PRINTED & DIGITAL EDITION

newSpecial

SERVING THE PEOPLE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA SINCE 1949

Holding steady together in troubled times

826 - FEV 2023

Suivez-nous sur
www.newspecial.org


COMPTOIR IMMOBILIER
RÉGISSEURS DEPUIS 1825
RÉALISEZ
TOUS VOS PROJETS
Gérance - Location - Vente - Pilotage - Commercial - Prestige
comptoir-immo.ch
SERVICE - ÉTHIQUE - PERFORMANCE - DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE

© UNCTAD

GARRY ASLANYAN
Editor-in-chief /
Rédacteur en chef

Together, we can build resilient economic development

It is very fitting to focus on economic and resilient development in our first issue of the year. There is a lot of uncertainty about current economic shocks and a cascade of crises.

We have an exclusive interview with the Secretary-General of UNCTAD that updates you on current efforts, economic and investment challenges, and solutions ahead. This is complemented by a review of where we are headed, particularly drawing attention to leaving behind the artificial division of the world into the North and Global South, and the need for global economic solutions. We added other pieces to the debate, to bring you views on economic development and spiritual development as a holistic approach to achieve our shared goals.

Changing subjects, we have several articles about mountain passes in Switzerland and areas in neighbouring France. And of course, we have lots more topics and articles. I hope you will enjoy them!

Enjoy this issue! ■

Ensemble, nous pouvons construire un développement économique résilient

Pour ce premier numéro de l'année, il nous a paru approprié de nous interroger sur la résilience du développement économique.

L'incertitude demeure face aux chocs économiques actuels accompagnés par une cascade de crises. La Secrétaire-Général de la CNUCED nous a accordé un entretien exclusif qui présente les efforts actuels, les défis économiques, les opportunités en matière d'investissement et les solutions futures. Une analyse complète évoque particulièrement l'achèvement de cette division artificielle du monde entre le Nord et le Sud, pour privilégier des pistes vers des solutions économiques mondiales. D'autres éléments ont ainsi été ajoutés au débat, ils visent à élargir les points de vue. Au développement économique, vient s'ajouter le développement spirituel en tant qu'approche holistique pour atteindre des objectifs communs.

Mais ce n'est pas tout! Plusieurs articles vous feront voyager sur les cols des montagnes suisses et découvrir les régions de la France voisine. Et comme à l'accoutumée, nous espérons que vous apprécierez également tous nos autres sujets et articles!

Profitez de ce numéro! ■

Au service du personnel des organisations internationales de Genève depuis 1949

Serving the people of international organizations in Geneva since 1949

Interview with Rebeca Grynspan, UNCTAD Secretary General

As the world enters 2023, still not fully recovered from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and facing the specter of rising food and energy prices, war, poverty, injustice and human suffering, the promise of universal economic growth and social development remains the dream of many people and the goal of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.


© UNCTAD 2023

MARKO STANOVIC, UNCTAD

Established in 1964 as a permanent conference, UNCTAD is part of the United Nations Secretariat tasked with research, technical cooperation, and intergovernmental consensus-building in sustainable economic development.

Rebeca Grynspan, of Costa Rica, became UNCTAD's eighth Secretary-General in the Fall of 2021 and is the first woman to lead the organization. Previously, she was the Ibero-American Secretary-General, an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and UNDP Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean. Prior to joining the United Nations, Ms. Grynspan served as Vice-President of Costa Rica from 1994 to 1998.

I decided to ask Ms. Grynspan several questions on what her vision for world development was and how she plans to steer UNCTAD in achieving this goal.

Developing countries and LDCs have experienced multiple shocks in a brief period of time (such as Covid-19, food shortages, climate change and geopolitical tensions). How resilient are developing countries proving, overall? How easy is it for them to chart their own course, in the face of rising pressures globally?

The world is living through a series of cascading crises. The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and the cost-of-living crises are all increasing poverty and hunger at record speed. Inequalities are growing everywhere. And shock after shock, the Sustainable Development Goals are falling further and further beyond reach. Geopolitics, not economics, is now driving globalization.

Cascading crises also mean cascading inequalities because they are disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable, severely affecting developing countries and especially the Least Developed Countries. This has been made worse by the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic depleted our capacity to cope, so we are less resilient today than in 2019.

These countries currently cannot deal with shocks alone, nor can they invest in their own long-term sustainable development. The international community must understand that these are global and systemic shocks that need global and systemic action.

What do UNCTAD's statistics tell us about the state of global economy post Covid-19, and how have trade, investment and food security been impacted? Is there likely to be a pressing need for another debt relief program soon?

UNCTAD expects global GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth to be 2.2% in 2023, the slowest rate of growth since the Global Financial Crisis, except for the 2020 pandemic, with huge risks to the downside. This slowdown will reduce both investment flows and trade volumes.

In our most recent Global Trade Update, UNCTAD showed that trade volume growth has already turned negative in the second half of 2022, and we already see a downtrend coming into the new year. That said, global trade was at record high of 32 trillion dollars as of December 2022, because trade growth in the first two quarters of 2022 was very robust. In terms of investment, we already foresee a decline of global FDI flows in 2022 and 2023, because of increased investor uncertainty following the war in Ukraine, as well as interest rate hikes in the advanced countries, which is leading to massive capital flight from the Global South, in the magnitude of the hundreds of billions of dollars.

Monetary and fiscal policy moves in advanced economies are affecting economic, social and climate goals. UNCTAD warned that the world economy may be on the edge of a policy-induced global recession and soaring debt is, indeed, a major concern.

According to the IMF (International Monetary Fund), 54% of all low-income countries (LICs), and 21% of all middle-income countries (MICs), are in or near debt distress situation. But the issue is not only limited to the developing world. In 2022, we expect to see a record debt of over 300 trillion dollars – more than three and a half times the world GDP.

As interest rates rise, this tremendous debt burden is starting to crack. And if we do not put in place the appropriate urgent multilateral mechanisms (for debt transparency, debt suspension, and debt restructuring), this burden will eventually endanger the 2030 Agenda and could inflict worse damage than the financial crisis in 2008.

What can we say about the 2030 Agenda and SDGs – have they been superseded by all the challenges mentioned above?

The context is harsh, as the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said, "we are in a perfect storm." Times are challenging for policymakers because they face increasingly difficult choices. To deal with a complex situation, we need a complex policy mix, and the best, truly global, and win-win policy choice we have available is still the 2030 Agenda.

However, to achieve the SDGs, we need to be able to learn the right lessons from the crises we have faced and adapt accordingly. UNCTAD has outlined specific ways to contribute to the global economic reform agenda. The measures we put forward include institutions of South-South macroeconomic cooperation, as well as regional integration in trade and development finance. Global challenges, however, remain, such as the economic governance of climate change and loss and damage, including climate justice; the effects of market concentration and corporate equity chains on development, as well as the developmental consequences of financialization. These challenges can only be tackled together.

As the Coordinator of the UN's Global Crisis Response Group Task Team – how do you see UNCTAD's relationship and common work program evolving with various UN agencies in the future?

We have been part of very active teams from many UN agencies as well as outside partners, including from the private sector, and the international financial institutions. The Global Crisis Response Group has been led by the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General, and my contribution was to coordinate the Task Team, but it has truly been a UN-wide effort.

I believe that UNCTAD has shown its capacity to really contribute substantively to global discussion, to which we bring a highly informed macroeconomic, trade and development perspective.

I believe that in the future, UNCTAD's world-class macroeconomic, statistical and policy expertise will be more needed than ever.

Geneva is home to many UN agencies, as well as WTO and various NGOs dealing with economic development. How easy is it to meet with representatives of other entities? Is there a framework for cooperation?

UNCTAD has very strong and close relations with other Trade Agencies like the World Trade Organization and the International Trade Centre. It is very important for the international debate on economic issues that all our agencies engage closely with each other.

Beyond trade, we also engage closely with our sister agencies in Geneva, especially with those that have also been part of the Global Crisis Response Group.

SDG No. 8 calls for, among other things, promoting development-oriented policies that support entrepreneurship. Do you think that promoting entrepreneurship, for example in circular economy, could help create employment and mitigate climate change?

Small- and medium-sized enterprises globally account for two thirds of all jobs and create most new jobs. Therefore, they are an important engine of economic growth and a vehicle to achieving SDGs. On the other hand, problems related to overconsumption and generating waste, planned obsolescence where products are designed with programmed life span, and closed proprietary software systems that exclude competition could be more easily resolved by applying circular economy principles. I think the world will eventually need to go in this direction, increasingly recycling and reusing.

UNCTAD is developing a study on entrepreneurship and circular economy and will soon elaborate capacity-building programs to help interested countries transition from linear to circular model of economy.

UNCTAD was established in 1964 to help create the "new international economic order." Are we there yet, or if not, what still needs to be done?
We are definitively not there yet. And the call for a new international economic order is becoming more important and increasingly urgent. The international financial architecture is not working in three key areas – liquidity, which is excluding the global south – investment, which is lagging behind the imperatives of sustainable development – and debt, where the world still lacks a functioning multilateral mechanism for debt transparency, restructuring, and relief.

UNCTAD's past research, sometimes decades in the past, is still very relevant today. Our work on Special Drawing Rights, for example, which are key to solving the liquidity problem, I believe can help inform G20 discussions on the issue – especially when it comes to 'recycling SDGs'. Our work on debt, which is still ongoing (we had a highly successful Debt Conference just last month), is seeking to shape the global discussion on this problem, as the world is facing truly systemic debt crisis, with 54% of LICs and 21% of MICs in or near debt distress levels (as of the end of 2022).

This year we are working very closely with the G20 Indian presidency, to be part of the contribution towards a New International Economic Order.

After one year on the job, how would you describe your UNCTAD experience? Biggest challenges, biggest satisfactions.
This has been a very tough year. We have worked very, very hard, in challenging circumstances, and I am overall satisfied with what we have achieved; UNCTAD is full of engaged, brilliant and hardworking staff members. We are still not where we want to be, but this year has been a very good first step in the right direction, getting UNCTAD to be a key voice in global conversation on macroeconomic, trade issues which keenly affect developing countries to ensure their perspective is heard.

As I told the Trade and Development Board as I took up my responsibilities at UNCTAD, this organization has the real capacity to contribute to systemic change that countries and the current crises demands. ■

UNCTAD's faulty compass

UNCTAD's 1964 establishment was to bring about a "new" international economic order; it reflected the rapidly changing character of UN membership.


© Thomas Weiss 2023

THOMAS G. WEISS

In the 1950s what Alfred Sauvy called *le tiers monde* ("Third World," now Global South) emerged between the "East" and "West." Together, the latter two became the "North," appropriately juxtaposed to the "South," or the developing countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The Cold War's end erased the East-West cardinal directions on UNCTAD compasses; the once-meaningful distinction between so-called developing and developed countries should have disappeared then as well but did not. What had been helpful to shake up the agenda for discussions about justice and economic development, however, has long since lost that utility. Yet, it seemingly is the only navigation for UN conversations.

Would the World Be Better without the UN? That question, the title of my 2018 Polity Press book, gets a hearty negative response, but the UN development system would certainly benefit by jettisoning the anachronistic North-South compass. Something besides this simplistic binary between the supposedly uniformly affluent North and the poor South could lead to something besides the unproductive theatrical jousting between the West and the "Rest."

Gaining speed during the 1950s and 1960s, decolonization resulted in two key coalitions through which developing countries articulated their security and economic interests vis-à-vis the major powers—the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the Group of 77 (G-77). The East-West rivalry maintained the frigid temperatures throughout the Cold War, when the North-South rigid dichotomy appeared on UN maps. As noted, the East–West struggle disappeared along with the Soviet Union, but the North–South divide survives despite its irrelevance in a globalizing world.

Conor Cruise O'Brien—the Irish man of letters and politician as well as former UN staff member—described the world organization as "sacred drama," which aptly characterizes the strange geographical bedfellows in the two major but ageing troupes and their roles in UN theaters. Amateur or even professional geographers may have trouble without a special compass to determine boundaries.

During the Cold War, the "West" or "First World" consisted of industrialized countries (North America, Western Europe, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand), while the "East" or "Second World" consisted of the Soviet Union and its allies in Eastern Europe. Whatever their actual hemispheric locations—along with inaccurate hemispheric designations, Taiwan is nowhere (and not a UN member) while Israel is in the "western and other" group—the very unevenly "developed" countries of the former East still accompany the West in the "North."

Let's go back further. The first visible manifestation of today's Global South was the Asian-African Conference—the momentous political gathering in Bandung in April 1955. The key figures were the "giants" of the first generation of Third World leaders: Indonesian president and host, Sukarno; Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru; and Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser. Also present were future movers and shakers: Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh, Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, and China's Zhou Enlai.

The motivation for Bandung was finding a path between the Soviet Union and the United States. Specifically, many newly independent countries were unable to secure UN membership. No new states had been admitted since Indonesia in January 1950 because neither Moscow nor Washington would agree to have an additional member from the other's camp.

Eventually Bandung led to founding the NAM—countries claiming to be aligned neither with the Soviet Union nor the United States. Following Bandung, the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization was founded at a meeting in Cairo, and then a more moderate group gathered in Belgrade in September 1961, at the First Conference of the Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries. Despite rhetoric, Third World regimes and nationalists had close relations with one or both superpowers. Indeed, amateur lexicographers might have problems in drafting a commonsensical dictionary entry for "non-aligned" because the NAM included such Soviet lackeys as Fidel Castro's Cuba and such American ones as Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaïre. But the logjam in admitting new UN members disappeared.

Working in parallel with the NAM but concentrating on economic issues was another amalgam, the "Group of 77"; and here mathematicians require a special calculator. In June 1964 the G-77 was named after two new members joined the original 75 (which included New Zealand) in a working caucus that gathered to prepare for UNCTAD I. The numbers continued to grow (currently 134) and New Zealand departed, but the original label remains.

The crystallization of developing countries into a single bloc for the purposes of international economic negotiations was a direct challenge to industrialized countries. Third World "solidarity" resulted in cohesion for the purposes of international debates. It meant that developing countries were in a better position collectively to champion policies that aimed to change the distribution of benefits from growth and trade.

While the East-West distinction no longer exists, the UN still struggles with the anachronistic North–South axis. The predictable antics between the industrialized North and the Global South impede any sensible regrouping of voices to reflect issues or interests. Dramatic and largely symbolic theatrical confrontations, rather than a search for meaningful partners, continue. With consensus as the preferred route for decisions, lowest common denominators enable 193 states (the current UN membership) to adopt resolutions, work programs, and budgets. Countries interpret them in the way that they deem fit or ignore what they dislike.

