

# UN Special

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

# Syria

N° 758 – AVRIL 2016

**UNHCR** P.8  
Serving Syria's  
displaced

**WHO** P.12  
Serving those  
most in need

**WFP** P.14  
Mobilizing  
food convoys  
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ALEXANDER MEJIA

Rédacteur en chef / Editor-in-chief

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## All quiet on the Geneva Front

For the people that live in this peaceful city, this sentence (adapted from title of Erich Maria Remarque's novel) makes a lot of sense. However, when you look inside the Palais des Nations, it is quite the opposite. Just think of the people that you encounter in our hallways: diplomats and UN staff members pushing feverishly busy agendas emanating from gatherings like the Human Rights Council, the World Health Assembly or the Syrian peace talks. Think of the media representatives and world leaders engaged in global conferences and high-level meetings at our headquarters. Think of the quiet work that you and other colleagues do in unnamed offices and old meeting rooms. Think of your own contribution to the high-profile results we have become used to accomplishing. Believe me; the United Nations in Geneva is anything but quiet. And you are an integral part of it.

In that light, I welcome you to this edition of our prestigious publication with a particular focus on the Syrian conflict. We are offering you a main article different from what you would normally read in the news, supported by several other articles depicting the efforts of a few of our colleagues on the ground in Aleppo, Damascus and Homs. The common factor in this type of coverage is that all those writing are members of Geneva-based teams. The unifying line is that several UN entities based in this peaceful city are making a humongous difference in war-torn cities in Syria. It may seem 'all quiet on the Geneva Front,' but in reality many life-saving and critical

efforts are being conducted from here, not to mention the historic work that Staffan de Mistura and his team are conducting from the Palais itself. All these dedicated UN professionals and diplomats are truly committed to bringing lasting peace to a country devastated by a conflict that started in 2011. The length of the war and its results are very sad indeed: five years with more than 250,000 people killed, approximately 1.2 million injured, more than 6.5 million internally displaced and almost 4.6 million refugees. All is not quiet on the Syrian Front.

With that, dear colleagues, allow me to invite you to read inside articles that go beyond this complex topic and that are relevant to all of us. They range from health-related articles to the Sustainable Development Goals, from disability training to how to deal with diabetes, and from pension fund updates to insurance challenges in Switzerland. After all, this magazine was created by UN staff and for UN staff. And remember, our publication is 100% produced by volunteers. You are always welcome to approach us with a topic that is relevant for you and your work.

I consider it an honor to be your new editor and take advantage of this public opportunity to express my commitment to do my best to ensure that UN Special fulfills its mandate: to serve you as one of the best publications of its kind. ■

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## The Geneva front UN efforts to resolve the Syrian conflict

*A complex, yet essential  
process unfolding within  
Palais des Nations*

**LAURA ROJAS**

During a typical workweek, international Geneva is filled with meetings and events. At the Palais des Nations, shiny cars and elegant diplomats roam within the idyllic frame provided by the views of the lake and the Mont Blanc. Every morning, staff, visitors, interns and others pass through the security checkpoints and head to their offices. Amid this beehive activity, in Building A of Palais des Nations, another group of people starts the day with a mixture of seemingly unsurmountable odds and towering hope surrounding them. This group is composed of experts led by Mr. Staffan De Mistura, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Syria. Their task is to carefully monitor the conflict in this country and contribute tangibly to its resolution. We may pass by them in the hallways, not realizing that they often work day and night under the weight of profound global scrutiny. Nevertheless, the team is animated by a unique optimism. Recently, they accomplished what was thought to

be impossible under the circumstances: the first cessation of hostilities agreement to hold.



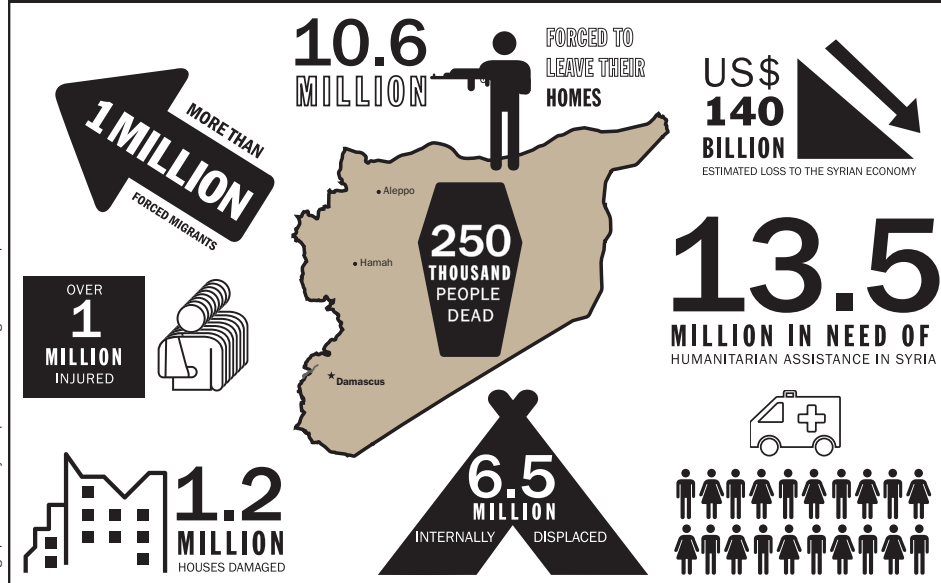
Infographic created by UN Special team. Images from Freepik.com

Prior to the start of the latest round of peace talks, Mr. de Mistura, appointed to his current position by the UN Secretary General in July 2014, gave a diplomatic briefing for Ambassadors of UN Member



## 5 YEARS OF WAR IN SYRIA: A VERY SAD REPORT

Infographic created by UN Special team. Images from Freepik.com



States on the situation in Syria. In this briefing, he shared about the failure of the previously planned talks and the expectations for upcoming ones. He also highlighted that the key to continuing undeterred in his work for peace has been his deep optimism and faith, especially in the face of the challenging negotiations to come.

At the time of writing, the Palais des Nations opened its doors to a new round of so called 'proximity peace talks' facilitated by Mr. de Mistura. The Special Envoy engages with the warring factions, passing from room to room to speak with them as they are unwilling to sit at the same negotiation table. Taking place in a city with a long tradition of hosting peace negotiations and welcoming refugees since the Reformation era, the talks have the potential to redefine the entire structure of governance in Syria. The discussions are expected to span several weeks, contingent on the parties' respect for a peace plan that includes making the cessation of hostilities permanent after five years of war.

A permanent cessation of hostilities is the prerequisite of a more holistic peace plan including monitoring mechanisms. Though a promising new phase in the negotiations, this is still fragile. The process has experienced major setbacks when the terms of the agreement have been violated. The road towards the current cessation of hostilities started during the Vienna talks on 14 November 2015. Some of the contentious issues were the future of the

Syrian government, the representation of the opposing parties at the negotiations, and the establishment of a practical timetable towards a ceasefire. The date for the commencement of the next round of negotiations was set to be 1 January 2016, and Geneva was established as the location where the representatives of the Syrian government and the opposition would meet.

In December 2015, General Assembly resolution 2254 was presented at the Security Council in New York. Most of the actors in the conflict committed to participate in the upcoming talks in Geneva. The peace talks were postponed, eventually starting on 29 January 2016. However, they were suspended after only a few days in light of continued violence and lack of humanitarian relief on the ground. In addition, the Special Envoy sensed the necessity of undertaking intense consultations with concerned stakeholders, including women and civil society, prior to continuation of the talks. "The United Nations is not prepared to hold talks for the sake of talks. Such talks can only be meaningful if they also deliver immediate tangible benefits to the Syrian people", Mr. de Mistura emphasized.

On 26 February, Mr. de Mistura announced that 97 armed groups, the Syrian Government, and the major regional and international stakeholders had indicated their willingness to accept the framework of the cessation of hostilities. This, however, does not apply to and excludes Al-Nusra and Daesh.

The latest round of Intra-Syrian talks resumed on 10 March 2016. Peace talks now focus on matters of governance, including a new constitution for Syria and the holding of elections within an 18-month time frame. Two task forces created by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) are responsible for overseeing the delivery of much-needed humanitarian aid since late February to thousands of Syrians in besieged and other hard-to-reach areas, as well as a cessation of hostilities that took hold at 0:00 a.m. on 27 February 2016 and which was endorsed by Security Council resolution 2268. One week after the announcement of the cessation of hostilities, Syrian civil society and the UN indeed confirmed a notable decrease in the level of violence though, as expected by Mr. de Mistura, incidents reflecting a violation of the agreement have been reported.

The latest talks focus on an approach to cooperation as well as a reassessment of advances made by the parties involved in the conflict to ensure that they are willing to comply with the different parameters set in place. In addition to focusing primarily on governance issues, the agenda of the discussions in Geneva includes discussions on the

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release of prisoners. The UN will be assisting the task forces and mediating between the relevant parties to assist in the achievement of the best solution possible for Syria's people. The flow and analysis of information will also be a relevant point to address as the parties look into the future. Indeed, an impartial flow of information is likely to assure both parties and their allies that infringements will be addressed in all confidence and that the effects of such infringements will be contained. This set-up will also facilitate the movement of aid convoys into the most marginalized areas, in which many convoys have previously been detained.

The peace talks in Geneva are likely to mark a significant step toward the resolution of a conflict that has changed the face of Syria and has displaced millions of civilians. Hope for resolution shines in the work of Mr. de Mistura and his team, and the world waits to see the impact the peace talks will have on the conflict and those it has intimately affected for half a decade. ■

Latest news about the Intra-Syrian Talks on UNOG website: [http://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news\\_media.nsf/\(httpPages\)/4d6470dbeaf92917c1257e59004fac2d?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news_media.nsf/(httpPages)/4d6470dbeaf92917c1257e59004fac2d?OpenDocument)

In July 2014, Mr. Staffan de Mistura was appointed as the Special Envoy for Syria by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon. Prior to his appointment, Mr. de Mistura worked with the United Nations for more than 30 years in areas affected by conflict, including Somalia, the Balkans, the Middle East, Nepal and Afghanistan.

His role as Special Envoy includes providing support to end the violence and violations that plague the Syrian crisis and promoting the peaceful and inclusive resolution of the conflict. This mandate involves extensive engagement with relevant stakeholders and a commitment to facilitating a Syrian-led political solution to the crisis.

Mr. de Mistura is a dual citizen of Italy and Sweden, and speaks Swedish, Italian, English, French, German, Spanish and colloquial Arabic. He is married and has two daughters.

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# Damien Mc Sweeney, Reporting Officer with UNHCR Syria

## Serving Syria's displaced

*"It's great that my team's efforts aren't wasted and the information is being used."*



Al Hosn at an NFI Distribution; having some fun with the locals

© UNHCR Field Office

### UNHCR

**Damien, could you please tell us about your background and how you came to work for UNHCR in Syria?**

After working in the private sector for a number of years, I was very unhappy and I decided to return to college to pursue a career in Humanitarian work. I hold two Bachelor's degrees, one in International relations and the other in International development and food policy. In addition, I hold a Ph.D. from University College Cork, which deals with the protection and security of vulnerable populations in complex emergencies. Moreover, I had previously worked with the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid Emergency Section, as an external relations officer with UNHCR in the

Dadaab refugee camps near the Kenyan/Somali border, as a reporting and operations officer in Bor in Jonglei State, South Sudan with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and now presently in Damascus, Syria with UNHCR, as their reporting officer.

**What is it about your current role that appeals to you most?**

Besides the obvious opportunity to work in one of the oldest cities in the world and learn firsthand about 7000 years of civilization, because of the focus of the world is now on Syria, any of the information, reports and publications we produce are very much sought after and widely read. I also have the opportunity to travel throughout the country

visiting our field offices and seeing firsthand the situation on the ground.

**What are the main focuses of UNHCR's work in Damascus/Syria?**

The needs of the affected population are huge. After nearly five years of conflict, Syria is the largest humanitarian and protection crisis globally with UN estimates of 250,000 people dead with over to one million injured. 13.5 million are now in need of humanitarian assistance with 10.6 million Syrians forced to leave their homes, often multiple times. Over 6.5 million people now internally displaced within Syria and the amount of Syrian refugees seeking refuge in neighboring countries, making this the largest

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refugee crisis faced by UNHCR since its establishment 60 years ago. In addition, the crisis has led to reduced or, in many cases, a breakdown of social services as well as an estimated loss to the Syrian economy of US\$140 billion. Only 42% of hospitals are fully functioning and almost 50% of Syria's physicians have fled the country. Furthermore, 1.2 million houses have been damaged, including approximately 400,000 completely destroyed. Because of this UNHCR main areas of focus are Protection, Non Food Items distribution (mattresses, blankets, winter clothing, plastic sheeting, kitchen sets, hygiene kits and nappies), health and shelter.

**From your perspective, what are the main issues for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Refugees living within Syria?**

Protection Issues such as lost or destroyed documentation,



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Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), child protection, trauma and psychosocial problems and loss of livelihoods. Also loss of belongings with people often fleeing fighting with little more than the clothes on their backs, lack of shelter and lack of access to social services such as health and education.

**As a reporting officer with UNHCR, your job is to gather and communicate essential information on refugees and IDPs-what are some of the main challenges you encounter in this sense?**

In terms of information gathering, access to many areas due to fighting and access to people in besieged areas is

one of the largest challenges we face. For example, there are two governorates (Raqqah and Deir Ezzor) where we can't operate because ISIS controls them, so getting reliable information from these areas is next to impossible. Also, there is a considerable brain drain that has led to lack of expertise and capacity in many areas, which



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In Aleppo at a newly opened UNHCR funded community center for IDPs and Host Community

is impacting on our partners' ability to provide reliable information.

