



Chapter 1

**DRIVING
MULTILATERALISM
FORWARD**

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.



© UN PHOTO: SOPHIE TORELLI CHIRONI

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.



© UN PHOTO: LAI SANDERS

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.



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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.



© UN PHOTO: VIOLAINE MARTIN

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.



© UN PHOTO: JEAN-MARC FERRÉ

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.



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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.



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



© UN PHOTO: VIOLAINE MARTIN

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.



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



© UN PHOTO: VIOLAINE MARTIN

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya (right), meets with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste, Adaljiza Magno (left), at the Palais des Nations on 2 March.



© UN PHOTO: VIOLAINE MARTIN

The President of the 76th session of the General Assembly, Abdulla Shahid, is interviewed in the UN Geneva television studio on 15 June.



© UN PHOTO: JEAN-MARC FERRÉ

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya (right), meets with the Vice-President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Delcy Rodríguez (left), at the Palais des Nations on 18 November.



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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.



© UN PHOTO: SOPHIE TORELLI CHIRONI

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya (left), meets with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Burkina Faso, Olivia Ragnaghnewendé Rouamba (right), at the Palais des Nations on 29 November.



© UN PHOTO: PHILIPPE MORARD

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.



© UN PHOTO: MATIJA POTOCNIK

The Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Amina Mohammed, addresses the diplomatic community at a UN Geneva Executive Briefing, on 12 December.



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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.



The Minister of Women, Family and Human Rights of Brazil, Damares Alves, delivers a statement at the high-level segment of the 49th session of the Human Rights Council.

© UN PHOTO: VIOLAINE MARTIN

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.

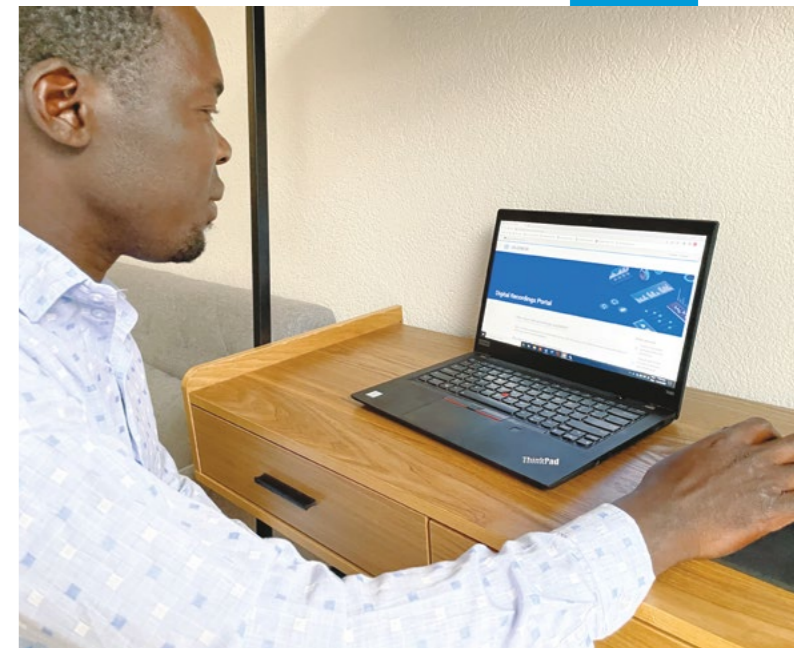
As part of the update, meeting transcripts are generated in English, French and Spanish and uploaded to the portal, completely automatically. This allows persons with hearing impairments to readily access the content of meetings held at UN Geneva. The portal also serves as a crucial tool for reporting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



The improved Digital Recordings Portal offers greater support and accessibility for users with disabilities.



© UN PHOTO: VERENA BONGARTZ

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.

