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Foreword

Our world today is confronting a number of complex and multifaceted challenges: from armed conflicts to humanitarian disasters, from climate change to rising inequalities, and from food, energy and economic crises to an uneven recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Global challenges require global solutions. We cannot tackle these issues in isolation from one another. Herein lies the value of multilateralism – and the United Nations.

The current system of global cooperation, however, is being put to the test. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has therefore called for a new vision of multilateralism, one that is more inclusive, networked and effective.

UN Geneva is well placed to drive this reinvigorated multilateralism. We provide a platform for global dialogue and negotiations, as well as a space for exchanging ideas and best practices. We bring people together to find solutions to global problems.

In 2022, we facilitated multilateral diplomacy while focusing on being more inclusive, networked and effective. We welcomed an increasing number of participants to in-person meetings at UN Geneva – the highest levels since the outbreak of the pandemic. At the same time, virtual and hybrid conferencing ensured that people far from Geneva could still participate in the work that took place here.

We also undertook activities to help realize the Sustainable Development Goals, communicated the work and values of the United Nations across the globe, engaged with young people and promoted multilingualism. And, throughout, we supported our greatest resource – our staff – while embracing flexibility, innovation and collaboration.

As we reflect on both the achievements and the tribulations of 2022, it is a timely opportunity to remind ourselves that we have a shared interest in looking after our planet, our future and each other. To overcome today’s divides, we need more – not less – international cooperation, and a strengthened, impactful multilateral system.

In this challenging world, multilateral solutions are – and must be – the only way forward.
The Client Support Centre responded to more than 10,200 phone calls and 186,100 remote service requests. After its reopening when COVID-19 restrictions were eased in May, it provided 9,650 in-person consultations.

The Central Support Services handled procurements valued at approximately $209 million. They also issued 13,796 UN laissez-passer and processed 77.5 tons of items through diplomatic pouches, on behalf of Geneva-based UN entities.

The Client Support Centre responded to more than 10,200 phone calls and 186,100 remote service requests. After its reopening when COVID-19 restrictions were eased in May, it provided 9,650 in-person consultations.

The Financial Resources Management Service supported:
- Accounts and trust fund management
- Treasury
- Payroll and accounts payable
- Budget
- The processing of around 300,000 payments

The Human Resources Management Service provided:
- General human resources management
- Policy and legal services
- Learning and training activities
- Medical and welfare services

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There were 1,613 staff at UN Geneva, including temporary staff, on 31 December.

Medical support and advice provided to staff, including workplace COVID-19 contact tracing and 24/7 telephone support.

Payroll services provided for nearly 6,000 UN system staff.

There were 109 nationalities, from a wide range of professional backgrounds.

The Financial Resources Management Service supported:
- Accounts and trust fund management
- Treasury
- Payroll and accounts payable
- Budget
- The processing of around 300,000 payments

Medical-related administrative services provided for more than 15,000 staff in the field and at main duty stations.

The United Nations Staff Mutual Insurance Society against Sickness and Accidents provided medical insurance for staff, retirees, and their dependents – a total of over 35,000 persons.

There were 109 nationalities, from a wide range of professional backgrounds.

30 webinars and training sessions provided by the Staff Counsellors Office, which included counselling sessions, follow-up with different service providers, and advice to managers.

342,021 pedestrians and 246,202 vehicles screened at the Palais des Nations by the Security and Safety Service.

30 webinars and training sessions provided by the Staff Counsellors Office, which included counselling sessions, follow-up with different service providers, and advice to managers.

937 individual psychosocial support interventions delivered by the Staff Counsellors Office, which included counselling sessions, follow-up with different service providers, and advice to managers.

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59,191 identification badges issued by the Pass and Identification Unit.

300,000 payments processed by the Financial Resources Management Service.

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Accounting and trust fund management, treasury, payroll and accounts payable, budget, the processing of around 300,000 payments.

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1,657 tons of CO₂ equivalent emitted by UN Geneva. Most of these emissions were due to consumption of natural gas and other fuel for heating. Through a carbon-offset programme, UN Geneva is climate-neutral.

98% of the 492 tons of waste produced by UN Geneva was reused, recycled, composted, incinerated or recovered. This included waste from the Strategic Heritage Plan renovation project.

594,572 m³ of water used by UN Geneva.

150 staff attended a virtual Strategic Heritage Plan "open house" event on the renovation of the historic Palais des Nations buildings.

Over 40 weekly briefings to update Strategic Heritage Plan focal points on the progress with the renovations.

In mid-2022, Tempus was reconfigured. Three 200-seat rooms became one large 600-seat conference room.

UN Geneva supported talks to advance peace processes in Libya and Syria and in the context of the Geneva International Discussions:

- High-level meeting on Libya’s constitutional track: June
- Geneva International Discussions: October

Syria Constitutional Committee meetings March and May
Civil Society Support Room’s thematic working groups on civic space and the economy: March
Syrian Women’s Advisory Board: October

7,979 meetings organized, of which:
- 4,474 were in person
- 103 were virtual
- 3,402 were hybrid

39.3% of meetings included interpretation services.

576 summary records produced

594,572 m³ of water used by UN Geneva

594,572 m³ of water used by UN Geneva

77,933,605 words translated

9 conference rooms in section AC of the Palais were under renovation.

The Strategic Heritage Plan project spent SwF 93 million on renovation work on the historic buildings of the Palais des Nations.
2022 in numbers

**Director-General**

- **Chaired** 4 meetings of the UN inter-agency Security Management Team
- **Held** 81 bilateral meetings with representatives of Member States from all 5 geographical regions; 32 were with Heads of State and Government, foreign ministers or other high-level dignitaries
- **Briefed** all 5 regional groups and held 3 informational sessions with Member States
- **40 new permanent representatives** presented their credentials and 3 new permanent observers presented their nomination letters.
- **16 Executive Briefings** held – 7 in person and 9 in a hybrid mode – with an average attendance of 48 delegations per briefing
- **Gave** 18 interviews
- **Tweeted** 365 times
- **Held** 102 meetings with representatives of UN entities, other international organizations, civil society, and private sector institutions, and with academics; 62 meetings were with senior UN officials and heads of international organizations
- **151 public speaking engagements**, including 30 engagements either virtually or by video message
- **12 of 13** missions

**Went on**

- **11 missions**
  - **March** To participate in the UN Senior Women Leaders’ Retreat, in New York
  - **April** To deliver the annual lecture at the seventh Delphi Economic Forum, in Greece
  - **May** To participate in the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum, in Davos, Switzerland
  - **June** To participate in the ninth Global Baku Forum, in Azerbaijan
  - **August** To participate in Diplomacy Day at the Locarno Film Festival, in Switzerland
  - **September** To participate in the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Switzerland’s membership in the United Nations, in Melide, Switzerland
  - **October** To participate in the 77th session of the First Committee of the General Assembly, in New York
  - **October** To participate in the fifteenth Verona Eurasian Economic Forum, in Baku
  - **December** To participate in the international conference Institutionalized Prevention and Response to Gender-based Violence, in Tashkent

**March**
- To address students of Sorbonne University in Paris

**June**
- To participate in the UN Senior Women Leaders’ Retreat, in New York

**March**
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**LIAISON WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Accredited representatives</th>
<th>NGOs</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>4,275</td>
<td>1,040</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>2,998</td>
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The gender breakdown of participants in the activities of the Centre for Learning and Multilingualism was:
- Women: 61.3%
- Men: 33.3%
- Other: 5.3%

**RECORDS AND ARCHIVES**

- 2,596 views of Knowledge and Learning Commons events on YouTube
- 30 online learning resource guides developed
- 11 Conference Primers comprising 3,468 resources, plus 2 mobile guides for specific conferences added to the Conference Primers for diplomats and delegates; resources consulted 6,182 times
- 3,334 participants in 293 language training courses:
  - 271 students in Arabic
  - 177 students in Chinese
  - 446 students in English
  - 1,619 students in French
  - 296 students in Russian
  - 525 students in Spanish
- 4,884 participants in management and communication training activities across 97 training workshops, 16 lunchtime learning events, 14 outreach activities and 217.5 hours of coaching
- 1,635 answers provided through the “Ask an Archivist” online system
- 25,017 page views of Archives research guides
- 392 staff and external researchers assisted via phone and email
- 47,906 records digitized
- 618,670 page views of the online Archives platform, catalogue and repository

**LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

- 364 on-site visits to the Archives Reading Room
- 132 candidates took language tests.
- 315 candidates sat recruitment exams in 49 sessions.
- 37 Knowledge and Learning Commons sessions organized;
  - 1,949 attendees, of whom were 1,113 women
- 132 candidates took language tests.
- 315 candidates sat recruitment exams in 49 sessions.
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Nearly 300 people participated in an awareness-raising campaign at the Sustainable Development Goals pop-up space at Geneva Airport.

69 million impressions across the five social media platforms (the number of times @UNGeneva posts were seen by social media users)

2.6 million engagements across the five social media platforms (the number of times social media users liked, commented on or shared @UNGeneva posts)

2,025,200 followers across UN Geneva’s 5 main social media platforms as of 31 December:
- Twitter (English): 883,000 (+23%)
- Facebook: 699,000 (+4.5%)
- Instagram: 340,000 (+15.6%)
- Twitter (French): 97,000 (+15.6%)
- LinkedIn: 6,200 (+100%)

As of 2022, 100,000 Perception Change Project publications have been distributed, including:
- 400 copies of Sakura, a book on gender equality, and
- 360 copies of Start Doing Good, the latest publication for children on the Sustainable Development Goals.

As of 2022, 1,361,453 pages from the League of Nations Archives Project have been digitized.

665 access badge requests and 2,136 on-site users of the Library.

177,411 online catalogue searches.

136,573 views of research guides pages.

850 unique users of the OpenAthens system – software that enables staff telecommuting or on mission to connect to Library resources remotely. Users logged in to OpenAthens 8,602 times and OpenAthens provided resources to users 17,797 times.

3,192 UN documents uploaded to the Official Document System at the request of internal and external users.

29,000 maps and 9,000 photographs scanned.

7,593 answers provided through the Library Virtual Reference Desk.

5,635 Library users.

21 cultural activities,
4 special events and
14 side events organized at the Palais des Nations.

1,800 people attended the events, and about 1.4 million took part in online or hybrid events.

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2.6 million engagements across the five social media platforms (the number of times social media users liked, commented on or shared @UNGeneva posts)
18 in-person and virtual briefings on the Sustainable Development Goals offered to 975 people, including diplomats, students and private sector representatives.

296 people subscribed to a social media group where information about resources and events pertaining to the Sustainable Development Goals is shared.

4 key individuals in the Pipeline Builder sustainable finance pilot project were interviewed for the SDG Lab website: the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Ghana, Charles Abani; the Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, Yofi Grant; the founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Ground Up Project, Brindusa Burrows; and a former Assistant Secretary-General, John Hendra.

70,000 visits to the SDG Lab’s Twitter account and 4,650 to its LinkedIn profile

46 dignitaries attended in total, and there were more than 150 participants each day.

In 2022, a total of 363 people participated in the Conference on Disarmament:
- From Member States: 153 men and 86 women
- From non-Member States: 82 men and 42 women
- Out of 64 heads of delegations: 46 men and 18 women

The high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament was held from 28 February to 2 March.

SDG LAB

To date, 112 publications have been developed by the Perception Change Project, which are available free online for everyone’s use.

16 information programmes for a total of 473 university and graduate students

1,126 photos uploaded to UN Geneva’s Flickr page

23,274 visitors to the Palais des Nations took a guided tour.

24,887 visitors to the UN Museum Geneva

100 hybrid biweekly press briefings

1,286,320 unique visitors to ungeneva.org, who looked at a total of 3,434,351 pages

8 CINÉ-ONU sessions

23 episodes of The Next Page, the podcast on multilateralism

117 press conferences given by officials from UN agencies, programmes and funds, and Member States

32 stories and features published on the SDG Lab website, which received a new design and site architecture in May

4 key episodes of a special SDG Lab podcast series, focusing on understanding how COVID-19 impacts the Sustainable Development Goals, were broadcast by the UN Library and Archives Geneva. Titled It Takes a Global Crisis, the podcast explored sustainable cities, environmental resilience, social protection, and digitization and connectivity.

364 people from 213 organizations make up the Geneva SDG Community, a dynamic network dedicated to delivering the Sustainable Development Goals.

1,288 webcast videos produced

24 episodes of the English-language news podcast UN Catch-Up

46 episodes of the French-language news podcast ONU Info Genève

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Chapter 1
DRIVING MULTILATERALISM FORWARD
GLOBAL COOPERATION IN GENEVA AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS

Leaders and representatives from around the world pursue multilateral diplomacy at UN Geneva, the heart of global cooperation. UN Geneva welcomes these high-level visitors and facilitates their contributions to multilateralism, whether in person or virtually. Below are some of the leaders we saw in 2022.

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, welcomes the President of Malawi, Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, to the Palais des Nations on 21 February.

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya (right), welcomes the President of Switzerland, Ignazio Cassis (left), to the Palais des Nations on 28 February.

The President of the Marshall Islands, David Kabua, addresses the high-level segment of the 49th session of the Human Rights Council by video link, on 28 February.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand, Nanaia Mahuta, addresses the high-level segment of the 49th session of the Human Rights Council, on 28 February.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, Riad Al-Malki, delivers remarks during the high-level segment of the 49th session of the Human Rights Council, on 28 February.
The Secretary-General of the International Organization of la Francophonie, Louise Mushikiwabo, speaks during a high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming, on 28 February.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Mélanie Joly, addresses the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament, on 28 February.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Peru, César Landa Arroyo, addresses the high-level segment of the Conference on Disarmament, on 28 February.

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya (left), meets with the Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security of the United States of America, Bonnie Jenkins (right), at the Palais des Nations on 1 March.

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya (right), meets with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, Mukhtar Tileuberdi (left), at the Palais des Nations on 1 March.

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya (right), meets with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste, Adaljíza Magno (left), at the Palais des Nations on 2 March.
The President of the 76th session of the General Assembly, Abdulla Shahid, is interviewed in the UN Geneva television studio on 15 June.

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya (right), speaks with the Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón (left), at the Palais des Nations in the context of the Socialist International Council meeting, on 7 July.

The Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Martin Chungong (left), speaks with the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya (right), ahead of the relaunch of the “I say no to sexism” campaign at the Palais des Nations on 30 September.

The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed, addresses the diplomatic community at a UN Geneva Executive Briefing, on 12 December.
A SIMPLE PORTAL THAT HAS TRANSFORMED CONFERENCE SERVICES AT UN GENEVA

Behind every meeting at UN Geneva, there’s a myriad of teams working in the background to make everything run on time. Take prepared statements, for example: these speeches are often read at a dizzying speed and interpreted into as many as six languages in real time. Their contents are then summarized and are reported accurately and quickly after the meeting.

Our ability to deliver on these important mandates rests on the shoulders of meeting services assistants. Among their many duties is the task of collecting prepared statements ahead of each meeting and distributing them to interpreters, translators, précis-writers, and other staff who need to see the text.

To help streamline the process and make it much easier to collect, organize and distribute prepared statements, UN Geneva staff proactively created the eStatements Hub – an internal portal that many staff now describe as a “must-have” to perform their jobs. By the end of 2022, the Hub had been visited more than 66,900 times by UN staff members. It is home to over 50,000 documents.

DIGITAL RECORDINGS PORTAL MADE ACCESSIBLE

In November, UN Geneva launched a new version of its Digital Recordings Portal, the online repository for all meetings recorded at the Palais des Nations and Palais Wilson.