**Given Syria's well documented environment of mass violence and conflict, how do you find the day to day work environment?**

It can be extremely challenging, especially in terms of freedom of movement, access to areas and security. On a daily basis, the security situation is challenging, with risk of collateral damage from gunfire, rockets, mortars and explosives as well as the increased risk of kidnapping with the expansion of ISIS. For example, a few months ago, unannounced rocket and mortar attacks took place on Damascus city in August with over 200 rockets and mortars hitting the city over a three day period. The houses of two national UNHCR staff members were hit but luckily neither they nor their families were hurt. In addition, there have been a number of

deliberate attacks on UN staff with both hotels in Damascus and the hotels in Homs and Aleppo where UN staff reside being hit by mortars and rockets on a number of occasions.

**The current mass displacement of people in Syria has been widely covered on an international scale. What is a lesser known fact about the current displacement crisis in Syria?**

Yes, the 4.3 million refugees who have fled Syria has been widely covered especially because of the impact it is having on European countries, but the plight of the internally displaced has not been significantly covered by the international press to the same extent.

**Do you think there is a good public understanding of the issues faced by refugees/IDP both within Syria and more broadly, in the Middle East?**

In general there is awareness that there is conflict in Syria and that there is presently large-scale displacement flows both inside and outside Syria. However the 2015 killings in Paris and the subsequent media coverage spread fear and misinformation about Syrian (and other) refugees and provoke 'kneejerk' reactions from governments. Refugees fleeing war in Syria, often making perilous journeys in overcrowded dingys to Greece, some losing their loved ones along the way, should not have to further suffer because of the actions of the people who carried out the Paris attacks so it's up to us in UNHCR to advocate on their behalf, make sure they receive the protection that they are entitled to under international law, and ensure the public is well informed on the issues faced by them.

**What are your views on the future and on how the Syrian**

**people see the prospects of peace?**

I hope to see peace returning to this beautiful country. After five years, the Syrian people deserve it. When peace eventually comes, hopefully sooner rather than later, there will be massive work to be done by Syrians with the assistance of the international community, including the UN, in rebuilding the country. For example, for UNHCR in particular, there are 4.3 million Syrian refugees and as soon as conditions are safe, there will be a massive voluntary repatriation operation. UNHCR will need to ensure all refugees and IDPs are afforded the protection they are entitled to under international law. In addition, the scars of the conflict, both physical and mental, will not disappear overnight and there will be massive protection needs in the forms of psychosocial support, counseling, legal advice and documentation issues to name but a few. However, I have been in Syria now for close to two years and it never ceases to amaze me the resilience of people here. Despite the tragic circumstances that have befallen both displaced people and host communities, there are many who refuse to let life get them down, pick themselves up and in many cases start all over again using their strength, intelligence and skills to educate themselves. ■

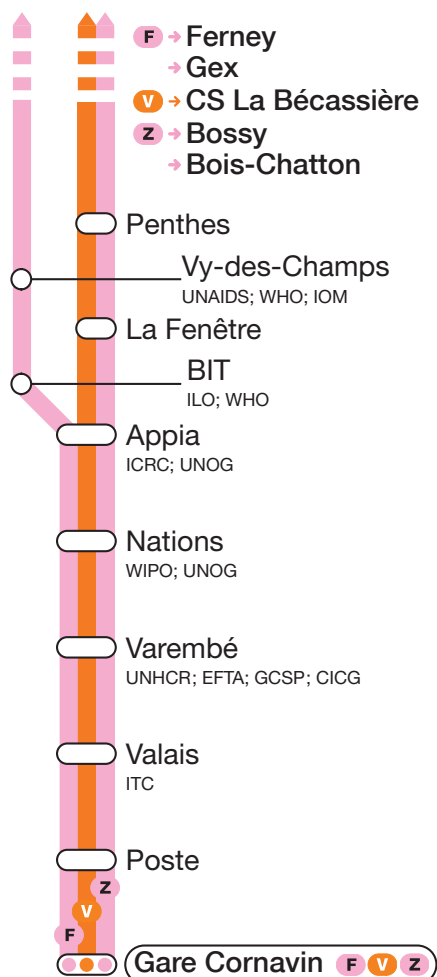
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# Challenges to access people under siege in Syria

## Serving those most in need

*This month, the violent conflict in Syria enters its sixth year. The recent peace talks and “cessation of hostilities” denote a window of hope to ease the plight of the Syrian people.*

### ELIZABETH HOFF, WHO COUNTRY DIRECTOR

The figures are staggering: over 250,000 people have been killed since the inception of the conflict in 2011. More than 1.2 million injured, 6.5 million internally displaced and almost 4.6 million are now refugees in neighboring countries and beyond. On top of these appalling numbers, over 4.5 million are living in hard-to-reach and besieged areas.

The health situation continues to deteriorate with civilians paying the highest price. Almost two-thirds of all Syrians have no access to safe water, putting them at risk of diseases like typhoid and cholera. The current availability of safe water inside Syria is now at one third of pre-crisis levels and people in many rural areas experience regular water cuts that may extend up to one week at a time.

Every month, more than 25,000 people need treatment for injuries. Throughout the country, almost 300,000 pregnant women are not getting the care they need for a safe and healthy pregnancy. People with chronic diseases are dying of complications that are easily controlled under normal circumstances. Half of all children are missing out on life-saving vaccinations, and one in four children is at risk of developing a mental health disorder that will have a long-term impact.

In addition to these critical needs, over half of the country’s health care facilities are either completely out of service or only partially functioning while facing critical shortages in life-saving and essential medicines. Half of all health professionals have fled the country and those that remain are at constant risk of attacks. As the conflict continues, more lives are lost every day, not just due to the violence, but as people become victims of a failing health system that can no longer provide them with the health services they need to stay alive.

Health services—from hospitals to medical staff—are not only affected as a result of

collateral damage, but are directly targeted as parties to the conflict continue to attack hospitals and systematically obstruct the access of humanitarian aid agencies in direct contravention of international humanitarian law. Prior to the implementation of the ‘cessation of hostilities’ agreement, these attacks had significantly increased in frequency and scale. Since the beginning of the conflict, more than 300 health facilities have been attacked and more than 650 health workers killed.

These harsh conditions faced by the vulnerable are magnified in the fifteen besieged locations across Syria, where there has been little reprieve in isolation and thus access to humanitarian aid, especially medicines and healthcare, food, water, shelter, and protection.

The besiegement has left an estimated 486,700 people with almost no life means, resulting in the deaths of people by starvation in Mouadamiya in 2014 and recently in Madaya. People in Darayya have not received any assistance by the United Nations Agencies since 2012 and in Deir ez-Zor city, an estimated 200,000 people, most of whom are women and children, are besieged under severely deteriorating conditions and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, particularly health supplies, food, and basic commodities.

This tactic collectively punishes civilians and is an ongoing pattern in this conflict. Moreover, interruption of other life supplies is used to attain political and military gains. Parties to the conflict have systematically used water as a tactic of war. During the past two years, water in the two major cities in Syria, Damascus and Aleppo, was frequently cut off. Citizens of Aleppo were left without water for over a month and had to use unsafe drinking water sources, including water collected directly from the Queiq river.

Given the challenges to deliver medical aid to besieged and hard-to-reach areas,



a number of measures have been pursued to alleviate the suffering of people in need, including engagement of influential stakeholders and regularly monitoring the situation via a network of 59 medical focal points, 67 NGO partners, 995 epidemiological sites, and the health resources availability mapping system.

As obstacles, practical and political, are numerous in reaching this particularly affected group, so are the efforts being made by WHO to navigate them. Working with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and local and international NGOs has permitted some medicines, medical supplies, and vaccines to be delivered to hard-to-reach and besieged areas in Aleppo, Idleb, and Rural Damascus governorates.

WHO has been regularly requesting access to hard-to-reach, opposition-controlled, besieged, and ISIL-controlled areas. Out of 102 requests filed in 2015, access to only 30 locations was granted, while the majority of the remainder requests were gone unanswered or rejected. Even when humanitarian access is granted, medical supplies and equipment are restricted by warring parties and thus life-saving medicines, medical and surgical supplies are systematically removed from the few approved convoys. In 2015, nine incidents of removal of medical supplies were reported in Homs, Aleppo, and Rural Damascus governorates, resulting in depriving the population of over 142,000 life-saving medical treatments.

When access is not hampered, there is hope that WHO could alleviate the suffering of those in most needs. In 2015, 17.2 million medical treatments were delivered through Syria, 27% of which were to hard-to-reach, opposition-controlled, and besieged areas; almost 2.9 million children were vaccinated against polio and 1.6 million against

measles; 34 mobile clinics were delivered to local health authorities and NGOs operating, particularly in hard-to-reach areas, and; 995 epidemiological sentinel sites are functioning, including from hard-to-reach and besieged areas.

With the cessation of hostilities continuing to tamp down violence in Syria, improved access to besieged areas has been noted as more WHO-agency specific and UN Inter-agency convoys are being authorized to deliver humanitarian succor to people in need.

While WHO will continue to call for greater, immediate, and uninterrupted access to all locations throughout Syria, we remain committed to supporting people in need, especially those suffering the most as they continue to bear the brunt of the siege; it must be lifted. ■

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## The work of the World Food Programme in Syria

# Mobilizing food convoys entering war zones



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*Isam Ismail shares an insider's perspective on the complex process of bringing food to those who need it most in Syria.*

### ISAM ISMAIL, WFP SYRIA EMERGENCY RESPONSE OFFICER

The concerned WFP Sub Office/Hub then begins to prepare the convoys to approved locations by identifying the number of people in need and determining the contribution of WFP to the interagency convoys, which usually includes monthly food rations and additional nutrition items.

In a recent cross-line mission, convoys went to two locations besieged by the opposition in the north of Syria and to two locations besieged by the government in the rural Damascus governorate in the south. I was part of the convoy going to the southern region. The Office of the Special Envoy (OSE), the Resident Coordinator (RC), UNDSS, and OCHA, along with some involvement of the ICRC, negotiated with the fighting parties to access these four locations in a synchronized manner.

The arrangement of the convoy is handled by the Logistic Cluster and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), which is the implementing partner for all UN Joint Interagency Convoys in Syria. In order to begin loading the trucks, the convoy must receive facilitation letters for each truck, signed by the governor of the governorate where the loading warehouse is located. Delays in receiving facilitation letters can

cause delays in the movement of the convoys. Once the loading process finishes, security staff seal the loaded trucks.

Each agency involved in the convoy then compiles a list of staff members participating in the mission and the armed vehicles required. All participating staff are trained on security issues, equipped with the necessary protective equipment, and meet with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) on the day of the convoy's movement.

### Four Town Delivery Day

On delivery day, the convoy was divided into two parts, one to go to the northern region and one to go to the southern region, and was synchronized so that delivery would take place at the same time in both places. The convoy included 48 trucks, around 10 UN armored vehicles and 10 SARC cars.

In the convoy going to the southern region, of which I was a part, the first check point was passed without any issues. In later checkpoints, the convoy's items, approvals and participants were checked. As these stops and delays occurred, the day continued passing, and the convoy entered the besieged area of Madaiya city in the evening. SARC had entered in advance of the convoy in order to make the necessary arrangements for offloading locations.

The people of the area had been without food supplies for almost two months in very cold weather. Once the convoy reached Madaiya, a huge number of people were waiting inside in the main square and gathered around the team.

Upon exiting the armored vehicles, the team encountered hundreds of civilians running up to ask for anything to eat. "Please a piece of bread... or a biscuit... anything that will feed us... we haven't eaten for many days".

The team had been instructed not to show the people any food, and I spoke loudly to the crowds, saying, "Just wait few hours

until we offload the food we brought, and then you will be able to eat today. Please help us to finish the work and then things will be fine. We brought rice, bulgur, white beans, oil, sugar, lentils, chickpeas, fava beans, and tomato paste.”

Later, as I moved around to monitor the offload of the food items, a few children appeared asking if I had some biscuits, bread or sandwiches. I told them that I didn't have any but that we had brought food for all of the families. They kept asking if the road would be open again and if the siege would end. I replied, “We don't know, we have only been asked to deliver these items. Inshallah will be opened one day.” The children were very weak and shaking from the freezing weather. I told them to go back home as it was late and cold. They moved to someone else, asking about food. It is very difficult for us when we see the severity of the people's conditions and when women come to us saying their children haven't eaten in 4 days and are only consuming water with spices or some herbs. The team completed the offloading process by 3:30 a.m., gave instructions to the local relief committee on how to distribute the supplies, and moved out of the area. The way back to the starting point required passing through the same checkpoints and, again, the checking of names and IDs. The team reached the starting point by 5:00 a.m. At that hour, it was hard to find a taxi, and I decided to walk home. As I walked in the rain, the pleasure and happiness mixed with the tiredness I felt was something I had never before experienced in my life.

After greeting my wife, I went to bed remembering all the difficult and nice moments of the day and thinking of all the people inside the besieged area who had started cooking the food directly after we had left. Suddenly, I remembered that I needed to relax and sleep, as we had to be ready to be on the move again in 48 hours.

#### General Challenges Facing Convoys in Syria

- Access to cross-line areas requires time for negotiations, and approval is granted mainly by National Security. This approval specifies the location, proposed list of items, participants, facilitation letters, loading plan, and delivery timeframe.
- Passing through opposition-controlled areas to deliver to government-controlled areas even if these locations are

not besieged can be difficult and the supplies may be exploited.

