

# Divva

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## International Diplomat

Digitizing foreign aid

# Nicolai Astrup

*Minister of International Development of Norway*



The Bangladesh success story  
**M. Shameem Ahsan**



The Norwegian ambassador in Geneva  
**Hans Brattskar**



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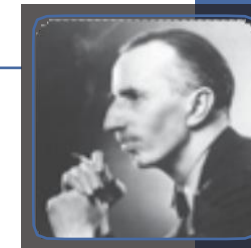
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# Editorial

## Go digital...

Just after the World Economic Forum, businesspersons and others went out in the press and encouraged people to go digital.

The reason is quite simple, my colleague explained: "We are at a crossroads between two types of societies – the old traditional one and the emerging new digital society."

Transition periods are never easy, though, he continued. There will be winners and losers, and it's now that we should start to determine what kind of society we want to see in the future. In France, the Yellow Vests protest movement might be an example of what we will see more of in the future. In the beginning, it was just protest against the rise in the gasoline prices. Now, it has gone further and might even turn into a political party. One of the things that they are asking for is a different system of participatory democracy. The French president has launched a "national dialogue", and although most people do not expect much outcome, it might turn out to be better than most people expect.

In Norway, the Norwegian government just appointed the first minister in charge of digital issues. Erna Solberg, the Norwegian Prime Minister, said recently that Norway has to prepare for the digital revolution. She therefore appointed Nicolai Astrup, who was

the Minister of Development, to this important position. Mr Astrup also sits on the United Nations High-Level Segment for Digital Cooperation established by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres last year. The Panel is reflecting on both the risks and the incredible benefits of digital transformation. It goes without saying that new thinking and innovative ideas are needed to harness the benefits and manage the risks of this digital age. Norwegian banks will start to employ robots to give people advice on how and where to save money based upon their spending history. So, apparently, 2019 will be the year!

A recent study published in the United States by the Brookings Institution showed that robots and artificial intelligence will replace as many as one quarter of the US working population in the years to come. Robots aren't replacing everyone, but a quarter of U.S. job situations severely disrupted as artificial intelligence accelerates the automation of existing work is significant. The report further says roughly 36 million Americans hold jobs with "high exposure" to automation – meaning at least 70 percent of their tasks could soon be performed by machines using current technology. Those jobs that remain largely unscathed by this evolution will be those requiring not just advanced education but also interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence and maturity.



However banal the question may sound, it is imperative that we ask it and try to answer it: where are we heading after all? Nobody really knows, but let us orient ourselves by quoting Martin Luther King: "Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."

It is not enough to look ahead to, and brace for, technological developments. In thinking about how we shall participate in the making of this new emerging type of society, we must demand that justice be an integral component of it. Technological transition is not enough – there is ample evidence of that already in today's world. We must bend our efforts to use this momentous transition to bring about the just world that Martin Luther King fought and died for.

MARIT

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## Digitizing foreign aid



Left His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Haakon, Prime Minister Solberg, Minister of Foreign Affairs Eriksen Søreide and Minister of Development Astrup on their way to the United Nations in New York. General Assembly 2018.

Photo : Frode Overland Andersen / Ud

### Interview with His Excellency

# Nicolai Astrup

## Minister of International Development of Norway

It is not every day that one has the chance to meet a person like the Norwegian Minister of International Development, Nicolai Astrup. He belongs to one of the traditional shipping families in Norway; he is young, but retains the pioneering, forward-looking and innovative outlook of his ancestors. The Norwegian Prime Minister, Erna Solberg picked the right man for this important position, because the Minister is a person who wishes to help as many as possible, with the means he has on his development budget.

We had a chance to meet him in Geneva, where he participated in the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. Despite his young age, he is one of 20 members appointed by Antonio Guterres, appointed in his personal capacity, representing a cross-section of expertise from government, industry, civil society, academia and the technical community. Ms. Melinda Gates, Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Mr. Jack Ma, Executive Chairman of Alibaba Group were appointed by the UN Secretary-General as



Co-Chairs of the Panel. The Secretary-General asked the Panel to contribute to the broader public debate on the importance of cooperative and interdisciplinary approaches to ensure a safe and inclusive digital future for all taking into account relevant human rights norms. The panel is expected to identify policy, research and information gaps and make proposals to strengthen international cooperation in the digital space.

**Q: You seem to be the youngest member of the Erna Solberg Government?**

That's not the case. I think I'm 7 years older than the youngest Minister. Historically there are others who have been far younger than me holding a ministerial position. I think the youngest one in the government is 33 years old.

**Q: You are one of 20 members of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel, appointed in your personal capacity. What are the prospects for global digital cooperation?**

When I took up this (ministerial) post, it struck me that there is a huge potential in using digital tools, and that these would enable us to get better results out of our traditional development aid projects. In addition, it would enable countries to progress quicker on the development path than we did.

We have many individual, outstanding examples of technologies and innovations that have contributed to excellent results but we were lacking a strategic approach for the use of digital tools. Therefore, we elaborated a digital strategy for our development aid policy, which we launched last August. Now we are working on the elaboration of a report to the Norwegian parliament about digitalization in our development aid policy. I have spent a tremendous amount of time on this issue last year. So, the invitation to participate in this panel came in time and fits in well with the key issue – on how to modernize the development aid policy.

In our traditional development aid programmes, we have noticed that in those cases where we have used digital tools the outcome is better, and this has given us the possibility to reach out to a larger number of beneficiaries than in the past. I will give you a concrete example: Last year, I visited Malawi, and a project that has benefited from Norwegian financial assistance. 30,000 first and second grade pupils in school use digital learning material somewhere between 30 minutes to one hour a week, which we would say is close to nothing. Nevertheless, the result is amazing. 100 per cent improvement in literacy rates, and 60 per cent increase in mathematics in comparison with those who do not participate in the project. The parents of these pupils have access to these tools in the afternoons and evenings, and they learn to read and write. So, this is a project that has a double utility.

*“We hope that the fund will contribute to private and public investments, in particular in waste management systems. Many countries do not have proper waste management systems and the result is that the pollution goes directly into the ocean.”*

We have also financed an application called EFAU for Syria, which is designed for Syrian children who live in refugee camps and who do not have access to ordinary schooling as they should have had under normal conditions.

Another application we have financed is the MPESA Platform, which is a mobile phone banking service being used by more than 30 million Kenyans. This gives persons who have never had a bank account or a credit card to be part of the modern economy, both in terms of savings and investments.

We are progressing quickly. Telenor (the Norwegian Telecommunications Company) told me that on broadband coverage in Myanmar, they have achieved in 5 years what it took them 20 years to develop in Norway. It's all about how fast we can realize the potential hidden here. These are the inputs I have put forward in this panel, and it's called Digital Public Goods.

**Q: What do you mean by digital public goods?**

That's technologies based upon open source, unlicensed technology that anybody can use and develop further. They are free, easily accessible for everybody – in other words, a common good.

A good example is a health information system with corresponding software, developed by the University of Oslo. The system is now being used in more than 100 countries, reaching out to 2.3 billion people.

Funnily enough, one of the countries not using it is Norway, but it is being used all over the world. It's a system that gives information about health to the authorities, and gives them the opportunity to improve health services. India has built an ICT system for their population of 1.2 billion. It is based upon open source technology that everybody can use. For developing countries, this is something very positive. In many cases, they do not have the capacity or resources to develop their own system, but here they can take something already existing and adopt it to their local needs. This is happening in India, where with the assistance of the World Bank, they will export their system to Morocco. And this is only the beginning, and can turn into something like our health service system. So, you see there, is a tremendous potential out there. What we are now trying to do is to bring together both private companies and non-governmental actors to set up an accessible software platform. To arrive at this stage, we have in addition challenged UNICEF Venture, to set up a prototype of a digital public goods platform. If we succeed in this venture, I think this can really make a difference at the global level. We hope that the Panel will also consider it as their priority because the UN system by and large is a platform for independence. China, the U.S. and India have



Prime Minister Erna Solberg, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Søreide and Minister of Development Nikolai Astrup. UN General Assembly September 2018

Photo : Frode Overland Andersen / Utd

their own approaches on how the digital future will be, so this can be a common denominator platform, which will have a tremendous potential.

So, it is indeed very exciting to be present here and to participate in this development. I also think that the time has come to reflect upon how we can use each Norwegian Krone to get the most out of it, and that we can reach out to many more people.

A lot of exciting things are taking place. Let me just mention a new alliance between FAO, UNICEF, the World Food Programme, the United Nations, Microsoft, Amazon and Google using Big Data to predict famine, so that we will be able to come up with resources before disaster strikes, thereby save many human beings from a tragic death, and not the least reduce the cost at a time when international humanitarian funds do not cover the needs.

**Q: All this is indeed very impressive.**

Well there is a perspective, and there is a new approach to how we work, both in terms of development and finances. The Panel's work covers global interests, whereas I would say that this might have the biggest impact for the poorest nations.

**Q: What other work do you do in the field of Norwegian development aid?**

One of the biggest challenges that we are facing is marine pollution and marine debris. Every year, 8 million tonnes of plastic waste go into the ocean. At the end of the day, something has to be done before it's too late. We need clean oceans if we are going to be able to feed our future generations. We have therefore launched a new development project to clean the ocean. We will use 1.6 billion NOK (1 USD = 8.5 NOK) over a 4-year period. When we were looking for an organization to carry out this project, we did not find any so we took the initiative to set up a new fund under the auspices of the World Bank – the ProfBlue. Within 6 months we managed to set up the fund and get pledges of 1 billion NOK. We hope that the fund will contribute to private and public investments, in particular in waste management systems. Many countries do not have proper waste management systems and the result is that the pollution goes directly into the ocean. So that is another issue that we are working on. Of course, we do collaborate with the big polluting countries, and we will also establish collaboration with Africa. They do not pollute much today but with some of the rapid economic development taking place on the African continent, which is an excellent thing, they might be faced with the same problems as in India today. •





**Making the invisible, visible:  
leading the way for a clean planet  
and healthy people.**

Interview between Marit Fosse &

# Rolph Payet

Executive secretary of the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm conventions

The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions aim to protect human health and then environment from hazardous chemicals and waste, are legally-binding, almost universal in their global geographical coverage, and are administered by UN Environment in Geneva. I recently caught up with the conventions' Executive Secretary, Rolph Payet, to find out more.

**Marit Fosse (MF):**

**Dr. Payet, thank you and let us begin. You are a former Minister of Environment and Energy for the Seychelles. Please tell us, how has your island upbringing shaped you in your professional career, and how did that career lead you to the United Nations, and to Geneva?**

I am born and raised in the Seychelles, a group of islands more than a thousand miles from any landmass. This feeling of isolation, in environmental terms, indeed came to an end

when tonnes of wastes were continuously washed up on some of our inhabited islands, chemicals like DDT found in Indian Ocean whales and the wonderful red sunsets during certain times of the year which presumably arise from air pollution on the continents. Islands are not alone anymore, through our industrialisation and consumption we have spread wastes and chemicals to all the remote corners of the planet. So you can say, this is what prompted me to come to Geneva.

Geneva, this year celebrates 100 years of multilateralism, and with reason, as the city hosts hundreds of organisations and many conventions leading to a positive impact on our planet. The hub for chemicals and wastes multilateral issues reside here in Geneva, and together with the World Health Organisation, The World Trade Organisation and the International Labour organisation, among others, provides



the BRS Secretariat with the greatest platform to advance the decisions of the parties to those conventions. And with 187, 161, and 182 parties to the three conventions – Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm - respectively, the coverage really is global in its extent.

So, the journey from my island to Geneva is to meet the world, and for us to see how we can reverse global pollution and its impacts on human health and our one and only planet.

**MF: Very interesting indeed. The inter-connectivity of ecosystems. And we as part of the ecosystems are also therefore connected, for better or for worse. Tell us about the situation regarding chemicals and waste: what does this slogan "Making the Invisible, Visible" actually represent?**

**RP:** Making the invisible, visible is how we bring the issue of chemicals and wastes to the doorstep and home of each and every consumer without the need for a degree in chemistry or otherwise. Under the present scenario not many consumers know that only 9% of their electronic wastes are actually recycled, and that millions of tonnes of those end up in parts of Africa where children break them up and are thus exposed to toxic chemicals. The modern consumer raids the supermarket and the high streets every day, removes plastic packaging, and throws it away. Cumulatively, such unnecessary packaging becomes millions of tonnes! Who takes a moment to think about what happens to those wastes? We live in societies in artificially-created bubbles where we are not – currently – accountable for our footprint on the planet. It is one thing to pay for an environmental levy on a product and feel exonerated of our environmental responsibilities, and another to see it turn up in the backyard of someone less fortunate, doing them harm, or eventually into our food systems, doing harm to us.

Because chemicals are everywhere, in the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink. In the furniture we sit on, in the mobile telephone we communicate with, in the cooking equipment we prepare our food with, the clothes we wear. They are in the heavily industrialised regions of the world, and on the highest, most remote, seemingly pristine alpine mountains. They are in our mega-cities, and also in our polar regions. So, we have the responsibility to make them visible!

We need to be more transparent to our consumers with regards to hazards they are being exposed to - and most importantly

and positively, the alternatives – to toxic chemicals. Some years ago, we developed the "Body Burden Man" diagram to illustrate the multiple pathways of hazardous chemicals into our body. Research has also clearly showed that pregnant and nursing mothers, children, and the elderly are most vulnerable.

**MF: These are very important, yet quite disturbing conclusions. Thanks for sharing that. Why is it so key that people should be aware of the hazards from chemicals and waste, other than because they have the right to know?**

**RP:** I see it from two important angles. First, informed people can make better decisions as to their purchasing and disposal habits, and second, they can then play an important role in ensuring the government, private sector do what is necessary to ensure that measures to recycle wastes, for example, are properly undertaken. And in a safe manner, of course, and not illegally dumped in a remote country.

Indeed many studies have confirmed that implementation of our conventions and national laws, especially environmental laws, at national and local levels is improved when citizens are well-armed with information. Tackling the challenges of chemicals and waste requires partnership between the international community, individual governments, the private sector and the general public, so the better-informed people are, the better the implementation.

And in fact, so many solutions are actually already there! Ecological agriculture to produce food without harmful pesticides; organic cotton for our clothing and bedding; mosquito nets to prevent malaria whilst avoiding the spraying of harmful chemicals such as DDT; innovative solutions to waste management; the advent of circular economy, life-cycle approaches to product design, use and recycling; lead-free paint; the list is endless. We need to embrace and promote these solutions.

**MF: Take marine plastic litter. What is happening with the recent groundswell of public awareness on that?**

**RP:** A great example indeed! It is in some ways many decades too late, but now we have the attention of the public, let's do something about it! Governments have recognised and responded to this heightened sensitivity around this issue, be it the large number of countries which have introduced and



are now enforcing bans on single-use plastic bags, such as Kenya, or be it the many countries which are collectively throwing human and financial resources into international processes aiming at tackling this global problem in a coordinated and connected manner. But there is more that can be done, and I am confident more would be done. The observation of plastic particles in our food should not be taken lightly.

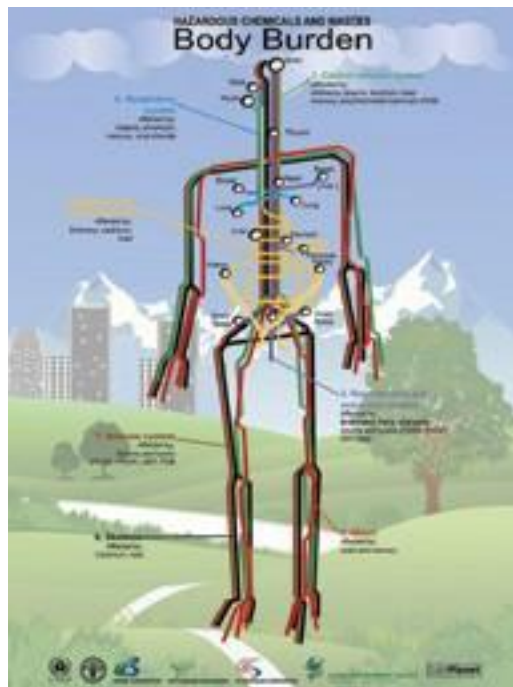
**MF: Can you say more?**

**RP:** Of course. For example, Norway, a country you feature elsewhere in this magazine, has been quite instrumental in providing international leadership, and also financial resources, to help engage governments and stimulate UN efforts to pull together state-of-the-art information, analysis of policy gaps, and the discussion of potential governance options, for tackling marine plastic pollution, including through the Basel Convention. In fact, a growing group of countries, both in the developed and developing world, are calling for clear and tangible action on the issue of plastics. It is one area, they declare, that we have had enough talk – we now need impactful action – and I agree with them. For this reason, I am very excited that the meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention will be considering a range of concrete actions to address this issue, including a proposal for more comprehensive coverage of the plastic wastes moved across borders.

**MF: What meeting is that??**

**RP:** Every two years the parties (governments) come together to take decisions on the sound management of chemicals and waste, within the legal framework of the three international conventions – the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions. Those decisions should then be given effect in those countries that are parties to those conventions. This year, our Triple Conference of the Parties (or COPs) will run from 29 April to 10 May under the banner of “Clean Planet Healthy People” and we hope that it will send a strong message that we indeed need to clean up our planet for the sake of the health of all.

