



CHAPTER 2

BOOSTING COMMUNICATION ON OUR WORK AND AMPLIFYING YOUTH VOICES

Young people are agents of change and a positive force for development when provided with the knowledge and opportunities they need to thrive. Every year, UN Geneva welcomes and supports youth participation in multilateral diplomacy through a number of activities.

©UN Photo: Violaine Martin



EMPOWERING WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD

In 2022, at the initiative of the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, the annual exhibition series *17 Faces of Action* was launched, with the first iteration held in Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan. Organized in collaboration with Member States and the Swiss Association of Women and Empowerment, the series recognizes the important contribution of women in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This year, UN Geneva continued to shine a light on the inspiring stories of women in different countries with four impactful national exhibitions.

In June, the Portuguese exhibition took place at the National Library of Portugal. It shone a spotlight on the stories of pioneering women and their contributions in the fields of science, art, diplomacy and activism – just a few examples of the many remarkable women who can be found throughout the country's history.

The next exhibition was held at the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia in Tbilisi in July, and the following exhibition was launched in Viet Nam on Vietnamese Women's Day in October. The photos were displayed at the Vietnamese Women's Museum in Hanoi, which offered a unique backdrop, given its role in raising awareness of and preserving the rich historical and cultural heritage of women across all of Viet Nam's diverse 54 ethnic communities.

◀ The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, views the Emirati edition of the *17 Faces of Action* exhibition on the margins of the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai on 3 December.
©UN Photo: Lidiya Grigoreva

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, João Gomes Cravinho, open the Portuguese edition of the *17 Faces of Action* exhibition on 19 June in Lisbon.
©UN Photo: Lidiya Grigoreva





The Director-General inaugurated the last *17 Faces of Action* exhibition of 2023 in the United Arab Emirates on the margins of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Dubai (COP 28). Strategically positioned at the heart of Expo City Dubai, the exhibition garnered a great deal of attention from the public and COP 28 participants. It highlighted the remarkable work of 17 Emirati women leaders in advancing gender equality.

The national exhibition series will continue in other countries in 2024. UN Geneva will later display the photographs from all the national exhibitions at the Palais des Nations, as a call for action to inspire future generations.



“Through their resilience, passion and unwavering commitment, the women portrayed in these exhibitions have become catalysts for positive transformation within their communities and beyond.”

Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya

The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, opens the Vietnamese edition of the *17 Faces of Action* exhibition on 20 October in Hanoi. ©UN Photo: Lidiya Grigoreva

A participant addresses the audience during the inauguration of the exhibition in Tbilisi. ©Photo: UN Women/Leli Blagonravova

UN GENEVA MEETINGS COVERAGE: AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT AND PROMOTIONAL STRATEGY

This year, the United Nations Information Service in Geneva implemented a strategy to enhance the visibility and reach of key information products, primarily the summaries of meetings of the human rights treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council held in Geneva. The summaries are available on the websites of UN Geneva and of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

To amplify the content, the Information Service launched a social media campaign with promotional videos to raise awareness about the summaries of Human Rights Council and treaty body meetings. A systematic strategy of posts on X (formerly known as Twitter) was implemented, and collaboration with the communications team of the Office of the High Commissioner further amplified the reach.

As part of this strategy, the Information Service shared meeting summaries and social media assets with United Nations information centres around the world for dissemination, especially during reviews of their host countries by human rights mechanisms. Additionally, video highlights of Human Rights Council and treaty body meetings were featured on the UN Geneva website, with links directing users to the meeting summaries.

These efforts led to a substantial increase in press coverage. For example, after the summaries of the review of Mexico by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances in September were made available, 32 stories on the review were published across a multitude of prominent Mexican media channels. Similarly, following the review of Andorra by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, articles on the review were published by the country’s three main news outlets.

The strategy to amplify the reach of meeting summaries also resulted in an increase of visitors to the websites of UN Geneva and the Office of the High Commissioner. In 2022, 744 summaries in

English and French generated 556,265 page views for both websites combined. In 2023, 750 meeting summaries in both languages had yielded 805,170 page views for both websites as of November, representing an increase of 45% and underscoring the strategy’s effectiveness. UN Geneva intends to sustain this momentum, aiming for further growth in page views next year.

Since 2021, the overall online audience of the United Nations Information Service in Geneva has quadrupled, reflecting the successful outreach efforts. This expanded reach addresses a demand for accurate information from the United Nations in an era of misinformation. The use, by global media outlets and in official government communications, of information produced by UN Geneva confirms the indispensable role that UN Geneva plays in important global issues.