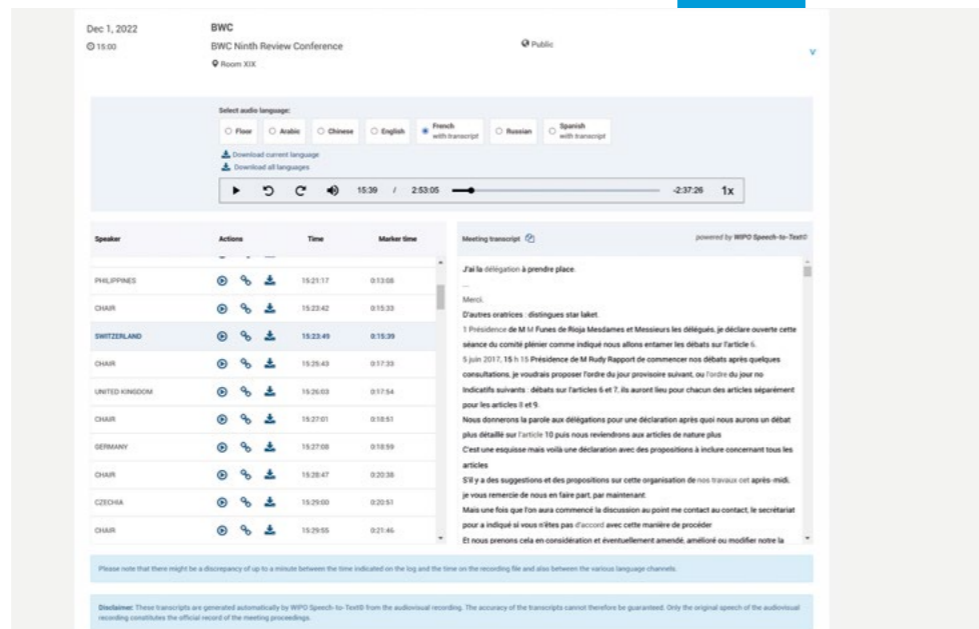
The Fully Automated Speech-to-Text (FAST) project came together in 2018 as part of UN Geneva's efforts to meet the needs of conferencing clients via innovative tools. Powered by artificial intelligence technology from the [World Intellectual Property Organization](#), FAST automatically transcribes meeting 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.

The FAST project uses artificial intelligence to automatically transcribe meeting audio, in three languages so far: English, French and Spanish.



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.

Scan the QR code to read the CTT-2 initiative's report.



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



© UN PHOTO: MATIJA POTOCNIK

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.



© UN PHOTO: MATIJA POTOCNIK

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

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 Fontanet, Professor of Translation at the University of Geneva, discuss the future of translation at the International Translation Day event.



© UN PHOTO: SHUYUE AMBER YIN

Rameswar Panda, a research scientist at the MIT-IBM Watson AI Lab, joined the panel remotely.



© UN PHOTO: SHUYUE AMBER YIN

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.



UN Geneva interpreters at the 2022 United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt

© UN PHOTO: ZHUANG MINGLIANG

POLITICAL DECLARATION ON EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS

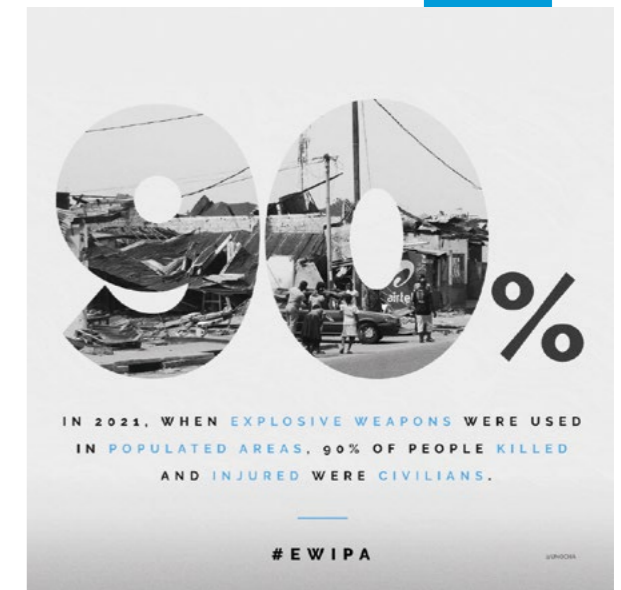
On 17 June 2022, consultations led by Ireland on the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas were concluded at UN Geneva. The Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament 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](#).



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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.

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



© UN PHOTO: VIOLAINE MARTIN

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.

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



Participants at the Ninth Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention, held at the Palais des Nations



© UN PHOTO: MARIIA KOROLEVA

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



© UN PHOTO: PETER KOLAROV

The 2022 Disarmament Fellows on one of the study visits during their three-month programme

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



© UN PHOTO



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The Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Catherine Russell (centre), and the UNICEF Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia and Special Coordinator for the Refugee and Migrant Response in Europe, Afshan Khan (left), engage with permanent representatives during an Executive Briefing held on 30 June.

