

newSpecial

SUMMER 2020 @HOME IN GENEVA

Rest, Recover and Reflect



ÉTÉ À GENÈVE

Un guide complet - p. 6

FAO AT 75

Interview with the Director of the Liaison Office in Geneva - p. 22

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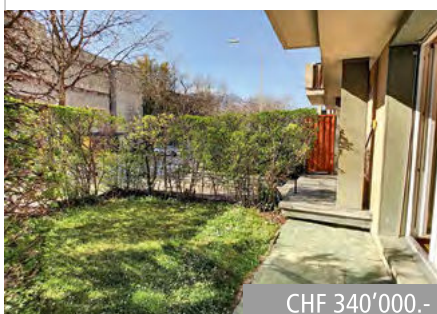
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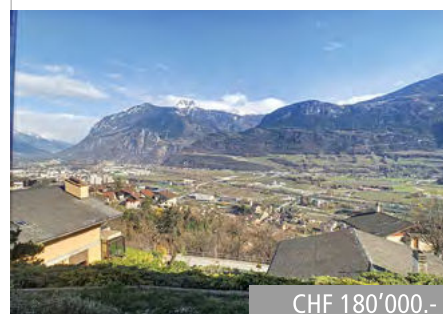
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EDITORIAL / ÉDITORIAL 3

FEATURED / À LA UNE
 Leave, rest and recuperation – important ingredients for the health and well-being of staff 5

How to enjoy summer 2020 in Geneva, Switzerland 6

How a hotel group in Geneva is charting the course for the future of the hospitality industry 10

Covid 19: c'était écrit 14

The Art of (de) confinement 16

Treasure hunting in Plainpalais's *Marché aux puces* 18

Global call to cultivate mental hygiene 20

Le regard d'un aigle 24

Reflections in lockdown 27

INTERNATIONAL GENEVA / GENÈVE INTERNATIONALE

The sociolinguistic diversity of staff in international organizations in Geneva and Switzerland 34

Choosing a candidate in US elections 36

A centre in Geneva to promote the use of evidence in humanitarian action 38

Why legal insurance for employment matters is essential 40

UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES / AGENCES DES NATIONS UNIES

On the Black Lives Matter Protests 12

FAO at 75! 22

UN-Isolated: Geneva diplomatic community reflects on the new reality 2020 28

WHO headquarters: A bit of history 31

ART & CULTURE

WHO's inaugural Health for All Film Festival will return for a second edition in 2021! 42

Namibie: Entre dunes et océan 44

Confinement: We humans have disappointed the birds 46

INTERIM EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Rest, recover and reflect

The last few months have been tough and it is now the summer. We need to relax and recover. We are fortunate to be able to do so in a beautiful, relatively safe and undeniably rich country like Switzerland. So *carpe diem* this summer for us with a bit of luck. But let's not forget that we have serious business ahead.

In Geneva, the first wave is over, but will there be a second? In isolated places like New Zealand with decisive leaders it's over... as long as they keep their frontiers closed. In Europe it's more or less over... still a few pockets or clusters here and there. But in huge, highly populated areas of the world it hasn't even peaked yet... and often they don't have anything like the level of healthcare, social protection or economic resilience that we enjoy.

Climate specialists warn that if we thought the disruption caused by Covid-19 was bad, we ain't seen nothing yet compared to when, as global warming intensifies, nature releases its full fury and oceans rise, cultivable land becomes desert, and climate refugees replace war refugees.

Let's take time this summer to relax, but also to reflect. To ask ourselves what type of world a baby born in 2020 would like to grow up in. Apparently they'll be called coronials! What could the "new normal" be and how can we #buildbackbetter? We'll be sharing ideas on this in our September issue. Until then stay safe and happy holidays! ■

COMITÉ DE RÉDACTION INTÉrimAIRE

Se reposer, récupérer et méditer

Voici l'été, il est temps de se ressourcer après ces quelques mois difficiles.

Quelle chance pour nous en Suisse, de pouvoir apprécier ce pays magnifique, relativement sûr et économiquement favorisé. Carpe Diem! Que cette période estivale nous apporte la chance sans cependant nous faire oublier ce que l'avenir nous prépare.

La première vague est passée à Genève, y en aura t'il une seconde? Quelques places isolées comme la Nouvelle -Zélande, ont stoppé la maladie. Ses dirigeants ont pris cette décision décisive et qui semble efficace aussi longtemps que leur frontière restera fermée...

C'est moins évident en Europe où quelques clusters perdurent ici ou là. En revanche, le pic n'a jamais été atteint dans quelques régions du monde particulièrement exposées. Leurs niveaux en termes de soins de santé, de protection sociale ou de résilience économique n'ont rien d'équivalent à ceux dont nous bénéficions.

Les spécialistes du climat nous préviennent. Ils mettent en perspective la perturbation causée par Covid 19 et le réchauffement climatique. Ils annoncent le scénario: une nature libère sa fureur, des océans débordent, des terres cultivables deviennent désertiques et des réfugiés climatiques remplacent les réfugiés de guerre.

Prenons le temps de nous relaxer. Réfléchissons aussi sur le futur d'un bébé «coronial» né en 2020. Demandons-nous dans quel type de monde aimerait-il grandir et quelle serait alors la nouvelle normalité? Faut-il nous diriger vers la tendance #buildbackbetter pour mieux reconstruire nos sociétés? Nous partagerons, à ce sujet, quelques idées dans notre numéro de septembre. D'ici là, prenez soin de vous, nous vous souhaitons de bonnes vacances. ■

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Interview

Leave, rest and recuperation – important ingredients for the health and well-being of staff

*Interview with
Mr. Raul Thomas,
Assistant Director-
General, Business
Operations, WHO*



© WHO

CATHERINE KIROREI-CORSINI AND
GARRY ASLANYAN, WHO

The so called “new normal” has changed everything for staff when it comes to work. An early indication is that staff have adapted relatively well when it comes to work, but what about leave, rest and recuperation, do you have any information on this?

The recent teleworking and well-being survey showed that the majority of staff have indeed adapted relatively well to teleworking although one of the issues highlighted by staff completing the survey was the difficulty unplugging and disconnecting from work. Summer is now upon us and it is important that staff take the requisite time off to recharge their batteries as they would normally have done, regardless of the ability to travel far and

wide. Additional flexibility for the exercising of annual leave and home leave has been provided for given the unique circumstances we find ourselves in. In addition, United Nations organizations are also looking into ways to best accommodate rest and recuperation for those staff in hardship duty stations.

Staff health and wellness, especially mental health, is paramount to staff productivity. Do you track how staff are doing when it comes to this and what are the support systems to minimize any negative impact?

SHW, the Staff Counsellor and psychologist are regularly monitoring and assisting staff members who request assistance or are known to need support. We have implemented several psychosocial support initiatives including regular small group

webinars run by the Staff Counsellor which have seen a good level of participation and interest. We are also working with the Staff Association and the office of the Ombudsperson to see how best to provide additional support in this space. Outside of the official support mechanisms, as managers and colleagues we should also be alert to any issues our colleagues are having and guide them in the right direction where possible.

How important is it to take leave? Are there techniques to do it in a way that does feel like leave, even if travelling or returning home for many staff is not an option?

As mentioned in the reply to the first question, we all need to take leave regardless of the ability to travel to our usual holiday destinations. It has been a challenging time for everyone, including our families, and we need to spend time with them in a relaxing environment – we need to take the necessary time to reconnect. There are many interesting attractions and things to do/experience in our duty stations so perhaps now is the time to be creative and discover the area we live and work in. Also, within a couple of hours drive there are countless nearby resorts with lakeside beaches, pools, hiking and biking trails for those who like adventure. Switzerland and neighbouring France and Italy

have a wealth of spa resorts for ultimate relaxation over short or longer periods, so lots to do and see right here in our own back yard.

Summer leave has always been part of staff recharging and rejuvenation, as there are fewer meetings and events and no school for children. In light of the current situation, what is your advice on how to plan things, even if in a different way?

Discuss leave plans in your team ensuring all staff are going to be taking a minimum of 15 days this year. Discuss coverage during the periods of leave and start your hand-over at least a week before you go. Put vacation rules in place in GSM, put a clear “out of office” message in Outlook, with contact details of who is covering and do not say that you will be looking at emails. Have faith in those covering for you. UNPLUG AND RELAX!

What are your own plans for this summer?

That is a good question – I plan to take some time and visit the coast of Italy with those members of my family who are with me as well as exploring the many cultural sites in and around Geneva. While I usually travel to visit extended family in the summers, I am really looking forward to experiencing summer in Europe! ■

How to enjoy summer 2020 in Geneva, Switzerland



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**GRACE RACHAEL ACAYO,
RESEARCH ANALYST, ITU**

So, like everyone else, I am sure you can safely say 2020 has NOT gone in the direction of the plan you laid out on New Year's Eve 2019. Covid-19 has stolen the show and seems to have no intention of leaving us just yet. Therefore, it has now become clear to all of us that for the foreseeable future we will have to learn to get on with our lives in what is now known as the "new normal."

Perhaps at this point, you had intended to be halfway across the world, in the mountains of Brazil, on the beach on the Gold Coast of Australia or even closer by in a villa in the south of Spain. So, what do you do now that those plans have been shelved? Well you could still consider travelling to locations which have begun to reopen their borders and have

reported low levels of Covid-19 presence such as the Caribbean or Eastern Africa but maybe you're a bit skeptical about being in the first batch of people who decide that the new protocols and restrictions will not stop them from taking on the skies.

If that is you, then while you may have been dreaming about lazy days by the beach in exotic destinations this year, you may need to consider using this summer to learn more about all the cool things to do in Geneva and if you are even more adventurous, taking the big leap and moving beyond the border lines of "the Republic" and into the depths of Switzerland. If this appeals to you then you are in luck! Below I have compiled some of the best things to do in Geneva and beyond, this summer.

10 "must do" things in Geneva for Summer 2020

Pamper yourself at the Bains des Pâquis

Though Geneva may have other spas more luxurious than the Bains des Pâquis, none are as interesting, kitsch or reasonably priced as this 1930s public swimming bath, set on Lake Geneva. Open year-round, it is great for a dip, sauna, massage, fondue or a cheap lunch in friendly, casual surroundings. Plenty of events take place on site, including early-morning music and poetry readings in summer!

Explore the Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum

For various reasons – its famed neutrality, its location in the Centre of Europe – Geneva is the seat of many international organizations, some of which are open to visitors. The outstanding International Red

Cross and Red Crescent Museum is unmissable for its moving and sometimes shocking permanent exhibition, which charts the vital humanitarian work carried out by the organization for the past 150 years.

Learn about particle physics at CERN

Here's another thing that Geneva is remarkable for: a 27-mile ring of superconducting magnets that accelerates particles at the speed of light. It seems incredible that a world-renowned physics laboratory attempting to solve the secrets of the universe should be open to the likes of us mere mortals, but it is. A tram ride out to the district of Meyrin, CERN is open for guided tours, and while you might not see the Large Hadron Collider (it's closed to the public when operational), a visit round the lab takes in various other accelerators and is still fascinating.



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Hike on the Salève

The Salève mountain is a peaceful retreat just a short bus ride away from the city centre – so close in fact that it’s known as Geneva’s local mountain even though it’s actually just over the border in France. From the cable car base station at Veyrier it’s a short ride up to 1,379m for a superlative view of the city

and lake. On the summit, you can hike, paraglide, bird-spot, picnic or just sit in one of its cafés and contemplate the view.

Geneva Natural History Museum

Animal cries, sounds and environmental rustlings convey a stunning sense of realism. The display is especially memorable for its beauty and clarity,



© emageti/flickr

its opulence and intelligence. You may also explore a world of minerals – both terrestrial and extraterrestrial – with the exhibition of meteorites, precious and semi-precious stones and fossils.

Geneva Wine Trail

The longest vineyard walks in Switzerland. Discover the

magnificent Geneva countryside by following three fascinating didactic itineraries combining wine growing, nature and local products.

The three itineraries are equipped with information panels introducing Geneva’s grape varieties. The Rive Droite (right bank of the Rhône) itinerary



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passes through Switzerland's largest wine growing village, Satigny. From there, you will enjoy an exceptional view of Mont-Salève. The Entre Arve et Rhône walk introduces the "Champagne" region where a great many restaurants propose local products. Last but not least, the Entre Arve et Lac walk follows the left bank of the Rhône through charming historic villages.

Lake Geneva Cruises

The Belle Époque boats have been navigating Central Europe's largest inland lake for 140 years and offer fantastic cruises between France and Switzerland. The views from the boat extend from harbours and castles (Chillon, Morges, Rolle, Yvoire among others) over vineyards to the snow-covered summits of the Swiss and Savoyard Alps. The boat landings are starting points for many exploration activities like city tours (Geneva, Lausanne, Montreux, Vevey).

Guided tour: The flavours of Geneva chocolate

Truffles, chocolates, the traditional Geneva chocolate kettle or an award-winning chocolate cake: this tour allows you to discover the best chocolatiers of the city and a total of eleven sweet creations.¹

Stand-up paddling and windsurfing in Geneva

Whether you are a beginner or an expert, this school is open to everyone and offers windsurfing or stand up paddle boarding sessions to suit your level. Have fun in the water and then work on your tan or sip a drink beneath the palm trees on their magnificent terrace.

The new Eaux-Vives Beach

This beach with fantastic views of the Jet d'Eau invites you to relax and chill out and has recently been upgraded and now features a new beach restaurant with a breathtaking view of the lake. Locals and tourists alike have long enjoyed being able to swim right in the

heart of the city of Geneva. The new Eaux-Vives public beach makes this possible and evokes holiday feelings. The long, wide beach is made of sand. Some sections are made of gravel. The facility includes a grassy area for guests to relax and enjoy.

Top 5 things to do within a two-hour drive from Geneva

Fly over Lake Geneva

The region around Villeneuve is near Geneva, Lausanne, and Valais. It is therefore ideal for paraglider flights. Breathtaking views and an adrenaline rush are guaranteed!²



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© Henk Bekker / flickr



Chillon Castle

Chillon Castle is located on a rock on the banks of Lake Geneva. This castle is the most visited historic building in Switzerland. For nearly four centuries, Chillon was the residence and profitable toll station of the counts of Savoy. It's possible to rent out the castle for various events.

Fortress Vallorbe

Up to 200 men who were stationed in the fortress of Vallorbe defended the Jougne Pass and the French border – with field howitzers, cannons and machine guns. Water and food supplies lasted for two months. Filtered air and the fortress's own operating theatre guaranteed autonomy as far as the

outside world was concerned. "Pré-Giroud", built between 1937 and 1941 and also used during the Second World War, is today part of military cultural history.

Stalactite cave and subterranean river

The River Orbe created a fascinating cave system at the

Vaudois town of Vallorbe. The tour leads visitors along the subterranean course of the Orbe (an outflow from the Vallée de Joux), passing by stalactites, stalagmites, drip-stone formations, columns and galleries.

Salt Mines of Bex

For centuries, the ownership of salt mines meant wealth and power. The salt deposits at Bex, discovered in the 15th century, are still mined today. The salt mines are accessible to visitors, a museum depicts the mining of salt from 1684 to the present. ■

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Safety first

How a hotel group in Geneva is charting the course for the future of the hospitality industry

Interview with Dr. Christian Rey, Chairman, and Xavier Rey, CEO, “Rey Group” and “Rey Hotels and Residencies”.

GARRY ASLANYAN, WHO

The pandemic has changed the way we travel and the role of hotels. While pandemic-era policies are still being developed at hotels around the globe and will no doubt vary widely, it's safe to say that guests will see big changes the next time they stay anywhere. To check-in on how one hotel group in Geneva has dealt with and coped during the pandemic and what it plans for this summer, *newSpecial* interviewed the owners of Hotel Drake and Hotel Sagitta.