UN political correctness demands speaking of the Global South as if it were homogeneous, with no apparent hesitation in grouping Singapore's and Chad's economies or Costa Rica's and North Korea's approaches to military spending. Especially puzzling is China's caucusing with the G-77. At the recent COP 27, the world's largest source of current greenhouse gases and second largest economy continued to seek similar treatment to the small islands about to disappear with climate change.

Probing deeper and adding a dash of cynicism, powerful governments in both the North and the Global South are comfortable maintaining the North-South fiction because it inhibits any substantial democratization of international relations. They embrace fixed roles and oppose democratic means to address globalization—the North because global democracy would challenge privilege, and the South because global democracy would require local democracy.

On some issues—like emphasizing the importance of the General Assembly, where each state has one vote—developing countries maintain consistently common positions. In such instances, the North–South divide continues to be somewhat salient. Occasionally, developing countries subdivide into political subgroupings according to an issue: that is, countries that are radical or moderate, Islamic or non-Islamic, mutually intraregional or interregional, maritime or landlocked, and experiencing economic growth or stagnation. Within the western group, there have always been differences, which are more easily aired after the disappearance of the East–West divide.

So, where are we headed after so many performances, including where it all began, on UNCTAD's stage? The artificial division of the world into the North and Global South is an inaccurate oversimplification, which ignores substantial bits of reality. Such rigid categories are more helpful to diplomats hoping to write scripts for drama in various UN amphitheaters rather than for serious negotiators or analysts attempting to move beyond the *dialogue des sourds* that characterizes economic deliberations. ■

1 Thomas G. Weiss is Presidential Professor of Political Science at the CUNY Graduate Center, Distinguished Fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, and Global Eminence Scholar at Khyung Hee University, Korea. He was a member of the UNCTAD secretariat, 1975-85.

What's in a word? Defining 'development'

© Marko Stanovic 2023

UNCTAD's building in January 2023, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

PHILLIPPA BIGGS, ITU
AND MARKO STANOVIC, UNCTAD

'Development' is a tricky word to pin down, as it has several different meanings, both in everyday life, as well as in economics, including at different levels – national or systemic.

In the early days of international economics, 'national development' was often interpreted as becoming integrated into the nascent global trading system and supply chains, whether as a standalone partner (e.g., China or the Kingdom of Siam) or as part of a region or route (the Silk Road). Here, development originally meant agreeing to the exchange of primary resources including for manufacturing, or foreign scientific innovations and technology, the basis for trade and specialization in trade, according to Adam Smith and his famous book, 'The Wealth of Nations'.

More recently, 'development' has been viewed as a long-term process seeking to raise the *average income per capita* and living standards in a country, contributing to total national Global Domestic Product (GDP)[1]. In the 1960s, the first United Nations Development Decade for 1960-1970[2] adopted a target growth rate of 5% annual growth in GDP, as the United Nations development target for the 1960s. As part of this first decade of development, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was established in 1964, in recognition of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by developing countries, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Indeed, the energy of the 1960s was positive, optimistic, and expansive – many new countries and UN bodies were established, partly reflecting the desire of newly independent countries to construct their nation and their identity, building on existing bodies of knowledge and expertise.

The advantages of focusing on economic growth is that it is a measurable benchmark (measured in absolute dollar terms or relative percentage rates of change), which applies to all countries, irrespective of their structure, society or culture. It is generally agreed that opening

© Marko Stanovic 2023

United Nations meeting room at the historical Palais des Nations in Geneva.

up economies to international trade as part of globalization should offer countries (as well as citizens and consumers) greater choice, economies of scale and greater growth and benefits from specialization.

Some countries have considered using balance of payments as an alternative measure of economic development (defined in terms of economic competitiveness or ability to export within the new global trading system). However, the measurement of balance of payments is not simple, and is further complicated by factors such as exchange rate movements. So, the good news story of economic growth became the priority and focus of various types of socio-economic systems – capitalism, communism, or theocracies alike, with some Communist Governments introducing Five Year Plans for growth and/or industrialization.

The disadvantages of focusing on economic growth is that growth is often cyclical and sometimes risky. Globalization tends to introduce other cultural values or priorities (most notably excessive consumption and fashionable fads), can create dependencies as well as new needs, and might generate contagion effects and greater vulnerability and volatility in supply chains, depending on crises or conflicts elsewhere.

In 1972, the fourth King of Bhutan, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, famously declared, "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product" for Bhutan as a rebuttal to the GDP approach. In 1962, the foreword to the – then Acting United Nations Secretary-General U Thant's report on Proposals for Action acknowledged that: *"we are beginning to understand the real aims of development and the nature of the development process… Development concerns not only man's material needs, but also the improvement of the social conditions of his life and his broad human aspirations. Development is not just economic growth, it is growth plus change"*[3].

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, economic development came to be viewed as something of a progression or climbing an upward ladder from initial focus on primary resources extraction and agriculture, to manufacturing, and eventually becoming a service-oriented economy, along with the development of human resources, including skilled and knowledgeable labour to contribute to national development.

The 1972 'Limits to growth report'[4] from the *Club of Rome* and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), used pioneering computer simulation to extrapolate future economic growth, as a function of various inputs and identified major problems with an approach focusing solely on economic growth. Although some of the assumptions used in this report look slightly dated today, the analysis was correct in drawing early attention to the environmental limits on growth, although the report clearly could not anticipate at the time how quickly climate change would impact all countries and, directly or indirectly, every single person around the globe in the fifty years that have elapsed since its publication until today.

Various other critiques have been made of capitalism more broadly, and its emphasis on perpetual growth (see, for example, the book, 'False Dawn' by John Gray, Professor of Politics at Oxford University and later London School of Economics). Over time, the definition of development therefore expanded from focusing solely on economic growth to include broader aspirations, opportunities and above all, the "quality" of economic growth – and in particular, its energy-efficiency aspects.

Further, the argument that 'a rising tide lifts all boats' has been abandoned, as it has quickly become apparent that there was a large body of people 'left behind' in abject poverty in many countries. Increases in GDP have to translate into real improvements and increases in people's standard of living and choices, more broadly across a nation. For optimal socio-political outcomes, the *'quality' and expansion of economic growth and development* should extend beyond local to include greater regions, so the benefits of public revenues, infrastructure and services accrue to as broad a swathe of the population, and do not exclude, for example women or ethnic minorities. The hope is that the empowerment, energy and enterprise of individuals can contribute to the energy and impetus of countries, inspiring national economic energy and vision.

How economic growth is funded and brought about also matters. Much of recent economic growth and development has been funded through debt and borrowing, on the assumption that funds can be invested immediately to yield higher total returns, and eventually repaid. The latter has unfortunately presented problems to some highly indebted countries which are struggling to repay their interest and principal debt obligations to the detriment of social spending.

In this sense, 'economic development' has also implicitly come to mean being integrated into international monetary and financing systems. The establishment of the Bretton Woods institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have helped the expansion and development of an international system of borrowing[5]. Economic growth has been used to justify economic indebtedness for noble causes, such as ambitious infrastructure projects and other socially desirable projects.

One of the problems with integration into the international financing system (a.k.a. debt) is that some social projects (e.g., hospitals and schools) have public benefits extending far beyond their economic, let alone, accounting costs. Accountants can famously *not well* measure the community use, or social utility of projects, such as distributing polio vaccines to children or planting trees for future generations. Also, a few governments have diverted internationally borrowed money into current consumption, military or defence purposes or vanity projects, such as impressive public buildings or even space ventures.

National visions of development such as the *Kenya 2030 Vision*[6] and *UAE 2050*[7], for example, now seek to promote economic diversification at the national level to mitigate some of the risks of specialization, as well as digital services and smart urban management at the regional or municipality level. Increasingly countries are incorporating "circular" economy principles into their development strategies, to reduce waste and pollution and promote *reuse* and *repair* approach to consumption. In this connection, many national development strategies are promoting entrepreneurship as a vehicle for creating employment, as well as keeping abreast of technological innovation and transitioning from linear to circular model of economy.

In addition, many philanthropic organizations and NGOs recognize a vital role for local communities in promoting local and 'bottom-up' development at the grassroots level. For example, the Jane Goodall Institute promotes conservation through local and community development projects, including its 'Roots and Shoots' leadership programme in some 100 countries[8].

Today, economic development is increasingly associated with a larger role for the digital economy and online commerce, as an essential part of global economic activities. Recent definitions of the *Fourth Industrial Revolution*[9] imply that 'digital services' are now the pioneering frontier of development. Digitalization opens the door to tremendous opportunities, as it can leapfrog development, spur economic growth, connect people and enable greater integration into global trading systems. However, some major downsides are slowly emerging, including job substitution, digital divide between developed and developing countries, new global trade flows in data, rising energy costs, and the ecological footprint associated with digital technologies. To examine these trends, UNCTAD will host its annual *eWeek* in December 2023 to debate the issues driving the digital economy[10].

What will 'economic development' look like in 2030 and beyond? The UN and international community more broadly, actually has a well-defined and pluralistic vision of development contained in its "2030 Agenda: The Future We Want". The task however, will be to realize visions of development, despite growing and varied challenges. ■

1 https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/osg2014d1_en.pdf

2 https://research.un.org/en/docs/dev/1960-1970#:~:text=Decades%3A,%2FRES%2F1710%20(XVI)

3 https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N62/115/49/PDF/N6211549.pdf?OpenElement

4 https://www.donellameadows.org/wp-content/userfiles/Limits-to-Growth-digital-scan-version.pdf

5 The Bretton Woods Agreement was negotiated in July 1944 by delegates from 44 countries at the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference held in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, U.S.A. https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/bretton-woods-institution

6 https://vision2030.go.ke/#:~:text=The%20Kenya%20Vision%202,030%20aims,a%20clean%20and%20secure%20environmen

7 https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/uae-future

8 https://rootsandshoots.org

9 https://www.weforum.org/focus/fourth-industrial-revolution

10 https://unctad.org/eweek2023


© Shutterstock

The right to spiritual development

ERIC STENER CARLSON,
UN SOCIETY OF WRITERS

The theme for this month's issue of *newSpecial* is "development". When we think of the word, we typically think of *economic* or *social* development – work, health, education, the environment, and our general well-being.

So, why am I writing about spiritual development?

I'll answer that question with another question. Have you ever heard of the Declaration of Philadelphia? If not, here are the highlights. It's 1944, and the Secretariat of the International Labour Organization (ILO) has relocated from Geneva to Montreal, because of concerns over WWII. A few hundred miles away in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, leading ILO delegates from employers' and workers' organizations and governments gather to write a declaration of values, a blueprint for society after the war.

The outcome of the war is by no means certain. Will it continue for years? Will fascism prevail?

In this dark moment of uncertainty, the delegates reach deep into their value systems and enunciate concepts that are as relevant today, as they were almost eighty years ago.

Perhaps you've heard some of the concepts that came out of that meeting in Philadelphia, such as "labour is not a commodity"? Or maybe "poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere"? And then there is the affirmation that resonates through the years:
All human beings, irrespective of race, creed or sex, have the right to pursue both their material well-being and their spiritual development in conditions of freedom and dignity, of economic security and equal opportunity

As staff in the UN system, many of these ideas should seem familiar to us, because we promote them every day – freedom, economic security, equality, dignity. However, the idea of "spiritual development" may seem new to some of us, although the right to pursue it is mentioned in the same breath as the right to pursue material well-being. So, what's going on here?

I don't know, exactly, what the drafters of this declaration had in mind when they referred to spirituality. Of course, the UN Declaration of Human Rights (which came out four years after the ILO's


© Shutterstock


© Shutterstock

Declaration) refers to "religion" a number of times, particularly to how persons should not be discriminated against because of religious beliefs.

However (and this may be stating the obvious), *religion* is not the same as *spirituality*. There are many possible definitions for the two terms. But essentially, religion is institutional (it has to do with structures and rules) and spirituality is personal (our personal relationship with God, or the universe, or whatever transcendent concepts we have of what is right and good).

So, it's interesting that the Declaration of Philadelphia places emphasis on this very personal experience. And that's where I'd like to focus right now – at the personal level, of us as staff in the UN system.

I need to say here that spirituality is incredibly important for me. My belief in a higher power, a beautiful, benevolent force in the universe, gets me out of bed in the morning. It was the central motivation for my having joined the UN system, and it's taken me on a long – and sometimes dark – journey to promote the rights of sexual assault survivors, people living with HIV, persons with disabilities, and persons from the LGBTQI+ community. Along that journey, I have struggled, and I have doubted, and I have re-evaluated my beliefs, and, hopefully, I have come out the stronger for it.

Now, I'm not saying this to promote my own belief system or to convince anyone that my way of thinking about God or Goodness is better than anyone else's. It's just to say that we seldom speak of it, but we have this right to spiritual development. Moreover, I think it's something deeply-rooted in all of us, and it informs how we view the world and how we act in it.

A few years after joining the UN system, I remember reading a collection of essays by writers from a variety of communities, including Atheism, Christianity, Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Humanism, Judaism and Islam. The silver thread running through these essays was that there's something about our spirituality (in whatever form it takes) that underpins a universal belief in decency, equality and fair treatment. This message resonated with me and helped me to see my spirituality as a foundation for the work I do. Of course, that's not the case for everyone.

In my almost quarter-century as an international civil servant, my beliefs have been met with an entire spectrum of reactions – some have viewed them as positive, others as quaint, others as archaic, and yet still others as contradictory with a "modern" view of society; after all, they argue, what need have we of spirituality when, if we are to make any positive difference in people's lives, we must live and work in this material world. (Hence, perhaps, the focus on economic and social development.)


© Shutterstock


© Shutterstock

I think this suggested disconnection between this world we experience (of war and poverty and hunger) and the world we believe in (of prayer and faith and imagination) is based on a fundamental misunderstanding. It views human beings as two-dimensional, of eating and educating and producing, while it misses what I think is a very real and profound longing in all of us to develop spiritually, in whatever way we understand the term.

At least in my case, I don't see a disconnect. It's not that I believe in God, and *then* put those beliefs aside and do my work as a civil servant. Rather, I do my work, *because* I believe in God, because I believe there is a divine spark in everyone, so we should all be respected, we should all be free.

One day, a few years ago, I needed to pray, I mean I *really* needed to pray. Maybe we all have days like this, but I was having an especially hard day – my anxiety was through the roof, my mind was at war with itself, and I needed a few minutes of peace and reflection.

I don't know about where you work, but there's a prayer room in my office building, so I went to that room, and I sat and prayed.

