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Despite the post-pandemic upturn in winter tourism, including mountain sports, its future is threatened by the energy crisis and global heating.

In February 2022, the sixth report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) contained an additional chapter on the impact of climate change in mountain regions, reporting increased “demand for and dependence on snow management measures such as snow-making.”

The Swiss, French and Italian Alps are no exception. The future of winter sports in these regions is under strain, with shorter periods of snowfall and long dry spells.

On top of that, the energy crisis has led many to ask whether using energy to open up ski stations should really be a priority for local authorities.

In this issue, Christophe Clivaz, academic, National Council member for the canton of Valais and co-author of a book on winter tourism and the climate challenge tells us that “between climate change, the energy crisis and a possible return of the pandemic, alpine tourism is facing major challenges this coming winter.”

Even so, the ski stations are getting ready for the start of the winter season. This issue gives you tips for exploring Chamonix, Verbier and Courmayeur, the three jewels of the French, Swiss and Italian alps.



Même si le tourisme d'hiver, notamment les sports de montagne, a connu une réelle embellie après la pandémie, son avenir est menacé par la crise énergétique et le réchauffement climatique.

En février 2022, dans son sixième rapport, le Groupe d'experts intergouvernementaux sur l'évolution du climat (GIEC) a consacré un chapitre supplémentaire sur les conséquences de la crise climatique dans les régions montagneuses. Il constate notamment une « hausse de la demande et de la dépendance vis-à-vis des mesures de gestion de la neige comme la fabrication de neige ».

Les Alpes suisses, françaises et italiennes ne font pas exception. L'avenir des sports d'hiver dans ces régions est mis à mal avec des périodes d'enneigement écourtées et des périodes de sécheresse prolongées.

En outre, compte tenu de la crise énergétique, beaucoup se demandent si l'utilisation de l'énergie pour ouvrir les stations de ski devait être la préoccupation majeure des autorités locales.

Dans ce numéro, Christophe Clivaz, professeur, conseiller national du canton du Valais et co-auteur du livre « Tourisme d'hiver, le Défi climatique » estime qu'entre « Le réchauffement climatique, la crise énergétique et le retour possible de la pandémie, le tourisme alpin fait face à de sacrés défis pour l'hiver qui vient ».

Il n'en demeure pas moins que les stations de ski se préparent pour lancer la saison d'hiver. Ce numéro vous donne des pistes pour mieux explorer Chamonix, Verbier et Courmayeur, les trois joyaux des Alpes françaises, suisses et italiennes.

Prisca Chaoui

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The official magazine

of international civil servants.

The opinions in this magazine are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the United Nations, or its specialized agencies. The publication of this magazine relies solely on the financial support of its advertisers.

La revue officielle des

fonctionnaires internationaux.

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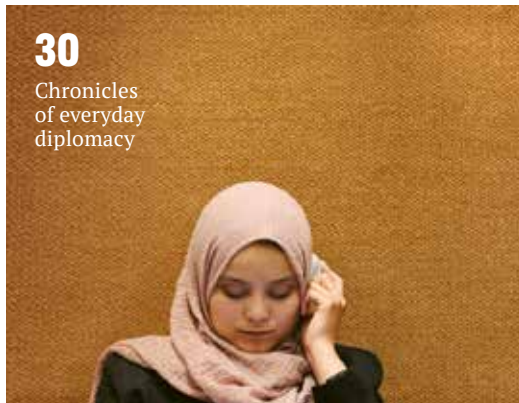
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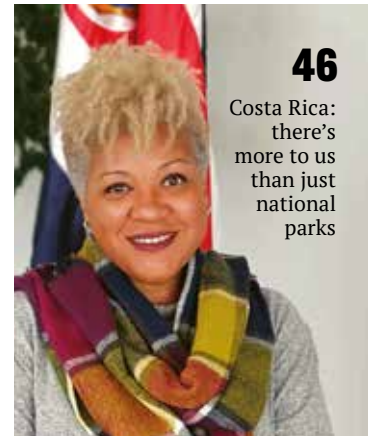
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France continues to support its alpine regions and their local economies

How winter tourism is being reborn

As the winter season in the northern hemisphere arrives, the restart of global tourism is underway and gaining momentum

Sandra Carvao *

After two of the most challenging years in the history of the sector, with international travel down by 70% on pre-pandemic levels, strong pent-up demand is being unleashed and people are once again traveling for both work and leisure.

The lifting of COVID-19-related travel restrictions – by the end of October more than 100 destinations worldwide had removed all restrictions - has translated into growing demand especially in the Americas, the Middle East and Africa. While the

sector's restart in Asia is still lagging behind, the re-opening of many destinations in recent months brings a positive outlook for the rest of the year.

As well as tourist arrival numbers rising, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is also seeing increases in the amount of money being spent by tourists. That increase, from major source markets like Belgium, France and Germany, for example, is now almost back to pre-pandemic levels, bringing hope for the many businesses and livelihoods that are dependent on our sector.

Tourism all year round – creating opportunities for all

From the very start of the crisis, UNWTO has recognized that the sudden and unexpected pause in international travel represents a unique opportunity to rethink tourism – how it works, and who benefits.

Tourism has already established itself as a key driver of development, job creation and opportunities for many economies and communities. Prior to the pandemic, the sector accounted for \$3.5 trillion in direct tourism GDP, 1.5 billion international travelers and 7% of all world exports. And indeed, the relevance of the sector to economic and social well-being everywhere has never been more evident, as was made clear by its very absence over the course of almost two years’.

However, as tourism restarts, this window of opportunity to do more and to do better is closing. Now is the time to ensure that the many and varied benefits the sector offers are shared as widely and fairly as possible. As the UN Secretary-General said in his Policy Brief entitled COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism, “while sustaining the livelihoods dependent on the sector must be a priority, rebuilding tourism is also an opportunity for transformation with a focus on leveraging its impact on destinations visited and building more resilient communities and businesses through innovation, digitalization, sustainability, and partnerships.”

One of the pillars of tourism transformation is the need to create a framework that will serve to reduce the concentration of tourism demand both in time (seasonality) and in space through the dispersal of tourism within territories and the promotion of diverse destinations, for example promoting rural destinations. Advancing such policies of diversification bring dual benefits: on the one hand, it can reduce pressure on popular destinations, including popular cities and resorts. At the same time, it can also promote tourism year-round, ensuring the economic benefits, particularly to rural communities, are more consistent and reliable.

“ The tourism of the future needs to be more resilient, diverse and inclusive ”

In this respect, the crisis has brought an increased focus on policies to create new and more sustainable experiences in many destinations. Working with the Indonesia Presidency of the G20, UNWTO has developed a set of guidelines that aim to support countries consolidating their recovery on a people-centered approach. The G20 Bali Guidelines for Strengthening Communities and MSMEs as Tourism Transformation Agents include several examples of how countries have developed and implemented policies to support this agenda.



Tourism is slowly gaining traction again



Promoting diversity among tourism locations is essential for the future

To take just one example, in France, the government has launched a major plan to support investment called ‘Avenir Montagnes’, mobilizing nearly €650 million of public funds (from both the state and regions), which will generate investments of €1.8 billion. The plan aims to respond to the specific problems of the mountain regions by diversifying the tourism offering, supporting ecological sustainability and the transition to cleaner energy and, finally, breathing new life into communities hit hard by multiple crises. An additional effort to promote the mountain regions in France and overseas by Atout France – the French Tourism Board - has also been designed to accelerate the recovery of tourism activity and associated revenues.

“ In 2021, UNWTO launched the Best Tourism Villages Initiative ”

In the same spirit, in 2021, UNWTO launched the Best Tourism Villages Initiative. The Best Tourism Villages by UNWTO was launched to advance

the role of tourism in safeguarding rural villages, along with their landscapes, natural and cultural diversity, and their local values and activities, including local gastronomy. These villages stand out for their natural and cultural resources, besides their innovative and transformative actions and commitment to the development of tourism in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In many cases, the initiative showcases destinations that can be visited whatever the season – again, spreading the benefits more evenly and consistently, reducing the pressure of peak seasons and providing year-round livelihoods for residents.

The tourism of the future needs to be more resilient, diverse and inclusive. Increasingly, the accessibility to traditional winter destinations will bring a myriad of social and economic benefits. At the same time, promoting new winter tourism destinations will bolster resilience, while further enhancing the sector’s contribution to the wider UN agenda and the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals. ▶

* Sandra Carvao is the UNWTO Chief of Tourism Market Intelligence and Competitiveness.

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Est-ce que le ski alpin est en danger ?

Tourisme alpin: les défis de la prochaine saison hivernale

Crise de l'énergie, réchauffement climatique et retour éventuel de la pandémie. Les enjeux ne manquent pas pour le tourisme en montagne

Christophe Clivaz *

À la question désormais presque traditionnelle depuis que le climat se réchauffe « y aura-t-il de la neige à Noël ? » est venue s'ajouter ces deux dernières années la question « pourra-t-on faire du ski avec la pandémie de Covid-19 ? ». Et en 2022 une nouvelle question est apparue: « y aura-t-il assez d'électricité pour faire fonctionner les remontées mécaniques cet hiver ? » Mais avant de nous pencher sur cette dernière question, rappelons que le ski a été un modèle de développement touristique très puissant dans les vallées alpines depuis la fin de la 2ème guerre mondiale. Au point qu'aujourd'hui, lorsque l'on parle du tourisme alpin en hiver, on pense essentiellement aux domaines skiables, considérés

comme la colonne vertébrale de tout l'écosystème touristique en montagne.

La pertinence de ce modèle est aujourd'hui questionnée par les principes du développement durable. Faire du ski, est-ce durable ? Pour tenter d'y répondre, on peut se référer aux 17 objectifs de l'Agenda 2030 pour le développement durable. Dans leur représentation graphique habituelle, ces 17 objectifs sont posés les uns à côté des autres, sans hiérarchie entre eux. L'Université de Stockholm propose une représentation alternative sous forme de « gâteau de mariage » qui place la biosphère, et les 4 objectifs qui la concernent, comme base de la société, puis de l'économie, et de leurs objectifs respectifs.

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Représentation des objectifs de développement durable de l'Agenda 2030 selon le Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC) de l'Université de Stockholm

Cette représentation schématique montre comment les dimensions sociales, économiques et écologiques du développement durable sont liées entre elles. Dans la pratique, la mise en œuvre de la durabilité nécessite en effet souvent des compromis entre les aspects économiques, écologiques et sociaux. En fin de compte, la dimension écologique devrait prévaloir, en tout cas dans les pays alpins où les besoins essentiels sont couverts, car le maintien du vivant est une condition sine qua non au fonctionnement de la société et de l'économie. Ceci est aussi valable pour les stations de sports d'hiver.

Dès lors il paraît peu raisonnable de poursuivre l'agrandissement des domaines skiables, leur liaison ou la généralisation de l'enneigement artificiel. Certains domaines skiables tentent pourtant de faire perdurer le modèle jusqu'au bout, en investissant des montants colossaux dans les retenues collinaires et les réseaux d'enneigement artificiel afin d'atteindre le 100% de pistes enneigables mécaniquement. Ce alors même que l'eau et l'énergie sont des ressources rares comme on en prend brutalement conscience en cette année de sécheresse et de crise énergétique.

Si la question de la disponibilité de l'eau varie fortement d'une station à l'autre, toutes sont confrontées pour la première fois cet hiver au problème d'une possible pénurie d'électricité. Les Remontées mécaniques suisses ont pris les devants et communiqué à leurs membres une série de bonnes pratiques afin d'économiser l'électricité. La branche a adopté un plan lui permettant si besoin de diminuer sa consommation électrique afin de répondre aux objectifs d'économie qui peuvent lui être fixés par la Confédération en cas de pénurie. On parle par exemple de baisser la vitesse des téléphériques et télésièges, de fermer une partie du domaine skiable ou de raccourcir les heures d'ouverture de certaines installations.

En plus d'une possible pénurie, certaines sociétés doivent également faire face à une augmentation massive des coûts de l'énergie. En Suisse les gros consommateurs d'électricité (plus de 100'000 kWh par an) peuvent depuis 2009 décider de rester sur le marché régulé ou d'opter pour le marché libre. La plupart des sociétés de remontées mécaniques ont ainsi choisi le marché libre qui offrait ces dernières années des tarifs plus bas que le marché régulé. Mais la tendance s'est brutalement inversée, notamment avec la guerre en Ukraine, et le prix de l'électricité a été multiplié par 10 sur le marché libre. Certaines sociétés de remontées mécaniques bénéficient de tarifs bloqués pour l'hiver qui vient et ne seront ainsi pas touchées dans l'immédiat par cette augmentation. D'autres au contraire vont devoir faire face à des coûts de l'énergie beaucoup plus élevés dès cet hiver, qui pourraient mettre en péril leur avenir. D'ici deux à trois ans, tous les domaines skiables verront cependant leur facture électrique augmenter de manière très importante.



