

UN Special

Special edition
**HEALTH &
WELLBEING**



RISK COMMUNICATION

Zika virus

N°759 – MAI 2016

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ALEXANDER MEJIA

Rédacteur en chef / Editor-in-chief

Do you often think about your health and wellbeing? If so, this edition is relevant to you. We offer a selection of articles on these topics, including one on the Zika Virus, and several others with practical advice on how to improve your health, live better and manage stress while working.

Vous vous posez souvent des questions sur votre santé et votre bien-être? Si oui, ce numéro est pour vous. Il est composé d'une sélection d'articles à ce sujet, dont un sur le virus Zika, ainsi que plusieurs offrant des conseils pratiques pour améliorer votre santé et bien-être au travail.

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Health is at the top of the agenda this month at the Palais des Nations, as WHO hosts the 69th World Health Assembly. This global forum is the world's highest-level health policy-setting body and is composed of health ministers from all 194 member states of the WHO. Diplomats, practitioners, experts and civil society representatives also attend as observers.

This edition's feature article provides insight into a less visible perspective of the Zika virus: risk communication. Our colleagues at WHO let us into the process, telling us how they inform affected communities and vulnerable zones about this epidemic. We track the disease and its spread around the world visually, and share tips on how to protect yourself while travelling.

In addition, the UNOG Staff Council invites you to read about issues at the Pension Fund and on the UN whistleblower protection policy. You are the judge on these two articles and we simply invite you to reflect on these two matters critical for our careers. Last but not least, we look at those making a mark on our organization, whether just starting or completing years of service, through the coverage of internship issues and the long-service medal ceremony. We are proud of our collective work as international civil servants, and hope you enjoy this new edition of the *UN Special!* ■

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

La santé est au cœur des préoccupations ce mois-ci au Palais des Nations, où l'OMS accueille la 69^e Assemblée Mondiale de la Santé. Ce forum global est le principal organe décisionnel en matière de santé mondiale, composé des ministres de la santé des 194 pays membres de l'OMS. De nombreux diplomates, praticiens, et représentants de la société civile y participent également.

L'article principal de ce numéro met en avant un aspect moins connu du virus Zika: la communication sur les risques. Nos collègues de l'OMS nous racontent comment ils informent les communautés infectées et les habitants des zones vulnérables. Nous vous invitons à visualiser la progression géographique du virus, et partageons des conseils pour se protéger lors de voyages.

Par ailleurs, le Conseil du Personnel vous propose des articles sur le Fonds de Pension et la politique de protection onusienne sur les lanceurs d'alerte. Nous vous laissons juges de ces deux articles et vous invitons simplement à réfléchir à ces sujets fondamentaux pour vos carrières. Enfin, nous reconnaissons ceux qui contribuent à notre organisation, en début de carrière ou par leur ancienneté, au travers de reportages sur les stagiaires à l'ONU ainsi que des photos de la Cérémonie de remise des médailles d'ancienneté. Nous sommes fiers de notre travail collectif en tant que fonctionnaires internationaux, et espérons que vous apprécierez ce nouveau numéro de *UN Special!* ■

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

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WHO's risk communication lead for PAHO (the Americas) Cristina Mana (right) examines mosquito larvae during a field visit.

You really need to know: Zika response

WHO and partners join forces for risk communication and community engagement for Zika response

Dr GAYA GAMHEWAGE, Dr MARGARET HARRIS, WHO

A mobile phone app to communicate about epidemics? Real-time social science research informing the response? These are just a few of the new ways to better engage the community and provide targeted risk communications during disease outbreaks.

The lessons learned during the devastating West African Ebola outbreak, which demanded the most have been applied by the World Health Organization and its operational partners, including UNICEF, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), UNESCO and more than 100 other agencies and experts—who are all working together to combat the latest epidemic – Zika Virus Disease. One of the most important of those lessons

was that risk communication and community engagement must be improved and much better coordinated.

Why are we worried about Zika?

First identified in a monkey in Uganda in 1947, the Zika virus was not considered a source of major illness in humans until recently. However, when Zika reached the Americas in 2015, and spread explosively to at least 62 countries, some countries and areas have reported a rise in unusual neurological conditions during Zika virus epidemics.

Zika virus is usually transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected *Aedes* mosquito, a mosquito that can also transmit chikungunya, dengue and yellow fever. Zika may also be transmitted through sexual contact.

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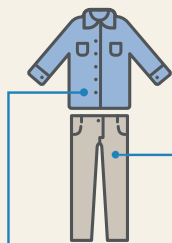
Get vaccinated against yellow fever and Japanese encephalitis



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window screens



Wear light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts and trousers



Use insect repellent

Sleep under an insecticide-treated bed net



Get rid of stagnant water from places where mosquitoes breed, such as in old containers, flower pots and used tyres



For more information, contact your health-care professional www.who.int/world-health-day

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Symptoms of Zika virus disease include fever, skin rash, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise and headache, which normally last for 2 to 7 days. There is no specific treatment but symptoms are normally mild and can be treated with common pain and fever medicines such as paracetamol, rest and drinking plenty of fluids.

The main fear around Zika is the suspicion that pregnant

women who are infected with Zika could give birth to babies with microcephaly – where the brain and head of a baby does not develop normally and stops growing after birth – and other congenital abnormalities. Health workers have also noted another suspected nerve system complication, this time in adults – Guillain-Barre syndrome. This is a usually rare condition in which a person's immune system is triggered by something

like a viral illness to attack their peripheral nerves. Severe cases of Guillain-Barré syndrome are rare, but can result in near-total paralysis, including the inability to breathe. With good supportive care in well-equipped hospitals, most people will make a full recovery from Guillain-Barré syndrome but the care needs put a huge burden on the hospital system if there are many cases.

Responding to concerns about the spread of Zika and its potential consequences, on 01 February 2016, WHO declared the recent clusters of microcephaly and other neurological disorders in Brazil a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). WHO recommended enhanced surveillance and research, and aggressive measures to reduce infection with Zika virus, particularly amongst pregnant women and women of childbearing age. One of the key health response interventions is risk communication and community engagement.

Risk communication and community engagement

The ultimate purpose of risk communication in the Zika response is to enable people at risk to take informed decisions to protect themselves and others from infection and mitigate the effects of Zika virus and its potential complications.

The objective of Zika risk communication work is to engage communities to understand

the risks associated with Zika virus disease and promote healthy behaviours, reduce anxiety, address stigma, dispel rumours, resolve cultural misperceptions and engage communities in response activities.

Some key activities carried out in the first two months of the Zika response include:

- A guideline for governments and response agencies on risk communication and a joint handbook with UNICEF and IFRC for field teams and community level engagement
- Training packs for local journalists so that they can understand and cover Zika issues accurately and meaningfully
- A WHO Zika app for Android and IOS mobile phones which can be downloaded for free, and is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French
- A resource pack for conducting knowledge, attitude and practice surveys at community level to better understand people's fears, needs, and behaviours
- Engagement of mass media and community radio, including provision of radio scripts for use in countries and production of information, education and communication materials.
- Stakeholder coordination to ensure consistency of messaging, and working together to reach influencers who

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have the ability to engage at risk-communities;

- Dynamic listening to understand and respond to people's perceptions and management of misinformation and rumours.

Axis 1: Risk communication for vector control

There are many things that are still not known about Zika. But we know that controlling the mosquito vector leads to less exposure to the risk. This means that vector control is essential and risk communication and community engagement are essential for sustained vector control. The Aedes mosquito can lay eggs in the tiniest amount of water and can even survive on the sides of containers without water for months. There are concrete actions for vector control that authorities should take. In addition to these, risk communication aims

at supporting and engaging communities to fight the mosquito at community, household and individual levels.

Axis 2: Risk communication for women of reproductive age

Because of the concern that Zika infection in pregnant women may lead to severe congenital abnormalities in babies such as microcephaly, much of the risk communication and community engagement work in the Zika response is focusing on helping women and girls, and their partners and families, to take informed decisions about protection from infection, pregnancy, and seeking appropriate health care.

Axis 3: Health care personnel

Health workers need the most up-to-date knowledge about Zika and its complications. They also need to be empowered and enabled to communicate risk,

provide advice and specialized counselling to those affected by Zika virus disease. WHO will use its Zika app amongst other means to get this knowledge to health care professionals, community health care workers and pharmacists around the world. ■

For more information on Zika risk communication visit <http://www.who.int/risk-communication/en/>



The WHO Zika app is available for both android and IOS phones and can be downloaded for free. It is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French.

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Mindful or Mind full?

WHO has been running 8-week courses in mindfulness in English and French for the past eight years, and approximately 300 staff have followed the training during this period.

VERONICA RIEMER, WHO

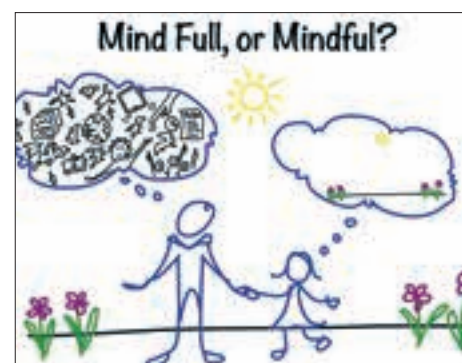
Perhaps you think that mindfulness and meditation is a bit too “hippy” for you, and just the thought of sitting cross-legged in the lotus position gives you cramps and contractions. But you might just want to reserve your judgement until you have heard about some first-hand experiences from staff at the World Health Organization who have followed a specially adapted programme run by the Staff Health and Wellbeing Unit. The course consists of a two-hour session once a week including discussion, meditation and group exercises to develop coping strategies to help colleagues move towards a happier and healthier life. Although many were sceptical at the outset, regular mental work-outs, just like physical work-outs, are really making a positive difference in their lives.

So what exactly is mindfulness – the buzz word of the minute? Bianca King a qualified and experienced Psychotherapist and Counsellor, who teaches The Living Healthier Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course in English, explained that mindfulness is the ability to pay deliberate attention to our experiences – to what is going on in our mind, body and day-to-day life. “A Mindfulness-Based Approach to Stress teaches people practical skills that can help with daily and ongoing life challenges and physical and psychological health problems” she said. “It is a means of maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment. It is to pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without believing, that there’s a “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment”.

Working for an evidence-based organization, WHO staff likes to understand the science behind the practice. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction is based on the psycho-educational group approach developed more than 30 years ago by Jon Kabat-Zinn, a microbiology Ph.D. teaching at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. He was inspired in the late 1970s to apply the basic principles of mindfulness meditation to patients in a medical setting. His work developing the MBSR programme proved effective in helping alleviate the suffering of chronic and previously debilitating medical conditions such as chronic pain.

A recent review of nearly 50 scientific studies found that mindfulness is as effective as anti-depressants in helping depression, but with no side-effects, and that mindfulness training of 20 minutes a day improves working memory and the ability to sustain attention. It is now widely recognized as the first intervention in Western medicine to offer mindfulness meditation (as compared to other forms of meditation) to enhance mental and physical fitness and reduce stress, which is known to be a major contributor, either directly or indirectly, to coronary heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidental injuries, cirrhosis of the liver and suicide. Although other clinical applications of mindfulness have since been developed, MBSR is the oldest and most generic platform for learning mindfulness.

Mira Schneiders, a participant on one of the most recent courses, confirmed that the programme had taught her to focus on the present moment rather than letting her thoughts drift into past regrets or future fears. “Mindfulness is an invitation to be



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present and to bring a gentle curiosity to our direct experience in each moment as it unfolds” she explained. “By practicing regularly, it can help to sharpen our arrow – to understand the things that are important to us, to see more clearly where it is that we want to put our energy and to gain insights into what it is we want to pursue. At the same time, mindfulness allows us to cultivate compassion with

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the people around us and the world in which we live. It is balance and strength, with ease”.

Other colleagues have found the programme to be hugely beneficial in dealing with worry and tension, not just in the workplace, but the home environment too.” It gives you the tools to better address stress and put it into perspective” said one participant. “After an extended period of sick leave due to burnout, mindfulness has helped me to adopt new ways of thinking and being and I am now on the road to better stress management” said another. “I certainly recommend this course to every staff member”.

The programme is increasing in popularity, much to the satisfaction of the course organisers in the Staff Health and Wellbeing Unit. “Professional challenges, organizational changes, relationship and family pressures and the pace of life

today are very demanding on our staff” said Eva Murino, the Staff Psychologist who co-teaches the course in French with psychologist and psychotherapist Martine Favrat. “The course is not just about adopting a stress reduction tool” Eva explained. “The mindfulness approach is a self-development practice which profoundly transforms individuals, helping them become actors of their life and responsible for their choices. Recent studies have even demonstrated that regular mindfulness practice enhances the ability to cooperate and collaborate with each other which is vital in the work environment”. ■



© Quentin King

Bianca King, English course leader

In addition to teaching within numerous organisations, Bianca King regularly conducts public courses at Webster University, as well as other locations in and around Geneva. More information about Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) courses in Geneva can be found here: www.genevaminfulness.com



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A bicycle bell produced for the Cycling Festival Europe in Geneva Parc des Bastions, Switzerland, April 14, 2016.

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The bicycle and the United Nations

JOHANNES SOMMERFELD, WHO

What could possibly be – the reader of this article may ask – the relationship between a trivial object such as the bicycle and the United Nations (UN) as the world's leading intergovernmental organization? The bicycle may make it into UN-based deliberations on road safety, city planning, urban infrastructure, health promotion and recently, even on sustainable development and climate change. But it rarely makes it beyond specialized agencies work into the limelight of the Organization.

