



Chapter 3

International cooperation:
supporting multilateralism

UN Geneva welcomes the faces of multilateral diplomacy despite unsettling times

By providing infrastructure, services and support, UN Geneva, with its unique convening capacity, enables the international community to work for peace and security, disarmament, human rights, humanitarian relief, the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), and much more.

The COVID-19 pandemic made clear the value of international cooperation, solidarity, and multilateral discussions. In 2020 UN Geneva continued to support multilateralism, in particular by organizing meetings and conferences of global importance.

Following the opening of the 43rd regular session of the Human Rights Council on 24 February, the Secretary-General, António Guterres, meets with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov.



UN Photo: Jean-Marc Ferré



UN Photo: Pierre Albouy

Dignitaries and representatives of Member States, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, academia and the private sector joined the various events organized by UN Geneva in 2020 in person, with strict protective measures in place after the onset of the pandemic, or virtually. The hybrid format allowed for in-person or virtual participation. The events included the 43rd to 45th regular sessions of the Human Rights Council, the Conference on Disarmament, Libyan and Syrian peace talks, the UN75 dialogues, the 2020 Afghanistan Conference and others.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, Kang Kyung-wha, speaks during the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament, on 24 February.



UN Photo: Jean-Marc Ferré



UN Photo: Antoine Tardy



UN Photo: Adam Kane

UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya meets with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of Slovakia, Miroslav Lajčák, on 26 February.

Journalists take photos ahead of a meeting between the Secretary-General, António Guterres, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, David Zalkaliani, on 24 February.

The President of the 74th session of the General Assembly, Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, gives a press conference at the Palais des Nations on 25 February.



UN Photo: Jean-Marc Ferré

As part of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council, the Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, addresses the urgent debate on racially inspired human rights violations, systemic racism, police brutality against people of African descent and violence against peaceful protests, by video link, on 17 June.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives, Abdulla Shahid, addresses the Human Rights Council by video link at its 45th session, on 17 September, during a panel discussion on the right to development which focused on strengthening international cooperation and solidarity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.



UN Photo: Jean-Marc Ferré



UN Photo: Adam Kane

UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya welcomes the President of the Swiss Confederation, Simonetta Sommaruga, during her visit to the Palais des Nations for "Journalists at risk: Let's protect media freedom!", a panel discussion organized jointly by Switzerland and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on 1 September.



UN Photo: Jean-Marc Ferré

Renowned architect Lord Norman Foster is interviewed by UNTV in UN Geneva's SDG Studio, on 6 October, about Sustainable Development Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and about the relationship between cities, citizens and sustainability.

The Mayor of Geneva, Sami Kanaan, joins other mayors in a football match against permanent representatives to highlight the Sustainable Development Goals, during the 2020 Forum of Mayors at the Palais des Nations, on 6 October.



UN Photo: Matija Patocnik



UN Photo: Matija Patocnik

UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya meets with the President of the Lower Chamber of the Swiss Parliament, Isabelle Moret, the President of the Upper Chamber of the Swiss Parliament, Hans Stöckli, and the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Jürg Lauber, during their visit to the Palais des Nations on 15 October.



UN Photo: Violaine Martin

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Pekka Haavisto, briefs the press during the 2020 Afghanistan Conference, on 24 November.



UN Photo: Jess Hoffman

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Retno Marsudi, addresses the 2020 Afghanistan Conference at the Palais des Nations by video link, on 24 November.



UN Photo: Violaine Martin

The Minister of Finance of Afghanistan, Abdul Hadi Arghandiwal, speaks with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Mohammad Haneef Atmar, at the 2020 Afghanistan Conference, on 24 November.

Stopping the war in Libya

The peace process in Libya made a significant advance with the signing in Geneva of a permanent, countrywide ceasefire agreement between Libya's warring parties, in October. The agreement was the result of intensive negotiations facilitated by the [United Nations Support Mission in Libya \(UNSMIL\)](#), which took place both in person and virtually.