Thank you very much for agreeing to speak to *newSpecial*. Could you tell us a bit more about your hotel group, your business motto and presence in Switzerland?

The Rey Group has been around for about 60 years, it was created by my father, Othmar Rey, and since then we have continuously made it grow. We have always had a strong link with the international organizations in Geneva and those who visit them for business. Our motto is “home away from home”, mainly because our hotels and residences in Geneva are more than just a

hotel room, they allow visitors to have small kitchens and are quite large, which gives them a home feeling. For travellers who work with international organizations, this is an ideal option. We are also a family business with various sectors that include hotel, hospitality and real estate development.

Many businesses, especially those in tourism, had to shut down to avoid the spread of COVID-19. While it is frustrating on a business level and comes with a loss, how did your hotel group respond, how did you try to make sense of the new situation?

We have a relationship with our guests and also with our employees, which is important to us. It was in this spirit that we have stayed open during the pandemic and the lockdown in Geneva. We felt that we could do our part for those in need of a place to stay. Many people had no way of returning home, as there were no flights to several parts of the world, including to Africa or Asia. They had no choice but to stay in Geneva and we could not leave them without service. Hence,



© Rey Group

we stayed open. On average, about 35% of our guests are international civil servants, at times about 50%, when there are big meetings. We have agreements with missions and organizations. When we stayed open, we were only at 10-15% of occupancy, but that didn't matter. We felt responsibility to make sure the price was reasonable so those who had to stay for a long time could afford the stay.

Thanks for that, it is very interesting to hear how you adapted to the situation and also offered “shelter” to many groups in

Geneva. What advice do you have for businesses, especially in the tourism industry, in the process of recovery and return to operations?

In general, hotels in Switzerland have high levels of safety and cleanliness. With that base, we have adapted to the situation, for example for breakfast, we had to put space between the tables, we developed schedules for guests to come at specific times so there is no crowding. Most things are packaged – the same quality of products, but packaged for the safety of the customers. We are producing our own disinfectant solutions



Centre équestre La Bâtie.

in house, so we are not dependent on deliveries from outside. Its 100% ecological and can be used in a variety of ways. This is also important for our staff, who knew they had appropriate tools to deal with this situation. While we had to reduce some staff presence, we didn't reduce the quality of service, things like 24-hour front desk and other things stayed the same. We made sure the guests didn't feel any change in the quality of our services.

How do you think businesses will change?

As we already mentioned, Switzerland has always been a very safe place for travel and if you have seen the recent reports, Switzerland has been categorized as one of the safest places to travel in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is due to standards introduced by the authorities as well as those implemented by hotel and other service managers. This is extremely important as with the opening of airlines, we will be ready to ensure visitors' safety and it's an important message to the world that Switzerland is open and ready to receive them, safely. But of course, people will be more careful. Especially how they interact with other people. Everybody needs to adjust and find how best to keep a distance and keep safe. But we are still learning, it's difficult to predict how things will be in the industry in the next few months, as recommendations on distance, on the use of masks and other aspects

change based on emerging science. But one thing is clear, we will have to live with COVID-19 and be ready for any other challenge in the future.

The hotel industry is exploring ways to adjust to the new reality but also see how this can be an opportunity. Things like check-in and hotel reception with less human contact are being explored. But this must be done carefully because people appreciate how they are helped at the reception and at breakfast. There are some experiments with robots and machines, which are still being tested, but we know that we will keep the human contact in the hospitality business. The focus of our business is to welcome people, to make the guests feel at home. We are a family group – we want to make sure people come to our hotel as their own home and that's how we train our employees. We have very long-lasting relationships with our employees, we create the spirit and help maintain that spirit.

Many of our readers return home during summer as they work for international organizations in Geneva. As the travel requirements have changed and this may be harder to do, what advice do you have and what guidance can you offer so they can do their best to enjoy the summer?

This may be a great opportunity for your readers who come from around the world to take time and learn about

Switzerland and take a vacation here. We are a small country, but we have different cultures and ways of life that can be appreciated and enjoyed. Switzerland is a land that was created on a compromise and this history and culture should be of interest to many of those working in international organizations which always seek global approaches and agreements to make the world a better place. You can drive across Switzerland in four hours and it will always be different from place to place, which is quite special. This is a great opportunity. There are many ways and new approaches to this. We have launched a new service for those who live in Geneva. We have the lake, we have the mountains, we have the forests, almost every type of nature is around us. All of this is particularly great to enjoy during the

summer. Our Group has a stable with horses in Geneva. We are going to organize camps where people can come in the morning and enjoy things like golf and horse riding, plus lunch that will feature typical local dishes and wine. There are plenty of things to see, and you can even do this while riding a horse (<http://centre-equestre-versoix.ch/stage-dequitation-initiation-golf-ete-2020>).

Thank you very much for this conversation and sharing your thoughts on this topic. I am personally going to take your advice and make sure I get to know Geneva better, even more than what I think I already know, having lived here for over ten years. The summer of 2020 may be that opportunity indeed, notwithstanding the changes and challenges that are around us. ■



© Geoff Livingston / flickr

On the Black Lives Matter Protests

*A desperate yearning for a long-departed mother.
Reaching deep from the bowels of fragile humanity.
Grasping for breath. Begging for mercy.*

JOINT REFLECTIONS BY UNITED NATIONS SENIOR AFRICAN OFFICIALS¹

The entire world heard the tragic cry. The family of nations saw his face pounded against the harsh tarmac. Unbearable pain in broad daylight. A neck buckling under the knee and weight of history. A gentle giant, desperately clinging to life. Yearning to breathe free. Till his last breath.

As senior African leaders in the United Nations, the last few weeks of protests at the killing of George Floyd in the hands of police, have left us all outraged at the injustice of racism that continues to be pervasive in our host country and across the world.

Not enough can ever be said about the deep trauma and inter-generational suffering that has resulted from the racial injustice perpetrated through centuries, particularly against people of African descent. To merely condemn expressions and acts of racism is not enough.

We must go beyond and do more. United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres stated that “*we need to raise our voices against all expressions of racism and instances of racist behaviour*”. Following the killing of Mr. George Floyd, the cry ‘Black Lives Matter’ resounding across the United States and throughout the

world is more than a slogan. In fact, they do not only matter, they are quintessential to the fulfillment of our common human dignity.

Now is the time to move from words to deeds.

We owe it to George Floyd and to all victims of racial discrimination and police brutality to dismantle racist institutions. As leaders in the multilateral system, we believe it is incumbent

upon us to speak for those whose voices have been silenced, and advocate for effective responses that would contribute to fight systemic racism, a global scourge that has been perpetuated over centuries.

The shocking killing of George Floyd is rooted in a wider and intractable set of issues that will not disappear if we ignore them. It is time for the United Nations to step up and act decisively to help end systemic racism against people of African descent and other minority groups “in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion” as stipulated in Article 1 of the UN Charter. Indeed, the foundation of the United Nations is the conviction that all human beings are equal and entitled to live without fear of persecution. It was at the height of the civil rights movement in the United States and during the emergence of post-colonial independent African nations joining the United Nations, that the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) came into force in 1969.

This was a pivotal time in history. The collapse of apartheid in South Africa, driven in part by the United Nations, was one of the Organization’s proudest achievements.

The human rights and dignity of black people in Africa as well as across the African diaspora resonated as a powerful signal to future generations, that the United Nations would neither turn a blind eye on racial discrimination nor tolerate injustice and bigotry under the cover of unjust laws. In this new era, the United Nations must in the same vein use its influence to once again remind us of the unfinished business of eradicating racism and urge the community of nations to remove the stain of racism on humanity. We welcome the initiatives by the Secretary-General to strengthen the global anti-racism discourse, which would

address systemic racism at all levels, as well as its impact wherever it exists, including in the United Nations Organization itself.

If we are to lead, we must do so by example. To initiate and sustain real change, we also must have an honest assessment of how we uphold the UN Charter within our institution.

Our expression of solidarity is well in keeping with our responsibilities and obligations as international civil servants to stand up and speak out against oppression. As leaders we share the core beliefs and the values and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations that do not leave us the option to keep silent.

We commit to harnessing our expertise, leadership and mandates to address the root causes and structural changes that must be implemented if we are to bring an end to racism.

Almost 500 years after the revolting Transatlantic trade of Africans began, we have arrived at a critical point in the arc of the moral universe as we approach in 2024 the end of the International Decade for People of African Descent, a mere four years away. Let us use our collective voice to fulfill the aspirations of our communities that the United Nations will wield its moral power as an institution to effect global change. Let us use our voice to contribute towards the realization of Africa’s own transformative vision contained in Agenda 2063 which is consistent with the world’s Agenda 2030.

Africa is the cradle of humanity and the forerunner of human civilizations. Africa as a continent must play a definitive role if the world is to achieve sustainable development and peace. That was the dream of



© Tim Demmel / flickr



© Anthony Quintano / flickr

the founders of the Organization of African Unity, that was also the strong belief of prominent leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah and eminent intellectuals such as Cheikh Anta Diop.

Let us never forget the words of President Nelson Mandela: “To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity.”

Let us ever bear in mind the admonition of civil rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer: “Nobody’s free until everybody’s free”, who was echoed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”.

Their words were later embodied into the rainbow of the diverse nation of South Africa, as spelled by the peacemaker

Archbishop Desmond Tutu when he stated that “Black liberation is an absolutely indispensable prerequisite to white liberation – nobody will be free until we all are free.” ■

1 All signatories listed below are senior UN officials who hold the rank of Under Secretary-General. They signed this Op Ed in their personal capacity: Tedros ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS Mahamat Saleh ANNADIF, Zainab BANGURA, Winnie BYANYIMA, Mohamed Ibn CHAMBAS, Adama DIENG, François Louceny FALL, Bience GAWANAS, Gilbert HOUNGBO, Bishar A. HUSSEIN, Natalia KANEM, Mukhisa KITUYI, Mankeur NDIAYE, Phumzile MLAMBO-NGCUKA, Parfait ONANGA-ANYANGA, Pramila PATTEN, Vera SONGWE, Hanna TETTEH, Ibrahim THIAW, Leila ZERROUGUI

Covid 19: c'était écrit

La crise sanitaire que nous avons traversée depuis quelques mois a provoqué un brouhaha médiatique qui multiplia, avec plus ou moins de lucidité, des avis d'experts autoproclamés. Voici quelques réminiscences de lectures qui finalement avaient analysé, avec une justesse qui laisse rêveur, cet évènement historique.

MARTINE & CHRISTIAN DAVID

La servitude est une; on est libre dès qu'on la brave, quel que soit le nombre de tyrans.

Sénèque, 65

Tu seras fait d'un vulgaire la fable, tu bâtiras sur l'incertain du sable, et vainement tu peindras dans les cieux.

Ronsart, 1552

Ce qu'il y a de plus fatal est qu'au lieu de savoir me taire quand je n'ai rien à dire, j'ai la fureur de vouloir parler.

Rousseau, Les confessions, 1765

Certes, on peut braver les lois humaines, mais non résister aux lois naturelles.

Jules Verne, *Vingt mille lieues sous les mers*, 1870

J'ai compris que tout le malheur des hommes venait de ce qu'il ne tenaient pas un langage clair.

Albert Camus, *La peste*, 1947

Il y a deux histoires: l'histoire officielle, menteuse, puis l'histoire secrète, où sont les véritables causes des événements.

Balzac, 1837

La science et la technique ont pris le pas sur la nature, sur le pouvoir, sur la poésie, sur la philosophie et sur la religion. Voilà le cœur de l'affaire. Elles ont bouleversé notre vie.

Jean d'Ormesson, *Un jour je m'en irai, sans en avoir tout dit*, 2013

Une «sobriété heureuse» permettrait, en modérant nos besoins de choses inutiles, de ne plus être dupe des leurre de la société de consommation et de remettre l'humain au cœur de nos préoccupations.

Pierre Rhabi, 2010

Les bienfaiteurs paraissent mieux aimer leurs obligés que les obligés leurs bienfaiteurs.

Aristote, 322 av. JC

On a réussi des trucs carrément épatants, très difficiles, comme faire fondre la banquise, glisser des bestioles génétiquement modifiées sous la terre, déplacer le Gulf Stream, détruire un tiers des espèces vivantes, faire péter l'atome, enfoncer des déchets radioactifs dans le sol, ni vu ni connu. Franchement on s'est marrés. Franchement on a bien profité. Et on aimerait bien continuer, tant il va de soi qu'il est plus rigolo de sauter dans un avion avec des tennis lumineuses que de biner des pommes de terre.

Fred Vargas, *L'Humanité en Péril*, 2019

Les mesures n'étaient pas draconiennes et l'on semblait avoir beaucoup sacrifié au désir de ne pas inquiéter l'opinion publique. Les malades mouraient loin de leur famille et on avait interdit les veillées rituelles, si bien que celui qui était mort dans la soirée passait sa nuit tout seul.

Albert Camus, *La peste*, 1947



Le passé n'est pour nous qu'un triste souvenir; le présent est affreux, s'il n'est point d'avenir.

Voltaire, Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne, 1756

Au milieu des années 1590, Shakespeare, miraculé de la peste, écrit des poèmes narratifs, comme Le Viol de Lucrece, car les théâtres à Londres étaient fermés pour éviter la contagion. «La peste fait un retour terrible en 1603-1604». Il y aura également une nouvelle épidémie en 1606. Shakespeare a bien écrit Le Roi Lear pendant ces années, qui sont une période «faste» pour l'auteur.

François Laroque 2016

L'histoire de la peste n'est pas close: la capacité de survie du bacille dans les profondeurs de la terre constitue une menace constante et imprévisible pour les hommes, et la maladie continue de sévir régulièrement en diverses régions du monde.

Frédérique Audoin-Rouzeau,
Les Chemins de la peste: Le rat, la puce et l'homme, 2003

De nombreux éléments laissent penser que nous détruisons les fondamentaux de la prospérité humaine dans une débauche de consommation téméraire.

Yuval Noah Harari Homo DEUS 2015

Tout est dit et l'on vient trop tard depuis plus de sept mille ans qu'il y a des hommes et qui pensent.

La Bruyère, 1696

Est-il plus agréable de passer une journée avec ses enfants ou entre amis, chez soi, dans un parc ou dans la nature, ou de la passer à courir les magasins ou à zapper d'une chaîne de télé à une autre? La simplicité ne consiste pas à se priver de ce qui nous rend heureux, cela n'aurait aucun sens, mais à s'alléger de ce qui nous en écarte.

Christophe André, Matthieu Ricard, Alexandre Jollien, 2018

Il y a des jours, des mois, des années interminables où il ne se passe presque rien. Il y a des minutes et des secondes qui contiennent tout un monde.

Jean d'Ormesson, Voyez comme on danse, 2001

Trop heureux l'habitant des campagnes, s'il connaissait son bonheur!

Virgile, 70 av JC

Les scientifiques ont constaté que des bactéries, du méthane et des virus oubliés ou inconnus surgissent des trous qui s'ouvrent pour donner suite à la fonte du permafrost.

Rapport de la Cop 24, 2018

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The Art of (de) confinement

The Edward Hopper exhibition at the Fondation Beyeler in Basel holds a mirror up to the period we have just lived through. To complete the experience, I recommend a prize-winning work of fiction on the artist's life.