Scan the QR code to access [meeting summaries](#) produced by UN Geneva.



Delegates take part in the fifty-second session of the Human Rights Council at the Palais des Nations in February. ©UN Photo: Violaine Martin



THROUGH THE LENS OF UNTV GENEVA: CONVERSATIONS TO DRIVE ACTION

In addition to covering major news events at UN Geneva for international broadcast partners, UNTV Geneva staff often have the opportunity to interview individuals whose work aligns with the inclusive values of the United Nations.

“If you don’t have facts, you can’t have truth. Without truth, you can’t have trust.” This was the inspiring plea for information integrity made by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Ressa, just one of the many personalities who shared their calls for action with UNTV Geneva this year. A co-founder of the online news site Rappler in the Philippines, Ms. Ressa visited UN Geneva in July in her role as Vice-Chair of the Internet Governance Forum

Leadership Panel established by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres. The renowned journalist went on to say that if we do not fix our information ecosystem, we will “have no shared reality” and will not be able to solve the world’s most pressing problems, such as rapidly advancing climate change.

Supporting the United Nations’ push to get the world on track towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, singer and activist Joan Baez, from the United States of America, made a memorable visit to the Palais des Nations in June, using her star power to advocate for tackling the climate crisis. Famous for her anti-war activism,



Ms. Baez told UNTV Geneva how, in the face of conflict and despair, she continues to choose action and to “do her part”.

Bringing a touch of glamour to climate campaigns, Riccardo Bellini, Chief Executive Officer of luxury fashion brand Chloé, spoke at UN Geneva in March on the margins of a sustainable development forum organized by the Economic Commission for Europe. Mr. Bellini told UNTV Geneva about the sustainability revolution that he had started within his company, leading the company to eliminate polyvinyl chloride from its products.

Regularly, personalities who have important messages about the work of the United Nations are hosted in the UNTV Geneva studio, where their messages are relayed across the world to UNTV Geneva broadcast partners and other media organizations. Next year will mark a significant milestone for UNTV Geneva: the studio, and other UNTV Geneva offices, will move to new premises at the Palais des Nations. The move will bring all audiovisual and multimedia content editors and producers together in one place for the first time.



Singer and activist Joan Baez discusses climate change in the UNTV Geneva studio.
©UN Photo: Nicholas Hopkins-Hall

Riccardo Bellini, Chief Executive Officer of luxury fashion brand Chloé, explains to UNTV Geneva the sustainability initiatives he has introduced at his company. ©UN Photo: Emmanuel Hungrecker

◀ Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Ressa speaks to UNTV Geneva about the importance of information integrity. ©UN Photo: Jean-Marc Ferré

SHARING KNOWLEDGE, INSPIRING ACTION: MULTIMEDIA ENGAGEMENT BY UN LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES GENEVA

The UN Library and Archives Geneva created a number of diverse multimedia products to promote knowledge-sharing on multilateralism and inspire informed action. A new video series, *Journey to the Summit of the Future*, featuring interviews with United Nations system specialists and other experts, focuses on key issues leading up to the Summit. The interviews are aimed at enriching preparations across the United Nations and raising awareness among Geneva audiences of the Summit, which will take place in September 2024.

In *The Next Page*, the UN Library and Archives Geneva podcast, experts joined the hosts to explore numerous subjects with the aim of making

Ultimately, the multimedia engagement of the UN Library and Archives Geneva is aimed at opening minds, spurring discussion and mobilizing informed advocacy around shared global priorities.

knowledge about multilateralism more accessible worldwide. Topics included reimagining international relations, knowledge and learning for multilateralism, change and effective multilateralism, the democracy-multilateralism nexus, and technological change and future-proof policymaking.

The UN Library and Archives Geneva also organized learning events on topics such as the role of young people, civic participation and the history of multilateralism as part of the *HiSTORIES* series.

By leveraging multimedia tools and participatory forums in this way, the UN Library and Archives Geneva stimulates learning and exchange on pressing issues. Videos, podcasts and events make knowledge about multilateralism more engaging and accessible. They spotlight diverse voices and fuel solutions-oriented dialogue. Most importantly, these initiatives inspire action by equipping audiences to participate in shaping the collective future of humanity. When people better understand the stakes and the possibilities of multilateralism, they are empowered to advance progress.

