



serene
communications



Learning Opportunity trips UN Geneva

June & September 2017

The United Nations in Geneva

The United Nations system includes a large number of intergovernmental organisations, specialised agencies, programmes, funds, offices and research institutes as well as related organisations. Two thirds of the activities of the United Nations system take place in Geneva, making it a key centre of international co-operation and multilateral negotiation. This is one of the reasons that the city is often referred to as "International Geneva".

Around 9,500 staff work for the United Nations family in Geneva, which is the largest concentration of United Nations personnel in the world. They are active in many of the major fields of work of the United Nations, including health; labour; intellectual property; human rights; humanitarian action and disaster relief; economic, trade and development activities; disarmament efforts; science and technology; as well as research and training.

The key bodies working in Geneva include Charter based and treaty based bodies including:

Human Rights Council

Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council

Human Rights Council Complaint Procedure

Human Rights Committee

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Committee against Torture

Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Committee on Migrant Workers

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Committee on Enforced Disappearances

The Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them. It has the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year. It meets at the UN Office at Geneva.



The Council is made up of 47 United Nations Member States which are elected by the UN General Assembly. The Human Rights Council replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.



UPR

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process that involves a review of the human rights records of all UN Member States. The UPR is a State-driven process, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, which provides the opportunity for each State to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to fulfill their human rights obligations. As one of the main features of the Council, the UPR is designed to ensure equal treatment for every country when their human rights situations are assessed.

The UPR was created through the UN General Assembly on 15 March 2006 by resolution 60/251, which established the Human Rights Council itself. It is a cooperative process that, by October 2011, had reviewed the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States. Currently, no other universal mechanism of this kind exists. The UPR is one of the key elements of the Council that reminds States of their responsibility to fully respect and implement all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The ultimate aim of this mechanism is to improve the human rights situation in all countries and address human rights violations wherever they occur.

CEDAW

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

CEDAW Committee consists of 23 experts on women's rights from around the world. Countries who have become party to the treaty (States parties) are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how the rights of the Convention are implemented. During its sessions the Committee considers each State party report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the State party in the form of concluding observations. In accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention, the Committee is mandated to : (1) receive communications from individuals or groups of individuals submitting claims of violations of rights protected under the Convention to the Committee and (2) initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights. These procedures are optional and are only available where the State concerned has accepted them.

The Committee also formulates general recommendations and suggestions. General recommendations are directed to States and concern articles or themes in the Conventions.



Participants of February 2017 trip in the CEDAW session

Overview of visits to the UN in Geneva

The visits to the UN in Geneva will include a number of different elements including:
 Registration at the UN as a delegate with an ECOSOC accredited organisation;
 Meeting with other NGOs;
 Participation in NGO events;
 Attending sessions at the various UN entity events depending on the calendar of events at the UN at the time of the visit;

The opportunity to speak at an event;
 Meeting with the UK Mission to the UN in Geneva;
 Meeting with other UN Agency officials
 Visiting Geneva;
 Participating in an NGO conference at the weekend.



Participants speaking at the Palais Wilson

We will be expecting to focus on CEDAW, UPR and HRC though it may be possible to participate in the International Radio conference, Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other UN mechanisms, depending on what is happening at the time of the visit.

After the visit, participants will have the opportunity to debrief and work on their reports and testimonials and should undertake a post trip event.

Dates for the trips are 16 – 23 June 2017, 15 – 22 September 2017. There may also be a trip in November and one in February 2018.



Assembly Hall Palais des Nations

Background to Serene Learning Opportunities with educational institutions

Since 2005, we have been assisting young women and men to attend UN events particularly UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York and the Human Rights Council Geneva. This began with Anisa Fadaei, who was a student at Stroud High School, who went to CSW and established the National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO) youth caucus. The NAWO Young Women's Alliance has developed with increasing activities during the year, enabling members to be accredited to attend and providing opportunities for them to speak during the CSW and HRC as well as events post CSW for example in the Houses of Parliament. These opportunities have been provided to students from sixth forms and universities around the country with students not only benefiting from the experience, but also being able to engage in work experience that would not have been available to them otherwise. NAWO is the first women's organisation to have a youth caucus and is the only one with the Young Women's Alliance (YWA) although other women's organisations have begun to accredit and assist young women to attend CSW and HRC in very recent years. Participants will be automatic members of the YWA and thus party to the opportunity this affords.

Responsibility of students and parents

Students will need to be able to demonstrate that they can balance the demands of academic work with demanding commitments of the visits. They will miss days of their formal education – the amount depends on the specific visit. They need to be committed to catching up on any missed work; however, the busy schedule whilst away will make it very difficult for students to do any academic work while there. In addition it would be useful for them to attend all the planned activities and be free to make optimum use of their time. They need to understand that this is not a “jolly” but a demanding opportunity.

Parents need to understand that this is not a 'school trip' and that they will not be accompanied by a teacher/tutor. They will need to take out their own insurance for their own children and understand that they are travelling independently and are not the responsibility of the school/university. It is the responsibility of parents to brief their children about the relevant risks of international travel.

It is essential that students (if at school) have parental support and we will need this in writing. In addition, students will need to put in writing themselves why they wish to become involved, what will be the result of their involvement and why they should be selected. These need to be emailed to Serene Communications at the earliest opportunity.

Logistics

Serene is organising the flights, transfers in Geneva and accommodation. Participants are responsible to provide their own travel insurance and subsistence. We negotiate group rates and prices and exchange rates may vary. Much will depend on the numbers of participants and flight/accommodation availability. Fees also include training and administration costs.

Zarin Hainsworth OBE, (and potentially other staff) from Serene Communications will be with the participants. The students will sign a contract that stipulates they need to inform Serene of their movements and will provide mobile phone contacts.

Attendance at sessions at the UN is only possible if you are accredited by an ECOSOC accredited organisation and these organisations do not charge for accreditation. Thus there is no charge for accreditation – which will provide the participants with a UN pass and the ability to enter the UN. Accreditation is the gift of the relevant NGO.

Although it is not possible to guarantee a speaking opportunity, Serene works with trusted organisations to put on side events and therefore there are often such opportunities. Since 2005, every student attending CSW or HRC has spoken at an event, if they have wished to, and many have had a wide range of other opportunities as a result.

Selection

We want to select the most suitable and committed participants and do not wish any suitable candidate to be deterred by cost. However, this is not a school trip and the participants have to arrange their own fund raising.



Summary

This is a unique opportunity. School age applicants need to be fully supported by parents, be demonstrably able to balance academic work with commitment to the trip; be passionate about equality issues and prepared to work hard on their presentations in advance and for a punishing schedule in Geneva; be confident enough to deliver them at the UN and later in other venues; and be prepared to give presentations in school and elsewhere; raise the profile of HRC and other UN processes and write a report.

The rewards are enormous. Successful participants will be accredited by an NGO, will be provided with the opportunity to participate in the UN, training on HRC, UPR and CEDAW, the possibility to attend a seminar on Parliamentary Lobbying, and will have gained a wealth of experience in real, not simulated, politics. They will be mentored in the kind of presentations to make and how to enhance them as well as presentation skills and networking.

Further information

If there are any questions please do not hesitate to contact Zarin Hainsworth
zarin@serenecommunications.com 07786311198