The first round of talks of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission, established as a result of the [Berlin International Conference](#), was convened at the Palais des Nations in February. The Commission comprised five senior officers appointed by the Government of National Accord and five senior officers appointed by the Libyan National Army. As a result of the second round of talks, also held in Geneva, a draft ceasefire agreement was prepared. Unfortunately, the spread of COVID-19 posed an additional obstacle to advancing these discussions. In an innovative step, UNSMIL, with the assistance of the [UN Mediation Support Unit](#), moved the negotiations online to keep the momentum of the talks going.

With the support of regional players, UNSMIL organized the third round of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission, which was held virtually, followed by an in-person meeting in Egypt. Thereafter, the parties met in person for the fourth round, in Geneva, to finalize a ceasefire agreement.

On 23 October in Geneva, the parties signed a complete and permanent ceasefire agreement with immediate effect in a ceremony held in the historic Council Chamber of the Palais des Nations. The agreement also responded to the Secretary-General's call for an immediate global ceasefire to focus on the fight against COVID-19. The Security Council welcomed the permanent ceasefire agreement, which is now being implemented by the parties with the assistance of the UN.

“I would like to extend my thanks to the 10 members of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission. What they have accomplished here today took a great deal of courage. They demonstrated their patriotism, love of their country and commitment in coming together to reach an agreement that can help secure a better and more peaceful future for all the Libyan people.”

Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya, Stephanie Williams

Signing of the
ceasefire agreement

Members of the
5+5 Joint Military
Commission and
representatives of the
United Nations with
the signed ceasefire
agreement at the
Palais des Nations



UN Photo: Violaine Martin



UN Photo: Violaine Martin

Afghanistan conference attracts online donor pledges

From 23 to 24 November, UN Geneva welcomed the 2020 Afghanistan Conference, during which at least \$3.3 billion was pledged by donors for the peace process in Afghanistan and development objectives for 2021–2024.

Jointly organized by the Government of Afghanistan, the Government of Finland and the United Nations, the conference was mostly held virtually, with the co-chairs located in the Palais des Nations. Around 70 governments and more than 30 international organizations took part in the conference over two days, committing political and financial support for a lasting peace for the people of Afghanistan and for stability and prosperity. The conference also adopted a communiqué calling for an immediate, permanent and comprehensive ceasefire to end decades of conflict.

The 2020 Afghanistan Conference showed that despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, multilateral discussions are able to continue, thanks to technology, partnerships, and the firm commitment of the UN and the international community.

“All eyes in Afghanistan are towards Geneva. They are expecting a lot from the international community.”

Deputy Minister of Finance of Afghanistan,
Abdul Habib Zadran

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, Mohammad Haneef Atmar, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons, at the 2020 Afghanistan Conference.



CyberMediation Network: leveraging digital tools for effective and inclusive mediation

While peace mediation remains above all a human-centred endeavour, digital technologies play a considerable role – presenting a range of opportunities and challenges for both mediators and parties to a conflict. Increased exposure to new technologies and a deeper understanding of them allows mediation practitioners to better leverage digital tools in their efforts to end a conflict by peaceful means.

In 2020, the COVID-19 crisis drastically reduced opportunities for conventional, in-person mediation. Mediators had to further explore the area of digital peacemaking and find innovative solutions to facilitate online meetings and build trust between parties to conflicts via cyberspace.

Further to the CyberMediation conference held in Geneva in 2019, a group of international partners established the CyberMediation Network to foster reflection on the impact of digital technologies on mediation and to inform mediators and practitioners about the benefits, challenges and risks associated with their use. UN Geneva and the [Mediation Support Unit](#) of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs coordinate the work of the CyberMediation Network.