Les remontées mécaniques et le système d'enneigement artificiel consomment de l'électricité

Si notre réflexion s'est focalisée sur le ski, il faut néanmoins rappeler que les stations de montagne ont développé ces dernières années de nombreuses offres complémentaires afin de se diversifier, y compris en hiver. Si certaines activités sportives comme la luge ou les raquettes nécessitent aussi la présence de la neige, d'autres comme la randonnée ou le patin peuvent avoir même lieu lorsque celle-ci est absente. L'offre s'est surtout considérablement élargie dans les domaines de la culture, du patrimoine, de la gastronomie et du bien-être. Il y a donc bien un avenir pour les stations de montagne, avec ou sans le ski.

On le voit, entre réchauffement climatique, crise énergétique et possible retour de la pandémie, le tourisme alpin fait face à de sacrés défis pour l'hiver qui vient. ▶

* Christophe Clivaz est professeur en tourisme à l'Université de Lausanne (UNIL) et conseiller national du canton du Valais.

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Chamonix: an authentic alpine town

Chamonix-Mont-Blanc: in pole position

Located in France at the junction between Switzerland and Italy, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc has it all

Céline Gruffat *

An exceptional location

The valley extends over 28 km and is flanked by the superb summits and needles of the Mont Blanc massif and the Aiguilles Rouges. The historic town of Chamonix sits in the middle of the valley, a mere 30 minutes' drive from both the Swiss and Italian borders and just one hour's drive from Geneva.

An authentic alpine town

Chamonix is where modernity and tradition live harmoniously side by side, giving the place a unique vitality and character. Its colorful history

and architectural heritage offer an extraordinary journey through time, from the first explorers in the 1700s to the technical prowess of one of the most remarkable cable cars in the world (Aiguille du Midi - 1955), Chamonix has never ceased to be a pioneer in mountain tourism.

The first Winter Olympic Games, hosted by the town in 1924, promoted the development of winter sports. Today, both summer and winter seasons are equally popular and, unsurprisingly, Chamonix-Mont-Blanc is hailed as the birthplace of mountaineering and the world capital of skiing!

A renowned ski destination

Proud to be a member of the “Best of the Alps” resorts, Chamonix offers outstanding skiing from December to May, with reliable snow cover and excellent springtime conditions. Best known for its iconic descents such as the Vallée Blanche (a 20 km long glacier itinerary), its free-ride spots and vertical drops, the valley also offers gentle tree-lined slopes, wide open panoramic pistes, snow parks and nursery slopes for beginners and children alike.

Skiing the Vallée Blanche

Accessible from the Aiguille du Midi (3,842 m), the Vallée Blanche is one of the greatest glacier descents in Europe. This unmarked off-piste route of 20 km and 2000 m vertical drop allows experienced skiers to discover an exceptional setting, surrounded by legendary peaks, whilst descending the Glacier du Géant and the famous Mer de Glace... It is strongly recommended to use the professional services of a high mountain guide.

Ski touring: on the up!

Over the past few years in the Chamonix Valley, ski touring has grown in popularity. To facilitate training and practice, there are now four marked routes, or itineraries, of different lengths and difficulty which are not patrolled and are for different levels of ski tourers.

- Les Houches / Prarion: elevation 841 m
- Argentière / Lognan par La Trapette (not recommended for beginners): elevation 730 m
- Argentière / Refuge de Lognan: elevation 800 m
- Le Tour / Charamillon: elevation 358 m

A new gondola on the Balme Ski Area for Christmas 2022

The existing gondola, which departs from the village of Le Tour, will be replaced by a new generation Doppelmayr 10-seater panoramic gondola for the next ski season. The future installation has a capacity to transport 2,200 people per hour, over double the current capacity. The new cabins will travel the 376 m elevation in 5.26 minutes, a speed of 6 meters per second.

Ski Mont Blanc...unlimited

The “Mont Blanc Unlimited” lift pass lets visitors enjoy 1,000 km of skiing in three countries: Chamonix Valley, Megève, Saint-Gervais, Courmayeur (Italy), Crans Montana and Verbier

(Switzerland)... as well as the sight-seeing excursions of the Aiguille du Midi, the Mer de Glace and the Tramway du Mont Blanc (France).

It's not all downhill

Cross-country skiers may enjoy more than 40 km of scenic slopes, a perfect way to discover the valley. Other winter activities include dog-sledding, snowshoeing, ice climbing, scenic flights, tandem paragliding, the Alpine Coaster luge, and not least QC Terme, the most scenic spa in the Alps! The newly opened International Crystal Museum is also a must for every visitor to Chamonix!

A paradise for sightseeing

From the town center, explore the wonders of an incredible high-mountain environment by riding the famous Aiguille du Midi cable car, up to 3842 m. This is the closest you will get to the summit of Mont Blanc and the sweeping 360° view of the Alps is breathtaking!

Or, embark on the romantic Montanvers rack and pinion train to the Mer de Glace glacier (the largest in the Alps) and visit the Ice Grotto and the historic Grand Hotel at 1913 m. Hop on the panoramic valley train (free of charge) to discover the valley's outlying villages and hamlets, or take one of the many lifts to lunch in a mountain restaurant.

Heart and soul of the Alps

Chamonix is truly cosmopolitan, an international melting pot offering an eclectic choice that reflects the people who live here and the people who visit: from luxury hotels to backpacker's gîtes, from Michelin star restaurants to Savoy food trucks, from attractive boutiques to high-tech sports outlets, from sunny street cafés to lively clubs and bars...the list goes on.

World Cup: skiing the Kandahar - February 4, 2023

This winter, the world circuit's best alpine skiers will return to the famous “Verte des Houches” for a spectacular slalom event. Find out more here: chamonixworldcup.com

For everything you need to know about Chamonix: chamonix.com ▶

* Céline Gruffat is a Press Officer at the Office de Tourisme, Vallée de Chamonix-Mont-Blanc.



© COURTESY OF COURMAYEUR MONT BLANC

Courmayeur ski slopes

Courmayeur Mont Blanc: Italy at its peak

Nestled between France and Italy, Courmayeur sits beside the jewel of the Alps, Mont Blanc, which at 4810 m is the highest peak in Western Europe

Raffaella Scalisi *

Pure, authentic, elegant, traditional, cosmopolitan, energetic and revitalizing: words that reflect the soul of Courmayeur Mont Blanc, a unique place to recharge, find yourself, and follow the rhythm of nature.

Tradition, good food, sports, fun, relaxation, entertainment, shopping, and mountain culture are the ingredients of the Courmayeur experience, framed by stunning surroundings. Mont Blanc, through which this location becomes the entryway to Italy, allows foreign visitors to begin

experiencing the best of the Italian lifestyle. This is, literally, Italy at its peak.

Courmayeur is part of 'Best of the Alps,' a prestigious award which, for more than 25 years, has been awarded to the most internationally renowned and exclusively ski resorts of the Alps and embodies the highest quality of tourism. Courmayeur provides the opportunity to ski on the many slopes and find untouched runs that are an off-piste paradise, as well as to enjoy skating, snowshoeing, dog sledding, fat-biking,

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and much more. The area has hosted many competitions and Italian Olympic athletes, including medal winners such as Federica Fontana and Federica Brignone.

Beautiful views, breathtaking slopes, and off-piste powder runs mean fun at every level. There are two sides to enjoy the adventure: the Chécrouit side and the Val Vény side of the ski resort. The two ski and snowboard schools in Courmayeur are designed for everyone at all levels, even for those who want to go off-piste, and there's plenty of equipment rentals in the many shops in the village and on the slopes.

However, skiing is not just a sport but above all an experience of sensations, emotions, and contemplation. In Courmayeur, for example, you can ski on the wonderful slope from Arp down to Youla, which consists of a section of a path, classified red, of about 700 m in length, which gives access to a north-facing slope with a very challenging 600 m-long black piste, with a gradient of 70%, in addition to the numerous off-piste trails already prepared in the past. To refine your technique, there is also a snow park for tricks, jibbing, jumps, and evolutions on the slopes.

Courmayeur Mont Blanc is also a free-riders' paradise, with people coming from all over the world to live a day full of adrenaline and fun, in different descents every time, enjoying an incomparable panorama. Perhaps the most special free-ride descent develops on the Mer de Glace

Cross Country Skiing
in Val Ferret



© COURTESY OF COURMAYEUR MONT BLANC

glacier in the heart of the Mont Blanc massif. The route is 18 km, starting from Punta Helbronner at 3,466 meters and arriving in Chamonix, at 1,042 meters. It winds between granite spires, crevasses, and breathtaking seracs. The departure is from the spectacular Skyway Mont Blanc, then a short walk on the glacier to reach the Col Flambeau.

The alpine guides of Courmayeur are always available to accompany skiers on their trips. The Società di Guide Alpine was the first to be established in Italy, and the second in the world. It was one of the first organizations to promote and raise awareness of the mountain, and in particular of mountaineering. In 1850, the forerunners of this noble profession came together and formed a society with the aim of formalizing, through a fixed structure, a profession that had become the bedrock of mountain tourism.

Courmayeur is also the only side of Mont Blanc where it is possible to heliski, for all those who want to experience the thrill of off-piste combined with that of a helicopter flight. In just a few minutes, you can reach the Mont Fortin area to ski breathtaking backcountry free-ride routes with the heliguides.

Cross-country skiing is also huge in Courmayeur, with Val Ferret among the most beautiful cross-country ski locations in Aosta Valley. With more than 20 km of slope, Val Ferret allows many variations that give the skier the opportunity to create their own ring every day, lengthening or shortening the basic routes. And for the novices, it is of course possible to request lessons with the professional ski instructors.

And after all the skiing, what about the food? Well, winter in Courmayeur wouldn't be complete without it, so to properly welcome visitors there are over twenty restaurants that offer refined menus to suit varying tastes. Thanks to the evening opening – until midnight – of the Courmayeur cable car, you can enjoy an aperitif and dinner at high altitude while admiring the sunset on Mont Blanc. The area represents Italian excellence at its best, and Courmayeur's century-long culinary tradition takes pride in local producers and suppliers who will provide the perfect gastronomic accompaniment to your perfect view. ▀

* Raffaella Scalisi is General Manager at Courmayeur Mont Blanc.

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Verbier, en train et à ski

Le domaine skiable de Verbier se renouvelle et opte pour une mobilité douce

Clément Guntern *

Pour beaucoup, Verbier c'est une destination cosmopolite au cœur des Alpes valaisannes, célèbre pour son festival de musique classique, son domaine skiable et ses compétitions de freeride connues des freeriders du monde entier. Verbier a d'ailleurs été élue pour la première fois en 2021 « Meilleure destination de ski au monde » lors du World Ski Awards.

Mais au-delà de la station de ski de renommée internationale, il y a la vallée et ses villages authentiques qui méritent le détour, ainsi que le développement d'une mobilité douce qui est désormais l'axe central du développement touristique.

Face à Verbier, dans la même vallée, Bruson, un village connu en été pour le Palp Festival a la renommée grandissante. Avec ses vieilles bâtisses en bois, il témoigne de la vie d'autrefois.

Bruson fait aussi partie du domaine skiable des 4Vallées. En partant du village du Châble, qui fait office de carrefour, on accède aussi bien à Verbier qu'à Bruson en télécabine. Le nouveau télésiège, construit cet été, permet d'atteindre le sommet en moins d'un quart d'heure. Il remplace désormais la vénérable machine qui transportait les skieurs depuis les années 1990 jusqu'à La Pasay, à plus de 2100 mètres.

Comme le veut l'expression, autant faire d'une pierre deux coups. A l'occasion des travaux du nouveau télésiège, la vieille buvette de La Pasay a laissé la place à un restaurant flambant neuf. La nouvelle terrasse promet d'être ensoleillée et le panorama magnifique avec le massif du Mont-Blanc en toile de fond. Depuis La Pasay, les pistes traversent des forêts clairsemées où les amateurs de freeride bénéficient d'un environnement privilégié. D'ordinaire moins fréquenté que Verbier, Bruson

La télécabine reliant
Le Châble à Verbier



offre un confort à la hauteur de la beauté du cadre naturel et de la variété des pistes skiabiles.

En empruntant la télécabine depuis le Châble, on arrive sans changer de transport jusqu'aux Ruinettes, point de départ pour découvrir le reste des 4 Vallées, notamment le Mont-Fort qui culmine à 3330 mètres. Une plateforme panoramique va être installée cet hiver afin de permettre aux visiteurs de profiter du panorama exceptionnel, à 360 degrés, du Cervin jusqu'au Mont-Blanc.

Mobilité douce

Pour les stations de ski comme pour toutes les destinations touristiques, le sujet de la mobilité est crucial, que ce soit pour des questions environnementales ou simplement de confort. Et il ne servirait à rien de proposer chaque année des nouveautés si on n'améliore pas l'accessibilité.

