

UN Special



N°771 - JULY-AUGUST 2017

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Rédacteur en chef / Editor-in-chief

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This month, *UN Special* continues to cover the controversial 7.5% wage cut for staff, including the massive work stoppage held on 16 June as a protest the measure. In several articles and an interview, we weigh in on this subject, as well as on the role of staff unions' advocacy. We also turn our attention to the effect of the pay cut on G staff, and the interconnectivity between staff members of all grades across the UN.

In these pages, you will also find discussions on a variety of pertinent global issues, and especially the cause of Sustainable Development. UN Assistant Secretary-General Nikhil Seth weighs in on how to bridge the gap between adoption and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); he asserts that training and capacity-building programs will be the key to taking the SDGs from paper into practice. Also in this issue, you will hear about “why the world needs more Canada”, the recent celebration of Africa Day on 25 May, and the fight for “eQuality”, or making the web accessible for people with disabilities. You will also find the latest contribution from the UNOG Young Reporters, speaking to the importance of woman in sports.

Finally, and as customary in our double edition for the summer months, please enjoy some book recommendations from fellow staff members, as well as some tips for making the most of such Geneva attractions as the caves ouvertes and the Opéra des Nations. And for those tempted to venture further afield, we offer you tales of travels along the Canal du midi and into hidden corners of the Philippine islands. The *UN Special* wishes you an excellent summer; wherever your sojourns may find you! ■

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

Ce mois-ci, *l'UN Special* continue de couvrir les diminutions salariales de 7,5% contestées par le personnel ainsi que l'arrêt de travail du 16 juin comme protestation contre cette mesure. Plusieurs articles et un entretien reviendront sur ce sujet, ainsi que sur le rôle de plaidoyer des syndicats du personnel. Nous prêtons également attention à l'effet de cette réduction sur le personnel de catégorie G et sur l'interconnexion entre les membres du personnel de l'ONU de toute catégorie.

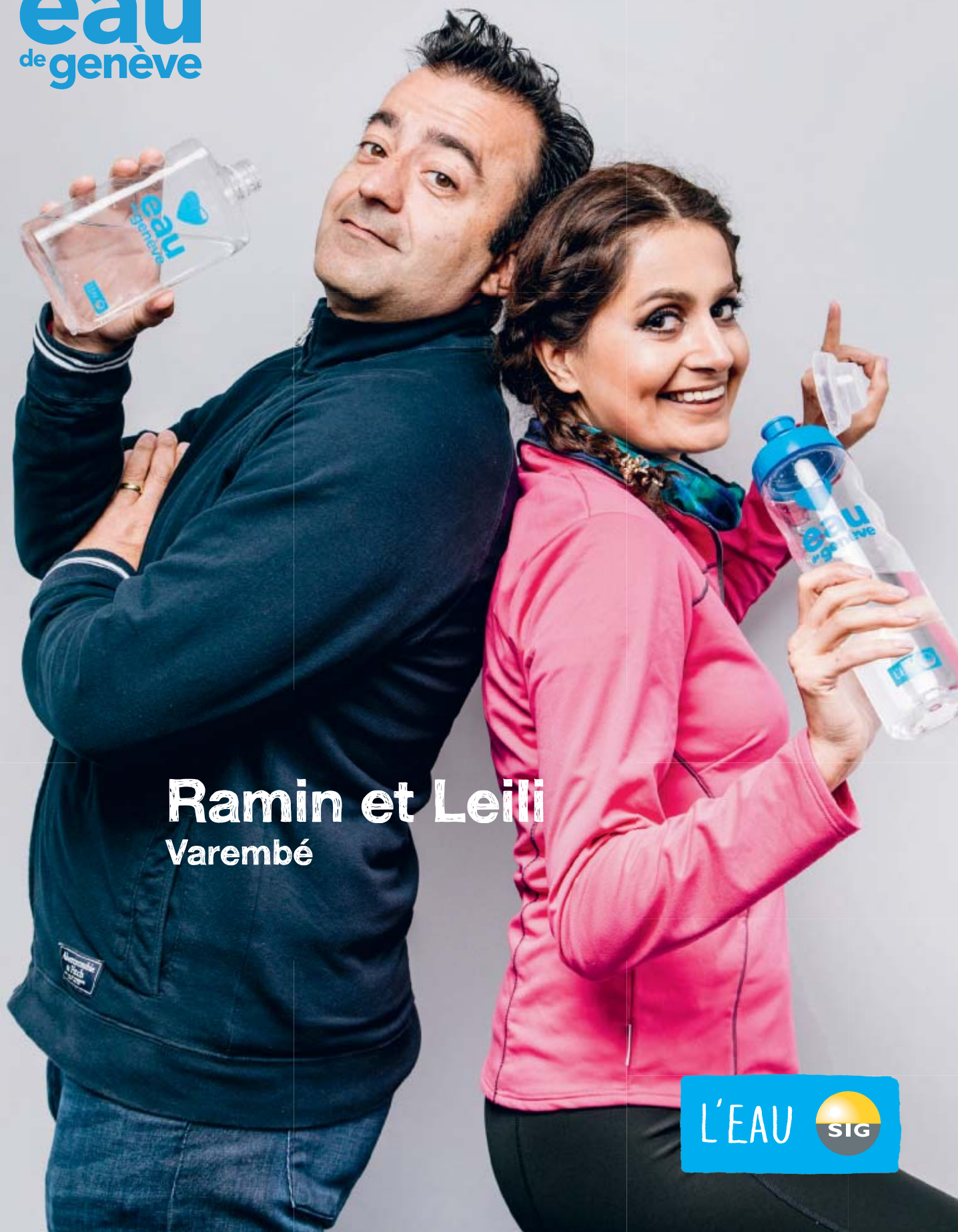
Dans ces pages, vous trouverez également des discussions autour de diverses questions pertinentes, et en particulier celle liée au développement durable. Le Secrétaire général adjoint des Nations Unies, Nikhil Seth, traite sur la manière de combler le fossé entre l'adoption et la mise en œuvre des objectifs de développement durable (ODD). Dans ce numéro aussi, vous apprendrez davantage sur «Pourquoi le monde a besoin de plus de Canada», sur la célébration récente de la Journée de l'Afrique le 25 mai, et sur la lutte pour le «eQuality», ou comment rendre le Web accessible aux personnes avec handicap. Vous trouverez également la dernière contribution des jeunes reporters de l'ONUG sur l'importance de la femme dans les sports.

Enfin, et comme d'habitude dans notre double édition pour les mois d'été, profitez de nos suggestions de lectures estivales, ainsi que de nos conseils pour tirer le meilleur parti des attractions de Genève telles que les caves ouvertes ou l'Opéra des Nations. Et pour ceux qui sont tentés de s'aventurer plus loin, nous vous proposons des récits de voyages le long du canal du Midi et dans les coins cachés de l'île Bohol aux Philippines. *L'UN Special* vous souhaite un excellent été, partout où que vous vous soyez! ■

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



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UN Geneva comes to halt during work stoppage

On Friday 16 June, international organizations in Geneva came to a halt for two hours to protest the decision of the International Civil Service Commission to impose an almost immediate 7.7 percent pay cut.

IAN RICHARDS, UNCTAD

A number of high-level meetings were suspended, including the Human Rights Council. However, staff unions asked that for humanitarian reasons, the Syria talks should continue to be serviced.

During the work stoppage many offices lay empty, while a large number of staff convened in Room 18 of the Palais des Nations for an information meeting. The meeting was raucous with table thumping and chants of “no pay cut”. Attendees included directors and human resources personnel.

The unions thanked staff for attending the meeting despite

threats issued in an email from UN management two days before – threats that were universally ignored.

Staff were joined at their meeting by a delegation from the International Labour Conference led by David Boys from Public Services International and French trade union leader Bernard Thibault.

The background to the pay dispute lies in a decision of the ICSC, composed of 15 commissioners selected by the General Assembly, to cut pay by a month a year on the basis of a cost-of-living survey that has since been revealed to be riddled with errors and made

up of fake data and prices taken from the wrong country.

The ICSC’s decision, made in late March in New York, would require the pay cut to be implemented in May for newly arriving staff in Geneva, and from August for existing staff.

A series of staff meetings and rallies, at which inconsistencies were pointed out in the ICSC data, led many executive heads of agencies, but not that of the UN, to refuse to implement the cut until such time as they could get satisfactory answers to the concerns raised by staff. However after two meetings with the ICSC, they remained unconvinced.

Further, the refusal of the ICSC three times to meet with Geneva staff, led to claims of the ICSC being unsure of its own figures.

Under pressure, the ICSC accepted to receive a team of statisticians from UNCTAD, the ILO and IMF to examine their

data, where the errors were then spotted.

The stoppage and concerns of staff received significant media coverage. It is hoped that this will ensure that the ICSC and UN management understand the strength of feeling in Geneva.

The next step is the ICSC meeting in Vienna later this month where the issue is on the agenda for possible reconsideration. Both staff unions and the management teams of agencies are seeking dialogue with the ICSC to see how their original decision may be reconsidered on the basis of the calculation errors and significant unrest.

Should that dialogue prove not to be fruitful and the decision not be reversed, it is likely that further collective action will be considered. ■

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Six raisons qui me font croire que votre lutte contre la baisse de salaire a porté ses fruits...

À la veille de la tenue de la session de la CFPI à Vienne, un message d'espoir doit être envoyé à tous les fonctionnaires des organisations internationales à Genève qui n'accepteront jamais de perdre un mois de salaire.

**PRISCA CHAUI,
CONSEIL DE COORDINATION DE L'UNOG**

Un rassemblement le 6 avril, un autre le 25, une assemblée extraordinaire le 24 mai, une pétition et enfin un arrêt de travail le 16 juin. À chaque fois, des centaines de fonctionnaires sont venus dire haut et fort non aux coupes salariales de plus de 7,5% décidées par la Commission de la Fonction Publique Internationale (CFPI) en mars.

Nous sommes tous en droit de nous demander maintenant si des lueurs d'espoir pointent dans l'horizon ou si les dés sont jetés et que nous allons par conséquent perdre un mois de salaire à partir d'août. Oui, il s'agit bel et bien d'un mois de salaire que nous perdrons si les coupes venaient à être introduites. Il faut ajouter à cela la baisse de l'indemnité pour frais d'études du fait de

l'examen de la rémunération pour les catégories professionnelles et supérieures ainsi que l'octroi d'échelon chaque deux ans au lieu de chaque année. En d'autres termes, les pertes s'élèveront à plus de 12% dans le cas de certains fonctionnaires.

Personnellement, et sans trop vouloir être optimiste, je pense que les coupes telles que décidées ont peu de chance d'être introduites. En effet, il y a plusieurs faits qui me poussent à envoyer ce message d'espoir aux fonctionnaires des organisations internationales à Genève.

– Pour une première fois, nous constatons que le personnel et les administrations œuvrent pour atteindre un objectif commun: ne pas laisser ces coupes faire leur

- chemin dans la fiche de paie. Ainsi, syndicats et administrations luttent-ils, chacun à sa manière pour s'opposer à la décision de la CFPI.
- Les coupes devaient entrer en vigueur à partir de mai pour les nouveaux employés et en août pour ceux qui sont actuellement en fonction. Or, aucune organisation, à l'exception de l'ONUG et du HCR, n'ont jusqu'à maintenant appliqué cette décision.
 - Généralement, la CFPI adopte ses décisions sans laisser la voie ouverte à un éventuel examen. Cependant, et suite à la pression du personnel et des administrations, la CFPI réexaminera la question lors de sa prochaine session qui se tiendra à Vienne du 10 au 21 juillet.
 - Il y a une division entre les Commissaires de la CFPI, puisque certains d'entre eux sont déjà acquis à l'idée de l'injustice d'une telle décision.
 - Certains États membres sont en train de questionner l'impartialité et la nature purement technique de la CFPI.
 - La crédibilité des données statistiques sur lesquelles la CFPI s'est fondée, semble être mise en question suite à une analyse préliminaire qui a été effectuée par des statisticiens indépendants.
- Une chose est certaine, la CFPI doit aux fonctionnaires une

explication claire et transparente quant aux données statistiques douteuses et erronées qu'elle a utilisées. Les représentants du personnel attendent impatiemment le rendez-vous de Vienne qui est un rendez-vous fatidique, et pour les fonctionnaires qu'ils représentent mais surtout et avant tout pour la CFPI, dont la crédibilité et l'objectivité sont en jeu.

doit d'entendre si elle veut rester l'organe en qui les Organisations mais surtout les fonctionnaires ont confiance.

CFPI, prouve nous que tu es à la hauteur de la tâche qui t'incombe...

Voici le message que j'aimerais envoyer à l'organe qui veut m'arracher un mois de salaire. ■

CFPI ne tue pas Genève...

CFPI ne coupe pas mon salaire...

CFPI, sois transparente...

CFPI, respecte les règles...

Voici quelques slogans qu'ont scandés les fonctionnaires le 16 juin et que la CFPI se

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Training needs to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030

Can the international system transcend the walls of conference halls, and realise the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda? Training and education are the best guarantee of the shift needed by this new “transformational” era.

NIKHIL SETHI¹

Almost twenty months after the historic adoption of the goals and targets contained in the 2030 Agenda, the time has come to identify the bottlenecks which will impact their realization. I focus only on the promise to reach the furthest first while leaving no one behind. The UN membership of 193 has almost half of its membership which is either severely conflict distressed and/or severely development distressed. The question is how are we going to reach these countries to make the promises of the 2030 Agenda a reality in the lives of the citizens of these member states – in UN jargon “the countries in special situations”, including countries in Africa, least developed countries (LDCs), land locked developing countries, small island developing states and conflict stressed countries. These are not exclusive categories but together account for the bulk of UN membership.