Our message is that even if wastes are being dumped far away from where we got rid of them, in remote locations, there is clear scientific evidence that their hazards come back through our air, food and water. If there is one thing on our planet that we cannot hide – it is our waste. Sooner or later it will be washed up on our coasts, turn up in our food, in the air we breathe. I challenge anyone to bring me a glass of naturally collected water which does not contain any manmade chemical or microplastic!



**MF: The COPs sound interesting. What else apart from marine plastic waste is on the agenda?**

**RP:** Both the Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions will also work on the possible listing of more chemicals either for further controls or outright restriction. This is done through a robust scientific review process. They will be deciding upon chemicals found in fire extinguishers, non-stick cookware, and other items we use at home – for example in stain-resistant textiles such as carpets – and which have been found to be linked to major health issues such as kidney cancer, testicular cancer, thyroid disease, pregnancy-induced hypertension, and high cholesterol.

**MF: Non-stick pans? What can people do then, at the individual level, to protect themselves and their families from these “invisible hazards”?**

**RP:** Well, once aware, people can do a host of things which will lower their own exposure, and at the same time benefit the environment. Some of these actions might even save them money! Changing habits is the first step. Choose cooking pans with safer coatings, for example. Cutting down on waste is a no brainer! Especially avoiding single-use plastics and by reusing or recycling as much as one can. In some circles some consumers have adopted the slogan - If it can't be reused or recycled, refuse it!

At our COPs we will also be encouraging all delegates to walk the walk. For many years now, our meetings have been paperless, we have also made them carbon-neutral, and since last year we have increased our efforts in reducing wastes and eliminating the use of single-use plastic materials. This year, we will be asking the delegates to BYOBottle: Bring Your Own Bottle – as there will indeed be no plastic water bottles available or sold.

**MF: Wonderful! Dr Payet, thank you for explaining all about chemicals and waste, good luck with those important decisions at the COPs, and we look forward to hearing positive outcomes for human health and environment very soon.**

**RP:** Thank you Marit, it has been a pleasure. I urge anyone interested in finding out more, including our colleagues from the media, to consult our websites at [www.brsmeas.org](http://www.brsmeas.org) or to follow us on Twitter @brsmeas

« **Multilateralism is under pressure but is definitely not dead!** »



Interview with

**Mr Hans Brattskar**

Ambassador of Norway to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva



Behind the patina of diplomatic politeness, he is pleasant, even friendly, the Norwegian ambassador in Geneva, Mr Hans Brattskar, who, despite a long list of achievements, also comes across as modest. We did not know much about him when we first met, but digging into different sources, we found out that Mr Ambassador was trained as an economist with a PhD in political science before entering the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the early 1980s.

Commensurate with his long list of achievements, Ambassador Brattskar has had an impressive career. Let us briefly mention that he has been Embassy Secretary of the embassies in Washington, D.C., and Kuala Lumpur; head of the Secretariat for the Minister of International Development in the Ministry before going back to the U.S. as Ministerial Counsellor at

the Norwegian United Nations delegation in New York. Later, he was Norway's ambassador to Sri Lanka. Back in Oslo, Ambassador Brattskar became the Foreign Affairs Ministry's special adviser for peace-building operations, and then head of the government's climate and forest project. He was appointed Norway's ambassador to Kenya and Norway's representative to United

Nations organizations in Nairobi. Under the Erna Solberg government, from 2013 to 2015, he was State Secretary for Development Assistance for Foreign Minister Børge Brende (who was appointed President of the World Economic Forum in 2017), and finally, he arrived here in Geneva. So, now let us leave the floor to Ambassador Brattskar...

**Q: Mr Ambassador, what could you tell us about your background beyond the list of diplomatic and government posts you've held?**

I have been in the Norwegian Foreign Service since 1984, so that is quite a few years now – 35 years this summer. I studied many years in the U.S., first a degree in economics and later international relations. While I was finishing my PhD in international relations at Claremont Graduate University in California I taught economics for a year at a college in Norway. Then I got into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1984 and have been there since, except two leaves of absence. I have been here in Geneva for two years and six months. In the ministry of foreign affairs, we have four-year terms, so, I have a year and a half to go.

**Q: 2019 is an important year for Norway here in Geneva. Could you tell us about it?**

Well, every year is important. But, this year, we have again, for the third time, taken on the presidency of the Mine Ban Convention. The official title is the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. It was adopted in Norway in 1997 and signed in Canada later the same year. This year, we have something called the review conference, to assess what has been done over the last five years. The last review conference was in Maputo, Mozambique, in 2014, and I headed the Norwegian

Delegation there. At the time, I was State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and this year I am the President of the Mine Ban Convention, so, I'll be leading the review conference in Oslo, from 25 to 29 November. In addition to reviewing the last five years' achievements, we'll develop what we'll call the Oslo Action Plan, which looks at the priorities for the next five years. This activity will take up almost the whole year.

**Q: You have now just finished a mine conference here in Geneva. Were you happy with the outcome?**

Very much so, although it was not part of the Mine Ban Convention; it was the United Nations Mine Action Conference. I participated in parts of this conference. On Friday, 8 February, I chaired a

*“Mine clearance is in many places a requirement for development. Mine clearance come first, and opens up land again for productive use.”*

meeting on what we can do better to protect children. The last official figures we have are from 2017, and they clearly show 2450 casualties – children either killed or injured by landmines. We brought together persons from different parts of the world working on this issue, both from the UN and representatives from the field. We have to teach children in school what they have

to be careful about in terms of mine awareness. About 80 % of all mine victims are boys and men, so this we also take into account and tailor education to the different needs that boys and girls have.

It was very interesting and a good opportunity to exchange experiences and lessons learned. It was also very well attended.

**Q: In one of the side-events, it was said that one dollar spent on de-mining gives a return of five dollars to the community.**

Yes, it's very important, and, with that in mind, last year Norway created a new humanitarian development strategy under our foreign minister, Ms Ine Marie Eriksen Søreide. The key words there are protection and prevention. What can be done so that we do not need to spend huge amounts of money, over and over again, when disaster strikes? It is very important that we focus more on prevention.

Mine clearance is in many places a requirement for development. Mine clearance come first, and opens up land again for productive use. This then enables people to invest in education, health, infrastructure, education, job opportunities in the areas that are opening again. It is something that must be done so that sustainable development can take place and thereby achieve the millennium development goals. The ambition is that, in 2025, we should have a mine-free world.

**Q: Is that not very ambitious, when you know that the cheapest form of warfare is to lay mines?**

It's indeed very ambitious, and we will still have challenges in 2025. But I think it's crucial to stress that the Mine Ban



Convention has been a huge success! Around 52 million anti-personnel landmines have been cleared around the world in the last 20 years! Mauritania was the last country to be declared mine-free, recently, and it is no longer acceptable to produce, buy and sell landmines. Having said that, I should also say that we have an increasing problem with what we call improvised landmines, which are made by non-state actors. That, for instance, is a huge problem in Syria. It is important to stress that the Mine Ban Convention State Parties must tackle the huge challenge of improvised mines.

So, I would say that at a time when international cooperation is facing many challenges, it's important to look at where we have had significant success. The Mine Ban Convention and its sister convention, the Cluster Munition Convention, are examples of positive practical and concrete results of collaboration.

**Q: Going to another issue: I see a poster behind you where it's written "Norway for the Security Council". Do you have a special assignment in this regard?**

It is a vital task for all of us in the Norwegian Foreign Service. Norway has been a reliable and consistent partner since the United Nations was founded in 1945, and we continue to be a loyal and active member of the global community. If you look at net contributions, Norway is the seventh largest contributor to the UN system. That's quite significant for a small country such as ours. We provide one percent of our gross national income to development assistance. I think that Norway together with Denmark, Sweden and Luxembourg are the countries giving 1% of our national

income to development assistance. We have had 40,000 persons participating in peace keeping operations since their beginning. We are very active in environmental and climate issues as well as peace building and peace negotiations. As a strong supporter of the multilateral system, it is natural for Norway to once in a while be a member of the UN Security Council, as part of our strong international engagement. We have not been a member of the Council since 2001 and 2002 – almost 20 years. We would like to make ourselves available because we think that we can have an important voice in the Security Council.

Last time we were in the Security Council, I was based in New York and was the Security Council coordinator, so, I was very much involved last time, and I hope to see Norway back in the Security Council in two years' time

**Q: So, how was that?**

It was a very interesting experience in every way. We saw close up the importance, and the positive achievements that the international community can do if we work together. It was, also of course, a very busy time. We had a very good team, and I know that we will have a good team this time, as well.

**Q: You said earlier that we are the seventh largest contributor to the United Nations System. Do we benefit from it, or could it be better?**

Obviously everything can always be better. I would say that we benefit greatly from being a member of the United Nations. We have benefited from international collaboration



in general. If you look at Norway, we have an ocean that is seven times larger than the land mass of our country. Without the laws of the sea and other regulations of the use of ocean areas, Norway would not have the same opportunities that we have today. We have benefited from ocean resources and will continue to do so. This is also one reason Norway is now working with others to reduce marine litter and micro plastics. Having rules and regulations benefits all states, large and small. Being a smaller state, we benefit greatly from rules and regulations, international

laws and active cooperation whether it is humanitarian issues, human rights, trade or economic co-operation. So, my answer would be, we would not have the living standards that we have today if it was not for rule-based international cooperation. Since we benefit greatly from having this system, we will continue to work with others so they can also benefit further by

Norway investing in for instance education and in health around the world, and working to create job opportunities. Climate cooperation is another example of the need for cooperation. So, yes, we do benefit from many aspects of international cooperation, and that is why, when you look at opinion polls, you see that, when Norwegians are asked about our engagement in the UN, there is strong support from the general public. In addition, people in Norway have a great deal of faith in the United Nations.

All this does not mean that we should not have a critical voice if we see something that we are not happy with, but the overall question is whether we benefit from multilateral cooperation, and the answer is clearly yes!

**Q: The UN family consists of many specialized agencies – WHO, UNHCR... How do you see Norway's role in these organizations?**

We have a very strong voice in these organizations. Norwegian politicians make frequent visits to Geneva to follow-up on the work of international organisations and to promote Norwegian policy. I think this is the interesting thing about Geneva: the work here is so varied and there are so many things happening. Geneva is really the world's meeting place, and it all goes back to the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement in the 19th century.

We have a steady stream of delegates from Norway visiting Geneva to participate also in the more technical organisations, such as the World Meteorological Organization, the ITU and WIPO... All these and others are very important for what I said earlier about rules and regulations and practical collaboration.

Then we have the UNHCR, as you said, OCHA, the IOM and the Office for the High Commissioner of Human Rights – Norway is one of the largest donors to these and other organisations. The WHO, UNAIDS, GAVI and the Global Fund are followed with great interest for all the normative work being done in the medical field. So, yes,

our voices are definitely heard, and we see a clear interest by these organizations in Norwegian policies and priorities. I mentioned the new humanitarian strategy that came out last year, and that is one that has generated a lot of interest here in Geneva.

**Q: While I was listening to all the things you do, I wonder if you ever have time to rest.**

It's very seldom there are meetings during the weekends here. When Norway was in the Security

Council there were meetings on the weekends too, but luckily here in Geneva, that is not the case. There are exceptions to that of course, and I must say it is a very pleasant place to work and to live. The work is very meaningful and Switzerland is a wonderful host country,

**Q: Among all the international organizations is there one in**

**particular that is close to your heart?**

I have colleagues at the Mission who are specialists in the different thematic areas, whereas I am lucky enough to be involved in all aspects of the work at different times of the year. We move from issue to another, and one big event this year that I may highlight is the celebration of the ILO's Centenary. It will attract Heads of State and representatives from all over the world and is something we are all very much looking forward to.

**Q: You mentioned the 100th anniversary of the ILO. Does this mean something in particular?**

Yes, on the theme for the celebration is the future of work. ILO has already made a report on this issue, which will be much discussed this year. That is of interest to us all since our world is changing owing to international trade but also to technology. How do we meet these challenges, what will happen to the traditional jobs? Of course, we do not have answers to all these questions yet, but again it is another example of an area in which we need to collaborate and exchange experiences.

**Q: Finally if you have a message for our readers, what would that be?**

We are at a time when things are moving very quickly, and the international architecture that came out of the two world wars is under more pressure than before. My message to everybody would be that we need to stand up and defend a system that has benefited us in so many ways. I explained earlier why it has benefited Norway so much, but it has benefited all countries, big and small. If we want to continue to move forward we need to preserve what has been established by previous generations. We need to move forward in cooperation, not in confrontation!

PHOTOS AND TEXT MF

*"...we would not have the living standards that we have today if it was not for rule-based international cooperation."*

## The Bangladesh success story



Interview with His Excellency Mr.

## M. Shameem Ahsan

Ambassador of Bangladesh

**You have a long diplomatic career of more than thirty years. Could you tell us a bit about the major highlights of your career?**

After graduating with Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, I joined the Bangladesh Foreign Service in 1986. This 32-year long career took me to diplomatic posts in New Delhi, Geneva, Kuala Lumpur and New York. Ambassadorial assignment is considered the pinnacle of one's diplomatic career. My first assignment as Ambassador started in 2005 in Iran. Next, I served as Bangladesh High Commissioner to Brunei Darussalam and Ambassador to Brazil before coming to Geneva as the Permanent Representative to UNOG. I am also assigned as Permanent Representative to the World Trade Organization and Bangladesh Ambassador to Switzerland with concurrent accreditation to the Holy See. Over the last four years in Geneva, I was a Member of the Bureau of PrepCom of the 3rd World UN Conference for Disaster Risk Reduction and Vice President of the Bureau of the Conference at Sendai, Member of the Troika of Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) representing Bangladesh, Coordinator of LDCs Consultative Group at the WTO, President of the 9th Conference of Convention

on Certain Conventional Weapons - Protocol V and global Coordinator of LDCs in the UN System. I have also been serving as a member of the ACWL (Advisory Centre on WTO Law) Management Board and Alternate Member of the Governing Board of the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) here in Geneva. Obviously, the experiences are varied, interesting and profoundly enriching, to say the least.

**As you said, many years back you first served in Geneva as a young Bangladeshi diplomat. What are the changes that you can see now in multilateral diplomacy in Geneva in comparison to your previous tenure?**

In 1994, I joined our Mission in Geneva as First Secretary and after a little over 2 years left as a Counsellor in 1996. In more than 20 years since then, the world has gone through unprecedented transformation. To many, it is now a fast-changing, complex, hyper-connected and uncertain world. The nature of 'power relations' in the global 'balance of power' has been shifting from a bipolar to unipolar to a multipolar world. Indeed, we are passing through a tumultuous time and an age of uncertainty. The centre of global economic





power is also shifting. Devastating effects of climate change, protracted conflicts, forced displacement of population and rampant inequality characterize the current world while pockets of growth are also visible. To keep pace with such transformation and to adapt to new realities, the dimension, shape and magnitude of multilateral diplomacy in a place like Geneva pose a quotidian and evolving challenge. This challenge is to be perceived and confronted in terms of changes in mindset, in organization of work structure and in ways of doing business. Business is never as usual.

In the above context, I must say, it demands a very high level of engagement, commitment and diligence in Geneva, often transcending the traditional approach. Each organization is nowadays dealing with issues that are not quite the same, neither in number nor in nature. For instance, human rights issues are receiving much more attention since the Human Rights Council replaced the Commission in 2006 with intense focus on thematic issues. Similarly, the pace of engagement and volume of business have also intensified in the humanitarian, social, disarmament, migration and trade sector. There are then issues emerging due to rapidly changing technology and their impact on other areas. Development issues and the architecture in which to address them now demand special attention. From the MDGs, we have moved on to the sustainable development goals or SDGs with the commitment to 'leave no one behind' – an unprecedented vow. New ways of doing business comprise partnerships and coalitions across stakeholders in multiple areas. In nearly everything that we do, often, innovation is not only desirable

but has actually become key to move forward. So, the international Geneva as a centre of multilateral diplomacy and policy making is much more vibrant, engaging and challenging now than it was two decades ago.

***You will soon celebrate the 48<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence and National Day of your country on 26 March. What was the source of inspiration for your nation towards independence?***

We gained independence through a nine-month long bloody war in 1971 at an incredibly high cost – 3 million martyrs sacrificed their lives, 200,000 women were dishonoured, and scores of intellectuals were murdered to deprive the nation of their valuable service. In 1947, British rule ended with creating two states based on religion – Hindu-majority India and Muslim-majority Pakistan. In no time, substantial linguistic, cultural, socio-economic and political differences became visible between the two wings of Pakistan – West Pakistan and East Pakistan (Bangladesh). The widespread discontent among the Bengali people in East Pakistan arising out of discrimination, economic deprivation and marginalization, found expression in major movements in various stages that include the 1952 Language Movement, 1966 Six Point Movement for greater autonomy and the 1969 Mass Uprising against the continuous repression. This led to the 1970 general elections through which the majority party from the then East Pakistan earned the right to form the Government. All these movements were led by our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. When denied the right to form government,



*His Excellency is opening the exhibit of the International Language Day 2017*

Bangabandhu made a clarion call on 7 March 1971 for emancipation at a mammoth gathering at the Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka which marks a turning point in the nation's history. The tide turned in the wake of mass killing by army crackdown in the midnight of 25 March when Bangabandhu made the declaration of independence on 26 March 1971. The Bengali people, under his guidance and leadership, started the war of independence

to defend the motherland and to liberate Bangladesh. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's charismatic leadership inspired our decisive victory on 16 December 1971.