Ce que beaucoup ne savent pas, c'est que, depuis l'hiver dernier, Verbier fait partie des quelques stations de Suisse romande accessibles en train. La télécabine qui assure la connexion entre la gare du Châble et Verbier, a été reconnue en tant que transport public. Ce qui signifie que les horaires ont été largement étendus. Désormais, elle fonctionne en continu de 5h10 à 23h50 ; ce qui rend un fier service aux habitants et aux visiteurs qui passent la nuit dans la vallée. En outre, les différentes cartes

de transport public sont reconnues. Ainsi, depuis Genève, il suffit de changer de train à Martigny puis de prendre la cabine au Châble pour arriver à la station de ski. Des bus prennent le relais et sillonnent la station en continu.

Mieux, de mi-décembre à mi-avril, durant les week-ends et certains jours fériés, le « Verbier Express » permet de rejoindre Le Châble depuis Genève sans changement. Le train s'arrête également dans toutes les gares principales de l'Arc lémanique. Pour les amoureux de la montagne, le « VosAlpes Express » fonctionnera sur le même modèle dès cet hiver depuis Fribourg. Un rabais est également proposé en combinant billet de train et forfait de ski. Que ce soit pour un séjour ou pour du ski à la journée, les transports publics deviennent une alternative toujours plus intéressante.

Grâce à ces transformations, la destination offre accessibilité et confort. Elle se rapproche aussi de ses hôtes qui souhaitent se rendre à la montagne sans voiture. Verbier la cosmopolite, Le Châble l'accessible, Bruson l'authentique et La Tzoumaz la familiale, toutes localités de la destination ont quelque chose de différent à offrir. ▶

* Clément Guntern est directeur junior en relations publiques à Verbier Tourisme.





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Community is at the heart of human rights

Human rights: a scathing scorecard

A sober personal assessment of where we stand today on the achievement of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Michael Stopford *

The 10th of December is Universal Human Rights Day, the anniversary of the 1948 signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). What a magnificent affirmation of the human spirit is expressed in its first article: *All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*. As has often been remarked, neither the UDHR nor the UN Charter (*We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war*) could have been written today, where that sense of united

aspiration for humanity has disintegrated and vanished. To quote the opening words of Secretary-General Guterres before this year's UNGA: "Our world is in big trouble."

Many years ago, the UNOG Director General also headed the Centre for Human Rights, so as Chef de Cabinet I had the privilege of working within the UN human rights arena. Let me give you my personal scorecard of where we are today on the UDHR (a couple of articles omitted for brevity):

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Spirit of brotherhood notably lacking in today's international community

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as ... property, birth or other status.

Inequality possibly at an all-time high across the world

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Universally under threat

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Modern slavery widespread

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Torture widely practiced

Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Widely violated

Article 10 & Article 11

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.

Everyone charged with a penal offense has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty... Judicial impartiality under threat or non-existent

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor and reputation.

Social media and online monitoring make a mockery of this

Article 13 & Article 14

Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

Not respected

Article 16

...Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

Not universally respected



Global Campus of Human Rights in Venice



Human Rights Day

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Widely ignored and under threat

Articles 19, 20 & 21

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression... Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. ...expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage... Doubtful if even half of humanity enjoys any of these

Article 23

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work... Widespread, universal dissatisfaction with work and working conditions

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay. Competitive, neoliberal modern economy makes this impossible

Article 25

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family...

Today under acute threat with no assurance for the future

What has brought us, the so-called international community, to this state, and what can we do about it? And, in fact, the challenge goes beyond mere human rights: what about animal rights, or the rights of the biosphere menaced by climate change and mass extinctions? In this short space I'd only mention two pathways for a more promising future: education and a sense of community. Both are included in the UDHR. The right to education is in Article 26: but we need specifically, and more than ever before, human rights education. In this context I'd highlight the tremendous work carried out by the Venice-based Global Campus of Human Rights, a consortium of over 100 universities worldwide that has trained and prepared human rights defenders and activists in all regions, now under the inspiring leadership of the UN expert and international lawyer Manfred Nowak.

“ Without a sense of community... it is no surprise that the other ideals remain unrealized ”

And, finally, a sense of community, so lost today under the crushing weight of nationalism, populism, egoism of all shades — and yet so beautifully expressed by the UDHR's Article 29: *Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.* Without that sense of community — in fact of a shared humanity — which so few countries today seem to embrace, it is no surprise that the other ideals of the UDHR remain unrealized. The “coalition of the world” called for by Mr. Guterres can only be anchored in a sense of community at every level. ▀

* Michael Stopford is a former Chef de Cabinet at UNOG. He is currently Managing Partner of the data-based communications company ANCORED (anced.se).

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OF THE WORLD



Time is of the essence when it comes to implementation

Switzerland: a leading hub for sustainable finance

Switzerland's financial center is tackling the global challenge of climate change. This means solid action and commitment

Jörg Gasser *

The Swiss financial center is working to position itself as a world-leading hub for sustainable finance, something that requires concrete measures that must be implemented quickly. The first milestones in this regard were achieved in 2022: the launch of the Swiss Climate Scores and new industry initiatives show how seriously Switzerland's financial center takes the global challenge of climate change.

The Building Bridges conference, co-founded by the Swiss Bankers Association (SBA), was held for the third year in a row in fall 2022. It is intended both as a platform for knowledge sharing and to promote sustainable finance in Switzerland and worldwide. As the Swiss financial center's most important industry association, the SBA sees sustainable finance as a strategic priority and supports its members at various levels as they endeavor to

make a proactive contribution to sustainability. Collaborating on implementing concrete measures quickly is essential to building the Swiss financial center's leading position in sustainable finance.

Top-quality advisory services from Swiss financial institutions

In parallel with its ongoing efforts to improve the frameworks for sustainable financial products, the financial center intends to press ahead with its own sustainable finance initiatives. At the end of June 2022, for example, the SBA defined two new sets of binding self-regulation on sustainable banking business for its members. Among other things, these will improve the quality of advisory services provided to clients. Banks' advisors are required to tell clients about sustainability in consultations, record their preferences, and present them with sustainable solutions while explaining the risks and rewards. With a focus on the central aspects of investment and real estate financing, the self-regulation sets out minimum requirements and standards, making sustainability integral to all consultations without forcing investors to make their entire portfolio sustainable. That is ultimately the client's choice, not the bank's.

Swiss Climate Scores create transparency on Paris alignment of financial investments

In addition to top-quality advice at the point of sale, a complete range of suitable, genuinely sustainable products is needed. Working together with the financial sector, the Federal Council has created a reliable seal of quality for investments in the form of the new Swiss Climate Scores, comprising six indicators designed to provide meaningful, transparent, and easily understandable information on the alignment of financial investments with the Paris Agreement on climate change, and make it possible to compare investments with each other. This puts Switzerland



The Swiss financial center continues to make progress on its net-zero commitments



All sectors of the economy must play their part in decarbonization

at the forefront of a global movement, positioning it as the first choice for Swiss and foreign clients and investors seeking to invest sustainably.

Committing to net-zero: good progress in Switzerland

A study published recently by PwC on the status of voluntary commitments to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 proves that the Swiss financial center is making progress in this regard. Some 62% of the total assets of SBA members are committed to the aims of the Net-Zero Banking Alliance (NZBA). Meanwhile, 61% of the assets under management of Asset Management Association Switzerland (AMAS) members are pledged to the Net-Zero Asset Managers (NZAM) initiative. These net-zero alliances have become a key instrument for the financial industry's contribution to achieving global climate goals. By joining one of them, financial institutions commit to setting specific interim and long-term climate neutrality targets and drawing up a plan on how to meet them. They are, of course, also required to report on their progress every year.

On the right track, but still a lot of work to do

As you can see, the proportion of the Swiss financial center's financing solutions, assets, and insurance premiums committed to net-zero is growing. This is good news, but it is clear that there is still a long way to go, and all sectors of the economy must play their part in decarbonization. However, the financial center can continue to support the transition effectively with appropriate financing, asset management and insurance solutions. ▀

* Jörg Gasser has been CEO of the Swiss Bankers Association since May 2019.

Are we ready for the next health crisis?

As WHO and partners prepare for the International Day of Epidemic Preparedness in December, we ask Dr. Sylvie Briand about the past, present, and future

Daniel Nazarov *

What have we done right and wrong in the past? Have we learned lessons from the most recent outbreak? What are the next steps for a better outbreak response? And how does this all tie in with International Day of Epidemic Preparedness in December? Dr. Sylvie Briand, world-class expert and Director of the Pandemic and Epidemic Diseases Department at WHO, gives her thoughts.

Dr. Briand, you led the Global Influenza Programme of WHO during the swine flu pandemic in 2009. You also served in the Global Task Force on Cholera Control and as lead for the yellow fever initiative at WHO. How would you compare the approaches that were taken to combat swine flu and COVID-19?

When it comes to H1N1 (swine flu), one key factor is that we already had early warnings. There was an alert as early as 1997, and in 2003, the threat re-emerged in parallel to SARS-1 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 1). Due to these red flags being raised, the world was already on high alert. It was also during this time period that

the negotiation of the new International Health Regulations (IHR) took place, which were later adopted in 2005 and came into force in 2007. As a result, from 2005 until 2009, just before the outbreak, countries were well-prepared for what was to come: many countries developed plans, did simulation exercises, and conducted capacity-building activities in order to respond to these early warning signs. I remember that, according to a study we conducted during that period, there were 116 national plans officially recorded. When the H1N1 pandemic happened in 2009, the response was well implemented: the actions were commensurate to the risk, and even though we were not entirely certain as to how the virus may evolve, a vaccine was developed in a relatively short period of time.

That is not to say that everything went well. For instance, the lab response was lagging behind, and we did not have good statistics on hospitalization rates and death counts, which is why we officially had 18,000 deaths recorded by the end of the pandemic, whereas a more sophisticated analysis that we conducted at a later stage gave us a more realistic figure between 400,000 to 600,000 deaths in the first year.

But overall, I do believe that the reaction to the outbreak was correct—there was good coordination, no excessive measures were taken, and it was well managed. Yet, there was a flip side to this accomplishment: following the H1N1 events, many countries became victims of their own success and reduced their interest and attention from pandemic reactivity strategies. Since 2009, many countries have seen political changes, shifts in priorities, and their country plans were not updated. By the time COVID-19 started, the memory of epidemic preparedness was lost, and we had to face the crisis from a starting point in which many actors were not prepared to face such a problem.



Being prepared for global disease outbreaks always serves countries well

This was not the case globally, however. In Asia, for example, many countries were much more prepared, due to the recent experience of MERS-CoV (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus) in South Korea in 2015. It was a complex outbreak, and an array of counter-measures were taken to fight it, which in turn, affected the economy. It was following that experience that South Korea decided to invest much more attention and resources into preparedness. At the same time, due to fear of SARS or MERS returning, neighbouring countries adopted similar prophylactic approaches, and as a result, we saw a more appropriate reaction to the COVID-19 outbreak in that region in comparison to less prepared countries.

Going back to the 2003-2009 period, I am certain that if countries were not on alert, and there was not an early reaction, governments and other actors would not have had the capacity to respond, and the outbreak would have been much more serious.

You mentioned how despite the achievements of the past, the knowledge and know-how got lost. Is this something that the International Day of Epidemic Preparedness aims to address?

Yes, absolutely. In fact, we should go beyond simple awareness-raising—in parallel to leveraging awareness at the political level, we must also work on putting relevant mechanisms in place. For example, what really saved us during COVID-19 is that we already had a laboratory network for influenza, which just celebrated its 70th anniversary in October. GISRS (Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System) is a very strong system operating in 130 countries. When the COVID-19 pandemic first began, we immediately addressed these labs, who were then able to properly diagnose COVID-19. Similar mechanisms which are sustainable and scalable when needed, are of the utmost importance. An important next step for the global community is to identify, in a timely manner, what kind of global mechanism would be needed for the next pandemic, so that if such a mechanism already exists, we can ensure that it is scalable upon demand; and if it doesn't exist, that we can create it. This should really be one of the main focuses these days, as the creation of a global mechanism from scratch is a time-consuming process, and therefore must be put in place before an outbreak, and not as a reaction to it, when it's already too late.

Earlier this year, we published a report titled “Imagining the Future of Pandemics and

Epidemics,” in which we apply sophisticated foresight methodologies to develop scenario-specific solutions. A good first step to identifying this global mechanism would be for audiences to familiarize themselves with this report, as one of its main focuses is about shifting from a reactive to a proactive approach in addressing infectious threats.

Who is the main audience of the International Day of Epidemic Preparedness?

It's a mix of all actors, ranging from political leaders to civil society. We need awareness at all levels, and we need all countries on board. For this reason, we have a new plan called “UHPR,” which combines Universal Health and Pandemic Readiness. You cannot control an outbreak without communities and civil society. In an outbreak, everybody is an actor: we are all potential victims of the virus. As we have seen during COVID-19, no one was protected, not even presidents. We can all be infected by a virus, and so we all must be active participants in the response. Therefore, we need to engage everyone—political leaders, NGOs, civil society, and other non-state actors if we want an adequate response to a future crisis.