A few minutes later, I was surprised to see a colleague of mine – someone with whom I'd worked closely for many years on employment programmes for persons living with HIV – enter the prayer room. He took off his shoes, and he got down on his knees, and he prayed.

We didn't say a word to each other. We just nodded in recognition, and got back to our prayers, and I don't think we said anything to each other about it afterwards. Yet, in that brief moment, sharing the same place of prayer, I felt deeply connected to him, and I still do. I think seeing him pray that day did me more good than my own prayers did. There we were, both exercising our right to spiritual development, he on his path, and I on mine.

It was so comforting and so uplifting, and yet it struck me that we never talked about this fundamental pillar of our lives. Yes, there is a physical place to pray, but I don't think there's often the social space to talk about spirituality, not nearly as much as other forms of development. Perhaps, as I mentioned, because it's seen as antiquated or somehow antagonistic with working in this "real" world. As such, our spirituality tends to settle into the background and to be forgotten.

However, I've been thinking lately about what friends of mine say about the importance of expressing their ethnicity or culture or sexual orientation at work, about bringing their full selves to work. I think, in the final analysis, that's what the right to spiritual development means to me. The Declaration of Philadelphia invites me to bring my entire self, my full self, to work every day, invites me to bring my sense of God and Goodness to work, and I feel more complete, I feel the better for it.

Maybe that's why, in the middle of a war that almost tore the world apart so many years ago, the drafters viewed material well-being and spiritual development in the same light, considering the pursuit of both a right, connected, intertwined. And that is a beautiful thing. ■

Climate change and the world economic crises: Reflections of a West African

Inez Randolph

INEZ RANDOLPH, MEMBER OF THE GHANA ASSOCIATION OF WRITERS

I breathed a huge sigh of relief last year when most of the borders opened and international travel started to pick up after the disaster and strain COVID-19 put on international travel. I have not left my home country in almost three years, and I am very much looking forward to escaping to a new one for a well-deserved holiday during the spring break.

I am a witness to the devastation climate change is causing and the effect it is having on weather patterns. The rainy season in my country no longer happens when it normally does and as for the dry season, well, it is scorching. We go from extreme heat to freaky rain! The heat is intense, and the atmosphere is not as humid as it used to be. Sometimes, I even feel the heat coming from the ground. This makes walking barefoot rather unpleasant. The world news often has information about the effect of climate change in other parts of the world too, and it doesn't seem to stop. Mother Nature is very angry because humans are seriously messing up. Pity how destruction happens so fast, however, reconstruction takes time. The issue now is how can we reverse the vicious cycle? What legacy are we going to leave for our children? What story are we going to tell our grandchildren? As if climate change is not enough, the world economy seems to be in a bit of turmoil as well. Various economic crises are not making things any easier on anyone, especially, those of us from the African continent.

I never really have any new year resolutions however, this year, I have started cutting down drastically on my spending. It is about what I need and not about what I want. I also want to be even more generous and do more for others. Being my 'brother's keeper' is going to reaffirm my faith and reassure me that I DID something to help the change. I was part of the solution and not the problem.

The key for me is to start small and build up. No use making big promises and not following them. I intend to start with my water usage. Leaving water to run for no reason is now a NO, NO for me! Leaving the lights on in rooms in the house I barely go into has no meaning. Result: I only switch on the lights in the areas I mostly use, i.e., the kitchen and the living room. The external lights I turn on at 5:30 p.m. go on at 6 p.m. and are switched off at 5 a.m. instead of 6 a.m. the following day.

Wasting petrol in traffic is the next big change I have made. I leave the house extra early to avoid the rush hour, which enables me to finish earlier for the drive back home before peak hour begins. Food shopping and clothes shopping will now be well thought through too. Checking prices and changing brands to start off with plus, eating local and incorporating more veg, eggs and fruits in my diet should hopefully help 'my pocket' and my body. I have also cut down on meat and have become more of a pescatarian. In addition, seeing how much I like bread, I will bake my own. I love baking anyhow, so this is something I should have been doing a while ago. Even Freckles my dog is part of the change. Funny, she now seems to like home-cooking than the imported dog food I usually buy for her. Pity, this could have saved me quite a bit of money if I had woken up earlier!

Hopefully, this will inspire others to do the same. Looking forward to REAL CHANGE this year.

Remember, a little goes a long way... ■

Flooding in Accra August 22

Whilst Switzerland suffers from heatwave

© pexels.com/Aphiwat chuangchoem

Entretien avec le Professeur Jean Costentin

Du cannabis et de son usage

La banalisation de l'usage du cannabis se généralise, notamment parmi les jeunes générations. Le Professeur Costentin[1] alerte, depuis plusieurs années, sur les effets et dangers de cette drogue, souvent passés sous silence.

© artoff – https://drogaddiction.com

Professeur Jean Costentin

CHRISTIAN DAVID, ONUG

Quelles sont les raisons qui vous ont poussé à la conclusion et motivé votre combat contre l'usage du cannabis?

Ma réflexion a démarré il y a une vingtaine d'années. Un certain nombre d'incidents, voire de drames, ont éveillé mon attention. Ils portaient à chaque fois, une signature cannabique. Je dirigeais une unité de neuropsychologie expérimentale associée au CNRS. Un accident de voiture par choc frontal,provoqué par un conducteur qui avait consommé un mélange d'alcool et de cannabis, avait coûté la vie à trois enfants et au conducteur qui arrivait en face. J'avais été atterré de constater que le cannabis avait été oublié pour expliquer les causes de l'accident. Je me suis même aperçu qu'une certaine omerta était de mise. Entre ce qui est publié sur les revues scientifiques et ce qui est rapporté au public, il existe un hiatus énorme. La combinaison cannabis et alcool multiplie en effet par 29 le risque d'accident.

Une littérature abondante existe sur ce sujet. En 1853, Jacques

Joseph Moreau, un psychiatre, avait publié un livre: «Du cannabis et de l'aliénation mentale». Il faut souligner que cette drogue a longtemps été cantonnée à des usagers adultes d'un bon niveau social. Les problèmes sont apparus quand ces usagers ont rajeuni, notamment vers la fin des années 1960. Entre 12 et 24 ans, l'individu connaît une phase dite de maturation cérébrale. La consommation, pendant cette période, peut provoquer une régression intellectuelle, des malformations et des troubles psychiatriques divers. dont la schizophrénie qui est une maladie irréversible.

La plante fut cultivée initialement pour ses fibres, qui servent à tresser des cordages. D'autres variétés ont vu le jour sur les contreforts de l'Himalaya: Dans ces régions arides, pour se prémunir de la dessiccation, la plante s'est couverte de résine laquelle concentre le principe actif psychotrope du cannabis le THC (tétrahydrocannabinol).

En cas de consommation prolongée, une tolérance et dépendance s'installent. En cas de dépression, la consommation de cannabis peut soulager au début puis les effets s'estompent. Dés lors, la dépression va réapparaitre bien plus vive avec en embuscade, le risque de suicide. La transmission à sa progéniture des vulnérabilités due à la consommation est également ignorée du grand public.

Un certain nombre d'études épigénétiques (modifications sur le ruban d'ADN) sur la base d'expérimentations animales, a permis de constater que les effets sont transmis aux générations suivantes. Le THC a pour effet de diminuer en intensité de l'expression du gène dans les récepteurs de la dopamine. La publication d'une étude de Yasmin Hurd[2] directrice d'une équipe brillante sur les drogues et addictologies constate sur un fœtus dont la mère a consommé du cannabis, une diminution importantes (50%) des récepteurs cérébraux sur lesquels agit la dopamine. Il s'ensuit une vulnérabilité car les drogues stimulent la libération de dopamine. Il faut enfin insister sur le fait que depuis 30 ans, le taux de THC a été multiplié par 6,5 dans les produits en circulation.

Votre approche est basée sur des données scientifiques, quels sont les arguments de vos détracteurs et qui sont-ils?
Le monde de l'addictologie est peuplé de psychiatres. La profession comporte des gens respectables et respectés mais également une frange non négligeable d'idéologues qui prônent «le droit au plaisir». Beaucoup de ces psychiatres ne sont pas des scientifiques, ils sont souvent issus des générations qui avaient 20 ans en 1968 et sont incapables de traiter la plupart des cas qui leur sont présentés. Cela constitue également pour eux, une rente de situation dont ils s'accommodent. Au niveau des médias, la fumée qui s'élève au-dessus de certaines salles de rédaction, n'est pas seulement celle du tabac...

Certains médicaments palliatifs sont prescrits par les médecins
Donnons l'exemple du trop fameux subutex qui a été mis sur le marché pour limiter la dépendance et la transmission notamment du sida pour les héroïnomanes. Cette molécule peut être prescrite par tous les praticiens qui négligent les alternatives génériques. 100 000 individus en France se voient prescrire des pastilles censées fondre sous la langue, ils vont les mettre en solutions et se l'injecter, ce qui est le comble pour un produit conçu pour limiter les injections. Le patient va voir plusieurs médecins et va pouvoir se constituer un stock et le revendre à des jeunes qui n'y avaient pas accès jusqu'alors. La crise des opioïdes aux Etats Unis a fait 100 000 morts l'année dernière, bien plus que les accidents routiers.

Les vertus thérapeutiques du cannabis sont souvent vantées et les magasins de vente de ses dérivés (CBD) fleurissent en Europe comment l'expliquer?
Le THC trouve dans le cerveau, une multitude de récepteurs et génère une multitude d'effets dont le consommateur ne perçoit que les plus importants. Ainsi, les troubles de la mémoire à court terme peuvent avoir des

conséquences conduisant à une crétinisation du consommateur. Pourquoi nos pays qui consacrent beaucoup de moyens à la formation de ses jeunes figurent en si mauvaises positions dans le classement PISA. J'affirme, sans pouvoir le démontrer, que si on enlevait le cannabis de l'espace éducatif pour les enseignés et pour les enseignants, ce classement changerait.

> S'il faut être attentif à l'état de la planète que nous léguerons à nos enfants, il est majeur de nous préoccuper de l'état des enfants que nous lui léguerons.
>
> – CNPERT[3]

L'éducation nationale en France est d'une défaillance coupable à ce sujet. J'interviens dans des lycées et collèges, à la demande des directeurs d'établissements. La consommation commence dès le collège.

Concernant les vertus thérapeutiques, des personnes victimes de maladie ont recours à des «petits joints» pour soulager leurs douleurs. S'ils les prennent sans THC ce n'est pas dangereux, dans le cas contraire, c'est évidemment problématique car ils se mettent en situation de devenir dépendants. 20% de ceux qui l'ont expérimenté le deviennent et nous sommes démunis pour les en sortir. Il y a des effets qui vont en faveur du cannabidiol (CBD) dans les maladies inflammatoires du côlon et de l'intestin mais il reste nécessaire de tester scientifiquement.

Les cultivars contiennent peu de THC et beaucoup de CBD qui est une molécule très proche du THC et n'a pas ses effets de psychotropes et toxytomanogènes. Le CBD du commerce «devrait» être exempt de THC. Une expérience publiée consistait à placer du CBD dans une solution représentant le liquide gastrique. Une fraction non négligeable de ce CBD était transformée en THC. Le CBD a été commercialisé sous le nom d'épidiolex pour traiter des variétés graves d'épilepsies infantiles (Syndromes de Dravet et de Lennox-Gastaut). Ce médicament n'agit qu'ajouté aux médicaments qui étaient déjà prescrits et qui s'avéraient insuffisants. L'hypothèse est que ce cannabidiol pourrait agir en troublant l'inactivation des autres médicaments, en leur faisant donc la courte-échelle. De ce fait, le CBD a permis de faire diminuer les crises d'épilepsie. La multitude d'effets mis en avant par la publicité n'est donc pas exacte mais davantage commerciale car les intérêts capitalistiques, soutenus par des lobbyistes, sont énormes.

Certains pays ou états légalisent, notamment pour limiter les trafics, qu'en pensez-vous?
Pour répondre à cette question, je citerais simplement l'exemple des Pays-Bas qui ont légalisé depuis longtemps. L'actualité récente montre que le procès de la Moccro Maffia crée une vraie menace vis-à-vis de plusieurs dirigeants et personnalités.

Quelle écoute obtenez-vous auprès des pouvoirs publics, vous sentez-vous parfois isolé?
Avec d'autres scientifiques qui ne sont pas des idéologues nous affirmons qu'il est coupable et criminel de légaliser le cannabis en raison, entre autres, de son effet sur le cerveau des sujets jeunes.Je ne me sens pas isolé au niveau des académies de médecine et de pharmacie qui sont totalement en phase avec nos positions. Au niveau politique, une commission parlementaire a récemment essayé de favoriser la culture du cannabis dans un département français (la Creuse). Les autorités ont cependant eu connaissance de certaines informations qui vont à l'encontre de cette légalisation. Il faut souligner que la consommation du cannabis est étroitement liée à celle du tabac. Ce dernier est responsable reste l'un des plus grands défis de santé publique. Le cannabis, c'est toute la toxicité physique que l'on connaît au tabac, à laquelle vient s'ajouter la toxicité psychique. ainsi que la combinaison avec l'alcool déjà évoquée.

Quel message voulez-vous faire passer aux Organisations internationales et notamment à l'OMS?
C'est un devoir international de tout faire pour mettre nos jeunes à l'abri de cette sale drogue fallacieusement banalisée. ■

1 Dr en Médecine, Pharmacien, Dr ès Sciences professeur émérite de la faculté de Santé de Rouen; membre titulaire de l'académie nationale de Médecine; membre titulaire de l'académie nationale de Pharmacie membre du collège de l'Agence française de lutte contre le dopage (AFLD); président du centre national de prévention d'études et de recherches sur les toxicomanies (CNPERT); directeur honoraire de l'unité de neuropsychopharmacologie du CNRS (1984-2008); directeur honoraire de l'unité de neurobiologie clinique du CHU de Rouen (1999-2011); derniers livres parus: «Le désastre des toxicomanies en France» Ed. Docis (2018); «Dictionnaire critique du cannabis» Ed. Docis (2019); «Toxicomanies: Sauvons la jeunesse» Ed. JDH, coll. Hippocrate & Co (2021)

2 La Dre Yasmin Hurd est titulaire de la chaire Ward-Coleman de neurosciences translationnelles et directrice de l'Institut de toxicomanie de Mount Sinai.

