officielles de la Ville, du Canton et de la Confédération. L’idée était de créer une structure susceptible de servir de lieu de rencontres et d’échanges entre journalistes suisses et internationaux, mais aussi de promouvoir la Genève internationale dans les médias suisses et étrangers. Si tout le monde ou presque s’accordait à penser qu’il s’agissait d’une bonne idée, le plus difficile était de trouver le financement nécessaire et surtout un lieu susceptible d’abriter le nouveau Club de la Presse. Le délicat a sans doute été constitué par l’installation en 1993 de l’Organisation mondiale du Commerce sur le bord du lac et par le souci des autorités suisses et genevoises de préserver les acquis de la Genève internationale face à la concurrence avec d’autres villes dans d’autres pays du monde.

C’est ainsi que la villa “La pastorale”, située au cœur même de la Genève internationale, a été mise à disposition par le Canton. Outre le Club suisse de la presse dont le but est d’organiser des conférences, rencontres de presse, tables rondes et séminaires de travail à l’intention des médias locaux et internationaux, La Pastorale abrite aussi le Centre d’accueil de la Genève internationale. Créé avec le soutien de la Confédération suisse, de l’État de Genève et de la ville de Genève, ainsi que de l’ensemble des médias romands, le Club suisse de la presse ambitionne d’être un lieu de rencontre unique en son genre entre journalistes et commu nicants de toutes sortes au sein d’une ville où se produisent de nombreux événements d’importance mondiale et que attire donc de nombreux médias du monde entier.

Après 17 années d’existence le Club suisse de la presse compte 33 membres médias (journaux, radios, agences de presse, TV), 62 membres collectifs (Organisations internationales, organisations non gouvernementales, entreprises) et 285 membres individuels. Environ 800 personnes sont titulaires d’une carte individuelle du Club, dont 450 journalistes et 300 attachés de presse, diplomates et personnalités diverses.

Véritable pont entre la Genève internationale et la Genève locale, c’est un lieu de rencontre privilégié entre journalistes locaux et leurs quelque 150 confrères étrangers accrédités en tant que correspondants permanents auprès de l’ONU qui couvrent les activités des organisations internationales. Quant aux journalistes de passage venus suivre l’une des nombreuses conférences internationales qui se déroulent chaque année à Genève, ils peuvent y trouver une place de travail ou des conseils. Les différentes organisations internationales, non gouvernementales ou locales, ainsi que les entreprises multinationales organisent des conférences de presse et événements divers à l’intention de tous les journalistes, mais aussi du public local et international. Le Club suisse de la presse a proposé depuis sa création des dizaines de rencontres avec la participation de décideurs locaux et internationaux, ainsi qu’avec des Chefs d’États prestigieux que les journalistes ont rarement l’occasion de côtoyer ailleurs. Soucieux de s’adapter aux changements intervenus ces dernières années dans le métier de journaliste mais aussi à l’arrivée des nouvelles technologies et moyens permettant d’informer le public de manières différentes, le Club suisse de la presse s’est équipé pour transmettre en direct les conférences de presse qu’il organise.

Pour renforcer les liens entre ses divers partenaires, le Club de la presse organise chaque année à la rentrée une fête de la communication. Plusieurs centaines d’acteurs de la Genève internationale, journalistes ou non, se retrouvent à La Pastorale pour communiquer et échanger dans une ambiance amicale et festive sous le patronage de l’ONU ainsi que des autorités de la Ville de Genève, du Canton et de la Confédération suisse.

Pour en savoir plus: http://2013.pressclub.ch
Hydra
The Pearl of the Aegean Sea

“There are places on Earth where God has reached down from Heaven and touched in a special way, places where you feel like you’re standing in the palm of His hand. When you find it, you know it, your soul knows it.”

– Michael Traveler, author of Miracle Road

Having missed our last dolphin ferry ride at the Paraeus Port in Athens, we are relieved to spot Hydra in the distance. Shaped like an amphitheater, it is the most beautiful natural harbor in the Aegean Sea. The word ‘Hydra’ derives from the Greek word ‘Ὑδρα’ for water.

Standing at the prow of our ferry we catch our first glimpse of the pretty villages nestled in the hills. White villas dot the lower slopes all the way to the pebbly shores. Red and pink bougainvillea blaze against the green hills. Windmills stand sentinels. Canons line parapets and cypress trees stand tall. Boats bob gently on the still waters of the harbor. Hydra emerges under the rays of the setting sun. A statue of Admiral Andreas Miaoulis, naval commander during the Greek wars, stands tall and proud, his eyes eternally scanning the distant waters for enemy boats.

Passengers make their way towards the exit just as the ferry touches the shore. We are welcomed by the cheerful sights and sounds of Hydra.

People sit in restaurants enjoying drinks. Shopkeepers stand outside their shops greeting the new visitors with cheerful smiles. Cats bask lazily on harbor walls, napping on window sills or simply wandering around curiously staring at the new arrivals. Donkeys stand by the harbor enjoying a break after the day’s work. Hydra island is a national monument. It is wheel free. There are no cars or bikes on the island. Donkeys are used to carry things.