Indeed, Bangladesh and Bangabandhu have been synonymous in the eyes of freedom loving people. He not only instilled the spirit of freedom in the hearts of millions, but also inspired everyone to believe in and to build "Shonar Bangla" (Golden Bengal). But, on 15 August 1975, Bangabandhu, along with his family members, was assassinated by anti-liberation group of conspirators in one of the most barbaric carnages in the human history. But, their conspiracy against the nation was eventually foiled when Bangabandhu's able daughter current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assumed the responsibility of the state for the first time in 1996. She vowed to complete her father's unfinished tasks. The temporary break in 2001 aside, from 2008, the nation's onward march was increasingly visible in all aspects of development under her leadership. Since then, the country has been continuing in its journey to development reaching one remarkable milestone after another. As you know, very recently, she was sworn in as our Prime Minister for a record fourth term. We are confident that under her dynamic leadership, we will continue to come up with many more achievements for the

*“As an export-driven economy, we have to improve our export competitiveness and diversify both markets and products. We also need to look for meaningful regional and sub-regional partnerships.”*

good of the people of the country in the days to come.

***Bangladesh has recently become eligible for graduation from the LDC category to a developing country. What are your thoughts about this graduation?***

Bangladesh, the largest least developed country (LDC) in terms of population and economic size, looks likely to graduate out of the LDC category by 2024. The recent widely acclaimed socio-economic development propelled by better health and education, lower vulnerability and sustained economic growth is behind this achievement. We met the three criteria for graduation at the Committee for Development Policy (CDP) triennial review held in March 2018. Now, Bangladesh will be required

to be recommended for graduation at the next triennial review in 2021 and we are well set to attain that landmark.

To meet long-term development challenges, in 2010, the Government of Bangladesh adopted a forward-looking 'Vision 2021' to make the country a middle-income one by 2021. That year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence of Bangladesh. Graduation is thus very much consistent

with our national development efforts and aspirations. This will bring a lot of opportunities for Bangladesh and quite a few challenges as well. Diversification of the economy, infrastructural and technological upgradation, training and skill development of human resources and institutional strengthening would be key. We would also need to prepare to face the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution comprising the prospect to reshape all dimensions of our existence – economic, social, cultural and human. Its effect is still not clear, but the disruptive potential for societies and its systemic impact including on economic growth is of concern. As an export-driven

economy, we have to improve our export competitiveness and diversify both markets and products. We also need to look for meaningful regional and sub-regional partnerships. At the same time, we have to remain active at the World Trade Organization to realize any potential benefit. In the post-graduation period, Bangladesh will still be eligible for Generalised System of Preferences or "GSP Plus" benefits for market access under certain conditions. On the other hand, we must remain mindful of our commitment to achieve the SDGs. That is our pathway to secure smooth graduation from the LDC status.

***Bangladesh's economy is booming with an impressive annual growth rate over the last few years. What are the reasons***





#### **behind this striking economic performance?**

We are among the fastest growing economies in the world. Bangladesh is on Goldman Sachs' list of the "Next 11" emerging economic powerhouses of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Currently, we are the 43<sup>rd</sup> largest economy in the world in terms of nominal GDP. Bangladesh's recent economic boom that you rightly referred to, came on the back of a decade of economic growth registered at over 6.26% per annum. Last three years in a row, the GDP grew at an average rate of over 7 per cent and in 2017-18, we registered a growth of 7.86%. We believe, this rapid economic expansion will pick up further momentum and hit 10% annual growth over the next three years. Consequently, the per capita income has increased from USD 543 in 2006 to USD 1,752 in 2018.

This success is the outcome of the implementation of a range of effective policies adopted by the present Government. One striking achievement is the steady decline in poverty. Also, other social indicators like gender disparity in education and maternal mortality have also significantly improved. Throughout this process, the economy continued to diversify from a predominantly agrarian to a more manufacturing-based one with rapid growth in the ready-made garment (RMG) industry making it the second largest RMG exporter in the world. Innovation, investment and job creation have also been crucial in our economic transformation. Public investment was at 4.3% of GDP in 2009. It rose to 8.2% in 2018. Foreign investors are being offered various financial incentives like tax holiday, avoidance of double taxation and exemption of duties. 100 Special Economic Zones will be gradually set up; currently 11 are functioning. This would help create 10 million job opportunities in the country.

**Bangladesh's recent all-round development trajectory has become a unique success story. Could you highlight some of Bangladesh's remarkable achievements in the socio-economic arena?**

Since 2009, the Government has been implementing

inclusive and people-centric development policies. To this end, annual national budgets consistently allocate substantial resources to social sectors for pro-poor human development and social safety net so as to unleash the creative energies of the entire population. As I mentioned earlier, one of the stellar achievements in the socio-economic development is the reduction of poverty at a remarkable rate. Poverty rate dropped from 41.5% in 2006 to 21.4% in 2018. During the same period, extreme poverty has decreased from 24% to 11.3%. We have launched some innovative socio-economic development models like 'One House, One Farm Project' for the poor and 'Shelter Project' for homeless persons. We have ensured 100% enrollment at the primary level. Since 2010, students are receiving free textbooks from pre-primary

to secondary levels in school that include books for ethnic minorities in their mother languages. In health, the maternal mortality rate has decreased to 170 per hundred thousand and child mortality rate under the age of five has gone down to 28 per thousand. Around 18,000 community health clinics and Union Health Centres have brought health care to our people's doorsteps where 30 different types of medicines are distributed free of cost. As of now, 99% of our people have access to sanitation and 88% to safe drinking water. Life expectancy has increased to 72 years from 64 in 2009.

Our economic transformation was also driven in large part by social changes, starting with the empowerment of women. The Government has taken every possible step toward educating girls and giving women a greater voice, both in the household and in public sphere. The RMG industry I mentioned before – the largest export earner – employs 4.5 million workers of which 80% are women. **Education for girls till twelfth grade is free of cost in public educational institutions. At secondary level, the ratio of girls to boys is 53:47, up from 35:65 in early 2009.** Women entrepreneurs are offered collateral free bank loans with 5% service charge. 10% of Small Entrepreneurs' Fund and 10% of industrial plots are earmarked for women entrepreneurs. **Clearly**, promoting women's empowerment through enhancing opportunities for education greatly facilitated their political and economic emancipation.

**Infrastructure is one of the key requirements for economic development. What are the major improvements in infrastructure sector in Bangladesh that represent a positive shift in your country's future progress and development?**

Bangladesh's strategic location makes it an emerging hub for regional connectivity, foreign investments and global outsourcing. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister since 2009, we embarked on a strong infrastructure programme of mega projects including Padma Multi-Purpose Bridge, Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, a number of deep sea ports

etc. to match our development aspirations. The Government has increased infrastructure investment over the years. The work of the 6.15 km long Padma Bridge is financed with our own resources. This bridge would connect the country's second most important port at Mongla and industrial zone in Khulna, the Asian Highway and Trans-Asian Railway. In addition, the mega projects like Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, Payra sea port, Sonadia deep sea port, coal-fired Matarbari and Rampal power plant, metro rail and liquefied natural gas terminal are under construction. These projects would certainly have a positive impact on the economic growth and development of the country.

Energy is another key area. 90% of our population has come under electricity coverage. Power generation capacity has gone up to 20,000 megawatts from 3000 megawatts in 2009. Power supply is being ensured with the installation of 5.5 million solar panels. To effectively address the impact of frequent natural disasters and adverse effects of climate change, Bangladesh Delta Plan (BDP) 2100 has been developed with assistance from the Netherlands. The BDP 2100 aims at attaining long term water and food security, economic growth and environmental sustainability while effectively reducing vulnerability and building resilience to natural disasters, climate change and other delta challenges through water governance. The BDP 2100 is aligned with existing and future development plans, including the SDGs. The Plan would be implemented by 2030 through 80 projects costing USD 37.5 billion.

**Over the years, information and communication technology (ICT) has changed the way of the world dramatically. How Bangladesh is advancing with ICT keeping pace with the digital world?**

We have embarked on a journey towards 'Digital Bangladesh' in January 2009 under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The main purpose of this initiative is to build a tech-savvy and knowledge-based society ensuring the country's inclusive growth, sustainable development and good governance. Since then, Bangladesh has come a long way as an emerging country in the technology world. Today, ICT has been already brought to people's doorsteps. They now have easy access to public services through the national web portal of 25,000 websites and 5,275 digital centres. Even in remote villages, they benefit from various services through the 4,550 Union Digital Centres. There are more than 0.5 million freelancers involved in outsourced jobs. A government initiative is providing quality training to youngsters in order to increase the number of IT professionals to 2 million by 2021. Already, the number of the country's total internet users reached 90.05 million and mobile telephone users crossed 143 million. According to the GSM Association, Bangladesh has the potential to be the 10<sup>th</sup> largest internet using country in the world by 2020. On the other hand, the export of tech-enabled product and services recently crossed USD 1 billion from only USD 26 million in 2008. The target now is to earn USD 5 billion from export from this sector by 2021. To maintain a sustainable industrial

growth, we are also establishing high-tech parks across the country. The parks will not only create thousands of jobs but also encourage local and foreign companies to further invest and work there.

Bangladesh's remarkable progress in ICT sector has been recognized with some prestigious international awards. In recent past, our Prime Minister received the 'South-South Cooperation Visionary Award' and the 'ICT Sustainable Development Award'. ICT Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister Sajeeb Wazed Joy got 'ICT for Development Award 2016' for his pioneering role to set the country on the path of digital revolution. The Prime Minister's Office of Bangladesh has been receiving the prestigious 'World Summit on Information Society' prizes of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) almost regularly since 2014. In addition, Bangladesh received the 'Global ICT Excellence Award' for its contribution to social development of the nation by pursuing ICT. One of the most impressive milestones achieved is the successful launch of our very first commercial satellite 'Bangabandhu Satellite-1' in May 2018. This makes Bangladesh the 57<sup>th</sup> country to have its own satellite in outer space.

**Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to suffer from adverse effects of climate change. What has been Bangladesh's role in addressing this pressing issue at various levels?**

Bangladesh is among the 10 most climate vulnerable countries in the world. Its topography, coupled with high density of population, has made the country particularly exposed to climate change risks. Bangladesh remains committed to implementing the Paris Agreement. We are spending over 1% of our GDP in addressing climate change impacts. We are also promoting climate-resilient agriculture. Initiatives have been taken to increase forest coverage from 22% to 24% in the next five years. A project worth 50 million USD is being implemented for the conservation of the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest and a UNESCO world heritage site. We have integrated our development programmes and our efforts to build capacity for combating climate change into the BDP 2100, to which I referred earlier. This multi-sectoral, techno-economic long-term Plan is aimed at water and food security, economic growth and environmental sustainability and effectively reducing vulnerability as well as building resilience to natural disasters, climate change and other deltaic challenges through water governance. Bangladesh is the only country in the world that has adopted such a long-term development plan spanning 82 years. At the international level, Bangladesh has always been very vocal in addressing the adverse effects of climate change. As an active member and 3<sup>rd</sup> Chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) – a partnership of countries highly vulnerable to a warming planet, we hosted a major gathering of the Forum at Dhaka in 2011. There a 14-point Declaration was adopted at an event attended by the then UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon. Currently, we are chairing the **Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) which aims at** addressing climate change and disaster induced displacement.





His Excellency receiving his credentials from UNOG Director General Michael Moller

**Very recently, the Global Compact on Migration has been adopted in Marrakech and Bangladesh has played a key role in this. Could you tell us a bit more on Bangladesh's engagement with the international community in the area of migration?**

We believe, migration should always remain a choice, not necessity and migrants must be treated with respect and dignity. They should be seen as potential change agents in both their countries of origin and destination. That is why we have been playing a leading role on migration agenda at the global level, and always have been supportive of safe and regular migration. In 2016 Bangladesh chaired the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) and hosted the Ninth GFMD Summit Meeting in Dhaka in December 2016. The same year, our Prime Minister in her address at the UNGA first tabled the proposal for a Global Compact for migration. As you mentioned, the Compact was finally adopted just a few months ago in Marrakech, Morocco. I attended the event as part of Bangladesh delegation. Bangladesh calls for a meaningful implementation of the Compact. To support the crucial work of the newly formed UN Migration Network, we would make a financial contribution to the Start-up Fund for capacity building. We believe, the international community should remain engaged in seeking to broaden support for the Compact.

**Last year, more than one million Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar. Could you share your views with us about the current status and possible solution of this crisis?**

We opened our border and embraced the forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals merely on humanitarian ground. Although Bangladesh is not a Party to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, we have been living up to our humanitarian and moral obligations to this people. We have done our part despite substantial challenges facing a populous country with limited resources. We have catered to their need for food, shelter, clothing, healthcare and security. Many countries and organizations including the UN, the Commonwealth, and the

OIC have shown solidarity with the Rohingyas and extended support and assistance for them. For this, we remain thankful to the international community. But, this influx has created a massive socioeconomic, environmental and demographic pressure on us. Therefore, from the beginning, we have been seeking a durable solution which lies in their repatriation to their home country. The crisis has its origin in Myanmar. As such, its solution has to be found in Myanmar. The first phase of repatriation was scheduled to commence in November last year. But, it did not happen as the Rohingyas returnees refused to leave Bangladesh since they did not have any confidence that conducive environment existed in their place of origin. We will not force anyone to go back to Myanmar against his or her will. Hence, it is very important to create conducive environment in Myanmar for their return and to restore peace along with ensuring their citizenship. The international community has a role to play in this and help resolve the issue. We want an early, peaceful solution to the Rohingyas crisis.

**Bangladesh has been elected a member of the UN Human Rights Council recently for the fourth time since the establishment of the Council. What would be your priority areas in the Council?**

Respect for human rights and fundamental freedom is deeply rooted in the history and society of Bangladesh. As a new nation with old civilization, Bangladesh emerged from Liberation War aspiring for a democratic and inclusive society. We remain naturally committed to the principles of pluralism, non-discrimination and justice within and beyond our borders. That is why Bangladesh is a State Party to almost all major international human rights instruments, including the two Covenants. Our recent election to the Council for the fourth time bears the testimony of confidence and trust of the international community to our proactive diplomatic and political contributions and commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights nationally and globally. As the newly elected member of the Council, we would redouble our efforts to build consensus on important human rights issues. We would cooperate with other UN Member States,

civil society representatives and special procedures in order to make the Council an effective, efficient and credible human rights body. We would also support the UN bodies and agencies, funds and programmes that can facilitate the promotion of human rights such as UNICEF, UN- Women, WHO, ILO and UNFP. We look forward to being actively engaged in the Universal Periodic Review mechanism under terms, conditions and modalities developed by the Council. We would pursue the issue of human rights and climate change at international level in order to further

enhance the interface between human rights and climate change and advance our work on protection of family. We would work to promote and advocate for the rights and wellbeing of migrant workers across the entire migration cycle. We would also continue to focus on the right of the Palestinian people to its accession to full statehood and would remain vocal against violation of human rights and abuses in all parts of the world, including of the Rohingyas people in the Rakhine State in Myanmar.

**The whole world is committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). How Bangladesh is galvanizing its efforts in achieving the SDGs?**

Bangladesh was a front-runner in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We have proved many myths wrong. It was no mean feat that a country that was written off by certain naysayers as a 'bottomless basket case' at its birth proved its remarkable resilience by turning itself into a poster child of MDGs. The ambitious set of SDGs captured in the 2030 Agenda were built on the gains and lessons we harvested from the MDGs. Building on our MDG achievements, we are committed to leading by example once again through attaining the SDGs. Soon after the adoption of the Agenda, our Government incorporated SDGs in the 7th Five Year Plan. We have mapped out lead, co-lead and associate Ministries against each target of the SDGs. The Government has adopted a "Whole of Society" approach to ensure wider participation of NGOs, development partners, private sector, media and CSOs in the implementation of the SDGs. It has also developed an innovative whole-of-government tracking, measurement and analytics platform called the SDG Tracker. A 'Chief Coordinator for SDG Affairs' has been appointed in the Prime Minister's Office to ensure overall coordination. As part of our commitment to implement the SDGs, we took part in the Voluntary National Review at the UN High Level Political Forum in July 2017 being one of only 44 countries. We believe to be on the right track in terms of implementation. However, we are in need of huge resources to finance the implementation of SDGs. We stand ready to forge meaningful and effective partnerships to successfully reach the goals and targets of this global agenda.

**Could you highlight some of the major diplomatic achievements of Bangladesh that you have seen in your long diplomatic career?**

Over the years, Bangladesh, through its multifaceted engagements, has been able to consolidate its image as an active, responsive, responsible and contributing member of the international community by projecting its democratic aspirations, impressive socio-economic development and peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts in distant lands.

