Unity & Resilience: 75 years of global cooperation
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Foreword

At the beginning of 2020, we could not have imagined that our world would be upended to the extent that it was. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us in a multitude of ways: from the immediate health and economic impacts to changes to our ways of living and working. It has magnified inequalities and slowed progress towards achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The reverberations will be felt well beyond 2020.

In these uncertain times, the resilience of humankind shines through, offering hope through collective action. Multilateralism is at the core of the United Nations; strengthening and supporting this collaborative foundation has proven more crucial now than ever.

COVID-19 directly challenged how Member States work together in multilateral processes, requiring UN Geneva to adapt the ways in which it provides services and support while also managing the impact of the Organization’s severe liquidity crisis. We persevered and transformed, quickly embracing new ways of working. Transitioning from on-site to virtual work was no small feat, and it is a testament to the flexibility, innovativeness and dedication of UN Geneva staff that we were able to continue delivering our mandate and facilitating multilateralism.

At the same time, in 2020 UN Geneva marked 75 years since the signing of the Charter of the United Nations. UN Geneva organized events and initiatives to build upon the global dialogue launched by the Secretary-General for the anniversary, which focused particularly on youth. This historic milestone was an opportunity to reflect on how far we have come, where we stand now, and the direction we want to take for our common future.

The challenges of 2020 have crystallized some of the pathways ahead. The virtual way of working cannot replicate the richness of in-person interaction; this is especially true in multilateral diplomacy, where context and nuance matter greatly. Nonetheless, UN Geneva is building upon the skills and experience gained over the past year to become a centre of excellence for hybrid conferencing, virtual events and virtual collaboration, thereby bringing greater flexibility and inclusiveness to international cooperation.

In 2020, we were reminded that some of our greatest challenges, from COVID-19 to climate change, do not recognize borders. As we strive to overcome this pandemic and build back better, we must work in solidarity – not in isolation – and prioritize a strong multilateral system.

Learning from 75 years of unity and resilience, UN Geneva stands ready to support the international community in the transformation to a more just, equal and sustainable world.

Tatiana Valovaya
Under-Secretary-General
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva
Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament
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 fulfil its mission.

- 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.

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

- The Client Support Centre responded to more than 14,000 phone calls and 48,000 remote service requests.
- The Human Resources Management Service provided numerous services, including:
  - General human resources management
  - Policy and legal
  - Learning and training
  - Medical and welfare
- The Financial Resources Management Service supported:
  - Accounts and trust fund management
  - Treasury
  - Payroll and accounts payable
  - Budget
  - Procurements valued at about 184,780,000 CHF
  - The purchase of commodities from vendors from over 43 different countries

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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.
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 1 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 briefing sessions 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.

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.

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 2,489 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 21 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 16,730 videos and 46% were of these meetings were held in a virtual or hybrid format.

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Conference management

There were 45 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.

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- 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.

Learning and development

11,270 people participated in 528 learning activities:

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- 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 235 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.

11 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.

5 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 UNifeed.

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 1.36 million visits to the old website during 2020.

2 news podcasts were launched: ONU Info Genève and UN Catch-Up.

A total of 37 episodes of ONU Info Genève were produced, including weekly news bulletins and in-depth interviews with newsmakers, such as the Mayor of Geneva.

The UN Catch-Up team put out 3 episodes, which were played online 12,001 times.

United Nations Radio produced 1,469 reports, interviews and audio clips.

44 weekly live radio shows were held on World Radio Switzerland in English to brief local audiences about events and activities at UN Geneva.
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.
- 365,000 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 30,000 impressions, respectively.
- 289,100 followers of UN Geneva’s Facebook page.
- More than 25,000 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

The SDG Lab organized 2 Flagship events:

- A webinar in which 5 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.
United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Geneva

The Conference on Disarmament session dates were:
- 20 January–27 March
- 25 May–10 July
- 3 August–18 September

The Conference held 25 formal and 4 informal plenary meetings, of which 6 were in a hybrid format that used a remote simultaneous interpretation platform.

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Geneva supported 7 official meetings for various Conventions housed in Geneva, for a total of 19.5 days of meetings.

The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Geneva organized 11 informal events and participated in an additional 28 external events and speaking engagements in the context of the Biological Weapons Convention.

382 annual national reports on aspects related to the Anti-Personnel Landmines Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons were received and processed by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Geneva.

Young UN

Young UN had 2,100 members worldwide, including 423 people based in Geneva.

More than 350 staff profiles from over 35 organizations and 20 duty stations were hosted on conecta, a collaboration space and platform to link people, skills and projects across the UN system which has been created jointly by UN Geneva’s Centre for Learning and Multilingualism and Young UN.
Chapter 1

UN at 75: honouring the past, looking to the future
UN75 virtual dialogues focus on multilateralism in the time of COVID-19

In the same year as the UN marked its 75th anniversary, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how interconnected and interdependent the world is. The global challenges stemming from the crisis have been a stark reminder of the need to work together across borders, sectors and generations.

As part of the UN75 global conversations launched by the Secretary-General, António Guterres, UN Geneva organized a series of three virtual dialogues on multilateralism, which were watched by thousands of people across the world.

The first dialogue was held on 24 April to mark International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace. The discussion brought leaders of Geneva-based international organizations together with Swiss students to consider how the multilateral system was faring in the face of a global pandemic.

“This crisis will help to build a more effective and inclusive system of multilateralism, cooperation strong enough to address global challenges. COVID-19 will pass but the climate emergency, inequality and poverty will remain. That makes solidarity and international cooperation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals even more important than ever.”

UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya

On 25 June, UN Geneva hosted a second "Multilateralism in the time of COVID-19" dialogue, to mark the anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter of the United Nations. Students and young researchers from partner institutions, as well as leaders of key international agencies, discussed the effects of the pandemic on culture, sports and tourism.

“As recent weeks have shown us, shared challenges are best addressed through cooperation and international solidarity. These values lie at the heart of tourism. Now, as we start tourism responsibly and when it is safe to do so, we have an opportunity to grow our sector back stronger and better. Both sports tourism and cultural tourism can help build the foundations for this brighter future.”

Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization, Zurab Pololikashvili

Scan the QR code to watch the first “Multilateralism in the time of COVID-19” dialogue.

Scan the QR code to watch the “Multilateralism in the time of COVID-19” special feature on culture, sports and tourism.
The third and final dialogue was held on 22 October, as part of UN Geneva’s activities for United Nations Day. The theme was “Multilateralism of the Future: How will global cooperation evolve in the 21st century?” High-level speakers considered the evolution of multilateralism and the role of the UN in shaping the future of international cooperation in the face of emerging global challenges.

“I do think we need to build a much more inclusive multilateral system and to recommit ourselves to the core values of solidarity, cooperation and equality that underpin the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

Chair of The Elders, former President of Ireland and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson

Scan the QR code to watch “Multilateralism of the future: how will global cooperation evolve in the 21st century?”

The UN75 theme of “Shaping our future together” meant that engagement with youth was central to the anniversary campaign, globally and in Geneva.

**Futurecasters: Global Young Visionaries Summit**

UN Geneva’s commemorations of the UN’s 75th anniversary were launched at the Palais des Nations with the opening of the Futurecasters: Global Young Visionaries Summit, the 2020 iteration of the Ferney Model United Nations, on 8 January. Organized by the International Telecommunication Union and the Lycée International de Ferney-Voltaire, the summit brought 750 students from 25 countries to Geneva for three days to discuss global issues from a youth perspective.

With “Technology for development” as the theme, students debated how technologies could be harnessed to drive progress towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Guest speakers at the opening included the Director-General of UN Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya; the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Preparations for the Commemoration of the United Nations’ 75th Anniversary, Fabrizio Hochschild Drummond; and the Director of the Telecommunication Development Bureau of the International Telecommunication Union, Doreen Bogdan-Martin.

“We will use your voices to try and reinvigorate the international project so that we can secure the future you want and secure the future we all want for your children and subsequent generations.”

Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Preparations for the Commemoration of the United Nations’ 75th Anniversary, Fabrizio Hochschild Drummond

Youth play a key role in UN75 events
Youth dialogue with the Secretary-General of the United Nations

Young people in Geneva had an opportunity to offer their advice directly to Secretary-General António Guterres in February. As part of a series of global conversations held to mark the Organization’s 75th anniversary, the Secretary-General took part in a discussion with young people before an audience of more than 600 at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. During the event, young people voiced their concerns and outlined their vision for a better future. The topics addressed included inequality, climate change, misinformation, and youth leadership.

Martin Ostermeier was among six panellists who shared the stage with the Secretary-General. As the representative of Young UN – a network of over 2,000 changemakers working across the UN system, supported by UN Geneva – Martin urged additional efforts to make the Organization “more democratic and more participatory”. He stressed that, for participation to be meaningful, consultation had to be ongoing. “This dialogue is a great first start, but it shouldn’t happen every 75 years.”

“This is the beginning of a new dynamic of relationship between the UN and ‘We the Peoples’, and this relationship will hopefully be able to shape a new kind of multilateralism – a multilateralism that is inclusive, in which not only the governments, but also civil society, academia and local communities have a voice and have influence.”

Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres
Conversations in Swiss schools

As part of the 75th anniversary activities, UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project partnered with the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, the Permanent Mission of Switzerland, the Fondation pour Genève and the Eduki Foundation to engage with schoolchildren throughout Switzerland.

Speakers from International Geneva visited classrooms to explore the 75th anniversary of the UN with students and start conversations with them on the challenges and opportunities the UN faces, now and in the future. This outreach initiative was aimed at broadening students’ understanding of the UN system, while inviting them to express their thoughts and ideas.

In total, 21 presentations were given to over 350 schoolchildren in Switzerland, in five cantons. Seventeen of these took place in classrooms, while four were held by video link.

The Future We Want: from online contest to art exhibition

As part of the UN’s 75th anniversary celebrations, UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project ran an online art contest titled “The Future We Want”. The aim of the contest was to foster conversations about the kind of future we want for our world and how we can empower youth to work towards it.

Permanent missions to the United Nations in Geneva were invited to submit a work by an artist from their country. In all, there were 44 entries, from all five continents. The public were then invited to vote for their favourite artwork via a dedicated website. Close to 17,000 votes were cast, from around the globe.

