A NEW SECRETARY-GENERAL ARRIVES

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We have a new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres. He has arrived, and we have had our first interactions with him. His mandate is a difficult one, and the staff in Geneva understand the challenges ahead and the difficult topics we will have to broach in our dealings with the UN management. At the same time, we have started a new relationship with Mr. Guterres and wish him well. He is, after all, an international Genevois who sees the United Nations in Geneva at the center of the UN.

In this edition, we offer you several articles on him and on the three new priorities he is giving us. We have an article on the agenda of the world sets for the UN and another on the need for UN reform. We also write with great joy about the arrival of an African woman to the second highest post in our organization. Ms. Amina Mohammed has become our new Deputy Secretary-General, and we embrace her as well.

We continue to give you the staff’s perspective on the pension fund and on the role of the UN in Agenda 2030. A senior diplomat writes about a new compact on migration, one of our Deputy Editors writes about multilingualism, WHO raises awareness about its guidelines on sugar intake and UNOG’s Young Reporters send us a new contribution. In addition, we invite you to read about disabilities, cycling, cultural diplomacy and the unique role of the InterContinental hotel in International Geneva.

A wide array of topics with one commonality: you and your interests. We hope you enjoy this edition!

Nous avons un nouveau Secrétaire général, M. António Guterres, et nous avons déjà pu interagir avec lui. Son mandat est difficile et le personnel à Genève comprend les défis qui nous attendent et les sujets délicats que nous devrons aborder dans nos relations avec la direction de l’ONU. Nous avons entamé notre relation avec M. Guterres et l’accompagnons de nos voeux. C’est, après tout, un Genevois international qui place les Nations Unies à Genève au cœur de l’ONU.

Nous vous proposons plusieurs articles sur lui et sur les trois nouvelles priorités qu’il a dressées, de même que sur la feuille de route que le monde a donnée aux Nations Unies ou sur la nécessité de réformer l’ONU. Nous consacrons un article à l’arrivée d’une femme africaine au deuxième poste le plus élevé de notre organisation: Mme Amina Mohammed a été nommée Vice-Secrétaire générale et nous l’accueillons avec grand plaisir.

Nous vous faisons partager le point de vue du personnel sur le fonds de pension des Nations Unies et sur le rôle de l’Organisation dans le Programme de développement durable à l’horizon 2030. Un haut diplomate écrit le nouveau pacte mondial sur la migration, l’un de nos rédacteurs adjoints écrit sur le multilinguisme et l’OMS nous sensibilise à la consommation de sucre. De jeunes reporters de l’ONUG contribuent également à ce nouveau numéro, dans lequel vous trouverez aussi des articles sur le handicap, le cyclisme, la diplomatie culturelle et le rôle unique de l’hôtel InterContinental dans la Genève internationale.

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The impossible job...

“I, António Guterres, solemnly swear to exercise in all loyalty, discretion and conscience the functions entrusted to me as Secretary-General of the United Nations, to discharge these functions and regulate my conduct with the interests of the United Nations only in view, and not to seek or accept instructions in regard to the performance of my duties from any government or other authority external to the organization.”

ALEX MEJIA, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

On 18 January, I joined the crowd at the Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Room at the Palais des Nations, to attend the first meeting of the new Secretary-General with UN staff based in Geneva. I had met him briefly on a couple of prior occasions, while he was campaigning for this post, and each time had the same impression: of an approachable man of clear mind and straight talk. After the meeting today, I would add two more critical characterizations: a communicator who easily connects with an audience, and a determined leader with an agenda. You see, it was a full house, and there were many warm comments emanating from a usually cold audience. This type of meeting is supposed to have a rigid script, but instead, I witnessed the crowd’s spontaneous reactions to Mr. Guterres’ knack for balancing seriousness with humor and peaceful reflections with incisive comments.

He shared with us the three priorities of his mandate: peace and security, sustainable development and management reform. He told us that diplomacy for peace will be the top issue, and that conflict prevention will be as important as crisis response. He said that too many people are dying, and that preventing war must be our priority. Indeed, he wants to make 2017 a year for peace. He went on to share his thoughts on the renewed focus on sustainable development that his administration will have; the effort will be spearheaded by no one less than Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Amina Mohammed (see the article on her appointment on page 14) leading the charge and making sure we all row in the same direction towards the achievement of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The fight against poverty will continue along the same roadmap we have already embraced, but with a more synergetic effort in regards to the SDGs, one in which all UN agencies contribute tangibly and in a coordinated fashion towards those goals. Last but not least, on management reform, the new Secretary-General said that we need to review the way we operate in order to increase the efficiency of the organization, while still respecting staff. He noted that our rules and regulations can sometimes become unintended straightjackets that diminish efficiency and increase micro-management, which he is not fond of. He promised that any reform will be debated with the participation of staff members, taking into account our concerns and knowing that job security has a direct impact on motivation and productivity. He envisions a more flexible organization, but not at the expense of its human resources, and he concluded with this assertion: “I will always seek sincere and open dialogue with you, based on trust and not on preconceived perceptions”.

©UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

The impossible job...
We have been following Mr. Guterres since the very morning he arrived at UN headquarters in New York. We have followed him for several weeks on the nightly news, on our webpages, on twitter, on UN TV, you name it. However, there is nothing like seeing the man himself and, most importantly, listening to his message, and the ruminations that happen as the result of verbal engagement. Today we saw the way he walks, talks, looks and breathes. Today we saw the man and his years, but also the spark in the eyes and the rapid smile that his colleagues at UNHCR still remember. After all, he reminded us today that he was simply coming back to his old town, and that he truly sees the United Nations in Geneva as the center of the UN. We can confirm today that he is indeed a former Genevois.

Now, you may ask, what can be the motivation for a leader with such a difficult mandate? An analysis of this question would be long and tedious, but will always need to include the fundamental aspirations and drivers of that leader. In the case of Secretary-General Guterres, we know that he has dedicated his life to public service, and that he is an experienced politician, a results-oriented person, and a man of faith. He desires to continue to serve others, and he evinces an old definition of maturity that I learnt from my grandfather, another career-long civil servant: to be mature is to be able to tolerate frustration. I am sure the life of António Guterres has seen many frustrations, which is exactly why he is the right person for this impossible job. For the next five or perhaps ten years, he will have to dwell in that narrow space between diplomatic victory and political defeat, in the twilight zone between public accomplishments and personal frustrations. Take the war in Syria, or any other conflict negotiation amongst the powers-that-be: even with the positive outlook that the pundits give to the new relationship between Mr. Trump and Mr. Putin, the Secretary-General knows that he has no real authority. He knows that he only carries a moral mandate, and that his success rides only on his ability to influence other leaders. It’s no easy job.

But again, we may ask, what could be his real motivation every morning when he wakes up? Perhaps the answer lies in his faith. Last December in New York, with his left hand resting on a Bible and his right hand in the air, Mr. Guterres took the Oath of Office printed above. With that pledge, our new Secretary-General was appointed to the highest post in the United Nations Organization. An oath is the utmost sort of promise. It requires faith, in a higher ideal, in a higher being, in oneself. When you recite those words, you are more than committing to do what the Oath of Office states. All your aspirations and all your drive will also be put into the effort. Why is his motivation important for us? It’s simple: if he is successful, then all of us are successful. If he fails, we also fail. You may think you are detached from his performance, but think again: if the United Nations is seen as less and less relevant in the future, fewer and fewer resources will be invested in our operations. At moments like that, downsizing and restructuring become fashionable in the conversations of Member State decision-makers. On the contrary, when our leader(s) have visible accomplishments and a tangible impact, our mandate is supported and even enhanced. The United Nations of the 21st century must not grow smaller just as global problems are growing exponentially. We need António Guterres to thrive and to represent us well. His motivation is critically important, and whatever its source, we pray that it remains high and determined.

With a Secretary-General who has previously been a Head of Government, we may take comfort in his profound command and understanding of politics. This type of experience implies visible negotiation skills, an understanding of human nature, and a silent ability for compromise. These skills are critical if the UN is to succeed in issues of war and peace, as we must get political leaders to work together. A statesman like Mr. Guterres surely understands the principle articulated by Cicero:
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New priorities for the United Nations

The UN must change in order to be relevant and to serve humanity. The world order of 1945 or before exists no longer. We must try to make the UN a new and vibrant organization that responds to the challenges of this new era. The lives of millions of refugees, migrants and ordinary citizens of every nation depend on it.

AMBASSADOR LUIS GALLEGOS

We begin 2017 with a new UN Secretary-General, António Guterres. He arrives at an important juncture in the ever-changing international landscape, where his leadership is much needed to guide the world organization. The international order requires dialogue, restraint and consensus, all of which are difficult in a world dominated by competing interests that, in many cases, prevail over principles and international law.

The Greek philosopher Heraclitus noted that change is the fundamental essence of the universe. Human society is ever-dynamic, which makes it difficult for a static or permanent world order to exist; especially when, for example, society confronts change with adverse reactions, including war.

Thus, the UN must change in order to be relevant and to serve humanity. The world order of 1945 or before exists no longer. We must try to make the UN a new and vibrant organization that responds to the challenges of this new era. The lives of millions of refugees, migrants and ordinary citizens of every nation depend on it.

When member states created the UN, they intended it fundamentally to be an inter-governmental body. It has evolved, however, into a more complex entity, with some characteristics not necessarily intended by the governments that created it. For example, in the world society of today, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are sometimes more powerful than nation states. The international community today also consists of transnational corporations that, in many cases span the globe, and which have certain capacities that states do not. The lack of resources and the lack of will by member states to fund the UN has lead to the creation of public-private partnerships between the UN and its agencies. These PPPs need orientation and vigilance. In the field of human rights, the UN and many regional organizations have made it possible for individuals to take their country, or a third country, to task. And finally, we now have the legal standard of international treaties and their international monitoring bodies, which seek to ensure member state compliance with treaty obligations.

The difficulties we face as an international community are daunting! The people and governments of the world look to the UN as the forum for discussion and for consensus on how to meet these transnational challenges.

The Three Pillars of the UN – Human Rights, Peace and Security and Sustainable Development – encompass such a huge spectrum of human endeavors that, on a given day, dozens or hundreds of meetings take place around the world to try to reach agreements among the different areas. Negotiation is the basis for these agreements, and we need professionally capable individuals in state delegations and in the UN to go beyond the talk and to walk the walk. I believe that we must make those outstanding agreements realities on the ground. We must be pragmatic and try our best to meet the needs of those brothers and sisters who desperately need our commitment.

The UN is at its best when members can reach these agreements. I have participated in countless meetings in New York, in Geneva, and around the globe, and have witnessed the efforts towards these agreements. It is not an easy task; for many,
often, the obstruction of agreements, the lack of consensus and the unwillingness to go beyond narrow interests impedes multilateral solutions that would benefit millions or even billions of persons. A clear example is the Conference on Disarmament, where more than fifteen years have passed with no agreement on topics that are vital for human survival.

My experience chairing the Ad-Hoc Working Group (from 2002 to 2005) that elaborated the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWD), demonstrates that world society can be changed. Indeed, more than 170 states have signed and ratified obligations that have changed the world for billions of PWD and their families. This experience compels me to defend what is possible rather than resort to eternal skepticism like many others. Results like this are the UN at its best!

For an international system that seeks to address all of human activity—certainly a worthy endeavor—prioritizing is a difficult and complex process. The integration of international variables in all human activity is a consequence of the new international order, which some do not understand and try to prevent. The internationalization of internal variables, on the other hand, has influenced the dynamics of global multilateral negotiations where the interests of the more powerful prevail or try to prevail. The only current forum where all nations can express their concerns and those of their people is the United Nations and the multilateral organizations. Some states believe that if the UN or regional multilateral organization does not serve their interests, these institutions should be eliminated or at least restricted. Such a proposition is an easy way out to satisfy internal political agendas.

In a world that needs global leadership to meet the challenges of more than six billion people, we must foster for political will, cultivate a vision to change, and address the need to restructure the organization and its workings. The international community clamors for a more democratic world system, one that can complement intergovernmental negotiations with the participation of civil society and all other stakeholders.

We must ask governments to be willing to look beyond their internal political interests, giving way to understanding rather than obstruction, confrontation and war. We need a more efficient UN that can deal with a new and ever-changing world. We ask for a more just world order, one where human rights are understood as universal, where development meets the needs of billions, and in which the security and peace of one is the security and peace of all.

In the long run “We the People of the United Nations…” must prevail. That is our motivation. That is my hope.

Ambassador Luis Gallegos has been Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations in New York and in Geneva, as well as Ambassador to the USA, Australia, El Salvador, and Bulgaria. He is currently a Fellow of Harvard Law School, President of the Institute of Public Policy and Disability at American University, President of the Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs (G3ICT), Honorary Chair of the Universal Design Commission, Member of the Board of Special Olympics International, Member of the Board of the Advisory Group of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and Special Advisor of the Nippon Foundation.
A new Secretary-General

The right person for the right time

Who is António Guterres, the man?