3 https://drogaddiction.com/193-2

UNCTAD'S Work

KEY UNCTAD facts

68 million
annual regular budget from UN

195
member States

42 million
extrabudgetary from technical assistance

218
projects in 80 countries

57 years.
Established in 1964 as an organ of the United Nations General Assembly

456+
staff members

1
THI
UNCTAD
NATIO

12
Adapt to climate change and use natural resources more effectively

11
Curb regulations that stifle competition

10
Protect consumers from abuse

09
Speed up the flow of goods across borders

08
Help local firms move up value chains

07
Promote entrepreneurship and innovation

UNITED NATIONS
UNCTAD

2
NGS
D HELPS
NS DO

01
Address macro-level development challenges

02
Achieve integration into the global trading system

03
Diversify their economies to make them less dependent on commodities

04
Limit their exposure to financial volatility and debt

05
Attract development friendly investment

06
Increase access to digital technologies

Headquarters:
Geneva
Switzerland

Secretary-General:
Rebeca Grynspan
(Costa Rica),
since 13 September 2021

Deputy Secretary-General:
Pedro Moreno
(Spain),
since November 2022

unctad.org

The king of Siam's eclipse, 1868

A total eclipse of the sun in the mid-19th century led to the discovery of helium and the death of Rama IV, the king of Thailand, a self-taught polymath who had predicted the event several years before and to a degree of accuracy exceeding his European contemporaries.

King Mongkut in European dress.

KEVIN CRAMPTON, WHO

On August 18, 1868, the moon's shadow swept across the world from Yemen to Australia during a total solar eclipse in which the moon passes between the Sun and the Earth and its apparent size neatly covers the disc of our star.

Such events (although not rare – a total eclipse happens on average every 18 months somewhere in the world) are a perfect opportunity to observe the corona, the outer part of the Sun's atmosphere, which is normally hidden by the brilliant light of the surface.

Eclipses therefore yield a wealth of scientific data and were intensely studied and eagerly awaited, particularly during the 19th century when men of science were actively gazing Heavenwards with ever-better instruments and making rapid progress in the fields of physics, chemistry, and astronomy.

The date and timing of the 1868 eclipse had been calculated two years before and the most accurate prediction (by two seconds) came not from the professional scientists of the day, but from a rather remarkable source – King Mongkut of the Far East Asian country of Siam, now modern-day Thailand. In commemoration of his contribution, the Thai Astronomical Society and NASA, now name the 1868 event as "The King of Siam's eclipse".

The king, styled as Rama IV in the Thai dynasty, was a remarkable polymath. Born in 1804, he ruled Siam from 1851 until his death, the same year as the eclipse. He presided over the country at a time of increasing pressure from Western powers, greedy for colonial expansion. Siam was rich in natural resources and the north was a perfect location for the lucrative cultivation of opium. It is a testament to his diplomatic skill (he learned English well enough to translate treaty documents for


The viewing pavilion at Wakor, the king is in the centre.

The mural of the King observing the eclipse.

his court) that he managed to keep his country independent when neighbouring Myanmar (then Burma) and Cambodia became European colonies.

He kept up a lively correspondence with Queen Victoria (addressing her as, "my dear sister") and accorded a full state welcome to a letter that she sent, treating it with the same dignity as the person of the Queen.

Although Mongkut accepted unfavourable trade deals (such as the 1855 Bowring treaty which legalised opium export into Siam when previously he had forbidden the drug) he kept his country independent. Siam was respected by the superpowers of the time who admired Siamese culture, customs and business acumen and the country's acquisition of Western science and methods undermined their argument that colonisation was needed to bring "civilization".

Outside of Thailand, he is best known as the king in the 1951 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical "The King & I", which was made into a film in 1957 with Yul Brynner playing the eponymous monarch. The musical was based on the memoirs of Anna Leonowens, who had been a schoolteacher at his court in the 1860s when he wished his 39 wives and concubines and 82 children to receive elements of a Western-style education.

Mongkut spent almost the first thirty years of his life as a monk when he was passed over for succession to the throne in favour of a more experienced Prince. It was during this period that he studied Latin, English and Astronomy and became acquainted with Christian missionaries and foreign traders and sailors. He rose to become the Abbot of a temple in Bangkok and even allowed a Christian friend to preach sermons there since he admired the morals and achievements of the foreign faith, although its doctrine confused him.

A legacy of his intellectual curiosity and tolerance, his reign was one of modernisation and reforms with Siam emerging as a close partner of its Western allies. One anecdote relates that he offered a herd of domesticated elephants to the US President James Buchanan, to be used as beasts of burden. The US politely declined and pointed out that the weather might not suit the animals and that steam engines now served just as well.

The king's enthusiasm for the 1868 solar eclipse (which he calculated accurately using a mix of Siamese and Western systems) was such that he had a special viewing pavilion built in the jungle at the village of Wakor, south of Hua Hin. He judged this to be an optimal location from which to observe and invited various dignitaries and foreign representatives to accompany him.

Many nations had had the same idea, and two expeditions had been sent from Germany to Aden, with others viewing in India and the Celebes Sea. It was the first eclipse since the 1859 theory that bright lines in the spectrum of light would correspond to chemicals present within the sun. This was tested and led to the discovery of a new element named helium from the Greek "Helios" for sun.

Although King Mongkut's own observations were a success, the eclipse viewing would ironically be his downfall. He and his son caught malaria while in the jungle and six weeks later, back in Bangkok, the King died and his son, who survived the disease, succeeded him.

Today, his ashes are interred beneath the Buddha image of a small temple (by Thai standards), to the east of the Grand Palace in Bangkok. A narrow alleyway gives access to a richly decorated chamber where, at the very back, and if you look closely, you can find a mural showing the king bent over a telescope and studying the eclipse that now bears his name, one small part of his unusual life and legacy to his country. ■

When good intentions meet complex realities: Traceability and due diligence of metals

We are all aware that the energy transition and green technologies require metals, such as cobalt and lithium, in batteries, display screens, and other consumer items. However, some of these metals are produced under conditions we find difficult to accept.

©Olle Östensson

OLLE ÖSTENSSON[1], UNIGE

For instance, revenues from sales of the metals have been financing arms used in civil wars and by terrorists, the exploitation of mine workers and children who should be in school, and the degradation of the environment. As consumers, we would like to be assured that such conditions are not tolerated and that products do not contain metals produced in this way.

Promoting better practices in an intricate industry

Governments, the industry, and civil society organisations have undertaken several initiatives over the past decade to ensure the traceability of metals and to promote better practices in mining. All the initiatives have the common goal of influencing actors in the supply chain and making them comply with a set of standards. These standards may be one-dimensional: a description of the efforts employed to determine the mine or location of the origin of "conflict minerals", for instance; or they may cover a wide range of social and environmental aspects. These standards may be contained in government regulations or be voluntary undertakings.

Large-scale industrial mining companies can be influenced through regulation and public opinion. This is not to say that some companies do not take advantage of lax enforcement. As a rule, however, it is risky for companies not to follow regulations and standards since they can be prosecuted and are sensitive to reputational risk. They must obtain credit, and their shareholders may be reluctant to provide them with capital if they are seen as breaching industry norms. As such, regulators, civil society and public opinion have significant leverage with large companies.

However, large companies often interact with artisanal mining[2]. Artisanal miners often work in the informal sector, sometimes illegally, in the sense that they do not have formal titles to the deposits they are exploiting. This means that they are difficult to regulate. They have usually been attracted into artisanal mining by poverty and lack of other alternatives. Artisanal mining may be the most important rural non-agricultural activity in Africa.[3] Since miners are poor, they are also more exposed to risks such as armed conflict, environmental degradation, and forced labour. Artisanal mining has therefore become a focus of traceability and due diligence initiatives.

Experiences in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) can throw some light on the effectiveness of the various initiatives. Artisanal miners in eastern DRC supply about a third of the world's tantalum, an essential ingredient in capacitors for mobile phones and personal computers[4]. Armed groups prey on the miners and appropriate part of their income. Two important legislative initiatives in the United States and the European Union[5], respectively, aim to reduce the influence of the armed groups by requiring downstream companies to declare the origin of the tantalum they use (as well as gold, tin and tungsten).

South-eastern DRC supplies most of the cobalt used in electric vehicle batteries worldwide[6], of which artisanal miners produce a large share. Since there are insufficient areas open to artisanal mining, many miners work on large mining companies' concessions, often without permission. Several schemes intend to reduce environmental degradation and social ills, such as child labour in cobalt mining, by asking mining and downstream companies to carry out due diligence on the source of any cobalt they acquire. But do the traceability and due diligence schemes work?

Practical challenges of implementing traceability and due diligence schemes

First, there are some technical complications. Indeed, a rock containing cobalt is mixed with other similar rocks and then has to be chemically processed to be incorporated into a battery and finally installed in a vehicle. During this process, it is usually traded between several countries. As a result, it is almost impossible to identify the origin of the cobalt in the battery.

Second, while consumers have heard about "blood diamonds", which led to reduced demand for diamonds in general, they are less informed about products containing cobalt or tantalum, and

©Olle Östensson

Miners in North Kivu, DRC, 2009

©Olle Östensson

Miners in North Kivu, DRC, 2009

how to avoid them. This means that there is less pressure from consumers to have producers conform to standards.

Third, actors in the supply chain, mining and processing companies, find themselves carrying out complex tasks for which they could be better equipped, such as judging the extent and nature of child labour. From the point of view of downstream processors, the easiest way out is to avoid controversial origins altogether, which does not solve the problems. Trusting governments to carry out due diligence is not a realistic solution either: if the governments in question had the capacity to deal with the challenges, then these problems would probably not arise in the first place. Also, non-governmental organisations rarely have the resources necessary for long-term commitments.

Fourth, problems differ from one artisanal mining area to another, and any particular scheme will not fit all circumstances.

More fundamentally, we have to ask if the initiatives have solved the problems they were created to solve.

With respect to conflicts in eastern DRC, the answer, unfortunately, seems to be "no". It is sufficient to go through the regular reports of the United Nations Group of Experts[7] to realise that conflict minerals legislation has had little effect on violence.

Regarding other aspects, such as child labour, the answer is similar: practical difficulties have proved overwhelming. Various schemes have produced encouraging results, but they are limited in time and space and tend to be effective only within their own narrowly defined criteria.[8]

Does this mean that nothing can be done and that we must accept child labour, the exploitation of mine workers, forced labour, environmental degradation and the financing of terrorism as inevitably associated with artisanal mining of energy transition metals? No, some initiatives have had positive results, but they seldom go beyond the pilot stage due to the lack of sustained financing and monitoring. More resources must be committed over the long term, but donor interest has been limited. Schemes also have to be designed to solve the problems important to the miners themselves. Otherwise, they are unlikely to be enthusiastic about engaging in somebody else's projects. In the DRC, for instance, this means access to more land for artisanal miners and better support from donors and authorities. The problems associated with artisanal mining will not disappear because somebody decrees what miners can and cannot do. Support to enable them to do the right thing is necessary.

Leaders and actors in the field of commodity trading must be aware of these challenges and the many ways and leverage available to overcome them. The training of professionals has then a crucial role to play. Created in 2008 in collaboration with the Swiss Trading and Shipping Association (STSA) and the major companies in Commodity trading, the executive education programmes in Commodity Trading of the University of Geneva address this specific need by training professionals for careers in commodity trading through a 360-degree vision of the industry. The programmes build on the insights of industry experts and are continuously updated to consider the manifold changes and challenges of the commodity industry while taking advantage of the proximity of Geneva's global commodity trading hub. ■

1 Olle Östensson is a Guest Speaker at the University of Geneva and a consultant specialised in the assessment of government policies with respect to the commodities sector.

2 An artisanal miner is a miner who is not officially employed by a mining company but works using their own resources, usually with simple non-mechanized methods.

3 Hilson, G., Mondlane, S., Hilson, A., Arnall, A. and Laing, T. (2021). Formalizing artisanal and small-scale mining in Mozambique: Concerns, priorities and challenges. Resources Policy 71.

4 United States Geological Survey (2022). Mineral Commodity Summaries. Tantalum.

5 Section 1502 of the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (the Dodd Frank Act), and Regulation (EU) 2017/821 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017.

6 United States Geological Survey (2022). Mineral Commodity Summaries. Cobalt.

7 UN Security Council (2021). *Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.* S/2021/560.

8 Mancini, L., Eslava, N.A., Traverso, M., and Mathieux, F. (2021). 'Assessing impacts of responsible sourcing initiatives for cobalt: Insights from a case study.' *Resources Policy* 71, 102,015

UNFCU co-hosts 5th United in Sustainability Summit

Summit builds momentum for 2023 Credit Union action on UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Pamela Agnone, executive vice president, UNFCU; the Honorable Rodney Hood, Board Member, National Credit Union Administration, NCUA; Jamil Ahmad, Director, New York Office UN Environment Programme; Yma Gordon, vice president, Corporate Social Responsibility & Impact, UNFCU, at UN NY Headquarters.

ELISABETH PHILIPPE, UNFCU

At UN New York headquarters, the United Nations Federal Credit Union (UNFCU) recently co-hosted its 5th United in Sustainability (UIS) Summit. The hybrid event drew more than 300 credit union representatives from across the Americas to discuss support for the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[1]. The Organization of American States Federal Credit Union (OAS FCU) co-hosted the event.

"As cooperatives, credit unions have an important role in localizing the UN Sustainable Development Goals," said keynote speaker Jamil Ahmad, director of the UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) New York Office. "We look forward to following the UIS Network's collective action on building more climate resilient, economically-empowered, and inclusive communities."

The UIS Network was founded by UNFCU in 2018 to provide credit unions in the US with tools and resources to advance the SDGs. Today, more than 100 credit unions are active participants of the UIS Network. They meet regularly to discuss community leadership, amplifying impact through collaboration, and influencing the credit union industry. Members of the UIS Network have access to resources from the UN Global Compact, UNEP Finance Initiative (UNEP FI), and the Women's Empowerment Principles.[2]

"By providing a platform for financial cooperatives to start or advance their sustainability journeys, UNFCU is growing a

© Margaret Fox

Keynote speaker (center) Jamil Ahmad, Director, New York Office of UN Environment Programme addresses the United in Sustainability Summit on SDG partnerships. Leading Q&A was Claire Kells (left), senior manager for Corporate Engagement at the UN Global Compact. Tom Kurian (right), first vice president, Enterprise Information Security at UNFCU, served as UIS Summit host.

© Margaret Fox

At the UIS Summit in UN HQ NY (l-r) John Lewis, President/CEO of UNFCU, with Lucila Simão and Carolina Castro, CEO and project manager, respectively of the Brazilian Fenasbac Institute; Carlos Calderon, President/CEO of OAS FCU; and the Honorable Rodney Hood, National Credit Union Administration, NCUA, Board Member

movement," said Yma Gordon, vice president of Corporate Social Responsibility & Impact at UNFCU. "In 2023, through the UIS Network, we plan to continue this momentum. The roadmap includes more green financial products, advanced reporting on carbon footprints, and influencing our supply chains."