The 10 artworks that received the most votes were reviewed by an international jury of nine children knowledgeable about art, which was convened with the support of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva and the World Food Programme. The young jury selected the three winners: Wall, by Sigita Maslauskaitė-Mažyliénė; Diversity Crowd, by Luigi Olivadoti; and The Future That We Dream – A Harmonious World of Coexistence, by Zhao Peizhi.

Wall, by Sigita Maslauskaitė-Mažyliénė
UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya selected an additional winner from the remaining shortlisted entries: Maria Bertha, by Leca Araujo, submitted by the Permanent Mission of Brazil. This artwork pays tribute to Bertha Lutz, one of four women to sign the Charter of the United Nations in 1945 and a prominent advocate for the inclusion of women’s rights in the Charter.

The artworks were exhibited first at the Palais des Nations and then at the D10 Art Space in central Geneva. The Perception Change Project will publish a book about the contest winners, and the winner of the Director-General’s Prize will be invited to exhibit her work at the Palais des Nations.

To show their pride in being part of the UN and the diversity that it represents, over 900 staff members from the UN community in Geneva, current and former, took part in UN Geneva’s photomosaic project to mark the UN’s 75th anniversary. Staff submitted head and shoulders portraits of themselves, which were all compiled into a large mosaic showing the Palais des Nations with the tagline “Together For You”. Released on United Nations Day, 24 October, the image was widely shared on social media and is now displayed in the Palais des Nations.
Host country celebrates UN75

Two children drawing their ideal world together: a tree, a sun, a house, people holding hands, and animals. They are the subject of a 6,000-square-metre ephemeral fresco by French artist Saype, installed in the summer in the grounds of the Palais des Nations. Titled World in Progress, the artwork highlights the role of future generations, a driving force behind the UN’s mandate and mission, and recalls the theme of the UN75 celebrations: the future we want.

Switzerland donated the fresco to mark the 75th anniversary of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations on 26 June. UN Geneva hosted an event at the Palais des Nations together with the Permanent Mission of Switzerland and the Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Ignazio Cassis, who came from Bern to unveil the artwork.

“I like to deal with subjects through children. They hold the world of tomorrow in their hands. And when we talk about children, we also talk about us. What are we going to leave them as a world? What values do we want to leave them?” - Saype

Scan the QR code to watch a video of artist Saype creating World in Progress on the grounds of the Palais des Nations.
Switzerland also offered a virtual version of the annual concert by the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande to celebrate United Nations Day on 24 October. UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya delivered opening remarks prior to the concert, which was screened for the public on UN Web TV and Radio Télévision Suisse.

Scan the QR code to watch the concert by the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande.

On the evening of United Nations Day, 24 October, the Palais des Nations and Geneva’s iconic Jet d’eau were lit up in blue, joining a number of Europe’s other most iconic buildings and monuments, as part of the Turn Europe UN Blue initiative.
Open-air exhibition chronicles a century of multilateralism in Geneva

To celebrate a century of multilateralism, UN Geneva’s Library and Archives and Division of Conference Management, in partnership with the Republic and Canton of Geneva, the City of Geneva and the Fondation pour Genève, staged an exhibition entitled 100 Years of Multilateralism in Geneva. The exhibition featured 18 bilingual, double-sided panels that trace the evolution of multilateralism in the city, from the establishment of the League of Nations to the activities of the UN today.

From 12 to 30 October 2020, the exhibition was on display in Geneva’s Place des Nations. In line with the measures taken to respond to COVID-19, and to provide easier access for the public, the Library and Archives also launched a virtual version of the exhibition.

Scan the QR code to visit the 100 Years of Multilateralism in Geneva virtual exhibition.

UN Library and Archives
Geneva: transformations over the past 75 years

The Library and Archives opened in 1936, in the east wing of the Palais des Nations, as the Library of the League of Nations. Ten years later, in 1946, the Library and its historical archives were transferred to the United Nations. Since then, even though the building has remained relatively unchanged, the Library and Archives spaces have undergone several transformations to adapt to technological changes and the evolving needs of clients.
Library and Archives: Chronology of makeovers

1960s
The Library Study Room (Room B.135) was converted into a conference room. Later, in 1971, it was returned to the Library and became the Catalogue and Loans Desk Room.

1970s
The Periodicals Reading Room (Room B.127), located on the first floor of the Library, moved to the third floor. Room B.127 was redesigned and became the United Nations and Specialized Agencies Reading Room.

1990s
Adapting to the widespread adoption of information technology, the Library created two “cyberspaces” to provide access to its resources via the Internet. In 1997, the Library Foyer and the Welcome Desk (Room B.133) were completely redesigned to become the first Library cyberspace. A second cyberspace opened on the third floor of the Library (Room B.348) in 1998.
2000s

A third cyberspace, reserved for diplomats, opened in 2000, as a dedicated space in the United Nations and Specialized Agencies Reading Room (Room B.127), on the first floor.

2010s

The Catalogue and Loans Desk Room (Room B.135) was transformed in order to host the Library Talks. In 2012, it was repurposed to become the Library Events Room. Also in 2012, the Periodicals Reading Room moved to Room B.348 and the vacated space became the new United Nations Archives Reading Room.

2016

The main cyberspace was dismantled, and the Library Foyer and the Welcome Desk went back to a configuration similar to that used in the League of Nations era.

2018

The Library Events Room was refurbished to host the activities of the new Knowledge and Learning Commons.
Preserving art and heritage as part of the Strategic Heritage Plan

The Palais des Nations is an outstanding example of 20th century architecture and is also home to an important art collection. With paintings, sculptures, artworks on paper and fabric, ceramics, photographs, and more, the collection represents the diversity and richness of the world’s cultures. It comprises over 2,000 works dating from the era of the League of Nations to the present day.

Respectful of the architectural and artistic legacy of the past, UN Geneva’s Strategic Heritage Plan project has documented the art collection, as well as rooms of major historical and artistic value. Art and heritage specialists have defined conservation and restoration norms that must be respected during the renovation to prevent any risk of damage or degradation.

“Within the collection, artists have captured key UN values such as peace, human rights and environmental issues, and the project is proud that the protection of this heritage lies at the heart of the Strategic Heritage Plan.”

Strategic Heritage Plan Project Director David McCaug

Commemorative events

Every year, UN Geneva marks a range of international days and anniversaries, with commemorative events. Although some necessary adaptations were made this year owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Geneva continued to find ways to honour these important dates.
Anniversary of Haiti earthquake

UN staff members, diplomats and members of the Haitian community gathered at the Palais des Nations to mark the 10th anniversary of the earthquake that shook Haiti on 12 January 2010. Louis Germain, a UN staff member who survived that day, shared his experience, and a minute’s silence was observed at 4.53 p.m., which was the exact time that the quake struck in 2010.

International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

In January, UN Geneva paid tribute to those who perished in Nazi death camps, and marked the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Holocaust survivor Paul Sobol, 93, of Belgium, told of his personal experience of detention in Auschwitz-Birkenau and other camps.

In addition to the official observance, several other activities related to the Holocaust commemoration were organized by UN Geneva and various permanent missions to the UN in Geneva, at the Palais des Nations and in the city of Geneva, including film screenings and an exhibition.

World Humanitarian Day

On World Humanitarian Day, 19 August, a ceremony at the Palais des Nations honoured colleagues who lost their lives in humanitarian service, and the thousands of aid workers who continue to provide much-needed support to people suffering in conflicts or natural disasters across the world. Organized in collaboration with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the ceremony was, exceptionally, held in a hybrid format, with a limited physical presence and the audience participating virtually.

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was marked with a hybrid special meeting at UN Geneva on 8 December. Speakers discussed the humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and highlighted the importance of meeting the needs of the population, abiding by international law and restoring faith in a political horizon.
UN Geneva also used social media to commemorate and raise awareness of international days such as:

**International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda**

25 years after the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, see the stories and hear the stories of survivors on Tuesday’s International Day of Reflection. UN/UNOV/Kabuga

**International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers**

The dynamic and flexible nature of the Convention allows for the progressive development and codification of rules relating to the means and methods of warfare. The addition in 1995 of the Protocol on Blinding Laser Weapons (Protocol IV) marked the first pre-emptive ban on a weapon before its use on the battlefield. In 2003, the Convention was augmented by the Protocol on ExplosiveRemnants of War (Protocol V), which addresses the post-conflict impact of such weapons. In addition, a Group of Governmental Experts was set up in 2016 to discuss emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Looking forward, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs will continue to mark the anniversary of the Convention into 2021, and the Sixth Review Conference, in December 2021, will provide an opportunity for the Convention to remain a strong, agile instrument.

Anniversaries for key disarmament treaties in 2020

Two important disarmament treaties negotiated at UN Geneva had anniversaries this year: it was the 40th anniversary of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the 45th anniversary of the Biological Weapons Convention.

The Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, more commonly known as the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, is a key instrument of international humanitarian law that seeks to ban or restrict the use of weapons that cause unnecessary suffering to combatants or that indiscriminately affect civilians.

Since its adoption in 1980, the Convention has gained the support of 125 High Contracting Parties, and, through an amendment in 2001, it became one of the few disarmament instruments to apply to non-international armed conflicts.

Scan the QR code to read the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the 40th anniversary of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Scan the QR code to watch the message of the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs for the 40th anniversary of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.
Biological Weapons Convention turns 45

When the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, usually referred to as the Biological Weapons Convention, entered into force on 26 March 1975, it constituted an important landmark as the first multilateral disarmament treaty to ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction.

Forty-five years later, it is supported by 183 States parties and has managed to establish a strong global norm that the use of disease as a weapon against humans, animals and plants is intolerable.

The implementation of the Convention at the national level has increased the capacities of States to prevent and respond to the possible use of biological weapons.

The Ninth Review Conference, scheduled for 2021 in Geneva, will provide an opportunity to take stock of progress made in the implementation of the Convention and consider new developments, including in the areas of science and technology. It will also consider how the Convention can respond to future challenges so that it remains an important pillar of the international health security architecture.

Scan the QR code to watch a short video about the history of the Biological Weapons Convention.

Scan the QR code to watch a short video about three young women working to reduce the threat posed by biological weapons.
For a short time after the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations, the League of Nations and the United Nations worked side by side. During the first General Assembly of the United Nations, in 1946, Member States representatives discussed the dissolution and liquidation of the League, in particular the transfer of its functions, property and assets based in Geneva. Following the adoption of the Common Plan by the General Assemblies of both organizations, the assets of the League of Nations were transferred to the United Nations, closing the last chapter of the League.
1954

Geneva Conference

From 26 April to 20 July 1954, the Palais des Nations hosted the Geneva Conference to discuss peace settlements in both the Korean Peninsula and Indochina. The conference helped produce the Geneva Accords, which were aimed at unifying Viet Nam.