*"We have proved many myths wrong. It was no mean feat that a country that was written off by certain naysayers as a 'bottomless basket case' at its birth proved its remarkable resilience by turning itself into a poster child of MDGs."*

On the multilateral front, beginning with the UN membership, Bangladesh continues to secure membership of governance and policy making bodies of the UN agencies and other international organizations, including non-permanent membership of the Security Council, Human Rights Council, ECOSOC, CMW and CEDAW Committee, FAO, ITU, IMO, ILO and so on. Our Prime Minister's 'People's Empowerment and Development' Model and "Culture of Peace and Non-Violence" resolutions have been highly acclaimed by the international community.

Out of all this, in my view, what stands out is Bangladesh's emergence as an

unfailing, dependable and strategic partner of the UN in its peace endeavors. Out of total 69 peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh has successfully completed 54 operations in around 40 countries where 1,57,836 peacekeepers took part. Currently, we are the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in troop contribution and 3<sup>rd</sup> in police contribution to UN peacekeeping operations. Recently, UNESCO has recognized the historic 7<sup>th</sup> March Speech of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as part of the world's documentary heritage. Last year, a resolution on the 'human rights situation of the minority Rohingyas Muslim population and other minorities in the Rakhine state of Myanmar' was adopted at a special session of the Human Rights Council called by Bangladesh and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. After a span of 17 years of the founding of BIMSTEC as a regional organization, its long cherished Permanent Secretariat was established in Dhaka in 2014. We have also some notable engagements with SAARC and ASEAN Regional Forum at the regional level. On the bilateral front, one of the most significant achievements, to me, is peaceful settlement of the long pending land border disputes with India by exchanging more than 150 enclaves of land. Earlier, we also reached a peaceful settlement of maritime boundary disputes with Myanmar and India. •





## Launch of the **UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund** for the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan.

On 27 November 2018, the UN Headquarters, New York, hosted a High-Level Event on the launch of the UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region in Uzbekistan.

The event was co-organized by the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Japan and Norway in cooperation with the UN Human Security Unit, the UN Country Team in Uzbekistan and the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office.

On 22 June 2018, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 72/283 on strengthening regional and international cooperation to ensure peace, stability and sustainable development in the Central Asian region.

The resolution affirmed the importance of closer and more coordinated cooperation between the States of Central Asia and called upon Member States inter alia “to support the efforts of the Central Asian States aimed

at mitigating the environmental and socioeconomic consequences of the drying up of the Aral Sea.” It further urged the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system “to harmonize their programmes and activities in support of the priorities for regional cooperation, integration and sustainable development in Central Asia.”

The High-Level Event was dedicated to the official launch of the UN Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea Region (MPHSTF) in Uzbekistan under the auspices of the UN. The event presented the Fund’s programme strategy, which was based on the analysis of needs of the population affected by the Aral Sea crisis through the application of the concept of

human security. Another objective of the Event was to draw the attention of the broad international community and donor countries to the environmental disaster of the Aral Sea, which has already moved beyond national and regional borders and more than ever requires the integration of the efforts of the entire international community.

***Negative consequences of the drying up of the Aral Sea***  
Once the world’s fourth largest lake, the drying of the Aral Sea is considered one of the world’s worst environmental disasters, causing a cascade of environmental, socio-economic, health and humanitarian challenges for the governments and communities in the region. The fivefold reduction in water flow from the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers has decreased the volume of the Aral Sea by more than 14 times over the past 50 years. Salinity levels have increased by 25 times, and now significantly exceed those of the world’s oceans. Today, in place of once flourishing fishing waters, a sandy salt desert of more than 5.5 million hectares is a breeding ground for dust and salt storms, carrying more than 75 million tons of dust and poisonous minerals into the atmosphere every year across thousands of kilometers.

The Aral Sea catastrophe has exacerbated climatic conditions in the region, increasing dryness and heat in summer and extending periods of cold in the winter. According to forecasts of experts, by 2035-2050 the air temperature in the region can increase by another 1.5-

3.0 Celsius relative to current indicators. Moreover, the threatening impact of the Aral Sea catastrophe is observed all over the world. According to international experts, poisonous salts from the Aral region are found on the coasts of Antarctica, in the glaciers of Greenland, in the forests of Norway and many other parts of the globe.

***The Fund has several important objectives.***  
First of all to ensure a coordinated approach to addressing problems in the Aral Sea region, related to the livelihood of the population, including aspects of health, economic development, environmental situation, social protection, etc.

Second, to provide integrated development assistance to the Aral Sea region through the joint efforts of the Government of Uzbekistan, the UN Agencies and the donor community within the framework of the Trust Fund’s Strategy.

Third, to draw the attention of the world community to the problem of the Aral Sea region and mobilize technical and financial resources for the development of the region.

And the fourth, to attract new knowledge, innovative technologies and approaches to the Aral Sea region to ensure sustainable development of the region, which could become a kind of “hub” of environmental





innovations and technologies. To this end, partnerships with the private sector are also foreseen.

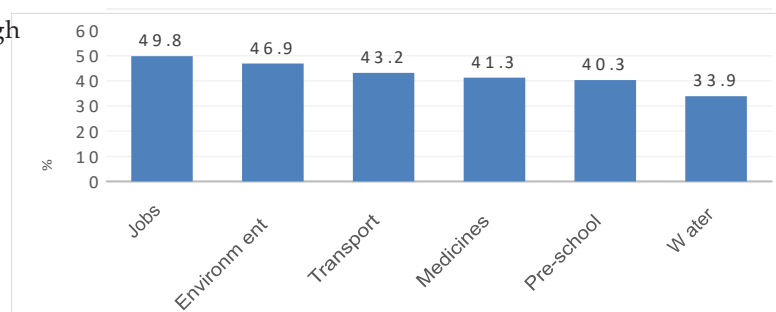
Several objectives need to be pursued: job creation, improving access to basic social services as clean drinking water, better housing, sanitation etc., restoring environmental balance in the region, improvement of access to quality health and education services, empowerment of women and girls, including support to women in difficult circumstances, development of good governance through joint planning and implementation of collective initiatives.

Notably, the focus areas of the Fund's Strategy are aimed at addressing the priority needs of the affected population (see Figure 1) identified through the comprehensive needs survey.

It should be noted that the Government of Uzbekistan has been implementing a number of programmes in the above areas, including within the framework of the State Programme on Development of the Aral Sea Region for 2017-2021. The purpose of the Fund is to complement these efforts by mobilizing a coordinated

donor assistance, based on the Fund's integrated Strategy. The Fund will also prioritize the most vulnerable and remote areas of the Aral Sea region and direct work with communities.

More than 3 million people in the two most affected regions of Uzbekistan, i.e. Khorezm region and the Republic of Karakalpakstan are expected to benefit from the Fund's activities. CELHIA DE LAVARENNE



**Figure 1. Priority needs of the population affected by the Aral Sea disaster, 2017<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.uz.undp.org/content/uzbekistan/en/home/library/poverty/summary-project-report-on-a-socio-economic-survey-of-the-needs-o.html>

## How about attending the Eastern Economic Forum

in Vladivostok, Russia this year?

Vladivostok has always had enormous political and economic importance for Russia. It is the terminal stop of the famous Trans-Siberian Railway, Russia's largest seaport and the base of its Pacific Fleet. The Trans-Siberian Railway is a railway system whose original, main line connects Moscow with the Russian Far East. The longest railway line in the world with a length of 9,289 kilometers, it has connected Moscow with Vladivostok since 1916, and is still being expanded and improved.

A special landscape and location between the Amur and Ussuri bays on the Golden Horn Bay prompted the famous Norwegian traveler Fridtjof Nansen to compare the city with Naples.

"The view of the city from the sea is very beautiful, Vladivostok is unlikely to give way to any city in this respect. Located on terraces, it is very reminiscent of Naples. True, there is no Vesuvius in the background, but a beautiful harbor and beautiful islands," he later wrote.

In 2012, in anticipation of the APEC summit conference, Vladivostok underwent a major overhaul with many new monuments and attractions built for the event.

Since 2015, in accordance with a decree of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) – Восточный экономический форум (ВЭФ) – has been held there annually in September. This year will see the fifth Forum, from 4 to 6 September.

The EEF exhibition space, centered on Russia, features presentations about specific advanced special economic zones, investment projects, and measures being taken by Russia in federal and regional authorities to develop the socioeconomic, demographic, and investment potential of the Far Eastern Federal District.

Although initially set up to encourage investment in Russia's Far East, the Forum has seen its scope expand steadily as it has become a major platform for the discussion of key issues in the world economy, regional integration, and the development of new industrial and technological sectors, as well as of the global challenges facing Russia and other nations in the region.

As the number of foreign delegations attending increases, along with events and meetings, and agreements signed on the margins of the Forum, the gathering grows in importance,



with the result that has already become one of the world's major gatherings.

Events at the Forum customarily take place in the form of panel sessions, round tables, televised debates, business breakfasts, and business dialogues devoted to Russia's relationships with its neighboring countries.

The Forum business programme includes a number of business dialogues with leading partner countries in the Asia-Pacific region, and with ASEAN, a key integration organization of dynamically developing nations in Southeast Asia.

The heads of five states became honorary participants in the EEF – 2018: Russian President Vladimir Putin, People's Republic of China Chairman Xi Jinping, Mongolian President Khaltmaagiin Battulga, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and South Korean Prime Minister Lee Nak Yeong. Both the Russian president and the Japanese premier have attended every year since the Forum's inception.

Last year it was attended by more than 340 heads of foreign companies, plus heads of 383 Russian companies. Over the years, the Forum has become a recognized international platform for discussing multilateral cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region. EEF-2018 had a record-breaking total of signed agreements, which underlines its high practical effectiveness. At last year's fourth Eastern Economic Forum, 220 agreements were concluded for a total amount of 3.1 trillion rubles.

For those intending to attend who can manage the time, the ideal is to use the occasion to cross Russia, starting at Saint Petersburg, taking the high-speed rail connection to Moscow, then the Trans-Siberian, pausing along the way at some of the most famous stops. The trip takes the traveler across eleven time zones and some of the most spectacular scenery on earth. For the business traveler, it is the ultimate business trip! EKATERINA PINCHEVSKAYA



# The 2018 Sphere Handbook: From human rights to humanitarian practice

Over the last decade, the number of people affected by humanitarian crises has continued to increase, making it vital to unlock the fullest potential of every actor to save lives and uphold the rights of people affected by crises.

Sphere contributes to this shared commitment by working as a catalyst to develop the best available standards and concrete guidance to improve the quality and accountability of humanitarian action.

Christine Knudsen, Executive Director of Sphere, said: *"The Sphere Handbook is grounded in the expertise of a diverse community of practitioners. It is field tested, practical and actionable. Built on shared principles and commitments, the Handbook sets out agreed minimum standards which translate the rights to water, shelter, food and health into clear and measurable actions."*


The 2018 Sphere Handbook is the result of a far-reaching and inclusive consultation process. It is informed by evidence, research, and established field practice, with inputs from a diverse community of practitioners from all regions and backgrounds, including affected communities as first responders.

The Sphere Handbook was first developed twenty years ago, as one of the first initiatives to improve quality and accountability in humanitarian action.

*"The standards have been regularly updated over the two decades to ensure they remain fit for purpose in a changing world. The foundation of the work, however, remains steady: all people affected by crisis have the right to assistance, the right to life with dignity, the right to protection and security, and the right to fully participate in decisions related to their own recovery,"* said Ms. Knudsen.

The Sphere Handbook provides a comprehensive framework to guide anybody working in humanitarian action to understand fundamental principles, protection, technical standards of quality and measurable indicators. Sphere creates this framework to ensure accountability to the people we serve, as well as to partners, colleagues, and those who provide resources for this important work.

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## A true human rights defender!

Interview with Barrister

# A Majid Tramboo

Director and Permanent Representative to the United Nations of International Human Rights Association of American Minorities (IHRAAM) – an International NGO in a Consultative Status with the United Nations

You have probably seen his face in the *Palais des Nations* many times. Barrister Majid Tramboo is not a newcomer in Geneva, for he is among those numerous human rights defenders who come to Geneva several times a year to participate in the sessions of the Human Rights Council. Barrister Tramboo is fighting for human rights all over the world through his NGO, but the case of Kashmir, this famous state between India and Pakistan, has a special place in his heart. As you surely know, throughout history, Kashmir has always been important owing to its geographical location in the midst of India, Pakistan and China. We had a chance to meet Barrister Tramboo, during his most recent visit to the City of Calvin. Now we will leave the floor to Barrister Tramboo:



withdrew, but they still managed to free one part of Kashmir, so, now there is Indian-held Kashmir and Pakistan-administrated Kashmir known as Azad Kashmir.

**Q: What is Kashmir? Is it a territory with recognized boundaries or only a region, is there a Kashmiri ethnic group?**

Kashmiri is one who holds a state subject of the state. There is not a particular ethnic group as such. The majority of the population is Muslims, but there are also Christians living there together with other religious groups. In Kashmir, there are many

churches – both Catholic and Protestant. Then, there are Hindu Pandits, who are living there. Unfortunately, in the early 1990s, the puppet governor installed by India tried to drive away the Pandits from the state, spreading fear among them of being exterminated. However, this was wholly false, and the majority of Kashmiri Pandits still live in Kashmir. There is a Sikh community in Kashmir as well. All of these form together the Kashmiri community.

**Q: Do you have a special language?**

We have various languages, but the majority-spoken language is Kashmiri. We have what we call the Dogri and Gojri language with other languages, but the majority speak Kashmiri, which is close to Urdu, and somewhat close to Persian, using the Arabic alphabet.

**Q: How many people live in Indian Kashmir?**

About 14 million people.

**Q: The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights came out with a Report about Kashmir recently. It was quite a novelty in fact. Were you satisfied with the Report?**

Indeed, this is a novel Report. A lot of work has gone into the subject over the years. Practically all the mandates of the Office of the High Commissioner together with Special Rapporteurs have been involved over the years. They exemplified all the gross human rights violations that are perpetrated in Indian-

**Q: Barrister Tramboo, why are you here today?**

I have been coming here regularly for almost 30 years, attending practically every session of what used to be the Human Rights Commission and the Sub-Commission and now the Human Rights Council. The main purpose of my visit is defending human rights around the globe, which is the objective of my organisation, the International Human Rights Association of American Minorities (IHRAAM). As I am a Kashmiri from Indian-held Kashmir, it goes without saying that I have a particular concern about, and a particular interest in, defending the human rights of the people of Jammu & Kashmir.

**Q: Please correct me if I am wrong. Isn't the Kashmir issue a conflict that has been going on since India and Pakistan got their independence in 1947?**

Yes. On 14 August 1947, Pakistan got its independence, on 15 August 1947, India got its independence, and we were in the middle. Unfortunately, the Indian government on or around 27<sup>th</sup> October 1947 invaded Kashmir sending troops in with airplanes to our capital, Srinagar. That is how the occupation began. There was a sort of battle between the Kashmiri resistance forces and the Indian army. Obviously, the Indian army was backed by the British generals, the resistance forces



held Kashmir. I believe that the High Commissioner definitely recognised that there is grave tragedy taking place therefore, he took the bold initiative and produced this evidence based scathing Report. What is important, besides how the High Commissioner has articulated terrible violence against the people of Kashmir including the use of pellets guns and huge violence and molestation against Kashmiri women and young girls, that he has recommended to establish an Inquiry Commission to investigate these terrible human rights violations. He has raised the issue relating to the Kashmiris who have disappeared, over the years, in Indian detention and torture centres. It is admitted by the government of India that around 7500 Kashmiris (actual number is much higher) have disappeared. There are huge numbers of unmarked and unnamed graves found more than 10 years back. The European Parliament has passed a resolution for India to investigate those graves, get the DNA testing done and find who have been buried in those graves but nothing has been done till now. Therefore, the High Commissioner is absolutely right to ask for an Inquiry Commission to investigate these gruesome human rights violations. That is the most important aspect of the Report.

On my part along with other NGOs and my colleagues, we have a plan to lobby the member states of the UNHRC and inter-governmental organisations to have a panel discussion on the Report to start with.

**Q: Was there ever a referendum on self-determination conducted in Kashmir?**

When the conflict first started, India took the matter to the United Nations in 1947-48, and the UN Security Council passed several resolutions, which included that the people of Jammu & Kashmir across have the right to self-determination, which has still not materialized up to today. Even though it was India that brought the matter to the Security Council but it is India that since then has blocked repeatedly the plebiscite on self-determination.

**Q: Are you still militating for this issue?**

Of course, the United Nations Resolutions form the legitimate basis for our legitimate demand for right to self-determination.

**Q: Do you feel that people do not know what is happening in your country?**

Common Europeans, in general terms, may not be so live to the issue but there is realisation that there is a serious problem between India and Pakistan because of Kashmir. The British are because they are part of the problem and that there a huge Kashmiri diaspora residing in the United Kingdom. However, we try to raise the profile of Kashmir in the European Union through the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Council so that within the Europe Union.

