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30 Years of the Beijing Declaration

ADVANCING WOMEN'S RIGHTS
AND HEALTH

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30 YEARS OF THE BEIJING DECLARATION

2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a landmark global policy framework for women's rights and gender equality. Adopted by 189 member states in 1995, it outlines a comprehensive roadmap addressing twelve critical areas of concern, including women's health. Over the past three decades, the Beijing Platform has driven significant progress in advancing gender equality, empowering women, and improving health outcomes worldwide. This milestone celebrates the collective efforts and achievements of governments, organizations, and individuals dedicated to creating a more equitable and just world for women and girls.

As always, we have something special for all our readers. We have a set of poems for the International Women's Day, don't miss the rimes and emotions of expressions that our authors express to women, mothers, sisters and leaders around us. The staff in international organizations are full of talent and creativity! This year also marks 36 years of United Nations Society of Writers who have been producing Ex Tempore, a collection of annual writings and poems of fellow staff members. This story will also continue in our next issue.

We returned in 2025 with more engaging content. You can find all our 2024 and 2025 issues online, on stands in Geneva, and take them with you on your travels. Share them with friends and colleagues! //

30 ANS DE LA DÉCLARATION DE BEIJING

2025 marque le 30^e anniversaire de la Déclaration et du Programme d'action de Beijing, un cadre politique mondial emblématique pour les droits des femmes et l'égalité des sexes. Adopté par 189 États membres en 1995, il définit une feuille de route complète couvrant douze domaines critiques, y compris la santé des femmes. Au cours des trois dernières décennies, le Programme de Beijing a permis des progrès significatifs dans la promotion de l'égalité des sexes, l'autonomisation des femmes et l'amélioration des résultats en matière de santé dans le monde entier. Ce jalon célèbre les efforts et les réalisations collectifs des gouvernements, des organisations et des individus dédiés à la création d'un monde plus équitable et juste pour les femmes et les filles.

Comme toujours, nous avons quelque chose de spécial pour tous nos lecteurs. Nous avons un ensemble de poèmes pour la Journée internationale des femmes, capturant les rimes et les émotions que nos auteurs expriment aux femmes, mères, sœurs et leaders autour de nous. Le personnel des organisations internationales regorge de talent et de créativité! Cette année marque également les 36 ans de la Société des écrivains des Nations Unies, qui produit Ex Tempore, une collection annuelle d'écrits et de poèmes de collègues membres du personnel. Cette histoire se poursuivra également dans notre prochain numéro.

Nous sommes revenus en 2025 avec un contenu plus engageant. Vous pouvez trouver tous nos numéros de 2024 et 2025 en ligne, dans les kiosques à Genève, et les emporter avec vous lors de vos voyages. Partagez-les avec vos amis et collègues! //

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ALI SHOJAEI - UNSPLASH



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The Beijing Platform for Action

A 30 YEAR IMPERATIVE TO ADVANCE GENDER
EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), the most significant global policy framework for women's rights and gender equality. Signed by 189 Member States in 1995, it sets out a comprehensive roadmap for action, covering twelve critical areas of concern, including 'Women and Health'. The 30-year review of the BPfA demands reflection on progress, reinvigoration of commitments, and renewed urgency to address gaps in advancing women's health as a pillar of gender equality.

The Women and Health Chapter of the BPfA affirms women's rights to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, emphasizing autonomy, equity, and the dismantling of systemic barriers. It calls for action on critical issues spanning sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), non-communicable and communicable diseases, aging, disability, nutrition, and gender-based violence (GBV), among others. It also addresses the need to transform structural drivers of inequality, including gender-blind health policies and programmes, underfunded health systems, harmful gender norms embedded in care provided to women's health, lack of sex disaggregated data and insufficient evidence on gender and health, including the inequitable consideration of women's health across all research and interventions.

Health is not merely an outcome of gender equality but a prerequisite. Without equitable access to quality healthcare, women cannot fully participate in education, employment, or leadership. The BPfA's holistic approach recognizes the fundamental need for reproductive rights and that women's health needs to extend far beyond reproduction, encompassing their experiences as individuals across the life course.

The Beijing+30 review process poses critical questions to Member States, asking them to identify actions taken over the last five years to improve health outcomes for women and girls¹ and address gaps in Universal Health Coverage (UHC) for all

aspects of women's health. Member States are asked about priority issues, including, amongst others, mental health services, maternal mortality and SRHR and how they are addressing equitable access to health services for groups experiencing marginalization, with clear strategies for inclusion. Additional health-related priorities in the review relate to accountability for eliminating discriminatory norms affecting women's access to care, particularly for women with disabilities, those who live in rural contexts, and who are refugees. Additionally, Member States are asked to provide further detail about integration of gender-responsive approaches into health policies, including for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and aging populations.

WHO's own monitoring, as well as BPfA reports, show that there have been advances over the last three decades. Modern contraceptive use has risen,² maternal mortality declined globally (although unevenly), and gender-responsive UHC frameworks now address many aspects of women's health. The World Health Organization (WHO) has been instrumental in this progress, including through its leadership in the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health and through its technical support to Member States, exemplifying its commitment to translating BPfA principles into action and results.

However, much remains to be done. SRHR and GBV, central to any women's health agenda, are negatively impacted by fragmented investments and inconsistent political will. Maternal mortality reductions have stagnated in 131 countries since 2016, and GBV remains pervasive, undermining women's safety and autonomy. Equally concerning are mental health disparities: depression is approximately 50% more common in women than men,³ yet services remain stigmatized, underfunded and inaccessible, particularly for groups that are marginalized. Climate-related disasters also exacerbate care burdens and health risks for women. These intersecting challenges demand urgent, coordinated action.

TEXT EVELYN BOY-MENA AND ANNA COATES, WHO
PHOTO WHO / PANOS / EDUARDO MARTINO



Some of the Beijing+30 regional review reports already highlight troubling gaps in attention to longstanding and emerging issues, others do not comprehensively address them, and additional sources must be considered to understand the full picture. Older women's health, for instance, has been sidelined, with inadequate access to geriatric care,⁴ pension protections, as has digital health literacy,⁵ and research into conditions like osteoporosis⁶ and dementia⁷ that disproportionately affect older women. Unpaid care work - a structural driver of women's physical and mental exhaustion - has worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic and under austerity measures,⁸ yet remains insufficiently addressed in many health policies. Similarly, intersectional disparities persist: women with disabilities face barriers to accessing healthcare;⁹ indigenous women contend with systemic discrimination in health systems;¹⁰ and those in conflict zones are denied basic services amid instability.¹¹ These neglected priorities underline the need to recenter the BPfA's holistic vision of all aspects of women's health, ensuring no woman is left behind. As the United Nations' lead health agency, WHO

is driving initiatives that integrate SRHR into UHC benefit packages,¹² ensuring women's autonomy over their bodies and choices.¹³ WHO also champions gender-responsive strategies to address NCDs - such as cardiovascular conditions and cancers - which disproportionately affect women due to systemic inequities in prevention, diagnosis, and care.¹⁴ Strengthening health systems to holistically respond to GBV¹⁵ and mental health needs¹⁶ remains a priority. And WHO is redoubling its efforts towards making health systems gender responsive overall, including by increasing the availability and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and better evidence on the interlinkages between sex, gender, and health. These efforts not only expose disparities¹⁷, but also leverage evidence-based action and accountability. The Organization's recent adoption of the Sex and Gender Equity in Research (SAGER) guideline represents a major step in this direction.

For the UN system, the Beijing+30 milestone underscores a critical truth: advancing women's health is not a standalone agenda but a corner-

Diabetes in Brazil, 2016:
 Doctor Hildene Melo hugging her patient Regina Paixão,
 age 78 and diabetic for the past 21 years.
 February 2016

stone of sustainable development. As the Beijing+30 review unfolds, the global community must dismantle systemic barriers – from underfunded health infrastructures to discriminatory norms – and invest in policies that recognize women’s health as multifaceted over the life course. By centering the needs of women and girls in all their diversity, from newborns to aging populations, we can ensure that the right to health becomes a lived reality, not an unfulfilled promise.¹⁸ The moment demands urgent action, collaboration amongst UN partners, Member States and others, and unwavering political will to transform commitments into tangible outcomes. //

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Making the Invisible Visible

EXPLORING EMOTIONS THROUGH TRADITIONAL ART TOOLS AND VIRTUAL REALITY INSTEAD OF EXPLORING EMOTIONS THROUGH TRADITIONAL ART AND VIRTUAL REALITY

Can Art Therapy Be Applied Through Virtual Reality? This was the key question we explored during our four-day double workshop at ArtGenève, held at Palexpo. Participants were invited to express their emotions through both traditional art materials and immersive digital creation in Virtual reality. By offering these two distinct approaches, we aimed to understand how different mediums shape emotional engagement and whether virtual reality could serve as a meaningful complement to traditional art therapy.

While traditional art therapy has a well-documented history of helping individuals explore and process emotions, virtual reality offers new dimensions of creative expression that are still being studied in therapeutic contexts. Our goal was to observe how participants of all ages engaged with these two artistic modalities and what insights could be drawn from their experiences.

THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL AND VIRTUAL ART IN EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION

Our exploration was based on two key aspects: the effectiveness of traditional art therapy in fostering emotional expression, self-awareness, and well-being, and the emerging potential of virtual reality to enhance artistic creativity and provide deeper emotional engagement.

Art therapy is a creative therapeutic approach that engages the imagination, body, and emotions, offering a way to express oneself beyond words. Rooted in psychodynamic, phenomenological, and neuroscientific principles, it has long been used in mental health care. At the heart of this process is the art therapist, who provides a safe, non-judgmental space where emotions can be freely explored. The physical act of creating, whether feeling the softness of pastels, the resistance of a brush on paper, or the transformative power of clay, helps build a direct and deep connection with the body and our inner self. In this accepting and playful space personal experiences can unfold naturally, making them easier to understand and process.

Virtual reality introduces a different way of engaging with art. Research suggests that working in a virtual environment enhances focus, synchronizes cognitive activity, and immerses users in an alpha brainwave state associated with relaxation and creative flow. By stepping into a three-dimensional artistic space, individuals can move beyond the limitations of a flat surface, exploring depth, movement, and interaction in a way that is not possible with traditional materials.

One of the most promising aspects of Virtual reality in a therapeutic context is its accessibility. For individuals with physical disabilities or mobility challenges, Virtual reality eliminates certain barriers, allowing for uninhibited artistic exploration. Additionally, the ability to erase, modify, and rework creations in real time reduces the fear of making mistakes, which can sometimes hinder expression in traditional media.

With these factors in mind, we set out to explore how participants would respond emotionally and creatively to both traditional and virtual art-making.

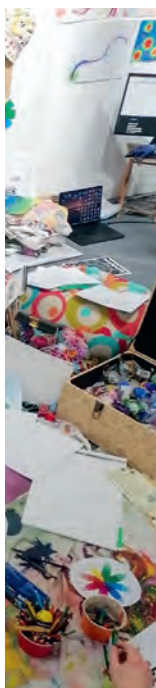
A HANDS-ON EXPLORATION OF EMOTIONS

With the guiding prompt *“How do you feel right now?”*, visitors engaged in both traditional and Virtual reality-based art-making. Traditional materials such as pastels, colored pencils, and watercolors allowed for direct, hands-on expression, while Virtual reality headsets connected to OpenBrush provided an immersive, multi-layered digital art experience.

Over four days, more than seventy participants of all ages took part. While younger visitors were particularly drawn to Virtual reality, participants across generations openly shared their emotions and personal stories after completing their artwork. The act of externalizing emotions—whether through the tactile engagement of pastels or the fluid movement of a Virtual reality brush—offered a powerful opportunity for self-reflection.

Each session concluded with a reflection period, where participants displayed their work and

TEXT DR. EVANGELIA BAKA, SENIOR SCIENTIST, HUG VIRTUAL MEDICINE CENTRE
VICKY TSAIOUSI, ART THERAPIST, CENTRE MÉDICAL DE MEYRIN
PHOTO YULIA LEM



discussed their experiences. The openness and vulnerability with which people shared their thoughts reinforced the idea that artistic expression, in any form, acts as a bridge to self-awareness and human connection.

KEY OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS

A noticeable trend was the amount of time participants spent in each medium. On average, individuals engaged with Virtual reality for longer periods than with traditional materials. The immersive quality of Virtual reality, combined with the interactive nature of digital tools, encouraged exploration and playfulness. Many younger participants, in particular, struggled to leave the virtual space, fully absorbed in the creative experience. However, adults also found the Virtual reality process unexpectedly meditative and engaging.

For many, working with physical materials provided a strong sense of grounding. The direct interaction with paper, color, and texture created an embodied experience that felt intuitive and familiar. Some participants described this as a reconnection with themselves, a process that allowed them to slow down and become more aware of their emotions.

However, traditional materials also posed challenges for some individuals. A few participants expressed hesitation when faced with a blank page, unsure of where to begin or how to visually represent their feelings. Others found that the permanence of traditional media made them more self-conscious about their artistic choices. In contrast, many participants described Virtual reality as liberating. The absence of physical

constraints, combined with the ability to work in three dimensions, gave them a new sense of freedom in their artistic expression. Some found that Virtual reality allowed them to access and process emotions that felt difficult to express through traditional means. One experienced artist remarked, *“I think Virtual reality better represents my feelings.”*

Interestingly, both mediums evoked unexpected emotional responses. One participant reflected, *“When I started drawing, I felt very happy, but by the end, I started feeling sad. Why?”*—highlighting how creative expression can bring unconscious emotions to the surface.

By the end of the event, we had collected seventy unique *“paintings of emotions”* in traditional form, alongside an equal number of saved and printed Virtual reality creations. Participant feedback reinforced the idea that both mediums offer distinct yet valuable pathways to self-expression.

BLENDING ART, TECHNOLOGY, AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Our participation in ArtGenève was not just an experiment - it was an inspiring demonstration of how art, technology, and therapy come together. The overwhelmingly positive response confirmed that both traditional and Virtual reality-based art-making have unique advantages, and that innovation in creative expression can open new doors for emotional exploration.

Looking ahead, we aim to further explore the integration of Virtual reality into art therapy by designing structured sessions and studying its long-term therapeutic impact. While Virtual reality cannot replace traditional methods, it holds great promise as a complementary tool, particularly for individuals who struggle with verbal communication or conventional artistic techniques. However, potential challenges - such as overstimulation and the lack of tactile feedback - must also be carefully considered when developing Virtual reality-based therapeutic approaches.

Would Virtual reality art therapy be an effective complement to traditional methods in the long run? The initial results are promising, suggesting that both mediums offer unique benefits and can coexist within therapeutic settings.

But one thing remains certain—whether in two dimensions or three, art continues to be a profound and universal vehicle for self-expression, self-discovery, and healing. //

Four Poems for International Women's Day 2025

POÈME - POEM



A CALL FROM A CHILD'S SOUL

Women play a variety of roles in their personal, professional, and social lives. Among all of them, motherhood is the most exquisite, demanding, and fulfilling. Being a mother and professional with multiple responsibilities and deadlines on a daily basis is a tremendous challenge. This poem is meant to remind mothers that their children need them in person and that family time should not be occupied with work. While everyone can be replaced at work, a mother's uniqueness and care are crucial for the development of a child's personality, including emotional intelligence. The ability to love, care for, and respect family as a concept for healthy relationships, confidence building, sincerity, and happiness is developed during childhood. Children who are loved have a good chance of becoming caring and responsible parents in the future.

LOOK AT ME MOMMY!