Several events were organized in 2020 under the auspices of the CyberMediation Network, on topics such as digital inclusion, the use of virtual reality tools for mediation purposes, and digital process design and facilitation:

- June: An interactive webinar was held on digital inclusion in peace processes, organized by [Build Up](#), the [United States Institute of Peace](#), and the [Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding](#) of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. The webinar featured practical tools to operationalize digital inclusion and highlighted recent examples of digital inclusion in mediation and peacemaking.
- June: A virtual workshop was held on the topic of social media and strategic communication in the mediation field, organized by the Mediation Support Unit and [swisspeace](#). The workshop explored the issue of attacks against mediators on social media and analysed existing strategies and tools to counter misinformation and disinformation in mediation processes.
- November: A high-level online discussion on building trust via cyberspace was held as part of [Geneva Peace Week](#). Diplomats and digital technology experts explored ways in which mediators can build trust online and discussed mediation experiences from an interdisciplinary perspective. The discussion revealed a need to work in close partnership with technology designers, providers and users in order to build the required level of trust in cyberspace.
- November: A round table on virtual reality and armed conflict mediation was convened by the [Crisis Management Initiative](#) and [DiploFoundation](#). Experts and humanitarian practitioners explored the use of virtual reality technologies in the peacekeeping and humanitarian fields, and the current limitations of using virtual reality and ways in which these can be addressed.

Socially distanced credentials ceremonies

The presentation of credentials by a permanent representative-designate marks the beginning of his or her work in a duty station. The letters of credence are issued by the Government concerned and addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In Geneva, it is the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva who receives the credentials on behalf of the Secretary-General. This ceremony is an important part of efficient and effective diplomacy.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Geneva put in place a number of protective measures at the Palais des Nations, and presentation of credentials ceremonies were able to be held, with certain adaptations. For example, the ceremony was restricted to a maximum of four people, including the Director-General and the permanent representative. Masks were mandatory, chairs were at least 1.5 metres apart, and the traditional handshakes were replaced by socially distanced smiles.

By implementing such measures, UN Geneva was able to maintain these time-sensitive ceremonies that are part and parcel of the smooth functioning of multilateralism in Geneva.



UN Photo: Sergey Shaposhnikov

The Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Lucy Duncan, presents her credentials to UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya.

Indico.UN goes global

Every year, the United Nations manages thousands of meetings and conferences of different types at the Palais des Nations, as well as at many other locations in Geneva and around the world. In the past, the processes for managing these events have varied; each duty station used different solutions, and many processes were not automated or globally harmonized across the entities.

In 2015, [Indico.UN](#), a self-service registration platform originally created by the [European Organization for Nuclear Research \(CERN\)](#), was implemented for facilitating meetings management at UN Geneva. Indico.UN allows key stakeholders to interact with meetings management, security services, event organizers and meeting participants to make security clearances quick and efficient and to facilitate accreditation approvals. It also provides event-specific pages and notifications of changes to events, a

document and agenda repository, and a channel for conversation between meeting organizers and participants.

In 2020, UN Geneva launched version 2 of this powerful platform, which expands the range of services available.

The new version has a fresh user interface and relies on modern technologies and databases that allow developers to create new plug-ins specifically for UN entities worldwide. Organizers now have the possibility of creating multiple and different registration forms for the same event. Participants can register for an event without creating an account and can sync events they have registered for directly into a personal calendar. The new invitation management module makes it even easier for event organizers to manage events directly from the Indico.UN platform.

Visitors at the Palais des Nations



UN Photo: Violaine Martin

Where's my seat?

It has always been a challenge to create and change the seating plans for the 32 conference rooms in the Palais des Nations.

Meetings of the Human Rights Council, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Conference on Disarmament and the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees all have specific requirements for arranging how participants sit in the conference room. UN Geneva has developed a new tool – SeatFlow – entirely in-house, to help meeting room assistants quickly generate seating charts, adapt them, if needed, to new challenges such as COVID-19 social distancing rules, and then automatically print out nameplates.

Meeting room assistants first consult with meeting organizers, and then use the SeatFlow tool to prepare meeting- and room-specific seating charts faster and more easily. The tool presents visualizations of various amenities

in each room, including seats, entrances and exits, and other features. Furthermore, the SeatFlow tool takes accessibility requirements into account and helps to ensure appropriate seating for meeting participants who have specific requirements. Meeting room assistants can also simulate the blocking of seats to comply with changing requirements. Seating charts can be printed in large formats at high quality and displayed near conference room entrances to help delegates find their seats easily.