- Checkpoints on the way to final destinations often make the lives of the accompanying team members very difficult. Passing through a checkpoint entails checking the trucks, even though the trucks were originally loaded in the presence of security staff and sealed by security representatives.
- The waiting time at checkpoints can extend up to 7-8 hours.
- For some areas, such as Erbeen in Ghota, teams are hindered from proceeding with delivery because the government approved only one route, which was not agreed to by UNDSS because it was mined. UNDSS

proposed an alternative safer route, which was then not approved by the government.

- The UN Access Working Group proposals often sit for a long time at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs without any feedback on these proposed locations to be accessed.
- Governing authorities vary in their level of cooperation and support of UN access to besieged areas. ■



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# Nobody left outside

*A cooperation between the newly-founded Rotary Club Genève International and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*



UNHCR installation for the Gala dinner

© ag.malliot/point-of-views.ch



Gilbert Chopard (right), President of the new Rotary Club Genève International, receiving the Charter

**MARIE-JOSÉ ASTRE-DÉMOULIN, SDLS, UNOG**

On 28 January 2016, a Gala dinner took place in the ball room at the Intercontinental Hotel in Geneva. This event, organized by the four-month old Rotary Club Genève International, was aimed at raising funds for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, a displaced population of more than 1.3 million, in urgent need of humanitarian aid.

Interview with Mr. Gilbert Chopard, President of Rotary Club Genève International.

**Mr. Chopard, could you tell us more about the Gala dinner that took place in January?**

Thanks to the constructive discussions we had with UNCHR in Geneva and in Copenhagen, a dedicated team from our four-month old Rotary Club organized this great event and we raised 45,000 CHF in favour of Syrian refugees, as part of a larger fund-raising activity for the benefit of this population.

**So your club is quite recent! How did it start?**

I have been a Rotarian for a number of years and I had been approached on several occasions by international civil servants or expatriates from

the private sector who would have loved to join a Rotary Club, but who could not do so because, until now, all the Clubs in Geneva used French as their language of communication. At the Rotary District level, many similar requests motivated our Governor to start a new English speaking Club in Geneva.

**Did the Club immediately attract the interest of the international community?**

I was surprised by the high level of interest – we started on 20 October 2015 with 31 founding members. We have already reached 40 members now with full gender equality, from 13 nationalities.

While the United Nations and Rotary interact formally, few United Nations and international staff – about 40,000 staff in the Geneva area – had joined Geneva's Rotary Clubs until now. Linguistic, logistical and cultural obstacles hindered more active participation in our Clubs from members of international Geneva. Contacts with professionals from the United Nations system, international business and other international structures have also shown enthusiasm for joining Clubs such as ours.

**What made you decide to cooperate with UNHCR for Syrian refugees as a first project?**

Firstly, we were proud to have established the club "just in time" for the United Nations 70th anniversary on 24 October 2015. Secondly, because of the high number of United Nations staff members who have joined our club, we thought that it would be appropriate to choose a cooperation with a UN entity for our first project. And finally, the situation of Syrian refugees is obviously a serious humanitarian crisis that we felt needed to be addressed. The Gala dinner is the first of a series of actions that have been scheduled in the coming months.

**Thank you, Mr. Chopard. We can only wish success to your Club as it contributes to good causes and encourages stronger links and friendship between Geneva multicultural businesses and diplomatic communities. ■**

More information and contact details at: <http://www.rc-geneve-international.org/club/>

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Residents in Bernex enjoying the annual Escalade festival with a large chocolate cauldron filled with marzipan vegetables and candies wrapped in the Geneva colours of red and gold.

# New neighbours for the international community

*This month, the international community welcomes new residents to a former office building next to the WHO campus.*

## VERONICA RIEMER, ON BEHALF OF THE STAFF ASSOCIATION, WHO

The Appia Centre (previously occupied by WHO and UNAIDS staff) has now been converted into a temporary home for approximately 150 people from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, and Syria. Over the past months, the Canton of Geneva has been working actively with IOM, WHO, UNAIDS and ILO Staff Association Representatives, as well as management from the International School (Nations campus) and the Crèche des Morillons to facilitate their arrival and ensure smooth transition from a civil protection shelter to more suitable premises, renovated for their comfort and well-being.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1,000,573 refugees and migrants arrived in Europe from the Middle East and North Africa during 2015. Applications for asylum in Switzerland are processed through Bern, and applicants are subsequently allocated to a Federal Centre (of which there are six countrywide) where they wait while their papers are being processed. Each canton has an acceptance quota for the



Runners at the 38th Course de l'Escalade, December 2015.

refugees depending on its current population. Nearly 6% of all those who apply for asylum, have been assigned to the Canton of Geneva, which takes responsibility for their housing, welfare and integration into society, until such time as their residence is approved (or rejected).

An integration programme has been put in place to firstly introduce and acclimatize



Initiation to the delights of the Swiss Fondue at Bains de Paquis.

the residents to their new environment and secondly to help them adapt to life in Switzerland. As well as undertaking lessons in the French language, the residents will also attend awareness sessions on Swiss culture, tradition and values. Special attention will be given to providing a better understanding of the role of women and girls in a western society in order to avoid misconceptions and security issues that have been witnessed in other parts of Europe since the beginning of the year.

At a presentation to the international organizations in March, Christophe Girod, Director General of the Hospice General in Geneva explained that the Canton of Geneva provides accommodation at the Appia Centre as well as a public transport pass and an education programme. Each resident receives a monthly payment of approximately CHF 400.– from which they must manage their own expenses for food, clothes, health products, entertainment etc.

Many of the migrants originate from rural and isolated areas and have endured great danger and difficulties prior to their arrival in Switzerland. Simple tasks like purchasing food in supermarkets, going to the Post Office and taking public transport are quite overwhelming. "This is where volunteers from the international community can really help" he said. "We would be delighted to receive support from anyone who has the time and interest to contribute to this initial adjustment phase and integration process by coming to meet with the residents and assisting with simple daily tasks to improve their independence".

Whilst clothes have been donated in abundance, donations of books in French Arabic, Syrian, Aramaic, Kurdish as well as games (chess, draughts, and cards) would be very welcome. "The asylum procedure can be lengthy and it can take months if not years before a resident receives news about his future" explained Barbara de

Bobes, who is responsible for the new Appia Centre. "Living with this uncertainty is not easy, and frequently makes asylum seekers more sensitive and fragile. Using this time constructively, to learn new skills and languages enables them to more easily find employment in the event that their application is approved". ■

If you would like to have more information about the Appia Centre, situated next to the WHO campus, please contact Barbara de Bobes [barbara.de-bobes@hospicegeneral.ch](mailto:barbara.de-bobes@hospicegeneral.ch). If you would like to offer help with the integration of residents into life in Switzerland, please contact [katia.zenger@hospicegeneral.ch](mailto:katia.zenger@hospicegeneral.ch).

You can find more information on the website "Actions migrants": <http://www.hospicegeneral.ch/faire-un-don/action-migrants.html>



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# Twenty years of extending a welcome

*An interview with Ambassador Pierre de Cocatrix on the eve of the Geneva Welcome Center's 20th anniversary. Here, he shares his thoughts on the past, present and future of a structure that plays a key role in the life of International Geneva.*

SARAH JORDAN, UNOG

**March 1st marked your first year as Director of the CAGI. What are your impressions?**

I feel very much at home. I am happy to have fully familiarised myself with all that my predecessors have accomplished and I am keen to consolidate and continue the work entrusted to the CAGI by the Swiss Confederation and the Canton of Geneva. I would like to pay homage to the vision of these two founders, for the CAGI is an incredible tool that exists nowhere else in the world. In the last 20 years the CAGI has become so well-known that it no longer needs to advertise! Since my arrival we have updated our database, which

boasts 1,600 active members from International Geneva. I have been warmly welcomed in this, the first year of my four-year mandate. I am delighted to announce that in May, just over a year after my arrival and in its 20th anniversary year, the CAGI will be opening a new delegates' information desk and "outpost" of the Cultural Kiosk in the Palais des Nations at Door 40. This initiative, supported by the Director-General, Mr. Michael Møller and the Swiss Mission, and financed by the Swiss Confederation, will be open 150 days a year when important meetings are held. This greater visibility and reinforced presence of the CAGI in the very heart of the Palais corresponds to the CAGI's founding mandate of welcoming and integrating newcomers to International Geneva.

**How are you going to celebrate the 20th birthday of the CAGI?**

Plans are already well underway for the celebrations, to be held here at la Pastorale on Wednesday 27th April – a date fixed after discussions with the political authorities



Ambassador Pierre de Cocatrix was formerly Director of the Office of the Secretary-General of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF). He became Director of the CAGI on 1st March 2015.

here in Geneva, the Swiss Confederation and the Director-General. We will welcome 600 or so guests under the CAGI marquee. Twenty is a great age – a coming of age – and we are going to mark it in such a way as to thank the politicians, institutions and individuals of International Geneva who have supported the founding mandate of the CAGI – welcome and integration – for two decades now. The ceremony will kick off with four short official speeches that will highlight the importance of the International



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dimension of Geneva. After these addresses by Ms Esther Alder, Mayor of Geneva, Ambassador Alexandre Fasel, Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Mr François Longchamp, President of the State Council of the Republic and Canton of Geneva and Mr Michael Møller, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, a specially commissioned commemorative film will be screened to look back at the CAGI's first 20 years and look forward to the next 20... This film will be posted on the CAGI website after this event and anyone in the world planning to re-locate to Geneva will be able to discover the mission of the CAGI and its five services from afar: help with accommodation, the newcomers' welcome network, the delegates' welcome service, events and cultural kiosk, and support to Non-Governmental Organizations. After this official part of the proceedings, the "party" will start. The Genevese Stacey King (The Voice) will sing and then a show featuring music and dance from the five continents will follow, presented by the École-Club Migros. We want to underline the International in "CAGI" and the finger buffet and refreshments offered will feature culinary delicacies from all over the world. Everyone's culture will be represented! And the Confederation, the Canton

and the media too. The CAGI has a milestone to celebrate, a reputation to uphold and the vocation to reach out to those who do not yet know us.

#### **What is your vision for the future of the CAGI?**

When I arrived at the CAGI, things were pretty good, but I want to make them even better!

I spent nine years working alongside the Secretary-General of La Francophonie, former President of Senegal, Abdou Diouf. It was a great privilege to work with this wise man – a true democrat. I admire his humility, his kindness and his availability. He used to say to me "Pierre, I am at the helm of the OIF – I hold the rudder and look at where we want to go – but you, in my team, must all row in the same direction and at the same speed!". I would like to apply this philosophy to my current team of ten. It's not easy to manage people and it is sometimes necessary to take difficult decisions. I want my team to progress, each in their own specialist area, as we work together, motivated, united and mutually supportive, in order to succeed in the mission entrusted to us. When Ambassador Christian Dunant handed over to me last year he said "My successor will consolidate and give a new dimension to the CAGI." I like this approach. I am optimistic by nature and want to

make my mark on the CAGI. When my mandate ends, I hope to address similar words to the man or woman who follows me.

I want to continue to uphold and develop the excellence of what the CAGI offers. With Michael Cochet, in charge of Events and the Cultural Kiosk, we want to identify themes around which we can bring internationals and the local community together more effectively. We will be holding more events at different missions and include cultural elements – music, dance or art exhibitions. Our recent Afterwork at the Opéra des Nations, during which guests were able to actually watch a rehearsal of Alcina, the first opera to be performed at this new venue, is a taste of things to come. We are currently preparing a Brazilian themed evening, in partnership with the Brazilian mission, to be held at the end of June. This will bring together the Swiss – the International Olympic Committee is based in Lausanne – and the International – the Summer Olympics are to be held in Rio de Janeiro this summer. At the Cultural Kiosk and its new satellite at Door 40, we will soon be able to accept credit card payments – making the purchase and reimbursement of tickets easier. We will continue to work with the pool of students we employ, who will strive to offer even more

assistance and support to our growing public. More and more people purchase tickets at the Kiosk and take advantage of the offers our cultural partners often reserve to us.

In 2014/2015 we noted a growing demand from permanent missions, international organizations and UNOG for personalised presentations of what the CAGI does. We welcomed sixty diplomats to a presentation in the Palais last year. We intend to organize more events of this type – WIPO, the Global Fund and UNHCR have all expressed interest. This will further enhance our contact with newcomers.

In conclusion, I am really very happy to be at the head of the CAGI. I am in my element in the international diplomatic community. I have been out meeting people all year long, listening to what they have to say – and this is how I plan to continue! ■

For further details: [www.cagi.ch](http://www.cagi.ch)



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# 10 Años del Consejo de derechos humanos de la ONU

*El Consejo de Derechos Humanos de la ONU (CDH) estará celebrando su 31er período ordinario de sesiones al momento de esta redacción, las sesiones irán del 29 de Febrero al 24 de Marzo de 2016, y es el primero del año 2016.*

## LAIA EVIA

El Consejo de Derechos Humanos es un órgano intergubernamental del sistema de las Naciones Unidas, responsable de la promoción, fortalecimiento y protección de los derechos humanos en el mundo, fue creado para abordar las situaciones de violaciones de derechos humanos y hacer recomendaciones a los estados en ese sentido. El Consejo tiene la capacidad para discutir todas las cuestiones temáticas de derechos humanos y el resto de las situaciones que requieran de su atención durante el año. El Consejo fue creado por la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas el 15 de Marzo de 2006 por la resolución 60/251. Su primera sesión tuvo lugar del 19 al 30 Junio del 2006.

En este sentido el año 2016, es un año importante para el Consejo, ya que se celebran los 10 años de su existencia. Durante estos años, el Consejo ha crecido significativamente en magnitud y en expectativas, posicionándose como un órgano político influyente y relevante en el ámbito multilateral el cual ha registrado logros significativos a nivel temático y a nivel específico por país.