My dear mum,
Please get the eyes
Off the screen,
Look at me,
Listen to those who need you,
Say hello to family
That loves you,
Get off the plane
For once
And give
Your beloved
A chance
To hug you
All day long,
To show you
To whom they belong
To offer you a song
Making you proud, untouchable,
Invulnerable and strong.

//

A SOARING WOMAN

As a shining mare
With hooves of wind and air rushing manes
I hear your neigh and mirthful laughter.
Beneath scores of flying wings
When you took flight
From the billowing mist
Of the dark dense horizon.
Defying the sand and sea
Keeper of thunderstorms and lightning
Deity of the ten directions
You may distort time and space.
Every time you appear or disappear.
Gallop and trotting
Carrying the spirits of the starry ancestors
On your ample shoulders and strong flanks.
Sky born Naïve and strong.
I am possessed by the curve of your grace.
Phantom of my yearnings
I wait for you.
I yearn for you.
The light presence the wildly strong
To sew the tapestry of my dreams of
substance
The dashboard of my work and failures
To rescue the insights
I have given you the wings of my heart.
And the petals of my soul
Give me your immortal love...
the bliss of the inherent life.
Of A soaring woman.

//

TEXT DR IVANA KNEZEVIC (WHO HQ), DR SHANTA GHATAK (WHO SEARO),
DR SHYAM KUMAR (WHO SEARO), MS SANGEETA JASMINE (WHO SEARO)
PHOTO ISTOCK- SKYNESHER

THE HEART, THE SOUL, THE KEY

This poem is a tribute to my mother and the irreplaceable role she plays in shaping my life. It seeks to honour the multifaceted strength, resilience, and grace of women. The verses reflect on how women navigate the many roles they are called upon to perform - whether as nurturers, leaders, creators, or warriors for justice. The poem acknowledges their contributions both in the home and in society, recognizing the quiet, yet powerful influence they have on the world around them. It also highlights the importance of equality, celebrating women as the guiding light that empowers and enriches the human experience. The poem, *"The Heart, The Soul, The Key,"* reflects the essence of what women are to the world: the heartbeat that keeps things moving, the soul that brings life and meaning, and the key that unlocks the potential for growth, understanding, and change. This poem could be used as a message of appreciation, especially on International Women's Day, or to celebrate the women who inspire and empower others in everyday life.

**TO THE WOMAN
A POEM ON GENDER EQUALITY**

Oh woman, oh woman,
do you know your worth?
Without you,
where would this world find its course?
Your courage spreads light,
making the world shine,
With endless patience, you walk every line.
In the home, out in the world,
in every step you take,
You run tirelessly, for others' sake.
The path you pave, with love and grace,
You light the way for every race.
Without your eyes, this earth would be blind,
Without your hands, no life would unwind.
Every bond you weave with care and love,
Your struggle is endless, a gift from above.
You are the power, the source of light,
In a world without you, how could there be sight?
In your passion and rule,
every man becomes a child,
And in your smile, the world is beguiled.
Your strength, your spirit, your endless might,
For equality, you stand tall in the fight.
You are the foundation, the silent guide,
In your hands, true power resides.
So, here's to you, woman, on this special day,
May the world honour you in every way.
For without you, where would we be?
You are the heart, the soul, the key.
Happy Women's Day!

//



FEARLESSLY FLY

I am ready to soar to see the world around,
I thought as I moved out of my little abode,
Flying wasn't easy as feathers
were to be pruned,
My little aim was to fearlessly fly.

Faced hurdles as flew over new territories,
Friends were made en route to destinations,
Doubts rose in mind, can I fly high?
Fears shook my wings, can I fly mild?

Whispers unsettled my calm and clear mind,
You are a girl, why take such a flight?
Murmurs did not understand my inner drive,
You are young, fly for yourself, not for others.

Seasons changed, and years passed by,
Flight continued, and horizon was seen,
Fell umpteen times, with tears in eyes,
But grit pushed me to fearlessly fly.

Mind questioned if it was time to fly slow,
To encourage others like me to fly high,
To tell, hard it may seem but sky is the limit,
Remember your passion to fearlessly fly.

//

Transformation Towards Excellence for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

WHO'S JOURNEY TOWARDS ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY
USING THE UN SYSTEM-WIDE ACTION PLAN (UN SWAP)
ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action was the first global policy framework to identify gender mainstreaming as a key strategy to achieve a gender equal world. This article captures World Health Organisation's performance on gender equality and women's empowerment not only in as an organisation but also in its programmes. The progress is compared from 2018 when the first UN SWAP report was prepared and 2024 when recent UN SWAP report is submitted.

UN-SWAP is an accountability mechanism to measure the performance of United Nations (UN) entities on gender equality and women's empowerment through a set of 17 Performance Indicators, clustered around six broad areas: (i) results-based management; (ii) oversight; (iii) accountability; (iv) human and financial resources; (v) capacity; and (vi) knowledge and communication. UN entities assess their performances and provide ratings, narrative, and documentary evidence. UN Women reviews it and mutually agrees with each UN entity for the final ratings and narratives.

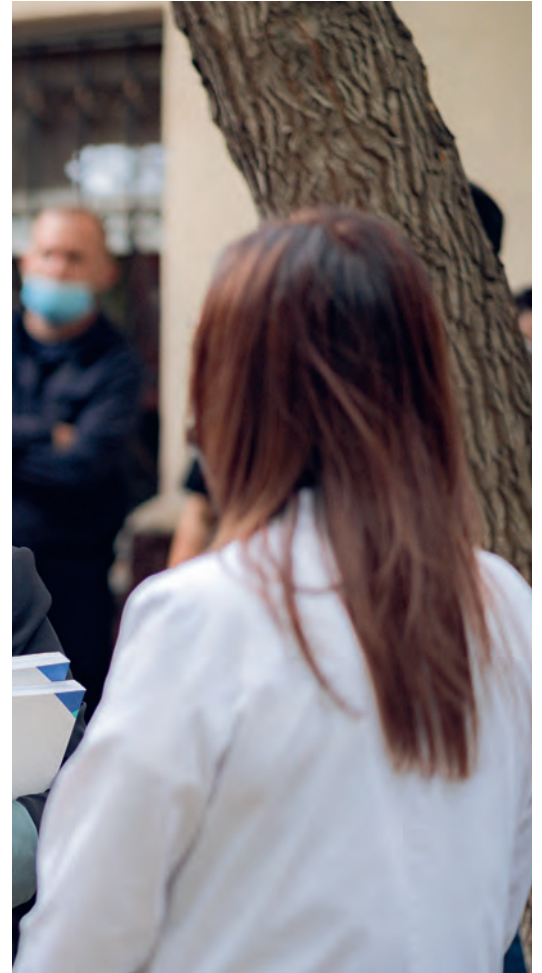
WHO began reporting on the UN-SWAP in 2018. At that time, the organization attained only a 37% rating. Whilst the level of achievement was undoubtedly low, there were areas of strength. Particularly notable was the integration of gender equality in the vision statement of the Thirteenth Global Programme of Work (GPW13), stating that the organization's "powerful voice for health and human rights is indispensable to ensure that no one is left behind." This is in alignment with the Economic and Social Council Resolution 2008/34 that 'gender equality and the empowerment of women make an essential contribution to the work of the United Nations'.

Despite these strengths, there were significant areas that required improvement, especially in results-based management, accountability, human and financial resources, and capacity development. Since 2018, WHO has intensified efforts toward gender equality and women's empowerment using the UN SWAP framework as a means of promoting and monitoring change. In 2023 it scored over 80% and is on track to maintain, if not exceed, this figure, in the latest reporting in 2024.

Reflecting the Organisation's heightened commitment is the establishment of the Gender, Rights, Equity, and Diversity (GRED) as a full-fledged department under the Office of the Director-General. A roadmap to advance 'Gender Equality, Human Rights, and Health Equity (2023-2030)' has been endorsed by the Secretariat. A Steering Committee composed of senior leadership at the three levels of the organization oversees the implementation of this roadmap and informs the Global Policy Group and the Directors of Programme Management of progress, challenges, and remedial actions.

The Sex and Gender Equity in Research guidelines are adopted as policy, facilitating integrating and reporting sex and gender dimensions in research. All evaluations integrate a gender equality and women's empowerment lens. The annual report of the Internal Auditor to the World Health Assembly includes a standing section on the "integration of equity, gender, and human rights," to present relevant findings on gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. A mandatory gender marker is being implemented to quantify expenditure to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in WHO's technical work.

TEXT LUBNA HASHMAT, WHO
PHOTO WHO KAZAKHSTAN



Women leading as WHO Country Office Teams
in Kazakhstan Distribute Pulse Oximeters and Their
Manuals for Use to Kazakh Health Facilities.

The gender parity policy and action plan are enforced and emphasize cascading accountability mechanisms. The Human Resource Business Intelligence Dashboard uses evidence-based analytical insight on a real-time basis across all regions and Headquarters. The figures are shared on the UN System-wide Dashboard on Gender Parity and the UN Secretariat Gender Parity Dashboard. The communications strategy prioritizes gender and disability inclusion and focuses on health topics affecting women. A capacity development plan has been designed to ensure that all staff members are equipped to fulfill their GRED-specific responsibilities. A Global Network comprised of representatives from the country, regional offices, and Headquarters ensures that GRED considerations are integrated into all programmes. The Respectful Workplace Programme marks a significant shift from isolated initiatives to a comprehensive, institutionalized effort that emphasizes dedication to respect, inclusivity, and fairness across the organization. The Awards of Excellence recognize exceptional contributions to gender and diversity goals.

The overall journey demonstrates that UN SWAP reporting created an accountability mechanism for the organisation to take concrete steps for gender equality and women's empowerment. This was made possible with unwavering support of member states and commitment of senior management including the Director General of WHO. //

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ECOSOC
Resolution
2008/34



Going Local: Empowering Communities in Health Emergency Response

THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS IN STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY PROTECTION AND ENHANCING LOCAL OUTBREAK RESPONSE.

When public health emergencies strike, local communities are the first to respond. Their actions can significantly influence outcomes, whether during armed conflict, disasters from natural hazards, or infectious disease outbreaks. The COVID-19 pandemic and many other health emergencies underscored the importance of community-centered responses, highlighting the strengths, assets, and expertise of community-based groups. Recognizing this, the World Health Organization (WHO) has placed community protection at the heart of its renewed Global Architecture for Health Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Resilience (HEPR), a framework presented at the 75th World Health Assembly.

A NEW PARADIGM FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

HEPR is built on the principle that health emergencies begin and end in communities. Strong national health systems must be deeply connected with and accountable to the people they serve, ensuring inclusive and equitable preparedness and response mechanisms. By embedding community-centered policies, strategies, and practices, WHO is working with national governments, civil society organizations, and local networks to enhance community engagement throughout the emergency cycle.

One of the first applications of this new approach is during the global mpox response. In line with this new framework, WHO developed an integrated training package for community health workers (CHWs) focusing on outbreak detection and response, risk communication, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), infection prevention and control (IPC), and community coordination.

PILOTING COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKER TRAINING IN DRC

The first pilot of this training was conducted from 25 to 26 November 2024 in Pakadjuma, an informal settlement in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The training aimed to equip CHWs with the skills needed to detect cases and respond to the mpox outbreak, engaging communities, and improving infection prevention and control practices.

"The training was very practical and informative. It was well-adapted to our local realities and the role we play in protecting our communities," shared a participant.

CHWs trained in the session have since been actively working with communities to provide risk information, identify potential mpox cases, and monitor contacts of confirmed patients. According to Ms. Sophia Kayiba, the Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) focal point for the Limete health zone, the trained CHWs have significantly improved case detection and contact tracing efforts. However, she also highlighted the need to expand the training to other high-risk areas.

SCALING UP: BUILDING NATIONAL CAPACITY

Following the successful pilot, WHO organized a national Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop in Kinshasa from 27 January to 1 February 2025 to scale up the initiative. The workshop aimed to strengthen national capacities for community-based outbreak preparedness and response, ensuring a sustainable approach to CHW training across the country.

TEXT KAI VON HARBOU, KWANG IL RIM, LESTER SAM GEROY, JACK KATSON KATYA MARILO, JULIENNE NGROUNDOUNG ANOKO, DEGRATIAS KAKULE, WHO PHOTO WHO DRC OFFICE



The training included:

- RCGE Fundamentals: Strategic interventions for risk communication, led by Africa CDC and WHO AFRO.
- Community-Based Detection and Response: Methods for early warning and surveillance.
- Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) and Home Care: Best practices for community-level outbreak management.
- MHPSS and Community Coordination: Strengthening psychosocial support services and collaboration among stakeholders.

A total of 35 national experts, including representatives from the Ministry of Health, WHO, UNICEF, IFRC, and other international partners, participated. Training materials were adapted to local contexts through extensive consultations, ensuring relevance to the DRC's unique health landscape. A rollout plan was developed to scale up the training and ensure sustained implementation across priority regions.

“The training materials are operational and relevant for both mpox response and other disease outbreaks,” noted a participant. *“We must actively mobilize CHWs to strengthen community protection against infectious diseases.”*

The HEPR framework and this CHW training initiatives underscore the critical role of local communities in health emergency preparedness and response. By empowering CHWs and fostering strong partnerships between national and local actors, these initiatives enhance the resilience and effectiveness of health systems in crisis situations.

“Community health workers are the backbone of local outbreak response. Investing in their training and integration into health systems is not just an emergency measure, but a long-term strategy for resilience. Kai von Harbou, Unit Head for Community Readiness and Resilience, WHO Health Emergencies Programme.”

The success of the Pakadjuma pilot training serves as a model for future interventions, demonstrating how community-led initiatives can strengthen outbreak detection, improve response coordination, and build long-term preparedness capacities. As these efforts continue to expand, they will be instrumental in shaping a more robust and community-centered approach to global health security.

Immediately after the National ToT workshop in the DRC, the WHO HQ and AFRO teams moved to Uganda, where a Sudanese Ebola Virus (SDV) outbreak had recently been declared. Their mission was to support the development of training materials for community health workers (CHWs) to enhance community-based Ebola detection and response, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and local communities.

A three-day participatory workshop was organized from February 4th to 6th. Eighteen CHWs from three districts in Uganda participated, working alongside representatives from the MoH Uganda, WHO AFRO, the WHO Uganda country office, and the UK Public Health Rapid Support Team (PHRST). Together, they co-developed integrated training materials for CHWs, incorporating the knowledge and experiences of local community members. //

Ms. Sophia Kayiba, Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) focal point for the Limete health zone disseminates RCCE materials on mpox in Pakadjuma district.

New just-in-time learning guidance will help save lives in health emergencies

EQUITABLE AND SCALABLE ACCESS TO LEARNING IS ESSENTIAL TO IMPROVE OUR READINESS AND RESPONSE FOR FUTURE CRISES.

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WHO implementation guidance on emergencies capacity-building



Your new OpenWHO



Recent history has demonstrated that we must be prepared for health emergencies, whether caused by natural disasters, humanitarian crises or emerging epidemics. Since these emergencies often challenge health systems in similar ways, there is a growing emphasis on the need for countries to adopt an all-hazards approach. This is a key aim of new WHO implementation guidance on emergencies capacity-building: approaches for just-in-time learning response to health emergencies. The Guidance builds on the findings of five evidence reviews, which integrated 557 journal articles, and several rounds of consultation and stakeholder agreement to support those delivering learning to prepare for and manage health emergencies.