Scan the QR code to watch footage of the opening day of the Geneva Conference.

1955

The “Big Four” in Geneva

In July 1955, amid cold war tensions, UN Geneva hosted a summit of the Heads of Government of the “four great Powers”: France, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

From left to right: Premier Nikolai A. Bulganin of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, President Dwight D. Eisenhower of the United States of America, Premier Edgar Faure of France and Prime Minister Anthony Eden of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland pose for the media at the Palais des Nations.
First “Atoms for Peace” conference

In August 1955, UN Geneva hosted the first International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy – also known as the “Atoms for Peace” conference – which was attended by about 25,000 participants. Some participants also took the opportunity presented by this conference to discuss the creation of an Atomic Energy Agency.

Scan the QR code to watch a video about the second Atoms for Peace conference, which was also held in Geneva, in 1958.

Inauguration of UNCTAD and the G-77

From 23 March to 16 June 1964, the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) took place in Geneva. At the end of the session, the Group of 77, also known as the G-77, was established through the signing of the Joint Declaration of the Seventy-seven Developing Countries. Today, the G-77 is the largest grouping of developing countries in the UN.
Extension of the Palais des Nations

Since the laying of the foundation stone on 7 September 1929, the historic buildings of the Palais des Nations have undergone several renovations and extensions. One of these projects was the construction of the E Building between 1968 and 1973 to better meet the growing demand for conference facilities. The new building was designed by a team of five architects, led by Eugène Beaudouin of France, and added office space and 11 conference rooms to the complex.

Visit of Pope Paul VI to Geneva

On 10 June 1969, on the occasion of his visit to the Geneva-based World Council of Churches, Pope Paul VI addressed the International Labour Conference on the 50th anniversary of the International Labour Organization, as well as the public in Ariana Park.
In December 1988, the General Assembly moved its plenary meeting, aimed at discussing the question of Palestine, from New York to Geneva, in order to allow the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Yasser Arafat, to address Member States of the United Nations.

On 25 May 1990, the Security Council met in Geneva for the first time in its history to begin a debate on the situation in the occupied Arab territories.
Nelson Mandela visits Geneva

Following his release after 27 years in prison in South Africa, Nelson Mandela visited several countries, including Switzerland.

On 8 June 1990, he addressed the 77th annual session of the International Labour Conference at the Palais des Nations and delivered a powerful message against the apartheid system.

Scan the QR code to watch footage of Mr. Mandela’s speech.

Inaugural session of the Human Rights Council

In 2006, the General Assembly established the Human Rights Council to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world and address situations of human rights violations.

The Council met for its inaugural session at UN Geneva from 19 to 30 June 2006.
Interim agreement on Iranian nuclear programme

On 24 November 2013, a historic agreement was reached in Geneva between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the P5+1 countries (China, France, Germany, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America) regarding the Iranian nuclear programme. This interim agreement paved the way for further negotiations which led to the successful conclusion in 2015 of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

Olympic flame comes to UN Geneva

The Olympic flame, a symbol of peace and hope, came to UN Geneva during its worldwide journey ahead of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Scan the QR code to watch the Olympic flame arrive at UN Geneva.
Inaugural meeting of the Syrian Constitutional Committee

UN Geneva hosted the in-person opening session of the Syrian Constitutional Committee on 30 October 2019. This was the first phase in UN-brokered face-to-face talks between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the opposition to draft a new constitution for the country after nearly nine years of conflict.

Libya ceasefire agreement

A historic ceasefire agreement to end the conflict in Libya was officially signed at UN Geneva on 23 October 2020, paving the way for the resumption of political discussions and national elections in 2021.

From left to right:
Ahmad Kuzbari, Co-Chair representing the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic; Geir O. Pedersen, Special Envoy for Syria; and Hadi al-Bahra, Co-Chair representing the opposition.

A. Amrhammad Mohamed Alamami (left), head of the Libyan National Army delegation, shakes hands with A. Ali Abudahams (right), head of the Government of National Accord military delegation, in front of the Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya and Head of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya, Stephanie Williams.
Chapter 2

Unprecedented times: adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic
UN Geneva and the COVID-19 response

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Switzerland, the Swiss authorities took a number of measures to prevent the spread and limit the impact of the virus. The measures included an initial nationwide lockdown of nearly three months, from 16 March to 8 June.

At UN Geneva, the Director-General quickly established a COVID-19 Response Team. The measures implemented by the host country were strictly adhered to; meetings at UN Geneva were suspended, and staff telecommuted, with the exception of a limited number of staff critical to maintaining the functioning of the Palais des Nations.

UN Geneva embraced flexibility, innovation and technology to rapidly adapt to these unprecedented circumstances and ensure business continuity while supporting the health and well-being of staff.

Here are some examples of how we did this:

Telecommuting

Existing culture change efforts at UN Geneva, including through #NewWork, more flexible working practices, and innovation via networks such as Young UN, paid off during the lockdown. Staff switched from working at the Palais des Nations to working from their homes and UN Geneva remained “open” for business, continuing to provide support to our clients and for intergovernmental processes. The transition was made smoother by the earlier wide adoption of part-time telecommuting and related training for managers and staff, investment in and migration to cloud-based IT tools, and the commitment and efforts of our staff.

Increased internal communication meant that staff received regular and up-to-date information.

It was, nonetheless, a challenging period for UN Geneva and its staff. Workloads in many teams increased, new ways of operating and solutions had to be found, there was a greater burden on managers to support and lead their teams through an uncertain and difficult time, and many staff members juggled their work with other commitments such as home schooling and family care. The need to support staff through health and well-being services also increased.

The lockdown and switch to working from home also had an impact on the implementation of the UN’s internship programme. There are considerable benefits to an in-person internship, particularly as regards networking opportunities, face-to-face mentoring, and social integration in the workplace. However, partially and even fully remote internships during the lockdown still provided valuable opportunities for interns to learn and develop, as well as to contribute their ideas and skills to the work of the UN, for example by conducting research, helping to organize virtual events, preparing background papers, drafting speeches, and more.
Director-General

The Director-General, Tatiana Valovaya, switched to virtual working as of 17 March. For example, she continued all her weekly meetings with UN Geneva senior management virtually, chaired inter-agency coordination mechanisms, including the Security Management Team, oversaw communications and meetings with Member States and UN colleagues, engaged with the media, recorded video messages, spoke at virtual events, and more.

The Director-General also took the opportunity to practise a passion of hers – photography – and captured images of the Palais des Nations during lockdown. She was subsequently invited to exhibit these photographs publicly in central Geneva, from 24 February to 17 March 2021, through a collaboration between UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project and the Centre de la photographie Genève.

In the Salle des pas perdus during lockdown

The corridors of the Palais des Nations during lockdown
CHAPTER 2
Unprecedented times: adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic

Security Management Team

The safety and security of its staff is of the utmost importance to UN Geneva. One key mechanism for ensuring this is the inter-agency Security Management Team, which is an effective forum for sharing information and coordinating responses among the UN family in Switzerland.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to an unparalleled level of activity for the Security Management Team, which met over 20 times throughout 2020. Chaired by UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya in her capacity as Designated Official for Switzerland, these meetings brought together the leaders and key officials of more than 40 UN system entities in Switzerland, and also of non-UN organizations with observer status, such as the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and the European Broadcasting Union. In addition, representatives of Switzerland and France were invited to present updates on the COVID-19 measures in their respective countries.

UN Geneva also coordinated regular meetings of the security, human resources, medical and communications networks that cooperate across the UN system and other organizations in Geneva.

Medical support

UN Geneva’s Medical Service provided medical support and advice to staff and contributed to workplace safety during the COVID-19 pandemic. It implemented a dedicated telephone hotline for COVID-19 case reporting and advice, with 24/7 support available, alongside workplace contact tracing. The Medical Service also took part in a Hôpitaux universitaires de Genève study on COVID-19 antibodies by coordinating the voluntary antibody testing of 201 UN Geneva staff who worked on-site through the lockdown.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations recognized that a coordinated UN-wide approach would be needed for medical evacuation from field locations of UN personnel, their dependents, and staff working for certain international non-governmental organizations. This led to the creation in May of the UN System-wide COVID-19 MEDEVAC Task Force, working under the COVID-19 Medical Evacuation Framework. The UN Geneva Medical Service provided staff for the new group; a UN Geneva nurse and doctor each spent one day a week at the World Health Organization to help coordinate COVID-19-related medical evacuations.

Strategic Heritage Plan

Managing a construction project as large as the 836.5-million-franc Strategic Heritage Plan is already a significant planning and logistical challenge under normal circumstances, and this was compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council of State of Geneva ordered the closure of all construction sites in Geneva in March. UN Geneva adheres strictly to both federal and cantonal decisions and, as a result, work was suspended on the construction sites at the Palais des Nations until late April, and the Strategic Heritage Plan team switched to remote working. COVID-19 also affected supply chains for the project.

The team worked hard to mitigate the impact on the project’s schedule, however, and work was able to continue on the pre-construction phase of renovating the Palais des Nations’ historic buildings, which included engagement with suppliers, detailed design work for the conference area of the E Building, and planning for the demolition of the E Building office tower.
Security and safety

At the height of the pandemic, UN Geneva’s Security and Safety Service implemented a phased deployment plan for its staff, reducing the number of staff on duty to the minimum necessary. This maintained the security of the Palais des Nations while at the same time ensuring that an adequate reserve was always on standby to replace teams on duty. Furthermore, duty teams were kept separate to minimize the risk of any cross-contamination between arriving and departing shifts.

Interpretation

UN Geneva’s staff interpreters worked from home to ensure that business could restart as soon as possible in adapted formats, acquiring skills with new tools to assist the transition from physical to virtual ways of working. They played a key role in testing virtual interpretation platforms and developing innovative approaches to the electronic dissemination of statements, and created and contributed to a task force on remote interpretation. Staff interpreters also took the opportunity to design and implement online tests and training courses for freelance interpreters.