En éstos últimos 10 años, el Consejo ha vivido constantemente a la altura de su importante mandato como la principal entidad de la ONU encargada de la promoción y protección de los derechos humanos. Mediante la participación de todas las partes interesadas, mediante el fomento de la participación, y por medio de su función como un instrumento para facilitar el diálogo sobre cuestiones de derechos humanos, el Consejo ha desempeñado un papel fundamental en los esfuerzos internacionales para hacer frente a importantes desafíos globales. Como parte fundamental de este esfuerzo, el Consejo ha promovido la idea de que los derechos humanos son universales, indivisibles e interdependientes y están relacionados entre sí; deben ser respetados en tiempo de paz y de crisis.

Para celebrar los 10 años, muchas agencias de la ONU, del gobierno e innumerables ONG, centros de derechos humanos y académicos, se han enfocado en reflejar los importantes desafíos que tiene por delante el Consejo y las muchas oportunidades de mejora que el entorno global le sugiere

efusivamente. Ya que dichos desafíos han sido amplia y repetidamente cubiertos, este pequeño artículo se concentra únicamente en recordar algunos de los principales logros de este organismo, creyendo que una entrada positiva en ese sentido es muy necesaria en las situaciones que enfrentamos hoy en día.

Por lo tanto, algunos de los éxitos del Consejo de Derechos Humanos, en sus 10 años de existencia han sido los siguientes:

- **El Mecanismo del EPU:** el cual ha revisado el historial de derechos humanos de cada estado miembro de la ONU, fortaleciendo así la universalidad, la inclusión y el diálogo. Ha tenido bastante éxito como un mecanismo de revisión de pares.
- **Los Procedimientos Especiales:** han crecido con fuerza. Recientemente, se han creado nuevos mandatos para abordar cuestiones actuales e importantes, tales como el derecho a la privacidad y la eliminación de la discriminación contra la mujer.
- **La intensificación de la actuación en situaciones de país** para contribuir en los esfuerzos de rendición de cuentas en países como Irán, Costa de Marfil, Libia, Túnez, Guinea, Kirguistán, Myanmar, Corea del Norte, Sudán y Eritrea.
- **El establecimiento de importantes normativas** que algunos estados han decidido adoptar y están empezando a ser utilizados, tales como los «Principios Rectores sobre las empresas y los derechos humanos».
- **El emprendimiento de acciones concretas** para resaltar prioridades de derechos humanos tales como la libertad de reunión y asociación, la protección a la comunidad LGBT y a los defensores de los derechos humanos.
- **Desarrollos normativos** para resaltar los derechos existentes, tales como los derechos de las personas con discapacidad, educación, agua y saneamiento, entre otros.
- Recientemente, con la situación de Burundi, el Consejo ha emprendido varios pasos para prevenir violaciones graves y sistemáticas.
- **Asegura** que los derechos humanos sigan siendo visibles entre las actividades de la ONU y que tengan prioridad en las agendas estatales.

Pero no se debe ser demasiado optimista sobre los mencionados logros. En todos los casos, existen muchos retos por

cumplir. Como se escucha repetidamente, «el Consejo de Derechos Humanos es sólo tan fuerte como sus Estados miembros». Hay que recordar y aprender del pasado y tomar en cuenta que la única manera de lograr la paz duradera y el desarrollo es mediante el respeto de los derechos humanos. Los Estados Miembros del Consejo no pueden permanecer satisfechos por los éxitos, especialmente en un año especial, que se supone debe ser visto como una referencia para la mejora. ■



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## World Health Day 2016

# Beat diabetes

*7 April marks World Health Day. This year, the World Health Organization (WHO) is putting the spotlight on the rising numbers of people living with diabetes worldwide, and measures that can be taken to address this noncommunicable disease (NCD).*

### PAUL GARWOOD, WHO

There are some common misconceptions about diabetes. It is a disease only of the developed world, where modern lifestyles result in people eating too much fast food, drinking too many sugar-laden soft drinks and doing too little physical activity. And there is little that communities – including governments – can do to curb the epidemic of diabetes and other noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

There is truth in some of these statements, but there's a considerable level of error, too.

For this year's World Health Day, WHO aims to bust some popular myths about diabetes, as it highlights the rise in the number of people living with diabetes worldwide, and the measures needed to prevent, detect and control the disease.

On World Health Day 2016, WHO aims to show that all countries can take measures to address the global diabetes epidemic. On World Health Day, WHO will release its first *Global report on diabetes*, which depicts the vast and growing numbers of people living with the disease, the wide spectrum of age groups affected, and the measures that can be taken to address its causes.

Diabetes is a chronic disease occurring either when the body produces insufficient insulin or when it cannot effectively use the insulin it makes. Insulin is a hormone that changes the permeability of the cell membrane, so that sugar in the blood – from the food we eat – can enter the cells and be burned as energy. Without enough insulin, blood sugar rises. Over time, this can lead to serious damage to many bodily systems, especially the nerves and blood vessels.

The vast majority of the hundreds of millions of people living with diabetes have the type 2 form of the disease. Type 2 diabetes is largely the result of excess body weight and physical inactivity. Until recently, this form of diabetes was seen only in adults – but it is now also occurring in children.

Type 1 diabetes, on the other hand, is characterized by deficient insulin production and requires daily injections of insulin. Though we know that type 1 diabetes is most frequently an autoimmune disease and has a genetic component, environmental factors also play a role. However, the cause of type 1 diabetes remains unknown and it is not preventable with current knowledge.

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As part of World Health Day 2016, WHO is promoting a two-pronged approach to increase action on diabetes prevention and control by governments and the general public.

Many people cannot make the healthiest choices for multiple reasons. These include limited availability of healthy food choices, and reduced opportunities for physical activity.

Difficulties also exist for many in terms of paying for medication, including insulin.

Governments worldwide have committed to addressing diabetes and other NCDs. Target 3.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for reducing by one-third the incidence of premature deaths from such diseases by 2030, while target 3.8 highlights the need for people to access affordable essential medicines as part of efforts to achieve universal health coverage.

And WHO's Global Action Plan on NCDs (2013-2020) includes the global voluntary target of reducing premature deaths from NCDs by 25% by 2025. The plan also seeks

to halt the rise in diabetes and obesity and increase the availability of the basic technologies and essential medicines needed to treat diabetes and other major NCDs.

Prevention of diabetes is central to World Health Day 2016. As a large proportion of diabetes is preventable, WHO is urging governments to help people protect themselves from type 2 diabetes by making healthy diets available and affordable, reducing consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages to reduce the risk of childhood overweight and obesity, and promoting physical activity.

There are related measures that people can take to prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes. Maintaining normal body weight, engaging in regular physical activity, and eating a healthy diet can reduce the risk of diabetes.

Showing that diabetes is treatable is another goal of World Health Day 2016. Diabetes can be controlled and managed to prevent complications. Increasing access to diagnostic tests, affordable treatment, and patient education for self-care are vital

components of the response. Government commitment is key to making such access universal.

On World Health Day 2016, WHO will conduct a range of actions linked to diabetes prevention and control in addition to an event to mark the official launch of the *Global report on diabetes*. These include its *Step Up* initiative to promote staff use of office stairs, instead of elevators. This is part of the WHO *Walk the Talk* workplace health and well-being programme, which also involves offering healthy meal options at its cafeterias. In addition, WHO is collaborating with United Nations partners to raise awareness of diabetes, including by offering staff dining at cafeterias the chance to take a quiz on lunch paper-tray mats. Take the quiz yourself here: <http://www.who.int/campaigns/world-health-day/2016/whd-quiz.pdf>. ■

More information on World Health Day 2016 can be found at: <http://www.who.int/campaigns/world-health-day/2016/event/en/>

		
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# FACTS & FIGURES







# 17.2 Million

medical treatments delivered to people  
in need across country

# 27%

of WHO's support distributed to opposition-  
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areas across Syria

# 2.9 Million

children vaccinated against polio

# 1.6 Million

children vaccinated against measles

# 20 000

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and emerging health issues

# 1512

reporting epidemiological sentinel  
sites functioning fully and covering all  
governorates and people in Syria

# 100%

of all public hospitals and 97% of Syria's  
1783 public health care centres assessed for  
functionality and accessibility



# Diabetes is a top five silent killer

## Let's wipe it out!

*Maintaining healthy body weight, exercising regularly, and eating a balanced diet are effective measures in preventing diabetes in people at risk and dealing with the disease once they have it.*

### MAHMOUD HAMMOUD, UNOG

Collaborative multilateral effort involving the public and private sectors can help beat diabetes in our lifetime. But we will need to change our habits and our lifestyles first.

Even in a country such as the United Kingdom where awareness programmes are common, diabetes is often falsely seen as a mild condition, even though it is directly linked to tens of thousands of deaths every year around the country. Diabetes does not kill directly, but its complications include heart disease, strokes and kidney failures, in addition to blindness, angina and limb amputations due to poor oxygen supply through the "sweet" veins. At least one third of those deaths are preventable if people manage their condition properly. In fact, the



vast majority of diabetes cases could be prevented from developing altogether if people at risk took action and managed their health early enough. In many well-developed countries, diabetes is at least a top five killer, and in developing countries, it is even worse.

### Diabetes is not cancer or heart disease...

Although diabetes is non-communicable, preventable, and treatable, it is quickly reaching pandemic proportions. In 2008, an estimated 347 million people had diabetes. It is most frequent in the US and Canada, followed by Spain, Italy, Greece and the Middle East. In 2012, the disease caused 1.5 million deaths, 80% of which transpired in low- and middle-income nations. Left unchecked, diabetes will be the 7th most

common cause of death worldwide over the next 14 years.

Even when diabetes does not cause fatalities, it often leaves its victims with life changing consequences. We listened to the heart-breaking story of A. Khan in the borough of Ealing, West London, UK. This beautiful, hard working mother of two led a very active life; next to her regular day job as a teacher, she used to head a local charity in the evenings and on the weekends. A. Khan was diagnosed with diabetes in 2007. Since then the disease has caused complications, including three strokes, visual impairment, loss of consciousness in hypoglycaemic comas, and numerous organ failures.

The former president of a local charity has been crippled,

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reduced to a person requiring assistance for every aspect of her daily life. Her family has also been severely impacted. Her daughter uses her annual leave days to take care of her diabetic mother. Despite all the help A. Khan has received from her family and health authorities, she has not shown significant improvement.

Raising awareness and facilitating widespread, proactive care is imperative, given the deadliness of diabetes. Society today still does not see the link between being overweight and diabetes. Hence officials say that unless we take the same attitude towards obesity and the junk food industry as we have towards smoking, a solution will not come soon.

#### Political will to encourage a healthier choice

Governments should play an active role in preventing and

treating diabetes. Health officials in the United Kingdom claim that a tax of 7p (10 US cents) per each regular-sized soft drink would generate £1 billion per year. By dedicating the tax revenues towards employing preventative strategies in the National Health Service (NHS) and schools, we could witness a dramatic shift in diabetes occurrence rates. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that soft drinks constitute a major source of dietary sugar for UK school children & teenagers. Health experts worry about sugar's contribution to weight gain and diabetes, a disease costing the NHS billions of pounds per year.

Dr. Lawrence Loh, an adjunct professor at the University of Toronto, suggested that while the world's public health agencies are doing much to combat diabetes, rates of the disease continue to rise as sedentary

lifestyles become more common worldwide.

Professor Loh suggested that what is presently absent in the fight against diabetes is stronger political will to create healthy environments with targeted policies and programmes. Loh identified the crucial importance of clear strategies against obesity and other precursors.

"We must make the healthier choice the easier choice," he said, "by encouraging healthy eating, such as by regulating junk food, and encouraging regular exercise, such as through better and more active transport."

In one example, the introduction of taxes on unhealthy foods to encourage healthier eating, Professor Loh said that previous economic incentive efforts had success when implemented properly, such as with tobacco

and alcohol. However, he also stated that further research is needed to ensure effective application to fatty foods and sugary drinks.

Multiple social sectors are critical to these achieving these goals, including governments, private and public employers, members of academia, medical professionals, mainstream media figures, and people themselves. There are several ways for these groups, especially the average person, to get involved. If you have the credentials, find out how you can hold a health workshop, mini-conference, or a class on the subject. For people without medical credentials, you can participate in a run supporting a diabetes charity or simply donate to a foundation dedicated to fighting the disease. ■










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Vorsprung durch Technik 



# Great tips to enjoy life despite diabetes

*Simple lifestyle modifications such as maintaining healthy body weight, exercising regularly, and cultivating a balanced diet can effectively prevent, delay, or even treat type 2 diabetes.*

## MAHMOUD HAMMOUD, UNOG

Type 2 diabetes sufferers produce insufficient amounts of insulin, which means they do not have enough energy to go about their day. As a result, they are typically sedentary and overweight, further exacerbating their insulin needs.

### Gym? With this tummy?

If you have type 2 diabetes, you have probably had a sedentary lifestyle for years and it will be very difficult to start exercising regularly. Older diabetes sufferers might find it embarrassing to visit the gym regularly. Men with a tummy are embarrassed to work out next to those 6-pack guys in their early twenties. Ladies with prominent features find it intimidating to go to the gym and work out next to young women significantly fit their weight. Men and women alike are self-conscious about

their bodies – especially parts they find unseemly.

Contrary to what some advertisements want everyone to believe, there is no “magic” pill that takes tummy fat away in record time. At least not yet. Until one is developed, let me help you with practical tips you can easily adopt – whether you are trying to prevent diabetes or you are actually dealing with it. Exercise is of utmost importance here.