On 8 June 2012, a *Boda Boda* (an East African transport bicycle) was placed in front of the United Nations building in New York City. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke in the presence of over 40 ambassadors and dignitaries to promote cycling as a sustainable means of transport in the lead up to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)¹. “Bicycles are important, but they are just part of a bigger picture: our global efforts to achieve truly sustainable

development. Our challenge is to get the world to use renewable energy to power our trains, planes, buses and boats. This is especially important for cities,” the Secretary-General said. Then he observed that “I would much rather see bicycles and bike-riders around here than the limousines, armoured SUVs and other gas-guzzling cars that we all use at the United Nations! Maybe I should ask my security detail whether I can bike to work – but they would probably have a heart attack at the thought.”.

Affectionately called *Petite Reine* in French (allegedly following an official visit of Queen Wilhelmine of the Netherlands, a committed cyclist, to Paris, in 1898), with more than a billion copies in circulation and an estimated yearly global industrial production of over 100 million², the bicycle is the most widely utilized means of transport in human history. Through various technological innovations, the bicycle has been around for almost 200 years, since the 1820s. It serves humanities' needs

on a daily basis including in transport, business, recreation, sports and just fun. Many of us UN staffers in Geneva use it on a daily basis to commute to work or we participate in the annual Bike-to-Work scheme, sponsored by our UN agencies.

On April 14, 2016, the bicycle and the United Nations in Geneva had another happy encounter. The Cycling Festival Europe was hosted in Geneva, with broad support from many agencies, by the Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Geneva. It was co-sponsored by the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) and two of the UN specialized agencies in Geneva (World Health Organization and United Nations Economic Commission for Europe). The Canton de Genève, the Ville de Genève, the Université de Genève and civil society organizations such as TCS, Genève Roule, PRO VELO Genève and AGIR joined the co-sponsorship of the event.

Generously protected from traffic by Geneva Police on motor

cycles, many event cyclists were escorted from the Place des Nations to the Parc des Bastions.

In the Parc des Bastions itself, information stands, food trucks, and numerous playful activities (slowbiking, special fun bicycles and BMX cycling) were offered.

UNOG Director-General Mr. Michael Møller praised the longstanding cycling cultures in countries like the Netherlands and in his native Denmark and expressed that "the United Nations Office in Geneva is pleased to be co-sponsoring this event as the bicycle is indeed an important element in the sustainable development agenda of the United Nations. UNOG is fully committed to *Greening the Blue*, the UN's common system approach to creating a more sustainable UN".

To conclude the festive atmosphere in the Parc des Nations, and in marvelous weather, an *apéro* was generously offered by the Département de l'Environnement, des Transports et de l'Agriculture of Canton de Genève with local products.

The World Health Organization contributed bicycle bells with the slogan "Move to health" to raise awareness of the value of cycling in sustainable urban transport, health promotion and the improvement of air quality. An in-official world record in bicycle ringing was attempted, practiced first to the strains of Johann Strauss' *Blue Danube*. At the time of publication, it is unknown whether the record was in fact broken, but certainly the sound and joy of the cyclists' bells reached beyond the Parc des Bastions and its busy urban surroundings. ■



© UN Photo/Pierre Albouy.

Geneva's Conseiller d'Etat Mr. Luc Barthassat (L), Ambassador Mr. Roderick van Schreven (2nd L), UNOG Director General Mr. Michael Møller (3rd L) and Geneva's Conseiller administratif Mr Remy Pagani (R) pose at the Cycling Festival Europe in Geneva, organized by the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Netherlands, Parc des Bastions, Switzerland, April 14, 2016.

1 UN bike ride highlights importance of sustainable transport, UN News Centre, "<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=42188>" \l ".VxXkik1Jm70"

<http://www.un.org/sg/STATEMENTS/index.asp?nid=6113>

<http://www.worldometers.info/bicycles>

<http://www.greeningtheblue.org>

2 www.worldometers.info/bicycles

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The benefits of stress-management tools for international organizations

How resilience trainings and physical activities can improve staff well-being in international organizations.

GEMMA VESTAL¹, HARSHITA JAIN², SHEVA CARR³,
ROBERT BROWNING⁴, AND SABEENA BALI-DINGRA²,
WHO

The problem of stress in the workplace

Today, professionals live fast paced lives, glued to their smartphones and tablets while in an onslaught of meetings and consultations. Due to globalization, jobs require attention 24-7 because people work across all time zones.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Programme of Occupational Health's publication *Work Pressure & Stress*, pressure is unavoidable in the contemporary workplace. Pressure may help keep staff alert, motivated, and able to work – until it becomes excessive. Then, pressure evolves into detrimental, unhealthy stress. The most stressful type of workplace is one where there is little opportunity to exercise control, lack of support amongst coworkers, and a poor match between demands

and values with staff's capabilities and knowledge.

Indeed, Maslach et al's article *Job Burnout* finds that there is a high prevalence of professional stress syndrome or "burnout" in both developed and developing countries. In fact, 53% of people in the global workforce feel closer to burning out now than they did five years ago, according to a 2015 Regus Group survey of 22,000 business people in over 100 countries.

Perhaps the modern world is one of the culprits for such high prevalence of stress. The International Labour Organization (ILO) cites this rise in stress in the workplace in Europe and elsewhere as due to reasons such as: "information overload, intensification of work and time pressure, high demands on work-related travel, being constantly 'on call' due to mobile phone technology, and the worry of losing one's job."

The organizational duty towards a healthy and respectful workplace

International organizations have a duty, of course, to fulfill their mandates. But they have a duty to their staff as well: to maintain and promote a healthy and respectful

workplace. While it may seem that there is tension between these two duties, it would behoove international organizations to balance them. Maintaining and promoting a healthy and respectful workplace helps staff perform optimally, so that in turn, they can better serve the institutional mandate. To this end, international organizations need more than managers – they need managers who are leaders, for it takes visionary leadership to recognize and then achieve this balance.

What is a healthy and respectful workplace? A universal strategy for a healthy workplace integrates a broad range of health issues, including mental health and well-being, hygiene and sanitation, physical activity, occupational health, and nutrition and foods safety – all essential elements to a healthy workplace. Further, a respectful workplace is one that encourages trust, responsibility, accountability, mutual respect, and open communication, and embraces the dignity and diversity of individuals.

The benefits to international organizations of ensuring a healthy and respectful workplace

International organizations reap benefits when they balance the fulfillment of their mandate with the promotion of a healthy and respectful workplace for staff. In 2011, *WHO Healthy Workplaces: A model for action* listed the myriad organizational benefits of a healthy workplace:

- A well-managed health and safety programme
- A positive and caring image
- Improved staff morale
- Increased productivity
- Reduced staff turnover
- Reduced absenteeism
- Reduced health care and insurance costs
- Reduced risk of litigation and fines

International organizations cannot, in fact, afford not to alleviate workplace stress. To put the costs of stress in economic terms, three business professors at Stanford and Harvard Universities in 2015 analyzed the relationship between workplace stressors, mortality and health costs in the United States. They found that workplace stress contributed to an additional healthcare expenditure of up to 190 billion US dollars. And in Europe, in a literature review released by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in 2013, the

financial costs of work-related depression in Europe are estimated to be up to 617 billion euros.

There is no doubt that well-being is absolutely indispensable, whereas, stress in the workplace has dire physical, mental, emotional, and economic consequences. So why are modern workplaces so slow to offer tools and services that can help their staff manage stressors and therefore improve their health and performance?

Organizational solutions to manage pressure and stress in the workplace

When the phrase “stress” originated, it was

defined as external pressure. As researchers further examined people under stress, they observed that people have different responses to the same external pressures. Some survive or are even motivated in the face of pressure, while others collapse into stress. It would seem, then, that stress may be defined not as external pressure, but as an internal physiological and attitudinal response to pressure that can be self-regulated.

This is good news for international organizations, because it means they can provide trainings and offer opportunities that empower staff to cultivate resilience and increase mental, emotional and physical

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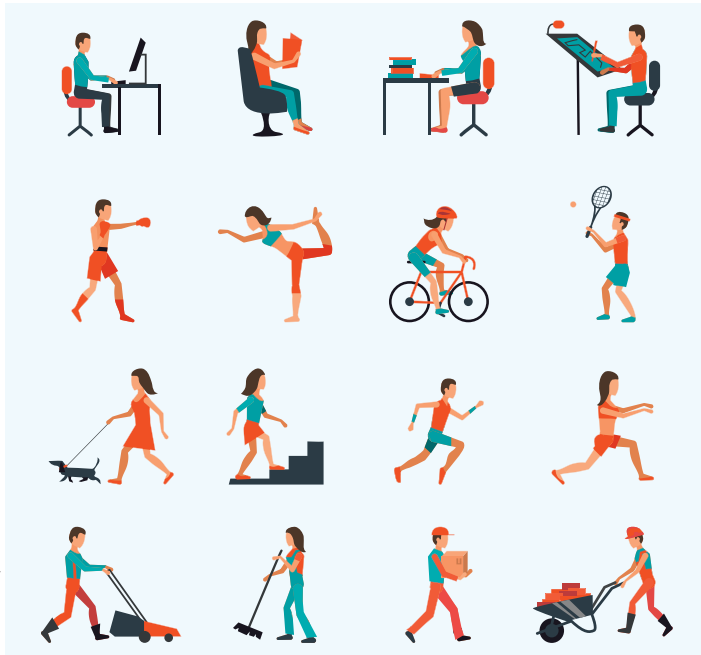
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capacity in the face of pressure, before it surmounts to unhealthy stress. Part and parcel to the provision of a healthy and respectful workplace, international organizations should at a minimum offer two ways for staff to take charge of their well-being: resilience training and physical activity.

First, resilience training is a strategy which operates on the following basic assumptions. Just like a battery, our body has a reserve of energy. This energy is not just physical, but also mental and emotional. When a person's inner energy is fully charged, they have high

resilience and can meet outer pressure with more ease and less stress. People who do not have resilience literacy find themselves unable to prepare for, recover from, and adapt in the face of stressors. They are less likely to remain calm or think clearly in the face of adversity or challenges, such as, interpersonal conflict. Ordinary challenges will act as stressors, draining their inner energy so that they are not at their best when confronted with tough situations. This can have a negative effect on staff's health, productivity, and performance. It can also affect the people in their social

circles such as coworkers, friends and family. The economic cost of low resilience is much higher than the costs of investing in interventions that could improve staff's skills in managing stress.

In a study of thirty-eight participants with hypertension, HeartMath Institute's workplace stress reduction intervention resulted in decreased blood pressure. Such findings imply that providing workshops and tools for managing stress positively influences the physical and emotional health of staff. This finding is poignant in light of a Journal of the American Medical Association study showing that "workplace stress is as bad for your heart as smoking and high cholesterol."

Second, exemplary in respect to promoting physical activity has been the WHO Walk the Talk – the new healthy workplace initiative of WHO for its staff. It reflects the commitment of the Organization to embody the very health advice it provides the world. WHO Walk the Talk endorses several behavioral and well-being practices: using the stairs, standing rather than sitting, offering assorted lunchtime and after-work exercise classes, walking meetings, and monthly running or walking lunchtimes by way of the "away from your desk and into nature" initiative.

These practices contribute to a healthy, supportive, and safe working environment – and therefore mitigate workplace stress.

Conclusion

Today's high-speed work culture is quickly spreading to all parts of the world. The causes of stress differ for each work environment and affect staff differently. International organizations have the responsibility to create a healthy and respectful workplaces where their staff can perform at the optimum level. And staff should be given their own autonomous solutions to stress as well. Without the skills to meet modern pressures, the effects of stress are not only harmful to an international organization's productivity and performance, but also crippling to a person's physical, emotional, and mental health. Helping their staff build resilience and gain physical activity should be a priority for all international organizations because it is vital to both staff and the organization itself. ■

- 1 A Vice-President of the WHO HQ Staff Association.
- 2 Interns at WHO.
- 3 CEO of FYERA!, and HeartAmbassadors, Co-Vice President of Pathways To Peace.
- 4 Director, HeartMath Healthcare, Co-Vice President of Pathways to Peace.



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Trouble at the pension fund

Corporate infighting, allegations of management fraud, media leaks, pensions not being paid, a move towards risky investments, all capped by a seemingly pliant board. How did it all go wrong?

LORAINÉ RICKARD MARTIN, UNOG

Once seen as a bastion of stability, the UN pension fund has rarely been out of the news these last two years, and for all the wrong reasons. We'll try to shine some light on the malaise at the top of our pension fund and exposes the power politics that could eventually tear it apart.

The United Nations Pension Fund, 67 years old this year, provides pensions to 72,000 UN retirees and survivors. With \$52 billion in assets, it has enjoyed robust health for much of its existence. While it suffered a significant dip in assets during the 2008 economic crisis, as did many public pension funds, unlike others that foundered, it rallied and continued to thrive. It has grown on the back of a conservative investment policy, with solid checks and balances in place, including strict separation of the departments managing its investments, known in the industry as the assets side, and that paying retirees, the liabilities side.

This all changed in 2014. Enter the fund's CEO, Sergio

Arvizú, a man known for his outward charm and diplomacy and in reality responsible only for paying retirees and with no access to the investments, despite his title. The staff unions received a trove of leaked documents documenting Arvizú's attempts to revise the Memorandum of Understanding, the cornerstone document defining the fund's relationship to the UN. The revision was being justified by a General Assembly resolution, 68/247, adopted in December 2013, requesting the fund's board to prepare a review of staffing issues. (However, Arvizú failed to reveal that the fund was not supposed to take action until the proposals had been considered by the General Assembly.)

While the MOU reads as a very technical document, the staff unions contended that the real goal of the MOU revision, which included changes to rules on procurement, receipt of gifts and hiring, was to disassociate the fund from the UN, give the CEO free rein over staffing issues and allow

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The Pension Fund
Investment Committee

Arvizú to take control of the fund's investments.