AT FULL SPEED: EXECUTIVE BRIEFINGS AT UN GENEVA

After a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Geneva's Executive Briefings programme resumed in 2021 and reached full speed again in 2022. The Executive Briefings are an opportunity for Geneva's diplomatic community to engage with senior officials of the UN and its partners, and serve as a platform for sharing multilateral knowledge and experience. This also connects International Geneva more closely with the work of the UN globally and encourages a better understanding of Geneva as the operational hub of the system.

Sixteen Executive Briefings were held this year – seven in person and nine in a hybrid mode – with an average participation of 48 delegations per briefing. High-level speakers at the Executive Briefings came from the UN Secretariat and UN system organizations, multilateral initiatives such as the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, and think tanks such as the Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator Foundation. Topics discussed included the reform of the UN development system, migration and internal displacement, disarmament, violent extremism, children's rights, ethical and legal challenges posed by artificial intelligence, and the future of multilateral governance.



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The Director of the UN Library and Archives Geneva, Francesco Pisano, speaks with newly arrived diplomats.

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](#).



© UN PHOTO: UN LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES GENEVA

Newly arrived diplomats attend “Introduction to UN Geneva for Diplomats” in the Library Events Room.

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](#).



UN Geneva staff member Claudio Gagliano digitizes United Nations official documents in the Library's digitization studio.

© UN PHOTO: ALYNI LIMA



© UN PHOTO: KELLY LE NORMAND

An oversized map is prepared for digitization in the Library Events Room.

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.

Scan the QR code to access the [UN Archives Geneva platform](#).



© UN PHOTO: ELMA OKIC

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

A QR code is inserted into a file, which is the final step in the pre-digitization process before scanning.



© UN PHOTO: ELMA OKIC

Project Director Blandine Blukacz-Louisfert (second from left) congratulates the team during a celebratory event marking the end of the Total Digital Access to the League of Nations Archives project in October.



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© UN PHOTO

Through Global Search, anyone can discover resources from four United Nations libraries, which include treasures like the work *Tractatus qui intitulatur Fedus Christianu(m)* by Ambrosius Alantsee, 1504.

SPEEDING UP ACCESS TO INFORMATION: A STATE-OF-THE-ART SYSTEM FOR FOUR UN LIBRARIES

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.

Scan the QR code to access [Global Search](#).



Four UN libraries now use one common state-of-the-art management system.

© UN PHOTO: CARLA BELLOTA

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.



© UN PHOTO: MATIJA POTOCNIK

As part of the Strategic Heritage Plan renovations, historic buildings at the Palais des Nations have been outfitted with new audiovisual systems, among other modern functionalities.

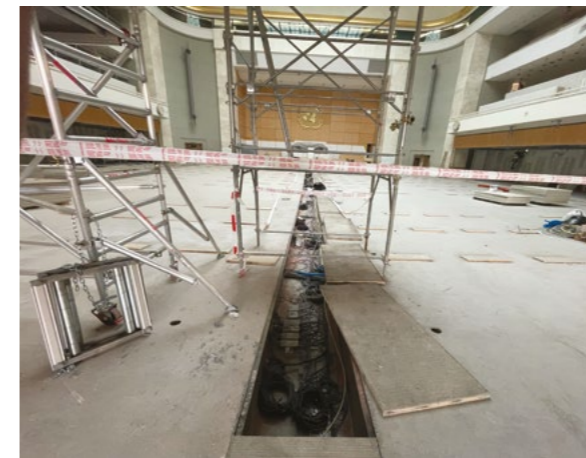


Staff examine progress on the renovation of a meeting room at UN Geneva.