### Get a personal trainer

You do not *have* to go to the gym. If your finances allow it, hire a personal trainer (PT). Your PT can meet you wherever it is most convenient to you and develop an exercise plan that will help you efficiently shed unwanted pounds and stones. Your PT must know how to motivate you and get

you going. That is an essential part of their job.

### Golden rule

With or without a PT, start slow and work your way up. Find whatever activity you like and go for it! For example, start fast walking regularly. Let us say you are on your way to a regular engagement. Incorporate walking into your commute. Start with 10 minutes, and then increase it to 15, and so on and so forth. Your body will pick up the habit of the exercise after a couple of weeks of strong-willed, repeated insistence.

### Agua por favor!

High blood sugar can give you the sensation of hunger when you are only thirsty. Does this sound strange? It is not. Thousands of people have received this information from their doctors, trainers, or nutritionists, and can confirm it: people with diabetes or at a risk of diabetes sometimes feel hungry when a glass of water will do. Next time you are hungry and it is not mealtime, try this 20-minute-trick: go for a glass of water and wait

20 minutes. If you are not hungry after 20 minutes, you were not hungry to begin with!

### P.A.S.S.!

Stop using sugar completely. Seriously, throw away your bag of sugar and never buy sugar again. Now PASS again. Not the sugar, but P.A.S.S. — pears, apples, spinach, and squash. These four foods empower your body with the day's needed fibres. In fact, you should P.A.S.S. daily. Sundays included. From now on, when somebody at work offers a cake with a 10 mm thick coating of sugar (icing), just pass on it.

The task of establishing a regular workout routine might sound scarier than an Alfred Hitchcock film. Nevertheless, just remember: everything is difficult until you try. ■



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## Fostering innovation at the UN

# A new sustainable development agenda

*What does it take to achieve this ambitious and transformational agenda?*

**MARIA FERNANDA BETANCOURT**

The realization of this agenda will certainly require the involvement of all relevant stakeholders and will demand collaboration between different actors. But just as collaboration and active engagement are crucial, so is the ability to innovate and to find new ways to address the increasingly complex and interconnected challenges that affect all countries across the globe.

In January 2016, the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda came into force. While 2015 was the year where action was oriented towards the

adoption of the 2030 Agenda, 2016 will be the year where the United Nations will start focusing all its energy on the implementation of this Agenda and its 17 Goals.

But what will it take to achieve this ambitious and transformational agenda? The realization of this agenda will certainly require the involvement of all relevant stakeholders and will demand collaboration between different actors. Partnerships between the UN, governments at different levels, private sector, civil society and academia will be crucial. The achievement of the 17 Goals

will require that all those who were involved in crafting the new agenda become actively involved and work together in its implementation; it will require the participation of *all countries, all stakeholders and all people*.

Just as collaboration and active engagement are crucial, so is the ability to innovate and to find new ways to address the increasingly complex and interconnected challenges that affect countries across the globe. International organizations need to find innovative ways to respond to the challenges of poverty, unemployment,

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increased urbanisation, gender inequality, conflicts and climate change, among many others. Fostering innovation is central to achieving the SDGs. In a recent article in the Guardian, David Lewis<sup>1</sup> poses the question “Is innovation essential for development work?”, to which he then answers that not all development problems require new solutions and that it is funds and capacities that are needed in the development context, rather than innovation. While certain to some extent, the big challenges that lay ahead of us do require more innovative approaches, methods and techniques if they are to be addressed in the next 15 years.

To find innovative solutions, the UN must take a look outside and partner with actors that are testing new models and ideas on the ground. Special consideration can be given to a new actor that has become more prominent in the last decades – the social entrepreneur. Call them social entrepreneurs, leaders, visionaries, change makers, social or humanitarian innovators... the important and common trait is that they innovate to solve today’s challenges and engage with commitment and determination in unique pathways. They are multiplying at fast pace in both developing and developed nations, shaping new and practical solutions for a broad range of sustainable development issues, in all the areas covered by the 17 Goals. Shashikumar Velath from the organization Ashoka in India emphasizes that social entrepreneurs are needed for their creative solutions, their change making skills and their power to shift institutional, societal and individual mindsets<sup>2</sup>. There is a great potential in engaging in conversations with these people and in learning from their experiences. We should seek to identify these new initiatives

and join forces to scale them up and adapt them to different contexts, amplifying their impact. “Social enterprises achieve impressive results, but often remain under the radar of governments, donors, and impact investors. They have a huge potential, but there is still more work to be done to fully capitalize on the potential”, says Natalia Agapitova from the World Bank’s Social Enterprise Innovations Program.<sup>3</sup>

But besides reaching out to social innovators outside the UN, the UN should also look within its own system. The UN is often criticized for being a highly bureaucratic and change resistant organization. Now is the time for each and every agency to concentrate its efforts in finding new ways of doing things. While many agencies are already innovating in multiple ways, their structure and functioning, together with the daily time pressure do not always allow for these innovations to be widely spread. Examples of innovation in the UN range from structured forms, such as UNICEF, UNCHR and UNDP innovation teams/units, to more punctual initiatives, such as the WHO – ITU mHealth initiative that uses mobile technology to help combat noncommunicable diseases, the WFP’s cash and vouchers initiative which can help cut down the costs of transporting and storing food whilst benefiting the local economy, and UNOSAT’s use of satellite imagery to track humanitarian crises, among many others. These are certainly great examples of innovation happening at the UN. The question remains, how can we foster more of this?

New practices have to be put in place so that existing innovative techniques and initiatives are easily shared with colleagues in different programs/departments/regional offices. UN agencies should



© UN Photo/Ley Felipe

encourage their staff to come up with new ways of doing their work as well as to collaborate with colleagues in joint projects. Here is an opportunity for Human Resources to become leading units that drive a culture of innovation within their organizations. A KPMG paper on organizational innovation states that “Contrary to popular perception, success does not appear

to be determined by a company’s R&D budget. Instead, studies strongly show that the most successful corporate innovation strategies are the ones that predominantly focus on people and human capital. These include finding, engaging and incentivizing key talent for innovation, creating a culture of innovation by promoting and rewarding entrepreneurship and risk taking

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and developing innovation skills for all employees.”<sup>4</sup>

UN agencies must also take advantage of the continuous waves of young newcomers. In Geneva, there is a large number of young professionals joining international organizations, often for short-term periods, as interns, consultants or temporary staff (to a much lesser extent, for entry-level posts). Young professionals bring to the organizations new and fresh ideas combined with energy and enthusiasm. They are capable of looking at existing methods of working from a different perspective and are often eager to propose alternatives. We should create room for listening to contributions from newcomers and encourage dialogue between employees at all levels and in all roles. In the longer term, UN agencies should also focus on providing

opportunities for young professionals to stay and become part of the workforce, contributing in a more sustainable manner.

Moving to the system as a whole, the UN must multiply spaces for people from different agencies to interconnect, and to find new opportunities for collaborating and for integrating interdisciplinary teams. To accelerate progress towards sustainable development, we need to address coherently the causes of global challenges and their interlinkages. It is often said that innovation is more prone to happen when people with different ways of approaching the same realities connect and share. In this sense, Geneva already has a favourable setting: people coming together from all over the world, from different cultures, backgrounds and disciplines. We must leverage the

potential of the city and offer the international community more possibilities to interact, collaborate and co-design sustainable and multifaceted solutions. These spaces can take different shapes and forms, but what matters is that they become a recurrent practice that boosts ongoing dialogue and generation of new ideas.

Innovation has indeed become a buzzword in the development context. But in light of a new agenda that is to end poverty by 2030, we must make innovation –in its different shapes and forms– a reality across the UN system. The opportunities are plenty. ■

- <sup>1</sup> Is innovation essential for development work? <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/jul/25/innovation-development-funding-capability>
- <sup>2</sup> Social Entrepreneurs are vital contributors in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. <http://news.trust.org/item/20160216104938-4jhu3/>
- <sup>3</sup> Getting beyond better: How the development community can leverage social enterprises to help the extreme poor. <http://blogs.worldbank.org/dmblog/getting-beyond-better-how-development-community-can-leverage-social-enterprises-help-extreme-poor>
- <sup>4</sup> KPMG (2013) HR as a driver for organizational innovation. <https://www.kpmg.com/Global/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Documents/hr-driver-organizational-innovation-v2.pdf>

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# Pension Fund Update

## *Reproducing an open letter from the Staff Association*

Thursday, 18 February 2016.

Dear Members of the Board of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund,  
Dear Executive Heads of UN Common System Organizations,

We would like to draw your attention to the now well-known and worrying situation facing thousands of new retirees of the United Nations common system, former staff members of the organizations participating in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund.

Since the middle of the last year, we, and no doubt you, have been receiving complaints about long delays in the disbursement of retirement benefits following separation. We see a new vulnerable group being created: former staff members deprived of the means of subsistence for many months (in the worst cases, for one year or more), and especially those in the field.

We understand from junior and mid-level staff at the Fund that despite their hard work and lack of support by their senior management, the processing time for a new beneficiary, once their case reaches the Fund from an organization and in the best of cases, is four months. This is on top of the time taken by organizations to process separations.

Many retiring staff live outside their home countries and have diverse and important financial obligations (mortgages, education fees for their children),

contracted on the basis of a reasonable expectation of retirement benefits.

We are sure you will agree that the situation facing our former colleagues and constituents cannot be accepted. For many months, they have been deprived of the legitimate income constituted by their own contributions complemented by the contributions of the organizations, for no other reason than managerial inability to process their legitimate claims.

That the United Nations common system cannot honour its obligations towards its former staff in a timely manner weighs heavily on the image of our system and sends the wrong signal to those who have dedicated their lives to the defense of the values, and the achievement of the goals of the United Nations. We therefore urge you to take resolute action to put an end to the current practice of mismanagement at the Fund and to this end propose a series of measures:

- A faster processing of new claims that allows the elimination of the current backlog as soon as possible, through an adequate staffing and management of the Pension Fund and increased coordination between participating organizations and the Fund, including as regards the compatibility of ERP systems.
- The use of advances for retirees who do not receive their long overdue benefits, paid either by the Fund or the organizations.
- A change to how claims of new retirees are processed so that the Fund disburses the first retirement benefit no later than 30 calendar days after the day of the last salary

payment and pays penalties to the retired staff member if this objective is not met.

- An acknowledgement by the Fund's CEO, Mr. Sergio Arvizu, to staff and retirees that there is a serious problem and steps by the Board to hold the management accountable for the misery it has caused.

To this end we call on the Chair of the Board, Mr. Olusoji Adeniyi, to call for an urgent extraordinary meeting to address the current situation and make sure it never happens again. We regret that to-date he has declined to hold such a meeting.

The leadership of the Fund's management and of its Board owe it to the thousands of suffering retirees to step out of their state of denial, the latest communication from the Fund ([http://www.unjspf.org/UNJSPF\\_Web/WebEmail/imp/IPASwebsite12Feb2016.pdf](http://www.unjspf.org/UNJSPF_Web/WebEmail/imp/IPASwebsite12Feb2016.pdf)) being a case in point.

Please accept the assurances of our highest consideration,

Ian Richards, President CCISUA  
Diab El-Tabari, President FICSA  
Dimitri Samaras, President UNISERV. ■

## Book review

## “Nansen, explorer and humanitarian”

ITA MARGUET

**Fridtjof Nansen** (1861-1930) was a Norwegian explorer, zoologist and statesman. In 1888 he led an expedition across the Greenland icefield and in 1893, in the Fram, set sail across the Arctic. In 1895, with J.F. Johansen (1867-1923), he left the ship and reached 18° 14'N, the nearest point to the North Pole then attained. He subsequently contributed greatly to the League of Nations and pioneered the **Nansen Passport**, an identification card for displaced persons (1922). He won the Nobel Peace Prize (1923).

As extract from the Foreword, the book portrays the many dimensions of a man who

was one of the most interesting personalities of his time. And it shows through the man's struggles, setbacks and overwhelming victories on behalf of hundreds of people in need, the fundamental importance of having a strong international system in place for their protection. This system now exists, also thanks to Fridtjof Nansen. But it continues to come under pressure, as respect for human rights runs low in many places, and as racism and xenophobia resurface, time and again, in societies around the world.

He saw his work as a real contribution to peace. So too did the League of Nations, and

when **Fridtjof Nansen** died the Assembly paid solemn tribute to his memory for his efforts “to unite the nations in the work for the cause of peace”.

Overall the book, co-authored by two journalists with long international experience, provides an extensive and fascinating insight into the life of a scientist, an intrepid polar explorer and respected diplomat. He was also the first High Commissioner for Refugees, appointed by the League of Nations. Since 1954 UNCHR has presented its annual Nansen Refugee award to individuals and organizations that have made exceptional contributions

to the refugee cause. The award boasts a long list of laureates who share Nansen's personal conviction. ■

The book is on sale at Palais des Nations, Geneva (30 CHF) with on-line and other outlets.