Future updates to the SeatFlow system will allow delegates to find their seats directly through a digital interactive map, or possibly through the Indico.UN registration platform.



Remote interpretation

COVID-19 dramatically changed the way that meetings are held at UN Geneva, and consequently also the way that staff work to provide support for such events.

Rapid changes to the technologies used by interpreters, in order to make meetings virtual, meant they had to quickly adapt to service the meetings, enabling all Member States to participate in the multilateral system.

One of the more complex aspects about holding virtual and hybrid (a mix of virtual and in-person) meetings was to figure out how to continue to provide remote simultaneous interpretation in the UN's six official languages.

In 2020, UN Geneva staff worked hard to find solutions through the use of remote simultaneous interpretation platforms, which send audio and video feed via the Internet to and from participants who may be located anywhere in the world.

Testing revealed the ins and outs of the different platforms and allowed potential problems to be identified. One major issue was that the quality of the audio feed from remote participants varied greatly, as did their Internet connections. The UN's remote interpretation task forces, based in the four major conference-servicing duty stations of New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, drafted recommendations about the microphones and other equipment that remote meeting participants should use.

Thanks to communications technology and the commitment and innovativeness of UN Geneva staff, meetings could still be held – and interpreted – enabling the continuation of multilateral discussions and decision-making during the pandemic.

A delegate listens to proceedings of the Human Rights Council at its 43rd session.

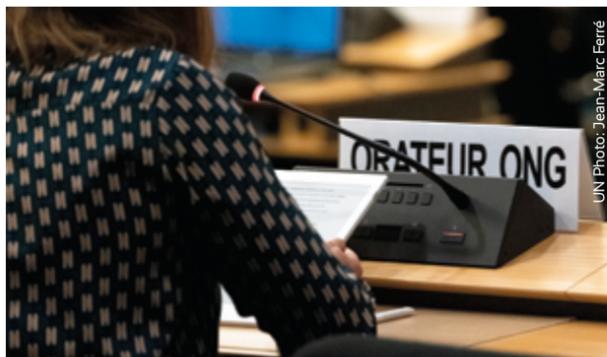


Delegates attend the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in the Assembly Hall of the Palais des Nations.

See what was said

Delegates, secretariats, journalists and researchers need to access information from official meetings quickly and easily. To meet this need, UN Geneva is continuing its effort to provide searchable transcripts generated automatically from audio recording files. The Fully Automated Speech-to-Text (FAST) pilot project is setting up a structure to routinely run automatic speech recognition on audio files recorded in [official UN languages](#).

FAST is an additional service for delegates and secretariats that takes advantage of existing technology, though it is not meant to be an official record. To improve the accuracy of the tool, originally developed by the [World Intellectual Property Organization](#), the FAST team used UN-specific texts to teach the system how to handle accented speech, as well as words used frequently in a UN context. Initially, the pilot project provided transcripts in English, at the end of 2019, for a limited number of meetings. In 2020, a French-language data set was developed and is being used to train the system to generate transcripts in French. The service will be similarly extended to other official UN languages in coming years. Searchable transcripts are made available on [Indico.UN](#) event pages for ease of reference for participants.



UN Photo: Jean-Marc Ferré

Progress in 2020:

- FAST operations continued from mid-January to mid-March, transcribing up to eight three-hour meetings a day (four committees in session).
- Over a six-month period, more than 700 hours of audio recordings of meetings were automatically transcribed.
- With the suspension of scheduled sessions due to COVID-19, FAST operations were limited to [United Nations Information Service](#) press conferences and briefings.
- In mid-June, having been adapted technically to be able to accommodate virtual and hybrid meetings, the FAST service resumed; it then covered the 43rd (resumed), 44th and 45th sessions of the Human Rights Council, the 76th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the 129th session of the Human Rights Committee, the 69th session of the Committee against Torture, the 19th session of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, and ongoing meetings of the Conference on Disarmament.
- The FAST team collaborated with the [Library of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), indexing legacy audio recordings of the [World Conference on Human Rights](#), as part of the initiative to safeguard records of this historic conference and make them available to the wider public.