The new portal comes with a refreshed design that enhances the user experience and reflects modern UN branding. It is available in English and French, and the interface is compatible with standard accessibility tools and controllable via keyboard navigation.

As part of the update, meeting transcripts are generated in English, French and Spanish and uploaded to the portal, completely automatically. This allows persons with hearing impairments to readily access the content of meetings held at UN Geneva. The portal also serves as a crucial tool for reporting on meeting outcomes.

In 2022, more than 2,800 meetings were recorded and published on the portal, most of them in multiple languages. An average of 1,600 users accessed the meeting recordings through the portal each month.

Scan the QR code to access the Digital Recordings Portal.
HOW THE FAST PROJECT IS GETTING FASTER

Machines listening to hours of meetings and converting the spoken word into text: this is the world of artificial intelligence.

The Fully Automated Speech-to-Text (FAST) project came together in 2018 as part of UN Geneva’s efforts to meet the needs of conferencing clients via innovative tools. Powered by artificial intelligence technology from the World Intellectual Property Organization, FAST automatically transcribes meeting deliberations into text to help substantive secretariats, delegates and UN staff do their work more efficiently.

Since the launch of the English version in 2019, FAST has scaled up to process thousands of hours of recordings per year, covering meetings for 40 UN entities. In 2022, we rolled out French and Spanish transcription, with support from the International Organization of la Francophonie. Arabic, Chinese and Russian are in the pipeline for 2023. The Digital Recordings Portal, which was recently redesigned and is fully accessible for persons with disabilities, now automatically displays the transcripts next to the audio files.

The lesson learned so far: while technology is changing the way we work, human creativity and problem-solving are key to finding new, practical applications of technology for the work of the United Nations.

A SNEAK PEEK INTO THE FUTURE OF CONFERENCING

First launched in 2018 to study major economic, technological, social and environmental trends related to conferencing services, UN Geneva’s Conferencing Today and Tomorrow initiative has entered its second phase, known as CTT-2. This phase includes collecting insights from clients about how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way they approach organizing conferences.

In March 2022, the CTT-2 initiative published a report that presented lessons learned during the pandemic and recommendations on how to meet conference clients’ emerging needs. In response to these findings, UN Geneva developed an online portal to provide a single point of entry for information and guidance on conference organization.

The CTT-2 initiative also promotes excellence in service provision through training, and has led several forward-looking workshops on emerging trends in conferencing. This included a design thinking workshop held in October that explored additional use cases for the Fully Automated Speech-to-Text (FAST) project, which generates conference transcripts with the help of artificial intelligence, as well as foresight workshops to build the skills of meeting organizers at detecting trends and at strategizing around new technologies and developments in other domains.

Under the leadership of the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, a task force of conference organizers was also formed to further develop International Geneva as a hub for modern, multilingual, multilateral conferencing.

Report by the CTT-2 initiative on how to meet conference clients’ emerging needs

ahead of a regional briefing for delegates, a staff member sets up the meeting room with cards promoting a questionnaire about the conferencing experience at UN Geneva.

Scan the QR code to access the online portal that provides information on organizing conferences at UN Geneva.

Scan the QR code to read the CTT-2 initiative’s report.
LOOKING TO THE FUTURE OF TRANSLATION

Five years after the General Assembly designated 30 September as International Translation Day, language professionals continue to bring clarity and cohesion to international public discourse through translation.

At a hybrid event held on 29 September at the UN Library and Archives Geneva to celebrate International Translation Day, UN Geneva paid tribute to translators, just some of the many unsung heroes behind multilateral diplomacy. The event highlighted translators’ behind-the-scenes work and examined what the next era of translation could look like – especially in light of advancements in machine-learning translation – by drawing on findings from the academic field, innovations in the scientific community, and the experience of UN Geneva’s Languages Service.

Scan the QR code to watch a recording of the International Translation Day event.

“Professional translation, as a trade and an art, plays an important role in upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, bringing nations together, facilitating dialogue, understanding and cooperation, contributing to development and strengthening world peace and security.”

GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 71/288 ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TRANSLATION DAY

Panellists Anne Fassotte, Head of the French Translation Section at the UN Office at Geneva, Michelle Keating, Chief of the Languages Service at the UN Office at Geneva, and Mathilde Fontanel, Professor of Translation at the University of Geneva, discuss the future of translation at the International Translation Day event.

Rameswar Panda, a research scientist at the MIT-IBM Watson AI Lab, joined the panel remotely.
DEPLOYING IN SUPPORT OF MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY

In addition to facilitating global cooperation at the Palais des Nations, this year UN Geneva again supported high-level United Nations meetings in other locations around the world. This included dispatching a team to provide conference servicing support for the duration of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP 27, which was held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in November. At COP 27, Member States came together to take action towards achieving the world’s collective climate goals and made the historic decision to establish and operationalize a loss and damage fund. The participants included numerous Heads of State and Government, many government ministers, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres.

Other events that UN Geneva’s conferencing staff were deployed to included the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, held in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, in May, and the seventh session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, which took place in Bali, Indonesia, also in May.

POLITICAL DECLARATION ON EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS

On 17 June 2022, consultations led by Ireland on the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas were concluded at UN Geneva. The Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs supported the process, including by delivering joint statements on behalf of several UN entities.

Then the Declaration was endorsed by 83 States at a high-level international conference hosted by Ireland on 18 November 2022. In the lead-up to the conference, the Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs continued to jointly coordinate the engagement of UN entities. It also supported numerous universalization activities; these included outreach events and the coordination of a sponsorship programme to encourage the participation of least developed countries at the endorsement ceremony.

The Declaration seeks to address the devastating and long-lasting humanitarian impact of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, and marks the culmination of almost three years of consultations involving Member States, the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and civil society organizations. Above all, it symbolizes a significant milestone for the protection of civilians. As rapid urbanization has led to armed conflict moving into villages, towns and cities, the impact of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas on civilians and the infrastructure they rely on has been horrific and goes well beyond the direct and immediate impact of a blast or detonation. Such use of explosive weapons also has severe indirect effects on civilians and civilian infrastructure through the disruption of essential services such as water, sanitation, electricity and health care.

Scan the QR code to read the Declaration.
NINTH REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

Scientific and technological barriers to the acquisition, development and use of biological weapons are eroding. The Biological Weapons Convention, which entered into force in 1975, serves as the sole multilateral forum for discussing and addressing emerging biosecurity-related challenges.

The Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention was held at UN Geneva from 28 November to 16 December, under the Presidency of Leonardo Bencini, of Italy. States parties called for the strengthening of the Convention, and an agreement was reached in this area at the end of the Conference. Most notably, States parties agreed to establish a Working Group on the Strengthening of the Convention, which will meet from 2023 onwards. The Working Group will address several issues, including international cooperation and assistance, scientific and technological developments, confidence-building and transparency, and compliance and verification. The Review Conference also decided to reinforce the Biological Weapons Convention Implementation Support Unit, which is based at UN Geneva.

What is the Biological Weapons Convention?

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, more widely known as the Biological Weapons Convention, was the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. One hundred and eighty-five States are parties to the Convention, making it an almost universal legal instrument that prohibits effectively the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxin weapons.

The final outcome document from the Review Conference is a sign that success can still be achieved in multilateral disarmament, despite the current challenges in the international security environment.

Scan the QR code to read the Final Document of the Ninth Review Conference.

The final outcome document from the Review Conference is a sign that success can still be achieved in multilateral disarmament, despite the current challenges in the international security environment.

Scan the QR code to find out more about the Convention.

The Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Izumi Nakamitsu, speaks at the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention.
CHAPTER 1

GENDER-RESPONSIVE DISARMAMENT

The importance of a balanced involvement of women and men to address the threat posed by improvised explosive devices has been recognized since 2019 within Amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons. This echoes the call for gender-responsive disarmament made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

Since then, the Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs has actively supported the Amended Protocol II Group of Experts on Improvised Explosive Devices by ensuring wide participation by female experts and incorporating gender perspectives in the discussions. The 2022 meeting of the Group of Experts featured 13 women panellists out of a total of 17. It also included gender-sensitive guiding questions in four out of its five panels. Efforts such as these are a reflection of UN Geneva’s commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

“I believe that strengthening the role of women in disarmament and ensuring that disarmament discussions take the gendered impacts of weapons into account are effective and underutilized strategies to advance our collective goals in disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control.”

IZUMI NAKAMITSU
Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for Disarmament Affairs

FULL RESUMPTION OF THE FELLOWSHIPS ON DISARMAMENT

The United Nations Programme of Fellowships on Disarmament was launched by the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament, in 1978, with the aim of promoting expertise in disarmament in more Member States, particularly in developing countries. The 10-week-long Programme is run by the Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). In its nearly 45 years, 1,076 public officials from 170 States have received training via the Programme, many of whom are now in positions of responsibility in the field of disarmament, as diplomats or senior international staff, in Geneva, Vienna or New York.

After cancellation of the 2020 Programme and the holding of a shortened version in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2022 the Programme resumed in full. Twenty-five Disarmament Fellows, selected from the candidates nominated by their respective governments, attended a series of briefings in Geneva given by diplomats and by representatives of UNODA, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research and the International Committee of the Red Cross on a range of disarmament and arms control issues. They were welcomed by the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, and were able to discuss and follow the work of the Conference on Disarmament and several disarmament treaty regimes. In line with the established practice, after two weeks in Geneva, the Disarmament Fellows continued their studies in The Hague, Vienna and several other locations, and received their certificates at a plenary session of the First Committee of the General Assembly, in New York.
THE CYBERMEDIATION NETWORK: FOCUSING ON CYBERSECURITY

The CyberMediation Network, comprising 16 organizations that specialize in mediation, continued its work in 2022. UN Geneva and the Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs have facilitated the work of the Network since its inception in 2019. On 1 November, the Network held its first in-person meeting at UN Geneva since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, on the topics of cybersecurity in conflict contexts and digital peacemaking.

The Network also continues to promote several practical partnerships among its members. In February, the Mediation Support Unit, CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation and the Geneva-based CyberPeace Institute launched the Digital Risk Management E-Learning Platform for Mediators, a capacity-building tool designed specifically for the cybersecurity needs of the mediation profession.

The theme of digital risk management and cybersecurity awareness for mediators was also featured at an online event held during Geneva Peace Week in November. The interventions and experiences shared by the participants at the session reconfirmed the importance of these issues and emphasized the need for capacity-building and training efforts.

Participants at the CyberMediation Network meeting in November
NEW KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING SERVICES DEEPEN DIPLOMATS’ UNDERSTANDING OF UN GENEVA

The UN Library and Archives Geneva and its partners have provided new knowledge and learning services to diplomats to support their work and help them keep up with the conferences, meetings and multilateral diplomacy that takes place at UN Geneva.

Two sessions of “Introduction to UN Geneva for Diplomats”, a newly designed two-day programme for new and recent arrivals, were held at the Knowledge and Learning Commons in May and October 2022, following an inaugural session in 2021. This programme allows diplomats to better understand the knowledge, conferencing and administrative services available to them, as they begin their postings in Geneva. The sessions were well received, with diplomats appreciating the chance to get to know UN Geneva better and to interact with one another. This positive reception led to a decision to continue holding the programme twice a year to support as many new diplomats as possible.

The UN Library and Archives Geneva also upgraded Conference Primers: the Diplomat’s Guide to Conferences in Geneva, its web resource that delivers substantive knowledge to diplomats online. This platform gives rapid access to all conference summaries and to key decisions taken at meetings held at UN Geneva. It continues to grow, with advice from experts, contributions from partners, and research led by the UN Library and Archives Geneva.

Scan the QR code to access Conference Primers: the Diplomat’s Guide to Conferences in Geneva.

DIGITAL ACCESS TO UN KNOWLEDGE ON MULTILATERALISM

Knowledge about multilateral approaches, negotiations and discussions still resides in a multitude of printed materials, especially official and unofficial documents, working papers, archives and publications. To make this knowledge accessible to as many people as possible, the UN Library and Archives Geneva works to digitize these sources of information and make them available online.

To support diplomats and conference delegates, the UN Library and Archives Geneva focuses on providing wider access to legacy United Nations documents in the key fields of disarmament, human rights and international law, through the Official Document System.

Thanks to the new Conference Primers platform, delegates can get customized assistance to find documents related to specific conferences even more quickly.

Easier access to early United Nations archives is now available via 44,600 digitized index cards which allow researchers to find the correct information by searching by subject or name.

Finally, UN Geneva’s efforts to share knowledge on multilateralism led to the completion this year of the Total Digital Access to the League of Nations Archives project, which saw all 15 million pages of the League archives digitized and made freely available on the UN Archives Geneva platform.

Scan the QR code to access Conference Primers: the Diplomat’s Guide to Conferences in Geneva.
A TREASURE TROVE OF MULTILATERAL HISTORY

UN Geneva launched the Total Digital Access to the League of Nations Archives project in 2017, thanks to a generous grant provided by a private Geneva foundation. After five years of effort by a team of more than 20 staff, in 2022 this complex and technically challenging undertaking was successfully concluded on time and within budget.

The UN Library and Archives Geneva digitized and made publicly available the entirety of the League of Nations archives, including almost 15 million pages of historical content, 9,000 photographs and 29,000 maps, generating more than 200TB of data along the way. The Library and Archives also ensured the long-term preservation of these unique original documents and developed a digital preservation system. Over the course of the project, UN Geneva built unparalleled expertise in large-scale digitization of archives.

Furthermore, the UN Archives Geneva platform was implemented and launched as part of the project and is now the online resource for all digitized League of Nations content, as well as for additional material and descriptive entries for unscanned records managed by the UN Library and Archives Geneva. The platform provides state-of-the-art user search functionality and is a cornerstone of the delivery of multilateral archive access to the global community.

The completion of the project has revolutionized the use of these archives for a range of clients, including researchers and diplomats. The creation of digital League of Nations archives has opened the door to a world of new research possibilities and vastly expanded the potential to unlock new insights about the League and its impact on global cooperation today.

For a much longer life, the digitization team carefully repairs damaged League of Nations documents before they are digitized and stored.

Scan the QR code to access the UN Archives Geneva platform.
This year, United Nations Secretariat libraries further streamlined workflows as well as access to information resources for users. Benefiting from the expertise of its multi-skilled staff, UN Geneva led the process of smoothly and swiftly integrating the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Library in Bangkok into a single, common library management system. ESCAP now joins the UN Library and Archives Geneva, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in New York, and the four-member library of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean with locations in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Trinidad and Tobago, which were already part of the common system.

Staff, delegates and the wider public can now easily discover more than 100 million information resources through the Global Search tool, which include the digital and print collections of four United Nations libraries on different continents. By sharing the same management system, librarians save time, and clients can more quickly and easily find the information they need from a wealth of resources.

Global Search
Global Search is a single point of access to the print and electronic collections of the UN Library and Archives Geneva. Through Global Search you can:

- Get direct access to e-books, articles, e-journals, and the contents of journal issues
- Find and order print books, journals and UN publications
- Discover UN Geneva’s collection of artworks
- And much more

You can also use Global Search to expand your research to other UN libraries.
STRATEGIC HERITAGE PLAN: IMPROVED FACILITIES FOR MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY

To better support multilateral diplomacy, now and in the future, UN Geneva’s Strategic Heritage Plan project is renovating, restoring and upgrading the Palais des Nations. The project will also ensure improved working conditions and safety, as well as better accessibility for persons with disabilities and greater energy efficiency.