He arrives at a historic moment, after achieving unanimity among the great world powers.

ANGELA MONTAÑO GARCÍA, UNITAR

As of January 1, 2017, we have a new Secretary-General. Although the predictions suggested that the new UNSG would be a woman or some other candidate from Eastern Europe (a region hitherto unrepresented), it was finally Portugal’s nominee António Guterres who obtained unanimity from the Security Council when he appeared as the most qualified and experienced person to fill the position. Indeed, over the years, Guterres has earned himself a reputation as a good diplomat and a great speaker; he has a different skill set than former Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, who was sometimes criticized for his communication style. Also, SG Guterres arrives at the UN at a critical moment for the organization. Expectations are high: he will have to resolve crises and deal with complex situations such as the current conflicts (e.g. Syria, Yemen, South Sudan, Afghanistan), the allegations of sexual abuse by “blue helmets” in the Central African Republic, the UN responsibility for the cholera outbreak in Haiti and the possible change in the dynamics of the Security Council, given a possible reset of the United States’ relationship with Russia after its recent presidential election. The task is tremendous, but the hopes pinned on SG Guterres are even greater. Let’s take a closer look at the life and career of the man who now occupies one of the most powerful and challenging positions in the world.

“The talking jackhammer”

Mr. Guterres was born on April 30, 1949 in Lisbon, Portugal. From a very young age, he was a brilliant student, who won the National High School Award for best student in Portugal in 1965. In 1977, he obtained his Bachelor’s degree in Physics and Electrical Engineering from the Instituto Superior Técnico of Lisbon. As a practicing Catholic, he was an active member of an association of Catholic students who handled various community aid and education projects in the slums of Lisbon. On the political level, he became an activist with the Catholic University Youth before joining the Portuguese Socialist Party in 1974, once the Carnation Revolution put an end to fifty years of Salazar’s dictatorship in Portugal. In 1976, during the democratic transition, Guterres became Parliamentary deputy of the first legislature. During the seventeen years that he occupied this position, he earned the nickname “the talking jackhammer” for his persuasive and powerful oratory.

In 1992, he became Secretary-General of the Socialist Party, and once the Socialists won the legislative elections in 1995, he became Prime Minister of Portugal. Mr. Guterres’ mandate was an important milestone in Portuguese history, as he was the first head of state to complete his term.

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In 1992, he became Secretary-General of the Socialist Party, and once the Socialists won the legislative elections in 1995, he became Prime Minister of Portugal. Mr. Guterres’ mandate was an important milestone in Portuguese history, as he was the first head of state to complete his term.
His tenure, which took place in a period of accelerated expansion for the country, was marked by achievements such as the creation of a “guaranteed minimum income” for all, and the successful integration of Portugal into the euro zone. Also during his tenure, the former Portuguese colonies were embroiled in conflict with the pro-Indonesian militia, due to the victory of the partisans for the referendum on self-determination. In addition to his other accomplishments, Guterres’ strong diplomatic skills played a crucial role in convincing the UN and the international community of the urgency of intervening in East Timor in 1999.

M. Guterres’ tenure as Prime Minister also included, in 2000, the Portuguese presidency of the European Union. The presidency was considered a victory, notably after the organization of the First Summit of the EU-Africa in Cairo, and after the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy to improve economic growth in the EU Member States.

In spite of all these accomplishments, the unfavorable economic situation affecting Portugal at the time weakened the Socialist Party, and caused it to lose the municipal elections in 2001, during M. Guterres’ second mandate. Affected by this defeat, the Prime Minister resigned in 2002.

“Neither optimistic nor pessimistic, but determined”

Those last years of his term were not easy for Guterres. Not only did the defeat of the Socialist Party lead him to withdraw from politics, but he also lost his first wife and the mother of his two children, Luísa Amélia Guimarães e Melo, who died of cancer in 1998. The Portuguese people still remember how their former Prime Minister showed his human side during that difficult personal ordeal, returning home every night to be with his wife, no matter how busy his agenda.

However, Mr. Guterres did not abandon his quest to give a more transcendental dimension to his life. In 2005, he was appointed UN High Commissioner for Refugees by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. His mandate lasted ten years and was characterized by a difficult period, in which the number of displaced persons rose from 38 million in 2005 to about 60 million in 2015. Throughout those years, High Commissioner Guterres’ negotiating and leadership capacities were put to the test. Undoubtedly, the world faced one of its most serious refugee crises. Billions of Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghans (among others) were fleeing war and conflict to seek refuge in Europe via the Balkans. Despite being frequently confronted with the inaction and lack of political will of some European leaders, Mr. Guterres never ceased to raise the alarm, and to appeal to the international community’s sense of responsibility and solidarity with those in need of it.

Major challenges awaiting the new SG

In this context of crisis, new SG Guterres must find a way to unite the members of the Security Council, who have never been so divided as at this moment. Will the charisma and field experience that characterizes our new Secretary-General be enough to encourage the great powers to work together to resolve the conflicts that threaten peace in the world? At least one thing is certain: our new chief is determined to make progress. António Guterres is the man we need, and he has come to the right place at the right time.

1 Mr. Guterres during an interview with the Swiss newspaper Le Temps, January 2, 2015: https://www.letemps.ch/monde/2015/01/02/y-51-millions-personnes-deplacees-force-monde-ceffroyable
The UN needs reform. Here’s how.

IAN RICHARDS, UNDG

Since taking his oath of office, new Secretary-General António Guterres has repeatedly called for reform to:

• speed up selection of staff deployment;
• simplify, decentralize and make administration flexible;
• better protect whistleblowers;
• reach gender parity;
• use resources more effectively;
• motivate staff.

Clearly, he has set expectations high.

Staff, too, want reform, not least to ensure that hard work, upholding UN values and contributing to the SDGs are recognized and rewarded. So how about we look for some common ground?

Let’s start by going back to giving UN staff preference for promotions over hiring externals, as practised at UNHCR. It’s a big request to make to the General Assembly, but why should we advertise every vacancy outside when the skills and experience are already here inside? And to help that shift happen, let’s make performance reports count once again towards promotion. Past performance is the best predictor for the future.

Let’s also work with the General Assembly so that General Service, Field Service and National Officers can apply to international professional posts. Outsiders should not have easier access to P posts than 50 percent of our own staff.

It’s also time to get to the bottom of why more women don’t get promoted. Are there unconscious biases, and if so how can we correct them? Are flexible work arrangements evenly applied? Should parental leave be reviewed? WHO and UNICEF give six months. The Global Fund lets mothers transfer some leave to fathers to share responsibilities. Parental leave should also cover non-traditional families.

Let’s address the difficulties recruiting and retaining young people. The average joining age at the UN is 41. Only 3% of posts are P-2. Our many young colleagues are instead employed as free interns, UN volunteers, consultants and temporary staff. Let’s convert entry-level work to real posts, pay our interns and fund it by cutting some USG and ASG positions before they are filled.

Let’s be pragmatic too, and make mobility about staff going where their skills and experience are best. This principle stands opposed to moving for the sake of moving, which creates unnecessary uncertainty for staff, families and departments. Selection times are long, and OHRM is overburdened. Let’s clarify which decisions, such as recruitment and promotion, are centralized to guarantee quality, and which should be decentralized for faster and better lateral deployments, while also helping staff change departments and duty stations if they wish.

Last year, I attended the annual memorial for fallen staff and peacekeepers. They read out a record of 217 names, of which 59 were killed in Mali alone. Is the money the UN receives to be in the world’s most dangerous places always worth the staff we lose, and how can we improve safety?

And for staff who retire, the current two-month wait to get paid, even if down from six months last year, is too long. The fund’s staff work so hard. But its leadership stumbles from one mess to another. The General Assembly heard us and blocked the fund’s exit from the UN. The fund’s leadership needs to change.

At a time when our critics are watching closely, the UN’s behavior must be irreproachable. Staff who report misconduct, rapes, fraud, or rule-breaking should not be hounded out of office. They should be protected with a better whistleblower policy. We cannot afford any more scandals and cover-ups.

Further, let’s put in place accountability for senior managers, 360-degree reviews and zero tolerance on harassment. And where needed, let’s provide coaching in management skills.

Let’s also figure out what works and what doesn’t work with Umoja before we go any further with administrative consolidation under the global service delivery model. Jobs are at stake here.

Lastly, let’s make our work more interesting and impactful. Let’s reform our institutions and their roles to tighten the link between work and impact. Let’s stop morale-damaging pay cuts. Let’s give staff their own desk, and not resort to hot-desking. Let’s cut back on meetings, memos, endless chains of approval and note-taking. Let’s trust staff to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whether GS, P, S, FS or NO and at every grade. We shouldn’t feel overqualified for our jobs. We should feel challenged, at every step.

Such reforms won’t just benefit staff, but the organization as well. If the Secretary-General wants reforms, let’s work with him to make sure they are the right ones.
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An African woman appointed Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations

The appointment of Amina J. Mohammed heralds a hopeful agenda for gender equality.

Amina J. Mohammed is a 55-year-old Nigerian woman who studied in both Nigeria and the United Kingdom, and who is the mother of six children. Former Minister of Environment of Nigeria, she proved to be the most competent candidate to fill the post of UN Deputy Secretary-General, after having played an essential role advising former SG Ban Ki-Moon on effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Her expertise is vast: it includes poverty reduction strategies, public sector reform plans, and keys to achieving optimal sustainable development.

Mohammed is not the first woman to occupy one of the most powerful positions in the UN; from 1998 to 2006, Canadian Louise Fréchette held the position of Deputy Secretary-General, and from 2007-2012, Tanzanian Asha-Rose Migiro took the office. However, the appointment by
Amina Mohammed as the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Planning, speaking at a panel discussion on Living in Extreme Poverty, New York, June 2013© UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz

SG Guterres of three women to senior positions – Mohammed as Deputy Secretary-General, Brazilian Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti as Chef de Cabinet and South-Korean Kyung-wha Kang as Special Advisor on Policy – demonstrates the clear determination of the new SG to push for geographical diversity and gender parity in the UN. The nomination of these three women to help lead one of the world’s most influential organizations is a testament to their dedication and strong background in diplomacy, human rights, development and humanitarian action. Nevertheless, Mr Guterres considers that there is still a long way to go. Indeed, only 42.8% of current UN employees are women, and within that group only 32.1% of them hold high positions. For the SG, achieving gender parity and therefore equal opportunity for all is an essential objective of his agenda, and is the key to the empowerment of women in the world.

This new configuration of the Office appears as a hopeful sign, after the results of last year’s US presidential election caught many people by surprise. Seeing how a candidate – who throughout his electoral campaign was seemingly intolerant, xenophobic, sexist and misogynist – won the presidency was a shock to many; especially considering that his opponent was a highly qualified candidate who arguably received much more severe scrutiny because she was a woman. While many people contend that the elected candidate had inadequate political experience, and his apparent lack of diplomacy was on full display in the global media, the female candidate was often criticized for being too “cold”, for showing herself as a “calculating individual”, or for just being the “wife of”.

Throughout the above-mentioned elections, it became evident how gender stereotypes continue to be attributed to women, thus perpetuating unequal treatment. The elections also revealed how often women continue to be subjected to symbolic violence, and how the glass ceiling remains a reality, that hinders their access to the same opportunities and job aspirations as men.

For these reasons, the appointment of Amina Mohammed and of her two female colleagues shines a light on the horizon. We need to promote the empowerment of women, and we must support female models who have broken the glass ceiling and who will inspire others to do the same. Let us also hope that this first positive action endorsed by the new UNSG will serve as an example for other world leaders to implement actions that value parity and gender equality.
Considerations towards a global compact on migration

Under the existing consensus on the need for “sustainable development for all”, and the expectation of moving “towards a transformative migration agenda”, a new Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) took place in December 2016 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The language used to introduce this summit demonstrated the current relevance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN’s Agenda 2030, and the need to apply them in a transformative way in the field of migration.

AMBASSADOR ARTURO CABRERA HIDALGO

The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, signed on 19 September 2016 at the 71st UN General Assembly, calls for an Intergovernmental Global Compact on Migration in 2018. Such a negotiation will face a key challenge: how to take into account all the interconnected elements of migration with a human rights centered approach. We should understand the New York Declaration within the framework of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) that took place in Bangladesh this past December.

The solution is not as simple as improving migration governance and “ultimately” (in the long run) “the safety and well-being of migrants and
their host societies”. This view of the process presents a problem of priorities. What’s more, if we consider shared responsibility, it also leaves aside “the safety and well-being” of the societies of transit and of origin. In these places, we may discover important root causes of migration: causes which are mainly (though not always) economic.