“This will be an amazing resource for us, in view of the challenge of capturing the content of our many meetings.”

Secretary of the Forum on Business and Human Rights, Graham Fox

Scan the QR code to see a sample of FAST automated transcription.



A participant speaks during the 45th session of the Human Rights Council on 24 September.

Tempus, the temporary conference facility, opens at UN Geneva

Tempus, the temporary infrastructure for conferences at the Palais des Nations, is officially open for business. Named after the Latin word for “time”, its tailored design was conceived to best answer the needs for conferences and meetings while major renovation works are carried out in the historic buildings of the Palais des Nations as part of the [Strategic Heritage Plan](#). Tempus is expected to be used until the renovation work is fully completed in 2024.

Tempus has three 200-seat conference rooms, each equipped with interpretation booths. Sign language interpretation, webcasting and remote participation are also possible, in one of the rooms. In line with UN Geneva’s commitment to disability inclusion, the entire facility is fully accessible.

On 21 September, the new facility hosted its very first conference: the [Global Forum for Road Traffic Safety](#), held jointly by the Economic Commission for Europe and the International Trade Centre.

Tempus’ three rooms will be turned into a single 600-seat conference room prior to the renovation works in the E Building, where the majority of the Palais’ large conference rooms are located.

“In spite of the very challenging times, in spite of the pandemic, in spite of the economic and social crisis, the necessity of an additional building for multilateral and international meetings is more important than ever. Congratulations to everyone who helped deliver Tempus.”

UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya

Scan the QR code to take a 360° virtual tour of Tempus.



UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya opened the facility in September along with the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva, Jürg Lauber.



UN Photo: Jean-Marc Ferré

Innovative approaches to the Conference on Disarmament

In Geneva, the disarmament architecture finds its expression in a full calendar of intergovernmental meetings and side events pertaining to disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control conventions. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent restrictions on physical meetings had a considerable impact on the schedule of these meetings and the substantive work on disarmament.

Recognizing the importance of furthering multilateral dialogue and processes on these issues, in several instances the disarmament community succeeded in adapting its working methods through the use of new conferencing technologies.

The Conference on Disarmament, the single negotiating body of the international community on disarmament, resumed formal plenary meetings at the Palais des Nations with a newly acquired multilingual conferencing platform. The Conference continued its work in the 2020 session, including by holding general debates and a dedicated meeting on emerging technologies, and with the successful negotiation and adoption of its annual report.

Furthermore, the Austrian rotating presidency held the Conference's first ever virtual civil society forum, together with the Secretary-General of the Conference, Tatiana Valovaya.

In addition to the Conference on Disarmament, the 18th meeting of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the first part of the review conference of States parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions went ahead with the use of virtual platforms.

A hybrid session of the Conference on Disarmament, in August 2020, in which delegates participated either in person or remotely.



UN Photo: Adam Kane

Disarmament in Geneva: 2020 orientation course

Geneva, as the venue of the Conference on Disarmament and birthplace of many disarmament conventions and treaties, has a large and collaborative disarmament community that is engaged in various multilateral disarmament processes, on issues ranging from biological weapons to conventional arms.

To support Geneva-based delegates working in this field, in 2019 the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Geneva and the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research piloted an orientation course for newly arrived diplomats working on disarmament. The aim of the course is to provide an introduction to disarmament topics, developments and processes, as well as to foster collaboration and promote collegiality among disarmament diplomats and other practitioners.

“As the arms control and disarmament agenda has expanded in subject matter and political complexity, there is a palpable need for participants in multilateral processes to have knowledge, up-to-date information and expert analyses,” said the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu.