The air is fresh and crisp. A gentle breeze blows across the waters. We savor the sight of quaint little boutiques and restaurants lining the port. On the way we stop to buy gelato. We walk past old men sitting under trees and people eating...
in tavernas. We notice more canons. A little yellow kitten chases us playfully. Pulling along our carry ons, we walk up the narrow paved street to our hotel.

At the hotel we are welcomed by the fragrance of lavender and geranium. Our smiling hostess comes out to greet us. The hotel was once a summer home of the advisor to the Russian Tsar. Its a beautiful place with its white high ceilings and French windows.

We eat dinner at a local taverna. Family pictures decorate the walls. The atmosphere is homely. The food is delicious and the service efficient and warm. We taste various local dishes of aubergine, yogurt, tomatoes, warm bread and cheese. Hydra has many tavernas serving wonderful food.

The next morning, we enjoy breakfast in a sunny room with bright yellow floors overlooking a little courtyard with lemon and orange trees. Soft classical music plays in the background. We smell fresh coffee. We love the warm bread and cheese pies baked by Maria.

We visit the Greek Orthodox church – a hidden gem on the island. Little silver ships and sea dragons hang from the heavy crystal chandeliers probably to bless the sailors at sea. Biblical paintings adorn the high ceilings and walls. Due to the romantic nature of the island, it is said couples who visit end up getting married here!

We walk on windswept paths along high cliffs overlooking the sapphire blue sea to the neighboring villages of Avlaki, Kamini, Vlychos and Plakes. We come across young boys and girls cliff jumping into the sea.

We meet cats of all colors. Hydra should be named ‘Cat Island’. We see donkeys carrying fruits and flowers. Men riding donkeys wave and sing. One man points at the flower in my hair I had picked up earlier from the path. It must have fallen from his bag. He laughs and breaks into a huge smile.

We walk through Avlaki, a little village of whitewashed homes and blue doors. In Vlychos we eat lunch at the seaside taverna. We sit in the shade of the vine terrace. The Blue vases filled with wild flowers stand out against the white tables and chairs. The simple Greek lunch of aubergine and fresh pasta is perfect.

On our way to Plakes we see wild horses. It is a nice village to stop for drinks before heading back to Hydra port. We enjoy delicious fresh juice. Orange juice is a common drink in Hydra because oranges grow in abundance on the island. All tavernas and homes have their own orange trees.

One must never miss the sunset on a Greek island. Sunsets are spectacular. We eat dinner while watching the sun set at the ‘Sunset Restaurant’. We agree that this restaurant has one of the most beautiful views in the world. As the sun goes down we remember the beautiful sunset of Oia, Santorini.

Hydra island is a World Heritage site where nature thrives unspoiled and pollution is kept at bay. Wild flowers bloom and orange trees grow in abundance. Wild horses, donkeys and cats coexist happily alongside its inhabitants. Dolphins and seals come to play in its waters without fear. Visitors experience kindness, generosity and hospitality. Hydra made us feel at home. It gives visitors a sense of belonging. It must be the simple generosity and kindness of its people. We were met warmly wherever we went. Hydra will stay with us long after we leave.
France

Sur le chemin de Stevenson (1re partie)

Moins médiatisé que le chemin de Compostelle, le chemin de Stevenson n’en est pas moins intéressant à parcourir. Et, du Puy-en-Velay jusqu’à Alès, sur plus de 250 kilomètres, la région est magnifique.

TEXTE & PHOTOS CLAUDE MAILLARD

Bernard Bays, Ousien durant de longues années et qui m’accompagne dans mon périple, m’affirmera même qu’il le préfère au Compostelle qu’il a déjà fait.


Le journal de route de Robert Louis Stevenson fut publié en 1879 sous le titre de «Voyage avec un âne dans les Cévennes» et précédéra de quelques années ses œuvres les plus connues : «L’île au trésor» et «Le cas étrange de Dr Jekyll et de Mr Hyde».

Cet ouvrage a permis de retracer son itinéraire, devenu Le chemin de Stevenson qui offre aux randonneurs la possibilité de suivre les traces de cet aventurier écossais amoureux de la France...

En 1993, la Fédération Française de Randonnée balise le chemin de Stevenson qui devient alors le GR 70. Afin de faciliter l’accessibilité à l’itinéraire, le chemin de Stevenson a été prolongé depuis le Puy en Velay et jusqu’à Alès.

L’association «Sur le chemin de Robert Louis Stevenson»

«Je ne voyage pas pour aller quelque part, mais pour voyager ; je voyage pour le plaisir du voyage. L’essentiel est de bouger, d’éprouver d’un peu plus près les nécessités et les aléas de la vie, de quitter le lit douillet de la civilisation, et de sentir sous ses pieds le granit terrestre avec, par endroits, le coupant du silex.» (Robert Louis Stevenson).