Ultimately, the multimedia engagement of the UN Library and Archives Geneva is aimed at opening minds, spurring discussion and mobilizing informed advocacy around shared global priorities. In a complex world, knowledge fuels hope, connects stakeholders and catalyses change. Through multimedia storytelling and enquiry, UN Geneva is helping to write the next chapter in humanity's journey – one filled with justice, sustainability and peace for people and planet.



A student writes down her thoughts on multilateralism during a learning event at the UN Library and Archives Geneva. ©UN Photo

Attendees pose for a photo at a learning event on young people and multilateralism at the UN Library and Archives Geneva. ©UN Photo

THE POWER OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION

As the adage goes, a picture is worth a thousand words, particularly in our fast-paced, ever-evolving world. In 2023, UN Geneva and its partners continued efforts to raise awareness, and thus broaden the understanding, of the work undertaken by Geneva-based international actors, particularly through outreach activities that leverage the power of visual communication.

The opening ceremony of the Crafting a Better World exhibition, organized by UN Geneva in partnership with permanent missions in Geneva.
©UN Photo: François Vioud

Crafting a better world

At the initiative of the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, UN Geneva, in partnership with permanent missions, curated *Crafting a Better World*. For the exhibition, inaugurated on United Nations Day, Member States provided artefacts from around the world. Centred around craftsmanship, the event reflected traditions that have been passed down through generations and mirrored the world's diverse beauty and shared cultural richness. It also highlighted UN Geneva's commitment to promoting cultural diversity and supporting the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth and Goal 12 on sustainable consumption and production.



World Trade Organization Public Forum 2023

In September, UN Geneva continued its successful collaboration with the World Trade Organization (WTO), setting up a Sustainable Development Goals spinning wheel during the WTO Public Forum 2023. The wheel served as a prompt to illustrate the important role that trade plays in promoting sustainable development and the contribution that WTO can make to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Participants in the Forum were all invited to spin the wheel and share their thoughts on the relationship between the Sustainable Development Goals and trade.



The Director-General of the World Trade Organization, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (left), and the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya (right), launch the Sustainable Development Goals spinning wheel on the margins of the WTO Public Forum 2023.
©UN Photo: Niccolò Ventura

Le MEG et les 17 Objectifs de développement durable exhibition

UN Geneva worked with a local museum, the Musée d'ethnographie de Genève (MEG), and the city of Geneva to organize an exhibition aimed at inspiring the local population to take action and build a more sustainable future for all. Inspired by the booklet *170 Actions to Combat Climate Change*, developed by the Perception Change Project, the exhibition, entitled *Le MEG et les 17 Objectifs de développement durable*, showcased 20 posters illustrating the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Each poster was written in easy-to-understand French and highlighted the possible actions individuals could take to build a better future.



The *Le MEG et les 17 Objectifs de développement durable* outdoor exhibition showcased posters illustrating the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in easy-to-understand French.
©UN Photo: Niccolò Ventura



***Not a Woman's Job? Breaking Barriers in Sports* exhibition**

In July, UN Geneva and the [International Olympic Committee](#) joined forces with Member States in Geneva to launch *Not a Woman's Job?: Breaking Barriers in Sports*, a spin-off of the *Not a Woman's Job?* photo exhibition. The 65 photos submitted by permanent missions, alongside 30 photos shared by the International Olympic Committee, celebrate inspiring women – athletes, coaches, referees and community leaders – and their contributions to breaking down gender barriers in sports. UN Geneva and the International Olympic Committee brought these powerful images forward in the hope that the exhibition would inspire women and girls around the world to break the glass ceiling.

Scan the QR code to discover the [exhibition](#).



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Costa Rican surfer Brisa Tomi Hennessy Kobara, one of the inspiring women featured in the *Not a Woman's Job? Breaking Barriers in Sports* exhibition, tied for fifth place in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, in the first appearance of this sport at the Olympics. ©Costa Rican Surfing Federation

A guest looks at the powerful photos of women displayed in the *Not a Woman's Job? Breaking Barriers in Sports* exhibition.

