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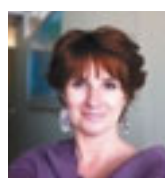
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La Genève internationale Au hasard d'une rencontre

Pour ses nouveaux arrivants, Genève, ville classée parmi les 10 villes les plus agréables au monde, peut paraître paradoxale : internationale et impersonnelle à la fois. Se fier à sa première impression serait une erreur. Genève est discrète et réservée et elle se dévoile lentement. Ce n'est qu'en faisant preuve de patience que l'on arrive à déchiffrer ses codes.

Ville de paix, située au centre de l'Europe, elle attire chaque année, notamment grâce aux organisations internationales, des citoyens du monde entier qui tentent de prendre leurs marques et de s'adapter à leur nouvel environnement tout en conservant leur identité culturelle, linguistique et religieuse.

Genève offre-t-elle l'environnement et les conditions optimum pour une mixité réussie ?

Sans imposer de point de vue unilatéral, elle respecte l'identité et la liberté d'expression notamment au travers de centres d'échanges interculturels, d'associations de quartier, d'écoles et de lieux de culte. A Genève, chacun peut vivre sa culture et pratiquer sa religion librement.

Genève n'est pas qu'une plateforme incontournable pour la paix, où de nombreuses nationalités vivent harmonieusement. A ceux qui veulent apprendre à la connaître, elle réserve de belles surprises. Au détour d'une rue, au hasard d'une rencontre, la Genève authentique vous attend.

International Geneva Through a chance encounter

For newcomers, Geneva, a city ranked one of the 10 most liveable in the world, can seem a paradox: both international and impersonal at the same time. Relying on first impressions would be a mistake. Geneva is discreet and reserved, and reveals itself slowly. Cracking its secret codes requires patience.

A city of peace, located in the centre of Europe, each year it attracts, often through international organizations, citizens from around the world trying to put down their roots and adapt to their new environment, while maintaining their cultural, linguistic and religious identities.

Does Geneva offer the best conditions and environment for a successful mix?

Without imposing a unilateral point of view, Geneva respects identity and freedom of expression. Everyone can live their culture and practise their religion freely, evidence of which are the many intercultural centres and neighbourhood associations, schools and places of worship.

Geneva is not just an essential platform for peace, where many nationalities live in harmony. It still keeps many surprises for those who want to get to know it. Around each corner, or through a chance encounter, the real Geneva is waiting for you.

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Rencontre avec Monsieur Rémy Pagani, Conseiller administratif et Maire à deux reprises de la Ville de Genève.

Monsieur Pagani nous reçoit dans son bureau de l'Hôtel de Ville au cœur de la Vieille-Ville. Accueil spontané et chaleureux. Nous allons découvrir au cours de notre échange un homme affable, charismatique, convaincu et combatif.



© Didier Jordan, Ville de Genève

PROPOS RECUEILLIS PAR PHILIPPE DEHALU ET CHRISTINE ETZENBACH

Monsieur Pagani, vous êtes Conseiller administratif de la Ville de Genève, chargé du Département des constructions et de l'aménagement. Pourriez-vous nous expliquer votre mission? Le statut de Genève, ville internationale, l'influence-t-elle?

Mon rôle politique est d'assurer l'interface entre l'Administration et le Conseil municipal. Tous les projets que nous menons, la construction d'un immeuble ou la rénovation du Grand Théâtre, par exemple, doivent être validés par le Conseil municipal. J'ai été élu sur des options politiques, il me faut constituer des majorités au sein du Conseil municipal pour faire passer mes projets. Ça, c'est mon rôle fondamental.

Je dois aussi être très attentif, dans mes stratégies politiques,

aux possibilités de référendums, car le Département que je préside est le plus exposé à cet égard.

Je suis par ailleurs chargé d'organiser l'Administration et de gérer au mieux le budget annuel d'investissement qui se monte à 130 millions de francs. Nous sommes le plus important propriétaire immobilier du canton avec 800 bâtiments, dont 350 immeubles locatifs (5300 logements), 350 arcades, des théâtres, et même des chapelles funéraires.

La présence des institutions internationales influence mon travail. La rénovation du Grand Théâtre, un des meilleurs théâtres lyriques au monde, m'occupe depuis trois ans. Pour assurer la continuité des spectacles, j'ai proposé l'achat d'un théâtre de substitution par la Fondation du Grand Théâtre

qui sera installé près de la place des Nations et s'appellera l'Opéra des Nations. Le choix de ce site n'a pas été fait par hasard. J'ai convaincu la Fondation du bien-fondé de cette implantation car je pense qu'il existe un lien intrinsèque entre la Genève internationale et la Genève culturelle.

Pourriez-vous nous décrire les priorités que vous vous êtes fixées pour la Ville pendant votre mandat? Ces priorités sont-elles basées sur une consultation des différentes parties prenantes: la population, les institutions internationales et les organisations non gouvernementales par exemple?

J'avais deux grandes priorités. D'abord, améliorer l'offre des crèches. Quand je suis arrivé, 40% d'habitants étaient satisfaits de l'offre. Aujourd'hui, ce chiffre se situe entre 65 et 70%. Si je suis réélu, mon objectif sera d'atteindre 100% de satisfaction dans les 5 prochaines années. La situation de Genève est particulière. Contrairement à beaucoup de villes en Suisse, il y a ici 65% de personnes actives. Pour vivre à Genève, il faut disposer d'un salaire et demi. Les familles ne peuvent pas se contenter d'un seul salaire, sauf à risquer de tomber dans la pauvreté. Et donc, de ce point de vue-là, la municipalité a un rôle social de redistribution de richesse à tenir. Elle doit pouvoir offrir des prestations de crèche en tenant compte du revenu, pour permettre aux couples qui désirent des enfants d'en avoir dans de bonnes conditions.

La deuxième priorité est la sécurité. A mon arrivée, la Ville comptait environ 90 gardes municipaux. Actuellement, sous mon impulsion, l'effectif atteint 200 gardes.

On est sur la bonne voie en ce qui concerne ces deux priorités.

Concernant la concertation des parties prenantes, il faut respecter le système démocratique. Vous avez un programme,

vous êtes élu sur ce programme et vous le mettez en œuvre. J'ai un parcours un peu spécial: je viens des milieux associatifs, associations d'habitants, syndicats. Mon expérience de 30 ans de militantisme, la connaissance des réseaux et des gens qui expriment leurs besoins m'ont amené à me présenter. Après... c'est le choix du corps électoral. Il faut déterminer quels sont les besoins exprimés, et surtout les satisfaire. Les organisations internationales sont partie prenante du débat dans la mesure où, par exemple, les plaintes exprimées il y a 4 à 5 ans au sujet des vols et agressions contre les membres de celles-ci ont influencé nos politiques de police de proximité.

Pouvez-vous nous parler de l'état d'avancement des projets pour les Organisations Internationales?

J'ai été très heureux d'apprendre que, avant Noël, l'ONU avait voté la poursuite des travaux d'étude de la rénovation du Palais des Nations. La Ville de Genève est partie prenante, elle met à disposition de l'ONU, et des Organisations Internationales plus généralement, les terrains où elles sont installées. La majorité des terrains offerts par la Ville le sont *ad vitam aeternam*, en droit de superficie. Peu de gens le savent.

De plus, et c'est ma collègue Sandrine Salerno qui en a la charge, la Ville participe à toutes les discussions pour soutenir les prêts sans intérêt qui seront accordés en faveur de la rénovation de ces bâtiments et de la construction d'autres.

Il est un peu surprenant qu'à quelques centaines de mètres de l'OMS, dont le domaine est interdit de tabac, s'érige fièrement le nouveau siège d'une multinationale du tabac. Cela n'interpelle-t-il pas le responsable politique et le citoyen genevois que vous êtes?

J'étais contre cette implantation. La publicité pour le tabac est interdite, il est interdit de fumer dans les lieux publics, les

bureaux, les cafés et restaurants, et... on laisse installer cette multinationale. Sauf que le gouvernement cantonal a décidé qu'elle devait s'implanter là.

Les réflexions sur la mobilité à Genève ne peuvent s'envisager sans une collaboration étroite avec les autorités françaises. Quels sont les dossiers significatifs et visibles qui pourraient aboutir prochainement?

Je suis vice-président du Groupement local de coopération transfrontalière (GLCT). Avec Monsieur Longchamp, Conseiller d'Etat, qui en est président, nous battons aux côtés des Français pour que les lignes de tram se prolongent au-delà des frontières. C'est un peu délicat depuis que nous avons reçu, du corps électoral, ce cinglant refus d'aider à la construction de parkings-relais en France voisine.

Par ailleurs, je me bats pour que le CEVA fonctionne, et notamment pour que la gare de Cornavin soit agrandie en sous-sol. Les CFF voulaient simplement ajouter 2 voies supplémentaires en bas du quartier des Grottes. Mais en fait, cette option ne permettrait pas de cadencer le CEVA toutes les 15 minutes. Le CEVA qui se construit aujourd'hui ne fonctionnera que toutes les 30 minutes. Peu de gens le savent, mais c'est un handicap pour Genève à long terme. Après ma lutte de 3 ans pour convaincre le Canton de l'importance d'une colonne vertébrale ferroviaire performante, la gare souterraine est décidée dans son principe. Reste à en déterminer le coût.

Comment la Ville de Genève pourrait-elle, à votre avis, augmenter encore son attractivité pour un public international?

Pourquoi, historiquement, Genève a-t-elle été choisie comme ville internationale? C'était la Rome protestante. Les Américains, qui se préoccupaient de la paix dans le monde, cherchaient un lieu qui leur corresponde et, étant majoritairement protestants, leur choix s'est porté sur

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Genève. Durant la guerre froide, Genève a été une passerelle entre les deux grandes puissances. Ensuite, nous avons vécu une période où Genève a été désinvestie au profit de New-York. Je pense que Genève va être réinvestie grâce à sa neutralité, précieuse dans la négociation d'accords équilibrés. Je pense que c'est pour cela que l'ONU à New-York a validé les travaux de rénovation des bâtiments de l'ONU Genève.

Un nouveau concept émerge: celui de «ville intelligente» («smart city» en anglais), c'est-à-dire d'une ville mettant en œuvre une gestion centralisée et automatisée des infrastructures (eau, énergies, télécommunications, transports, services d'urgence, bâtiments, etc.), ceci afin d'améliorer la qualité de vie des citoyens, dans le respect de l'environnement. La Ville de Genève participe-t-elle de cette démarche?

J'ai tenté de convaincre mes collègues de conserver entre les mains de la Ville de Genève, soit de la collectivité, le réseau de fibres optiques (NAXOO 022 Télégénève). Je pense que cette infrastructure est décisive pour mettre en place les nouvelles

technologies qui arrivent et qui permettront ce nouveau service public. On est à un carrefour aujourd'hui, où les gens achètent encore des tickets de bus dans les distributeurs, ou vont encore à la banque avec leur carte de crédit pour effectuer des paiements. Demain, ils pourront le faire depuis chez eux avec leur téléphone portable ou par wifi sécurisé grâce aux fibres optiques. Je pense que l'implantation de ces nouvelles technologies, dont je suis un fervent défenseur, est stratégique car elles seront bénéfiques pour la population. D'ailleurs le corps électoral m'a suivi en refusant, par un vote, la vente de ce bien public qu'est NAXOO.

Quelle est votre vision du Grand Genève en 2050?

Tout d'abord, je n'aime pas tellement le terme Grand Genève, qui a une connotation impérialiste.