Let me first put aside the argument that it will depend on transfer of resources and technology alone. Transfers in the form of aid, or concessional lending or more efficient remittances or better trade deals or greater investment flows. Yes, these are important but what is most urgently needed is smart policy with better planning, smarter resource allocations and robust engagement of a myriad of actors, national and foreign, who are often well intentioned but do not engage in a coordinated and coherent way. Let me, therefore, put resource and technology issues aside and focus instead on the capacity dimension of the problems faced and one of the real bottlenecks which is the limited capacity in most of these countries to use the tools, the data and the modeling, to reboot policy away from the baggage and inertia of history, into the new “transformational” era defined by the 2030 Agenda.

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Training includes pre-deployment training for African military and police, climate change learning, de-centralized training of local authorities, training in chemicals and waste management, diplomatic training, analysis of satellite imagery and other training which covers the pillars of the Agenda 2030 – people, peace, planet, and prosperity – and we do this in partnership with governments, the UN system, academia and the business sector. What has been most striking is how remote the great agendas of 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate change, disaster management, and financing are from the root and branch delivery of services at the national and local levels. The great halls of the General Assembly in New York and Geneva are churning out significant outcomes which are often stuck at the level of diplomatic discourse. Here is the nub of the problem.

Can the international system get together to build capacities in the countries furthest behind and what are the most immediate tasks?

Let me briefly highlight the four major tasks ahead.

In our interactions with LDCs in Africa and the small island states, the first issue we face is the incorporation of SDGs into national planning frameworks and the issues of aligning and harmonizing them with multiple national, regional and international agreements e.g. Africa 2063 and Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) pathway as well as the nationally determined commitments (NDCs) for implementing the Paris climate change agreement. **For smaller planning ministries, the task is truly daunting.** The international agreements are in harmony to a general degree, but weaving them into one national plan is a task for which support is required. The UN system is stepping up to the task but the specialized agencies with expertise, including on health, the environment, sustainable agriculture and education, need to work co-jointly with country teams in these 90+ countries, to help Governments generate harmonized and aligned plans to guide programming and resource allocation for the achievement of the SDGs. This work at the national level would need to trickle down to provinces, cities and rural communities. **Strengthening capacities at the local level will be as critical.**

The second major task is helping these countries, one by one, to better understand the deep network of connections between the goals and targets. How do the goals on sustainable agriculture interface with the goals on water, energy, poverty, hunger and climate change? Are scarce resources best spent on drip irrigation or larger irrigation infrastructures? What are the co-benefits of sectoral investments and what should be the planning and policy priorities? Should quality girls' primary education be considered a better investment than early childhood education? These are some of the hard policy and planning decisions. **Countries need help with data, statistical analysis and modelling in light of the**

new integrated focus on “ending poverty in all its forms everywhere” along a sustainable pathway, without trading off present prosperity with future needs. Training is needed in most planning and line ministries to look at issues afresh – to better understand the interconnection of goals and targets, quantify social benefits like equality, gender empowerment, social inclusion, climate change and the creation of peaceful and just societies.

The third, linked and immediate task, is building the capacity for modern data gathering, data analysis including through better household surveys, improved censuses and strengthened data collection

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Nikhil Seth, Executive Director of UNITAR.

and use. Policy to reach the most vulnerable must be able to identify who they are, where they live and how to improve their lives. This includes categories like the disabled (including the mentally disabled), the elderly, indigenous peoples, migrants and others. This is no easy task but modern technologies including mobile telephony can facilitate the crowdsourcing of problems and solutions. Satellite and drone applications have a broad potential for enhancing analysis. They are low cost, cutting edge and easily replicable. The real challenge is creating a critical mass of national data producers and analysts from Samoa to Burkina Faso to Haiti who can help in guiding policy makers to the right decisions. Developing capacities for data collection and use is not sufficient, however. Data needs to be analyzed and key questions need to be asked from an evaluation logic in order for us to ascertain what real differences our investments are making and how we can learn and improve policies, programmes and other undertakings for the betterment of society.

The fourth is the training needs of the business sector and civil society to understand their role and engagement in the implementation of the SDGs and the NDCs. Penetration is needed beyond the FORTUNE 500 companies, to the millions of medium

and small industries in the countries in special situations. What do the SDGs mean for their activities? How can the goals, targets and indicators percolate down into the language and actions of their modest business models? Where should the focus of advocacy and civil society vigilance be directed in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda? A strong and concerted effort needs to take place in building the capacities of these crucial non-governmental actors. Vital to this task is the creation of meaningful multi-stakeholder spaces, meaningful and not purely cosmetic, for regular interaction with governments. Governments themselves require capacities to engage effectively with these actors, while ensuring underserved constituencies are well represented. Beyond simply informing the critical stakeholders, Governments can promote a real collaboration through innovative institutional mechanisms and ensure there is shared ownership around localized SDGs.

The training needs, in just these four larger conceptual areas, are huge. When we add the sectoral needs – in education, health, energy, water, security sector reforms, agriculture and infrastructure – it requires a truly gargantuan effort. We have become accustomed to a world where lip service is paid to education and training, but where

the resources and efforts are marginal in comparison to the needs.

The deep transition we need for peaceful and just societies, with an end to poverty along a sustainable growth trajectory, firstly needs a mindset change in millions of decision makers' minds. Education and modern training are the best guarantee of this shift but when this will happen is a question mark. We cannot wait until 2030. ■

1. Nikhil Seth is the Executive Director of UNITAR, the training arm of the United Nations.

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Example of “flexible” space workplace.

Strategic Heritage Plan Staff concerns

The renovation has significant design flaws, negative impact on productivity and UNOG carries poor negotiating approach with the Swiss authorities.

ALEX MCCUSKER, UNECE

The Strategic Heritage Plan is in full swing. The majority of the work of the SHP involves improvements to the Palais engineering and conference spaces. I assume readers are familiar with the plan¹ so this article will deal mostly with the concerns staff members see in the proposal for the new building.

Staff understand and support the need for change. It can be an opportunity – when change supports the overall performance of the organisation, improves the quality of outputs, reduces bureaucracy and raises efficiency and working conditions. However the SHP as currently structured does not do this.

One of our main issues is the lack of genuine communication

and effective consultation that takes into account staff views. In a process that has been going on since 2009, until spring 2015 there was no consultation in the decisions being made. When this was pointed out to management the response was that the only consultations required were with staff bodies. However administration chose not to involve the Staff Council until 2015 nor is it currently involved in the governing bodies of the SHP. For the last year we have repeatedly requested, both formally and informally, the demographic information, detailed studies and space planning guidelines underlying the decisions that have been taken, with not even the courtesy of an answer. Without access to specific numbers it is difficult to clearly express the problems and propose solutions. On the issues listed below staff have

raised these questions specifically² with no response.

Efficiency

The plans for the new building call for a so-called “flexible” space with staff changing their workplace through the day as their space use changes. This leads to significant time loss, estimated at 15%. Which means 15% fewer outputs or 15% more resources to accomplish the same work. In addition to time spent moving around, there is lowered productivity due to inadequate privacy and inability to focus.

The new building is also further from the entrances and the parking areas which means it will take longer to get to the office. 700 more staff means increased competition for parking. It will also become more difficult to reach the Palais, especially for those staff members living outside Geneva.

Flexibility

The current Palais offices are highly flexible – desks, chairs and shelves can be moved around to accommodate meet-

ings, privacy and new staff. The offices planned for the new building cannot be changed so easily and space allocations will be much more inflexible. In a comprehensive survey of ECE staff over 90% indicated their functional requirements could not be met in an open office environment.

Health

Studies³ show that staff stress and turnover increase with open-plan offices. Given the increase in stress-related illness in all organizations it would be both judicious and financially sensible to avoid this. The cost savings from such an office pale to insignificance compared with the costs of turnover and staff sickness and reduced cohesion. This is an example of penny-wise and pound-foolish.

Space Ratios

The plans for office space call for significant reductions from current UN planning guidance (and from a global average⁴ of 13 m²) with increased inequality. For example USG space goes from 6 times larger than

	2008 UN	2008 UNOG	SHP	Reduction in office space	
				from UN 2008	from UNOG 2008
	square meters				
USG/ASG	35.6	39	30.4	-15%	-22%
D2	17.8	31	15.2	-15%	-35%
D1		21		-	-
P5	8.9	15	7.6	-15%	-29%
P4		12		-	-
P1-3		9		-	-
G	5.9	6	3.8	-36%	-37%
Hot Desk	-	-	2.5	-	-

the smallest space to 12 times larger under the SHP. The P to G ratio goes from 1.5 to 2.0.

Finances

UNOG is planning to save \$5 million annually on the Palais Wilson rent. It plans to invest \$130 million in the new building which is a 26-year payback. Presumably there are many other places in the UN system where a similar investment would have much shorter payback periods. Excessive consultancy costs in the SHP have also been raised. Apparently no attempt has been made to negotiate with the Swiss government

over reducing or eliminating the rent for spaces outside the Palais. The fact that the Swiss government is providing a zero-interest loan is somewhat less of a gift in a negative interest rate environment. With the high level of interest from other locations to host these functions without cost, and in view of the 5 billion CHF of annual income Geneva and the area earn from the staff, missions and visitors, there should be some negotiating room.

Measuring outcomes

The UN is currently emphasizing the importance of indicators

to monitor progress towards sustainable development. There appear to be no measurable indicators concerning the functionality of space for staff and staff performance in the proposal. The SHP team indicated that improving staff efficiency was not their concern. Staff efficiency drives the costs of the organization significantly more than building costs. We have been told the old buildings are unrivalled so why do we wish to discard the current functional arrangements for an inferior and more costly solution.

Mr. Møller has stated he opposes these plans for open-space. Given the record of the UN with implementation of plans (Umoja, IMIS, renovation of NY) one would think member states would wish to get more input and review options before committing to the SHP, especially if it will increase overall costs. Again, many of

these issues can be discussed and staff are eager and willing to do so. The lack of information and effective consultation means we are without any means to do so. ■

1. See for example 2011, 2013 and 2015 reports on SHP (A/66/279, A/68/372, A/70/7/Add.8)
2. In written form at both the December 2015 ECE SHP Forum and the March 2016 UNOG Town Hall.
3. <https://digest.bps.org.uk/2013/08/19/the-supposed-benefits-of-open-plan-offices-do-not-outweigh-the-costs/> and additional studies quoted in <http://www.ilostaffunion.org/new/wp-content/uploads/safeworkopenspacenote.pdf>
4. <http://www.bdcnetwork.com/corenet-office-space-worker-shrinks-150-sf>

Strategic Heritage Plan

You can have any type of desk you want as long as it's a hot desk

UN management billed the “smart working” exercise as a genuine consultation on what kind of office space staff would need after the Palais renovations.

IAN RICHARDS, UNOG STAFF COORDINATING COUNCIL

They said they genuinely understood that different staff and tasks needed different types of office space. They understood that hot desking was not for all. Many might genuinely need individual or shared offices, or perhaps open space but with your own desk. They even acknowledged that hot desking might not be appropriate for anyone.

We were told that the American company, brought in at vast expense to handle the consultations, and on the basis of a dubious procurement process (I didn't see the contract advertised either) would use its tried and test methods to deliver something staff would be happy with. Needs would be respected.

Now it seems that the smart working exercise is less smart than we had been led to believe.

Having met with the team from UN management handling the renovations and the American company, Gensler, it seems that what they told us is far from what they intend to do. Apparently all those surveys and consultations were actually just

to help them determine what kind of hot desking spaces we wanted.

Do we want desks cheek by jowl (collaboration space), or desks without telephones (quiet space) or desks in telephone boxes (focus booths)? That's essentially the choice we will be offered.

But don't worry, we'll all get our own laptop to compensate. One of those UN laptops that take so long to start up that by the time you have turned it on and sent an email, you could have hand-written the message with pen and paper and delivered in person to the other end of the Palais.

So what was the point of all those students spending the week checking whether you were in your office? Apparently it was to confirm that staff in ECE, OHCHR, OCHA and UNCTAD spend roughly similar times in and out of their offices. It also discovered that staff might occasionally leave their offices to visit the cafeteria or toilets. Fascinating.

Then there were the focus groups. The ones were we were asked to interpret

strange-looking shapes and stick post-it notes to flip chart boards. Sort of like those retreats you get taken on where the outcome has already been decided, and the flip chart sheets take a short route to the recycling bin.

And before that the survey, which asked whether you would do what was necessary in the interests of the organization. I didn't understand that question either.

I suspect that many colleagues will feel let down by the exercise. We don't know how much it cost – tens, hundreds of thousands? The students who walked around the offices were flown in from the Netherlands – perhaps Swiss students weren't up to the task?

Whichever way you look at it, it seems that vast sums of money will have been spent by UN management to justify to itself what it already knew it wanted to do. And all in order to reduce productivity.

When we look back at this in six months time, in light of the 2018-19 budget and the cuts on their way, this will come across as quite an extravagance.

But what is spent is spent. We should therefore put the smart working exercise to one side, and refocus on our goals i.e. how can we work to ensure the best office space for staff – space staff are able to work in productively.

Going forward, let's persuade UN management to use fewer consultants, less architectural dogma, and more common sense. If staff need individual or shared offices, and there is room for it, then let's put it in. ■

Emil Frey SA

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A-t-on vraiment besoin d'un nouveau bâtiment alors que la Genève internationale est en danger?

À un moment où les fonctionnaires de l'ONUG sont menacés de coupes salariales et de délocalisation à large échelle, une réévaluation des priorités s'impose...

PRISCA CHAQUI, ONUG

Je suis tombée des nues lorsque j'ai dernièrement lu un message envoyé par l'Administration de l'ONUG appelant les fonctionnaires à soumettre leurs idées quant aux moyens qui peuvent être envisagés pour réduire les dépenses, à un moment où l'Organisation traverse une crise budgétaire de taille. À cette crise, viennent s'ajouter d'importantes coupes de salaires

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(7,5%) pour la catégorie des administrateurs (catégorie P) et les menaces du dispositif de prestation centralisée de services ou GSDM qui entraînera à terme la délocalisation d'un nombre important de fonctions administratives.