Let’s face reality. At the last International Dialogue for Migration, held in Geneva, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, referring to the current refugee crisis in the Middle East, said that to deal with such forced migration, it is necessary to stop the “proxy wars” that produce it, “which are wars of choice”. We may also affirm that to deal with growing economic migration, it will be necessary to change the world’s unequal economic conditions and structures, which are its root cause. As Professor Branko Milanovic, one of the world’s leading economists on inequality, has demonstrated, the gap in GDP between developed and developing or least developed countries (LDCs) continues to grow exponentially. Some of Milanovic’s numbers show that the gap between developed countries like the United States and others like Madagascar (an LDC) is around 50 to 1. That figure is up from a ratio of 10 to 1 in 1960. Other figures show African countries that currently have per capita GDPs lower than at the time of independence, and that the poorest 1% of the Danish population has an income higher than 95% of the people living in Mali or Tanzania.

Growing income gaps, however, cannot produce migration flows by themselves, unless other conditions are present. One of those conditions, particularly present since the 1980s and the so called Third Industrial Revolution, according to Milanovic, is a much greater awareness of those income gaps. In a recent publication, he proposes a new approach to the age of globalization, which would entail more open migration as a way to reduce global inequality. (A note: more open migration is in no way meant to be opposed to better managed migration.) Although it may seem difficult, it is necessary to rethink globalization and to promote policies that are centered on the human being, and which seek

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UNITED NATIONS GENEVA (UNOG)

To save our pension fund we need to change its board

At the end of December, the UN General Assembly passed a stinging resolution against the leadership of our pension fund.

IAN RICHARDS, UNGG

Declining to mince its words, in December, the General Assembly (GA) struck down Pension Fund CEO Sergio Arvizu’s attempts to use new financial rules to remove the fund from the UN, and to replace the Office of Internal Oversight Services with a hand-picked auditor.

The GA heavily criticized the late payment of newly-retiring staff, which last year reached a delay of six months and even today is six weeks too slow.

It brought control to the CEO’s budget profligacy, which is paid not by member states but directly by staff. It refused to approve a number of posts, including in communications and office management. It criticized the use of outside consultancy firms, such as PWC.

It drew attention to the fund’s alarming underperformance, having lost $3.4 billion through foreign exchange losses between 2014 and 2015.

Against this backdrop, it dismissed attempts by the board of the pension fund to renew the CEO’s contract one year ahead of time.

All of these developments are good news, and reflect extensive discussions between staff unions and GA delegates, as well an outreach and media campaign by the staff federations of CCISUA and FICSA. However, had the board of the pension fund done its work, the GA would never have needed to take such drastic action.

Our pension fund is overseen by 33 board members, eleven each chosen by staff, management and member states. They meet for five days a year. (In contrast, a normal pension fund has about 8 members meeting once a month.) Having watched the board at work these past two years, albeit from the sidelines, I’ve been struck by how reluctant board members have been to stray from the line set by the fund’s leadership, headed by the CEO, and its entourage.

When I met with board members last July to discuss the delays in pension payments of up to six months, I was expecting some contrition, an assumption of responsibility, a recognition of the feelings of 14,000 of their constituents who signed a petition condemning the late payments. Perhaps some members would undertake to hold the CEO accountable for these serious failings?

Instead, and with the exception of the staff representative from WIPO, those members repeated the party line that the delays were minor, that they had nothing to do with the CEO and that organizations not checking that the paperwork was correctly submitted were to blame. They presented this excuse despite the fact that the fund receives $10 million a year from the UN to actually check the paperwork.

To make things worse, those same board members decided to sign confidentiality agreements pledging not to share board documents with the staff they represent in advance of making decisions. They also issued a statement attacking the staff unions for bringing the failings of the pension fund to light.

As staff unions we have focused a lot of attention on the actions of the fund leadership. But the fact that member state delegates had to step in to save the fund from itself shows that it is now time to focus our attention on the board, and to make sure that those we elect to it truly represent staff.

Challenges to the pension fund are piling up: the world economy remains volatile, employees live longer post-retirement, constant budget cuts shrink the number of staff paying into our fund, and payment delays and investment losses persist. In a short time, UN staff will have the opportunity to elect representatives to the board of the pension fund. Please ensure that you elect colleagues who are both able and willing to hold the pension fund’s leadership to account, to listen to you and to represent your interests.
global sustainable development. In such a scenario, the global movement of people, capital, and products plays a key role. A Global Compact on Migration could lead in this direction.

Some weeks ago in Geneva, Professor Klaus Schwab, founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, presented his book *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*. In it, he explains his vision to transform the ways in which we relate to each other. Due to the growing speed at which information flows, people are much more connected and aware of economic inequalities. However, according to data provided by Schwab himself, 1.6 billion people still do not have access to electricity, and so have not yet even arrived at the Second Industrial Revolution. 4 billion people do have electricity, but not internet, and so may be said to have arrived at the Second Revolution, but not yet the Third. Any heightened awareness of economic gaps due to technology would have to belong to those possessing that technology; but according to these figures, the vast majority of the world’s population, so far, does not.

However, this situation is changing, as the world becomes more interconnected. Therefore, more awareness and more information will eventually create more population flow. The result may be global economic, political, social, and human rights crises, or on the other hand—a confrontation of inequality and injustice, which leads to better systems that work in favor of minorities.

If we are to rethink global management of migration, we must deal with the changing conditions of human relations and human mobility. Several topics under this umbrella require discussion, but in this reduced space, I would like to refer to one of particular importance: the role of businesses as an economic component of migration. Businesses can create incentives for economic migration. They may or may not be part of what is called safe, regular, and orderly migration management, depending on the existence of clear rules and liability regarding the respect and protection of migrant human rights. Principles and guidelines are important, but they are just the basis for concrete rules, partnerships and commitments from all stakeholders.

As such, a Global Compact on Migration should take into consideration new forms of partnerships, not only among the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN, but also partnerships with the private sector. New commitments will also be necessary, but they should use the tools that already exist. If states want to contribute to safe, regular and orderly migration, they don’t need to invent new formulas. They just need to commit, for example, to sign and promote the United Nations Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families, or to contribute constructively to the work of the Human Rights Council open-ended Working Group on Transnationals and Human Rights.

In summary, a Global Compact on Migration should have an approach that is human-rights-centered, that is based on the SDGs, and that facilitates the reduction of economic inequality. It should promote and respect the already-existing initiatives and legal frameworks related to migration, in a way that is coordinated and adopts a global perspective.

Arturo Cabrera Hidalgo MPA, PhDc, is former Vice-Minister of Migration and Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs of Ecuador. Part of this discussion was presented by the author at the UN Panel “A Dialogue on a Global Migration Compact” in New York, November 2016. He is currently the Chargé d’affaires, a. i. of the Permanent Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations in Geneva.
What is the role of the UN in Agenda 2030?

A recent conference at the Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies in Geneva explored the nature of global norm-setting in the context of the UN’s Agenda 2030.

GARRY ASLANYAN, DEPUTY EDITOR

If you are anything like me, you probably take advantage of conferences and workshops hosted by various programmes at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. But alas, to attend is not always possible, what with busy work and travel schedules.

So when I saw that the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (DHF) and the Graduate Institute’s Programme for the Study of International Governance were organizing a public conference on “The UN’s Normative Role in an Agenda 2030 World,” I realized I couldn’t miss it. Admittedly, I know a lot about the normative role of WHO (and a bit about that of ILO and UNECE), but the normative role of the UN in general was not very clear to me. There were more than 100 participants in the conference who, like me, wanted to know more.

It quickly became clear that trends challenging the existing world order – such as the changing distribution of international economic power, the pertinence of market forces and the rebalancing between the public and private spheres, the emergence of global challenges that require collective solutions, and rapid technological changes – render this normative role of the UN even more necessary.

The panelists and speakers were numerous, and all boasted current engagement and authority in this area. So has the 2030 Agenda set new norms, or brought the existing norms together? It seems to be a mixed bag. No Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target seems to have fallen below already-agreed-upon norms, and some go beyond existing rules. But the SDGs have brought the norms together under one comprehensive development framework. The
sense in the room was that the SDGs do not go far enough on human rights, discrimination and forced migration. The panelists agreed that the normative role of the UN may be understood to include:

1. developing global norms and standards, from conventions and treaties to soft law and outcomes of world conferences
2. supporting Member States in the integration and alignment of national legislation and policies with agreed norms
3. supporting Member States in the implementation of such legislation and policies, and
4. providing monitoring and review mechanisms to encourage compliance with norms.

There was a sense in the room that there are already more normative frameworks than countries are able or willing to implement. Panelists suggested that there is an overemphasis on the development of new norms. Some also argued that weak implementation should not be considered a result of the nature of the norms, but usually comes down to a lack of capacity in the countries themselves. Countries have different priorities for implementing the SDGs and other international agreements, which raises questions about the cohesiveness of the development agenda.

Though this particular conference of course did not seek to be the last word on where to go from here, it did discuss some future directions for action. According to one idea, the UN needs to embrace a renewed and powerful narrative on norms. The narrative currently suggests that international norms are there for some, but not for others. The SDGs are an opportunity for the UN to make a strong case for the value of multilateralism itself, at a moment where the future of multilateralism is being written.

In addition, the implementation of international norms should be prioritized. Providing technical support to strengthen the implementation capacity of Member States is a key role that the UN should continue to play. The implementation of international norms should be prioritized. Providing technical support to strengthen the implementation capacity of Member States is a key role that the UN should continue to play. The discussion highlighted the issue of appropriate financing. Panelists underlined the need to improve communication on the SDGs and the normative role of the UN, as many institutions and individuals are unaware of the SDGs, or may be reluctant to accept them. And finally, the talks highlighted issues of how the UN operates, including the need for inter-agency cooperation and coordination, to bridge the UN’s normative and operational roles and to develop new methods for sharing information across the UN system. We shall stay tuned for future discussions on this topic, so keep an eye out for future conferences on the normative role of the UN.
Roughly 6,500 languages are spoken in the world today, but 2,000 of these have fewer than 1,000 speakers.

According to the 2015 UNOG annual report, 1,500 staff members hold 111 nationalities.

At the United Nations in Geneva (UNOG), the flags of 193 member states plus those of two observer states fly in the Allée des Drapeaux, behind the Place des Nations.

The Organization has six official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. English and French are the official working languages.

International Mother Language Day (IMLD) was proclaimed by UNESCO in 1999, just as we were entering the new millennium. The date of 21 February commemorates the day in 1952 when students demonstrating for the recognition of their language, Bangla, as one of the two national languages of the then Pakistan, were shot and killed by police in Dhaka. IMLD was formally recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution proclaiming 2008 as the International Year of Languages. Every year since then, IMLD has been celebrated with a specific theme. For 2017, the theme is “Towards Sustainable Futures through Multilingual Education”, which also supports Goal 4.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): “Ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.”

The importance of multilingualism at the United Nations

Multilingualism is a defining feature of our Organization. As the second largest United Nations body, we have a responsibility to reflect the diversity of the world in our workplace and in our work. This includes the use of multiple languages in our communications, in our meetings and in our work to advance the goals of the United Nations.
Nations duty station and one of the major conference centres in the world, UNOG provides a key platform for international dialogue and diplomacy. It is the role of the Division of Conference Management (DCM) to facilitate these discussions and conferences by ensuring the provision of high quality editing, translation and interpretation services in the six official languages for such organs as the Human Rights Council, the Conference on Disarmament, UNECE and UNCTAD, as well as highly sensitive political negotiations. In 2016, DCM translated an estimated 240,100 pages and provided interpretation services to 3,117 meetings.

As Corinne Momal-Vanian, Director of Conference Management at UNOG and focal point at UNOG for multilingualism explains: “We have to make efforts when we recruit people to make sure that we value the fact that they’re multilingual, but among the staff who are already on board we have to make sure that they maintain their level of multilingualism or develop it if they don’t have it when they get into the Organization”. The language training programme of the Staff Development and Learning Section (SDLS) does just this in promoting the acquisition and consolidation of multilingualism by UNOG staff and the UN community in Geneva at large through the training it conducts in each of the six official languages. In 2016, nearly 2,800 UN staff, their spouses and members of permanent missions to the UN took part in programmes to develop their language skills, an all-time high! All full-time and part-time teachers working at UNOG are mother tongue speakers, many of whom are multilingual. The date of 21 February is therefore a very appropriate one for SDLS to take on its new identity. Indeed, as of this date, it will be known as the “UNOG Centre for Learning and Multilingualism” (CLM), a name that better reflects the language objectives of the Organization as expressed in General Assembly resolutions as well as in the SDGs – our roadmap until 2030. In collaboration with DCM and the United Nations Library, many events have been planned to celebrate International Mother Language Day.

Events in Geneva to mark this occasion
Director-General Mr. Michael Møller will be opening the proceedings as of 12 noon on 21 February on the ground floor of the “E” building, and all staff are encouraged to participate in order to celebrate the unique opportunities that working in a multilingual environment provides. At the time of going to press, the list of events to mark IMLD had not been finalised, but may include: information stands about language courses, language quizzes with prizes to win, crash courses for beginners in the six official languages, conversation tables (for intermediate and advanced levels). The DCM Photo Exhibition, “Once upon a time a document”, showcasing the work of the staff in the Division, will also be inaugurated. Culinary and musical attractions are also planned...