©UN Photo: Ali Khaffane

NEW CLIMATE CHANGE POP-UP SPACE AT GENEVA AIRPORT

UN Geneva's [Perception Change Project](#) and [Lagardère Travel Retail](#) introduced a new pop-up space at Geneva Airport as part of an ongoing collaboration to promote the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). The initiative – 170 Actions and More to Combat Climate Change – actively engages travellers and inspires them to learn about and adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives. The space invites both adults and children to contribute their own ideas for ways to combat climate change and increases awareness about the collective action needed to tackle this global issue. By focusing on interactive and practical methods of public engagement, such as this pop-up space, UN Geneva and the Perception Change Project aim to shift mindsets and motivate a global audience to undertake significant actions for a sustainable future.



Colourful spaces invite the public to learn about climate change and share their ideas for ways to combat it. ©UN Photo: François Vioud

The inauguration of the pop-up space at Geneva Airport took place on 30 November.

©UN Photo: François Vioud

A THRIVING VISITORS' SERVICE

The Visitors' Service at UN Geneva saw a significant increase in the number of visitors to the Palais des Nations, despite spatial and logistical challenges linked to the renovation works currently under way. The Visitors' Service welcomed over 36,000 visitors in 2023, compared to just under 24,000 in 2022. Students constituted most of the visitor groups: 68% of visitors came from schools and universities. The Visitors' Service increased the variety of languages it offers and now also conducts tours in Japanese.

Furthermore, this year the Visitors' Service conducted many tours for special guests, including singer and activist Joan Baez, from the United States of America, and singer Dimash Kudaibergen, from Kazakhstan.

A group from Japan takes a guided tour given in Japanese, a new language offered by the Visitors' Service at UN Geneva. ©UN Photo: UN Geneva Visitors' Service



On 9 November, the Visitors' Service participated in an initiative entitled "Futur en tous genres" (Futures for all genders). The aim of this annual event, which is organized by the Swiss authorities, is to broaden the future professional horizons of both girls and boys by allowing them to discover various career paths with no preconceived ideas and to recognize that their gender does not bar them from any profession. More than 80 children visited UN Geneva as part of this initiative, which offered the children a valuable glimpse of an international workplace, including through guided tours given by the Visitors' Service in English and in French.

Scan the QR code to [book a tour of the Palais des Nations](#).



FOSTERING CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING

Culture is an integral part of diplomacy and is often spotlighted at UN Geneva through the [Cultural Activities Programme](#). Art exhibitions, film screenings and concerts organized at the Palais des Nations encourage exchanges and dialogue among cultures and people who share different traditions. In 2023, 21 activities were organized by Member States and international organizations and held at the Palais des Nations, either virtually or in person, and in various languages.

By fostering tolerance and respect, these cultural activities helped UN Geneva strengthen the foundation for the promotion of successful dialogue and international cooperation in areas central to the work of the United Nations, such as education, global health, gender equality, sustainability and multilingualism.

The Permanent Mission of Bulgaria, together with the Diplomatic Club of Geneva and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), organized a concert featuring renowned soprano Sonya Yoncheva and the children's orchestra MusicEnsemble from the Conservatoire de Musique de Genève for World Children's Day in November. ©UN Photo: Zeyu He



YOUNG ACTIVISTS SUMMIT HONOURS FIVE ACTIVISTS AT UN GENEVA WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF PRINCE ALBERT II OF MONACO



The arts, languages and traditions of the activities offer unique immersive experiences and spaces for learning and growth. The activities are aimed at dispelling stereotypes and championing cultural understanding, in order to bring the global community closer together. Some of the events that were held in 2023 are highlighted in these photos.



Resolution 46/230, an exhibition that showcased 10 pieces of art, including unique Azeri carpets, was held at the Palais des Nations in September, with the generous support of the Permanent Mission of Azerbaijan.

©UN Photo: Polina Urmanova

The Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan presented the World Painting exhibition in February at the Palais des Nations. The unique art project depicts brush strokes by over 2,000 people from 190 countries, and advocates for harmony, tolerance and the peaceful co-existence of the citizens of the world.

©UN Photo: UN Library and Archives Geneva

UN Geneva, through the United Nations Information Service in Geneva, continued to promote global youth activism by co-organizing the 2023 [Young Activists Summit](#). The Summit, held at UN Geneva for the fifth straight year, honoured five remarkable young activists in the presence of Prince Albert II of Monaco.

This year's Summit, watched live on UN Web TV by around 20,000 participants from 144 countries, was centred on the theme of peace and reconciliation. During the event, the 650 attendees present observed a moment of silence to pay homage to all victims of conflict, violence and climate change globally. The Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva, Tatiana Valovaya, emphasized the challenges faced by the world, and the tremendous human tragedy, loss and conflict being experienced. She urged youth to actively engage in the issues, stating: "We need you, young people, to help us find solutions."

