2020 in numbers

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent health and safety measures, including a nationwide lockdown in Switzerland from 16 March to 8 June and measures taken at the cantonal level, heavily impacted UN Geneva’s operations and ability to carry out its full range of usual activities. Despite this, UN Geneva, through the collective efforts and solidarity of its personnel, achieved a range of results, many of which are summarized below:

People management and capacity-building

UN Geneva provided effective, reliable and client-focused administrative and support services to fulfill its mission.

- On 31 December 2020, there were 3,439 UN Secretariat staff in Geneva, including temporary staff, of 153 nationalities, from a wide range of professional backgrounds.
- 46% of UN Geneva staff were female, and 54% were male.
- More than 3,500 staff contracts were administered.

UN Geneva provided administrative and operational support to more than 40 UN system entities in Europe and their field offices around the world.

Health and well-being

More than 12,000 staff and UN Volunteers worldwide have access to UN Geneva’s medical services.

The UN Geneva Medical Service:

- Provided medical support and advice to staff affected by COVID-19, including workplace contact tracing and a dedicated telephone hotline offering 24/7 support.
- Supported the new UN System-wide COVID-19 MEDEVAC Task Force by providing a nurse and doctor one day per week to help coordinate COVID-19-related medical evacuations. In 2020, 114 UN personnel were medically evacuated under the new arrangements; the most severe COVID-19 cases had to be evacuated by air ambulance.
- Conducted 40 workplace risk assessments.
- Provided 1,420 flu vaccines to UN personnel in Geneva.
- Coordinated the voluntary antibody testing of 201 UN Geneva staff who worked on-site through the COVID-19 lockdown for a study by the Hôpitaux universitaires de Genève.

189,587 m² of floor space in the Palais des Nations complex and its annexes were assessed to ensure a safe return to the office after the first COVID-19 lockdown.

Environmental awareness

1,559 tons CO₂ equivalent were emitted on the UN Geneva premises. Most of these emissions were due to consumption of natural gas and fuel for heating. Through a carbon offset programme, UN Geneva is climate neutral.

1,423 tons of waste were produced on the UN Geneva premises, of which 59% was reused, recycled, composted or recovered.

102,810 m³ of water were used on the Palais des Nations campus.

35 million sheets of recycled A4 paper were printed in 2020, a 58% reduction from 83 million sheets in 2010, saving the equivalent of 362 trees.

More than 224,000 items of incoming and outgoing mail and diplomatic pouches from all over the world were processed.

The processing of 282,000 payments, or an average of 23,500 payments per month.

The processing of all electronic disbursements of the UN Secretariat and related entities in CHF, EUR, GBP, DKK, NOK, SEK.

More than 12,000 staff and UN Volunteers worldwide have access to UN Geneva’s medical services.

The support provided by the UN Geneva Staff Counsellor’s Office included:

- 103 in-person mindfulness meditation sessions, from January to March.
- 320 staff participating in targeted group interventions.
- More than 1,300 participants in well-being webinars run in collaboration with the Knowledge and Learning Commons and the Centre for Learning and Multilingualism.
Director-General

Chaired 21 meetings of the inter-agency Security Management Team.

Delivered 182 speeches, including remarks at 37 virtual events and 20 video messages.

Gave 24 interviews.

Went on 2 missions:
- January: to attend the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland
- January: to represent the Secretary-General of the United Nations at the Ministerial Meeting of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, in Brussels

Tweeted 713 times.

80 high-level visitors were welcomed at UN Geneva, including 4 Heads of State or Government, 64 foreign ministers and 8 representatives of the Swiss authorities. The Secretary-General visited Switzerland 3 times and the President of the General Assembly visited once.

39 new permanent representatives presented their credentials, and 2 new permanent observers presented their nomination letters.

The Director-General held 81 bilateral meetings with Member States, both in-person and virtually, with representatives from all five geographical regions:
- 29 meetings were with Heads of State or Government, foreign ministers or other high-level dignitaries.
- 15 meetings were with high-level officials of the host country, Switzerland, including with the President, Federal Councillors and Presidents of Parliament.

The Director-General gave 8 briefings to Member States, regional groups and other groupings.

The Director-General held 109 bilateral meetings with representatives from UN entities and other international organizations, civil society, academia and private sector institutions. These included 61 meetings with heads of international organizations, of whom 50 were senior UN officials.

Conference management

4,274 meetings were held in Geneva; 32% took place in a virtual or hybrid format. On average, 17 meetings were held per working day.