"The 2022 United in Sustainability Summit opened my eyes to the Environmental, Social, and Governance progress being made by credit unions, both across North America and further afield," said Gavin Landless, vice president of Risk Management at Empower Federal Credit Union in Syracuse, New York. "The time is now for serious leadership in equitable risk-based environmental sustainability. The UIS Summit plays a vital role in bringing us together to become sustainability leaders for our communities."

At the UIS Summit, more than 30 experts shared best practices on sustainability. Participants learned about green solutions; climate resiliency strategies; and the positive community impact of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. For the first time, participants expanded beyond North America to include Brazilian credit unions and the Fenasbac Institute, part of the Brazilian Central Bank ecosystem.

About UNFCU

UNFCU is the member-owned credit union of the United Nations community, dedicated to providing financial peace of mind. UNFCU was founded in 1947 and serves more than 200,000 members across the globe. ■

1 https://sdgs.un.org/goals

2 For more information, visit https://www.uisnetwork.org

3 Read the UNFCU 2021 Impact Report available at https://www.unfcu.org/social-responsibility to learn more about UNFCU's commitment to social responsibility.

Rien que pour vos yeux

Entretien avec Thibaut Leroy, ophtalmologue, cofondateur de Terres d'Ophtalmo

Il nous est tous arrivé de rencontrer, pour la première fois, des personnes que l'on apprécie immédiatement.

Il en est ainsi pour le Dr Leroy, sympathique, compétent et généreux, sachant mettre ses interlocuteurs et ses patients à l'aise,qui, depuis 2015, participe à des missions humanitaires de chirurgie ophtalmologique.

Le Docteur Leroy et son équipe

MARIT FOSSE[1]– CHRISTIAN DAVID (VERSION FRANÇAISE)

Il rejoint l'association «Pour les Yeux du Monde» avec laquelle il part au Cambodge pour opérer sur le block boat naviguant sur le Mékong. En 2016 et 2017 il intervient dans la clinique St Damien du district d'Ambanja à Madagascar. En 2018, il crée l'association «Terres d'Ophtalmo» avec son ami le Docteur Camille Rambaud. Leur but est de pérenniser la prise en charge ophtalmologique des patients en formant des praticiens sur place. L'une des particularités de cette chirurgie humanitaire est la complexité des interventions lorsque les cataractes sont fortement installées, les rendant beaucoup plus difficiles à traiter. Le

matériel chirurgical disponible dans les pays pauvres est souvent réduit au strict minimum et en mauvais état. La perte de vison constitue l'un des pires handicaps qui puisse arriver. Les aveugles souvent mis au ban de la société, il est nécessaire que davantage de bénéficiaires puissent profiter des compétence du Dr Leroy et de ses amis.

Pouvez-vous nous parler un peu de vous?
Après mes études de médecine à Paris et ma spécialisation en ophtalmologie à Lille, nous avons fondé, avec mes amis sur place, notre association. Il a toujours été très important pour moi de partager mes compétences acquises et mon temps. En tant qu'ophtalmologiste, je dispose d'un revenu confortable et je considère qu'il faut en faire bénéficier des personnes qui n'ont pas accès aux soins. Pendant mes études, j'étais allé au Burkina Faso. Nous avons par la suite commencé des missions humanitaires avec différentes associations existantes, notamment à Madagascar et au Cambodge. L'un des problèmes rencontrés fut la continuité de l'action chirurgicale humanitaire. Lorsque nous partions, les soins s'arrêtaient. Nous avons convenu qu'il était nécessaire de soigner sur place en y ajoutant une action de formation des professionnels locaux à l'ophtalmologie de sorte que, lorsque nous ne sommes pas là, ils puissent continuer. Nous apportons dans nos bagages, du matériel de qualité et le laissons sur place pour que les soins continuent lorsque nous quittons le pays. Il existe d'énormes écarts dans les niveaux de soins ophtalmologiques d'un endroit à l'autre. Par exemple, dans les trois îles des Comores, il y a un ophtalmologue pour 1 million d'habitants.

Nous n'y pensons pas beaucoup et le considérons comme acquis, mais avoir de bons yeux est important.
Effectivement, cela a un impact énorme. Prenons l'exemple des personnes qui ne peuvent rien voir elles sont souvent considérées comme inutiles dans la société, voire un fardeau pour leur famille, elles ne peuvent pas travailler dans les champs, ni même s'occuper des enfants.

Comprenons-nous vraiment l'importance de la cataracte et des autres affections oculaires?
La cataracte est la première cause de cécité et représente 40% de tous les cas dans les pays en développement. En France, cette affection ne représente que 3 à 4%, car elle est diagnostiquée beaucoup plus tôt, quand elle peut être facilement traitée. Il existe en France d'autres pathologies, plus graves, comme le glaucome, qui représentent un pourcentage plus faible sur le terrain, car les personnes qui en sont atteintes ont une espérance de vie plus courte.

Comment financez-vous vos activités?
A la base, l'association fonctionne grâce aux dons. Elle a été créée en 2017. Aujourd'hui nous sommes une vingtaine d'ophtalmologistes et de chirurgiens. Une personne travaillant à la Croix-Rouge nous aide pour les questions administratives. Nous sommes tous bénévoles. De temps en temps, des ophtalmologistes qui partent à la retraite font don de leur matériel, et nous le réutilisons.

Nous sommes toujours intéressés pour entrer en contact avec des ophtalmologistes qui envisagent de «léguer» leur matériel. Nous essayons de mettre en place une sorte de sous-groupe pour s'occuper de cette question. Nous entreposons ces dons de matériel d'occasion dans un local loué. Nous mettons ensuite le tout dans un conteneur pour l'expédition. Nous nous assurons toujours, avant d'envoyer ce matériel, que le destinataire en fera bon usage. Il existe toujours un risque de corruption. Nous étudions sur place la fiabilité de l'endroit où nous allons investir des «fonds». En général, nous nous y rendons deux ou trois fois. Nous examinons tous les détails. À chaque fois, notre travail de fond est méticuleux et qualitatif.

Nous avons beaucoup travaillé au Maroc en apportant notre expertise et enseigné des sujets techniques. Aux Comores, nous essayons de disposer d'un intervenant sur chacune des trois îles et assurons un suivi sur place. Nous préparons actuellement une mission à Madagascar pour travailler avec une autre association déjà présente qui reçoit des patients. Elle a besoin de davantage de personnel et ne dispose pas des compétences techniques appropriées. Nous allons donc nous y rendre pour partager nos connaissances et former les médecins locaux et leur apporter du matériel médical.

Nous avons également mis en place des partenariats avec des

Le Docteur Leroy

entreprises vendant du matériel médical d'ophtalmologie, des médicaments et des implants de lentilles intraoculaires. Nous envisageons de créer une sorte de centre d'échange pour l'achat de matériel médical en Chine et en Inde. Ils ont des prix très raisonnables pour les équipements médicaux d'ophtalmologie, et la qualité est très bonne. Nous sommes donc à la recherche de partenaires sérieux.

En général, nous suivons nos «clients» pendant plusieurs années, en nous assurant que tout se passe bien, qu'ils s'autofinancent et qu'ils n'ont pas besoin d'aide supplémentaire. Lorsque nous sommes satisfaits du résultat à long terme, nous nous rendons dans un autre pays. Nous explorons actuellement des possibilités au Sénégal, qui pourrait devenir notre prochain partenaire.

L'un des plus grands défis que nous ayons eu est que la pandémie de Covid a rendu les voyages impossibles. Les Comores et Madagascar n'ont pas accepté de visiteurs. Nous avons donc malheureusement perdu près de deux ans de travail.

Quelle est la situation aux Comores aujourd'hui?

Notre partenaire local est un ophtalmologue comorien qui nous reçoit quand nous venons. Il recrute le personnel, et nous avons deux à trois internes en ophtalmologie, qui profitent aussi de notre venue pour apprendre la chirurgie, et développer leurs connaissances scientifiques. Ainsi, nous organisons également une rencontre comorienne d'ophtalmologie avec plusieurs experts médicaux, car les yeux sont un organe qui peut avoir d'autres pathologies: diabète, accident vasculaire cérébral, maladies cardiovasculaires, etc. Par exemple, les patients diabétiques doivent être suivis régulièrement car ils peuvent avoir des problèmes aux yeux. Les stagiaires apprennent donc différentes pathologies et, nous formons les internes à la chirurgie pendant environ deux semaines. Une mission est partie aux Comores en octobre/novembre, et j'ai rejoint deux autres collègues à Madagascar pendant deux semaines afin d'évaluer les besoins et de mettre en place l'équipe qui sera sur le terrain. Une clinique qui existait sur place avait été abandonnée. Nous devons la remettre en état et nous avons lancé un financement participatif pour l'achat d'une machine qui nous permettra d'opérer les cataractes. La machine n'est pas plus grande qu'une valise. Elle permet d'offrir aux patients la même opération de la cataracte qu'en Europe. Elle coûte environ 30 000 euros et fera une énorme différence pour les patients.

Êtes-vous ouverts à de nouveaux membres?

Bien sûr, nous accueillons de nouveaux membres, ceux qui peuvent apporter leur contribution à l'association. Un graphiste a créé notre logo, un professionnel a réalisé la vidéo, certains s'occupent de la gestion financière et de l'administration. Nous sommes ouverts à tous, qu'ils soient experts en logistique ou qu'ils aient d'autres compétences. Notre réunion annuelle coïncide avec le grand rassemblement annuel des ophtalmologistes à Paris en mai. Nous organisons ensuite des réunions plus restreintes trois ou quatre fois par an pour partager des informations. Nous sommes transparents, donc toutes les informations sont disponibles sur notre site web[2].

En sortant du bureau du Dr Leroy, j'ai la sensation que son action inspirante peut réellement générer d'autres élans similaires pour atténuer toutes les souffrances. ■

1 Marit Fosse est rédactrice en chef du magazine Diva international (www.divainternational.ch/)

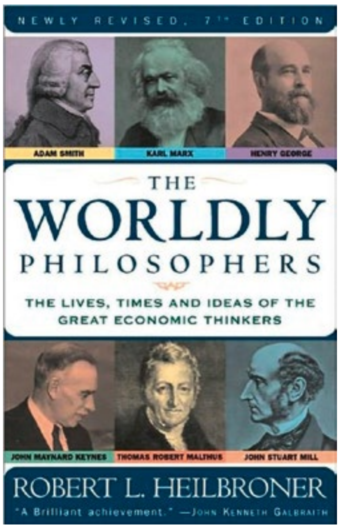
2 https://www.terresdophtalmo.org

Book review the worldly philosophers

The lives, times and ideas of the great economic thinkers

by Robert Heilbroner

This excellent book was included in one of 'The Economist reads' reading lists, and deservedly so, because it really is a classic in every sense of the word (first published in 1953 and now in its seventh edition).



PHILLIPPA BIGGS, ITU

For economists and non-economists alike, there is something in this book for everyone, and you are guaranteed to learn something. At four million copies sold, it is apparently also the second-most widely read book in economics, after Samuelson's famous student textbook, an impressive readership for a non-mandatory, non-fiction book.

Alongside his learned review of the lives, writings and theories of great economists, Robert Heilbroner gives an excellent overview of the evolution of economic markets and economic thinking. Indeed, he traces the development of economics broadly, and capitalism more narrowly, first as a philosophical approach, then as political economy and only finally as a separate social 'science', complete with mathematical equations and models.

Robert Heilbroner explains how successive economic thinkers built on each other's work and ideas, although they were at odds with each other. He describes how Adam Smith saw order in chaos and first described the benefits of the specialization of labour and the market-clearing mechanism of equilibrium between supply and demand via price (and wage) signals, behind the seemingly random decisions of consumers. This is in sharp contrast to the pessimistic viewpoints of Thomas Malthus, David Ricardo and Karl Marx, who foresaw population/resource constraints and seemingly inevitable class struggle, respectively.

Different economists put forward different theories for the business cycle and commercial crises or economic 'gluts' of overproduction, as recessions were first called rather quaintly, ranging from solar sunspot cycles (!) to the mass nervous disorders of market merchants (one suspects that there might be something in the mass nervous disorder theory to explain modern panic selling on stock markets). In reality, as this book makes clear, different recessions – and their more serious version, depressions – come about for a range of reasons, structural or otherwise.

Robert Heilbroner takes a playful approach to each economist, describing their peculiarities, peccadilloes, famous quotes and anecdotes. However, he is keen to point out that his chosen famous economists are all united by their curiosity and determination to understand the world – and markets – in which they found themselves, even when they disagree on the causes of economic ailments, and their respective necessary cures.

My only sorrows were, firstly, that the book only covers the wide-ranging field of economic thought and economists until the 1950s and finishes its review and selection of economists with Schumpeter. I would have loved to find out what Robert Heilbroner would have made of modern monetary theory. Secondly, the book fails to include even a single female economic thinker, wife or partner in any depth. Even if women were not actively encouraged to earn a living as a writer or thinker over most of the 250 years covered by this book, we know that some wives and partners played a very active role in encouraging and supporting the work and interests of their famous husbands (e.g. we know that Mary Burns helped shape some of the thinking of her long-time partner Friedrich Engels, and much of John Nash's work in economics was made possible in large part due to the loving support of his wife Alicia Nash, née Lardé).

But other than that, a truly fascinating book from which everyone is guaranteed to learn something, and to have their ideas challenged in some way! ■

© MOB – David Bochud

Le GoldenPass Express traverse les vignobles vaudois.

Goldenpass Express : le bogie qui gomme les frontières

« Le GoldenPass Express entre dans la légende » : c'est ainsi que 24 H a salué l'arrivée du nouveau train qui, dès le 11 décembre 2022, relie sans changement Montreux et Interlaken. Il faut dire qu'il s'est fait attendre.

JÉRÔME GACHET[1]

Avec le lancement du GoldenPass Express, le 11 décembre dernier, c'est une idée vieille de près de 150 ans qui se réalise. Dans la deuxième moitié du XIXe siècle, alors que la Suisse se dote d'une infrastructure ferroviaire, quelques pionniers songent à relier la Riviera vaudoise aux régions des lacs de Thoune et de Brienz. Il n'y a pas de hasard là derrière cette volonté: imaginez les retombées économiques et touristiques d'un train qui relie directement Montreux à Interlaken!