Not to be forgotten either...
Language Days at the United Nations...

The Department of Public Information has established language days for each of the six official languages. The purpose of the UN language days is to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity as well as to promote equal use of all six official languages throughout the Organization. Under the initiative, UN duty stations around the world celebrate six separate days, each dedicated to one of the Organization’s six official languages. Language Days at the UN aim to entertain as well as inform, with the goal of increasing awareness and respect for the history, culture and achievements of each of the six working languages among the UN community. The days are as follows:

- Arabic (18 December)
- Chinese (20 April)
- English (23 April)
- French (20 March)
- Russian (6 June)
- Spanish (12 October)

In conclusion, let us keep in mind the words of Nelson Mandela. “If you talk to a man in a language that he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.” Maybe it is time for you to enrol on a language course at the UNOG CLM! The enrolment period is currently underway (31 January to 24 February). ■

For more information about the language courses at UNOG, please visit http://learning.unog.ch/.
UN Secretaries-General
Leaving a mark in history

Milestones

### Dag Hammarskjöld
(Sweden)
1953-1961

- 1 March 1953
  - Joseph Stalin’s death
- 10 April 1953
  - Dag Hammarskjöld becomes 2nd UN SG
- 1 November 1954
  - Algerian War of Independence starts
- 14 May 1955
  - Warsaw Pact signed
- 7 November 1956
  - 1st UN peacekeeping force sent to the Suez Canal
- 17 April 1961
  - Construction of the Berlin Wall
- 18 September 1961
  - Dag Hammarskjöld dies in a plane crash during the Congo Crisis
- 10 December 1961
  - Dag Hammarskjöld wins the Nobel Peace Prize

### Trygve Lie
(Norway)
1946-1952

- 10 January 1946
  - First UN General Assembly meeting
- 17 January 1946
  - First UN Security Council meeting
- 1 February 1946
  - Trygve Lie becomes 1st UN SG
- 5 March 1946
  - Winston Churchill’s Iron Curtain Speech
- 29 November 1947
  - United Nations adopted Partition Plan for Palestine
- 15 May 1948 – 10 March 1949
  - First Arab–Israeli War
- 9 October 1952
  - Inauguration of the UN Headquarters in New York
- 10 December 1948
  - Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- 25 June 1950 – 27 July 1953
  - Korean War

### U Thant
(Myanmar)
1961-1971

- 3 November 1961
  - U Thant becomes 3rd UN SG
- 5 July 1962
  - Algeria’s Independence from France
- 16 – 28 October 1962
  - Cuban Missile Crisis
- 22 November 1963
  - Assassination of US President John F. Kennedy
- 4 March 1964
  - UN Peacekeeping Force dispatched to Cyprus
- 10 December 1965
  - UNICEF wins Nobel Peace Prize
- 4 April 1968
  - Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.
- 12 June 1968
  - Approval of the UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
- 10 December 1969
  - ILO wins Nobel Peace Prize

### Kurt Waldheim
(Austria)
1972-1981

- 1 January 1972
  - Kurt Waldheim becomes 4th UN SG
- February 1974
  - Relief operations in the Sudan-Sahelian region
- 13 November 1974
  - UN recognizes the Palestine Liberation Organization
- 17 December 1974
  - Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet comes to power
- 2 December 1976
  - Fidel Castro becomes 17th President of Cuba
- 4 November 1977
  - Mandatory arms embargo against South Africa
- 17 September 1978
  - Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel
- 8 May 1980
  - WHO announces the global eradication of smallpox
- 1981
  - AIDS is recognized
- 10 December 1981
  - UNHCR wins Nobel Peace Prize

### 1990s

- 1991
  - Apartheid abolished in South Africa
  - End of the Cold War
  - Dissolution of the Soviet Union
- 1995
  - Start of the Gulf War
  - Fall of the Berlin Wall
- 1999
  - Attack on Golo marks the beginning of the war in Darfur
  - UN brings humanitarian aid to affected areas in Somalia
- 2000
  - Adoption of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development
  - World Summit on Sustainable Development
- 2001
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - September 11 attacks
  - UN and Secretary-General Kofi Annan win Nobel Peace Prize
- 2002
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - UN Millennium Summit – adoption of the 8 MDG
- 2005
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - UN Millennium Summit – adoption of the 8 MDG
  - 10 December 2005
    - UN and Secretary-General Kofi Annan win Nobel Peace Prize
  - 15 March 2006
    - UN and Secretary-General Kofi Annan win Nobel Peace Prize
- 2009
  - Haiti Earthquake
  - Haiti cholera outbreak
  - Haiti Earthquake
  - Haiti cholera outbreak
- 2011
  - Haiti Earthquake
  - Haiti cholera outbreak
  - Haiti Earthquake
  - Haiti cholera outbreak
- 2013
  - The Arab Spring
  - Creation of the Human Rights Council
  - IPCC & Al Gore win Nobel Peace Prize
- 2015
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2016
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2017
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2018
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2019
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2020
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2021
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2022
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2023
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force

### 2020s

- 2020
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2021
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2022
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2023
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force

### 2030s

- 2030
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2031
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2032
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2033
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
- 2034
  - Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - Ban Ki-moon wins Nobel Peace Prize
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
  - The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force
**Milestones in history**

**UN Secretaries-General**

- **1946**
  - First UN General Assembly meeting, New York

- **1947**
  - 29 November – United Nations adopted Partition Plan for Palestine

- **1948**
  - 15 May – First UN Security Council meeting
  - 10 December – Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December

- **1951**
  - 5 March – Trygve Lie wins Nobel Peace Prize

- **1952**
  - 9 October – Dag Hammarskjöld wins Nobel Peace Prize

- **1953**
  - 1 March – Joseph Stalin’s death

- **1954**
  - 1953 – 1961

- **1961**
  - 1 February – First Arab–Israeli War
  - 13 August – Construction of the Berlin Wall

- **1964**
  - 17 January – Cuban Missile Crisis

- **1965**
  - 10 December – UNHCR wins Nobel Peace Prize

- **1968**
  - 12 June – Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

- **1969**
  - 10 December – ILO wins Nobel Peace Prize

- **1970**
  - 2 August – Fall of the Berlin Wall

- **1972**
  - 26 December – Apartheid abolished in South-Africa

- **1975**
  - 1 January – Ban Ki-moon becomes 8th UN SG
  - 10 December – 5th UN SG

- **1976**
  - 2 December – Fidel Castro becomes 17th President of Cuba

- **1977**
  - 4 November – South Africa reintegrates the General Assembly

- **1978**
  - 17 September – Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel

- **1979**
  - 26 October – United Nations adopted the International Criminal Court (ICC) into force

- **1980**
  - 8 May – South Africa reintegrates the General Assembly

- **1981**
  - 26 December – 5th UN SG

- **1982**
  - 1 January – 6th UN SG

- **1983**
  - 30 December – Apartheid abolished in South-Africa

- **1984**
  - 10 December – UN Peacekeeping Forces wins Nobel Peace Prize

- **1985**
  - 12 January – 7th UN SG

- **1986**
  - 26 April – The Chernobyl disaster

- **1987**
  - 26 October – UN and Secretary-General Kofi Annan win Nobel Peace Prize

- **1988**
  - 10 December – UN Millennium Summit – adoption of the 8 MDG

- **1989**
  - 9 November – State of Palestine becomes non-Member Observer State

- **1990**
  - 25 January – Beginning of the Gulf War

- **1991**
  - 26 December – Dissolution of the Soviet Union
  - 5 June – Apartheid abolished in South-Africa

- **1992**
  - 1 January – 5th President of Iraq Saddam Hussein

- **1993**
  - 25 May – UN establishes first war crime’s tribunal for Yugoslavia

- **1994**
  - 7 April – Rwandan genocide
  - 23 June – South Africa reintegrates the General Assembly

- **1995**
  - 26 October – Israel-Jordan peace treaty
  - 10 December – Nobel Peace Prize for Peace to Arafat, Peres, and Rabin
  - 4 November – Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated

- **1996**
  - 10 December – 50 years of the United Nations are celebrated

- **1997**
  - 10 December – The International Criminal Court (ICC) enters into force

- **1998**
  - 30 December – 8th UN SG

- **1999**
  - 26 September – Adoption of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development

- **2000**
  - 21 October – 6th UN SG

- **2001**
  - 20 March – Beginning of the Iraq War

- **2002**
  - 1 July – 28th UN SG

- **2003**
  - 26 February – Attack on Golo marks the beginning of the war in Darfur

- **2004**
  - 20 January – 7th UN SG

- **2005**
  - 12 January – 8th UN SG

- **2006**
  - 15 March – Creation of the Human Rights Council

- **2007**
  - 22 April – Paris Climate Agreement comes into force

- **2008**
  - 20 March – 9th UN SG

- **2009**
  - 20 March – 10th UN SG

- **2010**
  - 24 May – 11th UN SG

- **2011**
  - 24 May – 12th UN SG

- **2012**
  - 24 May – 13th UN SG

- **2013**
  - 24 May – 14th UN SG

- **2014**
  - 24 May – 15th UN SG

- **2015**
  - 24 May – 16th UN SG

- **2016**
  - 24 May – 17th UN SG

- **2017**
  - 24 May – 18th UN SG
Eye witness to history

The InterContinental Genève

For over half a century, the InterContinental Hotel of Geneva has boasted an intimate relationship with the city’s international organizations. InterContinental guests over the years – from Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, to Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Yasser Arafat, to name only a few – make up a veritable who’s who of 20th and 21st century international affairs. This unique venue is also trusted to host high-level dialogues; over and over again, its palatial halls and cozy corners alike have played eyewitness to history. General Manager Jurgen Baumhoff offers UN Special readers an insider’s view of this storied institution.

Can you explain why the InterContinental Genève enjoys such a unique relationship with the UN and International Geneva?

J. BAUMHOF: Location is the first and most obvious reason. Set deep in the heart of International Geneva, surrounded by Permanent Missions and within walking distance of the Palais des Nations, the InterContinental is quite literally in the neighborhood. The UN and International Organizations have been our neighbors since our doors first opened in 1964, and because we embraced the neighborhood on day one, we have had the honor of becoming a kind of unofficial guesthouse for the UN. Nearly forty percent of the business of this hotel is in some way related to the UN. This close relationship has become a hallowed tradition for us.

Geography alone, however, is not the whole story. The InterContinental Genève has always gone the extra mile to foster our relationship with the International Organizations through a special brand of
service. One key is our ability to be flexible to the needs of different nations. We spend a lot of time training our staff in protocol: not merely the standard protocol, but the diverse array of protocols and cultural sensitivities specific to every nation under the sun. And this training is not simply aimed at the management team, but penetrates every level of staff. After all, in the end, the most important people are those who are connecting and engaging, minute-to-minute, with the visiting delegations. High-level political actors come to Geneva for a very particular purpose: to try to solve a human rights issue, or to end a war, for example. They are here to arrive at a solution, and we at the InterContinental Genève have the opportunity to be politically-neutral facilitators for that solution. We are creating an atmosphere. Thus, we believe it is critical for every InterContinental employee to grasp how their own interactions – large or small – with a guest may help incrementally to either foster or jeopardize a positive outcome. As such, scrupulous attention to every detail, including cultural detail, is primordial for us.

Among all the attributes of your hotel, is there one you believe that diplomats most appreciate?

J.B.: Diplomats know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they can count on our discretion. As host, we are in the position of a fly on the wall: we may be privy to many off-the-record interactions. We take this role as both a privilege and a responsibility, and guests know they can trust us with their privacy. They know we will never comment on or release any sensitive information to journalists or other parties. And when you are dealing with high-stakes bilateral and multilateral talks, such trust is critical.

The negotiations we host often deal with some of the world’s most charged political issues, and even questions of war and peace. In this context, even subtle environmental conditions can play an outsized psychological role, impacting the success or failure of the talks. In this sense, I sometimes think of us as a silent and intimate eyewitness. We consider it our mission at the InterContinental Genève to foster the ideal conditions for success, as we watch history unfold within our walls.

Can you briefly describe the history of the InterContinental?

J.B.: The InterContinental brand was established in 1946, just one year after the UN itself: last year we celebrated our 70th anniversary. We were founded by the Pan American Airways (Pam Am) company, which sought to create a line of hotels in key international cities. The first hotel was built in Caracas, Venezuela, and still operates as the Tamanaco InterContinental. Several other hotels in South America followed, corresponding to Pan Am’s most important flight routes at the time; but ownership of the brand has since become international, and of course our hotels are now found all over the world.
The InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), our umbrella organization, now has its headquarters in London. It consists of over 5,028 hotels and 742,000 rooms, across 100 countries. These hotels include our brand (the InterContinental), but also other brands such as the Holiday Inn, the Crowne Plaza, Kimpton Hotels, Hotel Indigo, Staybridge Suites, and more. It is also worth mentioning that the InterContinental Brand was the first hotel in the world to create a loyalty program (at that time called the Six Continents Club). Today, that pioneering program is known IHG Rewards, and boasts 85 million members. As everyone knows, these programs are common practice today, and we feel privileged to have been part of the origin of that vision.

