



United Nations Women's Guild - Geneva

Summer edition
2021
Issue 3

EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Members,
Dear Friends,

Once again I hope you are all keeping well during this unprecedented time.

In spite of the health crisis the Guild has been able to carry on with its diverse classes, Coffee Mornings and Special Events albeit with the help of Zoom and Skype. Also some fundraising has been done especially with the Ecolint School which you will read about in Mateja's message.

Here's to a great summer break and hoping to be able to continue maybe with more in-person events around September time.

Keep well,
Caroline

MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT

NILOUFAR RAFI-KIAN BOUABID

Dear Members, dear Friends,

What a year we have had! It wasn't easy considering the health requirements imposed upon us. We did it nevertheless! The UNWG Management Team has done a tremendous job and I take this opportunity to thank everyone of my colleagues of the EC who have put in a great amount of energy and goodwill to bring this session to a close. I would also like to thank all the amazing ladies and Missions who worked hard to keep our activities alive and offer a sense of friendship and collaboration. It has been a personal pleasure to witness the great interest of our members and their participation throughout the year in the UNWG activities.

I would also like to thank and extend my personal appreciation to our two new Honorary Presidents: Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director General of the UNOG and Mr. Jürg Lauber, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Switzerland to UNOG and other International Organizations in Geneva. As this has been a year of firsts for us, we are extremely proud to have these two Dignitaries in our midst.

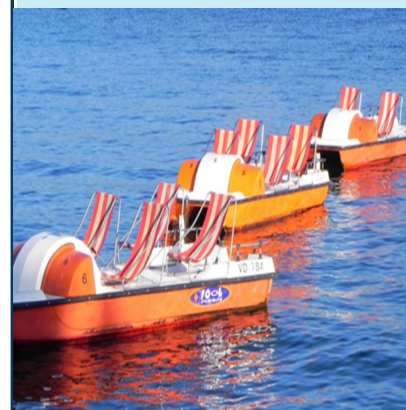
As you may have guessed, Ambassador Lauber's presence, which he ever so generously offered, is an absolute first, for the UNWG-Geneva. It's a change that is the introduction to many other changes needed for a modern and thriving organization that strives to matter within the *Genève Internationale*. Change doesn't have to be difficult once focus is kept on important issues. Our main objective is our charity efforts and as Ambassador Lauber put it with much elegance, we are one of the only organizations to give everything back to those in need. To continue to do so in an ever changing world, we must adapt to new ideas and new ways of participation and management. That is precisely the challenge that our Management Team, elected last October, has accepted. Hence, I would like to personally thank Ambassador Lauber for giving me the opportunity to introduce this change, which will ultimately have to be adopted by our members. To our dear members I say, my friends, don't miss this golden opportunity to hand over this organization to a new generation. We are all here temporarily, the organization will continue with us and without us in the future, and it is our duty, if we claim that its interest is paramount rather than our own, to give it the means to become an organization of the 21st century.

The UNWG-Geneva, in the image of its sister organizations around the world, has done much for women and children, as a women's organization at a time when women did not have the access they have today. The simple fact that we women, have to think about making our organization a champion of gender equality and open our doors to all people, rather than just women, is a testament of how far women have come. Let us show the way of how welcoming and open minded we can be. Together we will be able to achieve so much more for those in need.

Please continue your commitment towards the UNWG-Geneva, open your arms and your hearts to change so that we can all continue to keep our promise to those in need around the world.

I wish you all a healthy and fun summer; see you in September.

Niloufar



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INTERVIEW RESPONSES BY AMBASSADOR JÜRIG LAUBER, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF SWITZERLAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN GENEVA

- 1. *The United Nations Women's Guild, hitherto an all-women's association, is pleased to welcome a man, Ambassador of the host country, as Honorary President. This is a first in the history of our association. What does this mean to you?***

As Head of the Swiss Mission, I can only salute the constant commitment of the UNWG and its members to the objectives of the United Nations over the last 50 years. I would like to highlight in particular the support given to those most deprived of the world.

Gender equality and diversity issues are important to me and are one of the pillars of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. I have been an "International Gender Champion" for many years, an initiative led, amongst others, by ambassadors to the UN in Geneva, as well as heads of agencies, precisely to promote gender equality and diversity and to make it a reality in their professional sphere of influence.

My personal commitment in this respect and also in my work as a diplomat finds its consecration in my new function as Honorary President of the United Nations Women's Guild. I am proud of this. I thank you for the confidence you have shown in me and for your open-mindedness to allowing a man to join your ranks!