Following two petitions to the Secretary-General signed by 16,000 current and former staff, Ban Ki-moon's then chief of staff Susana Malcorra, organized a town hall meeting on 16 April 2015 at UN headquarters in New York. Amidst widespread anger, she stressed that there would be no plans to change the investment policy in the short, medium, or longer term, and assured staff that no changes would be made to the MOU without consultation.

It was finally the UN's head of management, Yukio Takasu, who suspended finalization of the revised MOU on 10 July that year, citing the need to allow time to sensitize staff and retirees about the real purpose of the MOU and ensure it would allow the fund "to operate in a more efficient and responsive manner."

If this was meant to bring peace it failed, as around the same time staff working at the fund had come forward alleging fraud and conflict of interest by

Arvizú, later detailed in the US and Swiss press. This plunged the fund into a new storm and triggered an investigation into Arvizú, which is still ongoing.

With the MOU debacle and allegations against Arvizú still fresh, the annual meeting of the fund's board, which took place in July 2015, was the most contentious in recent memory.

Against a charged atmosphere at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Arvizú and his counterpart in charge of investments known as the Representative of the Secretary General, Carolyn Boykin, looked horns on a number of issues.

Allies of Arvizú in the board also took to the floor one after the other to lambast Takasu for suspending the revision of the MOU. Arvizú then had UN security remove a participant from the meeting when it appeared that she would question his

While attention over the last two years has been mainly focused on the difficulties facing CEO Arvizú, the fund's investment side, known as the Investment Management Division, has also come under fire.

MOU. Sareva was then supported by Linda Saputelli, the president of the FAFICS retiree association.

Unspoken at that meeting was a new looming crisis that would shortly hit the fund. Over that summer, a new administrative software was being installed called IPAS (Integrated Pension Administration System). Against better advice, the decision had been taken among the fund's senior leadership not to provide a backup procedure in case the system failed to work.

And that is exactly what happened. Between May and

management practices. The staff union federations present at the meeting, CCISUA and FICSA, were attacked in an outburst by the fund's legal chief, Janaa Sareva, for campaigning against changes to the

August that year, the fund was unable to process payments for newly retiring staff members. And when the system finally started to function, fund staff, despite working overtime and weekends, were unable to maintain the rate of processing they had before.

Reports emerged in late 2015 of protracted and unprecedented payment delays, reaching by the end of the year an average of six months. Emails by retirees, some penniless, went unanswered and stories circulated of unopened files stacked floor to ceiling at the fund's New York office. Messages from Arvizú failed to acknowledge the severity of the situation.

The staff union federations, CCISUA, FICSA and UNISERV, in a joint letter dated 18 February 2016 to the Secretary-General and Executive Heads, drew attention to the problem, and called on the chair of the fund's board, Olusoji Adeniyi, to convene an extraordinary meeting to resolve the crisis.

Adeniyi, reputed to be close to Arvizú, replied that he saw no



Ms. Carol Boykin, the fund's investment chief, with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon

reason for an extraordinary board meeting and that the delays would swiftly resolve themselves. Unsatisfied by the reply, the staff unions initiated a new petition to the Secretary-General, which at the time of writing had collected 3,500 signatures, calling for Arvizú to be replaced with someone able to “fix the problems at the fund and restore staff morale.”

Stung into action by the letter and petition, Takasu, the UN head of management, intervened at the end of February to impose performance indicators on Arvizú, with a target to reduce the six-month payment backlog by 35 percent by the end of March and eliminate it entirely by 31 May 2016. He announced this to staff through the UN's intranet on 1 March.

Meeting the CEO once month later, Takasu was assured that the fund had accelerated processing and exceeded its first performance target. This was promptly announced on the UN intranet. However, these figures are disputed (see inset by the CCISUA staff union federation president) and the petition to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to replace Arvizú has been revived.

At the same time, a former chief of entitlements at the fund issued an open letter on 9 April 2016 describing the Arvizú's reports on the backlog as “seriously flawed and deceptive” and calling for an independent investigation and payment of interest and damages to retirees who hadn't been paid.

While attention over the last

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On current trends

14 months to clear the pension fund's payment backlog

IAN RICHARDS, PRESIDENT OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF INTERNATIONAL STAFF UNIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS, UNOG

The fund triumphantly claimed on 14 April, via the UN intranet that the “backlog in payments of pension benefits is being eliminated”. It cited statistics that 1,241 cases had been dealt with out of a backlog of 3,400.

Mission accomplished? Not really. The intranet article forgot to mention that around 1,000 new cases arrive at the fund each month as people continue to retire. The net drop in the backlog is therefore 241 cases (1,241 minus 1,000). This means the backlog was only reduced by 7%, a fifth of the 36% claimed by management. On current trends it will take 14 months to clear the backlog.

And this is an optimistic scenario. Pension fund staff privately report that there is no clear way to measure the size of the backlog as many files from newly retiring staff hadn't yet, at the time of writing, been entered into the system.

Meanwhile, many of the additional staff meant to be working on clearing the payment backlog have only been temporarily released from other activities and on a part-time basis.

Add to that, continuing bugs with the pensions administration software, making calculations extremely slow, and communications difficulties between it and the UN's new Umoja system, and the continuing challenge in paying new retirees become apparent.

There are many ways to resolve this problem, including fresh leadership at the top. But for any improvement, the fund must start by being transparent to its retirees about the situation they face. ■



Mr. Sergio Arvizu, the CEO of the fund, with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

two years has been mainly focused on the difficulties facing CEO Arvizú, the fund's investment side, known as the Investment Management Division, has also come under fire.

The division is led by Carolyn Boykin, with the innocuous title of Representative of the Secretary-General. She reports directly to Ban Ki-moon rather than to

Arvizú. Her appointment in 2014 had already caused a stir when media reports were shared of her sudden departure from a previous position as chief investment officer at the Maryland State Retirement and Pension System under a mismanagement cloud in 2003. (She then joined Bolton Partners Investment Consulting Group, an actuarial, not investment, company for a

number of years before landing the UN job.)

On 10 April 2015 and, later, in June that same year, CNBC and Opalesque, respectively, announced that Boykin was considering moving toward hedge funds and other alternative investments, and was authorized to hire external fund managers. This information was, according to reliable

sources, deliberately leaked to the media, and calls from eager hedge funds soon followed.

Equally surprising was a simultaneous media report that the chair of the fund's investment committee, Ivan Pictet, was resigning after ten years, citing reasons of his advancing age and long working hours.

However, fund insiders told the

author that Pictet had been elbowed out. This wasn't denied in the Swiss press: "Le fait de ne pas avoir les coudées franches a-t-il pesé dans la décision d'Ivan Pictet? "Ce n'est pas faux", répond le banquier genevois." (*Le Temps*, 10 April 2015, "Ivan Pictet a démissionné du Fonds de pension de l'ONU").

Further exchanges of letters show deepening problems on the fund's investments side.

In August 2015, shortly after the annual Pension Board meeting, the FAFICS retiree association president, Linda Saputelli, who had heretofore dismissed concerns about both the MOU and hedge funds, while staunchly supporting the CEO's push for a revised MOU, swung into action, exchanging letters with Takasu, in which she voiced "unease" about a number of management and governance matters related to the fund's investments that, she emphasized, posed risks to the system of checks and balances.

Six months later, in February and March 2016, the fund's assets and liabilities monitoring committee wrote to Takasu raising alarms about the situation at Boykin's Investment Management Division, and requesting Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's intervention and concrete actions concerning "weakened governance and risk management", "dangerous understaffing" and "a loud danger signal" of transactions conducted "in open disregard of proper clearer mechanisms" and without reference to proper investment procedures and oversight.

The letter also noted that Boykin's statement at the committee's February meeting "that possible changes to the Fund's investment philosophy and approved UNJSPF risk appetite are being considered" did not conform with acceptable levels of investment risk.

Add to these worries, Boykin's reported attempt last year, stymied by an unfavorable internal risk assessment, to invest an additional \$2 billion in hedge funds at a time when large public pensions were pulling out of hedge funds.

Today the fund faces a crisis of confidence and leadership: questionable statistics about the backlog and questions about

when long-suffering new retirees and survivors may expect their first pension payment; a power-hungry CEO under investigation; an investment chief operating in an environment of lax compliance and risk management with plans for riskier investment of our life savings; and a board seemingly in cahoots with the CEO.

It is not too late to reverse the fund's problems. However, left to their own devices, neither Arvizú nor Boykin nor the fund's ineffectual board will make a difference. Given the increasingly alarming evidence that the continued safety of our pensions may be hanging in the balance, there's every reason for the Secretary-General to

focus attention on how a faltering pension fund might impact his legacy and take swift and forceful action while he still can. ■

All relevant documentation may be found on Loraine's UN Pension Blog, <http://unpension.blogspot.com>



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Bringing WHO's internship programme in line with global health policy

Dr ASHTON BARNETT-VANES¹,
Mr MAZIAR JAMNEJAD LL.M

Human resources for health is a WHO priority

Following growing international concern regarding the state of the global health workforce. This May WHO will launch its Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health, which – *inter alia* – aims to “substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States”.

The WHO-IP should build future HRH capacity

In realising this ambition, WHO will invest across its operations in projects and programmes that build health workforce capacity. However, it also leverages its own administrative functions in pursuit of this aim. For example, by recruiting a more geographically diverse staff profile, WHO builds global health expertise in professionals from a wide range of Member States. This not only improves its own policymaking, but crucially – builds confidence in national health systems that WHO is both engaged and sensitive to country and regional issues.



© UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

The World Health Assembly recognized this when in 2003 it amended the staff recruitment protocol and formally called for greater recruitment of developing country professionals². This resolution did not extend however to WHO's extensive in-house training programme for future HRH leadership: the WHO Internship Programme. This 50-year old programme is the largest and most high-profile in global health, with ~1000 opportunities offered annually across its headquarters and 6 regional offices. Aimed at junior health professionals from WHO Member States – the programme offers unrivalled access for up to 6 months in WHO's technical and policy operations. Candidates are able to develop their professional experience and build

networks with emerging and eminent individuals in the field.

As the internship programme is administered by WHO, many expect it to be compatible with global health ambitions. However, research has shown that participation of Member State nationals is inconsistent with WHO's own HRH policy. For example, in 2014 a study showed 50% of interns at the flagship headquarters programme were from just 2 Member States; with less than a quarter from developing countries⁴. This year – at the request of a WHO Member State – WHO released partial statistics from the entire programme for discussion at the January meeting of its governing body in Geneva. These showed that amongst its ~1000 annual internships



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offered worldwide, only 20% are undertaken by candidates from developing countries. Further, fewer than 5% of all internships are offered in the African, Eastern Mediterranean or South-East Asian WHO regions, where disease burdens are highest. Most striking, 60% of WHO Member States were unrepresented on the programme³. At the January meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee, Member States discussed the issue and a range of views were expressed. Many were concerned by the report's findings, though the resulting Executive Board statement was circumspect and did not set a clear strategy for reform⁴. Member States requested that WHO release statistics on the national origin of interns that participate in the programme, and this will be critical in informing their decision on the appropriate reforms.

The WHO-IP's wider implications

The reasons for the current Member State imbalance on the internship programme are straightforward. Recruitment to the programme is ad-hoc and not policy-driven; departments select candidates informally without reviewing all applications and therefore those with pre-existing connections are favoured. Interns are not financially supported by WHO during their stay, even in expensive locations like Geneva; candidates from Member States with significantly lower incomes are therefore unable to participate in the programme. These issues

characterise many internship programmes at international organisations, including those of other United Nations agencies. However, often lost in the discourse concerning WHO's programme in particular – is the precedent it sets in global health; and the impact it has on training future health leaders in developing countries.

As WHO is *the* authority on global health, organizational consistency between its external objectives and internal operations are central to the credibility of its policymaking. WHO should be congratulated for the transparency it has shown in releasing some of its internship programme statistics. However, these indicate a programme at odds with core global health policy; hesitancy in reform now would send the wrong signal to the international community – undermining both the global human resources for health ambition *and* its main proponent. Moreover, given past reform of WHO's recruitment structures to promote balanced participation – are WHO Member States content with the scale of underrepresentation reported in the internship programme going unchecked?

For decision makers weighing whether to reform the internship programme, consider its impact on future leaders from developing countries. Hitherto, their involvement in the programme has been minimal. 2014 data showed most developing country interns at

headquarters were actually studying in a high-income setting at the time of their internship; giving the impression they've a better chance of participating by moving to or studying in a high-income country. Those future leaders who remain in their region and decide to apply to a regional office must compete for opportunities that are few and far between. For example, the African WHO regional office, serving a continent with 30% of the world's disease burden and only 3% of the world's health workforce hosts <2% of WHO internships (just 16 persons)⁵. None of these realities helps prepare national health systems for dealing with structural health issues or future emergencies. Global health security is predicated on country and regional cooperation with international organizations. WHO cannot afford to be anything other than steadfast in its commitment to building future regional health capacity.



Reforming the internship programme

To put the internship programme onto a path consistent with global health policy, several issues need to be addressed. Member State participation on the programme could be improved through the appointment of a designated staff officer with responsibility for programme administration, including objective recruitment that is globally representative. Second, provision of a nominal stipend to compensate interns – already under discussion by member states⁵ – would

eliminate the financial barrier at minimal cost. Finally, introduction of a semi-structured curriculum would enhance the programme's capacity building role and improve its credibility in the eyes of Member States and donors.