© UN PHOTO: MATIJA POTOCNIK

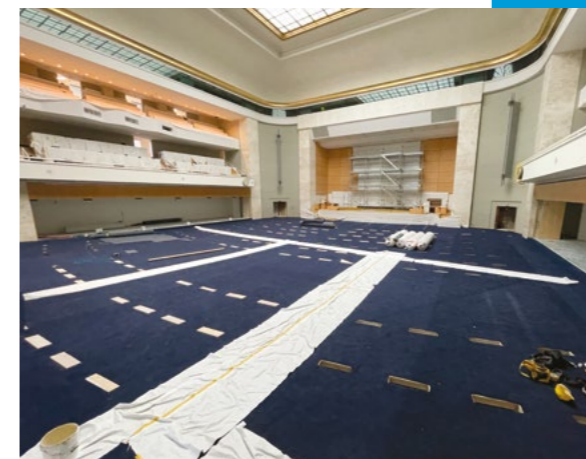
Progress in 2022

Assembly Hall



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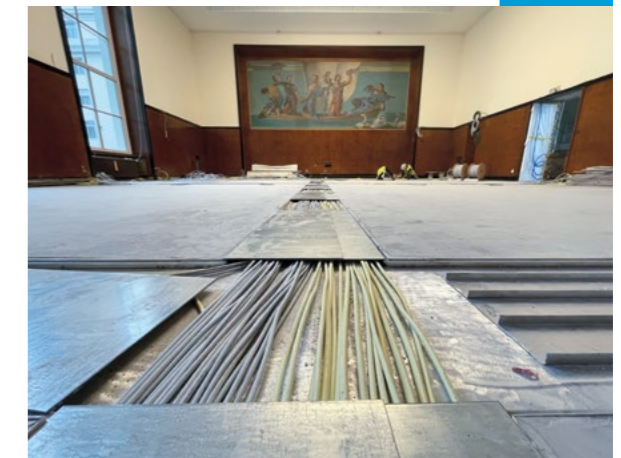
January



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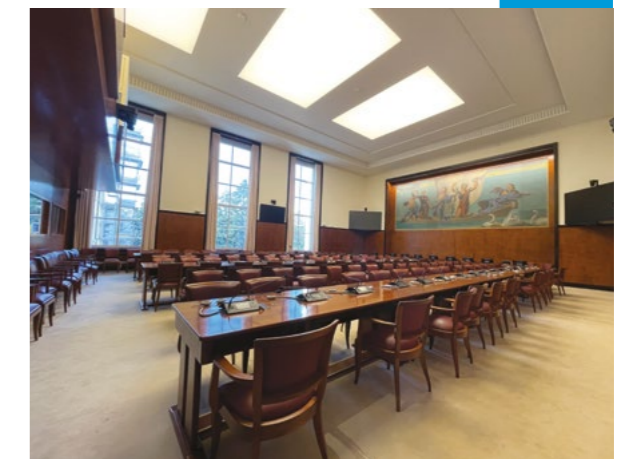
December

Room III



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January



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October

Room VIII



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January



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December

New press conference room



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January



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December



© UN PHOTO: ANTONELLA VISAGGI

A meeting takes place in Tempus, the temporary conference facility.

Business continuity

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.

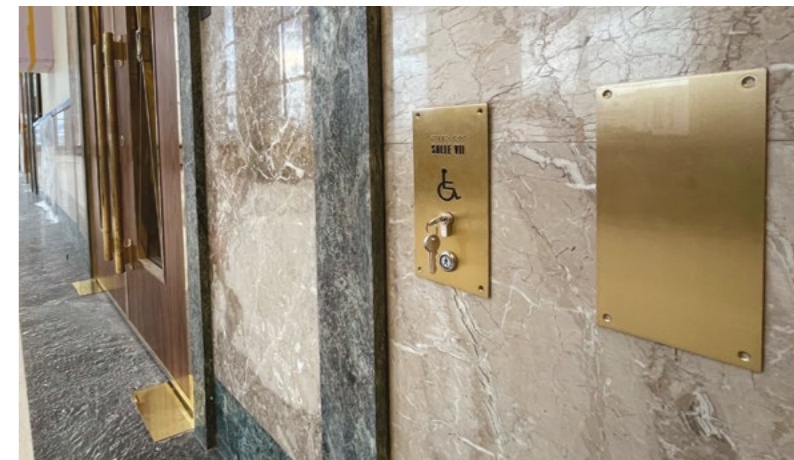
Accessibility improvements

The historic buildings of the Palais des Nations were constructed in the 1930s, a time when accessibility was not given the attention that 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 now 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.