- 2. *The UNWG's mission is to help disadvantaged women and children throughout the world, mainly in developing countries, by financing projects with sustainable returns in the areas of education and social and community development. Switzerland has always provided valuable support to our activities. How do you see this support evolving in the coming years?***

In addition to its activities in favour of its members, I note that the main objective of the UNWG is to assist disadvantaged women and children. Thanks to the funds raised at the Bazaar, you offer them concrete help. This major event in the social calendar of the international community is in line with the goals pursued by the UN, in particular that of developing friendly relations between nations based on respect for the principle of mutual aid and sharing.

“Gender equality and diversity issues are important to me and are one of the pillars of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. “

For many years, the Swiss Mission has been active at your side, supporting you in the organisation of the Bazaar and running the Swiss stand. It will of course continue to do so with great enthusiasm.

For my part, as honorary president, I will be attentive to your organisation and offer my support in all matters where I can provide an added value or an opportunity to act.

3. *The UNWG is always keen to involve the Swiss population in general, and Geneva in particular, in its activities so as to strengthen the link between International Geneva and the population of our host country. What new synergies could be envisaged, with your support, between the UNWG and the Swiss authorities, for the full and effective realisation of our shared goal?*

One of the roles of the Swiss Mission, within the framework of the host state policy, as defined by the Swiss Federal Council, is to promote closer relations between International Geneva and the local population. We do this through the *Geneva International Welcome Centre*, with the close

links we have with the Diplomatic Club of Geneva or by collaborating with the *Fondation pour Genève*. And as of now, we are going to associate ourselves even more closely with the activities of the UNWG through my participation in your meetings, gatherings, etc. thanks to my very new honorary function.

Geneva has an international vocation, not only because of its intense multilateral diplomatic activity, but also because of its large foreign population, the largest in Switzerland. One idea could be to increase the visibility of the Guild at the local level via collaboration with Geneva associations dealing with the integration of the foreign population or, better still, to improve mutual understanding between the foreign and Swiss populations who, while living in the same territory, are frequently unfamiliar with each other.

Translated from French by Patricia Bell.

“And as of now, we are going to associate ourselves even more closely with the activities of the UNWG through my participation in your meetings, gatherings, etc. thanks to my very new honorary function.”



From left to right: Danielle Werthmüller, Imane Tazi-El Hachimi, HE Ambassador Jürg Lauber, Niloufar Rafi-Kian Bouabid, Mateja Prosek Grima

MESSAGE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT ACTIVITIES

IMANE TAZI-EL HACHIMI

Dear Members, Dear Friends,

We have now reached the end of the third quarter of 2021 and I would like to give you a brief summary of our activities.

We are very pleased to be able to give you this report on our various activities. I should like to point out that these would not have been possible without the perseverance of our Committee and the collaboration of our friends.

This year has been exceptional, mainly because of the health crisis which has forced us to change our way of working. Since the beginning of the year we have had to reinvent and update ourselves so as to maintain our usual activities and propose new ones.

Thanks to our friends, the wives of the Ambassadors to the UN, we were able to hold our monthly Coffee-mornings throughout the year. The themes, so diverse and rich, allowed us to travel to various countries and discover some amazing cultural and historical facts. We would like to thank them for their invaluable help.

We also set up a series of special events once a month in the form of conferences. The main theme this year was physical and moral well-being. These conferences were well attended and a great success.

I would also like to underline the excellent work done by our activity leaders who were able to reinvent themselves and adapt to the new situation, each in their own way, and maintain their activities online throughout the year. This has enabled our members to preserve a certain routine and maintain this social and friendly link that binds us. I should like to congratulate them and thank my colleague Helgard for her coordination and organizational work.

Finally, as soon as the situation permitted, we wanted to organize a summer lunch before the holidays to celebrate a return to normality. For us, it was essential to be able to meet in person with our members and friends, albeit with

fewer attendees, after a long period of virtual meetings. The event was held in a famous Geneva restaurant in a delightful lakeside setting and a friendly congenial ambiance. It was also an opportunity to raise some funds thanks to the organization of a lottery, for which the prizes were generously donated by missions and members of the Guild.

Once again, we were able to meet in person at the June Monthly meeting. It was held in a restaurant where the chef is passionate about edible wild plants. His presentation was accompanied by herbal tea and fruit juice and some delicious treats.