Indico UN was used by 40 entities in 29 countries to organize 309 conferences comprising 2,389 sessions. It handled 88,738 registrations, 76,889 attendee approvals and the printing of 16,730 badges.

5 conference rooms at the Palais des Nations were upgraded to host hybrid conferences with interpretation. Interpretation was provided at 1,257 meetings; 46% of these meetings were held in a virtual or hybrid format.

16 days of sign language interpretation were provided at 27 accessible meetings.

Remote real-time captions were provided for 53 meetings. Approximately 70 million words were translated in official documents and publications.

The Division of Conference Management produced over 2,600 videos and illustrated animations, to support hybrid format conferences. Interpretation was provided at 1,257 meetings; 46% of these meetings were held in a virtual or hybrid format.

10,000 questions were received from UN staff, resulting in the transfer of over 150 linear metres of records to the Library and Archives.

Liaison with non-governmental organizations

3,950 representatives of 1,153 NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council were accredited to UN Geneva.

Strategic Heritage Plan

There were 86 million Swiss francs’ worth of construction and renovation works between March and November.

H Building:
- 100% of the facade has been installed, comprising some 2,600 glass panels.
- 7 lifts have been installed.
- 3 temporary conference rooms in Tempus were built and opened.

A construction village for 400 workers was built.

12,800 m² of temporary facilities were installed at UN Geneva.

Library and Archives

UN Library and Archives Geneva manages 8 linear kilometres of UN records and maintains 17 repositories throughout the Palais des Nations.

The virtual service desk responded to 10,000 questions from Library and Archives clients in 2020, including through 300 chats and a new online interview service for researchers.

More than 200 queries related to individual records management were received from UN staff, resulting in the transfer of over 150 linear metres of records to the Library and Archives.
More than 10,000 items of UN records were digitized and 1,300 new description inventories were created to make the records more publicly accessible.

More than 2 million pages of League of Nations archives were digitized; almost 10 million pages are now available online. 60,000 pages of UN official documents and 400 publications from the Library’s collections were also digitized.

Almost 124 terabytes of data from League of Nations archives are now available in the digital preservation system.

2,200 boxes of archives and almost 6,000 historic maps were physically preserved.

Metadata was created to enable research and fast retrieval of information from 2,600 boxes of archives and 5,300 books and UN documents.

Researchers viewed 734,000 pages of League of Nations archives through the online interface of the new digital preservation system.

Digital library resources were accessed more than 350,000 times, and the Library’s online catalogue was used 40,000 times.

4,800 archives were consulted and 1,521 print books and issues of periodicals were physically preserved.

Users had 50,000 more digital journal articles available to them than in 2019, and 10,000 new print books, journals and newspapers.

8 records management training sessions were held for 81 participants.

Telecommuting for Library users was facilitated by:

- The publication of 2 resource guides on telecommuting and open access information.
- Remote access for 375 UN staff members to digital library resources.
- An expanded FAQ webpage which was consulted 2,100 times.

A new Online Information Package for diplomats was published with 3 conference primers, accompanied by a training session, a training guide and a customized resource guide.

A new global reader community was created through #UNGenevaReads, an online reading programme with more than 100 participants.

2 Library Talks were held with about 150 participants.

25 podcast episodes on multilateralism were produced and were downloaded by listeners 5,400 times.

29 cultural activities and side events were organized, in 5 official UN languages and 8 non-official languages, with permanent missions and other international organizations.

640 participants were guided on 70 tours through the Library and Archives and the UN Museum Geneva.

2 artworks were officially donated by Member States and added to UN Geneva’s artworks collection.

55 artworks from UN Geneva’s collection were displayed in the Tout un monde exhibition in a Geneva art gallery.

27 activities were organized as part of 100 Years of Multilateralism in Geneva, including 1 exhibition on the Place des Nations that was also made accessible virtually.

Learning and development

11,270 people participated in 528 learning activities:

- 309 language training courses were held, with 264 students in Arabic, 206 in Chinese, 579 in English, 1,708 in French, 293 in Russian and 572 in Spanish.
- 2,536 people attended 117 management and communication activities.
- 4,399 people participated in 39 knowledge and Learning Commons events.
- 713 candidates sat 5 local exams in 43 sessions.
- 57% of participants were female and 43% were male.

Information and outreach

260 press releases were produced in English and 255 in French, summarizing the sessions of the Human Rights Council, the human rights treaty bodies and the Conference on Disarmament.

216 permanent and 345 temporary accreditations were delivered to members of the press to cover UN activities in Geneva.