The 2020 course was held from 18 to 27 August in an online format. It consisted of six thematic modules, each with its own reading list, introductory video and 90-minute interactive videoconference session. Bringing together 38 delegates from Member States and intergovernmental organizations, the course provided a valuable platform for in-depth discussion with ambassadors, scholars, and practitioners from international organizations and the private sector.

Participants in the 2020 orientation course at a reception hosted by the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament, Ichiro Ogasawara.



Photo: Delegation of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament

A screenshot of a digital event page for the "Disarmament In Geneva: 2020 Orientation Course". The page has a dark blue header with the title in white and yellow. Below the header, there is a "Share" section with social media icons. A "When" box indicates the dates "18 August - 27 August 2020". A "Where" box indicates "Online". The main content area features three small thumbnail images representing different modules of the course. The text describes the course as consisting of six thematic modules, each with a reading list, introductory video, and a 90-minute interactive session. It also states that participation in the interactive sessions is mandatory for course participants.

UN Geneva continues to be a leader in digitizing institutional memory

The [UN Library and Archives Geneva](#) is the official repository of all documents produced or held by UN Geneva that have enduring historical and administrative value.

In 2020, the UN Library and Archives Geneva continued the immense task of digitizing and preserving the entirety of the League of Nations archives. The [Total Digital Access to the League of Nations Archives Project](#) reached the halfway milestone of 7.5 million pages scanned in June and surpassed 10 million pages before the end of the year. Almost 124 terabytes of data are now available in the digital preservation system to researchers worldwide. The project was also selected as one of the three finalists for the Digital Preservation Coalition's 2020 [National Archives Award for Safeguarding the Digital Legacy](#).

Work began on the digitization of the map collection held by the UN Library and Archives Geneva – an often underexplored part of the League of Nations collection that contains approximately 20,000 maps. The UN Library and Archives Geneva also continued its project for digitization of historic UN official documents, together with other UN system libraries. These documents are made available through the [Official Document System](#).

To help preserve the archives of tomorrow and increase awareness around archival records, training and information sessions were offered throughout the year to UN Geneva staff. More than 200 queries related to individual records were received, resulting in the transfer to the Library and Archives of over 150 linear metres of records of enduring value.

The UN Library and Archives Geneva is dedicated to increasing online access to publicly accessible UN records within its care by updating and streamlining descriptive inventories and access points as well as targeted

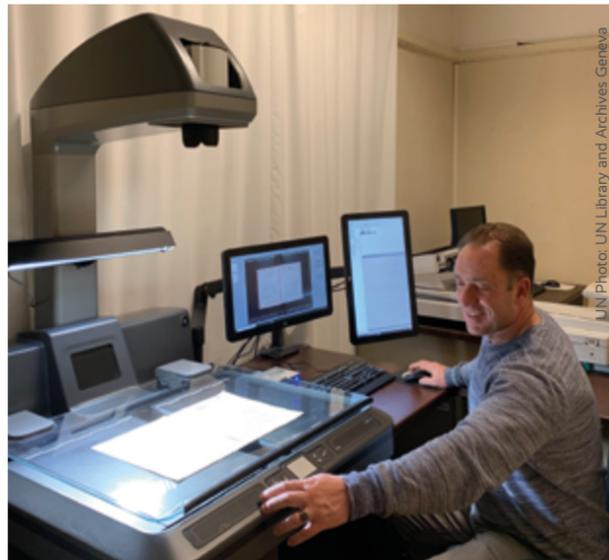
digitization; more than 10,000 items of UN records were digitized and 1,300 new description inventories created.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, there was a dramatic increase in demand for digital information. As some of the UN Secretariat libraries were closed during the lockdowns, the UN Library and Archives Geneva played an important role in ensuring continuity of service by digitizing materials that are part of its print collections for UN libraries in New York and Vienna.

Scan the QR code to watch a video about the Total Digital Access to the League of Nations Archives Project.



UN Geneva staff member Claudio Gagliano digitizes UN documents.



UN Geneva archives are a key resource for the study of multilateralism

Digitization of the [League of Nations archives](#) and the opening of new collections at the [UN Library and Archives Geneva](#) have provided further opportunities to study multilateralism.