We hope that we will be able to return to our usual pre-Covid rhythm in the autumn and hold our face-to-face activities, especially our flagship events, namely the Children's Walk and the Bazaar, that enable us to fulfil our essential mission, i.e. to finance projects and provide scholarships for underprivileged children.

I wish you all a pleasant and relaxing summer and I look forward to seeing you in September!

Imane



MESSAGE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT PROJECTS MATEJA PROSEK GRIMA

Dear members of the UNWG,

We have managed to bring yet another successful UNWG season under the roof. After initial very difficult months due to the Covid pandemic, when we had to reinvent our organization and become fully operational online, we managed to organize different fundraising activities among which were also mini Children's Walks. International schools in Geneva have not shy away in this difficult year from helping us fundraise for our beneficiaries in Madagascar, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tanzania through our scholarship programme. Last school to participate at this year's walk was ECOLINT La Châtaigneraie campus. The school organized the walk in May on the grounds of the school and raised over 9,000 CHF. Bravo Ms. Lee and her team for a wonderful work she does! I would also like to thank all the teachers from different schools that supported us in this extremely difficult year. They made these individual Children's Walks possible by being very creative in their organizations. We are hoping that in next scholastic year we can receive the students back on the grounds of the UN for our classical Children's Walk. In addition, the Executive Committee after a lengthy process, selected 14 projects which focused on basic needs for children and women in the areas of health, sanitary well-being, and education in Colombia, Benin, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Morocco, Sierra Leone and others. Hopefully this year we can again organise our major fundraiser and will be able to fund more projects for children and women in need.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our dear members who generously donated through the Donation Drive Initiative, who purchased our beautiful Human Solidarity greeting cards and who participated in our mini lottery draw at our Summer Luncheon. Our circle of friends has to persevere our fundraising efforts to be able to continue supporting children; they need us now more than ever.

I wish you healthy, happy and peaceful summer holidays and I am looking forward to seeing you all in the fall for yet another season of interesting, fruitful and fun events.

Mateja



MESSAGE OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER JULIANA BARRIOS

After a very challenging year, we've learnt about all the wonders Social Media brings to our Organization. Even though the UNWG has used Social Media before, this past year we have taken it to a whole new level.

On the Facebook side, we created a page to share all the moments and novelties from our Organization. News happens so fast that we wanted to have a platform to share them instantaneously with all of our members. Also, it enabled us to have a direct channel of communication with our community, so we would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have kept in continuous contact! We have enjoyed so much all of your messages and comments that constantly enrich our page content.

Aside from Facebook, we have a beautiful Instagram profile full of pictures of our Coffee Mornings, Special Events and activities. For those who are not familiar with this platform, Instagram is all about aesthetics. It focuses on pictures and images to create content, and we take pride in showing the world the diverse group of smart and beautiful women that compose our Organization.

I know Social Media can be a little intimidating at first, but I would like to invite you all to give it a try. Very soon you'll get familiar with its dynamics and it will be hard not to enjoy our content. Follow us on Facebook (UNWG Geneva) and Instagram (@unwggva).

Last but not least, we have also redesigned our UNWG website to a vibrant, interactive and very informative website, where members can find information about our work, check the calendar of events and enjoy browsing through photos of our past events. You can visit our modernized website at www.unwg.ch.

Juliana

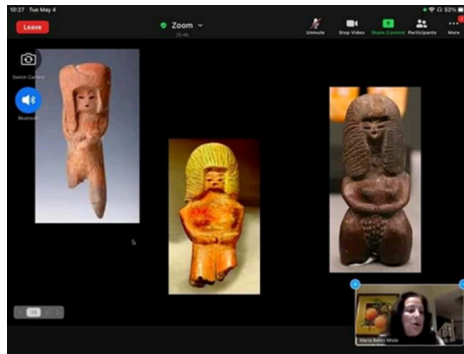
ENGAGING THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY

COFFEE MORNINGS

Mission of Ecuador: In the search for lost roots May 4th

Our great appreciation to Mrs. Theresa Salvador de Izquierdo, spouse of the Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Ecuador to UNOG for organizing our May Coffee Morning on Tuesday, 4 May 2021.