How do you see the relationship between the InterContinental and the UN going forward?

J.B.: We already have an excellent working relationship with the UNOG Director-General and with many other parties throughout International Geneva. We will seek to develop a similar kind of relationship with the new UN Secretary-General himself, Mr. Guterres. He already knows Geneva well, after presiding over the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) for ten years, and we hope that he will feel at home at the InterContinental as Secretary-General.

In terms of our relationship with the UN, discretion is everything. Efficiency is everything. On the one hand, it is important to maintain a certain protocol and a certain distance. And yet, none of this delicacy precludes our developing, over time, a more intimate rapport with the political actors we host. Bit by bit, we can close the gap. We can stop and chat with them. We don’t talk politics, because that’s not our job. But while maintaining the necessary respect, we can also reduce the distance and foster a certain familiarity; because, at the end of the day, when someone comes to us, we want them to feel like they’re at home. Our relationship with them – no matter what nation or faction they represent – should be one of respect, of mutual understanding, and of trust. We strive to be professional, yet approachable. And at the InterContinental Genève, we firmly believe it is possible to have the best of both of these worlds.

Finally, can you tell us about your own career, and how you came to the InterContinental Genève?

J.B.: I am originally from Germany, and began my career in the hotel industry 44 years ago. In fact, I first came to Geneva in 1975 as a stagiaire. My first job with the InterContinental brand was in 1977 (in Paris), after which I worked in various hotels in Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, the Persian Gulf, and other places across the globe. I have spent 32 years in total working for the InterContinental brand.

On more than one occasion, I worked in a market where we had close links to the government. For example, I had the opportunity to open the InterContinental in Tel Aviv, Israel, and subsequently spent several years there. Immediately after the opening, the daughter of a prominent

When you’re the host, you maintain political neutrality, and you welcome everyone, no matter what and no matter who; so of course that is what I did that night. And I will never forget the image of Mr. Arafat, together with all these Israeli politicians, enjoying conversation and smoking cigars. In my work as a hotelier, I have gotten an ongoing glimpse behind the political curtain, which sometimes reveals a very different picture than that depicted by the press to the outside world. Over the course of my career, I have learned that politics often looks different behind the scenes. Here in Geneva, I continue to have the privilege of bearing witness to such history-in-the-making.

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On more than one occasion, I worked in a market where we had close links to the government. For example, I had the opportunity to open the InterContinental in Tel Aviv, Israel, and subsequently spent several years there. Immediately after the opening, the daughter of a prominent Jewish newspaper owner got married in our ballroom – then one of the largest ballrooms in Israel – and the guest list included every Israeli politician you can imagine. Incidentally, Yasser Arafat also came, and I witnessed how political actors from opposing sides can come together around a dinner table.
Ne «mégottons» pas avec l’environnement

RICHARD CHALVERAT, UNCTAD

La plupart des membres du club de course à pied de l’ONU ont une relation affectueuse avec le magnifique séquoia qui trône souverainement sur le parc du palais, aux côtés de la villa Pelouse. Il est notre point de ralliement au départ et au retour de nos entraînements quotidiens. Il nous protège du soleil en été, nous abrite de la pluie ou de la bise, et nous a probablement tous vu naître comme il nous verra retourner en poussière. Certains collègues semblent, cependant, faire peu de cas de la beauté de cet arbre et de la chance d’avoir un parc magnifique – et magnifiquement entretenu – autour de nous, préférant les utiliser comme un vulgaire cendrier. Que ces personnes fument, soit! C’est, après tout, leur choix et nous le respectons. Qu’ils soient aussi peu respectueux de notre environnement à tous, par contre, est inacceptable.

Nous rappelons à ces personnes que les mégots doivent être jetés aux endroits prévus à cet effet, non pas dans le parc, ni dans les bouches d’égouts. Il y va du respect de l’environnement, des collègues et du merveilleux travail de nos jardiniers-paysagistes.

Pour rappel, les mégots sont une source importante de pollution, notamment de nos lacs et rivières. Il faut en moyenne 12 ans pour qu’un mégot se dégrade entièrement, et un mégot peut, à lui seul, polluer jusqu’à 500 litres d’eau!

Il suffit, donc, d’un petit effort de la part de chacun d’entre nous pour garder notre parc intact et, plus généralement, préserver notre environnement.

Education / Enseignement

JFK Swiss Outdoor Camp offers opportunities for children of 6 to 13 years old to enjoy first-hand experience Outdoor Learning in Saanenland’s Alpine environment with all the natural resources available. 1, 2 or 3 weeks sessions. Day or Boarding.

www.swissoutdoorcamp.ch
Do not be surprised reading the title. There is no typo! It is exactly how it is written – Nobel!

EVELINA RIIOUKHINA, UNECE
RYAN KENNEDY, UNECE

Do not be surprised reading the title. There is no typo! It is exactly how it is written – Nobel!

And moreover and more unusual – it is a Nobel Medal – this is what the UNECE received for its leadership and its innovations during the 7th International Forum for Sustainable Energy that took place recently in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The Nobel Medal was awarded to our noble organization through Scott Foster, Director of the Sustainable Energy Division, and recognized for the role and contribution of our Commission (UNECE) to sustainable energy in the region. The medal was awarded by the Baku Nobel Organization at the Villa Petrolea in Baku, Azerbaijan.

This Award – although unusual – is more than deserved by the UNECE, which will celebrate its 70th anniversary in Spring 2017. It was one of the first bodies in the UN Secretariat, created just after World War II, bringing together Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East (Israel), and North America. The Commission is a unique and sometimes unusual organization, as many events that have taken place in the Commission over nearly seven decades have had a global impact rarely seen elsewhere (a special issue will be dedicated to this in April 2017). Not bad for a “Regional” Commission!

During recent years, the uniqueness of the Commission, and its unusual events, have become an unspoken tradition, starting:

• from being re-discovered, as a precious pearl, by the UNOG Director-General Mr. Michael Moller, who was at this time also Acting Executive Secretary of the UNECE and who gave the UNECE rally to his younger compatriot Mr. Christian Friis Bach as new Executive Secretary, thus entrusting him to take care of this pearl to make it a real jewel;

• from a Geneva-held UNECE Swearing-in Ceremony for the UNECE, held at the Council Chamber, for which the then UN Secretary-General took time to come personally to the Palais (event of “du jamais vu” in Geneva!) and which was marked by a special pledge “to drive by the rules” by signing the Road Safety Poster and thus assuring the safety of our passengers of the UNECE vehicle though having a Special Envoy on Road Safety and even more – by further receiving an endorsement, and even blessings from The Pope for the UNECE actions to guarantee life safety on the road;

• from ensuring sustainable living through the Charter on Housing, through giving our refuge to the new inhabitant Sofia who not only ensured the gender 50/50 on the 3rd floor, but who also taught us a valuable lesson on how to protect our sustainable future;

• from leading at the tables of the meetings through becoming actors ourselves: by staging Geneva Energy Conversations by Stefanie Held or performing from the stage of a TED Talk by Scott Foster who inspiring appealed the world to fight for a sustainable energy future, and even more – by turning all of UNECE, within seconds and with a magic wand into a huge orchestra that could perform in harmony while “drumming” for the SDGs! Etc., etc… The list can be long…

All this would not be possible without the joint efforts by our management team and each and every staff member, working together as one for the same goal. Only thanks to this spirit we managed to bring all cross-sectoral, inter-sectional and inter-sectoral work, and our UNECE joint spirit became the catalyst that brought the whole world together for the same important global purpose. And the International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development in Baku, organized by our regional Commission, the UNECE, in partnership with our sister regional Commissions, proved it – around 500 people from all over the world came together to discuss issues of our mutually related global concerns of sustainability, where our regional Commission can propose solutions for the whole world too! The UNECE was represented by the Deputy Executive Secretary Andrey Vasilyev, the Forum was organized mainly by the Sustainable Energy Division, and the Environment Division took part in the event.

We are proud that today our UNECE pearl shines! Our duty is to keep it shining as we move into the future! And while saying “Merci beaucoup, Baku!” for the Nobel Medal and being proud with all outstanding events that marked the passing years, we are looking ahead with a big hope. We will soon mark a big jubilee-birthday. And on the eve of the birthday, like in all fairy tales, we can make a wish and we have right to hope for a dream – and finally, why not to dream about the Nobel Prize for our UNECE next, even bigger jubilee?!
Prix d’Excellence pour M. Michael Møller


PARIS VIOD,
UNOG PERCEPTION CHANGE PROJECT
Attribué tous les deux ans, ce prix distingue une personnalité qui s’illustre sur le terrain de la communication.

D’après Éric Benjamin, Président de l’USAP, ce choix s’explique par le fait que « toujours un Directeur général de l’ONU à Genève ne s’était autant impliqué dans la communauté genevoise que Michael Møller ». Soulignant l’originalité des actions menées par M. Møller, Éric Benjamin cite notamment le Projet de Changement de Perception et l’édition d’un livre qui a eu un très grand impact, intitulé Les Recettes pour la Paix, les Droits et le Bien-Être, la journée portes-ouvertes aux Nations Unies, le Geneva Mix & Mash et l’entraînement à la course de l’Escalade dans le parc de l’ONU. Ces actions de communication stimulent la création de liens entre communauté genevoise et internationale, dans le but de vivre de manière plus harmonieuse, mais aussi de mieux saisir le rôle de l’ONU et des organisations qui y sont raccrochées.

Par la suite, Rémy Pagani, Conseiller administratif de la Ville de Genève, a fait remarquer les efforts de M. Møller pour « donner à la communication des Nations Unies un tout autre visage » et « raffermir les liens entre les différentes communautés locales et internationales ».

Pour Pierre Maudet, Conseiller d’État de la République et Canton de Genève, Michael Møller a permis à l’ONU de revivre à Genève grâce à une stratégie de communication novatrice ayant « réussi à insuffler une vision de cette organisation ».

Après avoir reçu le trophée confectionné par la Haute École d’Art et de Design (HEAD) contenant une centaine de mots associés à l’univers de la communication (allant de Gutenberg à Twitter), M. Møller, clôturant la cérémonie, insiste sur le besoin de changer d’outils de communication sur l’ONU, pour que l’impact de cette organisation et de la Genève Internationale soit apprécié de tous.

Nouveaux outils de communication, changement de perception, création de liens entre communautés, modernisation de l’ONU, les raisons ne manquent pas pour justifier la remise de ce prix d’excellence en communication à Michael Møller. Cette distinction célèbre très légitimement trois années de travail de l’actuel Directeur général et l’encourage à poursuivre son engagement aussi longtemps que son mandat le lui permettra.
Removal of sugary drinks from sale and service in WHO headquarters

Starting on 11 October 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) removed sugary drinks from sale and service at official functions in WHO headquarters in Geneva. This move, part of the staff-led “Walk the Talk” initiative, seeks to demonstrate WHO leadership through implementation of its own guidelines.

PAUL DAVID GARWOOD, WHO

In April 2015, WHO issued the updated Guideline on sugars intake for adults and children. The guideline recommends reduced free sugar intake by both adults and children throughout the life course. Specifically, it recommends reducing the intake of free sugars to less than 10% of total energy intake, approximately 12 teaspoons of sugars per day. Furthermore, the guideline suggested that a further reduction to below 5% of total energy intake, or about 6 daily teaspoons, would provide additional health benefits.

This guideline helped numerous Member States facing public health challenges to take policy measures aimed at reducing sugar consumption, in order to promote healthy diets, and to prevent and control obesity and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) among their populations. Such measures taken by governments included removing sugary drinks from public institutions (such as schools and hospitals), taxing
sugary drinks, regulating the marketing of food and non-alcoholic beverages high in fats, sugars and salt, revising national dietary guidelines, and implementing nutrition labelling, among other actions.

In the same vein, WHO has decided – in the wake of discussions involving staff members, the Staff Association, building management, technical units, and vendors – to take similar actions at the Organization’s headquarters, in order to support the development of a healthier food environment by removing sugary drinks from sale and service.

In so doing, WHO has demonstrated leadership by implementing policy actions set out in its own strategies and guidelines. These documents include the WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs (2013-2020), the WHO Guideline on Sugars intake for adults and children, and the report of the WHO Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity.

Beverages removed are those containing free sugars, such as soft drinks, fruit drinks, sachet mixes, energy and sports drinks, flavoured milks (including hot chocolate), breakfast drinks, sweetened cold teas and coffees, as well as fruit juices, including 100% fruit juices. The lattermost are included in the group because they contain free sugars like honey and syrup, as defined by the WHO guideline on sugars intake. Hot teas and coffees that contain no pre-added sugars continue to be available. Sugar packets for use with tea and coffee are also available at the restaurants and coffee shop.