SARAH JORDAN, UNOG

If you visit “Word of the year” on Wikipedia, you will find the American Dialect Society (ADS) list of words that are emblematic of the society we live in. This list has been compiled since 1991 and many English language dictionaries have now adopted the same idea and identify the most popular or most frequent words each year too. Sometimes the choices of these different lexical references coincide, but not always. In 2002, the ADS choice was *weapons of mass destruction*. In 2009 it was *tweet*, in 2010, *app* and in 2017 *fake news*. I’m laying my bets that *confinement* will be the choice for 2020. Yet in the 18th and 19th centuries, confinement referred to childbirth – either actually giving birth, or to the period (sometimes a quarantine – or forty days) that followed it. The word is the same in English and French, so readers of Jane Austen or Gustave Flaubert may have encountered it. Indeed, using the word in this way, you could say British Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s fiancée Carrie Symonds was confined during the confinement...

My obsession with this word and my joy when confinement (in its 2020 sense) came to an end can certainly be likened

to the idea of birth, or in this case, re-birth. My first cultural excursion, cautiously masked and by train, after three months at home, was to Basel, and the magnificent Edward Hopper exhibition at the Fondation Beyeler (open until 26 July).

Edward Hopper was a late 19th century American artist, who became well-known between the first and second world wars. He depicted the daily life of the middle classes and, in particular, their solitude. In his paintings you see solo persons looking out of windows, people social distancing at the cinema or in a café, people on public transport with a spare seat between them, people apparently teleworking... His work exudes solitude, melancholy and exclusion. It resonates with boredom, repetition and the passage of time. Even when there is more than one person in a painting, they do not look at each other and appear to be alone. There is no dialogue. Unsurprisingly, he has been hailed as the painter of confinement!

It all sounds a bit depressing you might say? Well, on reading more about the artist I felt I understood him better and appreciated his art more. He was an introvert who suffered



Edward Hopper, *Cape Cod morning*, 1950
Huile sur toile 86,7 × 102,3 cm – Smithsonian American Art Museum, don de la Fondation Sara Roby

© Héritiers de Josephine Hopper / 2019, ProLitteris, Zurich
Photo: Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gene Young

from deafness and liked photography. His marriage was not happy and his wife, an unsuccessful artist herself, was his only model because she did not allow him to paint other women. This explains the paintings that made him famous. But at this exhibition there are some lesser-known paintings too. Many are outdoor scenes: of Europe, which he visited three times in his youth, of New York, where he lived, and of the American East Coast, where he holidayed, including landscapes and seascapes. The colours, the light and shade and the calm

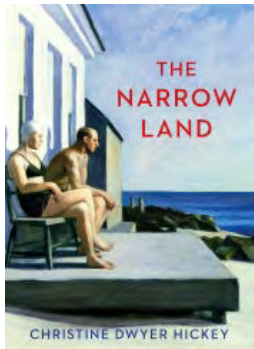
were a delight to behold in the emptier than usual exhibition spaces and a perfect antidote to coronavirus stress.

To sum it up, here are some words from Hopper that appeal to me:

“So much of every art is an expression of the subconscious, that it seems to me most all of the important qualities are put there unconsciously, and little of importance by the conscious intellect.”

Edward Hopper, letter to Charles H. Sawyer, October 19th, 1939

During confinement, I also attended some online lectures on artistic themes given by the Geneva Literary Aid Society (GLAS). This association supports the Edith Wilkins Foundation for Street Children in Darjeeling, India. One GLAS Hour, “Meet the author Christine Dwyer Hickey”, took place just after my excursion to Basel and it particularly caught my attention. When you read the blurb that follows, you’ll understand why!



© Christine Dwyer Hickey

“The Narrow Land is a quiet tour-de-force placing art at the heart of historical fiction. By framing her portrait of the marriage of Edward and Josephine Hopper in one hot summer, 1950, at their house in Cape Cod, Christine Dwyer Hickey captures the intensity and sometime destructiveness of the relationship, and the impact on it when Michael,

a child of a concentration camp, comes to stay nearby. The author manages a rare thing: she reveals the impetus of Hopper’s art, writing beautifully about light, angles and shade in an effortless way so that we only gradually, and thrillingly, become aware that we are seeing things as Hopper did.” – judges’ citation for Walter Scott Prize.

The lecture was very entertaining and I found out lots about Edward Hopper. You can watch a recording of the event on the GLAS site. What is more, Ms Dwyer Hickey actually won the Walter Scott Prize she was nominated for!

A few days later, my first post-confinement outing to a shop was to Payot, where I ordered the book. I am still reading and enjoying it now and recommend it whole-heartedly as a complement to the exhibition, to the understanding of a great artist and to getting over a very particular time in all our lives. Now it’s time for de-confinement! ■

Further details:

Fondation Beyeler – <https://www.fondationbeyeler.ch/en/>

The Geneva Literary Aid Society – www.theglas.org

“The Narrow Land” by Christine Dwyer Hickey ISBN-13: 978-1-78649-671-3



Edward Hopper, *Second story sunlight*, 1960
Huile sur toile 102,1 × 127,3 cm – Whitney Museum of American Art, New York – Purchase, avec des fonds des Amis du Whitney Museum of American Art., Inv. N.: 60,54.

© Héritiers de Josephine Hopper / 2019, ProLitteris, Zurich Photo: © 2019, Image numérique Whitney Museum of American Art / Sous licence Scala



Edward Hopper *Lee Shore*, 1941, Huile sur toile 71,8 × 109,2 cm, The Middleton Family Collection

© Héritiers de Josephine Hopper / 2019, ProLitteris, Zurich Photo: © 2019, Photothèque / Scala, Florence

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Treasure hunting in Plainpalais's *marché aux puces*

It's Saturday morning, 10 o'clock and the beginning of a warm summer day. The sun is shining outside, and you can't help but wonder what to do on such a nice day.

MARKO STANOVIC¹

One of the best kept secrets among Geneva's expat community is the Plainpalais *marché aux puces*. Although there are probably still fleas in the odd rug being displayed here and there on the pavement, Geneva's most famous "flea market" offers many items in prime condition. Books, furniture, vinyl records, stamps, vintage household appliances and a myriad of other things new and collectables starting at Fr. 1 apiece, which is inexpensive for Geneva to say the least!

Formerly associated with a "crummy" image, flea markets have now become trendy. Usually located in the heart of fashionable districts of Switzerland, flea markets have become cool places to meet friends, check out varied and colourful stands, drink coffee or taste the latest trendy vegan snack.

Every Wednesday and Saturday, as well as on the first Sunday of the month, the sprawling Plainpalais square has since the 1970s welcomed the largest flea market in Switzerland. It

features more than 300 registered traders who, depending on the weather, line the rhomboid shaped area. The market has two types of traders: "fixed" ones who have their own permanent place, and "aux tickets" (which refers to the old way of making a payment), who rent their spaces randomly on a daily basis. In the summer, most traders try to be there since summer seems to draw out people the most.

Checking out the stands takes time (isn't that the idea?!). Those looking for second-hand vinyl can find two or three dedicated sellers who only sell records. The selection and quality is fairly good but the prices are not cheap – expect to pay from Fr. 10-30 apiece. Considering that you can buy a new record for about Fr. 20 at first sight this does not seem to be such a good deal. However,

"connoisseurs" know that the new records are usually made from digital sources whereas the vintage ones found at Plainpalais were cut from analogue tapes, the latter much preferred by audiophiles!

Looking for treasures in vintage books is possible too. For example, there was recently offered for sale a 19th century Parisian Hetzel Edition of Jules Verne's "The Mysterious Island" book in a nice preserved condition in red cloth and gold embroidered cover page for Fr. 25, which is a deal. eBay offers the same book for Fr. 300 and more.

On the other hand, one can find CDs and even analogue cassette tapes (remember those?) for Fr. 1-2 apiece. Now that's a bargain. Of course, you may have to look in your "cave" for that old CD player! Similarly, sellers that do not specialize in records



© Marko Stanovic



© Marko Stanovic

usually offer vinyl scattered in boxes for about Fr. 2 apiece but those would be found by taking the time to browse. Not infrequently, one can find real gems hidden there.

The situation with the furniture is less prolific. There are some

interesting Parisian style “bistro” tables and chairs at low prices, but really nice antique furniture is often not available. Then again, you can’t have everything!

So, next time you have nothing planned for your Saturday, take a tour of the Planpalais

marché aux puces, alone or with a friend, find some real treasures, have a vegan burger and of course, don’t forget the “renversé”. There are certainly ways to enjoy the nice weather and have inexpensive fun in Geneva! ■

- 1 President of the United Nations Society of Writers (UNSW) and President of United Nations Staff Alliance

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Global call to cultivate mental hygiene

COVID-19 taught us to be super vigilant in our physical health and hygiene. Yet, in its wake, mental health is fast emerging as the new silent, invisible and unprecedented health priority.

CHRISTINA YAP

Uncertain times are unsettling for the mind. Indeed, neuroscientists have shown that the brain equates ‘uncertainty’ to ‘danger’, activating the panic button in the nervous system and triggering a whole range of ‘fight or flight’ responses. A hyper vigilant brain experiences heightened anxiety, fear and stress, which can lead to violence and aggression.

Mental health conditions affect the mood, thinking and behaviour. Globally, mental-health issues (see the table below) are escalating. Whilst recent media spotlight has focused attention on undesirable behaviours, decisions and actions, here’s the stark reality:

Classic signs of mental health issues

- feeling sad, down (potentially depressed)
- feeling confused
- feeling excessive fear, worries, guilt
- having problems remembering (potentially dementia)
- losing focus and ability to concentrate
- feeling extreme tiredness, fatigue
- experiencing problems with sleep
- experiencing anxiety
- feeling overwhelmed with stress, daily life
- having problems with alcohol, drug use (potentially addictions)
- having major changes in eating habits (potentially eating disorders)
- experiencing changes in sex drive
- experiencing hallucinations, delusions (potentially schizophrenia)
- feeling detached from reality, problems relating to people and situations
- having suicidal thoughts
- experiencing mood swings (potentially bipolar disorder)
- experiencing excessive anger, violence

Note: Our mental and emotional wellbeing is intricately connected with our physical body. So mental unease could also manifest physically, such as unexplained aches and pains in the body.

Urgency to practise mental hygiene – NOW

The risk is that, left undetected, spiralling mental health issues will not only impair our health and wellbeing. This would have untold psychosocial and economic impacts, leading to greater social instability and unrest. And that’s the last thing the world needs right now.

Ever been in a situation where you’ve walked away from an encounter or a meeting with someone who’s in a dark mood and yourself felt miserable afterwards? Well, psychiatrists have reported a phenomenon whereby untreated severe mental illness can potentially spread dramatically to those with pre-existing psychiatric disorders, as well as those who were previously

healthy. That means that mental health issues can be infectious (so to speak) and can have a domino effect on society...

So whilst the spotlight shows pockets of injustices or inequities to be addressed, perhaps there’s a deeper calling. A calling for all of us to:

- practise mental hygiene as the utmost priority
- shore up our own mental (and emotional) states
- be in the most stable position to sustain the further uncertainties that are coming our way.

Call it an act of ‘self-leadership’, ‘resilience’ or ‘agility’, if you like. Ultimately, it’s a sense of personal responsibility that we take for our own and others’ sakes.

And it’s like physical muscle training – use it or lose it. So let’s look at how we can start training our mind.

None of us are immune to it.
In fact, every single one of us
is susceptible to it.



© sualk61/flickr

Slowing down the mental hamster wheel

Like hamsters running in a wheel, we have a tendency to create – and perpetuate – more of our own suffering. Unconstructive self-talk, negative thoughts about ourselves and others, mulling over things or situations over which we have no control, criticising people whose decisions we cannot influence – these all contribute to the speed of the spinning wheel, triggering mental health issues.

Whilst everyone experiences negative thinking every now and then, constant streams of negative repetitive thoughts and emotions are harmful to the mind. Over time, habituated unconstructive thoughts will seriously affect self-perception, relationship with oneself and others, work, health and daily functioning.

Here's an exercise to start slowing down that wheel. Be kind to yourself as you do this practice.

Step #1: Practise catching unconstructive or negative thoughts. Acknowledge them as they come up, with a non-judgemental, compassionate attitude.

Step #2: Each time such a thought arises, consider if something constructive can be done (whether by yourself or by reaching out for help).

- If something can be done, then direct focus, energy and attention to doing it.
- If there were lessons learned, then take note of them.

Step #3: If there's nothing (more) to be done, then it's time to release those thoughts. If it feels helpful, write them down on a piece of paper, then tear it up and throw it away.

By practising letting go of negative thoughts, we release our attachment to them (and their hold over us). This helps to create head space for a calmer mind.

What we can do now

As a way to train the mind muscle, try practising the 'slowing down the hamster wheel' exercise daily. Notice any difference in ability to create more head space over time.

Take a look at the table of mental health symptoms above. Be proactive. Do you identify with some of these? If so, reach out

for help. Is anyone you know exhibiting any of these symptoms (or who may be experiencing violence or abuse at the hands of someone exhibiting these symptoms)? If so, show compassion and understanding, and encourage them to reach out for support.

There are toll-free emergency numbers and helplines available for anyone to call. Reach out to a doctor if appropriate. There are also networks of support groups, trained coaches, counsellors and therapists who are ready to listen and support.

Mental hygiene is our utmost priority in these uncertain times. It's down to each of us to practise mental hygiene to help

steer ourselves and others through uncertain times.

Share this article with someone who may find it helpful.



Christina Yap is a senior HR professional, health and wellbeing leader, author and coach. She helps employees to find clarity, focus and inspiration to thrive in challenging times.

Christina has lived in Geneva and now lives in Zurich. She serves on the Global Wellness Institute and has been published on Forbes and Thrive Global.

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FAO at 75!

We interviewed Ms. Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett, Director¹, to learn more about FAO's important work in ending hunger and malnutrition, even more so as the world is faced with the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Ms Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett

ADRIANO TIMOSSÌ, UN

We interviewed Ms. Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett, Director, FAO Liaison Office to the United Nations Office at Geneva on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the UN specialized agency for Food and Agriculture (FAO), to learn more about FAO's important work in ending hunger and malnutrition, even more so as the world is faced with the unprecedented challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

First of all, could you tell us more about yourself and your country?

I am from Guyana, better known as the only English-speaking country on the continent of South America, but historically tied to the Caribbean. I started my career in earnest, working in a government programme which sought to address certain needs of indigenous communities. Later, I served as Minister of Amerindian (Indigenous) Affairs and thereafter as Minister of Foreign Affairs, both for a period of seven years, while simultaneously being a Member of the Parliament. I joined FAO in 2015, starting in Rome as Coordinator for Parliamentary Alliances and, since 2017, as Director of the FAO Liaison Office in Geneva.

Can you tell us more about the FAO and the added value of your organization?

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was established on 16 October 1945 as the specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. We are, for the most part, a research-based organization providing technical cooperation and policy advice to our member countries in their efforts to fight hunger and malnutrition. Our goal is to achieve food security for all by making sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality and safe food to lead active and healthy lives. With 194 member states, FAO works in over 130 countries worldwide.

FAO is celebrating 75 years in 2020. What are your initial thoughts about this challenging year for humanity?

FAO is as relevant today as it was 75 years ago when it was birthed. Much has been accomplished over this period – hunger numbers have fallen, poverty rates have decreased, enough food is produced to feed the world's population, among other successes. Yet, this 75th anniversary of the United Nations and FAO has served to remind us how much more we need to do to overcome the challenges for humanity. The eradication of poverty and hunger are rightfully Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2. It is difficult to imagine how the other goals will be achieved without these two making significant progress.

According to the 2019 State of Food Security Report (SOFI), more than 800 million people were hungry due mainly to conflicts, climate change and economic setbacks. On

top of this came the Desert Locust Crisis in the Great Horn of Africa, at a level not seen in up to 70 years in some countries, creating a humanitarian crisis requiring urgent actions from all partners. Then came the global health crisis of COVID-19. This is indeed one of the most challenging moments in our history, as the pandemic intensifies affecting the world in an unprecedented way. Along with the severe human losses and the social and economic impacts, these challenges will test our capacity to work together and provide coordinated responses. Indeed, we must ensure that this health crisis does not become a food crisis.