Authors : Marit Fosse and John Fox.  
Foreword by Antonio Guterres, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



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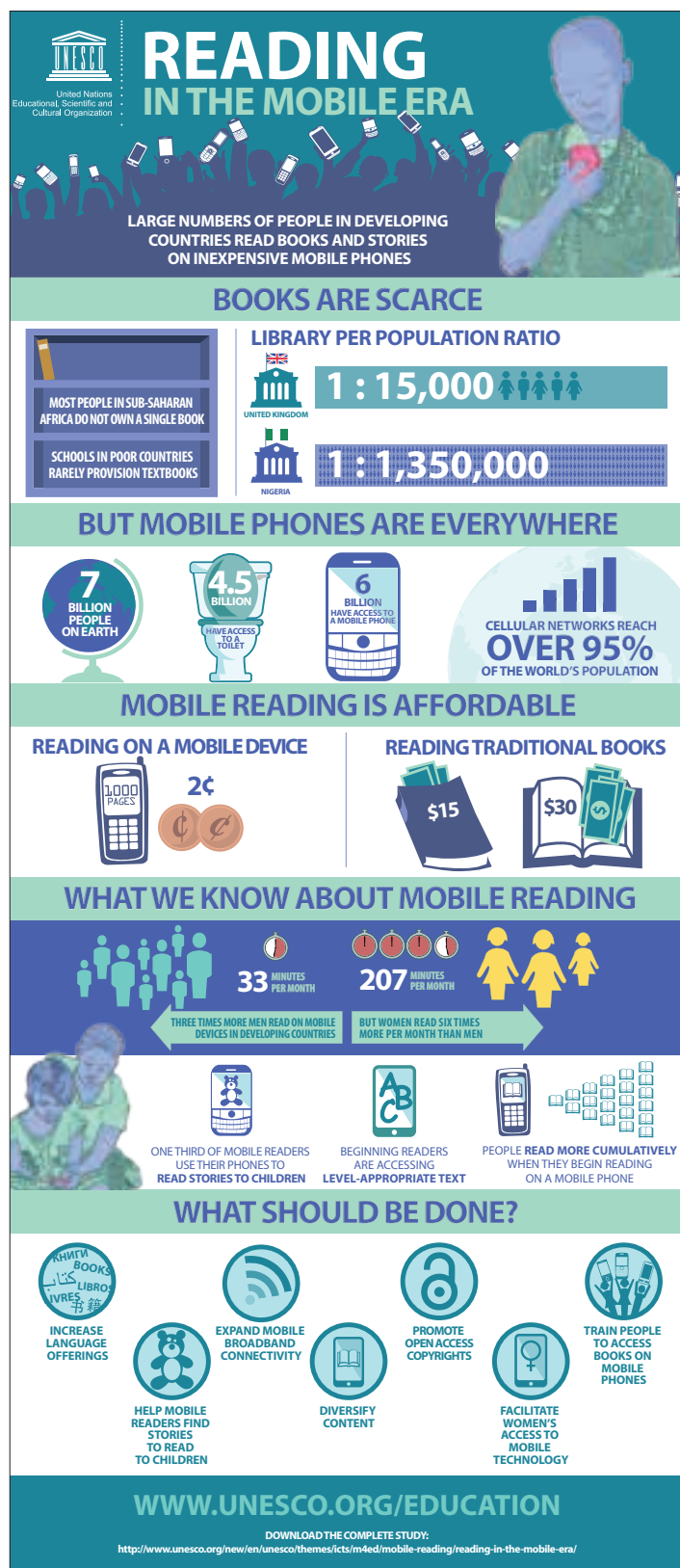
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## AMELINE PETERSCHMITT

This is a symbolic date for literature, since on this day in 1616, Cervantes, Shakespeare and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega all died. In addition, other prominent authors, such as Maurice Druon, Haldor K. Laxness, Vladimir Nabokov, Josep Pla and Manuel Mejía Vallejo were born or died on this day.

UNESCO created this day in 1995 to pay tribute to authors worldwide, to encourage reading throughout the world, and to raise awareness on the important contributions of world literature to our shared cultural and social heritage.

What do you associate with books and reading? Until two years ago, I associated reading with the smell of old books, wandering down library aisles, flicking pages, skipping pages, and the feeling when reading the last page of a thick book. Mobile phones were not on my list. But these associations were challenged when I first read UNESCO's report on Mobile Reading "Reading in the Mobile Era: A Study of Reading in Developing Countries"<sup>1</sup>. This report paints the picture of the mobile reading revolution occurring today in developing countries.

Poor access to text is one of the main barriers to reading worldwide, and is strongly correlated with low literacy rates. In Japan, where the literacy rate is close to 100%, there is 1 library for every 47,000 people. By contrast, in Nigeria, where a staggering 40% of the population cannot read or write, there is only 1 library for 1,350,000 people (Ajeluorou, 2013). These differences can also be found within a same country. In the United States, access to books and good quality libraries varies drastically with income. As the UNESCO report states, "this correlation between wealth and book access can be seen in

nearly every country on Earth and cuts across geographic lines". Despite the progress in literacy rates in the past 15 years, there are still 774 million people worldwide who cannot read or write, 16% of whom are between 15 and 24 years old: "books still constitute a bottleneck".

Over 40% of the world population now has unlimited access to text thanks to the connection to the Internet. But what about those still unreached by this connection? As UNESCO asks, "what mechanisms exist to get books into the hands of the poorest people on Earth?". This is where mobile phones come in. Over 6 billion people now have access to a working mobile phone, which makes mobile phones more widespread than toilets (only 4.5 billion have access to a working toilet). Mobile phones "are plentiful in places where books are scarce".

In the face of this reality, several organizations, such as Worldreader, are working to provide easy and affordable access to books on basic mobile handsets. UNESCO's study finds that "across developing countries, there is evidence of women and men, girls and boys reading multiple books and stories on mobile phones that can be purchased for less than 30 dollars. Mobile reading is not a future phenomenon but a right-here, right-now reality". In UNESCO's report, the results of a survey completed by 4,000 people in seven countries (Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Zimbabwe) reveal the profile, motivations and habits of mobile readers.

## Who are mobile readers?

On average, there are three times more men than women reading on mobile phones.

This gender gap in mobile reading, reflects the gap in phone ownership. However, “once women start reading on their phones, they tend to be more highly engaged and read more”. Women therefore spend more time reading per month than men. In addition, mobile readers are young: 90% are under 35 years old, and two thirds are under 24. This is relatively unsurprising, given that young people are more likely to own and use a mobile phone than older generations. Lastly, mobile readers tend to have higher levels of education than the general population. Indeed, the most active readers are those who have achieved a diploma.

#### Why do they read on their mobile phones?

The primary reason for reading on mobile phones is

convenience. Easy, ubiquitous and seamless access to books appears to be a universal reason for favoring mobile reading. The second motivation is affordability. This reason was cited more frequently among habitual readers, and, therefore, among women.

#### What are mobile readers' habits?

62% of respondents reported that they read more since they read on their mobile phones. This reflects a wider trend that “the overall reading consumption of individuals tends to increase following the adoption of digital reading”. A significant finding is that one third of the respondents read stories to their children from their mobile phones. What is more, another third stated they would read to their children if there were more children's stories available on their phone.

This study provides a detailed overview of mobile reading in developing countries, and points to several policy recommendations to increase access to text and literacy levels. For instance, taking into account that young people are more likely to read on mobile devices than paper books, governments should develop comprehensive digital libraries including books in local languages and level-appropriate text. In addition, more can be done to train older generations to use technology as a portal to text. The fact that many mobile readers use their phones to read aloud to their children also reflects an “untapped opportunity to support the literacy development of children”. By providing affordable, child-friendly content on mobile phones, governments could positively impact early childhood education on a large scale.

Of course, providing access to text is in itself not enough to increase literacy rates – efforts are still needed to provide quality education to all children. “Nevertheless, the primacy of access cannot be overstated. While it is true that books, by themselves, will not remedy the scourge of illiteracy, without them illiteracy is guaranteed”. As we work towards the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, let's leverage this reading revolution to help achieve Target 6 of SDG 4 on Education, namely “by 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy”. ■

<sup>1</sup> Reading in the mobile era: A study of reading in developing countries, UNESCO 2014  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002274/227436E.pdf>

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# Do you know your SDGs?

*The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), approved by the General Assembly in 2015, entered into force on 1 January 2016.*

*A photo exhibition at the UNOG Library allows you to get acquainted with this new ambitious development plan in an original and visual way.*

## CRISTINA GIORDANO, UNOG LIBRARY

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), approved by the UN General Assembly in September 2015, are at the heart of the UN development programme for 2015–2030. Building on the success of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that ended in 2015 they call for action by all countries, not only the developed ones, to go further in the fight against poverty and climate change. They are based on a democratic consultation that included not only world leaders and specialists, but was open to all citizens of the world. In this sense, they can really be called “our shared vision of humanity” and a “to-do list for people and planet,” to use UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon’s own words. Since they have a larger scope, they are also more numerous and ambitious than the previous MDGs: 17 goals (instead of 8) and 169 targets.

If countries have the main responsibility in implementing the SDGs, different institutions, each at its own level, can join the global effort to make the SDGs known and



shared by the general public. In this perspective, the UNOG Library hosts from March to the summer 2016 a photo exhibition entitled “**Sustainable Development Goals: a Visual Dialogue**”, where two talented photographers, Sergio da Silva and Angelo Mitsotakis, present their own interpretation of each of the 17 SDGs.

Sergio da Silva worked at UNOG for many years and, as the founder of the Club Photo International of the Palais, has forged a solid reputation. He has taken part in several exhibitions and his photos have often

## Education/Enseignement

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been chosen to illustrate UN publications. Angelo Mitsotakis, on the other hand, exposes at the Palais for the first time. "I used to take pictures like anybody else, until my friend Sergio made me see things in a different way", says Angelo Mitsotakis "We have been working together for many years, experimenting while taking photos. When he proposed to work with him on the SDGs project, I liked the idea because it was a challenge."

"I did not know the SDGs when the project started", adds Sergio da Silva "I had to read and study them carefully. My first concern was how to use photos that would correspond to each goal without being too obvious. I wanted to stimulate curiosity and interest. This is also why I thought it would be better to

have two photographers instead of one. Angelo's work and mine represent two different perspectives. It is a real dialogue."

Sergio reveals which criteria they used for the selection of the photos. "We looked for pictures with a positive aspect because the SDGs incarnate the future we want", he says "The photos had to be complementary and highlight different aspects of the same goal. They also had to be neutral, not related to any specific place, because the goals are universal, therefore valid for all." Presentation was paramount. "We wanted to show something the public is not accustomed to see.", he continues "Our aim is to make people read about the SDGs and want to know more". The images have been treated with a special technique. Their

round shape alludes to the fact that the UN goals are global and have to be achieved globally.

The two photographers say they are proud of their work because it promotes an important cause and help disseminate the principles of the SDGs. Thanks to the cooperation with the UNOG Library; their pictures will also be present online, in the form of tweets that the Library will regularly post on its account. Nothing, however, replaces enjoying the exhibition as a whole. So please drop by the Library on the first floor of the B building, and see for yourself if the photographers have achieved... their goal! ■

**Sustainable Development Goals: a Visual Dialogue**  
Photos by Sergio da Silva and Angelo Mitsotakis  
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# Are you covered by your insurance if you need a mountain rescue?

*Rescue insurance is a worthwhile investment and provides you with peace of mind. At least it will be there as a safety net in the unfortunate event you need to be rescued.*

## GEMMA VESTAL, WHO

Summer is around the corner and the ski season soon gives way to the season of hiking and climbing in the mountains of Switzerland and neighbouring France and Italy. But although we happily pay those extra few Euros/francs for insurance in the mountains in winter, I wonder how many of us have considered paying to cover emergency repatriation during a summer excursion.

I am passionate about hiking and climbing, but this summer I shall be more cautious and better prepared. On 4 July 2015, I organized a via ferrata activity with some of my friends in Loèche-les-Bains. A via ferrata is a narrow path or vertical climb whereby access is facilitated by an iron cable. Additional climbing aids, such as iron rungs, pegs, carved steps and even ladders and bridges are often provided. Via ferratas allow otherwise dangerous routes to be undertaken without the risks associated

with unprotected scrambling and climbing or the need for climbing equipment such as ropes. This particular route was described in the guide book as “the longest and most demanding in Switzerland. Long, vertical ladders, with steep and strength-sapping climbs. The backdrop is grandiose, and the views across and down to the town of Loèche-les-Bains are fantastic”. We felt fit and wanted a challenge, so we were excited as we set off that hot Saturday in July, taking the cable-car from the town of Loèche-les-Bains (1,401 m) up to the Gemmi Pass (2,322 m). From the pass, it was going to take us at least six hours to get to the summit of Daubenhorn (2,942 m).

The group’s first mistake was a late departure from Loèche-les-Bains for the Gemmi Pass at around at 10 a.m. We spent the first four hours taking breathtaking photos of the via ferrata, but midway through

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Mid-way of the ascent. Things were still okay.



© Emmanuel Gueux

Two more hours to go and some team members were fatigued at this point.

the ascent, one of our group members showed signs of low energy and fatigue. The adage "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link" became a reality for us as the pace of the whole group was slowed down by this team member. Consequently, we did not reach the summit until nine o'clock

in the evening. Sundown was in less than an hour and there were still four more hours of hiking before reaching our car in town.

After another 30 minutes on a gruelling, steep and slippery descent from the summit, we arrived at a snowfield

(approximately 2,800 m) only to realise that all the trail markers were covered with snow. It would have been too dangerous to guess the route, as we were surrounded by crevasses. We no longer had any food or water, nor did we have enough layers of clothing to keep us warm through the

night. Not anticipating walking in the dark, we did not have any headlamps, and our climbing shoes were so soggy and freezing cold that frost bite was imminent.

Thus, the group resignedly concluded that we needed to be rescued by helicopter and



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© Heather Mondin

We were instructed to stay in the snow field so that the rescuers could easily see us. Such relief to see the helicopter!

with the little battery power left in our phones from taking many photographs that morning, we called some air rescue numbers and finally, the three-digit emergency number for Switzerland. Thankfully, Air Zermatt responded within 15 minutes and by the time they arrived, we were bordering on hypothermia. They told us that had we called them just an hour later, they would not have been able to fly in the dark and we would have had to spend the night at high altitude. A rescue expedition could not have been resumed until break of dawn the following day. Thankfully, we had taken action in time and we were all lifted to safety.