Prince Albert II of Monaco underscored the importance of action over mere words. Addressing the young activists, he offered them encouragement to take a course of action to maintain their enthusiasm, optimism and desire to change the world, and urged them to persevere in their pursuit of positive change.

The five honorees hailed from Burkina Faso, Colombia, India, Myanmar and the Sudan. The event showcased their impactful work in areas ranging from human rights and peacebuilding to climate action and environmental protection. They each received donations to support their field projects, underscoring the Summit's commitment to translating inspiration into tangible action.

This year's Summit discussions were moderated by Trisha Shetty, founder of the non-governmental organization SheSays. Niki Black gave a poignant musical performance, singing the John Lennon song *Imagine* as a powerful message of peace.

The event, organized jointly by UN Geneva, the non-governmental organization [dev.tv](#), [Radio Télévision Suisse](#) and the [Geneva Graduate Institute](#), marked a pivotal moment in efforts by the United Nations to empower young people to be catalysts for positive change on a global scale.

Scan the QR code to watch a [recording](#) of the 2023 Young Activists Summit.



Young Activists Summit 2023 laureates Roshni Perween (centre) and Maimouna Ba (right) embrace next to fellow laureate Nisreen Elsaïm (left). ©UN Photo

BEYOND TOKENISM: WALKING THE TALK ON GENUINE AND MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN POLICYMAKING

Current global crises disproportionately affect youth, although they generally had little say in the policies and ensuing actions that caused those issues in the first place. Young people should not only be considered as the inheritors of tomorrow. As emphasized by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, in *Our Common Agenda*, they must also be given concrete opportunities to design such a tomorrow, aligned with priorities and values they can relate to and own.

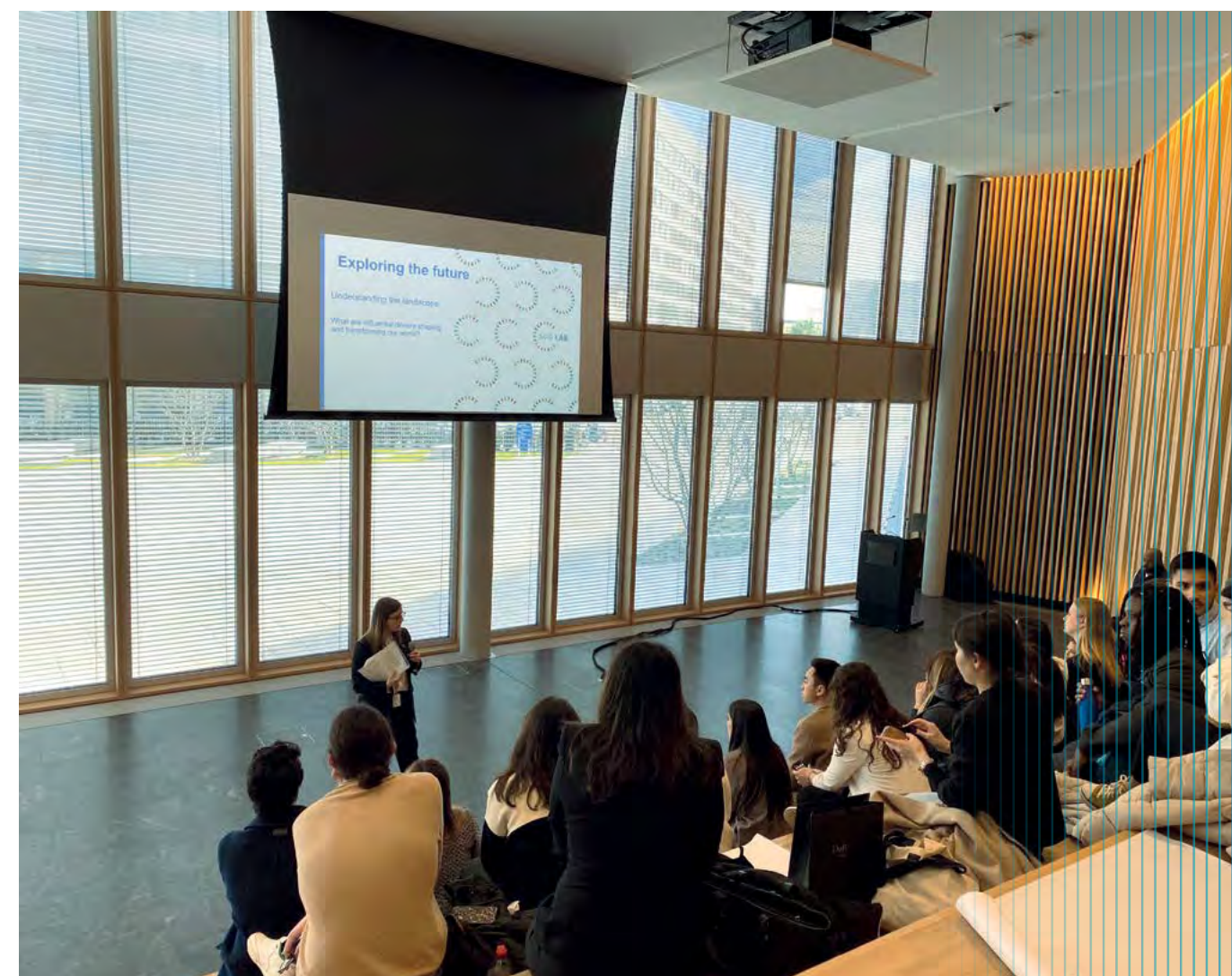
As part of efforts and commitments to that end, UN Geneva's [SDG Lab](#) collaborated with young people globally to design [surveys](#) and intergenerational dialogues aimed at understanding their priorities and values. The outcomes and findings of the consultations were reinforced and amplified through a series of workshops held with youth during various events, including the fifty-second St. Gallen Symposium, the 2023 [Sustainable Development Goals Summit](#) and the multi-partner [Collaborate for Social Impact initiative](#). Smaller-scale dialogues were also held with young people at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne in Switzerland, IE University Madrid and China Foreign Affairs University, and with youth and government representatives, including a workshop organized on behalf of the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for youth, education and employment.

