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Non aux coupes salariales à Genève

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Days ago, Geneva hosted the 70th World Health Assembly, and outgoing WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan passed on the torch to the Organization’s first African Director-General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. This month, UN Special takes the opportunity to honor Dr. Chan’s tenure; and, in tandem, highlights an issue close to the heart of WHO and to many other arms of the UN family: the global epidemic of road-related deaths and injuries. In these pages, you will read about initiatives from across many UN-affiliated bodies to curb this deadly trend.

UN Special also continues its coverage of the 7.7% staff pay-cut. Please peruse some testimonies about how losing one month’s pay per year will have tangible impact on staff and their families; and please help yourself to the two tear-out flyers at the center of this magazine, as we seek to paper UN office doors across Geneva in solidarity against this measure. Most of all, we hope you will consult the paper prepared by the Federation of International Civil Servants’ Associations (FICSA), which spells out specific actions staff may take to protest this decision.

You will also find inspiring articles on youth empowerment in the Yucatan peninsula, the global fight against non-communicable diseases, and the launch of the World Meteorological Organization’s spectacular new Cloud Atlas – a feast for the eyes indeed. We also cover important discussions on the UNOG Strategic Heritage Project, and we welcome the incipient Geneva summer with a feature on the UN Beach, an ode to the old-fashioned postcard, and an invitation to wanderlust towards “l’origine du monde,” the place where the world began – turn to page 45 to find out where!

As the season shifts and the days continue to lengthen, we hope this edition of UN Special will keep you company, from inside the office to wherever your summer sojourns may carry you! ❘

Genève a récemment accueilli la 70e Assemblée mondiale de la Santé et le Directeur général sortant de l’OMS, le Dr Margaret Chan, a transmis le flambeau au premier Directeur général africain de l’histoire de l’Organisation, le Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Ce numéro de UN Special sait cette occasion pour rendre hommage au Dr Chan et aborde par ailleurs une question chère à l’OMS et à de nombreuses agences de l’ONU : celle des ravages causés par les accidents de la route. Ce numéro vous permettra d’en savoir plus sur les initiatives menées par plusieurs agences onusiennes dans le but de freiner cette tendance mortifère.

UN Special continue également de couvrir la question des coupes salariales. Vous pourrez découvrir des témoignages montrant l’impact d’une perte équivalent à un mois de salaire par an. En signe de solidarité contre ces mesures, vous pourrez faire usage des affichettes qui se trouvent en page centrale de ce magazine et les apposer sur la porte de votre bureau. Vous pourrez en outre lire l’article préparé par la Fédération des associations de fonctionnaires internationaux (FICSA), qui inventorie certaines des actions collectives spécifiques que le personnel peut mettre en place pour protester contre cette décision.


Nous espérons que ce numéro du UN Special vous accompagnera à mesure que les jours s’allongent, au bureau, ou quel que soit l’endroit où l’été vous mène. ❘

The official magazine of the international civil servants of the United Nations at Geneva and of the World Health Organization

La revue officielle des fonctionnaires internationaux des Nations Unies à Genève et de l’Organisation mondiale de la Santé

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Interview with the outgoing Director-General of WHO

Dr. Margaret Chan

As the Director-General of WHO is about to complete 10 years of leadership, UN Special sat down with Dr. Chan to ask her a few questions.

As you look at the last 10 years, what are the achievements you are most proud of?

Under WHO leadership, endemic countries and their partners have turned around the deadly epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria and pushed them into retreat. Few thought this would happen 10 years ago. This has been a focused, intense, well-funded and unprecedented effort. The results are stunning.

WHO estimates that more than 18 million poor people living with HIV are now seeing their lives transformed by antiretroviral therapy – a near doubling of the number in just four years. This is the fastest scale up of a life-saving intervention in history. In a remarkable achievement for a global health initiative, treatment coverage for people with HIV in eastern and southern Africa surpasses the global average.

Declines in malaria and tuberculosis have been equally impressive. Deaths from malaria have dropped by 60% in sub-Saharan Africa, the historical heartland of this disease. Endemic countries have literally blanketed their populations with protective insecticidal nets. For example, in just the two years from 2012 to 2014, nearly 430 million high-quality nets were distributed in sub-Saharan Africa. WHO estimates that the assault on malaria has saved nearly 7 million lives. The results for tuberculosis are even more dramatic: some 49 million lives have been saved since the start of this century.

But I am most proud of the attention now being given to the strengthening of health systems, which was a neglected issue when I took office 10 years ago. Midway through my time in office, I presented universal health coverage as the most powerful concept that public health has to offer. It is the ultimate expression of fairness and one of the most powerful social equalizers among all policy options. I pushed hard to have universal health coverage included as an overarching health target in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and was delighted when this happened. Recent
G7 summits have stressed the need to build resilient and inclusive health systems, and they see this as one of the best defences against the threat from emerging and re-emerging diseases, like Ebola, Zika, and urban yellow fever.

What are the most difficult and challenging aspects of leading an agency of this size and global reach?
Getting the politics and the incentives right. The fact that chronic noncommunicable diseases, like heart disease, cancer, and diabetes have overtaken infectious diseases as the leading killers worldwide has had profound implications at the policy level. The biggest risk factors for these diseases are lifestyle-related: tobacco use, the harmful use of alcohol, a sedentary lifestyle in front of computer screens and handheld devices, and food choices that include too much fatty, sugary, salty highly processed junk food. No country in the world has managed to turn its obesity epidemic around in all age groups. The rise of these chronic diseases is strongly linked to the globalized marketing of unhealthy products. These products are peddled by powerful economic operators. Economic power readily translates into political power.

One of the most contentious issues in public health swirls around intellectual property rights and the extent to which patent protection for pharmaceutical products curtails access to life-saving and health-promoting medical products for the poor. Debates on this issue nearly always polarize around the question of which should have supremacy – economic interests or health concerns? Getting the balance right is a huge challenge, but we usually manage.

As I have learned, no lasting improvements in health will take place without government commitment at the highest political level. I will pressure heads of state and government in private when, for example, they fail to make polio eradication an emergency priority or refuse to give WHO free access to displaced populations or those wounded by armed conflict. I don’t mind hitting them hard on the phone or in a face-to-face meeting behind closed doors. But I rarely do public shaming. Progress in public health depends on broad-based cooperation and a spirit of solidarity. Poor performing governments need to be motivated to change their behaviours as part of this collaboration effort. I find motivation, followed by technical guidance and support, is the better long-term tactic.

Do you think it is more difficult to lead the agency being a woman?
Never for one minute did I think being a woman had any impact on my leadership
role. In public health, women have a superior image in terms of their compassion and caring role. I consistently felt that being a woman was an advantage. It also gave me leverage with women’s groups. Throughout the developing world, it’s the women who do the most to improve health for their families, communities, and countries.

Have you seen any change in attitudes to women leaders in the last 10 years?
Yes. Today, five out of eight members of WHO’s Global Policy Group, which includes myself, my Deputy Director-General, and the Directors of WHO’s six regional offices, are women. This is historically unprecedented at WHO. As another example, 30 years ago, women accounted for a scant quarter of delegates attending the World Health Assembly. Today, women account for nearly half. I am thrilled to look out at those vast audiences and see so many female faces.

What is your biggest regret? What could you have done differently if you had a chance to do it all over again?
My biggest regret is obvious. During West Africa’s first Ebola outbreak, WHO was too slow to recognize that the virus would behave in entirely different ways than it did during more than a dozen Ebola outbreaks in equatorial Africa. We did not recognize soon enough that the measures that had quickly brought previous outbreaks, even large ones, under control in just a few months would fail to make a dent under the unique circumstances of the West African outbreak. But we did make rapid course corrections, introduce new tactics, and bring all three outbreaks to an end.

As we now know, the outbreak began in Guinea in December 2013 in a very remote small village. But the outbreak was not detected nationally, and attributed to the Ebola virus, until March 2014. That gave the virus enough lead time to penetrate hospitals in large urban areas, and then cross the borders into Liberia and Sierra Leone. That kind of multi-country urban epidemiology had never happened with an Ebola outbreak before. Had resilient and inclusive health systems been in place, if countries had had well-performing surveillance, early alert, and laboratory services in place, if they had decent hospitals with electricity, running water, and isolation wards, if they paid the salaries of their doctors and nurses, the situation in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone would have looked entirely different.

What advice would you give to the next DG to help them do a great job?
Continue to push the universal health coverage agenda. And never let the new WHO emergencies programme, which was created after the Ebola crisis, out of your personal oversight.

For the future, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is transformational, especially for health, as it addresses some of the most critical root causes of ill health that reside in non-health sectors. Progress towards meeting these new goals will make a monumental contribution to the prevention of both chronic diseases and the many infectious diseases that thrive in filthy rural environments or poorly designed and polluted urban areas. I will be watching this progress with great personal interest.
Non et trois fois non aux coupes salariales à Genève...

PRISCA CHAOUI,
CONSEIL DE COORDINATION DE L’ONU

Ni la pluie ni le mauvais temps n’ont découragé les 500 fonctionnaires venus des différentes organisations internationales basées à Genève se rassembler dans l’enceinte du Palais des Nations le 25 avril pour dénoncer les coupes salariales décidées par la Commission de la Fonction publique internationale (CFPI) suite à l’enquête sur le coût de la vie menée en octobre 2016. « Non aux coupes salariales », « Oui à la transparence », voici quelques slogans qui ont été scandés haut et fort par des fonctionnaires résolus à ne pas baisser les bras face à la décision de la CFPI de réduire les salaires des membres du personnel des catégories Administrateurs et supérieurs de 7,7%. La seule justification derrière cette décision est que les salaires à Genève doivent être alignés sur ceux des collègues à New York. En d’autres termes, si les collègues à New York subissent une perte de leur pouvoir d’achat, les collègues d’autres lieux d’affection doivent connaître le même sort.

L’irrégularité de la décision tient au fait qu’elle se fonde sur des données statistiques que l’on considère être incorrectes. Ainsi, les conclusions de l’enquête menée par la CFPI sont-elles loin de refléter la réalité macro-économique qui prévaut à l’heure actuelle à Genève où les salaires ont augmenté de 3,7%, entre 2010 et 2015 et où la cherté de vie est parmi les plus élevées dans le monde. De plus, la Commission n’a pas respecté sa propre méthodologie qui exige d’analyser les prix à Genève et à Nyon dans le canton de Vaud. En effet, pour la première fois, les loyers en France voisine sont pris en compte et considérés comme des dépenses non locales. Cela a eu pour effet de réduire artificiellement le coût de la vie à Genève. Il semble par ailleurs que la CFPI n’ait pas correctement appliqué sa propre méthodologie relative au calcul du coût de la vie. La liste des irrégularités relevées est longue et il est impossible de les énumérer toutes.

Force est de constater que ces coupes surviennent suite au changement de la méthodologie relative aux enquêtes sur le coût de la vie que la CFPI a introduit il y deux ans. La CFPI prétend que toutes les parties concernées, c’est-à-dire les Administrations des différentes organisations et les représentants du personnel étaient au courant des changements et qu’ils ne s’y étaient pas opposés. Or, les représentants du personnel s’y étaient opposés. L’on est en droit d’ailleurs de se demander si les changements n’ont pas été apportés à la méthodologie avant que les enquêtes ne soient menées dans les différents lieux d’affection, y compris Genève. A supposer que cette allégation soit de mauvaise foi, une chose est certaine : la CFPI a manqué de transparence pour ce qui est du pourcentage de la baisse qui n’a pas été révélé lors de la session de février 2017 du Comité consultatif pour les questions d’ajustement (ACPAQ) et il a fallu attendre la session de mars de la CFPI à New York pour que la bombe soit lâchée.

Tout cela soulève des questions sur la nature même de la Commission qui est censée être un organe technique et non politique. Notre Organisation traverse une crise financière due aux changements récents opérés sur la scène internationale, mais ce n’est ni la première ni la dernière fois où cela se passera et couper les salaires n’est évidemment pas le meilleur moyen de réduire les coûts.