Le feuilleton ne fait que commencer. L'affaire commence mal quand, au tournant du siècle, le réseau se déploie: voie métrique (1 m) entre Montreux et Zweisimmen, voie normale (1 m 43) entre Zweisimmen et Interlaken. Fin de l'histoire? Non. La flamme diminue, mais ne s'éteint pas. Dans les années 1930, on songe à construire un troisième rail pour contourner cet écueil. Techniquement, c'est jouable, mais le projet tourne court: trop chère, trop compliquée. Il eût en effet fallu construire un tunnel pour traverser la gare de Spiez, déjà très fréquentée depuis l'ouverture du tunnel de base du Lötschberg, en 2007.

À la fin des années 2000, la compagnie du chemin de fer Montreux Oberland bernois (MOB) part sur un concept totalement différent: plutôt que de changer les rails, modifions le matériel roulant! Avec un bogie à écartement variable et une rampe d'écartement, le train pourra passer d'une voie à l'autre. Le concept est élaboré dans les Ateliers techniques du MOB, à Chernex. Le principe est aussi simple en théorie que difficile à réaliser en pratique. Le bogie doit s'écarter, certes, mais aussi s'élever de 30 centimètres. Une complexité et une efficacité qui le rendent unique au monde.

La compagnie basée à Montreux cherche alors un partenaire industriel pour réaliser son concept. C'est l'entreprise Alstom qui est désignée. Dès janvier 2019, quatre prototypes sont livrés et testés. Ça fonctionne, ça fonctionne même très bien. Et à Zweisimmen, la rampe d'écartement est construite. Seules les voitures sont équipées des fameux bogies. Cela suppose qu'une locomotive tracte le train entre Montreux et Zweisimmen (réseau du MOB) et une autre entre Zweisimmen et Interlaken

© MOB – Actalis

La star canadienne Shania Twain est la marraine d'une rame, le Shania Train.

© MOB

Le GoldenPass Express a fait ses grands débuts le 11 décembre 2022.

le baptême du nouveau-né. Cette tâche est confiée à Michael von Grünigen, légende du ski suisse et la chanteuse canadienne Shania Twain. La star mondiale a d'ailleurs une voiture à son nom, le Shania Train. Dessiné par Pininfarina, le célèbre designer de Ferrari, fabriqué par Stadler dans ses ateliers de Bussnang (Thurgovie), le GoldenPass Express a de l'allure. Elégant, confortable, il porte haut les couleurs des grands express européens de la fin du XIXe siècle dont il s'inspire.

Le GoldenPass Express effectue désormais quotidiennement le trajet entre Montreux et Interlaken (115 km). Cette ligne n'a pas attendu le GoldenPass Express pour être mythique. La GoldenPass Line qui relie Montreux et Lucerne est connue pour être une des plus belles du monde. Et là, entre Montreux et Interlaken, c'est un paysage de rêve qui défile durant trois heures, fait de lacs et de montagnes, de vignobles et de pâturages, de palmiers et de cimes enneigées. De la Riviera vaudoise à l'Oberland bernois en passant par le Pays-d'Enhaut, la Suisse se montre dans toute sa diversité et toute sa splendeur.

Grâce à de grandes fenêtres panoramiques, le voyageur est comme assis dans le panorama. Le GoldenPass Express a été pensé pour sublimer le paysage. C'est encore plus vrai en Classe Prestige: les sièges sont en cuir, chauffants, et ils pivotent de manière à ce que l'on se trouve toujours dans le sens de la marche. Le voyage pourra aussi être agrémenté par les plaisirs de la bouche. Une offre de restauration mettant en avant les produits du terroir est proposée. Un must qui vaudra au GoldenPass Express d'être un des fleurons du Grand Train Tour of Switzerland.

(réseau du BLS). Ce changement de traction permet de résoudre un ultime obstacle: la tension électrique n'est pas la même sur les deux tronçons.

Comme doté de pouvoirs magiques, ce bogie fait voler en éclats les frontières. Entre la voie métrique et la voie normale. En théorie, le Goldenpass Express pourrait se promener un peu partout en Europe. Certains spécialistes voient cette innovation technique comme la clé de voûte permet de relier en quelques secondes deux écartements différents. Ce train est aussi un trait d'union entre les cultures, entre les langues, entre la ville et la campagne. Et il rapproche Montreux, Gstaad et Interlaken, trois pôles touristiques majeurs de ce pays.

À fin 2019, le projet est à bout touchant. C'est généralement là que le sol se dérobe. C'est précisément ce qui est arrivé quand, début 2020, le Coronavirus s'est abattu sur le monde. La pandémie a deux effets fâcheux sur le Goldenpass Express. D'une part, elle a retardé la production des bogies d'une dizaine de mois. D'autre part, elle a asséché les marchés du tourisme. Tous les experts de la branche s'accordent à dire que l'on ne retrouvera pas la situation d'avant-Covid avant 2023 ou 2024. Lancer le Goldenpass Express dans un tel contexte reviendrait à «l'envoyer au casse-pipe». Il est ainsi reporté à décembre 2022.

Ce jour est arrivé. Le 9 décembre 2022, deux jours avant le premier service commercial, ont lieu l'inauguration officielle et

Le lancement du GPX – c'est son abréviation – n'est pas passé inaperçu. *CNN, The Times, The Guardian, The Telegraph, Bloomberg, la NZZ, Tagesschau, 24 Heures*... Intriguée, la presse du monde entier (plus de 200 titres, dans 25 langues) s'est penchée sur le dernier-né.

Il est temps de grimper à bord, de tester par soi-même. Jusqu'au 10 juin 2023, le nouveau fleuron de la flotte du MOB effectuera un trajet dans chaque sens. A 9 h 08 au départ d'Interlaken et à 9 h 35 au départ de Montreux. Puis, dès le 11 juin, il augmentera la cadence avec quatre allers-retours quotidiens. Bon voyage! ■

1 Compagnie du Chemin de fer Montreux Oberland bernois (MOB)

Info: gpx.swiss

The rare, but beautiful Amur leopard

Donating to charities and supporting their work makes the world a better place. Here, you will discover the world of Amur leopards and why I think it's important for you to talk about climate change.

LISANNE HOPKIN, NEWSPECIAL EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

I think we should talk about climate change as much as we talk about Covid-19. Covid-19 is constantly in the news, we are still talking about it three years later. It is almost like the flu now. It's still in the air, people are still getting infected by it, mostly in the winter, and we'll probably have to get annual booster jabs to keep our immunisation up. However, this is not the case for climate change. There is possibly a similarity in that some people think climate change isn't real, just as some people believed that Covid-19 vaccines could be dangerous for us. However, we have come to realise that the vaccines are indeed fighting against infections and saving lives, and generally are safe. Whereas, our lack of actions surrounding climate change are still costing people and organisms their lives. We're not saving anyone or anything through climate change.

An Amur leopard up close.

Sir David Attenborough, who could easily be considered a pioneer when it comes to climate change, has done so much in raising awareness, showing us the beauty of the world, but also proving how climate change is affecting the planet Earth. He has been a part of numerous television shows over the decade, authored many books, and has done so much work for the environment. One of my biggest worries is that when he passes, the world will fall apart even more rapidly, because we do not have him to guide us.

And yes, like Attenborough, I will tell you that the ice caps are melting, floods are forcing people out of their homes, hurricanes mean we live without power for days on end. This is seriously scary stuff, and yet it is not being taken seriously, which is infuriating. People's lives are constantly at risk, animals are suffering the consequences of OUR actions. How is that even fair? We are the ones who are ruining the planet, but the animals are the ones who are suffering the most. They cannot change their actions. They have to adapt. Whereas, we need to change our actions. And we need to adapt. We, as humans, need to save the animals and plants who cannot change the world. It's hard to know whether your actions are making an impact on the planet.

There are many things you can do to help reduce climate change, like reducing your carbon footprint, cutting down on the use of plastic, being smart with your energy... Personally, I like to support charities that work towards making the world a better place. One of those charities is the World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

The WWF describes itself as 'the world's leading independent conservation organisation'.

© Tambako the Jaguar

Amur leopards have 1-4 cubs.

Their mission is ‘to create a world where people and wildlife can thrive together’[1]. Growing up, the WWF has always been a part of my life. I can remember sitting in the car with my mum and sister, and asking my mum what the WWF was because I’d just seen it written somewhere. (On a piece of paper, or maybe a sign if we’d been visiting something. I can’t quite remember where I saw it.) That’s my earliest memory of the WWF. My mum’s always been one to support charities and to want to make the world a better place, and I’m glad that’s been passed down to my sister and me.

On October 5th 2020, perhaps due to Covid-19 making its mark on the world, I decided that I wanted to help look after some of the wildlife on this planet. I went to the WWF website looking for an animal to ‘adopt’, determined to make a decent decision, and not just pick the first animal that was suggested to me. Eventually, I decided that I wanted to help protect Amur leopards. Now, like me, you may not have ever heard of Amur leopards. Perhaps because there are only about 120 Amur leopards left in the wild, but like many of the big cats, they are so gorgeous. Each leopard has ‘unique spot patterns, which means that we can identify them individually’[2], and their coats, which can grow up to seven centimetres long in the winter, feature ‘large, dark, widely spaced rosettes with thick, unbroken rings’[3] which is different from other leopards.

Amur leopards have been listed as ‘critically endangered’ since 1996. That’s 27 years! Twenty-seven years and still Amur leopards are one of the most endangered species on the planet.

Amur leopards are hunted by poachers for their fur. The leopards live in the Amur-Heilong region, which spans most of China, Russia, and Mongolia, and live in what are known as ‘temperate forests’[4]. These forests are in a ‘mild climatic area’, though they do experience heavy rainfall and lots of harsh winters[5]. Though the Amur-Heilong region is quite vast, pristine and untouched, the forests are coming ‘under growing pressure from increasing development and the need for resources’. They are wanted for wood and paper, and for development purposes, like road and rail infrastructure[6].

The Amur leopards’ habitats are also being destroyed by humans who want to convert forests into agricultural land, as well as being destroyed by fires. This means that not only are the Amur leopards not safe, but neither is their prey who also need the forests to survive[7]. On top of that, Amur leopards keep a healthy wildlife balance in their environment – this is good for ‘the people, animals, and plants’ that depend on that balance[8]. Why should we then put these wonderful animals at risks when it is clear how vital it is to look after them and their habitats? They keep their environment balanced all by themselves, and as soon as you add humans into the equation, we throw it all out of balance. Not only that, but the presence of Amur leopards actually ‘influences the condition of the forest and ecosystem, which supplies wildlife and people with food, freshwater and many other resources.‘[9] Amur leopards are even beneficial to humans, so why do we insist on endangering them and their environments?

Now, I know that I said we should be as vocal about climate change as we are about Covid-19, and that Amur leopards doesn’t exactly equate to Covid-19. However, we know that climate change is affecting the wildlife on this planet. So, to some extent, I am saying that Amur leopards = climate change = Covid-19. Not the best maths equation, but that is not my point.

My point is that we spent so much money and focus on Covid-19 research and vaccines, and look at how successful it’s all been! Why can we not then do the same thing for climate change? We have so much research on it already! All we need now is for everyone to come together, accept that climate change is real and that we have to act now, and then do everything we can to prevent any more damage that we are causing to the planet! Easier said than done, but that is my point. Doctors, nurses, scientists, so many people put some much work into finding solutions for Covid-19 vaccines. Why can we not find solutions that will save our planet, save the wildlife like Amur leopards, and in turn, save the future? How could you not want to save the future? That’s basically superhero stuff!

Thankfully, the WWF is helping to protect Amur leopards and their habitats. In 2001, the WWF had been campaigning for the establishment of an Amur leopard park in Russia. In 2012, the Russian government approved of this campaign, and now, the park, which spans 650,000 acres, is a protected area for the leopards and is called Land of the Leopard National Park.[10]

WWF does a lot of work in helping Amur leopards. That’s a given. They maintain good quality habitats, provide the much-needed food for the leopards that they may not be able to get due to harsh winters. WWF also works with TRAFFIC, which is the wildlife trade monitoring network, so that the trade of Amur leopard products is reduced and that they succeed in their work of conservation of Amur leopards. WWF is also working hard to maintain lands that are suited to the leopards and are promoting ways to reduce illegal and unsustainable forest practises.[11] The ‘adoption’ of an Amur leopard leads to several similar outcomes being fulfilled, such as the protection of Amur leopards from poaching, the supplementation of their food, securing their protected areas. There are a few additional issues that are part of the adoption programme too, but the main takeaway is that you are helping to protect the lives of Amur leopards. ■

If you want to find out more about Amur leopards or wish to find other animals you could support and/or adopt, visit the WWF website.

1 World Wildlife Fund. “Who We Are.” WWF, website.

2 World Wildlife Fund. “Top 10 Facts about Amur Leopards.” WWF, website.

3 World Wildlife Fund. “How Fast Are Amur Leopards? and 9 Other Amur Leopard Facts.” WWF, website.

4 World Wildlife Fund. “Amur Heilong.” WWF, website.

5,6 Ibid.

7 World Wildlife Fund. “Adopt an Amur Leopard.” WWF, website.

8 World Wildlife Fund. “Amur Heilong.” WWF, website.

9 World Wildlife Fund. “How Fast Are Amur Leopards? and 9 Other Amur Leopard Facts.” WWF, website.

10 Ibid.

11 World Wildlife Fund. “Adopt an Amur Leopard.” WWF, website.

© Carla Edelenbos

Le lac du Hopschu.

Col routiers de Suisse

Le col du Simplon

J'adore le col du Simplon avec ses paysages étendus et sauvages, d'une beauté rude pendant toutes les saisons.

CARLA EDELENBOS,
UN SOCIETY OF WRITERS

Il se trouve à 2005 m d'altitude dans le canton de Valais, et fait la liaison entre la ville de Brig en Valais et la ville de Domodossola en Piémont, Italie, en traversant le village frontière de Gondo. Le passage du col est marqué par une grande statue en pierre qui représente un immense aigle, œuvre du bataillon 11 de l'armée suisse qui était stationnée au col pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale.

Des découvertes d'objets préhistoriques autour des petits lacs sur le Simplon, montrent l'utilisation de ce passage déjà depuis le Mésolithique (10 000 – 5000 BC), mais on ne sait pas grand-chose de ces temps préhistoriques. Le col du Simplon entra dans l'histoire pendant le Moyen Âge, au 12e et 13e siècle, quand le passage empruntait la route la plus courte entre l'Italie du Nord et la région de la Champagne en France. Des marchands italiens prenaient le chemin par le col pour vendre leurs produits dans les foires importantes du Champagne et rentraient par le même chemin, lourdement chargés de produits étrangers. Transporter ses produits ainsi était loin d'être gratuit: à chaque étape, il fallait payer une taxe ainsi qu'une sorte de péage aux seigneurs locaux qui assuraient l'entretien et la sécurité de la route.