In 2022, significant progress was made on the Strategic Heritage Plan, especially in the first parts of the historic Palais buildings to be renovated, Building A and Section AC. Conferencing facilities and office spaces have been upgraded to ensure that they are fit for purpose. This has included the installation of new audiovisual systems in conference rooms, which will support more modern meetings, improved communication, and inclusive participation via hybrid events. It will also allow for business continuity – ensuring that the Palais is able to operate under a range of circumstances. At the same time, the historical character of each room has been maintained. Around 54 per cent of the existing furniture will be reused in the renovated buildings.
Business and operational continuity is an important element of UN Geneva’s Strategic Heritage Plan project. Tempus, the temporary conference facility, has provided substantial extra conference room capacity to enable multilateral diplomacy at the Palais des Nations to continue throughout the renovation works. In mid-2022, Tempus was reconfigured from three rooms of 200 seats to become one large 600-seat conference room, in preparation for the closure of the Building E conference rooms ahead of their renovation. The months of March, May and June this year saw the highest levels of use in Tempus to date, at 96%, 99% and 100% occupancy, respectively.

Accessibility improvements

The historic buildings of the Palais des Nations were constructed in the 1930s, a time when accessibility was not given the attention it receives today. One of the goals of the Strategic Heritage Plan project is to make the Palais more accessible for persons with disabilities.

An extensive network of guiding strips is being put in place on levels 0 and 3 from Buildings S to E to make it as easy as possible for persons with visual impairments to move around. In Building A, push buttons at wheelchair height have been added to open automatic double doors to conference rooms. Heritage conference tables have been modified for persons using wheelchairs. The desktop audio visual equipment has been adapted to give easier access to microphones and electrical sockets, and new features Braille. Interpreter booths have also been made accessible for wheelchair users, by installing ramps with a slope no steeper than 6 per cent, in accordance with Swiss regulations, or installing a stair lift.

In implementing all these measures, the heritage of the conference rooms and the furniture in the Palais des Nations has been preserved.
Preserving heritage during the renovations

Preservation of the historic buildings of the Palais des Nations and their heritage elements is also a key objective of the Strategic Heritage Plan.

As part of the renovation work on Room XII, also known as the Italian Room, the ceiling, which dates from 1938, required refurbishment. The lighting system needed to be changed to make it more energy-efficient, and the gilded ceiling also needed repair. During the renovation, it was discovered that the gilding was not made of gold leaf as originally thought, but instead of copper leaf, which had oxidized over time, giving a gilded appearance when viewed from the ground.

The challenge for the Strategic Heritage Plan team was to obtain the same gilded effect using materials that would be stable and hold their colour. It was not possible to use copper leaf, as it would have looked too shiny. Instead, experts from Italy succeeded in replicating the current “gold leaf” colour using acrylic materials.

A look behind the scenes

On 28 June, more than 150 staff members joined an online Strategic Heritage Plan open house event. During a live broadcast, participants were taken behind the scenes of the newly renovated areas of Section AC of the Palais des Nations, including offices and meeting rooms. There was a particular focus on safety and accessibility features.

A second session focused on the conference areas, and featured presentations on heritage protection, new technology and the latest schedule of works. Members of the Strategic Heritage Plan team again joined live from renovated conference rooms and the Salle des pas perdus to show the progress of the work. The Strategic Heritage Plan team was also joined by other UN Geneva colleagues who work alongside them, including staff from the Information and Communication Technology Service, the Facilities Management Section and the Division of Conference Management.

RENOVATION OF BAR CONCORDIA

To support the multilateral diplomacy that takes place at the Palais des Nations, UN Geneva provides a range of additional services, including spaces to meet, talk and eat. One such space is Bar Concordia, an important catering outlet for participants in major conferences and talks, as well as for UN personnel.

Bar Concordia is centrally located in the Palais des Nations, next to the Concordia conference rooms and just a couple of floors below the iconic Assembly Hall. It has been fully renovated. Improvements include a fresh design, doubling of the previous seating capacity, fire protection, asbestos removal, better accessibility for persons using wheelchairs, and up-to-date bar equipment. The renovation was designed to complement the heritage aspects of Building A, especially the materials used in the Assembly Hall, such as limestone, wood and brass, which all feature in the renovated bar. Furthermore, the aesthetic of the bar now complements and continues the fresh and modern design of other newly built or soon-to-be-renovated spaces in the Palais des Nations.
THE PEACE GATE, A NEW ACCESS POINT TO THE PALAIS DES NATIONS

Every year, UN Geneva welcomes hundreds of thousands of people to take part in, witness or facilitate global cooperation. With the existing turnstiles at the Nations Gate only able to accommodate a small flow of people, and no screening capacity and limited access for persons with disabilities there, UN Geneva was pleased to open a new access point at the southern end of the complex.

The Peace Gate, near the Place des Nations, has been designed and equipped to improve the speed and efficiency with which UN Geneva can process entry to the Palais. It features a dedicated screening area for visitors, access for persons with mobility impairments and cyclists, upgraded badging technologies with biometric reader capabilities, and two reception desks.

Inaugurated on 5 May by the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, the Peace Gate can be used by holders of the blue UN Geneva grounds pass and by day visitors, arriving on foot or by bicycle.

The Peace Gate was designed by the special projects team in the Building Unit of UN Geneva’s Central Support Services, in collaboration with the Security and Safety Service.

Natural wonders and UN values inspire the Peace Gate design

In designing the new Peace Gate, UN Geneva wanted to ensure that the architecture would integrate well with both the natural and the built elements in the immediate environment. For example, the Peace Gate is designed so one segment of it is exactly parallel with the Broken Chair on the Place des Nations – a monument symbolic of the campaign against landmines.

The Peace Gate also creates a conceptual link between the host country and the United Nations, by symbolizing the union between Switzerland’s natural wonders – such as snowy mountain peaks and crystal-clear lakes – and the values of simplicity, transparency and honesty, which the United Nations strives for.

“You can see the mountains reinterpreted in the simple, linear design. Acute angles create a clear architecture, with peaks,” said UN Geneva architect Federica Perrini.

“The roof is where we have incorporated the concept of the lake – it is large, even going beyond the building, and it protects people from the elements as it floats among the branches and foliage of Ariana Park.”

The Peace Gate was constructed with eco-friendly materials; for example, the sides of the building are made entirely of larch, a wood typical of the Swiss Alps. The roof is also made of wood and is covered with mirrored panels that extend and reflect the surroundings. UN Geneva has also taken great care to protect the roots of the adjacent trees, which are more than a hundred years old.

An LED installation near the entrance shines the word “Peace” in all six official languages of the United Nations.
CEREMONY FOR NEW UN GENEVA SECURITY AND SAFETY SERVICE COLLEAGUES

With the improving epidemiological situation in Switzerland, this year saw the return of many in-person events that had been suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic. One such event was the traditional ceremony to welcome new officers of UN Geneva’s Security and Safety Service.

Fourteen officers from a range of backgrounds had passed selection tests and completed six weeks of training to master their primary mission: protecting the people and property of the United Nations. During the ceremony, held on 4 March, they received their training certificates and badges.

At the same event, five officers of the Security and Safety Service were honoured for their outstanding professionalism and bravery in preventing loss of life and damage during an incident at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in October 2019. The pandemic had prevented these colleagues from being recognized at such a ceremony until now.

TROOPER JOINS THE TEAM

This year, UN Geneva welcomed a special new member of the team: Trooper, an English springer spaniel puppy. Trooper joined the DetEx K9 unit of the Security and Safety Service, complementing the four other dogs already serving with their handlers in the unit. The DetEx K9 unit helps to keep people and property on UN Geneva premises safe by detecting explosives, firearms and other threats. Trooper will complete a year of training with his handler before assuming his full duties.

Scan the QR code to watch a short video about Trooper.
ENGGING WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AS PART OF INCLUSIVE MULTILATERALISM

Every year, the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, meets with civil society representatives in Geneva – an opportunity to reflect, take stock and look ahead. On 27 June, after two years of virtual meetings due to restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was again held in person.

The Director-General spoke with civil society about the need for a renewed and inclusive multilateralism and the valuable role played by international actors in Geneva, including civil society organizations and youth groups. She discussed UN Geneva’s priorities and activities, and its intention to strengthen engagement with non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Throughout the year, the Director-General also addressed meetings organized by NGOs, such as Leaders pour la Paix, Geneva International Model United Nations, the Soldiers of Peace International Association and the International School of Geneva (Ecolint).

The NGO Liaison Unit at UN Geneva supports the global efforts of the United Nations to promote, expand and strengthen the role of non-governmental organizations, in particular those with consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. UN Geneva’s engagement and partnership with civil society continues to grow in substance and in numbers: in 2022, the Liaison Unit facilitated around 30 meetings of NGOs in the Palais des Nations and accredited 4,275 representatives from 1,040 NGOs.

The Director-General’s annual meeting with civil society

Civil society representatives ask questions of the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, during the annual meeting.

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CHAPTER 1

Driving multilateralism forward

Holocaust survivor Emma Adjadj at UN Geneva for the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

TOGETHER TO HONOUR AND REMEMBER

Every year, the multilateral community gathers at UN Geneva to honour International Days and commemorate significant historical events.

Holocaust Remembrance Week

The theme of Holocaust Remembrance Week in January was “Memory, dignity and justice”, which highlighted the global imperative of Holocaust commemoration and education and encouraged action to challenge hatred, strengthen solidarity and champion compassion.

On 26 January, the United Nations Information Service in Geneva held a virtual Ciné-ONU screening of Sophie Nahum’s film Les Derniers (“The Last Ones”), featuring personal interviews with Holocaust survivors. A panel discussion with Ms. Nahum and with Yoni Berrous, from Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, focused on the challenges of keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive and on the importance of education, especially among today’s youth, who may have little connection with these events of the mid-20th century.

UN Geneva’s annual ceremony for the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust was held at the Palais des Nations on 27 January. Some 120 guests attended the event, which opened with a video message by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, followed by a candle-lighting ceremony and a minute’s silence in honour of the victims and survivors of the Holocaust.

In a poignant address at the ceremony, the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, reminded those gathered that “the Holocaust did not start with the gas chambers, it started with hate speech. Xenophobic and racist speech, both offline and online, represent the scourge of our times.” She emphasized that, even after all this time, intolerance continues to persist in modern society. The Permanent Representative of Israel, Meirav Eilon Shahar, and the Head of the Permanent Delegation of the European Union, Lotte Knudsen, also delivered remarks.

From year to year, the number of survivors of the Holocaust is diminishing. That makes this day of remembrance even more important. At this year’s ceremony, Holocaust survivor Emma Adjadj, then aged 92, from Marseille, France, shared her memories of fleeing the Nazis during the war and of losing her mother and three siblings, who were sent to Auschwitz after a raid on the location where they were staying. Sadly, Ms. Adjadj passed away in November 2022.

Scan the QR code to watch a recording of the ceremony.

PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AT UN GENEVA

On 15 June, the President of the 76th session of the General Assembly, Abdulla Shahid, met with civil society representatives at UN Geneva.

Mr. Shahid expressed his support for the work of non-governmental organizations, emphasizing how the information they provide from the ground is crucial to the successful implementation of the mission of the United Nations. Civil society representatives, in turn, spoke about their work and their contributions to the President’s five priority objectives, known as the “five rays of hope”: recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, rebuilding sustainably, responding to climate change, respecting human rights and revitalizing the United Nations.

The event highlighted important themes and encouraged non-governmental organizations to call for greater action on issues such as climate change, the promotion of women’s rights, youth having an equal voice, and stronger commitments to peacebuilding. As acknowledged by Mr. Shahid, the participation of civil society and the promotion of civic space is more important than ever for reinvigorated multilateralism.
International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda

On 7 April, UN Geneva commemorated the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, marking the 28th anniversary of this dark chapter in human history. On this day, the global community honours those who were murdered during the genocide and reflects on the suffering of those who survived.

A wreath-laying ceremony was held at the Memorial Stele at the Place des Nations, followed by a commemoration in the Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Room at the Palais des Nations. Remarks were given by the Permanent Representative of Rwanda, Marie Chantal Rwakazina, the President of IBUKA Memory and Justice – Association of Genocide Survivors (Swiss Section), César Murangira, the President of Rwandan Diaspora in Switzerland, Yves Cyaka, genocide survivor Judence Kayitesi, and the Director of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, Alessandra Vellucci, on behalf of the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya.

“Twenty-eight years on, the genocide in Rwanda remains a stain on our collective conscience. The horrors and suffering of millions of Rwandans need to serve as a constant reminder of our moral obligation not to ever allow such a tragedy to happen again. Genocide must and can be prevented if we have the will to apply the lessons learned from the past.”

TATIANA VALOVAYA
Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers

On 30 May, UN Geneva honoured the memory of more than 4,200 fallen UN peacekeepers and paid tribute to over 1 million uniformed and civilian UN personnel who have served in peacekeeping missions to support ceasefires and prevent and respond to violence in conflict-affected countries.

The theme for this year’s International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers was “People. Peace. Progress. The Power of Partnerships.” “Since 1948, UN peacekeeping has always been a collective endeavour”, said the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, in her remarks. “Multilateral and inclusive partnerships are key in creating conducive conditions for sustainable peace and development”, she added.

Remarks were also given by the President of the Soldiers of Peace International Association, Laurent Altar-Bayrou, and the Permanent Representative of India, Indra Mani Pandey, whose country was the third-largest troop contributor to UN peace operations in 2022.

Scan the QR code to watch a recording of the ceremony.

© UN PHOTO: MATIJA POTOCNIK

International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya (second from right), with the Permanent Representative of India, Indra Mani Pandey (third from right), and the President of the Soldiers of Peace International Association, Laurent Altar-Bayrou (right), commemorating the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers at the memorial in Ariana Park.
World Humanitarian Day

On World Humanitarian Day, 19 August, UN Geneva paid tribute to humanitarian workers who have lost their lives in the line of duty around the world. This year’s commemoration marked the 19th anniversary of the terrorist attack on the UN compound at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, in which 22 people died, many of them UN personnel. In another terrorist act, which took place in Algiers on 11 December 2007, the UN family lost 17 more humanitarian staff members. Two plaques at the Palais des Nations are inscribed with the names of those killed in these attacks, forever commemorating their ultimate sacrifice in the service of humanity.

World Humanitarian Day also provided an opportunity to honour the thousands of aid workers who continue to provide life-saving support to people suffering in conflicts or natural disasters, and to advocate for their safety and security no matter where they are.

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

UN Geneva marked International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People with a special meeting at the Palais des Nations on 29 November. The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, chaired the meeting, reading out a message from the Secretary-General, António Guterres, who expressed concerns over the devastating humanitarian situation in Gaza and reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to realizing the vision of two States – Israel and Palestine – living side by side in peace and security, with Jerusalem as the capital of both States.

The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, Ibrahim Khraishi, read out a statement by the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, which called upon the international community to take concrete measures against Israel’s settlement expansion over Palestinian land. Stressing the importance of full membership for the State of Palestine in the United Nations, he also called for the convening of an international conference under the auspices of the Organization to resolve all final status issues.
CULTURE AS A PART OF DIPLOMACY

Cultural exchange and understanding can play an important role in facilitating and enhancing global cooperation. In support of this fact, UN Geneva’s Cultural Activities Programme serves as a platform for Member States and international organizations to showcase diverse cultures through concerts, film screenings, art exhibitions and more. This year, we organized 21 virtual and two hybrid cultural events, four special events, and 14 side events in various languages. Many of the events touched on subjects central to the work of the United Nations, such as gender equality, humanitarian issues, and innovation and technology. The Cultural Activities Programme also contributed to UN Geneva’s celebration of multilingualism, which includes a special day for each official UN language.

An exhibition entitled ‘I Am Alive’, comprising images taken by Swiss photographer Dominic Nahr, was held at the Palais des Nations from 20 June to 6 July. Organized by the Permanent Mission of Germany and the non-governmental organization Save the Children Germany, the photographs portrayed people who had experienced war as a child, and the impact on their lives.