In February, the UN Library and Archives Geneva, in partnership with the [University of Geneva](#) and the [University of Sydney](#), held a workshop entitled “Working with the archives of the United Nations in Geneva”. A panel of speakers discussed the challenges involved with providing access to UN Geneva’s archives, how to rediscover the League of Nations in the digital age, methodological challenges regarding the use of international archives, and the potential of digital historical knowledge transfer and the use of the UN archives for reconsidering the cold war narrative.

The panel of speakers at the “Working with the archives of the United Nations in Geneva” workshop.



Sharing knowledge about multilateralism and diplomacy with a global audience

In 2020, the [UN Library and Archives Geneva](#), together with many partners, facilitated the sharing of knowledge on multilateralism and diplomacy with a worldwide audience.

Events included the first session of #UNGenevaReads, which brought readers together to discuss *The Future We Choose* with the book's authors Christiana Figueres and Tom Rivett-Carnac.

The [Knowledge and Learning Commons](#) platform launched the [HiSTORIES](#) series in September. It focuses on topics and personalities documented in the League of Nations archives and, in particular, highlights the impact that the League's achievements and innovations have had on modern multilateralism.

In November, the UN Library and Archives Geneva launched a new research guide entitled "[Key resources and services for diplomats](#)", consolidating relevant knowledge for diplomats in one place.

The Next Page, the podcast of the UN Library and Archives Geneva, advanced the conversation on multilateralism with a wide range of experts. This year's episodes featured, among others, [David Nabarro](#) on the impact of COVID-19 on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, historian [Margaret MacMillan](#) on the shaping of modern multilateralism, and a 2018 Young Leader for the Sustainable Development Goals, [Ahmed M. Badr](#), on transcending displacement through creativity. In 2020, the podcast reached listeners in more than 79 countries.



John Pace, former Secretary to the Commission on Human Rights, the predecessor of the Human Rights Council, presenting his book on the Commission's work on *The Next Page* in October 2020.

UN Photo: Karen Lee

International understanding through cultural activities

UN Geneva's [Cultural Activities Programme](#) provides a forum for collaborative dialogue among people of different cultures and backgrounds, while celebrating diversity. The programme supports Geneva-based permanent missions and international organizations, helping them to promote cultural diplomacy through art exhibitions, film screenings, concerts, and more. These activities stem from a mandate set by the General Assembly in 2001 as part of the [Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations](#).

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, in 2020 UN Geneva organized 29 cultural, special, and side events in more than 10 languages (5 official UN languages and 8 non-official languages). In total, over 2,000 people took part in the events held at the Palais des Nations; after events returned to the Palais in the summer, in-person events were subject to social distancing guidelines for the health and safety of all participants. The programme also adapted to hosting virtual and hybrid events, ensuring that cultural diplomacy continued throughout the year.



February

Iceland

Exhibition: *Perspectives*

The Permanent Mission of Iceland presented the *Perspectives* exhibition, which featured Icelandic artists who promote a culture of human rights. Audiences were invited to contribute to the “Together we create a community” concept which used poetry and testimonials to portray different perspectives on gender, human rights and social responsibility and conveyed the importance of multiculturalism.



February

Italy

Exhibition and performance: *Dancer inside Geneva*

Dancer inside Geneva, organized by the Permanent Mission of Italy, featured a selection of portraits of dancers by photographer Simone Ghera and performances by dancers from the Staatliche Ballettschule in Berlin. The event featured two forms of art, photography and dance, to promote cultural diversity.



February

Slovakia

Exhibition: *Amazing Planet*

Slovak photographer and explorer Filip Kulisev raises awareness of biodiversity and our planet’s natural resources through his art. The *Amazing Planet* exhibition by the Permanent Mission of Slovakia presented some of his unique photographs from around the world.