I must note that the timing of the International Day of Epidemic Preparedness is unfortunate: it falls between Christmas and the New Year—a period when people don't want to think about future crises or looming threats, especially in countries that observe these celebrations. It's definitely a communication challenge from that perspective, but the importance of maintaining momentum remains as relevant as ever.

We are still struggling with many outbreaks across the world: Cholera in 29 countries, Monkeypox, COVID-19, and Ebola are a few examples. We are constantly running after the next crisis, and that's why this day (International Day of Epidemic Preparedness) is so important. If every country in the world, and all the people in it, become more prepared, I believe that we can shift from a reactive mode to a preventive mode and deal with these crises. They will continue to happen, but currently we can see that every time an outbreak happens, it's perceived as a surprise or shock; but we shouldn't be surprised, we should be prepared. Hopefully, this is something that this day will address. ▶

* Daniel Nazarov is Programme Coordinator, Director's Assistant at UNITAR.

Chronicles of everyday diplomacy

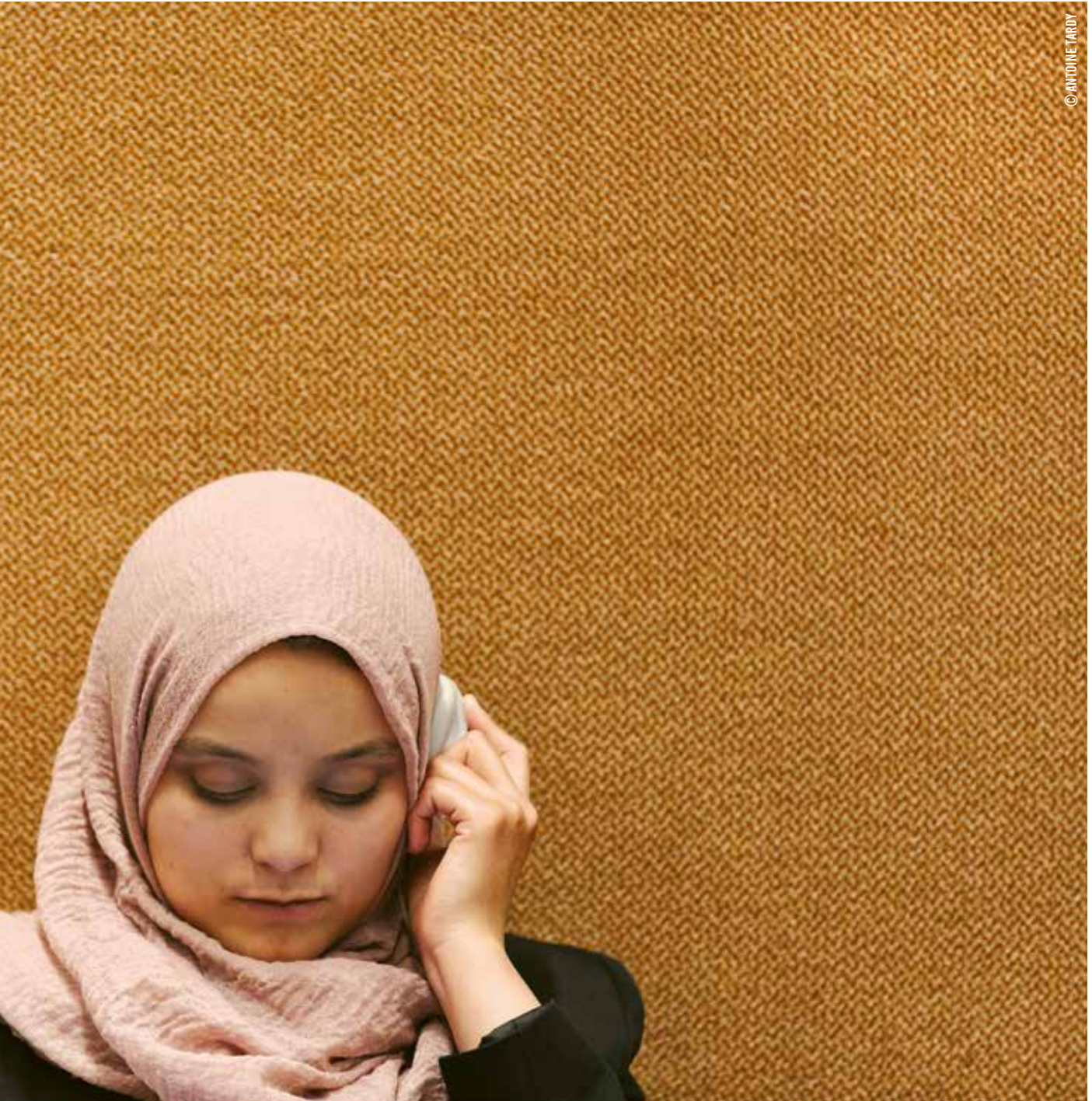
Antoine Tardy*

Last month, we talked about the important work of the interpreters. At the other end of the line are the listeners – and sometimes decision-makers – whose concentration skills are put to the test, day after day.

Among them are often students and aspiring international civil servants, who conscientiously confront their learnings, assumptions and ideals with the reality of a conference room. ▶

* Antoine Tardy is a freelance photographer based in Geneva (antoinetardy.com / Instagram: [@antoinetardyphoto](https://www.instagram.com/antoinetardyphoto)).





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First place winner Karen Putzer of Italy competes in the Women's Giant Slalom on December 28, 2002 during the FIS World Cup in Soemmering, Austria

Interview with an olympic hero

Learning how to turn setbacks into victories is par for the course in the world of sport

Julián Ginzo *

Becoming an Olympic champion takes both talent and extraordinary effort. What is your message to athletes chasing this goal?

The day I won my Olympic medal, I was late at the start gate and my bid number 2 didn't look promising. Most likely, I was going to be a good forerunner for the following competitors. Luckily enough, I learned through some hard landings to turn anxiety and obstacles into motivation and energy. I knew that I was already behind the others before getting out of the starting gate, which made

me go even faster, and I arrived at the finish line with a huge advantage. The waiting at the finish for the other competitors to come down was a pain. This is just to say that, as an athlete, if you're ready to face the obstacles and challenges, you can make the difference.

Eight world cups and a few accidents along the way. What would you say to young athletes who want to give up at the first obstacle?

My coach used to say, "We only give up letters." I'd say try first, because you won't do professional

sports for your entire life. It has a limited duration anyway, and this opportunity won't come back to you. I was told at the age of 25 to stop doing sports. Not competing, but sports in general. And I thought that at this point, before stopping, I could just give it a try. As a result, I won my eighth and last World Cup race after three months of recovering from injury. I am not saying to always insist and persist, and I also admire athletes who acknowledge the right time to quit and take care of their health. But I always saw sports as a privilege that not all of my peers had, and I was fortunate enough to practice sports as a leisure activity after school and I never saw it as a "real" job.

“ My coach used to say, “We only give up letters” ”

Not that it has always been fun, especially as there hasn't been any understanding yet of combining sports with school. Nothing, however, can provide

a comparable experience and shape your character like sports. And you will benefit from this for the rest of your life afterwards too.

“ I was told at the age of 25 to stop doing sports ”

In Europe, sports like this can open doors to humanitarian action through international organizations. Can skiing achieve this?

Skiing, in particular alpine skiing, is not the most appropriate sport for humanitarian actions, especially in terms of supporting refugee athletes. I was impressed by the work and the time some of my colleagues were putting in to the IOC Refugee Olympic Team for Tokyo 2020, and I would love to transfer my experience to refugee athletes participating for the first time in the Olympic Winter Games. ▶

* Julián Ginzo is a UN Today Contributor.

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Je vais faire de la justice sociale l'élément central de mon mandat

Premier africain à prendre les rênes de l'OIT, l'ancien Premier ministre du Togo, Gilbert Houngbo, entend œuvrer pour un nouveau contrat social

Muriel Scibilia *

Entre l'augmentation des inégalités et les atteintes à l'environnement, comment le monde du travail peut-il remettre l'Agenda 2030 sur les rails ?

Le monde est confronté à des crises multiples qui se renforcent mutuellement: séquelles du Covid-19, niveaux sans précédent de la dette mondiale, forte hausse du coût de la vie, guerre en Ukraine. Le tout venant s'ajouter à des crises au long cours telles que l'accélération du changement climatique. Les perspectives pour 2023 prévoient une augmentation des risques, notamment une hausse de l'inflation et des taux d'intérêt.

Parce que ces crises et ces perspectives sont susceptibles d'entraver la reprise générale du marché du travail dans le monde, il est plus nécessaire que jamais de mettre en œuvre les objectifs de développement durable de l'Agenda 2030. L'importance du travail décent est soulignée par l'objectif 8 qui vise à "promouvoir une croissance économique soutenue, inclusive et durable, le plein emploi productif et un travail décent pour tous". Pendant la pandémie, l'OIT s'est battue pour placer les travailleurs et les entreprises au cœur de l'élaboration des politiques économiques. Nous allons continuer à le faire.

Gilbert Houngbo est
Directeur général de l'OIT
depuis Octobre 2022

Un élément essentiel de cette stratégie est la justice sociale, thématique dont je souhaite qu'elle constitue l'élément central de mon mandat. A mon sens, elle ne doit pas être seulement le rêve de quelques-uns, mais une feuille de route commune élaborée et partagée par les gouvernements, les partenaires sociaux, les partenaires de développement et les investisseurs du secteur privé.

Face aux mutations auxquelles est en proie le monde du travail, liées à la l'innovation, la numérisation et l'économie de plateformes, de quels leviers dispose-t-on pour garantir un travail décent et les droits fondamentaux ?

Les changements et innovations technologiques ne sont pas nouveaux, mais le rythme et la vitesse auxquels ils se produisent sont sans précédent. Nous devons prendre acte de ces changements qui vont se poursuivre. Ces opportunités de progrès sont accompagnées de défis importants pour garantir un travail décent. L'OIT s'investit de longue date sur ces sujets. Par exemple, lors de la récente Assemblée générale des Nations Unies, l'OIT et le Secrétaire général des Nations Unies, António Guterres, ont présenté une initiative conjointe appelée « Accélérateur mondial pour l'emploi et la protection sociale pour des transitions justes ». Il s'agit de soutenir la création d'au moins 400 millions d'emplois décents, principalement dans les secteurs vert, numérique et des soins, et promouvoir l'extension de la protection sociale aux quatre milliards de personnes qui en sont privées. De nombreux acteurs internationaux clés se sont engagés à soutenir cette initiative, notamment le Forum économique mondial, la Banque mondiale, la Confédération syndicale internationale, la Banque africaine de développement et l'Organisation internationale des employeurs. L'idée est d'anticiper les mutations et crises de manière proactive au lieu d'en subir les contrecoups.

L'avènement de l'intelligence artificielle, la transition écologique font appel à des emplois très qualifiés. Quel défi pour les pays en développement, pour l'Afrique en particulier ?

La transformation numérique de l'économie, la transition écologique créent de nouveaux défis et de nouvelles opportunités dans le monde du travail. Avant le déclenchement de la pandémie, l'impact de l'hyperconnectivité et de la numérisation retenait déjà l'attention des décideurs politiques: le changement climatique et la dégradation de l'environnement accentuent encore ces défis pour la croissance et l'emploi. Mais ces changements profonds peuvent également conduire à des emplois plus nombreux et de meilleure qualité. Prenons l'exemple des énergies renouvelables: le dernier rapport de l'OIT montre que l'emploi mondial dans ce secteur a atteint 12,7 millions l'année dernière, soit un bond de 700 000 nouveaux emplois en un an. Il s'agit donc d'amener les travailleurs à se former. C'est là où il faut mettre l'accent afin de s'assurer que, s'il y a potentiellement des millions d'emplois perdus, il y en a encore plus qui se créent. Dans le cas de l'Afrique, le défi est encore plus grand en raison de l'impact de la pandémie 19 qui a annulé une partie des progrès réalisés en matière de réduction de la pauvreté au cours des dernières décennies. Même si la croissance économique repart, un retour au niveau de référence d'avant la crise pour le marché du travail africain ne suffira pas à réparer les dommages causés à court terme.

La Conférence internationale du travail vient d'attirer l'attention sur l'impact de l'économie sociale et solidaire sur la création, la qualité et la résilience de l'emploi dans ce secteur, comment en accompagner la croissance ?