**Q: It is a very sensitive issue, and you are in the midst of three nuclear states. Are you afraid that something might happen?** It has long been the perception that Kashmir is a nuclear flash point in that region. It is recognised within the stakeholders

that if this matter is not resolved, the hostility between India and Pakistan could lead to a situation where they go nuclear, and half of the world's population might disappear. This is the reason why we have been insisting throughout that, in order to avoid this disastrous situation; the world community needs to address the Kashmir issue. The United Nations needs to act, the United State needs to act, the United Kingdom needs to act, and even the EU and OIC need to act. So yes, it is a nuclear flash point, hanging there always, and there is a danger, yes!

**Q: Do you feel that things have changed since the publication of the Report?**

Things have not changed as yet, but we have to ensure the inquiry commission is formed first, and get on with the job. Most important is to materialise the UNHRC's panel discussion on the Report. Therefore, it is very important that we work towards the achievable during the upcoming sessions.

**Q: The former High Commissioner Zaid, in one of his last interviews, stated that he considers one of his highest achievements to be the Report on Kashmir. What do you think about that?**

Well, these are very kind words from him and we Kashmiris believe that he has been truthful to job. India's reaction is not very surprising but the Secretary-General of the United Nations defended the Report. I would say, yes perhaps, this is one of the best achievements for Kashmiris to have this kind of Report from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The United Nations has not, for whatever reasons, so far, met all its obligations on the Kashmir issue, the principle reason being that India has demonstrated inflexibility and intransigency. The Kashmir issue cannot be solved without the United Nations therefore, the Report is a breath of fresh air from the United Nations, and we hope that it will be perused.

**Q: Has this given you further motivation to continue your actions?**

Well, this has given us a lot of hope, let's it put it this way, that there is realisation across there being grave situation in occupied Kashmir that needs to be addressed.

**Q: Finally, Barrister Trambo, do you have a message for our readers?**

We have been coming here for many years, and we definitely want to see that your readers and your audience are there to support our legitimate cause and raise their voice against the grave human rights situation in occupied territory, even a simple email to your governments, politicians, intergovernmental and human rights organisations will help. They might go on social media to express their views on this issue. Of course, here in the United Nations, we invite all the NGOs to come and support the case of Kashmiris human rights.

I conclude this interview with further two messages: Incredible India's – Incredible Terrorism in Kashmir must stop as demanded by the UN Report and Self-determination is Democracy – Democracy is Self-determination! mf



Interview with

## S. V. Kirupaharan

Founder and General Secretary, TCHR – Tamil Centre for Human Rights

**Q: We heard a lot about Sri Lanka and the Tamils in the past. Is the conflict over?**

Well, certainly the armed conflict is over. But the diplomatic struggle to find a permanent political solution to the long standing ethnic conflict and to find justice to the victims of horrendous human rights violations is still going on.

The war ended in May 2009, in other words almost a decade ago. But the government of Sri Lanka has not taken any constructive measures either to find a political solution or to find remedies to accountability.

The war ended with the help of the international community on a promise by then government in power that 'as soon as they bring the war to an end, they will give a permanent solution to Tamils' in the North and Eastern province in the island, which is known as the hereditary land where Tamils live for thousands of years. That government had two third majority in parliament for nearly six years but they found excuses not to find a political solution rather than finding a solution.

This is the pattern with every government in power since the independence of the island in 1948. However, the conflict is purely based on language and culture, not on religion as some misinterpret!

**Q: Most of us, do not really know what this conflict was all about, so it might be interesting to know a little what is was all about. Could you give us a short explication?**

In Sri Lanka there are two main linguistic groups – Sinhala and Tamil. Of course English is widely in use here. Out of these two linguistic groups – Sinhalese who are numerically the majority consist of Buddhists and Christians. The Tamils consist of Hindus (Saiviets), Christians and Muslims.

Sri Lanka then known as 'Ceylon' had three Kingdoms in the island. Out of these three Kingdoms, two belonged to Sinhalese and the third was ruled by the Tamils. This is well documented and witnessed by the colonial masters who ruled Sri Lanka. First, the Portuguese (1505 to 1658), then the Dutch/Netherlands (1658 to 1795) and the third and final one was Britain from 1795 to 1948.

When the Portuguese and the Dutch ruled this island, they kept those three Kingdoms separately without any interference. When the British ruled this island, they amalgamated all three Kingdoms together in the name of 'easy administration' in 1833. When the British gave independence to the island in 1948 - unfortunately, they gave the power to the numerical majority Sinhalese. Since then discrimination started against Tamils. The majority Buddhist who are Sinhalese started a slogan that this island belongs only to the Sinhalese. This



marginalised the Tamils, when I say Tamils this includes Hindus, Christians and Muslims as well. This slogan created a lot of political turmoil and the Tamil political leaders started a peaceful non-violent campaign for their political rights, I mean Tamil speaking people in the North and East of the island.

These peaceful non-violent struggles for more than three decades were met with violent responses. This eventually made the Tamil youths to start an armed struggle which was initially supported by India during the time of late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

This armed struggle was brought to an end in May 2009 with the help of several countries.

This war has led to almost one million Tamils seeking political asylum in Western countries and India. Thousands of Tamils are still missing or unaccounted for; there are almost 90 thousand war widows in the North and East, hundreds of political prisoners, many have lost legs and limbs, Tamil lands were under military occupation. Actually it is a genocide. We know that like the Armenians genocide in Turkey and others, this will also take time to be accepted as a genocide. We are pleading the International community to consider the plight of the Tamils seriously.

**Q: You are the founder and the secretary general for the Tamil Centre for Human Rights. Why did you set up this organization?**

It is a long story.

In fact, I sought political asylum in France in 1989. Since then we have notice that even though international human rights organisations like Amnesty international were working on what was happening in Sri Lanka, not everything that was happening in each nook and corner of the North and East was being reported.

So we, some Tamils, established the Tamil Centre for Human Rights – TCHR in 1990 in France with the aim of reporting incidents which were not covered by the media and organisations like Amnesty international.

We reported violations like – arrests, torture, rapes, disappearance, killings etc. to the UN Special Rapporteurs and Working groups. Also we started to attend all the UN Human Rights Forums since 1990 with our documented reports to those sessions. You can see all these details in our website – [www.tchr.net](http://www.tchr.net)

**Q: Is there a difference between the Tamils and the “ordinary citizen of Sri Lanka”? If yes, please explain.**

I think I have answered this question in the second question. However, I will try to explain in another way. It is a question of cultural identity. If Sri Lanka had treated Tamils equally and fairly, since independence, then there would be no difference. All citizens would have their rights respected and would not suffer the extreme discrimination that exists.

The very naming of the island as Sri Lanka was done under the new Constitution of 1972, which emphasised Sinhala identity. Sri means resplendent in the Sinhala language. That constitution gave preference to the Sinhalese in several ways, including privileging Buddhism, which in Sri Lanka practices superiority over other religions. It reinforced the domination of Tamils by the Sinhalese. For this reason, there is ambivalence.

Tamils, who are aware of their history and rights, and the struggle for social, economic and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights, do not feel they can uphold successive Sri Lanka regimes which discriminate against, and persecute them as a people.

**Q: Finally Mr KIRUPAharan what would you like to achieve?**

As I said before, we have been attending the UN human rights forums for the last almost 29 years. We meet the VIPs, Diplomats and others on monthly and quarterly basis and also we organise side events in the HRC updating the delegates on developments in Sri Lanka.

One can see that while we have been working here, the demography of the Tamil hereditary land has been changing. The government agenda is obvious. They buy time and space to achieve their four pillars. That is – Sinhalese, Buddhisation, Militarisation and Colonisation of the Tamil hereditary land.

The Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner(s) for Human Rights and other UN mandate holders are working on it. All their reports are well documented on Sri Lanka.

Within the last few years Sri Lanka has been on the agenda of the Human Rights Council. The Sri Lanka lobby is very powerful and manages to get everything they want.

We are trying to find justice for the victims and to find a durable political solution to the conflict. Sri Lanka is good in giving promises but when it comes to implementation they drag. Time is running out. We strongly believe that with the support of the international community, especially with the support of the big powers – an international investigation and a UN referendum will eventually end this conflict. mf



# Peace And Security

## The Colombian Peace Process

By Susana Lozada Arce

We live in a world where peace and security are essential. Unfortunately, Colombia is a violent society. Peace is not only an absence of war, but requires economic justice and gender equality enabling people to live free from any form of violence. Women are important for peace and security enabling them to develop their maximum potential to fight for justice, sustainable security and peace. The purpose of this article is to discuss the particular case of Colombia. The achievement of peace and security in conflict areas will end hostilities and bring about social and economic reintegration. Is it important to develop new place building strategies, and Colombia to be considered as a good example.

Currently Colombia is working hard and contributing to this topic, adopting international standards with the implementation of transitional justice and peace building resolution. There is a specific route Colombia is developing with a humanitarian focus to cover the necessity especially for victims of the conflict, this very important when we talk about peace and security.

The participation and role of women in the design of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration is making an important impact in the process of reconciliation, the participation not only of women but of different sectors is impacting the communities that had been affected by the war, creating a positive change in society and re-integration to civil life.

The construction of peace in Colombia is bringing structural reinforcement to victims such as restitution of rights, dignity, reparation and integration in society. For many years, women who had been victims of the conflict in Colombia had been fighting for their rights in the middle of the conflict, at the same time social activists are playing an important role when dialogs are part of the reconciliation process in different communities. Memory, forgiveness and forgetting are fundamental in the context of peace and security, as they are essential in the process of implementing humanitarian action and active participation among the victims of the conflict.

The importance of security and peace in conflict zones is key, as it will bring together communities and different parts that are involved in peace dialogs. Colombia currently has 24 territorial spaces for capacitation and reintegration enabling victims and communities develop productive projects while at the same time they are able to have technical formation as a reincorporation process to civil life. The process of

peace and security in conflict zones facilitates adaptability during the reincorporation process in areas such as wellness, psychosocial support, academic formation, and the development of initiatives in art, culture and sports.

Peace and security plays a fundamental role in the achievement of the agreements to consolidate and implement protection to victims of the conflict. Generating credibility is important when negotiation is occurring upon different communities; taking care of peace means to fulfil the agreements, the commitment is not only from government but also from all parts that are involved. When communities come together to share about peace and security a multidisciplinary perspective belonging to human rights start making a positive impact in the accomplishment of humanitarian and social responsibility.

The importance of peace and security in the development of sustainable peace initiates when a community model reintegration develops its best to practice discipline in different areas that will help society. A good example of this is the current work the organization Abba Colombia with based in Bogota and representation in Switzerland is developing. Abba is reaching specific communities that have been affected by the war in Colombia, helping them to overcome different experiences victims had gone through in areas like social, spiritual, emotional, physically and mentally. The improvement between security and development in affected zones of the conflict in Colombia has improved enabling victims restored their lives having a stability after the war.

The implementation of effective security will ensure a stable peace in communities affected by the war, at the same time victims of the conflict will feel safety influencing their environment and making a positive change into civil society. This need to be work on daily basis, preventing violent conflict again and reaffirming sustainable peace and security; as a result, economic growth, development goals and peaceful regions will be cover. The constant presence of safety, security and peace in the process of dialogs is key, as victims will feel secure in their development of integral reparation. The integral reparation consist on an effective development that will treat the victim as a human being giving them the capacity to fulfil their purpose this with the support of the different actors involves. Peace and security will ensure a sustainable peace if there is a supervised program assuring the effective reparation for victims. •







## Interview with **Hamidullah Arefi** Editor-in-Chief, The Kabul Times, Afghanistan

He is a brilliant young man with elegant manners who speaks eloquent English. He is the editor in chief of the only English-language newspaper in a country that has been one of the world's most troubled since the 1980s, Afghanistan. Mr. Hamidullah Arefi has the difficult job of reporting from the country, and despite threats and difficulties, he and his dedicated team keep on going. We had a chance to meet him in Turkmenistan recently where he had come to cover a conference devoted to a subject of utmost importance to his country, energy. Now let us give the floor to this dynamic young man...

**Q: You are the editor in chief of the only English-language newspaper in Afghanistan. Could you tell us about it?**

I joined The Kabul Times in 2014. It is the oldest newspaper and was started under the rule of King Zahir Shah, 55 years ago. It is the first and only English newspaper. Our subscribers are the diplomatic missions in Afghanistan as well as the members of the Afghan elite who like to read their news in English. We blend the latest social and economic developments into the updates. We are in close collaboration with all state ministers, and they have press offices. They liaise

with us, either in English or in the local languages that we just translate. We have one reporter in Brussels. She is reporting on EU and NATO issues. We do publish the newspaper from Saturday to Wednesday. Thursday and Friday we are off.

**Q: How many people are working with you?**

Altogether we are 30 regular staff. They are the official employees working for The Kabul Times. We also have some working under contract who do translations and distribution. Adding those, we are close to 80 people.

**Q: Is it not very difficult to manage such a big staff?**

Actually, it has been at different phases. I'm the chief editor, and I have my sub-managers there, so they are taking care of that, and then they report to me. Of course, managing a daily in a country like Afghanistan, where anything can happen at any time, is still very difficult. We are really happy that we have managed to survive all these last years.

**Q: How did you embrace this career path -- and an even more difficult one at an English-language newspaper?**

I was much inspired because, I watched my mother working,

She had studied journalism in Russia and working for the state news agency. Being very enthusiastic, she was writing articles, filing stories even at midnight sometimes, so, I thought that I should follow the same path. I worked for some agencies, and then the South Asia Foundation. Then suddenly this position came up, and I applied and got it.

We have a unique feature with our newspaper. All the reporters are female. So in a country like Afghanistan, which is really a difficult country for women to work, my newspaper is an exception where all the reporters are female. Only the editorial and administrative boards are men.

**Q: How is this received in a country like Afghanistan?**

When I recruited reporters, I focused only on women. They have had such a difficult time, and have faced so much discrimination during the Taliban period, that I felt that they also needed experience. Women are still facing social challenges, but I have just been focused on giving them a chance. We have female reporters going on so many trips, even outside Afghanistan, and gaining experience as international journalists.

Inside Afghanistan, the places which are critical for covering the news, I prefer to go myself, or to send another male member of the staff, but everything else is covered by the women.

**Q: What has been the reaction among the other media?**

Some said that I discriminated against the men, but they were mainly joking. As a general rule, people are happy to see female reporters. Even the photographers are female in our daily.

**Q: Have you ever regretted your choice?**

No, never!

**Q: You said earlier that anything can happen at any time in Afghanistan. How do you face that?**

You are right. Actually we publish news on the political side of the government. So, of course, there are some elements to beware of, such as the Taliban and ISIS. These are really

*“When I recruited reporters, I focused only on women.”*

*“Of course, managing a daily in a country like Afghanistan, where anything can happen at any time, is still very difficult.”*

seeking the opportunity to attack the media. We have taken care of these security issues, and we care, but we are reporters and have to reflect the reality of our people, which is our main goal now. Our media in Afghanistan have made many sacrifices in the last 15 years, some reporters have been killed on the battlefield filing stories.

We are not afraid of that. We are working to achieve our goals and to satisfy our people to get fresh news.

**Q: Are you facing the same difficulties as newspapers in Europe?**

Today there are social media, and these have affected mostly the print media. Nobody is exempt from this trend. Some people who are not interested in reading the paper go directly to the social media. We have the same problem, but we have taken some new approaches. We have our online edition so you can go to our online version [www.thekabultimes.gov.af](http://www.thekabultimes.gov.af) and you can download the whole newspaper and read it whenever you have time. So we are taking care of the new generation as well, but we keep the print version. The full internet version is free of charge.

**Q: How do you manage to get money?**

We generate revenue through subscriptions and advertising. We have people who have subscriptions inside Afghanistan, and some in neighbouring countries such as Dubai, India and Pakistan. So, we receive money for that, but the online edition is free of charge.

**Q: So, now people in Geneva can read your newspaper online.**

Sure. No matter where people are based, they can read it as long as they have access to the internet.

Our colleague had to shorten his stay at the conference because of the terrible terrorist attack that took place on May 31st. We wish him and his colleague lots of courage and luck in all their endeavours so that we and all the others can continue to get fresh news from Afghanistan. •





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# Chevauchée népalaise à moto

## Douze motards traversent le Népal : de l'aventure au parcours initiatique

**Christian DAVID**

*L'organisateur : Vintage Rides*

### Jour 1- période octobre novembre

Sur les 12 participants du club Carpe Diem dont Gé, son dynamique président, deux sont des participantes. Le look biker n'est pour l'instant pas évident, le look baroudeur est en revanche souligné par les bagages : des sacs étanches qui seront utilisés pour le convoyage sur place. 9 heures de trajet jusqu'à l'aéroport de Mumbai (Bombay) et 8 heures d'attente pour la correspondance vers Katmandou. Autant dire que nous arrivons un peu fatigués à Katmandou.

### Jour 2

L'aéroport est minuscule, comparé à celui de Bombay. Les formalités d'usage accomplies, nous traversons Katmandou à bord de 3 camionnettes. La ville porte encore les stigmates du tremblement de terre de 2015. La douche à l'hôtel de Patang est régénératrice. Après une brève visite dans la ville, nous rencontrons notre guide Pierry, accompagné de son épouse Pascalou. Pierry est un motard pur jus depuis son adolescence. Au fil des années, ce globe-biker a vécu de sa passion comme un intermittent de la moto et des sports mécaniques. Il a, à son actif, des dizaines de raids dans tous les endroits de la planète ou presque. La glace est très vite rompue

entre nous la charmante Pascalou partage son sourire qui nous accompagnera jusqu'à la fin.