Indeed, we face great challenges. How prepared is FAO to face the challenges? What are its main contributions to combat COVID-19?

Since the very beginning of this pandemic, FAO has been fully involved in supporting global efforts. Among our first main messages, were that the food supply chains must remain open, while taking all recommended precautionary measures to stop the spread of the disease. We also called for restraint on export restrictions in trade, which was generally heeded. Safeguarding food security and livelihoods is at the centre of our actions. Our Director-General, Mr. Qu Dongyu has stressed that the COVID-19 pandemic affects everyone in every country, rich and poor, and tackling it requires planning ahead to anticipate its impacts as well as robust international cooperation. Apart from the Director-General taking this message to important political venues from the G20 Agriculture Ministers to the United Nations Security Council,

FAO has also coordinated meetings with its member states in the various regions to ensure that our responses are coordinated and cater for the peculiarities of the various regions. These interactions, and those with other partners, have guided our response. A “Food Coalition” led by Permanent Representatives to FAO in Rome has been established to, among other things, advocate for the overall FAO response plan. We have also produced a series of policy briefs geared to our membership and partners, which I invite you to peruse on our website.

On the institutional front, FAO is undergoing important reforms under the leadership of our Director-General Qu Dongyu. In his words, we aim at “creating an inclusive and agile FAO that serves its members to achieve the four betters: better production, better nutrition, better environment, and a better life by a further transparent, open, innovative, responsible and effective reform.” Even before the pandemic the world had changed significantly and FAO needed to ensure that it was ready to face down the challenges, including by ensuring better targeting of those most in need. With COVID-19, this is accelerated.

New initiatives include the establishment of the Office for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDCs) as these countries count among the most vulnerable in the world; the Hand in Hand initiative; an Office for Innovation, among others. The Hand-in-Hand initiative aims to unlock agriculture’s full potential through matching donors with the most vulnerable countries and FAO providing the relevant data and tools to identify where investments could have the most impact so that resources are maximized. We have also established an Office for Innovation to better consolidate and coordinate our work in this area. We are confident that these changes will make for a better and fitter FAO.

Much has been said about the health impacts of COVID-19 but could you tell us more about its consequences for food security. Are we going to face another food crisis?

We now face the stark reality that if we do not take immediate action, this global health crisis can become a global food crisis, as warned by both UN Secretary



Lo Valledor Market in Chile adopts health protection measures during the COVID-19 pandemic

© FAO/Max Valencia

General António Guterres and FAO Director-General Qu Dongyu. In April, FAO and partners launched the Global Food Crises Report, which estimates that before COVID-19, 135 million persons suffered from acute hunger. With COVID-19, this figure is projected to increase by over 50 million, and we are only speaking of acute hunger here. As I mentioned earlier, SOFI 2019 estimated that 800 million of people were food insecure. Our efforts to significantly reduce this number will be seriously challenged by the impacts of COVID-19. However, we must not and cannot give up this fight.

Yet, I must stress that while COVID-19 is a global health crisis, it is not a food crisis. We must therefore provide the enabling environment for food production and ensure that stress in trade is minimized. Indeed, net food importing countries can be disproportionately affected if the right measures are not in place. As a response to the pandemic, there could be a tendency to resort to protectionist measures in trade. However, policy measures should aim to address actual rather than perceived demand and supply disruptions. Experiences from past crises have demonstrated that avoiding trade-restrictive measures can be equally important to direct forms of support to consumers and producers and ensuring global food security. Following international guidelines on safe travel and trade corridors can help keep agri-food

supply chains alive, mitigate food supply disruptions, and promote food security. Transparency is of paramount importance for any policy actions affecting international trade in food and agriculture.

Any final thoughts?

Overcoming the global challenges of today requires the international community to work together as one. Only with strong cooperation, coordination and solidarity will we succeed in defeating the virus and its impacts. We must act now and act together. It is in crises that the best and worst of humanity can be witnessed. On a positive note, COVID-19 has afforded us the opportunity to witness the generosity and solidarity of many, which makes me even more optimistic. In FAO, we will continue to work with our member countries and partners at all levels, making our best efforts to support countries to avoid a food crisis and overcome this unprecedented challenge. ■

1 FAO Liaison Office to the United Nations Office at Geneva on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the UN specialized agency for Food and Agriculture (FAO)

Learn more on FAO’s work at: <http://www.fao.org/home/en>

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
Learn what FAO is doing with regard to the current pandemic at <http://www.fao.org/2019-ncov/en>



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Le regard d'un aigle

Un aigle caméraman prend son envol depuis le plus haut gratte-ciel du monde à Dubaï. Un milliard de personnes a visionné cette vidéo. Au-delà du buzz médiatique, nous rencontrons Jacques Olivier Travers à Sciez, sur les rives du Léman. Il a fait de sa passion un métier et de son métier, un chemin de vie.



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Jacques Olivier Travers

CHRISTIAN DAVID, UNOG

Visite des volières

Quelques jours avant l'ouverture du parc, quelques personnes s'activent. Nous suivons pas à pas Jacques-Olivier qui nous décrit avec enthousiasme et détails ses pensionnaires abrités sous de gigantesques volières dans lesquelles pousse une végétation dense. Des cris stridents résonnent. Cà et là, des perchoirs, des blocs de pierre, des nids, des bassins. L'habitat des volatiles dont certains sont menacés, a été reconstitué. Ils cohabitent, adoptent les codes de leur espèce et se reproduisent. Quelques canards, oies, dindes et moutons circulent en harmonie avec ces rapaces sans être inquiétés. 24 espèces d'oiseaux viennent visiter la volière et certains y ont niché. Les pensionnaires s'entendent bien entre eux. Quant aux humains, certains confondent parfois parc animalier et parc d'attraction. L'espace est disponible pour 1000 places: 400 couvertes et 600 en plein air.

Aigles, vautours, faucons, chouettes et hiboux, nous regardent passer, indifférents. Certaines espèces spectaculaires attirent les regards. Pour les autres, il s'agit de les mettre en scène avec des démonstrations et animations pour permettre au public de les mieux connaître. Dans la volière crèche, des jeunes rapaces se croisent et apprennent à cohabiter, ils contribueront à permettre la reproduction des espèces menacées. Un arrêt dans la couveuse nous confirme d'ailleurs que tout est mis en œuvre pour pérenniser cet objectif.

Revenons sur votre parcours et l'évolution de la perception du public sur les rapaces et la vie sauvage.

Enfant, je vivais à la campagne et je rendais visite à une voisine paysanne. Aujourd'hui, les gens sont déconnectés de la nature. La faune sauvage se raréfie et sa perception est faussée. On aime les animaux sauvages des dessins animés, tant qu'ils ne nous embêtent pas. Le vivre ensemble ne doit



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pas concerner que les humains, il doit englober la nature dans son ensemble. C'est évident que les vidéos tournées ces dernières années ont contribué à changer les mentalités. Quand j'ai débuté il y a 25 ans, ce n'était pas le cas. Je me suis aperçu que pour intéresser les gens à cette cause, il était indispensable d'utiliser les outils d'aujourd'hui. Cette technologie concrétise aussi le rêve humain de voler comme un aigle ou de nager comme un dauphin. Cette perception fait appel à des sensations enfouies aux tréfonds de notre animalité. L'aigle qui a volé à Dubaï est en voie de disparition et de nouveau, grâce à ces vidéos, le public commence à comprendre. Bien sûr, nous nous servons de cette identification mais cela ne nous empêche pas d'effectuer le travail de fond ici au parc.

Etes-vous fauconnier ou naturaliste ?

La fauconnerie est une activité millénaire qui permettait aux hommes de chasser. Mon savoir-faire est évidemment inspiré par la fauconnerie et je l'utilise pour cette cause qui est la préservation des espèces. Cette approche me permet d'attirer l'attention sur le constat que certains vont s'acharner à sauver une espèce non menacée et laisser disparaître une autre. En Asie et en Afrique, dans les forêts équatoriales, des espèces sont anéanties et personne ne semble le remarquer c'est certes moins grave en Europe mais il faut rester vigilant. Et puis, nous avons un réel problème avec les prédateurs. Les chaînes ne veulent pas diffuser l'image d'un animal donnant la

mort alors que les films et les séries sont de plus en plus violents et nous montrent des flots d'hémoglobine. Notre rapport à la mort est vraiment particulier ! Le postulat est pourtant simple : s'il n'y a pas de prédateurs dans la nature, alors il n'y a pas de nature. Dès que l'être humain empiète sur les zones sauvages, cela pose problème et on le voit bien avec les loups, les ours ou même les aigles. Par comparaison, les chats domestiques tuent environ 200 millions d'oiseaux par an en France. Si les aigles mangent 50 chats par an, le rapport semble acceptable. Je comprends les bergers qui restent présents au milieu de leur troupeau et qui défendent leurs bêtes. J'ai plus de mal avec ceux qui posent 2000 bêtes sans surveillance dans les alpages et crient au loup en constatant des pertes.

Vous avez appris à voler à des aigles ?

En vivant au quotidien avec eux, je me suis aperçu qu'un animal né en captivité sait se déplacer mais pas voler. Il m'a fallu 10 ans pour mettre au point cette méthode. Le vol nécessite un apprentissage, par les parents, de l'air avec les courants descendants, ascendants, tourbillonnants. On m'a pris pour un loufoque. J'ai alors médiatisé trois grands vols avec des oiseaux nés en captivité : le Mont Blanc, la traversée de la Manche et les chutes Victoria. Nous avons ensuite validé cette démarche avec des scientifiques. L'apprentissage dès le plus jeune âge, reste un atout majeur comme pour un sportif. Nous travaillons également pour que leur dépendance à l'homme ne soit pas trop importante afin de pouvoir les

relâcher. Ces immenses volières y contribuent. Les jeunes qui restent ensemble pendant plusieurs années redeviennent sauvages très rapidement car ils se sont affrontés pour obtenir le meilleur emplacement, la meilleure nourriture. Pour les vautours, en revanche, nous n'arrivons pas à les rendre moins dépendants de l'homme pour l'instant.

L'apport de la technologie n'est-il pas contraignant pour les oiseaux ?

Le «solar impulse» de Bertrand Piccard ouvre la voie. Dans 10 ou 20 ans presque tous les avions seront électriques. Je pense que c'est la même chose. Au début les caméras pesaient 350 grammes, elles en pèsent aujourd'hui 70. Dans 10 ans elles pèseront 10 grammes et on pourra relâcher des oiseaux dans la nature et les suivre grâce aussi à l'amélioration de la transmission. Par exemple, la caméra nous a permis de comprendre qu'un oiseau longe le relief pour profiter de l'aérodynamie au point que ses plumes touchent le rocher.

Comment pourriez-vous qualifier ou définir votre relation profonde, intime avec les rapaces ?

Jacques Olivier hésite.

Les gens vont penser que c'est fou mais un rapace me parle. Je vois un oiseau pendant cinq minutes et je peux vous raconter sa vie. Je n'ai aucune explication rationnelle à donner. Le matin je vais voir les fauconniers pour leur mentionner qu'un oiseau semble avoir tel ou tel problème. Il n'est pas à sa place habituelle, m'a regardé



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d'une autre manière. C'est indéfinissable mais cela relève aussi de ma présence avec eux. Cependant, ils parviennent toujours à me surprendre par leurs performances. Ils prennent leur envol à des hauteurs de 4000 mètres et me retrouvent sans se déconcentrer dans la vallée. Je pense maintenant que l'insulte «triple buse» pour qualifier un imbécile est injustifiée. Il est capable d'apprendre de retenir. Ainsi mes oiseaux reconnaissent ma voiture ce qui est pratique pour les retrouver. Quand je les accompagne en parapente, ils comprennent les mots ou l'intonation de droite, gauche, oui, non.

Dans une vidéo, vous citez un proverbe cherokee: Nous devons avoir le regard d'un aigle pour prendre la bonne décision. Avez-vous le regard d'un aigle?

Je ne sais pas mais en tout cas, au travers du regard des aigles, j'ai modifié ma perception de la nature. Au début, j'ai fait l'erreur du passionné en me focalisant sur l'oiseau. Le vrai enjeu est que je ne pourrai pas réintroduire d'aigles dans la nature si elle n'est pas en mesure de les accueillir. Le soutien du public permet d'ouvrir des perspectives avec les politiques au point d'envisager sérieusement une réintroduction dans quelques années.

Les soutiens internationaux, scientifiques et partenaires

Il se trouve que l'ancienne Directrice de l'UICN était ma voisine de village. Nous avons monté un programme destiné à la protection du pygargue à queue blanche, un oiseau endémique, qui a bien fonctionné avec notamment le vol au dessus de la tour Eiffel. Cela leur a permis d'avoir une bonne visibilité et nous avons pu avoir accès à leurs données scientifiques. Nos contacts avec la communauté scientifique sont excellents. Nous testons des systèmes de suivis de balises sur nos aigles pour qu'ils puissent ensuite être implantés sur des oiseaux sauvages. Des appareils de contrôles de pollution ont été expérimentés. Nous essayons de comprendre les schémas de migration des faucons. Je peux leur amener des éléments sur les couloirs de vols qui leur permettent de compléter leur étude. En mettant des caméras dans les nids, nous voyons des parents qui déplacent les bébés pour les mettre à l'ombre comme le fait un félin. Nous n'en sommes qu'aux balbutiements de la compréhension. Il faut rester très humbles face à la toute puissance nature qui ne fonctionne pas avec des règles mathématiques et accepter que nous ne comprenions pas tout. Notre partenaire, la maison Chopard, nous accompagne. C'est une maison suisse et le Pygargue est le symbole de Genève. Le patron de cette entreprise est un vrai passionné qui souhaite vraiment agir pour l'environnement. Nous avons monté une fondation.

Quelle serait votre plus belle récompense?

Pendant des siècles, on a fait passer les oiseaux de la nature à la captivité. Je souhaite réaliser l'inverse. C'est l'enjeu des 20 prochaines années pour sauver les espèces qui autrement et irrémédiablement disparaîtront.


Mais je n'aurais jamais imaginé que je puisse déjà avoir tant reçu grâce à cette passion. ■

Le parc est ouvert


Vous pourrez admirer 80 espèces de rapaces en semi-liberté et apprendre à différencier un milan d'une buse et une chouette d'un hibou.

Pour visionner les vidéos mentionnées dans l'article: Aigles du Léman

Remerciements à la personne qui m'a permis de faire ce reportage et souhaite rester anonyme



Reflections in lockdown



*Well, here I am shut in my little world bubble,
Trying to keep well, stay safe, out of trouble,
In “confinement” – now a daily used word,
unlike before*

*When reserved for ladies giving birth,
in novels of yore.*

*Outside of my bubble, life has changed,
all is closed, such a cost,*

*Most people teleworking from home, others
have jobs lost.*

*So, how do I feel, lonely? anxious?
panicky? or what?*

*Will my food order go through,
find a delivery slot?*

And when it comes, I face the disinfectant stress

*For the fresh items, quarantine the rest,
what a mess!*

*It is hard to believe what I hear and see
on the news,*

*Conflicting messages, no-one really knows,
different views*

On what to do for the best, will we get a vaccine

*To enable our lives to resume,
get back in routine?*

*The days, weeks pass by, all blur into one,
But those “rainy day” jobs, I don’t get them done.*

*How lucky I am, able to take walks,
have this chance,*

*Unlike my friends across closed
borders in France.*

*On my walks I park the news,
admire nature’s daily changing*

*In the gardens and fields,
watch the birds nest arranging,*

*Keeping my social distance,
and controlling my wrath*

*When the cyclists claim priority,
monopolize the footpath.*

*Few planes do I see and hear overhead
in the sky,*

*Just the birdsong, branches blowing in the wind
as I pass by.*

*My “world” is so calm, quiet, few cars
on the road*

*Compared to the local hospital,
trying to cope with the load*

Of the sick and the dying, true to its cause,

*All we can do to support is
our nightly applause.*

*Contacts with friends are confined
to virtual for now,*

*Messages, video clips, zooms etc.
just grow and grow*

*Daily, give me comfort but also
make me stressed,*

*Overload my systems, put my technology
to the test.*

*But what benefits lie in this surreal
Covid situation?*

*Waters and skies are cleaner with much
less pollution,*

*Planet Earth gets a rest, but how long will
that last?*

*Will the “climate change” laws get
finally passed?*

Cases of kindness are many, volunteers abound,

*But will the world have learned lessons
and turn life around?*

*What will our future be like?
for now it’s all a mystery,*

*Unwelcome, but amazing to live through
this special moment of history.*

BY SUE BLOCK TYRRELL



UN-Isolated: Geneva diplomatic community reflects on the new reality 2020

In this series of conversations, we are exploring the perspective of the diplomatic community in Geneva on the emerging priorities, changes in the international agenda, the experience of the Swiss lockdown and the transition to the “new normal” in 2020.