L'actuelle instabilité économique a permis de mettre en évidence les lacunes de notre système de développement et de confirmer la nécessité d'un paradigme de développement alternatif ou complémentaire. L'économie sociale et solidaire (ESS) est, à bien des égards, une source continue d'innovation, son but étant de trouver des solutions et de répondre à des besoins sociaux changeants et évolutifs. Malgré un potentiel de développement considérable, les organisations de l'ESS ne sont pas suffisamment reconnues dans l'écosystème d'innovation sociale. De nombreux leviers peuvent encore être activés ou renforcés pour les soutenir et les accompagner dans leur démarche. Les relations avec les décideurs politiques locaux, qui restent déterminantes pour le passage à l'échelle

et l'acceptation du projet localement, sont parfois difficiles par manque de connaissance et de sensibilisation de la part des élus. Il existe des programmes et des dispositifs de soutien en faveur de l'innovation sociale (comme l'Incubateur francophone Africain (IFA) en Afrique de l'Ouest, ou le réseau Afric'innov, Impact HUB, Jokkolabs, etc.), mais ils sont très rares à viser spécifiquement les organisations de l'ESS. Il faudra donc faire plus et mieux.

L'OIT ne disposant pas de mécanismes de sanction, sur quoi s'appuyer pour inciter les États à respecter les engagements pris dans les Conventions de base de votre organisation?

En réalité l'OIT dispose de mécanismes de sanction: sa Constitution autorise la Conférence internationale du travail à adopter toute mesure susceptible d'amener un État membre à se conformer aux recommandations d'une commission d'enquête créée par le Conseil d'administration pour examiner les plaintes. Ce mécanisme a d'ailleurs été utilisé en 2000 pour lutter contre le travail forcé alors très répandu au Myanmar... avec un certain succès, du moins jusqu'à récemment, devrais-je dire. De même, au début des années soixante, il a été demandé à l'Afrique du Sud de quitter l'Organisation en raison de son régime d'apartheid - une question qui n'a été résolue qu'au début des années quatre-vingt-dix, lorsque l'Afrique du Sud a aboli l'apartheid et que l'OIT a pu aider à reconstruire les relations de travail en tant que composante clé de la stabilité et du progrès social. Lorsque la coopération est dans une impasse, l'OIT privilégie la voie du dialogue et de la persuasion pour protéger les droits des travailleurs. Cela tient en partie à son ADN, à sa tradition de tripartisme et à la prise de conscience que, quelle que soit la diversité des intérêts économiques, des convictions politiques ou des perceptions culturelles, nous devons tout faire pour trouver des solutions durables. Une grande partie du travail de l'OIT consiste à soutenir la réalisation des droits économiques et sociaux. Tout comme par le passé, les crises et les conflits actuels sont souvent causés par des violations des droits économiques et sociaux, aggravées par des violations des droits civils et politiques. Notre travail consiste à dénoncer ces violations, à en faire comprendre les conséquences et à apporter notre aide là où il existe une volonté de changer les choses. ▶

* Muriel Scibilia est auteure et ancienne fonctionnaire de la Conférence des Nations Unies sur le commerce et le développement (CNUCED).



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Arrival at Geneva Airport of COVID-19 double stretcher medevac, 10 August 2020

How the UN evacuated staff during Covid

HELP, the Health Evacuation Logistic Platform – created by the World Health Organization in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic – saves lives

Maritza Ascencios *

Imagine. A medical evacuation request comes at 2 a.m. Literally hundreds of calls to make, messages to send. The ministry of health, the United Nations resident coordinator, country authorities, countless others. Negotiations, an aviation team, paperwork – passports, documentation, other medical and legal requirements. A flight to get ready for the medical evacuation of a seriously ill patient – a United Nations staff member, a family dependent or anyone across all functions and levels at work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Time is vital.

Florent Evesque, Health Operations Officer at the World Health Organization, explains how innovation has supported the response to such critical situations.

What is the COVID-19 Medevac System?

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, senior management across the United Nations came together and created the System-Wide Medevac Task Force in response to the crisis. United Nations medical directors quickly saw a need to align strategies and harmonize efforts across the United Nations system.

The idea was to ensure that people at all duty stations could continue to deliver on their mandates at a normal pace. At first, we were concerned about local capabilities and that people could get sick easily and rapidly deteriorate. The solution needed to be reliable and allow for a fast response to the need for a local or international

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The safety of UN staff in times of crisis is of utmost importance

medical evacuation – medevac – of patients. By May 2020, the task force operationalized a unified COVID-19 Medevac Mechanism to support people with a clinical need for health care services that were not available at their duty station. The COVID-19 Medical Coordination Unit under the Mechanism, based in Geneva, took over globally as the single contact point for medevacs.

The Unit builds on the existing capacities of the World Health Organization, World Food Programme and the United Nations Department of Operational Support, providing global coverage 24/7 for all United Nations entities. Staff, their dependents, the contractors, blue helmets, and a range of military personnel, as well as non-governmental organizations and longstanding friendly institutions such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, can count on the COVID-19 Medevac Mechanism.

How does HELP – the Health Evacuation Logistic Platform – fit in?

At the outset, an international medevac usually took two to three days to arrange. The operation is complex. The Medical Coordination Unit is responsible for clinical and operational decisions. The Strategic Air Operations Centre, based in Brindisi, oversees the use of aircrafts, while in-country COVID-19 coordinators take care of the local situation, working with national and local stakeholders. We were on call, 24/7, getting pinged at the same time from all around the world: Asia, Latin America, Africa... There could be six to seven medevacs being organized simultaneously.

By August 2020, Dr. Caroline Cross, the Medical Coordination Unit's Director and Medical Director at the World Health Organization, saw that improvements could be made. She asked our team for

a more efficient approach. We needed a tool that could gather all information and logistical details 'under one roof' and secure all data.

I took the lead on designing that tool, working with in-house IT colleagues and, later, my colleague Marit Chervier-DeRuiter. We looked at what was key, especially how to reduce the time it took to respond. Everything had to be secured and stored, so that if, 10 years from now, there was a legal case, we would have complete and accurate records. Then we brought in a very experienced team of developers, familiar with the United Nations, who created a customized tool to streamline a medevac operation while still capturing key details.

It took almost a year, but we now have a dedicated and efficient tool that we launched in July 2021.

What have you gained with the HELP tool?

All information that comes in for each medevac, from so many stakeholders in different time zones, is now stored in one place. Medical documentation, the aviation components, debriefs and more. And each stakeholder involved in a medevac operation has access to everything in real time.

Also, the time from getting that first phone call request for an international medevac to when a patient is admitted to the receiving hospital has dropped sharply. The standard time frame for medevacs in the private sector is two to three days. We have been able to reduce that to under 10 hours for the fastest medevacs through the HELP tool, backed by the COVID-19 Medevac Mechanism and its focus on people, plus a highly dedicated team.

The HELP tool has been in use globally, since August 2022, as the main platform at the World Health Organization for international, national and local medevacs beyond COVID-19, such as medical emergencies, injuries and medical referrals. In future, it might even be used in other contexts.

The World Health Organization announced on 14 September 2022 that the end of the COVID-19 pandemic is in sight. While the race to the finish is still on, the world is not there yet, so the innovative HELP tool is sure to keep giving much needed support. ▶

* Maritza Ascencios is an Editor at UNCTAD. She has worked in communications and advocacy at UNICEF and UNDP.



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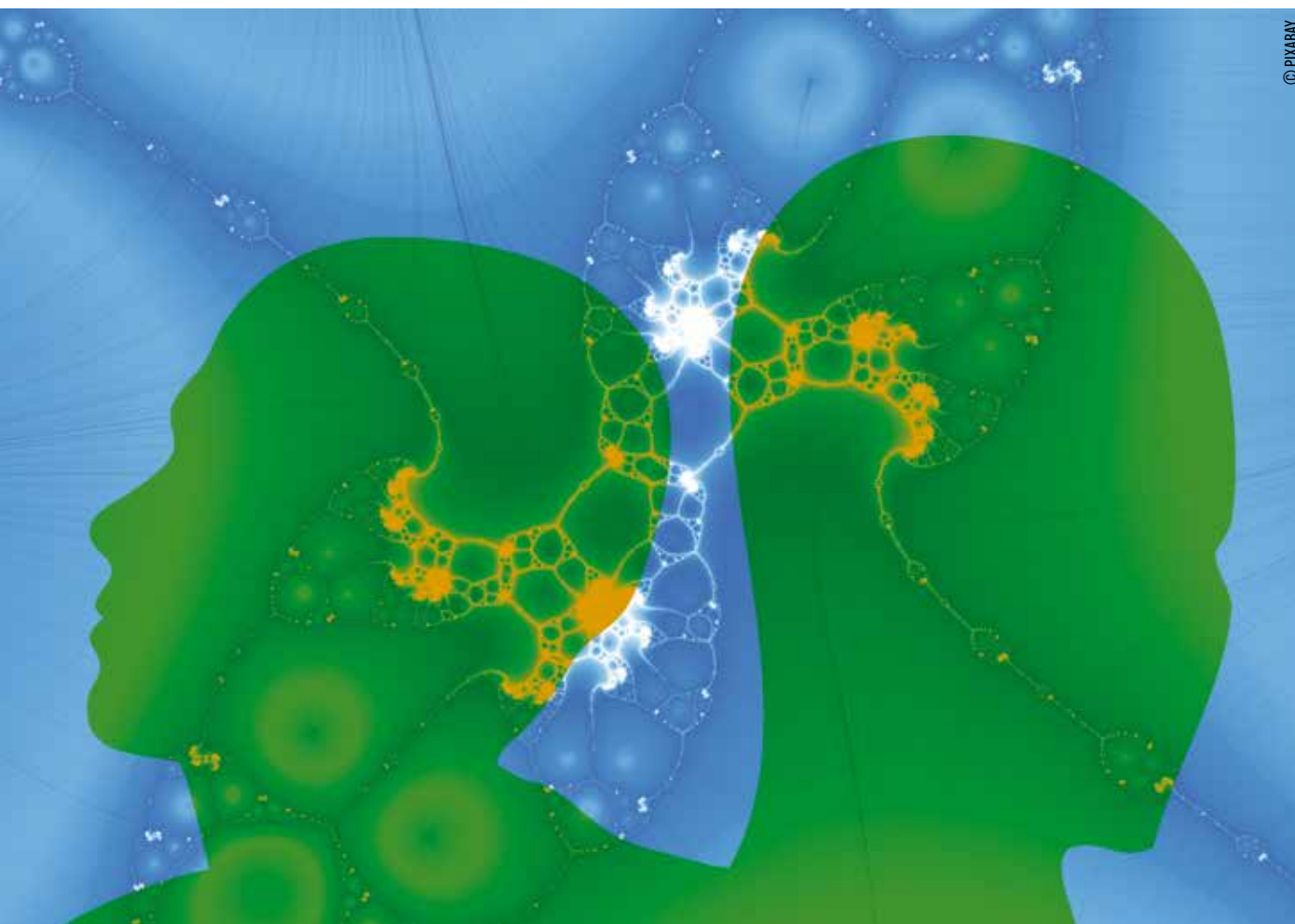
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Neural pathways communicate information from one area to another area of the nervous system

Understanding hidden disabilities: a must at the workplace?

Perhaps with greater understanding of neurodiversity, and greater sensitivity to each other, the UN can foster the strengths of its workforce

Rosa Smith *

Disability is often used to describe an ongoing mental or physical challenge. Having a disability does not mean a person is disabled.

Invisible disabilities, in simple terms, is used to describe a physical, mental or neurological condition that is not visible from the outside, or immediately apparent or obvious to others. In this sense, hidden or invisible disability is an umbrella

term that captures a whole spectrum of conditions and/or challenges that are unseen. While it is difficult to discuss the full breadth of this spectrum, this article will focus on neurodiversity.

“Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one ‘right’ way

of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.” (Harvard Medical School, 2021).

Neurodiversity emerged first as a concept in the 1990s, with a focus on fostering inclusion of all people with diverse neurological and developmental conditions (including but not limited to autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, and other learning disabilities). It is through this approach that greater value for diverse thinking, learning and behaving can be recognized, and foster these unique strengths. Importantly, neurodiversity promotes equality and inclusion.

Neurodiversity and the workplace

Lack of awareness, lack of appropriate infrastructure and stigma are all obstacles to inclusion. Often, it is through small adjustments that a workplace can be more accommodating to persons in the neurodiverse minority. There are a number of UN policies that call for greater inclusion of persons with disabilities, beginning with the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2030 Agenda: leave no one behind, and the SG’s recently launched United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy. Not only is this core to our programming but there is also great value in ensuring a diverse workforce and inclusive working environment. How can we address the greatest barrier of all: misconceptions?

A snapshot of my personal experience

“Specific learning difficulty is a commonly used term and includes issues such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, ADHD and specific language impairment which can all have an impact on the ability to learn” (Source: personal psychological assessment). Perhaps, to a large extent, having a hidden disability means not only others but you do not see it. I don’t feel disabled and have lived most of my life without being diagnosed. This has meant



A newfound confidence

I have developed coping mechanisms, ways to compensate, and found strengths in my weaknesses.