This workshop dialogue approach provided a safe space for intergenerational exchanges on topics that are at the core of the SDG Lab's work, such as long-term sustainability, intergenerational equity and future generations.

Building upon this framework, the SDG Lab explored alternative sustainable development models to promote core values identified through the above-mentioned activities, and collaborated with youth in the design of strategies and recommendations to move such models from the margins to the centre of the global sustainable development narrative. Ways to apply this centering approach,

which is now key to the work of SDG Lab, were explored by students at the [Geneva Graduate Institute](#), who carried out an applied research project under the mentorship of SDG Lab staff. The SDG Lab plans to expand these efforts in 2024 through innovative projects and initiatives, such as a pilot SDG Lab residency programme.

At the intergovernmental level, the SDG Lab used its thought leadership role to influence and share perspectives on significant youth-related processes and developments. Notable highlights included its reflections on *Our Common Agenda* policy briefs on [meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes](#) and on [future generations](#).



Students from IE University Madrid take part in an interactive workshop on unpacking the drivers of system change, hosted by UN Geneva's SDG Lab on 28 March 2023 at the Palais des Nations.
©UN Photo: Davide Fanciulli

PRIORITIZING VALUES TODAY FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES OF TOMORROW: SDG LAB AT THE ST. GALLEN SYMPOSIUM

For the past 52 years, the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland has gathered students, alumni and leaders from various sectors at its annual [symposium](#), a unique student-led and student-organized conference focused on cross-generational dialogue and collaboration on sustainable development topics. It is one of the oldest intergenerational forums of its kind.

In 2023, UN Geneva's [SDG Lab](#) attended the St. Gallen Symposium to workshop certain aspects of its newly adopted vision and mission. It was in this spirit that the Lab, in collaboration with the [Club of Rome](#), organized an interactive session entitled "[Setting the pillars of a new sustainability paradigm](#)". The session reflected the SDG Lab's new

focus on intergenerational equity and provided a unique opportunity for various actors to exchange views on how to assess the intergenerational impact of sustainable development policies. An important result of the session was a compilation of values that, if prioritized today, could have a significant and positive impact on both current and future generations.

This exercise was built on the SDG Lab's engagement in the [Big Brainstorm 2023](#). For this initiative, led by the [United Nations Foundation](#), the SDG Lab worked with young people worldwide to collect opinions on the values that youth deem fundamental for a fairer and more sustainable future. The following key values emerged from both initiatives:

An important result of the session was a compilation of values that, if prioritized today, could have a significant and positive impact on both current and future generations.

