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United Nations, Vienna

Ceremony marking 40 YEARS UNITED NATIONS VIENNA

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the handover of the Vienna International Centre (VIC) to the United Nations in August 1979, when Vienna thereby became one of the official headquarters of the UN, together with New York, Geneva and, later, Nairobi. A ceremony, co-organised by the City of Vienna and the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs was held on 27 May 2019 to mark the occasion, with UN Secretary General (SG) Antonio Guterres attending.

This report describes the ceremony, the Vienna International Centre, the UN agencies that operate in Vienna, and what this means for GWI and our representation and advocacy here.

The Anniversary Ceremony

The Ceremony took place in the VIC's Rotunda. Principal guests included SG Antonio Guterres, UN Vienna Head Yuri Fedotov, the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Karin Kneissl, and the Mayor of Vienna Michael Ludwig - who all spoke. The Austrian President was represented by the Ambassador to the UN. The Heads of the UN Agencies in Vienna were present as were various Ambassadors, members of the Diplomatic Corps and other Representatives.



(Photo: UNIS) *SG Guterres speaking at the 40Years United Nations Vienna Anniversary Ceremony*

The music had been especially commissioned for this occasion and was dedicated to the United Nations. The Fanfare was titled '193+' (the number of UN member countries) with the violin soloist playing on a 1709 Stradivarius, loaned for the occasion. The music was handed to the SG as a symbolic gift.

SG Guterres talked about the challenges facing the UN, the importance of the SDG's, and the fact that as it approaches its 75th anniversary the UN still has far to go. He included a personal remark about Vienna after mentioning the many milestones of international cooperation that Vienna has hosted and the favourable conditions under which the UN operates here. He had previously met with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Greta Thunberg, the climate activist, who were in Vienna for a Global Climate Summit. Minister Kneissl spoke about the importance of multilateralism and traditional diplomacy in today's changing world. She quoted Bertolt Brecht:

“There are some who are in darkness
And the others are in light
And you see the ones in brightness
Those in darkness drop from sight.”

She said that she still sees it as our utmost and most noble task, since we are privileged to sit here in the light, that we continue caring for the millions in the dark.

Several other events are planned to mark this anniversary, including an open day for the public in September and a travelling exhibition in and around Austria that will showcase and raise awareness of the work of the UN in Vienna.



SG Guterres



The Vienna International Centre (VIC)

Around 5,000 employees from more than 125 countries work at the VIC. It covers an area of 325,000m², includes six office towers, the tallest of which stands at 120 metres, and two conference buildings – and took seven years to build. Its facilities include a medical centre, a library, kitchens, cafeteria, restaurant, post office and a bank. About 70,000 participants attend conferences at the VIC each year. Since 2015, the VIC has been climate neutral.



The VIC (photo taken from exhibition at UN, and Austrian Foreign Ministry document)



UN Agencies in Vienna

There are many UN Agencies headquartered or represented in Vienna. Their work ranges across very different areas and topics, with the **Sustainable Development Goals** providing the overall roadmap, as described by Mr Guterres. The UN agencies include:

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): from its headquarters in Vienna and through a global network of field offices, UNODC assists Member States to address the threat posed by drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism and to promote security and justice.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA): is the world's central intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical co-operation in the nuclear field. It works for the safe, secure and peaceful uses of nuclear science and technology, contributing to international peace and security and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO): is the specialized agency that promotes industrial development to create shared prosperity and advance economic competitiveness while safeguarding the environment and strengthening knowledge and institutions.



UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO PrepCom): is preparing for the implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, which bans nuclear explosions everywhere: on the Earth's surface, in the atmosphere, underwater and underground. It is establishing a global verification regime to ensure no nuclear explosion goes undetected. This data is also used for non-verification purposes such as tsunami warnings and global radiation monitoring.

The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA): promotes international cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space. It helps Member States gain access to space science, technology and applications for sustainable development. UNOOSA helps all countries leverage the potential of space technologies for disaster management and emergency response. It maintains the UN Register of Objects Launched into Outer Space.



The United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) Vienna Office: facilitates cooperation in all areas of disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. The Vienna Office coordinates the Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (DNP) Education Partnership bringing together 30 partner organizations (including GWI!) to develop educational packages on disarmament topics.

The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB): is an independent panel of experts monitoring the implementation of the UN drug control conventions. It works to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical / scientific purposes while preventing diversion into illicit channels.



The International Organization for Migration (IOM): promotes humane and orderly migration for the benefit of all and international cooperation on migration issues. It also provides humanitarian assistance to migrants in need. IOM Vienna includes the Regional Office for SE and E Europe and Central Asia.

Sustainable Energy for All Initiative (SEforAll): is a global platform working to achieve universal access to sustainable energy. The initiative brings together thousands of partners from the public sector, private sector and civil society.

The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL): is focussed on the modernization and harmonization of laws for international trade and business to reduce legal obstacles to the international flow of goods.

The United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA): maintains a Liaison Office, which also represents the UN Departments of Peace Operations, and Operational Support. It cooperates with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), based in Vienna.

The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR): evaluates the levels and effects of exposure to ionizing radiation. Its reports provide the scientific basis for radiation protection measures used by governments and international bodies.



The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): monitors the implementation of the relevant asylum laws according to the Geneva Refugee Convention and makes suggestions on refugee related questions.

The United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV): provides support including conference planning, security and language interpretation to UN programmes.

The United Nations Information Service (UNIS) Vienna: UNIS communicates the activities and concerns of the United Nations and supports the public information activities of Vienna-based UN organizations.



The International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR): promotes international cooperation to make the Danube, Europe's second largest river, cleaner, healthier and safer. It works towards ensuring the sustainable, equitable use of waters / freshwater resources in the Danube Basin.

Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention – UN Environment Vienna: promotes international cooperation for the protection and sustainable development of the Carpathians, Europe's largest transboundary mountain region. The office is UN Environment's global hub for work on mountains.



GWI - UN Vienna

The nature of the UN presence in Vienna with its focus on crime (UNODC), peace (UNODA, CTBTO, UNHCR, DPPA), sustainable development (UNIDO) and human rights (Vienna World Conference on Human Rights) guides our representation and advocacy work and activity in the various NGO Committees.

Key events include the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) and the UN Convention against Corruption.

The work of the UN in Vienna covers multiple areas of interest and importance – Peace (Peace Education), Crime (Corruption, Cybercrime, Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Drug Prevention / Trafficking, People Trafficking, Terrorism, Money Laundering, etc), Human Rights, etc. We have much to do!

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