Virtual and hybrid conferencing

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in Switzerland, UN Geneva identified the provision of virtual and hybrid meetings as crucial to business continuity. From an early stage, UN Geneva focused on adjusting its conference services business plan in order to remain efficient and relevant during and after the pandemic. This included:

— Identifying, procuring and testing IT platforms for virtual and hybrid meetings
— Upgrading rooms to support such meetings
— Preparing training materials for meeting participants

However, virtual and hybrid meetings entail significant extra costs, including software licensing and training, which were not foreseen prior to the pandemic. UN Geneva endeavoured to reduce costs related to such meetings to the extent possible by training existing staff to provide additional technical support and assistance with meeting moderation.

As a result of its preparations, UN Geneva was able to rapidly provide hybrid meeting services when a partial return to the Palais des Nations became possible, which included the provision of conference services to Human Rights Council sessions, the 2020 sessions of the Conference on Disarmament, and numerous peace talks.

What’s the difference?

On-site meetings
Participants are in the conference room, interpreters are in their booths, and UN Geneva technicians control the audio and video equipment located inside the conference room.

Virtual meetings
Participants and interpreters are online using a remote simultaneous interpretation platform, and staff moderate the meeting.

Hybrid meetings
Some delegates are in the meeting room and others participate virtually. Interpreters and meetings management staff service the event from the conference room, technical staff manage the audio and video feeds, and other staff moderate the meeting.
Library and Archives

The importance of timely access to reliable information became even more apparent during the lockdown. While the UN Library and Archives Geneva maintained a limited physical presence at the Palais des Nations to serve clients and manage its records and repositories, it also adapted by offering more virtual services than ever before – quickly building on existing online resources and services not only to ensure continuity of service, but also to enhance outreach and improve the accessibility of information resources.

With the sudden shift to remote work, the demand for access to online resources increased substantially. There were 279 requests for remote e-resources access accounts for UN staff, including 120 remote access requests in March alone. In response, Library staff created two new resource guides: “Resources for telecommuting” and “Open access resources”. Overall, digital library resources were accessed more than 350,000 times through research guides, a Global Search function, and subscription databases. In April, the Library started LibChat, an online chat service to answer users’ questions and help them find information remotely. Thus, the Library’s reference services moved from a physical desk to a virtual one, making it accessible from any location.

Archives staff began offering its consultations for researchers online, and gave virtual presentations of the League of Nations and UN Geneva archives to universities. Researchers were provided with individual access to the content digitized by the Total Digital Access to the League of Nations Archives Project via a temporary online repository.

Learning and development

The main challenge for UN Geneva’s Centre for Learning and Multilingualism was to deliver high-quality workshops and language courses during the pandemic. The Centre’s staff and students quickly and successfully switched from face-to-face delivery in the classroom to virtual learning, ensuring that effective and interactive learning experiences continued. This transition was facilitated by strong partnerships and internal IT tools, developed over the past ten years – particularly platforms for online learning and administration. The Centre also offered virtual coaching sessions to individuals, and collated and shared online resources for the personal and professional development of staff, including on topics such as working from home, mental well-being, and IT training.

Knowledge and Learning Commons

The Knowledge and Learning Commons at UN Geneva is a space where UN staff, interns and diplomats can come together to share knowledge and learn informally. In the wake of COVID-19 and the transition to lockdown and working from home, the Commons worked with the Staff Counsellor’s Office at UN Geneva to deliver virtual learning sessions designed to support the mental health and well-being of staff amid the changes and uncertainties of COVID-19.

The sessions, held in English and French, included topics related to keeping a healthy mind, strategies for coping with anxiety and supporting the people around us, and mindfulness meditation. They became a positive and supportive way of keeping staff connected and increasing knowledge about well-being. The sessions reached more than 1,300 people across Geneva-based organizations of the UN system.

The other virtual sessions organized by the Knowledge and Learning Commons in 2020 covered a range of topics, such as understanding history through the League of Nations Archives, mediation and negotiation in multilateralism, the use of big data for environmental challenges, and resources available to diplomats to support their work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Scan the QR code to watch a short film about the activities of the Knowledge and Learning Commons in 2020.

UN Photo: Kieran Rigney

A virtual language course run by UN Geneva’s Centre for Learning and Multilingualism

UN Photo: Nadia al-Droubi

Staff of UN Geneva’s Knowledge and Learning Commons moderate an interactive virtual session for World Mental Health Day, with counsellors from UN Geneva, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).
Media engagement and communications

If there’s one thing that journalists accredited to UN Geneva are used to at the Palais des Nations, it’s the press briefings by the United Nations Information Service in Geneva on Tuesday and Friday mornings. With everyone working from home, the press briefings and other press conferences went entirely virtual from March to June. UNTV’s experts put the online sound and images into the webcast version, delivering a seamless product that continued to be archived on UN Web TV. The press briefings and press conferences provided the media with information about COVID-19 developments, while keeping other issues, such as providing food for hungry populations, extreme weather patterns and climate change, and trade and development, on the media’s agenda. When a limited return to the Palais des Nations began, the briefings took on a hybrid format, with journalists and spokespersons participating either in person or through the online platform.

In the early stages of the pandemic, UN Geneva also developed a virtual platform that allowed the entire local UN communication system to continue working during the lockdown period. A hybrid system was then developed, which has since supported almost every UN media activity in Geneva.

Graduate Study Programme

Every summer, UN Geneva’s Graduate Study Programme, the UN’s longest-running educational programme, brings together selected graduate students from around the world for two weeks of lectures, discussions, visits to Geneva-based institutions, and group work on projects. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the organizers decided to forge ahead in 2020. The programme switched to a virtual format, with a one-week “condensed” programme focusing on the UN at 75.

As a result, the number of students increased to 80, compared to an average of 55 in previous years. The cohort was one of the most diverse in the programme’s 58-year-long history, with participants from 53 countries on six continents and in 13 different time zones. Despite not being able to meet in person, participants welcomed the “phenomenal opportunity” to connect with people from across the world.

Adaptability

A number of UN Geneva staff temporarily took on new roles and tasks to support their colleagues and the work of the Organization during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Staff of the travel unit, for example – where work changed due to COVID-19 travel restrictions – assisted colleagues working on human resources, carte de légitimation applications, and facilities management. Staff with pre-existing medical conditions in high-contact jobs, such as mail delivery, were redeployed to UN Geneva’s Facilities Management Section to support the implementation of additional health and safety measures at the Palais des Nations.

Interpreters shifted their linguistic skills from the spoken to the written form to support the translation of ad hoc documents and written materials, including the UN Geneva Annual Report 2019, COVID-19-related information, and web pages, while other staff volunteered to learn new skills to run platforms for virtual and hybrid meetings.
Safely back: returning to the Palais des Nations

While digital solutions enabled the continuation of multilateralism during the COVID-19 lockdown, UN Geneva was committed to providing a safe working environment for conference delegates, UN staff and others when it became possible to resume on-site and in-person services. This required careful planning and robust protection measures, which we developed on the basis of guidance from Headquarters, the host country, the World Health Organization and the UN system inter-agency working group of medical directors.

Swiss authorities announced a three-phased easing of the lockdown measures which took place between 27 April and 8 June, and a limited number of UN Geneva staff worked at the Palais des Nations during that time to prepare the premises for the return of staff. Starting from 8 June, UN Geneva staff made a partial return to the Palais des Nations, which ensured that the new physical distancing requirements could be adhered to. In November, however, the deteriorating COVID-19 situation in Geneva resulted in the implementation of new measures by the Canton of Geneva and a return to full-time telecommuting for many staff.

There are more than 189,587 square metres of floor space in the numerous buildings of the Palais des Nations complex. Every office and conference room had to be assessed and then set up for physical distancing. This was achieved by adapting traffic flows and seating arrangements, and by ensuring healthy ventilation and the availability of hand sanitizer and disinfectant products. Similar measures were put in place at the Strategic Heritage Plan construction sites, together with mandatory personal protective equipment and specific training on COVID-19 restrictions for those working on the sites.
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For conferences we established new safety rules, such as registration procedures, occupancy limits, and mask wearing, while meeting documentation went fully digital. Five conference rooms were equipped to host virtual and hybrid meetings. Due to physical distancing requirements in the interpretation booths, only three of the conference rooms could deliver interpretation in six languages; in the other two rooms, interpretation could be provided in three languages.
The functions of the meeting room attendants for in-person meetings were adapted to respect the new procedures. The attendants prepared the seating protocol, which now needed to take account of physical distancing and the other measures implemented, and monitored and adjusted the list of speakers and addressed any issues arising in the meeting room. However, attendants no longer approached delegates in the room for copies of speeches, and no physical distribution of documents took place; instead, delegates were encouraged to submit documents electronically.

To facilitate the electronic distribution of documents and help meeting participants with their documentation needs, a new “Documents and beyond” tool was created in Indico.UN. This pilot service also provided participants with all session- and meeting-related information, in one place. Online distribution of documents through Indico.UN’s virtual kiosk function was rolled out for meetings, starting with the 44th session of the Human Rights Council in June and July.

Thanks to UN Geneva being able to resume its conferencing activities on 15 June, a total of 4,274 meetings were held in 2020. These include 2,915 in-person meetings (of which 685 were with interpretation), and 1,359 virtual and hybrid meetings (of which 572 were with interpretation).

Despite major logistical challenges and a severe liquidity crisis impacting the United Nations, UN Geneva and its dedicated staff successfully adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown to ensure business continuity and the ongoing facilitation of multilateralism. The experience and skills gained during the first lockdown also enabled UN Geneva to smoothly adjust to the strengthened measures against COVID-19 introduced in Geneva in November in response to increasing case numbers.

Scan the QR code to read more about COVID-19 measures at UN Geneva.
Switching the Jet d’eau back on

Just after the COVID-19 lockdown began in March, Geneva’s iconic Jet d’eau was switched off to help protect the staff who maintain the site. After 83 days, the world famous fountain resumed operation, on 11 June. In a symbolic gesture to highlight the importance of multilateralism and international cooperation in the fight against the pandemic, the Jet d’eau was turned back on by World Health Organization Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, alongside UN Geneva Director General Tatiana Valovaya and representatives of International Geneva.

“The United Nations stands besides its host city and country in its fight against COVID-19. This will not stop with the end of the pandemic, but will continue in the years to come.”

UN Geneva Director General Tatiana Valovaya
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.

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.
CHAPTER 3  International cooperation: supporting multilateralism

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.


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

General Tatyana 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.
CHAPTER 3
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The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Pekka Haavisto, briefs the press during the 2020 Afghanistan Conference, on 24 November.

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.

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.
CHAPTER 3
International cooperation: supporting multilateralism

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”
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

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 roundtable 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.

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 entries.