Je pense que les autorités de la Ville de Genève et le gouvernement cantonal sont d'accord: nous avons tout intérêt à réfléchir au niveau de l'agglomération car nous nous trouvons dans une agglomération d'un

million de personnes et dans une région qui se développe extraordinairement bien. Nous avons tout intérêt à la doter des infrastructures nécessaires pour que cette région fonctionne le mieux possible. Autrement, on va aller vers la ségrégation. Je ne sais pas si vous avez remarqué, mais moi ce que j'aime à Genève, c'est qu'il y a encore des quartiers populaires en plein centre-ville. La Ville a lancé la rénovation de bâtiments de logement dans le quartier de Saint-Gervais, à côté du quai des Bergues, un des lieux où les maisons sont les plus chères de Suisse. Nous y offrons des logements à 3600 francs la pièce par année. Cela permet à la population d'habiter encore dans des quartiers centraux. Je pense que ça, c'est un bien collectif que Genève doit conserver. ■

Monsieur Pagani, nous vous remercions de nous avoir accordé cet entretien malgré votre agenda très chargé.



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Une courte histoire de la Genève Internationale

Genèse d'une vocation internationale

PHILIPPE DEHALU

A l'origine, il y eut la Réforme

En 1536, lorsque le conseil de Genève introduit la Réforme dans la cité et fait appel à Jean Calvin, personne ne se doute que cette décision va changer le cours de l'histoire de la ville. Celle-ci se porte au secours des protestants d'Europe et les accueille. En l'espace de vingt-cinq ans, près de mille nouveaux bourgeois y sont admis, parmi eux, outre des Huguenots, des exilés chassés d'Angleterre par les persécutions. Sous la protection de la ville, ils forment leur propre église réformée menée par John Knox, puis ramènent les idées de Calvin en Angleterre et en Écosse. C'est la naissance de l'Eglise Presbytérienne.

Au cours des deux siècles suivants, des dizaines de milliers de réformés accourent à Genève. Genève, ville sévère mais tolérante, s'internationalise grâce au négoce et aux banques.

Les premiers réformés, et en particulier Jean Calvin, utilisent une version de la Bible intitulée la Bible de Genève. En 1620, la Bible de Genève arrive au Nouveau-Monde sur le Mayflower dans les bagages des émigrés que le navire transporte. Cela créera des affinités entre Genève et le

Nouveau-Monde et expliquera le penchant naturel des dirigeants américains pour la ville. En effet, on ne dénombre pas moins de sept Présidents américains descendant des passagers du Mayflower.

Le Siècle des Lumières

Au XVIII^e siècle, Genève se place sur la carte européenne des sciences et des arts. La ville attire les étrangers célèbres. Savants, écrivains, poètes la fréquentent. D'Alembert et Voltaire louent son esprit d'indépendance, le sérieux de ses mœurs. Jean-Jacques Rousseau y naît au début du siècle au 40, Grand-Rue, aujourd'hui La Maison de Rousseau et de la Littérature.

La naissance d'une conscience internationale

Dès le milieu du XIX^e siècle, son rôle international va s'accélérer. Choqué et ébranlé par ce qu'il a vu à l'issue de la bataille de Solferino, Henri Dunant révolutionne le droit de la guerre. Avec des amis, ils invitent à Genève 16 pays pour une conférence internationale et, en 1864, 12 de ceux-ci adoptent la «Convention de Genève pour l'amélioration du sort des blessés dans les armées en campagne», base de l'édifice du droit international humanitaire. Le Comité International de la Croix Rouge (CICR) est né.

Dans les années qui suivent, de nombreux congrès et réunions internationales se tiennent dans la ville. Genève propose un climat favorable où esprit de liberté austère et serein s'allie au respect de l'ordre public.

Une négociation va avoir un retentissement international et placer davantage encore Genève sur la carte du monde. C'est «L'arbitrage de l'Alabama» qui règle le différend entre les Etats-Unis et la Grande-Bretagne sur la Guerre de Sécession: la Grande-Bretagne, normalement neutre dans ce conflit, avait fourni aux Sudistes un navire de guerre, l'Alabama, qui allait couler 150 navires nordistes. Pour la première fois, une médiation internationale met fin à un différend entre deux nations.

La Société des Nations

A l'issue de la première guerre mondiale, le Traité de Versailles établit dans sa première partie une charte pour une Société des Nations (SDN). Cette charte reprend l'idéal wilsonien (du nom du Président américain d'alors) d'une diplomatie ouverte, organisée par un droit international.

Se pose immédiatement la question du siège de cette nouvelle gouvernance mondiale. Deux villes sont en compétition: Bruxelles et Genève. A l'issue d'intenses tractations, Genève est choisie. Elle le doit

aux efforts diplomatiques et à la neutralité de la Confédération helvétique, à la présence à Genève du CICR, et au coup de pouce du Président américain, Woodrow Wilson, de confession presbytérienne.

La SDN se réunit pour la première fois à Genève en novembre 1920. 41 Etats sont présents, les USA sont absents. Ils n'y adhéreront jamais! La SDN s'installe dans le Palais Wilson en attendant la construction du Palais des Nations.

A l'approche du second conflit mondial, pour affirmer sa neutralité, la Suisse coupe les ponts avec la SDN. La SDN s'éteint avec la guerre qu'elle n'a pu empêcher... les lustres du Palais des Nations s'éteignent.

Les Nations Unies

Dès avant l'issue finale du conflit mondial (capitulation du Japon), l'Organisation des Nations Unies (ONU) est fondée en juin 1945, à San Francisco. 50 pays, dont 16 européens, signent la Charte des Nations Unies. Le siège en est fixé à New-York. Dans le même temps, de nombreuses agences importantes des Nations Unies, plutôt tournées vers l'amélioration du monde, vont avoir leur siège à Genève. A New-York le politique, à Genève, la part d'utopie.

Ce n'est qu'en 2002 que la Suisse rejoint l'ONU. Cette adhésion renforce encore davantage le rôle de Genève. De grands rendez-vous se tiennent à Genève: négociations sur le désarmement nucléaire, première rencontre des 4 Grands, rencontre Reagan-Gorbatchev, et à l'heure actuelle, négociations sur le nucléaire iranien.

La Genève Internationale aujourd'hui

Genève abrite aujourd'hui 28 organisations internationales, 250 organisations non gouvernementales et plus de 170 missions diplomatiques auprès des institutions internationales. Ce n'est pas moins de 2500 conférences qui s'y tiennent chaque année.

Parmi ces organisations internationales, n'oublions pas le CERN, établi à Meyrin depuis 1954. Le CERN, c'est pour la recherche nucléaire, l'un des plus grands et des plus prestigieux laboratoires scientifiques du monde qui compte plus de 3000 scientifiques autour d'une infrastructure de recherche à la pointe de toutes les technologies. Il a pour vocation la physique fondamentale, la découverte des constituants de la matière et des lois de

l'univers. C'est aussi en son sein que fut inventé et développé le World Wide Web.

L'esprit de Genève

«Et dans toutes ces institutions, c'est toute la vieille Genève qui se retrouve là comme par enchantement, celle qui croyait en la responsabilité de l'homme devant Dieu sous Calvin, en la liberté de l'homme sous Rousseau, en son pouvoir au temps de cet Horace-Bénédict de Saussure assez intrépide pour aller voir au Mont-Blanc de quoi la glace est faite, et de ce Dunant assez idéaliste pour imaginer des moyens de réparer la guerre.»¹ ■

¹ Joëlle Kuntz auteur de *Genève, histoire d'une vocation internationale* aux Editions ZOE 2010.



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An interview with

Ambassador Christian Dunant,

Director of the Geneva Welcome Centre, also known as the Centre d'Accueil Genève Internationale (CAGI)

The Geneva Welcome Centre, as its name clearly indicates, is the one-stop shop for any newcomer to Geneva – whether you are looking for somewhere to live, a network of new friends, or a club to practise your favourite sport, the staff at CAGI can point you in the right direction.



SARAH JORDAN, SDLS, UNOG

Native of Geneva, co-founder of the CAGI twenty years ago and for six years its Director, Ambassador Dunant takes his retirement this February. He talks to Sarah Jordan about the services offered by the Centre, which is at the heart of “International Geneva”.

The Centre, based at the Villa la Pastorale opposite the Hotel Intercontinental in Petit Saconnex, is a non-profit organization, founded in 1996 by the Swiss Confederation and the State of Geneva. It receives funding from around 33 associate and supporting members, which means that its services are free-of-charge for newcomers with legitimization cards irrespective of rank or nationality. In recent years the scope has widened to include other visitors such as conference delegates.

Services to newcomers

Ambassador Dunant explained the two main services provided – to facilitate installation and promote integration. “We can offer practical help through our Housing and Information Service, putting tenants in touch with estate agents and providing additional support for non-French

speakers to help them better understand rental contracts and the housing regulations in Switzerland. We can also advise how to open a bank account, explain the schooling options and even more everyday challenges like the functioning of the public transport system and the purchase of bus tickets! We are all-round problem solvers!”

Once installed in your new home, you are ready for the next step – integration. To this end, the Centre has developed a “Welcome Network”, which is supported by 25 volunteers, to help you get to know Geneva and the surrounding area and interact with the international and local population.

“We have three specific products on offer”, explained Ambassador Dunant. “The first is a monthly excursion to a place of interest, accompanied by a group of our volunteers. In September last year we took about 90 people to St Cergue in the Jura mountains to see the cows come down from their summer pastures – known in French as the Désalpe – followed by lunch at the Château de Nyon. In December, we have a traditional Escalade fondue party at La Pastorale to introduce newcomers to the

Geneva Fête de l’Escalade, followed by a guided tour of the old town. Last year we had approximately 650 guests and their families attending the event”.

Promoting communication

The second product is the Conversation Exchange Programme, which is open to both the international and local populations. “We have 1,000 people registered, speaking 65 different languages. We encourage people to get together once a week to converse in their native tongue with a person who wants to learn their language – for example a native Chinese speaker and a native German speaker chat together in each of the two languages for about 30 minutes. To further develop fluency, in a more convivial atmosphere, we organize cocktail parties twice a year for everyone registered in the programme, each person wearing a badge indicating the languages they speak. It certainly makes for an entertaining evening!”

“Our third action is a telephone call to every newcomer – we try to contact at least 60-70% of the 1,500 people who arrive in the city each year, to present the Centre

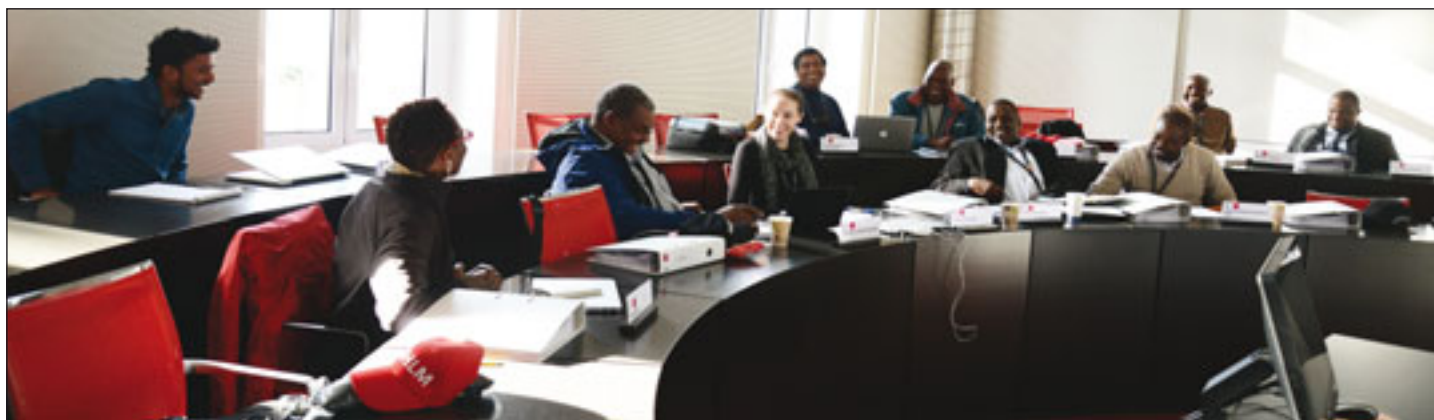
and its services. With a pool of volunteers, in addition to our staff, fluent in English, French, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Italian, German and Russian, we can be sure that most newcomers hear from us in one way or another.”