La première idée qui m'est passée par la tête, et qui est d'ailleurs partagée par beaucoup de fonctionnaires, fut le projet de rénovation du Palais, plus connu sous le nom du Plan stratégique patrimonial. À mon humble avis, réduire les coûts induits par ce projet en le revoyant de fond en comble serait le meilleur moyen de faire des économies. Ce projet qui à la base visait à rénover un Palais vieillissant et dont les coûts ne devaient pas dépasser les 180 millions de francs suisses, s'est agrandi pour devenir un monstre qu'on n'arrive plus à maîtriser. Un monstre dont les coûts s'élèvent à plus de 800 millions, un monstre pour lequel notre Organisation s'est endettée, un monstre qui va impliquer de placer les fonctionnaires dans des bureaux paysagers qui avaient le vent en poupe par le passé et qui sont en train de disparaître.

Je ne suis nullement contre ce projet, qui certes a des côtés positifs. Je suis pour la modernité et le progrès mais pas à

n'importe quel prix. En effet, je refuse de voir des collègues en train de perdre un mois de leur salaire et d'autres devoir quitter l'Organisation, et en même temps constater que des millions de francs sont versés pour alimenter un projet dont on aurait pu se passer dans l'immédiat. Je conçois que le Palais soit à rénover, je conçois que tout puisse faire l'objet d'améliorations, mais je ne comprends pas comment peut-on dépenser des millions de francs dans la construction d'un nouveau bâtiment qui est loin de répondre aux aspirations des fonctionnaires en matière de distribution de postes de travail.

Certains diraient que ce projet sert l'intérêt de la Genève internationale et que le simple soutien qui lui est accordé par les autorités du pays hôte est la preuve de jours meilleurs pour l'avenir des fonctionnaires internationaux à Genève. J'aurais aimé être partisane de cette vision optimiste de la situation, mais la réalité me fait croire au contraire.

Face à cet optimisme, je dirais: que restera-t-il de la Genève internationale si elle va perdre son attractivité aux yeux des jeunes talents qui cherchent un employeur stable, capable de leur offrir le minimum nécessaire pour survivre à leurs

besoins, un employeur qui ne coupe pas les salaires du jour au lendemain de manière considérable et unilatérale? Que restera-t-il de la Genève internationale à un moment où ces commerces seront boudés au profit des commerces de la France voisine du fait de la baisse de salaires? Que restera-t-il de la Genève internationale si la majorité des services administratifs qu'accueille l'UNOG aujourd'hui seront délocalisées vers d'autres villes, y compris européennes, où le coût de la vie est moins élevé?

Eh bien la réponse est simple, il restera une Genève internationale qui n'a rien d'internationale que le nom. Il restera un Palais auquel on aurait rajouté une annexe toute en verre, un Palais certes habité mais beaucoup moins qu'il ne l'est aujourd'hui. Une annexe qu'il va falloir modifier dans quelques années puisqu'elle ne pourra pas répondre aux besoins fonctionnels du personnel qui s'y retrouvera. Les fonctionnaires ont dit à maintes reprises non à un bâtiment qui touchera à leur performance, mais il vaut mieux ne pas les écouter pour ne pas faire tomber à l'eau ce projet, n'est-ce-pas?

Pour revenir à la question de savoir comment couper les dépenses, eh bien les choses

sont très simples: revoir les priorités. Or les priorités pour les fonctionnaires de l'ONUG aujourd'hui sont de garder leur emploi, un emploi pour lequel ils sont payés de façon décente. Leur priorité n'est pas la construction d'une beauté architecturale qui finira par abriter les quelques chanceux qui resteront au Palais dans les années à venir.

Vision apocalyptique du futur? Non. Il s'agit tout simplement d'une vision réaliste... ■

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Swiss National Day

An international vein in the “heart” of Switzerland

If International Geneva is known for its multicultural features, vistas and facets, and is unique in its spirit as an international city in Switzerland, what image will come to your mind when you try to describe the “heart” of Switzerland?



“Impression. Soleil levant.” Claude Monet, Fondation Gianadda.

**EVELINA RIOUKHINA
AND OLEKSANDR SVIRCHEVSKYY**

It will definitely be the Alps, valleys and gorgeous, absolutely magnificent cows. When our imagination brings us to this setting, the last thing we expect is to find an “international” touch. In reality, this is a very big mistake, as in the heart of Switzerland, in the Canton of Valais (Wallis), amongst the valleys and surrounded by Alps, in the capital of the so famous Battle of the Queens (“Combats de Reines”, traditional Swiss cow-fighting, and Switzerland’s ultimate championship), there is a tiny but truly international vein. This international vein is called Martigny.

Why Martigny? A small picturesque town in the middle of the Valais – what is “international” about it? If you examine it carefully, you will see that this town has many international facets or layers, and thus this international vein is strongly engrained in it. Firstly, it has “international” geography, being literally in an “international” location, at the cross-roads between Switzerland, Italy, and France. Located on the Rhone elbow in the Lower Valais, it represents the hub of the pass routes across the Simplon, Great St. Bernard Pass to Aosta (Italy), and over the Col de la Forclaz to Chamonix (France), thus as if symbolically combining the majestic Mont Blanc with the gorgeous Swiss and Italian Alps (including St. Bernard and the neighbouring Matterhorn).

Martigny’s history stretches back two thousand years, and also combines international features: Celtic tribes, the Romans and Napoleon’s troops have all left behind traces. A restored amphitheatre, Roman thermal baths, temples and living quarters can be admired in Martigny today. Martigny is also known as the first bishop’s seat in Switzerland. La Bâtiaz and Vieux-Bourg featuring several churches and secular buildings can also be admired there.

Martigny’s gastronomy, which is in a way, a mix of cultural and historical heritage, is international too. It is surrounded by vineyards and orchards, and known as one of the sunniest towns in Switzerland¹. Its special climate and geogaphy, in combination with its history give it a special mixed flavour and Mediterranean flair and tasty gastronomy marry well with typical Swiss flavours, and can thus be considered as its winning feature. In the past famous figures, such as Rousseau, Goethe, Stendhal and Liszt, already succumbed to the temptation of the region’s culinary delights.

But Martigny has also been known, for more than 40 years, as the host to high culture and arts, and particularly international events that unite all nations and civilizations. Martigny is the home of one of the most renowned private art museums, the Fondation Pierre Gianadda. By simply listing the exhibitions it has organized one can immediately taste the flavour of international unity



© Sytenius/Wikipedia

Fondation Gianadda à Martigny.

and of the unifying language of arts. Over the years, the Museum has exhibited the rarest collections thus turning this small town into a really international cultural artery in Europe. It has welcomed such geniuses as Picasso, Renoir, Modigliani. Szafran, Marc Chagall, Vallet, Rodin, Kandinsky, Van Gogh, Hans Erni (the author of the mosaic at the entrance to the Palais des Nations), Barcélo, van Dongen, Anker, Valloton, Saudan, Balhus, with some of the rarest works from private collections that are not seen in other museums. It has also exhibited collections from the world's most renowned museums, such as Pushkin Museum, Russia, or The Metropolitan Museum of Arts, New York, and it has also exhibited the collections of the National Tretyakov Gallery (Moscow) "The Icones russes. Les saints", and "Les Trésors du Monastère Sainte-Catherine" of the Mount Sinai, Egypt. Moreover, this arts Gallery was constructed around the remains of a former Roman temple, which today houses a classical music concert hall. The

international constellations of artists this concert hall have hosted over several years, can give envies to the concert halls in the biggest cities of the world!

Today's exhibition is a living example of the international spirit – uniting Hodler of Switzerland, Munch of Norway and Claude Monet of France. Moreover, this exhibition succeeded in the impossible task – to harmoniously combine uncombinable, which only arts can do – by common feelings of water, snow, the suns, the moons, and where are the limits of imagination while painting all those. The exhibition is called "Peindre l'impossible", and the name itself suggest how challenging the task was. The real "must" of this exhibition – and a sort of "du jamais vu" over the whole history of existence of the Fondation Gianadda – is the rarrissime chef d'œuvres it exhibits "Impression. Soleil Levant" by Claude Monet (1872), which is itself an exceptional event and outstanding painting (the



© Adrian Hueflickr

Opéra de Lucerne.

painting is exhibited under special security protection, a photo illustrated the article).

When we arrived and saw the full palette of visitors, not only from Europe, not only from our Global Geneva, but perhaps, from all over the world, we were not surprised. This international audience had come to admire the masterpieces. They gathered united, holding their breath in admiration of the famous painting(s). Thus, the language of arts, unifies in the heart of this small Valaisain city, which, through its history and tradition, has been transformed into a significant and vital artery in the heart of Switzerland with truly international spirit. And we witnessed, at first hand, how this international exhibition, and the international audience that it draws, give an ever stronger beat to Martigny's international vein! ■

1. Sierre, in several km away from Martigny, is formally considered as the sunniest town of Switzerland.

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Why the world needs more Canada

Celebrating the 150th anniversary of Canada.

GARRY ASLANYAN, WHO, DEPUTY EDITOR

First, a few confessions need to be made. I am biased as I write this article for the 150th anniversary of Canada. As a Canadian, my views are heavily influenced by the love and admiration I feel for my country. The other confession relates to the title of this article – it’s not mine, it is borrowed from others.

It is not really clear who coined the expression “the world needs more Canada” first. It was a tourism slogan from the 1990s used in television and newspaper ads, pitching the U.S., Japan and Europe on the idea of Canada as a land of tranquility, safety and whales coming up for air in slow motion. Then in 2003, the singer-songwriter and U2 star, Bono, excited Canadians by declaring: “The world needs more Canada.” And then, President Barack Obama used the same expression to conclude his speech in Canadian Parliament in 2016. Finally, my favorite use of the slogan is that by our national bookstore chain that tries to use it to sell more books about Canada.

What does 150 years mean to a nation? Many of you who come from countries with much longer histories may think that we are a young nation. We are. But at times we forget that it is not always true. Canada is

older than Germany in its present form and only six years younger than Italy in the way it is now constituted. A century and a half seem even smaller when we consider that indigenous peoples have been in Canada for at least 14,000 years.

The birth of Canada coincided with the fact that it put in place many of the laws and structures that still govern the country. This has allowed Canada and Canadians to achieve great things, including sometimes make mistakes. We also learned to acknowledge the people and events that defined our land long before 1867.

What are the characteristics of Canada that allow us to take our place in the family of countries who are members the United Nations? I have discussed a few of the notions that may play a role and I also added a table of famous things that you probably didn’t know where invented in Canada.

Democracy is certainly part of why we want to celebrate Canada, but it is actually a far smaller part of what makes this country great than most people imagine. But democracy is not unique to Canada and it has not always proven to be the easiest of approaches. It cannot be diversity

that we Canadians celebrate. Diversity is not the cause of Canada's greatness, but rather one of its effects. Finally, things such as universal health care and other social innovations are quite recent while Canada was a desirable place before those things were in place.

Like the United States and Australia, Canada is a creature of the New World. We are not an ancient civilization like Europe or the Middle East or China. This allowed Canada to avoid the prejudice and social/cultural barriers that exist in the Old World. There are some exceptions to this, e.g. the plight of many Indigenous people in Canada. The second thing that makes Canada great is freedom, introduced by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That freedom includes things like the rule of law, non-corrupt judges and police, reasonably speedy and predictable resolution of disputes, moderate levels of taxation, stability of property and its transference by consent, the certainty that defeated governments will leave office and that elections actually choose governments. Added to the civil freedoms of speech and religion and

Ten famous things invented in Canada you didn't know about

Peanut Butter

Montreal pharmacist Marcellus Gilmore Edson envisioned his nutty ointment-like product, patented in 1884, as a food option for people who couldn't chew.

The Odometer

Nova Scotia inventor Samuel McKeen created a device that measured distance with every revolution of a carriage wheel.

The Rotary Snowplow

A Toronto dentist named Dr. J.W. Elliot first conceived the idea of a snowplow to clean up train tracks. The snowmobile and snowblower were also born in Canada.

The Egg Carton

Newspaper editor Joseph Coyle of Smithers, British Columbia, found a new use for paper in 1911.

McIntosh Apples

In 1811, farmer John McIntosh began grafting a wild apple tree at his South Dundas farm that gave birth to the new apple variety in 1835.

The Walkie-Talkie

Don Hings invented what he called the "packset" in 1937. When Canada declared war on Germany two years later, he went to Ottawa to redevelop the device for military use.

Insulin

Toronto scientists Frederick Banting, Charles Best and James Collip discovered it and learned how it could treat diabetes in 1911.

The Baggage Tag

John Michael Lyons of New Brunswick changed travel when he invented the first baggage tag in 1882 that contained information about the bag's point of departure, destination, and owner.

Standard Time

Engineer Sandford Fleming brought standard time to U.S. and Canadian railways in 1883. Time zones became U.S. law in 1918 and were accepted worldwide by 1929.

The Electric Wheelchair

In 1952, engineer George Klein made the world more accessible with a motorized wheelchair.

conscience and assembly, this makes an inheritance of freedom almost without peer in the world.

Freedom plus the New World together make a society in which each of us has

been given more latitude to shape our lives according to our individual beliefs and desires than anywhere else on the face of the earth. Perhaps these are the reasons why the world needs more Canada. ■



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Staff council

Gemma Vestal in the front line of a historic union movement at the UN

Interviewing Gemma Vestal is like talking to a friend. She is simple, welcoming and conveys strength that undoubtedly comes from her long-standing union experience.



© Garry Aslanyan and Evelina Rioukhina

Gemma Vestal

SOLANGE BEHETOGUY, UNCTAD¹

Born in the Philippines, she spent most of her time in the USA and arrived in Geneva in 2003 to work at WHO as a Legal Officer and Scientist handling tobacco product regulation issues. With her diverse and enriching career Gemma is a fighter so it's no wonder she says: "I truly believe that it is necessary to empower staff and treat them fairly and with respect".

UN Special: You are a charismatic woman. Traditionally the staff union environment is dominated by men. How important is the participation of a woman in a staff council or association?