At present, any diet and zero calorie drinks remain for sale, because the health impacts of non-sugar sweeteners are currently being reviewed by the WHO Department of Nutrition for Health and Development (NHD). Once this scientific review is concluded, the sale and service of beverages with non-sugar sweeteners (i.e. diet and zero calorie drinks) will be considered as part of a wider initiative to improve the food and beverage environment at WHO headquarters.

In the same manner, issues related to the sale of alcoholic beverages at WHO headquarters are also under review. The removal of sugary drinks from sales and services constitutes the first step in the dietary component of the “Walk the Talk” initiative, which is planned to be progressively implemented and will include measures such as increased availability of healthy choices, at the restaurants and coffee shop as well as in vending machines.

Beverages that remain for sale and service at WHO headquarters, therefore, include water, fizzy water, unflavoured milks with various fat contents, teas and coffees, and, as noted above, beverages with non-sugar sweeteners.

By implementing this policy (and potentially addressing alcohol in the near future), WHO aims to set a positive example for Member States, other agencies and organizations, Permanent Missions and visitors. Considering the link of this policy to Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 3, other UN agencies are encouraged to implement it in their respective institutions. In this endeavour, WHO is happy to provide technical support.

1 Free sugars include monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods and beverages by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, and sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit juice concentrates (WHO Guideline: Sugars Intake for adults and children, 2015).

For more information, please contact walkthetalk@who.int.

For the WHO Guideline on Sugars intake for adults and children: http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/guidelines/sugars_intake/en/
For the Report of the WHO Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstr...
Elizabeth Gachuiri
My primary school in Kenya

From memories to action: this is the story of a woman who, 40 years later, returns to her school to find her roots.

The girl thinks now that she had a visionary mother. In fact, both of her parents had always supported her dreams. Perhaps this support made the difference between herself and her friends at that school in the village on the slopes of Mount Kenya. Most of those friends stayed in the village, got married earlier and had children. They had to adjust their dreams to the requirements of their society.

The girl always used to think about life outside of the village. She believed she would at least go to the city of Nairobi and eventually to the University of Nairobi. That girl became the woman Elizabeth Gachuiri. Liz, as her friends call her, is the youngest and the only girl of five siblings, and she is the one who attained the highest level of education in her family. She is now 56 years old, and she has worked since 2000 as an Economic Affairs Officer in the United Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Everything started around a dining table
Just after a training programme in her church in Ferney-Voltaire, Liz received a visit from her friend Lucy, who works in the humanitarian NGO sector of Nairobi. Liz recounted her experience of the training programme, which involved around a hundred women from across Europe and sought to empower and guide these women to impact their communities. Liz and Lucy were sitting around her dining table, as women very often do. They were chatting, laughing, eating, and having tea. They delved back into memories of into their own educational journeys, and came to realize that neither one of them had ever returned to Giakaibei Primary School, approximately 120 kilometers from Nairobi towards Mount Kenya. They felt challenged and, from this simple table, they decided to transform memories into action, and to retrace their roots. They would discover what the school looks like today, a full 40 years after Liz had left it.

They organized a first trip for January, 2016. As Liz recounts: “As I walked on those grounds, usually with green tropical vegetation, I felt the very conviction of how I/we could contribute to the learning environment of those children, who probably
don’t have a vision of ever getting out of there and making a meaningful living. We had the privilege of meeting with the school principal and some members of the school board, and to see for ourselves. We also spoke to the Class 8 examination class of innocent and shy, but very brilliant kids, and we encouraged them to work hard. We are living examples that they can make it in life, irrespective of their beginnings. They are of course better off than us in many ways; they have electricity at school and most of them in their homes, which we didn’t.”

“We learnt from the school managers that we were the first older female students, as far as they could remember, to get back to the school to observe, and also to ask what they would need. The older male students, though, go back from time to time, for various reasons and ambitions. For Lucy and myself, we went back with a purpose and a vision to develop the learning environment of those brilliant kids, and to contribute to the creation of a generation of national and international leaders, entrepreneurs, executives [and more],” says Liz.

The second trip took place in July 2016, immediately after the UNCTAD 14 Conference in Nairobi. Liz and Lucy managed to raise funds from friends and colleagues, and the school management organized a fundraising event to welcome Liz, Lucy and their friends and family, who joined the two women to share this unique encounter. Using the collected funds, in three months the school was able to rehabilitate eight classes, and to refurnish a computer room and library. “We are now in phase II”, says Liz, smiling wide. “The aim is to collect books for the library and to buy individual desks and chairs, because those kids are sitting on the same type of desks that I used to sit in 40 years ago!”

“I want to say that in the next two years, I would like my school to be a model school, a school that people look at and see knowledge and excellence, because I know a school is a source of motivation for kids to learn. When they have the necessary educational books and a well-equipped and functioning library, and other facilities, they will excel, because they are very brilliant kids”.

Two special girls
When Liz and Lucy went back to their Primary School, Liz noticed a girl leading a welcome song for the guests, and it reminded her of how she used to lead songs in the same school many years ago. Another girl of 14 years, president of the student government, gave a speech on behalf of all the students. Her name is Angeline Mweru. «She is a leader, and what can help this girl become a great woman is education. She is already very eloquent in her speech delivery”. ■
Interns for Interns

Only 20% of WHO interns hail from low-to-middle income countries (LMICs), despite the fact that these countries bear the overwhelming brunt of the world’s health disparities. The WHO Intern Board, together with a network of alumni, have launched an initiative to right this wrong.

EMILY ROHMAN, WHO

It is estimated that over 600 interns participate in the WHO-HQ internship program. The program is very effective in creating future leaders in public health. Supervisors invest valuable time training their interns in transferable skills and giving them the professional experience necessary to one day work in a public health setting: more specifically, a global health setting. These interns are not only some of the brightest young adults from all over the world, but they are also passionate about helping each other. The WHO Intern community has the reputation of being strong and well-organized, thanks especially to the WHO Intern Board behind it.

As the Communications Coordinator of the WHO Intern Board, I have the benefit of seeing all this strength first hand. The Board regularly organizes both social and career-oriented events. I have had the opportunity to collaborate with many young adults from a variety of backgrounds and with experiences from all parts of the world, who all come together to organize programs and events to benefit WHO Interns. These events include networking and professional development opportunities, such as the Expert for Interns seminars, where interns can learn about global health topics and can interact with professionals in the field; Interns for Interns seminars; French conversation lunches organized by French-speaking interns; mentoring opportunities through the Intern Buddy Program; and Staff-Intern Coffee Exchanges. There are several social activities where interns have the opportunity to converse and form relationships with other like-minded young adults, such as Friday Unwined, an end-of-the-week hangout on the WHO rooftop with food and drinks; hiking; and free fitness classes taught by interns. I have made some great connections, interacted with people from various cultures, and given career advice, but also gained much from the most accomplished professionals and brightest MPH/MD/PhD students, thus broadening my intellectual horizons in ways that I never thought possible — all unique opportunities that one cannot gain by simply sitting in a classroom or staying at one’s desk from 9 to 5.

We encourage any intern to join the Intern Board, whether it is their first day, or even their last week. I have found from personal experience that getting involved is the best way to make the most of an internship and to turn it into the type of experience you want it to be. Not only does the Board provide leadership opportunity, but it also allows interns to take the initiative on their own program, to connect with other interns or professionals in a prospective field of interest, and to gain the support of hundreds of other interns as well.

A Current Project

Nevertheless, in my position, I cannot fully enjoy the benefits of being a WHO Intern without sparing a thought for the many young adults in low-to-middle income countries (LMICs) who cannot even consider such an opportunity. In 2013, The Lancet reported that only 20% of WHO interns came from LMICs, the very countries that contain 80% of the world’s population and bear the greatest burden of disease. Though it may be quite some time until the WHO-HQ intern population represents the ideal diverse workforce, the WHO Intern Board and a network of alumni of the WHO Internship Program, independent of WHO, have been working together to enable candidates from LMICs to intern at WHO-HQ in Geneva. This past winter, they were able to successfully sponsor two candidates with a scholarship to cover the cost of interning in Geneva. Though two LMIC interns hardly makes for a representative number, it is certainly a start. Your support, whether financial or through supporting the the WHO Intern Board, is an invaluable investment in the future of global health.
Conseils pratiques pour le personnel

Au cours de la semaine de formation à la pré-retraite, organisée par la Section de la formation et du perfectionnement du personnel de l’ONUG du 10 au 14 octobre, 2016, de nombreux intervenants ont prodigué conseils et informations aux membres du personnel.

MARIE-JOSE ASTRE-DÉMOULIN, UNOG
Martine Thévenot, ex-collègue de l’OMPI, ex-Présidente de l’Association française des fonctionnaires internationaux (AFIF) et aujourd’hui Conseil en fiscalité française à Mathec Solutions a retenu pour nous quelques points essentiels.

Loi sur la naturalisation en Suisse
La nouvelle loi sur les naturalisations entrant en vigueur au 1er janvier 2018, il est recommandé à toutes les personnes qui le souhaitent et réunissent toutes les conditions requises de faire leur demande avant cette date, les demandes pour les fonctionnaires internationaux devenant plus compliquées puisqu’il faudra désormais être notamment, détenteur d’un permis C.

Paiement des retraites
N’hésitez pas à prendre contact avec les services de la caisse des pensions au Palais des UN pour vous faire aider pour remplir votre dossier de retraite. Les délais de paiement semblant se réduire, mieux vaut s’assurer que votre dossier parte parfaitement rempli sans risque de retour pour raisons administratives.

Assurance maladie frontalier (pour les résidents en France)
Dans le cadre de la signature de l’accord franco-suisse sur l’assurance maladie du 7 juillet 2016 je vous invite à demander à vos ayants droits concernés – c’est-à-dire étant affiliés au régime suisse et français – et les retraités et qui n’auraient pas fait une demande d’exemption formelle de leur assurance suisse et dont il a été fait obligation de s’assurer à la CMU, de contacter votre CPAM de référence, de remplir le formulaire E106 ou S1 et de déposer une demande entre le 1er octobre 2016 et le 30 septembre 2017 pour exercer formellement votre droit d’option. Vous retournerez ensuite ce formulaire signé par la CPAM à votre assurance suisse. Si vous ne le faites pas ceux qui sont affiliés à une assurance maladie suisse seront radiés d’office de l’assurance maladie française.

Lump sum: France
En France, le montant d’imposition sur la lump sum n’est pas le même que celui appliqué au montant des retraites versées sous forme de rentes. Il est important de bien réfléchir à vos projets pour faire le bon choix.

Déclarations des comptes à l’étranger
Pour la France comme pour la Suisse, ne pas oublier de déclarer tous les comptes à l’étranger (dont la MEC et autres comptes), les pénalités pour non déclaration étant très élevées. Si vous ne l’avez pas fait, il est conseillé de faire une déclaration rectificative auprès notamment d’un conseiller (avocat) fiscal.

En 2016, l’ONU fêtait en grande pompe les 10 ans de la Convention relative aux droits des personnes handicapées. L’on est en droit de s’attendre à ce que l’ONU, berceau de cette Convention, soit la première à mettre en vigueur ses dispositions en faveur de ses propres employés handicapés, quelle que soit la nature de leur handicap. Afin de voir si tel est vraiment le cas, nous avons rencontré Alain Valmalette, traducteur/ réviseur à la Section française de traduction au Palais des Nations depuis 1991. Alain nous brosse un tableau pour le moins nuancé de sa situation de fonctionnaire non-voyant. Que signifie être non-voyant au Palais des Nations en 2017? Rencontre avec Alain Valmalette

Beaucoup de fonctionnaires vivent dans l’ombre du fait de la nature de leur travail, mais certains vivent dans l’ombre à plus d’un titre. Le Palais est-il bien équipé pour permettre à ces derniers de sortir de l’ombre et de jouir des mêmes droits que leurs collègues?

Quel soutien l’administration vous fournit-elle pour vous aider à effectuer votre travail? La première chose que l’Administration a faite pour moi, c’est de me recruter. C’était sur concours, il y a déjà longtemps et dans des conditions qui n’ont pas été simples à l’époque, mais elle a jugé que mon handicap ne constituait pas un frein à l’accomplissement de mes tâches, ce que je m’efforce de lui prouver tous les jours. Autre point: l’Administration a toujours consenti à acquérir le matériel et les logiciels spécialisés dont j’avais besoin pour travailler. Comme tout ce qui est informatique, ces outils ne cessent de s’améliorer et il faut les actualiser au fur et à mesure que les outils mis à notre disposition par l’Organisation se modernisent. Enfin, les arrangements en matière de télétravail ont pour vertu de limiter les déplacements, ce qui n’est pas sans intérêt dans le contexte sécuritaire actuel.