Une chose est certaine : les fonctionnaires à Genève ne sont pas prêts à se soumettre aux jeux politiques dont ils sont victimes. Ces mêmes fonctionnaires qui ont intègre leur Organisation croyant à sa mission et ses valeurs, sont déçus de voir que la baisse de salaire de manière brute et unilatérale n’est que la seule récompense qu’ils peuvent espérer en contrepartie de leur dévouement et des services quotidiens qu’ils rendent à leur employeur. C’est pourquoi, ils sont déterminés à contrer, par tous les moyens légitimes, cette injustice patente.

Sous la pression du personnel et conscients des risques qu’encourent les fonctionnaires s’ils laissaient passer une telle injustice, les chefs des agences basées à Genève ont envoyé une lettre à la CFPI le 28 avril suite à leur rencontre avec le Vice-président de la Commission et le Chef de la Division sur le coût de la vie, à Genève les 27 et 28 avril. Dans cette lettre, ils ont demandé le report de l’application de la décision jusqu’à l’obtention d’informations supplémentaires quant au processus qui a mené à son adoption. La réponse de la CFPI est tombée le 9 avril. Elle indique, entre autres, que les agences pourront soumettre leur contribution durant la 85ème session de la Commission qui se tiendra à Vienne du 10 au 21 juillet. Cela ouvre donc la voie à une possibilité de négociations et est en lui-même porteur d’espoir.

Ce semblant de victoire s’est vite révélé illusoire : les fonctionnaires de l’ONU à Genève ont reçu le 11 mai un broadcast du Département de la gestion à New York annonçant que les coupes salariales seront appliquées aux nouveaux membres du personnel à partir du 1er mai et aux membres actuellement en service à partir du 1er août. De là à parler de douche froide…

Ce broadcast contredit la lettre du 9 mai et semble vouloir mettre les fonctionnaires devant le fait accompli. Ce broadcast contredit aussi les dires du Secrétaire général Antonio Guterres lors de sa rencontre avec les représentants du personnel le 25 avril à Genève lorsqu’il a affirmé que ces coupes étaient le contraire des réformes positives. Quoi qu’il en soit, les syndicats de toutes les agences basées à Genève sont en train de coordonner les prochaines actions à mener afin de convaincre la CFPI de revenir sur sa décision. Parmi ces actions, l’arrêt de travail qui finira par aboutir à ce que personne ne souhaite… la grève. Cette grève n’est pas contre les organisations qui les emploient mais contre la Commission qui ne semble plus être la garante de la fonction publique internationale. La question qui se pose aujourd’hui est de savoir si cette Commission n’est pas investie d’un mandat qui va à l’opposé de son appellation. N’est-il pas temps de freiner l’érosion de la fonction publique internationale? La réponse est oui et trois fois oui…
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How the proposed pay-cut will affect the lives of staff

FROYLAN SILVEIRA,
UNOG STAFF COORDINATING COUNCIL

It may be easy to underestimate how much a family’s life can be affected when their salary is cut by 7.7%, but in a duty station as expensive as Geneva it goes way beyond what you might normally read in the news or hear in the hallways. We are not really talking about a percentage here, but about parents not being able any more to pay school fees they have already committed to pay, or mothers who are now practically denied access to childcare. The fact is rents are very expensive in Geneva and overall prices are certainly not dropping like flies. Life is expensive in Geneva. The cost of living in Geneva has not dropped by 7.7% (Switzerland’s 2016 deflation was only 1.27%, with inflation kicking back in in 2017). Making a living in this duty station, especially if you come from abroad and do not have any family support locally, is quite expensive. And yet, a technicality seems to have prevailed over common sense and human lives to make it more difficult to UN staff carry out their jobs. The fact is rents are very expensive in Geneva and overall prices are certainly not dropping like flies. Life is expensive in Geneva. The cost of living in Geneva has not dropped by 7.7% (Switzerland’s 2016 deflation was only 1.27%, with inflation kicking back in in 2017). Making a living in this duty station, especially if you come from abroad and do not have any family support locally, is quite expensive. And yet, a technicality seems to have prevailed over common sense and human lives to make it more difficult to

P2 staff member

Earlier this year, I carefully considered my family budget before deciding to enroll my daughter for her first year of school in a private school. In compliance with the state school enrollment deadline, I renounced her spot in Geneva state school in the beginning of March and I paid the CHF 6,500 in non-reimbursable fees for her to attend Ecolint in the autumn. Then of course, we received the announcement of the cut in post-adjustment… My single salary supports my entire household (my husband has a chronic degenerative disease, is not working and will likely not return to paid work). I wonder how I will now pay for a private school that I can no longer afford. Had I known I was going to receive such a pay cut, I would have made different choices in terms of my young daughter’s schooling. However, now I cannot receive in return the thousands of francs I have paid, and even if I withdraw her enrollment I will still need to pay partial tuition for the coming year. Thus I cannot change my decision for this year, and next year my daughter will likely again need to face a new school and move into the state school system. I do not know if I will be able to pay all of my bills with this pay cut – hopefully yes, but we will need to tighten our belts to eliminate anything beyond strict necessities, and there will be no savings. I am also sorely disappointed that our pay will be reduced to be in line with New York, whereas we work at least 20 hours more per month! If we are to receive this cut, then at least our hours should also be cut to be in line with New York.

P3 staff member

I transferred to Geneva from New York in late November 2016, a decision I took based on a number of factors, including the financial aspect, as the move entailed the loss of my spouse’s income after he renounced his job in New York to support my geographical career move. It was clear to me that the cost of living in Geneva would be considerably higher than the cost of living in New York; however, given the higher post adjustment, it appeared as a financially feasible move at that moment. Once in Geneva, nonetheless, it was evident that financial aspects such as high rental prices in Geneva were not taken into consideration to calculate rental subsidy rates, for example, which had a direct and unfavourable impact on my purchasing power in relation to that I had in New York. In addition, there is also the extremely high child day care costs. UN staff pay as much as CHF 2,500 to have their child go to the “crèche” which is not reimbursed by the Organization and which I will have to start covering as soon as I return to work from maternity leave. Against this context, a further salary reduction of 7.7% renders Geneva as a financially unaffordable duty station for me and this will certainly have an impact on my future career decisions. This is particularly disappointing given the fact that, during my career with the United Nations, I have guided my career decisions taking into consideration the substantive contribution that I can make to the Organization through my skills and experience, not based on financial considerations. Having to rule a duty station out as a result of its financial disadvantages is certainly a step in the wrong direction for staff members who, like me, believe that UN career moves should be planned according to higher motivations and ideals, such as serving the Organization wherever we are most likely to make a significant contribution, and not wherever we will be least likely to experience economic and financial hardships or provide an acceptable standard of living for our families.

P4 staff member

I have been working for the UN since 2000. My only “luxury” in all the years that I have worked has been to have five children. No private schools, no expensive holidays, no designer clothes, no domestic help, nothing extravagant. My spouse does not work; it would be impossible, otherwise, for me to do my job, including travelling frequently on mission, while juggling the children’s needs. That means that my salary supports seven people. I was not expecting this to become an issue because we always lived well within our means. Now, I’m wondering how I can safely face the major expenses that always arise with time. For example, the car I drive to work is 17 years old and unreliable; I have to find a replacement. My older children are hitting their teens and starting to cost more, which will can only increase as time goes on. And here we are suddenly expected to forgo one month’s salary a year. It will not change the dedication with which I do my work, but it adds extra stress and worry in a context where we are already, in the workplace, being asked to do more with less. The proposed cut is not conducive to efficiency at work.

P5 staff member

Slashing one month of income from the budget of our family of five will be really hard. Very high cost of education and child care in Geneva makes big difference. Two of my school-age children attend international school. It has considerable costs for the family budget, but there’s little choice if you’re a UN international bound to move away sometime. When filling in the living costs’ survey last year, I discovered that next season, when my third little one is to go to municipal kindergarten, we would need some careful adjustments or else our cost of living might become unsustainable – because Swiss child care system treats international
employees differently and the price of putting a kid in the kindergarten is no less than that of a decent college education (and – by the way – is not compensated by UN).

And now the news on pay cut came. I feel like somebody in our own organization thinks of us – employees – as of a machines that could be easily transported from one place to another and then to next, with no consequences for productivity and efficiency. However, the simple truth is that we’re humans, and the needs of our family – including internationally applicable education – are essential to us. International education is not a luxury but a must for international employees. Whoever has failed to give due attention to this aspect has done poor job, and in fact failed us. ■

Director

Why am I so worried about the impending salary cut? I work at the director level, with a good salary. So why complain about the loss of a month salary per year? Because I am the single parent of an adolescent who will depend on my financial support for many years to come. I am a few years away from retirement. The cut will rob my child’s university years and funds put aside for my own retirement. I simply do not have enough work years left to make up for the loss.

This may only be the beginning of my financial decline. How will the cut affect my pension? A lot of uncertainty. A lot of anxiety. Geneva is one of the most expensive cities in the world. If you are single mother, you spend huge amounts on childcare, while depending on a single income. My living costs have been going up during the last years, and certainly not decreased by 7.7%.

Geneva means home to my child, who grew up here, and it has started feeling like home to me, too. It never dawned on me that I might not be able to live here any longer after my retirement because I could not financially afford it. Now this becomes a very real possibility. It is a sobering perspective. It is demoralizing. ■
FEATURED

Road traffic victims, an avoidable reality

_Around 3,400 people die from predictable and avoidable hazards each day on the roads. Although developing countries are making great efforts to implement action plans for road safety, 90% preventable of deaths still occur in such countries._

The reality today shows that it is the place where one lives that can determine the chances of being in a traffic accident. For instance, Africa has one of the highest rates of fatal traffic accidents with a rate of 26.6 per 100,000 population. And even if Europe has an index three times lower than in Africa, the index remains considerable with 9.3 per 100,000 population. Nevertheless, not only is there a high risk of road mortality for each country, but there is also a high risk of road traffic injuries that can lead to serious consequences for the victim and his or her relatives such as financial loss due to rehabilitation and medical high costs, risks of disability, and psychological repercussions.

The **Fourth UN Global Road Safety Week** was celebrated last month, from 8-14 May. During this major event, Director-General of WHO Margaret Chan pointed out that another main problem of road safety rests on the dangers related to driving at high speed.

Latest WHO statistics show that between 40-50% of people do not respect the speed limit, which can result in deaths that could have been prevented. Unfortunately, drivers and passengers are not the only ones at risk. Pedestrians and cyclists can also suffer from the consequences of an inadequate attitude on the roads. Indeed, the faster a person drives, the less control he or she will have of the vehicle and the greater the stopping distance will be. Thus, we observe that at 50 km/h there is a 20% risk for a pedestrian of dying if hit by a car against a 60% risk of decease if they are run over at 80 km/h.

Another worrying figure is the number of teenagers who die on the roads every year: according to the latest WHO indexes, it is estimated that 3000 adolescents die every day from road accidents.

They result from negligence. And that negligence extends well beyond the behavior of individual drivers. By adopting certain policies and practices, adapting the roads design, improving vehicles technologies, changing behaviors and bringing awareness on this issue, we can not only save lives but also improve them.

**On the importance of adopting and promoting safety regulations**

There are simple use practices that cities and communities can adopt:

- **Predictable and avoidable hazards:**
  - **Adapt the roads’ design:** Provide infrastructure that is safe and user-friendly for all road users.
  - **Improve vehicle technologies:** Develop vehicles that are safer and more reliable, reducing the risk of accidents.
  - **Change behaviors:** Promote safe driving practices and discourage risky behavior.
  - **Bring awareness:** Educate the public about road safety and the consequences of negligent behavior.

By adopting these measures, we can make our roads safer, reducing the number of road traffic victims and improving the quality of life for all who use them.
should adopt and promote. For example, it is extremely important to: implement traffic regulations that limit the permissible speed on roads and streets by providing adequate infrastructure and technologies; ensure that the pavements and sidewalks of the streets are in good condition and that cars conform to regulatory standards; raise awareness on security measures such as on the use of helmets and seat belts; provide separate and safe bicycle lanes for cyclists; and protect vulnerable pedestrians such as children by introducing effective road signals to allow them to walk safely from their homes to their schools. Likewise, encouraging safe and responsible behaviors is essential in order to improve road safety. Communities that are aware of the dangers of drinking and driving, and that promote adequate behaviors and solutions (e.g. not taking the wheel when one has drunk, choosing a sober person to be in charge of driving after a party, promoting the use of public transport, etc.) may see a clear reduction in traffic accident rates. This also applies to raising awareness about the dangers of driving when the body shows signs of tiredness or drowsiness and the driver does not pay attention to these alarms. Education is crucial if our goal is to reduce the terrible risks of road traffic.