### Jour 3

C'est le matin, nos bécans nous attendent. Elles sont superbes avec leur look de mamies, leur guidon large et leurs pare-cylindres maison. Brijesh notre mécanicien est indien, il vient de New Delhi. Le chauffeur de 4X4 qui nous accompagne est népalais. Cathy, du haut de son mètre soixante, seule femme conductrice prend ses marques.



Nous entrons dans le vif du sujet en traversant Patang pour nous diriger vers les contreforts des montagnes aperçus dans la brume. Il faut nous acclimater à la conduite à gauche et au passage de vitesses au talon. Le principal organe de tout véhicule mécanisé népalais est sans conteste le klaxon. Il est utilisé pour toute action de conduite : dépasser, croiser un animal, en adaptant sa conduite à une circulation pour le moins anarchique. Les deux roues sont utilisées par les familles : le père casqué est au guidon, un enfant devant lui s'accroche aux rétroviseurs, la mère est passagère avec encore souvent un enfant derrière elle. Contrairement à l'Europe, la circulation se déroule sans aucune agressivité. Les villages pittoresques à flanc de montagne se succèdent, l'allure est modérée et nous avons le temps de jeter un coup d'œil tout en restant concentrés sur la conduite. Les abords sont fleuris, un peu sales car des déchets s'amoncellent çà et là. Les couleurs sont chatoyantes, sur les gens, les maisons et les véhicules, notamment les camions et

les transports en commun bariolés qui rejettent une fumée noire.

n'avons pas encore récupéré des fatigues du voyage.



### Jour 5

Nous quittons le Sapana village, dont la traduction est le rêve, pour enfourcher notre rêve à nous et nous diriger doucement vers les reliefs. Nous empruntons quelques chemins caillouteux, histoire de faire chauffer la gomme. En passant dans une zone militaire, bordée par un canal, nous nous arrêtons devant un

Quelques petits arrêts destinés à rassembler la troupe, ponctuent cette première partie. Ils permettent d'apprécier le panorama. Le déjeuner se déroule dans un petit restaurant situé dans une vallée proche de la ville d'Hétanda. Des rizières, des champs cultivés étagés défilent



le long de la route goudronnée sur laquelle les ornières sont nombreuses. La température est estivale, entre 20 et parfois 30°.

Pierry nous fait soudain obliquer vers un chemin de terre jusqu'à traverser un bois dans lequel des chèvres nous tiennent compagnie. Nous franchissons un gué peu profond en guise d'examen d'entrée. Nous voici arrivés dans la vallée du Terrail, au Sapana village, une étape habituelle des vintage-ride.



### Jour 4

Deux sorties sont organisées le lendemain sans moto. Cet éco-village dispose d'une réserve naturelle. Nous pouvons apercevoir quelques crocodiles et des spécimens de faune locale. Nous participons même à la toilette des éléphants.

Cette pause est la bienvenue car nous

hameau d'habitations en attendant de pouvoir régler un problème technique. Avant de partir, nous avons prévu d'apporter, dans nos bagages, des jouets, des stylos, des vêtements, friandises et quelques harmonicas.

Nous donnons un ourson en peluche à une petite fille qui est terrorisée par ces extra-terrestres casqués. Après quelques instants, la fillette apprivoise le motard et surtout sa peluche.



Nous rejoignons la route. La circulation est intense, un singe traverse à toute vitesse. Entre-temps, le 4X4 est tombé en panne : le radiateur est fendu. Il faut

trouver un garage pour remplacer la pièce.

Nous filons vers notre destination du jour en empruntant une route de montagne. L'adrénaline monte aussi à cause de la circulation et des virages qui s'enchaînent. Les dépassements sont souvent limités. Il faut triplement anticiper : le véhicule d'enface, celui qui est doublé et qui risque à tout moment de changer de trajectoire pour éviter un obstacle, un animal, un piéton ou pour doubler sans clignotant. La conduite est vraiment rock and roll.



Pierry décide de nous faire obliquer sur un chemin de terre pour une séance cross très pentue. Les motards ne s'en sortent pas trop mal. Il faut préciser que les qualités de la monture y sont pour beaucoup. La moto se joue des obstacles avec une facilité parfois déconcertante grâce à sa première longue, coupleuse et une capacité de franchissement étonnante.

Un bouchon se forme dans un goulet d'étranglement. Je touche la main d'un enfant qui pend d'un bus. Il me



regarde les yeux écarquillés. Je lui joue un petit air d'harmonica et lui tends un autre harmonica rangé dans mon blouson. Moment fugace de partage et d'émotion. Nous arrivons à temps pour le coucher de soleil sur la terrasse de l'hôtel Srinagar.

### Jour 6

Les plus matinaux sont levés à 5h30. Le soleil apparaît lentement sur les montagnes et nous apercevons les sommets qui culminent au-dessus de la brume matinale. Après un solide petit déjeuner, nous voici engagés sur une piste, puis une route de montagne. La circulation devient plus fluide et nous permet de jeter un coup d'œil sur les bananeraies, les orangeries et bien sûr les rizières qui sont disposées en étagères. Quelques haltes nous permettent d'admirer le panorama et notamment, la pagode de la paix. Nous arrivons dans la vallée de Pokhara. Une crevasse intervient, Brijesh change la roue en 3 minutes chrono. Le déjeuner au bord du lac Pawa, est plutôt touristique et les pieds dans l'eau. Pokhara est peuplée de touristes trekkers qui peuvent acheter leur matériel sur place, et à un prix défiant toute concurrence.

### Jour 7

Les cimes enneigées des 8000 se détachent alors que nous circulons sur la route principale, et semblent nous souhaiter la bienvenue en nous invitant à continuer vers elles. La route devient sinueuse, très piégeuse. Nous avons changé de véhicule et de chauffeur, la panne du radiateur avait endommagé le moteur. Chaque motard signale à son



prédécesseur d'un geste du pied ou de la main, une pierre, une ornière pour

permettre d'anticiper.

La progression en colonne est soumise à des règles. Un volontaire qui est généralement un pilote aguerrri reste en queue de dispositif comme serre-file, allume son phare pour que Pierry puisse visualiser la progression. Ces quelques jours ont permis à tous de véritablement apprécier la difficulté ensemble, en équipe. La plupart se connaissent déjà bien et ont déjà vécu des aventures similaires. Les caractères se révèlent : loquaces, discrets, humoristiques, râleurs parfois, il y en a pour tous les goûts. Il est certain que cette passion commune qui réunit les Carpe diem, crée un lien puissant. Bien sûr, quelques signes liés à la fatigue, apparaissent mais ils sont fugaces, l'énergie du groupe aide à les surmonter.



Deux ponts de singes plus tard, la conduite devient pilotage. Pierry le confirme : « on y est ». Une succession

de virages s'enchaîne, il faut rester hyper concentré, nous montons puis redescendons à 900 mètres pour déjeuner dans un minuscule restaurant surplombant le fleuve. Quelques-uns se demandent quel jour nous sommes, peu sont capables de répondre. La particularité et l'intensité de ce voyage nous font perdre la notion du temps. Il nous reste 21 km, il nous faudra 3 heures.

Nous prenons désormais pleinement conscience du privilège de cheminer dans de telles conditions

sur un parcours de légende, celui du Mustang. Le périple devient de plus en plus difficile car la route est soumise aux caprices et à la force de la nature. Depuis le début, nous avons croisé des tractopelles qui visiblement restent sur place en permanence pour réparer les dégâts dus aux éboulements et autres glissements de terrain. Cette fois l'éboulement a complètement recouvert la voie. Le tractopelle déverse directement son chargement dans le torrent qui se trouve en contrebas. Ici, les forces de la nature sont puissantes dans cette partie du monde où les plaques tectoniques sont en action permanente. Juste avant cet épisode, Gilles a chuté lourdement, il préfère finir l'étape dans le 4X4 car il souffrait déjà d'un problème aux ligaments croisés. Il aura le courage, malgré les difficultés croissantes de

remonter sur la moto le lendemain.

Nous arrivons pour la nuit à Tatopani, petit point de rendez-vous des trekkers, qui dispose de piscines d'eau chaude. Nous sommes bien dans l'ancien royaume du Mustang dont la traduction tibétaine est plaine fertile depuis le check-point passé quelques kilomètres plus bas.

### Jour 8

Ça monte ! Les pistes sont complètement défoncées. Des pierres tombent, parfois devant nos roues et appellent à la vigilance. 1ère, 2ème, les virages se succèdent à un rythme effréné, nivelant le niveau des motards mais tous s'accrochent. Pierry veille sur la troupe,



avec une maîtrise impressionnante il remonte et redescend pour constater l'avancée de la colonne. Sacré bonhomme ! Avec sa stature et sa voix de basse, il pouvait paraître un peu bourru, mais au fil des jours, nous le sentons bienveillant, attentif, nous conseillant sans en rajouter, nous sentons qu'il a bien pris la mesure des possibilités de chacun d'entre nous. Quant à sa femme Pascalou, sa sensibilité, son éternel sourire bienveillant et son attention transparissent dans ses photos et rajoutent un surcroît de sérénité dans notre parcours.

Nous traversons une zone boisée par des pins et des cèdres et nous arrêtons pour la pose chaï (thé au lait).

Les Aanapurnas nous contemplent. Un franchissement de gué plus tard, nous entrons dans le lit du fleuve asséché. Nous discutons avec un groupe de femmes, accompagnées par leurs enfants. Avec leur bonne humeur et entre deux éclats de rire, elles parviennent à nous convaincre de les prendre en moto-stop jusqu'à leur destination.

Les difficultés montent en puissance. Nous arrivons au lodge de Marpha très

fatigués après avoir traversé les étroites ruelles de ce magnifique petit village. La pomme est le fruit roi dans cette partie du Mustang. Elle est déclinée en pommes séchées vendues par les habitantes dans des sachets et en alcool. Nous dégustons un magnifique crumble au restaurant Paradise. Dominique M. le Géo Trouvetou du groupe, a embarqué dans son sac un module électronique conçu par ses soins, qui enregistre les données météo, GPS et la progression du convoi.

### Jour 9

Marpha vient de disparaître dans la poussière et déjà, nous rencontrons quelques problèmes mécaniques. Un sélecteur de vitesse est sorti de sa butée, Brijesh répare... La végétation s'est raréfiée et devient même désertique. Nous rejoignons le village de Jomsom sur lequel est positionné un petit aérodrome. Quelques avions atterrissent pendant notre passage.

En contrebas, nous franchissons un pont de singe après avoir traversé une portion minérale, la pierre devient maîtresse des lieux. A ce point, et curieusement, nous retrouvons une route goudronnée. Il s'agit d'une démonstration technique et politique dans la perspective de

tracer un passage avec le voisin chinois. Le trajet est devenu plus roulant, nous admirons des paysages vertigineux avec notamment un canyon. Nous arrivons à Jarkhot, au lodge modeste et même charmant baptisé avec humour : hôtel New Piazza.

Direction Muktinath, appelé lieu du salut au sommet situé à 3700 mètres. Nous sommes arrivés au point culminant du périple, Victoire !

Jeannot prend de l'élan dans la montée, au moment d'entamer un virage, il ne voit pas un cheval et sa cavalière et les percute. L'animal se cabre, sa cavalière tombe, heureusement sans se faire mal. Jeannot aura droit jusqu'à la fin du voyage, à des plaisanteries sur le rapport entre la roue avant d'une moto et l'arrière train d'un cheval.

Dans le temple, dédié au culte de Vishnu, 108 robinets à tête de taureaux, déversent une eau qui provient des glaciers. Une offrande est posée (un harmonica) pour demander au Dieu de préserver notre voyage. Plus loin sur un promontoire, un gigantesque Bouddha de 15 mètres de haut, contemple avec ses yeux bleus indulgents ces humains qui se recueillent.

« Ô temps, suspend ton vol ! » La nuit



au lodge de Jarkhot, le repas partagé, la voie lactée qui tapisse le ciel étoilé sont des instants d'éternité.

### Jour 10

Nous remontons vers le temple visité la veille et obliquons vers la vallée de la Cali Gandaki pour emprunter une piste vertigineuse. Les lacets s'entrecroisent et se succèdent, le parcours est caillouteux. Quelques plaques de glace nous incitent à redoubler de vigilance. Les descentes sont piégeuses car des amas de galets sont empilés les uns sur les autres. La vue est impressionnante, nous nous arrêtons au sommet d'un aplomb pour contempler les cimes. Le ciel, d'un bleu limpide souligne encore mieux ce moment. Un groupe d'humains rencontre, en toute humilité, une nature surpuissante qui a façonné cet environnement.



Arrêt dans un village, quatre hommes viennent de tuer un Yak qui git sur le dos, ils dépècent l'animal en tirant sur la peau et en la frappant avec la partie cognée de leur hache pour la détacher. Deux bus sont restés bloqués en se croisant sur un passage étroit, les manœuvres sont difficiles car le bus est au bord du précipice. Après plusieurs



manœuvres, le passage est dégagé.

Nous croisons quelques troupeaux de moutons avant d'arriver à Kagbepi, dans un « YakDonald » où après l'épisode de la bête dépecée, nous déjeunons d'un hamburger de yak. Une soudure de cale pied, un coup de clé anglaise plus tard, nous cheminons sur une route ventée, soulevant des volutes qui se transforment en nuages de sable fin comme du talc appelé fesh fesh. Nous avons donc entamé le voyage retour quand nous parvenons au lodge high pain hill. Les images, les odeurs et les sourires népalais tournent autour de nos yeux quand nous nous endormons.

### Jour 11

Un concerto improvisé pour trois harmonicas donne le départ de cette étape. Les deux enfants à qui j'ai fait signe de venir éclatent de rire.



Trois femmes portent sur leurs dos des paniers tressés remplis à ras-bord de blocs de pierre. La charge doit peser au moins trois fois leur poids. Maintenu par une lanière, chaque panier vient prendre appui sur leur front. La descente est ardue, la fatigue accumulée a pour conséquence de provoquer une baisse de vigilance et quelques chutes viennent nous rappeler à l'ordre. L'univers minéral s'estompe pour laisser place à la zone boisée. Au point de ralliement, Pierry se précipite vers une maison. Une mère maltraite son petit garçon. Il est à terre et elle

lui donne de violents coups de pieds. L'enfant est en sang. Elle ne semble pas comprendre que quelqu'un puisse intervenir : c'est son fils. Cette femme est elle-même couverte de cicatrices au visage. Nous nous arrêtons devant une cascade majestueuse : l'eau est vivifiante ! Sur la piste, les nuages de sable fin soulevés par le vent ajoutent de la difficulté et quelques chutes et bobos supplémentaires en résultent.

De retour au lodge de Tatopani, après



nos bains d'eau chaude, la soirée est plus que joyeuse, quelques verres d'alcool de pomme, les tables et les têtes tournent un peu, parfois beaucoup, c'est sûrement l'altitude !

### Jour 12

Adieu Tatopani et en route vers la civilisation. Sur la piste, nous cheminons de concert avec des troupeaux de chèvres et de moutons. Les pièges sont toujours aussi nombreux. Une chute arrive, sans trop de mal. Après un dépassement mal maîtrisé, je ne vois pas une ornière, je suis projeté contre la voiture que je doublais ce qui a pour conséquence de redresser la moto alors que je me dirigeais directement sous les roues du véhicule, merci Vishnu ! Les dégâts sont minimes. Après quelques palabres, 5000 roupies sont remises au conducteur en guise de constat amiable. Plus loin, au point de ralliement, des réfugiés tibétains nous vendent de la verroterie.

Nous passons la nuit dans le magnifique hôtel Begnas lake, adossé à une colline



au bord d'un lac. Une musique népalaise envoûtante traverse les berges, nous sombrons dans le sommeil.

### Jour 13

Au matin, les brumes du lac se lèvent en même temps que nous. Nous préparons notre équipement pour une longue étape. Nous pensions que le début du cheminement serait tranquille. Pierry, avec un petit sourire en coin, nous a concocté un itinéraire de montagne où sont concentrées toutes les difficultés : pierres, terre, terrain gras. Pas de bobos, malgré quelques décrochages. Nous croisons des enfants en uniformes qui se rendent au collège.

Des deux côtés de la route, les habitations se succèdent, nichées dans une végétation luxuriante. Des murs de torchis aux tôles ondulées, des épis de maïs sont suspendus et séchent au soleil. Les habitants sont souriants. La route toute en lacets qui mène à Bandipur est un bonheur pour le motard. Arrêt déjeuner dans ce village charmant et isolé qui fait penser à un comptoir de la route de la soie. Un temple minuscule surplombe une colline. Il faut le mériter, l'ascension est difficile jusqu'à la pinède qui abrite le temple mais la vue à 360° compense largement cette difficulté. Nous redescendons par la même route. Tout au long du parcours nous avons constaté que la pollution est importante, la verrue des plastiques accumulés sur le bord des routes est présente, comme partout dans le monde, peut-être même davantage.