Quel soutien recevez-vous de vos collègues? Je travaille dans une section où la pression est particulièrement forte et le volume de travail élevé, ce qui n’empêche pas mes collègues de se montrer compréhensifs et serviables. Je dois parfois attendre un peu, mais d’une façon générale, si j’ai besoin d’aide, je sais qu’elle me sera accordée. Le problème, c’est que l’accessibilité des outils mis à notre disposition est très imparfaite et que mes sollicitations tendent à se multiplier. Je ne perçois aucune hostilité de la part de mes collègues du fait de ces difficultés croissantes, mais il est vrai que j’aimerais être un peu moins celui qu’on doit toujours aider et un peu plus celui qui aide les autres, ça rétablirait le nécessaire équilibre.

Quels sont les principaux défis auxquels vous faites face (équipement, accès au bâtiment, accès aux activités récréatives au sein de l’ONU)? L’informatique est à priori considérée comme un moyen permettant aux personnes handicapées d’accéder à
Je constate que de très nombreux projets sont en cours, mais les choses ne bougent que très lentement alors que le manque d’accessibilité est un problème quotidien.

Que peut faire l’Organisation pour vous soutenir et soutenir d’autres collègues non-voyants dans leur travail?

La première des choses serait d’imposer un cahier des charges qui intégrerait pleinement la notion d’accessibilité à tous les niveaux. C’est déjà vrai pour tout ce qui concerne la communication vers l’extérieur. L’Organisation a beaucoup fait pour rendre accessibles ses sites, pages Web, instruments juridiques internationaux et autres documents de base. Elle travaille à rendre ses réunions plus accessibles, notamment au sein du Conseil des droits de l’homme. Les choses progressent lentement, mais elles progressent. C’est important et il faut le souligner, mais nos outils de travail, ceux qui nous servent quotidiennement, ont été développés sans tenir aucun compte de ces notions, un peu comme si l’Organisation n’employait jamais de personnes handicapées visuelles. Des millions de dollars ont été dépensés pour prendre des directions non accessibles dont j’espère qu’elles pourront être corrigées en intégrant les besoins d’accessibilité. À l’heure actuelle, le public extérieur à l’Organisation est beaucoup mieux servi que les personnes handicapées visuelles qui la servent, ce qui est paradoxal. Dans mon cas, le problème est avant tout informatique.

Les grandes entreprises informatiques et acteurs du web ont publié à l’attention des développeurs des directives visant à intégrer l’accessibilité dès les premières étapes du développement des applications et sites Web, ainsi que des modules qui permettent de tester l’accessibilité des sites Web et même des fichiers. J’y ai fait référence dans les échanges que j’ai pu avoir avec des développeurs au sein de l’Organisation, mais il faudrait que ces directives, qui ont mondiales, s’imposent à tous, ou au moins que l’Organisation s’en inspire. Elle devrait aussi s’inspirer des pratiques adoptées par d’autres organisations. Je crois pour exemple que l’UIT a mis en place une chaîne de traitement documentaire particulièrement accessible, avec la participation, me semble-t-il, d’une personne handicapée visuelle.

La question de l’accessibilité des bâtiments est problématique. La fermeture de l’UBS de Pregny, ce qui est un problème quand on doit arriver à l’heure au bureau ou en réunion.

L’accessibilité des bâtiments est rendue complexe par leur nature et leurs dimensions, mais il serait assez facile de faire étiqueter tous les ascenseurs en Braille et de les voca-

L’autonomie. C’est vrai dans ma vie privée. Je porte un grand intérêt aux nouvelles technologies et mon ouverture en la matière n’est plus à démontrer. Or, depuis quelques années, nos outils de travail se multiplient (Umoja, Gdoc, Eluna), mais leur accessibilité, lorsqu’elle existe, est très imparfaite. Je dois donc développer des stratégies particulières qui demandent beaucoup d’énergie pour arriver à faire des choses que tout un chacun peut faire en quelques secondes. Je dois aussi de plus en plus faire appel à des collègues pour accomplir certaines tâches pour moi, ce qui est assez paradoxal et anormal pour une personne si ouverte aux nouvelles technologies.

Je constate que de très nombreux projets sont en cours, mais les choses ne bougent que très lentement alors que le manque d’accessibilité est un problème quotidien.

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Throughout this winter, many people in Geneva have continued to cycle to and from work. You are probably asking yourself, “What about the rain, the snow, the winter slush on the roads?”

Cycling to work the other day I was in fact caught in a massive downpour. Pelted by rain in the face, I was warm and dry inside my rain jacket and pants, and it was an exhilarating feeling to be cruising through the deluge, past the hundreds of cars queuing at the border and inching their way through Geneva.

OK, you say. That might be fun to do once, but a nice, warm car is still better, isn’t it?

We talked to a few cyclists, and here is what they said:

• When the weather gets worse, so does the automobile traffic. And public transport always gets more crowded and unpleasant in winter. Biking is a good low-stress alternative.
• Rush hour plus bad weather make for road congestion, which affects not just cars but buses and trams, too. Whereas cycling in the cold (or wet) takes no longer than usual. You always know how much time you will need to get to work, or home.
• Most people actually find that it’s more pleasant to cycle in the cold than during a heat wave, say. You just need suitable outer clothes. Getting rained or even snowed on is no big deal (and, although everyone likes to complain about Geneva weather, downpours like the one I mentioned are very infrequent). Dressed right, you can arrive at your office refreshed, dry and warm.
• Getting that spurt of exercise at the start and end of the working day is invigorating and incidentally helps keep you fit. Your bike may be your waistline’s best friend!
• Safety needs particular attention in winter.

Geneva cyclists offer some recommendations for getting around the city on two wheels.
This last point is important. During my ride through the rain the other day, I suddenly became aware of another cyclist, just ahead of me. He was hard to see, as he was wearing dark clothing and riding without lights. This was just before dawn, and the rain was coming down in sheets. I thought of the car drivers peering out from behind smeared, wet windscreens: I don’t suppose many of them even saw him. If you are going to use your bike to go to and from work year-round, you should give extra thought to safety.

Do you want to give it a try? We have five recommendations:

1. **Equipment:** A rain-proof overjacket, trousers and boots. Also, get a pannier; it’s much better than a rucksack.
2. **Visibility:** A bright-yellow safety vest costs and weighs next to nothing, and will ensure car drivers see you. As an alternative for winter, consider getting a fleece-lined rainproof jacket, of the type worn by road workers. It will keep you warm AND make sure you are seen.
3. **Protection for the head and hands:** When you get in a car, you strap on your seatbelt, right? So don’t take unnecessary risks on a bicycle: wear gloves and a helmet. And avoid the temptation to use earphones: it’s best to focus on what you’re doing, with a minimum of distractions.
4. **Tram tracks and other hazards:** These get more slippery when wet, so don’t go too near them. If you do need to cross them, do so at a large angle so your wheel doesn’t get caught. Dead leaves, moisture and frost also make the road surface slippery in winter, and may obscure the edges of sidewalks, traffic islands, potholes and so on.
5. **Zen:** Leave 10 minutes earlier than you strictly need to, so you won’t be hurrying desperately through the traffic, breaking traffic rules as you try to get to your appointment on time. Defensive riding habits make cycling not just fun but also safe.

A word to motorcyclists

You understand what we’re about. We’re like you, except we have only about 0.3 horsepower, and a lot less protection. So please don’t “buzz” cyclists or block the bike lane. Happy biking to everyone!

A few words to car drivers

Please remember that bikes and motorbikes don’t have air bags, and our balance is way more precarious than yours. For example, every time you do a right turn or change lanes, it is a potential red-alert situation for cyclist (or motorbike rider) you haven’t quite seen, on your right. So use your turn signals well in advance to indicate your intentions! Everyone will thank you for it.

Remember: an accident that only puts a minor dent in your car could, if it involves a bike, become a life-changing event for everyone involved, including the driver.

And after you’ve stopped the car: have you heard about something called the Dutch Reach? Imagine you’ve just parked your car at the side of the road, and are about to get out. Think about how you open the door. You use the left hand, right? (Assuming you’re the driver.)

Now think about using your right hand. Notice what that does? Your body naturally shifts slightly towards the door, so that you can easily see over your shoulder and spot traffic (not just bicycles) coming up from behind. This is a great habit that prevents a particularly senseless type of accident, known as “being doored”.

Finally: be patient with cyclists who seem to be behaving erratically. We all have a right to use the road, and each one of us can make the experience better with a bit of patience and respect. If it helps: remember that a reckless cyclist is primarily endangering himself/herself (unlike a reckless motorist).

In a nutshell

You can turn your commute into an enjoyable, safe part of your day, even in winter. You just need the proper gear to keep you warm, dry and visible. The main thing, as always, is to cultivate a calm but vigilant state of mind.

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You can turn your commute into an enjoyable, safe part of your day, even in winter. You just need the proper gear to keep you warm, dry and visible. The main thing, as always, is to cultivate a calm but vigilant state of mind.
Cultural relations through the artful lens of a former refugee

UNOG intern Amara Chhin recounts her journey from a UNHCR refugee camp, to the operatic stage, to the halls of the Palais des Nations.

The barbed forest ground did not spare my mother’s bloody, bare feet during her journey from Cambodia to Thailand. Mangled feet were the least of her concerns while sidestepping land mines still to be awakened. The sleeping explosives were kindly marked with torn clothing, knotted conspicuously around tree branches by previous refugees who detected them before detonation. These bits of cloth provided safe passage to my mother, the malnourished infant harnessed to her chest (my sister), and the four people she had in tow: her elderly parents, her sister and her cousin. I can vividly envision the sense of duty and service with which she led their atrophied bodies through the sodden terrain in the early rain season to eventually meet my father at the Kao-I-Dang refugee camp on the Thai border. This UNHCR refugee camp was my birthplace. As perilous as the journey was, my mother was fleeing a far more lethal danger: Pol Pot.

I am tempted to speak from a place of personal intimacy with famine, genocide and war. In truth, my accounts are merely transgenerational impressions of trauma that I did not experience myself. My experience is paradoxical; I have no personal memory to draw upon, but must accept such second-hand trauma as an indispensable part of my personal narrative. The clearest extraction from this discord is my engraved social and political awareness and a sense of service to help those with similar trauma.

My family and I engaged the diverse challenges of resettled political refugees in Houston, Texas in the United States in 1981. My parents’ immediate challenges included culture shock, discrimination, and acquiring new college degrees in an exotic language and culture. Through their resilience, they eventually found opportunity in a Shipley Donut shop. The family donut business was a labor-intensive path towards the American dream. Grueling hours and monotony through my teenage years left my artistic self to be kindled.

Looking to performing arts as a personal outlet, I quite literally found my voice through singing. I was surprised to find that I excelled in statewide competitions, and earned my place as the winning vocalist in the Houston Young Artists competition at Rice University, with Mozart’s “Vedrai Carino” at age 16. The attention and opportunity was a catalyst for my pursuit of performing arts.

Enjoying the Western operatic aesthetic, I pursued vocal studies at the Moores School of Music at the University of Houston. During my studies, I realized that I was likely the only Cambodian classically-trained operatic soprano at that time. My first professional contract granted me a homecoming to Cambodia, where I was struck with an enigmatic familiarity. I was hired to participate in a workshop for Cambodia’s first native rock opera, *Where Elephants Weep*, commissioned by Cambodian Living Arts (CLA). I met the frenetic streets of Phnom Penh with zeal, basked in conversations in my Khmer tongue, and devoured every opportunity to engage in my cultural traditions – I was a foster child returning to my mother land, which thus far had only existed in grim genocidal impressions.

I had my moment of splendor in a squat-ter community in the “White Building” in
Phnom Penh, which housed a Yike opera class (traditional Cambodian opera). I shared a performance of the Puccini aria, *O Mio Babino Caro*, and they reciprocated with a scene from *Mak Therng*, a classic Yike love story. Overcome by the beauty contained within makeshift walls and a dirt floor, tears of gratitude streamed from me. I saw that cultural heritage could instill a sense of purpose, fulfillment and accomplishment in my people in the dawn of a new cultural era.

This experience provided an example of how cultural preservation can promote healing, improve economic well-being and repair lives. I foresee a cultural renaissance that advertises Cambodia for its arts instead of its killing fields, in which I must participate.

Most recently, I came into my own unique artistic voice through a project entitled *Teuk Dey*, Khmer for “motherland.” This new venture is an eclectic pop collaboration between myself and two fellow artists based in Paris, France: Olivier Bostvironnois, composer, and Jean-Baptiste Phou, a prolific Parisian-Cambodian performing artist with aspirations borne out of an East-West duality, much like myself. Inspired by Cambodian aesthetics and the diasporic narrative, *Teuk Dey* depicts vignettes of our personal and transnational experiences. Through my first solo single on the EP, *Little Hands*, I composed lyrics that explore the intersectionality of my displaced childhood and of motherhood.

My interest in the arts lays beyond the limits of a recording artist and stage performer, and now includes engaging the legal discourse of arts development, arts policy, and how to improve the lives of people in traumatized and displaced communities. In December of 2016, I complete a master’s degree in Global Policy Studies, specializing in Migration and Development, at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin. Through my coursework, I gained a deepened interest in the cultural dynamics of international relations, leading me to the invaluable opportunity to intern in the multilateral capital of the world: the United Nations Office at Geneva.