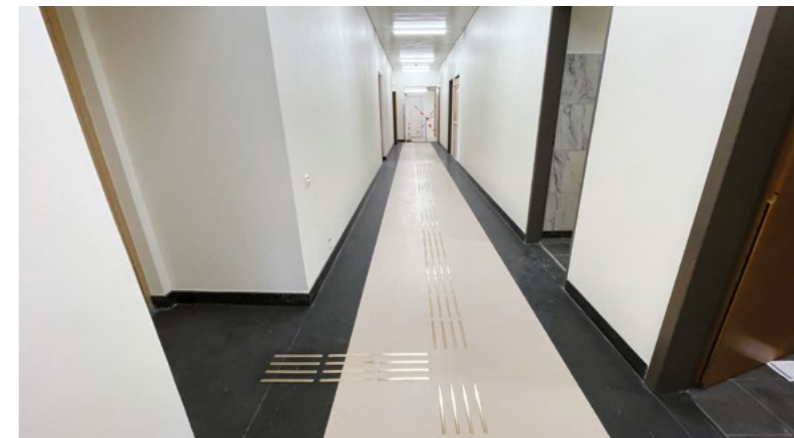
In implementing all these measures, the heritage of the conference rooms and the furniture in the Palais des Nations has been preserved.

© RÉNOVATION PALAIS DES NATIONS SA/LORENZO BARNINI



New features give easy access to conference rooms for persons using wheelchairs.

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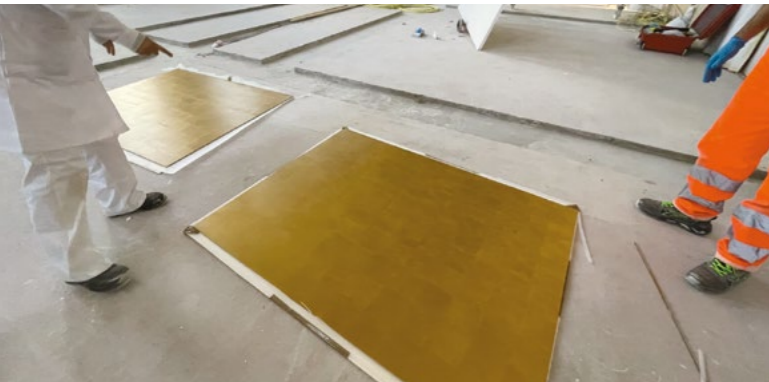
A new network of guiding strips on the floors helps to make the historic buildings of the Palais des Nations more accessible to persons with disabilities.

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.

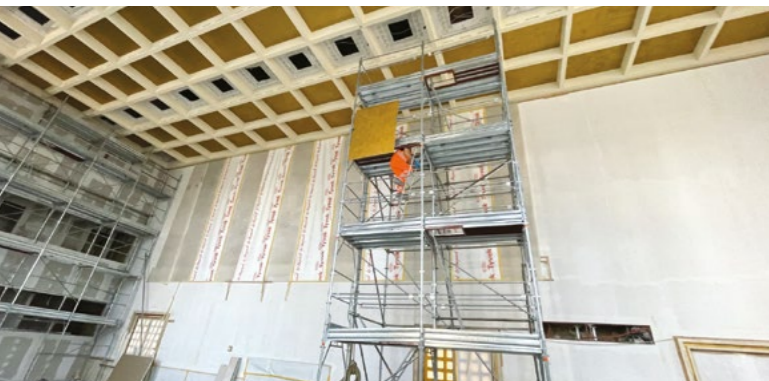
As part of the renovation work on Room XII, also known as the Italian Room, the ceiling, which dates from 1938, required refurbishment. The lighting system needed to be changed to make it more energy-efficient, and the gilded ceiling also needed repair. During the renovation, it was discovered that the 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.



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A close-up of the gilded ceiling panels in Room XII



© RÉNOVATION PALAIS DES NATIONS SA/LORENZO BARNINI

Experts compare new ceiling panels with existing panels to ensure that the colour matches.

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.



The online Strategic Heritage Plan open house event for staff



© RÉNOVATION PALAIS DES NATIONS SA/LORENZO BARNINI

Staff members present the renovated areas of Section AC of the Palais des Nations to colleagues during the online open house event.

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.

Before the renovation



© UN PHOTO

After the renovation



© UN PHOTO

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.

© UN PHOTO: CELIA MARQUET-JOUVE



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.