The Centre also provides an Events Service which aims to connect international and local people. “I no longer want to hear “I spent four years in Geneva and did not meet one Geneva resident”, joked the Ambassador. “We hold regular events after work in and around the city – either at newly opened venue or a cultural outing such as the Tutankhamun exhibition or a visit to a museum. Events are also organized at our Centre – such as themed evenings or celebrations for national or international days.”

CAGI also has a Cultural Kiosk, situated inside the Palais des Nations at Door 6, where you can purchase tickets to all kinds of shows, often at a preferential rate.

Services to the international community

In addition to the service offered to newcomers, two years ago, the Centre created the Delegates Welcome Service. This is



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funded by the Swiss Government and the City of Geneva to support those delegates from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and those from Lesser-Developed Countries (LDCs) (indigenous populations in particular). The Ambassador explained the challenges faced by these delegates who wish to attend conferences in Geneva, but who lack the necessary financial resources. “Geneva is an expensive place, and many organizations and individuals just don’t have the money to cover the costs”.

“The Delegates Welcome Service offers a workroom equipped with ten computers, a meeting room and a comfortable lounge with coffee and newspapers. We can meet delegates at the airport and find them special room rates at hotels which do not require a credit card. In certain circumstances, we can also subsidize the hotel costs incurred. This service allows delegates to participate in conferences, which they would otherwise not be able to attend. We were able to accommodate 1,000 delegates last year for a total of 7,000 overnight stays”, he confirmed. “This enhances the image of Geneva as a welcoming international city. I am very keen on civil society participating in international conferences and contributing to the discussions and decisions that take place here”, he said.

A large number of delegates attend the numerous sessions organized by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, but the Ambassador remarked upon the growing

participation in other meetings held at organizations such as the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). “What gives me great satisfaction is to see these delegates meet up and exchange informally at the Centre before a high-level international conference”, he raved. “When they arrive on the first day at their session, they already have their contacts, which greatly facilitates their work. And when they return to their home countries, they spread the word!”

Retiring from CAGI

As he leaves the Centre, the Ambassador spoke proudly of the achievements of the past six years. “I am leaving CAGI in good hands and my successor will be able to count on my team, who are highly motivated and competent! I am very happy that CAGI is now well-known in Geneva. Our new Internet site, which is compatible with mobile devices, is often the first contact newcomers have with our Association and we work very hard to keep the information up to date.”

He explained that the aim of CAGI is to help Switzerland, as a host country for international people, to be the best in the world. “As someone who has had a long career as a diplomat, I know that a person starting their career as a Second or Third secretary here in Geneva may come back later as a Head of Mission. The next step could be back in their own country as a Minister. These people spread the word about our city and CAGI has a very key role

to play in ensuring that the message they carry is positive – and that is a message we work tirelessly to promote”.

Ambassador Pierre de Cocatrix will replace Ambassador Christian Dunant on 1 March 2015. Ambassador de Cocatrix was formerly Director of the Office of the Secretary-General of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie. ■

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Moving to Geneva

A few tips to feel at home

Relocating to any new city is both an exciting and daunting experience – full of possibilities for a new start, but also potential pitfalls and initial difficulties. I moved to Geneva from the UK just over a year ago, and below are a few things I learnt from my time settling in.

PETER REES, WHO

Know before you go

Find out whether it is feasible or a better option to live over the border in neighbouring France. The rent is generally cheaper with more living space (apart from Ferney-Voltaire, as demand is high), there is more choice in supermarkets and longer opening hours, and neighbourhoods are quieter, which may be more desirable for families. However, public transport is less frequent and reliable (having a car or bike is more convenient), and it may be too quiet and rural for younger professionals.

Finding accommodation and the first few days

Most people moving to Geneva sublet for the first few months, as it is quicker and involves less paperwork than obtaining a lease through a “régie” (letting agent). The best places to look are on the Intranet and notice boards at the international organizations, the *Tribune de Genève* newspaper, and the classified ads on glocals.com (a website for international professionals living in Switzerland) or leboncoin.fr (a classified advertising site in France). If you are planning to stay long-term (more than a year), the

régie route will be better value. Each neighbourhood in Geneva has its own character, with the inner city districts of Eaux-Vives, Plainpalais and Pâquis being most popular for their easy access to the centre and the best transport links. However, suburban areas like Grand-Saconnex, Vernier and Charmilles are also well-served by bus routes and are no more than 20 minutes to the city centre or Nations.

Wherever you choose to live, scout out the nearest shops to you and memorize their opening hours. Shops in Geneva

generally close around 7 p.m., which can be frustrating if you work until 6-6.30 p.m., and very little is open on Sundays. Knowing this before is certainly an easier experience than turning up at a shop that’s closed, or about to close and then getting a dirty look from the shopkeeper!

Settling in and the first few weeks

If you’re living in an apartment block in central Geneva, make sure you know the “house rules” to avoid any misunderstandings with neighbours. Noise after 10 p.m., including taking a

shower, is often frowned upon, and many apartments with laundry machines in the basement operate a strict rotation system where each person has a two-hour slot per week.

It's well worth getting the annual CFF half-price train pass covering all of Switzerland. Although the initial outlay of CHF 175 is quite high, a few day trips to other parts of the country on its excellent rail network will give you good value for money.

For travel within Geneva, the Transports Publics Genevois (TPG) city pass is a good investment at CHF 70/month or CHF 500/year if you plan to use buses and trams frequently. Biking to work is often quicker thanks to Geneva's extensive cycle route network and rush-hour traffic, although unless you get an electric bike the hills

from the centre or Ferney-Voltaire to Grand-Saconnex can be taxing!

Finding activities that interest you is the best way to spend free time and make friends in Geneva. As well as the obvious outdoor weekend activities like skiing and hiking, there are plenty of ways to wind down or learn a new skill in the evening.

Glocals.com is the best source for digging out group activities, whether sporting or recreational, and evening classes in any field are just an Internet search away.

For cultural events, the best places to browse are the *Tribune de Genève* newspaper, *Go Out!* magazine, and the *Renard Sur La Lune*, a free guide by TPG to restaurants, bars, clubs and events in Geneva throughout the year.

The most important tip I can give on settling in Geneva is to be patient and give it time to get used to the pace of life. As a strange personal example, after moving here from London I could not understand why I had to make the choice between either doing food shopping or doing sport on a given evening, as there would be time to do only one of them after work. Geneva is behind the curve on making things easy for the consumer. But it is steadily improving.

I found that Geneva was not an easy city to settle in and make friends straight away, for many reasons. Although it is an international city, it can feel provincial, soulless and dreary at times, especially in winter, when street life is minimal. The transient nature of the city also makes it hard both to meet people who will be staying

long-term and having people around to do activities with on weekends, as Geneva's handy location in central Europe and as an airport hub encourages getaways. By pursuing your interests and trying out new things in your free time, though, you meet new people and begin to build a network. It can be a fantastic and fulfilling place to live and work if you adapt to the "mode de vie" and stick to it. ■

References:
www.glocals.com
www.leboncoin.fr

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A look into a High School Graduate's testimonial

The morning before graduation, a young girl full of dreams and aspirations, looked out her bedroom window, onto the beautiful lake and the rising sun. Lost in her thoughts, she couldn't compel the small anguished voice inside of her, asking: "What will your future look like?" Look ahead and what do you see?

BEATRICE FALGA
EDITED BY OMAR BAWA

Impatience and excitement, of course. But maybe nostalgia as well? What do we make of all that we leave behind? Years of growing up in an international environment, school, city, how thankful can we be for this unique experience?

Growing up in such an international place as the region of Geneva, has been uplifting and mind-opening. First of all, being exposed to a diversity of cultures I would never have thought of uncovering, from American to African and Asian, has been the starting point of an amazing journey. By getting to know others, I was also able to shape my own personality and understanding of the world, in a way I am very grateful of. Geneva is a hub of intellectual diversity and stimulation, where each and everyone learns from

the other, it is the 'Pearl of the Mountain Valleys'.

As attending an international school is part of the 'international experience', my eight years at the Collège du Léman (CDL), in Versoix, was an opportunity for me to open up, away from my small village in France, where there was merely one way to be and to act. I learned more languages as well, which I truly value today. After-class lessons were available to all students, for a multitude of languages, from Italian to Spanish and Arabic to Chinese (and Swedish!). We also had the chance to engage with different cultures first hand, for example during exchange programs, namely in Mexico, Monterrey, and by taking part in inter-scholar sports tournaments in Orlando, Florida, highly appreciated by the majority of students.

The advantages of an international school are also the different education systems that can be followed: the International Baccalaureate, AP, A-levels, French Baccalaureate, Swiss Maturité. A choice made difficult by the high quality of teachers. An international environment also multiplies your opportunities for the future, and possibilities to pursue higher education abroad, all over the world.

Overall, this 'international experience' taught me tolerance, friendship and respect towards others, while giving me the keys to success.

Furthermore, Geneva is a hub of culture and intellectual stimulation. First of all, who wouldn't want to taste a dish from a different part of the world each day? From steamed dumplings, to Indian Biryani, Italian linguinis or well-refined chocolate, Geneva offers a wide

culinary experience. Second of all, being able to visit the UN, the ICRC, or even the CERN nearby, is a great chance. As it gathers a wide variety of international firms, organizations and humanitarian aid, it is the ultimate place to start any career aspirations. Interested in current affairs and have a thirst for knowledge? This is the perfect place to get some work experience before starting university. During the two summers of my penultimate and last year of high school, I interned at an NGO and a social enterprise: the GIPRI (Geneva International Peace Research Institute) and Goodwall. I learned essential skills that are beneficial in any environment: patience, perseverance, time-efficiency, and communication skills.

Now, a year and a half after graduation, the young woman finds herself looking out that

same window again, onto the beautiful lake and the snowy mountains. Look ahead, and what do you see?

One year and a half since I've left Geneva for pursuing my studies in England, I still haven't left that international sphere, I've kept my passion for travelling, volunteering and uncovering new experiences. I am now on the executive team of UNICEF on Campus and Warwick Asia Careers Society, and am preparing the Warwick Economics Summit, held on 13-15 February. I've also had the opportunity to volunteer in South Africa, while I am looking to do a similar project in Romania this year, and I am looking forward to an internship in Hong Kong.

Growing up in an international environment opened me up to a new vision of the world, which would probably

have been restrained if I'd stayed in my small village in France. I greatly appreciated the opportunities offered to me on a silver plate: meeting new people, discovering new cultures and invariably shaping my personality in a way I would never have thought possible. I don't think success comes from your background. Success is shaped by the strength of your will, your ambitions and your motivations. However, those facets of your personality are reinforced by the environment you live in, and external factors can contribute to empower your dreams, and finally achieve your goals. Undoubtedly, life is made up of opportunities we have to seize. As I like to think, 'cherish the past, live in the present, and prepare for the future'. Being successful is about making mistakes, as long as we learn from them, in order to create our own path, and our own future. ■



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 **UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE**

Christian Friis Bach: Making the UNECE a household name

Christian Friis Bach, the recently appointed head of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), is hoping to make some radical changes in the public perception of his organization. This means overhauling its information outreach and collaborating more effectively with partners to show that the United Nations make a difference.



EDWARD GIRARDET¹

AND WILLIAM DOWELL²

One of the United Nations' worst habits since its founding at the end of World War II has been its tendency to label its organizations, programmes, treaties and projects with tedious names or even more unwieldy acronyms.

Did the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) really help itself by appropriating a title producing an acronym that was almost identical to the one belonging to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)? Both human rights and refugees are hard enough to communicate, but most people either have no idea what these epithets mean, or they constantly confuse one with the other. The same goes for all those other awkward UN designations: UNFPA, UNODC, UNISDR, UNIDO, HLPF... At least 'UN Women', a relatively new initiative, puts the message across clearly and without mincing words or letters.

Combined with the pervasive inability of so many UN agencies to adopt more imaginative and effective information initiatives, this is one reason why so much of the public-at-large is not aware what the UN does. “It’s very much a problem for the UN which changes slowly,” admits Christian Bach, a youthful 48-year-old Dane who was appointed last July as the new Executive Secretary of UNECE.