Après 1320, l'importance des marchés français déclinait, et des guerres régionales ainsi que des troubles politiques provoquaient une diminution importante de la circulation sur le col. Après la «découverte» de l'Amérique à la fin du 15e siècle, de nouvelles routes maritimes virent concurrencer les voies commerciales et le Simplon fut largement abandonné. Il fallut attendre le 17e siècle pour que le col vive un renouveau. Le marchand Kaspar Jodok von Stockalper profita des violences de la guerre de 30 ans (1618-1648) pour vanter la sécurité de la route empruntant le Valais épargné de la guerre. Il se porta garant de la sécurité de la marchandise entre Genève et Domodossola. En 1634, pour montrer qu'il pouvait réaliser ses promesses, il organisa le voyage de la princesse Caragniano, épouse du prince Thomas de Savoie, via le Valais vers l'Italie. Le cortège accompagnant la princesse comptait plus de 100 nobles, et il fallut donc utiliser des calèches, des bêtes de somme, des animaux de trait et, pour traverser le col qui n'était pas encore carrossable, des chevaux pour les nobles. La traversée constitua une grande réussite et une belle publicité pour la renaissance de la route du col du Simplon!

Stockalper prit alors le monopole pour le transport des marchandises par le col. Les marchands qui ne lui confiaient pas le transport de leur marchandise mais la transportaient eux-mêmes, devaient s'acquitter d'une taxe. Les guildes des muletiers, qui avaient auparavant entrepris le transport, furent dissous et les muletiers devinrent des employés de Stockalper. Il construisit de nouveaux ponts et élargit et fortifia l'ancien sentier pour en faire une route de 3 mètres de large.

© Carla Edelenbos

Le pont du Ganter.

© Carla Edelenbos

L'aigle au col du Simplon.

© Alfred de Zayas

À raquette au col du Simplon.

Avec ses richesses accumulées, Stockalper fit construire un beau palais à Brig ainsi qu'une résidence d'été sur le col qui était utilisée aussi comme hébergement pour les voyageurs, le Alte Hospiz. Malheureusement, il se faisait aussi beaucoup d'ennemis, et en 1678 il dût fuir en Italie. La route qui était sa fierté ne fut plus entretenue et tomba en désuétude. On peut toujours admirer le Stockalper Schloss à Brig, et l'ancienne hospice, qui appartient maintenant à l'armée suisse (il y a une caserne à côté), attire toujours des regards admiratifs des randonneurs qui suivent le chemin Stockalper, transformé en un beau sentier pédestre, très bien aménagé, qui mène de Brig à Gondo.

Un siècle plus tard, en 1800, Napoléon Bonaparte ordonna la construction d'une route carrossable pour permettre à ses troupes de passer le col, qui formait le chemin le plus court entre Paris et Milan. Mais la construction de cette route aurait violé le traité de neutralité de la République helvétique, à laquelle le Valais appartenait, avec l'Autriche. Napoléon songea donc à annexer le Valais comme une province française, mais l'opposition des valaisans était telle qu'il déclara en 1802 le Valais une république indépendante, jusqu'au 1810, quand enfin il annexa le Valais à la France. Encore aujourd'hui, il persiste un sentiment de grogne chez certaines anciennes familles valaisannes contre les français à cause des violences commises par les soldats français et l'annexion forcée. Après la chute de Napoléon, le Valais devint un canton Suisse en 1815, en même temps que Genève. Malgré toutes ces complications, des travaux pour construire la route du Simplon commencèrent en 1801, accompagnés d'un stationnement important des troupes françaises à Brig. Des milliers d'ouvriers furent employés, et comme les valaisans mettaient de la mauvaise volonté, ils furent forcés à travailler. En septembre 1805, après un été fou pendant lequel les travaux ne s'arrêtaient pas et qui vit de nombreux mineurs trouver la mort dans les gorges de Gondo, l'ingénieur Céard, responsable de la construction, put enfin écrire dans son rapport: «Veuillez dire à Sa Majesté impériale qu'il n'y a plus d'Alpes, le Simplon est ouvert.»

La route de 63 kilomètres mesurait entre 7,2 et 8,4 mètres de largeur, et son dénivelé moyen était de 6%. Avec ses 8 grands ponts, 56 petits ponts et 7 galeries, elle constituait un miracle de technique. Au bord de la route, 10 auberges furent construites. Quatre existent toujours, et deux d'entre elles fonctionnent encore comme restaurants. Contrairement aux idées reçues, Napoléon lui-même n'a jamais posé pied sur sa route. Au Simplon, les français commencèrent à bâtir un nouvel hospice, qui devrait servir comme caserne. Mais le travail fut interrompu après la chute de Napoléon, et c'est seulement en 1831 que la bâtisse fut achevée, sous contrôle des chanoines du Grand-Saint-Bernard qui y accueillent encore des visiteurs aujourd'hui.

En 1906 le tunnel ferroviaire sous le Simplon fut ouvert et la route perdait sa place primordiale pour le transport de marchandises. Par contre, l'augmentation de la circulation touristique compensait

© Carla Edelenbos

Hospice du col du Simplon.

© Carla Edelenbos

Le chemin Stockalper.

un peu cette perte. A partir de juin 1906 la route fut ouverte quelques jours par semaine pour des automobiles – la vitesse permise était de 10 km/h et les voitures n'étaient pas autorisées à couvrir la distance de 42 km entre Brig et Gondo en moins de 4 heures et demie, sous menace d'amende! En 1919 les premiers cars postaux prirent la route, permettant ainsi aux gens moins fortunés de traverser les Alpes. Avec l'augmentation de la circulation, la route, qui était non goudronnée jusqu'aux années 50, nécessita des travaux de renforcements. En 1960, elle fut intégrée au réseau routier national suisse et agrémentée de nouveaux ouvrages d'art pour garantir son ouverture même en hiver. La route nationale suit largement le tracé napoléonien et il ne reste plus grand chose de la route originale, à quelques exceptions près, comme le pont sur l'Äger, pas loin du hameau Egga sur le côté sud du Simplon. Sur la route nationale, le pont sur la Ganter, construit entre 1976 et 1980, est splendide, il traverse la vallée sur un longueur de 678 mètres donnant presque l'impression de voler.

La traversée par la voie aérienne du Simplon était presque aussi convoitée que le passage terrestre. En septembre 1910 se tint une compétition internationale avec un prix de 70 000 francs pour le premier avion qui traverserait les Alpes jusqu'à Milan, à partir de Brig. La météo n'était pas favorable et les aviateurs devaient patienter. Le jeune franco-péruvien Geo (Jorge) Chavez entreprit un premier essai le 19 septembre, mais dut arrêter à cause du mauvais temps. Le 23 septembre, il essaya à nouveau et réussit à traverser le Simplon. Malheureusement, des turbulences le forcèrent à descendre dans les gorges étroites de Gondo. Fatigué par sa bataille avec les forces naturelles, il voulut se poser à Domodossola mais perdit le contrôle de son avion quelques mètres avant l'atterrissage. Il mourut 5 jours plus tard d'épuisement. À l'endroit de la place de départ à Ried-Brig, un monument rappelle ce vol historique, et au centre de Brig, une fontaine commémore le jeune aviateur, décédé à l'âge de 23 ans. L'aéroport de Lima est nommé Jorge Chavez en honneur de cet aviateur hors du commun, qui fut le premier à traverser les Alpes par la voie des airs.

Actuellement, hormis les camions qui passent entre l'Italie et la Suisse, la route est surtout utilisée par des touristes. Les randonneurs pédestres peuvent emprunter le magnifique chemin Stockalper de Brig à Gondo, qui suit au loin la rivière Saltina pour monter au col et ensuite descendre par le joli village de Simplon (Simplondorf) et les gorges escarpées de Gondo, dans lesquelles on peut encore visiter une caserne datant de Napoléon ainsi qu'un fort militaire utilisé pendant la première et deuxième guerre mondiale. Une autre possibilité consiste à descendre par la vallée de Zwischbergen, dans laquelle il reste des traces de la ruée vers l'or dans la région à la fin du 19e siècle. Depuis le col, on peut aussi monter jusqu'à la cabane CAS du Monte Leone, depuis laquelle on a une splendide vue sur le glacier. Plus tranquillement, une balade au lac de Hopschu permet de se rafraîchir les jours d'été et de cueillir des myrtilles. Au village de Simplon, l'écomusée raconte l'histoire fort intéressante de la région.

Le col du Simplon reste ouvert pendant l'hiver et souvent le niveau de neige à côté de la route est impressionnant, atteignant parfois 3 mètres. Ça vaut la peine de monter, nul besoin de voyager au nord de l'Europe pour admirer des paysages arctiques! Les possibilités pour les randonnées à raquette ou à ski sont nombreuses et il y en a pour tous les niveaux. Les amateurs de ski de piste peuvent se régaler à Rothwald, entre Brig et le col du Simplon: un long téléski amène les skieurs au sommet où ils peuvent se réchauffer au petit restaurant. Après, chacun profite de la délicieuse descente sur des belles pistes, à recommander quand la neige est fraîchement tombée et a recouvert les sapins et mélèzes d'une belle couche de poudre blanche. ■

Pour plus d'informations:
www.brig-simplon.ch
www.simplon-hospiz.com
www.ecomuseum.ch

El arte de resistir

ALFRED DE ZAYAS,
UN SOCIETY OF WRITERS

Sapere aude![1] ese imperativo de Horacio nos anima a razonar, a pensar independientemente, a buscar evidencias, conocer los hechos, desarrollar un instinto para saber lo que debemos hacer. Para eso hay que tener acceso a la información, toda la información, no solo fragmentos, hay que buscar la información proactivamente, estudiarla, compararla, discutirla – y digerirla.

Indispensable para resistir las mentiras y necedades que nos rodean, hay que estar alerta, tener disciplina, construir una opinión propia, basada en hechos verificables y reforzada en el diálogo con otros que igualmente buscan la verdad. Resistir es pensar primero y luego actuar responsablemente. No es procedente gritar las cuatro verdades a todos los vientos. Es mejor tener una estrategia existencial para saber cuándo y con quien hablar, como desarrollar un punto de vista consecuente que nos permita convencer a otros de las razones éticas que nos obligan a resistir la mentira, los abusos de poder, la arrogancia, la explotación de los más vulnerables, la discriminación, la destrucción del medio ambiente, la manipulación de la opinión pública, la injusticia y la propaganda de guerra.

Resistir significa aceptar las consecuencias de nuestra oposición a las arbitrariedades, a los poderosos, y a las corrientes ocultas que arrasan. Como nos advierte Terencio, *veritas odium parit*[2], la verdad atrae el odio, puesto que aquellos que ya poseen el poder – o lo buscan – se sirven de la mentira y de la calumnia para construir sus castillos. Resistir es anticipar la opresión, tener una estrategia razonada y aprender como esquivar los golpes.

Entre los héroes de nuestra época hay que honrar a los lanzadores de alerta como Julián Assange y Edward Snowden[3]. Héroes son aquellos que como Prometeo nos dan el fuego de la verdad para poder combatir a los oligarcas y otros criminales. Los lanzadores de alerta nos abren los ojos y muestran que nuestro mundo puede ser mejor, más justo, más gentil.

Nosotros todos debemos de tener el coraje de abrir nuestros propios ojos y actuar con una consciencia ética y social que nos haga solidarios con aquellos que sufren la injusticia. Y si el momento llega, nosotros también debemos ser lanzadores de alerta de nuestra propia manera, de conformidad con nuestras posibilidades.

Se me ocurre que el crimen de Ayotzinapa[4] fue cometido con la complicidad de las autoridades Mexicanas. Hubo un gran esfuerzo de ahogar las investigaciones, pero también hubo resistencia, y asesinaron a periodistas[5]. La justicia requiere transparencia y responsabilidad. Pensemos también a la resistencia de las Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo que lucharon por décadas para averiguar el destino de sus desaparecidos hijas e hijos, de sus nietos queridos y de tantas otras víctimas.

Hay muchos ejemplos de lanzadores de alerta. En los Estados Unidos conocemos a algunos nombres, aquellos que el poder a acusado de romper con el «secreto de estado». Pero hay que resistir. Hay que admitirlo: El secreto de estado es una invitación al crimen – a cometerlo y luego a esconderlo, disimularlo, negarlo.

No, no podemos permitir que los gobiernos cometan grandes crimines en el mundo, y que lo hagan con impunidad y en nuestro nombre. El silencio nos convierte en cómplices. Es por eso que el Consejo de Derechos Humanos de Naciones Unidas ha creado los Procedimientos Especiales, y la Relatoría sobre el Derecho a la Verdad, a la Justicia, a la Reparación. Es por eso que es necesario redactar y adoptar una Carta de los derechos de los lanzadores de alerta.


© ip-watch.com

Entre los lanzadores de alerta quiero nombrar algunos nombres ya olvidados por la prensa. Pero no debemos de olvidarlos. Son nuestros héroes. Daniel Hale, Jeffrey Sterling, Scott Bennet, los tres sirviendo años de prisión por divulgar la verdad sobre crímenes geopolíticos. No son los lanzadores de alerta que deben de estar en la cárcel, sino aquellos que han abusado de nuestra confianza, traicionado sus obligaciones como servidores de la sociedad y han corrompido el estado de derecho.

En el mundo Orwelliano que vivimos, hay que saber más, luchar más, resistir más. La libertad de las generaciones que nos siguen depende de nosotros. Nuestros hijos y nietos tienen derecho a que nosotros guardemos su herencia. Sin embargo, no basta resistir. Hay que crear también, y esa es la noble vocación del escritor, del poeta, del novelista. Orwell – el filósofo-poeta-novelista por excelencia – resistió al totalitarismo en España, en Inglaterra, en el mundo, y luchó por los valores humanistas. Nos dio la alerta al creciente peligro de nuestro Gran Hermano – «Big Brother» – y no le escuchamos. *Vox clamantis in deserto* (Isaías 40:3).

Gabriel García Márquez el genial Colombiano, Premio Nobel de Literatura fue un gran luchador por la justicia social y en sus novelas protestó contra los abusos de los poderosos – pero también cantó las verdades del amo.