In honour of International Day of la Francophonie, the International Organization of la Francophonie and UN Geneva presented “L’Art du tact et l’art du texte”, an evening of diplomatic dialogue and poems, on 28 March.

To draw attention to the need to protect the Earth’s seas and oceans, the work of nine contemporary Azerbaijani artists was displayed at the Palais des Nations from 13 to 30 June. Entitled ‘My Seas, My Oceans’, the exhibition was organized by the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan.

The Permanent Mission of Malaysia held a concert at the Palais des Nations to showcase the culture of its indigenous communities, on 21 June.
Throughout the year, the international community gathers at UN Geneva to find solutions to some of the world’s most pressing challenges. UN Geneva is a hub of multilateral activity, welcoming Member States, international organizations, civil society, youth, the private sector and more.

Facilitating multilateralism at UN Geneva:

behind the scenes

UN Geneva is one of the largest conference centres in Europe. In 2022, we organized nearly 8,000 meetings. About 4,500 were in-person meetings and about 3,400 hybrid, with the rest held virtually. Nearly 40% of the meetings included interpretation services.

A wide range of teams work together at UN Geneva to ensure that meetings, conferences and events run smoothly. Below is a snapshot of just some of the people who work behind the scenes to make multilateral diplomacy at UN Geneva a success.

The Security and Safety Service’s DetEx K9 Unit searches a conference room to ensure it is safe for meeting participants.

Scan the QR code to see more behind-the-scenes photos of conferencing at UN Geneva.
Behind the scenes

Translators and revisers translate meeting documents into the six official UN languages.

Staff members from the Division of Conference Management work on Indico, the portal that people use to register for meetings and events at UN Geneva.

An editor revises documents for a meeting to ensure that they are of the highest quality.

A graphic designer works on a report.

A desktop publishing specialist prepares the layout of a document for a meeting.

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© UN Photo: Matija Potocnik
In UN Geneva’s print shop, a staff member oversees the printing of documentation and publications.

Staff members from the Division of Conference Management hand out conference documents at a distribution counter.

Security and Safety Service officers assist persons with disabilities in accessing the Palais des Nations.

Security and Safety Service officers set up X-ray screening equipment in front of a conference room.

Protocol staff and Security and Safety Service officers prepare to welcome high-level visitors to a meeting at UN Geneva.
A staff member from the Office of the Director-General sets up nameplates for a meeting.

Cleaning staff prepare a meeting room in Building H.

Cleaning staff prepare a meeting room in Building H.

A staff member of the Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs assists delegates.

Staff from the Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs set up a meeting room for a side event.
Interpreters provide simultaneous oral translation of conference and meeting proceedings.

A sign language interpreter communicates conference proceedings in International Sign.

A Security and Safety Service officer watches over a meeting.

Staff of the UN Library and Archives Geneva facilitate an online event.

A videographer with the United Nations Information Service in Geneva records conference proceedings.
behind the scenes

A staff member of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva provides technical moderation at a press briefing.

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A staff member of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva captures activities for social media.

© UN Photo: Philippe Morard

The webcast team of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva broadcasts conference proceedings via UN Web TV.

© UN Photo: Lai Sanders

A staff member of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva provides technical moderation at a press briefing.

© UN Photo: Philippe Morard

behind the scenes
Chapter 2

CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABILITY
CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABILITY

FOCUSING ON THE LINK BETWEEN MINE ACTION AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

“Addressing the threat represented by explosive remnants of war can have a catalytic and accelerating role in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,” stated the President-designate of the Sixteenth Annual Conference of the High Contracting Parties to Protocol V of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Ignacio Sánchez de León García-Ovies, of Spain, in his introductory remarks at the Meeting of Experts on Explosive Remnants of War.

During the meeting, organized by the Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and held on 22 July, the synergy between mine action and the Sustainable Development Goals was a common thread discussed by all participants. As the expert from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining underlined in his presentation, mine action can help States reach the Sustainable Development Goals and realize the 2030 Agenda, and consequently, the Goals can help measure the impact of the clearance of explosive remnants of war in affected States. For example, clearing agricultural land enables communities to grow crops, thereby improving food security and nutrition, which is part of Goal 2 on zero hunger.

At the Meeting of Experts on Explosive Remnants of War, held at the Palais des Nations.

GENEVA SDG COMMUNITY ANNUAL MEETING: HOW DO WE EFFECTIVELY MOBILIZE NETWORKS FOR THE GOALS?

UN Geneva’s SDG Lab convened the first in-person gathering of the Geneva SDG Community this year since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Community’s annual meeting focused on how to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. It was held at UN Geneva on 15 September, just before Global Goals Week – an annual week of action, awareness and accountability for the Goals.

Through guided exercises and by applying the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Practical Impact Alliance model, members of the Community mapped the different roles that they play in enabling Sustainable Development Goals implementation in three focus areas: leveraging sustainable finance, enhancing the use of quality data on the Goals, and harnessing digital technology for impact. Participants noted the value in identifying “missing” actors in the Community to strengthen collaboration on the Goals.

To inspire the discussions, the SDG Lab invited Nadim Choucair, a founding partner of the Berlin-based 2030 Cabinet, to share his research on what makes collaboration in mission-driven ecosystems – like Geneva’s – work. In addition to Mr. Choucair, representatives of other organizations were invited to present their work on accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals, including the CyberPeace Institute, the Global Governance Centre at the Geneva Graduate Institute, the International Chamber of Commerce, Microsoft and the Fondation genevoise pour l’innovation technologique.

This event – and the practical exercises it involved – made it clear that in-person meetings are important occasions for helping stakeholders make sense of the roles they play in the shared ambition of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
CHAPTER 2

SDG LAB OUTLINES INNOVATIVE WAYS TO FOSTER COLLABORATION FOR THE GLOBAL GOALS AT SHOWCASE 2030

When you work on a topic as broad as the Sustainable Development Goals, how do you meaningfully engage a network of more than 350 sustainable development actors?

In June, Trine Schmidt, the manager of the Geneva SDG Community at UN Geneva’s SDG Lab, shared insights on community and network engagement, at a talk held during Showcase 2030. Organized by the Enterprise for Society Center – a joint venture of the University of Lausanne and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne, among others – Showcase 2030 is an annual gathering that seeks to harness the power of science and technology for the advancement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

What is the SDG Community?

The Geneva SDG Community is a network of individuals working on sustainable development within the rich ecosystem of international organizations and other actors based in Geneva. It brings together more than 350 individuals from 215 organizations, with the aim of leveraging their wide-ranging expertise and skills to strengthen collaboration for the Goals.

Ultimately, the Community makes the unique potential of Geneva more accessible for implementation of the Goals. This is translated into practice through a transformative ecosystem approach that:

- Brings together and aligns the diverse Community
- Mobilizes knowledge and knowledge-brokering
- Fosters innovation for policy and practice

In her talk, entitled “It takes a village: innovative ways of fostering collaboration for the Sustainable Development Goals”, Ms. Schmidt highlighted not only how the Goals offer a framework to address complex issues, but also the importance of taking an “ecosystem” approach to solving them. She underlined the core ingredients required to build a vibrant and engaged community of actors: trust, informality, relevance, ownership and flexibility.

“Networks are dynamic and constantly changing, and to maintain engagement it’s important to be able to adapt to themes and challenges that arise from the community. A key feature of the Geneva SDG Community is that we convene around diverse topics through the lens of SDG enablers: SDG data, digital transformation, and sustainable finance.”

TRINE SCHMIDT
Geneva SDG Community manager
PRESENTING THE SDG LAB TO PERMANENT MISSIONS

Given that 182 permanent missions are accredited to UN Geneva, engaging with Member States on their progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is an important activity for our SDG Lab. That being the case, in July, the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands invited the SDG Lab to present its work to fellow missions. In response, the SDG Lab organized a briefing, complementing its other outreach activities held throughout the year. The event, hosted by the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Paul Bekkers, was attended by representatives of 35 Member States. It enabled the SDG Lab team to speak in greater detail about its activities – including its work on promoting sustainable finance and on topics such as data and digitization, as well as its ecosystem approach to collaborating for the Goals.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: AN ECOSYSTEMS APPROACH

When used properly, digital tools and technologies can act as a catalyst for advancing implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and help deliver results at the global, regional and local levels. Building on this belief and on two previous Geneva SDG Community meetings on digitization, UN Geneva’s SDG Lab convened a workshop on 1 December entitled “Digital transformation for the Sustainable Development Goals: an ecosystems approach”, facilitated by Nadim Choucair, founder of 2030 Cabinet.

Bringing together stakeholders from the UN, academia, the private sector and civil society, as well as government representatives, the workshop posed two questions: How can the expertise of the Geneva SDG Community be leveraged to ensure appropriate use of digital technologies to deliver impact at the local level? And what roles do various actors from the Community play in that mission?

After an introduction to the concept of “digital-ready” local ecosystems, the participants were guided through an exercise to get a clearer picture of the different roles they play in the Geneva ecosystem to advance digital transformation. This helped them to better map their expertise, as well as to identify who might be missing from the room.

It quickly became apparent that if digital tools and technologies are to be useful in accelerating local impact, local context needs to be carefully considered in their use. Therefore, practitioners and digital enablers could benefit from a framework to help bring to the surface the particularities of that local context, so that they can design, implement or select the relevant digital tools and technologies.

The second part of the workshop focused on the local context and actors, and how their roles might be augmented, enabled or impeded by digital technologies. The United Nations Development Programme zero-waste food market project in Panama was used as a case study.

Combining insights from the first and second parts, the workshop moved to a plenary reflection on what practitioners should look out for and consider so that digital technologies are used appropriately to enable local action. Among the elements mentioned were inclusivity and equality, digital governance and security, doubling efforts, matchmaking, private sector engagement and accountability, social listening, self-sustainability financially and in terms of skills, and measurement and intersectionality.

The participants gained new insights and professional connections, and expressed a shared interest in working towards tangible, co-created outcomes. This will require a deep dive into thematic pillars identified during previous Geneva SDG Community meetings regarding the possible implications of the digital transformation. As a next step, the SDG Lab will consider possible formats to guide these discussions further.
MEASURING PROGRESS: LAUNCH OF THE GENEVA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS DATA FORUM

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals represent a tremendous challenge for national statistical offices, which struggle to meet the data demands of the 231 unique indicators included in the Goals’ monitoring infrastructure. According to estimates, not a single country is able to provide data on every indicator, and most countries are only able to offer one or more data points on 55% of the indicators. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 noted that most data on the Goals remains aggregated, making it difficult to assess the experience of vulnerable groups and ensure that no one is left behind.

What are the best practices, challenges, and insights into doing data better for the Goals? Perspectives on this topic were presented on 11 November at the launch of the Geneva Sustainable Development Goals Data Forum. During a roundtable discussion convened by UN Geneva’s SDG Lab and hosted by the Global Governance Centre at the Geneva Graduate Institute, participants from the United Nations system, representing the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the World Health Organization, from civil society organizations, such as the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and the Network for International Policies and Cooperation in Education and Training, from academia, specifically the Geneva Graduate Institute, and from the private sector, namely from Deloitte, shared their views and offered examples.

Speakers noted that Sustainable Development Goals data goes beyond being just a technical and reporting matter. It is about understanding how data informs decision-making to ensure that programmes and initiatives to deliver the Goals leave no one behind. At the same time, as the panelists noted, data is intrinsically linked to questions of transparency, accountability, privacy, and equality, and poses capacity challenges for Governments in responding to these and other concerns.

The Geneva Sustainable Development Goals Data Forum and its November launch event are one of several SDG Lab initiatives, carried out via the Geneva SDG Community, to bring together organizations working on data to foster greater debate and better showcase what international Geneva is doing on this topic which is so central to sustainability.

BUILDING BRIDGES 2022: ALIGNING FINANCE WITH SUSTAINABILITY

With over 2,000 participants and 65 events, Building Bridges Week underlined the need and the urgency for Sustainable Development Goals-oriented investments for climate action, biodiversity and social justice. Held in Geneva from 3 to 6 October, Building Bridges Week comprised a range of activities, including workshops, a networking village and a high-level summit. UN Geneva’s SDG Lab is a founding partner of Building Bridges Week and an active participant.

The Building Bridges movement recognizes that the complexity of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires the active involvement of all actors in society, not least the financial sector. It therefore brings together the United Nations, international organizations, academia, civil society and the financial sector for one ambitious goal: to tackle the world’s most significant challenges by mobilizing and accelerating the flow of financial investments to help achieve sustainable development.

Understanding the integrated nature of the challenges posed by the 2030 Agenda, the SDG Lab convened two workshops as part of Building Bridges Week: “Demystifying risks to SDG investments in African markets” and “Digital transformation of the financial sector: risks and opportunities for SDG financing”. In addition, the SDG Lab provided support to the United Nations Development Programme and AlphaMundi Group for their panel discussion entitled “Investing for change in Africa”.

In the lead-up to and throughout Building Bridges Week, the SDG Lab also focused on keeping the Sustainable Development Goals at the centre of the dialogue, ensuring more diversity of views and voices, and demonstrating tangible and concrete examples of “building bridges” collaborations. Here are some of the results:

We shared a common UN message
United Nations officials delivered a common message throughout Building Bridges Week: that the Sustainable Development Goals must be the framework for a sustainable future that all sectors, including the financial sector, should address and respond to.

We ensured geographic diversity by bringing voices from the Global South to the fore

The SDG Lab, in collaboration with other UN partners such as the United Nations Development Programme, endeavoured to bring different perspectives to Building Bridges Week. The 2030 Agenda is global and, while the Sustainable Development Goals apply to all countries, the need in terms of access to finance is undeniably more significant in the Global South. With this in mind, it was crucial to support participation by stakeholders in the regions facing these challenges. Some key voices at Building Bridges Week were the Chief Executive Officer of the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, Yofi Grant, and the Chief of Staff at MarketForce Kenya, Muthoni Wachira.

We promoted sustainable finance

A series of interviews looked at sustainable finance from the perspectives of four individuals involved in the Pipeline Builder pilot project, a joint initiative of the SDG Lab and the Ground Up Project. The Pipeline Builder, which has been inaugurated in Ghana, aims to streamline and boost financial flows to projects aligned with national sustainable development strategies.

In the lead-up to Building Bridges Week, the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, shared her perspectives on what is at stake for the finance community as it shifts towards sustainable investing, in an article published as part of a special second-anniversary print edition of Geneva Solutions, in collaboration with Geneva newspaper Le Temps.

Participants at an SDG Lab workshop noted that cybersecurity is a key element to ensuring the success of the growing digitalization of the financial sector. Government, regulators, the financial industry and even vulnerable segments of the population need to be involved in co-designing and testing digital products and services.

At the opening of Building Bridges Week, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Rebeca Grynspan, speaking on behalf of the UN system, emphasized that the only way to break through cascading economic crises, inequalities and instability is through smart and bold investments.
BUILDING BRIDGES FOR SUSTAINABLE FINANCE - BEYOND GENEVA

The Building Bridges initiative for sustainable finance, co-founded by UN Geneva’s SDG Lab in 2019, aims to spur action on finance for the Sustainable Development Goals. In November 2022, the SDG Lab partnered with Sustainable Finance Geneva and the International Institute for Sustainable Development to bring a glimpse of the Building Bridges movement to the Development2030 conference in Brussels.