- A healthy relationship with nature
- Equality and equity
- Tolerance and diversity
- Inclusivity and participation
- Community approaches
- Collective actions

These values also resonated with participants attending a side event organized by the SDG Lab at the [2023 SDG Summit](#) held in September in New York. During the workshop, which was entitled "[Manifesting new sustainability values: from aspirational envisioning to practical policymaking](#)", participants proposed a suite of actions to better integrate the values and perspectives of future generations into current policymaking. The highest priority was given to:

- Raising awareness about the impact of an individual's environmental footprint on future generations.
- Developing better cultural transformation and evaluation tools to estimate and predict priorities of future generations.
- Establishing representatives of future generations at different levels of governance.
- Ensuring funding so young people can actively participate in intergenerational dialogues.

Scan the QR code to take part in the [SDG Lab's global survey](#) on values and priorities for young people and future generations.



Participants exchange ideas at the SDG Lab workshop entitled "Setting the pillars of a new sustainability paradigm", held in collaboration with the Club of Rome on 5 May at the fifty-second St. Gallen Symposium. ©St. Gallen Symposium

INCREASING THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUTH IN DISARMAMENT DISCUSSIONS

In his policy brief entitled [A New Agenda for Peace](#), the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, observed that “youth are essential to identifying new solutions that will secure the breakthroughs that our world urgently needs”. Meaningful youth engagement has been a priority for the [Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs](#) for several years. Throughout the year, the branch organized several events to raise awareness among youth about disarmament issues, and met with students, youth representatives and young scientists.

In March, the branch launched the [Youth for Biosecurity Fellowship](#). The programme ran for a period of three months, during which young people participated in online courses and had the opportunity to take part in a five-day field visit to Geneva, including to institutions working in the area of biosecurity.

Within the framework of the [Conference on Disarmament](#), a special youth panel discussion was organized under the presidency of Germany and held in a plenary session on 10 August. On that occasion, the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, Jayathma Wickramanayake, urged Member States to expand and strengthen youth participation in decision-making at all levels and to make the provision of spaces for youth engagement a requirement in United Nations decision-making processes.

On 22 August, UN Geneva welcomed a group of Hiroshima and Nagasaki Peace Messengers, who visited the Palais des Nations and attended a meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.



Participants in the Youth for Biosecurity Fellowship programme during their visit to the Palais des Nations in August. ©UN Photo: Remi Bacouillard

Staff members of the Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs also had exchanges with students from various universities about disarmament, notably in the context of the [sixty-first Graduate Study Programme](#), organized by UN Geneva.

The Geneva branch of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs remains committed to involving youth in disarmament discussions and will undertake further initiatives to that end in 2024.

57TH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LAW SEMINAR

Twenty-three young jurists of various nationalities, representing all regional groups of the United Nations and specializing in international law, came to UN Geneva for the 57th session of the [International Law Seminar](#), held from 3 to 21 July.

In addition to attending plenary meetings of the [International Law Commission](#), participants took part in specially arranged lectures, visits to the offices of the International Labour Organization and the World Trade Organization, and visits to academic institutions – the Geneva Graduate Institute, the University of Geneva, the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights and the Swiss Institute of Comparative Law.

A day trip to Lausanne was organized in cooperation with the Swiss Institute of Comparative Law. A special programme, focused on the topic of end of life and assisted suicide from a comparative law perspective, was tailored for participants with the participation of a team of lawyers from the Institute, led by its Acting Director, Lukas Heckendorn Urscheler.

Two working groups were organized: one on identifying new topics for the International Law Commission, and another on regionalism and universalism in the work of the Commission. Under the supervision of two members of the Commission, Dapo Akande and George Rodrigo Bandeira Galindo, each group prepared a report and presented its findings during the last working session of the Seminar. The reports were compiled and distributed to all participants and to the members of the Commission.

UN Geneva has organized the International Law Seminar since 1965, in connection with the annual session of the International Law Commission. The Seminar is aimed at promoting knowledge of the work of the Commission and the United Nations concerning the progressive development of international law and its codification.