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.
CHAPTER 3  International cooperation: supporting multilateralism

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.

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

A delegate listens to proceedings of the Human Rights Council at its 43rd session.
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 text, 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 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 Pilot project provided transcripts in English, at the end of 2019, for a limited number of meetings.

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 of Disarmament and the 79th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

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 43rd 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 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.
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.

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.
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 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.
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.

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 over 100 cultural events, 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.

**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.

**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.

**France**

**Exhibition: Ecce Homo II**

A monumental work of bronze, copper and steel, Ecce Homo II by Jacek Jamuszkiewicz 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*.

**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.

**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.

**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.
Chapter 4

Outreach and engagement: communicating the work of the UN
UN Geneva engages in a global conversation on peace

With the Palais des Nations as the location of choice for bringing parties together for complex and sensitive negotiations, UN Geneva plays a central role in international peacebuilding efforts. On top of that, the city of Geneva is well equipped to champion collaboration, with its extraordinary mix of international organizations, permanent missions, non-governmental organizations and other actors.

In the wake of COVID-19, peacebuilding efforts were dealt a setback, while remaining more important than ever. Two of International Geneva’s flagship peace events, the Geneva Peace Talks and Geneva Peace Week, transitioned to a virtual format, enabling organizations, institutions and individuals from all over the world to participate.

The Geneva Peace Talks were livestreamed from the Council Chamber at the Palais des Nations on 21 September, the International Day of Peace. The Talks were centred on the theme of “shaping peace together”. Eleven speakers discussed crucial issues such as racism, education, rights for refugees, mental health, tribalism, redemption, international and traditional peacebuilding, and social entrepreneurship. Around 400 participants tuned in to watch the 8th edition of the Geneva Peace Talks.

Geneva Peace Week has been a leading annual forum in international peacebuilding since 2014. This year, it focused on rebuilding trust after disruption and finding new pathways for international cooperation. It also served as an umbrella for 70 events held virtually, and for a new Digital Series addressing issues such as cyber peace, environmental peacebuilding, and harnessing the economy for peace in the COVID-19 era. The 7th edition of Geneva Peace Week connected 4,261 people from 159 countries in 170 sessions. Neither of these events would be possible without the extraordinary engagement of many speakers and participants, and of UN Geneva’s partners – the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, Interpeace, the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, the Government of Switzerland, and many more.

Scan the QR code to watch the 2020 Geneva Peace Talks.

Global Leadership for the 21st Century conference

The Global Leadership for the 21st Century conference, held on 15 and 16 December, was the culmination of a year-long joint project between UN Geneva and the World Academy of Art and Science to develop cross-sectoral catalytic strategies to address current global leadership challenges. The conference was held from the Palais des Nations, with 800 participants joining virtually from about a hundred countries.

The objective of the project was to develop forward-looking recommendations for dynamic and efficient global leadership strategies, in support of the findings of the UN’s 75th anniversary report The Future We Want, The United Nations We Need. The project’s work was based on the findings of 16 working groups, a major e-conference that took place in June, and several smaller events involving some 400 experts from over 70 partner organizations of the UN system, academia and civil society.

The two-day conference included thematic sessions on peace and human security, the economy and employment, health and food security, the environment, financing, education, and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It examined leadership strategies for a renewed multilateralism via the engagement of civil society, the media, youth networks, social movements and the private sector. It also examined the integration of research into policymaking and policy implementation.
More than 60 speakers – diplomats, representatives of the UN system, scientists, civil society actors, journalists, members of academic institutions, and youth and business community representatives – shared their visions, innovative solutions and practical suggestions.

All panellists agreed on the importance of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a compass for action and leadership, and stressed the need for innovative and inclusive solutions to tackle global challenges. It was repeatedly underlined that people should not only be at the centre of our strategies, but they should also be directly engaged in designing solutions and contributing to a renewed multilateralism. The outcomes of this conference and of the overall project will serve to inform global leaders about good practices and innovative strategies fit for the 21st century.

Scan the QR code to watch videos of the proceedings of the Global Leadership for the 21st Century conference.

An expert panel explored the multilayered relationship between climate change and security sector governance and reform, at the 16th annual seminar hosted jointly by UN Geneva and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. The event, held virtually on 10 December, was entitled “The impact of climate change on global and local security governance: learning from local experiences of the security sector”. It highlighted how national-level experiences can be a driver of sound approaches to multilateral climate security policy.

In her opening remarks, UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya stressed: "Climate change is much more than just an environmental crisis. It is also a pressing threat to peace and security. It directly challenges governance structures at the State, regional and international levels, including the crucial work of the security sector."

The Director of the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, Thomas Guerber, moderated the session and shared some of the Centre's perspectives on climate change, and particularly on the relevance of good governance of the security sector to address climate-related security risks.

Participants in the seminar shared their insights and articulated innovative ideas to prevent and tackle climate-related security challenges. The speakers included the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Mami Mizutori; the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Barbados, Chad Blackman; the Director of the National Centre of Strategic and Security Studies of the Niger, Mahamadou Seidou Magagi; the Programme Manager at the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, Gabriela Manea; and the Director of Political Affairs at the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel, Moudjib Djinadou.

The long-standing partnership between UN Geneva and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance is a testament to the vital contribution that think tanks and other research institutions make to the work of the UN.

Scan the QR code to see an overview of the joint UN Geneva and Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance seminars held since 2003.

Did you know that 8 of the 15 countries most susceptible to climate change risks host a UN peacekeeping or special political mission?
Moving from crisis to resilience

On 9 June, the SDG Lab and the International Labour Organization (ILO) convened a high-level panel that focused on inequalities and the informal economy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UN Geneva Director-General, Tatiana Valovaya, was joined by the ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder, and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Alicia Bárcena, as well as three country representatives from Jordan, Portugal and South Africa, to stress the importance of providing social protection to informal workers and other vulnerable groups, not only during times of crisis but as established policy measures to build long-term resilience to support achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. More than 400 participants joined the virtual discussion.

As a follow-up to the high-level event, an opinion piece by Ms. Valovaya, Mr. Ryder and Ms. Bárcena was published in three languages (English, French and Spanish) in 12 media outlets in Switzerland and the Americas. This article stressed the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals framework as a universal road map for tackling inequalities and guiding the post-COVID-19 recovery.

Spotlighting Sustainable Development Goals implementation challenges in Europe

Ahead of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, five ECE member States joined the SDG Lab’s pilot online session which focused on sharing challenges that countries face in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Representatives of Austria, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Romania and Slovenia used the 18 March webinar to focus on a key issue faced by each of their governments in delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDG Lab worked closely with the five countries to prepare a two-page outline on each implementation challenge, and then brought together a group of experts from the Geneva 2030 Ecosystem and beyond to provide ideas, resources and connections for the countries on the issues highlighted.

The five countries also used the session to stimulate an exchange of solutions among themselves, and to benefit from each other’s ideas and from lessons learned in the ECE region. The exchange demonstrated a strong appetite by ECE member States for seeking novel ideas and advice from other countries and International Geneva experts.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the Geneva 2030 Ecosystem.
The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the critical importance of digital networks to ensure inclusivity, connectivity, and that no one is left behind – not only during times of crisis, but also to accelerate progress towards achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals with their 169 associated targets.

Connectivity is even more important in remote rural regions of the planet, where access to basic public goods and services remains inconsistent and scarce.

One country leapfrogging the digital divide is the Niger, through its Smart Villages project, a broadband infrastructure initiative supported by the Geneva-based International Telecommunication Union (ITU) that is now inspiring other countries working to provide Internet access and digital services to underserved communities. This partnership between the Niger and ITU was born out of a collaboration supported by UN Geneva’s SDG Lab.

In March 2018, after discussions with representatives of the Niger’s National Agency for the Information Society about how to bring meaningful connectivity to people in rural areas, the SDG Lab organized and led brainstorming sessions to introduce the Nigerien project to a set of experts from the Geneva 2030 Ecosystem. The interactions were focused on providing ideas, practical tools and resources to advance the Government’s ambitious vision. One such connection formed was with ITU.

After the initial connection spearheaded by the SDG Lab, in July 2020 the National Agency for the Information Society and ITU piloted a Smart Villages project in the Niger, and launched Building Smart Villages: A Blueprint to share Niger’s experiences of bringing meaningful connectivity and digital transformation to its disadvantaged rural communities with other countries that face similar challenges.

The Blueprint is based on lessons learned from the experiences of setting up, managing and sustaining projects in different parts of the world, including the Niger’s Smart Villages project. It contains a step-by-step guide that shows how to establish, manage and run an intelligent village as a sustainable development project.

“Through the SDG Lab’s convening and connecting power, the Niger had access to the unique International Geneva ecosystem. In just a few days, we were able to leverage the ecosystem’s technical and policy expertise to accelerate our Niger 2.0 project for attaining the Sustainable Development Goals through information and communications technology.”

Minister and Special Adviser to the President of Niger and Director-General of the National Agency for the Information Society, Ibrahima Guimba-Saidou

Staying connected with the support of International Geneva
CHAPTER 4   Outreach and engagement: communicating the work of the UN

Celebrating the SDG Moment in Geneva

Member States held the first-ever SDG Moment on 18 September to highlight a vision for delivering the Sustainable Development Goals during the Decade of Action and for recovering better from COVID-19. During the SDG Moment, representatives of Member States and other actors highlighted poverty and inequality, the climate crisis and a healthy planet, and gender equality, while cross-cutting issues such as finance, partnership, governance and technology were discussed throughout the three-hour broadcast.

Members of the Geneva 2030 Ecosystem joined a virtual gathering, hosted by the SDG Lab and the International Institute for Sustainable Development, to watch the live stream of the SDG Moment and to brainstorm about how to more effectively communicate in Geneva what happens during New York-based meetings, such as of the General Assembly.

Geneva 2030 Ecosystem members used the session to connect with each other and share best practices so that the Ecosystem can better leverage such events and transfer the knowledge and support to initiatives being put into action in Geneva and at the country level.

Young Activists Summit showcases youth vision and achievements

Seven young activists from four continents shared a message of hope and expressed their determination to make the world a better place at the Young Activists Summit 2020. The online event drew an audience of over 9,000 people from 106 countries, on 20 November. It spotlighted young activists’ initiatives on issues such as climate action, biodiversity, gender equality, human rights, and sustainable and ethical fashion.