"Target 3.6 – By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents"

On 10 May 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 64/255, Improving global road safety, and officially proclaimed the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. It was founded under the vision of ensuring a sustainable development for all countries, and later on it was modelled around Target 3.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals which aims to first stabilize, then reduce road mortality and traffic injury rates by 50% by 2020. Therefore, the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety is predicted to contribute to saving around 5 million lives between 2011 and 2020 by encouraging governments and all stakeholders to raise awareness and adopt standards and practices to reduce the risk of road mortality and injuries.

By 2015, 47 countries had already demonstrated their commitment to the Decade and succeeded in implementing speed limits at 50 km/h or less. Since it is a fact that reducing the authorized speed of only 5% can reduce the percentage of fatal accidents by 30%, the commitment of these governments to enforce speed limits is extremely encouraging. Also, an informal group named Friends of the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 counts already with 18 governments and 8 international agencies who are profoundly committed on promoting the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. We must now ensure that efforts continue and are amplified if we are to reduce road fatalities and ensure the safety of each person.

Move with Peace of Mind
Move with STERLING
Accelerating action towards achieving SDG 3.6 and saving lives on the world’s roads

New World Health Organization (WHO) data show that every year around 1.3 million people die as a result of a road traffic collision and between 20 and 50 million more sustain non-fatal injuries, some resulting in significant long-term disabilities.

Margie Peden¹ and Etienne Krug², WHO

These deaths and injuries, while devastating to victims and their families, also cost governments between 3-5% of their Gross Domestic Product. According to WHO’s most recent Global status report on road safety 2015, 90% of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. Around half are among vulnerable road users – pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

More than a decade since the release of the WHO and World Bank World report on road traffic injury prevention and the establishment of the UN Road Safety Collaboration (UNRSC), there has been a major shift in the understanding of road safety as a major health and development concern with a shared responsibility across multiple government agencies. This increase in visibility has in part been due to global advocacy efforts, through biennial UN General Assembly resolutions, two World Health Assembly resolutions, and two global ministerial conferences – the first hosted by the Government of the Russian Federation in 2009 and the second by the Government of Brazil in 2015.

Arising from these two latter events was launch of the first Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011–2020 and more recently the request by the UN General Assembly for WHO to lead the development of voluntary global targets and indicators.

The inclusion of two road safety targets in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – one in the Health Goal (target 3.6) and the other in the Sustainable Cities and Communities Goal (target...
11.2) – has further raised the need for quick action. Target 3.6 calls for reducing by 50% the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic crashes by 2020. This means that in less than four years, many hundreds of thousands of deaths need to be averted in order to reduce the annual rate down to approximately 600,000 deaths per year. This will require substantially increased and concerted effort from governments, international agencies, civil society and the private sector. In this context, WHO has worked with international partners to further raise awareness and to develop a package of core interventions which will assist Member States to put in place both effective and cost-efficient strategies to accelerate action.

**Fourth UN Global Road Safety Week**

To raise road safety awareness, the UNRSC recently organized the Fourth UN Road Safety Week (8-15 May 2017). Focused on speed management, more than 1,000 events were held around the world including days dedicated to slowing down streets, campaigns around schools and activities involving parliamentarians and the media. The Week and its related campaign “Save Lives: #SlowDown” drew attention to the dangers of speed and the measures which should be put in place to address this leading risk for road traffic deaths and injuries.

To mark the UN Week WHO issued a new report entitled Managing speed, which suggests that excessive or inappropriate speed contributes to one in every three road traffic fatalities worldwide and highlights five strategies to address the problem. “Speed is at the core of the global road traffic injury problem,” notes WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan. “If countries were to address just this key risk, they would soon reap the rewards of safer roads, both in terms of lives saved and increases in walking and

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cycling, with profound and lasting effects on health.”

Save LIVE package
Save LIVES: a road safety technical package was also launched by WHO during the Fourth UN Global Road Safety Week. The package details 22 evidence-based interventions identified by many of the world’s leading road safety experts and their agencies as those most likely to impact road traffic deaths and injuries. There are six core components of the package, namely:

- Speed management
- Leadership on road safety
- Infrastructure design and improvement
- Vehicle safety standards
- Enforcement of traffic laws
- Survival after a crash

Since the reality of road safety differs across countries, this Package is not a one-size-fits-all solution, but rather a guide to support decision-making at national and local levels based on a good situational assessment. The vital next step will be to provide technical support to Member States to implement those elements of the Package most likely to save lives.

Progress in countries
During the last decade WHO, in collaboration with partners, has been able to help achieve and demonstrate substantial gains in countries. These include reductions in speeding and increases in seat-belt and child restraint wearing in the Russian Federation and Turkey; and reductions in drinking and driving and increases in motorcycle helmet wearing in Cambodia and Viet Nam, among others. Bloomberg Philanthropies was a key financial supporter of these initiatives and as a result of the success of its first grant announced a second 5-year commitment (2015-2019) of US$ 125 million to global road safety focusing on 5 countries and 10 cities.

Improving seat-belt and child restraint wearing in the Russian Federation
In the Russian Federation, a road safety project was implemented from 2010-2014 by three partners – WHO, the Global Road Safety Partnership and Johns Hopkins University – in cooperation with the Ministries of Health and Internal Affairs in Lipetsk and Ivanovo regions, with additional support from the regional Administrations, the State Inspectorate for Road Safety and regional Departments of Health. The goal of the project was to enhance road safety in these pilot regions through targeted actions addressing three risk factors: reducing speeding, not wearing seat-belts and not using child restraints – with the potential for dissemination of the project experience across the Russian Federation. Activities included assessment and modification (where necessary) of road safety laws; increased enforcement of these laws; mass media campaigns to raise awareness of effective measures; and monitoring and evaluation of activities. Roadside surveys conducted by Johns Hopkins University, together with Lipetsk State Technical University and Ivanovo State Polytechnic University, documented reductions in speeding and increases in the use of seat-belts and child restraints in target areas.

In closing, evidence from many high-income and a few middle-income countries shows that while achieving Target 3.6 might be technically possible, the momentum garnered during the past decade needs to be converted into urgent action. Continued advocacy and tools such as the Save LIVES package can indicate which measures to prioritize to yield the greatest benefit in terms of lives saved, but this guidance will only come to fruition if championed at the highest political level of every country of the world. ■
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Education and training as cornerstone of road safety

Road traffic crashes result in an extraordinary death toll and injuries on the roads, and constitute a serious problem with disproportionate impact on health and development. What is most striking is that road accidents are the leading killer of young people aged between 15 and 29 years.

ESTRELLA MERLOS,
CIFAL GLOBAL NETWORK

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets an ambitious target (3.6) to halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents, by 2020. This is only three years away and an urgent development priority.

In addition to this target, the 2030 Agenda includes road safety as a key component of sustainable cities and communities. Target 11.2 calls to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons. Certainly, transport systems cannot be sustainable if they are taking the lives and disabling a disproportionate number of the population.

Addressing road safety challenges requires the active engagement and commitment of all social actors: academic institutions, governments at all levels and sectors, the private sector, the media, the international community, and the society as a whole to ensure that road safety is a global priority.

Furthermore, there is a need for a common understanding that road safety is a collective responsibility. In this sense, educating the general public about the importance of addressing the problem of road traffic accidents and raising awareness of road safety risk factors is essential.

Given the complexity of this issue and the diversity of actors involved, ranging from health authorities to transport, finance, education, the police, hospitals and many others, training and knowledge exchange that leads to the implementation of effective measures that reduce road traffic crashes is crucial.

Leveraging its position as a dedicated training arm of the
United Nations System, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) is working closely with other UN agencies and partners around the world towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal target 3.6. At the core of UNITAR’s work is to build awareness and promote education, facilitate training to policy-makers, legislators, local authorities and those who enforce legislation, as well as to instill a sense of collective responsibility.

UNITAR’s efforts to raise awareness and promote education target youth and individual road users. Through educational road safety “shows” and campaigns implemented by UNITAR’s affiliated training centres around the globe, thousands of youths between 14 and 23 years old are reached every year and are informed about the importance of adopting a respectful traffic culture and the risks of speeding, drinking and driving and distracted driving.

Strengthening the capacities – through training and knowledge exchange- of policymakers and government authorities in areas related to road safety such as urban planning and design, mobility and transport, legislation and enforcement is a key objective of UNITAR’s road safety global training initiative. Launched in 2015 with the aim of contributing to achieve road safety targets through capacity building, this initiative places priority in countries with highest road traffic death rates, with a special focus on low-income countries, LDCs and SIDS. Throughout 2017 alone, UNITAR will deliver nine regional training activities targeting government authorities from national and local levels to learn about innovative approaches to road safety, while promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration.

When talking about road safety education, academic institutions at all levels are fundamental partners. From changing school curriculum to include road safety to conducting research in the field, developing research-based policies, contributing with data to make informed decisions, to building road safety professionals, academic institutions have a key role to play. A greater collaboration between governments and academia must be further encouraged around road safety.

The important role that media plays in education has been widely recognized. A quality media can have a positive impact on society and contribute to achieve societal outcomes. In the field of road safety, journalists and media outlets can contribute by informing citizens in a timely and accurate manner on road conditions and potential risks, thus helping to reduce road traffic injuries. They can also raise awareness on the major risks factors, highlighting the need for reducing speed, the dangers of driving under the influence of alcohol and driving distracted, and the importance of wearing helmets, using seat-belts and child restraints. Strengthening the capacities of journalists by increasing their knowledge on road safety is also essential to leverage the role of media as partners in prevention.

In closing, road safety starts with each of us. It is not only a government’s responsibility but also an individual responsibility. There is urgency for change. The high road death toll and crash rates are unacceptable.

Road safety begins with me!
Seguridad vial en México
Una prioridad nacional

El dato revelado en 2016 por medios de comunicación en México es espeluznante: la primera causa de muerte en jóvenes de entre 15 y 29 años son los accidentes de tránsito, según el Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública, y están vinculados con el consumo de alcohol y la velocidad.

SENADOR RAÚL POZOS LANZ
Otro dato, del Consejo Nacional para la Prevención de Accidentes en México, es que 1.4 millones de personas resultan con lesiones y 1.2 con alguna discapacidad.

No se trata de un fenómeno particular de México, afecta a toda Latinoamérica. El Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo efectuó un estudio que no sólo confirmó que los accidentes de tránsito son la primera causa de muerte en la región, sino que puso sobre la mesa varias causas: carros inseguros, poca infraestructura vial, falta de rigor a la hora de enseñar a conducir y entregar licencias de tránsito, sanciones blandas a la hora de impartir la ley a los conductores infractores y, por supuesto, el alcohol.

Hay que agregar el nuevo fenómeno del uso del celular mientras se conduce, que se ha colocado en poco tiempo entre las primeras causas de los accidentes de tránsito y obligado a las autoridades locales a incluir sanciones cada vez más rigurosas.

Sin embargo, por más que las autoridades de tránsito o vialidad endurezcan las sanciones, hay un elemento fundamental, insustituible, que tiene que ver directamente con la responsabilidad de que un joven conduzca o no un vehículo de manera responsable: los padres.

Tal parece que en los tiempos llamados modernos a los jóvenes los encontramos al frente de los accidentes de tránsito, sin tener en cuenta las consecuencias que ello puede traer.
de un volante por «generación espontánea». No es así. Cuando un joven conduce un vehículo es porque sus padres o sus amigos, o alguien, se lo dio. Son pocos los que tienen capacidad económica propia para adquirir uno.

De manera que hay ahí responsabilidad de los padres que le dan el vehículo al hijo, quizás sin la experiencia necesaria para conducir (aunque ya cuente con una licencia), quizás sin la vigilancia estricta para que lo haga con precaución, respetando las normas de tránsito, sin que haya de por medio consumo de alcohol o drogas.