As it stands, WHO's internship programme contradicts its own ambitions for global health policy vis-à-vis human resources for health; and fails to build public health expertise amongst future developing country health leaders. WHO and its governing bodies have a window of opportunity to embrace reform of the internship programme: the clock is ticking. ■

- 1 Dr Ashton Barnett-Vanes Ph.D; MD-PhD candidate, Imperial College London, UK; Senior scholar, Tsinghua University, China; ashton.barnett-vanes11@alumni.imperial.ac.uk
- 2 World Health Organization. Representation of developing countries in the Secretariat. The 56th World Health Assembly, WHA56.35. May 2003
- 3 Barnett-Vanes A, Kedia T, Anyangwe S. Equitable access for global health internships: insights and strategies at WHO headquarters. *The Lancet Global Health* 2014; 2(5): e257-9.
- 4 World Health Organization. WHO's internship programme: update. The twenty-third meeting of the Programme, Budget and Administration Committee of the Executive Board, EBPBAC23/2, November 2015
- 5 World Health Organization. Human resources: annual report. The 138th Executive Board, EB138/51. January 2016.

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The UN whistleblower protection policy

When an organization lacks reliable internal oversight practices, whistleblowers become an essential early warning system for the leadership as problems develop.



BEA EDWARDS, UNOG

The United Nations system learned this the hard way when the Oil-for-Food scandal broke in 2004. The episode exposed senior officials and the institution itself to lasting damage and distrust, from which it has yet to fully recover. In its wake, Secretary General Kofi Annan issued a whistleblower protection policy (SGB/2005/21) and established a new Ethics Office, designed to be independent and objective.¹

The Ethics Office in the Secretariat, however, which is responsible for protecting whistleblowers from retaliation, has a dreadful record. According to its annual report for 2015, the Office received 40 inquiries about the policy and its protections. Twenty-five of them were rejected, and the Office

launched preliminary inquiries into 15 others. The inquiries disposed of two cases without completing a preliminary review, six were rejected by the Office and the remaining seven are still in the preliminary-review stage.² In short, during the most recent reporting period, the Office received 40 applications. Not one of these has yet been found to be a valid case of retaliation requiring protection.

Since 2006, when the policy was first established, compilations of the Ethics Office annual reports indicate that less than 3 per cent of those seeking protection from retaliation actually receive it. Moreover, seeking protection is a protracted process lasting many years and ultimately the entire exercise may produce nothing.

Those who request protection from the Secretariat's Ethics Office and do not receive it (the vast majority of requestors), cannot seek review of the rejection by the internal justice system. A 2014 ruling by the UN Appeals Tribunal determined that the justice system lacks jurisdiction over the Ethics Office.³

The case that produced this ruling is illustrative of the lack of protection afforded UN whistleblowers: Wasserstrom vs. The Secretary General.

James Wasserstrom was a senior official at the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) who disclosed a probable kickback scheme involving local politicians and senior UNMIK officials. After

disclosing this information lawfully, Wasserstrom's assignment was not extended, his passport was confiscated, his car and his apartment were searched, and he was subjected to administrative and criminal investigations. The United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) found that the Ethics Office failed to review his complaint properly; misapplied the burden of proof; failed to address the UN's "humiliating and degrading treatment of a member of its own staff;" and reached a "fundamentally flawed" conclusion when it found that Wasserstrom's treatment was not retaliatory.

The Tribunal concluded the following: The Tribunal finds it difficult to envisage a worse case of insensitive, highhanded and arbitrary

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treatment in breach of the fundamental principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The failures of the Ethics Office to recognize such gross violations calls seriously into question its suitability and effectiveness as a body charged with the duty ... to assist the Secretary General in ensuring that all staff members observe and perform their functions consistent with the highest standards of integrity required by the Charter of the United Nations...⁴

Despite this negative appraisal, the Secretary General appealed the UNDT ruling, and in 2014, the UNAT ruled that the internal justice system lacked the jurisdiction over determinations made by the Ethics Office. After eight years of retaliation, exclusion and litigation, Wassstrom received no relief and had no further recourse.⁵

As pressure built for some form of protection for whistleblowers, the Secretariat commissioned an expert review of the existing policy in 2012. By last year, however, no revision had been finalized, even as the 2014 Wasserstrom ruling disarmed UN whistleblowers further.

In the United States, the Congress has reacted to the continuing retaliation against whistleblowers by legislating a 15 per cent deduction from the annual US contribution to any UN agency that is not implementing best-practice whistleblower protections. Effective implementation for each agency, each year, must be certified by the US State Department if the Congress is to disburse the full contribution. Last year, the State Department would not certify that the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) implemented effective whistleblower

protections, and Congress withheld funding.⁶

The UN common system needs an expanded policy that is fairly and objectively implemented by an independent oversight office. Without an effective policy to protect whistleblowers, the emerging allegations of widespread sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions were entirely predictable. A revised and effective policy is needed now, as UN leaders continue to inflict incalculable damage on the Organization and on very the staff members who try to warn them. ■

- 1 http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=ST/SGB/2005/21
- 2 One case still under preliminary review from the 2013/2014 reporting period was resolved without further investigation.
- 3 <http://www.un.org/en/oaj/files/unat/judgments/2014-UNAT-457.pdf>
- 4 <http://www.un.org/en/oaj/files/undt/judgments/undt-2013-053.pdf>
- 5 <http://www.un.org/en/oaj/files/unat/judgments/2014-UNAT-457.pdf>
- 6 US disbursement was largely symbolic, but it was an indication of the seriousness of the decision to withhold funding.



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#ZikaVirus



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a risk if I am
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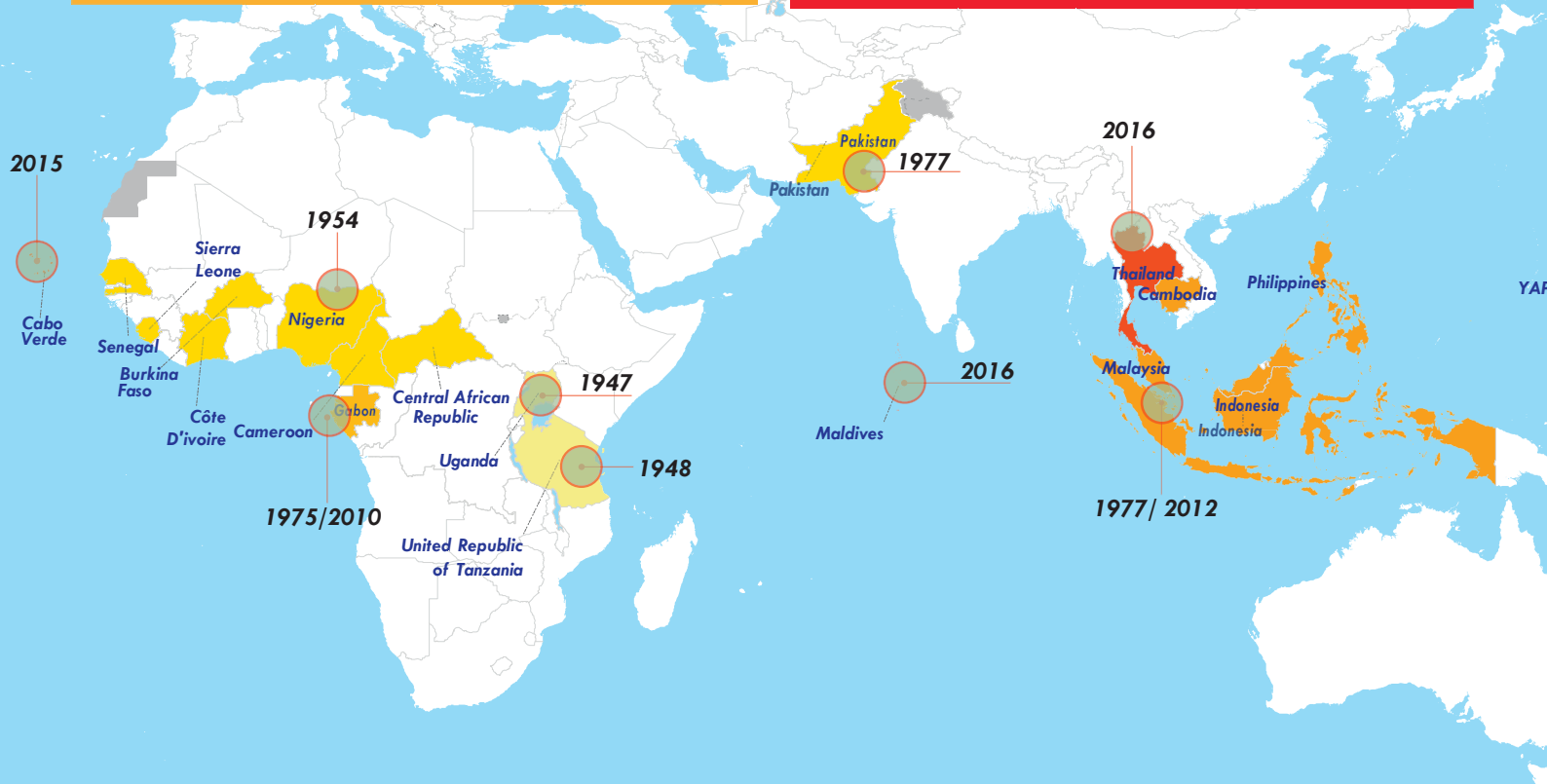
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Protect yourself from mosquito bites

and see a doctor if you think you have been infected.

#ZikaVirus



Available information does not allow measurement of the risk of infection; variable transmission among countries is not represented on this map.

Disputed Areas

Disputed Borders



**World Health
Organization**

Uganda
United Republic of
Tanzania

1947 - 1952

1954

Central African Republic
Senegal
Pakistan
Burkina Faso
Cote D'ivoire
Cameroon
Sierra Leone
Gabon
Indonesia
Malaysia
Costa Rica
Cambodia

1960 - 1983

YAP, Micronesia
(Federated states of)
Gabon

2007 - 2009

French Polynesia
ISLA DE PASCUA, Chile
Cook Islands
New Caledonia
Malaysia
Philippines
Cambodia
Indonesia
Thailand

2012 - 2014

Jan 2015

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Global distribution of Zika virus, 1947–2016



Two hundred staff in Geneva receive long-service medals



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UNOG STAFF COORDINATING COUNCIL

Two hundred staff in Geneva received medals last week for long service, in what was a lively and fun-filled awards ceremony organized by the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council.

Held in the Human Rights room, the awardees ran from security officers to economists, humanitarian staff to human rights officers, and peace negotiators to Umoja super users.

Staff with 25 years received silver medals, while gold went those with 30.

Speaking at the ceremony, UNOG Director-General Michael Møller thanked staff for their dedicated service, without

which the UN would not have achieved what it did.

Staff council executive secretary, Ian Richards, pointed out that with the new retirement age, plans were afoot to produce a 35-year platinum medal.

At the ceremony and afterwards staff recalled a different life when they entered the organization. Smoking was allowed inside, each staff member had a large office, and Umoja's predecessor, Wang, worked.

The next ceremony will take place in two years time. Our thanks to all who helped organize the event. ■

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Public Health as seen through the Weekly Epidemiological Record (WER).



URSULA ZHAO, WHO

Here in Geneva and across the UN family globally, we are more used to criticism than praise, especially in the area of epidemic and pandemic diseases.

Rarely do we have the space to celebrate what we have achieved together. The 90th anniversary of the historic Weekly Epidemiological Record (WER) could be one of those unusual and precious moments for celebration.

On April 1, 1926, a group of visionary and dedicated epidemiologists in the Health Office of the League of Nations in Geneva launched the very first edition of the WER. Their mission: to provide the world with information about infectious disease hazards, which, at that time, mostly travelled by sea: plague, cholera, yellow fever, typhus and small pox.

Every Friday since that first edition was produced in 1926, the WER has been published, without fail. Even during the darkest days of the Second World War, the few League of Nations epidemiological Information Service team members left in Geneva, managed to produce the WER every week. What started off as a simple record of case numbers and locations of these five notifiable diseases, has gone on to record and document for history, the greatest public health achievements in the last 90 years- the eradication of smallpox, the identification of different viruses and development of vaccines to combat them, even the establishment of the World Health Organization itself.

Historic and interactive exhibition at WHO

Now managed by the Epidemic and Pandemic Diseases at the World Health Organization, the WER is being modernized, digitized and adapted to record and discuss the greatest health threats that face humanity. For two months (April-May 2015), WHO is showcasing 90 years of public health as told by the WER through an interactive exhibition in April and May at the WHO headquarters main library, as well as online.

"The WER is a unique publication which has survived for 9 decades and evolved considerably. As the custodians of this historical publication, we are modernizing it to meet today's needs. Very soon, all back and future editions will be searchable on popular platforms so that practitioners, academics and other users can easily access the content," says Dr Sylvie Briand, Director of Pandemic and Epidemic Diseases at WHO.

The exhibition invites visitors to embark on a journey through 90 years of public health as witnessed by the WER. The timeline starts with the birth of the WER in 1926, marking milestones through the years: epidemics, technological breakthroughs, the establishment of WHO in 1948, the conquest of infectious disease scourges such as smallpox in 1979 and the ongoing battle against new and re-emerging infectious diseases. Visitors can also watch films from WHO's rich past at the vintage cinema corner, thanks to digitalization of WHO film archives. Along with the timeline and the films, there are displays of historical

artefacts and photo retrospectives, offering visitors a glimpse of the daily work of epidemiologists in the past. ■

See the interactive timeline at: <http://www.who.int/wer/90-anniversary/en/>

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COP21

Humanity's world-changing agreement

MAHMOUD HAMMOUD, UNOG

Amid international celebrations of the 21st annual Conference of the Parties on climate change (COP21 or Paris 2015), critics are arguing that any sense of achievement regarding this deal is meritless. Some consider the deal as 'not enough', while others call it 'a dream'. But COP21 is unforeseen and unparalleled in strategies to protect the environment and combat climate change. It is a world-changing agreement and a huge success, despite the fact that it lacks independent review and proper funding and is not fully legally binding.

What is COP21?