The Peace Gate viewed from inside the Palais des Nations campus

Mirrored panels on the roof give the impression of extending the Peace Gate.



© UN PHOTO: FEDERICA PERRINI



© UN PHOTO: FEDERICA PERRINI

The Peace Gate lit up at night



© UN PHOTO: CELIA MARQUET-JOUVE

An LED installation that reads “Peace” in all six official UN languages greets people at the Peace Gate.

ENGAGING 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.



© UN PHOTO: LIDIYA GRIGOREVA

The Director-General's annual meeting with civil society



© UN PHOTO: MATIJA POTOCNIK

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

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, with the President of Leaders pour la Paix, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, and members of the organization, who met at the Palais des Nations on 12 May.



© UN PHOTO: SOPHIE TORELLI CHIRONI

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, addresses students at the Geneva International Model United Nations, on United Nations Day, 24 October.



© UN PHOTO: LIDIYA GRIGOREVA

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, with students from the International School of Geneva (Ecolint), who were taking part in a model League of Nations event, on 13 December.



© UN PHOTO: SOPHIE TORELLI CHIRONI

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.

The President of the 76th session of the General Assembly, Abdulla Shahid (third from left), meets with representatives of non-governmental organizations at the Palais des Nations.



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



© UN PHOTO

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 Shahaar, 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.



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.

Candle-lighting ceremony during the commemoration of the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda

© UN PHOTO: MATIJA POTOCNIK



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



“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 Attar-Bayrou, and the Permanent Representative of India, Indra Mani Pandey, whose country was the third-largest troop contributor to UN peace operations in 2022.

Young peacemakers from France and Ukraine at the commemoration of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers at UN Geneva



© UN PHOTO: JEAN-MARC FERRÉ

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 Attar-Bayrou (right), commemorating the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers at the memorial in Ariana Park



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© UN PHOTO: VIOLAINE MARTIN

Survivors and family members of the victims of the Canal Hotel bombing lay flowers at UN Geneva's World Humanitarian Day commemoration at the Palais des Nations.



© UN PHOTO: VIOLAINE MARTIN

The annual World Humanitarian Day commemoration at UN Geneva takes place in front of the remnants of a United Nations flag destroyed in the Canal Hotel bombing and a plaque bearing the names of the victims.

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.

Scan the QR code to watch a [recording](#) of the ceremony.



International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

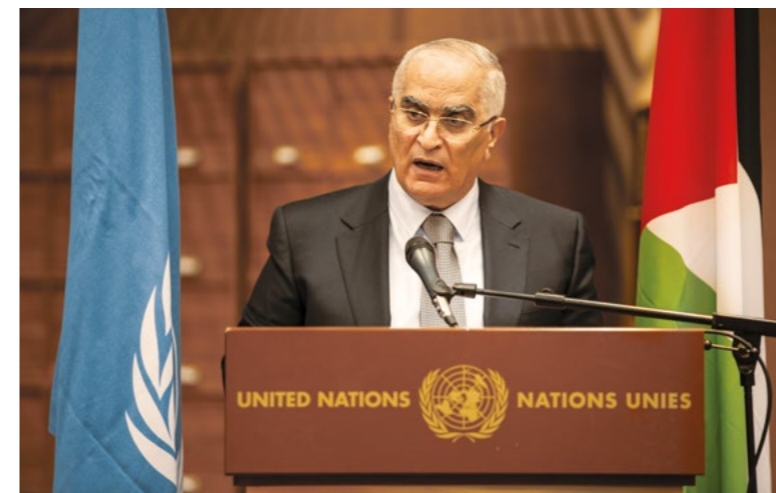
UN Geneva marked International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People with a special meeting at the Palais des Nations on 29 November. The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, chaired the meeting, reading out a message from the Secretary-General, António Guterres, who 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.



© UN PHOTO: PHILIPPE MORARD

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at the Palais des Nations on 29 November



© UN PHOTO: PHILIPPE MORARD

The Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, Ibrahim Khraishi, discusses the worsening humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people.

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.

© UN PHOTO: NORA KHAMIS

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.



© UN PHOTO: NORA KHAMIS

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.



© UN PHOTO: NORA KHAMIS

The Permanent Mission of Malaysia held a concert at the Palais des Nations to showcase the culture of its Indigenous communities, on 21 June.



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