A propos de pollution, la moto de

Dominique M. dont la segmentation est à bout, crache, à la fin du parcours, une fumée bleue malodorante, qui n'encourage personne à rester longtemps derrière lui.

Notre lodge suivant est difficile à trouver, le point GPS apparaît finalement et il nous faut traverser un pont de singe



de 150 mètres, emprunter un chemin accidenté pour finalement parvenir à une oasis de verdure exotique posée sur un flanc de colline. Il s'agit sans conteste du plus bel endroit pour dormir. Les constructions respectent le



style architectural local : un petit coin de paradis.

Cathy a chuté plusieurs fois pendant le périple. Il était en effet plus facile pour nous de rétablir notre assise grâce à nos jambes. Elle est remontée sur sa monture, sans en rajouter, avec une détermination qui force notre admiration.

### Jour 14

Après cette nuit en pleine nature, il est malheureusement temps de reprendre la route, nous serions bien volontiers restés un jour de plus. Le long de la motor way, des vendeurs ambulants proposent leurs marchandises : poissons du fleuve en contrebass, fruits et légumes. La circulation reste extrêmement dangereuse. Pierry nous a, à chacun, recommandé de ne pas relâcher notre vigilance pour ce dernier jour de conduite. Plusieurs d'entre nous passent de justesse l'examen du dépassement. Côté visibilité, il faut circuler dans la poussière qui colle et les fumées noires des camions et des bus. Traverser Katmandou est une aventure supplémentaire. Nous arrivons à l'hôtel Kantipur qui est un ancien temple, notre destination finale.

Nous abandonnons à regret nos montures dans la cour intérieure, avec un petit pincement au cœur.

Une visite dans le brouhaha de Katmandou s'impose. Le bruit, les odeurs, les couleurs, il faudrait davantage de temps pour visiter la ville.

L'aventure est terminée, le souvenir reste gravé à jamais.



# Joseph Malachy Kavanagh

(1856-1918)

Irish artist and painter

by Ita Marguet

An important and renowned contributor to Irish painting, Kavanagh was born in Dublin where at the age of twelve his early artistic efforts were rewarded when one of his pictures was accepted by the prestigious Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA). In the same year he gained a silver medal in the Royal Dublin Society Christmas Competition.

His art concentrated on unpretentious local subjects such as beaches, dunes, watercourses, and coastal views, including numerous landscapes of farm and woodland, seascapes of Howth, Dublin Bay and the sands of Sutton, Portmarnock, Merrion and the North Bull. He was also drawn to marshes and river bank scenes. His most individual body of work is a beautiful series portraying cockle-pickers on Sandymount Strand painted in the early 1890s.

An exhibition in 2009 at the Gorry Specialist Art Gallery in Dublin featured an entry by **Joseph Malachy Kavanagh** (RHA 1856-1918) of 'Children Playing by a Bridge'.

## Profile in brief

He studied at the Metropolitan School of Art, 1877-78 and the Royal Hibernian Academy (RHA) School where he was a friend and contemporary of Walter Osborne and Nathaniel Hill. He won the Albert Scholarship in October 1881 and the three art students travelled to Antwerp to enrol at the Académie Royale des Beaux Arts where he studied for two years. Kavanagh first entered the 'Antiek' class, then transferred to the 'Nature' (life) class of the popular Flemish Realist painter Charles Verlat. The three Irish students shared lodgings at 49 Kloosterstraat (Rue du Couvent).

Kavanagh painted village and street scenes around Antwerp as well as rural subjects. He also took up etching and became a talented print-maker. He was the Irish artist most profoundly influenced by the art of the Low Countries: by seventeenth century Dutch genre, by artist Anton Mauve (the Hague School) and by Flemish contemporary Realist painters. He showed skills at representing street scenes and architectural subjects and was one of the few Irish artists of his generation

who was an accomplished practitioner of etchings. Kavanagh painted village and architectural subjects in Normandy and Brittany in 1883 and 1884, and made etchings of the Mont Saint Michel. In Brittany he painted in some of the same locations as Osborne. Many of his Continental paintings and etchings of street scenes and rural subjects were exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy from 1883-86, and the Dublin Art Club until 1890.

He often viewed his figures from the side or from behind, absorbed in their work or looking into the landscape, lost in reflection. Viewing figures from behind, looking into the landscape, experiencing a sense of awe at the grandeur of Nature, and involving the participation of the viewer to share these emotions was a device used by some landscapists in the Romantic era. In Kavanagh's case it relates to the etchings of figures, to the influence of seventeenth century Dutch genre painters, Pieter de Hooch and to contemporary Flemish Naturalist painter Henri de Braekeleel - whose work Kavanagh would have admired in Antwerp - who depicted statuesque figures from behind, evoking a mood of stillness and contemplation.

A member of the Royal Hibernian Academy from 1889, Kavanagh exhibited regularly, taught classes, and was elected keeper in 1910. He was deeply shaken by the burning of the HRA premises on Lower Abbey Street in 1916, from which he escaped alive, though his studio within the building and many of his paintings were destroyed. He saved the Royal Charters of the Academy and the President's chain of office when escaping from the burning building.

The incident happened in 1916 at the time of the Easter Uprising when much of the city was left in ruins. From then he retired until his death in Dublin in 1918. •

*Note: Acknowledgement is given to the Encyclopaedia of Ireland and other reference material used in preparation of this text.*

# Ireland on the World Stage

## International Labour Organisation (ILO)

by Ita Marguet

The President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, was invited as a guest of honour to attend the 107th Session of the International Labour Conference to deliver an address at a Special Plenary Sitting on 7 June 2018 where he took the podium before the tripartite representatives of accredited Government, Employer and Worker organisations of ILO Member States. It took place in the main conference hall of the U.N building in Geneva (UNOG) under strict protocol and security. Following the introduction by Mr. Guy Ryder, Director-General of the ILO, the opening remarks delivered by the President of Ireland set the tone of the social, economic, cultural and political context in a far reaching, thought provoking speech that followed. *The full text is available online/in print at President/Media Library/Speeches.*

In his customary style as a gifted orator, delivered with conviction and passion, he recalled ... Of all the institutions established by the international community in the wake of the cataclysm that was the First World War only one has endured to this day, the International Labour Organisation. That it has done so is testament to the moral vision and indomitable hope that is contained within the preamble to the constitution of the Organisation, that 'universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice'. In our present circumstances, ninety-nine years after that constitution was first proclaimed, that spirit of idealism and of vital moral purpose is more urgently required than ever. The Organisation is into the commemoration events and celebration of its Centenary Year in 2019.

He addressed issues of the fundamental human rights and social aspirations of workers under the umbrella of the Organisation's past and current normative and other work to promote, develop and protect, at all levels in all places, in the context of widespread globalisation and threats to workers' basic human and social rights. His address called upon the ILO to vigorously pursue its universal mission through its current and future programmes.

He remembered Ireland's distinguished civil servant, Edward Phelan, who devoted his career to the Organisation and was instrumental in the drafting and preparation of the Declaration of Philadelphia. As Director-General he championed and pursued the spirit of diplomacy and dialogue that has been,



*Edward J. Phelan  
forth Director-General of the ILO 1941-1948, photo ILO*

and continues to be, so characteristic of the Organisation - a diplomacy of the common good, informed by deliberation, courtesy and respect, rather than any cynical and narrow diplomacy of transaction, derived from an immiserated and at best, insufficient, narrow theory of interests of threatened disadvantage.

When he received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1974, his fellow countryman, Sean MacBride, spoke of the imperatives of survival of the 20th century, which he believed could only be met through fulfilment of the United Nations Charter - nothing less than universal peace. On a planet now bearing the ravages of climate change, the imperatives of survival will rest on our capacity to fulfil the promise of the Constitution of this Organisation

The International Labour Organisation must be brought to the attention of the world. How much better it would be if the necessary elements of what constituted social cohesion was the discourse that prevailed on the streets of the world rather than the excluded being abandoned to become the prey of xenophobes, homophobes and racists? •

*Note: Acknowledgement is given to the speech by the President of Ireland from which this text is drawn. It follows preceding texts about the role of Ireland in the U.N. peace-keeping missions and other related activities.*



## Fabienne Lepetit - Nomad'Luxe

Elle se joue des codes et de l'ordre établi, transpose chaque instant capturé par la photo, transporte chaque visiteur dans son propre univers, transcende chaque impression.

Chacun de ses clichés remet en question le regard que nous portons sur toute chose.

Au-delà, son Oeuvre entière nous invite à l'ouverture sur nous même, l'Autre et la Nature.

EMMANUELLE OBADIA



J'ai pour habitude de laisser mes fans de la première heure parler de mon travail, préférant préserver ma sensibilité à l'abri de mon objectif.

Aussi je veux leur rendre hommage aujourd'hui car c'est grâce à leur soutien que je me suis lancée dans le domaine artistique avec une seule idée en tête : marquer un temps d'arrêt

dans ce monde tourbillonnant, scruter le quotidien, y voir une beauté cachée ou quelque chose d'inattendu, capter cet instant improbable et surprendre. Surprendre, celui ou celle dont le quotidien monotone devient moment d'évasion.

Force est de constater que ma démarche artistique est différente de la plupart des artistes que je croise.

Avoir vécu en Ecosse, en Espagne puis dans la Caraïbe y est certainement pour quelque chose.

Mon séjour à la Martinique (15 ans) où la diversité est la norme - la forêt, la montagne et la plage défilent en moins d'une heure de route ou à 10 minutes à pied - où je prenais le bateau tous les jours pour aller travailler, en profitant pour discuter avec des personnes venues d'horizons divers, fût une chance exceptionnelle. Nous échangeons sur nos vies en Outremer, de la Polynésie à la Réunion en passant par Haïti ou la République Dominicaine, en Métropole (France), dans nos régions de Bretagne, de Normandie (ma région d'origine) ...

Quelle richesse de couleurs, de métissages, d'expériences de vies ! Quelle matière naturelle et précieuse idéale pour stimuler ma créativité, loin des Photoshop et autres logiciels « perfecteurs » !

J'aime réaliser mes Toiles Photographiques avec ce que la Nature m'offre à découvrir : l'eau dont je ne peux me passer, indispensable à la vie et dont nous devons prendre soin, le soleil métissé Couleur Caraïbe qui me manque parfois en Normandie ou à Paris. Paris pourtant l'un de mes lieux de shootings photos privilégiés.

Je suis à la fois ilienne de Cœur, curieuse



urbaine et connectée à la Nature. C'est mon équilibre pour créer mes Toiles Emotions.

Mon Nomad'Luxe est de naviguer entre l'eau de la seine, celle de ma mare magique de Normandie, l'eau des flaques ... avec mon objectif passe-partout, toujours partant pour un voyage au plus près de mes émotions, que je parte pour affaires ou pour une randonnée à cheval, en vélo ou à pied ...

J'aime être authentique tout en étant ouverte aux autres et curieuse des différentes cultures et malgré mes multiples vies d'entrepreneur, de consultant, de responsable de librairie, de responsable de parfumerie sélective, j'ai su préserver ces valeurs auxquelles je tiens.

J'adresse d'ailleurs un grand merci à celles et ceux dont je croise la route et qui me confortent dans le message de paix et de tolérance que je cherche à porter dans tout ce que je fais.

Je suis aujourd'hui celle dont la vie est jalonnée d'échanges, de partages, de visuels, de couleurs, l'artiste sans relâche en quête de l'Esthétique au service de la sérénité de l'Âme et de l'Esprit.

Aussi j'accorde beaucoup d'importance à mes lieux d'exposition, à la qualité de mes rencontres avec les maîtres des lieux (valeurs humaines, cordialité, bienveillance), à l'atmosphère sereine etc...

Ma dernière exposition « L'Âme des Reflets » s'est déroulée au Cercle National des Armées en Septembre 2018 grâce à l'échange privilégié que j'ai eu avec Monsieur Patrick Lempereur, son Directeur. Elle annonçait ma thématique principale de 2019 : Comment préserver l'Eau dans notre environnement ?

Créons une nouvelle toile symbolique ensemble, dans des lieux d'exception, prestigieux ou intimistes, avec bienveillance, partage serein de valeurs et d'interculturel.

Lâchons prise, accordons-nous du temps pour soi, recentrons-nous et laissons surgir nos émotions. Puis revenons au quotidien avec sérénité. C'est le voyage Nomad'Luxe que je vous propose à travers mes Toiles Photographiques. •

**« Comme nul autre pareil et sans aucun artifice, Fabienne Lepetit est l'Artisan d'un voyage initiatique »**



# Genève en fête Peace Dinner

Gala Dinner  
August 20, 2019  
at Hôtel Beau-Rivage

Save the date  
and book your plates at  
[www.geneve-en-fete.com](http://www.geneve-en-fete.com)



Le **Dîner de la Paix** est organisé le 20 août de chaque année par **Genève en fête** afin de célébrer cette thématique dont Genève est fière d'être la capitale. Il se déroule dans tout le canton, dans les foyers et les restaurants désireux d'y participer. Cette année, le Dîner de la Paix de gala aura lieu à l'Hôtel Beau-Rivage en présence de personnalités. Réservez vos assiettes.

Toute l'année, participez aux événements festifs de **Genève en fête** ouverts à tous. Alors restez connectés à nos réseaux sociaux et notre site. A bientôt!

in homes and restaurants that wish to participate. This year, the gala Peace Dinner will be held at Hôtel Beau-Rivage in the presence of personalities. Book your plates.

All year round, take part in **Genève en fête** festive events open to all. Then stay tuned to our social networks and our site. See you soon!

The **Peace Dinner** is organized on August 20 of each year by **Genève en fête** to celebrate this theme of which Geneva is proud to be the capital of.

It takes place throughout the canton, in homes and restaurants that wish to participate. This year, the gala Peace Dinner will be held at Hôtel Beau-Rivage in the presence of personalities. Book your plates.

All year round, take part in **Genève en fête** festive events open to all. Then stay tuned to our social networks and our site. See you soon!

## Quel avenir pour le journalisme ?

Christian DAVID – ancien rédacteur en chef UN Special

L'association de la Presse Etrangère en Suisse et au Liechtenstein (APES) souhaitait, en posant cette question, susciter l'intérêt du public et s'interroger elle-même sur le devenir d'une profession particulièrement sujette à la sinistrose en Suisse Romande. Mais est-ce le cas partout sur la planète ?

Six experts en journalisme se retrouvaient pour cette soirée de l'APES organisée par Jean Musy son président. Leurs parcours, leurs origines et leurs vécus promettaient un débat constructif et diversifié.

En préambule, l'accent était posé sur la magnifique exposition du photographe Pierre Michel Virot : « Explore, Rapporte, Inspire », qui, après avoir pavoisé le hall des pas perdus au Palais des Nations, offrait son cheminement de 20 années d'images à l'Uni Dufour avant de continuer son périple. A l'heure des selfis, n'est pas photographe qui veut. L'œil de Pierre, plus sensible que n'importe quel focus élaboré, souligne les beautés surprenantes de notre planète au travers de ses paysages, des regards et des trésors architecturaux.

L'APES est une dame vénérable. Neuf décennies après sa naissance (1928), les aventures journalistiques se sont succédées et ses membres ont bataillé pour que leur métier, leur passion soient reconnus et qu'ils puissent accomplir leur profession dans les règles de l'art. (1)

« La presse est sinistrée » affirme Christian Clampiche. Journaliste suisse et fondateur du journal en ligne « La méduse », il souligne que les journaux suisses disparaissent inexorablement ou sont intégrés par de grands groupes. Jamil Chade se veut plus positif, ce correspondant brésilien ne croit pas qu'un monde sans journaliste est possible à condition que chacun intègre l'exigence du métier en termes de vérification de l'information. « Nous ne sommes pas des magnétophones d'un discours politique » affirme-t-il.

Peter Kenny est sud-africain, il se pose une question plus existentielle sur l'avenir des médias qui restent à la merci des gouvernements et des puissants pour des raisons

essentiellement économiques. Il est nécessaire de soutenir les petits journaux pour garantir une pluralité de l'information. Il suggère la création d'un fonds global, destiné à assurer la pérennité de la profession.

Remske Heddema insiste, quant à elle, sur la précarité des pigistes qu'elle a surtout constatée dans son pays. Aux Pays Bas, les « free lance » ne possèdent aucun droit à la négociation collective, ce qui handicape considérablement leurs conditions de travail.

Daniel Cornu, ancien rédacteur en chef de la Tribune, revient sur le bouleversement généré par internet qui agit forcément sur le statut et les conditions du journalisme. Le réseau est inondé d'informations diverses. Une cristallisation s'en suit avec une perte de visibilité pour le journalisme dit traditionnel. Cette multiplicité d'informations disparates, parfois non vérifiées, favorisent ces nouveaux phénomènes

que sont les théories du complot et les « fake news ». Les médias alternatifs qui se sont constitués, possèdent même davantage d'audience que les traditionnels. A terme, on peut même imaginer un journal qui serait uniquement composé de nouvelles recueillies et élaborées à partir d'algorithmes.