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is a global environmental agreement. The 21st annual Conference of the Parties of UNFCCC was held in Paris in December 2015. Though it can be described and interpreted in different ways for various purposes, Paris 2015 essentially makes it legally binding for signees to respect two promises:

1. To cap greenhouse gas emissions,
2. To keep the global temperature increase below 2°C (as compared to preindustrial times) and to pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C whenever possible.

A lot of fuss about just 2 °C?

'Two degrees' might seem like a lot of fuss about very little. Well, current global

warming of about 1 °C has been linked to many major natural disasters such as tsunamis and floods, causing the loss of — *read carefully* — hundreds of thousands of lives, homes, and schools and affecting millions of people around the world. Hundreds of thousands of children have been tragically impacted by these phenomena. Can you imagine what it would mean if such apocalyptic events were doubled?

To put it in simpler terms, global warming of 2 °C means exponentially more destructive wildfires, hurricanes, and tornados in many potentially vulnerable countries, including the United States. In addition to the death of marine life caused by coral bleaching and sea and ocean pollution, major heat waves and tsunami-like coastal flooding could accompany the rise in sea levels to more than 3 meters, leading to the disappearance of major cities. Two degrees might mean deadly food shortages, widespread famine and drought, cross-continent pest infestation, and major water pollution — all in our own lifetime. This is not to draw an ominous scene of horror, but rather to depict legitimate scientific estimates of the potential consequences of global warming of 2 °C.

Less than hoped for — more than expected

In an exclusive interview for *UN Special*, key climate change authority, Adam



Adam Koniuszewski, Green Cross International



Lord Deben

Koniuszewski of Green Cross International, stated, ‘The COP21 outcome exceeded our expectations but certainly fell short of what we hoped for’. He added, ‘The outcome is certainly a step forward but clearly insufficient given the urgent reality of the climate crisis. Its focus is on reducing emissions and adaptation when a much more profound transformation of our economies and society is required. It marks the beginning of a process that will transform the way we live’. Green Cross is a Geneva-based global NGO that has addressed environmental challenges since its inception in 1993.

No, the deal is not altogether legally binding. Had it been more binding, it might well have failed to be adopted. (COP21 strived for a unanimous agreement of 200 countries.)

No, the deal is ‘not perfect’. Existing commitments do not allow the announced goals to be achieved. We also need to admit that accountability and transparency are not obvious in the Paris agreement. The deal does not include independent verification of progress toward its targets.

A compromise, a beginning, unparalleled in history

Lord Deben and Lord Krebs, Chairmen of the United Kingdom Committee on Climate Change and its Adaptation Sub-Committee, respectively, and two uncontested world experts on climate change, agree that COP21 is a historic deal, at least because it compels the world to acknowledge that ‘keeping global warming to below 2 °C is nothing short of essential’. In clear terms, ‘This level of commitment to tackle climate change, by Governments on behalf of their 7.3 billion citizens, is simply unprecedented’.

Of particular importance to the value of the Paris agreement are two elements: first, that it includes a ‘regular review of progress against targets and making the necessary adjustments’, and second, that all nations have now confirmed that there is an urgent need to act because ‘the effects of historic and ongoing emissions will have serious and lasting consequences for the earth’s natural systems’.

COP21 is a compromise, but it was the best deal that could be reached under current circumstances. In fact, it is even better than many observers expected. COP21 demonstrates that ‘the transition to a low carbon economy is unstoppable’. That is significant. COP21 also ensures that we will decrease carbon pollution and drive economic growth by calling for low-to-no carbon investments in sustainable solutions of a renewable nature. Chief negotiator Xie Zhenhua of China, like many others, clearly expressed that, while the Paris plan is not ideal, it does allow us to start taking historic steps forward. Narendra Modi, India’s Prime Minister, tweeted that climate justice has won and we are all working toward a greener future. Very importantly, Giza Gaspar Martins, chairperson of the group speaking for some of the least developed member states, confirmed that COP21 is ‘the best outcome we could have hoped for’, although we all understand it is a compromise.

Even if the deal is far less than hoped for in the eyes of green NGOs and civil society actors, it is, ironically, ‘utopian, unrealistic, and only a dream’ for others. Yes, COP21 is without parallel in human history in terms of its target effect on climate change. It clearly defines a goal for the planet’s temperature limit and a methodology

to reach that goal. Developing countries would have \$100 billion a year in financing for climate-related amendments by 2020 to facilitate their change. The regular review mechanism is there to reconsider and possibly set higher goals as we start to make progress.

This deal forges an original way for all signees to achieve progress and reach their goals. Long-term sustainability is at the heart of every line of the deal. That by itself is world-changing. As *The New York Times* nicely put it, the ‘Climate Accord is a Healing Step, if Not a Cure’. *Canada’s The Globe and Mail* said: ‘The governments of 195 countries overcame decades of deep divisions to strike a watershed deal,’ and the Saudi newspaper, *Alriyadh*, followed up, stating, ‘195 nations signed it to protect mankind and nature: The Paris 2015 agreement, a major step by humanity to face the global challenge’. Indeed. ■

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Does your pension fund match your promise to achieve the SDG?

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GEMMA VESTAL AND SABEENA BALI-DINGRA, WHO

The United Nations is an organization that achieves progress through the cooperation and collaboration of countries and people from around the globe who deeply care, professionally and personally, about maintaining peace and equity for all people through public policy.

It is in this spirit that 193 countries of the UN General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to transform our world through economic development, natural resources management and protection, and social equity and inclusion. It is also in this spirit that 179 countries ratified the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), to combat the global tobacco epidemic and its devastating health, social, environmental, and economic consequences. Both of these agreements lead to common public goods that will benefit current and future generations.

But what happens when we do not "walk the talk?" Does your government pension fund match your country's promises?

One pension fund that walks the talk is the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF), a founding signatory to the "United Nations-supported Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) Initiative." UNJSPF is guided by the UN Global Compact, which initiates corporate sustainability in over 12,000 private-sector signatories in 170 countries, and with the UN Environment Program Finance

Initiative, which underscores the role financial institutions play in a sustainable world in 200 financial-sector members. For years, UNJSPF has restricted its investments in companies that derive revenue from the production, manufacturing, or distribution of tobacco-related products, or from production of military weapons, weapons systems, or weapons of mass destruction. It also invests in green bonds, or in other words, bonds that facilitate investments with environmental benefits such as renewable energy, sustainable energy, sustainable waste management, biodiversity conservation, and clean transportation.

Unfortunately the same is not true for all pension funds. Many governments, through the default options of their pension funds, are unwittingly investing in the tobacco industry, fossil fuels, and armaments in direct contravention of the WHO FCTC, as well as several Sustainable Development Goals: no. 3 good health and well-being, nos. 7 and 13 affordable and clean energy and climate action, and no. 16 peace, justice and strong institutions.

It would seem, then, that we are fighting these industries on the home front, but pension funds are their sneaky back door. Investing in tobacco, fossil fuels, and armaments is self-defeating and counter-productive to sustainable policymaking. Further, governments who encourage sustainable policies that they are not practicing themselves are at risk of being hypocritical. Finally, such investment directly violates many countries' expressed

moral values. If countries are parties to the WHO FCTC or obliged to follow the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, they must attempt in good faith to divest from tobacco, fossil fuels, and armaments. Handsome returns on investment are simply not worth it, when there is a higher price to pay.

This article aspires to motivate readers, not only by elucidating the harms that come from investing in the three industries, but also by shining a spotlight on those who have led meaningful change by reordering their financial affairs. Divestment has a tangible effect and sends a powerful message.

Tobacco vs. Good Health and Well-Being

Hospitals, health ministries, and others in the health sector are aware of the death toll of tobacco and the suffering caused by disease, disability, and enormous health costs, and yet they continue to invest in the tobacco industry – fuelling the very product that kills six million patients and citizens every year. To say that tobacco companies profit from investment portfolios is an understatement. In Australia, for example, pension funds had approximately two trillion Australian dollars in assets which are, by default, invested in tobacco. A sum this large in the hands of the tobacco industry has the capacity to create harm and havoc.

Sustainable Development Goal 3.4 is to strengthen the implementation of WHO FCTC in all countries, as appropriate. It would be better to divest from the tobacco industry, and thereby maintain a strong reputation for fighting the global tobacco epidemic.

The UNJSPF has divested all of its pension fund portfolios from tobacco. A number of countries have also been exemplar in this regard. An organization called Tobacco Free Portfolios in Australia, spearheaded



The United Nations General Assembly in New York, where the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted in September 2015.

by Dr Bronwyn King, has mobilised over 30 Australian Superannuation Funds to divest a total of 1.8 billion Australian dollars in tobacco stocks. New Zealand's Superannuation Fund divested 37.6 million New Zealand dollars invested in tobacco stocks, equivalent to 0.29% of its total assets. Norway's government pension fund has divested funds divested in any company that reaped more than five percent of their profits from tobacco production, amounting to 2.1 billion United States dollars.

Fossil Fuels vs. Affordable and Clean Energy, Climate Action

Our global reliance on cheap energy is increasing consumption of coal, oil, and gas. Fossil fuels increase greenhouse gas emissions, with drastic impacts on each and every continent on the planet. Greenhouse gas emissions are now 50 percent higher than they were in 1990. At this alarming rate, fossil fuel consumption will cause irreversible climate change leading to rising seas, flooding, droughts, rising disease, and increased conflict – affecting the way the world will be experienced by all future generations.

Sceptics and doctrinaires are often resistant to the idea that, in order to reverse the destructive path of climate change, they would be required to change their daily habits. Sustainable Development Goal 7 suggests, as viable and renewable alternatives, solar, water, and wind energy. But the implementation of clean energy need not go so far as to disrupt everyday habitual practice, such as driving or eating meat.

Financial divestment achieves a similar stance against fossil fuels. A study from the University of Oxford found that the fossil fuel divestment campaign – the fastest growing and most successful divestment campaign since divestment from South Africa during apartheid – imposed a helpful stigmatisation upon fossil fuel companies. As a result, divestment: pressures governments to legislate and leave natural resources intact; pressures governments to ban drilling and/or impose carbon taxes; and pressures fossil fuel companies to make transformative changes such as switching to less carbon-intensive forms of energy supply.

However, researchers have also found that when companies divest, even if the maximum possible capital is divested, the total is relatively small as compared to when state-owned enterprises act. This is where we come in. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has backed the fossil fuel divestment campaign, with its spokesman Nick Nuttall having said that it “sends a signal to companies, especially coal companies, which the age of ‘burn what you like, when you like’ cannot continue.”

Exemplar in this realm is Norway. Its \$890 billion government pension fund, which is the largest sovereign wealth fund in the world, sold billions' worth of investments in companies that relied at least 30 percent in coal. This is particularly extraordinary considering that Norway's landscape is rich with gas and oil.

Armaments vs. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

While some regions enjoy sustained levels of peace, prosperity, and security, others are plagued by armed violence. Armaments are used to perpetrate violence, sexual violence, conflict, crime, exploitation, torture, abuses of human rights, and the destruction of economic development. Insecurity and violence deeply mark those individuals who experience it, and silence the voice of democracy for the generations that follow. Sustainable Development Goal 16 calls instead for significant reduction in arms flow, and this can be achieved by pulling away support from armament manufacturers. Weapons and ammunition that are used in conflict can be traced back to conventional sources. Led by student activism, universities such as the University of Edinburgh have joined this initiative and divested from armaments. Other student-led campaigns include that of the University of Oxford, which maintains quarterly reports on the activities of the publicly-traded companies it invests in such as Lockheed Martin in the United States of America, to ensure no cluster munitions or landmines are manufactured.

The aforementioned individuals and governments show that frustration has the potential to give way to hope. As Dr Bronwyn King ceased allowing her portfolio to fund tobacco, the cause of her patients' death; as Norway ceased investing in fossil fuels despite their natural gas resources; as students at universities ceased watching their tuition fund the perpetration of violence – so too can anybody who reads this article make a difference. Money speaks. ■

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Micro-trottoir

Le sentiment de bien-être

A l'occasion de la Journée du bonheur, nous avons posé deux questions à des collègues fonctionnaires internationaux.



MARIE-JOSÉ ASTRE-DÉMOULIN, SDLS, UNOG

Qu'est-ce qui contribue à votre bien-être dans votre vie en général? Plus spécifiquement, en quoi l'ONU contribue-t-elle à votre bien-être?

Liping, CNUCED

Dans ma vie personnelle, j'ai besoin d'avoir de bonnes relations familiales et de pouvoir compter sur des amis. Au travail, ce sont les commentaires positifs de nos clients qui constituent une source de bien-être.

Ljerka, UNOG

Le fait de prendre un petit café avec des amis, c'est mon

massage, ma «méditation»! Pour mon mari, c'était une perte de temps, alors je l'ai «entraîné» et maintenant, il trouve que c'est une bonne pratique journalière. A l'ONU, je trouve que l'important c'est d'avoir des relations saines. J'aime bien l'ambiance de travail dans laquelle je me trouve actuellement car elle est plus détendue que dans certains autres postes que j'ai occupés.

Zicheng, ITC

Pour moi, l'harmonie familiale est un facteur de bien-être essentiel et cela inclut non seulement mon conjoint mais aussi mon frère, mes parents et mes amis proches –qui sont de vrais «psychologues» pour

moi! Au bureau, avec mon chef et deux ou trois collègues avec qui je collabore étroitement, nous partageons le même plaisir de faire des choses nouvelles ensemble.

Jennifer

Mon bien-être est lié à celui de ma fille. Si elle ne va pas bien, moi non plus. A l'ONU, ce qui me permet de me sentir bien c'est le respect mutuel entre collègues.

Sylviane, ONUG

Au plan personnel, l'essentiel pour moi est l'harmonie familiale. Pour le travail, c'est la satisfaction par rapport à mes résultats qui me semble la plus importante.