Having never worked in the UN system before, Bach considers his outside perspective to be an advantage. “We have failed to create visibility around the UN, particularly here in Geneva, which I see as the ‘Silicon Valley’ of international cooperation,” he says. “There is enormous strength in having so many crucial organizations in one place, but we should be promoting and developing it better as a global hub.”

Bach further stresses the need to shift towards non-state actors, which is why he believes the UN should seek broader partnerships with civil society, the private sector, media and academia in order to

drive the agenda forward. “Some say that the UN is only as good as the sum of its Member States, meaning that we are Member States driven. In one way, this is a big asset for us. But we now have to translate this into action and to benefit the citizens,” he adds. “The UN needs to re-invent itself and we should have the ambition to be more than the sum of our Member States. The UN should drive the world in the right direction.”

So how does this former Danish parliamentarian, the ex-Minister of Development Cooperation and also a former broadcast journalist expect to bring about change, particularly within UNECE. With its name perceived as yet another word gargle, UNECE is little known among the public-at-large, but, ironically, also happens to be one of the UN’s most influential and ground-breaking technical institutions. For Bach, UNECE affects lives in a manner that most people are not even aware of. “You are in contact with us daily. Every time you buy a Grade I apple in a shop, this is a standard set by the UNECE. Or the safety standard of the child seat in your

car. Or your seat belt,” Bach explains in his Palais des Nations office overlooking Lake Geneva.

UNECE’s norms and standards, many of them now global, are implemented whenever one gets into a car, goes to the supermarket, or takes a train. Transport alone relies on no less than 58 binding conventions and agreements. For example, the TIR (International Road Transport) Convention helps trucks to undertake their long cross-border hauls throughout Europe and beyond. The same goes for the content of carriers transporting chemicals or dangerous goods. The obligatory markings on the backs of trucks can help emergency response teams, such as fire departments, to know the nature of the cargo being hauled in the event of an accident.

But UNECE norms also affect trade, agriculture, forests, customs unions, e-commerce, pollution, urban living, land management and a host of other areas. Although representing 56 mostly European members, including Russia, as well as Central Asia, Canada, the United States and Israel, its

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recommendations, conventions and standards are applied increasingly by non-UNECE countries the world over. “It is in their interests to apply such standards,” says Bach.

Non-European States such as Myanmar (Burma), or even Afghanistan, are embracing UNECE norms since it will help them trade more effectively in a global market. “They know that it is important if they wish to export to Europe, which has very tough standards for agricultural products such as fruit and vegetables. For example, Afghanistan produces the best pomegranates in the world. They would be welcome in Europe, but Afghanistan will need to meet the standards and our TIR Convention can facilitate their transport”, adds Bach, recalling past visits to Helmand and other parts of Afghanistan during his days as Danish Minister of Development Cooperation.

Civil society groups are also using UNECE environmental conventions (five of them over the past 30 years) and data to oblige their governments to implement more stringent standards to combat environmental degradation. A growing number of governments cite UNECE standards as a means of pushing through more effective pollution controls in their own parliaments. The fact that many countries are now breathing sulphur-free air is a direct result of UNECE recommended standards. “Citizens now have the right to information on pollution, which is creating a form of environmental democracy,” adds Bach.

Equally crucial is UNECE’s support for the Water Convention, which will soon be

open for accession by countries outside the UNECE region. Central Asian countries now seek to develop shared access for agricultural and drinking use to rivers such as the Amu Darya (Oxus) and Syr Darya that flow into the Aral Sea. While unregulated competition for water access could threaten war, Bach notes, “there are more experiences where water scarcity has provoked cooperation rather than conflict. So that’s positive, and here we need the UNECE water convention.”

Bach now sees his role as bringing needed changes and increasing UNECE’s profile in a manner that helps the public better understand what it is doing. “All these issues are part of a very broad range,” he maintains. “My job is hopefully to strengthen them. The problem is that we do not have much visibility.” We’re now trying to “polish this pearl,” he adds, referring to a recent reference by fellow Dane, Michael Moller, the UN’s Acting Director-General in Geneva, that UNECE is the UN system’s ‘undiscovered pearl’ given what it has achieved as an organization since it was first set up in 1947.

As Bach describes it, UNECE is a mainly technical organization working with experts who develop standards, which then go into an inter-governmental framework. Finally, they become international standards. “I want the member States to help me build the car, a safe, sustainable car, that promotes transparency, accountability, quality and equality,” he says. “But I hope they will let me drive the car. Too many drivers will only make the car move slowly, or even crash.”

But UNECE is only part of the overall equation. “The UN needs to position itself far more strongly, particularly with regard to climate change or many of the current conflicts. We have to do better, and do more,” says Bach.

The UN needs to become far more communications savvy and to develop more joint public outreach initiatives with media, but also other agencies, rather than each one trying to promote itself. “The tricky thing is that our Member States have created a spaghetti bowl of agencies based on legal agreements or mandates that go back 60 years. Whenever a new topic came in, they created a new institution. This has led to enormous obstacles,” Bach points out.

“This needs to change, and it is changing,” Bach believes. “The interconnectivity among all these issues is crystal clear. You will never get peace without development, nor development without peace,” he says. However, the post-2015 agenda with the new Sustainable Development Goals already appears to be achieving this. “It’s a historic vision that will bring the world together. But the challenge remains: we all have to align our work to meet these global goals.” ■

¹ Editor of LeNews, Edward Girardet is a foreign correspondent and author. His latest book is: *Killing the Cranes – A Reporter’s Journey Through Three Decades of War in Afghanistan*.

² Former TIME magazine correspondent William Dowell is an editor of *The Essential Edge* and *The Essential Field Guide to Afghanistan*.

To really thrive, French is essential!

Unlike most people from Europe who are multi-lingual because they are used to driving for one hour and then finding themselves in another country that speaks another language, I am from a country where you can drive for several days and you are still speaking the same language.

GEMMA VESTAL WITH RESEARCH ASSISTANCE BY ANGELI VIGO

When I arrived in Geneva in 2003 for a short-term contract with WHO, I did not even try to learn French because I thought I would shortly be home. But my contract was extended once and then twice, though each time I thought I would soon be back to my English-speaking environment.

After four years in Geneva, I received a fixed-term contract, so I finally signed up for the free group French lessons at WHO. However, with my duty travel schedule, I was unable to fully participate and for years I skipped the final written exams for fear of failure. So, I have survived 11 years in French-speaking Geneva by going only to English-speaking doctors, dentists, hairdressers, gym trainers, Zumba instructors, vets, etc. My social life was limited to only those events or activities where someone could translate for me and when it came to official documentation I leaned heavily on kind co-workers for their assistance.

However, I knew deep inside that by not speaking French I was missing opportunities that Geneva and the surrounding areas could truly offer. But my work schedule was intense and a French course would have added to the stress. Therefore, I accepted the fact that I was living in a city whose language I could not speak. But this all changed last summer, when I started the process of buying my first home in Europe.

All the voluminous, legal documents were in French, and I was supposed to read, understand and sign every single contract. As a licensed attorney, signing documents I did not understand made me very anxious and fearful. My legal training requires me to read and understand the fine print and all the legal ramifications of a contract. This

was a major commitment and despite assistance from friends, I started to regret my complacency for the language.

Purchasing that French apartment, coupled with nagging fear, was the experience that catapulted me out of my English cocoon. What I needed was a place where I had no option but to speak French. And this meant an immersion class to drill French into my language-challenged neurons. A friend put me in touch with a school in Millefeuille, Provence in a château not far from Avignon. The cost was high, but I was desperate. I applied for study leave, which was approved and I set off, determined to succeed this time.

For two weeks, from the moment I arrived to the time I left, I heard and spoke only French. If I needed anything, I had to use French. It helped that none of the teachers and students knew me, so I was not afraid to make mistakes. My grammar-conscious psyche stopped resisting. I started stringing together words in my attempt to communicate and to my surprise I discovered I had an extensive French vocabulary, maybe absorbed by osmosis over the years.

And finally I had the gumption to speak French, regardless of the grammatical incorrectness, which was a breakthrough for me. As I drove back to Geneva, the frontier guards stopped me to ask a few questions. Effortlessly, I smiled and responded to their enquiries in fluent French! That blew me away!

Back at WHO, I was determined to keep up the momentum. I re-inscribed for the Berlitz online French course (I missed 11 online lessons due to professional demands) and caught up on all my tutorials in one

weekend. The following week I confirmed the completed homework to my professor and continued the course. Such is the beauty of the Berlitz online French lessons, which are offered for free at WHO. I have finally found a language instruction medium that works for me, where missing lessons does not necessarily spell a catastrophe. Now I am on a roll and the current goal is to take the French UNLPE in September 2016.

One can indeed survive in Geneva without knowing French. But to really thrive, French is essential. We all reach a point when the cost of not doing something becomes more painful than doing it. For me, not understanding the legal purchase agreements for my new home was more painful than the effort required for learning the language. For others, that might be applying for a new job or meeting a French-speaking partner. But, whenever that point comes, just think that if others can learn French, so can you. ■

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La neutralité au service de la paix

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grands centres de gouvernance et un pôle
de compétences en matière de coopération
internationale.*

OLIVIER BORIE

Genève offre certes une situation idéale au centre de l'Europe, un cadre pittoresque, des infrastructures fiables, un environnement sûr et bien d'autres avantages. Elle se situe aussi dans un pays, la Suisse, qui depuis des siècles, a su se tenir à l'écart des conflits grâce à sa neutralité.

La neutralité signifie la non-participation militaire d'un Etat à un conflit armé opposant d'autres Etats. Elle est à la fois un moyen de protéger son indépendance et son intégrité. Elle sert aussi à préserver une cohésion interne face aux dimensions plurilingues et multi-confessionnelles du pays.

En s'abstenant de prendre parti, la Suisse est généralement perçue comme un interlocuteur crédible et impartial, ce qui lui permet de proposer ses bons offices ou sa médiation. Elle a un intérêt évident pour œuvrer en faveur de la paix.

Ce n'est pas un hasard si elle est le pays dépositaire des Conventions de Genève et de ses Protocoles additionnels, piliers du droit international humanitaire. A cette différence près que si, pour le CICR, la neutralité est une condition de son action, pour la confédération, la neutralité est un

moyen de défense parmi d'autres. Cette neutralité librement choisie et armée peut être modifiée à tout moment. Ce principe n'a d'ailleurs pas été inscrit comme un objectif dans la première constitution fédérale de 1848.

Certains font remonter l'origine de cette pratique au XVI^e siècle. L'un des motifs principaux était la volonté d'éviter de graves dissensions internes issues des conflits liés à la Réforme en Europe.

Ce désengagement préservait non seulement la confédération de la guerre, mais il permettait aussi de contribuer à son développement économique, les cantons n'étant pas affectés dans leurs relations commerciales. On se rappelle parfois avec étonnement que le mercenariat constituait une source de revenu non négligeable. Les cantons suisses étaient neutres mais, des siècles durant, des milliers de confédérés vendirent leurs services aux armées étrangères.

Une date essentielle est celle de 1815 avec la reconnaissance au Congrès de Vienne de la neutralité de la Suisse. Ce traité garantissait à la confédération son indépendance tout en continuant à jouer un rôle de «tampon» entre les grandes puissances de l'époque.

La neutralité ne faisait pas nécessairement l'unanimité au sein des confédérés. Elle était perçue par certains comme une entrave au développement. Mais, la paix et la stabilité aidant, l'économie suisse prit son essor.

Sur un plan intérieur, le discours sur la neutralité va servir à cimenter le sentiment national: «si la Suisse a pu échapper aux horreurs de la guerre, c'est surtout grâce à sa neutralité». Au-delà de cette vision idyllique du petit pays neutre qui s'abstient de toute implication dans les affaires des autres, la réalité est, bien entendu, plus complexe.