Gemma Vestal: Indeed, not only are the staff associations and unions mostly represented by men, the UN and its agencies in general are still quite far from the gender equality that they are trying to achieve in line with SDG Goal 5. There are still many more men in higher ranking posts than women. There is a saying we've all heard that "nice women don't get the corner office or the promotion". And when women in supervisory role act tough in order to get the job done, those women get called all sorts of derogatory names, whereas men in

supervisory roles are expected to be tough and no one complains. Many years ago, I worked in a ground ambulance as a critical care transport nurse and I worked mostly with men. I was not taken seriously if I did not learn to speak their crude street language. So, for three years, I learned to curse like a sailor to "integrate" with my male co-workers and earn their respect. Why did I have to acquire a foul mouth and lose my femaleness and softness just to survive in the male-dominated job? Now, I find myself needing to be aggressive in order to be taken seriously, but I feel that there has got to be a better way of getting heard. It is still a work in progress for me. And I need to see successful female mentors out there to learn this delicate art of female leadership.

Knowing your rights is the first step towards ensuring they are respected. Many colleagues may or may have never heard about FICSA and the role it plays. What is FICSA doing to inform and promote UN Staff rights?

The Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) was founded in Paris in 1952. FICSA is a federated group of staff associations/

unions from organizations belonging to the United Nations common system. The diversity of membership ensures that all staff in the field and at headquarters duty stations have the opportunity to exchange views and information about conditions of service; seek the Federation's assistance and support when difficulties arise; and organize collective action.

As the Secretary General of FICSA, how do you deal with the current issue of the 7,5% pay cut from a union point of view? What does this mean to you from a personal point of view? Any positive and/or negative views?

The pay cut is not fair. Even the UNSG when we spoke to him in April said that the pay cut is not part of his vision of UN reform. We adamantly won't agree to working for 12 months and only being paid the equivalent of 11 months' pay. On 24 May, FICSA together with CCISUA, our sister federation, were given the mandate during an extraordinary general meeting of Geneva-based staff associations and unions to mobilize vigorously against the pay cut and use all legitimate means to defend staff interests. Personally, this means I will co-lead in pursuing any combination



© Garry Aslanyan and Evelina Rioukhina

of industrial actions to 1) get the attention of the ICSC to reverse the pay cut decision, 2) get our administrations not to implement the pay cut, 3) or for them to execute some mitigating measures such that Geneva staff won't experience a gain or loss in take home pay. The UN and most of its agencies here in Geneva have not seen work stoppages, work slowdowns, work to rule, or mass sickouts. A combination of any of the above modalities can be applied in a staggered, protracted, sustained and escalating manner throughout the summer and even into the fall if we have to. The good thing about this pay cut issue is that it affects both staff and management because at the end of the day, we are all staff and our salaries will be equally affected.

And I am not afraid to co-lead these upcoming industrial actions because I've had my experience with union organizing and strikes when I worked in California as a registered nurse in the late 80s and early 90s. From my experience, the success of nurses' strikes was in part due to the strong support of the other hospital services. We would need the same thing here in Geneva. We would need the strong support of General Service staff for our work stoppages and slow-downs to work. The P-staff going it alone would fail.

In your opinion, what are the consequences of this measure?

Are we on the way towards deterioration of the relationship between leadership and staff?

Is it a symptom of a transformed power relationship?

For the protests against the pay

cut, as stated earlier, we are lucky in a sense that the pay cut would also affect people in management. So, in a sense, we have an ally here.

How do you evaluate the current negotiation process? Could FICSA take any action? What are the next steps?

Sadly, except for ILO, none of the staff associations and unions in Geneva have collective bargaining agreements with their respective administrations. So, we are not in a position to negotiate. But we are in a position to influence by showing our extreme displeasure with this ICSC decision which was made in bad faith. If the agencies implement, they would push us to organize protracted and concerted industrial actions. Implementation of the pay cut would leave staff feeling bitter and resentful and it would be a mess.

The pay cut will affect P graded staff in Geneva. What is your message to G graded staff in light of this measure?

In fighting this ICSC decision, it is imperative to unite all categories of staff irrespective of grade and duty station, as these reductions come on top of other cuts and erosion in our conditions of service, including through the compensation review, the ongoing review of locally-recruited staff and the upcoming cost-of-living

surveys in 85 duty stations. We need our general service staff colleagues to back us up. We need the local unions in Geneva to support us. And we need Public Services International to also lend a hand in this struggle. This is a time to strengthen alliances and join forces with those who could be convinced to support our cause. We will not accept these pay cuts.

Do you have any additional comments or thoughts you would like to share?

It is my deepest belief that a happy, respected, and empowered international civil servant will move mountains in order to give their personal best in their job and enable their organization to achieve its lofty mandates. Don't cut their pay, rather, give staff the tools and support they need to excel. They win; you win. And together, we can better serve the global community. ■

1. With the participation of Garry Aslanyan (WHO) and Evelina Rioukhina (UNECE)

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Staff protest on 16 June







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International Human Rights A necessary perspective

There is consensus in the Human Rights Council that human rights are universal, interdependent and interrelated, as proclaimed in the 1993 Vienna Declaration.

ALFRED DE ZAYAS, OHCHR RETIRED

Properly understood, this universality cannot eliminate diversity of opinion, traditions, heritage, identity.

As UNESCO knows, homologation is not human rights. What we all need is space to express our own vision, our convictions, our yearnings. We need dialogue, pluralism and always a sense for proportions in balancing competing rights and interests in a manner to serve human dignity.

The phenomenon of “political correctness” poses a grave danger to human rights, because it restricts freedom of expression and leads to intimidation, career-Angst,

and self-censorship. It can even entail a subconscious suppression of thinking processes, when we sense that independent thinking becomes dangerous. This means a kind of mental terror – what Germans call “*Denkverbote*” (thought-blockers).

George Orwell already warned us about “newspeak” and the tendency of both the public and the private sector to manipulate words, to disseminate false or incomplete information, what today we know as “fake news” and “disinformation”. Indeed, it is not only governments that manipulate public opinion, but also private media conglomerates. If articles 19 and 25 of the International Covenant on Civil



© Alfred de Zayas

Alfred de Zayas, OHCHR retired.

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master – that’s all.”

Through the Looking Glass

Language indeed means something. The word can be more powerful than the sword. But language can be emptied of content and used arbitrarily, today to mean something, tomorrow something else.

and Political Rights (ICCPR) mean anything, they mean that in a democratic society everyone must have access to reliable information so that a personal opinion can be formulated. It is this personal opinion that is protected by freedom of expression. It would be very sad if the only freedom of expression recognized by human rights law were the freedom to echo whatever nonsense we heard last night in the telejournal or read in newspapers, Facebook or Twitter.

The danger of neologisms, euphemisms and word-manipulations was recognized by Lewis Carroll in *Alice in Wonderland*: “When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.”

International human rights treaty law mandates *inter alia* the protection of human life, the promotion of the family and respect for religious convictions. Notwithstanding these clear norms of hard law, some governments are busy curtailing pro-life, pro-family and pro-religion activities under the pretext of advancing (imposing) secularism and enforcing the catch-all goal of “non-discrimination”. This is done through arbitrary interpretations of the norms, sometimes in an unreasonably restrictive, other times in an unimaginably expansive manner, essentially corrupting the language of the norms so that the words lose their intended meaning. The result undermines the object and purpose of treaty provisions and erodes the State’s duty to respect the

sanctity of life. The proposed “newspeak” promotes abortion under the contradictory rubric “reproductive rights”, same-sex unions as a form of “marriage” (which is specifically defined in article 23 ICCPR as the union of a man and a woman), and even penalizes the teaching of the Bible (a grave violation of religious freedom, guaranteed in article 18 ICCPR). In a scenario of cognitive dissonance, pro-life, pro-family and pro-religion are even defamed in a bizarre way as contrary to human rights.

But what human rights are here at issue? There is no human right to abortion (which in some instances is a euphemism for infanticide), nor any human right to adopt children (article 24 ICCPR and the convention on the rights of the child – not of the “parents” – as paramount, including the right of the child to have a safe childhood and adolescence with affective links to a mother and father, free of potentially traumatic stress). These are not only matters of morals, but of the sanctity of life and of the dignity of the human person. Hence each State must legislate in accordance with established human rights obligations laid down in the ICCPR and ICESCR. Although persecuting religious persons for their beliefs and

traditional values undoubtedly contravenes human rights law, in some countries so-called “hate speech” laws are actually being instrumentalized to restrict the fundamental rights and freedoms of a significant part of the population. Such restrictions are incompatible with articles 17, 18, 19, 23 and 24 ICCPR. Moreover, accusing practicing Christians of preaching “hate speech” constitutes in itself a form of “hate speech” against Christians, who are being discriminated in a manner that also violates their rights under article 26 ICCPR.

We should all beware of a “human rights industry” that sometimes responds more to lobbies than to peoples and uses some human rights as weapons to undermine other human rights. For many reasons, we must beware of this new religion of “selective human rights”, which is not based on a holistic view of the human being but on ideological secularization, which necessarily entails a loss of spirituality and identity. It is the human dignity of each individual with his/her own convictions, the right to be oneself, free of intimidation and government surveillance, that deserves protection in law and practice. ■

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25th May – Africa Day

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JIMENA SARMIENTO AND SANCHIA ZUCKER-RODRIGUEZ, MEWC, NGO

African Liberation Day

Africa Day is historically rooted in the first Conference of Independent African States, which attracted African leaders and took place in Ghana on 15th April 1958. The conference was the first Pan-African conference on the continent. First celebrated as *Africa Freedom Day*, it had the purpose of annually marking progress on the liberation movement and of symbolizing the determination of the people of Africa to free themselves from foreign domination and exploitation.

Between 1958 and 1963 the political and social panorama

became increasingly complex, both in Africa and worldwide. On 25th May 1963, 31 African leaders convened a summit meeting to found the Organization of African Unity (OAU, also known as the African Union). On this occasion, *African Freedom Day* became *African Liberation Day* – also referred to as *Africa Day* – and the date for its annual celebration was set to 25th May.

Since then, *African Liberation Day* has helped raise political awareness about different issues faced by African communities across the world. It has also been mobilised as a platform for increasing visibility about their struggle for liberation and development processes.

Empowered Women Inspire Societies

The continent continues to face enormous challenges concerning the promotion, protection and fulfilment of human rights. As poverty reduction strategies in many cases fail to consider differences in income and gender power relations, the efforts made to finance programs that reduce inequality do not always benefit women. African women are still denied education, employment, and have limited opportunities in trade, industry and government.

Despite the fact that 51 of the 53 States from the African Union have ratified the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) and 37 of them are bound by the Maputo Protocol, in most cases, implementation and a rule of law that give women the full enjoyment of their rights remain unachieved.

Women today represent over half of the 1.2 billion African population, 41% of which is

under the age of 15. UN Bodies and Civil society have recognized the potential of this diversity and identified women as playing a key role in preventing, managing or overcoming the serious and challenging issues the continent faces, as they are a powerful force for peace, reconciliation of their communities, and bringing torn economies back to health. The need to strengthen these women's voices concerning their own empowerment, and participation in development, has hence become a primary goal of the African Women Decade and of the UN SDGs.

Despite these ambitious human rights-based plans of action, across the world, for centuries, the lives and work of the many African Women that have fought tirelessly and actively for their rights and the advancement of their societies remain widely unknown. Furthermore, the under representation of qualified African women in leadership positions has created a gender gap that exists in many areas of today's public scene.

© Jimena Sarmiento



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Social Media and Social Change

To address this issue, on Africa Day 2017, Make Every Woman Count (MEWC)¹, an African women-led NGO launched an innovative campaign, spotlighting the builders of tomorrow's societies.

The hashtag #MakingWomen-Visible, was used to raise the visibility of African women who have made significant contributions to communities, women's right, and representation in male-dominated spheres.

In the week leading-up to the campaign, instagrammers, and Twitter and Facebook users, globally, submitted nominations for African women whose achievements have had an impact on their communities. On Africa Day, the nominees were celebrated with visual

biographies. The campaign fomented the visibility of a wide range of achievements they have made to women's rights, from female African poets, political leaders and to ex-cutters who have now become leaders in the fight to end female genital mutilation. One of the nominees was celebrated for creatively raising awareness about Malawian women's experiences through adapting the Vagina Monologues to accurately reflect their current reality. Women who have made impact on a smaller but meaningful scale were also celebrated alongside women who hold substantial power, illustrating that, collectively, all contributions can have a transformative effect. This initiative echoes recent social media campaigns such as #WhatWomenWant launched by ATHENA. Its goal



Eurice Ntobedzi has employed women electrical engineers to support the development of projects in Botswana. She has brought Solar PV power to 20 remote rural schools.



Tijo Portia Tshego is a feminist trainer and a Gender Studies lecturer at the University of Botswana. She is deeply passionate about gender issues and devote to her work with young women.

was to place women at the heart of human and social development processes and the social movement. Another example is the campaign #SayHerName which raises visibility of African-American female victims of police brutality.

With the digital evolution, we are now facing a new era of citizen journalism. Whereas mass media traditionally monopolized the creation and transmission of content, it has now been democratized to include individuals armed only with the courage to raise a concern, and a platform to let it be heard. During the past decade, social media has become a powerful advocacy tool. It appears interesting to note that women's rights organisations have harnessed this power to gain visibility and be heard globally.

According to a global survey carried by a future-focused global ideas agency², today, 70% of young people perceive social media as a force for change. A new way to approach millennials, from across the world, would be to embrace their energetic idealism and trust them to transform Twitter trends into trends to change society. Through channelling this enthusiasm, maybe one day, equality online could translate to equality offline. ■

1. Make Every Woman Count (MEWC) is an African woman-led NGO which goal is to help African women by building their leadership capacities to influence policy and decision making. For more information consult <http://www.makeeverywomancount.org>
2. Havas Worldwide's Prosumer Report – "Millennials: The Challenger Generation", 2014

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EcoVadis Sustain 2017

Leaders in CSR¹ and procurement chart the path toward a sustainable future



© EcoVadis photos

DAVID McCLINTOCK, ECOVADIS

Hundreds of professionals in sustainable procurement, CSR and supply chain came together in Paris to share, network, learn and present at EcoVadis Sustain 2017, and our Rock-In-A Free World celebration in Paris in May. Here are a few highlights of the event that provide inspiration and hope that a key lever for sustainability progress lies in global supply chains:

Time to get Exponential!