It was only during the final semester of my bachelor’s degree that I recognized my biggest challenges to learning. These being; structuring work and coping with multiple deadlines, difficulty with spelling and feeling overwhelmed due to a specific learning difficulty that I had. To a certain extent, it was a relief to understand my personality in a psychologically scientific manner. It let me address this with extra support and mentoring - being able to focus my energy strategically. However, it did not resolve the pressures I felt when seeking success. This had its roots in past bouts of anxiety and depression, in which I felt overwhelmed with the sense that I should and could be doing better. Fast forward a few years, I am proud to be completing a master’s degree with a current average of 93%, the highest grades I have ever received in an academic context.

In my role at the UN, my opportunities and responsibilities have flourished in an exciting way. My disability has not held me back. I am proud to be able to think in a non-linear manner, or as some would call, “thinking outside the box.” Competing priorities, last minute changes, and being required to work autonomously is core to my role and a source of positive pressure. I’m glad to work alongside a team that allows me to focus and apply myself, particularly appreciating positive feedback that reassures me of my contributions. While I have not shared my hidden disability with my peers, I also wonder whether if I was more transparent, my job would be less stressful. As I write this article anonymously, perhaps I do fear prejudice, even though I come across as self-confident and persistently tackle tasks to the best of my ability.

Through my personal experience, and that of friends who also have a diagnosed disability, I am sensitive to the spectrum we all sit on, that each person has their unique characteristics and working manners, and that this neurodiversity can and should be valued. It is through this diversity in teams that shared strengths can be harnessed and weaknesses can be overcome. Perhaps with greater understanding of neurodiversity, and greater sensitivity to each other, the UN can foster the strengths of its workforce. ▶

* This author has chosen to remain anonymous, we have therefore given them a false name to protect their identity.



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The Mediterranean Sea forms a natural boundary for Gaza

Gaza as seen from the ground

A personal experience of Gaza: its territory, interacting with locals, and its culture

Philippa Greer *

Gazing out to the Mediterranean, my eyes followed the fishermen's boats sprinkled across the shimmering water. Suggestive of all the things that come to mind when one gazes out to a sea struck by the sun's rays, the water sparkled like glitter, evoking a sense of beauty, serenity, awe and wonder at life's simple pleasures and Mother Nature's promises. Yet a sadistic reality cut through the innate warmth of such feelings, disrupting one's human instinct at seeing the ocean. It hit my stomach with a sinking feeling, a sharp bleakness, stemming from the comprehension that this was a sea left untraveled, not fully enjoyed, unpromising and un-enabling. For it is a contained beauty, a Truman Show-esque backdrop to the fishermen's port and sandy banks. Gazans cannot reach beyond it; specifically, beyond a six nautical mile point.

While looking out at the sea I was walking through a food distribution centre, with the sounds of drones reverberating above in the sky. The physical

reaction the noise evoked was sharp and triggering. For Gazans, it is all the more deafening. Later, my companions and I enjoyed fresh, bright yellow corn on the side of the road, hot falafel and pita with rainbow cabbage, and drank from brightly colored mounds of icy slush in plastic cups, dyed bright cherry and orange. The ghoulishly colored dyed ice was visually striking as a color pop accessory in a cup, as young boys drove past in toy cars heavily decorated with fake flowers, Palestinian flags and flashing lights.

The juxtaposition of looking out at the sea and being surrounded by these symbols of fun, youthfulness, joy and vitality was confusing to digest. Seeing how ordinary Gazans lived by the sea, enjoyed and entertained themselves by the sea, reminded me of the relentless endurance of the human spirit and the ability humans have to make a way of life which incorporates joy, no matter the circumstances. Within refugee camps, in front of destroyed shelters, in hospitals and

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food distribution pickup points, life is alive in Gaza. Myriad personalities, talents and immense wit, humor, joy and laughter, people with limitless dreams and entrepreneurial outlooks, people honored to serve their communities and hopeful for a brighter, freer future, for themselves and for their neighbors. Gaza is positively saturated with such individuals.

As I went to bed and turned over on my side, closing my eyes for the day, the sound of the ocean pulsed through my thoughts once more as I started to drift off. It took me off on a journey into my dreams, providing a means of transit, evolution, progress, travel and possibility, promising a free pathway to another reality, one where all people could freely move and travel, work and prosper, thrive and bask in all of life's limitless offerings.

The following evening I passed a young man dressed as a clown, walking on stilts outside of a children's play center, jovially waving at myself and passers-by, bringing a bit of joy and frivolity to the evening. Two meters ahead, on the side of the street, I was shocked to then see a young girl lying on the ground, her face dirty and her eyes staring out in a disturbing manner. She was alone, but she looked like she was commonly acquainted with lying on the sidewalk.

Just like in Ramallah, Bethlehem or Salah al-Din Street in East Jerusalem, pink and blue bags of candy floss and colorful balloons for sale are sprinkled across random street corners amid trash on the ground and the occasional stray cat. Cars drove by with their inhabitants waving warmly at us as we walked along the uneven sidewalks. We took in these scenes of life and happiness, the simple pleasures for children, the fresh catches of the day, laid out on the sidewalk near the sea in the evening, with fishy watery streams of melting ice lacing across the street, prompting us to hop over them for the sake of our sandals.

These people were living by the sea, of the sea, and around the sea. The sea felt like the cinema screen of the day and night, the focus of the eye and the backdrop to imagining a limitless future, an unencumbered life, free from blockade, war and cyclical dispossession. The UN Secretary-General described the blockade on Gaza as a form of collective punishment. It was hypothesized by the United Nations that Gaza would be "unliveable" by 2020. It has also been termed an open-air prison. I find all such classifications to be correct, yet in particular, the last description to be quite apt.

When I would meet with prisoners in jails and death rows in the United States, or in prison quarters in Africa, I would often be told of the immense and conflicting comfort and torment brought to the inhabitants from looking up at the sky during recreational hours. It felt so unnatural to look up at the sky in such confined spaces, with the full knowledge that those seeing the sky had been deprived of their liberty. Sometimes I catch fellow passengers on planes gazing out at the clouds mid-flight and I wonder what they may be thinking, dreaming or hoping. Are they thinking of their next six months, their wedding, their children, their futures? When I catch a glimpse of these people who allow themselves a moment of getting lost in the wonder of the sky, I am often reminded of those prisoners I left behind, whom I know are still seeking comfort in the wonder of the same sky in prisons across the world, while at the same time being tortured by their own inability to access freedom beneath it.

As I thought of the cinematic presence of the sea in Gaza, providing hope and center to many, yet being belied and betrayed by an underlying cruelty, my thoughts traced back to what taking in the sheer magnitude of the sky meant to those living behind bars. The bars in Gaza take many forms. As with the prisoners I would meet in the United States or across Africa, my hope for Gazans is that one day they will be able to experience looking out at the sea as a free people. Just as I can gaze out at the clouds on airplanes and allow myself to imagine and think of the future. To be deprived of freedom of movement is a form of punishment one cannot begin to comprehend when we have the luxury of watching the sea reflect the sky from a position of freedom.

Leaving Gaza, I feel overwhelmed by the cruelty invoked on its inhabitants and the sense of abandonment of them. After fifteen years of land, air and sea blockade, such perversity has become normalized. Just like we, as humans, the world over, normalize caging other humans. As a free person, I will again leave, crossing through Erez Crossing after daybreak, weighed down by the surreal yet usual knowledge that the majority of those I meet in Gaza are not afforded this privilege. Saddened by the circumstances of those who remain, I will again watch the bittersweet waves crash along the shore of Gaza's eastern coast of the Mediterranean. ■

* Philippa Greer is a Legal Officer at the United Nations.

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Ambassador Shara Duncan Villalobos, Deputy Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations in Geneva

Costa Rica: there's more to us than just national parks

An interview with Shara Duncan Villalobos, Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of Costa Rica in Geneva

Julián Ginzo *

Please tell us briefly about your career, why you joined the diplomatic service, and how you were appointed to your current position as Deputy Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the UN?

I was nine years old when I announced to my parents that I wanted to become an ambassador and work in human rights issues. Later, when it was time to choose my career at university I decided to study law and kept the idea of joining the foreign service. I went on to get a master's degree in human rights and after that I finally went through the process of entering the service. I have been working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ever since and it has been my biggest honor. While I was serving as the Legal Adviser to the Permanent Mission of

Costa Rica in the UN in New York, I was appointed as Ambassador Deputy Permanent Representative of Costa Rica in Geneva, and it has been an extraordinary professional and personal experience. The work that we have done as observers at the Human Rights Council has been both stimulating and with a lot of commitment to the cause of promoting and protecting human rights for all.

What are the main highlights of your diplomatic career?

This career has given me the opportunity to be involved in many negotiations I hold dear. If I had to name two, I would definitely choose the activation of the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court over the crime of aggression in 2017.

It was particularly important since we were making history! And my favourite moment would have to be the recognition on 8 October, 2021 of the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment by the Human Rights Council which I facilitated, with Costa Rica as the penholder. The process toward that recognition started in 1972 with the Stockholm Declaration and, since then, many serious attempts were made to achieve the recognition, including in Rio in 1992, and others. But it took the sense of urgency of the triple planetary crisis we are currently experiencing to give the idea the proper impulse. I was lucky to be part of an amazing team that continually gave 100% to see this resolution come to life. My hope is that the recognition serves as a catalyst and that those very few countries that still have not recognized this right in their normative framework will follow suit.

Your country is internationally renowned for the size and diversity of the activities available in its national parks. What are the main policies to raise awareness so that people (locals as well as tourists) continue to consider them a strategic asset?

We established our national park system in 1970. That decision set the basis for Costa Rica's lasting commitment to nature, conservation, and sustainable use of our natural resources. Since the 1990s, my country has been able to overturn its deforestation rate, going from 25% forest coverage to more than 54% in 2020. Our wildlife areas are composed not only of national parks but of natural reserves, biological corridors, and many more with diverse levels of protection. We have come to understand that nature is not only a source of well-being, but also a major source of economic resources and a driver of development. Local communities have found in nature a source of pride and jobs. We have put in place programs for education in conservation in local communities and the formal education system. Recently, we have been making efforts to educate tourists about interacting with nature and have launched campaigns to that effect.

Costa Rica is one of the few countries in the world that does not have military forces. What are the criteria behind this decision?

In 1948, after an episode of rigged elections our only civil war broke out. The subsequent political events gave rise to a total reform of our country and its social system that started with the drafting of a

new constitution. It was during these deliberations that a proposal was made to dissolve the army as a standing permanent institution. Even though the discussions around the subject were not easy, the idea prevailed. The arguments given were sufficiently convincing. We would use the resources dedicated to the army to provide education and public health services. We chose a different path of human development. We decided to rely on international law and the emerging international system. We made the decision to favor life, peace, and human development.

By investing in people, we have been able to have indicators that compare to some of the most developed countries in the world. Our universal health coverage ensures that everyone in my country has access to world-class health services regardless of their family's income. Our investment in public education amounts to 8% of our GDP and education has been both a vehicle of social mobility and an engine for our development.

The UN Regional Human Rights Office for Latin America has recently launched virtual training courses in your country to strengthen the capacities of the main judicial authorities in the investigation of femicide cases. What internal policies have been initiated to reinforce this in society?

Violence against women and girls is the greatest pandemic of our time. Social structures need to be changed everywhere. That is why we have public policies to prevent violence against women and have carried out public campaigns to add visibility to the subject. We also empower women in their communities by training them on their rights and life skills, such as financial literacy. Our National Women Institution and the Observatory of Gender Violence help formulate public policy and improve women's access to justice. We have strong laws against femicide and sexual harassment.

The most important job we need to do is change culture. For that, we require comprehensive education, and though it may take longer, it is the best and only way to spearhead change for good, hence the importance of working with primary school children around issues of equality between women and men, conflict resolution, and new masculinities. ▶

* Julián Ginzo is a UN Today Contributor.

La course de fond d'une onusienne passionnée

La probabilité qu'Agnès Collardeau pousse un jour la porte du Palais des Nations et y reste 37 ans était faible, mais le hasard fait bien les choses

Olivier Meyer *

L'ONU est un cocktail improbable de profils et de talents, une sorte de millefeuilles dont chaque couche recèle de savoureux secrets.

Il est toujours passionnant, tel un géologue, d'en explorer les profondeurs. Et la géologie mène à tout, y compris à l'ONU.

Agnès terminait des études de géologie à l'université de Lyon lorsqu'elle croisa le chemin d'un certain Bernard Clavel. Ce fonctionnaire de l'ONU passionné de géologie, qui se rendait toutes les semaines à Lyon pour collaborer avec les chercheurs, trouva qu'elle avait du potentiel et lui proposa de rejoindre l'Organisation.