Brij Khindaria, journaliste indien, mentionne que l'évolution technologique devra être pleinement intégrée et que les journalistes doivent accepter ce changement sous peine de disparaître. En Inde, il constate un essor du journalisme local intégrant la spécificité des différentes langues. Pour s'adapter à cette redéfinition du métier, il mentionne une précédente tentative pour fédérer une approche qualitative, éthique et déontologique et cite l'UNESCO en indiquant qu'un vademecum pérennisé pourrait intégrer cette nouvelle donne (1). Tous conviennent d'ailleurs qu'il faut s'adapter à l'ère numérique et que l'apparition du portable amplifie le phénomène. Une des solutions mise en place, et qui fonctionne, consiste à faire payer l'information journalistique sur les sites avec un abonnement digital pour garantir à la fois sa qualité et sa fiabilité.

Au sein de la presse dite traditionnelle, la prédominance dans certains pays de grands groupes qui possèdent les journaux pose problème vis-à-vis de l'indépendance éditoriale. Il en va de la responsabilité des états voire des continents pour préserver, coûte que coûte, ce droit essentiel, relatif à la liberté d'opinion et d'expression (3). Tous les pays ne semblent pas agir de la même manière. Alors que l'Asie et notamment la Chine ont intégré l'évolution numérique et l'accompagnent, les USA sont à mi-chemin et l'Europe oppose une certaine résistance à ces changements.

La séance de questions réponses qui clôturait cette présentation a permis un échange avec le public notamment sur les questions des financements et les médias sociaux.

Une note d'optimisme, était envoyée lorsqu'une jeune journaliste en poste à l'ONU évoquait les difficultés

qu'elle rencontrait en termes de moyens et pour finaliser son travail, y compris sur le terrain. En dépit de cette situation, elle insistait sur la passion qui l'anime et son désir de vouloir continuer dans cette voie qui lui apporte un accomplissement permanent autant professionnel que personnel. La tradition est donc respectée et une partie de la réponse à la question initiale est donnée. •

(1) [www.apes-presse.org](http://www.apes-presse.org)

(2) Guide pratique du journalisme UNESCO / Reporters sans frontières

(3) Déclaration des droits de l'homme - Article 19 : Tout individu a droit à la liberté d'opinion et d'expression; ...; ce droit comprend la liberté de chercher, de recevoir et de répandre des informations et des idées de toute espèce; ...; Cet exercice comporte des devoirs spéciaux et des responsabilités spéciales.



# 70 ans PEN Suisse romand

## Ouvrer pour la paix

1989-2019

Alfredo de Zayas

Ouvrer pour la paix est la plus noble vocation de P.E.N. International et de notre Centre Suisse romand, fondé il y a 70 ans par l'essayiste Neuchâtelois Jaques-Edouard Chable. Pax optima rerum, maxime de la Paix des Westphalie. Elle est aussi la vocation de l'UNESCO et le credo des Nations Unies, dont la Charte est une sorte de constitution de l'humanité, une constitution universelle avec sa cour constitutionnelle, ainsi la Cour Internationale de Justice, qui à plusieurs reprises a condamné les agressions. Maintenant nous disposons aussi de la définition du crime de l'agression[1], adopté par les membres du Statut de Rome, à Kampala le 11 juin 2010.

Fondé en 1921 par la nouvelliste anglaise Catherine Amy Dawson Scott, peu après la catastrophe de la première guerre mondiale, P.E.N. International a pour but principal la promotion de la paix et de la solidarité universelle. Nous, écrivains avons une responsabilité de diriger nos talents vers une patiente construction d'un monde de dignité humaine, soutenue par une philosophie humaniste, où notre environnement est respecté, où nous gardons la planète pour les générations suivantes, où nous œuvrons pour la paix et tissons les liens entre les intellectuels du monde afin de bâtir des ponts entre les peuples et les cultures, en soulignant la fraternité universelle entre tous les peuples et toutes les langues. Le premier président de PEN, le romancier et dramaturge britannique John Galsworthy, a écrit les premiers trois points de ce qui est devenu la Charte de P.E.N., principes rédigés à l'issue du Congrès du P.E.N. à Berlin en 1926 et adoptés lors du Congrès à Bruxelles en 1927.

### Voici les trois paragraphes

- La littérature ne connaît pas de frontières et doit rester la devise commune à tous les peuples en dépit des bouleversements politiques et internationaux.
- En toutes circonstances, et particulièrement en temps de guerre, le respect des œuvres d'art, patrimoine commun de l'humanité, doit être maintenu au-dessus des passions nationales et politiques.
- Les membres de PEN devraient à toutes les occasions employer l'influence qu'ils ont pour favoriser une bonne compréhension et un respect mutuel entre les nations et les peuples; ils s'engagent à faire tout ce qu'ils peuvent pour dissiper toutes les haines, et à se faire les champions de l'idéal d'une humanité qui vit dans un monde égal et en paix. La Charte actuelle de P.E.N. dispose d'un quatrième paragraphe, qui n'a été approuvée que lors du congrès à Copenhague en 1948, après la deuxième guerre mondiale.

Elle ajoute le paragraphe suivant :

"Le PEN défend le principe de la libre circulation des idées entre toutes les nations et chacun de ses membres a le devoir de s'opposer à toute restriction de la liberté d'expression dans son propre pays ou dans sa communauté aussi bien que dans le monde entier dans toute la mesure du possible. Il se déclare en faveur d'une presse libre et contre l'arbitraire de la censure en temps de paix. PEN affirme sa conviction que le progrès nécessaire du monde vers une meilleure organisation politique et économique rend indispensable une libre critique des gouvernements et des institutions. Et comme la liberté implique des limitations volontaires, chaque membre s'engage à combattre les abus d'une presse libre, tels que les publications délibérément mensongères, la falsification et la déformation des faits à des fins politiques et personnelles." C'est sur la base de ce paragraphe que P.E.N. International a fondé en 1960 son Comité des écrivains en prison, qui mobilise l'ensemble de la communauté PEN pour agir à travers ses alertes du Réseau d'action rapide, des campagnes régionales ciblées et en utilisant le statut consultatif du PEN auprès des Nations Unies pour soumettre au Conseil des Droits de l'Homme des informations pour l'Examen périodique universel (EPU) des rapports de tous les Etats du monde. Depuis de décennies notre Président Hoang Nguyen et notre ancienne Présidente Fawzia Assaad œuvrent pour les écrivains persécutés et incarcérés. Par notre littérature nous œuvrons aussi pour l'accès à l'information, pour la liberté d'opinion, contre la censure et l'auto-censure.<sup>1</sup>

Les Gouvernements des Etats parties à la Convention de l'UNESCO[2], signée à Londres le 16 novembre 1945[3], ont déclaré au nom de leurs peuples, que, "les guerres prenant naissance dans l'esprit des hommes, c'est dans l'esprit des hommes que doivent être élevées les défenses de la paix". Ils ont reconnu que "l'incompréhension mutuelle des peuples a toujours été, au cours de l'histoire, à l'origine de la suspicion et de la méfiance entre nations, par où leurs désaccords ont trop

<sup>1</sup> Alfred de Zayas et Aurea Roldan, "Freedom of Opinion and Freedom of Expression", in *Netherlands International Law Review*, 2012. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/netherlands-international-law-review/article/freedom-of-opinion-and-freedom-of-expression-some-reflections-on-general-comment-no-34-of-the-un-human-rights-committee/ADCD74F635F688851788E9079E1ABB76>



Federico Mayor Zaragoza. L'UNESCO continue à entretenir une Action pour promouvoir la Culture de la Paix[6]. Hélas l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies a fait marche arrière, en adoptant le 19 décembre 2016, la Résolution 71/169 contenant une déclaration pas du tout progressiste sur le Droit à la Paix, suivie de la pauvre résolution 32/28 du Conseil des droits de l'homme du 1 juillet 2016[7], résolutions qui n'arrivent même pas à progresser par rapport à la résolution 39/11 de l'Assemblée Générale du 12 novembre 1984 sur le droit de peuples à la paix[8].

Nous observons avec préoccupation une régression générale dans la doctrine des droits humains, une corruption de termes, un départ dangereux de la culture du multilatéralisme,

souvent dégénéré en guerre." On a reconnu que la dignité de l'homme exige la diffusion de la culture et l'éducation de tous en vue de la justice, de la liberté et de la paix, pour toutes les nations, des devoirs sacrés à remplir dans un esprit de mutuelle assistance. La Constitution de l'UNESCO affirme quelque chose d'encore plus important : "Une paix fondée sur les seuls accords économiques et politiques des Gouvernements ne saurait entraîner l'adhésion unanime, durable et sincère des peuples et, par conséquent, cette paix doit être établie sur le fondement de la solidarité intellectuelle et morale de l'humanité."

L'article 1 stipule les buts et fonctions de l'UNESCO: L'Organisation se propose de contribuer au maintien de la paix et de la sécurité en resserrant, par l'éducation, la science et la culture, la collaboration entre les nations, afin d'assurer le respect universel de la justice, de la loi, des droits de l'homme et des libertés fondamentales pour tous, sans distinction de race, de sexe, de langue ou de religion, que la Charte des Nations Unies reconnaît à tous les peuples.

### Droit humain à la Paix

Hermanas y hermanos, il y a un droit humain à la paix[4], mais le Conseil des Droits de l'Homme a de la peine à le reconnaître. Ce ne sont pas les pays dits du tiers monde qui s'opposent, mais les riches démocraties telles que les Etats Unis, le Canada, l'Union Européenne, l'Australie et le Japon. En 1997 l'UNESCO a formulé une Déclaration sur le Droit de l'Être Humain à la Paix[5], proclamée par son président

le développement d'une "industrie des droits humains" qui "weaponize" les droits humains et les transforme en armes de destruction des adversaires en lieu d'être les moyens de solidarité, de médiation et de réconciliation.

Nous observons une tendance à saper la doctrine du multilatéralisme, qui est au cœur de la Charte des Nations Unies, de la Constitution de l'UNESCO et de la Charte de P.E.N. international. Les actions unilatérales des Etats Unis, de l'Union Européenne et de l'OTAN créent un danger pour la paix locale, régionale et planétaire. Nous ne devons garder le silence lorsque le droit international et les droits humains sont ébranlés. L'érosion de la morale internationale s'aggrave. Les exemples depuis l'élection de Donald Trump aux Etats Unies sont hélas trop nombreux. Et beaucoup de pays démocratiques qui doivent condamner la dérive éthique et juridique se taisent.

Il est du devoir des écrivains de continuer à œuvrer pour la paix, pour la solidarité internationale et pour le multilatéralisme. Il convient de nous rappeler de la maxime de l'Organisation Mondiale du Travail – "si nous voulons la paix, il faut cultiver la justice". Si vis pacem, cole justitiam! Il est donc à nous, les écrivains et écrivaines de tous les pays du monde, qui incombe chaque jour d'œuvrer pour la paix et la justice sociale par nos livres, nos articles, notre poésie, et par tous les moyens de la société de l'information et de la communication.

[1] [https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=XVIII-10-b&chapter=18&clang=\\_en](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XVIII-10-b&chapter=18&clang=_en)

[2] <https://crimeofaggression.info/role-of-the-icc/definition-of-the-crime-of-aggression/>

[3] <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/19450147/200601120000/0.401.pdf>

[4] entrée en vigueur pour la Suisse le 28 janvier 1949

[5] Alfred de Zayas, "Peace" in William Schabas, *Cambridge Companion of International Criminal Law*, Cambridge 2016, pp. 97-117

[6] [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/MAYOR2\\_F.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/MAYOR2_F.PDF)

[7] <https://en.unesco.org/themes/building-peace-programmes>

[8] <http://www.world-psi.org/en/united-nations-general-assembly-approves-declaration-right-peace>

[9] <https://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/39/a39r011.htm>





# Une saison à l'ONU

**STEINKIS**

## Désumé

Tout le monde a entendu parler de l'ONU, mais combien savent exactement ce qu'elle fait et comment elle fonctionne ? Et 70 ans après sa fondation, difficile de dire que les Nations Unies ont rempli leur ambition de départ : maintenir la paix et la sécurité dans le monde !

Pendant quatre ans, Karim Lebour a observé comme correspondant de presse l'impuissance du Conseil de sécurité, le recul de la domination occidentale, et l'avènement d'une nouvelle guerre froide avec la Russie et les nombreux travers et défaillances de l'ONU.

Ses chroniques parfois décalées, souvent drôles, toujours édifiantes nous font entrer dans le quotidien de cette administration gigantesque qui rassemble des dizaines d'agences et emploie quelque 44 000 personnes !

## Biographies des auteurs

Karim Lebour a été correspondant à l'ONU de Soudan à Soudan du Sud, après cinq ans au Proche-Orient où il a écrit *Jours tranquilles à Gaza* (récit préfacé par Stéphane Hessel). De son expérience à l'ONU, il avait tiré un premier reportage pour *La Revue Dessinée* avec James et Thierry Wartin, publié au printemps 2014. Karim doit son éducation à la BD à la bienveillance des personnels de la Fnac de Grenoble qui le laissaient lire dans les rayons. Il travaille aujourd'hui pour International Crisis Group à Washington.

Sortie des ateliers BD de l'école bruxelloise Saint-Luc en 2006, Aude Wassot entame à Paris une carrière de storyboarder dans le dessin animé, et s'installe stratégiquement entre une librairie bd et son bistrot préféré.

Après un séjour à Montréal, elle devient l'auteur de *Québec Land*, un journal dessiné sur le quotidien d'un couple d'expatriés français au Québec.

Auteurs : Karim Lebour et Aude Wassot

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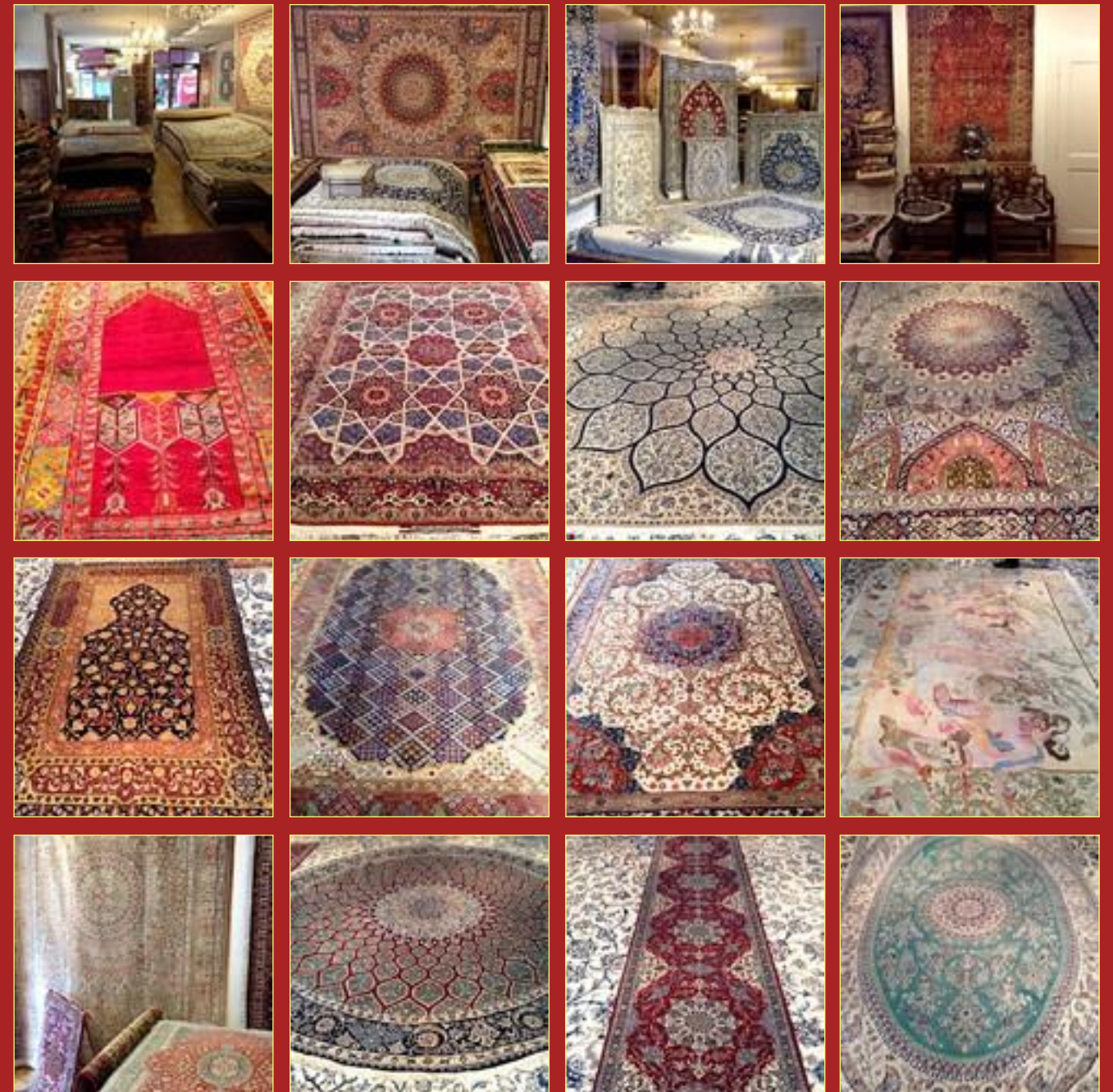
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