Emma, 15, and Zahraa, 21, described how they had created “Locate Victims Beirut”, a platform to locate missing victims, following the explosion on 4 August in Lebanon’s capital. Another young activist, Vanessa, 24, participating from Uganda, pointed to the way global issues intersect and asked, “How can we eradicate poverty without addressing climate change?”

In a video message, UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya commended the young activists’ resilience and resourcefulness. “The mobilization of youth reminds us that to build a better future, we must act now, and we must act together with youth,” she said.

The Young Activists Summit 2020 was organized by dev.tv in collaboration with the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, and Radio Télévision Suisse.

Scan the QR code to watch a video recording of the Young Activists Summit 2020.
Accessing the latest information from UN Geneva

The new www.ungeneva.org website and portal was unveiled in April to share the most up-to-date information and knowledge with Member States and the public. Produced in-house, the site is aligned with global UN branding, accessibility and multilingual requirements, and features a clean and responsive design.

Offering visitors a secure and seamless experience across devices, the new site shines a light on how the United Nations family in Geneva works together to promote peace, rights and well-being. Users can quickly access information about what’s happening at UN Geneva and about the issues we address daily as we work to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Key features include:

- Easy access to information about the UN and upcoming events at UN Geneva
- A news centre highlighting the latest developments coming out of Geneva
- Dynamic content, including photos, videos and audio files, throughout the site
- An interactive Blue Book to quickly find information about the permanent missions to the UN in Geneva
- Quick access to Library and Archives resources and information
- Ability to host multilingual content, in all six official UN languages
- All of UN Geneva’s social media feeds
- Content tailored to help youth and academics learn more about the UN, how to take action and how to contribute to multilateralism
- Portals to relevant content hosted by other UN entities based in Geneva and elsewhere
- Analytics to ensure that the appropriate content reaches its intended audience and that the site infrastructure remains accessible

UN Geneva reaches 1 million followers on social media

In July, the four UN Geneva social media accounts, combined, surpassed 1 million followers, on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. This milestone came 10 years after the opening of UN Geneva’s first social media account.

Reaching the 1 million mark was no small feat, as the growth has been 100% organic – no funds were used to “boost” our posts or promote any content. It is the fruit of constant efforts to publicize initiatives from the Palais des Nations and across International Geneva, while at the same time contributing to global UN campaigns, such as Verified, which seeks to combat misinformation about COVID-19.

UN Geneva’s social media presence continued to grow in the second half of the year, with the launch in July of a new Twitter account in French, @ONUGeneve.

As at 31 December 2020, the total number of followers across our platforms stood at 1.15 million.

The video series Faces of UN Geneva highlighted priorities and sparked conversations on UN Geneva’s social media accounts.
New podcast and Twitter account in French

Renewing its commitment to multilingualism, the United Nations Information Service (UNIS) in Geneva launched a French-language podcast and Twitter account.

Every Friday, UNIS journalists share the news of the week from the Palais des Nations and International Geneva via the UNIS Info Geneva podcast. On Wednesdays, the podcast features interviews with various personalities from International Geneva. As part of the UN’s 75th anniversary celebrations, the podcast featured Geneva locals discussing their vision for the future of the UN.

UNIS uses the @ONUGeneve Twitter account, the latest addition to the UN’s social media suite, as a valuable tool for communicating with French-speaking audiences in Geneva and around the world.

Sharing the positive impact made by International Geneva

UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project continues to influence an international public by producing creative content that shows the positive impact of the work done by Geneva-based international organizations.

In 2020, the Perception Change Project developed a number of social media campaigns, videos, infographics and more to communicate this message. A newsletter, Social Geneva, was also sent out, which could be used by social media managers to source and exchange content to raise awareness of International Geneva’s work.

With the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Perception Change Project adapted the focus of its content to share how Geneva-based international organizations were working to prevent the spread of the virus and mitigate its impacts on societies. This included:

- Two dedicated editions of the monthly Impact Stories of International Geneva newsletter
- An infographic for social media, produced in partnership between the Perception Change Project and twelve international organizations
- Focusing the Perception Change Project’s social media campaigns on topics such as the importance of solidarity and unity and fighting misinformation, and on initiatives led by the World Health Organization, including Together At Home and #HealthyAtHome
- Updating the 3D map of International Geneva, an online visual map of key international organizations in Geneva, so that users can easily link directly to each organization’s website and see what they are doing to fight COVID-19.
Addressing global challenges through publications

In 2020, UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project produced a number of publications to engage the public, particularly young people, in some of the most pressing global issues of our time.

New book in the Iceberg series

News headlines about the UN often only show the tip of the iceberg. The Perception Change Project’s Iceberg series of books aims to give a fuller picture that also explores the positive work being done “below the surface” in International Geneva to tackle global problems. In 2020, the Perception Change Project published a new book in this series, adding to the four books already available.

Jamila is about young people who are forced to flee their country of origin in search of a safer and more secure life. It reveals the challenges that young migrants face and encourages a better understanding of those who undertake daunting journeys across land and sea.

All the books in the Iceberg series are available online.

Scan the QR code to access all the publications of the Perception Change Project.

Fairy tales from around the world

At the beginning of 2020, the Perception Change Project reached out to all the permanent missions to the United Nations in Geneva, inviting them to take part in a project to collect traditional fairy tales from countries around the world. The aim of the project is to illustrate the Sustainable Development Goals in a creative way for children. Despite the impact of the pandemic, a number of Member States embraced this project with great enthusiasm.

The collection is available online and more fairy tales will be curated during 2021.

170 Actions to Combat Climate Change: booklet and website

Extreme weather patterns, rising sea levels and the mass extinction of species are just some indications that climate change is accelerating at an alarming rate. And because climate change is related to human activities, we all have a role to play if we want to reverse its effects. But often we’re at a loss to know how we can best help our planet and its people.

The 170 Actions to Combat Climate Change booklet – available in all six official UN languages – is full of actions that each of us can take in our daily lives to make a difference, from carsharing to buying locally made products.

Officially launched on World Environment Day in both print and downloadable formats, the booklet complements two earlier publications by the Perception Change Project: 170 Daily Actions to Transform Our World and 170 Jobs with a Purpose.
#YouNeedToKnow exhibition at the Place des Nations

In early September, the people of Geneva were invited to see the #YouNeedToKnow travelling exhibition, which communicates key facts about the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Ten four-sided stand-up banners showed concrete actions that are being taken by the UN and its partners to achieve the Goals; one banner was dedicated to actions being taken to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Although the exhibition travelled around parts of Switzerland and France in 2019, this was the first time it was displayed in Geneva.

The exhibition on the Place des Nations was opened by the Director-General of UN Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, the Administrative Councillor of the City of Geneva, Alfonso Gomez, and the president of the Fondation pour Genève, Ivan Pictet. This project was made possible by the support of the Fondation pour Genève and the City of Geneva.

To bring the UN and the Palais des Nations closer to the city of Geneva and its people, UN Geneva partnered with the DIO Art Space gallery this year for an exhibition entitled Tout un monde – l’art du Palais des Nations s’invite en ville.

Inaugurated on 23 June, the exhibition presented to the public 55 works from UN Geneva’s collection, including famous pieces such as Pax, by Mimmo Rotella, Von der Dunkelheit zum Licht, by Günther Uecker, and prints by Robert Rauschenberg and Otávio Roth. This was the first time that UN Geneva’s artworks had been exhibited outside the walls of the Palais des Nations.

The exhibition is touring nationwide until August 2021, giving the people of Switzerland an insight into the art and culture of UN Geneva.

Scan the QR code to virtually visit the exhibition.
Regional effort keeps Ciné-ONU on the screen

COVID-19 hit cinemas worldwide hard. But that didn’t stop the UN’s Ciné-ONU screenings from taking place. At the height of lockdown in Europe, Ciné-ONU Geneva invited Ciné-ONU in Brussels and Vienna to organize together the first virtual event, in May, which reached audiences across the globe with the 2017 documentary Unseen Enemy about global pandemics.

Viewers first watched the film online and then took part in virtual discussions with the film directors and subject matter experts. Brussels, Geneva and Vienna organized similar events in June with Sharkwater Extinction, about illegal shark fishing, and in October with Waking up on Mars, about one refugee family’s experience of dealing with trauma while waiting to learn its fate in Sweden.

“We knew the pandemic was going to be with us for a while and we didn’t want our followers to forget about Ciné-ONU. If they can’t come to Ciné-ONU, we thought, why not bring Ciné-ONU to them?”
Chief of Press and External Relations at the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, Rhéal LeBlanc

Match of our lives

For the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, UN Geneva partnered with famous sportspeople, including NBA basketball players, Formula One racing drivers, surfers, cyclists, swimmers and more. They created a video that called for solidarity during the global COVID-19 pandemic and highlighted the importance of working together to defeat the virus. The video was shared widely through UN Geneva’s social media platforms, as well as by the sports personalities featuring in the campaign.

Scan the QR code to watch the Match of Our Lives video.
#KidsWannaKnow

The Perception Change Project's #KidsWannaKnow initiative lets students put themselves in the shoes of reporters to interview experts from across International Geneva.

Students first choose a topic related to international cooperation, such as health or migration, and then prepare questions in their class or in groups. The Perception Change Project finds the relevant experts and organizes the interview. With the support of a camera operator from UN Geneva, the interview is filmed. It is then edited and shared widely on social media.

In 2020, #KidsWannaKnow interviews were held with experts from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Scan the QR code to watch the series of #KidsWannaKnow interviews.

UN receives sustainable fashion award

The fashion industry accounts for about 10% of global carbon emissions and produces 20% of the world’s wastewater, yet it can make dramatic changes to this situation through sustainable fashion.

The Green Carpet Fashion Awards celebrate sustainable fashion and the commitment of fashion houses to rapid change while preserving their heritage and authenticity.

In September, UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya received, on behalf of the UN, the Green Carpet Fashion Awards North Star Award, for organizations or individuals that show extraordinary leadership. The award was conferred on the UN in recognition of the work of the United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion and for promoting ways in which the fashion industry can become a driving force for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by addressing social, economic and environmental concerns.
Chapter 5

Inclusion: recognizing and celebrating diversity
Gender equality at UN Geneva

In recent years, UN Geneva has championed gender equality; this work has been consolidated under the leadership of UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya, who joined the International Gender Champions network shortly after taking up her post.