But this is a cautionary tale. The cost of the helicopter rescue was over 1,200 CHF per person. Since I had three accident/travel insurances, I was quite certain that reimbursement would not be a problem, but I was unaware of the special clauses in each

agreement. After paying my Air Zermatt bill, I proceeded to contact my insurance companies one after another. Generali Assistance, with whom I have been a member since 2009 (at 89 CHF per year), would not cover me because I did not first call their 24-hour hotline. We actually had tried, but the hotline was just ringing endlessly and our cell phone batteries were all getting close to zero.

Rega, an excellent helicopter rescue company, with whom I have been a member since 2010 (at 30 CHF per year), would also not cover me because we were not rescued by a Rega helicopter. Finally, and with relief, without any hassles, AXA Winterthur, with whom I have been a member since 2011 (at 54 CHF per year) reimbursed me after I submitted copies of the paid bills. However, not all of us had repatriation insurance coverage, so my friends had to pay this massive, unplanned bill out of their pocket.

Before you and your family explore the mountains this summer, consider buying rescue insurance. Here are a few things to ask your insurance agent:

- Is helicopter rescue covered?
- If you are domiciled in Switzerland, which countries are covered? Would they rescue you if you were in Italy or France?
- Can you call a country's emergency number or do you have to call the insurance's hotline number?
- Will medical bills be covered, such as, if they had to start an intravenous fluid or give you some medicines?
- Will ground ambulance service be covered?
- Is there travel companion coverage?
- How about coverage for household members?

If you are a keen mountain explorer, insurance is a worthwhile investment and provides you with peace of mind. At least it will be there as a safety net

in the unfortunate event you need to be rescued. ■

With research assistance by Ms Nava Shahi, WHO Summer 2015 Intern.

# Faith and the UN mandate for peace

*On the last Wednesday of every month, a unique meeting occurs in the Palais des Nations.*

## AIMEE LACE

UN staff and diplomats of many different origins, professions, and ranks, gather together around a round table, bowing their heads in prayer. These people constitute the United Nations Christian Association (U.N.C.A.) in Geneva, a non-profit association formed over a year ago as a platform for dialogue amongst UN staff and Geneva-based diplomats on issues of faith and inter-religious dialogue.

The main purpose of their meetings is to pray for the work of the United Nations. Inspired by their mutual faith in Jesus Christ and scriptures such as Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers", the participating staff pray monthly for the United Nations, its leaders in New York and Geneva, and the current events greatly impacted by the work of the organization. Current thematic areas for prayer include the Syrian conflict, the refugee crisis in Europe and elsewhere, and the UN's peace-keeping mandate. The U.N.C.A. refrains from proselytism, is neutral politically, and non-denominational in its Christian nature. Its members participate on a personal capacity. Peace is an issue close to the hearts of the United Nations staff, and the United Nations Christian Association has been well-received as UN staff and diplomats of the Christian faith seek to pray for peace in our world.

In addition to holding monthly prayer meetings, the Association recently co-organized the event, "Dialogue on Faith, Peacebuilding & Development," which took place on 5 February 2016 in coordination with the Missions of Jordan, the Holy See, and the Order of Malta, the Delegation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and UNITAR. Diplomats from permanent

missions, staff members from United Nations entities, leaders from NGOs and representatives of major religions gathered at the event to discuss the role of faith in peace-building and how faith-based organizations can support social and economic development in synergy with the new 2030 Agenda.

The dialogue occurred in commemoration of United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/65/PV.34 of 20 October 2010, which established the "World Interfaith Harmony Week" and designated the first week of February of every year as the time for its commemoration. The event was held at the UNOG Library and its aims were to better understand the potential of faith to



© Steve Mendez

promote peace and the role of faith-based organizations working on the field. The discussion at this gathering also recognized the important role that the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism will have in the discussion of faith and peace-building and in the joint efforts of adherents of different religions in the prevention of violent acts that lead to terrorism.

The activities of the U.N.C.A. are open to any staff member of the United Nations. ■

Additional information can be found at: [christiansun.org](http://christiansun.org).

## Restaurants







La Laguna Surire aux eaux turquoise à 60° d'où se dégagent des vapeurs de soufre.

### 3<sup>e</sup> partie

# Bolivie & Chili, final en beauté

*Loin de l'uniformité du gigantesque salar d'Uyuni (voir UN Special du mois passé), et avant de retrouver le Chili, place à la haute montagne aux sommets déchiquetés pour un trek à plus de 5000 m d'altitude dans un environnement minéral de toute splendeur.*

#### CLAUDE MAILLARD

Dès les premiers instants passés en Bolivie, l'émerveillement a été total tellement elle regorge de beautés naturelles que l'on ne retrouve nulle part ailleurs sur notre planète. Le pays est pauvre, 35% des Boliviens vivent avec moins de 2 dollars par jour et, selon l'indice du développement humain des Nations Unies, la Bolivie se classe au 108<sup>e</sup> rang sur 186 pays. Pourtant elle détient les deuxième réserves de gaz du continent sudaméricain (derrière le Venezuela), les premières réserves de lithium du monde (35%) et d'importantes ressources minières (fer, cuivre, étain...). Il semble que le choix du nationalisme fait par le Président Morales n'ait pas favorisé la confiance des investisseurs même si sa politique économique a reçu les félicitations du FMI (Fonds monétaire international). Séduits par le patrimoine naturel de

la Bolivie, les touristes sont de plus en plus nombreux à venir apprécier la richesse et la diversité de ses paysages d'exception et, quant à eux, ils ont fait le bon choix. Et ce n'est pas l'exploration des sommets qui surplombent le Parc national de Sajama qui nous fera dire le contraire!

#### Au milieu des viscaches

Fraîcheur et grisaille se sont donné rendez-vous pour nous accompagner en ce début de journée. Par chance le départ du trek a lieu dans une zone «tempérée» où jaillissent de nombreux geysers. L'activité est particulièrement importante et sur le sentier qui serpente parmi les bains bouillonnants, il faut redoubler de vigilance car le sol peut à tout moment se dérober sous nos pieds. Parties devant, les mules qui transportent le matériel et les vivres pour le bivouac nous

distancent rapidement dès qu'apparaissent les premières difficultés de terrain. Plus de deux heures d'ascension vont nous permettre d'approcher la laguna Khasiri (4850 m d'altitude) et d'observer plusieurs espèces d'oiseaux aquatiques dont les mouettes, les oies sauvages et les foulques géantes qui ne s'éloignent guère de leur nid flottant fait d'algues et d'herbes. Nous sommes alors à la frontière chilienne et poursuivons notre marche, un pied dans chaque pays!

Une dernière heure d'effort sera nécessaire pour atteindre un vaste plateau où se trouve la laguna Sorapata, endroit magique, entouré d'impressionnantes montagnes aux couleurs soufre dont le volcan Condoriri Grande au dôme enneigé. La nuit approche et l'installation du campement est prioritaire sous le regard curieux d'un condor venu nous observer. C'est plutôt la présence d'innombrables viscachas qui attirent le rapace. Les lapins-écureuils andins ne semblent pourtant pas troublés et continuent à vaquer à leur occupation favorite, bondissant comme des kangourous, de rocher en rocher, pour une partie de cache-cache endiablée. La nuit sera fraîche et au lever du jour, par  $-10^{\circ}$ , la laguna transformée en patinoire brille de mille feux sous les premiers rayons de soleil.



L'église de Guallatire au toit fait de paja brava.

© Claude Maillard

Dans un univers minéral féérique et après le franchissement d'un col à 5065 m d'altitude, cheminant au travers d'un désert de sable rouge et de rochers recouverts de yaretas (lichen millénaire aux vertus médicinales), nous longeons la laguna Chiar Khota entourés de tourbières et sous des giboulées de neige... avant de rejoindre nos 4x4 qui vont nous rapatrier jusqu'à la frontière chilienne.

#### Retour au Chili

La guerre du Pacifique qui opposa le Chili au Pérou et à la Bolivie entre 1879 et 1884

fit perdre à la Bolivie sa province du littoral qui était son seul accès à la mer. Aussi, la route qui traverse la frontière à Chungara est l'unique axe principal qui permet de rejoindre le port chilien d'Arica ouvert sur l'océan Pacifique. Autant dire que la file d'attente des véhicules, principalement des camions transportant des produits pétroliers, est impressionnante. Cela nous laisse le temps de contempler le volcan Parinacota (6348 m), coiffé d'un imposant glacier et qui se reflète dans le vaste lac Chungara, l'un des plus élevés

au monde. Accompagné de notre guide Andréa, nous prenons la direction de Putre que nous atteindrons en début de soirée après une escapade à la laguna Cotacotani et à Parinacota qui est la plus haute commune du Chili. Aujourd'hui 29 habitants vivent dans la localité qui était prospère jusqu'aux années 1980 grâce à l'exploitation de mines d'or. Jadis utilisée par les Espagnols comme étape lors du trafic du minerai d'argent de Potosi vers Arica, Putre, pittoresque bourgade peuplée par des Aymaras, est idéalement située pour

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Troupe de lamas au pied du volcan actif Guallatire d'où s'échappe un nuage de gaz et de vapeurs d'eau

partir à la découverte du parc national Lauca et de la réserve nationale Las Vicunas. C'est dans cette région, à 4250 m d'altitude, que se niche le salar de Surire dans son écrin formé de hautes montagnes dont le volcan actif Guallatire d'où s'échappent de grosses volutes de gaz et de vapeurs d'eau. Avec pour seule distraction le va-et-vient continu des camions acheminant le borax récolté au salar, un couple âgé réside seul le long de la piste, retiré du monde, dans le hameau d'Ancuta. Également loin de tout, à deux pas de la mine d'or de Choquelimpe, une poignée de familles continuent à faire vivre le village de Guallatire à la charmante petite église au toit couvert de paja brava, cette herbe qui pousse dans le désert. Au cœur de ce paysage, constitué de vallons de différentes couleurs pastel, des vapeurs soufrées se dégagent de la laguna qui jouxte le salar. Avec ses eaux turquoise (qui

atteignent 60° par endroits), et les quelques vigognes qui broutent sur les rives, la scène mérite que l'on prenne le temps de la contempler... et de s'y attarder.

#### **Valparaíso et ses 42 collines**

Après un arrêt à la forteresse de Copaquilla et avoir surplombé la vallée lluta, véritable oasis luxuriante dominée par de gigantesques dunes de sable ocre, notre périple s'achève à Arica, l'une des cités les plus arides au monde, d'où nous allons nous envoler pour Valparaíso. Premier port et deuxième ville du Chili, «Valpo» a joué un rôle géopolitique très important dans la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle lorsqu'elle servait d'escale pour les bateaux naviguant entre les océans Atlantique et Pacifique et traversant le détroit de Magellan. Dominée par quarante-deux cerros, collines construites de milliers de maisons en bois très colorées,

reliées au quartier du port par d'antiques funiculaires, la capitale culturelle du pays a été déclarée patrimoine culturel de l'humanité par l'Unesco en 2003. Les rues étroites et escarpées bordées de façades couvertes de fresques donnent à l'endroit une identité et une atmosphère très particulières et chaleureuse. Tombé amoureux de la ville, Pablo Neruda y fera édifier la Sebastiana, l'une de ses résidences, sur le cerro Bellavista d'où il dominait toute la baie. Aujourd'hui, la demeure du Prix Nobel de littérature (1971) qui est restée telle qu'il l'avait aménagée est ouverte au public. Plus au sud, à Isla Negra, l'écrivain, poète, diplomate et homme politique chilien avait également fait construire une maison dans une crique idyllique en bordure d'océan. Ce lieu où il est enterré et dont il disait «Cette maison est mon bateau ancré sur terre» a été transformé en musée.

Toute belle chose a une fin et il fallait se résoudre à rejoindre l'aéroport de Santiago pour rejoindre Genève, via Paris. Mais, près de Vina Del Mar, en traversant la vallée de Casablanca célèbre pour sa production vinicole, il nous paraissait inconcevable de ne pas terminer sur une belle note parfumée et fruitée notre fabuleuse aventure en terres chilienne et bolivienne... ■

## Changing our perception of disability

# The disability equality training

*In a highly interactive, enjoyable, and discussion-based session, the Disability Equality Training, held in early March at the ILO, taught participants a great deal about being aware of obstacles to inclusion and how to effectively reduce them.*

### JENS SCHLECHTER

When talking about disabilities, most of us think about a wheelchair or a blind person. In reality though, the spectrum of impairments is broad, including minor disabilities such as arthritis in your hands, slightly-impaired hearing, or temporary symptoms of depression. Some of those impairments coincide with growing older and affect a large percentage of older people. This also means that the majority of disabled persons have several minor impairments and face a range of barriers to their participation in social activities and everyday life. Yet, public policy and awareness-raising campaigns tend to overlook this and instead focus on persons with one major disability.

It is important to note that the barriers which impaired persons face to participation in everyday life are not only physical. They also relate to attitudes – the underlying issue is the stigma affixed to having physical or mental impairments. The attitudes towards disability that characterize societies can be categorized and referred to as Models of Disability. Traditionally, impairments have been often seen by society as a curse or god's punishment for some evil deed. Thus, disabled persons are blamed for their

impairments, assumed to be somehow “polluting”, and are openly excluded from any participation in society. But even in societies that embrace a medical approach to disability, impairments are stigmatized. This stigma can be implicitly reinforced by popular culture, such as movies in which an impaired villain is contrasted with a physically “perfect” hero. This particularly goes for kids’ movies and TV shows. For example, Captain Hook is the bad guy in Peter Pan and Long John Silver is the cunning and opportunistic pirate with a prosthetic leg in Treasure Island. These negative images impact the way in which disabled people are often viewed.