D'aucuns la considèrent comme un choix opportuniste, voire une forme de camouflage. Jusqu'où va la non-implication? Peut-on sérieusement vendre des armes tout en restant neutre, même en prenant toutes sortes de précautions? Est-il possible de vivre à l'écart du monde et de ses soubresauts? De fait, une neutralité absolue semble illusoire sur une planète

toujours plus interdépendante et, pour le moins inadaptée face à des défis globaux comme le changement climatique.

Malgré ces critiques, la neutralité est probablement bien plus profondément ancrée en Suisse que dans n'importe quel autre Etat.

La fin de l'ordre mondial bipolaire a amené les citoyens suisses à revoir leur position vis-à-vis des Nations Unies qu'ils ont accepté, à une courte majorité, de rejoindre en 2002. Ils ne percevaient plus de contradiction majeure entre leur neutralité et une participation plus active sur la scène internationale, en particulier en faveur des efforts de paix. Cet engagement ne signifie pas pour autant une perte d'indépendance vis-à-vis des différents blocs.

Son statut de pays neutre et son renoncement à une politique de puissance extérieure lui donnent presque une dimension morale, renforcée par son implication dans le domaine de l'humanitaire.

La neutralité n'est pas un choix de facilité. On ne peut la réduire à une simple abstention ou un repli sur soi. Elle exige de la volonté, de la lucidité et de l'habileté. Si la neutralité suisse s'est imposée plutôt par nécessité et un certain pragmatisme en évoluant au fil du temps et des circonstances, elle a néanmoins fini par faire partie intégrante de son histoire, de sa culture et de son rapport avec le reste du monde.

Au bout du compte, cette approche aura joué un rôle essentiel dans la préservation de la paix et de l'indépendance de la Suisse. Surtout, elle aura créé des conditions favorables à l'accueil d'institutions internationales et à leur bon fonctionnement. ■



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The *Rebirth* sculpture

A future vista of Geneva International *Rebirth*

*Re-birth at 70? Is that possible?
For the United Nations it is. Rebirth
is a monumental sculpture to be placed
in Ariana Park and unveiled for the
70th birthday of our Organization.*

**EVELINA RIOUKHINA AND
MARIA TERESA PISANI**

The sculpture represents all UN Member States united in the *Rebirth* symbol. Developed by world-renowned Italian artist Maestro Michelangelo Pistoletto, the symbol celebrates the *Rebirth* of society towards a new world, where the “human community” is united, dialogue between opposites is fostered, and balance and harmony achieved. It stems from a reconfiguration of the mathematical infinity sign.

The two circles at the ends represent the world of nature and the world of artifice, developed by humans through a process that has now reached globalizing proportions. The middle circle is the conjunction of the two and represents the generative womb of a new world. This new world is the ideal place where artifice and nature meet in harmony.

The *Rebirth* sculpture is a joint project of UNOG and UNECE. As a symbol of a new start, the *Rebirth* sculpture will be strictly linked to the Strategic Heritage Plan for the renovation of the Palais, thus marking an important practical and symbolic step in the “rebirth of the Palais” and of what it represents for diplomacy, world peace and development.

The sculpture will be located in the heart of Ariana Park next to the Celestial Sphere standing in the Cour d'Honneur to be visible from inside the Palais, as a “memento” to all delegates and visitors. The symbol should constantly remind people of the need to “meet in the middle”, to bridge distances and find harmony, whatever their function, job or role in society.

The symbol-sculpture will consist of 193 stones, each



Maestro Michelangelo Pistoletto traces *Rebirth* in the Ariana garden at the Palais des Nations

representing a UN Member State. Each stone will have the name of a UN member State engraved on it. The stones will be left rough and be of a size between 30-50 centimetres. People will be able to sit on them, using the sculpture as a place to rest and chat. The sculpture will be inaugurated during a ceremony on UN Day, with the participation of representatives of all UN Member States and civil society.

This symbol will remind us that the United Nations, through the joint work and participation of all Member States, is ready for its *Rebirth*, and with the society as a whole, committed to a world of peace, rights and well-being for all. ■

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Deadly Superbugs

Apocalypse Now?

Whilst the use of antibiotics to treat infections is one of the most important milestones in the history of medicine, drug-resistant bacteria are on the rise. What does this mean? Should we worry?

CHANTAL STREIJFERT GARON, WHO IN COLLABORATION WITH DR. DANILO LO FO WONG, WHO¹

“Antibiotic resistance is no longer a prediction for the future, it is happening right now across the world”, is the alarming message conveyed by the World Health Organization in its first Global Report on surveillance of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) published in 2014.

“Without urgent action, the world is headed for a post-antibiotic era, in which common infections and minor injuries which have been treatable for decades can once again kill,” says Dr. Keiji Fukuda, WHO’s Assistant Director-General for Health Security. A recent study commissioned by UK Prime Minister David Cameron even predicts that superbugs are likely to kill more than cancer by 2050.

You think this is science fiction?

In India, tens of thousands of new-borns are dying every year because they are born with bacterial infections – such as sepsis and pneumonia – that are resistant to most known

antibiotics. “If resistant infections keep growing”, warns the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, “that would be a disaster for not only India but the entire world.” And everyone is at risk. Uppalapu Shrinivas, regarded as the Mozart of classical Indian music, who had performed alongside several international artists such as John McLaughlin and Nigel Kennedy, died in September 2013, at age 45, because of an infection that doctors could not cure with antibiotics.

You would think developed countries are less affected?

In the USA, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), two million Americans become infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria each year, and at least 23,000 of them die as a direct result. Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus alone, better known as MRSA, the number one superbug, kills more Americans than the combined total of emphysema, HIV/AIDS, Parkinson’s disease, and homicide. Like healthy baby Simon Macario from Chicago, 15 months, who was taken

swiftly (within a few hours) and totally by MRSA after being treated with antibiotics for typical children health problems of his age – dehydration, ear and throat infections, asthma and allergy symptoms – that didn't work.

In France, Guillaume Depardieu, son of renowned actor Gérard Depardieu, first survived two types MRSA during the whole year he spent in the hospital after a motorcycle accident in 1995, undergoing dozens of operations and the amputation of one leg. But in a tragic twist of fate, he contracted pneumonia in October 2008 along with a new MRSA infection. He died three days later aged 37.

In the UK last year, Kelly Strudwick, aged 25, found herself fighting for her life as a result of a recurrent and virulent urinary tract infection (UTI). She was so ill that her parents were called to the hospital in the middle of the night as doctors feared she was dying. She survived, but for how long? Kelly is still getting UTI infections.

So what do we know?

We don't need to grab a medical mask and lock ourselves indoors just yet. Infections can be prevented in the first place by better hygiene, access to clean water and sanitation, infection control in healthcare facilities and vaccination.

On an individual level, we need to stop demanding antibiotics

for every flu, earache, cough, or other illness as antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses. When you take antibiotics, some bacteria may adapt and survive the treatment. These bacteria can then grow, spread and infect other people. As antibiotic resistance grows, the antibiotics used to treat infections do not work as well, or no longer at all. In addition, good bacteria that may protect against infection are destroyed for several months; the vicious circle kind of situation.

Lesson to learn?

Use antibiotics only when prescribed by a doctor, take the full prescription (even if you are feeling better) and never share antibiotics with others or use leftover prescriptions. And wash your hands!

How about WHO?

WHO declared war on AMR during World Health Day 2011 with the slogan "Combat Drug Resistance. No action today. No cure tomorrow". Since then, WHO has been at the forefront of a worldwide response to fight AMR together with many national, regional and global key players, creating a WHO Global AMR Task Force, an AMR Strategic and Technical Advisory Expert Group and publishing a Global Report on where the world stands in 2014 on the AMR front.

No less concerned, the World Health Assembly requested the Director General in May 2014

to develop a Global Action Plan to combat AMR in every corner of the world. Elaborated with the active involvement of WHO Member States and in consultation with all relevant public-private stakeholders, the Global Action Plan will reflect the perspectives, commitments, roles and responsibilities of every single actor in the fight against AMR. It will be presented to the World Health Assembly for endorsement in May 2015 which will kick off a global offensive against one of the deadliest threats of our times.

Remember, however, that combating drug resistance is a collective responsibility and if we do not act today, "Apocalypse (of antibiotics) Now" is just around the corner. ■

¹ Programme Manager, Control of Antimicrobial Resistance, WHO/EURO

For more information:

http://who.int/topics/drug_resistance/en

<http://www.euro.who.int/amr>



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Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of WHO with the WHO interns in November 2014

Interns for Interns

Introducing the WHO Intern Board

Interns at the World Health Organization are not only fun and driven; they are also passionate about the idea of “interns helping interns” while in Geneva. An informal way to help sustain this spirit of the intern community is the WHO Intern Board.

ESTHER PAK, FORMER PRESIDENT, WHO INTERN BOARD

“I like how the Intern Board is so much more than just a social board; it genuinely strives to make sure that not only do interns get the most out of their internship, but also that they can contribute as much as possible to the work of WHO,” said Olivia Murphy, current President, WHO Intern Board.

Former Vice-President Finola Hackett describes the Intern Board as “a very dynamic group with great ideas and skills, experience in leadership positions, and just an easygoing and positive attitude. Its success results from the fact that many interns are engaged and want to make the most of their time at WHO.”

Isabel Braminirova, former Vice-President, said, “The Intern Board helps us discover

our strengths and leadership capabilities via the roles we take on.”

What is the Intern Board?

The WHO Intern Board is a group of interns at WHO in Geneva that voluntarily organizes social, educational and professional-development activities for fellow interns. The Intern Board also connects interns with the staff and informs them about resources available to them.

A big thank-you to the Organization and the voluntary efforts of past and current interns for making the work of the Intern Board possible!

“Interns bring fresh ideas and energy to the organization, while WHO gives interns the opportunity to see firsthand how the United Nations works

to improve the health and well-being of people around the world,” said WHO Deputy Director-General Dr. Anarfi Asamoah-Baah. “In short, this is a win-win situation for everyone involved.”

What does the Intern Board do?

The Intern Board sends out a newsletter twice a week to all WHO interns, containing all sorts of information and resources, including the following:

Networking and professional-development opportunities: weekly WHO interns lunch; weekly WHO tour for new interns; speed networking sessions; seminars and events at the UN and other international organizations; Experts for Interns seminars, where interns can learn about

a range of global health topics and interact directly with leaders in their fields; Interns for Interns seminars, where interns have the opportunity to present their work; intern-led CV review sessions; and French conversation tables led by native French-speaking interns. Social activities: picnics by the lake; fondue nights; Friday unwind, which is an end-of-week hangout on the WHO rooftop with food, drinks and good company; holiday parties; bazaar visits; photography competitions; running clubs; music jamming sessions; hiking; free sports classes, including some taught by interns (such as yoga, spinning, Thai boxing and belly dancing); CERN tours; and tours of the UN and other international organizations.

Longer-term initiatives: developing a survey to gain insight

into the experience of interns and enable further collaboration with the Organization, and drafting guidelines to help current and future interns understand their roles more thoroughly, ensuring maximum benefit to both staff and interns.

Where can I meet the Intern Board?

Board members meet once a week to discuss ongoing and upcoming initiatives. Interns can get involved in a variety of areas and can even create their own positions. Contact the President or Vice-President for up-to-date meeting times and locations.

How can I get involved with the Intern Board?

Email the President and Vice-President, or email the Intern Board at who.intern-board@gmail.com. ■

Send a friend request to the Facebook account “Geneva-current Who-interns” and request to join the Facebook Group “WHO interns”.

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Scott Foster moderating Geneva Energy Discussions

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Two degrees will be harder than we think *Putting the genie back*

The Palais des Nations, the Geneva Graduate Institute and the newly-opened Maison de la Paix are becoming a Golden Triangle of peace and sustainability for Geneva International that combines the expertise of the UN with academia, civil society and the private sector.

**EVELINA RIOUKHINA
AND CRISTIAN OLAREAN**

It is not a coincidence that the new series of conversations on the role of energy in society were launched by the UNECE during the week of peace. The two notions have lots in common in today's world.