Education/Enseignement



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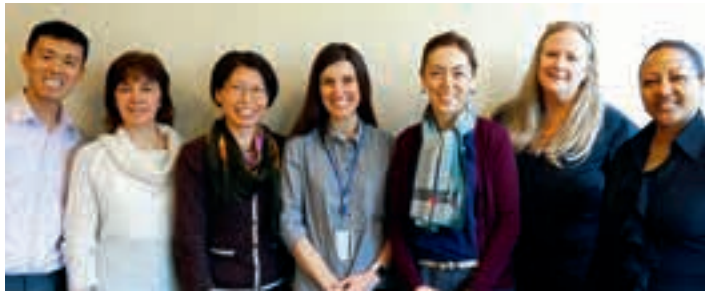


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En photo, les participants à un cours de français ayant accepté de répondre aux questions. De gauche à droite: Zicheng, Sylviane (professeure), Liping, Catalina, Ljerka, Jennifer, Ejigayehu.

Ejigayehu, HCR

Le fait d'avoir une relation de longue durée avec mon compagnon est une source d'immense de bien-être pour moi. J'adore aussi les moments que je passe avec mes amis, mes sœurs, mon entourage. Et la santé, bien sûr. J'aime aussi m'amuser, rire, faire ce qui me plaît, voyager. Au travail, quand je vois le résultat de ce qu'on fait, ça me fait vraiment plaisir. J'ai besoin d'avoir de bonnes relations avec les collègues et de faire les choses comme il faut.

Gillian, ONUG

Ne pas avoir de soucis et pouvoir bien dormir la nuit sont la preuve d'un état de bien-être au bureau comme à la maison. A l'ONU, je trouve que nous avons de bonnes conditions d'emploi et un cadre très agréable.

Catalina

Le sport est ce qui m'aide à me sentir bien. J'aime ma salle de gym où je retrouve de bons amis. A l'ONU, j'apprends beaucoup de choses au contact d'autres cultures et je me considère comme

chanceuse de côtoyer toutes ces personnes différentes.

Alina, CEE

Mon bien-être est constitué d'un mélange de confort psychologique et de santé physique, dans toutes les sphères de ma vie. Au travail la motivation et l'atmosphère au bureau sont à la base de ces deux aspects.

Olga, ONUG

Le bien-être pour moi, c'est d'être assise à table autour d'un bon repas, à rire et parler avec des gens que j'aime et avec qui je suis bien. L'ONU contribue à cela en me donnant des conditions qui me permettent de le faire.

Yuri, CEE

Mes loisirs contribuent à mon bien-être: mes cours de danse classique et l'alpinisme me sont essentiels. A l'ONU, je suis inspirée par deux éléments principaux. D'une part le cadre superbe, la beauté des bâtiments et la vue et, d'autre part, j'apprécie la diversité qui existe au niveau des collègues et la variété des expériences possibles.

Lorim, ONUG

Dans ma vie en général, ce qui me fait me sentir bien, c'est d'aider les autres. Au travail, j'ai besoin d'avoir des conditions qui me permettent de m'améliorer et d'évoluer.

Philippe, UNITAR

Ce qui m'aide, à chaque niveau de ma vie c'est l'équilibre entre plusieurs éléments: les relations sociales, le sport, le travail et les vacances.

Lyne, HCR

Je profite de chaque minute et je prends tous les bons côtés de la vie.

Sofia, ONUG

La santé est un élément primordial du bien-être. On n'y pense pas, jusqu'au jour où quelque chose vient affecter notre vie quotidienne. Et il peut s'agir d'un problème psychologique. Il est essentiel également de trouver un juste milieu entre une stimulation et un surcroît d'activités.


Juan, ONUG

Pour moi, le bien-être, c'est de regarder un bon film et d'en parler ensuite avec ma famille et mes amis.

Paul, Droits de l'homme

Je suis heureux quand j'apprends de nouvelles choses et à l'ONU, du fait de la diversité qu'elle offre, je peux faire ça tous les jours. De plus, je suis vraiment fier quand je vais sur le terrain et que je vois des résultats concrets. ■

Notre enquête a été conduite auprès de participants à des formations à la Section de la formation et du développement du personnel de l'ONUG. Un grand merci à tous ceux qui ont accepté de nous livrer leur témoignage et aux formateurs qui nous ont laissé l'accès à leurs groupes. Deux personnes n'ont pas souhaité mentionner leur organisation. Certaines réponses ont été faites en anglais. Nous avons tout traduit vers le français afin de simplifier la lisibilité de l'article.






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Les mots pour le dire

The United Nations and the City of Geneva support the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, celebrated on 17 May 2016

SARAH JORDAN SDLS/UNOG

How do you say “gay” in Portuguese? Is there a word for “lesbian” in Arabic? What does “transgenre” in French mean? When the words most frequently used to denote Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender or Intersex people (LGBTI) are insults or when the first words that come to mind are negative, how can you fight stigmatisation and the reinforcement of stereotypes? Whatever the language, the words that refer to homosexuality and sexual identity are often unknown and frequently taboo. How can you understand what you cannot name? How can you

accept something you cannot define? Ignorance leads to fear and fear to rejection.

The 2016 City of Geneva campaign against homophobia, transphobia and biphobia, piloted by the Service Agenda 21 – Ville durable, aims to combat this ignorance, informing the public of words to designate homosexuality and sexual identity in a neutral way so as to resist the trivialisation of insults and identify LGBTI individuals without prejudice and in the languages most widely spoken in Geneva: French, English, Portuguese, Spanish, Albanian and Arabic. Posters with the slogan “Finding the right words” will be visible in the streets of Geneva from 9 to 25 May.

Participatory activities such as workshops, round tables and information stands will sensitize people and reinforce the poster campaign in partnership with the Geneva Federation of LGBTI Associations,

the Albanian Popular University and the Roseaie centre, amongst others.¹

The International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia has been celebrated on 17 May since 2004. The date of May 17 was specifically chosen to commemorate the World Health Organization’s decision in 1990 to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder. It is now celebrated in more than 130 countries worldwide with 1,600 events reported in 2014.²

These mobilisations unite millions of people in support of the recognition of human rights for all, irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. The International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia has received official recognition from several States and international institutions such as the European Parliament. United Nations agencies, including the UNCHR with its campaign Free

Education/Enseignement

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"We are all different from one another, but we all have the same human rights. I am proud to stand for the equality of all people – including those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender."

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in India on 12 January.

and Equal, also mark the Day with specific events.³

The Staff Development and Learning Section (SDLS) at UNOG will shortly be offering "UN for all" core training. This half-day workshop focuses on the UN core value 'Respect for Diversity'. It explores biases we may have and their impact on our work with each other. It examines basic human rights principles, the power of language in the creation of an inclusive work environment and unconscious biases, and introduces the basic concepts regarding substance use, disabilities, sexual orientation and gender identity, and mental health. This session helps staff to consider diversity, inclusion, standards of conduct, conflict prevention, staff well-being and related topics. The Core Module increases awareness amongst staff members and provides concrete tools to help us treat

all colleagues with respect, dignity and in an inclusive manner, regardless of their perceived differences. Stay tuned for further information. ■

1 The programme can be consulted at www.ville-geneve.ch/17mai

2 Visit the official site here: www.dayagainsthomophobia.org

3 For further details: www.unfe.org

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Strengthening the UN with regional and gender diversity at the top

The United Nations has for decades promoted equal opportunities for women and men in senior decision-making positions both inside and outside the organisation.

MAHMOUD HAMMOUD, UNOG

After eight men Secretary Generals (SGs), the time is ripe to see a woman lead the UN. Regional diversity is visible in selecting previous SGs. Why not gender fairness? There are tens of experienced and skilled women candidates. For the future, for all the women of the world, for all our mums, sisters, and daughters, let us support the candidacy of women for the position of Secretary General of the United Nations (UNSG). *UN Special* has had the honour to place a few questions to Baroness Lister of Burtersett, Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill, and Baroness Burt of Solihull (United Kingdom).

The United Nations has a culture of empowering women to improve the economies of many countries around the world by using this sometimes forgotten or ignored half of our brainpower. Empowering women also means ensuring that the girls of today will receive the proper health care and education to allow them to be players in the future of their countries.

We asked Baroness Lorely Jane Burt of Solihull how she feels about eight men SGs, and she answered: 'Obviously I regret the fact that the UN has not seen fit to appoint a woman Secretary General and would support the election of a woman in 2016'. We naturally asked her why she is taking this stand, and she kindly added: 'A female figurehead sends a strong message to all citizens that women are equal members of the world community and should be respected and treated as such. In addition, women bring different and valuable skills and perspectives to the job. Diversity in any leadership role strengthens the organisation being led'.

Before jumping into the most talked-about candidates, let us stop for a second and remember the huge burden of being the ninth SG. The stakes are very high. Having to deal with many concurrent ongoing major conflicts and/or natural disasters is becoming the norm, and the responsibilities of the UNSG increase exponentially in

those situations. Any ex-SG would tell you stories about the hardships associated with the most senior job of the leading peace, rights and development organisation of the world, especially when millions of people are impacted by conflicts or disasters as things are today. The next SG must be qualified to handle this job with its full responsibilities. The route ahead seems to be very tough. Whoever the candidate is, he or she must embody the vision of the UN: peace, security, human rights, and development.

Very Strong Women Candidates

Many believe strongly in Irina Bokova, the current director of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). When Bokova was elected to her current post back in 2009, she broke the 64-year tradition of having only men at the head of the UNESCO. Bokova has ingeniously survived the major blow of budget cuts since 2011, when her organization granted membership to the Palestinian Authority and the US withdrew its funding. This is strong evidence of the readiness of Bokova for such a very high profile leadership role shouldering major international responsibilities. This makes her an excellent and viable candidate indeed.

Some believe Michelle Bachelet, president of Chile, would be a good candidate. Bachelet was the head of The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as 'UN Women', but she resigned to assume her role as the head of her country. The ex-prime minister of New Zealand, Helen Clark, current administrator of The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), holds the third position in the UN system, after SG Ban Ki-moon and Deputy SG Jan Eliasson. Natalia Gherman of Moldova, former deputy prime minister, has been officially nominated by her country. Croatia's foreign minister Vesna Pusić has also been formally nominated by her country for UNSG. Both Gherman and Pusić appear to be competitive candidates too.



Baroness Lorely Jane Burt



Baroness Margot Ruth Aline



Irina Bokova

These women are far from being the only candidates: European Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources, Kristalina Georgieva, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Queen Rania Al-Abdullah of Jordan, as well as Liberia's President Ellen J. Sirleaf, former President Mary Robinson of Ireland, and Christine Lagarde of France, head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), are also potential candidates who have been clearly floated in some media. Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), could also be nominated, especially after her successful presidency of the Paris 2015 agreement on controlling global warming. Rebeca Grynspan, former vice president of Costa Rica, and Alicia Bárcena Ibarra, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), might also be candidates.

Tens of Qualified Women Candidates

The new SG will be elected toward the end of 2016, maybe just before Christmas. When asked why they never elected

a woman for SG, previous authorities often replied that there were not enough qualified women candidates. Tens of experienced and talented women in the highest positions around the world are candidates now. Examples include but are by no means limited to Louise Arbour, Catherine Ashton, Ertharin Cousin, Louise Fréchette, Virginia Gamba, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Dalia Grybauskaitė, Tarja Halonen, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Ameerah Haq, Noeleen Heyzer, María Ángela Holguín Cuéllar, Michaëlle Jean, Tinatin Khidasheli, Sylvie Lucas, Graça Machel, Susana Malcorra, Federica Mogherini, Raimonda Murmokaitė, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Mary Robinson, Erna Solberg, Helle Thorning-Schmidt, and Maria Luíza Ribeiro Viotti. Some of these women are from the five permanent countries of the Security Council (P5) and hence, in order to avoid a concentration of power, they may not be favoured for the position. But in the name of fairness, many are not but should be considered in 2016.

Regional Diversity

If we look back in history at the eight

SGs, we realize that the selection has been based on an undeclared informal system of regional rotation. Trygve Lie and Dag Hammarskjöld hailed from Western Europe. U Thant was from Asia. Kurt Waldheim came from Western Europe and Javier Pérez de Cuéllar from Latin America and the Caribbean. Then came Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan from Africa, and finally Ban Ki-moon from Asia again. An SG from Eastern Europe in 2016 would be in line with regional diversity at top of the UN system.

Gender Diversity

All eight SGs since the creation of the UN were men, though the General Assembly Resolution 51/241 clearly says, **'Due regard shall continue to be given to regional rotation and shall be given to gender equality'**. A gender diversity score of eight to zero is not an accident but a decision. Since 24 women are right now either heads of their countries or governments, nothing should be special about having a woman SG.

We asked Baroness Margot Ruth Aline Lister of Burtersett about her stand on the above. To the fact that all SGs have been men, the baroness sent a very powerful message as she replied: "The continued absence of a woman at the top of the UN symbolises women's continued marginalisation within spaces of power". When we asked her why she would support the election of a woman for SG, she replied: "I would (...) support the election of a woman as Secretary General in 2016 in the name of equality".