Just-in-time learning is about delivering specific training to support responders with the information, knowledge and skills they require for emergency situations that impact the health of the public. As the Guidance describes, the benefits of accessing just-in-time learning are significant - from keeping people safe to minimizing socioeconomic losses in affected communities. The Guidance examines how learning has been planned and implemented during health emergencies. It aims to support modalities for equitable and scalable access to just-in-time learning and strategies, interventions and activities that, through their learning outcomes, save lives.

Under its current programme of work, WHO, with Member States, sets out to save at least 40 million lives between 2025 and 2028. Experience has taught us that just-in-time learning is a crucial element for upskilling and equipping our workforces to respond efficiently, equitably and resiliently to health emergencies.

Ugyen Tshering, Chief Programme Officer at the National Ministry of Health of Bhutan, and a member of the Guidance External Expert Group,

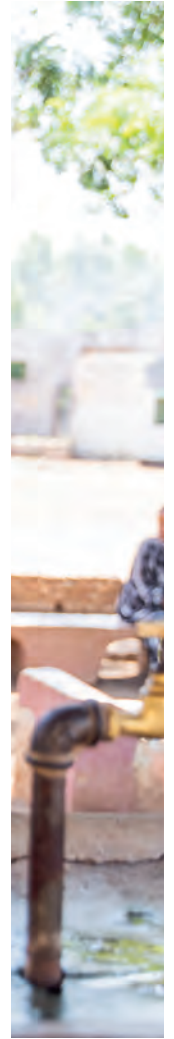
found the process of integrating insights from a diverse group of experts into actionable recommendations to be important and enriching. *“This Guidance is crucial as it provides a standardized framework that ensures consistency and effectiveness during health emergencies. By offering clear strategies and best practices, it empowers communities and systems to deliver timely, coordinated and impactful responses to health crises,”* he said.

Javiera Leniz Martelli, Assistant Professor at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, who was also a member of the External Expert Group, noted that just-in-time training is not limited to information like learning about a new infectious disease. It is also about understanding what health professionals *“need to learn to do in a different way,”* she said. During COVID-19, Martelli explained, doctors and nurses needed to be retrained to work in different areas, such as a pediatrician working with adult patients in the Intensive Care Unit. *“That’s all part of what you expect a healthcare system to do to be able to cope with those changes,”* she said.

WHO’s OpenWHO.org learning site has been a popular example of just-in-time knowledge for disease outbreaks and complex crises, with 9.2 million enrolments over seven years of operation. The platform has delivered more than 300 courses, with materials in 75 languages, and issued almost 5 million certificates. During the COVID-19 pandemic, OpenWHO contributed to just-in-time learning for health professionals through its courses on the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and COVID-19 vaccination, among others. Last year, its courses supported the response to 26 outbreak events including mpox and Marburg virus disease.

In January, OpenWHO was redesigned as an open-access learning resource hub with a focus on providing videos, slides and other operational learning materials that learners can adapt and

TEXT HEINI UTUNEN, MELISSA ATTIAS, ELLIOT BRENNAN AND GISELLE BALACIANO, WHO PHOTO WHO / ALA KHEIR



use to keep their communities safe in health crises. It continues to cover a variety of topics for health emergencies, including hazard-specific information, how to use specialist equipment and understand new procedures and induction learning for surge staff mobilized for the response.

Heini Utunen, Head of the Learning and Capacity Development Unit of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme and an architect behind both the OpenWHO platform and the just-in-time Guidance, notes that making these kinds of open resources available can have wide-reaching impacts: *“Just-in-time learning can enable first responders to access knowledge and information required to respond to evolving emergencies and crises; it can support policy-makers in planning and prioritizing decisions required for those situations; and it can support the public with critical information which they can use to mitigate the impact of health hazards resulting from health emergencies and crises,”* she said.

A core element of the Guidance is the need to establish networks before and in the early phases of events to foster partnership and collaboration. During an emergency, these networks

can be quickly leveraged to support peer learning, catalyze best practices and explore and deploy innovative technologies.

“In my community,” Tshering adds, *“I see this Guidance serving as a foundational resource for training and education programmes. It could play a vital role in strengthening the capacity of health centers, schools and community-based organizations to respond effectively to health emergencies. Additionally, it can be a key tool for developing localized action plans that align with the national health emergency framework.”*

Much remains to be done. More work is needed in evaluating learning outcomes and measuring the effectiveness of tested interventions. As the External Expert Group noted during Guidance development, there is a need for more robust evidence generation to address knowledge gaps and see what works where, for who and when.

But this much is clear: As we look ahead to new and emerging health threats, just-in-time learning is a crucial step in equipping our workforce and wider population with the tools they need to prepare and respond. Learning saves lives – especially in health emergencies. //

WHO staff monitor water quality at Algadeema school, a site hosting internally displaced families in Sudan that reported cases of cholera, in October 2023.

Transforming WHO: 5 years on

PROMOTING SCIENCE FOR HEALTH. IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY. PROFESSIONALIZING THE SUPPLY CHAIN. SHAPING THE GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH CONVERSATIONS. NURTURING VIBRANT, POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS. BUILDING A LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM. PREPARING TOMORROW'S GLOBAL HEALTH LEADERS.

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WHO
Investment
Case 2025-
2028



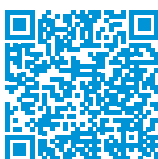
WHO
Investment
Round



WHO
Foundation



WHO
harnessing
science



These are some of the commitments WHO made back in 2017 when embarking on its Reform journey, with the vision for real impact in people's health. This is made possible with the support of all Member States and WHO's contributors and donors, and especially those who provide fully flexible funding, who invest to maintain a strong, independent WHO.

LOOKING BACK - HOW DID IT WORK?

INVESTING IN A TRANSFORMED WHO

With around 16% of WHO's budget supported through Member States' assessed contributions, the Organization needs sustainable financing to face today's complex and intersecting global health challenges. Countries took this task at heart, with a ground-breaking approval to increase their assessed contributions to cover 50% of WHO's base budget by 2030. Also, back in 2022, Member States formed a Working Group on Sustainable Financing that set the stage for historic decisions, including the introduction of an Investment Round to drive and sustain political commitment.

Transforming WHO meant adopting a new resource mobilization approach, as part of rapid reforms. Along with a new resource mobilization strategy, the WHO Investment Case 2025-2028 showed that the Organization, working with Member States and partners, will save 40 million lives over the next four years, with an estimated return on investment of US\$ 35 for every dollar spent. *"The investment case for WHO is clear. We need a strong WHO to make the world a safer place,"* said Catharina Boehme, WHO Assistant Director-General for External Relations and Governance.

FOR A MORE FLEXIBLE, PREDICTABLE AND RESILIENT FINANCING

Also, the first-ever WHO Investment Round, launched in May 2024, unleashed a series of global engagements and events, culminating at the end of 2024 with a major pledging event hosted by Brazil around the G20 Leaders' Summit. The Investment Round was approved by countries to make WHO a predictably, sustainably, flexibly funded Organization. Helping achieve this goal is also the WHO Foundation - bringing together funders and high-impact initiatives to further the WHO mission.

HARNESSING HEALTH SCIENCE

The Science Division at WHO Headquarters ensures a systematic approach to research prioritization across the Organization. During the pandemic, in an era of scrutiny of health-related science, the division was mandated to drive research and innovation for the global health agenda. *"Suddenly society is interested in science, and that comes with challenges...that is to be welcomed; science is not in an ivory tower,"* said Dr Jeremy Farrar, WHO Chief Scientist. He explains how the bedrock of health, economy and national security lies in a strong science base at country and regional levels. With the support of all Member States, and in collaboration with public health stakeholders, WHO has boosted its capacity to provide scientific advice, technical guidance, and support for countries to keep the world safe from existing and emerging health threats.

MEASURING AND REPORTING TO BUILD TRUST

A transformed WHO is focused on building trust between the Secretariat, Member States, donors, and other stakeholders. This means more accountability and transparency in reporting on



WHO hosts the first in-person Global Model, a youth-led simulation on the World Health Assembly, 29 October to 1 November 2024, Palais des Nations, Geneva.



WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, attends the Global Nursing Leadership Initiative on 28 October 2024 at WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland.

the Organization's performance. *"If there is no trust in the Organization, we will not be able to attract resources and implement the programmes that we set out to do,"* said Imre Hollo, WHO Director of Strategic Planning and Budget. Rolled out for WHO's 2020-21 Programme Budget, a WHO Output Scorecard collects quantitative and qualitative data on key strategic areas. It is both a report and a resource allowing readers to see big-picture progress and to zoom in at key elements of different WHO programmes, e.g. leadership, impact at the country level, and effective normative work such as generating technical products and global public health goods.

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN WHO'S SUPPLY CHAIN

WHO doubled its volume of procured goods and services after the COVID-19 pandemic, becoming the fifth largest procurer in the UN system. As part of its Transformation Agenda, it is building new competencies to set a more holistic supply chain. *"How we spend our money and who we spend it with has huge impact,"* underscored Ms Angela Kastner, WHO Director of Procurement and Supply Services. WHO eagerly adopts and adapts technology for its procurement process. For instance, a new Business Management System (BMS) has integrated key tools help the Organization implement seamless end-to-end functions and delivering responsive, resilient emergency supplies. A new transport and logistics module (TMS) allows countries to have real-time tracking, streamlined approval processes, and more visibility on the pipeline of products. Also, the global procurement dashboard and the new procurement policy contrib-

ute for the breakthrough in professionalizing WHO's supply chain, for efficiency and speed.

LEADING GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS ON HEALTH

Health is a political choice yet just one of many topics on the agenda at the world's largest political gatherings. Since 2019 WHO has been ever more center-stage on global health issues. Shaping the global conversation on health is critically important for delivering WHO's Transformation Agenda. *"The team aims to support engagement at the highest level of the Organization with political, high-level fora which have a broader political remit, to ensure health is high on the international agenda,"* said Ms Stéphanie Seydoux, Director-General's Envoy for Multilateral Affairs. It coordinates WHO's engagement in various global multilateral fora, to strengthen health diplomacy and position health as an integral part of all major global issues. The process also supports negotiations toward a pandemic agreement and WHO's first-ever Investment Round.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

Maintaining strong partnerships underpins all of WHO's core functions. WHO reforms set out to deepen existing relationships and nurture new partnerships with youth, civil society, parliaments, and the private sector.

In 2023, WHO launched a Civil Society Commission focusing on country-level work, and the WHO Youth Council to amplify youth voices. Both platforms support more meaningful and

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Measurement and reporting builds trust



Professionalizing WHO's supply chain



Shaping the global conversation on health



Building a lifelong learning platform



systematic integration of key stakeholders' concerns and interests into WHO's work. The WHO Youth Delegate Programme further encourages Member States to include young delegates to conferences and meetings, and the Global Model WHO targets 350 high-school and university students to negotiate in student-led public health simulations to give insight to Member States into young people's concerns and ideas on important health topics.

"Young people are the most underrepresented group in governance, yet half of the world's population is aged under 30. It is high time we engage them and incorporate their solutions for a healthier way forward. The Youth Council and its constituent organizations, working with WHO, is committed to charting this healthier course for the present and future," said Rehman Hassan, a WHO Youth Council Member from the Act4Food campaign of the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN).

WHO has also strengthened its engagement with parliaments and fosters corporate partnerships with tech companies to provide credible health-related information to the public.

FUTURE'S HEALTH LEADERS AT WHO

For WHO, reform also meant deeper reflection on its own workforce challenges. At the onset of the Transformation Agenda, WHO revamped its Global Internship Programme to help shape future health leaders and build stronger country health systems by contributing to a future competent and dynamic global workforce. The

World Health Assembly mandated a goal that 50% of interns should originate from low-and-middle-income countries (LMICs) by 2022. WHO made the Programme introduced a centralized application process, ensuring a cost-of-living allowance for eligible interns. The success was immediate: in 2023, 80 interns were selected of whom 75% were female and 63% were from LMICs. The Organization is fully dedicated to making sure the Global Internship Programme is a sustainable success, shaping future leaders at WHO.

A LIFELONG LEARNING PLATFORM

Launched in December 2024, the WHO Academy is a unique global source of knowledge and expertise for health and care workers, teachers, students, policy makers and the public. Based in Lyon, France, the facility is supported by national and local French governments. WHO is a learning Organization, promoting lifelong learning in the health sector - one among numerous efforts to strive for the highest possible level of health for all. *"The Transformation aimed to make WHO stronger, more effective and faster in responding to the needs of Member States. Within that vision, learning was an important component,"* said Dr David Atchoarena, Executive Director of the WHO Academy. With universal access and the paramount need to take local contexts into account, WHO made the primary delivery of learning online and offers it free as a global public good. WHO is also working to allow offline access for learners in rural or remote areas with limited connectivity. //

Midwife Rahmi (Mimi) performs a prenatal ultrasound to check the health of Inawati's baby at the Pala Island Village Health Post, Indonesia. Pala Island, South Sulawesi, Indonesia.



Préserver sa santé cardiaque : une priorité

Les maladies cardiovasculaires restent une cause majeure de mortalité, bien qu'une détection précoce et une prise en charge adaptée puissent réduire considérablement les risques.

Dans cette optique, l'Hôpital de La Tour mène des actions de prévention, notamment à travers un bilan cardio-vasculaire complet. Ce bilan comprend l'évaluation de la tension artérielle, des analyses sanguines et un dépistage des facteurs de risque, comme l'apnée du sommeil.

L'hôpital se distingue également par son expertise en cardiologie interventionnelle et chirurgie cardiaque mini-invasive et endoscopique, des approches qui permettent d'intervenir avec plus de précision et de limiter l'impact des interventions sur les patients. Grâce à ces techniques précises et innovantes, telles que la pose d'endoprothèse ou l'intervention coronarienne percutanée, il est désormais possible de réparer ou remplacer des parties essentielles du cœur sans recourir à une chirurgie ouverte lourde. Ces avancées réduisent considérablement les risques et favorisent une récupération plus rapide.

L'Hôpital de La Tour a d'ailleurs récemment augmenté ses capacités de prise en charge en cardiologie interventionnelle, en s'équipant des dernières technologies pour renforcer le traitement des troubles du rythme cardiaque dans les meilleurs délais. Cette amélioration bénéficiera à l'ensemble de la population genevoise et d'ailleurs.

Concernant la chirurgie cardiaque mini-invasive ou endoscopique, l'Hôpital de La Tour est l'un des seuls centres en Suisse romande à proposer ces techniques, qui favorisent une récupération plus rapide et réduisent les complications postopératoires. Elles reposent sur l'utilisation d'incisions réduites et d'une caméra haute définition permettant aux chirurgiens de visualiser le cœur avec une grande précision. Contrairement à la chirurgie à cœur ouvert traditionnelle, cette approche minimise le traumatisme chirurgical, diminue la douleur post-opératoire et raccourcit la durée d'hospitalisation. Elle est particulièrement indiquée pour les interventions sur les valves cardiaques et certaines pathologies coronariennes.

En associant prévention, diagnostic avancé et interventions de pointe, l'Hôpital de La Tour poursuit son objectif : améliorer la prise en charge des pathologies cardiovasculaires en offrant des soins innovants et personnalisés à tous les patients assurés en Suisse.

L'excellence médicale doit en effet profiter à tous.

Informations et prise de rendez-vous



Astana International Forum 2025: Reimagining Multilateralism in a Divided World

AMBASSADOR YERLAN ALIMBAYEV, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KAZAKHSTAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA.

In a world increasingly defined by polarization and fragmentation, the Astana International Forum (AIF) has emerged as a beacon of collaboration. As leaders and thinkers gather in Astana on May 29-30, 2025, the forum will once again provide a critical platform for dialogue on some of the world's most pressing challenges.