Es cierto, la agitada vida moderna, la presión económica que obliga a los padres de familia a trabajar y pasar largas horas fuera del hogar y, por consecuencia, dejar a los hijos solos, son también elementos que influyen en el comportamiento de los jóvenes que, a través de los medios de comunicación electrónicos, de las redes sociales que inundan nuestras vidas, reciben información que puede llevarlos a comportamientos de riesgo, como ponerse al frente de un volante para jugar a las carreras.

Son frecuentes los reportes de accidentes originados por jugar a las carreras en calles de las grandes ciudades de México. Tragedias que enlután a varios hogares al mismo tiempo y que al mismo tiempo nos alertan de la urgencia de estrechar acciones y, sin duda, buscar la forma de regresar a la disciplina familiar, que de dónde sale la primera y quizás la más importante educación para los niños y jóvenes.

No se nos olvida que hasta hace unas tres décadas manejar un vehículo era cosa de adultos. Observar a un jovencito manejando era intrepidez, incluso motivo de crítica de otros adultos porque representaba un peligro. Hoy día las estadísticas nos están demostrando que relajar esa forma de disciplina familiar ha puesto en peligro mortal a los jóvenes.

Los padres de familia tenemos que procurar que los hijos no manejen de noche; que usen el cinturón de seguridad; que sepan las reglas de tránsito; enseñarlos a conducir con precaución; platicarles sobre los riesgos de conducir bajo los efectos del alcohol o drogas; que si van a fiestas o lugares donde puedan consumir alcohol no lleven vehículo; que respeten el límite de pasajeros dentro del automóvil.

No debemos utilizar «influencias» para que los jóvenes menores de edad obtengan ilegalmente una licencia de conducir; tampoco dejarnos convencer por la súplicas y ruegos de nuestros propios hijos para que les prestemos el vehículo. No ceder a los chantajes sentimentales y condonarlos porque se van al cine o a la fiesta caminando, en taxi o en el autobús público.

Las desgracias ocurren en cualquier momento, cierto, pero son más frecuentes cuando nosotros mismos –consciente o inconsciente – generamos las condiciones propicias para que ocurran.

Por ello en México, como en toda la América Latina, la seguridad vial es una prioridad. Consistentemente se han venido modernizando las carreteras para hacerlas más seguras, se han endurecido las sanciones viales para prevenir los accidentes y han iniciado campañas de prevención y concientización tanto para los padres como para los propios jóvenes pues son ellos, lamentablemente, los que pasan a formar parte de las estadísticas.

En México cada entidad federativa integró su consejo estatal de prevención de accidentes, pero lo más importante, como lo mencionó el presidente Enrique Peña Nieto, es que depende de cada uno de nosotros, de nuestros hábitos y acciones, que gocemos de una mejor salud. Nuestros jóvenes son el futuro y su protección y sano desarrollo debe ser siempre prioritario.

El Senador Raul Pozos Lanz es el Secretario de la Comisión de Comunicaciones y Transportes del Senado de la República Mexicana. Fue elegido en el año 2012 y es Senador en funciones hasta el 2018.
Work Stoppages, Work Slowdowns, Work To Rule and Mass Sick-outs to protest against pay cuts

Following the 24 May meeting of all Geneva-based staff associations and unions and the resolution adopted therein, this paper prepared by FICSA spells out collective actions which staff and their associations/unions can now begin to implement against the ICSC decision to cut pay for staff in Geneva.

Can UN staff strike? Yes! But depending on the modality we follow, we risk not being paid for some strike days

In his legal opinion concerning the right of staff members in the UN common system to strike, Attorney Edward Patrick Flaherty confirmed that while the right to strike is not expressly provided for in the Staff Regulations or Staff Rules of the UN Secretariat and its specialized agencies, the right to strike is a well-recognized right derived from the principle of freedom to organize and freedom of association as a general principle of law, confirmed by the international administrative tribunals. Furthermore, the right to strike is inevitably connected not only with the right to organize and associate, but most importantly, it is an inherent paradigm of the freedom to speech, freedom of action and the right to criticize an administration in order to defend the interests of staff.

Intimidation aimed at discouraging staff from exercising their freedom of association may be reduced in this particular situation. Nonetheless, staff wants to be reassured that nothing “bad” will happen to them.

The cases where the Tribunals had to comment on the matter in question were usually related to the consequences of a strike, namely inadmissibility or unlawfulness of pay deductions, imposition of disciplinary sanctions or contract termination. Although an organization is entitled to deduct, from a staff member’s salary, an amount corresponding to the time not spent working, the deductions can only be made in accordance with the applicable written law of an organization.

Strike is a broad term which encompasses numerous types of industrial actions such as picketing, work stoppage, work slowdown, work to rule and mass sick-outs which are all described below.

Fear not: staff cannot be sanctioned for participating in industrial actions

UNAT has supported this view of the law and stated that:

“The unauthorized absence from work or attendance at the place of work while failing to perform duties removes the basis for payment of salary. As a result, the staff member loses his right to payment of his salary. However, his presence at his place of work and the objective of the work stoppage distinguish this situation from that of abandonment of his post”.

(UNAT Judgment No. 249)

It is important to underline that even though an organization has the right to impose the said measure, it cannot act arbitrarily, in a discriminatory manner or treat staff unequally. Although an administration has certain discretion over this matter, it must be exercised judiciously, carefully and with a sense of accountability.

ILOAT judgment 2493 at consideration 11 clearly recognizes the right of staff to work stoppage even in the absence of specific rules.

Other collective industrial protest actions that won’t result in a pay cut

Striking by picketing, where staff stand outside the gates of their organizations to dissuade or prevent fellow staff, visitors and others from entering the building would understandably result in those picketing staff not getting paid for the hours that they were “absent” from their offices. And taking into account that the forthcoming industrial actions in Geneva are all about protesting the pay cuts, it does not make sense to do something that could cause the further loss of pay.

Therefore, staff should be offered a slew of options as they show their solidarity to the protest against these erosions in our conditions of service. Enumerated below are four options that the various staff associations and unions could provide their members on the strike days identified by their staff federations. For example,
if a decision to strike on an identified day is called from 0800 to 1800, all staff should be instructed by their staff associations and unions to choose any of the four options below.

1. **Work stoppage**

   Work stoppage is defined as an occasion when a group of employees who show up at work decide to stop work, often as a protest or as a bargaining tool. There have been occasions when this action (contingent on a large number of staff participating) is sufficient to bring staff and management to the discussion table. Equally efficient has been the practice of work stoppages during meetings of governing bodies.

   Staff will be asked to stop their work, mid-morning or mid-afternoon, or during lunch time, to meet at a designated location on the premises of the organization. Length of work stoppage needs to be decided by staff. It could be on a one day only basis, or one day each week, or every day until the ICSC session in July.

2. **Work slowdown**

   A work slowdown is defined as an industrial action in which employees perform their duties but seek to reduce productivity or efficiency in their performance of these duties. A slowdown may be used as either a prelude or an alternative to a picket, as it is seen as less disruptive as well as less risky and costly for workers and their union. Staff would be present at their workstation but would only act on urgent issues.

3. **Work to rule**

   Work to rule is an industrial action in which employees do no more than the minimum required by the rules of their contract, and precisely follow all safety or other regulations, which may cause a slowdown or decrease in productivity, as they are no longer working during breaks or during unpaid extended hours and weekends (not checking email, for instance, or iPads, mobile). Such an action is considered less disruptive than a picket and obeying the rules is less susceptible to disciplinary action. Refusal to work overtime, travel on duty, or sign up to other tasks requiring employee assent are other manifestations of using work to rule as industrial actions.

   Staff would do only what they have to do and make no accommodations. This would include not accessing any electronic equipment after working hours, during lunch break, and sticking to regulatory work hours.

   During work stoppage, work slowdown, and work to rule, staff should utilize their time by talking to each other and getting familiar with the technicalities of the contested issue, the pay cut in this instance. In addition, they could catch up on the readings of their respective technical journals and other publications. Finally, they should be ready to go to any impromptu town halls or other mass gatherings in their respective organizations.

4. **Mass Sick-outs**

   A sick-out is defined as an organized period of unwanted sick leave taken as a form of group protest, usually as a measure to avoid a formal picket. Staff are allowed uncertified sick leave, normally up to 7 days per year. This is not an option for staff representatives as all staff representatives should show up on strike day at their respective work stations and speak with staff – office door to office door on each floor and in every building of their organizations.

   “Strike Days” should be regular and protracted to show how serious we are in our protest.

   Ideally, these “Strike Days” should be organized every week until the end of the 85th ICSC session in July. This would show the ICSC and our respective agencies that we are primed and ready to undertake the above actions unless and until we unequivocally show us that there would be no pay cut in Geneva.

   **Obtain legal insurance asap!**

   In the meantime, staff should all be encouraged to join the staff association or union in their respective organization to avail of legal insurance. In addition, they should be encouraged to enroll in other private legal protection insurances just in case they experience some retaliation by their administrations or in the event that they would lodge an appeal against the pay cut at the UNDT or ILOAT.

   **Object to this pay cut! Together, we have a voice! Together, we stand a chance!**

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1. With research assistance from Maria Dweggah

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In his letter to staff dated 22 April, the Secretary-General calls for “management reform to deliver with greater efficiency and effectiveness”, while recognizing that staff are “our most important resource” and that our “voices are heard”. Managers are called on to be “frugal” and staff and the Organization as a whole to undertake efforts “to be more prudent in our expenditure... and more effective in our delivery”.

AMY EDGAR, UNECE

As a case in point, the Galaxy staffing system, rolled out in 2002 to the tune of several hundred million, had to be replaced just a few years later. Then, with the paint barely dry on the walls of the renovated Secretariat Building following a multi-year project that ended up costing $2.15 billion, it was decided that, although the building had just been renovated for open space, everyone would now be moved to hot-desking. The latest, most egregious case in point is Umoja. But that’s not my subject today.

My subject is the Strategic Heritage Plan, or SHP, for you acronym lovers. Here is a plan to spend close to a billion dollars to renovate, upgrade, revitalize and reshape International Geneva! We will enact the will of the Member States and save money and create a world of the future, with state-of-the-art technology and design! No more stuffy offices with doors! We will all work together in one big open space – unless we are going to be hot-desking. At any rate, we will be “smart working”, however they are defining that these days. Indeed it is hard...
to get anyone to be pinned down about anything when it comes to this project. The only thing we do know is that they have refused to interest themselves in the question in the cost-effectiveness of the plan. It is enough to say that they will squeeze so many more people into the space available and all other considerations are not the concern of the project.

What? We have a billion dollar, multi-year project that will have a major impact on all staff in Geneva and, despite the calls for efficiency and streamlining, we are not allowed to consider these aspects in the new building? Truth, as they say, is stranger than fiction.

Here are some questions that need to be answered:

Why is it that certain departments or organizations must move from their current homes in the old Palais to the new building, whereas other departments and organizations, which are currently housed either in the E-building or offsite, will be relocated to the old building? We were told that this was based on a comprehensive study that served as the basis for a “blocking and stacking” plan (makes you feel a bit like a sardine doesn’t it?). However, when asked to see this “study” we met with a blank wall. It has never been made public.

On top of that, when asked who was consulted on the study, we were told at ECE by our Executive Secretary that wide consultations had been undertaken with staff. When we called for the names to be shared (in a town hall meeting) very few of the staff whose names were cited confirmed that they had been consulted, and the few who did said they had no idea what the meeting was for or that it had any relation to their future place of work.

So, given that a new building is needed to replace the floors that will be lost in the E-building, and given that the UN wants to save money by moving more staff on campus and out of rented offices, why is the new building not simply used to accommodate these people?

Also, why are we going to be asked to work in open space which suits neither or needs our either our needs nor our ways of working? When pressed to answer, the response from the powers that be is: it is the will of the Member States; our hands are tied. But if one tries to find a record of such a request by Member States, all that can be found is a reference to flexible work arrangements, which are never defined. More than that, there is a clear request from Member States for greater efficiency and cost savings, so why is that not a prime object of the whole exercise?

It is demoralizing to think that, as we are being asked once again to retrench and do more with less, so much time and money will be spent on a plan that is guaranteed to fail in terms of greater efficiency and staff satisfaction. Yes, guaranteed to fail.