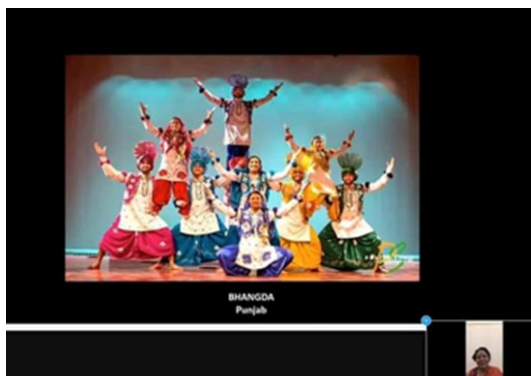
A big thank you to the guest speaker, Mrs. Maria Belen Misle, an art historian, who gave a very enriching presentation '*In the search of lost roots*' on the pre-columbian inspiration in Ecuadorean modern artists.



Mission of India: Indian Dance Traditions June 1st

Special thanks to Mrs. Sushma Pandey, spouse of the Ambassador, Permanent Representative of India to the UNOG for organizing our June Coffee Morning on Tuesday, 1 June 2021.

A wonderful presentation entitled '*Indian Dance Traditions: A Microcosm of Indian Cultural Heritage*' was presented by Dr Sonal Mansingh Padma Vibhushan, Winner of the Padma Vibhushan prize, Honorable Member of the Indian Parliament and legendary classical dancer.



9 June 2021

Madam Niloufar Rafi-Kian Bousabid,

I thank you for your letter of 7 June 2021 in reference to the Coffee Morning hosted by UNWG on 01 June 2021. I would like to express, on my behalf and on behalf of my wife Mrs. Sushma Pandey, our thanks and gratitude for giving us an opportunity to present a vital aspect of India's civilisation and culture to your members and other participants. We are grateful to you for all the cooperation extended to us. We are looking forward to avail more such opportunities in future for similar presentations on other facets of India.

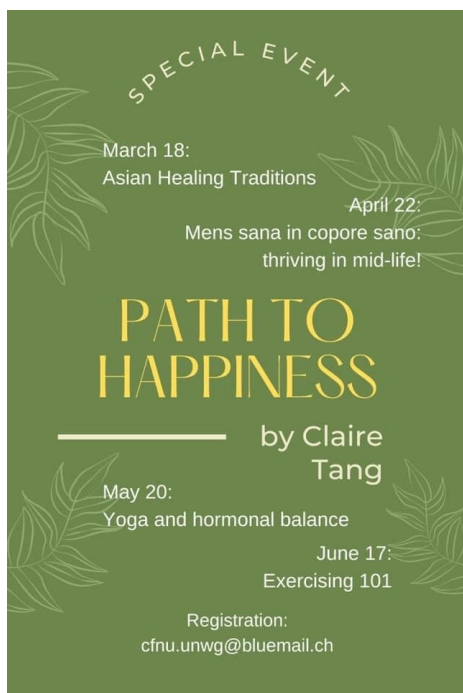
Bushika Pandey

Yours sincerely,
Indra Mani Pandey
(Indra Mani Pandey)

Ms. Niloufar Rafi-Kian Bousabid
President
United Nations Women's Guild - Geneva
Villa Les Feuillantines B-14, avenue de la Paix
1211 Geneva.



SPECIAL EVENTS



Series of Special events:

'Path to Happiness', hosted by Claire Tang.

Mrs. Claire Bostock Tang, spouse of the Director-General of WIPO, hosted four Special Events entitled "The Path to Happiness!"

Claire gave different presentations on Diet, Lifestyle, Stress Management and Cellular Health from March to June this year.

A very big thank you for all the very interesting presentations and all the impressive knowledge you shared with us.

We have since had many requests from members for a renewed collaboration with Claire in the future.



Essential Elements of a Healthy Lifestyle : Ayurvedic perspective

- Have a Routine
- Exercise
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Walking
- Self Massage
- Positive Relationships
- Environmental Wellness



WIPO FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY



UNWG ACTIVITIES

MONTHLY MEETINGS

EDIBLE WILD PLANTS, 25th June

The Monthly Meeting on "edible wild plants" that had been planned for March 2020 had to be cancelled due to the Covid pandemic. Thanks to good contacts of our friend and colleague Patricia Bell with several market gardeners in and around Geneva, we found another solution.

The last Monthly Meeting of the year, and the only one at which members of the UNWG-Geneva could meet in person, took place on June 25th in a charming restaurant called "Un R de Famille" where the chef, Sébastien Gueugneau is a connoisseur and passionate about edible wild plants.

Mr. Gueugneau and his colleague Phillip Carton gave us a warm welcome, followed by a fascinating power-point presentation giving us an glimpse of the edible wild plants that grow around us; we could never have guessed what treasures are within our easy reach!