UN Geneva is committed to attaining gender parity, particularly at the senior level, and promotes an inclusive and enabling working environment free from gender bias and discrimination. These efforts are supported by the Gender Steering Group, made up of senior managers, which regularly monitors progress and proposes relevant adjustments, and by the UN Geneva Policy for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2016–2020. Due to the exceptional circumstances in 2020, the Policy was extended for another year, and will be reviewed and updated in 2021.

In 2020, UN Geneva continued to advance towards the goal of reaching gender parity, with women now holding 48% of posts in the professional and higher categories. In addition, UN Geneva introduced the Code of Conduct to Prevent Harassment, including Sexual Harassment, at UN System Events as part of a zero-tolerance approach to harassment. Launched in February at the beginning of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council, the Code of Conduct is designed to ensure that events are held in an inclusive, respectful and safe environment. Information and copies of the Code of Conduct were shared with all relevant actors; banners were installed at key locations in the Palais des Nations, and a “Speak-up” helpline was made available for those seeking confidential advice. This initiative has helped to raise awareness about the standards of conduct expected from all participants at UN system events and to provide support to victims and witnesses of harassment.

Scan the QR code to watch a video about UN Geneva’s work on gender equality.
Women are central to Strategic Heritage Plan construction and renovation

The women professionals who work on the Strategic Heritage Plan – one of the largest construction and renovation projects currently under way in Europe – are breaking through the glass ceiling in fields historically dominated by men.

On International Women’s Day, 8 March, the Strategic Heritage Plan team released its second article in a series on the women working on the project, many of whom are in leadership roles. Through these articles, the Strategic Heritage Plan team seeks to highlight the contribution that women make to projects such as these, profile the skills and backgrounds of specific women in the team, and inspire the next generation of women and girls.

“Our team is rather atypical, as it breaks the gender stereotypes still found in many teams working on a construction project. We are proud to be part of a team that illustrates the gender balance promoted by the United Nations through its Sustainable Development Goal 5.”

Chief of Design and Construction for the Strategic Heritage Plan, Véronique Neiss

Scan the QR code to read more about the role of women in the Strategic Heritage Plan project.
Conference on Disarmament: discussions around the integration of gender perspectives


A key pillar of the Women, Peace and Security agenda is the meaningful and equal participation of women in decision-making processes. Despite repeated efforts, the participation of women in disarmament processes, particularly at senior levels, remains low. Out of the 65 heads of Member State delegations to the Conference on Disarmament this year, only 15 were women. To support evidence-based advocacy for the balanced participation of women and men in disarmament processes, the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs tracks the participation rates and numbers of interventions by gender in the Conference for Disarmament as well as in the other disarmament meetings it supports.

This year, gender equality also featured in discussions at the Conference on Disarmament. Notably, the Argentine presidency of the Conference on Disarmament decided to hold its first formal plenary meeting, in March, on the integration of gender perspectives and of the Women, Peace and Security agenda into disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.

Later in the year, the Australian presidency of the Conference on Disarmament proposed a technical update to the Conference’s rules of procedure to render them gender-neutral. The Conference’s rules of procedure, like those of many other disarmament bodies and conventions, refer to the President, the Secretary-General, Member State representatives and other roles using only male pronouns. The Australian proposal contended that the Conference’s rules of procedure should reflect the reality that women have served as Presidents of the Conference and have been appointed as the Secretary-General of the Conference. The proposal enjoyed widespread support, but was ultimately not presented for adoption.

Such initiatives, whether taken by Member States or by the UN in support of its Member States, contribute positively to the promotion of gender equality in disarmament processes.
Women in disarmament: perspectives of the co-coordinator on improvised explosive devices under Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

Stakeholders are increasingly calling for the active and full participation of women in decision-making processes and for the gendered impacts of weapons to be taken into consideration, in the field of international security and disarmament.

In recognition of the fact that diverse stakeholders bring new perspectives to the discussions, help find sustainable solutions and improve needs assessment efforts, States parties to Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons agreed in 2019 that the mandate of the Amended Protocol II Group of Experts should “recognize the importance of a balanced involvement of women and men ... in support of its efforts to address the threats posed by improvised explosive devices”. Since then, the Group of Experts has achieved near gender parity in panel discussions and has incorporated the perspectives of women from a broad variety of professional backgrounds to help better understand how to address the threat from improvised explosive devices.

Diana Esperanza Castillo Castro, of Colombia, has served as co-coordinator on improvised explosive devices since 2018 and has strongly advocated for the consideration of gender by the Group of Experts. For her, “understanding that women, men, boys and girls are affected by these devices in diverse and unique manners remains imperative to establishing adequate responses to fight this threat”.

Ms. Castillo hopes that the Group of Experts will further its work with analysis of the gendered impacts of improvised explosive devices; and that the Group of Experts forum will allow States to share best practices on gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive approaches successfully being included in national policies, in order to ensure effective, efficient and context-specific implementation in the future.
Removing barriers to disability inclusion at UN Geneva

UN Geneva recognizes the importance of diversity and inclusion, including diversity in ability, and we have been working to remove the barriers that prevent or inhibit the full participation by persons with disabilities in our work. In 2020, in response to the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, UN Geneva established a Disability Inclusion Team, with representatives from all divisions and services, and launched its own action plan to help drive local-level implementation of the Strategy. We made progress throughout the year towards achieving the goals set out in the action plan, some of which had to be adapted to respond to the challenges presented by COVID-19.

For example, with remote participation tools being used for meetings and events, UN Geneva developed new approaches to incorporate live captioning and sign language interpretation from remote locations into hybrid and virtual meetings. Accredited sign language interpreters worked from their homes, where they had created mini TV studios so they could simultaneously view the speaker, documents or captions, and their colleagues working in other locations. Backstage, the UN Geneva team merged the conference room and interpreters’ video feeds, which went to UN Web TV and the platform used for the virtual meeting.

This year, the UN Geneva Disability Inclusion Team also compiled a new toolkit for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. It comprises practical guides, online tutorials, and guidelines on accessibility and disability inclusion topics, such as the Disability Inclusive Language Guidelines to help staff better use disability-inclusive language in oral and written communication.

UN Geneva remains committed to raising its standards and performance on disability inclusion, at the Palais des Nations and beyond.

Scan the QR code to watch International Sign interpretation during the Human Rights Council’s annual panel discussion on the rights of indigenous peoples.
Sign languages are for everyone!

Sign languages are for everyone! UN leaders shared this powerful message in International Sign to highlight the importance of sign languages while challenging others to do the same.

In recognition of International Day of Sign Languages, 23 September, UN Geneva coordinated with the World Federation of the Deaf for the Global Leaders’ Challenge. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe and the United Nations Ombudsman, among others, responded to the challenge. They demonstrated the importance that the UN attaches to accessibility and sign languages, which is given expression to in the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities established that sign languages are equal to spoken languages. By taking part in this challenge, UN leaders helped raise awareness of the importance of sign languages and drew attention to the need for the full realization of the human rights of people who are deaf.

International Sign is frequently used at UN Geneva for accessible international meetings of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and panels of the Human Rights Council.

Scan the QR code to learn how to sign “Sign languages are for everyone!”

World Braille Day

In recognition of the importance of Braille for people around the world who are blind or visually impaired, in 2018 the General Assembly proclaimed 4 January as World Braille Day. Braille is a means of literacy that not only is key to realizing all human rights but also allows inclusion and equal opportunities.

UN Geneva marked World Braille Day 2020 with an exhibition entitled Please touch, which opened on 6 January. Organized with the support of the Bibliothèque Braille Romande et livre parlé, of Geneva, the exhibition featured a selection of Braille books, alphabets and writing devices, giving an opportunity to experience and better understand this system of reading and writing. The UN Geneva Visitors’ Service organized a tour of the Palais des Nations for people with visual impairments.

UN Geneva also finalized a standard operating procedure for Braille transcriptions, which provides instructions and guidance to all stakeholders involved in the Braille transcription service to ensure a clear delineation of responsibilities throughout the processing chain.
Expressing ourselves, in our mother language

Though it might not be the language we speak at work or at home to our children or our spouse, our mother language has been passed down to us through generations. It is found deep in our hearts and our minds and reminds us of who we are and where we come from.

For International Mother Language Day in February, Geneva-based UN staff shared stories, expressions and songs that were sung to them as children, and that they continue to sing to their own children, in their mother languages.

Scan the QR code to hear stories and songs in the mother languages of UN staff.

Celebrating the enrichment of the French language

In 2020, UN Geneva’s plans to celebrate French Language Day on 20 March around a show dedicated to spelling were cancelled due to the COVID-19 lockdown that came into force a few days earlier. Instead, the celebrations were held virtually, with a video reminding us that the French language has been enriched by the contacts it has had with other languages and cultures throughout its history. In the video, which also notes the 50th anniversary of the International Organization of la Francophonie, staff members and delegates at UN Geneva explore some of these well-travelled French words.

Scan the QR code to watch the video celebrating French Language Day.

What does the English language mean to us?

Every 23 April, the UN celebrates English Language Day, an opportunity to look into the particularities and intricacies of this lingua franca and reflect on the language that so many at UN Geneva use for work and personal interactions.

Staff celebrated in 2020 from their home offices, sharing anecdotes about their love of English and their favourite idioms. Their stories reveal how the English language impacts them personally, and ultimately, how it helps the Organization achieve its commitment to multilingualism, one of the priorities of UN Geneva.

Scan the QR code to see what the English language means to staff at UN Geneva.

Russian language: rich, emotional and full of life!

In a spectacular online celebration, leading theatres from across the Russian Federation observed Russian Language Day on 5 June this year with a linked series of theatrical performances in different genres. During the event, at which UN Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya delivered opening remarks, directors, actors and art producers shared their thoughts, as well as excerpts from stage shows based on works by famous classical and contemporary writers. The performances ranged from puppetry to ballet, and extended a cultural bridge to the rest of the world.

Scan the QR code to watch the entire Russian Language Day performance.
Spanish language festivities throughout Geneva

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, Spanish Language Day was not celebrated officially at the Palais des Nations this year. However, Palabras+, a cultural platform of translators and interpreters from UN Geneva, the World Trade Organization and the World Meteorological Organization, stepped in and ran a series of activities from 24 September to 14 October in Geneva to celebrate the Spanish language.

Many people put pen to paper and took part in the seventh “De la traducción a la creación” (“From translation to creation”) writing contest, the theme of which was “Juntos, pero no revueltos” (“United but not mixed”). Art and music featured prominently on the programme, which included a painting exhibition, a dinner with flamenco and a brunch with tango. Other activities were a tournament of mus (a card game), a family scavenger hunt around Geneva, an outdoor meditation session and a bread-baking workshop. Some lucky bystanders even enjoyed a sevillanas flashmob in a shopping centre.