The upcoming forum, themed “*Connecting Minds, Shaping the Future*,” reflects a growing recognition of the urgent need to rethink global cooperation. It also highlights Kazakhstan’s role as a bridge between East and West, offering a space where diverse perspectives can converge to address common concerns.

From its inception in 2023, the Astana International Forum has sought to counter the growing skepticism toward multilateralism. The 2025 edition, building on the success of previous gatherings, promises to further strengthen the forum’s reputation as a hub for fostering pragmatic solutions.

The theme of this year’s forum resonates with the challenges of our time. Geopolitical tensions, climate change, economic shocks, and the lingering effects of a global pandemic have left nations grappling with complex crises that no single actor can resolve alone. AIF2025 seeks to foster the kind of collaborative action necessary to navigate these challenges.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, reflecting on the forum’s mission, captures this sentiment: “*From geopolitical upheavals and economic shocks to pandemics and the resurgence of violent extremism, each challenge triggers another search for answers, another struggle to devise collaborative solutions. The Astana International Forum offers*

an essential platform to engage in dialogue with a purpose: the promotion of cooperation, innovation, and prosperity.”

AIF2025 will focus on four core themes, each carefully chosen to reflect the interconnected nature of global challenges:

1. Foreign Policy and International Security - How can diplomacy and cooperative frameworks address growing tensions and conflicts?
2. International Development and Sustainability - With the UN Sustainable Development Goals at a critical juncture, this pillar will explore pathways to achieving shared prosperity.
3. Energy and Climate Change - A spotlight on transitioning to renewable energy and addressing the impacts of a warming planet.
4. Economy and Finance - Discussions will tackle global economic resilience, inclusive growth, and financial stability.

By convening stakeholders across these areas, the forum aims to promote integrated solutions that reflect the complexity of today’s global issues.

Kazakhstan’s hosting of AIF2025 reflects its emergence as a Middle Power on the international stage. Over decades, the nation has actively contributed to nuclear disarmament, regional diplomacy, and humanitarian initiatives, earning a reputation as a balanced and reliable actor.

At a time when trust in traditional power structures is waning, Middle Powers like Kazakhstan offer a critical perspective. As a nation committed to multilateralism, Kazakhstan is positioned to bridge divides and facilitate dialogue. Its leadership role in many international initiatives, including on Geneva-based platforms, underscores this commitment.



AIF2025 reflects this concept by bringing together actors from diverse sectors and regions to work toward practical solutions.

The strength of the Astana International Forum lies in its ability to convene a wide array of voices. From heads of state and top business executives to academics and journalists, the forum creates an environment where perspectives from around the globe can be shared and debated.

Past participants have included prominent figures such as UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, and the Emir of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. This year, AIF anticipates welcoming more than 5,000 attendees from over 50 countries, reinforcing its role as a truly international event.

The forum's emphasis on inclusivity and collaboration aligns with the values that define International Geneva, making it a natural draw for officials, diplomats, and representatives based in Switzerland.

The Astana International Forum is more than a venue for discussion; it is a call to action. As the world faces mounting challenges, the forum highlights the importance of pragmatic collabora-

tion and the shared responsibility of nations, organizations, and individuals.

President Tokayev's words capture this collective ambition: *"AIF2025 is poised to once again re-energize the global community, offering fresh perspectives and collaborative solutions to some of the most critical challenges facing humanity today."*

This commitment is reflected in the forum's structure, which prioritizes actionable outcomes. By fostering dialogue that bridges public and private sectors, AIF2025 seeks to inspire not only debate but also tangible progress.

AIF2025 offers a valuable opportunity to engage with global decision-makers and contribute to shaping policy responses.

As the international community gathers in Astana this May, the spirit of collaboration and the search for common ground will guide the discussions. In a time of uncertainty, the Astana International Forum offers a much-needed reminder: solutions are possible when we connect minds and work together to shape the future. //

For more information or to register, visit <https://astanainternationalforum.org/register>. Follow the conversation on @AstanaIntlForum and @AstanaInternationalForum using #AIF2025.

Embracing the Quantum potential for Sustainable Development

AS WE ENTER THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF QUANTUM SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, WE REFLECT ON A CENTURY SINCE THE INVENTION OF QUANTUM MECHANICS, WHILST ENVISAGING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF QUANTUM TECHNOLOGY IN THE YEARS TO COME.

Quantum innovations have the potential to revolutionise a vast array of fields – from healthcare and energy to climate action, clean water and food security – offering solutions to pressing global challenges and accelerating progress towards achieving the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Realising the full impact of quantum technologies, depends on proactive anticipation and preparation. We can mitigate potential challenges with a global framework to guide its adoption, through international collaboration and strategic readiness. We can harness quantum’s potential to build a more equitable, sustainable and prosperous future for all.

In 1925, pioneers such as Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg, and Erwin Schrödinger developed quantum mechanics, a groundbreaking framework that describes phenomena at atomic and subatomic scales. During the past century, quantum science has revolutionised our understanding of the universe, challenging the very foundations of classical physics. On this new theoretical foundation, technological innovations shaping the modern world were built. From the invention of the transistor to the development of the laser, these early applications demonstrated the transformative potential of quantum. Today, quantum science has expanded far beyond its initial theoretical scope, encompassing fields such as computing, communication and sensing— opening up new solutions to some of humanity’s most urgent challenges.

In May 2023, the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) endorsed a resolution advocating for the official UN proclamation of the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology. This initiative gained further mo-

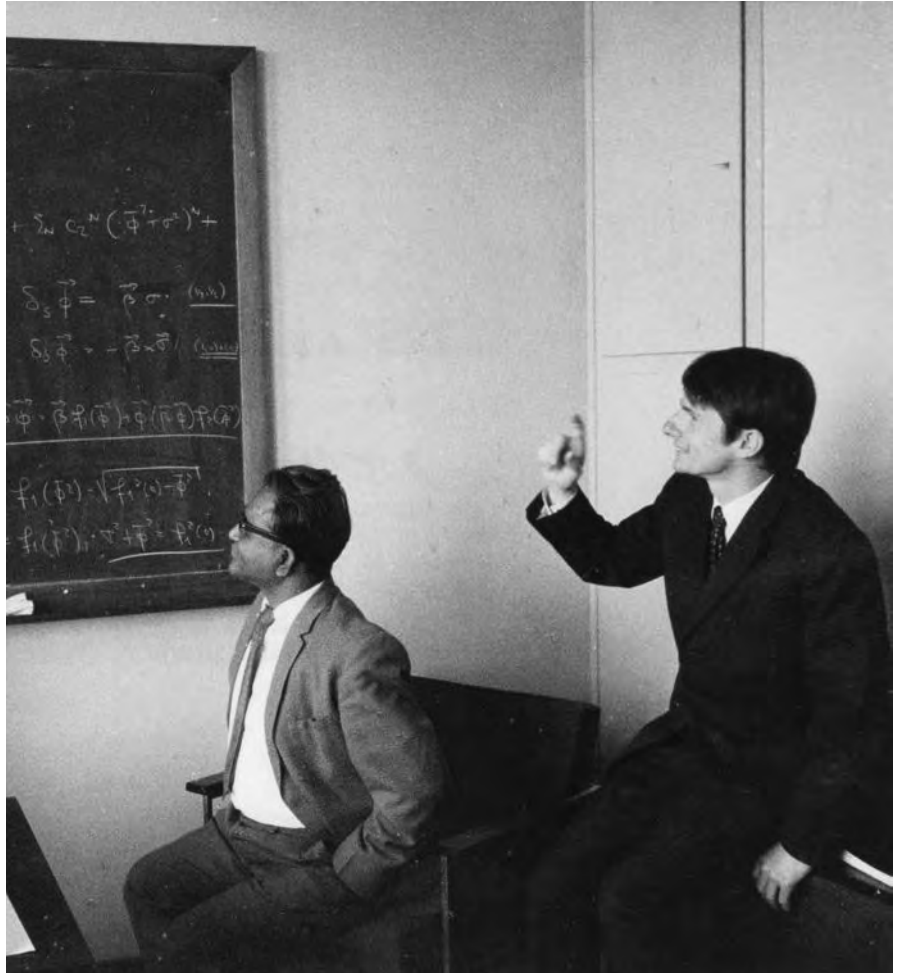
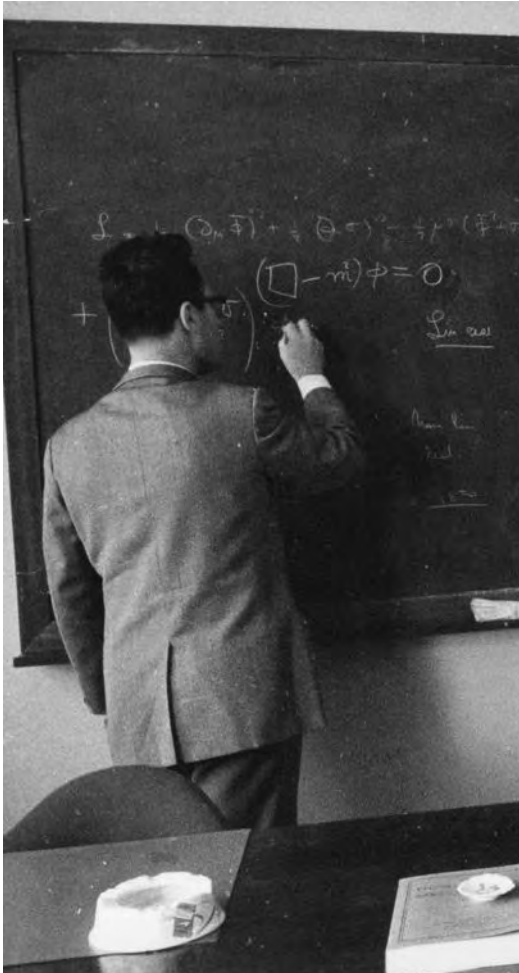
mentum with unanimous approval by the UNESCO General Conference in November 2023. Building on this progress, Ghana formally presented a resolution to the UN General Assembly in May 2024, garnering the support of over 70 co-sponsoring nations. On June 7, 2024, the UN General Assembly officially declared 2025 as the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology (IYQ), appointing UNESCO as the lead agency and focal point for this significant global initiative. IYQ, not only celebrates the transformative potential of quantum science, but also, serves as a critical platform to emphasize its role in addressing complex global challenges.

In parallel, another milestone was achieved in November 2021, when UNESCO introduced the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, adopted by 193 member states. This landmark initiative complements existing global ethical frameworks for AI, emphasizing its broader implications across UNESCO’s core domains: education, science, culture, and communication and information. The intersection of AI and quantum technologies presents both opportunities and ethical considerations, reinforcing the need for a responsible and inclusive approach to these emerging fields.

Particular emphasis is placed on education, recognizing that the increasing digitalization of societies necessitates new pedagogical approaches, ethical awareness, critical thinking, and responsible design practices. These are essential for navigating the evolving labor market, employability landscape, and civic participation in an AI-driven world.

Beyond AI, the rapid advancements in quantum science and technology introduce new ethical frontiers. Quantum computing, with its poten-

TEXT ALEXIA MARIE YIANNOLI, OPEN QUANTUM INSTITUTE,
FRANCESCA LUALDI, UNESCO & SITONG PEI, UNESCO
PHOTO UNESCO / DOMINIQUE ROGER. COLLECTION OF UNESCO ARCHIVES



tial to revolutionize data processing, cryptography, and problem-solving, raises profound questions about security, equity, and access. As AI and quantum technologies converge, UNESCO's ethical framework becomes even more critical in ensuring that these innovations serve humanity responsibly, inclusively, and sustainably.

For this reason, a central pillar of UNESCO's mission in quantum science is promoting international collaboration. The organization strives to ensure that the advancements of quantum technologies are shared equitably worldwide, enabling countries at all stages of development to engage in and benefit from the quantum revolution.

To commemorate 100 years of quantum science, a series of events have been organized this year. The International Year of Quantum (IYQ) 2025 was officially launched on February 4th, with UNESCO hosting an opening ceremony at its Headquarter (Paris). This gathering of prominent scientists, policymakers, and educators highlighted the transformative power of quantum science. On February 21st, in collaboration with OQI and supported by the UNESCO Liaison Office in Geneva, the IYQ inauguration in Geneva was held at the Geneva Music Conservatory. The event celebrated the fusion

of science and culture, while raising awareness among the diplomatic community, policymakers and civil society about the societal impact of quantum technologies.

Ms. Ana Luiza Thompson-Flores, Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office in Geneva, remarked: *"This launch event in Geneva not only celebrates the International Year of Quantum but also advocates for harnessing quantum science to serve the common good. La 'Genève internationale' provides a unique platform to address shared challenges and foster global awareness. Renowned as a hub for international scientific diplomacy, Geneva serves as the perfect venue for this gathering, uniting policymakers, scientists, and civil society to shape a sustainable and inclusive future for quantum science and humanity."*

The Open Quantum Institute (OQI) builds on the disruptive history of developing technologies, transforming theoretical concepts into practical applications. Positioned at the forefront of quantum computing development, OQI is shaping the future while drawing valuable insights from the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence. Learning from the lessons of AI, OQI calls on the support and involvement of the diplomatic community to develop regulatory frameworks to govern the technology before its full poten-

tial is realised. Building a diverse quantum ecosystem of global networks, OQI draws on the support and collaboration of a range of stakeholders – from academia, tech, private sector, diplomacy, philanthropy and education. Within OQI’s growing community, a strong emphasis is placed on collaborating with UN agencies involved in the validation of quantum computing applications to address global challenges and accelerate the SDGs.

OQI was officially launched in March 2024 and is hosted at CERN for its three-year pilot phase. Across its key pillars of work, from developing SDG-focused quantum computing use cases to building global capacity through education and training efforts with a focus on quantum underserved geographies, the collective aim is to anticipate the full impact of the technology before it is in our hands. Positioned at the European Centre for Nuclear Research (CERN), OQI’s work reflects the Laboratory’s long-standing commitment to science diplomacy, with global collaboration at the heart of advancing technology for the benefit of all.

Enrica Porcari, Head of CERN IT, underscored the significance of OQI’s mission during the IYQ inauguration in Geneva: *“CERN has played a pivotal role in quantum computing, first through the Quantum Technology Initiative and now through hosting the pilot phase of OQI. We recognise the impact that the discovery of new technologies has on society, and through reverse engineering, have put this at the forefront of OQI’s work – in particular, nurturing the development of tangible use cases and anticipating the impacts of the technology before they are realised.”*

At the heart of OQI’s mission is the development of quantum computing applications to tackle real-world challenges and accelerate progress toward the SDGs. Notable use cases under development include:

- Improving medical imaging accuracy and early disease diagnosis through quantum machine learning solutions (SDG 3: good health and wellbeing).
- Detecting water leaks in urban water systems using quantum simulation to optimise sensor positioning (SDG 6: clean water and sanitation).
- Reducing the carbon footprint of catalytic processes and refining carbon capture technologies using quantum machine learning (SDG 13: climate action).

In collaboration with industry partners, OQI aims to democratise access to quantum computers and simulators. By redistributing donated quantum computing capacity to quantum underserved geographies, OQI seeks to bridge the quantum digital divide and empower equitable engagement in use cases in development. Aligning strongly with the mission of UNESCO and the IYQ, OQI’s curated catalogue of capacity building activities and events throughout 2025 not only raise awareness of the development of the technology and continue to foster international collaboration but work towards becoming a reference point for other initiatives to deploy quantum computing to address societal challenges – a goal extending beyond OQI’s three-year pilot phase.