The UNECE and the Geneva Graduate Institute's Centre for International Environmental Studies (CIES) have launched a special series to engage Geneva-based experts and the public with international experts in conversations about sustainable energy. *Putting the genie back: two degrees will be harder*

than we think was the first in the series of Geneva Energy Conversations. UNOG Acting Director-General Michael Møller and UNECE Executive Secretary Christian Friis Bach were personally involved in the inaugural event. The idea is the brainchild of the UNECE's Sustainable Energy Division.

David Hone, Chief Climate Change advisor to Shell and author of *Putting the genie back: two degrees will be harder than we think*, was the invited keynote speaker who kicked off the series. He took on the subject of climate change in a frank and open discussion, building on his more than 30 years' experience in the energy industry.

"The solutions lie within our grasp; it's just a question of whether we want to use them." So, why will 2°C degrees be harder than we think?

Mr. Scott Foster, Director of the Sustainable Energy Division, and moderator of the first discussion, shared his impressions: "It is clear from history that policies must align with people's needs. It is not enough to lecture citizens about what they should or should not do – it is much more effective if people work to achieve societal objectives while working in their self-interest. Likewise it is impossible to know the future given how technology advances, economies evolve, and markets react. It is therefore essential that we be humble in our approach and focus on establishing framework conditions within which investors and consumers make their choices". As participants noted, there is not a lack of capital, nor a dearth of innovation or technology that

prevents us from meeting the objectives of energy for sustainable development. What is needed is stability and political commitment to the long game in balancing economics, environment, and societal needs. But we have to remain open to all the solutions that are on the table, as fossil fuels will continue to play an important role in people's lives for many years to come. Therefore, technologies like carbon capture and storage will just as much have a role as changing our behaviours and involving younger generations in the planning of their future.

Now, the UNECE is in the process of preparing a second Geneva Energy Conversation that will take place in parallel with its next bi-annual session. Energy and the UN's

sustainable development goals will be the main topic of the next conversation. Today, in the new set of goals, energy underpins them all and is an integral part of our lives and our future.

It is expected that the second event will again bring together academia, the UN and the private sector to consider the important topic of a sustainable future for all. This will one more time demonstrate that the symbolic "Golden Triangle of Geneva International" works and brings results! ■

Watch for the 2nd Geneva Energy Conversation!

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A taste of India in Pâquis

*Love Indian food?
Adventurous enough to try rich and
aromatic spices? The whiff of spicy,
full-bodied Indian meals wafts in the air
at Pâquis in the heart of Geneva.
This correspondent surveyed the Indian
culinary spread on offer in Pâquis' myriad
lanes and shares his experience.*

GAUTAM BASU

The story of Indian restaurants in Geneva's downtown is one of sheer enterprise. Of South-Asian origin expatriates who began their careers in the hospitality industry in Europe, and then set up shops to win the hearts of *les Genevois* through their stomach. In this episode we feature Indian Plaza, Sajna and Bollywood restaurants, offering the range of dishes from all of India's four principal regions, each with their distinctive cuisine. These are the rice-staple and largely vegetarian South Indian or Decan genre; the predominantly carnivorous East which includes the fish-based culinary preparations from Bengal; the proverbial dal-chappati-sabzi (lentils, Indian leavened flour-based bread and vegetable curry) -based diet of the West; and the meaty delicacies of the Northern heartland that were introduced by the Mughals five centuries ago and collectively called the Mughlai gharana (genre).

Indian Plaza – Rue de Monthoux 58

Kazi Delwar Hussein, proprietor of Indian Plaza, is from India's eastern neighbour Bangladesh. He started this 50-seater restaurant in 2008 with the focus on providing "the family dining experience". The restaurant exudes authenticity and a family ambience. Hospitality is also at its best in this restaurant, service coming always with

a smile. Kazi says he endeavours to offer his clients, who are regulars, as realistic an Indian dining experience as possible. Most clients work in the neighbourhood and regularly drop by to have lunch.

Running the restaurant has not been without challenges, admits steward Aziz. He recalls with a smile how in the early years he found it more challenging to communicate with clients than to rustle up a delicate culinary spread on the table. Sign language helped initially, he says, but with time he picked up the French language.

Indian Plaza bustles with diners gorging on aromatic dishes from the Indian heartland prepared by chef Swapan, who ensures that the quintessential flavours of India are retained in every meal. It caters to all tastes, waistlines and pockets. It strikes a balance between flavours, offering from wholesome chicken curry madras to lamb and beef cooked in Pakistani and Indus flavours, churned out in remarkable time. For beef and fish dishes, Indian Plaza would give many restaurants in Geneva a run for their money for consistency, taste and finesse.

Most Indian restaurants in Pâquis offer an all-you-can-eat buffet every weekday between 12 noon and 2.00 p.m. for a fixed price of CHF 18. Indian Plaza's buffets are commended widely by patrons, and the throng of clients at that hour stands testimony. The buffet has more takers when the menu serves the shrimp or beef masala. Check out the days!

Sajna - Rue de Neuchatel 18

Khalilur Rahman, owner of Sajna, set up this equally popular restaurant in 2009 after many years in Switzerland with a kaleidoscopic career. He runs it with his wife, who adds a very personal touch with her winning smile and pleasing disposition.

Sajna Restaurant is a 70-seater establishment with distinctive wooden filigree carvings and décor made-to-order from Rajputana (or Rajasthan, India's desert state in the west). It scores high on ambience and authenticity too.

Before we touch on the dishes, try Sajna lassi as an aperitif, the nutritious sweetened and flavoured milk drink that keeps one cool on a hot summer day and has high protein content.

When it comes to the main courses, Sajna is popular among its regulars and perhaps is the most pan-Indian restaurant of the crop as it has something to offer from all the Indian genres of cooking: rogan josh flavours from the Mughlai school, the vindaloo from the Goan kitchen with a distinctive Iberian flavour (dating to the centuries-old Portuguese influence in this state), and jalfrezi (with hot spices, green chilli and masala) and tikka masala from the north.

Sajna's South Indian and Malabar (of Kerala state) preparations are very authentic. Try the restaurant's parantha (fried Indian flatbread) with beef sticks and gravy, or fried chicken cooked in the spicy Kerala style, or its biriyani (traditional Indian fried rice cooked in herbs and spices together with chunks of meat, ideally over a slow fire) starting with the egg and chicken variety. All these delicious meals are prepared by an Indian chef and are on offer at reasonable prices.

The buffet is most popular on Fridays, when it serves tandoori chicken chunks (roasted in an earthen oven) in addition to its regular menu.

Bollywood - Place de la Navigation 6

Ravinder Singh from the industrial city of Jullundur in India's Punjab state, started out by running Café Gandhi in Pâquis in 2003; initially as a coffee and snack bar which turned into a "no-frills" restaurant for a quick weekday lunch bite for the

office-goer. Gandhi Café was one of the first Indian eateries in downtown Geneva. In 2007, Ravinder branched out with the bigger and higher-end Bollywood restaurant at Place de la Navigation. The restaurant comfortably sits 60 people indoors, and during summer, capacity more than doubles thanks to the sprawling terrace.

The interior of Bollywood is worth a look as its walls are adorned with prints from quintessentially popular Indian films and doyens of Hindu cinema such as Amitabh Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai. Bollywood after all is still modern India's biggest ambassador abroad.

Bollywood, the restaurant, specializes in Goan, Bombay, Peshawari and Punjabi food, and its highlight is the lamb saagwala (lamb cooked in spinach curry). It also serves a variety of kebabs, and an appetizing vegetable pulao with a smattering of cashew nuts and saffron.

Ravinder admits that the prices of his dishes may be on the higher side, but says he has loyal Indian patrons who always drop by for a "taste of home".

Happy eating! ■

Do share your experience of an Indian meal in a Geneva restaurant. Write your comments and opinion to Gautam Basu at basug@who.int.

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Pascal Frchet, 55 ans, employé dans les services d'appui.



© Oleksandr Svirchevsky

Slim Roua, 51 ans, messenger au Palais.

Portraits croisés, à la rencontre de Pascal Frchet, OMS et Slim Roua, UNOG

A la demande de nos lecteurs, «Portraits croisés» est une nouvelle colonne du magazine. Elle permettra de découvrir chaque mois une personne de l'OMS et son homologue aux Nations Unies.

**CETTE RUBRIQUE EST PROPOSÉE PAR
SOLANGE BEHOTEGUY ET EVELINA RIOUKHINA**

Pour cette première nous allons à la rencontre des Services de distribution. C'est grâce à eux que nous recevons tous le magazine chaque mois. Quatre questions courtes, dont la dernière «Libre cours» laissera les invités s'exprimer, recommander un livre, une chanson, un poème, partager une idée ou une astuce, ou tout simplement libérer leur parole...

Pascal et Slim, vous distribuez *UN Special* et vous êtes dans les premiers à le feuilleter...

P.F. On a les prérogatives qu'on peut! Je m'attarde toujours à la rubrique loisirs! Un petit rituel avant de le distribuer.

S.R. Je distribue le courrier et le magazine un peu partout, aux Droits de l'Homme, Motta et Palais Wilson, à la CNUCED, à la bibliothèque... A cause de la crise, je fais désormais le travail qui occupait cinq personnes auparavant. Je distribue entre 400 et 500 exemplaires dans une journée. Ils nous arrivent au triage, on les expédie ensuite par division. Chaque messenger reçoit son quota de numéros, et tout est fait dans la journée. Avant on les livrait dans les bureaux, maintenant on les distribue dans les casiers. On appelle ça les points de chute. Avec l'équipe on reçoit à peu près 2000 exemplaires.

Pendant la distribution, on entend parfois des commentaires. Pas des critiques sur la forme, c'est plutôt sur le fond que les gens nous relancent. Il m'arrive d'entrer pour laisser un numéro dans un bureau et qu'on me dise «non, non, non» comme

si j'allais poser un poison. Par contre, il y a des gens qui réclament des exemplaires en plus.

Quand et comment a commencé votre histoire avec l'OMS et l'ONU?

P.F. Notre histoire a commencé il y a longtemps, par le joli mois de mai, mois du printemps, mois du muguet. A la faveur de notre conférence annuelle de mai 1983, j'ai décroché un contrat de 15 jours dans le service de distribution du courrier. J'y suis toujours. La fidélité d'un homme à un seul service s'appelle Vertu, à une seule femme Amour.

S.R. Je suis né en Algérie, et suis venu en Europe à 25 ans pour faire une carrière de footballeur. J'ai décroché un DESS comme entraîneur de foot. D'abord à Caen, en Normandie, puis en Suisse alémanique. De passage dans la région, le hasard a fait que je m'arrête dans un club à Annemasse. De fil en aiguille, je me suis orienté vers l'ONU. J'ai eu mon premier contrat en 1991 à l'ECOSOC et pendant dix ans j'ai été président du club de football de l'ONU.

L'OMS et l'ONU s'apparentent-elles à un sport de combat?

P.F. Je n'ai pas cette vision. Le travail n'est pas une lutte. Son sens est d'unir les hommes!

S.R. Pas vraiment. Travailler à l'ONU, c'était un peu comme un rêve. J'étais tellement impressionné que, la première fois, j'ai laissé ma voiture dehors. Au Palais, nous avons la chance de travailler dans un environnement multiculturel. Je croise des fonctionnaires de toutes origines et entends parler plusieurs langues.

Libre cours...

P.F. A la vie!

[...]

Les champs sont labourés les usines rayonnent

Et le blé fait son nid dans une houle énorme

La moisson la vendange ont des témoins sans nombre

Rien n'est simple ni singulier

La mer est dans les yeux du ciel ou de la nuit

La forêt donne aux arbres la sécurité

Et les murs des maisons ont une peau commune

Et les routes toujours se croisent.

Les hommes sont faits pour s'entendre

Pour se comprendre pour s'aimer

Ont des enfants qui deviendront pères des hommes

Ont des enfants sans feu ni lieu

Qui réinventeront les hommes

Et la nature et leur patrie

Celle de tous les hommes

Celle de tous les temps.