Forte d’un réseau qui se veut avant tout humain, du Puy-en-Velay à Alès, l’association regroupe plus d’une centaine de prestataires touristiques ou « Relais Stevenson » qui proposent hébergement, restauration, location d’ânes, randonnées équestres, organisateurs de séjours, intervenants et sites culturels, et transport de personnes et de bagages, dont « La Malle Postale » à l’efficacité irréprochable.

Au pays de la lentille
La lentille verte, appellation d’origine contrôlée, produite sur une centaine de communes du bassin du Puy-en-Velay, constitue un mets réputé employé par les plus grands chefs. Situé au sud-est du Massif Central, point de départ de notre balade, le Puy en Velay est avant tout un site exceptionnel. Préservée des atteintes du temps, la ville réserve bien des surprises aux visiteurs. L’étonnante chapelle Saint-Michel d’Aiguilhe, perchée sur son piton rocheux haut de 82 m, est l’un des sites les plus étonnants de France. La cathédrale (inscrite au patrimoine mondial de l’UNESCO) et son cloître qui est la référence de l’art roman des XIe et XIIe siècles. Au sommet du rocher Corneille, la statue monumentale de Notre Dame de France érigée en 1860, d’un poids de 835 tonnes, a été réalisée avec le métal de 213 canons pris aux Russes lors de la Guerre de Crimée. Tout l’environnement de la haute ville est compris dans un secteur sauvegardé de 35 hectares où sont protégés les éléments architecturaux des anciennes demeures, ornées de tourelles, de portes sculptées et de fenêtres à meneaux. Enfin, la visite ne saurait être complète sans la découverte de l’Atelier Conservatoire National de la Dentelle chargé de maintenir les techniques de la dentelle aux fuseaux qui a également fait la renommée du Puy-en-Velay. Après avoir passé la nuit à la « Maison Saint-François », gîte d’étape accueillant les marcheurs et pèlerins, situé dans le quartier historique du Puy-en-Velay, nous attaquons notre longue marche, plein sud, en direction d’Alès que nous devrions atteindre dans quelques jours dans le coin. C’est ça le Chemin de Stevenson : de belles rencontres là où l’on ne s’y attend pas !

Le Bouchet-St-Nicolas, paisible petite commune de 250 habitants, est perché à 1228 mètres. Pendant de longues années, l’acteur Daniel Auteuil venait y passer ses vacances dans la maison familiale. La salle de l’auberge « Le Couvige » accueille de nombreux randonneurs venus se restaurer. L’ambiance est très conviviale. Artiste peintre, photographe, écrivain, Jacques Bardinet a notamment travaillé avec David Hamilton. Le personnage, très sympathique, très ouvert, est venu passer quelques jours en compagnie du cheminement du Stevenson. Enfin, la visite ne saurait être complète sans la découverte de l’endroit situé à 22 km du Puy-en-Velay. Avant cela, notre périple nous a conduits au Monastier-sur-Gazeille, gros bourg construit autour d’une abbaye bénédictine fondée au VIIe siècle, l’un des plus beaux exemples de l’art roman en Auvergne. Son orgue de 1518 est l’un des plus vieux d’Europe. La commune, isolée, devait être désenclavée grâce à la Transcévenole, ligne de chemin de fer qui ne sera jamais achevée à cause de la première guerre mondiale. Aujourd’hui, près de l’auberge « Les Acacias », ne subsiste que l’impressionnant viaduc de la Recoumène, construit en basalte, long de 270 m et qui n’a jamais vu passer un train ! Maintenant, reconvertis en centre européen du saut à l’élastique, il permet aux adeptes des sports extrêmes de se jeter du haut de ses 66 mètres.

Notre chemin se faufile dans la vallée de la Loire que nous traverserons à Coubon, village ravagé par la grande crue du fleuve en 1980, puis à Goudet dont le château de Beaufort domine les lieux du haut de la montagne. Nous parcourrons également de vastes plateaux, avec des cônes volcaniques à perte de vue, nous rappelant que la région a connu de fortes éruptions il y a plusieurs millions d’années.

A la frontière entre le Velay et le Gévaudan, édifiée près du lac de Naussac, Langogne sera notre prochaine étape. La ville est également située à l’extrême nord-est de la Lozère, département que nous allons silloner les jours suivants. A découvrir dans le prochain numéro du UN Special.
Corrigendum

La France avait été omise dans la liste des 5 membres permanents du Conseil de Sécurité. Cette erreur s’était glissée lors de la transmission de l’article au graphiste.

La direction s’excuse auprès de l’auteur pour le désagrément causé ainsi qu’au-près du gouvernement français.

L’auteur de l’article «Humanitarian Workers who save lives, also need training», publié en septembre 2014, est Sofia Wahlstedt.

Corrigendum

France was omitted from the list of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. This error slipped in when the story was sent for layout.

The UN Special management apologizes for the error to the author as well as the French government.

The author of the article “Humanitarian Workers who save lives, also need training”, published in September 2014 is Sofia Wahlstedt.

Nous remercions également les personnes qui ont participé activement à l’élaboration de ce numéro:

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