At a panel discussion focused on forging more partnerships between the finance and development communities, sustainable finance practitioners from Geneva shared advice, perspectives and insights on aligning investments with the Sustainable Development Goals. The speakers unpacked sustainable finance and impact investing at a conference where these topics are at an early stage of exploration, particularly for many attendees coming from the humanitarian sector. And with the Development2030 conference scheduled to be held in Geneva in late 2023, there is even greater potential to foster further collaboration for sustainable finance.

“We built a session that was truly in the spirit of Building Bridges. It included speakers from a range of institutions, it broke down complex financial topics in a digestible way, and it aimed to build understanding between the finance community and the sustainable development community. It is our hope that by continually raising awareness and knowledge of sustainable finance, we can encourage more actors to participate in fundamentally transforming the financial system to align with the needs of people and the planet.”

KALI TAYLOR
Sustainable Finance Geneva community manager

DOING OUR PART FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Some 13 years ago, thanks to a lot of innovation and a bit of risk-taking, UN Geneva became the first entity to be connected to GeniLac, Geneva’s thermal network. Through GeniLac, water from Lake Geneva is used to cool conference rooms at the Palais des Nations. This ecologically friendly energy endeavour has proved to be very successful. It paved the way for more buildings on UN Geneva’s campus to be connected, and enabled the Services industriels de Genève (SIG) – Geneva’s local energy provider – to determine the value of upgrading the underlying system. This upgrade is now well under way and SIG hopes to connect the GeniLac system to 350 buildings by 2045, thereby avoiding 70,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually. UN Geneva is also installing infrastructure that will allow it to use GeniLac for heating as well as cooling, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions for heating by 80%, which currently amount to approximately 3,500 tons a year.

In 2022, as part of efforts to promote sustainability, UN Geneva partnered with SIG to showcase to the public the evolution of GeniLac and highlight UN Geneva’s pioneering role in this sustainable energy solution.

NEW ELECTRIC VEHICLES FOR THE SECURITY AND SAFETY SERVICE

This year, UN Geneva’s Security and Safety Service acquired two new fully electric vehicles and began replacing its remaining petrol and diesel vehicles with multipurpose electric vehicles that are suitable for all daily and emergency tasks. This initiative, which involved teams across UN Geneva’s divisions working seamlessly together, is part of our ongoing sustainability efforts.
BIODIVERSITY IN ARIANA PARK

The Palais des Nations stands in the 46-hectare Ariana Park, one of the biggest parks in Geneva. Although construction works and climate change continue to take a toll on the ecosystem of the park both above ground and below ground, UN Geneva is striving to meet the Sustainable Development Goals, notably their environmental targets, and those of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030), by enhancing the park’s resilience and biodiversity.

In 2020 and 2021, 285 new trees were added to the 1,376 existing trees. In 2022, some 500 more trees and shrubs were planted, mostly local species such as maple, oak, holly and dogwood. In total, Ariana Park now boasts nearly three hectares of forest.

UN Geneva is also replacing grass with varieties tested for the local climate, allowing us to save on water, fertilizers and pesticides. Wherever possible, manicured lawns in the park have been converted into prairies that are home to a rich variety of wildflowers and teem with wildlife. A new focus on soil health is also leading to an expansion of the park’s hedges and mulched and bush-covered areas, which promote animal and microbial biodiversity.
UN GENEVA AT THE EUROPEAN ENERGY TRANSITION CONFERENCE

UN Geneva took part in the 23rd European Energy Transition Conference, at Geneva, from 31 May to 2 June. Held in a different European location each year, the event brings together thousands of participants to discuss the transition to renewable energy and adaptation to climate change.

As part of 2050Today, a Geneva climate action initiative, and together with other international organizations, UN Geneva presented the measures implemented to make the Palais des Nations more sustainable, resilient and cost-effective, such as using lake water to cool its buildings.

During the three-day event, the Perception Change Project distributed to the public the booklet 170 Actions to Combat Climate Change and the infographic “International Geneva for affordable and clean energy”. This infographic, made up of contributions from 12 international organizations in Geneva, shows how these organizations are working towards Sustainable Development Goal 7 on affordable and clean energy. The Perception Change Project also contributed activities, aimed particularly at young people, such as an interactive quiz.

Scan the QR code to read the 170 Actions to Combat Climate Change booklet.

Scan the QR code to visit the 170 Actions to Combat Climate Change website.

Scan the QR code to see the “International Geneva for affordable and clean energy” infographic.

#YOU NEED TO KNOW EXHIBITION AT THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION PUBLIC FORUM

UN Geneva partnered with the World Trade Organization (WTO) to hold the #YouNeedToKnow: Making Trade Work for People and Planet exhibition at the WTO Public Forum, from 27 to 30 September. The Public Forum is WTO’s largest annual outreach event, at which participants discuss developments in world trade and propose ways to enhance the multilateral trading system. This year’s event was attended by 3,200 people from around the world.

The #YouNeedToKnow exhibition, which comprised ten stand up banners on the Lakeview Terrace at WTO headquarters, communicated facts and figures about the Sustainable Development Goals and showcased how trade can play a decisive role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This exhibition is part of the #YouNeedToKnow series, an initiative by UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project and the Fondation pour Genève to raise public awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals and suggest daily actions that everyone can take to contribute to a more sustainable world.

The #YouNeedToKnow exhibition at the World Trade Organization
CHAPTER 2

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
SPACE AT GENEVA AIRPORT

A Sustainable Development Goals “pop-up” space was a feature of the East Wing at Geneva Airport throughout 2022, thanks to a partnership between UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project, Geneva Airport, and Lagardère Travel Retail. This collaboration between the public and the private sectors was aimed at reinforcing the public’s awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The space included a kids’ corner, reflecting the role of children as the leaders of the future. Lagardère funded Sustainable Development Goals-branded Caran d’Ache coloured pencils, which were provided to children in the kids’ corner. Publications produced by the Perception Change Project were distributed. Postcards were also given out, so that travellers could write messages to the UN about their personal commitments towards achieving the Goals.

170 ACTIONS TO EMBRACE A SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE

What can each of us do in our daily lives to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals? UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project provides numerous suggestions in its 170 Actions series of booklets.

170 Actions to Embrace a Sustainable Lifestyle, the fourth booklet in the series, was released in 2022. It is centred on achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production. As with the other booklets, 170 Actions to Embrace a Sustainable Lifestyle sets out 170 ideas – ten for each Goal – for action that each one of us can take. It is available in printed form and online, in English and French.

ROAD TO THE WORLD CUP 2022

Ahead of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) Men’s World Cup 2022, UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project highlighted the role that sport can play in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Perception Change Project partnered with the UN Geneva Football Club to support the Permanent Mission of Qatar in organizing a football tournament called “Road to the World Cup 2022”. Eight teams, made up of representatives from the diplomatic community in Geneva, played at the Stadium of Varembé on 22 June to promote tolerance, respect, cooperation and solidarity.
Communicating our work and values

TENTH ANNIVERSARY GENEVA PEACE TALKS

Every year, the Geneva Peace Talks facilitate a global conversation on solutions to some of the most challenging issues of our time, by showcasing inspirational people who are making extraordinary contributions to peace.

On 21 September – International Day of Peace – the Geneva Peace Talks revisited the original theme of the first Talks held in 2013 to ask again: “What does peace mean to you?” The meaning of the word “peace” can indeed vary according to the context. Its significance differs for everyone, and according to their experiences.

At the tenth anniversary Geneva Peace Talks, 12 speakers, artists and musicians from different backgrounds and with different perspectives shared their thoughts and experiences on the significance of peace, inspiring the more than 600 attendees. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, and the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, also delivered remarks, via video message.

As in 2021, the event was held in a hybrid format at the Palais des Nations, and was co-organized by UN Geneva, Interpeace and the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, in partnership with the Permanent Mission of Switzerland.

Scan the QR code to watch a recording of the 2022 Geneva Peace Talks.

The speakers, artists and musicians at the tenth Geneva Peace Talks, in the Palais des Nations.
GENEVA PEACE WEEK

Since 2014, Geneva Peace Week has been a leading annual forum on the international peacebuilding calendar. With the theme of “Peace is possible”, the 2022 Geneva Peace Week continued building on thematic discussions that emerged the previous year, while creating spaces for contextualizing and discussing recent local and geopolitical developments and the impact they have on those working towards a more peaceful and just society.

Geneva Peace Week, from 31 October to 4 November, was an umbrella for more than 40 events held online and in person. It brought together some 100 partner organizations, and citizens, experts and thinkers, to share their experiences, build knowledge and expertise, and empower everyone to work collectively towards peace.

This flagship event was organized by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, the Geneva Graduate Institute and UN Geneva, with the support of Switzerland.

UN GENEVA MARKS THE 50TH SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

The 50th session of the Human Rights Council took place at the Palais des Nations from 13 June to 8 July. The United Nations Information Service in Geneva worked closely with the Human Rights Council to raise the profile of the Council and highlight the events being held during this special anniversary session.

Key events during the 50th session included an urgent debate on the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, and a presentation from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, that highlighted the high numbers of civilian casualties in Ukraine and raised concerns that attacks by the Russian Federation were not complying with international humanitarian law.

Throughout the four-week session, the Information Service produced 48 video and audio clips, which included coverage of presentations by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and 24 special procedure mandate holders, of the work of four investigative bodies, and of the urgent debate on Afghanistan. The video and audio clips were accessed more than 244,000 times. On the Human Rights Council’s Twitter account, the video clips were watched for more than 121,000 minutes.
CHAPTER 3

BRINGING THE WORK OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES TO A GLOBAL AUDIENCE

UN Geneva is committed to helping the world tackle the most difficult issues of our time, but also to providing unparalleled public access to the forums in which they are discussed.

When it comes to human rights, the webcast team at the United Nations Information Service in Geneva enables people anywhere in the world to get trusted information from the source, by broadcasting UN human rights meetings online, in real time. This year, the webcast team was able to step it up a notch by supporting daily multilingual livestreaming of human rights treaty body meetings at Palais Wilson and the Palais des Nations on UN Web TV and creating metadata in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. This increased the public’s ability to follow the dialogues between Member States’ delegations and the human rights experts who comprise the treaty bodies, in full transparency.

Some 400 meetings of the 10 human rights treaty bodies were webcast from Geneva in 2022. These webcasts complement the existing meeting coverage provided by the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, which documents the proceedings of the treaty bodies in concise summaries.

WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY AT UN GENEVA

Since 2012, the General Assembly has officially recognized 21 March as World Down Syndrome Day. The UN raises awareness of Down syndrome globally, and advocates for the full enjoyment of all human rights and participation in society by persons with Down syndrome. This includes education, access to paid, meaningful employment, independent living in local communities, and adequate healthcare.

From 19 to 21 March, between sunset and sunrise, UN Geneva projected the words “World Down Syndrome Day”, in all six official UN languages, onto the Palais des Nations. We also invited staff and visitors to share photos of the illuminations on social media.

UN Geneva also assisted with the inclusion of an opinion piece written by the non-profit organization Down Syndrome International for the UN Today magazine.

UN GENEVA WEARS BLUE FOR AUTISM AWARENESS

In April, UN Geneva’s Disability Inclusion Team held a group photo session at the Palais des Nations for World Autism Awareness Day. It was an opportunity to show support for persons with autism and their caregivers, for whom the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly difficult to navigate. We invited everyone to wear blue – the colour of autism awareness – and to hold banners bearing the words “UNited for Autism”.

The initiative coincided with the last day of a five-week-long session of the Human Rights Council. The Council suspended its meeting to allow its President, Federico Villegas, and other permanent representatives to take part in the photo shoot, reflecting their commitment to promoting the rights of persons with autism through the Council’s work.

UNWEB TV

Scan the QR code to watch a time-lapse video of the photo session.

CELEBRATING BRAILLE

Every January, UN Geneva celebrates World Braille Day, which publicizes the vital ways in which Braille has improved the lives of more than 2.2 million persons around the world who are blind or have a visual impairment.

In partnership with the Geneva-based non-profit organization Association pour le bien des aveugles et malvoyants, UN Geneva’s Disability Inclusion Team held several in-person introductory workshops on using Braille. At the workshops, over 40 UN staff and members of the diplomatic community explored the basic principles of the Braille alphabet, transcribed Braille into written text, and even learned to write their names in Braille with a slate and a stylus.

To help the public understand how Braille is printed and how it is read by end users, we produced a short video about Braille embossing at the UN Geneva print shop.

Scan the QR code to watch or listen to the video with audio description in English.
In 2022, UN Geneva advanced its cooperation with international organizations and Member States, in Geneva and beyond, to counter gender-based disparities and tackle discrimination against women and girls.

In April, UN Geneva hosted an exhibition organized by the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan devoted to the problem of domestic violence. Entitled Ordinary Objects, the exhibition highlighted the need to redouble efforts – at all levels and across all sectors – to end domestic violence, not only on paper but in real life, so that no one can refer to it as an “ordinary thing” in any country of the world. The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, also addressed, via video message, an event on International Women’s Day organized by the Permanent Mission of India, in March.

In September, the Director-General relaunched the “I say no to sexism. What do you say?” campaign at the Palais des Nations. The campaign was initially run in 2018 to create a sexism-free zone at UN Geneva. As recognized by the Director-General, dealing with sexist behaviours and attitudes is as pertinent now as it was four years ago.

For the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November, UN Geneva joined the global campaign 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence and participated in an outreach event at the Place des Nations.

During her official visit to Uzbekistan in December, the Director-General participated in an international conference entitled “Institutionalized Prevention and Response to Gender-based Violence”, where she emphasized that comprehensive empowerment of women and girls was vital to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

At the initiative of the Director-General, two national exhibitions were launched with the theme 17 Faces of Action, in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan, to recognize the important contribution of women in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Following a series of national exhibitions held in other countries, the portraits of women are expected to be displayed at the Palais des Nations in 2023.

Throughout 2022, the Director-General, as an International Gender Champion, raised the issue of gender equality and the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in numerous speeches she delivered and in her interactions with multiple actors.
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY: FROM UN GENEVA TO OUTER SPACE

UN Geneva celebrated International Women’s Day on 8 March with a joint video message from heads of UN entities in Geneva, as well as video profiles of six women working for a sustainable world.

The profiles, which were published across UN social media platforms throughout the week, highlighted this year’s International Women’s Day theme: “Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow”. They recognized the contributions of women around the world who are leading the charge on climate change adaptation, mitigation and response.

One of the videos featured Chinese astronaut and space teacher Wang Yaping from the China Manned Space Agency. Speaking from a six-month mission in outer space, she encouraged women and girls to pursue their space dreams.

The short videos appeared on UN Geneva’s social media channels and were also published on the UN’s main YouTube channel, which has over 2.5 million subscribers.

AN EXCEPTIONAL YEAR FOR UN GENEVA SOCIAL MEDIA

This year was exceptional for UN Geneva’s outreach efforts on social media. In early February, UN Geneva won first prize in the International Organizations category at the Geneva Engage Awards. This annual award is given to the organization with the best growth and engagement in the preceding year. UN Geneva had previously been placed second for two years before winning this year.

Another milestone was achieved in November, when the five UN Geneva social media channels – Twitter in English, Twitter in French, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn – jointly reached 2 million followers. This means that our social media presence is among the largest in Geneva, and makes us one of the leading UN communicators on social media. Managed by a very small team in the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, our social media outreach speaks about the solutions that the UN family and the broader International Geneva bring to today’s global challenges.
Twenty years of Swiss UN membership

On 10 September, Switzerland unveiled a model version of the Palais des Nations in its largest open-air museum, Swissminiatur, to mark the 20th anniversary of its membership in the United Nations. The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, joined the President of Switzerland, Ignazio Cassis, and the President of the Canton of Ticino, Claudio Zoli, in Melide, on the shores of Lake Lugano, for the event. Switzerland became a member of the United Nations on 10 September 2002 after nearly 55 per cent of Swiss citizens voted to join the Organization in a national referendum.