The only way such plans can be enacted wisely is to consult staff before any final decisions are taken, to take their comments into consideration in the planning stage, and to be open and transparent in doing so, publishing the rationale behind the decision-making, indicating why certain comments were taken on board and others were not. At least in this way any major gaffes regarding the matching of staff needs and concerns will be avoided and staff will have a greater ownership of the final result, even if it is imperfect in their eyes. Secondly, there has to be greater impartial financial oversight over any project of such magnitude. There is simply too much at stake. A cost-benefit analysis has to be run by an independent body (OIOS?) and it has to be made public. This should have happened before the digging began, before telling staff that they are moving no matter what because a blocking and stacking plan has already been done and there’s no going back now...

(For a more comprehensive analysis of the SHP and queries about its cost-effectiveness, please see the excellent article by Alex McCusker, “SHP – Staff concerns”, in the August 2016 edition of UN Special.)

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UNECE’s 70th anniversary

Days of future past

In a unique gathering of former and current Executive Secretaries of UNECE, it was clear during the discussion that many challenges were recurrent for the organization. We invite you to read their insights.

FÉLIX GUIMARD, THEODORE KOUKIS, UNECE

Four Executive Secretaries of UNECE gathered at the Palais des Nations on 26 April on the occasion of the organization’s 70th anniversary to exchange their views on the organization’s past, present and future. This unusual dialogue between Mr. Berthelot (1993-2000), Ms. Schmögnerová (2002-2005), Mr. Kubiš (2009-2011), and Mr. Bach (2014-2017) offered a unique insight on recurrent challenges and emerging opportunities.

All participants agreed that UNECE’s core role is that of a forum for regional dialogue, peace and development, where member States cooperate to reach agreements on common challenges, even at times of political tensions in the region. Mr. Berthelot recalled that following the end of the Cold War, UNECE had to manage structural changes in the European political landscape. In particular, UNECE’s norms were instrumental to help East European countries prepare for accession to the EU. New members from Central Asia and the Balkans joined the Commission, and even countries at war managed to cooperate on concrete issues, such as trade and transport. One can get a glimpse of the political
and territorial tensions in the region from the length of the footnotes in some UNECE publications. UNECE was instrumental in the creation of integration structures such as the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA), jointly serviced by UNECE and ESCAP.

Ms. Schmögnerová stressed that UNECE Member States are very heterogeneous, some very developed, some still developing. This requires additional efforts from the Secretariat as there is no universal solution to be efficient. Addressing numerous diverging needs in terms of Trade, Transport and Environment requires an in-depth understanding of the region. Panelists regretted that an important UNECE publication, the Economic Survey of Europe, was stopped in 2005 as it was a reliable source of information on European countries.

Mr. Kubiš, currently leading the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, stressed that he is proud to have led UNECE, one of the best organizations in the UN system. Although UNECE’s historical role is to ease tensions through economic integration and cooperation, it is not an easy task to promote these themes at UNHQ, where the agenda often focuses on crisis management and global political issues.

The UNECE member states have been promoting sustainable economic and social development in the region through a number of soft and hard law instruments. The UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) was recognized by all speakers as a model example of intergovernmental cooperation to promote environmental democracy. The Aarhus Convention was also praised for demonstrating the valuable role that civil society could play as Governments’ partners in the future work of the UNECE.

It was clear during the discussion that many challenges were recurrent for UNECE, especially regarding visibility beyond the wide recognition of the added value of its normative instruments or perceived competition with other regional organizations, such as OECD or the EU. Despite these challenges, all panelists saw opportunities for UNECE, and more globally for the Regional Commissions, in helping Member States address pressing issues, such as the SDGs, population ageing, the transition to the numeric age and migrations. In this regard, Mr. Kubiš stressed the need for UNECE to position itself in the Secretary General’s reform agenda. He also said that UNECE’s normative tools on transport, trade facilitation, energy, etc. could help countries such as Iraq foster economic growth and job creation, thus alleviating migration tensions in Europe.

Mr. Bach concluded the conversation by noting that the insight exchanged with his predecessors was indeed a valuable legacy to lead the organization.

This event was moderated by Mr. Alex Mejia, UN Special Editor-in-chief. ■
It is for this reason that emphasis has been placed on these ‘Noncommunicable Diseases’ (NCDs) within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this article, we look at why NCDs is now center stage and why the UN system needs to respond.

“Target 3.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for a one-third reduction in premature death from NCDs by 2030. And for good reason,” states WHO’s Dr. Nick Banatvala, who leads the Secretariat of the UN Interagency Task Force for the Prevention and Control of NCDs (UNIATF). “NCDs represent the largest cause of death worldwide. The numbers are staggering. In 2015, 17 million people died prematurely (i.e. before the age of 70) from NCDs. More than 80% of these deaths – 14 million – occurred in developing countries, where NCDs make the largest contribution to premature mortality.”

The financial impacts are also massive. The health and economic costs of tobacco alone – one of the four main NCD risk factors – amount to around US$1.4 trillion annually. Harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity are the other main risk factors driving the NCDs epidemic.

The health and economic impacts of NCDs have implications for the futures and...
development of all countries, as well many United Nations agencies – not just the World Health Organization – in how they lend their support to governments and communities. The probability of premature death from NCDs is almost four times lower in the richest countries than the poorest.

“The Government of Barbados recognizes that it cannot manage the ever increasing burden of NCDs by treating people with these conditions,” says John Boyce, Minister of Health of Barbados. “We simply cannot afford to do this. Working to prevent NCDs is the best investment for our children.”

It is for this reason that the UN Secretary-General established the UNIATF in 2013. The Task Force comprises dozens of UN agencies and entities covering diverse portfolios but have, however, found a common challenge and opportunity for action in relation to NCDs.

Causes of NCDs lie beyond the health sector
For many years, the NCD agenda had been seen, largely, as one for WHO. But the establishment of the UNIATF underscores the multisectoral nature of the prevention and control of cancers, heart and lung diseases, and diabetes. The social and economic determinants of NCDs go well beyond the health sector. Let’s look at some examples.

“Most NCD deaths can be prevented by influencing public policy in sectors such as trade, taxation, agriculture, urban development and food production,” explains Dr. Banatvala. Such policy responses require “a whole-of-government” response, with “whole-of-society” engagement.”

A fallacy many believe is that nothing can be done about NCDs. This is not the case. Most premature NCD deaths are preventable by implementing a small number of highly cost-effective interventions.1

Tobacco excise tax, smoke-free work and public places, effective health warnings about the dangers of tobacco and tobacco smoke, the plain packaging of tobacco products and banning all forms of tobacco promotion and sponsorship all require the support of sectors beyond health – and therefore assistance beyond WHO.

Similarly, the harmful use of alcohol can be addressed through effective regulation of alcohol availability, the restriction of alcohol advertising/promotions and better use of pricing policies such as excise tax. When it comes to unhealthy diets, governments can encourage people to make healthier choices by reducing salt intake, replacing trans fats with unsaturated fats and implementing public awareness programmes on diet and physical activity.

Again each UN agency has unique entry points into the different parts of government to effect change.

“Coordinated, multi-sectoral action is needed to create the enabling environment that promotes healthy behaviors” Dr. Oleg Chestnov, WHO Assistant-Director General for NCDs and Mental Health, explains. “The UN system is crucial in providing effective support to Governments.”

A coherent UN response to NCDs
The focus of UNIATF’s work lies at the country level. A number of joint programming missions have fast-track multi-sectoral action in 17 countries.

So far, more than 15 UN agencies have joined missions to countries, meeting with Heads of State and Government, and officials from ministries including Finance, Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Sports, Education and Planning to name but a few.

Joint UN NCD missions almost always meet with Parliamentarians and often with Mayors and their officials. To assist governments, the Task Force has produced clear information on what different Ministries need to know about NCDs. Joint Programming Missions also engage with non-State actors and the media. The missions themselves build capacity among UN country teams to support national NCD responses, including integrating NCDs into countries’ United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks or their equivalent.2

Doug Webb, from UNDP, remarks that the missions tend to prompt similar responses. “Too often we find a lack of policy expertise to integrate NCDs into national SDGs, weak analytical, legal and tax administrative capacity to increase taxes on health-harming products and to self-finance national SDGs and NCDs responses, and private sector interference,” says Webb. “There is also a need for better communication between government, civil society and the private sector, and a need to advocate for

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greater resources across government for NCD prevention and control.”

As a result of these missions, UNIATF has been asked to assist countries in quantifying the costs of NCDs – to the health sector and the economy at large – and the benefits of scaled up action.

“The UNIATF’s priority is to help governments make the economic case for the prevention and control of NCDs in their country,” says Dr. Doug Webb, from the United Nations Development Programme. “It is crucial for governments to be aware of the financial gains and costs of NCDs to their country, the costs of inaction, as well as savings to be gained if the recommendations and actions suggested by the Task Force and host government are to be undertaken.”

National NCD investment cases have been done in 6 countries and a further 40 Member States have requested help.

“The Joint UN Task Force’s mission really stimulated the in-country UN system to get behind the NCD agenda, and start working together as one to identify clear actions to support the Government,” states Stephen O’Malley, UN Resident Coordinator following the Joint Mission to Barbados.

Other ways that the Task Force provides support to countries includes developing and implementing country action through global joint programmes and through Thematic Working Groups. Since it is still early days for NCDs, the Task Force is making a real effort to communicate with policy makers in developing and developed countries about the need for multi-sectoral action to prevent and control NCDs, as well as the role UNIATF can play in this.

But UNIATF members must be beyond reproach when it comes to NCDs. That involves, preventing tobacco industry interference in their work and demonstrating NCD-friendly working environments: e.g. tobacco free campuses, creating opportunities for physical activity and providing incentives for staff to have access to a healthy diet. WHO Headquarters now no longer sells high sugar soft drinks or fruit juices in its cafeteria, vending machines or coffee shops. UN agencies have to be seen to ‘Walk the Talk’.

Building the support base

At the 2016 UN General Assembly, around 20 high-, middle- and low-income countries gathered under the banner of ‘Friends of the Task Force’. While this support is welcome it is clearly a first step. The Task Force still needs to do a lot more and each and every UN agency needs to see how it can do its bit in tackling NCDs. While there is unprecedented demand for UNIATF’s services, the challenge of resource mobilisation looms large.

“A senior official in one government recently said to me that they were confident of achieving all the SDGs with the exception of those related to NCDs,” according to WHO’s Dr. Banatvala. “It’s quite extraordinary that in 2016, while NCDs accounts for 50% of the global disease burden, it receives only 1.7% of total development assistance for health. It is clear that more must be done.”

2. www.who.int/nmh/ncd-task-force/guidance-note.pdf?ua=1

Follow the work of the Task Force on Facebook (https://m.facebook.com/UNInteragencyTaskForceonNCDs1523961014280999/) and Twitter https://twitter.com/un_ncd

The authors alone are responsible for the views expressed in this article and they do not necessarily represent the decisions, policy or views of the World Health Organization or the United Nations Development Programme.
New Tools to Facilitate SDG Implementation

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) represent the culmination of a transformative, collective objective-setting process, as well as a new direction for sustainable development policy and practice.

LYNN WAGNER, IISD
In September 2015, the Heads of State and Government representing the United Nations’ Member States unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including 17 Goals that they pledged to achieve by 2030 and 169 targets that identified ways and means to achieve the Goals.

The adoption of the SDGs has set in motion planning processes by States, regional organizations, local communities, private sector and civil society. But achieving these plans, and the SDGs themselves, will require a transformative approach to implementation that is equal to the transformative decision to adopt them in the first place. At the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), we aim to be a catalyst for this kind of transformative action. Building on our expertise in a number of the themes addressed in the 2030 Agenda, we have established a program dedicated specifically to the SDGs – the SDG Knowledge Program. This program provides information and analysis in support of the 2030 Agenda, seeks to build capacity and foster the engagement of policy-makers, and encourages innovation in policy and practice.