John Elkington set the pace, and challenged all of us to breakthrough from incremental gains, and boldly seek Exponential transformation of our businesses and activities. The exponential future referenced in Paul Hawken's Drawdown, and embodied in the UN SDGs won't be achieved with 10%, 25% or even 50% increments; We must seek 10x leaps, tapping the explosion of innovation in technology, business models and our will to bring about this change. One example came in the CPO panel discussion where PSA-Peugeot-Citroen described how they set specific sub-score targets for suppliers on "Sustainable Supply Chain" theme 4 of the EcoVadis rating, thus leveraging their entire Tier 1 to influence Tier 2. This strategy was echoed in the Johnson & Johnson / Tessa Plastics workshop which detailed their buyer-supplier collaboration to drive sustainability to deeper tiers of the supply chain.

Collaboration

Throughout the two days the theme of collaboration was present. Sector initiatives TfS and Railspensible have grown to

19 members and 7 members respectively, and are radically accelerating transparency by making it easy for suppliers to share with ~10x the number of clients in one click. Also echoed in the breakout presentation from Clariant (a TfS member), on average 70% of the suppliers in these initiatives improve their score upon re-evaluation.

The previous evening at Rock-In-A-Free-World, Ron Lewis of Coca-Cola European Partners took home a Sustainability Leadership Award: Winning the category "Best Supplier Engagement", CCEP live up to their name and truly partner with suppliers on programs such as the Carbon Challenge to drive positive impacts. (More on the awards below.)

Procurement services and technology providers were on site to bring their latest updates, including AsiaInspection² who perform on-site audits, Pool4Tool³ the intelligent procurement platform, and Tradeshift⁴ the open platform for connecting buyers and suppliers.

Light the spark that ignites progress

A spark of an idea can light a team or company's journey to a bold goal, for example to re-think a business or metric or engagement strategy. At Unilever, they have sparked their employees imagination with goals to decouple growth from environmental footprint and to improve the lives of 5.5 million people. At PSA-Peugeot-Citroen they are "in 100%": They require 100% of tender proposals to have a CSR Scorecard, and are shifting goals from 'percent of spend' coverage, toward

driving supplier improvements in 2017. Similarly of the 2020 goals Ferrero has set for its sourcing, five are "100%" – as in sustainably sourced. In addition, they emphasize "bottom-up" and peer-to-peer in their internal engagement programs.

If you're new to sustainable procurement, or just want to know where your program stands, BSR "Supply Chain Leadership Ladder" self assessment will guide you.

Celebrate progress

Rock-In-A Free World was our way of celebrating our 10 year anniversary by celebrating our customers. EcoVadis worked closely with Justin Dillon, CEO of Made In A Free World to host this event to recognize who are working together in their supply chains to end slavery and create a sustainable world. It was also the debut of EcoVadis Sustainability and Sustainable Procurement Leadership awards, where we recognized three Buyer organizations Coca-Cola European Partners, SNCF and Michelin, as well as 14 awards for evaluated companies for their top scores in their region or sector. See the complete list of winners here.⁵

Home

Sometimes you have to step way back – all the way out of the atmosphere into space as Alex Mejia of UNITAR suggested in his presentation – to see the full scope of challenges as big as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and what's at stake: planet Earth, our collective home. Astronauts have universally reported that that no matter where you live (or what supply chain you work in), this realization will help us save the planet, one supply chain at a time. This was our best Sustain ever. To our customers and partners: A thousand thanks to all of you who presented and participated at Sustain; YOU are what makes this event so special and valuable. Contact us now to present in 2018! ■

1. Corporate Social Responsibility

2. <http://www.asiainspection.com>

3. <https://www.pool4tool.com/cms/en/products>

4. <http://www.tradeshift.com>

5. <http://www.ecovadis.com/ecovadis-announces-winners-of-first-ever-sustainability-leadership-awards>

« Le problème G »

Solidarité entre les catégories de personnel dans ce moment de crise.

SOLANGE BEHOTEGUY, CNUCED

G comme solidarité

Septième lettre de l'alphabet. En chimie, G est le symbole du glycinium. En physique, d'une constante de gravitation. La minuscule g est l'unité de mesure gramme que l'on écrit sans point abrégatif, kg, cg, mg, etc. La capitale G représente aussi la note sol dans le système anglo-saxon ou allemand. G, sur les anciennes monnaies de France, est la marque de la monnaie frappée à Poitiers, mais aussi à Genève dont c'était l'initiale. Sa prononciation est gutturale, c'est la première lettre de Graal et ceux qui aiment le scrabble peuvent l'utiliser pour le mot «général». D'ailleurs, dans un cadre onusien la lettre «G» viens de «général» et désigne une personne qui fait partie des «gens de l'administration». Je me suis toujours demandé pourquoi «P» ne veut pas dire «particulier» mais professionnel.

La définition officielle nous dit: G: «La catégorie des services généraux et des catégories apparentées exerce des fonctions administratives, de secrétariat et d'appui administratif, ainsi que des fonctions tech-

niques spécialisées telles que les fonctions d'imprimerie, de sécurité et d'entretien des locaux. Des emplois sont à pourvoir dans les huit réseaux d'emplois: gestion et appui aux opérations; développement économique et social; politique, paix et sécurité; systèmes informatiques et technologies de l'information; droit; information et relations extérieures; gestion des conférences; sûreté et sécurité».

Les différences entre les G et les P (surtout aux niveaux des droits), il y en a! Mais ça fera l'objet d'un autre article ici même, dans cette colonne intitulée «Le problème G», où nous trouverons ensemble des points intéressants à traiter.

Aujourd'hui je voudrais m'attarder sur la réduction salariale de 7,5% qui menace nos collègues, amis, chefs «P». Le mot solidarité vient de *solidum*, la volonté de rester ensemble. Cette solidarité est nécessaire, particulièrement à une époque où de nouvelles formes d'inégalités apparaissent et risquent de se développer. Ce n'est plus une question de grade mais d'union, ce n'est

pas le moment de regarder les différences et de se préparer des milkshakes de préjugés et de frustrations, c'est le moment de rester unis.

Un des plus grands malheurs de la société occidentale est l'individualisme.

L'idée de solidarité apparaît à la fin du XIX^e siècle et se présente comme une doctrine morale. Cela voulait dire une chose très simple, mon rapport à autrui n'est pas seulement juridique, non seulement je ne dois pas lui faire du mal mais d'une certaine manière lui faire du bien. À l'égard de mes collègues qui aujourd'hui risquent de perdre un salaire par an, cela veut dire que je collectivise le rapport et je brise le principe de l'égoïsme, et non parce que demain je pourrais être dans leur peau, même si dans ce cas de figure j'espère qu'ils agiraient aussi. On ne peut pas être solidaires parce qu'on attend un «retour», on est solidaires ou on ne l'est pas. De la même manière qu'il n'y a pas de gradations, il est impossible d'être un peu solidaire. ■

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FACULTÉ DES LETTRES



From all at Home

Following a battle in Ypres on 23 July 1916, Private Carl Mather was admitted to the 3rd Casualties Clearing Station with a gunshot wound to his shoulder and face and later succumbed to septic shock on 2 August 1916.



© Julie Clark photo

JULIE CLARK, UNODA

A month later the Mather family received a short letter from the Canadian Forces indicating that their son and brother would not be returning in the fall to begin his law degree. Along with the letter was a medallion engraved with a cross and poppy on the front and on the back the coordinates of Lijs-senthoek Cemetery in Belgium. We always knew that Great Uncle Carl was buried in a Flanders Field, but it was too far away from home with no chances to say goodbye.

In August 2016, I was offered an Internship position with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) in Geneva, Switzerland. Throughout the six months I worked with the Conference on Disarmament by attending meetings and conducting research. The conference subject matter pertained to the very things that impact families, and in particular changed mine. UNODA is one of the most important and truest multilateral forums to global security within the UN. The department's main purpose is to "help create a security environment favourable to ensuring human development, as enshrined in the letter and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations."¹ In an uncertain world it is important to remember that without the UN and without States dedicated to disarmament at all levels, the world of warfare becomes unpredictable and those involved can become unaccountable to their actions of indiscriminate violence. The actions of today, the laws in place and those still to be negotiated directly correlate with the past and are intrinsically linked with the future. Answers can be found in the successes and failures of history, while the tragic stories of the past serve as a reminder as to why negotiations will always remain an imperative to global wellbeing.

My personal connection to the Disarmament community began during the Second Battle of Ypres on 22 April 1915 when Germany unleashed Modern Chemical Weapons in the form of 150 tonnes of chlorine gas upon the 6 km wide front.² The war affected those in Europe and abroad; pulling in the commonwealth nations from over the oceans to fight on a land far from home. At the time, Great Uncle Carl was completing his Bachelors of Arts in History and was accepted into Law at the University of Manitoba. Being a loyal subject of the Commonwealth my Great Uncle Carl responded to the call to arms and on 4 October 1915 he was enlisted with the Manitoba Regiment in France, later being transferred to Ypres in June 1916. Private Carl Mather was one of 619,636 enlisted Canadians and one of 424,000 stationed overseas³ to arrive on the battlefield that only a year prior had drawn the world into modern warfare. Out of the 1,160 students from the University of Manitoba Carl was one of 123 that did not make it home.⁴

When looking at facts and figures, it is hard to identify the impact that war has on a family. Generations commemorate the fallen through novels and poems in the hopes of reminding us of the realities, but we can never completely comprehend unless we are directly impacted. Weapons that harm soldiers and civilians do not just explode within the direct area of impact, but rather reverberate across oceans, and through families for generations. A gunshot or a bomb can change the trajectory of a family's path. For mine, the gunshot that wounded our young soldier resonated across four generations and led me back to his graveside in Belgium 101 years later.



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Lijssenthoek Cemetery in Belgium.



© William Ruder-Röder

Canadian Scottish advancing near Inchy during the Battle of the Canal du Nord, 27 September 1918.

On a crisp sunny January day in Poperinge, Belgium, I cycled past farms and watched as the heat from the cold ground rose in a gentle fog; the smell of damp grass and cold air made me long for the prairies of Canada, of home. Farmers were out in the fields examining the winter frost and testing the soil in preparation for the spring tilling. I stopped my bike about a mile away from the Cemetery to absorb the image before me and imagined what Belgium must have looked like to Great Uncle Carl in the summer of 1916. Had the fields reminded him of home? Had the morning light on the ground around him brought him some moment of peace?

The Lijssenthoek Cemetery in Belgium encapsulates the loss of 10,784 people⁵; Great Uncle Carl rests in the section closest to the glass-encased museum, and in the middle of the fourth row. With each passing step and gravestone the weight of generations unable to say goodbye wore heavier and heavier; my feet were weighted into the soil, each breath laden with nerves. Then suddenly there he was; 161,195 – Private C. Mather of the 8th Battalion Canadian Inf., 2nd August 1916, Age 20 and the world around me paused. Though it was the words written at the bottom of the stone, words that were absent from the stones surrounding him that meant the most, “My Love to all at home.” Upon reading these words I said hello with tears in my eyes and sat down upon the muddy grass, cold with frost and told him about what he had missed. I told him about how I had ended up in Belgium, what I was learning at the UN and what I hoped to do in the future. It was important to me that he knew our family had never forgotten about him. When it came

time to say my own goodbyes, I promised that he would be my personal reminder of why global peace and disarmament are important. At the base of his tombstone I placed a wooden cross with the written words, “From all at home with love.” Walking out of the cemetery and making my way back to Poperinge the weight that had been heavy upon my shoulders, and had followed my family for generations, suddenly lifted. Our lost soldier was no longer lost and closure was found in a long awaited farewell.

The common theme of war is not necessarily the weapons, the tactics nor the politics, but rather the casualties. Casualties that present themselves in the hundreds and thousands; in the gaps of generations and the scars carved into hearts and marred earth. The only response to the reality is finding a way to continue dialogue and

negotiation. We must celebrate the minimal successes and remember that the goals to protect combatants and civilians in warfare are much more than written objectives, but inspirational necessities. ■

1. “Disarmament,” United Nations Office at Geneva, accessed February 20, 2017, [http://unog.ch/80256EE600585943/\(httpHomepages\)/\\$first?OpenDocument](http://unog.ch/80256EE600585943/(httpHomepages)/$first?OpenDocument).
2. Olivier Lepick, “Towards Total War: Langemarck, 22 April 1915,” in *Innocence Slaughtered: Gas and the transformation of warfare and society*, ed. Jean Pascal Zanders (London: Uniform Press, 2016), 46.
3. “The Cost of Canada’s War,” Canadian War Museum, accessed February 24, 2017, <http://www.warmuseum.ca/firstworldwar/history/after-the-war/legacy/the-cost-of-canadas-war/>.
4. “First World War centenary; U of M involvement,” *UM News Today*, July 29, 2014, accessed February 24, 2017, <http://news.umanitoba.ca/first-world-war-centenary-u-of-m-involvement/>.
5. “Project,” Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, accessed February 3, 2017, <http://www.lijssenthoek.be/en/pagina/143/project.html>.

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L'Opéra des Nations

A night at the opera before it's too late?

After 18 months, we have got used to the Opéra des Nations (ODN). But the Opéra is ephemeral in both name and nature.