H.E. Mrs. Monique T.G. Van Daalen

YULIA ANDREEVA, UNDP

Today we have the honour to speak with H.E. Mrs. Monique T.G. Van Daalen, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary / Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of The Netherlands to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva.

Ambassador van Daalen, thank you for agreeing to share your perspective and experience with us. Our readers are keen to learn whether and how the priorities and agenda of the Permanent Mission have changed since the pandemic broke out.

We have certainly seen some substantial changes. Let us remember that the multilateral system was built to prevent

worldwide crises and human suffering, as well as find ways to achieve peace and prosperity. Nowadays this system is facing a test like never before. It is key that we continue to collaborate with all the colleagues at the United Nations and WHO to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and ensure full recovery.

In this “big picture” context, our immediate strong focus as a Permanent Mission was (and continues to be) on public health and safety measures. At the beginning, we were engaging most closely with WHO and other international health partners.

However, we soon started thinking about the effects of the pandemic on people in humanitarian emergencies (e.g. refugees, displaced persons) and countries in the global south, who may suffer even more because the medical care may not be what we are used to here in Switzerland. We have therefore intensified our work with humanitarian agencies, including UNOCHA, UNCHR and IOM. The broader impact of the pandemic across different development goals has emerged as a stronger priority. This is in line with the humanitarian

diplomacy that is an important part of our mandate.

Last but not least, as a new member of the Human Rights Council, we were keen to see it up and running as quickly as possible. This has not been an easy task, especially as regards the decision-making process. It has been particularly difficult to adjust for some countries, especially those that lacked the necessary technology or insisted on the application of the standard procedures, which of course are all geared towards in-person interactions.

What about the Permanent Mission itself?

Our immediate priority was to ensure the safety and health of all our colleagues. As a first step, we created a COVID-19 Crisis Team, which closely monitors all health and safety measures in Switzerland, in Geneva as a city, at international organizations (in particular WHO) and in the Netherlands. Once collected and analysed, the Crisis Team conveys these measures to the Mission colleagues. We also take into account the safeguards and restrictions adopted by the French authorities since some of our local staff live in France.

Our next priority was to adapt our ways of working as quickly as possible. Together, we learned how to organize and attend virtual meetings on Webex, Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, Jitsy and other systems. Personally, I now have at least seven installed on my iPad!

What have been the biggest challenges in the Permanent Mission's work?

It was quite challenging at the beginning to get used to the new digital reality and find new ways for decision-making processes. Conducting diplomacy through virtual meetings, webinars and webchats is not easy and requires serious adjustment.

We have also seen more use of social media.

Despite all the flexibility and adjustments, I remain of the opinion that there is nothing better than meeting people in person. In virtual meetings you miss the non-verbal communication, body language and other expressions. But we have to learn as we go along.

Another challenge is restrictions on movement and travelling. This is also part of the new



reality. Here again I think about my colleagues from countries far away, who are unable to see their loved ones and who may not always have state-of-the-art internet connections to stay in touch, for example.

Does the Permanent Mission see any new opportunities for its work and for the United Nations collaboration more generally?

I think we should be more critical and perhaps reconsider the format of big conferences and meetings. Despite their certain advantages and multiparty fora they create, large-size events were becoming a costly routine. Not only by way of direct costs (e.g. airfare and accommodation) but also in terms of impact on the environment and future generations. We may see more hybrid ways of conducting large conferences, with country delegations limited to 1-2 representatives and the rest joining remotely through safe and efficient virtual platforms.

Through which means does the Permanent Mission continue to participate in the work of the United Nations bodies and initiatives during the pandemic?

We are fortunate to have the possibility to work from home with good electronic devices

and reliable internet connection. Thanks to that, we have been attending virtual meetings, including virtual lunches. Of course, we also continue to use telephone. All of us know how to reach our friends and colleagues in our networks by telephone, messenger or email.

What tools does the Mission use most to communicate with colleagues at the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva?

Video conferencing is definitely the key tool. We have tried all kinds of platforms and options to see what works best, also from the perspective of data safety.

We have also used a classic phone for one-on-one conversations. FaceTime, Jabber, Signal and other applications have been frequently used. The big advantage is that these platforms allow us to see each other, maintain some human contact. Our conversation today is via Zoom, and I think it helps our personal contact and face-to-face interaction.

In your view, how fundamental are the changes in the agenda and everyday work of the Permanent Mission? Are any of them permanent?

It is quite possible that we will see less travel. If in the future fewer people will or can travel,

the work of our Permanent Mission might extend to all the specialized agencies in Geneva. We used to have experts fly in for those meetings. If we don't have to do that, we may be able to broaden the scope of our work and contribution.

How does the "lockdown" regime look like at the Permanent Mission? Have personnel been self-isolating? Telecommuting? Requested (or encouraged) to return home at the outset?

We started our "StayAtHome Policy" on 16 March. The first couple of weeks, every morning we checked in with each team member to make sure they

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were feeling fine. We also asked them to mention any (potentially COVID-related) symptoms they might be experiencing. There have been colleagues who needed to follow complete self-isolation. We helped them with their groceries and other errands.

Our virtual Group has been more active than ever. It was very moving to see the support and care among colleagues in the event of sickness of a family member or employee.

Interns were sent home to the Netherlands to be safe at home. Colleagues who had family circumstances which made it better for them to telework from the Netherlands were given the choice to leave Geneva. However, most of our staff stayed and worked from home in Geneva.

I should also mention that we don't have a consular section at our Mission. This responsibility lies with our Embassy in Bern. However, our administrative colleagues checked the Mission's office on a regular basis for correspondence.

Could you please give any interesting/unusual examples of internal Mission rules and practices during the lockdown?
To make sure that everyone

could work in the most comfortable way, people could bring their desktop and desk chair from the office to their house. Furthermore, everyone was allocated a certain budget amount to purchase the necessary equipment such as a good headset or speakers. Our goal was to ensure that working from home was convenient. We have also actively encouraged colleagues to take breaks and go outside for a walk or exercise and to take some days off now and then.

How does the Permanent Mission maintain the morale of its personnel during the lockdown?
We organize informal weekly coffee breaks with colleagues. We do this to share experiences, worries, provide support and inspiration, and simply to chit-chat. There is special attention for colleagues who have just moved, are still separated from their family or simply live alone. As an international gender champion, I have been particularly keen to ensure a healthy life/work balance for all staff even in these challenging times.

The solidarity we seek in our collaboration with countries and international organizations is also very much present in our team. Sometimes this spirit pays off! In April, the Easter bunny came by to



every colleague's house to bring a chocolate Easter bunny.

What impact has the lockdown had on your and your colleagues' work and schedule?

It has been a challenging time. For colleagues with young children, who needed attention and support with home schooling, it has been rough. Also, often meetings were organized at short notice and took place at irregular hours. Time to prepare for and submit reports of briefings became more demanding. Some colleagues, especially in the health and humanitarian fields, were suffering from what we call in Dutch "squared eyes" and "mechanical ears."

Also, the learning curve in using different digital systems – especially how to mute and unmute, raise your flag/hand – was quite steep. But we all got adjusted rather quickly and once the dust settled, it became easier.

How is the Permanent Mission transitioning out of the lockdown?

Slowly but surely! We started with hybrid working as of 11 May. Each team has been assigned a day to have a "reunion" and meet at the office in teams of no more than 5 people. This is not mandatory,

however. Hence while some team members are physically in the office, others will join via video conference.

The standard remains working from home. I don't think we have an option as most personnel still have their office chair and desktop at home!

In addition, we have taken all the preventive hygiene measures and anyone who has any symptoms or is feeling not well must certainly stay home. Schools are re-opening – but not yet fulltime- so we need to maintain exceptions for colleagues with young children. High schools only start on 8 June. Until then we remain in a transitional and very flexible phase.

What permanent changes would you welcome in the everyday life and work of the Permanent Mission?

In my view, this uneasy time has taught us that working from home is possible for everybody. This gives us flexibilities and additional freedom.

In the future, I would like to see more "hybrid" meetings, with mixed online and physical presence. I hope this will lead to less travel for work, which will be better for our environment and future generations. ■

WHO headquarters

A bit of history

On 7 May 1966, the inauguration ceremony for the newly-constructed WHO headquarters on Avenue Appia took place and the keys were officially handed to the Chairman of the Building Committee. As we prepare to move into the new building and temporarily close our base of operations of the last 54 years for renovation, here's a quick look back at the creation of the WHO headquarters.

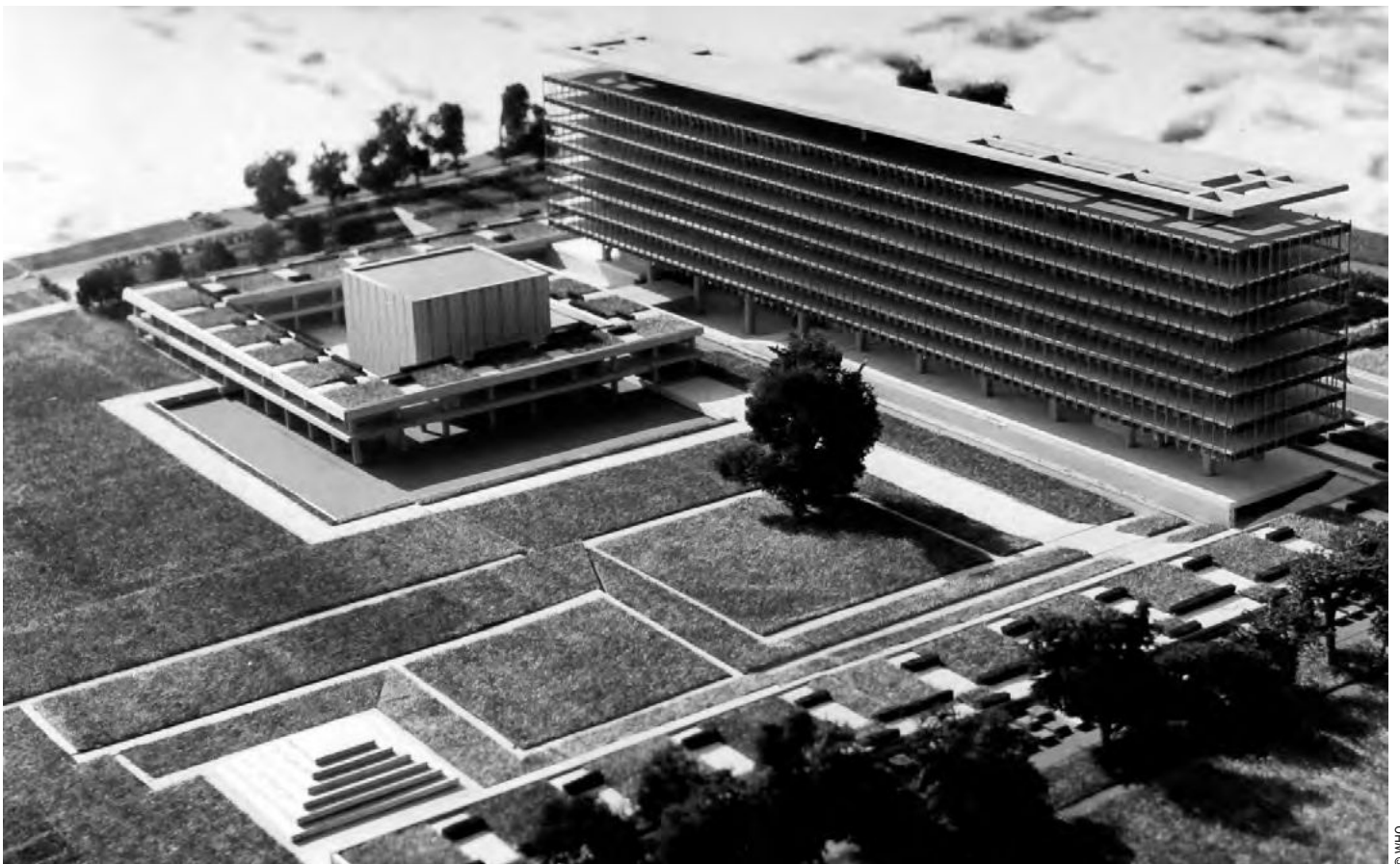
KEVIN CRAMPTON, WHO

On 24 May 1962 – Dr. Sergei V. Kurashov, Minister of Health of the USSR picked up a trowel and a dab of cement in the corner of a field in Pregny-Chambésy and sealed into a foundation block a time capsule detailing the beginning of the construction of new headquarters for

the World Health Organization as well as the organization's constitution. Looking on were the delegates of the 15th World Health Assembly, representatives of other agencies and dignitaries from the city of Geneva. It marked the beginning of four years of construction.

An international competition had been run in 1960 for the design for a new home for the specialised agency of the United Nations which, at that point, was working out of offices in the Ariana wing at the Palace of Nations, just down the road from the land donated by the city of Geneva.

The competition was won by Lausanne-based architect Jean Tschumi. A member of the Modern Movement, Tschumi was born in Plainpalais on Valentine's Day, 1904 and had followed a varied career with studies in fine art and time spent working on interior and furniture design as well as with





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“This building in which certain romantic features contrast with more austere architectural elements, presented a combination of problems which rarely occur together in a single building project”.

Mr. Pierre Bonnard: Architect

the sculptor Édouard-Marcel Sandoz. He had risen to prominence after World War II and was a professor at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne.

Tschumi had also designed the three-pronged star-shaped headquarters of Nestlé in Vevey and his vision for the WHO was a soaring concrete, aluminium and glass structure supported by 22 slender concrete columns (representing the Swiss cantons) to give an impression of lightness. The building would include a separate “Council Hall” and a stepped pyramid in the east of the green, campus site.

Unfortunately, Tschumi did not live to see the completion of this last great project of his life. He passed away in January 1962 and the work was continued by chief architect Pierre Bonnard, who had the duty of officially handing the keys to the organization in May 1966 at an inauguration ceremony held in the main atrium (in front of the recently-completed mural by

Brazilian painter Ibero Camargo) and attended by Tschumi’s widow.

Photos of the ceremony from the commemorative album issued to mark the occasion show some 350 guests assembled in the hall for speeches, the formal transfer of control and music by Convivium Musicum, a five-piece brass ensemble from the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande.

Mr. W Spühler, the Federal Counsellor present at the event on behalf of the Swiss Federal Council, told the assembled dignitaries,

“Henceforth, in this mighty building, scientists and humanitarians, men of thought and of action will combine forces with men of goodwill in every corner of the world, to undertake campaigns against the most insidious enemies of mankind”.