Extrait de *La mort, l'amour, la vie*,

Paul Eluard

Libre cours...

S.R. En 25 ans de carrière j'ai vu une évolution de l'ONU: des collègues partent, d'autres arrivent. Pour moi, elle est devenue plus froide, distante, le côté humain a fondu un petit peu. Aujourd'hui, on est à côté d'un collègue et pour communiquer on lui envoie un email. Si on ne garde pas le côté humain dans nos relations, comment peut-on espérer que le monde soit plus humain? Je trouve que le Palais – là c'est mon côté râleur qui parle – a perdu de sa chaleur. Un simple bonjour peut tout changer. Confucius disait: «Pour faire le tour du monde, ce qui coûte le plus cher, c'est de faire le premier pas». ■



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Les Bains d'Ovronnaz

Take the water

For many people living in Geneva, the winter is synonymous with skiing and the thrill of snow sports. But if hitting the slopes is not your idea of fun, and viewing them from a comfortable distance is more your cup of tea, then consider slipping into a hot thermal pool surrounded by snow-capped mountains, with snowflakes falling softly around you and let your stresses melt away. Such is the pleasure that you will find at any number of spas within easy distance from the centre of Geneva.

**VERONICA RIEMER, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER,
WHO STAFF ASSOCIATION**

Thermal baths and spas in the winter months are just the best way to survive the cold, grey days" said WHO staff member Carolyn Scudamore, who is a big fan of spas and thermal baths. "Relaxing in the hot water, taking a jacuzzi, a hamman or a sauna and then resting by an open log fire and listening to soothing music is just such a tonic and you feel like a million dollars afterwards!"

Not only is thermal bathing tremendously relaxing, it is also known to have remarkable health benefits and may even help prevent and treat diseases. Bathing in hot spring water gradually increases the temperature of the body, thus killing harmful germs and viruses. As you immerse yourself, your heart rate speeds up, sending blood to the surface of your skin and dispersing extra body heat into the air. But after a few minutes, the warm blood causes the blood vessels to dilate, which lessens resistance to blood flow and lowers your blood pressure.

A hot spring soak can provide tremendous relief from the pain of stressed muscles and tired joints. Additionally, the hot air has been claimed to bolster the respiratory system. If you are feeling fluey, then luxuriating in a thermal spring may help your body fight infections.

Mineral spring waters contain high amounts of negative ions, which can help promote feelings of not just physical but also psychological well-being. This kind of gentle swimming is very beneficial for calming the mind and relieving anxiety. When you're stressed, you frequently experience insomnia, digestive problems and sore muscles and joints. A thermal bath can counteract this, as the heat relaxes the body and the buoyancy contributes to a calm and meditative state.

The hottest thermal water in Switzerland, discovered in February 1831, can be found at Lavey-les-Bains. The water comes from springs at a temperature of 62°C to 70°C and is classified as "thermal water and chlorinated sodium sulphate". This particular water has virtues for the treatment of rheumatic musculoskeletal and dermatological problems. The two outdoor pools and the indoor pool are open all year at a temperature of 32°C to 36°C.

Similarly the thermal water at les Bains d'Ovronnaz offers you the warmth and high mineral content to help you unwind. All three indoor and outdoor pools are located to provide a magnificent alpine panorama. The centre offers a range of massages, shiatsu and reiki, and a hydrotherapy programme including watsu, hydromassage, Kneipp therapy, aquagym, and thalatherm as well as beauty treatments.

Closer to Geneva but without the outdoor pools and mountain views are the Bains de Cressy and Bains de Divonne. Both centres offer a selection of wellness and beauty treatments as well as the spa facilities such as jacuzzi, sauna and hammam. Established by Doctor Paul Vidart in 1848, the thermal baths at Divonne-les-Bains successfully treat many psychosomatic disorders such as psoriasis, eczema, stomach ulcers, high blood pressure and heart disease. According to legends, in Latin, Divonna mean "divine water" which in this region contains bicarbonated calcium and trace metal, drawn from 124 meters deep, at a temperature of 14°C. The waters in Divonne are rich in fluorine and magnesium; an ideal composition for promoting a balance between body and mind.

The thermal baths at Cressy offer a number of treatments such as acupuncture and lymphatic drainage. Their therapists are affiliated with ASCA (the Swiss Foundation for complementary medicine) and therefore recognized by some companies offering complementary insurance, which means a portion of the costs can be reimbursed. Recent amendments to the WHO Staff Health Insurance rules mean that acupuncture treatments will now be reimbursed at 80% with a ceiling of 24 sessions per calendar year and other traditional and complementary/alternative medicine interventions (e.g. Ayurveda) will be reimbursed at 80% with a ceiling of 12 sessions per calendar year (for outpatient treatment only).

So start the New Year off by taking better care of yourself and experience some of the health benefits of our local natural springs. And you will see how much more enjoyable 2015 can be! ■

You can find more detailed information about any of these thermal centres here:

Les bains de Lavey (Valais): <http://www.lavey-les-bains.ch>

Les Bains d'Ovronnaz (Valais): <http://www.thermalp.ch>

Bains de Cressy (Geneva): <http://bainsdecressy.hug-ge.ch>

Valvital Divonne-les-Bains (France): <http://www.valvital.fr>



Care & Emergency
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Rue Thomas Mazaryk 1
1202 Geneva
www.ardentis.ch



Interview with Dr. Simon Abi Najm, Head of Ardentis Dental Clinic Geneva

"Ardentis is the result of bringing together eleven dental clinics in the French-speaking Canton of Vaud, Canton of Geneva and Canton of Fribourg under the same brand name. Our clinics offer an all-encompassing multi-disciplinary approach to dental care that allows us to provide our patients with a complete range of services for adults and children. Our emergency services are open seven days a week. In providing care we make use of the newest computer technology, including digital radiology, cone-beam computer tomography, digital patient records, microscopes, computerized conceptual laboratory work. In order to offer our patients the best possible care, Ardentis clinics have high-tech equipment at their disposal and never think twice about investing in proven devices and technologies."

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Au fond l'Asie et au premier plan la rive européenne du Bosphore avec les paquebots et leurs flots de touristes qui vont déferler sur la ville.

ISTANBUL

Entre Orient et Occident ^(1^{re} partie)

Au confluent de l'Europe et de l'Asie, Istanbul est la seule ville au monde à être construite sur deux continents. La mégapole (15 millions d'habitants) fait le pont géographiquement, historiquement et culturellement entre deux univers : l'univers oriental et l'univers occidental. Napoléon Bonaparte imaginait que «si la Terre était une nation, Istanbul en serait la capitale»!

TEXTE & PHOTOS CLAUDE MAILLARD

C'est une évidence, la première ville de Turquie (la capitale Ankara compte 4 fois moins d'habitants) doit son destin à son emplacement privilégié, au carrefour d'une grande voie maritime et d'une grande voie terrestre. L'une relie la Méditerranée à la mer Noire, empruntant le Bosphore et la mer de Marmara. L'autre unit l'Europe occidentale à l'Asie et, au-delà, à la Route de la Soie, en direction de la Chine et vers l'Inde. La Corne d'Or, l'estuaire qui sépare le vieux Stamboul du reste de la ville européenne achève de donner à ce site un atout majeur en constituant un port naturel, pratiquement sans égal au monde et qui a largement participé à sa défense et à sa prospérité.

Une vibration particulière et une énergie singulière habitent Istanbul, sans doute depuis ses origines. La fabuleuse

confluence du Bosphore et de la Corne d'Or, mythique jointure entre l'Europe et l'Asie, sillonnée par les cargos au long cours et les navires du monde entier y est certainement pour quelque chose.

Byzance, Constantinople, puis Istanbul

Avant d'être baptisée Istanbul en 1930, la capitale commerciale de la Turquie moderne fut la Byzance des Grecs puis la Constantinople de l'Empire romain d'Orient et la capitale de l'Empire ottoman.

C'est vers 658 av. J.-C. que des marins venus de Mégare ont posé la première pierre d'une cité qui allait devenir Byzance. L'endroit choisi leur paraissait facile à défendre, riche en ressources et leur semblait propice aux échanges commerciaux. En 324, l'empereur romain Constantin 1^{er} décide d'y bâtir la Nouvelle Rome, destinée à devenir la capitale de son empire. La ville prendra alors le nom de Constantinople.

Sultan de l'empire ottoman, Mehmet II s'empare des lieux en 1453 et se charge de poursuivre les grands travaux entrepris par ses prédécesseurs. Il conserve également le nom de la ville. Ce n'est qu'au début du XX^e siècle que l'ensemble de la ville deviendra Istanbul, appellation qui ne désignait jusqu'alors que la seule péninsule historique, sur la rive droite de la Corne d'Or, écrit et prononcée Stamboul en français.

Avant même d'atterrir, nous serons confrontés aux embouteillages qui paralysent Istanbul. Trafic aérien surchargé, nous devons patienter 30 minutes dans les airs, survolant à plusieurs reprises la région du Bosphore. Nous aurons ainsi tout le loisir de nous rendre compte de l'étendue de la ville qui grouille en dessous de notre avion de la Turkish Airlines qui assure quotidiennement plusieurs vols Genève – Istanbul.



Reposant sur quatre énormes piliers, la coupole de la basilique Sainte-Sophie, d'un diamètre de 32 m, culmine à 56 m du sol.

Sultanahmet, formidable concentré d'histoire

Samedi, 5h30, le jour se lève à peine. Après la soirée passée à déambuler dans les vieux quartiers animés d'Istanbul aux ruelles pavées et escarpées (la ville est construite sur sept collines) et avoir apprécié la gastronomie locale, le réveil est difficile, d'autant plus que la météo n'est pas encourageante. De la fenêtre de l'hôtel Citadel qui domine la mer de Marmara, la vue est imprenable sur les navires qui s'engouffrent dans le Bosphore en direction de la mer Noire. Au loin, des éclairs déchirent le ciel asiatique. Parmi tous ces cargos, pétroliers et porte-conteneurs, plusieurs titanesques bateaux de croisière sont prêts à débarquer des milliers de touristes sur la ville. Il est grand temps d'enfiler ses baskets et de partir en direction du quartier de Sultanahmet, vers la place de l'Hippodrome, afin de découvrir la mosquée Bleue et la basilique Sainte-Sophie. Construit par l'empereur Septime Sévère en 203, puis agrandi par Constantin en 324, l'hippodrome pouvait accueillir jusqu'à 50 000 spectateurs. Dévasté par les croisés au XIII^e siècle, il ne conserve que trois vestiges: l'obélisque de Théodose, la colonne Serpentine et l'obélisque Muré. C'est l'heure de la prière du matin et une grosse effervescence règne à l'intérieur de l'élégante mosquée du sultan Ahmet aussi appelée mosquée Bleue en raison de son intérieur paré de 21 000 carreaux de faïence bleue d'Iznik. Avec ses dômes en cascade et ses six minarets élancés, elle est incontestablement l'une des plus belles mosquées du monde musulman. Elle fut achevée en 1616. Plus vieille de

mille ans, la basilique Sainte-Sophie est l'œuvre de l'empereur byzantin Justinien. Ses dimensions gigantesques en font le plus grand monument de la chrétienté au monde jusqu'en 1626 où elle sera devancée par la basilique Saint-Pierre de Rome. Au XV^e siècle, Mehmet II décide de modifier Sainte-Sophie et de la convertir à l'islam. Le sanctuaire chrétien devient alors la mosquée impériale Ayasofya. Finalement en 1935, Atatürk, le père de la Turquie moderne, décide de la transformer en musée.

La Petite Sainte-Sophie, église Byzantine construite au VI^e siècle par l'empereur Justinien et l'impératrice Théodora dans un jardin proche de la mer de Marmara est considérée comme un prélude à la «Grande» Sainte-Sophie. Ce petit joyau, résultat de la fusion entre l'art byzantin et l'art ottoman, deviendra mosquée au XVI^e siècle.

