



**United Nations
Office at Geneva
(UNOG)**

The Geneva Lecture Series

**A joint UNOG / UNITAR initiative
to address Global Challenges**



unitar
United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Palais des Nations – Geneva

Overview

The United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) are organizing a series of open lectures on a regular basis at the Palais des Nations in Geneva. The *Geneva Lecture Series* aims at bringing awareness of pressing global challenges to the concerned public and civil society in Geneva, with a focus on how each individual can contribute to resolve such challenges. It also offers an intellectual anchor for the work of the United Nations and other international organizations in Geneva and a mechanism to channel current thinking and research into policy-making.

This series is unique in that, although the lectures are organized and hosted by the United Nations, they are open not only to the diplomatic community but also to anyone who is interested in and concerned with the topics discussed. The audience has an opportunity to raise questions and engage in discussions with authoritative speakers.

The *Geneva Lecture Series* was successfully launched by the UN Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon on 29 April 2008 in Geneva. During the inaugural lecture, which gathered about 1,200 participants in the Assembly Hall at the Palais des Nations, the Secretary-General addressed the following question: "Are the development goals doomed to fail?"

Similarly, each of the next lectures will address a specific theme assessed to have a significant impact on present and future generations. The themes include *Peace and Security, Conflict Resolution, Terrorism, Disarmament and non-proliferation, Drugs and Crime, HIV/AIDS, Poverty Reduction, Global Economy, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Renewable Energy, Environment, Humanitarian and Disaster Relief, Gender Equality, Human Rights, Cultural Diversity, Immigration and Intellectual Property*, among others. Leaders and experts are invited to share their point of view on a specific issue, and to exchange ideas on concrete ways to make the world a better place to live for all.

UNOG and UNITAR organize these events in partnership with other United Nations agencies, programmes and funds, as well as with media, academic institutions, foundations, and federal, cantonal and local authorities, among others.

Background

UNOG serves as the representative office of the Secretary-General in Geneva. A focal point for multilateral diplomacy, UNOG services more than 8,500 meetings every year, focusing on a wide range of issues in such fields of disarmament, human rights, trade and development and humanitarian relief. It is one of the busiest conference centres in the world, as well as a center for information sharing and exchange, with a large number of dignitaries and high-level delegations coming every year to participate in bilateral encounters, intergovernmental meetings, conferences and other events. With more than 1,600 staff, it is the biggest United Nations office outside of headquarters in New York and provides critical support to the Organization's efforts in the fields of peace, development and human rights.

UNITAR was established in 1965 as an autonomous body within the United Nations. The mandate of UNITAR is to enhance the effectiveness of the work of the United Nations and its Member States in the fields of peace and security and in the promotion of economic and social development. UNITAR designs and conducts worldwide some 230 different training activities per year for more than 80,000 beneficiaries, including diplomats and other government officials, nongovernmental representatives and local authorities. The Institute endeavours to remain proactive in designing training and capacity development activities – including distance learning methods – that respond to the requirements of this era, where issues are more inter-related than ever, and where multi-disciplinary approaches are crucial.

The Republic and Canton of Geneva, as well as the **City of Geneva** constitute a centre of international diplomacy and cooperation for over a century. This historic role is underscored by the presence in Geneva of a large number of international and intergovernmental organizations. Geneva presently hosts more than 22 international organizations with headquarters agreements, 173 permanent diplomatic missions and representatives of more than 700 non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The city has promoted a culture of discourse and negotiations on issues as critical as peace and security, disarmament, human rights, humanitarian affairs, labor and health standards, telecommunications, intellectual property, environment, trade and development.

Fostering public debate and dialogue on universal concerns

The *Geneva Lecture Series* offers a unique platform to foster awareness on specific global challenges and deepen and broaden the participation of citizens and civil society at large in the on-going diplomatic and inter-governmental processes.

Within the framework of a selected theme, some of the following challenges will be addressed:

- Promoting peace and security
- Strengthening international cooperation over disarmament and non-proliferation
- Promoting conflict prevention
- Enhancing peaceful conflict resolution mechanisms
- Fighting against terrorism
- Preventing narcotic drugs trafficking and crime
- Eradicating extreme poverty
- Combating against HIV/AIDS
- Protecting biodiversity
- Curbing climate change
- Increasing the development and the use of renewable energy
- Protecting the environment
- Developing the global economy in a sustainable manner
- Enhancing humanitarian and disaster relief efforts
- Strengthening international cooperation over immigration control
- Advocating human rights
- Fostering cultural diversity
- Promoting gender equality
- Protecting intellectual property

UNOG and UNITAR are assisted in the organization and promotion of the lectures by a support committee, comprised of representatives of the various partners involved. The partners include relevant United Nations agencies and a limited number of sponsors (media, private companies, foundations, etc.) who have expressed their willingness to support this initiative through in-kind contribution or funds, and whose name is associated to the event. Relevant rules and guiding principles of the United Nations with regard to fundraising and partnerships will apply to all.

After brief welcoming remarks by the heads of UNOG and UNITAR, one or two prominent speakers are invited to give a lecture explaining to a broad audience the various challenges facing the international community around a specific theme. Following the lecture, a moderator leads an open discussion, in which participants have a rare opportunity to raise questions and engage in discussions with internationally renowned speakers. Moderators are selected among the media, heads of International Organizations or other high level personalities from civil society or the world of politics.

In addition to the open discussion with the invited speaker(s), a number of mechanisms/tools are put in place to ensure a wide dialogue around each lecture. Each event is broadcast live through the UN webcast. A *Geneva Lecture Series* website is also developed which will present a range of relevant information and documents for each lecture.¹ Further, media partners generate on-line discussions through their own websites ahead of the lectures, bringing to each speaker a selection of questions forwarded by their readers/listeners.

Two to three lectures are planned annually.

Participants and Speakers

The *Geneva Lecture Series* is **open to anyone** who is concerned with the future of our planet, including representatives of international organizations, media, academic institutions and NGOs, as well as citizens of Geneva and beyond. People outside of Geneva who cannot attend in person are invited to participate via Internet.

All media agencies accredited to the United Nations Office at Geneva as well as local media companies are particularly welcome to join and support this initiative, as their participation helps raise awareness of these crucial global issues in the general public and maximizes the impact of the lectures.

For each lecture, UNOG and UNITAR select a theme and speaker (s). Internationally recognized leaders and experts in their respective fields will be invited as speakers, including such personalities as Nobel laureates, former United Nations Secretaries-General and Deputy Secretaries-General, economic leaders (particularly from emerging economies), current or former political leaders, artists who are engaged in awareness-raising or operational activities, writers and other international prominent figures.

¹ www.unitar.org/gls