Y es así que a pesar de todo, sonrío tranquilo con optimismo por la humanidad, desde mi otra orilla del éxtasis, observando a Fermina y a Don Floro navegar hacia aquel horizonte de la *Nueva Fidelidad*, con la bandera amarilla del cólera flotando de júbilo en la asta mayor. Eso es resistir y recomenzar. ■

1 Horatius, *Epistolas*, 1, 2, 40. Ten el coraje de usar tu inteligencia.

2 Publius Terentius, *Phormio.*

3 Snowden, *Permanent Record*, Henry Holt & Co., New York 2019.

4 https://www.wola.org/analysis/ayotzinapa-key-points-understand-mexican-governments-new-actions/ https://www.debate.com.mx/politica/AMLO-Ordenes-de-aprehension-contra-militares-por-caso-Ayotzinapa-podrian-ser-reactivadas-20221026-0064.html

5 https://www.elimparcial.com/mexico/El-asesinato-del-periodista-Pablo-Morrugares-testigo-clave-en-caso-Ayotzinapa-Anabel-Hernandez-20200817-0167.html

© Claude Maillard

Depuis le Turet (1375 m), sommet surplombant le Pays de Gex, le panorama sur le bassin lémanique et les Alpes est exceptionnel.

Des rives du Léman aux sommets du Jura

Pays de Gex

À deux pas de Genève, le Pays de Gex et sa station Monts Jura offrent un panorama grandiose face à la chaîne des Alpes dominée par le majestueux Mont Blanc. Terre de nature et de patrimoine, cette région propose des découvertes en tout genre et des activités variées qui en font une destination unique et enrichissante.

CLAUDE MAILLARD

Le Pays de Gex est l'une des quatre régions principales qui forment le département de l'Ain. Bordé au sud par le Rhône qui vient de s'échapper du lac Léman pour s'écouler en direction de la Méditerranée et au nord par le département du Jura, il a également une frontière commune avec les cantons suisses de Genève et de Vaud.

Véritable porte d'entrée de ce territoire d'une superficie de 405 km^2, le tunnel routier du Fort l'Écluse rend possible sa communication avec la région Rhône-Alpes et le reste de la France.

Fort l'Écluse, un lieu stratégique
Construit en 1936, juste avant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, le tunnel routier du Fort l'Écluse[1] permet aux véhicules de gagner du temps en évitant la traversée du fort édifié pour contrôler ce passage stratégique. A l'origine «le défilé de la Cluse», cet axe de communication naturel entre la France et le plateau helvétique a de tout temps joué un rôle essentiel. Déjà à l'époque romaine, dès 58 av. J.-C., Jules César y avait fait bâtir une tour en bois et une fortification pour se protéger des Helvètes. Au XIII^e siècle, Amédée II, seigneur de Gex, y fait construire une maison forte pour surveiller les lieux et prélever une taxe sur les personnes et les marchandises empruntant cette route. Après les sièges successifs des Bernois et des Genevois au XVI^e siècle, le fort s'agrandit; une enceinte et une tour sont ajoutées. Mais les combats entre Français et Autrichiens en 1814 montrent qu'une protection sur les hauteurs est nécessaire. La construction d'une caserne défensive 200 mètres au-dessus du vieux fort est décidée en 1832. Une dizaine d'années seront nécessaires pour couronner la montagne de cet imposant ouvrage qu'est le Fort l'Écluse qui offre aujourd'hui les vestiges de plusieurs siècles d'architecture militaire. Désarmé depuis 1952, il est devenu propriété de la communauté de communes du Pays de Gex chargée de sa réhabilitation et de sa mise en valeur. Durant l'été, seul le fort inférieur est ouvert au public. Mais, s'il s'en sent le courage, le visiteur peut également gravir les 830 marches de la galerie creusée dans la roche pour atteindre les terrasses situées sous le fort supérieur d'où la vue sur la vallée du Rhône en contrebas est superbe.

Direction plein Est: la voie rapide qui longe la chaîne du Jura, véritable épine dorsale du Pays de Gex, mène à Saint-Genis-Pouilly. Avec plus de 14 000 habitants, la ville doit essentiellement son expansion à l'Organisation européenne pour la recherche nucléaire (CERN) dont le centre névralgique est situé à proximité, à cheval sur la frontière franco-suisse.

Le CERN, univers de particules
Les origines du CERN[2] remontent aux années 1940. Un petit groupe de scientifiques visionnaires d'Europe et d'Amérique du Nord

Classé monument historique, le château de Voltaire a accueilli pendant 20 ans l'un des plus illustres philosophes du siècle des Lumières.

Érigé à flanc de montagne, lieu fascinant chargé d'histoire, le Fort l'Écluse offre une vue imprenable sur la vallée du Rhône.

estiment nécessaire que l'Europe dispose d'une infrastructure de recherche en physique de calibre mondial. Il s'agit d'endiguer la fuite des cerveaux vers l'Amérique, qui avait commencé durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, et d'offrir un moyen d'unifier l'Europe d'après-guerre. Il faudra attendre 14 années pour que l'organisation soit créée, l'une des premières à l'échelle européenne qui compte aujourd'hui 23 États Membres. L'un des plus grands et des plus prestigieux laboratoires scientifiques du monde, le CERN a pour vocation la physique fondamentale, la découverte des constituants et des lois de l'univers. Il utilise des instruments scientifiques très complexes pour sonder les constituants ultimes de la matière: les particules fondamentales. En étudiant ce qui se passe lorsque ces particules entrent en collision, les physiciens appréhendent les lois de la nature.

Les instruments qu'utilise le CERN sont des accélérateurs et des détecteurs de particules. Les accélérateurs portent des faisceaux de particules à des énergies élevées pour les faire entrer en collision avec d'autres faisceaux ou avec des cibles fixes. Les détecteurs, eux, observent et enregistrent le résultat de ces collisions. Aujourd'hui, le LHC (Large Hadron Collider) est l'accélérateur de particules le plus grand et le plus puissant du monde. Son fonctionnement a démarré le 10 septembre 2008 et représente le dernier maillon du complexe d'accélérateurs du CERN. Il consiste en un anneau de 27 km de circonférence formé d'aimants supraconducteurs et de structures accélératrices qui augmentent l'énergie des particules qui y circulent. Tous les systèmes de contrôle de l'accélérateur et de son infrastructure technique sont regroupés au Centre de contrôle du CERN situé dans le Pays de Gex, plus précisément sur la commune de Prévessin-Moëns. C'est depuis ce Centre que sont déclenchées les collisions des faisceaux au centre des quatre détecteurs de particules dont celui d'ATLAS situé en Suisse, à Meyrin. Les trois autres, CMS, ALICE et LHCb, sont implantés dans le Pays de Gex, à Cessy, Saint-Genis-Pouilly et Ferney-Voltaire... Ferney qui ne serait pas la ville qu'elle est de nos jours sans un certain François-Marie Arouet, dit Voltaire, qui lui consacra 20 ans de sa vie.

Voltaire, Seigneur de Ferney

Après s'être brouillé avec son ami le roi Frédéric II de Prusse chez qui il réside de 1750 à 1753, Voltaire doit quitter les lieux et trouver une nouvelle demeure. Il séjourne alors en Suisse, à Prangins, Lausanne puis en 1755 dans la maison des Délices à Genève. Pensant avoir trouvé la ville idéale, patrie de la liberté réputée pour ses éditeurs et son esprit de tolérance, il déchantera rapidement lorsque la cité protestante censurera ses ouvrages. Indésirable en France, bridé à Genève, Voltaire décide alors de partir à la conquête d'un domaine à proximité de Genève, mais en France. C'est ainsi qu'en 1759, alors âgé de 65 ans, il acquiert la seigneurie de Ferney, un hameau misérable entouré de marécages et peuplé d'à peine 200 âmes. Voltaire aime le confort, les plaisirs de la table et de la conversation qu'il considère, avec le théâtre, comme l'une des formes les plus abouties de la vie en société. Il amasse une fortune considérable grâce à la vente de ses ouvrages et dans diverses opérations spéculatives. Cela lui permet de s'installer au château de Ferney et de mener grand train, tenant table et porte ouvertes. Le pèlerinage à Ferney fait partie en 1770-1775 du périple de formation des classes supérieures européennes sympathisant avec le parti philosophique. Investissant ses capitaux, il va également transformer le bourg médiéval pour en faire une petite ville prospère. Marais asséchés, construction de maisons, d'une fontaine publique, d'une nouvelle église, pavage des rues, développement de l'artisanat... Le style ferney-voltairien va se déployer suivant deux axes perpendiculaires: la route de Genève à Paris, et celle de Lyon à Versoix. Suivant les principes qu'il avait lui-même édictés en 1749 dans ses «Embellissements de Paris», il va proscrire les encorbellements et veiller au strict alignement des édifices pour le nouveau centre du village. En périphérie, il va favoriser l'édification de zones pavillonnaires cossues avec jardins, principalement destinées à ses proches et aux horlogers venus de Genève.

Reconstruit par Voltaire à l'emplacement d'une maison forte et d'une gentilhommière, au cœur d'un parc de 7 hectares, le château de Ferney[3] présente les principales caractéristiques des résidences aristocratiques de campagne du bassin lémanique. La demeure qui rayonne dans un véritable écrin de verdure a été classée monument historique puis achetée par l'État en 1999. Après avoir bénéficié d'une restauration complète et inaugurée par le président Emmanuel Macron, elle est à nouveau accessible aux visiteurs qui pourront, durant un instant, revivre les années que l'un des plus illustres philosophes du siècle des Lumières (1715-1789) passa à Ferney. ■

Suite du périple dans le Pays de Gex, de Divonne-les-Bains aux stations de ski Monts Jura, en passant par Gex, dans le prochain numéro du *newSpecial*

1 www.fortlecluse.fr
2 home.cern.fr
3 www.chateau-ferney-voltaire.fr
4 maryv@pre-richard.com

Vivicittà – a very special international running race in Geneva

On Sunday, March 26, the 11th edition of the Vivicittà Run Race will start and finish close to the Bains des Pâquis, in cooperation with Pro Natura.

© Vivicitta

Why the name Vivicittà?
As its name suggests, the competition was initiated in Italy 30 years ago, and it is currently proposed by some 20 Italian cities.

Why Vivicittà in Geneva?
Over the years, the Vivicittà has become international: today, this race takes place every year in major cities in 20 countries. Geneva, an international city, if ever there was one, is the first to organize it in Switzerland.

The organizing club, SATUS Geneva, has been in charge of its famous International Cross for 60 years, bringing together athletes from different countries. The Vivicittà was therefore the perfect natural successor.

Why is the Vivicittà so special?
- It takes place in all cities, on the same day, at the same time and over the same distance.
- It attracts between 70,000 and 80,000 athletes worldwide.
- It establishes an international ranking that takes into account the profile of the race and the altitude of the venue, in order to allow for a true comparison of individual results on a global scale.
- It involves blind and visually impaired people, as well as autistic runners.
- Since 1987, it has been under the patronage of the IOC (International Olympic Committee).

What about the itinerary?
It all begins with a dream start on the Mont Blanc quay, and after skirting the lake, the race takes off over the flowery heights of the Botanical Garden, passes near the international organizations, and then crosses the park of the Penthes Castle, with the lake always in the eye of the runners. Then comes the charming village of Pregny-Chambésy, and soon the *Perle du Lac* announces the imminent arrival.
A course unanimously appreciated by the participants of the first ten editions.

Did you know?
The first edition in 2011 attracted 179 participants, reaching 620 in 2018. The number of runners then declined to 408 in 2022 after two races cancelled in 2020 and 2021 in relation to the Covid-19 crisis. Your participation is essential, as each additional registration will reinforce our financial support of *Pro Natura*, a non-profit-making institution active in the preservation and protection of our natural environment.

Join us and enjoy a pleasant Sunday morning! ■

Information and registration:
www.vivicitta-geneve.ch

The race is supported by the City of Geneva, the Canton of Geneva and the Municipality of Pregny-Chambésy

Message du comité de rédaction

Aimeriez-vous partager votre opinion avec nous au sujet de newSpecial et de son contenu?

Nous serons toujours ravis de lire vos réactions. Les réponses intéressantes, parfois mêmes ingénieuses et constructives seront publiées dans le magazine. Souhaitez-vous soumettre un article, un sujet? Vous pouvez nous contacter quand vous le souhaitez.

Adressez vos commentaires à:
Garry Aslanyan – newSpecial
OMS, 20 av. Appia, CH-1202 Genève, Suisse
Par courrier électronique: info@newspecial.org

Message from the Editorial Committee

Would you like to share your opinion about newSpecial and its contents?

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 or a subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

Send your thoughts to:
Garry Aslanyan – newSpecial
WHO, 20, av Appia CH-1202 Geneva, Switzerland
By email: info@newspecial.org

newSpecial
WHO, office 4139
20 av. Appia
1202 Genève
info@newspecial.org

Suivez-nous sur:

www.newspecial.org

Au service du personnel des organisations internationales de Genève depuis 1949.
Serving the people of international organizations in Geneva since 1949.

Les opinions exprimées dans *newSpecial* sont celles des auteurs, et non forcément celles de l'ONU, de l'OMS ou de ses agences spécialisées. La parution de ce magazine dépend uniquement du support financier de la publicité prise en charge par une régie.

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

Composition du comité de rédaction
Composition of the Editorial Commitee

Garry Aslanyan
WHO, Editor-in-Chief

Présidente de l'association du personnel
Staff association president

Daniella Salmon

Marko Stanovic
UNCTAD

Yulia Lemenez
UNDP

Christian David
UNOG

Deborah Randolph Talon
WHO

Phillippa Biggs
ITU

Kevin Crampton
WHO

Eric Carlson
ILO

CE MAGAZINE EST DISTRIBUÉ DANS LA GENÈVE INTERNATIONALE ET LOCALE

Tirage combiné total (impression et numérique): **>10500 exemplaires**

Imprimé sur du papier certifié FSC.

MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC® C017879

Éditeur / Publisher
Publicité / Advertising
C•E•P S.A.
Quai Gustave-Ador 42
1207 Genève
T. +41 22 700 98 00
cepinfo@bluewin.ch

Graphisme / Design
Atelier Schnegg+
Michel Schnegg
Rue du Simplon 5
1207 Genève
T. +41 22 344 72 90
www.atelier-schnegg.ch

Impression / Printer
Courvoisier-Gassmann SA
135, chemin du Long-Champ
2504 Bienne
T. +41 32 344 83 95
www.courvoisier.ch

Emil Frey SA
1211 Genève-Acacias
bmw-efsa-geneve.ch