We were treated to a delicious snack consisting of a fresh herbal tea, organic apple juice, asperula flavoured crème brûlée and meadowsweet flavoured "cake financier".



UNWG SUMMER LUNCHEON

UNWG SUMMER LUNCHEON AT LA PERLE DU LAC, JUNE 24TH

After a year of zoom meetings, Skype calls and virtual life, UNWG ladies finally had the opportunity to meet in person, to share a meal together and to greet new members at the beautiful Perle du Lac Restaurant. We couldn't be happier to see each other again.

We also used this opportunity to hold a small fundraising event. Some of our members and selected Permanent Missions generously donated gifts and we organised a small lottery draw. We are pleased to announce that the lottery has raised a sum of 1,200,- CHF which will go towards financing UNWG micro-projects for disadvantaged children.



MORE ABOUT US

Dear UNWG Members,

A big wish for safe and happy summer 2021!

Hope to see most of you IN PERSON in September to again give you an opportunity to connect with others while learning new skills.

As always, you are warmly invited to join in our community activities. You may do so by exploring your talents or by deciding to lead an activity yourself.

The new course schedule will be sent to you at the end of summer.

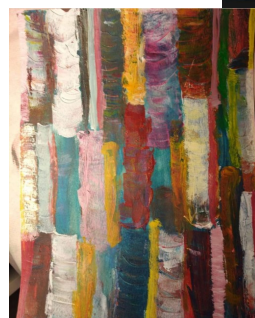
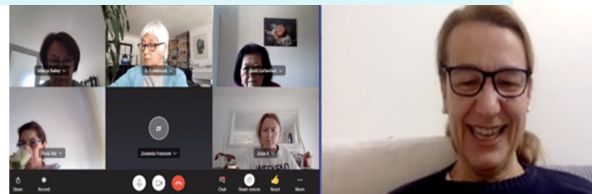
In general, if you have questions or need more information or if you consider offering a course yourself, please send a text to:

+41 76 604 8583 or write to: education@unwg.ch

Warm regards,

Your UNWG Teachers and Activities Leaders

Helgard Adams, Education Coordinator



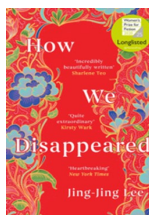
UPCOMING EVENTS IN SEASON 2021 –2022

Book Club

In September we will be discussing on Skype our book of the month, "The Good Earth" by Pearl S. Buck.



In October we will be discussing on Skype our book of the month, "How We Disappeared" by Jing-Jing Lee.



Thank you very much.

Chouhrette Bunzl

PROJECTS AROUND THE WORLD FINANCED BY THE UNWG-GENEVA

Prepared by Mateja Prosek Grima, Vice President Projects

PROJECT SUPPORTING NOSOTUA WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN PARAKUYO PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Parakuiyo Pastoralists Indigenous Community Development Organization-PAICODEO received a grant for the NOSOTUA women group from UNWG-Geneva. The assistance supported families in need in Parakuyo village, Kilosa district, Morogoro region. More specifically the grant provided heifers, computers and a printer to Nosotua women and food to children in Parakuyo primary school.

The project has helped women increase the possibility of livestock and property ownership and will in the future supply food for the families and for the wider community thus, increasing food security for the village. In addition, the project will have a spill-over effect, providing long term food and milk for the school children, which will help fight malnutrition in the village as well as providing manure to fertilize the grounds of the village fields. The PAICODEO also organized training courses for Nosotua women on heifer management, computer literacy, basic bookkeeping, record keeping by use of the storage, water and forest management.

The project will increase the trust and confidence in the community which will enable women to increase their voice in decision making in the family, in the village council and in the wider community which will in turn help women place more central role in family management and help them towards financial independence.



EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH FEW OPPORTUNITIES IN JARABACOA, LA VEGA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

The UNWG-Geneva continued financing in 2020 a project in the Dominican Republic which was implemented by a non-profit organization INDESCO and focused on empowering rural women with limited opportunities through the training in hospitality, bakery and pastry making, decoration, cooking, food handling, as well as offering short-term courses and youth club where they offered educational support to girls and teen girls.

Due to Covid the organisation, like many others, encountered problems in implementation and had to adjust the project, which they have done successfully. The trainings were conducted in the *Escuela Serranía* (Serranía School) where all health measures were followed. The Directorate of the School, made the decision that students remain in the School, due to poor conditions in which many of students live - very small houses, with many members, difficulty hygiene, little possibility of isolation, etc. In this way they could continue with their studies and ensure an environment with more favourable conditions against the Covid pandemic.