Throughout 2025, a series of OQI hackathons – coined as Quantathons – will take place across all continents. Hackathons will be either supported or inspired by OQI’s Hackathon in a Box, a practical guide developed to plan and resource hackathons around the world, in particular quantum underserved geographies, to strive towards mitigating the quantum digital divide. Incorporated into OQI’s vast array of capacity building activities is the Quantum Diplomacy Game – an interactive role-play game centered on the geopolitical implications of quantum computing as an emerging technology. Promoting science diplomacy as anticipatory and action-orientated, the game will be played across multiple continents throughout 2025 and beyond.

Aligning strongly with UNESCO’s mission and the goals of the IYQ, OQI seeks to serve as a reference for deploying quantum computing to address societal challenges. With a rich program of events and activities planned for 2025, UNESCO and OQI will continue to foster international collaboration to shape the development of quantum technologies for the benefit of all humanity. //

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United National Society of Writers: Thirty-six years of multiculturalism

THERE IS MUCH LITERARY TALENT IN THE UNITED NATIONS. THE NEWSPECIAL HAD AN INTERVIEW WITH ALFRED DE ZAYAS, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF EX TEMPORE SINCE 1989

The UN literary journal *Ex Tempore* has been published without interruption since October 1989. Volume 35 just came out in December 2024. As *Ex Tempore*'s editor in chief since 1989, can you tell us something about the origin of the magazine?

Tempus fugit! It feels like yesterday since that felicitous summer afternoon when three of us were leisurely sitting in the Press Bar near door 6 at the old Palais des Nations, chatting about contemporary literature...

There we were, on 14 August 1989 - a young, dynamic Brazilian UN staffer, Leonor Sampaio, a well-seasoned UN translator from Argentina, Sergio Chaves, and myself, an eager-beaver American lawyer with the then Centre for Human Rights (soon to be renamed Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), sharing our impressions on Gabriela Mistral, Isabel Allende, Jorge Luis Borges, Paulo Coelho, Gabriel García Márquez, and Pablo Neruda - while sipping on tonic water with lemon (me) and cappuccinos (Leonor and Sergio... this was before the craze for *latte macchiato*)

Half-way through our animated chat, Leonor proposed launching a literary club at the UN, Sergio seconded the initiative, and I suggested publishing our own literary journal. We were excited about this incipient United Nations Society of Writers, Société des écrivains des Nations Unies, Sociedad de Escritores de las Naciones Unidas, which would tap the latent literary talent of so many UN staffers - not just at UNOG, but also at UN New York, ILO, WHO, WIPO, WTO and other agencies within the UN family!

Who knows? Maybe some kept love poems and stimulating essays somewhere hidden in their office drawers, just waiting to let them out. Would

our colleagues not welcome the opportunity of liberating themselves from the constraints of UN jargon, of resolutions with long preambular paragraphs and reports full of graphics and heavy with annexes? We were persuaded that many of us could produce respectable poetry, short stories, essays, science-fiction, even plays in all six UN languages- not in bureaucratic legalese, but in the style of our favourite contemporary authors.

HOW DID THE NAME EX TEMPORE ORIGINATE?

AdeZ: It simply popped up. Happy with the prospect of cultivating our own garden and plucking the flowers of multicultural imagination, we knew we needed a catchy name - not a boring or hackneyed "*UN literary review*" or a pretentious *Pléiade*... We wanted to attract bold, spontaneous, uncomplicated, crisp new texts that would address our innermost feelings, aspirations, fantasies - whether humorous, melancholic, nostalgic or lovesick. A name for the review soon manifested itself as a kind of Epi-phany ἐπιφάνεια: I advanced the name *Ex Tempore* - spontaneous, impromptu, improvised... and my suggestion found immediate consensus. We were ready to venture into the production of literature and were optimistic about the response by peers and outside critics.

Both Sergio and I were already members of PEN International, Centre Suisse romand and had many non-UN friends who wrote extremely well. We also knew that the then Director General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Jan Martenson, was member of Swedish PEN and author of some 30 novels - most of them police thrillers. We felt confirmed in our project. I duly informed Jan Martenson, who was also my boss as Director of the Centre for Human Rights and successor of the great human rights leaders Theo van Boven and Kurt Herndl.



Ex Tempore Salon on
24 January 2025.

TELL US ABOUT SOME OF THE EARLY PROBLEMS?

Predictably, the first obstacle to our project was financial - where to look for subsidies, because membership fees are never enough to get even a run of 200 copies printed. We knew that initially we would have to do it out of our own pockets and were optimistic that with time we would find sponsors within and outside the UN. This aspect of the adventure proved particularly arduous, and it was not until 1993 that we managed to obtain a modest subsidy through the Socio-Cultural Commission of the Coordinating Council of the UN staff. Volume one was typed on A4 paper using regular typewriters (not computers) and assembled quite simply, photocopied and then bound in a Migros-folder, just like the ones that students use to submit their term papers.

There was little problem finding authors, and the distribution was easy through inter-office mail. Of course, we did have to do a bit of publicity - each one of us in our respective offices - and soon we were organizing *ad hoc* poetry readings.

Volume one came out in October 1989 and comprised a mere 23 pages. The A4 format was kept for four more issues, until we chose the A5 format for volume 6 and all subsequent issues. The number of pages quickly rose from 23 to 60 to

100 to the now more common 160 pages, and 180 for the 2019 thirtieth anniversary issue.

Number 35 was issued early in December 2024 and comprises 160 pages in all 6 UN languages, written by more than 40 UN staffers, retirees and even interns.

WHEN DID YOU START USING MODERN TECHNOLOGY?

The Advent of computers at the UN in Geneva was around 1993. I remember the Wangs that predated Microsoft Word. In any event we all started using computers in the mid-1990's initially for formatting and scanning of pictures, and eventually even for creative writing. Indeed, writing poetry on a computer felt bizarre, but we got used to it. The then Editor-in-Chief of *UN Special*, Claude Citon (1938-2020), helped us with useful advice on how to produce the magazine. Pierre Jourdan, also of *UN Special*, helped us with the formatting.

Beginning with volume 2 in 1990, every cover has been designed by Diego Oyarzun Reyes of UNOG, who also provided original drawings for the body of *Ex Tempore* and our logo with the distinctive pen.

WHO WERE THE AUTHORS OF THE FIRST HOUR?

Among our first authors were Claude Citon, who contributed an essay "*Satori*" for volume one and many more essays in later *Ex Tempores*, two delightful French-Armenian ladies, Jeanne Antablian and Aline Dedeyan, whose short story "*the day of the tenth year*" graced the pages of volume one and whose clever plays have appeared in many subsequent volumes of *Ex Tempore*. Over the years many UNSW members contributed drawings and photos, notably Martin Andrysek, whose artwork was much appreciated by the readership.

Soon we felt the need to give our authors the opportunity to express themselves in public, and started inviting our authors to read their poetry and short stories, sometimes in the UN theatre room XIV but also in rooms VIII and IX, of the Palais des Nations, and in the UN library, where we regularly participate in the library events to celebrate "*International Day of Poetry*" and "*International Day of Happiness*".

Since January 1997 we have held a literary salon at the "*Villa des Crêts*", attended annually by 40 to 70 literature lovers. On occasion we have

held summer or autumn events in the garden, e.g. to celebrate the 20th and 25th anniversaries of *Ex Tempore* or to commemorate the passing away of Mahmoud Darwish. We have also assembled in the Press Bar - for old times' sake.

DID ANYONE IN THE PRESS TAKE YOU SERIOUSLY?

Possibly because some of us were already members of P.E.N. international and had some contacts with the media, the Geneva press initially showed considerable interest in our work, as manifested in numerous articles in the *Tribune de Genève*, *Journal de Genève*, *Le Courrier*, and *Diva International*. More recently the media has been less receptive to our continued existence - I guess we ceased being "exotic" or a "novelty" long ago. Indeed, for over thirty-five years UN staffers have been demonstrating their literary talent and displaying kaleidoscopic interests from humour to satire to tragedy to science fiction.

Synergies are always important for authors. UNSW has gradually built solid cooperation with PEN International Centre Suisse romand, the Société genevoise des écrivains, the Société vaudoise des écrivains, and the Association des écrivains valaisains. We have exhibited volumes of *Ex Tempore* at the Salon du livre de Genève in Palexpo, not only on the UN stand but also on the stand of PEN International itself!

ON 24 JANUARY 2025, THE 30TH ANNUAL EX TEMPORE LITERARY SALON WAS CELEBRATED. DID YOU EVER THINK THAT THE SALON WOULD FLOURISH FOR SO MANY YEARS?

When we launched *Ex Tempore* 1989 we did not have an appropriate venue to hold literary salons, so we reserved UN rooms at the Palais

des Nations for ad hoc poetry readings. That changed when I acquired the maison de paroisse de Crêts de Pregny, with a 64 square meter meeting room that has proven ideal for all sorts of literary and musical events. We organized our first salon in 1996, and now we just celebrated our 30th literary evening at this venue. We have also held several more informal literary reunions outside on the terrace and in the garden, which I am not counting here. Our last salon counted with 36 participants in the audience and 16 readers and actors. Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish were well represented, but unfortunately our Arabic-speaking members could not join us this time - it is, after all, the season for colds and flu. We also had readings in Serbian by Dr. Ivana Knezevic, the president of the WHO "Poetry Garden", with translation into French. The mood was excellent, since our members are enamoured with the UNESCO ideal of advancing peace and human understanding through literature.

The UN library, the Library of the US Congress, the Bibliothèque nationale Suisse, the Bibliothèque de la Cité, the Bibliothèque of Neuchâtel and many other libraries have the complete collection of *Ex Tempore* since volume 1 in 1989. Those of you who would like to join UNSW, please write us and send your crisp, original literary contributions in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian. Deadline for submissions for volume 36 is 30 September 2025. Membership fee is a mere 40 CHF per year to be sent to our account with the UBS in Geneva 0279-CA100855.0 or IBAN CH56 0027 9279 CA10 0855 0.

Please consult our website www.extempore.ch and feel free to edit and add text and photos to our Wikipedia entries for United Nations Society of Writers and *ExTempore*. Part II of this interview will be continued in the next issue. //

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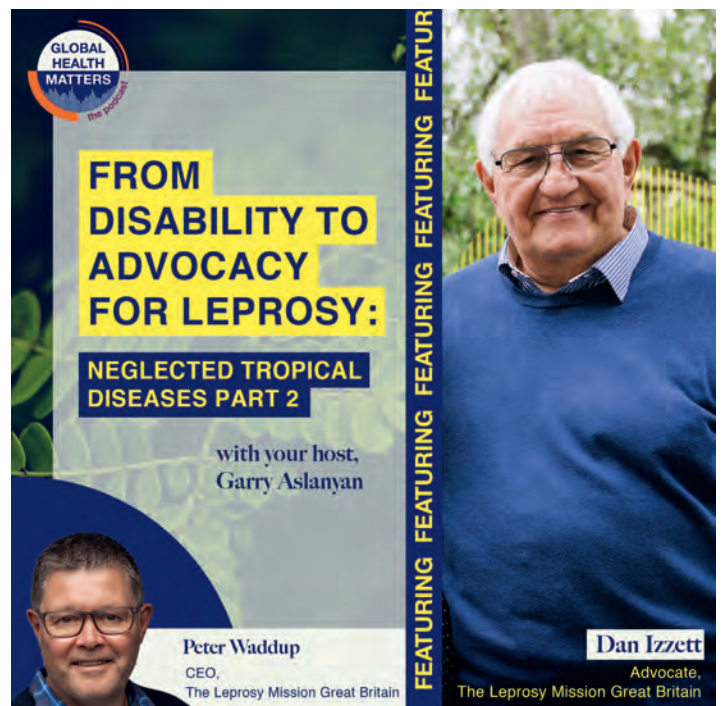
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Every book is an act of defiance

AN INTERVIEW ON “*TALES FROM THE COMING WAR*”
BY ERIC STENER CARLSON

U.S. novelist Eric Stener Carlson and Irish Painter Joseph Dawson were interviewed by Raymond Russell, Editor for Tartarus Press, an independent book publisher in North Yorkshire, UK.

Eric, what is the theme of “*Tales from the Coming War*”, and does it compare to your other short story collection from Tartarus Press, “*Dark Arts*”? Is this science fiction, strange tales or horror?

Eric: My new book is set in a final war in the not-too-distant future – and each of the thirteen stories gives a personal glimpse on this war, from thirteen countries around the world. You could say this is science fiction, or near future fiction, but my writing is never really about rocketships or ray-guns (or AI, in the case of this book), but rather about people. You could also say it’s horror, because war is the most horrifying act we’re capable of. It’s also strange, as the private, public, real, surreal, physical and spiritual all collide in this last gasp of humanity.

Where it differs is that, in “*Dark Arts*”, I explored kindness, and here I’m exploring cruelty – every character is cruel in some respect and also receives cruelty from others, which I think is very human. But deep down, beneath the cruelty, hiding under the hardened concrete of the bomb shelter or the library or the laboratory, there is love. And, so, in the end, this book is not unlike my other books – because I believe in love.

Eric, your stories can be quite beautiful and moving – but some are also quite harsh. You obviously care very deeply about your characters, no matter what side of this future war they are on, and there’s an element of suffering or pain that seems to connect them. Is this a fair assessment?

Eric: For much of the time I was writing these short stories, I was experiencing severe, chronic pain. I was in absolute agony, but, as Kahlil Gibran tells us, we should make teachers of even the worst experiences in life. Sometimes, I wrote through the pain, and, at other times I

wrote when my pain faded – for some reason, usually about 3 a.m. – and this seesaw of pain-and-release magnified the beauty of all things we take for granted every day – a glass of water, the hand of a loved one to hold, a good night’s sleep. It also made me understand better my characters’ pain, and I loved them more for it.

You mentioned people on different sides of the war. Certainly, I refer to the “*Alliance*” throughout my book, and every character is either for or against it, so they’re taking sides. But whether the Alliance is “*good*” or “*bad*” (or whether the characters are, for that matter) is immaterial, because they all suffer, their families suffer. From my studies, I remember reading accounts of soldiers who, when mortally wounded, regardless of what uniform they wore or what flag they flew, as they lay dying, would often cry out for their mothers. The heartbreaking truth is that we are all fallen, we are all worthy of the severest judgment, but in that final pain which is death, all the politics and propaganda fade away, and we reach into our memories for those we truly love, and it is that connection my characters share.

Eric, many of your characters are transforming or transitioning from one state of being to another. Can some of your characters, perhaps, be considered queer or trans, as they challenge conceptions of gender or gender identity?

Eric: In my story, “*Chronicle*”, I very much play with the notion of the ancient Nordic saga, riddled with gender stereotypes, and which presents a very dubious message of conformity to the so-called “*natural*” roles for men and women – yet, between the lines, you can glimpse a vibrant, alternative and transformative history. So, too, we see a transformation in “*Moth*”, that is deeply rooted in nature – in the forest I often dream about and which appears in my stories – and which is painful (again, the issue of pain), but ultimately liberating.

I don’t think we need to put a label on it, but, whether you call it “*queer*” or “*trans*” or “*two*

TEXT AUTHOR INTERVIEW WITH ERIC STENER CARLSON, UN SOCIETY OF WRITERS
& JOSEPH DAWSON, ARTIST – BY RAYMOND RUSSELL (TARTARUS PRESS)
PHOTOS JOSEPH DAWSON



Painting for Eric Stener Carlson's story
"Chronicle" by Joseph Dawson.

spirits", all of my characters transgress against what society would like to label as the "normal" boundaries. Without reducing anyone's experience to a metaphor, it is this search to become one's self - or, which is equally powerful, the act of just being one's self - which is one of the many things I love about my friends in the trans community, and another reason I love my characters.