Scan the QR code to see images from this year’s Spanish language celebrations.

Celebrating Arabic language and culture

Arabic Language Day was marked by UN Geneva on 18 December with a virtual programme to celebrate the Arabic language and culture. Activities included readings of the works of Syrian writer Zakaria Tamer and Iraqi poet Nazik al-Malaika, a presentation by Mauritanian poet Moulay Ali and a performance of Arabic music.

Scan the QR code to watch UN Geneva’s 2020 Arabic Language Day celebrations.

Honouring the translators of the past

As part of events to commemorate International Translation Day in September, Robert Dickinson, a staff member of the English Translation Section at UN Geneva, gave a talk for colleagues entitled “Translation at the League of Nations: a centenary celebration”.

Recalling the establishment of the League of Nations in Geneva in 1920, Mr. Dickinson paid tribute to the pioneering work of the League’s translators in promoting multilateralism through multilingualism and celebrated the enduring legacy of their work. He traced the history of the translation services from their beginnings in London in 1919 until the League’s last Assembly in Geneva in 1946, focusing on the tireless efforts of translators to meet the changing needs of the League. He concluded by emphasizing the continuous thread linking the League’s translators with their modern-day counterparts in the United Nations.

Scan the QR code to see images from this year’s Spanish language celebrations.
Chapter 6

Working better: embracing innovation
New ways, #NewWork: reshaping our workplace culture for the future

An end-of-year highlight was the live finale of the Reimagine the UN Together challenge – the “Dragons’ Den.” This UN system-wide idea-generating event tapped into the creativity, experience, and skills of colleagues, providing an opportunity for them to share, innovate and scale solutions to common business challenges. It was held entirely virtually, with teams pitching their ideas from numerous locations, and participants in every time zone. The event demonstrated the UN’s firm commitment to innovating to help solve global challenges.

#NewWork is creating a positive impact across the UN system and UN Geneva colleagues are excited to continue in this spirit in the years ahead.

conecta: matching skills and volunteers across the UN

conecta, a joint venture by UN Geneva’s Centre for Learning and Multilingualism and Young UN: Agents for Change, won the finale of the 2020 Reimagine the UN Together challenge – the “Dragons’ Den.” conecta is a collaboration space and platform for linking people, skills and projects across the UN system. Created by staff for staff, this project also won the Jury’s Award at the 2019 Dragons’ Den event. The conecta prototype was launched in September 2020, and already hosts more than 350 staff profiles from over 35 organizations and 20 duty stations. The next step for conecta is to attract more users to the platform and gather their feedback as a basis for continuous improvement.

In May 2020, the conecta team launched conecta4covid, to rapidly support the UN’s COVID-19 response and recovery by matching UN staff members needing extra help with colleagues willing to volunteer their skills and time. More than 140 volunteers signed up, and the initiative garnered 20 project proposals, from which 10 projects were successfully matched with enthusiastic volunteers.

Staff are building a bright future for the UN, where innovation, collaboration, learning, empowerment and flexibility are an integral part of our workplace culture.

In 2020, several projects were rolled out to help achieve this goal as part of the staff-driven #NewWork initiative.

At UN Geneva, this included improving teamwork against the backdrop of COVID-19 by adapting the popular “huddles” meeting technique for remote participation, and delivering virtual training on how to run “huddles”. We developed a new online tool to manage staff requests for flexible working arrangements, and to enable the gathering of important human resources data on the flexibility of staff and managers.

#NewWork – which was pioneered in Geneva in 2018 – went global in 2020, being adopted by groups at Headquarters in New York and at several other duty stations. This led to the launch of global projects. For example, a pilot of modern agile methodology was run, in which teams from New York, Geneva and Bangkok came together virtually to learn about the principles, tools and benefits of agile approach to our work. These participants relay what they have learned to their colleagues, so the knowledge gained can be applied widely.
Security upgrades at the Palais des Nations

Innovation and technological developments enabled UN Geneva to implement a number of improvements to security at the Palais des Nations in 2020. Thanks to the support of colleagues from UN Geneva’s Facilities Management Section, the old system of security bollards was replaced with a new anti-vehicle-ramming system that has been installed at the two main vehicle gates. These new “wedge barriers” can stop a 75-ton truck travelling at a speed of 65 km/h. In addition, the Palais des Nations video surveillance systems have been upgraded with new digital cameras to provide enhanced images, even in the dark.

Further improvements planned will cover protection of personnel, training of security officers and use of technology, so that the safety and security of everyone at the Palais des Nations continues to be assured into the future.

Protecting the UN against cyberattacks

Digital technology and data make the work of UN Geneva faster, more efficient and more effective, but, like all organizations, we know we are not immune to digital crime and cyberattacks.

UN Geneva works hard to reinforce prevention and protection against cybercrime. One such effort was the implementation this year of multifactor authentication for accessing digital resources such as email, online files and collaboration platforms. Multifactor authentication is a two-step procedure to confirm the identity of a user before he or she can access electronic tools, which makes it much more difficult for cybercriminals to break into our systems.

The deployment of multifactor authentication has reduced the exposure of our staff to the risks of cybercrime, particularly phishing attacks, which have been all but eliminated. Before it was introduced, compromised accounts had to be immediately closed to avoid damaging consequences, however the risk of such attempts succeeding with multifactor authentication in place is extremely low, or possibly eliminated.

The full migration to multifactor authentication was completed in less than two months, thanks to the work of our seasoned IT professionals and the cooperation of all Secretariat offices and colleagues.
Bringing medical insurance one step closer to clients

Improving efficiency and quality of service for clients through digitization and automation is a goal that UN Geneva hotly pursues. One such example was rolled out by the UN Geneva medical insurance team in August 2020: a mobile application to further improve the services provided to staff, retirees and family members insured with the United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society against Sickness and Accidents.

Available on both the App Store and Google Play, the application improves the client experience by allowing for quick, simple and almost instant submission of claims from anywhere, including remote locations, thereby reducing the turnaround time for reimbursements. The app eases the administrative burden on the insured: claims can be submitted and checked in real time using the inbuilt document scanner that digitizes prescriptions and receipts, attestations can be immediately issued and easily forwarded, and the amounts of dental and optical credits available are at the client’s fingertips. The app also has an inbuilt virtual insurance card, which means reduced costs and less environmental impact than with plastic cards which need to be regularly reprinted.

To develop the app, UN Geneva’s finance and IT services collaborated closely with the International Computing Centre, using a flexible and agile approach to deliver a home-grown application in less than 10 months, from conception to delivery. All at a fraction of the cost of outsourcing the development of such a tool.

New Eco Point, made of recycled plastic, inaugurated at the Palais des Nations

As part of a range of initiatives aimed at greening the Palais, in 2020 UN Geneva launched the innovative Eco Point – a space where staff can give new life to office products and recycle waste items. The Eco Point also creatively encourages staff to reduce their consumption and consider the environmental impact of their actions.

The Eco Point is not only made of fully recycled plastic but is fully recyclable itself. Designed to give prominence to the issue of marine plastic pollution, the Eco Point features LED lights and blue panels that serve as a visual reminder of the amount of plastic in our oceans, of how vulnerable our ecosystem is, and, more positively, of the fact that even small actions can help to improve our environment.

Staff are encouraged to #SolveDifferent, for example by thinking twice about printing documents or by opting for less ink-consuming fonts. They can also drop off or collect used but still functional stationery and office equipment, helping to reduce our consumption of office materials.

Finally, to lengthen the time before waste materials end up in landfill sites, recycling bins are provided for plastic, glass, paper, and cork, as well as for mobile phones and batteries. These items are collected by an external company and sent for recycling in Switzerland.

In 2020, only around 1% of waste collected at UN Geneva went to landfill. The other 99% was reused, recycled, composted or recovered, either directly on the premises or through contractors. We are also managing more waste on our own premises: from 2018 to 2020, the amount of organic waste recycled on-site increased from 40% to nearly 90%! 
State-of-the-art H Building nears completion

The new H Building, an integral part of the Strategic Heritage Plan, is nearing completion and will soon be one of the landmarks of International Geneva. This state-of-the-art construction has been designed as a healthy, highly efficient and cost-saving office building that is fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and sets the standard for new ways of working at UN Geneva.

Flooded with natural light and integrated into the Ariana Park landscape, the building will provide improved collaborative spaces and promote flexible and digital working. It will bring together, within the Palais des Nations complex, many UN staff who are currently housed in various sites in Geneva or in costly rented offices, enabling them to benefit from access to shared onsite amenities, including meeting spaces and support services.

Photographs chronicle the progress of this historic project and celebrate the lasting contribution of the men and women working on the construction of the building.

“These photographs will provide future generations with a glimpse into the Organization today, just as the photographs from the building of the Palais des Nations provide us with a window into the past and where we came from.”

Chief of the Institutional Memory Section at UN Library and Archives Geneva, Blandine Blukacz-Louisfert

Scan the QR code to view a time-lapse video of the construction of the H Building.
Valuable cooperation on construction projects between Headquarters, UN Geneva and other duty stations

The Strategic Heritage Plan project has been an example of the value of close collaboration among UN entities and duty stations. Best practices on topics such as accessibility, sustainability, waste management and maintenance are shared through the UN’s Inter-Agency Network of Facilities Managers. The Strategic Heritage Plan team also benefits from lessons learned during the Capital Master Plan project at Headquarters in New York and from cooperation with New York-based entities. It shares its own experiences with colleagues, too, working closely with those overseeing UN construction projects in Addis Ababa and Bangkok.
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- SDG Lab
- Perception Change Project
- Mediation Support

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- Financial Resources Management Service
- Human Resources Management Service
- Information and Communication Technology Service

Division of Conference Management
- Executive Office
- Central Planning and Coordination Service
- Interpretation Service
- Languages Service
- Production and Support Service

Strategic Heritage Plan

Information Service
- Press and External Relations Section
- UN News (Radio, Television, Webcast and Photos)
- Visitors’ Service

Library and Archives
- Library Services Section
- Institutional Memory Section

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* Note: The Director-General of UN Geneva also serves as the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and is the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Conference on Disarmament, which is serviced by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs in Geneva.
Unity & Resilience: 75 years of global cooperation

The interactive version of the Report is available from the 2020 UN Geneva Annual Report website, where you can also download an accessible PDF version of the Report.

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