In this regard, IISD is pleased to be collaborating with the UN Office of Geneva’s (UNOG) SDG Lab, which represents one effort to transform the approach to collective action. UNOG Director General Michael Møller has highlighted the need to break down bureaucratic barriers to implement the SDGs and to exchange information on best practices with partners. To these ends, the SDG Lab is pairing innovative dialogues with follow-up actions to ensure that the knowledge gathered through such discussions will be, according to Møller, “(1) used to further scale-up what works and (2) used to identify new partnerships that could address the challenges.”

Together with the SDG Lab, IISD is facilitating the Geneva 2030 Ecosystem. The Geneva 2030 Ecosystem is a network of organizations based in Geneva who share the objective of advancing the 2030 Agenda. It seeks to connect and convene diverse actors in Geneva to encourage collaboration, build partnerships, share lessons-learned, exchange information, and promote individual efforts more broadly, with the objective of creating the opportunity to build on each other’s work and advance the Agenda as a united front.

IISD also facilitates global efforts to exchange information and promote best practices for SDG implementation, through its SDG Knowledge Hub (http://sdg.iisd.org). Launched in October 2016, this online platform draws on IISD’s long history of Earth Negotiations Bulletin reporting on negotiations for multilateral environmental agreements. The content on the SDG Knowledge Hub is organized and searchable according to the 17 SDGs. A comprehensive calendar provides details on events that address SDG policy and practice.

These tools seek to identify and support early efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda, and will amplify the lessons and recommendations that international Geneva can bring to the SDG implementation table.
The language of clouds
Launch of the WMO International Cloud Atlas

At some time in every child’s life, he or she look up at clouds in the sky and just imagine... Some of those children grow up and still look at clouds every day, and the lucky ones can call it their career.

In recent years, collections of cloud photos and descriptions were appearing as websites and attempting to be an atlas for clouds. Unfortunately, these contained many errors. In addition, public enthusiasm for clouds is strong and there were calls for expansion of the Latin-based cloud classification system. One popular example, the new supplementary feature known as asperitas, was widely researched and advocated by the UK based Cloud Appreciation Society.

Given these reasons, and with an internal sense that the time was right, WMO undertook a grand update of the ICA, creating our Task Team of experts and giving us a broad charge.

The team and journey
What was unique in the authors’ experience is the teamwork and friendship that characterized this project. The WMO Task Team has nine cloud experts from around the world. This is a small number for a big job, but there was also full participation from staff within the WMO’s Secretariat, and the assistance of an institutional partner – the Hong Kong Observatory – to build the website. Also, thousands of people from around the world helped by sending us candidate cloud pictures. The collaborative, united approach is what made the project succeed.

Given these reasons, and with an internal sense that the time was right, WMO undertook a grand update of the ICA, creating our Task Team of experts and giving us a broad charge.

The nine experts are a very diverse group – coming from six continents, with homes high in the mountains, on plains, plateaus, and coasts, and from large cities and small towns. One expert has a unique perspective on tropical maritime clouds, coming from a Caribbean island nation. The team has a gender balance of three women and six men, members...
with long careers in meteorological training, academics, and leadership positions in their national weather organizations. The Secretariat participants were also from many nations and backgrounds, passionate about clouds and happy to look up at the sky. Overall, the team covered the spectrum of “poets and quants” – all members were driven to improve an already thorough and exact system of classification, and were at the same time very sensitive to the visual and inspirational side of cloud naming. The result was as perfect and beautiful an Atlas update as we could make in a finite time.

Keys to our success were individual dedication, team balance, commitment, and a very good working atmosphere. Also key was communication – in four years we had over 100 group teleconferences, met in-person four times, and exchanged many thousands of emails. Web-based meetings were spread across space and time – usually 6 a.m. in the US with strong coffee to wake up, midnight in Australia (strong coffee to stay up), and more reasonable hours for members in between.

Our team also faced obstacles, but we never gave up. Early in the project we identified help we would need. This included a budget, broader technical expertise, and strong community involvement. For example, we really needed a professional web designer to help us, but we never had funding for this and so moved forward without one. Eventually, thanks to the Hong-Kong Observatory and WMO Web experts, we succeeded. We also needed more cloud experts. Our team worked on rewriting hundreds of pages of text, adding content in areas not previously covered, writing a Glossary of terms, and defining new tools such as a search feature. But we were nearly overwhelmed by the gargantuan task of selecting hundreds of cloud images, thoroughly understanding them, gathering related information from other sources such as satellite and radar archives, and writing summaries to explain each classification and observation. In the end, the new Atlas has about 600 such images compared with 200 in the prior edition. There were times we knew we could not do everything we envisioned, and the solution was to push forward and do as much as we could.

There is no doubt these obstacles caused stress in our team. Ideally, we would have had a clear, bounded, achievable work-plan. Yet the group functioned with extreme effectiveness and dedication over the four-year project, and grew closer with each passing year. It has been a wonderful experience that we will never forget.

The result

The new atlas, just released on World Meteorological Day 2017 (March 23) is fully web-based. It has several new cloud classifications, for example some used to describe cloud features seen with severe weather, and others that better indicate when a cloud originates from waterfalls, volcanoes, or wild fires. It contains more images with detailed descriptions, covering greater geographic diversity of the clouds; it has a new glossary and decision aids to help both professionals and enthusiasts identify the cloud they see; and the language is updated to a more modern style.

The ICA release was met with great interest. We made headlines around the world and in many languages. The outreach and response on social media was unprecedented for a WMO activity.

As a regulatory document, parts of the ICA must remain frozen. But the material will be presented in new formats over time and tailored to as wide an audience as possible. For example, we plan an e-book version soon.

We can be proud of the new ICA as collaborative work of experts from around the world and dedicated staff of the World Meteorological Organization. It will benefit the weather community and all users of weather information and forecasts.

We hope you will enjoy it also, and while you are browsing, remember to look up at the clouds, rainbows, polar aurora, mirages and all the meteorological meteors in the sky... and see them with the eyes of a child.

1. National Center for Atmospheric Research, retired, Boulder, Colorado, USA
2. World Meteorological Organization, Geneva, Switzerland

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To Speak or Not to Speak…

That seems to be the question!

ASHA DHILLON1, UNHCR
Deputy High Commissioner
Kelly Clements in her speech for International’s Women’s Day recently, made a plea to all staff.

“Speak up and be heard”, she said to staff who had gathered in the Atrium of the UNHCR headquarters in Geneva and to staff at large. Clements was probably referring to the regrettable culture of silence that prevails among UNHCR staff.

According to a 2014 Global Staff Survey only 36% of the respondents thought it was safe to speak up to denounce harassment, discrimination, or misconduct. This represents a significant drop from 2011 when 43% of staff expressed confidence in speaking out.

The mechanisms and channels to report wrongdoing have long been established, and there are various support systems in place to protect whistleblowers from retaliation. Yet, UN civil servants continue to grapple with “whistle blowing”, and the apparent dilemma of speaking up against wrongdoings, even when perpetrated towards the beneficiaries we have sworn to protect.

The Staff Rules governing each person contractually-bound to the UN, require every staff member to report any breach of UN regulations and rules to the appropriate officials. It is outlined in the 1946 Charter of the United Nations, and reiterated in the UN Secretary-General’s Bulletin of 19 December 2005 on “Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations”. UNHCR reaffirmed “zero-tolerance for all forms of fraud and corruption” to mark International Anti-Corruption Day on 9 December 2016. The organization even launched an e-learning course on the Fundamentals of Fraud and Corruption awareness with the slogan, “It’s never the wrong time to do the right thing”.

And even if these guidelines, rules and campaigns did compel us, wouldn’t it still be our moral imperative to speak out about misconduct?

So why are we staff reluctant to speak up? Could it mean that we have such little faith in the system?

Not only are staff afraid to speak up against wrongdoing because they do not think it will lead to anything, but also because whistleblowers are often turned on by their colleagues, who swallow the line that by reporting the wrongdoing, they are the ones damaging the reputation of the organization rather than those who commit the wrongdoing.

Yet, the common lament is often, "Nothing will happen even if I report, so why bother?", or “I need to keep my job.” or “the Management is not interested in resolving issues, nothing will happen.”

Is there a culture of “shooting the messenger”, to the point that we have cultivated a fear of reporting cases of fraud and abuse, and thereby, lowering staff morale? Perhaps there is a justifiable disillusionment among staff that reporting will not yield results. How often have we heard of staff complaining of misuse of funds and mismanagement in the field by Senior Managers or Heads of Offices? How often have we heard of investigations only beginning when alleged perpetrators have retired, thereby removing all possibility of holding the person accountable?

There have been some instances in the past within UNHCR where whistleblowers suffered certain consequences for reporting wrongdoings. Staff members have complained of strained relationships within the department and of being sidelined. A staff member who complained of wrongdoings some fourteen years ago was not only allegedly denied protection from retaliation but was also reported to have been separated in the interim period.

There are also examples of cases similar in nature in other UN agencies such as the case of an OHCHR staff member who was retaliated against for sharing a report with French diplomatic officials containing serious allegations of pedophilia committed on children in the Central African Republic by the French military.

Allegations of atrocities committed by peacekeeping forces have been going on for years. The continuous abuses and sexual exploitation committed by colleagues and military personnel led to wide condemnation by the staff unions of the UN common system. In a statement issued in 2016, the Coordinating Committee of International Staff Unions and Associations (CCISUA) which is one of the UN staff federations took a moral stand to demonstrate the lack of accountability and the lack of preventive measures in place to prevent such sexual exploitation from recurring. The staff federation also spoke about the need for a culture change, that staff should be encouraged to alert management and those in authority of abuses and similar behaviours.

Change in sight?
These sobering examples might help us to understand why staff fear to speak up.

Critics have asked how then do we change this perception and demonstrate otherwise?

How then can we learn from past lessons?

Can we place our hope in the recent change of guards in the entire UN system, such as the new Secretary-General, the UNHCR High Commissioner, among others?

The new UN Secretary-General has already made several promising commitments since taking oath. Following intensive negotiations spearheaded by the Staff Federations for the past three years, particularly in light of several scandals, the new SG agreed to improve the whistleblower protection policy to include the right to appeal to the UNDT against a decision not to provide staff protection from retaliation. Staff members can now not only report cases of public interests but include reporting something as simple...
as the breaking of rules (if done in good faith) and the whistleblower can also report an act committed not only by a staff member but an act committed by a contractor or a UN partner. Other improvements include a tightened burden of proof to the benefit of staff, a reduced delay for the Ethics Office review (from 45 days to 30 days) and the possibility of preventive action by the UN Ethics Office and the OIOS to enable them to act before retaliation takes place.

It was refreshing to hear from the new Ethics Director (HCR) that the new policy on Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations is both a reflection of shortcomings of that policy in the past and an attempt to create a safer and more protected space for colleagues to report misconduct. He added that certain cases in the past have illustrated that protection against retaliation was not sufficiently robust and that UN(HCR) staff did not trust the organization’s ability to actually provide effective protection against retaliation. According to him, the lack of trust is embedded in an organizational culture of widespread fear of reporting dysfunctions and misconduct. Trust in the system can only be restored by an organization that is walking the talk, is holding its managers accountable and is promoting a culture of open and respectful dialogue. To achieve that, everyone in the organization should play a role and we all have an opportunity and a responsibility to contribute to that culture of open dialogue through our behavior every day. As a humanitarian organization we put humanity at the forefront of our values. We will only be able to do that in a credible way if we make sure that humanity and respect are at the core of our work environment.

Additionally, we must also be cautious of the misuse of the very mechanisms that are there to protect whistleblowers. Often times, we have heard of staff members falsely making accusations of being retaliated against when contracts are not renewed or to cover up against poor performance. Others may not realise that personal grievances such as alleged bullying or harassment incidents do not fall under the whistle blower policy and should therefore be properly channeled to the other conciliatory bodies that exist in the system. But now let’s look forward.

This is a time for change in the way the UN, and by the same token, UNHCR, do business and demonstrate a genuine commitment to protecting whistleblowers. Whistleblowers are motivated by the need to do the right thing, very often they do so to the detriment of their careers, which should not be the case.

Let no more past and future whistleblowers fall through the cracks of retaliation.

Let’s start by doing what is right.

Speak up. If not us, then who? If not now, then when?