Joseph, how did you go about shaping the illustrations to accompany Eric's stories? Did you come up with the ideas yourself, or was it through conversation with Eric? The images really capture the central narrative.

Joseph: I began by reading Eric's stories and making notes as I went along, allowing myself to be led by the mood, the hieratic quality and suggestion of each individual story. I made thumb nail sketches leaning on what was most visually suggestive.

I like to live with the stories a little to see where they take me. What occurs is simply a kind of co-natural relationship between the author's words and the painter. When I felt that I'd gotten a handle on what worked best, I'd have a



Painting for Eric Stener Carlson's story
"In our Silences, They Speak" by Joseph Dawson.

chat with Eric to see if what I was doing tracked with what he had in mind. Once the visual language of the story was established, I could then get on with the business of painting.

Here's another question for Joseph. There are 13 illustrations - plus the cover. That's a lot of work. What's your painting process like? Do you make quick sketches, do you use models?

Joseph: I gave each painting a solid day's work after getting a handle on what direction I wanted to take each piece. I'd wake up early, set out my palette and then simply work away. I tend to feel my way through the painting as I go.

I suppose you develop an instinct for when things come together and, should any uncertainty creep in, I'd give Eric a call and make any necessary changes in real time. It keeps things efficient. It helps to have an extra pair of eyes, and Eric was always good enough to be on hand for any direction I might have needed. With respect to models, yes, I always use models. I also look at paintings for inspiration. Almost every visual problem has been sorted out by some past master or other. It's good to take advantage of the tradition.

As a publisher, I'm trying to get to grips with the implications of AI. (At the moment it is mainly an inconvenience—we regularly receive submissions of AI work which would not fool anyone.) I am aware, though, that the technology will probably only become better. *Tales from the Coming War* is very forceful in its repudiation of AI, and not just because of the threat it poses to creativity. What does AI mean for you both, personally? And do you think it might eventually pose a threat to human survival?

Joseph: I understand people's concerns here. I've heard people talking about how it is a diluting influence on the culture, that authenticity suffers. This is not an unreasonable position. Others are more concerned about an inability to compete economically. Again, understandable. There are a whole host of considerations, worries and opinions out there. That being said, for my part, I don't really worry about it per se; I simply want to be good at what I do, and, for those who are interested to get what they can from it. I continue to paint regardless. I believe that people will always want something that comes from the hands of competent makers.

Presently, I don't feel particularly threatened where my own work is concerned but that may change. As far as it being a threat to our survival, I'm hesitant to speculate.

Eric: Let me start by saying that every book is an act of defiance – defiance against mediocrity, conformity and mass production. Or, rather, I should say every good book, every real book; the ones where authors take risks, where they go out on a tightrope without a net, and expose their fragility.

But AI doesn't do that. It can't. Because it doesn't have experiences to tell, because it's not alive. It just rifles through the books written by actual people who had sleepless nights and difficult relationships, and knew fear and longing and death. What AI does is to plagiarize the human experience, and what we do, in our gullibility, is to pay to read what this machine churns out. This is as ironic as that little "I am not a robot" box that pops up on our computer screen daily; it is *Blade Runner* in reverse, where we try to convince the robots that we are human. You asked whether, "eventually", AI will pose a threat to human survival. My answer is that it already is. We don't have to imagine robots launching a nuclear war, or psychotic cyborgs chasing us, or computers opening up the airlocks and blowing us into outer space.



The very thing that defines us, as writers (and, indeed, as humans), is not the act of putting words on a page, but, rather, using words to describe our lived experience.

The very beautiful thing about working with a small press like Tartarus, the very beautiful thing about co-creating "*Tales from the Coming War*", is that I actually wrote the stories, through long and painful nights, that Joseph actually painted those haunting images, and that Ray actually did the job of editing it, and now you can hold the printed version in your hands and read it. In any time in history, writing a book has been an act of defiance; but writing a book in the time of AI is even more so. //

Painting for Eric Stener Carlson's story "Moth" by Joseph Dawson.



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Bodenhaus



Maison
de montagne
Splügenpass



Histoire



Domaine
skiabile



Prix Wakker



De tous les parcours routiers vers de cols suisses, la route du col de Splügen m'a probablement enchantée le plus. Ce col forme la frontière entre le canton des Grisons et l'Italie, et se détache de la route qui mène de Coire au col de San Bernardino, qui fait le lien entre le canton des Grisons et le canton du Tessin.

Son attrait commence déjà dans le village dont elle porte le nom, Splügen, situé à 1457 mètres d'altitude, un joyau de maisons anciennes bien entretenues, d'un calme agréable et d'un charme parfait, où le temps d'une promenade on rêve à y revenir pour passer plus que quelques heures, surtout durant la chaleur de l'été. Comme l'a écrit Robert Browning en 1878, dans une lettre à un de ses amis :

« Nous avons trouvé ce que nous avons recherché. Il faisait trop chaud à Londres et encore plus chaud à Paris, alors nous avons décidé de rester dans le prochain endroit frais et d'en être reconnaissants. Nous nous retrouvons donc à Splügen, à 4757 pieds d'altitude. »¹

En 1995, Patrimoine suisse a accordé le Prix Wakker au village de Splügen, qui est considéré un bien culturel d'importance nationale. Depuis 2019 Splügen est membre de l'association « Les Plus Beaux Villages de Suisse ».

Le dénivelé d'environ 650 mètres entre le village et le col se fait sur neuf kilomètres, parfois sur une route assez plate, mais aussi en virages de lacets vertigineux, dont nous avons compté une vingtaine. C'est de toute beauté ! Si beau, que je me suis arrêtée à côté de la route pour faire des photos ; mais la route est aussi assez exposée et mon vélo a été pris par un coup de vent et s'est retrouvé en bas de la raide pente. Heureusement le vélo – et moi-même – avons survécu pour raconter la splendeur des lieux.

À 2035 mètres d'altitude, dans un joli virage, se trouve une auberge de montagne construite au début du 19^e siècle, à l'âge d'or du transport par le col. Ouverte pendant l'été, elle offre des chambres et des dortoirs, et un restaurant ouvert pendant la journée et sur réservation le soir. Le jour où nous sommes passés, le restaurant avait malheureusement son jour de repos, mais nous avons pu profiter des tables et

chaises mises à disposition pour manger notre casse-croûte emporté. Ainsi fortifiés, nous avons grimpé à vélo électrique sans difficultés les derniers cent mètres d'altitude jusqu'au col. Après cette spectaculaire montée, le col même, à 2114 mètres d'altitude, manque un peu de charme : il n'y a qu'un parking et un poste de douane délaissé. Heureusement qu'il y a des vaches avec leur cloches pour sauver le tableau !

Dans le passé, la route passant au-delà du col était fort importante, et forma la connexion la plus directe entre Coire et Como. Pour arriver à Splügen depuis Coire, il fallait d'abord passer par les dangereuses gorges de la Via Mala, qui formaient pendant longtemps une difficulté naturelle pour le transport des marchandises. Comme la route y passant était en mauvais état, le trafic se déplaçait de plus en plus en direction du col de Septimer, par la route qui passait plus haut vers Maloja².

Au 15^e siècle, les communes environnantes décidèrent donc de sécuriser la traversée, de construire un nouveau pont de pierre et de creuser un nouveau chemin par les gorges. En conséquence, la route de Splügen devenait une des plus importantes connexions des Grisons. Le transport se faisait exclusivement par muletiers, qui étaient organisés en associations et qui transportaient les marchandises sur leur tronçon de la route. Entre Coire et Chiavenna les marchandises changeaient ainsi 5 fois de muletier, par exemple les gens de Splügen prenaient les affaires des muletiers d'Andeer et se chargeaient ensuite du transport jusqu'au col, où les habitants de la vallée San Giacomo reprenaient les affaires pour les acheminer à Chiavenna. Côté sud du col, la route devait passer encore les redoutables gorges de Cardinello.

Pendant les guerres napoléoniennes, qui n'ont pas épargné la région, en décembre 1800, 15000 soldats de l'armée française sous commandement du maréchal MacDonald traversaient le col dans des circonstances épouvantables qui causèrent beaucoup de pertes. Quand les troupes étaient arrivées enfin aux gorges de Cardinello, des avalanches causèrent encore la mort de centaines de soldats.

Malgré les aménagements et les efforts pour sécuriser la route, la traversée des deux gorges



inspirait de la peur et il n'y avait que peu de voyageurs privés qui se lançaient dans l'aventure. Parmi les plus connus il y a l'humaniste Erasmus de Rotterdam en 1509. Plus tard, quand la route a été plus sécurisée, le nombre des voyageurs a augmenté. En mai 1788 l'incontournable Johann Wolfgang Goethe passa le col de retour d'Italie. Après l'ouverture de la route carrossable, d'autres écrivains et artistes de renom suivirent ses pas, comme Mary Shelley (1840), William Turner (1843), Hans Christian Andersen (1852 & 1873), Friedrich Nietzsche (1872), Mikhail Bakounine (1874), Robert Browning (1878) et Albert Einstein (1901).

Entre 1818 et 1823, une route pour les voitures de transport et les diligences fut aménagée entre Splügen et Chiavenna, aux frais du royaume de Lombardie-Vénétie qui sentait que le passage par le col de Splügen était menacé par l'aménagement d'une route par le col du San Bernardino, financée par le canton des Grisons et la province de Piémont qui à l'époque faisait partie du Royaume de Sardaigne. La route de Splügen fut ainsi la deuxième route carrossable suisse à travers les Alpes, après celle du Simplon. Côté nord, elle évitait les pentes trop exposées aux avalanches, et côté sud, un nouveau tracé contournait les gorges de Cardinello. Le trafic augmenta rapidement et, au transport des marchandises, s'ajouta le trafic touristique, qui ex-

plosa au milieu du 19^e siècle. L'ancien système de transports par les muletiers prit fin et des entreprises de transport virent le jour. Pour protéger les voyageurs d'avalanches, plusieurs galeries et refuges furent construits en même temps que la route. Une des galeries a été conservée et nous offre, à l'intérieur, une excellente exposition sur l'histoire de la route du col. Après l'ouverture des chemins de fer à travers le Brenner (1867) et plus tard le Gothard (1882), le trafic par le col a diminué rapidement et les efforts de la population locale pour obtenir une ligne ferroviaire par le col de Splügen pour faire face à la concurrence, échouèrent, entraînant la fin du renommé du col.

Depuis les années 1940s la route du col de Splügen est fermée en hiver et la région se transforme en petit paradis pour le ski. Trente kilomètres de pistes de ski alpin attendent le visiteur sur les côtes du Piz Tambo, jusqu'à 2215 mètres d'altitude. Les freeriders peuvent aussi profiter des multiples descentes non sécurisées. Les amateurs de piste de fond profitent surtout des pistes dans la vallée le long du Rhin postérieur. //

- 1 Traduit de l'allemand, citation vue sur le mur de l'hôtel Bodenhaus à Splügen, auberge depuis 1822, par où sont passés bien des hôtes renommés.
- 2 Voir l'article sur le col du Julier, *NewSpecial* novembre 2023.

Vue sur la route du Splügen depuis le col.

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Four Thousand Weeks

TIME MANAGEMENT FOR MORTALS

BY OLIVER BURKEMAN

This incredibly rich, thoughtful book explores our relationship with time, and changing attitudes to time. The book takes its title from the duration of a typical average (Western) life expectancy of 77 years, equivalent to around four thousand weeks.

From this statistic, and the fixed length of a day as only 24 hours, the author Oliver Burkeman draws a surprising number of points:

- **We may as well accept our own mortality** - and our own defeat - and try to make the 'best' use of our time, since it is literally guaranteed that most of us are not going to be able to fit everything we would like to accomplish into our own short life.
- **Productivity is a trap...** Busy, efficient people tend to get given more work, attract more email, more tasks etc. until they will find themselves "running to stand still" in a conveyor belt concept of life.
- **Since it is impossible to 'fit everything in'**, we may as well (1) accept this, and (2) lose the emphasis on 'fitting things in' by (3) concentrating instead on consciously identifying - and accepting - which things or activities to exclude. In order to get anything done, we are in fact always neglecting a host of other distractions, and this is inevitable. So we may as well stop beating ourselves up about it!
- **We need to concentrate on the present moment**, which is in fact all we have. You may know some people who are still be 'living in the past' (e.g. people who are traumatized by past experiences) or 'living in some fantasy future' (e.g. people who believe that their lives will be so much better once they earn a certain amount, weigh less, live elsewhere etc). The author quotes the French philosopher Henri Bergson as pointing out that the 'idea of the future' can be more appealing than the present or even the actual future because it holds an 'infinity of possibilities'. 'We find more charm in hope than in possession, in dreams than in reality'.

In fact, the author quotes the Canadian writer David Cain in suggesting 'our whole lives might be borrowed time'. Our lives may be the sum of our moments (indeed, conversations with lively-minded retired people can sometimes include 'the sum of their memories!').

Western culture glorifies multitasking, living at top speed, 'busyness' and productivity. Drawing on history, religion, philosophy, and even some advice from Alcoholics Anonymous (about addiction in general, not alcohol specifically), Burkeman explores our changing attitudes to time, and whether we can in fact 'master' or control our time at all.

As anyone who has spent time with either a toddler or dog knows, a fascinating toy or a stick 'takes as long as it takes'. Most toddlers and dogs are resistant to attempts to cut short their play or interest them in the toy or stick for any longer than they are naturally interested in it. Some activities - reading, painting, appreciation of a picture - naturally take the time they need, and any attempt to hasten or curtail the book or painting are self-defeating.

Allowing ourselves to become immersed in the present moment is one way to appreciate life more, and live life to the fullest. Indeed, 'seeking novelty in the ordinary' is one way of re-examining dull routines and taking a fresh look at things or activities that have become boring.

Oliver Burkeman explores how some of us feel guilty or bad about not finishing our 'To Do' list in any given day, and suggests we celebrate what we do manage to accomplish. He explores avoidance strategies and procrastination, and how some of us actively spend time dealing with all the small things (e.g. the example he gives is updating passwords), with the result that some of the important things never get done (e.g. replying to emails or letters from old friends). Burkeman suggests that managing our time is less about cramming more into our days and more about making deliberate choices that reflect 'what matters most to us'. (Of course, that question may lead some of us off on another search to identify and understand what matters most to us).

The book concludes with ten suggestions about how to get the most out of life, in more ways that might matter the most to you. Above all, this book is an invitation to reexamine some of our assumptions and precepts about our lives, as the 'sum of our moments'. So we should focus on spending our moments wisely. //

Laos

AU FIL DU MÉKONG 1/3

SAVOIR +

Altaï Travel



Le Laos et le Cambodge sont des destinations magnifiques, riches de sites archéologiques, de temples et pagodes, de villages traditionnels, de paysages à couper le souffle ... Autant de lieux incontournables ou insolites, connus ou confidentiels - sans oublier les femmes et les hommes qui font vivre ces patrimoines et leurs traditions - que nous allons découvrir grâce à Altaï Travel, le spécialiste du voyage outdoor sur mesure.

Après avoir parcouru l'Égypte et le Soudan au fil du Nil (aventure à vivre dans les numéros 830 à 837 du *newSpecial*), direction l'Asie à présent pour la découverte du Laos et du Cambodge, deux pays traversés de part en part par le Mékong.