The UN has put out colossal efforts and spent a lot of time and money in promoting women. It is time to see a woman at the top of the UN itself. Gender equality must be considered, in addition to regional fairness. There are tens of qualified women candidates. Women's marginalisation is unfair. Period. Diversity in the UN's leadership would bring different perspectives and bolster the UN and its values. We asked Baroness Healy of Primrose Hill what she makes of this, and she replied: 'Of course I would support the election of a woman UN Secretary General, why not?'. *Why not?* ■

Education/Enseignement



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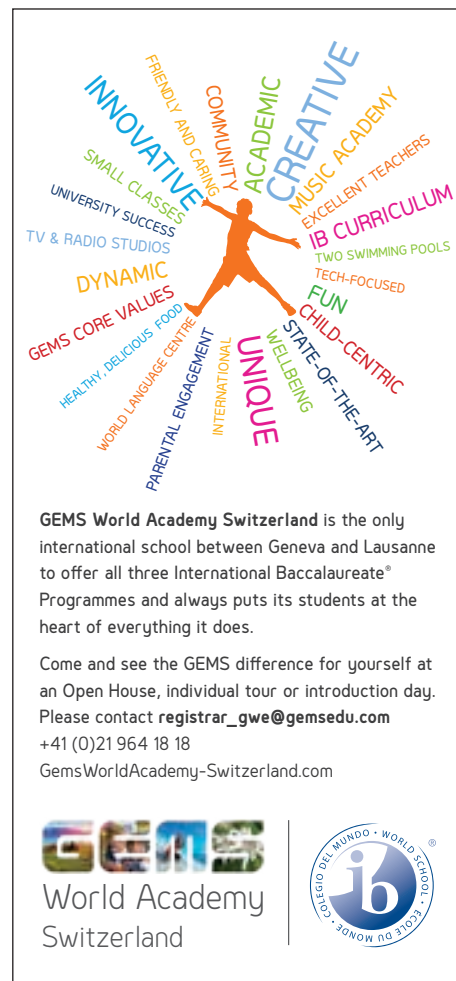
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Ils ont tous imaginé Genève

*Qui ne connaît pas Tintin?
La célèbre bande dessinée belge créée par
Hergé a fait le tour du monde, mais peut
des gens savent d'où vient la source
d'inspiration de ses personnages, les uns
plus attachants que les autres.*



© Hergé Moulinart



© atelier Schlegel

SOLANGE BEHOTEGUY, UNCTAD

Genève a aussi contribué à fabriquer des rêves en lui servant de scénario et même en lui prêtant la figure du physicien Auguste Piccard devenue le Professeur Tournesol.

C'est grâce à un paquet de cigarettes dans lequel on peut lire: «Genève. Hôtel Cornavin» que Tintin et le Capitaine Haddock partent vers la cité de Calvin à la recherche du Professeur Tournesol, enlevé par les services des renseignements bordures suite à une de ses inventions: un appareil à ultrason qui détruit tout objet en verre. Ce personnage «modeste et magnifique» séjourne alors à la chambre 122 de l'Hôtel Cornavin.

Depuis 1956, date de parution de «l'Affaire Tournesol» l'établissement a été renouvelé plusieurs fois, néanmoins la direction de l'hôtel aurait décidé de redonner le chiffre 122 à une chambre. Pas étonnant que des clients-admirateurs d'Hergé, un peu trop fétichistes, partent souvent avec la clé.

D'autres clins d'œil à la région lémanique peuvent séduire des connaisseurs et des amateurs. On découvre par exemple la gare Cornavin (bien que l'intérieur de la gare soit celui de

la gare de Lausanne, et non de Genève) et la route qu'emprunte le taxi de Tintin pour se rendre chez le professeur Topolino, à Nyon, existe toujours ainsi que sa maison à l'adresse «route de Saint-Cergue». Seul le numéro a changé et aux alentours cette maison est simplement connue comme «la maison de Tintin». On dit que les pompiers de Nyon conservent précieusement leur véhicule de secours qu'Hergé a représenté dans les moindres détails, alors qu'il réunissait la documentation sur place.

De plus, même si cet album est le seul qui se déroule en Suisse, on sait qu'Hergé s'est inspiré du Professeur Auguste Piccard, pour construire son personnage savant. Piccard était un physicien, aéronaute et océanographe suisse né à Bâle le 28 janvier 1884 et mort à Chexbres le 24 mars 1962 (à 78 ans) il enseignait et travaillait à Bruxelles à l'époque de la création de Tournesol. La ressemblance entre le physicien et son clone de papier est frappante: «Ils partagent le port d'un rond et haut col, d'une redingote, de petites lunettes rondes et un crâne dégarni sur le devant et l'abondante chevelure bouclée au-dessous des oreilles». Seule la très grande taille de Piccard le distingue

du Professeur Tournesol, toujours «un peu plus à l'ouest». Aujourd'hui on sait qu'Hergé a fait de son original savant un «mini Piccard» pour le faire rentrer dans les cases!

Mais il n'y a pas que Hergé qui a trouvé de quoi remplir la page blanche, la ville de Genève ne cesse de surprendre par sa capacité d'accueil et par la beauté inspiratrice de ses paysages. Le terroir de Rousseau a longtemps accueilli l'écrivain argentin Borges, puis à son tour à séduit le poète vénézuélien

José Antonio Ramos Sucre. Après avoir émigré de Grèce puis de Marseille, c'est à Genève que l'écrivain Albert Cohen passe une grande partie de sa vie et écrit son roman Belle du Seigneur. C'est aussi à Cologny, à la Villa Diodati au bord du lac Léman ou séjourné Lord Byron, que Mary Shelley écrit Frankenstein quand elle avait seulement 19 ans. Ils ont tous été séduits par la tranquillité et les travers de la ville. Ils ont tous imaginé Genève et d'autres ont déjà commencé à la réinventer. ■

Education/Enseignement

Feeling 19 again

RUTH HAHN-WEINART, UNOG LIBRARY

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A UN Library tour guide giving a visit of the library archives

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FACULTÉ DES LETTRES





© Claude Maillard

Quand le soleil embrase le Sahel...

Tchad

Le berceau de l'humanité

Conséquence d'une situation extrêmement instable, le Tchad peine à s'ouvrir au tourisme. Pourtant, ses paysages à la beauté insoupçonnée sont parmi les plus beaux d'Afrique.

Une destination à envisager avec précaution mais qui enthousiasmera les aventuriers...

CLAUDE MAILLARD

Enclavé entre la Libye au nord, le Niger et le Nigeria à l'ouest, le Cameroun et la République centrafricaine au sud et le Soudan à l'ouest, le Tchad est un point de passage entre l'Afrique du Nord et l'Afrique subsaharienne. Cinquième plus vaste pays du continent, il est l'un des berceaux de l'humanité, là où les archéologues ont découvert de nombreux ossements parmi les plus anciens, dont ceux de l'hominidé Toumaï.

Dans le passé, plusieurs royaumes sahétiens se sont succédé sur ces terres. Au début du XXe siècle, le Tchad devient une colonie de l'Afrique Equatoriale Française. Il acquiert l'indépendance en 1960 et depuis les affrontements pour le pouvoir ne cessent de se multiplier. Le

pays connaît la dictature de Hissène Habré entre 1982 et 1990. Idriss Déby Itno s'empare ensuite du commandement par la force. En 2008, des rebelles entrent dans la capitale N'Djamena et tentent de le renverser. Mais, avec l'aide de la France et le soutien de la communauté internationale, il réussit à conserver son fauteuil de président de la République et gouverne actuellement toujours le pays.

Malgré des ressources naturelles et pétrolifères considérables, le Tchad reste un des pays les plus pauvres du monde. Plus de 80% des habitants sont des ruraux qui survivent grâce à l'agriculture, à l'élevage et, plus surprenant pour un pays désertique, grâce à la pêche! En effet, le lac Tchad aux eaux très



Dans la rue, étalage de moutons prêts à consommer...



Accueil chaleureux de la part des enfants de l'orphelinat «Fondation d'Amour pour la Formation des Enfants en Détresse»

poissonneuses, qui fut jadis l'un des plus grands lacs du monde, fournit aujourd'hui une activité à plus de 150 000 personnes.

Abel et Toumaï

Deux découvertes paléontologiques majeures dans le désert ont contribué à considérer le Tchad comme le berceau de l'humanité. Avec l'Éthiopie et le Kenya, c'est l'un des endroits où l'on a retrouvé les plus anciens hominidés. Mais si les ossements de Lucy, mis à jour en 1974 dans la vallée éthiopienne de l'Aouach, datent d'environ 3,2 millions d'années, le crâne de Toumaï découvert en 2001 daterait lui de quelque 7 millions d'années! Trouvé dans le désert tchadien du Djourab, Toumaï est un primate qui représente la première lignée de l'espèce humaine. C'est le plus vieil ancêtre de l'homme. Quelques années auparavant, une équipe de chercheurs avaient déjà dégagé du sable les restes d'Abel, le premier australopithèque âgé entre 3 et 3,5 millions d'années. Le nom de «Toumaï» a été attribué à cet

hominidé par les plus hautes autorités tchadiennes. Ce nom, qui signifie «espoir de vie» en langue goran, est donné dans le désert du Djourab aux enfants qui naissent juste avant la saison sèche.

C'est en direction de ce désert du Djourab, cap plein nord, que notre périple va débiter après une visite approfondie de N'Djamena et de ses alentours. Construite au confluent des fleuves Chari et Logone, la capitale est située en face de la ville camerounaise de Kousséri distante seulement d'une dizaine de kilomètres. N'Djamena a été fondée sur la rive droite du Chari en 1900 sur l'emplacement d'un petit village kotoko (peuple d'Afrique centrale surtout présent au Cameroun) par Emile Gentil. En souvenir du commandant François-Joseph-Amédée Lamy tué au combat, l'officier de marine, explorateur et administrateur colonial français lui donna alors le nom de Fort-Lamy. Et ce n'est seulement qu'en 1973 que François Tombalbaye,

le premier président de la République du Tchad, baptisa la ville N'Djamena du nom d'un village arabe voisin signifiant «le lieu où l'on se repose».

N'Djamena, au cœur du Sahel

Lorsque l'association «Terre de Partages» (www.terredepartages.com) me proposa de participer à son expédition au Tchad, je ne mis pas longtemps à réfléchir avant d'accepter, tant cette destination me faisait rêver depuis toujours. Mais jusqu'au dernier moment notre départ a été incertain en raison des attaques meurtrières menées par la secte islamiste de Boko Haram au Cameroun et au Nigeria limitrophes.

Retardée par le long détour que le Boeing 737 de la Turkish Airlines a dû faire pour contourner l'espace aérien libyen formellement déconseillé d'emprunter, notre arrivée à N'Djamena se fera tard dans la nuit. La première image du Tchad sera celle d'un fonctionnaire en blouse blanche qui vérifiera sur mon carnet

de vaccinations que figure bien le sésame obligatoire, celui contre la fièvre jaune. Dans la foulée, petit contrôle de la température afin de lutter contre la progression du virus Ebola et nous retrouvons Issouf Elli Moussami, l'organisateur du Festival International des Cultures Sahariennes, qui nous accueille chaleureusement à la sortie de l'aéroport. Nous aurons le privilège d'assister à cette manifestation qui se déroulera à Fada, à l'autre bout du pays, près de la frontière avec le Soudan, un peu plus tard.

Quelques heures de sommeil, une bonne douche (froide), une tasse de thé, et nous voilà partis à la découverte de la capitale tchadienne peuplée d'un million d'habitants. Notre première visite sera pour Toumaï qui nous attend au musée national parmi moult objets retraçant l'histoire locale. Mais bien vite notre attention se portera vers un téléviseur installé dans une salle et qui diffuse en boucle des images de l'attaque



Ambiance festive et colorée au marché de l'artisanat



Toumaï, le plus vieil ancêtre de l'homme découvert dans le désert tchadien du Jourab

perpétrée pendant la nuit par Boko Haram au Tchad, à seulement quelques kilomètres de là. Rapidement refoulés par l'armée tchadienne, les assaillants auront néanmoins le temps d'incendier le village de Bagoua et de tuer plusieurs villageois, dont le chef du canton.

Au volant de son antique taxi Toyota jaune, Hamadou se faufile tant bien que mal au milieu d'une circulation anarchique pour nous conduire

à l'orphelinat « Fondation d'Amour pour la Formation des Enfants en Détresse » construit près du fleuve frontière avec le Cameroun. Petit détour chez Jean-Baptiste, responsable d'une librairie chrétienne (qui officie également comme pasteur) et sa charmante épouse Solange qui se feront une joie de nous recevoir afin de partager la spécialité nationale, la « boule ». Sorte de polenta, elle est réalisée à base de mil, de sorgho,

de riz ou d'autres céréales et généralement accompagnée de sauces à la viande, au poisson ou au gombo, variété de haricot gluant. Tous deux connaissent bien l'orphelinat où vivent une quarantaine d'enfants qui sont également scolarisés sur place. L'établissement assure aussi une formation professionnelle de qualité et gère la réinsertion sociale d'adolescents. Malgré leur détresse, petits et grands semblent heureux et nous font la fête à notre arrivée. Vêtements, livres, fournitures scolaires et victuailles seront distribués et dans le futur, une collaboration plus soutenue avec l'association « Terre de Partages » est envisageable.

A contrecœur nous devons nous séparer des enfants: promis, nous reviendrons. Nous retrouvons la vie grouillante des rues de N'Djamena, la Place de la Nation (construite à coup de milliards de francs CFA pour célébrer le cinquantième de l'indépendance du Tchad!), le marché artisanal, la cathédrale Notre-Dame de la Paix...

Nous rejoignons notre guide Oussmane, nos chauffeurs Hassan et Choua ainsi que notre cuisinier Abdoulaye qui s'affairent auprès de nos 4x4 Land Cruiser. Demain, l'expédition vers le massif de l'Ennedi, situé à plus de 1200 km de là, va commencer... ■

Suite de l'aventure organisée par l'association « Terre de Partages » (www.terredepartages.com) à découvrir dans le prochain numéro du *UN Special*.

Le long du Bosphore

Si, jusqu'à maintenant, vous aviez associé les tulipes uniquement à la Hollande, un petit passage par Istanbul au printemps vous obligera à réviser vos classiques!

MARIE-JOSÉ ASTRE-DÉMOULIN, SDLS, UNOG

Arriver à Istanbul en avril, c'est être accueilli par des tapis de tulipes le long de la route de l'aéroport. Des cohortes de tulipes fièrement dressées en rubans sur plusieurs kilomètres, véritables haies d'honneur.