The Director-General described the model version of the Palais as “a reflection of Switzerland’s strong commitment towards multilateralism”, adding that the country had shown unfailing support in areas such as peace, sustainable development and human rights, as well as vital leadership in global health and in digital governance and technologies.

On 6 July, the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, welcomed senior staff officers of the Swiss Armed Forces to the Palais des Nations. The visit by these high-level officials was organized in coordination with the Permanent Mission of Switzerland, as the country celebrated the 20th anniversary of its membership of the UN. The Director-General spoke to the officers about the state of global affairs, emphasizing the importance of making multilateralism more inclusive and effective, and highlighting the important role that International Geneva has to play in reinvigorating multilateralism.

Later, in September, the heads of the 26 cantonal migration services and their teams came to UN Geneva. They met with the Chef de Cabinet of the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, David Chikvaidze, and discussed Switzerland’s approach to migration and integration issues at different levels, and the work of the cantonal migration services in this area.

In November, the Presidents of the two chambers of the Swiss Parliament visited the Palais des Nations. The President of the National Council, Irène Kälin, and the President of the Council of States, Thomas Hefti, were shown the progress made on the renovation works being carried out under the Strategic Heritage Plan.
UN COMMUNICATION LEADERS MEET IN GENEVA

In May, directors of United Nations Information Centres around the world came together in Geneva for the first time. This was made possible with the generous support of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland.

Greeted by the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, and under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications Melissa Fleming, the 25 directors, together with the five UN regional communications officers and senior colleagues of the Department of Global Communications, familiarized themselves with Geneva-based international organizations over the course of a two-day programme.

They then met at the Palais des Nations for three days of internal discussions, as well as valuable exchanges of views with representatives of UN Geneva. The meeting provided many opportunities to share ideas and experiences, and helped these information leaders strengthen their capacity to communicate constructive solutions for our world’s problems.

VISITORS’ SERVICE WELCOMES 24,000 PEOPLE BACK TO THE PALAIS DES NATIONS

After the cessation of guided tours and restrictions on visits to the Palais des Nations during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Visitors’ Service at UN Geneva reopened at the start of the year. Although work on the Strategic Heritage Plan meant that many buildings were closed, the Visitors’ Service adapted its activities and welcomed around 24,000 people to the Palais des Nations through the course of 2022.

The Chief of the Visitors’ Service, Nicole Dawe, said: “Being able to reopen, and run guided tours, protocol tours and even special events, despite these challenges, allows people from all over the world to continue to visit the United Nations in Geneva and learn about the Organization’s activities to maintain world peace and foster international relations and development. We are also delighted to once again be able to showcase the uniqueness of the Palais des Nations and its beautiful 20th century architecture, situated in the stunning Ariana Park.”

Scan the QR code to book a tour of the Palais des Nations.

People walk in the grounds of the Palais des Nations.
ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL BAZAAR AT THE PALAIS DES NATIONS


The Bazaar is a colourful and festive celebration of cultural diversity, which is the secret of its success. More than 60 countries were represented this year, selling traditional food and products for a good cause: the proceeds from the Bazaar fund Guild projects that assist vulnerable women and children around the world. The event was opened by the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, who stressed her support for the Guild and its valuable charitable work.

Many countries presented their traditional cuisine at the International Bazaar.

© UNITED NATIONS WOMEN’S GUILD GENEVA

The International Bazaar featured cultural performances throughout the day.

© UNITED NATIONS WOMEN’S GUILD GENEVA

In addition to culinary delights, countries sold handicrafts and other products to raise money for the Guild’s charitable work supporting women and children in need.

© UNITED NATIONS WOMEN’S GUILD GENEVA

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, opens the 2022 International Bazaar at the Palais des Nations.

© UNITED NATIONS WOMEN’S GUILD GENEVA

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, tours the 2022 International Bazaar.
HARD CHOICES: A SPECIAL UNTV SERIES ON THE GLOBAL COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

To highlight the immense pressures that the global cost-of-living crisis has had on the world’s most vulnerable people – and why they need the international community’s help – the Department of Global Communications and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development teamed up with international broadcaster Deutsche Welle.

Under this partnership, UNTV Geneva produced a mini-series entitled Hard Choices, comprising four special reports. Each feature is set in a different country – Peru, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and Ukraine – and highlights the stories of those most affected by the skyrocketing prices of food, fuel, and fertilizer.

Viewers learn how the armed conflict in Ukraine has affected not only Ukrainian farmers and citizens, but also families and small businesses all over the world. Although exports of Ukrainian grain resumed in August after the signing of the UN-backed Black Sea Grain Initiative, relief remains elusive for many.

In one episode, Tunisians explain with frustration how they have struggled to buy essentials including eggs, coffee, vegetables and milk, and how things have become worse since the armed conflict in Ukraine began. Prices are so high that “it’s like the world is on fire”, an exasperated shopper told UNTV Geneva.

Food and fertilizers from the Russian Federation have also had trouble reaching world markets, with potentially serious consequences for upcoming harvests in many parts of the world.

The films support the work of the UN’s Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance, by revealing the human consequences of this global crisis and the need for common action.

The series will continue to shed light on different facets of climate action as the international community mobilizes to take forward the outcomes of the 2022 Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, also known as COP 27.

CLIMATE & CONSEQUENCE

In March, UNTV Geneva launched a new video series for social media: Climate & Consequence. The series features leaders and experts discussing the impacts of climate change on people’s lives and highlighting solutions. Interviewees, including renowned architect Lord Norman Foster, and the President of the 76th session of General Assembly, Abdulla Shahid, came in to UNTV Geneva’s studio to share their insights and to appeal for climate action. The initial topics covered in the series included climate change from the perspective of small island developing States, human rights, the world of work, and urban planning and design.

The short videos appeared on UN Geneva’s social media channels. Several were also published on the UN’s main YouTube channel, which has more than 2.5 million subscribers. The series will continue to shed light on different facets of climate action as the international community mobilizes to take forward the outcomes of the 2022 Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, also known as COP 27.
SEASON THREE OF THE GENEVA WITNESS SERIES

This year, UNTV Geneva produced season three of Geneva Witness, which was shown in June by Swiss broadcaster Radio Télévision Suisse and French network TV5Monde.

The series features people who pass through the Palais des Nations and who work in the fields of humanitarian action, human rights, and the search for peace. By giving a voice to those committed to creating a more sustainable world, these mini-documentaries highlight the role of the United Nations in Geneva as a major platform for multilateralism and international cooperation.

This season we met young sustainable fashion activist Lucia Kirchner, coral farmer Titouan Bernicot, music producer and activist Chmba Ellen Chilemba, director of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum Pascal Hufschmid and press cartoonist Patrick Chappatte.

SHARKS, SLUMS AND SUSTAINABILITY: CINÉ-ONU HIGHLIGHTS GLOBAL ISSUES

From the last remaining Holocaust survivors to the worrying decline of sharks globally, from the impact of desertification in Africa to the effects of systemic racism in our societies, from the work of two midwives in Myanmar to the right to education for children living in Nairobi’s slums — these are just some of the topics that Ciné-ONU Geneva explored this year during eight virtual and in-cinema screenings aimed at awakening consciences and raising awareness of the UN’s work.

At the start of the year, the COVID-19 pandemic forced Ciné-ONU to continue connecting with its audience via online screenings; some discussions were held on Facebook Live, reaching thousands of viewers. Then, as the epidemiological situation in Switzerland improved, Ciné-ONU returned to the cinema, in an effort to bring audiences back into theatres that had suffered during the pandemic.

Ciné-ONU is organized by the United Nations Information Service in Geneva in partnership with the International Geneva Welcome Centre and with the support of UN entities, permanent missions and non-governmental organizations.

CAN VIDEOS CHANGE OUR WORLD FOR THE BETTER?

What kind of impact can videos have on our lives and the state of the world? And how can people and organizations use creative videos to tell stories, change minds and influence behaviours?

In honour of World Creativity and Innovation Day, celebrated annually on 21 April, UN Geneva gathered together a diverse panel of media experts and content creators to discuss the role of videos in advocacy and sustainable development. Our hybrid panel discussion featured representatives from the World Economic Forum and the social media team of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, as well as an environmental educator and TikTok content creator.
PODCASTING AT UN GENEVA: BROADCASTING OUR WORK TO A WIDER AUDIENCE

The podcasts of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva reinforce the Organization’s outreach efforts, spotlighting issues and bringing the key messages of the UN to another platform. Scripted, recorded and edited at the Palais des Nations, English-language podcast UN Catch-up Dateline Geneva and French-language podcast ONU Info Genève offer up the week’s biggest stories from International Geneva, including from UN agencies and their partners. The podcasts are available weekly via social media platforms and UN News.

Among this year’s highlights on ONU Info Genève was a rare chance to hear Nobel Peace Prize laureate Denis Mukwege in an interview with host Alexandre Carette, who also sought the opinions of top UN officials, ambassadors, leaders for change and young activists. Meanwhile, on UN Catch-up Dateline Geneva, Daniel Johnson and co-host Solange Beheteguy Corés covered everything from the impact of the armed attack by the Russian Federation against Ukraine to a deep-sea coral reef discovery in the South Pacific.

EXPLORING MULTILATERALISM

UN Geneva continued to explore the role and impact of multilateralism via podcasts and events in which a diverse set of contributors shared their views.

The Next Page is a series of podcasts that feature diplomats, academics and historians engaging in conversations about multilateralism. This year, in 23 episodes, we delved into many different aspects of multilateralism, and its significance to people globally. The podcasts were distributed worldwide, with downloads in more than 100 countries. Some episodes were also included in university curricula in Switzerland.

For the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, on 24 April, UN Geneva released a series of videos featuring permanent representatives from the five UN regional groups who spoke about the role of multilateral diplomacy in today’s world. On 29 June, UN Geneva held a hybrid roundtable discussion to examine the challenges of multilateralism from the time of the League of Nations to the United Nations of today, in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of France.

On 12 and 13 May, a hybrid academic conference was held to mark 100 years since the establishment of the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation of the League of Nations, which paved the way for the creation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Scholars from over 15 countries presented 29 papers on the current state of research on intellectual cooperation.

This conference was complemented later by an episode of HiSTORIES on the centenary of intellectual cooperation, broadcast online to a wider audience on 13 October. The participants were able to ask questions to internationally recognized specialists and learn more on this topic.
UN MUSEUM GENEVA TURNS 75

2022 was a special year for the UN Museum Geneva: it marked its 75th anniversary and welcomed nearly 25,000 visitors from around the globe. The Museum was included in the guided tour of the Palais des Nations. Also, tailored visits were provided for permanent missions, delegates, UN staff and university students, by the UN Library and Archives Geneva.

The Museum features iconic, unique documents that trace the history of multilateralism in Geneva, from the establishment of the League of Nations to today’s activities of the United Nations. It displays archives that made history, such as the speech delivered by Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia at the League Assembly in 1936, the Nansen Passport, and the first drafts of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Visitors can also discover some unexpected documents, such as Le Corbusier’s architectural proposal for the Palais de Nations, a letter from Alfred Nobel about the creation of the Nobel Peace Prize, and a report about the first use of “telephonic interpretation” in 1930. Visitors have expressed their admiration and surprise, demonstrating their interest in multilateralism and its history.

The Museum is a formidable means of outreach and underscores the importance of preserving, making available and explaining the wealth of documents on the history of multilateralism kept by UN Geneva. By showing how Geneva became a hub for multilateral cooperation over many decades, the Museum provides a unique perspective on multilateralism as it has evolved, its multifaceted nature and its impact on our daily lives.

CRADLE OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

UN Geneva, through the UN Library and Archives Geneva, contributes to knowledge-sharing on multilateralism by authoring and editing literature on the history of international organizations.

In April 2022, the third volume of the United Nations Historical Series was published, entitled Genève, berceau de la Société des Nations (Geneva: Cradle of the League of Nations). The designation of Geneva as seat of the League of Nations in 1919 was a historic moment for the city, for Switzerland and for the evolution of multilateralism. The book explores how Geneva has become the hub of a unique multilateral experience that stretches from the League of Nations to today’s United Nations.

This publication is the result of historical research carried out in the archives of the League of Nations, which are managed by the UN Library and Archives Geneva. The archives themselves are also now entirely digitized and available online on the UN Archives Geneva platform.

PERCEPTION CHANGE PROJECT AWARD AT VISIONS DU RÉÉL

The city of Nyon, Switzerland, hosted the Visions du Réel film festival in April. UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project and the Diplomatic Club of Geneva presented the Perception Change Project Award to recognize a film that sheds light on current issues that will define the world of tomorrow. The award went to the documentary Children of the Mist by Vietnamese filmmaker Hà Lê Dềm. Her film illustrates clashes between ancient customs and modern values through the experiences of a young girl of the Hmong ethnic minority in northern Viet Nam.
ININAUGURATION OF THE L’OISEAU BLEU CANVASSES

On 21 June, an event was held at the Palais des Nations to inaugurate the beautiful big L’Oiseau bleu artworks by Japanese photographer Yoshinori Mizutani. Representing Sustainable Development Goal 17 on partnerships for the Goals, the two canvasses had been installed on the temporary conference facility, Tempus, thanks to a collaboration between UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project and Collectif 1m83 Art. During the inauguration, which was held in the presence of the Mayor of Geneva, Marie Barbey-Chappuis, the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, presented the project to the public and highlighted the artworks’ symbolism of flying towards a better future.

GenevaIMPACT WEBSITE

In 2022, UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project published a new website: GenevaIMPACT. It gives easy access to valuable information by and about the international organizations based in Geneva. With over 200 links to audio and video material, datasets, annual reports, and campaigns, this unique database informs the public about the work carried out in Geneva, presented in a user-friendly and time-saving way.

The GenevaIMPACT website has a bright, user-friendly interface to make information about International Geneva more accessible.

UN GENEVA AT THE LARGEST CAREER FAIR IN SWITZERLAND

In November, UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project took part in the Cité des métiers expo alongside its partners the Eduki Foundation and the Fondation pour Genève. Held every three years, Cité des métiers is the largest event in Switzerland dedicated to careers and education.

The Perception Change Project promoted career opportunities at the international organizations in Geneva, and ran information sessions featuring representatives of UN Geneva, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN). Participants learned about the skills and competencies needed, and educational paths to pursue, for career opportunities with the UN and its partners.
RETURN OF THE INTERNATIONAL LAW SEMINAR

After a two-year postponement due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the 56th session of the International Law Seminar took place from 4 to 22 July at the Palais des Nations. Twenty-eight participants of various nationalities and from different regional groups took part in the programme.

Participants attended the plenary meetings of the International Law Commission and specially arranged lectures by Commission members and international law scholars, and visited international organizations. They took part in working groups on the topics of “reparation to individuals for gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law” and “subsidiary means for the determination of rules of law”.

What is the International Law Seminar?

The International Law Seminar takes place on an annual basis. It is designed for postgraduate students of international law, and young scholars, lawyers and government officials working in the field of international law, to widen their knowledge both of the work of the International Law Commission and of the codification and progressive development of international law. It also provides an opportunity for lawyers coming from different legal systems and cultures to exchange views regarding items on the agenda of the Commission.

UN Geneva held the first session of the International Law Seminar in 1965, in connection with the annual session of the International Law Commission. More than 1,300 young professionals in the field of international law have participated since then.
“Be ambitious!” was the message from the President of the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, Leonardo Bencini, of Italy, to a group of over 30 youth representatives. During the Review Conference, which took place from 28 November to 16 December at the Palais des Nations, the youth representatives presented Mr. Bencini with 20 recommendations to strengthen the Convention.