This stigma, together with the underlying fear of oneself acquiring an impairment, creates a cycle of fear. Subconsciously, some people may be afraid of persons with impairments and therefore tend to avoid them. This avoidance, in turn, leads to an ignorance of the barriers faced by people with impairments. Not acknowledging the barriers, results in reinforcing exclusion and in perpetuating negative perceptions and fear.

Eventually, it all comes down to a very simple equation: *Impairments + Barriers =*

*Disability*. Because in *traditional* as well as in *modern* societies where impairments are explicitly or implicitly regarded as the individual's problem, reducing barriers is unfortunately not a high priority task. Some countries follow a medical approach towards disability. This approach sees disability as a burden – both to the individual and to society – and subsequently tries to “fix” persons with disabilities through medical treatment, to help them “fit in” society more easily.

Even though there is an interest in addressing impairments medically, instead of focussing on *fixing* persons with impairments, we should make greater efforts to remove the social and environmental barriers that persons with impairments face. This type of approach would be truly centred on the individual, regarding everyone as equal in a society that accommodates for all, irrelevant of a person's impairments.

Too often, the word *inclusion* is mistakenly used in the equality and non-discrimination discourse, when in reality the measures we are taking aim for *integration*. Simply *integrating* persons with disabilities means placing them within the same metaphorical “box” which is adapted for the majority

– persons without disabilities. Through a number of hands-on group activities and role plays, the recent Disability Equality Training sensitized participants to the difference between *integration* and *inclusion*. For example, one task was to design a restaurant which accommodates persons with disabilities. One major take-away from the training was that many adjustments – ranging from awareness-raising and attitude change to accessibility and communication – are needed to cater to everyone and thereby create an *inclusive* society.

Thinking about all the barriers persons with impairments face and coming up with ideas to remove them is challenging but rewarding for all. Learning how to figure out ways to address this challenge was one reason why the training was such a motivating experience. Personally, my next job leads me to Kyrgyzstan where I will work in the area of employment creation in cooperation with small holder farmers as well as with small and medium-sized enterprises. The Disability Equality Training equipped me with the awareness and practical skills needed to strive towards more inclusive work environments, and I am looking forward to applying this knowledge in my next job. ■



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# WHO Woman of the year is Ebola crisis heroine

*It seems only appropriate, as we move from an emergency Ebola phase, to the reconstruction and rebuilding of health systems, that the WHO Woman of the Year should be someone who played a leading role in the Organization's response to the unprecedented West African outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) which killed over 11,000 people among approximately 28,000 infected since December 2013.*



Margaret Lamunu with Evelyn Kortum, WHO Staff Association President.

## VERONICA RIEMER, ON BEHALF OF THE STAFF ASSOCIATION, WHO

Margaret Lamunu, WHO's Woman of the Year 2016, is a Ugandan national, and a medical Epidemiologist in the department of Pandemic and Epidemic Diseases.

Her first Ebola mission was to Nigeria in September 2014 and she soon after joined the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) in Accra, Ghana to provide support for disease surveillance and contact tracing (the identification and diagnosis of people who may have come into contact with an infected person) and prepare plans for engaging communities in preventing disease transmission, particularly across borders.

As the situation worsened in Liberia, she was transferred to the capital Monrovia, where she worked closely with the Government as a senior advisor to contain the outbreak and bring Ebola cases to "Zero".

In March 2015 she moved to Freetown, Sierra Leone where she continued working with the Government to contain the outbreak. She was later awarded a silver medal by the President of Sierra Leone for her exceptional contribution to their work. Margaret, had in March 2015, been awarded a gold medal by the President of Uganda for her exceptional contribution to the efforts to fight Ebola in West Africa, in addition to her efforts to contain the outbreaks in Uganda. She had led operational efforts to contain the first outbreak of Ebola in Uganda in 2000.

Margaret was presented with the WHO award on International Women's Day (8 March), by Evelyn Kortum, President of the Staff Association, which launched the initiative. The theme this year is "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality". It was not only a day to reflect on progress made across the globe but an opportunity to mark a call for

action to address the pressing barriers that can prevent women from reaching their full potential. Colleagues who nominated Margaret recognised her as an extraordinary team player and an inspiration to other women working in hardship environments. "Margaret showed that women can also work at field level under very challenging conditions" said her WHO colleagues. "She worked as a WHO professional within UNMEER in a very collaborative way and was the vital link between Geneva and the regional and country offices during this difficult response".

International Women's Day was also honoured by acclaimed Ted Talk speaker Dr. Michael Kimmel, a sociologist who specializes in men and masculinities, who spoke to WHO staff about the subject of unconscious bias and how we can address and redress the gender inequalities that negatively affect us all. Gender inequality also has negative consequences

for women in the workplace, such as fewer opportunities for promotion and growth and lower compensation. In fact, the World Economic Forum estimates that at the current pace, gender parity at all levels of decision-making will not be reached until the year 2133.

Addressing her friends and colleagues on the Day, Margaret expressed surprise and appreciation for the outpouring of kindness she had received. "I thought that no-one really noticed I was away on mission, so I am so grateful for this award and thankful to be part of such a wonderful team" she said. "I would like to dedicate this award to the many women and children, health workers, colleagues and all persons who lost their lives to Ebola. They are the real heroes!" ■

# La mujer que educa al hombre

*¡Soplan vientos de Paz, en mi patria, Colombia!  
Que dicha que Colombia pueda cerrar las páginas  
negras de su historia y comenzar una nueva  
historia escrita por ciudadanos reconciliados.  
Soy optimista y deseo que así sea.*



## AMBASSADOR CLAUDIA URIBE

Conjugando mis anhelos con la realidad, sé que en Colombia hay muchas tareas por hacer y muchas se están haciendo en el proceso de reconstrucción del tejido social, de los que destaco la restitución de tierras a los desplazados por la violencia, la reconstrucción de la memoria histórica, el incremento de las hectáreas cultivadas.

Mirando en perspectiva, la Colombia de hoy y la Colombia del futuro, me acordé de un viejo amigo que fue elegido Gobernador de un departamento muy próspero por su vegetación, clima y gente. Se encontró de pronto gobernando un territorio azotado por el caos creado por los negocios de la droga, que llegaron como un analgésico contra la pobreza; pero lo que hizo el dinero fácil, fue profundizar las carencias, incrementar la violencia y el deterioro social. Remover de esta región llena de gente buena, la desolación, la inseguridad y la falta de esperanzas, decía mi amigo, no es solo un tema de gobernanza, políticas públicas, subsidios y presupuestos robustos. Se requiere algo más.

Este viejo zorro de la política decía que nuestra sociedad está enferma no solo por la pobreza, sino además por la codicia, queriendo agrupar a varias de nuestras carencias morales y éticas en una sola. Siendo consciente que Colombia no

requiere más diagnósticos y que por lo tanto debemos pasar a la acción, he venido madurando desde hace varios años, una idea, para poder ubicar en sus justas proporciones una Colombia que contradiga al mismo Pablo Milanés cuando decía: «Nuestra Sociedad es un buen proyecto para el mal...».

Pues bien, mi plan son las mujeres, las madres, las actuales y las potenciales, ellas, para que junto con los padres, transmitan el valor del respeto y el trabajo. «La Mujer que educa al hombre» es mi propuesta.

Me dirán, ¿pero de que hablamos?, si las mujeres y la igualdad de en Colombia están amparadas por la Constitución Política y han estado incluidas en las políticas públicas y diré sí, claro que sí, Colombia fue el primer país de América en conceder derechos políticos a las mujeres hace más de 60 años y observatorios para la equidad de género, acceso a la justicia, condenan a la mutilación genital entre muchísimos logros. Pero, donde las políticas no han tenido éxito, es en el apoyo a la mujer como madre en su rol en la reconstrucción del tejido social.

El ciclo de la pobreza y la violencia se vive «en la familia», las madres que lo han vivido la transmiten otra vez. Las madres y el núcleo familiar son el detonante social que hay que articular.

Muchas madres se han quedado solas, casi 40% de los hogares en Colombia son liderados por madres cabeza de familia obligadas a proveer el sustento económico y también moral. Esta es una realidad muy cruda, porque lo ideal es que juntos padre y madre fueran la raíz que empuja el árbol de la vida y los valores. Pero cuando la madre se queda sola ella es la raíz.

La madre transmite lo que aprendió: si vivió violencia, la repetirá con sus hijos y luego sus hijos con los suyos. Si la madre está sola educando sus hijos, sus hijos –sobre todo los hombres– aprenderán que los hogares son comandados por una jefa, la mujer y por ello, los hombres pueden irse y abandonar hijos y así sucesivamente. El ciclo se repetirá y repetirá... por tanto hay que revertir este ciclo!

Los niños, todos los niños tienen derecho a aprender el respeto en su acepción más amplia, por sus mayores, por sus padres, por el medio ambiente, pero sobre todo por sí mismos y sus descendientes. Tienen derecho a saber que la familia se integra con padre y madre y que cada uno tiene un papel y que aunque los padres no estén juntos, los dos son la raíz de su existencia.

Conozco muchas madres, especialmente de las que viven en

condiciones muy desfavorecidas; ellas no ven problema en permitir que sus hijos hombres se emborrachen, roben o violenten, al tiempo que se resignan a que sus hijas mujeres sean las «hembras» de hombres, que como sus hijos las embarazan y abandonan. Disto de quienes califican genéricamente a los hombres como machistas irresponsables, puesto que reconozco, al menos en Colombia, un fenómeno social mucho más profundo.

Creo que los objetivos para el Desarrollo Sostenible lanzados por la ONU en el 2015 cuentan con una oportunidad para que los programas de género, reducción de la y búsqueda de la Paz incluyan las Madres, para quienes estoy convencida se necesitan proyectos y campañas que promuevan los valores, comenzando por el respeto y el trabajo digno. Colombia lo necesita, pero seguramente otros países también! ■



# Cultural agenda

April 2016

SONIA GARCÉS



## An art of disappearance

Centre de la photographie, Geneva  
until 8 May

[www.centrephotogeneve.ch](http://www.centrephotogeneve.ch)  
Jacques Berthet and Martin Widmer propose a new series, marked by human absence. Event: Reading of Martin Widmer texts in his presence, Tuesday, May 3 at 6 pm.

Dancing grandmother © YoungMo Choe



## Dancing Grandmothers

ADC in Bâtiment des Forces  
Motrices, Geneva  
17 April

[www.adc-geneve.ch](http://www.adc-geneve.ch)  
The choreographer Eun-Me Ahn creates an unexpected cocktail, with the main ingredient being a troop of Korean grandmothers with unwavering energy. After a greeting, half the audience joins the dancers. This light and joyful piece is a reflection of the spirit that animates the South Korean choreographer.



## 11th International Festival of Oriental Films of Geneva (FIFOG)

Geneva, Versoix, Lausanne,  
neighboring France, 11–17 April  
[www.fifog.com](http://www.fifog.com)

Under the patronage of the Swiss Commission of UNESCO, the International Festival of Oriental Films offers about a hundred films celebrating freedom in all its forms. The Algerian writer Ms. Ahlam Mosteghanemi will be the Honorary President of this 11th edition. Debates, an art exhibition and audiovisual workshops will complement the screening of films.

© Julien Berthmaud



## Street Dance Club

Opéra des Nations, Geneva  
24–27 April

[www.geneveopera.ch](http://www.geneveopera.ch)  
The choreographer Andrew Skeels, soloist with the Canadian Grands Ballets, is inspired by the dancing and the atmosphere of the legendary 1920's Cotton Club in Harlem. Seven hip hop dancers will bring to life a 2016 version in a composition by Antoine Hervé.



## Visions du Réel Festival

Nyon, 15–23 April  
[www.visionsdureel.ch](http://www.visionsdureel.ch)

The Nyon International Film Festival has been an annual event for 47 years. It is the only documentary festival in Switzerland, and will explore the complex realities of past and present history through 160 films from 54 countries, debates and workshops. Chile will be the guest of honor, with 15 films screened and 5 projects presented.



## Book and Press Fair

Palexpo, Geneva  
27 April–1 May  
[www.salondulivre.ch](http://www.salondulivre.ch)

The Geneva Book and Press Fair celebrates all forms of literature. Tunisia is the guest of honor of the thirtieth edition of the fair, and the theme is: “Revelations of the Tunisian revolution.” The Fair is organized around nine thematic scenes: thriller, psychology, travel, Swiss edition, Arab cultures, African Fair, cartoon, philosophy, novels.

## Message du rédacteur en chef

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

### N'hésitez plus et écrivez-nous !

Nous serions heureux de recevoir votre avis.

Les plus pertinents, les plus intéressants, les plus originaux seront publiés dans le magazine.

Si le succès est au rendez-vous, le magazine comportera à l'avenir une rubrique « nos lecteurs nous écrivent ».

### Et maintenant, à vos plumes !

Adressez vos commentaires à :

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Châtelaine, Genève, Suisse  
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## Message from the editor-in-chief

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

### Write to us!

We will be glad to hear from you.

The most interesting, relevant, or even ingenious responses will be published in the magazine.

We are also thinking of a regular feature with the messages from our readers.

### Now, put pen to paper!

Send your thoughts to:

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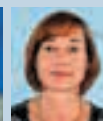
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