SARAH JORDAN, DEPUTY EDITOR

It's an even closer neighbour than the Botanical Gardens or UN Beach (see the two previous editions of *UN Special*). But we shouldn't forget that unlike the Botanical Gardens, which celebrates its 200th anniversary this year, or UN Beach, which has been our summer haunt since 1947, the Opéra is ephemeral in both name and nature. It will soon be a thing of the past and you will contemplate an empty space as you wait for tram number 15. The operas, ballets and recitals that took place on our doorstep proclaiming to the world that Geneva is a city of peace and culture will be no more. They will return to the newly renovated Grand Théâtre on the Place de Neuve. And, in just one year from now, our ephemeral structure, which already had a life in Paris before its arrival here, will be dismantled and embark on a new life in China... So make sure you experience a night to remember before it goes! The ODN has pulled out all the stops to offer a series of memorable and original swansongs for its 2017-18

programme. Below you will find a selection of the highlights as revealed to me by Daniel Dollé, Artistic Advisor and Dramaturge. For all performances, subtitles in English and in French will be displayed. Special rates are available for young people under the age of 30 and discounted standby rates are available for all. There are also different subscriptions if you are really keen!

A trilogy to recount the life of Figaro

Opera and Figaro go together, even for non-specialists. This trilogy – performed over three consecutive evenings – could even serve as an introduction to the genre. It tells the story of Figaro, the Barber of Seville and his marriage in two classic operas (by Rossini and Mozart), and his divorce in one contemporary one (by Elena Langer). This ambitious project comprising three different operas, three different composers, three different conductors, three different orchestras and three directors will use a common set, costume design and lighting to link the three chapters.



17-18 season poster.



Tobias Richter, Lorella Bertani & Sami Kanaan

Callas

This is an event not to be missed in the Geneva dance season. Everyone knows Maria Callas, the quintessence of the opera singer with her regal bearing, acclaimed voice and sad personal life. The Geneva Ballet Company, with 22 dancers on stage, will interpret the passions of her life as well as those of the heroines she played. Her arias will provide the musical score and the costumes will feature recreations of dresses the diva wore.

Figaro-ci, Figaro-là

Figaro again, but this time for the young: for school children and the rest of us – the young at heart. This is a dynamic new production that recounts Figaro as presented by different composers in different eras and seeks to explain the reason for his popularity: could it just be that he is an example of a man to whom we can all relate? Lasting under an hour and a half, with music and texts, the performance is supported by a full pedagogical programme for schools. This fun production is perfect for parents who would like to initiate their children to opera.

End-of-year operetta

The Gipsy Baron by Johann Strauss will be performed in French and is a suitably light and joyous sing-along type choice for the festive season – peppered with waltzes, mazurkas, polkas and czardas.

Faust in French by Gounod at the ODN / Faust in German by Robert Schumann at Victoria Hall

Faust is one of the most famous operas in the world. It is a simple yet timeless story about the quest for eternal youth. Just after the ODN production, Schumann's oratorio and overture, performed at Victoria Hall, will give another take on this character, conceived by Goethe.

Voces

In the 2016-17 season, the ODN hosted Rojo Tango, a celebration of the Argentinian dance. This season, it invites you to discover the world of Flamenco, another Hispanic dance, which UNESCO has classified as "Intangible Cultural Heritage" since 2010. Sarah Baras, one of Flamenco's most prestigious ambassadors, will direct and choreograph this ballet. As it says in the ODN programme "Her performances have just the right balance of madness and fever to appeal to any Flamenco lover or spectator". And with Tim Rice from the Rolling Stones on saxophone, this event promises to be unforgettable.

Cavalleria Rusticana and I Pagliacci

The realism apparent in works of literature in the late 19th century (Zola for example) finds an echo in these two love stories that go wrong. Directed by two Italian women – one from the south and one from the north – these two tales of

jealousy set in the Mezzogiorno – a land of coarse peasants with an uncompromising sense of honour are "slices of life" that we can all relate to.

King Arthur by Henry Purcell

If you like baroque music, myths and legend, this is for you – but don't expect this new production to be classical in its approach. A baroque orchestra, Cappella Mediterranea, a French director, Alain Maratrat, who has worked with the filmmaker Peter Brook, music and dance will unite in this new production of a late 17th century composition.

Don Giovanni

By the end of its short presence at Nations, the ODN will have presented *Così fan tutte* (April/May 2017) and the *Marriage of Figaro* (September 2017 – see above). This third work by Mozart – *Don Giovanni* – once described by Wagner as the "opera of operas" – brings things full circle and features the cream of contemporary soloists, including Simon Keenlyside in the title role.

Vertige Romantique

The first performance at the ODN in February 2016 was an opera – the last, in July 2018, will be a ballet. This world première, a celebration of romanticism, presents two creations; *Fallen*, to the music of Tchaikovsky and Schumann; and *Return to Nothingness*, to the music of Schubert. Its aim is to spark emotion and move us deeply. A fitting farewell from our Opéra. ■

For full details on the 2017-2018 season at the Opéra des Nations – follow this link: www.geneveopera.ch Everything is clearly explained in French and English.



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From Bohol with love

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Cycling above jungle treetops, plunging into the underwater realms of whale sharks and canoeing through illuminated clouds of fireflies at dusk; just a micro selection of all the possible activities offered in Bohol.

ALEXANDRA THACKER, FICSA INTERN AND GEMMA VESTAL, FICSA GENERAL SECRETARY

If you ever find yourself traveling to Manila for duty travel, allow a few days to explore some of the other 7,000 islands in the Philippines. With beautiful stretches of beaches and a tropical climate on offer, what's not to like? And the island of Bohol comes highly recommended.

Ease of travel

A province situated in the Philippines' central region and

little known by world travelers, Bohol is a place bursting with unique and unimaginable opportunities. Once you arrive on the island, either via a 2-hour ferry from neighbouring Cebu island or via a shorter 1-hour flight from the country's capital, expansive sea views will greet you. As will the welcoming locals.

Upon arrival, transport can immediately be arranged to whisk you off to any and all of Bohol's tourist destinations;

tourism offices and providers are readily available at both the port and the airport, so too are local taxis and transportation services to hotels and other accommodation.

Starting with Tagbilaran city, the island's capital, a quick visit to the various central malls will equip you with any essential clothing or items you may need for your adventures. However, under time constraints, it is best to forego the bustle of the city and dive straight into the heart of the island.

Sites, lights and action!

For some cultural immersion into the history and heritage of the region, the Blood Compact site in Bool narrates the origin of the *Sandugo* (blood compact) tradition and commemorates the diplomacy between the natives and the Spanish explorers in the 16th century. Further



© shutterstock

Hispanic influences can be seen when visiting Baclayon church in the municipality of the same name, although visitors should be warned that it is currently undergoing extensive restoration and reconstruction due to a massive 2015 earthquake.

Bohol is celebrated for hosting an excellent array of natural wonders and features. Most prominently, the Chocolate Hills in central *Carmen* are a geological phenomenon that is distinctive to Bohol's landscape. Cone-shaped mounds of limestone covered in grass decorate acres of the municipality's territory and true to name, the hills turn "chocolate" brown in the summer's heat. It's a site that must be seen to be believed.

Close by, the aptly named Chocolate Hills Adventure Park (CHAP) amplifies your experience of the hills by offering you a unique opportunity to soar across them. Either by bike or by surfboard, you can zip line above the canopies of the surrounding jungles between the chocolate hills and snap a photo to have proof of this ludicrous yet exhilarating adventure. Other activities are also available from treetop rope courses to wildlife exhibitions

to accommodate for varying degrees of thrill seeking.

In neighbouring Danao, the Dagohoy cave is another natural marvel with its expansive caverns you can walk through studded with impressive stalactites, waterfalls, and an equally fascinating history. Also to experience, if you so dare, is a heart-stopping 200 m-plunge ride into the Danao canyon at the adventure park.

Where the wild things are

Bohol is no stranger to intriguing wildlife; an abundance of creatures reside in and around the island, in the jungles and in the surrounding reefs.

Two species of primates worth looking out for are the famed Philippine Tarsier and the more elusive macaques of *Loon*. The former is bound to have appeared in most promotional content for the Philippines, as this species is endemic to the region. Its iconic wide-eyed gaze and petite build captivate sightseers near and far, and its reputation as one of the smallest primates in the world makes it a quintessential activity for the full *Boholano* experience. Due to habitat loss, Philippine tarsiers are mostly

found in sanctuaries across the island, however it is advised you avoid flash photography when capturing these creatures on photo in order to protect their nocturnal vision.

For a more obscure encounter, a visit to the mangroves of the *Loon* area grants you a remarkable opportunity to see the crustacean-eating macaques of Bohol. Only a recently budding tourist attraction, the unusual diet of crabs and shellfish of these short-tailed monkeys is a feat of nature you should definitely consider seeing when in Bohol.

However, if like the Tarsier, you are more of a nocturnal creature yourself, *Maribojoc* presents a chance to kayak up the Abatan River to view the illumination of fireflies at dusk. This natural spectacle manifests itself in other places in Bohol including *Loay* and *Loboc*, however *Maribojoc* is easier to get to given its proximity to Tagbilaran city. Though, *Loboc* and *Loay* do have the option of viewing the fireflies on a river cruise, while dining on traditional Filipino cuisine in the safety and shelter of a boat. Those fortunate enough will also be treated to a live performance from local bands as they coast down the river engulfed in bioluminescent firefly light.

Although not technically in Bohol, a must-go site involves venturing down to neighbouring Cebu Island's peninsula to the town of *Oslob*. There, you can rendezvous from dawn with the whale sharks. These 30-foot long creatures are beasts of the deep blue so being able to snorkel among them, just off the shores of *Oslob*, is an unparalleled opportunity. You may choose to SCUBA dive instead which allows you to float aimlessly among the whale sharks and explore their underwater habitat. Transport

to *Oslob* is most convenient from Bohol, where a number of dive shops at Alona beach in Panglao can be found for boat hire to the location.

7,000 islands and counting

Bohol is not only composed of the main island of Bohol; the islands of *Balicasag* and *Pamilacan* also belong to this province. Both accommodate captivating sea creatures and both are worthy of a stop over.

The surrounding Bohol seas are a playground for whales, dolphins and sea turtles. With the backdrop of a golden rising sun, morning boat trips to *Pamilacan* Island include an escort of a pod of dolphins. Around 11 species of whales and dolphins occupy the coral rich sanctuary and surrounding areas, giving you a chance to glimpse their jovial nature in action as they leap from the water.

Similarly, *Balicasag* Island is a haven for aquatic wildlife, treating SCUBA diving enthusiasts to wall, wreck and reef dives bursting with underwater flora and fauna. As a popular nesting ground for endangered sea turtles, *Balicasag* also allows visitors to admire this protected species from up close and personal.

Previously mentioned *Panglao* Island, as the biggest adjacent island to Bohol, can provide access to both *Balicasag* and *Pamilacan* as well as to an impressive selection of resorts and hotels, catering to all clientele.

All that has been mentioned illustrates only a small portion of Bohol's beauty and charm. This well concealed paradise still possesses many more adventures and thrills to be discovered, so it would be a shame to pass up on a chance to explore it when in the vicinity. ■



© François Viaud

Table ronde à l'occasion de la journée de la femme

La position de la femme dans le monde sportif

À l'occasion de la journée de la femme, une table ronde a eu lieu aux Nations Unies le 8 mars dernier à Genève; elle portait sur le sport comme moyen de réduire les inégalités entre les hommes et les femmes.

ASTA VAN ACKER, NIGEL BURZMINSKI

Un des objectifs de cette initiative était de donner plus de pouvoir aux femmes dans le monde du sport, de leur donner accès à des rôles plus importants dans ce domaine.

Le sport pourrait être utilisé comme outil de développement, si on en utilisait tout le potentiel pour progresser face aux inégalités entre les genres. C'est le constat des intervenantes de la table ronde organisée à l'Office des Nations Unies de Genève en mars, à l'occasion de la journée de la femme. Actuellement on peut clairement constater

une évolution en la matière: aux Jeux Olympiques de Rio, en 2016, la proportion de femmes a été plus élevée que jamais auparavant, puisque leur nombre représentait 45% des participants. Pour avoir un point de comparaison, en 1950, seules 10% de femmes ont participé aux JO.

Parmi les intervenantes de cette conférence, Myriam Baverel, première coach féminine de Taekwondo, est la première à avoir obtenu une médaille dans cette discipline. Elle a gagné 4 médailles d'or au championnat de France, 1 médaille d'argent

Jeunes Reporters à l'ONU est une initiative sous les auspices du Projet de Changement de Perception (PCP), dans le Bureau du Directeur général de l'ONU à Genève, la Fondation Eduki et le Service de l'Information des Nations Unies. Il ouvre les portes des Nations Unies à Genève aux étudiants (16-19 ans) intéressés par les affaires internationales et souhaitant discuter avec des experts de diverses organisations dans le cadre d'une conférence de presse. Chaque session est thématique et 2-3 représentants d'organisations travaillant sur ces questions viennent parler de leur travail et des problèmes actuels. Les étudiants, en tant que reporters, ont l'opportunité de poser des questions. Après avoir recueilli les informations, les étudiants peuvent écrire un article qui sera publié dans UN Spécial ou les journaux des écoles, ou bien faire une présentation en classe. Cela donne l'opportunité aux étudiants d'en apprendre plus sur leurs centres d'intérêts mais aussi de mieux comprendre l'activité de la Genève Internationale et enfin de communiquer aux autres ce qu'elle signifie.



© François Vioand



© Harry Pot

Sur la gauche: Doris Hart; sur la droite: Maureen Connolly, la première femme à avoir gagné les 4 tournois du Grand Chelem dans la même année.

au championnat du monde et une aux Jeux Olympiques d'Athènes en 2004. Elle a par ailleurs été élue deux fois – en 2009 et 2013 – meilleure entraîneuse de Taekwondo du monde par les techniciens de la *World Taekwondo Federation*.