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1. First Vice Chairperson of the UNHCR Staff Council UNHCR
2. 4,355 out 12,645 staff members participated in the survey.
The World Health Organization (WHO) is tasked by the international community to set global norms for public health. So, it is essential that United Nations (UN) Officials, including WHO Staff in Geneva are privy to relevant news, research and intelligence to make effective decisions.

ARUN BHARATULA¹, NICOLA SMITH² AND SUMUDU PERERA³

The discussion group was established in December 2016 and has evolved into a weekly activity with regular attendance. The group has adopted the format of academic journal clubs, with one participant per week chairing a discussion around a publication or topic.

The group has been going from strength to strength, much of which can be attributed to the expansion on the scope and breadth of journal articles being discussed. This year alone, the group has featured pieces on the efficacy of a “sugar tax”, advanced medical assistive technology, non-communicable diseases framed as communicable, the bioethics behind gain-of-function research, ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic in LMICs, treatment resistant malaria, deportation trauma, the Amish biomedical landscape, E-cigarettes for curbing the tobacco related burden of NCD with a focus on Sub-Saharan Africa, Ebola and pandemic reform, multidrug resistant TB (appropriately, in the week of TB day, just as there were chocolate eggs for attendees on Easter), that mysterious epidemic in the Venezuelan Amazon, conflicts of interest for patient advocacy organizations and life expectancy in industrialised countries! Controversial topics are particularly encouraged.

The club will remain a permanent fixture in the WHO community under the administration of the WHO Intern board, permitting everyone from interns, UN professionals and the broader community to deepen their knowledge and share information pertaining to global health.

For more information or to attend, join the club’s facebook page at: https://www.facebook.com/groups/GlobalHealthDiscussionGroup

1. Discussion group founder
2. Intern board vice-president
3. Discussion group president

© Arun Bharatula
Discussion group attendees in the India Room
Millenials in Latin America
Aliados del Desarrollo Sostenible en Yucatán

Armados con cámaras, smartphones y mucho talento, son una generación de jóvenes emprendedores que promueven y vigilan el desarrollo sostenible en una de las regiones con más crecimiento económico y turístico de México.

Jorge Carlos de María Granados Ramírez, President, AMA Yucatan Collective
En el corazón del antiguo territorio Maya en el Sureste Mexicano existe el Estado de Yucatán. Durante el siglo pasado Yucatán había permanecido como su territorio oculto bajo una densa selva. había dependido de sus majestuosas zonas arqueológicas mayas y contemplado a lo lejos la desbordante (y muchas veces irresponsable) explotación económica de su más conocido vecino Cancún y las Riviera Maya. Además de los importantes esfuerzos del gobierno y empresarios consientes en el organismo a su cargo: Cultura y Turismo. La ciudad de Mérida, capital del Estado de Yucatán es una vibrante ciudad cultural que alberga museos, galerías de arte y teatros donde artistas como músicos y poetas nacionales y extranjeros han encontrado un oasis para desarrollar su arte, pero tiene además un complemento importante distinto a la realidad de otras ciudades de México: La seguridad. Yucatán es el estado más Seguro de México con una tasa de homicidios similar a Bélgica, Canadá o Finlandia.

Con este ambiente de Seguridad, Cultura y Turismo además de un costo de vida que ronda los $1800-2175 USD no es raro que

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CNN nombrará Mérida como la ciudad #1 para retirarse en el extranjero en 2017 desplazando magníficas ciudades como Cuenca, Ecuador o Panama City, tampoco que fuera elegida por segunda vez como el reto no es menor, pero Silvia y sus compañeras de generación como muchos otros Empresarios Jóvenes, fotógrafos, diseñadores, artistas, mercadólogos, arquitectos, gestores culturales, etc. han encontrado una manera creativa y sustentable de aprovechar lo que su estado tiene para ofrecer.

Estas jóvenes profesionistas se habían percatado del interés por conocer los orígenes y cultura propia. Yucatecos, nacionales residentes y extranjeros empezaban a acudir a eventos artísticos, el centro histórico experimentaba un redescubrimiento comercial y la gente salía a explorar al interior del Estado. Con pocos recursos, pero mucho talento y voluntad, optaron por emprender un proyecto propio llamado “andar Yucatán” promoviendo el turismo de aventura, cultura y la naturaleza de Yucatán a través de la exploración y documentación fotográfica. Empezaron a organizar excursiones para descubrir destinos poco conocidos y brindar ideas de viajes y recorridos.

La propuesta sedujo a cientos de millenials y la respuesta no se hizo esperar, cientos de fotógrafos desde los que usan el Smartphone hasta los profesionales compartiendo miles de fotos en Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, etc. El poder de la imagen y la información empezaron a contar la historia de comunidades, de lugares y personas que habían permanecido ocultas hasta que los millenials se convirtieron en los promotores de la creación de empresas rurales en el interior del estado. Otro de los beneficios de esta práctica fue la denuncia. Son los millenials una generación que comparte por hábito lo que considera injusto, tienen un sentido social y ambiental muy dentro de sí, en Yucatán no dudaron en denunciar el maltrato animal, la contaminación del ambiente, el abandono de sitios históricos o la marginación de comunidades.

Este sentido de preservación está presente muy dentro de andar Yucatán, cuando le preguntamos a Silvia sobre la relación de su proyecto con los ODS nos respondió: «Se trata de promover «viajeros consientes». En la creación de estas rutas, siempre se beneficia directamente a grupos de comunidades yucatecas organizadas en cooperativas mayas, que están formadas por más de la mitad de sus integrantes mujeres, con Andar Yucatán ayudamos a que se sigan fortaleciendo estas cooperativas y emporar a las artesanas mayas». No han sido los únicos en el reconocimiento al valor del trabajo de estas Artesanas. Recientemente Christian Loboutin prestigioso diseñador colaboró con más de 100 de estas artesanas Yucatecas para su colección «Viva MEXICABA!» de la cual ha señalado que una parte de las ganancias se destinara a la Fundación «Haciendas del mundo Maya»

Aunque son una publicación gratuita y se interactúa principalmente a través de redes sociales no son ajenos al beneficio económico «En nuestros mapas mencionamos siempre a que comunidades se beneficia, muchas de estas viven en condiciones de pobreza, queremos incentivar la creación de empresas rurales como prestadores de Servicios Turísticos y lograr un crecimiento económico» Este modelo ha tenido un auge en Yucatán, donde cada vez más
cooperativas mayas están preservando sus tradiciones y bellezas naturales para ponerlo al servicio turístico, como es el caso de muchas comunidades rurales que atraen turistas por la belleza de sus cenotes. El desarrollo económico y la preservación natural son un binomio inseparable en el Estado.

Finalmente nos cuenta sobre la importancia del consumo responsable para su organización, este es un ingrediente importante para una generación que toma en cuenta no solo que si no a quien está consumiendo. Los sitios que anuncian, las colaboraciones que realizan, las asociaciones que promueven y los artistas que contribuyen son meticulosamente estudiados para saber sobre su compromiso con la sociedad, el ambiente y la cultura.

Este trabajo y logro tampoco es exclusivo, son una fuente de inspiración y colaboración de cientos de Empresarios, Aristas, Estudiantes, Profesionistas, Artesanos y Turistas. Sobre todo, de la colaboración fotográfica de miles de millenials que a diario documentan las maravillas del estado en sus redes sociales, vigilan la protección de la flora y fauna y fomentan el turismo y el crecimiento económico. Esperemos que en el largo camino que le queda a la generación de Silvia el modelo de Andar Yucatán se repita muchas veces y en todas partes del mundo.
The UN Beach Club was founded in 1947 and will therefore be celebrating its 70th anniversary this summer. In these difficult times of threatened pay cuts, outsourcing, relocation and disappearing posts, we should consider adopting a staycation mentality and embrace what we have here in the city. In the summertime, this lakeside retreat is difficult to beat.

1. The view
The UN Beach Club is just across the road from the Botanical Gardens on the rue de Lausanne. On the lakeside, with its own beach and port, you can enjoy a panorama which stretches from the Dent d’Oche to the west and the Mont Blanc to the east. There’s always plenty to look at on the water too – swimmers, sailing boats, including the majestic Neptune from time to time, or simply mother ducks and their numerous offspring...

2. It’s open come rain or shine seven days a week
The UN Beach Club underwent extensive renovations in 2011 with the aim of making it weatherproof. From May to September it is open 24/7. A covered, glass-panelled area keeps patrons dry in case of bad weather without robbing them of the view, and a newly installed marquee offers undercover dining for a further 30 covers.

3. The restaurant
Sylvain is in charge of catering this season. He started his career at the Deauville Palace and is keen to bring some up-market touches to our Beach – including white linen tablecloths and impeccable client-centred service. Nothing is too much trouble. Depending on the time of day, there are different options: breakfast from 9 a.m., lunch – including a three-course set menu at the unbeatable price of 20chf, aperitifs with a wide choice of tapas for afterwork unwinding, a room-service type menu for light meals all day long (club sandwiches, salads, pizzas) and a full à la carte menu for dinner – with a choice of side dishes – not just French fries! On Sundays this season, the Beach will be the venue for a family brunch from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. – 40chf for adults, 15chf for children, inclusive of beverages. Sylvain worked in an organic restaurant in Geneva before and is therefore very sensitive to the quality and origin of the ingredients his chefs use – sourced locally as much as possible. Vegetarians and those with gluten intolerance are not forgotten either. The restaurant has a competitively priced drinks menu with soft drinks, draught Geneva beer and some local Swiss wines as well as from sunnier climes – Languedoc in the south of France, Italy and Argentina. A cocktail menu includes the trendy Spritz – so popular in Geneva last summer – for only 7chf! In moderation, of course!

4. Sport for all the family
Eating or drinking is not the only thing one can do at UN Beach. Water sports have pride of place: the Beach has its own port, where members can rent a mooring ring for their boat for the season and pedalos, paddleboards, kayaks and windsurfing boards are also available. On dry land, a specially secured area has been laid out for toddlers and young children with a paddling pool and swings. Adults have a decked solarium at their disposal, directly on the lake behind a low wall that screens sunbathers from patrons of the restaurant and if you feel a bit livelier later you can choose between pétanque, darts or table tennis...

On Saturdays and Sundays, private picnics are authorised on the lawn of the UN Beach area, next to the restaurant. This area is fringed with some lakeside tables, so make sure you get there early to grab yours!

Chaises longues are available
MARIE-JOSÉ ASTRE-DÉMOULIN
Palais des Nations, jour de grand vent, franchissement en voiture des grilles de l’entrée.

J’abaisse ma vitre pour présenter mon badge. L’officier de sécurité me gratifie d’un bonjour parfaitement poli. La bise est si violente qu’un nuage de feuilles et de pollen s’engouffre dans ma voiture.

Je coupe mon moteur et, tandis que le garde ouvre mon coffre, je ressens un élan de sympathie pour cet homme exposé aux éléments.

Quand il se rapproche de ma fenêtre pour me remercier, j’ai tout à coup envie de lui exprimer ma gratitude et m’étonner du fait que lui et ses collègues ne bénéficient pas d’un meilleur abri.

« Vous êtes en plein courant d’air ici, c’est étrange que vous ne disposiez pas d’une guérite pour vous abriter entre deux véhicules! »

« On fait des échanges fréquents entre collègues, comme ça c’est plus facile, me répond-il avec un sourire. »

« C’est quand même dommage que vous ne soyez pas mieux protégés des intempéries. Une petite cabane qui couperait le vent sur trois côtés, ça vous serait bien utile, non? »

« C’est sûr que ce serait une bonne idée mais, vous savez, ce qui est le plus difficile à ce poste, ce n’est pas le froid mais l’attitude de certains collègues. »

« C’est-à-dire? »

« Il y a des personnes qui acceptent mal de devoir être contrôlées. Pourtant, on ne fait que notre travail, de notre mieux, pour assurer la sécurité de chacun. Au fond, ce qui nous fait du bien, à nous, c’est un bonjour ou un sourire – juste ça. Si on a ça, après, la pluie, le vent, le froid deviennent beaucoup moins importants. Avec un sourire ou un bonjour d’un collègue, on oublie tout le reste! »

Et pour ceux qui resteraient indifférents au bien-être de leurs collègues, qu’ils prennent soin au moins de leur propre santé et songent, en franchissant les grilles du Palais des Nations, au proverbe chinois qui dit que « sourire trois fois tous les jours rend inutile tout médicament ». Une méthode simple comme… bonjour!