L'offre était tentante: les horaires étaient suffisamment souples pour permettre à la jeune étudiante de terminer sa thèse, et il s'agissait de s'occuper d'une base de données... sur les minéraux et les métaux. Agnès n'avait que des bases théoriques en statistique, mais Clavel lui faisait confiance, et elle sentait que dans le milieu scientifique de l'époque les chances d'une jeune femme de trouver un travail de géologue étaient plutôt minces.

La jeune femme accepta de s'éloigner de sa famille, de ses amis et de ses habitudes pour s'expatrier à 200 km de son cocon lyonnais. Ironie de l'époque, pour devenir fonctionnaire des Services généraux (G), elle dut se résoudre à cacher son niveau d'études.

De 1981 à 2018, date de son départ en retraite, Agnès a été statisticienne, principalement à la Conférence des Nations Unies sur le commerce et le développement, avec un passage de quelques années dans la division statistique de la Commission économique pour l'Europe (CEE), où elle travaillait sur l'éducation et la problématique du genre. De retour à la CNUCED, elle beaucoup travaillé sur le thème des Pays les moins avancés.

Au début de sa carrière, on déroulait encore de grands listings IBM, les yeux rivés sur un écran de terminal où tout était écrit en langage informatique en vert sur fond noir. « On récoltait les informations manuellement dans les annuaires statistiques nationaux dans les bibliothèques du GATT et de l'ONU. L'arrivée des PC et des logiciels ainsi que les bases de données en ligne et la mise en place dans la plupart des pays d'outils informatiques ont grandement amélioré l'accès à l'information, ainsi que la qualité et l'autonomie du travail. »

La nature du travail d'Agnès a considérablement changé au fil des années. De la gestion des bases



Pour Agnès Collardeau, la persévérance paie sur le long terme

de données, elle s'est peu à peu orientée vers la recherche et l'analyse d'informations de plus en plus précises, variées et récentes, en interaction avec ses collègues économistes. L'utilisation de ces données pour différentes publications et la mise en valeur des informations chiffrées au moyen de l'infographie ont participé à la diversité et à l'attrait de cette activité professionnelle tombée du ciel.

“ La nature du travail d'Agnès a considérablement changé au fil des années ”

Agnès s'est principalement formée « sur le tas », parce que ça l'intéressait. Elle a reçu quelques formations de base (notamment aux logiciels Excel et Illustrator), mais elle dû dans l'ensemble, pour tracer son chemin, se débrouiller seule ou compter sur l'aide des collègues. Elle ne considère pas avoir eu une « carrière » proprement dite, puisqu'elle est restée au grade G-6 pendant 34 de ses 37 années de vie professionnelle à l'ONU. « Le plafond de verre pour les fonctionnaires des Services généraux existe bel et bien et les postes G-7 sont non seulement très rares mais en voie de disparition, alors qu'ils valorisent l'expérience acquise », déplore-t-elle. « J'aurais aimé pouvoir changer plus facilement de division ou d'organisation, avoir la possibilité de faire des formations ciblées au sein de l'institution pour peut-être présenter le concours G à P (Administrateur) et pour évoluer vers un poste de responsable. J'aurais aimé que l'ONU me propose des préparations pour m'aider à passer cet examen spécifique, qui d'ailleurs est trop peu souvent proposé pour les statisticiens. » Agnès estime que d'une certaine manière l'ONU n'a pas su tirer parti de son engagement et de ses compétences. « Dans d'autres organisations comme le HCR ou l'OMS, un fonctionnaire G pouvait partir sur le terrain et revenir avec le statut P. À l'ONU, c'était impossible. »

Pour autant la jeune retraitée ne regrette pas les quatre décennies qu'elle a données à l'ONU. Son travail l'a toujours passionnée et elle y a fait de multiples découvertes. Elle se souvient particulièrement d'une mission de conseil sur une nouvelle politique de développement incluant un volet statistique effectuée aux Comores avec l'une de ses collègues économiste. Ce fut une révélation sur le sens de son travail, sur le rôle et l'impact de l'ONU et sur « les attentes, vis-à-vis de nos

institutions, des pays pour lesquels nous œuvrons et qui sont en quelque sorte nos “clients” ».

Grande sportive, Agnès a été un pilier du Club de course à pied de l'ONU (UN Running Club), dont l'équipe féminine a participé à plusieurs reprises aux Jeux interorganisations, « une formidable occasion de réaliser que nous appartenons tous à une grande famille onusienne, au sens large, qui vit et travaille aux quatre coins du monde sur des problématiques extrêmement variées ». Un autre type de mission, un autre motif de fierté, lorsqu'on entre à Genève « avec coupes et médailles juste derrière les kenyans ! ».

Agnès garde aussi vivement en mémoire sa participation, en tant que membre externe et neutre (après avoir suivi la formation nécessaire), à des jurys de recrutement, aussi bien dans sa division que pour d'autres services: « des interventions très enrichissantes sur le plan personnel, et qui m'ont fait découvrir des modes de fonctionnement et des métiers très différents mais essentiels ».

Et ce n'est pas tout. Agnès a donné à celles et ceux qui n'auraient pas eu le plaisir de la croiser pour des raisons professionnelles l'occasion de la connaître à travers les nombreux personnages qu'elle a incarnés dans les spectacles du Club Théâtre de l'ONU, dont elle fut même quelques années la présidente. « Nous avons offerts des spectacles de qualité, je pense, et de réelles amitiés en ont découlé. »

Quatre ans après avoir quitté l'organisation, Agnès dit appartenir « au “monde d'avant” où les cours et les formations avaient lieu en groupe, dans une salle. Formidables lieux de rencontres et d'échanges... ». Si elle avait quelque chose à dire à celles et ceux qui ont pris la relève, ce serait « N'hésitez pas à quitter vos écrans ! Sortez du cadre ! Participez aux formations proposées et à des activités non-professionnelles ou organisez-en (théâtre, sport, musique etc...). Elles vous permettront de rencontrer des personnes différentes de votre univers quotidien, de vous faire connaître, de vous faire apprécier au sein de l'organisation et de découvrir d'autres métiers et d'autres services pour faciliter votre mobilité professionnelle. »

« Soyez fiers d'être un membre actif des Nations Unies, appréciez la diversité culturelle, vous croiserez des gens formidables et enrichissants ! » ▶

* Olivier Meyer est réviseur à la section de traduction française à l'ONUG et membre du comité de rédaction de UN Today.



L'époque de Magellan fut celle des grandes découvertes

Le voyage de Magellan-Elcano a changé les perceptions du monde

Pour commémorer le 500ème anniversaire de l'expédition de Magellan-Elcano, la Fondation Bodmer accueille une exposition qui relate cette aventure

Ester Rubio Colomer et Jesse Concha *

Conçue par le Ministère de la Défense espagnol et soutenue par l'ambassade d'Espagne à Berne, l'exposition présente un aperçu chronologique de l'expédition. Des textes et des images illustrent les étapes clés et présentent les protagonistes les plus marquants.

Elle a été inaugurée et présentée par Mme Luisa Martín-Merás Verdejo, ancienne chef de la Section de cartographie du Musée naval de Madrid. Elle a notamment mis l'accent sur l'impact que cette

expédition a eu sur la pensée européenne en matière de géographie.

Le 10 août 1519, cinq navires quittent Séville en Espagne pour faire le tour du monde. Il s'agit surtout de trouver un passage qui permette d'atteindre les îles aux épices, (aujourd'hui l'Indonésie) au large de la côte sud du continent américain. A leur tête, le navigateur portugais Fernand de Magellan. Un seul navire, la Victoria, reviendra le 8 septembre 1522.

C'est que l'expédition est très éprouvante et se heurte à de nombreuses difficultés: mauvaises conditions météorologiques, mutineries, etc. Magellan est tué en 1521 lors d'un affrontement avec des populations locales. Le navigateur basque Juan Sebastián Elcano prend la tête de l'expédition et achève le premier tour du monde.

“ C'est que l'expédition est très éprouvante et se heurte à de nombreuses difficultés ”

Cette formidable aventure maritime permet de collecter de nombreuses informations scientifiques, y compris de confirmer que la terre est bien ronde. Elle permet aussi de faire des pas de géant en matière de routes maritimes et de techniques de navigation. C'est l'aube de la mondialisation.

Entretien avec Mme Luisa Martín-Merás Verdejo, ancienne chef de la Section cartographie du Musée naval de Madrid

Quand avez-vous commencé à travailler au Musée naval et qu'est-ce qui vous a attiré vers l'histoire navale espagnole ?

En 1970, peu après avoir terminé mon diplôme en langues romanes et avoir passé un concours pour obtenir un poste au musée. Seules Lola Higuera et moi travaillions dans la salle de recherche en tant



Le Portugal s'est imposé comme une puissance maritime dès le XVe siècle

que personnel technique. À l'époque, très peu de chercheurs venaient consulter la documentation navale et ceux qui le faisaient étaient presque tous étrangers. Quand quelqu'un se présentait, nous l'entourions au point qu'il ne pouvait presque plus repartir. Ils en étaient ravis. Ils m'ont appris lors de nos conversations bien des choses que j'ignorais alors. Nous étions très fières de côtoyer tous ces professeurs et spécialistes de haut vol avec lesquels nous entretenons toujours des liens d'amitié.

Quelles sont les œuvres ou les pièces les plus précieuses de la section cartographique du Musée Naval ?

Le joyau du musée, c'est la Mappemonde de Juan de la Cosa; c'est la première carte qui représente l'Amérique. Elle a été achetée à Paris à la fin du XIXème siècle chez un bouquiniste. Quand ma fille était petite, elle voulait savoir qui était ce Juan de la Cosa à qui je consacrais plus de temps qu'à ma famille.

“ À l'époque, très peu de chercheurs venaient consulter la documentation navale ”

Pouvez-vous nous parler de votre expérience à la Herzog Augustus Bibliothek en Allemagne ?

J'avais été invitée en Allemagne en 1994 pour étudier une série de cartes espagnoles du début du XVIe siècle qui étaient assez peu connues et étudiées. Ce séjour a été très enrichissant car ces documents étaient tous anonymes et non datés. Or, je venais de publier un livre où j'en incluais certains. Ils étaient tous très précieux car ils appartenaient à la Casa de la Contratación de Séville. J'en ai trouvé une qui représentait pour la première fois la découverte de la mer du Sud par Nuñez de Balboa. Il y avait inséré une explication en latin. C'était une découverte que personne ne lui avait attribuée. La nouvelle était de taille car, jusqu'alors, la mer du Sud ne figurait sur aucune des cartes qui énuméraient les découvertes. ▶

* Ester Rubio Colomer est présidente de l'Association des fonctionnaires internationaux espagnols et Jesse Concha est interprète à l'ONUG.

Arabic and institutional translation: myths and reality checks

One of the UN's official languages, Arabic has, over time, developed its own unique characteristics that are central to its nature

Hassan Harrafa *

“**L**ike Venus, Arabic was born in a perfect state of beauty and it has preserved that beauty despite all the hazards of history and corrosive forces of time” **Jaroslav Stetkevych (1994)**

Language, the same as history and civilization, begets, breeds and bequeaths its own myths and fantasies. Without these, none would have survived and prospered. Arabic, whether Al-Fus’ha (modern standard Arabic) or Al-a’mmiya/Dar(i)ja (colloquial Arabic), is no exception. Although Al-Fus’ha purists never tire of lamenting its continuous decline, it has thrived since the 1920s - becoming international in the 1970s. Moreover, it has proven itself to be a resilient and versatile

medium in international institutions, despite the challenges it still faces. Institutional Translation has played a key role.

Arabic - the Rolls Royce and the Volkswagen

In the ongoing debate opposing the proponents of Al-Fus’ha and Al-a’mmiya, a canny metaphor has aptly outlined the status/role(s) of both Al-Fus’ha and its many dialects. In a seminal article, Said (2004) incisively compared Al-Fus’ha to a Rolls Royce and its dialects to a Volkswagen. While the former is largely elitist, prestigious, pedantic and only learned in formal settings, the latter is naturally acquired, spontaneous and cherished the same as Herbie is. Achour Kellal (2016), who borrowed Said’s metaphor later, sought to explain the reasons behind the wide use of the Tunisian Darja (dialect) online and has remarkably described the intricate diglossic nature of Arabic and contextualized its social underpinnings.

Debunking the myths and re-setting the record

Such myths and alarmist forecasts were concisely debunked by Jacquemond (2007) in a short but focused article on Arabic translation. A closer look shows that Al-Fus’ha has never been more used, written and debated. The number of online/offline publications today far exceeds what survived in thirteen centuries. News, official correspondence, laws, gazettes and literature are still compiled in Al-Fus’ha. Prestigious national and international prizes have been established in the Gulf and other Arab countries in a commendable push to further mainstream Al-Fus’ha in education and formal settings. Dozens of yearly symposia and fora review its present and future status. More concise and easily accessible grammar manuals and videos are freely available online (Hijawi: 2004). Grammar teaching and learning has never been so forthcoming.