Participants in the 57th session of the International Law Seminar pose for a group photo. ©UN Photo: Philippe Morard



PERCEPTION CHANGE PROJECT – YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

UN@School

The United Nations and its partners navigate a complex landscape of global challenges in a fragmented world. The UN@School initiative, which was launched in 2020 by UN Geneva's [Perception Change Project](#) and the [Eduki Foundation](#) with the aim of igniting students' passion for the work of the United Nations, continues to be a dynamic force, bringing together students and international organizations in Geneva. In 2023, 11 sessions were held involving over 200 enthusiastic school students, aged from 17 to 19, from six cantons of Switzerland. The students engaged in active discussions on topics such as the Human Rights Council, conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, food security and international trade. Through the UN@School initiative, UN Geneva aims not only to impart knowledge, but also to instill a fervent sense of global citizenship and inspire young minds to tackle the world's most pressing challenges with determination and zeal.



School students attend a UN@School briefing with the Geneva-based International Bureau of Education of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

©UN Photo: François Vioud

Hand Solo's journey of innovation towards inclusion and empowerment

An event entitled "From bullying to building" was held at the Palais des Nations on 7 December to showcase the importance of disability awareness and inclusion. Organized by UN Geneva's [Perception Change Project](#), the Permanent Mission of Andorra and the [World Intellectual Property Organization](#), the event featured David Aguilar, a young man from Andorra who built his own prosthetic arm from LEGO bricks at the age of 8. Speaking in front of an audience that included diplomats and children, Mr. Aguilar demonstrated the power of overcoming physical challenges through creative solutions.



David Aguilar (second from right) speaks at the "From bullying to building" event at UN Geneva.

©UN Photo: Niccolò Ventura

VIMAL: CHAMPIONING PEACE THROUGH SPORT

UN Geneva's [Perception Change Project](#) released *Vimal*, the seventh and final book in the Project's *Iceberg* series. *Vimal* explores themes of peace and resilience through sport with the heart-warming tale of a young boy who is committed to preserving peace in his distressed community. By using the universal language of sport, he finds a way to restore trust and spark hope among his peers. The story celebrates the enduring power of solidarity and the indomitable human spirit.

Scan the QR code to download [Vimal](#).



SPOTLIGHT ON

Celebrating a milestone: 75 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

This year marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). Ahead of the celebration events held in December, UN Geneva took the opportunity to reflect on the Declaration's enduring legacy and on Geneva's unique position in the history of human rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a foundational text for the United Nations. Translated into more than 550 languages, the Declaration enshrines the rights of all human beings and is a global blueprint for international, national and local laws and policies. It is also the bedrock of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

For 75 years, the core ambition furthered by the Declaration has been to infuse societies with equality, fundamental freedoms and justice.

UN Geneva, through its library and archives, maintains records related to the drafting of the Declaration and international human rights treaties, which are available to the public in digitized form through the [UN Archives Geneva](#) platform. Several thousand pages of original and unique materials related to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are accessible. The files include drafts of the Declaration, comments from Governments, organizations and the general public, and material related to the implementation of the Declaration. Original documents from René Cassin and Eleanor Roosevelt are among these invaluable records.

In the lead-up to the anniversary celebrations, UN Geneva reflected on the vital role of this landmark document through a number of activities, including a compelling [HISTORIES episode](#) that delved into the history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Other workshops organized by the United Nations system libraries further contributed to promoting human rights across the world and disseminating educational resources as part of the year-long [Human Rights 75 initiative](#) led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Easy access to information on human rights was also facilitated by the [online guides](#) jointly published by the UN Library and Archives Geneva and the OHCHR Library.

On 11 and 12 December, the international community gathered in Geneva to reaffirm its dedication to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights during the [high-level event commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Declaration](#). Member States, representatives of civil society organizations, of cities and of local governments, human rights defenders, young people, artists and many others took part in the celebrations. Dialogues, thematic consultations and side events provided space for participants to call for urgent change in the light of the many crises currently endangering human rights. In connection with the event, and as a reflection of the collective responsibility to uphold human rights, 286 pledges were announced by Member States and others on a wide range of human rights issues. A firm defender of human rights for all, UN Geneva was proud to support the celebrations of this milestone anniversary at the Palais des Nations.



The UN Archives Geneva platform gives the general public access to files and archival documents managed by the UN Library and Archives Geneva, including records related to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, available in digitized form.

Original drafts of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights preserved by the UN Library and Archives Geneva. ©UN Photo: Nadia Al Droubi



Scan the QR code to watch the [HISTORIES episode on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#).



The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk (centre), meets with young human rights activists as part of the high-level event commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. ©OHCHR Photo: Irina Popa