The new building comprised seven floors of offices and a top, 8th floor containing a restaurant and a staff rest room

with a television and record player donated by the Central African Republic. Many other gifts of fine art, furniture and furnishings were also received from member states with artists such as Camargo travelling to finish their pieces in-situ.

As well as the top-floor restaurant and rest room, the building boasted sub-terranean parking, a dedicated data processing centre of large magnetic tape machines, the WHO’s own medical clinic and eight elevators with a further two more for freight and four dedicated just for moving documents between the 10 floors. The Director General’s office has always been on the 7th floor.

The building provided 550 offices for the 982 headquarter staff. In 1966, WHO had 3,075 employees globally drawn from 91 nationalities and the building included, from the outset, a travel agent, a bank, post office and news stand. A world-class library with some 100,000 volumes and 2,700 medical periodicals was also open to

all qualified medical workers visiting headquarters.

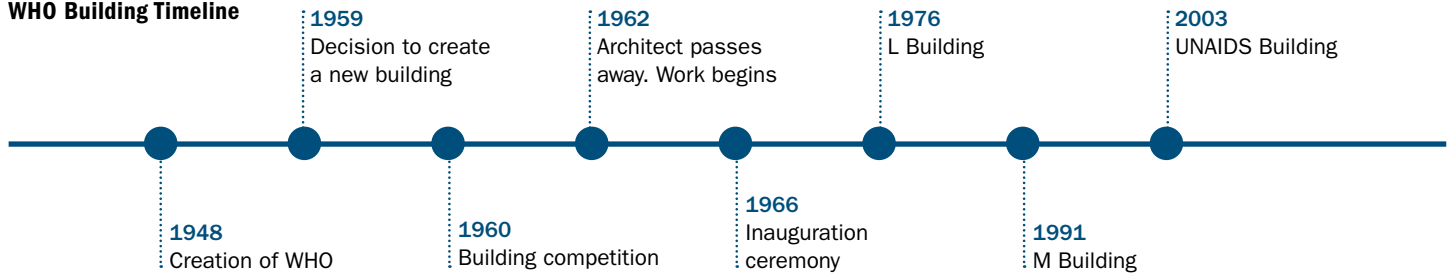
In 1966, the life and work of WHO was both different to and very similar to the mission today. Five Assistant Director-Generals reported to the Director-General, then Mr. Marcolino Gomes Candau from Brazil, and were concentrating on medical research, cardiovascular disease, cancer, access to clean water and malaria and smallpox eradication.

In 1967, WHO dedicated \$2.4 million annually to global smallpox eradication and worked to set up a surveillance network that led, in 1979, to the declaration of a smallpox-free world – the first disease ever to be eradicated by human effort.

In a pre-digital age, information management and transfer relied on paper and radio. The WHO’s Epidemiological Intelligence Service, operated out of Geneva, received data from (among other sources) an estimated 3,000 coded telegrams per year and distributed this information



WHO Building Timeline



back to member states by printing 4,000 copies of the “Weekly Epidemiological Record” and sending these via air mail to the member states. This weekly bulletin had been started by the League of Nations in 1925 and has continued interrupted from that time – an essential part of the International Sanitary Regulations which pre-dated the International Health Regulations of 2005. Information was also broadcast to member states by Radio Suisse.

WHO had a dedicated home along with its six regional offices, already well-established in 1966 in Washington, Copenhagen, Alexandria, Brazzaville, New Delhi and Manila.

Although it presented a striking new home for the organization and represented a commitment to the ideals, principles and mission of the World Health Organization, Dr. Arnold Sauter, the President of the 19th World Health Assembly reminded the attendees at the opening event of something equally true today as we

consider our imminent move to the new building.

“We must not see this building as merely a construction. It is financed by all member states and has been built by the technicians and workers of many nations. It must be regarded as a symbol of the creative will of the peoples who are working together in the World Health Organization to apply its ideals”.

When it was completed in 1966, the building was also seen as a tribute to the work of all who had contributed, since 1948, to the fight against unnecessary suffering and preventable disease. A tangible witness to the global mission to achieve the highest possible standards of health for all.

Whatever the future holds and however new, modern forms of teleworking transform our lives and where we execute our contribution to that mission, those same sentiments are as true today as when we first had a dedicated home in 1966. ■

WHO Building in Figures

150
metres long

20
metres wide

34
metres high

Supported by
22 pillars every

13 metres aligned
in two rows, eight
metres apart

1967 budget for WHO set at
USD 51,515,000

2,000
tons of concrete

17-acre
campus

3,000,000
person-hours to complete construction (on time)

1200
cubic metres of reinforced concrete

18,000
cubic metres of prestressed concrete

550
offices for

982
employees

The sociolinguistic diversity of staff in international organizations in Geneva and Switzerland

*Interview with Dr. Sara Cotelli,
University of Neuchâtel*



Sara Cotelli

**GUILHERME SANCHES LIRA,
UNIVERSITY OF NEUCHÂTEL**

The staff of international organizations in Geneva come from all over the world. They speak a variety of languages, often more than one language, and sometimes they even know and speak various dialects.

The Faculty of Arts (Faculté des Lettres) of the University of Neuchâtel is a reputable institution in Switzerland and in Europe, providing not only the Swiss community with high quality education, but also international students. The university has a long-standing tradition in the teaching of languages, indeed one of its oldest programmes in the Institute of French language and civilization (L'Institut de Langue et Civilisation Françaises, ILCF) dates back to 1892.

NewSpecial magazine had the opportunity to interview Dr. Sara Cotelli, who is the Director of the Centre de Langue and who teaches and researches at the university focusing on sociolinguistics, the anthropology of language and language policies.

First of all, thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed. Could you tell us a bit more about yourself and your work?

I share my time between

different positions at the University of Neuchâtel. I've been teaching languages for more than 20 years in different institutions and now I lead the Language Centre as well as teach English as a foreign language and English for academic purposes. I am also a lecturer in French as a foreign language at ILCF and finally, I teach sociolinguistics at the Faculty of Arts. I did my Master's degree at York University (Toronto, Canada) and took a course on sociolinguistics focusing on Quebec. It was really eye-opening and I decided to work on a similar topic for my PhD, but looking at Switzerland. I studied the language ideologies of minority groups in Switzerland, focusing on the Jura region in the 1960s and 1970s. Then, the francophone minority in canton Bern had links with their 'brothers-in-arms' from Quebec and that is how I came to do more research on the topic of languages in Canada.

Thank you, that sounds very interesting. As you know, many of the staff of the UN agencies and organizations in Geneva come from countries where language and minority language policies are an important part of the social fabric, but sometimes they also pose challenges to peace. Are there any lessons from Switzerland and its lan-

guage policies that you would highlight that demonstrate very effective language politics and planning? Why and why not? Are there examples from other countries?

Most people have the vision of Switzerland's multilingualism as very peaceful and successful. There are several episodes in history showing that conflicts have arisen because of the differences in languages and cultures. For example, three districts of the bilingual canton of Bern were made into a new francophone canton – the Republic and Canton of Jura – following 20 years of autonomist fights in the 1960s and 1970s. Linguistic arguments were important in the discourse of the main autonomist party. Sociologists have argued that Switzerland's democratic system is what allowed this crisis to be solved, even if there is still one vote to be held in the future as to the cantonal affiliation of the city of Moutier.

It is important to note that modern Switzerland only goes back to the beginning of the 19th century and it was built in 1848 around its multilingualism. But many Swiss people are not actually bilingual. They may have school knowledge of German or French or Italian but most of them are not proficient in another national language outside their own

first language. Moreover, even if Switzerland is trying nowadays to promote bilingualism following the adoption of a new language law (2007), the languages of many Swiss inhabitants are disregarded when they are not part of the four national languages, but the languages of migrant workers. Finally, we can note that in Switzerland the four national languages, if they are equally recognised in the constitution, do not enjoy an equal status. The fourth national language, Romansh, is on the verge of extinction, even if a lot of federal money is invested to prevent its total disappearance.

This is very interesting, indeed. Perhaps very few of our readers know about the work done at l'Institut de Langue et Civilisation Françaises at the University of Neuchatel. What are some of the functions and achievement of the institute? How does the work of the institute fit in the global French language promotion and protection agenda?

ILCF has been teaching French to foreigners and Swiss from other linguistic regions for more than 150 years. In the past, most students would go back to their home country and become French teachers. Nowadays, a lot of students are foreigners who have come to live in Switzerland with a Swiss spouse or are refugees. Learning French and about Swiss and European culture can help them fit into the community. ILCF also offers free classes to foreign and exchange students.

As I mentioned earlier, many of our readers speak more than one language already when they arrive in Geneva for their jobs. Learning French is often a challenge for many, especially in Geneva, as one can survive at work and for one's social life with English or other languages. One of the areas of your



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expertise is second language teaching and acquisition, what advice do you have?

Learning a new language in immersion is one of the best ways to learn. Also, there are usually a lot of French-speaking people in Switzerland who want to learn another language. Thus, it is usually quite easy to find someone with whom to start a tandem partnership. Tandem programmes, especially target speaking and communicative skills. But you should insist that it is a partnership and that both partners should exchange their linguistic skills and teach each other their own first language. It is not just a case of giving a free second language conversation class to people. You can insist on reciprocity. So I would encourage your readers to find someone to share their language with and thus improve their French communicative skills. Moreover, I am convinced that a great way to improve one's pronunciation is through reading aloud a lot, even if no one is correcting. French pronunciation is quite difficult, but by reading aloud as much as possible all sorts

of texts, learners can get their pronunciation muscles to get used to the language. A great tool to do that is to use a reader that offers text and audio (like for example the *cideb collection*). It is possible to listen to a paragraph and then read it aloud, record your reading and then compare the two and start again until it is perfect.

Finally, Professor Cotelli, you take deep interest in sociolinguistic issues and concepts, particularly with regards to the French language in North America. How do you think shedding light on different language variants can help people overcome their linguistic prejudice as well as the misconceptions they may have of the so-called non-standard variants?

Research has shown that the inclusion of regional variants in general dictionaries like *Larousse* and *Petit Robert*, as well as the publication of differential dictionaries (glossaries of regional vocabulary) like the *Dictionnaire Suisse Romand* (1997) or the *Dictionnaire of Louisiana French* (2009), have had an impact

on the linguistic insecurity of speakers who live in the countryside or in a French-speaking country which is not France. Researchers have argued that things have been changing since the end of the 20th century. Language ideologies of centrality (standard French is spoken in Paris) have started to be challenged by ideologies of regional identity. This trend is quite general in all francophone countries (in North America and Europe) and is probably linked to a more general change about the importance of regions, which has helped local tourism, arts and crafts and culinary specialties. If regional variants are becoming more popular, it is not the case of all non-standard variants. For example, computer mediated communication (CMC), also known as sms-writing in French, is criticized by a lot of commentators, including teachers, writers and the press, like the Figaro printing that CMC is at the root of the degradation of spelling skills in young people. ■

Choosing a candidate in US elections

As a Swiss and US citizen I vote in both jurisdictions. In Switzerland I cherish the semi-direct democratic system, characterized by voting on issues, initiating legislation, approving or rejecting laws and regulations by referendum.



© Violette Martin

ALFRED DE ZAYAS, UNSW

In 2002 Switzerland voted on whether or not to join the United Nations. There is a referendum tradition on all sorts of issues including the banking sector, bonuses, military procurement, free-trade agreements. We decide whether an agricultural district is declassified and opened for “development”, whether a bridge or tunnel is built. Democracy means hands-on participation to ensure the correlation between the needs and wishes of the people and the laws and structures that affect them.

Because there is no tradition of direct democracy in the United States, important decisions are taken by Congress or Presidential decree. There is little opportunity to decide whether taxes are lowered, securities

regulation is strengthened, sanctions are imposed or lifted. We try to influence government by means of what is termed “representative democracy”, which is not co-terminous with “participatory democracy”. The system works by organizing clusters of ideals and goals into “platforms” and dividing the players into political parties or “teams”, which are expected to enter into coalition in order to achieve viable majorities.

The problem with “representative democracy” is that often enough Senators and congressmen/women do not really represent the electorate, but are more committed to the agendas of certain lobbies, big business, big pharma, Wall Street, the automobile industry, the weapons manufacturers. We observe a great disconnect between power and the people. If many of the laws adopted by Congress were put to the direct vote of the electorate, they would be rejected.

In the United States the democratic deficit of “representative democracy” becomes more acute, because although there are some “marginal” political groupings, essentially there

are only two players or teams – like in a football match. We are expected to root for Team A or Team B, and the newspapers tend to act as cheer-leaders for the one or the other. A fundamental flaw in the two-party system is that it operates on the basis of competing “platforms”. The political cocktail inevitably combines disparate ingredients – some of them toxic. I often find myself in a quandary, because whereas I approve 50% of the Republican or Democratic platform, I abhor the remaining 50%. It becomes difficult to vote according to one’s conscience – a situation which leads to absenteeism.

Unlike in Switzerland, there is no possibility in the US to vote for issues and policies one by one. The differences between the two parties are mostly marginal, because on the key issues of governance they converge. Both Democrats and Republicans are for huge military budgets, support Wall Street, reject multilateralism in international affairs. Thus, in deciding for one party or the other, we often have to choose between bad or worse. Does this situation have any resemblance to democracy? Is

democracy just the pro-forma casting of a ballot for either one of two candidates we do not really trust?

Profile of my ideal candidate

Let us momentarily dream: An ideal candidate should have integrity and demonstrate intellectual and emotional honesty, a moral compass and a sense for proportions. He/she must have competence and independence of mind, must be able to think both inside and outside the box, must be committed to transparency and accountability. He/she must understand his/her role as a servant, not a master. He/she must listen and demonstrate flexibility and empathy, advance human dignity by ensuring a level playing field for all, without privileges, monopolies or scams, so that the “American dream” can become reality, so that the concept of “meritocracy” is more than just a PR farce. He/she must place people over profits, be committed to domestic and international peace, understanding that patriotism is not chauvinism or jingoism, but commitment to strengthening local, regional and international harmony, observing the guiding principle: si vis pacem, cole



Alfred de Zayas and Fawzia Assaad, Presidents of P.E.N. International Centre Suisse romand at the Place des Nations.

injustitiam – if you want peace, you must cultivate social justice – both domestically and internationally.

Platform of my ideal party

On domestic issues: Ensure that the basic necessities of all persons under the jurisdiction of the State are covered. Promote the well-being of all, e.g. through preparedness to meet daily needs and unexpected emergencies such as earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, floods and pandemics; universal medical coverage, enhanced research and development in the fields of health security, prevention of disease, new medicines and medical equipment to prevent and/or cure disease; free public education from grammar school to university; job-creation and re-training programs; environmentally sensitive energy policies with an emphasis on promoting the use of renewable energy; sensible public transportation, construction of more cycling lanes; access to information, maximum disclosure by government offices, a truly free media instead of a corporate press that manipulates public opinion through fake news,

suppression of crucial facts, and the partisan interpretation of events and history; freedom of opinion and expression that guarantees the right to dissent and not just the right to echo whatever nonsense we hear over CNN or Fox; academic freedom that is not frustrated by “political correctness”; abolition of structural violence, racial and gender discrimination; affordable housing and a solution to the homelessness problem in many big cities throughout the United States.

Budget priorities: Prepare to convert the military-first economy into a human services economy. Taxpayers’ money must not be squandered in exorbitant military expenditures, procurement of bombers, missiles and drones, research into nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, lethal autonomous weapon systems, artificial intelligence, military bases all over the world. The mantra should be: disarmament for development. Congress should cease allocating subsidies to the oil and gas industries, cheap fuel to the airlines. Government must immediately stop unconstitutional activities such as those

conducted by the CIA and the National Security Agency with its Orwellian “mass surveillance” of American citizens.