Majestueux parcours

Myriam Baverel a commencé par entraîner des équipes seniors de Taekwondo exclusivement féminines. Elle a toujours excellé dans cette fonction, obtenant les meilleurs résultats. Lors de cette conférence, cette jeune femme talentueuse a fait part de son désir d'entraîner également des équipes masculines. Initialement, cette requête a été refusée, et elle a dû insister et se battre afin de s'affirmer, dans ce domaine si rarement fréquenté par la gente féminine. En constatant qu'elle avait obtenu des résultats nettement meilleurs avec ses équipes que les autres coaches avec les équipes masculines, on a fini par lui donner une chance d'assurer également le coaching d'une équipe d'hommes; et encore une fois, elle a mené à bien sa mission, obtenant des résultats record et réussissant à décider un maximum des pratiquants qu'elle entraînait à passer au niveau compétitif. Mais les choses ne se sont pas toujours bien passées pour

cette femme-coach, pourtant si déterminée. En effet, il n'a pas plu à tout le monde qu'elle parvienne à atteindre un statut aussi élevé dans le domaine, et elle a été victime de nombreuses discriminations. On peut donc constater que ce problème n'est pas encore résolu, et que le sujet est toujours relativement tabou.

Autre intervenante de cette table ronde, M^{me} Marisol Casado est Présidente de l'Union Internationale de Triathlon et membre de la Commission des femmes dans le sport au CIO (Comité International Olympique). Elle aussi est la seule et première femme à avoir atteint une position aussi haut placée dans sa profession. Elle s'est dite très fière d'avoir été reconduite dans ses fonctions pour cette année 2017.

Inégalité des salaires

Il faut aussi souligner que dans le monde du sport, les salaires sont souvent différents entre les femmes et les hommes. Les footballeuses professionnelles, par exemple, rémunérées par leur fédération, leur club et les sponsors, touchent en moyenne 3500 €, tandis que les hommes reçoivent environ 12000 €.

La question est: peut-on s'attendre à une égalité des

salaires entre les genres dans tous les sports? Dans le monde du tennis par exemple, est-il juste que dans les tournois du «Grand chelem» (Australian open, French open, British open and US open) les joueurs et les joueuses gagnent les mêmes montants en argent (c'est en effet le cas), alors que les femmes y jouent leurs matchs en deux sets gagnants et les hommes en trois? Est-il donc juste dans un tel cas que les femmes gagnent autant que les hommes tout en sachant que celles-là jouent des matchs plus courts que ceux-ci?

Témoignage d'une coach de football canadienne

Tracy David a été footballeuse professionnelle et de 1986 à 1990; elle a joué dans la première équipe nationale canadienne de football. Cela fait maintenant 31 ans qu'elle est devenue coach d'équipes universitaires ou provinciales et d'équipes nationales de jeunesse, toutes féminines.

Vous est-il arrivé de vouloir devenir coach d'une équipe masculine?

Oui, cela m'a traversé l'esprit, mais je préfère coacher des équipes féminines, car selon moi, mon rôle est d'être un modèle féminin pour les joueuses que j'entraîne, ce

que je ne peux pas accomplir en entraînant une équipe masculine.

Vous serait-il possible de coacher une équipe masculine?

Oui bien sûr, mais pas sans peine; je pourrais me porter volontaire pour cette activité, mais je pense avoir moins de chance face à des hommes si ceux-ci se mettaient sur les rangs comme candidats.

Avez-vous déjà reçu des commentaires négatifs à votre égard pendant votre carrière?

Oui, mais c'était il y a très longtemps. J'avais le droit aux commentaires classiques comme «Le football, c'est un sport de mec», «Retourne dans ta cuisine», et d'autres commentaires assez machos. Mais depuis, surtout au Canada, le football est devenu le sport le plus pratiqué chez les femmes, et l'équipe nationale canadienne féminine est meilleure que l'équipe nationale masculine...! ■



© Claude Maillard

Couleurs d'automne sur le Canal de Midi à l'approche de Toulouse.

France

Au fil du Canal du Midi (1^{re} partie)

Prouesse technique exceptionnelle, le Canal du Midi qui permet de relier la mer Méditerranée à Toulouse, puis à l'océan Atlantique, grâce au canal latéral à la Garonne, a révolutionné le transport et les échanges commerciaux dans le pays du Languedoc dès le XVII^e siècle.

TEXTE & PHOTOS CLAUDE MAILLARD

Aujourd'hui, les 240 kilomètres de voies navigables classées au patrimoine mondial de l'Unesco qui rejoignent Sète à Toulouse offrent aux plaisanciers l'occasion d'effectuer une croisière fluviale hors du temps. Le chemin de halage emprunté autrefois par les chevaux qui tractaient les péniches est devenu un lieu de promenade très prisé parcouru par les cyclotouristes et les randonneurs.

Dans le train qui me conduit jusqu'à la gare de Sète où je dois retrouver mes compagnons de marche, j'ai le temps de me replonger dans l'histoire du Canal du Midi et d'étudier une nouvelle fois le parcours que nous allons réaliser. Une douzaine de jours de marche sera nécessaire pour rallier la «ville rose», capitale européenne de l'industrie aéronautique et spatiale.



© Claude Maillard

De Sète, il faut franchir 63 écluses comme celle d'Encassan pour rallier Toulouse en bateau.

Pierre-Paul Riquet, le génie d'un homme

Relier la Méditerranée à l'Atlantique fut le rêve des grands rois de France avec des enjeux importants en ligne de mire: éviter le détroit de Gibraltar, ses 3000 km de mer, ses tempêtes et ses pirates en vue de développer le commerce des céréales et du vin. Mais le projet de construction d'un canal était quasi utopique avec un col de 189 m à franchir sur un terrain aride et sans rivière. Seuls la ténacité, le génie et la fortune du biterrois Pierre-Paul Riquet viendront à bout d'une telle prouesse, avec l'aide de Colbert, sous le règne du Roi Soleil. Un chantier gigantesque débute en 1667 et s'achèvera 14 ans plus tard, quelques mois après la mort de son concepteur qui ne verra jamais son rêve devenir réalité.

Il y a tout juste 350 ans, Louis XIV signait l'Edit autorisant la construction du Canal du Midi. Mais déjà depuis l'antiquité ce projet avait été envisagé. Les Romains furent en effet les premiers à imaginer un canal qui relierait la Méditerranée à la Garonne, et donc à l'océan Atlantique, afin d'éviter d'avoir à contourner l'Espagne pour aller

de l'une à l'autre. Mais il y avait un sérieux déficit à relever: comment alimenter ce canal qui devait franchir la ligne de partage des eaux, frontière entre deux bassins versants où l'écoulement des eaux de surface se fait dans deux directions différentes? Un casse-tête que personne ne parviendra à résoudre pendant des siècles. Si bien qu'au XVI^e siècle, six semaines sont encore nécessaires pour relier la mer à l'océan.

Dans les années 1660, l'idée du creusement d'un canal est de nouveau d'actualité. Colbert, contrôleur général des finances du Roi Louis XIV, veut en effet moderniser et favoriser les échanges à l'intérieur du royaume, pour en faire une grande puissance européenne. Le projet que va lui présenter un certain Pierre-Paul Riquet dans un courrier daté du 15 novembre 1662 tombe à point nommé. Cet homme, né 53 ans plus tôt à Béziers, n'est ni architecte, ni ingénieur mais fermier général de la Gabelle. Son travail consiste à collecter l'impôt sur le sel, taxe royale créée en France au Moyen Age. Mais Riquet a une idée de génie. Installé à Revel, à

50 kilomètres à l'est de Toulouse, au pied de la Montagne Noire, il a constaté que les environs regorgeaient de cours d'eau et que la pluviométrie y était importante. Son projet prévoit de construire un immense réservoir à Saint-Ferréol, village proche de son domicile, pour collecter ces eaux, puis de creuser une rigole qui les amènera jusqu'au seuil de Naurouze, frontière de partage des eaux et point culminant du canal. L'eau pourra ainsi s'écouler vers l'ouest en direction de Toulouse, et vers l'est pour rejoindre la Méditerranée. Colbert est conquis et un Edit est signé en 1666 pour ordonner la construction du Canal des Deux Mers, dénomination souvent utilisée autrefois pour désigner le Canal du Midi. Aujourd'hui, lorsqu'on parle du Canal des Deux Mers, on évoque l'ensemble canal latéral à la Garonne (dont la construction ne sera achevée qu'en 1856) et Canal du Midi.

La première pierre du barrage de Saint-Ferréol pour édifier le réservoir d'eau est posée en avril 1667. Le chantier du canal démarre quant à lui en novembre



© Claude Maillard

Le charme bucolique du Canal du Midi en fait un lieu très prisé pour sa sérénité.

de la même année à Toulouse, avec la construction de l'écluse de la Garonne. Aujourd'hui, 63 écluses permettent le passage des bateaux sur le Canal du Midi. Pendant 14 ans, jusqu'à 12 000 ouvriers vont travailler simultanément sur le chantier. Munis de simples pelles et des pioches, ils vont creuser ainsi les 240 kilomètres du canal. Et pour évacuer la terre, ils n'auront à leur disposition que de rudimentaires paniers en osier. Il leur faudra aussi bâtir de nombreux ouvrages d'art, dont certains très innovants, pour l'alimentation en eau du canal et sa navigation. Outre le nombre impressionnant d'écluses à construire, de multiples bassins, rigoles et ponts sont à prévoir tout au long du parcours. Le pont-canal du Répudre, premier ouvrage de ce type construit en France en 1676, et qui permet au Canal du Midi de franchir la rivière Répudre en la surplombant, est de nos jours le plus vieux au monde encore en service. À l'approche de Béziers, le tunnel de Malpas devra être creusé sous la colline d'Ensérune pour éviter au canal de faire un trop long détour. Tous ces édifices coûtent cher, très cher, et les dépenses dépassent

vite les prévisions. Pour que son projet puisse aboutir, Pierre-Paul Riquet va y consacrer l'intégralité de son importante fortune accumulée lorsqu'il était fermier général de la Gabelle. Ruiné, il laissera plus de 2 millions de livres de dettes à ses héritiers. À bout de forces, il s'éteindra le 1^{er} octobre 1680 alors que son canal est en voie d'achèvement. L'inauguration de celui-ci aura lieu en « grande pompe » le 15 mai 1681. Par la suite, Vauban apportera quelques modifications à l'ouvrage afin de l'améliorer, mais toujours dans un esprit d'humilité et de respect de l'œuvre de Riquet. À partir de là et pendant deux siècles, le Canal du Midi va assurer pleinement sa fonction de fret. À Toulouse, on remplit les barques de blé, d'orge, d'avoine, de seigle et de millet. À Sète, ce sont du vin, du poisson séché et des cultures méditerranéennes comme les oranges, qui sont chargés en direction de la ville rose. Les notables propriétaires des terres agricoles environnantes font fortune. Un service de transport en commun est également mis sur pied. Il faut alors compter quatre jours de voyage pour relier Toulouse à Sète. Mais

cet âge d'or prend fin dans les années 1850 avec le réseau routier qui s'est bien amélioré, mais surtout avec l'arrivée du chemin de fer qui va porter un coup dur à l'activité sur le canal. Sa fréquentation chute, le trafic va rapidement s'éroder et, faute de crédits, il va se retrouver abandonné.

Déserté par la batellerie commerciale, le Canal du Midi va néanmoins trouver un second souffle grâce au tourisme nautique, et ce sont désormais des centaines d'embarcations de location qui partent à son assaut. Son classement au patrimoine mondial de l'Unesco en 1996 va apporter les crédits nécessaires à sa restauration. Mais aujourd'hui, cette voie d'eau doit faire face à un défi majeur, celui du remplacement de milliers d'arbres (menacés par un champignon microscopique responsable de la maladie du chancre coloré du platane) dont l'ombrage lui donnait ce charme si bucolique.

(À découvrir dans le prochain numéro du UN Special le récit de notre périple au fil du Canal du Midi.) ■

Buy locally and support our host community

The Caves Ouvertes events, an opportunity to taste the very best of Swiss wine and sustain local produce and culture.

ALEXANDRA THACKER, FICSA INTERN AND GEMMA VESTAL, WHO STAFF

As an annual celebration of Swiss gastronomy and wine, the *Caves Ouvertes* events grant you a taste of the very best Swiss vineyards have to offer. Held across four weekends in May in various regions of Switzerland, this national festival attracts more than 200,000 wine enthusiasts each year, both local and from abroad.

For a small fee of around 10 CHF, you are equipped with a glass and are allowed to explore the local open wineries and indulge in the best *crus* of previous harvests. And fear not for transportation or access to such wineries; specially organised shuttle buses are provided for travel between the wineries, free of charge, and even bikes are available for the more courageous and active.

At home, the Canton of Geneva has been hosting its annual *Caves Ouvertes* event since 1987, to much success. Many local *Genevoise* vineyards embrace this extremely popular occasion and their proximity to each other allows event goers to relish all that's on offer without having to travel far. If you're looking to venture out and taste the fruit of other cantons, Neuchâtel, Bielersée, and German-speaking Switzerland as well as Valais, Vaud and Ticino all host their own events around the same time.

Held around the third weekend of May, the *Caves Ouvertes* in Geneva offer a tasteful insight into a normally reclusive industry and allow local vintners to promote their homegrown wine to the residents of Geneva. Between the largest wine growing



© Guillaume Fournier and Jennifer Le Van

municipality of Satigny to its neighbour Russin, you are treated to internationally recognised and award winning wines from *La Cave de Genève* and *Le Domaine du Paradis*. All within a 5-kilometre radius. A stone's throw away, Dardagny provides a picturesque walk through the vineyards as you sample the delights of the region. Across the river and bordering *le lac Léman*, countless other wineries can be visited in Bernex, Lacconex and Meinier, to name a few.

However, the volatility of such a climate dependent industry has revealed itself with recent unexpected cold conditions devastating vineyard upon vineyard throughout Europe. Sub-zero temperatures in April 2017 have decimated large percentages of crops in Valais, Vully and Central Switzerland as well as in more renowned wine-growing regions including Champagne and Bordeaux. Even budding wine industries across the channel in the UK, which have experienced growing success and recognition in recent years, have seen upwards of 80% of their crop damaged by the drastic changes in temperature.

A vintner in Dardagny announced how “on the 29th of April, in one single night, all [their] efforts were reduced to nothing”. For many, a vast percentage of their annual income has vanished, all before even having to account for the incurred costs of production and expenses of winemaking for that year.