Working at the *Palais des Nations* directly under Sanna You and Pascal Sim in the Cultural Activities and Outreach program, I helped to implement UN cultural policy, which works to nurture mutual respect and understanding through cultural exchange. My six months in Geneva was an immersive experience in realizing small and large-scale cultural events in collaboration with member states, and involved conceptualizing and executing events that intersect arts and social issues. Particularly valuable was the chance to see, first-hand, the operational realities of governmental interactions in the cultural domain within a multilateral diplomatic structure. My colleagues at the Cultural Activities program achieve an astonishing 160 events annually with a mere team of about six, offering interns like myself the tremendous opportunity to take substantive roles as operational liaisons between the UN and member states.

My sense of duty and service has manifested in an appetite for learning about cultural interactions between human beings and between states. I believe that cultural competence in international diplomacy is instrumental in fostering the foundations for other collaborations amongst states. Through cultural exchange, states can cultivate a common commitment to promote social progress, human rights, freedom, peace, and security: the very values of the Charter of the United Nations. I recognize and relish my unique opportunity to return to the very institution that ushered my family from sanguinary feet to safety and prosperity – no longer as a child refugee of the UNHCR, but rather, as an artist and an active agent of positive systemic change.
Islande (2e partie)
Éclat et magnificence

On manque souvent de superlatifs pour décrire les paysages islandais tellement ils peuvent être extravagants, insolites et prodigieusement fantastiques, et l’on reste souvent bouche bée face à de telles beautés.

CLAUDE MAILLARD
Tout au long de l’année, Husavik, petit port situé sur l’océan Glacial arctique, vit au rythme de la pêche à la morue et au hareng. Mais c’est la baleine qui l’a rendu célèbre car c’est la capitale européenne de l’observation de ce cétacé… qui prend un réel plaisir à jouer à cache-cache avec les touristes venus le contempler. Heureusement l’Islande réserve de nombreux trésors et, après une semaine à parcourir le nord-ouest de l’île (voir le UN Special du mois passé), nous allons encore aller de surprises en surprises.

Le royaume des vulcanologues
Environ 30% de la surface de l’Islande, située de part et d’autre de l’une des plus grandes failles géologiques du monde, sont constitués de zones volcaniques actives. Ici, le manteau terrestre sous l’île est inhabituellement brûlant et élastique. Le sol s’élève, s’enfonce et la terre s’éventre, donnant naissance à des fissures d’où s’échappent le feu, la lave et le soufre. Pour les vulcanologues du monde entier, cet univers représente un formidable terrain d’étude. L’éruption du Laki en 1783, l’une des plus importantes de tous les temps, provoqua la plus grande coulée de lave de la planète. De plus, un puissant anticyclone envoyait des millions de tonnes de dioxyde de soufre sur toute l’Europe, dont la France qui fut recouverte aux deux tiers par cette poussière. La situation des paysans, déjà accablés par des sécheresses et des hivers très rigoureux, fut si désespérée qu’ils se rebellèrent et seront à l’origine de la Révolution Française qui éclata en 1789.

Direction Reykjavík, édifié sur les rives du lac Myvatn et qui fut entièrement détruit par une coulée de lave n’épargnant que l’église. La piste défoncée pour accéder au village passe à proximité des chutes d’eau de Selfoss et de Dettifoss, cette dernière, haute de 45 m et large de 100 m, étant la plus puissante d’Europe. A la fois verdoyante et austère, douce et marquée par l’empreinte volcanique, la région regorge de petits « chefs-d’œuvre » naturels tels que les solfatares et mares de boue en ébullition de Hverir et les grottes de Grjotagja. Au pied du volcan Hverfjall se nichent les formations de lave imposantes et déchiquetées de Dimmuborgir, tandis que plus au nord, dominant la centrale géothermique de Krafla, se dressent les volcans Leirhnjukur et Viti, ce dernier abritant un superbe lac aux eaux vert jade. Au cœur d’une coulée de lave du Krafla datant de l’éruption de 1984, entourés de volutes de fumerolles, déambulant au milieu de terres aux couleurs rouges, jaunes, noires, blanches… nous nous retrouvons dans un vrai paysage lunaire.

Cap au Sud
L’Islande aussi possède son monstre du Loch Ness qui séjourne dans le lac Lagarfljot, à l’extrême Est de l’île. Sur ses rives, Egilsstadir, une ville étape importante pour faire le plein de provisions en tout genre, se ravitailler en essence et pour trouver un mécano capable de
Les macareux, ici au cap Ingolfshöfdi, oiseaux emblématiques de l’Islande.

Paysage lunaire formé par les coulées de lave du volcan Krafufjöll.

© Claude Maillard

Remettre en état notre véhicule malmené par tous ces kilomètres de piste.

Dans les environs, une route en lacets, bordée de lacs gelés et de nombreuses cascades, franchit un col à 620 m puis plonge vers le fjord de Seydisfjördur. Fondée au XVIIIe siècle, la localité s’est développée à partir d’un comptoir utilisé par les marchands danois et les pêcheurs de hareng norvégiens. Par une route adapté à ce milieu rigoureux, seul moyen de transport adapté à ce milieu très particulier, Paradis des macareux, des labbes et des phoques qui ont colonisé cette réserve naturelle, le cap doit son nom au navigateur norvégien Ingolfur Arnarson, le premier habitant islandais qui aurait fait escale ici avant de s’installer à Reykjavik.

Avant d’atteindre le massif du Landmannalaugar, concentré de manifestations volcaniques variées qui font la richesse des paysages, considéré comme la plus belle région d’Islande, la route côtière qui mène à Vik réserve encore plein de surprises telles que la jolie église de 1884 au toit herbeux de Hof. Plus loin, après avoir traversé un vaste champ de lave provenant du volcan Laki, adossées au pied d’une cascade, la ferme de Nupsstadur (XVIIIe siècle) et une toute petite église en tourbe (XVIIe siècle) forment un tableau très agréable.

PROCHÉ DE KIRKJUAEJARKLAUSTUR, AU MILIEU D’UN PRÉ À MOUTONS, LE SITE DE KIRKJUGOLF ET SES ORGUES BASALTICS QUI CONSTITUENT UN ORIGINAL PARCOURS OUVRAGÉ EN NID D’ Abeilles méritent le détour, de même que les gorges aux parois abruptes de Fjardragljufur au fond desquelles serpente la rivière Fjardra.

Suite de l’expédition à découvrir dans le prochain numéro du UN Special.

**Dangereusement vôtre**

Profond de 200 m, formé au bas de l’une des langues glaciaires du Vatnajökull, le lac Jökulsarlon nous projette dans un fabuleux paysage polaire, un étonnant alignement de 34 îles géants en granit, autant d’îles géants en granit, autant de gros diamants. L’endroit est si spectaculaire qu’il a été à maintes reprises utilisé comme décor naturel dans plusieurs films, notamment deux James Bond (Dangereusement côte et Meurs un autre jour) ou encore Batman Begins de Christopher Nolan.

Dominé par le Hvannadalshnukur, point culminant du pays haut de 2110 m et encerclé par les glaces du Vatnajökull, le parc national de Skafafell est une véritable oasis de verdure. Promontoire surplombant la langue glaciaire du Skaftafellsjökull, il offre de nombreuses balades parmi une végétation variée où se cachent des trésors naturels comme la cascade de Svartifoss. Encadrée d’extraordinaires orgues de basalte noir, elle a inspiré l’architecte Gudjon Samuelsson pour réaliser la Hallgrimskirkja, l’église emblématique de Reykjavik.

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Dominé par le Hvannadalshnukur, point culminant du pays haut de 2110 m et encerclé par les glaces du Vatnajökull, le parc national de Skafafell est une véritable oasis de verdure. Promontoire surplombant la langue glaciaire du Skaftafellsjökull, il offre de nombreuses balades parmi une végétation variée où se cachent des trésors naturels comme la cascade de Svartifoss. Encadrée d’extraordinaires orgues de basalte noir, elle a inspiré l’architecte Gudjon Samuelsson pour réaliser la Hallgrimskirkja, l’église emblématique de Reykjavik.

Changement radical de décor avec le cap Ingolfshöfdi, isolé par une interminable lagune et auquel on ne peut accéder que juché sur la remorque d’un tracteur, seul moyen de transport adapté à ce milieu très particulier. Paradis des macareux, des labbes et des phoques qui ont colonisé cette réserve naturelle, le cap doit son nom au navigateur norvégien Ingolfur Arnarson, le premier habitant islandais qui aurait fait escale ici avant de s’installer à Reykjavik.

Avant d’atteindre le massif du Landmannalaugar, concentré de manifestations volcaniques variées qui font la richesse des paysages, considéré comme la plus belle région d’Islande, la route côtière qui mène à Vik réserve encore plein de surprises telles que la jolie église de 1884 au toit herbeux de Hof. Plus loin, après avoir traversé un vaste champ de lave provenant du volcan Laki, adossées au pied d’une cascade, la ferme de Nupsstadur (XVIIIe siècle) et une toute petite église en tourbe (XVIIe siècle) forment un tableau très agréable. Proche de Kirkjubæjarlaustur, au milieu d’un pré à moutons, le site de Kirkjugolf et ses orgues basaltiques qui constituent un original parcours ouvraged en nid d’abeilles méritent le détour, de même que les gorges aux parois abruptes de Fjardragljufur au fond desquelles serpente la rivière Fjardra.

Suite de l’expédition à découvrir dans le prochain numéro du UN Special.

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Les Jeunes Reporters à l’ONUG
Collaborer ensemble pour un monde meilleur

Trois intervenants, tous onusiens, évoquent lors de la 5e édition des conférences de presse Jeunes Reporters à l’ONUG la pauvreté mondiale actuelle: causes, conséquences, remèdes: tout est expliqué dans le but de sensibiliser les jeunes et les inviter à associer solidarité et efforts commun pour y remédier.

La pauvreté n’est pas un phénomène récent. Cependant, il est difficile d’accepter qu’avec tous les progrès technologiques et scientifiques contemporains, nous connaissions encore des drames humains dans le monde, conséquences d’un niveau de vie précaire. Un milliard de personnes n’ont pas accès à l’électricité tandis que 600 millions sont privés d’eau potable, entrainant des problèmes de santé dus aux conditions sanitaires et d’hygiène déplorables. On prévoit par ailleurs dans les prochaines années 836 millions de personnes vivant dans un état de pauvreté absolue qui obligerait même des femmes ainsi que des jeunes à travailler de façon non-officielle. Pour la CNUCED, cette situation de précarité n’est pas anodine et trouve plusieurs causes: les conflits géopolitiques et guerres, la corruption des dirigeants politiques, les mauvaises performances économiques du pays engendrant un faible revenu touché par la population, le faible potentiel de faculté productive et enfin l’omniprésence des activités agricoles, qui représentent les deux tiers de l’économie, peu productive, de ces PMA.

Le contexte de la pauvreté a été détaillé par trois intervenants qui ont évoqué des remèdes, la nécessité d’une mise en place d’un gouvernement qui mette en place des solutions concrètes basées sur ces principes nécessaires à la sortie de la pauvreté, ainsi que de s’engager dans une solidarité humaine avec les victimes.

Ainsi, une solidarité humaine est primordiale dans notre monde où l’interdépendance règne. Nous devons travailler ensemble à un monde meilleur, apprendre à vivre avec parcimonie, intelligence et respect afin de garantir un meilleur niveau de vie aux 800 millions de victimes. Cette solidarité, associée à des efforts communs de la part de tous, et aidée de l’association et de la collaboration des diverses agences onusiennes et ONGs, pourrait nous permettre d’espérer que d’ici quelques années, les 48 pays les moins avancés commencent à voir se rapprocher la fin de leur cauchemar.
UN Special is looking for a 60% part-time editorial assistant to provide administrative and editorial support to the magazine. The ideal candidate will be a skilled and meticulous person, proficient in editing and proofreading and with a keen interest and understanding of international affairs and issues related to the UN and WHO. He/she will also have strong multitasking skills, and will be able to work under tight deadlines.

Main responsibilities:
• The editorial schedule and copy-editing
• Pre-production and proofreading
• Distribution of the magazine
• Management of administrative tasks

Desired skills and qualifications:
• Writing and research skills in both English and French
• Ability to undertake copy editing
• Basic design skills and ability to prepare infographics and find images for articles
• Sense of initiative in finding solutions to problems and ability to work autonomously
• Detail-oriented, organized, proactive, professional

Education and Experience required:
At least 3 years of working experience in either writing, project coordination, copy-editing, communications, graphic design, editorial production or translation.

Length of assignment: 11 months
Starting date: 1 April 2017

If interested, please send your CV and cover letter to alex.mejia@unitar.org with copy to unspecial@unog.ch indicating “UN Special Editorial Assistant” in the subject line.

Deadline for the receipt of applications: 28 February 2017
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