SPECIAL FOCUS

“INTELLECTUAL GENEVA”: UNOG AS A PLATFORM FOR INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE

The rich presence of world-class research and academic institutions in Geneva represents a unique strength for the United Nations. Through its extensive network, UNOG facilitates the integration of this wide-ranging knowledge and expertise into discussion and policymaking within the Organization. The year 2013 saw a number of concrete realizations of these innovative and collaborative partnerships with “Intellectual Geneva”.

UNOG AND THE GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES SIGN A LETTER OF AGREEMENT

On 2 September 2013, Director-General Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Philippe Burrin, Director of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, signed a letter of agreement bolstering cooperation between the two institutions.

The partnership will facilitate access to internships at the United Nations and to its Graduate Study Programme. Students will also benefit from special programmes organized by UNIS on topics such as peace, human rights and the environment, as well as guided tours of UNOG.

Gaining a greater understanding of the United Nations and its work benefits not only the students of the Institute, but UNOG as well, by engaging the academic community in its activities and building on current United Nations efforts to motivate and empower young people. The agreement also furthers the efforts of both UNOG and the Institute to continue to promote Geneva as a centre of the international community’s work in the service of peace, development and human rights.

Another key partner in Geneva’s scientific and research community is the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), with whom UNOG signed a cooperation agreement in 2011. In 2013, UNOG benefited from this partnership by becoming a member of both an Internet consortium and the CERN Internet eXchange Point. Using the consortium as the main Internet service provider for UNOG allows UNOG to more than double the Internet bandwidth capacity available on site at a minimal cost, and enhances the capacities of UNOG in the event of a crisis at the Palais de Nations.

UNOG also partnered with CERN in outreach to the local community by taking part in the CERN open weekend, giving lectures in the “International Village” exhibition and setting up an information stall.
“Science, technology, innovation and culture can significantly impact each of the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental.”

Ambassador Néstor Osorio of Colombia, President of the Economic and Social Council, 1 July 2013.

CULTURAL CONFERENCE: SCIENCE MEETS ART

Organized by the Permanent Mission of Italy in collaboration with the UNOG Cultural Activities Programme on 21 November 2013, this conference explored the connection between science, technology and art, looking at, among other issues, the use of physics in the preservation and renovation of cultural heritage.

PROMOTING KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE THROUGH THE UNOG LIBRARY

In its position as knowledge centre in the heart of the UNOG intellectual, academic and outreach programme, the UNOG Library communicates to United Nations staff members, diplomats and staff from the Permanent Missions, conference delegates, the international community and the public at large about United Nations issues and informs decision-making and debate.

In 2013, the Library Talks series attracted 1,500 participants in 16 events, a marked increase since 2012, which confirms the importance of informal knowledge-sharing at UNOG. The Library Talks are organized with institutions from the United Nations system, civil society and academia, as well as with permanent missions, and strive to give diverse opinions on United Nations issues to members of the public. A few of the highlights of this year’s programme were “Afghanistan’s post-conflict reconstruction – the outlook after the 2014 transition”, a talk organized in collaboration with UNITAR; “Ten steps towards a weapons of mass destruction-free zone in the Middle East” organized with the Russian Center for Policy Studies; and “The legend of China’s growth” presented with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and the Permanent Mission of China.
SPECIAL FOCUS

SEARCHING FOR PARADIGMS FOR CHANGE

Is it possible to achieve the apparently conflicting goals of prosperity, security, sustainability and social justice?

This was the main question posed to over 250 participants in an international conference hosted on 3 June 2013 by UNOG and the World Academy of Art and Science. Headed by Ivo Šlaus and Garry Jacobs, the World Academy of Art and Science is an international NGO focused on the social consequences and policy implications of knowledge.

The idea for the conference sprang from a clear need to consider in depth the multiple challenges before the international community with a view to identifying the elements necessary for fundamental paradigm change.

The conference provided a rare opportunity for diplomats and activists to look beyond the daily discussions on technical and policy details and reflect together on what kind of future we want.

Over 40 prominent speakers from the United Nations family, government, other international organizations, academia and the private sector examined current challenges and proposed solutions. Among the presenters were high-profile leaders such as International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President Peter Maurer, CERN Director-General Rolf Heuer, Fondation pour Genève President Ivan Pictet and a number of Geneva-based ambassadors.

UNOG and the World Academy of Art and Science will continue their collaboration to identify the core elements of a new paradigm that can inform and guide broader international efforts. The reflection process is being continued in different conferences in various regions of the world.