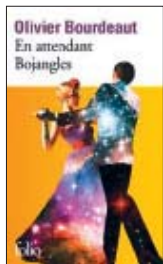
Having already experienced similar temperature drops in 2016, a combination of severe frost, hail and mildew has yet again

crippled another harvest for Swiss and European wine producers and has caused record low yields of grapes. Nonetheless, grapes were not the only victims as crops of apricots, plums and most significantly, cherries also suffered due to the unseasonably low temperatures.

Measures to counteract the catastrophic effect of the adverse weather were taken to ensure the survival of the buds through April's fluctuating temperatures. The use of lamps and heaters placed within the vineyards was not uncommon and candles were ignited in rows along grapevines to raise the surrounding temperature and keep the budding sprouts from freezing. Some wine growers resorted to spraying water vapour across acres of their vineyards in order to encase and protect blooming buds with a thin layer of ice. This method allows the water to freeze around the buds and release latent heat in the process, which is absorbed by the bud and aids its survival.

While winemakers are battling it out yet again to salvage what they can from another disastrous season, the importance of events like the *Caves Ouvertes* to support local producers is put into perspective. A plea from a local *cave* in Geneva on the 20th May 2017, at the event, stated that they still remain “committed to producing a quality product while respecting the long-term future of the land” despite recent hardships. It is only with our help, by “buying local, today and tomorrow”, that we can preserve an industry that plays an integral part in local culture and gastronomy.

Guided by the principles of Sustainable Development Goal 8, we should promote and sustain our local produce and culture. Regardless of whether we've been stationed here for one year or 20 years, Geneva with its surrounding areas is our current home, and it needs our support. Only in solidarity will we be able to continue to enjoy the pleasures of *Genevoise* vineyards for years to come. It is therefore our duty to buy locally and lend a hand to our host community through these hard times. ■



En attendant Bojangles

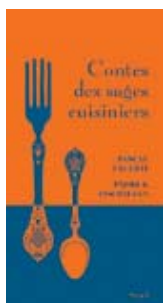
par Olivier Bourdeaut

MARIE-JOSÉ ASTRE-DÉMOULIN, ONUG
Fascinant moment que celui où l'on peut parler d'un livre qu'on aime. Cruel dilemme que de devoir en recommander un, un seul, parmi tous ceux qu'on a lus... Je ferai

donc, à mon grand regret, l'impasse sur «La légèreté» de Catherine Meurisse, journaliste du Canard enchaîné qui signe une BD renversante sur sa période post attentat, ou encore sur «Article 353 du

code pénal» de Tanguy Vieil qui nous jette dans la mer en même temps qu'un promoteur immobilier peu scrupuleux et qui nous tient en apnée sur une centaine de pages inoubliables. Et je me concentrerai sur «En attendant Bojangles» de Olivier Bourdeaut. Les raisons *objectives* de ce choix sont nombreuses: 1) il existe en différents formats: broché (pour les puristes), poche (peu coûteuse), Kindle (pour des valises légères) ou CD audio dans lequel le texte est merveilleusement lu par Louis Arene

et ponctué des notes enchanteuses de la chanson de Nina Simone dont le titre du livre est issu (idéal pour les trajets en voiture), 2) il a remporté cinq prix majeurs, 3) l'auteur, qui signe là son premier roman, est clairement touché par la grâce, 4) l'intrigue ne se raconte pas, elle se déguste. Et enfin, parce que l'été est un moment propice pour entrer dans la poésie d'un quotidien sublimé et explorer les facettes de l'amour inconditionnel. À consommer sans modération. ■



Contes des sages cuisiniers

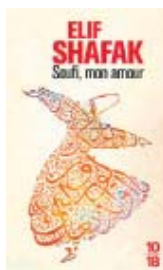
Un livre comme une pincée de sel (soit une cuillère à café rase)

SOLANGE BEHOTEGUY, CNUCED
Aimez-vous déambuler au milieu des étals des marchés de village? Vénération plus que tout les aubergines? Cuisiner

des mots? Savoir pourquoi le strudel s'appelle strudel? Posséder le véritable goût du plaisir? Découvrir le secret de la soupe au caillou? Ajouter de

la poudre à canon à la sauce à la tomate? Si vous avez répondu «oui» au moins à une des questions précédentes vous êtes prêts pour lire les «Contes des sages cuisiniers» de Pascal Fauliot et Patrick Fischmann. Au menu: des rois esthètes, frits et épicés, des princesses gourmandes, 218 pages succulentes pour nourrir l'esprit, un festin d'alphabet divin. Le livre est un vrai bijou que vous pouvez vous procurer à la petite boutique du château de Voltaire

ou ailleurs, si vos papilles gustatives vous emmènent par exemple à une librairie placée juste à côté d'un bon restaurant. Et puis quoi encore? Les auteurs vous entraîneront «à travers les continents et les époques... dans un tourbillon de contes savoureux revisités ou créés pour fêter l'imagination, le savoir-faire, la finesse et l'amour qui mijotent dans les cocottes des sages cuisiniers». Bon appétit et bonne lecture! ■



Soufi, mon amour

par Elif Shafak

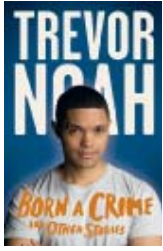
SARAH BENCHERIF, ONUG
Que vous soyez adepte de récits historiques, de prose poétique ou d'histoires d'amour, ce livre est pour vous et vous fera voyager à travers différentes époques dans plusieurs univers. C'est l'histoire d'une quête, quête de l'amour, quête de

la vérité, quête de liberté et d'absolu.

Il commence par l'histoire contemporaine qui se déroule en 2008 de Ella, une femme au foyer américaine à la vie monotone au Massachusetts, qui en lisant un manuscrit tombe sous le charme de son

auteur, Aziz un soufi qui vit à Amsterdam. Le manuscrit en question se dévoile dans ce roman en parallèle avec l'histoire de Ella et Aziz, et nous emmène au XIII^e siècle pour nous relater la rencontre entre deux hommes de foi: Le poète Rûmî et Shams de Tabriz, le plus célèbre derviche du monde musulman et les liens spirituels qui vont les unir et les transformer à jamais. La rencontre de Ella et Aziz va aussi bouleverser leur vies en découvrant le soufisme, le mysticisme et l'amour. Elif Shafak, avec ce roman captivant, de par sa structure, un livre dans un autre livre avec

différents narrateurs et un aller retour entre l'époque actuelle et le XIII^e siècle, entre le monde occidental et l'Asie, avec un message d'amour universel à chaque chapitre, nous invite à la liberté et à la tolérance entre les peuples. Et nous fait comprendre qu'à bien des égards, notre époque ne diffère guère du XIII^e siècle, une époque de conflits religieux et de malentendus culturels, de sentiment d'insécurité et de peur de l'autre. C'est dans ces moments là que nous devons plus que jamais ouvrir nos cœurs. ■



**Comically sublime
but deeply compelling**
Born A Crime

by Trevor Noah

**GARRY ASLANYAN, WHO,
DEPUTY EDITOR**

It's sad, it's funny, and it's at times alarming. *Born a Crime: Stories From a South African*

Childhood uses the story of Trevor's family as an example of life in South Africa under apartheid and its transition into democracy in the early 1990s. Trevor

is the son of a Xhosa mother and a Swiss-German father. Trevor is using stories from his own childhood to expose the absurdities of life under apartheid and the challenges facing a biracial person like himself. *Born a Crime* is not just an unnerving account of growing up in South Africa under apartheid, but a love letter to his remarkable mother, who grew up in a hut with 14 cousins, and determined that her son would not grow up paying what

she called "the black tax" — black families having to "spend all of their time trying to fix the problems of the past," using their skills and education to bring their relatives "back up to zero," because "the generations who came before you have been pillaged." Trevor Noah is now the host of "The Daily Show." His style includes a view point from a sometimes outraged outsider and comments on peculiar aspects of American life. ■



***Midnight blue*
(*Nachtblauw*)**

by Simone Van der Vlugt

(English, translated from the original Dutch)

SARAH JORDAN, DEPUTY EDITOR

I bought this book at Amsterdam airport. The cover, with a picture of typical canal-side houses in Delft Blue pottery, really attracted me and I love historical fiction. My plan was to prolong my experience of the Netherlands and it certainly paid off. The book is very

easy to read and the heroine, 25-year old Catrin, is a person I can relate to – even if she lived more than 350 years ago. After the death of her husband, she takes her destiny into her own hands and leaves her home town in the countryside to go and work as a housekeeper for a rich merchant family, the Van

Nulandts, in Amsterdam. The lady of the house takes painting lessons and, as an amateur painter herself, Catrin is fascinated to actually meet Rembrandt. The description of his home and studio, which I visited in Amsterdam, is very evocative. A secret from Catrin's past catches up with her though, and she is obliged to leave Amsterdam in a hurry. She goes to work for another Van Nulandt brother in his pottery factory in Delft... and meets Vermeer – the artist who painted "the girl with a pearl earring"! Catrin plays a prominent role in the story of the launch of Delft Blue pottery,

and the professional and personal successes and catastrophes that befall her keep the reader hooked. There is also a surprisingly modern love interest throughout the book, involving a heart/head dilemma. The action takes place against the backdrop of the Dutch Golden Age – a period in which commerce, science and the arts boomed. This book certainly prolonged my Dutch experience and I plan to return and visit Delft as well as Amsterdam as soon as possible. If you like strong women, historical detail, love and action, this is a good summer read for you! ■

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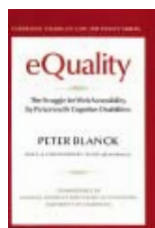


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“eQuality” as a standard to make the web an accessible and inclusive place

In his book “eQuality: The Struggle for Web Accessibility by Persons with Cognitive Disabilities” Dr. Peter Blanck explores how to make web content accessible to all.



“eQuality – The struggle for web accessibility by persons with cognitive disabilities” by Peter Blanck (2014, Cambridge University Press)

ANGELA MONTAÑO GARCÍA, UNITAR

Nowadays, the World Wide Web is a tool that constantly accompanies us in our daily life, and which has important implications for the construction of a person’s socioeconomic, political and cultural capital. However, access to the web for people with cognitive and other disabilities is far from being achieved. People with disabilities often face significant obstacles that prevent them from fully accessing web content, especially without backing from a robust framework of laws and policies. However, access to the web should be a priority at the global level, since it opens the door for all people to enjoy their human and civil rights (e.g., freedom of expression, freedom of association, and active citizen participation). In this sense, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) play essential roles in advocating for the right to equal opportunity to participate on the web for persons with disabilities. Indeed, the ADA and the CRPD (cf. Article 9, Accessibility) consider that the right to enjoy digital knowledge and the social capital gained from it are deeply linked to the right of non-discrimination on the basis of disability.

One of the main problems is that web interfaces are complex to use, and the user rarely benefits from alternatives means of accessing content. To address this issue, Dr. Blanck refers to eQuality as a key concept to ensure that: first, equality and justice under the law are assured for web users with disabilities; and second, that the web meets adequate standards of accessibility and quality. For instance, offering alternative content on the web is essential, as it “removes reliance on any one mode and cognitive mechanisms for comprehension”. In this way, “text can be heard instead of seen, audio can be read instead of heard, images are described instead of seen, and so on”. Other ways to adapt to the individual needs of the user is through what is called cloud computing. Cloud computing has significant benefits for people with visual, auditory and cognitive disabilities. Through the cloud, users can easily access support technologies such as audio subtitling, voice recognition, and more. Interestingly, people who use the cloud can easily access information and services that have been previously configured according to their preferences and individual needs, and which can be used to access the web in an adapted way, from any site and with almost any device.

There is still progress to be made, but the gains already achieved would not have been possible without the efforts of defenders. The stories of advocates and individuals who have risen to defend the rights of people with disabilities to web access are an essential part of this book. Some of these efforts address the adaptability of online content. For example, persons with cognitive, visual and hearing impairments have asked large companies such as CNN, Netflix and Sony to adapt their interfaces by either captioning and/or adequately adapting the content delivery so that it can be accessible to all. Unfortunately, many of these stories demonstrate how the needs of people with disabilities remain largely ignored: “Jennifer and Edward are deaf, and along with the Greater Los Angeles Agency on Deafness (GLAD), challenged CNN to caption CNN.com that they may have the opportunity to learn of the world’s news as did millions of others. CNN responded that if it was forced to caption CNN.com’s video clips it would violate the company’s right to freedom of speech.” The book also studies in detail how people with cognitive disabilities (e.g., persons with autism) can experience discrimination on the web when it is not

adequately adapted to their needs. The structure of a web page, its cognitive load and its navigability can significantly affect access by this group of people. A very large cognitive load on the content of a web page can inhibit the memorization process and attention capacities, making comprehension of the website and its content difficult. For this reason, web page designers should aspire to a “universal design” model, aiming at reducing the complexity and cognitive load of the web, as well as offering alternative channels of communication for the delivery of information.

In order to achieve eQuality, we must focus not only on strengthening laws and policies, but also on favoring the greater inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in the conception of a web that is adaptable and accessible to all. Advocating for the right of these people to fully participate in the web does not have to be seen as a matter of giving “advantages” to a population, but rather as an opportunity to build stronger and inclusive societies where knowledge can be shared among everyone. ■



© Peter Blanck, photos

Dr. Peter Blanck is University Professor at Syracuse University (USA), and Chairman of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI). The Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) works on advancing the civic, economic, and social participation of people with disabilities.

Message du rédacteur en chef

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

N'hésitez plus et écrivez-nous !

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

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

Et maintenant, à vos plumes !

Adressez vos commentaires à :

Alex Mejia, rédacteur en chef – *UN Special*
Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Genève 10, Suisse
Par courrier électronique: alex.mejia@unitar.org

Message from the editor-in-chief

Would you like to share your opinion about *UN Special* and its contents ?

Write to us!

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

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

Now, put pen to paper!

Send your thoughts to:

Alex Mejia, Editor-in-chief – *UN Special*
Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
By email: alex.mejia@unitar.org

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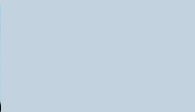
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