The youth recommendations are a result of the Youth for Biosecurity Initiative of the Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA). They were produced by representatives from a network of youth organizations supported by UNODA. The recommendations built on the Youth Declaration for Biosecurity – released at the Meeting of States Parties to the Biological Weapons Convention in November 2021 – which also came out of the Youth for Biosecurity Initiative.

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YOUNG ACTIVISTS SUMMIT

Each year, the Young Activists Summit honours the outstanding achievements of young people who are working to make the world a better place, while also seeking to empower other young change-makers. Bringing together participants from all over the world, the Summit champions the crucial principles of peace, cultural tolerance and global cooperation.

On 2 December, UN Geneva, working with the non-governmental organization devtv, Radio Télévision Suisse and its Genève Vision platform, and the Geneva Graduate Institute, hosted the fourth Summit. Young people from 134 countries took part.

Six young activists were honoured at a live event at the Palais des Nations, which was followed by live conversations on Instagram. This year’s Summit reached more than 8.2 million people around the world on social media.

The young activists featured were:
- 24-year-old Pashtana Durrani from Afghanistan, who strives to give girls access to education
- 19-year-old Zulaikha Patel from South Africa, who fights against racism
- 21-year-old Sebastián Benfeld from Chile, who is committed to a pollution-free environment and protecting environmental defenders
- 22-year-old C’est Prévue Emmy Lusila from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who protects and provides shelter for children in street situations
- 26-year-old Keely Cat-Wells from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, who works to achieve disability inclusion in the entertainment industry and thereby to change mindsets
- 21-year-old Sameer Jha from the United States of America, who is working to make classrooms safer for LGBTQ+ students

“...we, the adults, the older generation, came here to learn from you, young activists. To listen to you. And to understand how we can work together.”

TATIANA VALOVAYA
Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva
YOUNG LEADERS AND PARTNERSHIPS AT UN GENEVA

On 2 September, more than 1,000 young people from some 140 countries participated in the joint opening session of the annual summits of the World Economic Forum Global Shapers and the Forum of Young Global Leaders. A hybrid event organized by UN Geneva and the World Economic Forum, it was at the same time one of the largest in-person events to take place at the Palais des Nations since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. UN Geneva had also previously hosted the 2016 and 2017 annual summits.

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, and the Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, Professor Klaus Schwab, addressed the high-energy audience and opened a panel discussion that highlighted key issues such as sustainable development, climate change and the important role of youth in the work of the United Nations. The panelists included Managing Director at the World Economic Forum, Adrian Monck, the Director of Partnerships at the Institute for Change Leaders, Maya Roy, the Regional Director for Africa at the International Committee of the Red Cross, Patrick Youssef, the Founder and Executive Chair of Jango Capital, Fatoumata Ba, and the Co-Founder and Managing Partner of Beyond the Billion and The Billion Dollar Fund for Women, Sarah Chen-Spellings. After the panel discussion, Professor Schwab engaged the audience in an interactive discussion.

The Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, Professor Klaus Schwab, and the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, during the annual summits of the World Economic Forum Global Shapers and the Forum of Young Global Leaders, at the Palais des Nations.

“Youth is a great source of inspiration for the United Nations, and we need your courage and determination more than ever to address today’s challenges.”

TATIANA VALOVAYA
Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva

Strengthening the UN-Forum Strategic Partnership Framework

Through the UN–Forum Strategic Partnership Framework, signed in 2019, UN Geneva maintains close ties to the World Economic Forum. In 2022, the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, continued to be an active member of the Global Future Council on Frontier Risks, an interdisciplinary knowledge network dedicated to promoting innovative thinking to shape a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future. She also participated in the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, which took place from 22 to 26 May in Davos, Switzerland, where she contributed to various discussions around the theme “Working Together, Restoring Trust.”
CHAPTER 4

EXPANDING THE CONVERSATION ON MULTILATERALISM: DIRECTOR-GENERAL AT SORBONNE UNIVERSITY

In March, the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, delivered a lecture at the prestigious Grand Amphithéâtre of Sorbonne University in Paris as part of UN Geneva’s outreach activities. During the event, which was coordinated by UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project, the Director-General addressed current global challenges and stressed the importance of effective multilateralism. Her conversation with 150 students highlighted the global role played by the Geneva ecosystem, and its high number of international actors working for peace, rights and well-being.

SCOUT’S HONOUR: UN GENEVA JOINS SWISS JAMBOREE

UN Geneva proudly participated in the Swiss Scouts’ national jamboree from 23 July to 6 August, in the Goms Valley in the Canton of Valais.

After a global pandemic that wreaked havoc on economies and saw inequalities spike, the opportunity was perfect for rekindling discussions about human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals with youth from every corner of our host country.

Staff from UN system organizations met young people face to face, talked about their work, and raised awareness about the need to defend and protect human rights as the foundation for achieving the Goals.

Close to 700 scouts attended a workshop on human rights, delivered in German, French and Italian, which focused on diversity and inclusion – one of the themes of the jamboree.

On the campsite’s main boulevard, a United Nations stand welcomed hundreds of scouts and other guests each day, who were eager to learn about the Goals and how to achieve them.

Geneva scout Lucia said that scouting could really contribute to the Goals. “We have a lot we can do to help. If we all just grab a project, I’m sure we can really push the Goals forward. It’s very important we work from our local communities, while always thinking globally,” she said.

Thomas Hirt, from the jamboree organizing committee, said the UN’s presence was appreciated because of the values the two organizations share. “The Goals are really close to our hearts as scouts. We are close to nature, we want to live with nature, and we want to live together in peace. We were honoured to have the UN to answer young people’s questions and help them learn through various activities, because that’s also at the core of scouting – learning by doing.”

Scan the QR code to watch a short video about the UN’s participation in the Swiss Scouts’ national jamboree.
UN@SCHOOL AND YOUNG REPORTERS AT THE UN

UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project, together with the Eduki Foundation, organizes the youth outreach programme UN@School to help students better understand the work of the United Nations.

Launched on the 75th anniversary of the UN in 2020 as a series of conversations between students and representatives of Geneva-based international organizations, UN@School has continued to bring International Geneva closer to students. This year, 229 students from Swiss schools engaged with the programme, in nine sessions. The students, aged from 17 to 19, heard presentations and took part in discussions with representatives of International Geneva on topics such as the UN system, the Human Rights Council, disinformation and Internet governance.

In collaboration with the Eduki Foundation and the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, the Perception Change Project also held two sessions of the Young Reporters at the UN programme, during which 65 students visited the Palais des Nations and played the role of journalists, interviewing experts from international organizations.

A NEW PUBLICATION ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: START DOING GOOD

How can we make the world more sustainable? How can we solve global challenges? How can each and every one of us make a difference?

These are all important questions which are answered in the rhyming children’s book Start Doing Good. The book makes it easy for children to learn the Sustainable Development Goals in the same way as they learn their ABCs.

Start Doing Good was produced as a partnership between UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project, author Mara Catherine Harvey and illustrator María José Gajate Molina. The book is available as a printed version and online in both English and French.

In October, Start Doing Good was presented by the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, to students aged 6 and 7 at the International School of Geneva. Following a reading by the author, the students spoke with the Director-General about the Sustainable Development Goals and small actions that everyone can take to make their life more sustainable. Every student also received a copy of the publication.
UNITED FOR DISABILITY INCLUSION, THROUGH THE EYES OF CHILDREN

This year, to celebrate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, UN Geneva reached out to children aged from 8 to 15 in the local Geneva area and invited them to take part in a drawing competition with the theme “Making a world that includes persons with disabilities.”

Thirty entries were selected to feature in an exhibition being held at UN Geneva for the month of December. The winning artists and their parents and teachers attended an awards ceremony with the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, the Director of the Division of Conference Management at the UN Office at Geneva and focal point for disability inclusion, Kira Kruglikova, the President of the Human Rights Council, Federico Villegas, and Council of State of Geneva member Thierry Apothéloz. After the ceremony, guests were invited to a reception kindly funded by the Permanent Mission of Saudi Arabia, followed by a guided tour of the Palais des Nations.

END-OF-YEAR EXHIBITION OF CHILDREN’S DRAWINGS

UN Geneva’s Perception Change Project held an art exhibition at the Palais des Nations. The works on display had been created by children as part of two earlier initiatives: the “Draw a better future together” project by the Perception Change Project and the “Making a world that includes persons with disabilities” exhibition by UN Geneva’s Disability Inclusion Team. The exhibition featured 55 artworks as part of efforts to promote inclusion and showcase children’s ideas for a better future for all.
Chapter 5

CELEBRATING MULTILINGUALISM
AT UN GENEVA, MULTILINGUALISM IS PART OF OUR DNA

Multilingualism is a core value of the United Nations and one of the Secretary-General’s highest priorities. UN Geneva prides itself on fostering a workplace that is functionally bilingual in English and French, but our linguistic diversity goes even further: collectively, our staff speak nearly 70 mother tongues! Our Multilingualism Action Team supports and promotes multilingualism at UN Geneva. The Team meets quarterly to propose concrete actions, review progress made, and provide advice to the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva.

In June and July, to showcase the multilingual spirit of UN Geneva and to promote new internal resources that we have developed for staff to communicate effectively in multiple languages, we installed a photo booth in a busy area of the Palais des Nations and invited all passers-by to take part in impromptu photo shoots.

People at the photo booth spoke an array of languages.

Delegates also took part in the photo booth.

A participant in the multilingualism photo shoot.

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, shows the languages she speaks, in the multilingualism photo booth.

The Director of the Division of Conference Management at the UN Office at Geneva and focal point for multilingualism, Kira Kruglikova, holds up signs showing the languages she speaks.

Scan the QR code to meet some of the members of UN Geneva’s Multilingualism Action Team.

Scan the QR code to see all the photos from the multilingualism photo booth.
In July, we also relaunched the Director-General’s Multilingualism Champions initiative, which seeks to bring together the heads of UN entities in Geneva to advance multilingualism within their organizations. Around 30 senior officials took part in an afternoon of brainstorming and dialogue, during which they discussed existing challenges and explored potential solutions and opportunities to share best practices.

Scan the QR code to see photos from the relaunch of the Multilingualism Champions initiative.

The Permanent Representative of Switzerland, Jürg Lauber, speaks at the relaunch of the Multilingualism Champions initiative.

A SOBERING CONVERSATION ABOUT LANGUAGE LOSS ON INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

An estimated 40% of the global population do not have access to education in the language they speak or understand best. As education and resources for rare and endangered languages continue to falter—a trend exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic—linguistic diversity is under serious threat.

To highlight the importance of preserving linguistic diversity, and the roles that the UN can play in this area, UN Geneva hosted an online discussion on International Mother Language Day, 21 February. Featured speakers included the Chair of Linguistics and Endangered Languages at the University of Adelaide, Australia, Ghil’ad Zuckermann, research fellow in the Department of African and Ethiopian Studies at the University of Hamburg, Germany, Sheena Shah, and the Director of the Division of Conference Management and Chair of the Multilingualism Action Team at the UN Office at Geneva, Kira Kruglikova.

Scan the QR code to watch a recording of the event.

Panellists Ghil’ad Zuckermann (top left) and Sheena Shah (top right) speak at an online event organized by UN Geneva for International Mother Language Day.

Workshop at the relaunch of the Multilingualism Champions Initiative.
CELEBRATING THE SIX OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF THE UNITED NATIONS

This year, UN Geneva continued to promote multilingualism by celebrating the six official languages of the United Nations.

French Language Day – 20 March

There are more than 300 million French speakers around the world. At the United Nations, French is one of the two working languages of the Secretariat and is embedded in all our activities and official documents. This year, to celebrate French Language Day, staff, consultants, members of the diplomatic community in Geneva and students in UN Geneva’s language classes were invited to take part in a creative writing competition. Participants were challenged to write a short text related to the theme of “surprise”. The winners were invited to read their creations during an online awards ceremony.

Chinese Language Day – 20 April

UN Geneva celebrated Chinese Language Day with an online video festival on the theme of “China Chic”, featuring original content and performances contributed by creative people from around the world. The event was organized in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of China and China Media Group. It was introduced by the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, with remarks by the Permanent Representative of China, Chen Xu, and the President of China Media Group, Shen Haixiong.

English Language Day – 23 April

This year, UN Geneva marked English Language Day with a malapropism competition – a celebration of the language and all its quirks and diversity. English, in common with every language, can be fertile ground for humorous mistakes. A malapropism is a word that is used incorrectly in place of a similar-sounding one, often with amusing results. Staff and the wider public were invited to submit their favourite linguistic mix-ups. An online award ceremony was an opportunity to commend the participants and discuss English comical linguistics.

The winning malapropisms were:

“Bring your food vultures to pick up your supplies!”

“I mean that’s just the popcorn in the kettle black.”

“Now you have arrived at your final destiny! Please take your belongings with you and get off the bus. Thank you and we hope to see you again soon!”

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Russian Language Day – 6 June

This year’s celebration of Russian Language Day was centred around the Russian language in music and culture, and featured a livestreamed marathon of performances. The participants included the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Gennady Gatilov, the Governor of Sverdlovsk Region in the Russian Federation, Yevgeny Kuyvashev, and personalities from the arts community.

Theatrical performance in celebration of Russian Language Day

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Spanish Language Week - October

Spanish Language Week was celebrated in October with a diverse programme of public activities. It included an evening of Latin American music with Al Toque Mestizo, a Geneva-based group that explores its Latin American roots through the sounds, rhythms and poetry of Peruvian music, with accompanying dancers. The concert got the audience on their feet as they danced to the Latin beats in Room XX of the Palais des Nations, which had previously been renovated through a donation from Spain.

The concert was followed by the opening of two photography exhibitions, Cordel, Trashumancia Viva by Antolín Avezuela and España con Otro Enfoque by Rodolfo Romero, which featured remarks by both artists. The exhibitions remained on display at the Palais des Nations for staff and visitors to enjoy for most of October.

UN Geneva also worked together with a local museum, the Musée d’art et d’histoire, and with the group Palabras+, to host a two-day event that celebrated the Spanish language through literary reflection and discussions.

Arabic Language Day - 18 December

UN Geneva celebrated Arabic Language Day with a series of public events at the Palais des Nations, which included a panel discussion with award-winning Arabic-language authors, a poetry reading, a musical performance, a film showing traditional shadow puppetry, a calligraphy workshop, and special dishes at the UN Geneva cafeteria.

Staff and visitors were able to explore two exhibitions on display: Threads of Language, a Palestinian embroidery exhibition with an accompanying video, and Drawing a Language, a calligraphy exhibition by Maryam Altamimi. Ms. Altamimi also led an introductory workshop on calligraphy at which attendees learned to write their names in Arabic.

A public-facing hybrid event featured a panel discussion with the novelist and winner of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (often referred to as the “Arabic Booker”) Hoda Barakat, and the author, editor, and director of the Sindbad collection at Actes Sud, Farouk Mardam-Bey. It also included a shadow puppetry theatre performance by the author and founder and executive director of the Egyptian Traditional Aragoz and Shadow Puppetry Festival, Nabil Bahjat, a poetry reading by Manaf Mohamed, and a live musical performance by Zaid Tayem (playing the oud) and Mohamed Assi.

UN GENEVA HOLDS ITS FIRST-EVER CELEBRATION OF KISWAHILI

With over 200 million speakers across East and Southern Africa, Kiswahili and its various dialects are a powerful lingua franca and cultural connector across the African continent.

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), at its 41st session, in 2021, proclaimed 7 July each year to be World Kiswahili Language Day – the first African language to be recognized in this way by the United Nations.