Des milliers, des dizaines de milliers de tulipes formant des parterres drus et éclatants de couleurs. Des bulbes généreux offerts au visiteur pour lui faire pressentir la délicatesse de la ville vers laquelle ils le guident. Et encore, le nouvel arrivant ignore, à ce moment-là que d'autres fleurs vont tenter de voler la vedette aux tulipes

inodores. Les jacinthes! Dont le caractère moins racé n'est imputable qu'à la surcharge de corolles aux parfums entêtants qui fait ployer leurs tiges vers le sol, lourdes d'effluves et de pollens.

Le parc Gülhane, à dix-sept heures, c'est une explosion olfactive, un feu d'artifice de couleurs, un défilé de passants paisibles. Des couples, des familles, des grappes d'amis se promènent, main dans la main, préoccupés par le seul bonheur de se prendre tour à tour en photo devant les masifs de fleurs.

Les rares passants solitaires prennent des clichés, eux



© Marie-José Astre-Démoulin

aussi: des fleurs, des oiseaux dont les nids se devinent à travers les branches des arbres, des chats paresseux alanguis sur les pelouses. Car il est impossible de contempler un tel spectacle sans avoir envie d'en capturer l'image. On veut arrêter le temps, mémoriser les sensations, être certain qu'on n'oubliera jamais cet instant de pur perfection.

Monter jusqu'à la mosquée bleue, à travers des allées nettes, des ballets de jets aquatiques, des bassins somptueux. Découvrir Sainte Sophie en se laissant réchauffer par les rayons du soleil de printemps. Ne regarder sa montre que pour décider s'il est l'heure de déguster un meze en terrasse, au coin d'une ruelle, accompagné d'un jus de grenade fraîchement pressée.

Quelques centaines de mètres plus loin, les ferries crachent leur jus noir dans une mer dont le nom est à lui seul une ode, une allitération: Marmara. Marmara si belle, sois prudente,! Veille à ne pas te laisser trop souiller par les diesels gras et puants, même si dans ta générosité, tu souhaites tant permettre aux Stambouliotes de passer ce Bosphore, symbole des continents que l'on réunit d'une enjambée. Peut-être suffirait-il de rêver depuis le

somptueux Palais Dolmabahçe dont les grilles ouvrent sur la rive Asiatique.

A la rencontre du Grand bazar, ce sont les contes d'Orient qui nous montent à la tête: les mille et une nuits, Shéhérazade. Des histoires d'origine arabes ou indiennes, transmises par la Perse, on ne sait plus. Tout se mélange, comme ici, dans ces cavernes d'Ali Baba: trésors soigneusement empilés dans des allées d'échoppes interminables.

Eblouissement dans une boutique de lampes en verres colorés. Le vendeur se donne du mal pour expliquer la technique, le bronze, le métal, la double paroi. Il n'a rien à craindre, avec ces camaïeux bleus et jaunes qui dansent dans la lumière, sa vente est faite. Et 39 TL, c'est... -oui, le chiffre est bien correct...- une quinzaine de francs suisses.

On a envie d'en acheter cinq ou dix, ou davantage encore. Pour en décorer tous les coins de son salon, pour en offrir à tous ceux qu'on aime. Pour les froter et voir Aladin en sortir. On voudrait emporter les lumières d'Istanbul avec soi.

Afin de poursuivre le rêve, loin du fracas et des chaos du monde qui, lui, n'a pas cessé de tourner mais que nous avons oublié tandis que nous nous attardions dans cette parenthèse enchantée à déguster des loukoums et à décrypter le langage des fleurs; un langage où la tulipe revêt différentes significations selon sa couleur mais où porte toujours un message d'amour. Douceur eurasiennne. ■

<http://www.toutistanbul.com/le-festival-de-la-tulipe-a-istanbul>



© Marie-José Astre-Démoulin

Haut-Karabakh

Un conflit encore trop peu connu

Que ce soit dans la presse ou parmi la doxa, le conflit du Haut-Karabakh n'est pas un événement qui aura marqué les esprits au cours du mois d'avril 2016.

Et pourtant.

PHILIPPA ANDONIAN, UNITAR

Quand le 2 avril dernier éclatait le scandale des «Panama Papers», la presse du monde entier se ruait sur l'événement, alors que ce même jour on assistait, dans une quasi indifférence médiatique, à la reprise des hostilités dans le Sud-Caucase entre l'Arménie et l'Azerbaïdjan. Or cet événement est d'autant plus significatif qu'il a des implications géopolitiques très importantes.

Le Haut-Karabakh compte une population de 150 mille habitants à majorité ethnique arménienne sur un territoire couvrant onze mille kilomètres carrés. Historiquement rattaché à l'Arménie, le territoire fut intégré à l'Azerbaïdjan par le gouvernement de Staline en 1921, la chute du bloc soviétique. Dans la foulée de la chute du bloc soviétique, et du fait de tensions ethniques grandissantes dans la région, le Haut-Karabakh décide de faire sécession de l'Azerbaïdjan et proclame son indépendance en 1991. A ce jour, aucun membre de la communauté internationale n'a reconnu cette indépendance.

Un conflit armé entre l'Arménie et l'Azerbaïdjan débutait ainsi en 1991, et faisait l'objet de 4 résolutions du Conseil de Sécurité des Nations Unies (résolution 822 du 30 avril 1993, résolution 853 du 29 juillet 1993, résolution 874 du 14 octobre 1993 et



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résolution 884 du 12 novembre 1993). Ces dernières visaient à faire cesser les actes d'hostilité dans la région et appelaient à la conclusion de cessez-le-feu durables, en même temps qu'elles appelaient au retrait des forces arméniennes occupant les régions azerbaïdjanaises.

Parallèlement, dès 1992 l'Organisation pour la sécurité et la coopération en Europe cherchait à encourager la recherche d'une solution pacifique et négociée au conflit en constituant le Groupe de MINSK, co-présidé par la France, la Russie et les Etats-Unis. Au printemps 1994, une trêve intervient finalement entre les parties sans pour autant que le différend ne soit réglé. Le conflit du Haut-Karabakh, au cessez-le-feu plus ou moins respecté, devient gelé.

Jusqu'à la nuit du 1^{er} avril 2016 où la situation dégénère. La reprise des affrontements fait de nombreuses victimes militaires mais aussi civiles, ce qui constitue en soi une infraction à la Convention de Genève protégeant notamment les civils et fixant des limites à la barbarie guerrière. Les États-Unis et la Russie ont presque immédiatement appelé à une cessation des hostilités et le

Groupe de Minsk poursuit ses efforts dans ce sens, mais la reprise du conflit n'en demeure pas moins persistante.

Le peu de couverture médiatique de la reprise des hostilités pourrait laisser croire que ce conflit n'est aux yeux de beaucoup qu'une simple dispute autour d'un territoire réduit entre deux petits Etats. Mais le différend a une toute autre portée géopolitique, alarmante, les acteurs étatiques suivant très attentivement son évolution étant plus puissants et nombreux que les seuls états belligérants.

Si la Russie, alliée traditionnelle de l'Arménie, a officiellement adopté une position neutre, le président turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a clairement affiché lors d'un discours officiel son soutien à l'Azerbaïdjan. L'Iran se trouve dans une sorte d'entre-deux, entretenant de bonnes relations avec l'Arménie et s'étant récemment rapprochée de l'Azerbaïdjan.

Ce qui se joue aujourd'hui entre l'Arménie et l'Azerbaïdjan pourrait avoir des conséquences politiques majeures, à un niveau communément insoupçonné. Raison de plus pour que le conflit suscite l'intérêt qu'il mérite. ■



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Help! my Daughter does not love me!

She seems to systematically test social limits, seeking independence through autonomy. She resists and defies authority.

MAHMOUD HAMMOUD, UNOG

Marie is growing up. She'll be 11 in just a few months. She is regularly coming up with her own views, hopes, and ambitions.

Even though adolescence is a time to cultivate a sovereign sense of self, parental relationships continue to have a formative role in development. Attachment security in adolescence fosters exploration, along with cognitive, social, and emotional competence.

I am trying to provide Marie with a positive parental relationship that fosters a personal sense of security and confidence. But her quest for autonomy imbalances our relationship. The amount of time she spends with me has dropped precipitously, though she is happy to spend several hours with peers.

In public, Marie is a polite little girl. But at home, she enjoys torturing me by bullying her 4-year-old sister. She then takes my warnings as a personal affront.

She seems to worry about school work and exams to an unhealthy degree. Her anxieties are probably affecting her performance. In the face of these surprising changes, I sometimes feel vulnerable.

Constant Change and Turmoil

The quintessential characteristic of adolescence is change.

All that change has to do with what's happening in her brain. Her neurotransmitters are producing more dopamine, and certain portions of her neurological structure devoted to behavioural patterns are changing. This process doesn't stop until she's approximately 16 years old.

At the same time, her capacity for abstract thinking and problem solving increases as significant transformations occur in the prefrontal cortex. She is increasingly able to compare multiple perspectives, subsequently developing and nurturing her own worldview.

All of these changes mean she'll be increasingly irritable, engage in more risky behaviour, and develop a more complex worldview. Marie is clearly liberating herself from parental ties, establishing new relationships with peers, and developing her own identity. Subsequently, conflict in the parent-adolescent relationship is to be expected. However, when her emotional changes manifest as persistent anti-social aggression or withdrawal, I can't help thinking my daughter does not love me!

Looking for Herself

I understand that Marie must find her identity independently. Nevertheless, she's but a child. She is too proud to acknowledge that she needs my help, so I try to help her subtly and



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discretely. I'm beginning to think that's not enough.

Marie is surrounded by conflicting pressures and role models. She's on a swing, vacillating between who she is and who she wants to be. Under peer pressure and stress from school, I worry she'll jump off the swing at the wrong time, in the wrong direction, placing herself in peril.

As her father, I want her character and personality blossom. However, I do not see how this can become a reality when her identity's cornerstone is terrorizing her sister. Nor do I see how she can fully mature when she lashes out at my advice.

Her overwhelming egocentrism comes with the belief that her experiences are entirely unique. She seems to perceive even constructive criticism as an inherently personal affront. How can she reach her potential if she is not even willing to consider that she might be wrong?

"République Indépendante de Marie"

Marie craves independence and I do my best to help her attain self-sufficiency. I let her make her own choices and respect her privacy by maintaining an appropriate distance

to breed mutual esteem. I do, however, try to be close and supportive when she needs me. I demonstrate empathy by understanding her moods and perspectives. Even when I demarcate limits and indicate that I am in charge, I keep an open dialogue with her and am always willing to reassess.

I understand she wants to put distance between herself and childhood. However, when she defies the most reasonable limits, and refuses to at least acknowledge my perspective, her behaviour is anything but adult.

Confessions...

I am confused and bewildered. I understand her vulnerability and try my best to be supportive and empowering. Yet, while I'm supposed to have a role influencing her development, I don't see that influence in our relationship.

I do want my beloved daughter to feel secure in my affection and respect. I do want her to be able to venture courageously on her life's journey. However, the inevitable yet unpredictable drama of her becoming a young woman makes me wonder how I will cope. ■



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Ecuador's disaster

Severe damage and sincere hope

At 18:58 local time on 16 April 2016, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake hit the coast of Ecuador devastating its northern region. Several cities were destroyed in a few seconds leaving behind more than 600 dead and 4,000 injured.

At the moment of writing, the estimated damage to infrastructure and economic activity exceeds 3 billion USD dollars and, perhaps more importantly, has a profound negative impact on the recently-begun reconstruction efforts. The challenges to the economy and infrastructure include reduced economic activity, lack of jobs in the areas still being cleared, no basic utilities and public services, and, in particular, a tourism sector that will take years to recuperate as the news cycle is still active and tourists are cancelling reservations even far from the affected zone.

Was this earthquake particularly damaging? Yes, it was.

When we watch the news or see pictures of the tragedy, we react with solidarity and a contrite heart, but as life moves on it is easy to forget that a 7.8 earthquake is categorized as VIII on the Mercalli intensity scale. This scale is a seismic measurement used for categorizing the 'intensity' of an

earthquake and its effects. It is distinct from the 'magnitude' usually reported for an earthquake, which is a measure of the energy released. The intensity of Ecuador's earthquake was deemed 'Severe' and its impacts make the reconstruction phase challenging.

The UNOG Staff Council and the Ecuadorian staff members of the United Nations organized a collection and invite everyone reading our magazine to donate financially to the reconstruction and to the families of the victims. All proceeds will be sent to Caritas International and its Ecuador Office, with a particular focus on helping those

who survived the earthquake but whose lives are severely affected by its occurrence. If you wish to contribute, you can do so by sending money to the bank account described on this page, open until 30 May.

Even after the news about the earthquake has died down, we ask you to remember the faces of the orphans and to decide that their future should be prioritized alongside the physical reconstruction that will certainly take place. Their hearts and minds require our help! Their hope is in the hands of people like us! ■



Bank transfers can be done to the following bank details until 30 May 2016:

Beneficiary: Conseil de Coordination du Personnel de l'ONUG. Palais des Nations, 1211, Genève 10

Account name: Relief Fund

Bank: UBS, Palais des Nations, 1211 Genève 10

IBAN: CH37 0027 9279 HU16 5681 1

Account number: 279 – HU165681.1

Message du rédacteur en chef

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

N'hésitez plus et écrivez-nous !

Nous serions heureux de recevoir votre avis.

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

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

Et maintenant, à vos plumes!

Adressez vos commentaires à:

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

Message from the editor-in-chief

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

Write to us!

We will be glad to hear from you.

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

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

Now, put pen to paper!

Send your thoughts to:

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

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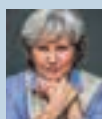
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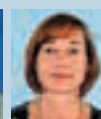
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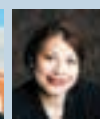
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