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Calligraphy “Over every Lord of knowledge there is One more knowing” Surat Yussuf, Ayat 76

Institutional translation and reality checks

It is unfortunate that arabic institutional translation has attracted little formal academic study. There is no author who has followed in the steps of Mossop (1990), Chesterman & Wagner (2002), and Koskinen (2008) for example. Didaoui (2005) and Enani (2012) tried to catch up but their contribution was limited and confusing at times. One recent niche exception is the “Speed in Simultaneous Interpreting” of Barghout, Ruiz Rosendo & Valera Garcia (2015). The challenge is still open for a more inclusive collaborative ethnographic study involving both Arabic institutional translators/interpreters and academia. The need for this is dire if present and future challenges are to be met.

“ It is unfortunate that arabic institutional translation has attracted little formal academic study ”

Relying mainly on technology simply will not do. Translation technology has peaked, and the augmented translator is becoming surfeited. This risks feeding translators’ sloppiness, dulling alertness, and flattening overall style and text flow, obvious through piles of calqued segments. This intra/inter-consistency approach looks increasingly as if it is outdoing even Saint-Jerome’s “Vulgate,” whereby 72 translators are said to have produced the same sacred text “word for word.”

Engagement, support and recognition

Arabic institutional translators and interpreters have embraced change and faced its ensuing challenges. To inform their work, they have shown

their resilience and perseverance in keeping up with an ever-changing discourse and narrative on international issues, shifting/evolving conflicts, new specialized concepts and self-created neologisms. Despite valuable contributions by in-house terminologists, translators often find themselves tied up when deadlines are tight. What’s more, the visually impaired and physically challenged face additional difficulties but still prevail. Quite often too, translators have to navigate their way in an increasingly stressful environment of productivity floors and unsparing deadlines.

More importantly, Arabic translators and interpreters have, in the last fifty years, proved themselves to be crucial and indispensable mediators in mainstreaming UN discourse, goals and values, be these on human rights, climate change, trade or international law, to name just a few.

Evolving needs and challenges

Arabic institutional translation needs more resources in terms of academic input, inter-section exchanges of good practices, more focused management, workable fit-for-purpose tools, real engagement and, above all, recognition. It is vital that all stakeholders’ interests are safeguarded, especially by Arab delegates, by the same token, if not more, as other languages are promoted and enabled.

Promoting multiculturalism is not a slogan but a continuous endeavor, in order to turn it into palpable reality year-in year-out. This is the responsibility of all. Everyone could bring in his/her contribution, as so much is at stake today between peace and war. ▶

* Hassan Harrafa works as a Translator at the Arabic Translation Section at the United Nations Office in Geneva (UNOG).



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'Tis the season!

From Finland with love - why Santa Claus matters

In Finland, we are thrilled to call our country the home of Santa Claus, as he symbolizes hope, love, generosity and connectedness

Anna Erat *

Times have been challenging lately to say the least. The adversities and challenges that we are facing on a global level are arguably unparalleled in history. They range from climate change, armed conflict and war, economic and supply chain disruptions, human rights violations, and threats to democracy as we know it, to a wave of mental health disorders due to COVID-19. Yet, the standard of living in most regions has never been higher. So how do we stay sane in an age of division and allow our civilization to flourish?

As a former physician researcher from Finland, I always look for answers in science. The Nurse's Health Study that was established in 1976, and as one of the world's largest longitudinal studies to date, has clearly demonstrated the importance of human connectedness to health and prosperity. This brings me to the tremendous importance of collective celebrations and gratefulness for peace and togetherness such as Christmas, Hannukah, Bodhi Day or Eid el-Fitr.

In Finland, we are thrilled to call our country the home of Santa Claus, who, also known as

Father Christmas or Saint Nicholas, is a legendary character that brings connectedness and unity to the people. In Finland he is called “Joulu Pukki,” a term that most people have never heard of. Arguably, he was controversial in the past, only bringing gifts to the children that are ‘nice,’ whereas the ‘naughty’ children were left without toys. However, nowadays he symbolizes hope, love, generosity and connectedness, which we all need to prosper.

Slowing down and finding peace

An active life is healthy, but there are times when one should embrace a slower pace or *slow living*, according to scientists from Harvard Medical School. Indeed, chronic stress can lead to chronic inflammation and subsequently to cardiovascular disease, cancers, and type 2 diabetes. Slowing down offers health benefits, such as lowering stress levels and blood pressure, and improving your social interactions and connectedness.

“ How do we stay sane in an age of division and allow our civilization to flourish? ”

In Finland, Christmas offers a great opportunity to slow down. The ‘Declaration of Christmas Peace’ in Finland is a tradition which initiates the Christmas celebrations and marks the official start of Christmas. The tradition of reading the Declaration of Christmas Peace in Turku, which is the former capital of Finland, has continued almost uninterrupted for more than 700 years and was only omitted during the Russian invasion and occupation of Finland in 1712–1721, in 1917 when the militia was on strike, and in 1939 because of a fear of air raids. The declaration is read out loud at midday to remind people that Christmas peace has begun and to advise people to spend the festive period in harmony.

Christmas and Light

Our inner clock is delicately regulated by melatonin, a hormone which is strongly affected by light. Our wellbeing is completely dependent on this hormonal cycle. As the hours of sunshine decrease day by day in December in the northern hemisphere, the celebration of light becomes increasingly important for health and mental

wellbeing. Therefore, right before Christmas, the Finns have a light celebration similar to Hindi Diwali. In Finland, we celebrate the Italian Saint Lucy or Lucia, who brings light into the darkness on 13 December, the day which was considered winter solstice until at least the mid-eighteenth century.

The favorite guest on christmas eve

Until the late 1900s, the church played a very important role in maintaining a population register in Finland. The vicars kept a church record of persons born, married and deceased in their parishes as of the 1660s, constituting one of the oldest population records in Europe. Nevertheless, Christmas Eve is one of the few days — or perhaps the only day — that modern Finns go to church. The Christmas mass often caters to children and allows them to perform carols or even small plays in church.

Yet, the favorite guest of Christmas Eve is no doubt Santa Claus himself. The legend of Santa Claus, based on the Christian bishop Saint Nicholas, dates back centuries. The modern depiction of Santa entering the house through the chimney began to take form in the early 1800s, based on Washington Irving’s book “Knickerbocker’s History of New York.” The concept that magical creatures enter homes through chimneys, however, actually comes from the fourteenth century, when there was a widespread belief that witches and other creatures could pass through solid objects to enter any residence.

Interestingly enough, the generally timid Finns have another understanding of hospitality and how to greet Santa Claus. In the home country of Father Christmas, he is greeted at the doorstep and let in through the front door. He is immediately whisked to the living room, where the children are eagerly awaiting him. There, they offer him mulled wine called “Glögi” along with savory gingerbread cookies. After some hearty conversation and togetherness, even the naughty children receive small Christmas presents directly from Santa Claus. Perhaps this special connectedness makes Finland the happiest country in the world? After all, in 2022 Finland was named the world’s happiest country for the fifth year in a row, according to the “World Happiness Report” by UNDP. 📌

* Dr. Anna Erat MD/PhD/IDP INSEAD is a Medical Director at Klinik Hirslanden.



La chromatothérapie est transformée en signal électrique puis transmise au cerveau

Soigner avec les couleurs

Omniprésentes dans la nature et dans notre environnement, les couleurs impactent nos états d'âme. Elles sont aussi utilisées pour apaiser et guérir

Muriel Scibilia *

A son grand-père herboriste, Bruno Tourniaire doit son amour de la nature et sa connaissance des plantes: à son grand-père violoniste, sa passion pour la musique. Biologiste, musicothérapeute, formé à la médecine traditionnelle chinoise et à la chromatothérapie, il a fondé et préside l'Association de Chromatothérapie Suisse A.C.S.

Qu'est-ce que la chromatothérapie ?

Cette technique utilise les propriétés de la lumière pour corriger les troubles physiques, émotionnels et psychiques. Tous les organismes vivants - humains, animaux, végétaux - sont porteurs d'énergies et interagissent en permanence avec les rayonnements qui les atteignent, dont la lumière.

En cas de pathologie même bénigne, ces énergies sont altérées. On va donc stimuler certaines zones ou points précis du corps avec une lumière de couleur appropriée afin de susciter une interaction réparatrice. Cela implique de poser d'abord un diagnostic précis aux plans physiologique, psychique et énergétique. La chromatothérapie est basée sur la science et des recherches, mais doit beaucoup aux savoirs millénaires comme l'acupuncture ou l'Ayurvèda. Elle vise les causes plus que les effets.

“ De la lumière pour corriger les troubles physiques et psychiques ”

Comment ça marche ?

La chromatothérapie utilise la gamme de lumières qui composent la lumière blanche. Cette dernière est un mélange de rouge, jaune, bleu, vert, violet et orange. On sait grâce à la science que chaque couleur correspond à une fréquence, une longueur d'onde, et une quantité d'énergie. Elaborée depuis des milliers d'années, la médecine traditionnelle chinoise les décrit en termes climatiques: à chaque saison, le vivant doit s'adapter à l'énergie du climat dominant, tel le vent au printemps, la chaleur en été, la sécheresse à l'été indien, l'humidité en automne et le froid en hiver. Chaque organe du corps a une fonction de régulation. Le cœur « climatise » le corps durant l'été en apportant du froid, les reins fournissent de la chaleur en hiver pour « réchauffer », l'humidité est générée par les poumons, la sécheresse par la rate, les vents par le foie et la vésicule biliaire. On est en

bonne santé lorsque ces « poussées climatiques » s'équilibrent les unes avec les autres. La maladie survient avec les déséquilibres internes ou externes.

Les tonalités des couleurs sont aussi classées de chaudes à froides. Les couleurs dites « froides », ralentissent le flux énergétique. On constate que le rouge appartient à cette catégorie. Ainsi, il sera utilisé en cas d'entorse. Les couleurs classées « chaudes », comme l'orange, permettent de traiter des inflammations. Les couleurs humides, comme le vert, sont appropriées en cas d'œdème. Couleur classée sèche, le bleu est bienvenu en cas de problèmes cutanés comme l'eczéma ou le psoriasis.

Comment se déroule une séance ?

Elle débute par une écoute attentive de l'histoire du patient (l'anamnèse), et par l'examen de son dossier médical. Décrypter le terrain et la pathologie permet de comprendre ce qui se passe dans les organes au plan énergétique, de définir comment, où, et quelle couleur sera appliquée. Le traitement se fait dans l'obscurité afin que l'effet recherché ne soit pas neutralisé par d'autres sources lumineuses. Puis le patient se repose une vingtaine de minutes.

Quels sont les liens entre la chromatothérapie et l'acupuncture ?

La chromatothérapie utilise les mêmes points que l'acupuncture mais avec une fibre optique, donc sans aiguilles, et se sert des propriétés universelles des couleurs. On bénéficie ici du travail pionnier de cartographie de tout le circuit énergétique du corps établi en Chine depuis des millénaires. Elle permet d'optimiser ce que fait l'acupuncture, comme travailler sur certaines zones tels les yeux, où on ne peut pas planter d'aiguilles.

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Le spectre des couleurs

Pour quelles pathologies est-elle efficace ?

Pratiquement toutes celles pour lesquelles on a l'habitude de prendre rendez-vous chez un médecin généraliste: hypertension, arthrite, constipation, suites d'un AVC, allergies, eczéma, psoriasis, herpès, coups de soleil, aphtes, anxiété, tendinites, foulures, traumatismes crâniens, etc.... On peut aussi l'utiliser pour traiter les animaux et les plantes.



Bruno Tourniaire, thérapeute

Peut-on recourir à la chromatothérapie en cas de pathologies relevant de la psychiatrie ?

Elle est efficace dans certains cas. Lors de troubles dépressifs par exemple, on parvient à stabiliser les humeurs. Elle permet aussi de sortir certains patients de la dépendance aux tranquillisants ou aux antidépresseurs.

Peut-elle remplacer la médecine « classique » ?

D'aucune façon. Elle est à considérer dans un cadre complémentaire. Le patient doit venir avec son dossier médical afin qu'on puisse déterminer le traitement énergétique.

En quoi est-ce une médecine écologique ?

Avec la couleur thérapie, on a juste besoin d'une lampe halogène ou d'une source de lumière froide et de filtres interférentiels dont la longueur d'onde est spécifique. Cette utilisation sur des années ne coûte rien. Au même titre, on propose une substance naturelle qui véhicule une énergie correctrice, ce qui permet de réduire la consommation intensive de produits qui mettent à mal l'équilibre des écosystèmes. C'est notamment le cas quand on traite une arthrose avec de la "griffe du diable" (nom courant de l'Harpagophytum) ou des hématomes avec de l'arnica. ▀

* Muriel Scibilia est auteure et ancienne fonctionnaire de la Conférence des Nations Unies sur le commerce et le développement (CNUCED).



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