This July, in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of the United Republic of Tanzania, UN Geneva held its first-ever annual celebration of World Kiswahili Language Day at the Palais des Nations, as part of its Cultural Activities Programme. The Director of the Division of Conference Management at the UN Office at Geneva, Kira Kruglikova, and the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, Maimuna Tarishi, opened the event. The festivities featured Tanzanian cuisine and refreshments, and a film screening, books and cultural products in Kiswahili.
THE DELIGHTS AND QUIRKS OF THE ROMANI LANGUAGE

In November, UN Geneva celebrated the World Day of Romani Language. This day has been officially recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as an opportunity to promote the preservation of Romani language and culture, to develop a greater understanding of the customs and traditions of the Romani people across the world, and to celebrate multilingualism and multiculturalism.

At the online event hosted by the UN Library and Archives Geneva, Juice Vamosi, a Romani language expert and special guest speaker, explained the interlinkages between Romani language and history; the existence of Romani loanwords in English, German and many other Indo-European languages; pachiv, a form of customary law that is followed by many Romani people; and the importance of including marginalized languages and communities in today’s public discourse.

The day continued with a high-level panel discussion, featuring representatives from the World Federation of the Deaf, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Ministry of Culture of Panama.

In honour of the International Day of Sign Languages, we also asked UN Geneva staff to sign the phrase “Sign languages unite us” in different sign languages.

For the more than 70 million deaf persons in the world, sign languages – fully fledged natural languages that are equal in status to spoken languages – represent not just a communication tool, but a crucial part of their linguistic identity and cultural diversity.

On the International Day of Sign Languages, UN Geneva partnered with the World Federation of the Deaf and the Swiss Federation of the Deaf to design a full day of cultural activities at the Palais des Nations.

The day began with a sign language pop-up café, sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Australia, the Bahamas, Lithuania and Saudi Arabia. Interacting with videos on a touchscreen, participants explored different sign languages from around the world, and used sign language to order coffee and snacks.

Next was Hem, a theatrical performance in International Sign by the group Riksteatern, which centres on the unique challenges facing deaf women and girls who become refugees.
UN Geneva’s Language Training Programme has experienced a radical transformation in the last few years. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, working arrangements have evolved and training has moved online. In 2022, the Language Training Programme continued delivering on its commitment to adapt to current and future needs in light of the so-called “next normal”.

Against this background, UN Geneva launched a comprehensive survey about its Language Training Programme to ascertain and analyse stakeholder requirements in terms of the objectives, content and format of the courses for the six official UN languages. The results showed that course participants desired maintaining online language training strongly, and reopening the face-to-face courses to a lesser extent. A third option also emerged: hybrid courses, which the Language Training Programme will study in the coming months, all the while continuing to develop content and to align its training with the United Nations Language Framework.

UN Geneva partnered with local educational institution Ifage to launch a pilot course in French Sign Language for interested staff, which ran from April to July. The course covered the basics of French Sign Language and introduced the deaf community – culturally, socially and historically.

The course contents included both the theory and the practice of sign language, focusing on the nuances of French Sign Language in particular. Participants praised the high quality of instruction provided by the “exceptional” teacher, Mireille Deschenaux, who is strongly committed to the teaching of sign languages.

Sign language is inseparable from realizing and advancing the human rights of deaf persons, who are a cultural and linguistic minority in many parts of the world. Lack of accessibility can inhibit deaf persons from participating in society, having equal opportunities, and sharing and learning information. While there have been advances in communication, such as subtitling, closed captioning and sign language interpreting, over 70 million deaf persons globally live in a world with accessibility challenges.

Mainstreaming sign languages within UN Geneva’s staff not only supports a more inclusive workplace, it also contributes to a more inclusive multilateralism.

“For me, it’s about inclusion. Not that I have deaf persons working with me on my team, but you don’t necessarily need deaf persons to learn the language, you can do it the other way around!”

MIGUEL
course participant
Chapter 6
SUPPORTING OUR STAFF
COMBATING RACISM AT UN GENEVA

In early 2022, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, adopted the Strategic Action Plan on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All in the United Nations Secretariat. UN Geneva also made the fight against racism and racial discrimination in the workplace one of its priorities. The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, established the Working Group on Addressing Racism in the Workplace, and in March she appointed an anti-racism advocate for UN Geneva.

The Working Group on Addressing Racism in the Workplace submitted recommendations to the Director-General in line with the Strategic Action Plan. The recommendations took into account staff input collected through staff focus groups and covered a range of issues such as recruitment and selection, performance management, formal and informal recourse, accountability and training. These recommendations will be implemented gradually at UN Geneva.

A number of events were held and initiatives launched to raise awareness about these topics. These included a video series that featured staff sharing their personal experiences with racism and racial discrimination. The videos were sent to staff and made publicly available.

It is clear that starting a conversation about these issues has already shifted mindsets. UN Geneva will continue moving forward in addressing and eradicating the scourge of racism and racial discrimination in the workplace.

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD: UN GENEVA ADDRESSES IMPLICIT BIAS AND STEREOTYPE THREAT

This year, UN Geneva held two workshops focused on enhancing the workplace environment. John Antonakis, a scientist from the Faculty of Business and Economics of the University of Lausanne, spoke about how subtle bias, such as bias regarding appearance, gender, age, ethnicity and more, can enter into judgment calls, and about the effect this has on career growth and other outcomes. Researcher Caryn Block, of Columbia University, explored the concept of stereotype threat, and how it affects an individual’s performance in organizational settings.

The two workshops shared the same objectives: to provide an understanding of how implicit bias and stereotype threat can create obstacles and challenges within the workplace and to equip attendees with key strategies to reduce them.

The events were part of UN Geneva’s commitment to making sure that everyone is given the same opportunity for success, regardless of their staff category, grade or level, gender, race, or other identities. By addressing these topics, UN Geneva continues to take steps towards creating an environment where everyone can contribute to their fullest potential without fear or prejudice.

The events were well received by participants, who left feeling inspired and better informed about how they can take action to build a more open and accepting work environment in their respective organizations.

INCREASING STAFF RESILIENCE

The UN Geneva Staff Counsellors Office aims to support a dynamic workplace, one where we can ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 3 on good health and well-being. This is the foundation on which we can continue to develop our personnel and support them in carrying out their essential mandates.

UN staff are often required to work under pressure, with limited resources, and to perform roles that require energy and passion. UN Geneva understands the ever-increasing demands and offers support through the Staff Counsellors Office in many forms.

One initiative is to provide tailored workshops and webinars to teams, which this year focused on topics such as emotional intelligence, preventing burnout, and the mind-body connection. The Staff Counsellors Office also prioritized supporting managers and leaders to recognize signs and symptoms of unhealthy stress in their teams and to respond with compassion, empathy and a problem-solving approach.

This year, in collaboration with the Medical Service and human resources partners, the Staff Counsellors Office also supported the return to work of staff who had experienced long periods of illness. The illnesses included mental health conditions that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, burnout, and physical illnesses that took an emotional toll.
PROTECTING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF INTERPRETERS

In May and again in October, UN Geneva hosted screenings of In Flow of Words, a documentary film that focuses on the experiences of three interpreters who served at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague. Born and raised in the former Yugoslavia, and having been witnesses to the brutal wars of the 1990s, the interpreters needed to contend with their personal memories and traumas while maintaining neutrality and professionalism in their work.

Each film screening was followed by a question-and-answer session with the film’s director, Eliane Esther Bots, as well as candid conversations about mental health with UN Geneva’s interpreters. The film “brought to light issues that are often unknown to the general public, even sometimes to UN colleagues, and even to interpreters that do not work in this context”, said Alma Barghout, Chief of the Arabic Interpretation Section at the UN Office at Geneva, who moderated the discussion.

Panel discussion at UN Geneva on the mental health of interpreters. From left to right: Kira Kruglikova, Director of the Division of Conference Management at the UN Office at Geneva; Eliane Esther Bots, director of In Flow of Words; Marie Diaz, Chief of the Interpretation Service at the UN Office at Geneva; and Alma Barghout, Chief of the Arabic Interpretation Section at the UN Office at Geneva. In addition, two speakers joined the discussion remotely: Besmir Fidahic, a former translator and interpreter at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, in The Hague; and Manfred Nowak, Secretary-General of the Global Campus of Human Rights and former Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Scan the QR code to watch a recording of the May panel discussion.

BUILDING AWARENESS ABOUT STROKE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In May, UN Geneva hosted an expert panel discussion to raise awareness about strokes and the physical and mental consequences they can have on survivors of any age. The event took place at the Palais des Nations and online, with the participation of medical experts from UN Geneva, the University of Geneva and other institutions.

Among the speakers featured were Louis Gustin, a disability policy officer in the Government of France, and Elise Mathy, an endocrinologist. Louis was a stroke survivor at a young age and Elise supported him on his path to recovery. The two speakers and other advocates presented a moving account of recovering from stroke and living with its consequences.

Scan the QR code to watch a recording of the discussion.

Endocrinologist Elise Mathy (left) and disability policy officer Louis Gustin (right) speak about Louis’s experience of recovering from a stroke at a young age.
CREATING ANOTHER #NEWWORK HUB BEYOND GENEVA

With interest in UN Geneva’s #NewWork initiative continuing to gather pace across the United Nations Secretariat, in 2022 we supported colleagues in East Africa in establishing another regional #NewWork hub. In June, the global #NewWork team, which included UN Geneva colleagues, led a week-long programme in Nairobi for colleagues in the United Nations Secretariat and regional peacekeeping missions. Participants were introduced to #NewWork and tools to support new ways of working, and many of them have committed to continue with #NewWork activities.

The adoption of #NewWork at another regional hub demonstrates UN Geneva’s continued leadership in this sphere, and builds on previous work, including the introduction of #NewWork at United Nations Headquarters, in New York, and at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, in Bangkok.

EMPOWERING TEAMS THROUGH THE MODERN AGILE APPROACH

In 2022, the human resources team of UN Geneva’s #NewWork initiative strengthened its support for teams by launching three training modules that use the Modern Agile approach. The modules aim to build on an existing appetite for new ways of working, and introduce a wider group of staff and managers to different ways of interacting, experimenting and collectively delivering on their tasks in order to eventually become more efficient and adaptive to change and challenges.

Starting with introductions to “Modern Agile” principles and to an “Agile mindset”, the training provided teams with tools to put all the principles into practice and to ensure that behavioural changes are sustainable. More than 340 staff and managers from UN Geneva and other UN entities participated in 20 Modern Agile training sessions during the year, and more sessions are planned for 2023.

What is #NewWork?

#NewWork is a global staff-driven initiative that originated in Geneva with the support of UN Geneva management, and is aimed at changing our workplace culture and creating “the UN we want”. Drawing on staff feedbacks, #NewWork articulates a vision, goals and an action plan to achieve a collaborative environment, empowered networks of staff, an organization that is fit for the future, a culture of innovation and a flexible working environment. From driving the adoption of collaborative technologies and new meeting techniques to launching innovation events, improving our service to clients and promoting flexible working arrangements, #NewWork has already delivered many positive changes to the way we work.

What is Modern Agile?

Modern Agile is first and foremost a mindset. It is focused on bringing value to people inside and outside a team, on being transparent and learning from experience and on producing better and more satisfying results. It guides teams on how to intentionally introduce tools and practices to nurture an empowered, engaging and inclusive environment, and to become more adaptive and responsive to rapidly changing contexts.
GAME SHIFTER: LEVERAGING IN-HOUSE LOCAL TALENT TO DELIVER ON OUR MANDATES

This year, UN Geneva took a leap forward in recognizing and empowering its General Service staff. In September 2021, UN Geneva had conducted a needs assessment survey to examine how to better support General Service staff. The results, from 1,090 respondents, indicated that career development, rewards and recognition, and good attitudes towards General Service staff were the major factors contributing to job satisfaction and motivation. In response to the survey, UN Geneva launched the Game Shifter leadership development lab in December 2022, with an inaugural cohort of 18 General Service staff members. Designed specifically for UN Geneva’s General Service staff, this innovative programme provides participants with an opportunity to become strong advocates for positive change, regardless of different levels and grades within the Organization.

“Taking part in this programme has really changed my approach to my job and career at the UN. I always used to believe the system was against me and holding me back but now I can see that the future is very firmly in my own hands and that it’s up to me to set my own goals and to implement a strategy to achieve them.”

GENERAL SERVICE STAFF MEMBER

UN Geneva’s move to invest in its General Service staff is a significant step towards enabling the Organization to develop a more agile, effective and accountable workforce. This will also lead to greater job satisfaction among General Service staff, which will help UN Geneva better deliver on its mandates. By recognizing staff potential, UN Geneva is prioritizing inclusivity in the workplace and sending a message that everyone can lead and make a lasting impact.

What is Game Shifter?

Game Shifter provides the transformational approach to leadership development that today’s fast-paced and constantly changing environment is looking for. It offers a unique opportunity for General Service staff to create their own narratives around leadership and rediscover their natural leadership superpowers. Game Shifter demonstrates the necessary mindset shift to help participants break free from traditional notions of leadership and understand how their strengths can be used as catalysts for positive change in the Organization.
LEADING WITHOUT AUTHORITY: THE IMPORTANCE OF “SOFT” POWER

Leadership is often associated with authority. Yet many leaders have found success by leading without any official authority, proving that it is more effective to use “soft” means to influence others.

In November, UN Geneva hosted an in-person event with noted scientist John Antonakis, who gave an insightful talk about the important role that soft power plays in motivating people and getting them to commit, without resorting to authority, legal means or coercion. He explored with the participants how charismatic leaders use verbal and nonverbal cues to influence followers and how to demonstrate charisma in a quiet yet impactful way. At the heart of his argument was the idea that followers identify with and commit to leaders who share a vision and values with them.

Participants left the session with renewed appreciation for the “alchemic” power of leadership and its potential to create positive social change. The thought-provoking talk showed how leading without authority requires taking the initiative and investing energy in building relationships, while embracing the unique talents and strengths of each individual. With this approach, leaders can inspire others and foster collective action that can make a lasting difference in their communities.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT FOR THE SPOUSES OF UN GENEVA STAFF

Providing career support to spouses and partners is a key factor for the successful integration, high motivation, resilience and engagement of internationally recruited United Nations staff. To better facilitate such support, this year UN Geneva became a corporate member of the Lake Geneva branch of the International Dual Career Network, a non-profit association that promotes dual careers and facilitates the integration of spouses and partners through professional networking and guidance.

On 2 November, UN Geneva – in cooperation with the International Geneva Welcome Centre, the International Dual Career Network and the Michael Page recruitment agency – held an event on spousal employment support for over 300 participants, at the Palais des Nations. The Director of the Division of Administration at the UN Office at Geneva, Clemens Adams, delivered welcome remarks on behalf of the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya. This was followed by presentations from the International Geneva Welcome Centre, the Permanent Mission of Switzerland, the University of Geneva, the International Dual Career Network, human resources representatives from UN Geneva and the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), and a representative from Michael Page, as well as a personal testimony from a staff member at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

The three-hour event, with English and French interpretation, was aimed at helping spouses and partners to better understand requirements and practices within the private sector and international organizations when looking for employment.
The UN Geneva senior management team provides executive support to the Director-General in her functions as the representative of the Secretary-General in Switzerland, as executive head of the United Nations Office at Geneva and the designated official for security for Switzerland, as mandated in the Secretary-General’s bulletin on the organization of the United Nations Office at Geneva. The team meets on a weekly basis to inform and advise the Director-General on priority issues, upcoming events and other high-level matters.

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- Administrative Unit
- Project Management and Coordination Unit

* Note: The Director-General of the UN Office at 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.

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