Economy: Create jobs. Support Main Street over Wall Street. Encourage private initiative and small business enterprises. Downsize large corporations and use anti-trust legislation where necessary. Break down monopolies. Regulate banks and Wall Street so as to prevent the boom-and-bust cycles. Abandon the practice of bailing-out rogue banks and mega-corporations.

Criminal law: The State is ontologically obliged to protect the population from crimes and abuses. The police department must be representative, truly democratic, and inspired by a philosophy of public service. Government must not privatize the police, security services or the prisons. Judges must be free to exercise discretionary sentencing; laws on mandatory sentencing, especially life-imprisonment sentencing for repeated minor offences must be abrogated. Capital punishment must be abolished. The primary goal must be preventive and educational – not “punishment”-oriented, which is always ex-post facto. The goal must be to rehabilitate convicts who should be reintegrated into society. Prosecution of common criminality is part of the State’s obligation to ensure the “security of person” (article 9, ICCPR), but this obligation extends also to the prosecution of “white collar crime” or economic crimes, including speculation, market scams, insider trading, fraudulent bankruptcies.

Urgently needed legislation: significant strengthening of Securities Regulation, abolishing tax havens, criminalizing all forms of tax evasion, regulating the activities transnational corporations to ensure

that they pay taxes where the profits are generated and that their employees receive decent salaries without racial or gender discrimination. Abolish “mass surveillance” of the population and impose high penalties on government officials who breach the privacy of persons. Following the revelations of Edward Snowden, the NSA should be dismantled, and officials who acted illegally and unconstitutionally should be prosecuted.

International relations:

Apply international law uniformly and not à la carte. Commit to the purposes and principles of the United Nations, acknowledging the UN Charter as a kind of “world constitution”. Properly fund UN agencies, including WHO, ILO, UNESCO UNDP, UNEP and UNWRA. Promote the Sustainable Development Goals. Abandon unilateralism and “exceptionalism”. Participate in multilateral negotiations, international solidarity. Government lawyers should facilitate the implementation of treaties and not try to find loopholes to weasel out from obligations. Stop military adventures that generate terrorism. Respect freedom of navigation and freedom of trade. Lift economic sanctions and financial blockades against geopolitical rivals. Abolish Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanisms contained in “free-trade agreements”, because they undermine the rule of law and circumvent the system of public courts. Promote the regional and international human rights courts. Persuade the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to advance not only economics but also human rights.

Make America great again

Yes, if we only revive the legacy of Eleanor Roosevelt, the first President of the UN Commission on Human Rights. ■

A centre in Geneva to promote the use of evidence in humanitarian action

The new Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Studies (former CERAH) intends to build more bridges between research conducted around the world on humanitarian action and the practitioners working on the frontline.



Professor Karl Blanchet

BRIGITTE PERRIN, UNIGE

Professor Karl Blanchet, who was appointed as the new director of the centre in September 2020, has just launched a new branding for this UNIGE-Graduate Institute joint center. Karl presents his vision of tomorrow's higher education in a humanitarian context.

“We do not expect humanitarian practitioners to become researchers, that's not what they need. But it has never been so important for people working in the field to understand and use evidence generated by top-universities”, stated Karl Blanchet, the Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Studies. He just

unveiled a new name, a new identity and a brand-new vision for the former Centre for Education and Research in Humanitarian Action (CERAH). This Center, created in 2008 by the University of Geneva and the Graduate Institute, had the objective to offer high-level, continuous education for humanitarian practitioners.

Increase access to education to frontline workers

The new name reflects a new vision for the Centre: “We are currently assessing how to transform our courses to increase access and availability of this knowledge to frontline humanitarian workers and

organisations”, explains Karl Blanchet. “The humanitarian system is changing very fast. We need to be agile and respond in time with the right intervention, and this is getting more and more complicated”. Flexibility is key not only in terms of format of the courses by offering distance learning courses organised in Kenya and Jordan; but also in terms of length and focus: short courses on specific disciplines like sexual violence, communication, climate emergency and negotiation are providing humanitarian workers with the knowledge they need at a specific moment, but it also gives them the opportunity to question their practice, listen to

The COVID19 Humanitarian Platform

In April 2020, the Center for Humanitarian Studies launched COVID-19 Humanitarian, an open-access, web-based platform for use by humanitarian actors in preparedness and response to COVID-19. This platform, managed in partnership with LSHTM and the Johns Hopkins University, promotes the exchange of field-based COVID-19 programme adaptations and innovations, facilitating learning among organisations in different sectors and contexts.

<https://www.covid19humanitarian.com/>

As part of the engagement in the response to COVID-19, the Humanitarian Encyclopedia project has prioritised analysis of certain concepts relevant to the crisis and its impact on humanitarian situations.

By analyzing key humanitarian concepts, such as ‘epidemic’, ‘ethics’ and ‘community engagement’, the Center aims to support global and local humanitarian actors to speak a clear, common language, share knowledge as a public good, and foster the co-production of new knowledge to guide humanitarian response.

<https://humanitarianencyclopedia.org>

Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Studies in figures
Executive education programmes:

- 1** Master (MAS) in Humanitarian Action
- 1** Diploma (DAS) in Humanitarian Action
- 1** Certificate (CAS) Quality Management of Humanitarian Projects (residential)
- 1** Certificate (CAS) Designing Strategies and Projects in Humanitarian Action (blended learning)
- 16** short courses
- 150** guest speakers per Academic Year
- 200** students per Academic Year

local lecturers and professionals, and to take the time to read scientific literature. When they complete one course, they can join another one, or apply to one of the diploma programmes (Executive Master, Diploma or Certificate). The key objective is to encourage a critical assessment of humanitarian practice in order to improve humanitarian response globally. We shouldn't forget that 90% of the humanitarian responders are national staff.

“In such a stressful environment, people need to pause at some point”

Karl Blanchet spent half of his career in international NGOs, notably at Handicap International (HI), where he was the Director of the UK office back in 2005. Before, he worked in the field in Sarajevo, Rwanda, Somalia, Cambodia and West Africa. “After these years spent working on humanitarian response, I felt the need to refresh my knowledge and I started a Master in Public

Health in Developing Countries at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) What surprised me the most at that time is how little evidence was used by NGOs.” After being the Director of HI, Karl went on for a PhD on the topic “How to measure the sustainability of programmes when there is so much turnover of staff and funding is unpredictable”. The Swiss Red Cross funded his research in Ghana. “This research gave me a sound understanding of the professionals’ constraints. When working in such a stressful environment, people need to pause at some point, to find sense in what they are doing, and then they need to be able to start again, being fresher. This is exactly the time when professionals need to enroll in continuing education. It is an individual journey.”

Making sure evidence research will be used by policy makers

After his time spent on his PhD, Karl worked at LSHTM for almost 15 years, first as a

lecturer, then as the Director of the Health in Humanitarian Crises Centre. After convincing his hierarchy, he started a fellowship at IHEID to start engaging in policy dialogues with WHO, MSF, ICRC, UNFPA and other international organisations in Geneva. His objective was to make sure evidence developed in London would be used by policy makers here in Geneva. That is how he came across the Centre's job vacancy for a new Director. “We want our course participants to be able to search in an research database, write something that is evidence-based, and well argued. They should be able to navigate research and access to the right experts who have digested the evidence. Finally, they need to know where to look for the latest evidence”, explains Karl Blanchet.

“Back in 2016, The World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul focused on localisation of aid, recalls the Director. The conclusion was that we should invest more on local actors. We have, consciously or not, failed to do it. Our Centre now aims to become an example of how to invest in local actors, both by what we teach and the way we teach. Our motto for the coming years is to be an instrument in the localisation of humanitarian aid through increasing the number of lecturers coming from affected countries, the organisation of free webinars, building online platforms to contribute to promote global knowledge, and invite more international actors to policy

dialogues. The location of the Center at the heart of International Geneva is of course a clear advantage to achieve this”

A new focus on Health

The Geneva Centre of Humanitarian Studies is currently developing a range of new courses addressing health issues and is planning to foster interdisciplinarity, notably with the UNIGE Institute of Global Health (ISG), to ensure all the participants get at least some knowledge in Public Health. “The past few months have shown the impact of a pandemic on the delivery of essential health services”, stresses Karl Blanchet. “We therefore decided to build a humanitarian platform (see box) with the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of public Health and tLSHTM to share scientific resources with field workers around the world.”

In the future, Karl Blanchet wants to develop further synergies with top universities and other disciplines (Translation, History, Management, Protection and Law etc.). French adaptation of some courses for humanitarian workers located in West-African countries is also part of his long-term projects. “Little by little we hope to gain legitimacy in research and become a magnet for other humanitarian initiatives, in Geneva or elsewhere in the world”. ■

More info:
Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Studies
<https://humanitarianstudies.ch/>

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Why legal insurance for employment matters is essential



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GEMMA VESTAL, WHO, EVELYN KORTUM, FICSA, CATHERINE KIROREI CORSINI, WHO

If you are a United Nations staff member (or a former staff member or an affected dependent) who wishes to appeal an adverse administrative decision, or who is subject to disciplinary action, this article does not concern you as you luckily have access to the Office of Staff Legal Assistance (OSLA), which does not charge a fee for its services. OSLA can help if you are a UN system staff member and are a UN workplace victim of: harassment, abuse of authority, discrimination; facing disciplinary charges at the UN; have been denied United Nations contract renewal; and, are concerned about a promotion

exercise at the United Nations. A UN staff member in New York said “OSLA provided me with the highest level of service at a very low point in my professional life.”

But what about if you are not a UN staff member? What if you work for one of the UN-affiliated agencies where access to the national justice system of your duty station is not an option? A standard legal protection insurance would not cover your work-related matters because there is usually a fine print provision in these policies that necessitates the use of the relevant national court, which precludes cases that would be adjudicated at the International Labour

Organization Administrative Tribunal (ILOAT) or the United Nations Appeals Tribunal (UNAT).

Legal expenses insurance is a class of insurance that facilitates staff access to law and justice, by covering the costs incurred in case of an unforeseen legal matter. Such costs normally include a lawyer’s fees and related legal expenses. Unfortunately, this issue is often only considered when a staff member approaches a lawyer for assistance about a potential legal dispute. At this point, the dispute may have already started, and the staff member may face deadlines, heightened stress and require urgent help. When staff members do not have legal expenses insurance, this may impede them from obtaining competent and timely legal advice.

As most international organizations already have a cadre of administrative law legal officers in their human resources department plus an entire legal department, there is already a daunting inequality of arms. Legal insurance covering employment law is imperative to facilitate access to justice within your international organization. Legal insurance can cover matters within your organization that are unforeseen and affect your employment status, including workplace conflicts, whistleblowing, selection process, and investigations. With the administrative inequality in the workplace, having legal insurance itself can signal to your organization that staff will

legally contest unfair or unjust administrative decisions. In order to protect yourself, it is imperative to sign up for legal insurance.

At WHO HQ in Geneva, the Staff Association offers, through CAP Protection Juridique, its dues-paying members legal protection coverage up to 10,000 CHF per case, less 500 CHF deductible, limited to two cases per head per year. For a mass litigation arising from the same facts, CAP covers up to 30,000 CHF, less 1,500 CHF deductible, limited to one mass litigation per year. The fee is 220 CHF per head per year provided there are 1,000 staff members enrolled. And then it is 230 CHF per head per year for over 1,000 staff members. If you are a WHO HQ staff member and you are not yet a dues-paying member of your Staff Association, contact staffassociation@who.int to start your membership and avail of this necessary legal insurance coverage.

However, the above coverage is not possible if the membership is below 1,000 staff members. This is the reason why many UN-affiliated agencies here in Geneva do not have CAP Protection Juridique insurance. Therefore, the Federation of International Civil Servants Association (FICSA) has worked for over two years now to broker a deal with an insurance provider so that staff associations and unions who have less than 1,000 dues-paying members can still get legal protection coverage.

Under this insurance scheme with Fortuna Insurance, if FICSA can gather more than 1,000 adherents, the premium will be 80 CHF/head/year. Below 1,000 adherents, the premium will be 100 CHF/head/year.

Without a deductible, Fortuna Insurance will cover up to 15,000 CHF per member and per dispute which includes:

1. The cost of a lawyer
2. Any compensation for legal fees awarded to the other party
3. Cost of expert opinions
4. Cost of a mediation process and out-of-court negotiation cost.

For mass litigation, defined as a case where there are ten or more staff filing against their administration on the same issue, Fortuna Insurance will cover up to 200,000 CHF and there is no deductible.

Under Fortuna Insurance through FICSA, the staff member does not have to be based in Geneva. The duty station could be London, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Cairo, Brazzaville, Copenhagen, Vienna, etc. The contract is between Fortuna and FICSA, and both are based in Switzerland. However, the respective court (ILOAT or UNAT) needs to be in Geneva, or hold its session in Geneva.

If you are interested in signing up for Fortuna Insurance, contact your staff association/union and ask them to add you to the list of interested staff that should be sent to FICSA as soon

as possible. The FICSA email is ficsa@un.org.

What is the overall process of bringing a case to Fortuna?

(a) The staff member needs to contact the President of the staff association/union who is responsible for informing the FICSA Secretariat and for passing the case to Fortuna within ten days of the date of receipt.

– The staff member needs to provide proof that options within the organizations were exhausted to settle a conflict

(b) Fortuna lawyers will consider the merits of the case and revert to the President of the staff association/union and the President of FICSA in another ten days maximum.

(c) The President of the staff association/union has to relay such a decision to the respective staff member without any delay.

Don't be like David facing Goliath alone. Have access to a competent lawyer; sign up for legal insurance protection. ■

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WHO's inaugural Health for All Film Festival will return for a second edition in 2021!

On the evening of 12 May, WHO put the spotlight on a few outstanding film makers from around the world for their contributions to global health.



SIMONE ST CLAIRE AND GILLES REBOUX, WHO FILM FESTIVAL TEAM

Despite the heavy workload of WHO staff fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Health for All Film Festival** was implemented almost as planned. WHO Director-General, alongside a jury made up of prominent figures in artistic domains and WHO public health experts, announced five winners and three special mentions during a lively virtual ceremony, which included musical performances by Angélique Kidjo and Ricky Kej, both part of the Festival

jury. In an exciting close of ceremony, the WHO Director-General announced that the Health for All Film Festival would return next year for its second edition!

'The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for compelling and creative communications about public health. Last year, WHO announced our first Health for All Film Festival. The volume, quality and diversity of entries has far surpassed our expectations' said Dr Tedros

Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General. 'In these difficult times, films and other media are a powerful way, not only of communicating important health messages, but of administering one of the most powerful medicines: Hope.'

The Health for All Film Festival aims to put storytelling power in the hands of people and seeks to showcase the role of individuals and communities as champions for health and well-being. In an extraordinary demonstration

of creative energy and enthusiasm for telling public health stories, the first ever Health for All Film Festival organized by the World Health Organization has attracted nearly 1,300 short film submissions - both amateur and professional - from more than 110 countries. These numerous submissions tell the stories of change-makers in communities through the lens of their smartphone or their high-tech video equipment. The impressive collection promotes dialogue around global health challenges and solutions, and



GRAND PRIX for animation films category: "Limbo" by Saw Eh Doh Poe, Nann Win May Aye and Nwaye Zar Che Soe, from Myanmar who are students from Yangon Film School based in Germany and Myanmar. An emotional testimony about sexual violence.



GRAND PRIX for nurses and midwives category designed to pay tribute to 2020 - the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife: "War & Grace" by Sonia Lowman from International Medical Corps, an NGO based in USA and UK. This film tells the story of courageous midwives in South Sudan.

WHO is grateful to all those who participated in this competition.