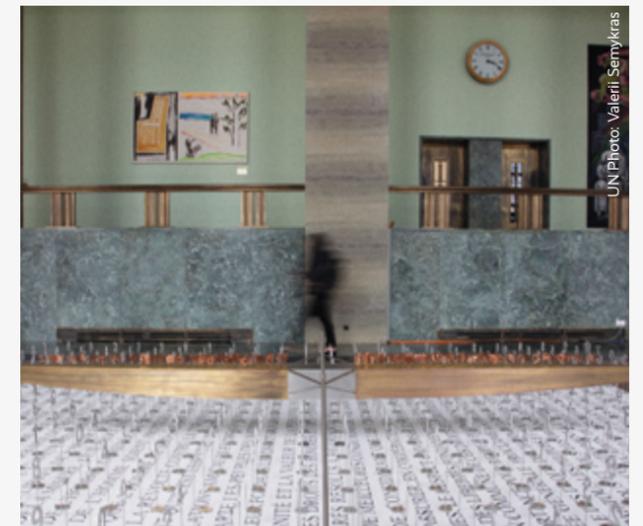


March

France

Exhibition: *Ecce Homo II*

A monumental work of bronze, copper and steel, *Ecce Homo II* by Jacek Jarnuszkiewicz depicts a floating vessel caught between two seas – between numbers and the words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The work invites the viewer to reflect on the challenges faced by the migrants of today. *Ecce Homo II* was presented by the Permanent Mission of France to UN Geneva with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.



October

Republic of Moldova

Exhibition: *Woven Poems*

To mark the UN's 75th anniversary, the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Moldova presented *Woven Poems*, an exhibition of traditional wall carpets and costumes. Historically woven by women, the carpets share ancestral messages of wisdom, peace and goodwill. They are not only decorative, but also provide insulation, and are included in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) [List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity](#).



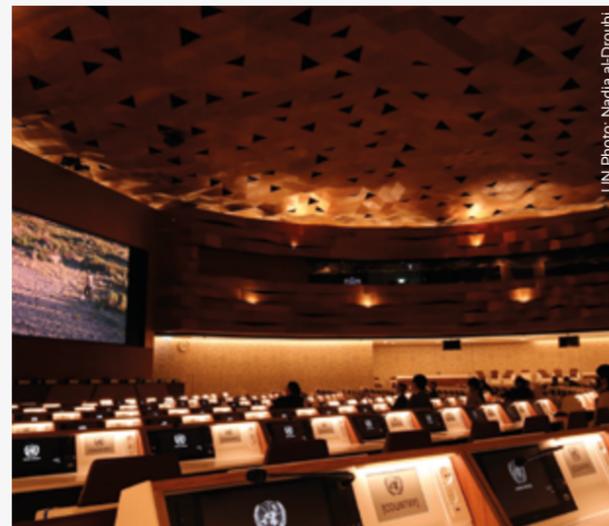
UN Photo: Joo Eun Lee

October

China

Film screening: *A First Farewell*

A screening of *A First Farewell* was given by the Permanent Mission of China. The film tells the story of Isa Yasan, an ethnic Uighur boy in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Isa is confronted by a series of events that means he has to say goodbye to his mother and his best friend.



UN Photo: Nadia al-Droubi

October

World Health Organization

Exhibition: *Art Impact 4 SDGs and Leadership*

UN Geneva and the World Health Organization presented *Art Impact 4 SDGs and Leadership*, a selection of paintings, photography and sculptures organized in conjunction with the UN Geneva and World Academy of Art and Science Global Leadership in the 21st Century project. The exhibition brought home the importance of cooperation to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). At the opening ceremony, a panel of experts from the UN and non-governmental organizations discussed the role that art plays in encouraging solidarity.



UN Photo: Althea Michel / Stoessel

October

Russian Federation

Event: Chess Tournament with Anatoly Karpov

Sixteen-time World Chess Champion Anatoly Karpov was welcomed to the Palais des Nations, where he played 30 chess games with players of different ages simultaneously. Presented by the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation, the tournament marked the 75th anniversary of the UN.



UN Photo: Krzysztof Galkowski