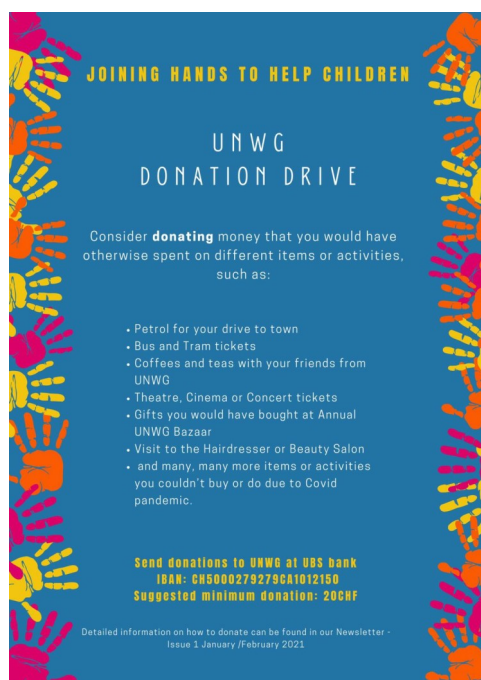
From January to September the beneficiaries residing in the School took a total of 630 hours of training in the courses of European Breads Technique, Basic Pastry, Pastry Decoration and Basic Cooking. In addition, some short courses were also taught either in person (prior to the pandemic) or via zoom. With the acquisition of the equipment which was subsidized by UNWG-Geneva, the school could produce bigger quantities of artisan products, jams and bread which in turn will after the pandemic give the school the possibility of increased sales.

The Youth Club was offered in person from January to mid-March and was retaken in August by Zoom. The aim was to provide educational support to keep girls and teenagers focused on projects related to their training as persons, raising awareness about the dignity of women and their role in the quality of family life, and helping to avoid the high number of teenage pregnancies, that almost doubles in rural areas in the Dominican Republic.

With regard to the short-term courses for women from communities surrounding the Serranía School, the profile of these beneficiaries formed a heterogeneous group, some single, others with a stable partner and some single mothers. Their common denominator is their condition of vulnerability due to low education levels and scarce economic resources. Some of the beneficiaries of the short courses offered in the School are implementing what they have learned and are selling the products within their community. This creates the possibility of them becoming financially independent and owning their own businesses.



FUNDRAISING



We would warmly like to thank those who have kindly contributed to the UNWG Donation Drive Initiatives: Ajkuna, Nadia, Taroub, Athar, Jun, Christine, Elisabeth, Laila, Pramila, Patricia, Maria, Eliane., Zohreh, Claire.

This is an ongoing drive so please send in your donations to help us continue to support the very many projects we have around the world. All the donations will go solely to assist children in need throughout the world. The donors will be acknowledged on our social media sites and those donating over 100 CHF will receive a commemorative Children's Walk pin as a token of appreciation for their generous support.

If you wish to stay anonymous when you give your donation, kindly write "Anonymous" in the message to the payee.

Suggested minimum amount of donation is 20 CHF.

Please send your donations to:

UNITED NATIONS WOMEN'S GUILD GENEVA

UBS Bank

IBAN: CH5000279279CA1012150

CULTURAL EXCHANGE SPACE

Fasting during the month of Ramadan

"The month of Ramadan is like rain, it nourishes the seeds of good deeds".

Dear Friends of the Guild,

In these difficult and sensitive times of pandemic, I would like to humbly share with you some ideas and thoughts about this month, sacred for Muslims.

Fasting (*sawm*) is the fourth pillar of Islam in the month of Ramadan, which is the ninth month of the lunar calendar and has eleven fewer days than the solar calendar. It is the only month whose name appears in the Qur'an. A month in which the faithful seek to intensify their bond with their creator, meditate on the Holy Book, participate in prayer vigils and, above all, be generous to the poor. Thus, solidarity and fasting occupy a major place during this period.

The memory of the revelation of the Koran to the Prophet is evoked during the night of the twenty-seventh day of this blessed month.