The success of the Festival would not have been possible without the active participation of hundreds of WHO staff members in Geneva and the six WHO regional offices, as well as some country offices. Thanks to UN colleagues in New York, the network of UNICs was informed and colleagues from various UN agencies globally contributed by helping spread the word. The virtual ceremony, also available in French and Spanish, has been viewed about 300,000 times through various social media platforms, and winning films have reached more than 20,000 views on YouTube. To watch the ceremony and get access to YouTube playlists containing most of the official selection, please

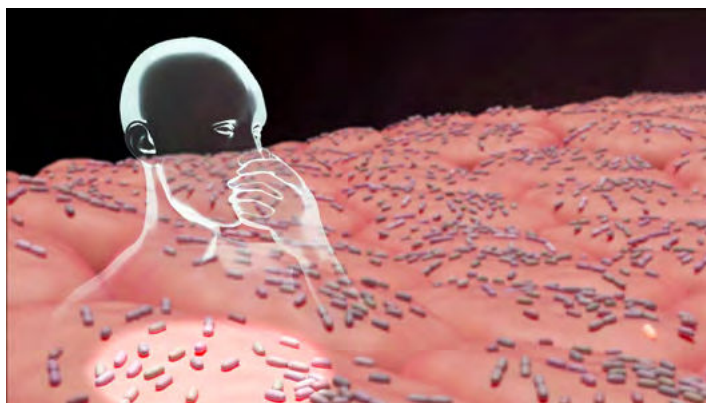
visit the Festival website: www.who.int/film-festival

Film has the unique ability to make us feel - to make us laugh, cry and think. Through the creation of compelling human-interest stories, filmmakers have the potential to influence health and catalyze change. Films are a powerful way to raise awareness, improve understanding and encourage action. As a tool to promote the production of high-quality films about health and encourage film makers to follow WHO's scientific guidance when developing their scripts, the Health for All Film Festival is a direct contribution to health promotion and health education – and will continue to do so in years to come.

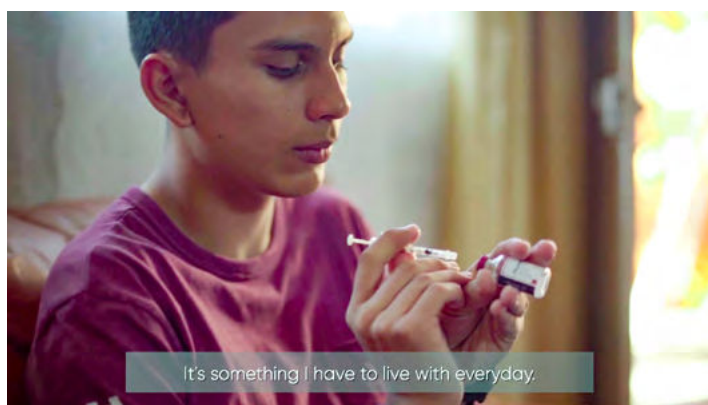
The inaugural edition of the Health for All Film Festival is

not over! The Festival will close on 22, 23 and 24 October with in-person evening events at the Auditorium Foundation Ardit, Plainpalais – Geneva. These events were initially planned for May, to coincide with the 73rd World Health Assembly, but were postponed due to COVID-19 lockdown measures. In the hopes that these events will take place, please plan to join us for a viewing of the official selection of the Festival on a big screen and dynamic discussions around the films' health topics and story-telling ability, facilitated by a panel of experts. Additional prizes will be announced at this time - the Mental Health Film Prize and the Social Determinants of Health Film Prize. The second call for short films will be released on 24 October.

All of us can help spread the word about this Festival and encourage the use of audiovisual language and human-centered stories to promote health - unlike the 'infodemic' of misinformation that has saturated the media! ■



STUDENT PRIZE out of the three categories: "Antibiotic resistance" by Nitai Steinberg, a Biologist from Israel, who was a student when he made the film and is now is a graduate of Biomedical Communications at the University of Toronto, Canada. His film is a demonstration of an easy to understand scientific education about AMR.



NCDs FILM PRIZE out of the category dedicated to short films about noncommunicable diseases: "Living without limits", a film about living with type 1 diabetes in Mexico, made by BBC StoryWorks for the Helmsley Charitable Trust.



GRAND PRIX for video reports category: "A doctor's dream" produced by DNDi, The Drugs for the Neglected Diseases initiative with Scholars and Gentlemen, a production company from South Africa. A film about the research of an efficient cure against sleeping sickness.



A la jonction des routes C14 et C24, du côté de Solitaire, localité isolée dans le désert qui porte bien son nom

NAMIBIE 2/4

Entre dunes et océan

Des dunes de sable désertiques bordant le littoral atlantique aux massifs montagneux austères de l'intérieur des terres, la Namibie présente une extraordinaire variété de paysages tous plus majestueux les uns que les autres.

CLAUDE MAILLARD

Située au centre du pays, Windhoek (voir le précédent numéro du *NewSpecial*) est la porte d'entrée des touristes au carrefour des routes se dirigeant au nord vers le parc d'Etosha et plein sud vers Fish River. Quant à nous, notre route nous mènera vers l'ouest en direction du désert du Namib pour le début d'une fabuleuse expédition. Sitôt sortis des faubourgs de la capitale namibienne, ce n'est que désert à perte de vue. La Namibie est l'une des contrées les plus sèches et les plus arides de la planète, et son avenir se voit menacé par la désertification et la pénurie d'eau.

Pour nous mettre tout de suite dans l'ambiance, c'est par l'une des randonnées les plus prisées du pays que va débiter notre aventure namibienne. Au cœur des montagnes du Naukluft, parmi les antilopes et zèbres de montagne, l'Olive Trail permet depuis son sommet d'avoir une vue panoramique sur toute la région. Mais avant de pouvoir s'extasier devant ces fabuleux décors, adrénaline garantie au passage d'un canyon vertigineux qui ne peut se franchir qu'en équilibre, accroché à flanc de paroi. Le ton est donné, le voyage s'annonce épique...

Magique, sauvage, fascinant

Au fur et à mesure que nous

approchons de la localité de Sesriem, le désert caillouteux laisse place à une vaste étendue de paysages de dunes d'une beauté saisissante. La mer de sable de Sossusvlei s'étend sur 32 000 km². Nous évoluons dans l'un des écosystèmes les plus anciens et les plus secs de la planète. Après une mise en jambes sur la dune 45, très photogénique au lever du soleil lorsqu'elle se pare de ses plus belles couleurs orangées, Big Daddy nous attend. Avec ces 325 m de haut, c'est la plus haute dune du secteur et l'une des plus grandes au monde. La juxtaposition du ciel d'un bleu profond et de l'imposante dune ensoleillée est tout simplement envoûtante. En file

indienne, perchés sur sa crête, nous entreprenons son ascension qui ne se fera pas sans mal, le sable se dérochant sous nos pas. Mais au bout de l'effort, la récompense est là avec une vue phénoménale à 360° qui permet d'apprécier l'étendue et l'isolement de l'endroit. A nos pieds, quelques centaines de mètres plus bas, se niche Deadvlei, l'une des plus étonnantes curiosités d'Afrique australe. Une course folle faite de grandes enjambées sur la pente escarpée de la dune va nous projeter sur une autre planète au milieu d'une forêt d'arbres pétrifiés qui se dressent au fond d'une cuvette au sol d'une blancheur surprenante.



Réunis par milliers sur les eaux miroitantes du côté de Walvis Bay, les flamants roses offrent l'un des plus beaux spectacles naturels africains



Région de montagnes faite d'amoncellements de roches et de vallées désertiques, le Damaraland résume magnifiquement la Namibie

Au beau milieu du désert, surnommé le «Bagdad café de la Namibie», Solitaire porte bien son nom. Entourée de cactus, la localité regroupe une station-service d'un autre temps près de laquelle des carcasses de voitures rouillées sont plantées dans le sable, une boulangerie qui vend d'excellents apple struddle et un campement qui nous permettra de reprendre quelques forces. C'est là, au milieu de nulle part, que nous croisons Brigitte et Ivo d'Interlaken, baroudeurs de l'extrême, qui sur leurs vélos surchargés parcourent la planète toujours en quête de nouvelles aventures. De l'Himalaya à l'Amérique du Sud, en passant par le Japon et Dubaï, ou encore la Chine et l'Egypte, nos deux sympathiques Suisses ont déjà accumulé des milliers de kilomètres au guidon de leur monture.

Avec vision panoramique garantie sur la voie lactée et les constellations australes, la nuit s'annonce grandiose.

L'appel du désert

Midi, le soleil est au zénith et une chape de plomb s'abat sur le désert lorsque nous traversons le tropique du Capricorne. Terme de notre journée, Walvis Bay approche et nous allons pouvoir profiter de la fraîcheur de l'océan Atlantique. La ville

est assez plaisante, il y règne une ambiance très décontractée. Abrité par la langue de sable de Pelican Point, le lieu accueille la plus importante colonie de flamants roses de toute l'Afrique australe. Trente kilomètres plus au nord, coincée entre les rouleaux de l'Atlantique et le désert du Namib, Swakopmund est une étape tout indiquée. Ville balnéaire à l'architecture germanique mais aussi profondément africaine, cette capitale touristique est riche en découvertes. Pour les amateurs de belles pierres, la Kristall Galerie expose d'extraordinaires cristaux, dont le plus gros fragment de cristal de quartz jamais découvert.

Terminé l'escapade au bord de l'eau; mais avant de retrouver la fournaise, notre guide Joseph nous a concocté une agréable surprise «rafraîchissante» qui restera à tout jamais gravée dans notre mémoire. Au milieu de milliers d'otaries, embarqués sur de frêles kayaks de mer, nous allons évoluer, tels de grands enfants, les yeux écarquillés, avec ces mammifères marins tous plus joueurs les uns que les autres. Mais finie la récréation, le désert nous attend. Au loin tel un mirage nous apparaît le Spitzkoppe qui domine la plaine du haut de ses 1728 m. Sa silhouette

imposante et bien reconnaissable lui vaut son surnom de «Cervin d'Afrique». Notre bivouac est prévu à ses pieds, mais avant, un petit détour près de la confluence des rivières Khan et Swakop s'impose. C'est là que pousse une curiosité végétale unique, l'extraordinaire *Welwitschia mirabilis* qui fut découverte en 1859 par le botaniste autrichien Friedrich Welwitsch. Certains spécimens pouvant mesurer jusqu'à 2 m de diamètre auraient 2000 ans!

Stupéfaction à l'arrivée dans notre campement installé pour la nuit: des occupants un peu particuliers l'ont déjà squatté. Dressés sur leurs pattes arrière, pas du tout farouches, une ribambelle de suricates ont envahi les lieux. A leur programme: visite à l'intérieur des tentes, inspection générale des sacs à dos et guet devant la marmite installée sur le feu, au cas où! Le spectacle est assuré pour la soirée... et au matin, pas besoin de réveil. Ceux que l'on surnomme «sentinelles du désert» sont déjà là, à nous observer et à fouiner dans nos affaires.

Ces vastes espaces du Damaraland dans lesquels nous évoluons constituent l'un des derniers territoires d'Afrique australe où zèbres, girafes,

antilopes, éléphants et même rhinocéros noirs vivent hors des limites d'un parc national. Avec ses forêts pétrifiées (témoignage d'une histoire de plusieurs millions d'années), ces peintures rupestres classées au patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO (héritage des chasseurs-cueilleurs San qui vivaient ici il y a 20000 ans) ou tout simplement avec ses fabuleux décors faits d'amoncellements de roches et de monumentales arches granitiques, le Damaraland à l'histoire millénaire n'est vraiment pas une région comme les autres.

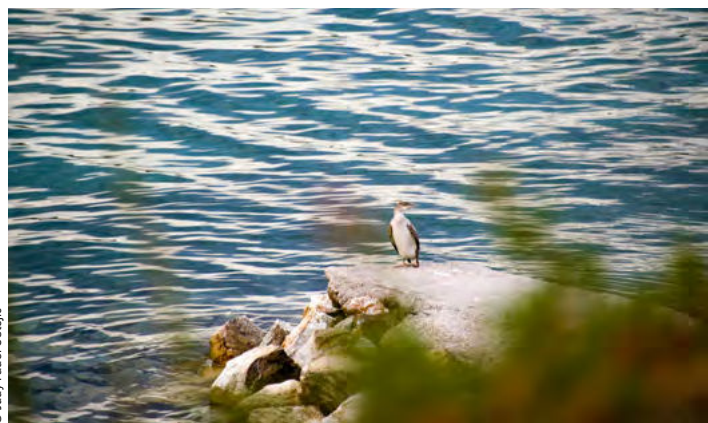
Passé le petit village de Uis, située à l'entrée de la vallée herbeuse de l'Aba Huab, Twyfelfontein forme l'une des plus grandes galeries d'art pariétal du continent africain. Plus de 2500 gravures, principalement d'animaux, ont été découvertes à ce jour. Direction plein nord pour atteindre Warmquelle, bourgade blottie sur les berges de la rivière Hoanib. Demain nous rencontrerons les habitants du village de Gorongava: ils font partie du peuple herero arrivé en Namibie au milieu du XVI^e siècle. ■

Suite de l'aventure à vivre dans le prochain numéro du *NewSpecial*.

Confinement

We humans have disappointed the birds

As the sudden confinement to combat the pandemic was put into place in March 2020, many countries did their best to find a solution by investing money, time, and hours of medical work.



© Judy Fadel-Ostojic
"Finally the world is mine"



© Judy Fadel-Ostojic
"Beautiful world"

JUDY FADEL-OSTOJIC, UNOG

In these circumstances, people discovered the importance of the role of medical staff, nurses, doctors and healthcare groups. For the first time in history, this segment of society became the most important one. Are they the new celebrities? After all, our society admires celebrities... Can we say that

COVID-19 has changed our way of thinking? The answer is yes! During the confinement, medical staff did indeed become our heroes.

The grim side of this positive observation is that many people have died, including doctors. We heard people say they were

"afraid" of isolation at home. They needed to get their lives back to normal. But the confinement experience was necessary, so they accepted it. It allowed family members to get together around a table for a meal or to play board games. Children were "happy" to see both parents close by. Families found that they needed to be together regularly.

Besides that, the birds were free to sing, they took advantage of the situation. They were singing and dancing with joy; they were dancing the human silence tango beautifully.

Wild animals in nature act in a way that proves to us how important it is to live without human noise. If the confinement continues, the birds may sing more.

We learned that all we need are a few clothes and basic ingredients to make food. People said that during the confinement there was no more flour in the shops because people had started baking bread at home.

Our consumer society is over. The air is very pure, and the rate of pollution has gone down. What else? as Clooney said! The

environment became clean as the pollution rate decreased. The environment started to heal. The whole earth was at rest.

Newspapers reported that the world will witness two phases, before COVID-19 and after! Human memory is short. After the decision to reopen businesses and return to normal life, people started queuing again, standing in front of shops. The confinement has not cured people of the consumer disease. Traffic has returned to how it was before. People have started the race to find tickets to go on vacation.

So just what have we learned from the confinement experience? We have learned that human memory is short, and that forgetfulness is a human characteristic.

Everyone has forgotten this tough period and returned to the habits of the consumer society: polluting the earth with cars and planes and consuming more than what they need as if COVID-19 was never anything more than a passing fancy. It turned out that people did not like the birdsong or the purity of the earth.

We need to go back into confinement. This time not to protect ourselves from COVID-19, but to save the earth from ourselves. We cannot disappoint the birds. ■

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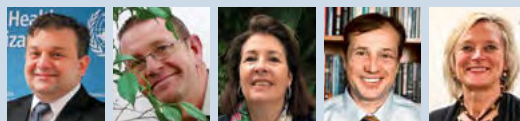
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