Véritable colonne vertébrale de l'Asie du Sud-Est, le Mékong, douzième plus long fleuve du monde, prend sa source sur les hauteurs de l'Himalaya à plus de 5200m d'altitude. Il irrigue tout d'abord la province du Yunnan en Chine, puis borde le Laos aux frontières avec la Birmanie et la Thaïlande. Ensuite, après s'être enfoncé dans les terres laotiennes où il serpente jusqu'à Luang Prabang - l'ancienne capitale royale du royaume du « Million d'éléphants » -, le Mékong fait à nouveau office de frontière naturelle avec la Thaïlande. Puis il traverse le Cambodge, où naissent les premiers bras de son delta, et se prolonge jusqu'au sud du Vietnam où il finit par se jeter dans la mer de Chine après un parcours long de 4350 km.

AU ROYAUME DU « MILLION D'ÉLÉPHANTS »

Principale artère du Laos et longtemps sa seule voie de communication, le Mékong continue d'être un axe vital pour le transport, le commerce et la pêche. Il draine un important trafic de marchandises et façonne également l'économie et l'agriculture avec ses berges qui accueillent l'essentiel des terres cultivées.

Bien que le Phou Bia, point culminant du Laos, ne fait que 2820m d'altitude, le pays est essentiellement constitué de hauts plateaux et de montagnes. Son histoire remonte jusqu'avant l'ère chrétienne, comme le démontrent les mystérieux vestiges de Tran Ninh que jonchent d'imposantes

jarres de pierre antiques dont la signification et l'origine ne sont pas encore totalement élucidées. Secret, longtemps isolé, le Laos est incontestablement le pays le plus énigmatique de la Péninsule indochinoise. Ses origines se diluent entre mythe et réalité historique, entre héros légendaires et rois rassemblant les peuples sous la bannière du bouddhisme. Le royaume du « Million d'éléphants » lutta longuement et vaillamment pour résister aux convoitises qu'il suscitait chez ses voisins siamois, annamites, birmans et chinois, au point d'appeler la France à la rescousse pour la défendre. Son histoire contemporaine tourmentée - la décolonisation, les bombardements liés au conflit vietnamien et l'instauration d'un régime communiste en 1975 qui s'est maintenu jusqu'à aujourd'hui - l'a tenu à l'écart du reste du monde durant de longues années. Cette période de fermeture est désormais révolue : le Laos s'ouvre progressivement, et les visiteurs étrangers découvrent un pays fascinant qui semble ignorer superbement la mondialisation trépidante à l'œuvre chez ses voisins.

« Authenticité » est peut-être le terme qui qualifie le mieux ce petit pays.

LUANG PRABANG, UN BIJOU SUR LE MÉKONG

Aéroport de Luang Prabang : le tumulte vécu quelques heures plus tôt lors de l'escale à Bangkok laisse place à une sérénité fortement appréciée. Bienvenue dans cette petite ville nichée au milieu de montagnes recouvertes d'une végétation luxuriante. Ancienne capitale royale qui demeure le centre culturel et religieux du pays, Luang Prabang est également un port fluvial situé sur le Mékong. A la tombée du jour, se laisser envoûter par la magie du coucher de soleil flamboyant sur le fleuve est un instant inoubliable et donne l'occasion de poursuivre cette immersion en douceur dans l'ambiance et le rythme locaux. Ville mythique pour les explorateurs du XIX^e siècle, Luang Prabang reste le joyau du Laos. La gracieuse toiture incurvée d'une pagode, la flèche dorée d'un stupa, la silhouette caractéristique d'une demeure coloniale se côtoient ici dans une harmonie que l'Unesco a saluée en 1995. A deux pas du marché pittoresque qui anime au quotidien le centre-ville, la pagode Vat Xieng Thong est considérée comme l'une des plus belles et vénérées du

Le Laos, le royaume
du « Million d'éléphants ».



Assister au coucher de soleil sur le Mékong
restera un souvenir inoubliable.

Selon la tradition, tous les garçons laotiens sont censés être ordonnés moines au moins une fois dans leur vie.

Laos. Construite en 1560 – peu avant le transfert de la capitale à Vientiane –, sa visite est incontournable. Édifiée au centre d'un ensemble de bâtiments religieux bordé de jolis jardins parfumés, elle nous séduit d'emblée par sa toiture illustrant parfaitement le style local avec sa structure assez complexe à plans superposés et descendant très bas. On apprécie également sa façade dorée à fond rouge richement décorée, ses piliers carrés ornés de décorations dorées ainsi qu'une superbe mosaïque de verre coloré représentant « l'arbre de vie » qui raconte l'histoire de la fondation de la pagode. A l'intérieur, on peut contempler la splendide structure en bois qui abrite les trois roues de Dharma représentées en or au plafond.

Situé entre la berge du Mékong et le pied du mont Phu Si – d'une centaine de mètres de hauteur qui offre une vue panoramique sur la ville –, le Musée national fut jadis le Palais royal du Laos, résidence qui a abrité la famille royale jusqu'à leur exil. Bâti en 1904, il symbolise le

mélange de style traditionnel lao et l'influence française de l'époque coloniale et abrite un grand nombre d'objets historiques intéressants qui retracent l'histoire du pays.

L'un des plus visités de l'ancienne ville royale, le temple Vat Mai, construit à la fin du XVIII^e siècle, a une grande importance pour les Laotiens. Il a servi un temps de demeure pour la famille royale et a abrité longtemps le Phra Bang, emblème mystique national du pays, et ce après que les Chinois eurent dévasté la ville dans la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle. Il fut, de plus, la résidence du plus haut dignitaire bouddhiste lao, Pra Sangkharat. Durant le Nouvel An lao, le Phra Bang est exposé au public et les Laotiens de tout le pays viennent alors dévotement arroser d'eau la statue sacrée en émettant leurs vœux.

LE LAOS, TERRE D'AVENTURES

Vivre chez l'habitant, partager le quotidien d'un villageois, c'est s'imprégner au mieux des coutumes locales, et pour cela le village traditionnel de Ban Lae Sivilay est idéal. Posé sur les rives de la rivière Nam Xuang – un des affluents du Mékong –, il compte quelques centaines d'habitants, d'ethnies lao et hmong. Aux alentours sont cultivés bananes, oranges, citrons, pamplemousses, ananas et litchis qui seront vendus sur les marchés de Luang Prabang situé à une trentaine de kilomètres de là. L'occasion pour nous de ramasser quelques fruits et légumes qui entreront dans la composition du repas du soir. Mais avant cela, initiation à la pêche afin d'agrémenter le menu en compagnie de notre hôte qui, depuis la rive, jette son filet d'un geste ample et gracieux; cette technique s'avérera peu évidente pour nous et le résultat s'en ressentira fortement!

La nuit sera bonne au sein de notre famille d'accueil mais le réveil, assuré par le coq du quartier, sera matinal, très très matinal ! Nous ne quitterons pas le village sans avoir participé à la cérémonie des offrandes faites aux moines dans la pagode locale; instants privilégiés remplis d'émotion et de sérénité.

Direction Nong Khiaw où notre pirogue nous attend pour embarquer sur la rivière Nam Ou afin de poursuivre notre aventure à vivre dans le prochain numéro du *newSpecial*. //



Redefining Engagement in the Art World

THE INVISIBLE WALL BETWEEN THE ARTIST AND THE AUDIENCE BECOMES A RAINBOW BRIDGE IN A GROUNDBREAKING CREATIVE ART & SCIENCE SPACE



“Walking through Art Genève, surrounded by incredible artworks, I couldn’t help but think - what if every piece had a digital life beyond the gallery walls?” - Heidi Herler, co-founder of ANASAEA

Art Genève 2025 was more than an art fair. It was an experiment in co-creation, and at its heart stood the Art and Science Co-Lab, a space where art, science, and deep real-life engagement converged. Built around the December issue of *newSpecial* dedicated to art and science, it was the only immersive, hands-on, co-creative space at the fair, proving that the urge to create is universal.

“Attending Art Genève 2025 was nothing short of a whirlwind rush - a frenzy of creativity, critique, and camaraderie,” shared Maximilian Vermilye, an accomplished digital artist and one of our special guests. *“From the moment we arrived during setup, I was entranced. Armies of workers maneuvered like clockwork, aligning masterpieces with precision. Meanwhile, my team and I took a more hands-on approach - rulers in hand, drills buzzing - as we carefully assembled our booth. The contrast between high-tech precision and the old-school touch set the tone for the entire week.”*

TEXT & PHOTOS
YULIA LEM

newSpecial is artwork in itself.





Making the invisible visible.
Traditional or virtual
art therapy?

We were privileged to collaborate with an extraordinary team of partners, including Dr. Michael Hoch, leader of artCMS at CERN, Maximilian Vermilye, ANASAEA, Adictab and the SDG Fab Lab at the University of Geneva, Vicky Tsausi, MSc Art Therapist at the Medical Center of Meyrin, and Evangelina Baka, a Senior Scientist, Virtual Medicine Centre at HUG (Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève). At the core of it all were *newSpecial* and the U4U Volunteers, the UN-backed initiative that brought together artists, scientists, and visitors of all ages and walks of life in a shared creative experience.

The Art & Science Co-Lab was a playground of innovation and imagination - from pencil to quantum mechanics. Adictlab invited visitors to experiment with painting with robots and reshaping landscapes in a sandbox, allowing them to see how artificial intelligence and human creativity can interact in unexpected ways. Meanwhile, Dr. Michael Hoch led participants through the virtual corridors of CERN, transporting them into one of the most cutting-edge scientific institutions in the world. *"It is not often that you get to walk through the Large Hadron Collider while standing in the middle of an art fair,"* one visitor marveled.

One of the most thought-provoking workshops was led by Vicky and Eva, where participants explored the difference between expressing emotions through traditional and virtual mediums. Vicky asked participants to paint their feelings on paper - free, instinctive, immediate. Then, Eva invited them to create something entirely new in virtual reality, asking: How does it feel? Does painting on paper provoke more raw emotions, or does virtual space offer a sense of liberation? The results were striking, with some describing the tactile experience as grounding, while others felt that VR offered an unexpected sense of peace and expansion.

Other highlights included U4U Peace Lean-ins, where visitors painted and left messages on bed-sheets donated by the International Red Cross. *"There is something deeply freeing about rolling onto a linen canvas, stretching your arms, and painting in every direction, without the limits of a small page,"* one participant shared. *"It feels familiar, inviting - like a return to childhood creativity."*

Addictlab presented a unique preview of the SDGzine, its magazine on the Sustainable Development Goals, on the theme of Climate Action. The Co-Lab showcased *'La Planète Bronze'*, by Portuguese artist Luis Marques, selected for the cover.

In U4U's Wear Your Art, visitors transformed old clothes into unique wearable pieces, a statement on upcycling and self-expression. *"It is incredible to see an old T-shirt turn into something completely new, something personal and meaningful,"* said one attendee. *"You walk away wearing something that is yours - it is art you can carry with you and on you."*

Meanwhile, ANASAEA's team offered a glimpse into the future of digital exhibition spaces, inviting visitors to walk through millions of virtual galleries and museums that are now part of the expanding Artverse. Guests could also design their own virtual gallery, curating and decorating it to their taste. *"It is easier than people imagine,"* ANASAEA's team explained. *"With just a few clicks, you can create a space, showcase your work, and open it to the world."*

The fusion of art and science did not simply place two disciplines side by side - it actively blurred the boundaries between them, proving that art and science are not separate worlds but deeply interconnected forces.

At first, the distinction was clear: experiments took place in one corner, paintings and sculptures in another. But as the days passed, these divisions dissolved. Visitors who came expecting to observe found themselves creating, questioning, and experimenting. Scientists became artists, artists became scientists, and together they built something new - an evolving, participatory experience that defied traditional classifications. The space demonstrated that there is art in science, just as there is science in art, and that when the two come together, the results are mesmerizing.

Art is not meant to be confined to a frame, to be admired from a distance with hands behind the back. It is meant to be touched, altered, reimagined, experimented with, even licked if curiosity calls for it. It is an evolving, living creation that responds to those who engage with it. Art Genève, with its unparalleled concentration of artistic expression from across the world, became the perfect platform to challenge these boundaries. In just a few days, it became clear: Art is no longer just what hangs on a wall. It is what we do, how we interact, how we leave our imprint on it.

Then came Sunday. The day of our "Art Talks: From the Big Bang to the Brush Stroke." We hosted the first-ever live-streamed Neurographica session in Geneva, featuring Professor Pavel Piskaryov. A blend of neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, and art, the session united 400 participants both online and at the fair. *"There was something incredibly peaceful about it, a sense of connection across disciplines and across the world,"* one participant noted. *"It was as if we were drawing our way into a shared understanding."*

"One of the most impactful moments came when I encountered my first true art critic - someone who wasn't there to flatter me but to challenge me," reflected Maximilian at the Art Talks. *"Her questions pushed me to reflect on what I truly want to express through my work. This experience reshaped my creative lens and left me with lingering thoughts that will fuel my next steps."*

And none of this would have been possible without the Ukrainian volunteers—the true driving force behind Art and Science Co-Lab. They glued together different experiences, partners, and visitors, creating an atmosphere of warmth, resilience, and generosity. *"The energy they brought was beyond anything I have ever seen - colorful, uniting, and filled with love,"* said one attendee. *"They carried this project forward with an incredible force of beauty and peace."*

Art Genève 2025 taught us a fundamental lesson: museums, galleries, art fairs, and cultural institutions can no longer limit themselves to displaying art at a distance. Co-creation, participation, and artistic response must become an integral part of the art world. Visitors do not just want to admire - they want to engage, to create, to leave their own imprint.

"Let us respond to your artwork. Let us have a conversation with you. Let us question your work through artistic responses that don't come in words but in brush strokes," challenged one volunteer, speaking to the art establishment in Geneva.

Art Genève 2025 was a colorful path of discovery - not just in seeing art but in making it. The question is no longer can we look at art but how can we converse, grow, heal, debate with it and co-create?

The artistic stage is no longer the guarded silent wall with a canvass adorned by a heavy price tag. The stage is living, breathing, blending and creating. Let us give everyone a voice. Let us all speak art. //

Spring Heeled Jack, the Terror of London

STARTING IN THE 1830S, VICTORIAN LONDON WAS STALKED BY A FIENDISH CREATURE THAT COULD LEAP TALL BUILDINGS IN A SINGLE BOUND AND PREYED UPON NIGHTTIME PEDESTRIANS. LESSER KNOWN THAN JACK THE RIPPER BUT ALSO AN UNRESOLVED MYSTERY, JUST WHO, OR WHAT WAS SPRING HEELED JACK?

On the evening of 19th February 1838, 18-year-old Jane Alsop answered a knock at the door of her father's house in Tower Hamlets, London and opened to a gentleman who said he was a police officer. He wanted her to bring a light into the street where a criminal had just been apprehended, but when she handed him a candle, he threw off his cloak to reveal "a most hideous and frightful appearance". According to her testimony he had burning red eyes, spat out blue flame and tore at her dress and neck with metal claws. She was saved by her sister and the assailant fled.

The attack was the latest in a series that had begun in October of the previous year. It was always at night and almost always lone pedestrians who reported a creature more demon than human that had cold, clammy skin like that of a corpse, tore at clothes with his sharp metal claws and could leap high into the air in a single jump.

A servant girl Mary Stevens had been assaulted on Clapham Common while walking to see her mother. A figure had jumped from an alley but fled when Mary's screams attracted a crowd. The following day near Mary's home a carriage crashed when a strange figure leapt in front of the horses but then escaped by clearing a 9-foot-high wall (2.7 metres) in one bound while cackling with laughter.