Topkapi, jadis cité interdite

Les tremblements de terre étant assez fréquents dans la région du Bosphore, on avait pris l'habitude de construire les habitations d'Istanbul en bois afin de limiter les dégâts. Pour se faire une idée de ce qu'était la ville avant que la plupart de ses maisons ne soient détruites par des incendies, il faut emprunter la rue Sogukcesme qui passe juste derrière Sainte-Sophie. Le Touring Club y a entrepris un magnifique travail de restauration pour préserver ce patrimoine.

Derrière le rempart qui borde cette rue dans sa partie haute, se cache le palais de Topkapi qui a été le siège du gouvernement



Simit, maïs, brochettes, marrons... à toute heure on peut se restaurer à moindre coût dans les rues d'Istanbul.

et la demeure des sultans pendant 400 ans. Jadis, l'endroit était une cité interdite au commun des mortels. Agencé autour de quatre grandes cours arborées, le luxueux palais, dont la construction débuta en 1459, finit par devenir une véritable cité dans la ville lorsqu'il fut terminé. Edifié à la pointe de la Corne d'Or, là où le Bosphore se jette dans la mer de Marmara, la résidence qui s'étend sur 700 000 m² abritait plus de 4000 personnes qui vivaient en quasi autarcie. L'approvisionnement en eau du palais était possible grâce à la Citerne-Basilique creusée en contrebas de Sainte-Sophie. Les Turcs l'ont baptisée le «Palais englouti» tant ses dimensions sont impressionnantes. Longue de 140 m, large de 70 m et haute de 8 m, elle pouvait contenir jusqu'à 100 000 litres d'eau. 336 colonnes supportent la voûte de cette citerne construite en 542 et sa visite vaut vraiment le coup d'œil, particulièrement aux heures les plus chaudes de la journée.

Et, pour vous faire patienter avant la tombée de la nuit et vous faire découvrir les monuments sous un autre angle, éclairés de mille feux, vous n'avez que l'embaras du choix pour trouver une bonne table dans le quartier. Pour les amateurs de poissons, le Fish House propose d'excellentes cassolettes, mais si vous préférez le bœuf, le poulet ou le mouton, le Gülhane Sark se fera un plaisir de vous servir l'emblématique döner kebab. ■

Suite de la découverte d'Istanbul dans le prochain numéro de *UN Spécial*.

27 February – 8 March 2015

13th International Film Festival on Human Rights (FIFDH)¹

Geneva boasts many film festivals – Tous Ecrans, Filmar en América Latina, Black Movie... to name but the most recent. The festival most relevant to the United Nations though is undoubtedly the FIFDH. Ever faithful to its concept “a film, a subject, a debate”, the Festival aims this year to attract and engage a wider public.

© Anne-Claire Adet, FIFDH
Isabelle Gattiker

SARAH JORDAN, SDLS, UNOG

A new Director

Isabelle Gattiker is the new Director of the FIFDH. She is the successor to Léo Kaneman² with whom she co-founded FIFDH in 2002.

As a young graduate in her early twenties, she was the ideal person to launch the young person's programme as of the second edition. Her desire to spread the word led her to produce a film for the OHCHR³ “Bringing Human Rights Home”, aimed at informing the public

at large how the Human Rights Council functions. In 2005 she left the FIFDH to travel around the world as assistant to the filmmaker Amos Gitai. She continued making films in Geneva with Intermezzo Films, producing numerous critically acclaimed and widely distributed independent films on human rights themes. Many of these were presented at the FIFDH. For 2 years, she also ran the Master's degree in Cinema programme at the Ecole Cantonale d'Art de Lausanne (ECAL) and the Haute Ecole d'Art et de Design (HEAD) in Geneva. “But there wasn't enough human rights in this job for me”, says Isabelle. And so, she returned to the FIFDH as co-Director in 2013. Only two years later, with 13 years of human rights experience under her belt and yet still only in her mid-thirties, she took over the Directorship of the Festival on 1 January of this year. Léo Kaneman remains Honorary President and an advisor on debate themes.

A new venue, new partners and events

The FIFDH has always been based at the Grütli, with some screenings at the Auditorium Fondation Ardit. Its growing popularity over the years meant space had become a real problem. As of this edition, the Salle Pitoëff in the rue de Carouge will greatly increase capacity with two 350-seat auditoriums for debates, a café-restaurant area for meeting and exchanging and an exhibition space for contemporary art and happenings. The FIFDH is reaching out to new audiences and parallel events will be held in public places: the Hôpital Universitaire de Genève (HUG), La Clairière (a detention centre for young offenders), Belle Idée psychiatric hospital and various cafés. Municipalities around Geneva will also host events – Meyrin, Carouge, Plan-les-Ouates and Gaillard in neighbouring France, as well as the Maison de la Paix and the UN headquarters. These events will involve local people. For example in Plan-les-Ouates, women migrants, local musicians and moviegoers will participate in the projection of a film on migration, and a French literacy class will be showcased.

But, as always, the FIFDH has its finger on the pulse of the most pertinent human rights issues.

Films and debates on the subjects of banking and human rights, the environment and the role of civil society (with the participation of the Yes Men), the Ebola epidemic, transitional



© Scott Olson, Getty Images

justice in Côte d'Ivoire, the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide (with the participation of Charles Aznavour), the persecution of the Uighurs (a minority Chinese Muslim community), the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (with the participation of Micheline Calmy-Rey, Former President of the Confederation and Michael Møller, Acting Director-General of UNOG), migration, cyber surveillance, Ukraine and child labour are all themes on the agenda this year. And International Women's Day on March 8 will be celebrated with a focus on the empowerment of women: their role in peace processes and their role in public life in Afghanistan, through music. ■

Further details: www.fifdh.org

¹ International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights (FIFDH)

² Léo Kaneman was interviewed by UN Special in 2013 <http://www.unspecial.org/2013/02/entretien-m-leo-kaneman>

³ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights



© Martin Good

Concerts par l'orchestre des Nations Unies

La Suisse en musique

Dans le cadre des festivités de GE200.CH, l'Orchestre des Nations Unies propose deux concerts avec un programme dédié aux compositeurs suisses. Un éventail de diversité musicale qui sera présenté durant les concerts par un récitant, David Cuñado.

QUENTIN TIÈSCHE

L'orchestre a veillé à sélectionner des œuvres originales dans le but de faire découvrir la richesse du répertoire musical suisse.

Après une ouverture d'Edouard Dupuy, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze sera à l'honneur avec un extrait de son Festspiel *La Fête de Juin* créé en 1914 à l'occasion du centenaire de l'entrée de Genève dans la Confédération suisse.

Dans un tout autre style, on entendra un extrait des *Quatre Episodes* du genevois Ernest Bloch et un air du Zurichois Othmar Schoeck, qui a travaillé à la composition de son opéra *Venus* à Genève.

Côté romantique, un mouvement de la Suite pour orchestre de Joachim Raff a été choisi. La pièce la plus originale à redécouvrir est le poème symphonique *L'Escalade de 1602* d'Henri Kling. Œuvre très populaire à Genève à l'époque de sa création à la fin du XIX^e siècle, elle n'a pas été rejouée depuis plus de cent ans. Cette œuvre inspirée par l'ouverture de *Guillaume Tell* de Rossini reprend bien évidemment les chants patriotiques de l'escalade, dont le très populaire *Cé qu'è lainô*.

Enfin justement, le public appréciera deux extraits de cet ouvrage, un air et cette célèbre ouverture de *Guillaume Tell* de Gioachino Rossini, une pièce expressive mais aussi pleine d'humour. Cet opéra est sans doute la plus célèbre œuvre musicale de l'histoire relatant une légende folklorique suisse. C'est ainsi qu'il fut choisi en 1879 pour l'inauguration du Grand Théâtre de Genève.

Ce concert, qui mêle chefs-d'œuvre bien connus et œuvres à redécouvrir, se veut témoin de la diversité musicale suisse.

**Le 1^{er} mars 2015 à 17 h au Victoria Hall
ainsi que le 4 mars 2015 à 19 h au Palais
des Nations**

Direction musicale – Antoine Marguier
Présentation, récitant – David Cuñado
Soliste – Eva Fiechter, soprano ■

Ces concerts sont gratuits. Merci de consulter le site www.unorchestra.ch

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C'EST NOTRE HISTOIRE

Boléro: la culture au centre de Versoix

À cinq minutes de la Place des Nations et des organisations internationales, la Ville de Versoix vient de restructurer son centre-ville par la construction de plusieurs immeubles, de commerces et de bureaux. Le tout complété par l'aménagement d'espaces extérieurs piétonniers et un hôtel qui offre une belle vue sur le lac.



OLIVIER DELHOUME, VERSOIX¹

Au centre de ce nouveau quartier face à la gare CFF, se dresse le nouveau bâtiment dédié à la culture et aux loisirs. Nommé Boléro, en hommage à la famille de Maurice Ravel originaire de Versoix, il abrite la nouvelle bibliothèque-médiathèque et une galerie d'exposition bénéficiant des derniers équipements techniques et de sécurité aux normes de l'UNESCO. Un café-restaurant ouvrira au printemps avec sa scène artistique qui mettra à l'honneur des musiciens et des comédiens dans son lounge-bar.

Si l'inauguration officielle est prévue le samedi 25 avril à 11 h, le Boléro ouvrira dès le samedi 31 janvier 2015. Ce premier

accrochage présentera peintures, sculptures, gravures et photographies. Après un vote spontané, les 80 artistes versoisiens ont décidé d'exposer, symboliquement, leur meilleure œuvre; occasion de montrer leur volonté d'ouvrir dans l'union la galerie du Boléro.

Le Boléro accueillera de nombreux événements et nous réserve bien des surprises en 2015. Espace de rencontres et de découverte, il s'annonce comme étant un centre de «loisirs, d'arts et de cultures en partage». Les institutions et les communautés seront nombreuses à vouloir en faire leur lieu de ralliement. ■

¹ Chef du service de la culture, Mairie de Versoix

Informations pratiques:

L'exposition «Artistes d'ici» ouvrira le samedi 31 janvier et durera jusqu'au 22 février. Ouverture du mardi au dimanche de 15 h à 18 h. Nocturne le jeudi jusqu'à 19 h. www.versoix.ch

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Dear editors of *UN Special*,

I wanted to thank you for the effort you keep doing to produce the *UN Special* journal, which brings all UN civil servants in Geneva together. I enjoy reading it and appreciate the team building effect it is able to provoke; one of the few opportunities to create a common civil servant spirit. Thank you!

I would also take the opportunity to ask you whether there have been considerations to move the journal to an electronic version in case this would help saving paper and energy resources. If this would be the case, I think it will be double appreciated.

Itziar Larizgoitia, 11.11.2014

Dear Itziar,

Thank you for your encouraging words. The online version is already available on the *UN Special* website <http://www.unspecial.org/>. In 2015 the website will be revamped to be more user-friendly and compatible with mobile devices, like smartphones and tablets. In addition, we are pleased to announce that starting in 2015 our issues will be printed on FSC certified paper. We believe that these measures are a big step towards a more sustainable magazine.

UN Special

Dear colleagues,

I would like to congratulate you on an excellent edition of the *UN Special*. The content is very interesting, relevant and stimulating. The way in which the information is presented brings out the inter-connections and raises interest. I must say that each article I read made me want to continue to the next one!

Congratulations and thank you!

Devina Ahluwalia, 11.12.2014

Dear Devina,

Thank you so much for your kind words. They are highly motivating for the writers and the editorial committee who all contribute to the magazine on a voluntary basis in addition to their day-to-day tasks. To receive a message like yours is worth every effort. Thank you!

UN Special

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en lien avec un des thèmes suivants: le Multilatéralisme, la Jeunesse, les Nouvelles Technologies et l'Ethique.

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Merci de nous envoyer l'image par courriel à

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which relates to one of the following themes: Multilateralism, Young Generation, New Technologies and Ethics.

Our team will select the best photos and yours may be used to illustrate one of our upcoming issues.

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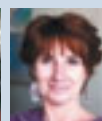
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