**Simple comme…**

« Sourire trois fois tous les jours rend inutile tout médicament ».

*Une méthode simple comme… bonjour!*

For further information: www.clubdelaplage.ch

Restaurant reservations: 022 731 68 29
Éthiopie (3ᵉ partie)
À l’origine du monde

Toujours dans l’univers hostile de la région du Danakil où la température dépasse les 50° (voir le UN Special du mois passé), nous laissons derrière nous l’étrange volcan Dallol pour en explorer un autre tout aussi surprenant, l’Erta Ale et son fameux lac de lave qui nous permettent d’imaginer ce que fut la naissance de la terre.

Champs de lave, nous apercevons au loin la silhouette du volcan qu’il faudra gravir. L’ascension, longue de 7 km pour une dénivelée de 550 m, prendra 3 heures. Aussitôt arrivés au sommet, nous ne résisterons pas à l’envie de faire une première approche du lac de lave bouillonnant prêt à déborder du cratère. De nuit, le spectacle est féerique. Nous aurons beaucoup de mal à regagner nos cabanes de pierre situées dans une zone sécurisée où nous passerons la nuit. Au petit matin, bien avant le lever du soleil, allongés sur nos paillasses, nous distinguons très bien le cratère de l’Erta Ale et les projections de lave qui illuminent le ciel d’une teinte rougeâtre. La journée sera consacrée à l’exploration du site volcanique. En raison des conditions climatiques, des problèmes politiques fréquents et de son éloignement, l’Erta Ale compte parmi les volcans les plus inaccessibles de la planète. En 1967, une équipe de recherche du CNRS dirigée par Haroun Tazieff constate la présence de deux lacs de lave logés à 160 m de profondeur au fond de deux cratères. Un lac de lave actif comme celui de l’Erta Ale, d’une température de 1200°, est constitué par l’apport permanent d’un volume de magma en circulation issu d’une source profonde. En 1987, des photos prises par satellite attestent que le lac situé dans le cratère nord s’est figé, seul le lac situé au sud étant toujours alimenté et en fusion.

Lalibela, patrimoine mondial de l’UNESCO
Plus de 500 kilomètres de piste nous attendent pour rejoindre Mekele, puis Lalibela où nous poserons nos « valises » pour deux jours. Les paysages traversés sont splendides avec en toile de fond de hautes chaînes montagneuses aux formes tourmentées. Devant un panorama aussi exceptionnel, la distance paraît moins longue... jusqu’au moment où nous sommes confrontés à des soucis mécaniques sur l’un de nos véhicules. Déjà ralentis par...
une crevaison, nous sommes victimes d’une projection de pierres qui va endommager notre radiateur, obligeant notre chauffeur Salmon de souvent s’arrêter pour refaire le plein d’eau. La nuit sera courte avec un réveil programmé aux aurores afin de rejoindre à pied le monastère Ashetan Maryam niché à 3152 m d’altitude sur un piton rocheux dominant Lalibela. Du sommet la vue est époustouflante. De nombreux pèlerins ont également fait l’ascension ainsi qu’un ermite qui, appuyé sur sa canne, médite face au vide.

Huit cents prêtres officient dans les nombreuses églises de Lalibela, haut lieu du christianisme éthiopien, lieu de pèlerinage et de dévotions inscrit au patrimoine mondial de l’UNESCO. Dans cette région montagneuse, onze églises médiévales monolithiques ont été creusées à même la roche. Leur construction est attribuée au roi Lalibela qui, au XIIe siècle, entrepris de bâtir une «Nouvelle Jérusalem» après que les conquêtes musulmanes eurent mis un terme aux pèlerinages chrétiens en Terre Sainte. Lalibela connut un grand épanouissement après la chute de l’empire d’Axoum. On distingue deux groupes principaux d’églises séparés par le fleuve du Jourdain, dont la plus spectaculaire, Biete Ghiorgis, taillée dans une colline de grès rose.

Notre périple dans la partie nord de l’Éthiopie touche à sa fin, mais plus de 700 km de route restent à parcourir pour rejoindre la capitale. Le pays est grand, très grand. Avec une superficie équivalente à 27 fois celle de la Suisse, les déplacements souvent effectués sur des pistes ou routes détériorées sont terriblement longs. Après le franchissement d’un col à 3200 m, le parcours qui mène à Addis-Abeba est emprunté par de nombreux ouvriers qui vont aux champs. Dans la région, entre deux rangées d’eucalyptus, d’aloë vera ou de bananiers, on cultive beaucoup de céréales (orge, sorgo, tournesol). La route est également très encombrée par des troupeaux de zébus, d’ânes et des caravanes de dromadaires, parmi lesquels les tuc tuc (taxi locaux pas chers) essaient de se frayer un chemin. Arrivés à Desé où nous ferons étape, nous dévaliserons les boutiques en fournitures scolaires que nous distribuerons le lendemain aux élèves d’une petite école des environs. Professeurs et enfants ne sont pas au courant, la surprise est totale. Tout d’abord intimidés, les élèves «se lâcheront» assez rapidement et nous passerons un très agréable moment en leur compagnie.

**Harar, la cité où le temps s’est arrêté**

45 minutes de vol depuis Addis-Abeba vont nous propulser à Dire Dawa, troisième plus grande agglomération d’Éthiopie située près des frontières djiboutienne et somalienne. Elle a été créée par la compagnie impériale du chemin de fer franco-éthiopien lors de la construction de la ligne ferroviaire Addis-Abeba-Djibouti. C’est là que furent installés les ateliers de réparation et d’entretien du chemin de fer, ce qui explique sa prospérité. C’est en Peugeot 404 vieilles d’une cinquantaine d’années que nous rejoignons Harar, la cité qui hébergea le poète Arthur Rimbaud à plusieurs reprises entre 1880 et 1891. La ville fortifiée perchée à 1855 m d’altitude, où le temps semble s’être arrêté depuis longtemps, domine la grande plaine désertique peuplée par les Afars au nord et les plaines des Somalis au sud. Sa situation favorisa son développement en tant que centre important pour la culture islamique et carrefour commercial entre différentes cultures. La région est également réputée pour ses cultures de café, le meilleur du pays, et de khat dont les feuilles qui se mâchent procurent un effet stimulant et euphorisant sur l’organisme.

De retour vers la capitale, nous traversons le parc national d’Awash dont l’exploration mérite au moins deux journées. Créé en 1966, il abrite une faune nombreuse de grands mammifères comme les oryx, les koudous, les gazelles de Soemmerring, les phacochères ou les dik-dik. Il regroupe également près de 400 espèces d’oiseaux. L’apothéose de la visite se situe au pied des chutes d’eau de la rivière Awash où une dizaine de crocodiles ont élu domicile: sensations fortes garanties!

Ce n’est pas sans nostalgie après une si belle Aventure que nous prenons une dernière fois la route, cette fois-ci pour l’aéroport d’Addis-Abeba où, tard dans la soirée, notre avion décolle pour l’Europe.
Bons baisers de Paimpol

Chers amis de la carte postale, n’est-il pas étrange que le mot « correspondance » soit tombé en désuétude alors que nos échanges par écrit n’ont jamais été aussi nombreux?

MARIE-JOSÉ ASTRE-DÉMOULIN

Au pays des « ce qui se conçoit bien s’énonce clairement… », des raisonnements cartésiens, des Proust et des Madame de Sévigné, qui aurait pu s’imaginer que nos échanges épistolaires (eh oui… encore un mot qui se dissout dans nos mémoires oubliées) feraient un jour l’objet de dénominations anglophones telles que email, Whatsapp, Messenger et autres SMS, sigle dont tout le monde ignore la signification – ce qui ne saurait troubler les Onzièmes que nous sommes, champions toutes catégories des mystérieux acronymes!

Selon le dictionnaire[1], l’une des définitions du mot « correspondance » est: Etre en rapport de symétrie et d’harmonie avec quelque chose, répondre par ses sentiments, par ses actions, etc. aux sentiments, aux intentions d’une autre personne.

Est-ce à dire que, dans notre époque textos/photos/vidéos, nous ne cherchons plus à « être en rapport de symétrie et d’harmonie » avec les autres? Ne chercherions-nous qu’à scénographier nos vies afin de les rendre attractives?

Ce désir de se rendre beau et visible n’est certes pas nouveau. Dès l’apparition des congés payés, l’être humain a en effet cherché un moyen de narguer ses congénères lorsqu’il profitait d’une situation privilégiée, à savoir, ses vacances.

Soucieux d’apporter la preuve de son moment annuel (bien-nu, pour les plus chanceux de nos ancêtres) de gloire et de bien-être, le salarié en goguette a très vite su inventer un support devenu universel: la carte postale!

En 1948, oncle Paul et tante Huguette envoyaient déjà de « Bons baisers de Paimpol » à grand-maman, sur fond de fausses excuser. Le cliché doit d’ailleurs toujours se trouver dans une boîte à chaussures quelque part dans le garage.

L’ère du selfie et d’Instagram, nous avons la certitude de trouver la carte tout à fait démodée et pourtant… pourtant… des milliers d’images, disposées sur des tourniquets brinquebalants, fleurissent aux devantures de magasins de souvenirs partout dans le monde.

Et nous voilà, à notre plus grande surprise, au milieu de la foule des badauds, à Venise, Vienne ou Prague, en train de faire défiler des rondes de clichés. Nous sentons que notre cerveau a entamé un processus qui nous échappe et qu’il guide nos doigts à travers des photos que nous trouvons très laides mais que nous retournons entre nos doigts sans pouvoir nous en empêcher.

Nous nous mettons à croire que, pour certains de nos proches, une carte postale est importante. Pas pour nous, certes, mais pour eux, aucun doute, il va falloir sacrifier à la tradition. Tandis que nous nous demandons avec un vague agacement comment durable nous parviendrons à trouver leurs adresses postale, nous nous imaginons déjà penchés sur le comptoir du marchand de journaux ou assis sur le banc de fer quadrillé de l’aéroport, celui qui fait si mal aux fesses, en train de mordiller un Bic bon marché tout en réfléchissant à ce que nous pourrions bien leur raconter dans les trois lignes de texte réglementaires. Et force nous est d’admettre que cette perspective ne nous déplaît pas entièrement.

Nous doutons du bien-fondé de notre démarche, nous nous agaçons de ces « personnes pour qui une carte postale est importante », nous affichons une nervosité feinte car nous n’admettrions pour rien au monde écrire n’importe quoi sur un emoticon clin d’œil quand il nous enverra un texto pour nous dire qu’il a reçu notre carte; ahah! on pourrait rajouter le cliché groupé des sites d’intérêt de la ville pour les voisins du 2e, c’est très important, les relations de bon voisinage.

Nous nous emparons de nos trésors, soulagés d’avoir cédé à notre compulsion et convincent de répondre ainsi pas nos sentiments, par nos actions, etc. aux sentiments, aux intentions d’une autre personne, qui colle parfaitement à la définition de la correspondance selon Wikipedia.

Amis de la carte postale, maintenant qu’il est démontré que le fait de s’adonner à notre marotte est une preuve d’altruisme, nous voilà libres de nous en donner à cœur joie en cette période estivale!

Alors, à vos styles et belles vacances!

Vous aimeriez partager votre opinion sur le magazine et son contenu ?

N'hésitez plus et écrivez-nous !

Nous serions heureux de recevoir votre avis. Les plus pertinents, les plus intéressants, les plus originaux seront publiés dans le magazine.

Si vous souhaitez proposer un article, n'hésitez pas à me contacter à tout moment.

Et maintenant, à vos plumes !

Adressez vos commentaires à :
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Would you like to share your opinion about UN Special and its contents ?

Write to us!

We will be glad to hear from you. The most interesting, relevant, or even ingenious responses will be published in the magazine.

Should you wish to submit an article, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Now, put pen to paper!

Send your thoughts to:
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Corrigendum
In the May edition of UN Special, a typo in the article «Back to basics» (p. 30) mistakenly implied a relationship between author Gelise McCullough from UNITAID and the Lean on Me Foundation. The sentence should have said not «her» foundation, but «the» foundation.