A complaint was officially lodged by an anonymous source with the Lord Mayor of London, and it was discussed in a public session at the Mansion House in January. The Lord Mayor had intelligence that the perpetrator was a person of high standing in society who had accepted a wager to tease young ladies while in costume. It was also revealed in time, that a flood of let-

ters had been received by the Lord Mayor from all over London describing attacks that were similar in nature.

The reports all stated that the attacker had claws, was terrifying to behold, often wore a tight-fitting costume like oilskin, could breathe fire and could leap impossibly high into the air.

The police had concluded that the Jane Alsop case was genuine and arrested a labourer called Thomas Millbank who'd boasted in the pub that he had been the culprit. He had discarded his white work clothes and the candle after the attack and the latter was found, but he was not persecuted as Jane insisted that her assailant could breathe fire which Thomas Millbank was unable to do!

In March 1838, The Times newspaper published an article about the Jane Alsop case and the legend of Spring Heeled Jack was given its name. The figure was readily taken up as a subject for penny dreadfuls (cheap, serialised thriller stories published for a mass audience and costing a penny), a play in 1840, and Punch and Judy shows which replaced the traditional character of the Devil with Springy Jack himself.

After passing into popular knowledge, sightings of the high-jumping villain became less frequent but more widespread. They continued on and off through the rest of the 19th century in locations as diverse as the British Midlands and the Southwest. In 1877, soldiers at the Aldershot Garrison fired warning shots at an intruder who escaped in a series of superhuman leaps. In 1861, he was blamed for setting fire to a hayrick by a disgruntled worker who was eventually prosecuted for arson.

The last reported sighting was in 1904 in Liverpool.

TEXT KEVIN CRAMPTON, WHO
PHOTOS ROBERT PROWSE JR. (1858-DIED CIRCA 1934),
PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

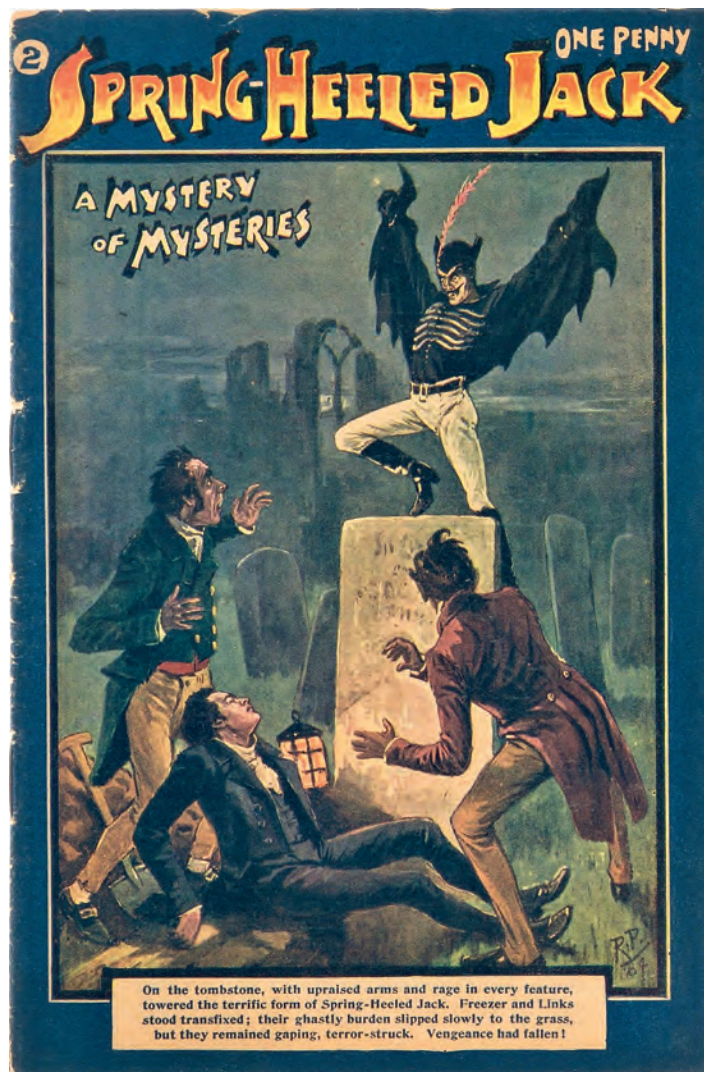


A Spring Heeled Jack illustration.

Inevitably, Spring Heeled Jack became a popular and enduring urban legend of the 19th century in which he was compared with the Devil or the Bogeyman who parents would describe to scare their children into behaving. His image also evolved as the century progressed, so that by the time of the final sighting, he had been reinvented as a dashing folklore hero, a disinherited nobleman using his superhuman ability as an urban vigilante fighting for justice.

Curiously between 1939 and 1945, a striking similar account of Pérák, the Spring Man of Prague was reported in Czechoslovakia, and also reinvented as the hero of the hour battling the German SS in animated films.

No full explanation for the Spring Heeled Jack mania was ever established. Often considered as a case of mass hysteria or attacks that so terrified the victims that they became embellished with their supernatural elements. Speculation continues today (including the theory of alien visitation) but only secondary material remains for study as unfortunately the original pamphlets published shortly after the Jane Alsop



A Penny Dreadful Cover.

attack were destroyed when the British Library was bombed during the Blitz of World War II.

Whether man or fiend, flesh and bone or phantasmagorical, there is no doubt that the story exerted a powerful influence over popular culture. The urban legend of Spring Heeled Jack, the villain who became transformed into a hero, essentially became a precursor to the comic book superheroes of the 20th century that we know and love today. //

The reinvention of Jack began as early as 1867 when *Spring-Heel'd Jack, The Terror of London*, was produced by the Newsagents Publishing Company as a penny dreadful series with the following advertisement.

"Whereas, a little over a quarter of a century ago, a person known to the police as Spring-Heeled Jack did frighten and cause the death of several persons, the daring deeds and startling adventures of this wonderful man will be published in weekly numbers."

The superhero was born.

Massif du Mont-Blanc

ÉMOTIONS ALPINES 2/2



TEXT & PHOTOS
CLAUDE MAILLARD

Repaire mondial de l'alpinisme, du ski alpin, de la randonnée ou de toutes autres activités de plein air et de montagne, le massif du Mont-Blanc offre une concentration de paysages glaciaires exceptionnelle, une multitude de hauts sommets vertigineux dont les plus élevés d'Europe, ainsi qu'une faune et flore d'une grande richesse, ou encore une géologie unique au monde.

Atteindre le sommet du Mont-Blanc a depuis plusieurs siècles représenté un objectif pour toutes sortes d'aventuriers. Après plusieurs tentatives, c'est le 8 août 1786 que le défi est relevé par les Chamoniards Jacques Balmat et Michel Paccard. Aujourd'hui, son ascension par la voie normale du Goûter reste un véritable challenge qui exige une bonne condition physique et de bonnes aptitudes techniques pour évoluer en haute altitude. Il est fortement déconseillé de se lancer dans une telle aventure par ses propres moyens. Chaque année, trop de personnes inexpérimentées se retrouvent en grande difficulté sur les pentes du Mont-Blanc après avoir tenté son ascension sans guide.

Nul besoin de contacter le bureau des guides¹ pour parvenir au refuge du Col de la Croix du Bonhomme. Bien que situé à 2443m d'altitude, son approche se fait en toute sécurité. Partir à la découverte du massif du Mont-Blanc qui regorge de tant de trésors à explorer selon les compétences de chacun est vraiment ouvert à tous les amoureux de la montagne.

REFUGE DU COL DE LA CROIX DU BONHOMME

Accéder au refuge du Col de la Croix du Bonhomme depuis Notre-Dame de la Gorge (à 3 km des Contamines-Montjoie) demande un certain entraînement. Plus long (22 km) et au dénivelé plus important (1450 m) que le sentier qui donne accès aux Chalets de Miage par le col du Tricot (voir le précédent numéro du *newSpecial*), cet itinéraire représente également une infime partie du parcours de l'Ultra Trail du Mont-Blanc (UTMB). Rendez-vous immanquable pour les trailers du monde entier, cette course mythique se déroule sur trois pays : la France, l'Italie et la Suisse. C'est l'Américain Jim Walmsley qui détient le record de l'épreuve après avoir parcouru

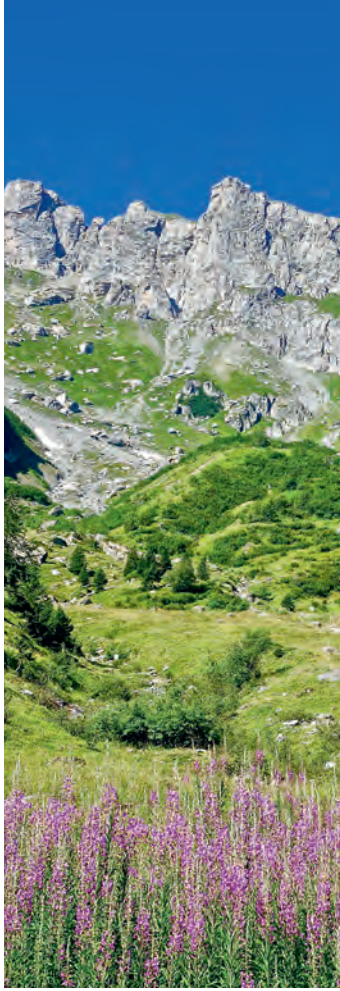
les 171 km du tracé et avalé les 10 000 m de dénivelé dans un temps prodigieux de 19h37'43".

Plus modestement, nous entamons l'ascension en longeant le Bon Nant, torrent alimenté par la fonte des glaciers et qui termine sa course 23 km plus loin en se jetant dans l'Arve, près du Fayet. Sur ses rives, l'adorable chapelle Notre-Dame de la Gorge, blanche et pimpante, au fronton peint, où toutes les jeunes filles ont rêvé de se marier, marque le départ de la randonnée. Datant du XI^e siècle, cette ancienne église paroissiale a été reconstruite dans un style baroque entre 1699 et 1707. Classée aux monuments historiques depuis 2015, c'est un lieu de prière indissociable pour un voyage sans encombre vers le Col du Bonhomme.

Après avoir franchi le pont qui enjambe le torrent face à la chapelle, on s'engage sur une voie romaine très raide faite de larges dalles de pierre. A son sommet, depuis le pont datant de la même époque antique, le coup d'œil sur la gorge profonde qu'il surplombe est saisissant. Plus haut, une fois passé le refuge du Nant Borrant, le chemin très pentu qui mène au refuge de La Balme à 1706 m d'altitude se transforme en un long replat traversant les alpages de la Rollaz. Nous en profiterons pour remplir d'eau fraîche nos gourdes avant de poursuivre jusqu'au chalet de Jovet dominé par les Aiguilles de la Pennaz (2688 m). Sur notre gauche, nous laissons le sentier qui conduit aux lacs Jovet, plans d'eau rafraîchissants situés dans un cadre magnifique au pied du Mont Tondou qui culmine à 3196 m d'altitude. On continue en direction du Col du Bonhomme qui se dresse face à nous et l'atteignons après avoir contourné une grosse barre rocheuse et traversé un névé qui précède une dernière ascension dans la caillasse. Du haut de ses 2329 m, il offre un très beau panorama sur la Réserve naturelle des Contamines-Montjoie d'un côté et sur le Beaufortain et le lac de la Gittaz de l'autre côté.

Deux kilomètres plus loin, situé à la croisée des chemins sur le Tour du Mont-Blanc, le Tour du Beaufortain et le GR5, le refuge du Col de la Croix du Bonhomme nous attend. Il fournit gîte et couvert pendant tout l'été (réservation obligatoire au +33 (0)4 79 07 05 28) mais aussi un majestueux emplacement pour savourer son pique-nique avant de redescendre à Notre-Dame de la Gorge par le même chemin.

Culminant à 4122 m, l'Aiguille Verte fait partie du panorama grandiose offert par la randonnée à l'Aiguillette des Houches.



En amont du Col du Bonhomme, le massif de la Tête de la Ciclé et des Aiguilles de la Pennaz est de toute beauté.

L'AIGUILLETTE DES HOUCHES

C'est en prenant un peu de recul que l'on pourra apprécier au mieux toute la beauté du massif du Mont-Blanc. Pour cela, la randonnée de l'Aiguillette des Houches est idéale. Majestueux belvédère sur le plus haut sommet des Alpes, elle restera sans le moindre doute une expérience inoubliable. De là-haut, les neiges éternelles du toit de l'Europe semblent à portée de main.

En direction de Chamonix, après avoir traversé l'Arve à la hauteur du village des Houches, une route sinueuse permet d'atteindre le parc animalier de Merlet² d'où démarre la randonnée. Ancien alpage perché à 1500m d'altitude, ce parc de 21 hectares où vivent en semi-liberté de nombreuses espèces animales est un incontournable pour les petits et les grands désireux de découvrir la faune de nos montagnes. La proximité inhabituelle avec ses nombreux animaux surprend et fait presque oublier leur caractère sauvage. Aux côtés du bouquetin, roi de la montagne, évoluent le chamois vif et méfiant, le mouflon reconnaissable à ses cornes

enroulées, le daim aux bois palmés et de nombreuses marmottes, adorables boules de poils symboles de l'environnement montagnard. Jaloné de vieux chalets traditionnels, le parc de Merlet abrite également le lama et l'alpaga originaires de la cordillère des Andes, ainsi que le cerf sika au pelage roux moucheté venant de l'est de l'Asie, animal sacré pour les Japonais.

Le sentier pour l'Aiguillette des Houches s'engage dans la forêt et, après le franchissement du torrent de Lappaz, se fait plus étroit et vertigineux. Une main courante et des crampons plantés dans la roche facilitent la progression. La pente devient plus raide et longe le ravin des Vouillourds par de larges lacets où la prudence est de mise. Perché dans le vide à 2152m d'altitude, face à la vallée de Chamonix, le refuge de Bellachat est en vue. Construit sur les ruines d'un ancien alpage de montagne, il était utilisé comme auberge pour excursionnistes et muletiers vers les années 1920. Plusieurs fois détruit par le feu ou par la tempête, il accueille maintenant sur réservation (+33(0)7 89 03 30 38) les randonneurs venus profiter de la vue exceptionnelle qu'il offre sur le Mont-Blanc.

Après avoir laissé sur notre droite le chemin qui conduit au Brévent, sommet de 2525m de haut que l'on peut atteindre directement depuis Chamonix par téléphérique, notre itinéraire traverse les prairies de Carlaveyron et serpente entre de petits étangs. Avec sa multitude de ruisseaux, cette réserve naturelle s'apparente à un jardin aquatique où prospère une flore spécifique précieuse, comme la laïche de Magellan, rareté végétale présente uniquement en ces lieux hauts-savoyards. C'est également le territoire de la grenouille rousse et du triton alpestre. Une ultime montée herbeuse et l'objectif de cette belle randonnée est atteint. Le panorama est grandiose face au Mont-Blanc et ses sommets voisins, de l'Aiguille Verte au Mont Joly. En se retournant, on aperçoit la chaîne des Fiz avec la Pointe d'Anterne, le massif des Aiguilles Rouges jusqu'au Mont Buet.

Cette courte randonnée de 11 km au dénivelé approchant les 1000m clôture de façon magistrale notre périple dans le massif du Mont-Blanc où nous attendent encore d'innombrables sentiers permettant d'accéder à des sites d'exception tous plus beaux les uns que les autres. //

1 contact@guides-mont-blanc.com

2 www.parcdermerlet.com

Véritable jardin aquatique, la réserve naturelle de Carlaveyron regorge d'une flore rare.



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