What is the significance of fasting ? Fasting is not penance. Fasting is a quarter faith and half patience, and the latter alone is half of faith. It is really a school of life, of humility, of serenity, of tolerance, of sharing, of generosity and of charity towards the most destitute, whatever their origins or confessions. One who fasts is able to bear the hardships of life and is open to the fate of the poorest. Saying a kind word is a form of almsgiving, keeping away from anything harmful is also a form of almsgiving. Through sharing of possessions and fasting, Muslims show their willingness to translate into action the moral, spiritual, and social prescriptions and values of Islam.

Initially, the fast was a voluntary deprivation, which later became a religious obligation, it is a Muslim practice of abstaining from eating, drinking, smoking and sexual intercourse from dawn till sunset or twilight.

It is an important religious period in Islam, during which recollection, charity, sharing and brotherhood are emphasized. This obligation is applicable to all Muslims over the age of puberty, except for the chronically ill, pregnant women, nursing mothers and manual labourers with physically stressful jobs. However, they must make a substitute sacrifice of a daily donation equivalent to one meal for the needy throughout the month. Another possibility is to replace the days of fasting during the year. The principle is actually quite flexible, the obligation applies only if it does not impact the health of the person concerned.



By voluntarily renouncing all the pleasures of earthly life, the person fasting is put in the situation of a human being suffering from hunger and brings forth compassion. It could be considered as a month of training to overcome one's ego. In this perspective, abstinence inculcates a strong sense of social responsibility and a sense of solidarity into one's consciousness. The goal is both a physical and a spiritual action, a period in which believers impose discipline on their body and control of their thoughts. Anyone who is confronted with insults can confuse the provocateur and disarm him by repeating three times the formula "I fast". Fasting is therefore a way of relieving oneself of the burdens of daily life and regulating one's impulses in order to curb one's desires.

As far as the social dimension is concerned, it is relevant to life in the city, because fasting implies solidarity towards one's neighbour which becomes stronger than usual, that is to say that we become much more sensitive to the sufferings of others.

Finally, the spiritual dimension of fasting is the one that is also much sought after: "To physical fatigue, responds an inner tranquillity."

We could therefore compare fasting to a spiritual journey during which the believer practices the fundamental principles of religion, namely: Devotion to God, morality, humanity and the acquisition of discipline as well as a sense of community and justice, with the firm desire to fast with full awareness. Self-discipline serves as an inner purification during this period when the person fasting immerses him/herself in meditation, makes peace with all those around him/her, renounces the satisfactions of daily life and gives special alms by sharing meals with all those in need. On the other hand, it is up to each person to choose during this blessed month and at the break of dawn, the pleasure and entertainment that he or she feels will most comfort his or her body after the hardships of the day.

Regarding the effects and benefits of fasting on health, it has been reported that "fasting is a form of protection, by fasting, you recover your health". This is tantamount to believing that: "Fasting is a remedy for health; the stomach is the seat of disease". This sentiment is currently shared throughout the world by a number of medical luminaries who advocate the benefits of fasting. A quotation from a Christian doctor corroborates this fact: "Know that the little food you eat with regularity, greatly outweighs what you eat with abundance and without regularity".

To conclude, it could be said that fasting is a means of renunciation and deprivation that establishes the foundations of equality, subjecting the rich and the poor, the humble and the powerful, to the same treatment. It even gives the concept of equality a universal meaning; this rite is practiced collectively at the same time throughout the Muslim world.

By Nadia MEHDI

ICELAND

Article on Iceland by Dr Ásthildur Jónsdóttir, Spouse of the Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Iceland to UNOG and other International Organisations in Geneva

‘I would like to point out Iceland's uniqueness: Iceland and its pure untouched nature are synonymous. If that is lost our uniqueness is lost. Just as if Paris lost its fashion, New York lost its skyscrapers, Los Angeles its Hollywood.’

This statement is on the webpage of the singer Björk who is Iceland's most internationally renowned musician. It is part of a campaign for environmental protection. It illustrates the salience of national identity in contemporary Iceland.

Icelandic nature, particularly in its extreme manifestations of volcanoes and glaciers and their potential to create natural disasters, has long fascinated travellers. Nature in Iceland does exert a powerful force on the landscape. Iceland sits on a mid-Atlantic tectonic plate boundary that is slowly being forced apart as new rock is pushed to the earth's surface, constantly forcing the two plates farther away from each other.