99 press briefings were held, and 152 press conferences were given by UN officials, the UN family in Geneva and Member States;

201 of these events took place in a virtual or a hybrid format.

1,558 webcast videos were produced for viewers worldwide.

2 new SDG Studio Geneva videos were created. The SDG Studio Geneva videos, which are now in their fourth year, have been viewed more than 660,000 times on social media.

Geneva Witness short documentaries were produced for broadcast on Radio Télévision Suisse, the Swiss public broadcasting channel, and TV5 Monde.

190 features, stories, studio messages, news edits and spots were produced and distributed via UNfeed.

22 portraits were produced of national and international staff from the UN and UN system agencies working around the world in the fight against COVID-19.

UN Geneva’s new website, www.ungeneva.org, received 250,218 page views and 60,926 visitors.

There were also 1,560 million visits to the old website during 2020.
There were a total of 1,156 million followers on UN Geneva's flagship social media accounts. COVID-19 and human rights were the two topics that generated the most engagement.

- 255,000 followers on Instagram, with continuing growth in the numbers of posts, videos and stories.
- 565,000 followers on Twitter, with 1.8 million interactions. Over 6,280 tweets, seen more than 199 million times. Our two most successful tweets of the year, in English and in French, echoed the call of the Director-General of the World Health Organization for unity and solidarity in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. They generated more than 2 million and 50,000 impressions, respectively.
- 289,100 followers of UN Geneva's Facebook page.
- More than 45,000 followers of UN Geneva on LinkedIn.

1,555 photos were uploaded to UN Geneva's Flickr account in 2020.

13,000 people took a guided tour of the Palais des Nations, in any one of 12 languages.

117 students attended a tailor-made information programme or a virtual presentation on UN activities in Geneva.

80 participants from 53 countries spanning 6 continents and 13 time zones, participated remotely in the first virtual iteration of the Graduate Study Programme.

News

Perception Change Project

44 permanent missions participated in the art contest titled “The Future We Want”, which garnered 17,000 votes from the public.

21 presentations about the 75th anniversary of the United Nations were given to schoolchildren in Switzerland. 17 were in classrooms and 4 were via videoconference. Over 350 children from 5 cantons took part.

72 students attended the Young Reporters at the UN programme.

Security

360 days of support were provided by the Security and Safety Service, which comprised 168 personnel.

153,995 pedestrians and 149,627 vehicles were screened by the Security and Safety Service.

5 field missions took place outside of Switzerland security coverage for conferences, close protection, and workshops and training.

1,184 hours of security training were provided, including specialized, advanced and online training.

The DetEx K9 Unit is made up of 7 dogs of various breeds, trained by 6 security officers who are professional dog handlers.

In compliance with the UN Occupational Safety and Health guidelines, 9 different worksites in the Palais des Nations complex are monitored by the Occupational Safety and Health Team which is composed of 4 security officers.

There were more than 7,000 views of the #KidsWannaKnow videos on social media in 2020 on the topics of refugees and migration, climate change, work and health. 13 new #KidsWannaKnow videos were shared on YouTube.

More than 4,500 publications were distributed worldwide.

There were 11,000 page views of the online publication Fairy Tales for a Fairer World and 800 views of 6 Fairy Tales from around the World, developed in collaboration with permanent missions after the success of the initial publication.

More than 6,500 subscribers read the Impact Stories of International Geneva monthly newsletter.

Geneva Impact’s Twitter account earned 2,740,000 impressions and reached over 9,500 followers.

1,000 copies of a new pocket map of International Geneva were produced.

SDG LAB

The SDG Lab organized 2 flagship events:

- A webinar in which, 3 ECE member States shared challenges that they face in implementing Sustainable Development Goals, held ahead of the ECE 2020 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development.
- A virtual discussion on COVID-19, the Sustainable Development Goals, inequalities and the informal economy, convened by the Director-General, with participation by the Heads of the International Labour Organization and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and by representatives of 3 Member States.

The SDG Lab’s Twitter account had 4,100 followers.

372 people from over 253 organizations participated in the Geneva 2030 Ecosystem, a dynamic network of organizations dedicated to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Ecosystem is curated by the SDG Lab and the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

237 people subscribed to the Geneva 2030 Ecosystem WhatsApp group, where information about resources and events relating to the Sustainable Development Goals is shared.

Every month, Geneva-based professionals take part in a virtual meet-up via the SDG Lunch Collider, in collaboration with the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), which gives members an opportunity to talk together about their work on the Sustainable Development Goals. The network has 135 members.

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