SPECIAL FOCUS

THE MEANING OF INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE

Throughout 2013, a number of events gave staff the opportunity to reflect on what it means to serve the United Nations. A new swearing-in ceremony for United Nations staff in Geneva, the commemoration of World Humanitarian Day and of the tenth anniversary of the Canal Hotel bombing in Baghdad during which 22 colleagues lost their lives, and ceremonies honouring long-serving and retiring staff, all contributed to this consideration of the meaning of international civil service.

THE OATH OF OFFICE

“Through the declaration of the Oath of Office, we affirm our commitment to the United Nations and to its core values. … As international civil servants, we bear the responsibility of translating these ideals into reality.”

These words of UNOG Director-General Kassym-Jomart Tokayev welcomed around 40 newly arrived staff members working for UNOG and other United Nations entities in Geneva, as they joined together to take the Oath of Office on 20 September 2013. While two colleagues read the Oath of Office in French and in English, staff committed to conducting their functions as international civil servants with loyalty, discretion and conscience. The Oath of Office ceremony is an initiative on the part of UNOG to engage United Nations staff in Geneva and officially welcome them to the larger United Nations family. A rite of passage for all staff members, the Oath of Office ceremony also follows the recent Secretariat-wide Leadership Dialogue initiated by the Ethics Office, which explores the nature of the obligations of international civil servants in the context of their daily work.
HONOURING RETIRING UNOG SECURITY OFFICERS

On 28 August 2013, the UNOG Security and Safety Service, together with the UNOG Director-General and authorities from the host country and from the Department of the Police in Geneva, paid tribute to retiring security officers. During the ceremony, it was recognized that the UNOG Security and Safety Service is composed of professionals with multiple skills and expertise who make numerous contributions to the Organization.

SERGEANT ANDUHA HAS EFFICIENTLY SERVED BOTH IN GENEVA AND IN MISSIONS ABROAD, INCLUDING THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE GROUP IN NAMIBIA.

SERGEANT BURGUIO, EXPERT IN MARTIAL ARTS, HAS ACTED AS A SELF-DEFENSE TRAINER.

CORPORAL VIGNON HAS WORKED IN THREE MISSION ASSIGNMENTS: HAITI, IRAQ AND BURUNDI.

RECOGNIZING LONG-SERVING STAFF

On United Nations Day, 24 October 2013, the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council organized a ceremony recognizing long-serving staff members who had served 25 or 30 years with the United Nations.

REMEMBERING FALLEN COLLEAGUES, PROMOTING THE HUMANITARIAN SPIRIT

Over 300 staff of the United Nations family in Geneva came together with humanitarian partners to pay tribute to fallen colleagues and mark World Humanitarian Day on 19 August 2013. Organized collectively by UNOG, OCHA Geneva and the humanitarian community, the event highlighted the enduring humanitarian spirit of United Nations staff around the world.

In an emotional and solemn ceremony, wreaths were laid at the commemorative plaque at the Palais des Nations, which bears the names of the 22 staff members who lost their lives in the Baghdad bombing on 19 August 2003. Many colleagues and friends of victims and survivors were present to share their memories and to commemorate the tenth anniversary of that painful day. Those lost were honoured in speeches by high-level representatives of UNHCR, ICRC, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, the Permanent Mission of Iraq and the UNOG Staff Coordinating Council.

Staff then followed the annual memorial service broadcast live from United Nations Headquarters, bringing together the global United Nations family.