Nature is very important to Icelandic people. In elementary schools today children learn what *meaning* human beings can find in nature. They question how they, as persons can engage with, appreciate, and enjoy nature and protect it. It is not important to know whether this meaning is ‘real’ and not just a figment of our fantasy or imagination because assuming that nature does indeed contain a wealth of meaning we as human beings can hope to live in harmony with the nature. I am quite certain that encounters with nature leave a permanent mark on people – in fact, I think one would pretty much have to be a *troll* to *not* be affected by the many strong experiences that these encounters engendered. Icelandic trolls live in rocky mountains, deep in the Icelandic highlands. They like the taste of flesh and are known to lure unsuspecting humans into their caves with spells, magic potions or simply by taking them captive.

Trolls are not the only creatures that are to be found in our folklore. Hidden people are elves that are supernatural beings that live in nature. They look and behave similarly to humans but live in a parallel world. They can make themselves visible at will. Their dwellings are in mounds, and they are also called Elves.



Road built around elf stones in the western part of Iceland

Some Icelandic folk tales caution against throwing stones, as it may hit the hidden people. People do not generally believe in hidden people they have heard tales about supernatural beings that have mostly been made for amusement. Even though people claim they don't believe in supernatural being there is a common respect for the renowned habitats of the hidden people, the nature. Iceland is full of enchanted spots, places you don't touch. They're protected by stories about the bad things that will happen if you do. This word of mouth, passed down over generations, is usually more effective than an official preservation order. That can be seen as there are many stories of machines breaking down and workers becoming ill when they interfere with elf rocks. The elves are seen as friendly, beautiful creatures, but you have to respect them, or they will take their revenge.

This protection can be interpreted as a symbol for the respect Icelandic people have for its nature. The hidden people seem in many ways to represent the Icelandic's dreams of a more perfect and happy existence. The elves stand for living in harmony with nature,” says Kolbrún Oddsdóttir, a landscape architect who worked with a seer to produce a series of tourist maps recording sites associated with elves. “They provide a metaphor for living sustainably with the resources we have. And they're good for tourism.”

My Egyptian Grandmother's Kitchen

Contributed by: Ingy Amin

Like most kids, I spent all my childhood with my grandparents, especially during the summer and winter vacations, I have to admit that living with them was one of the best memories that left a great impact on the formation of my personality and the development of my awareness of my surroundings. Like most of the families all over the world great conversations happened in the kitchen while cooking, eating, drinking...etc. I remember how she had a great passion for cooking every day to serve us with what we like to eat, go every day to the market to buy fresh food and come to prepare the breakfast then start cooking for dinner with lots of love and care and lots of stories and talk as well!



I want to highlight the great effort of all the grandmothers for their caring and helping their sons and daughters in raising their kids in a perfect way, they are first and best kid's friend; in addition to bearing the disasters in the kitchen and complete mess resulting from our actions!

So today I choose one of my grandmother specialties in the Egyptian kitchen ***“Okra Casserole (Diqqiyat Bamya)”***, I dedicate this recipe to all the beautiful grandmothers, thanking them for their endless love. Hope you try it and like it.

Okra Casserol (Diqqiyat Bamya)

Ingredients

½ kilo fresh okra (or frozen)
2 tbs ghee (butter or mix butter & oil)
Boiled cooked cubes of meat or lamb (quantity optional). Or use only vegetables
5 or 6 cloves garlic (be generous)
1 cup tomato juice + 1 ½ tomato paste
1 cup meat broth (can substitute with vegetable broth)
Lime juice



Method

For fresh okra wash it and place in a sieve to dry, remove caps and thorns, otherwise with frozen okra you eliminate this step.

Lightly sauté okra in 1 tbs ghee or butter or oil, then drain and set aside.

In a casserole, chop the onion into small pieces (you can use the chopper but don't make it too thin) and sauté until golden yellow, add boiled meat stir it for a minute then add the crushed garlic.

Add tomato juice, tomato paste, salt, pepper. Simmer until tomato sauce thickens and ghee (butter, oil) rises to top, then add the meat broth and stirring occasionally.

In an earthenware container (you can put it in Pyrex or leave it in a casserole) place okra with all ingredients, add meat broth if needed place in a hot oven, check from time to time and add extra broth if needed. Bake until ghee (butter, oil) appears on the top.

Place on a plate and serve hot with rice & bread sprinkle few drops of lemon/lime juice. ***Bon Appetite !***

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Newsletter

The deadline to receive information for the next Newsletter is:

15 August 2021.

Please ensure that all information is sent to the Newsletter:

email: **newsletter@unwg.ch**

***The Executive Committee Team, hopes
to see you soon and
wishes you an excellent summer!***