

## PALAIS des NATIONS, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Many of you will have seen the invitation from Jan Hemlin (S I Midland Arden) inviting Scottish Soroptimists to join her and other Soroptimists on a tour of the United Nations in Geneva. Nine Scotland North members took up the invite. We all added on a few days to explore the city.

As our organisation has ECOSOC consultative status and we are a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO), I have added below some interesting facts.

This headquarters began as the League of Nations and is the second most important centre after New York. Two thirds of the UN activities take place here with over 9,500 people working daily at the site. Today the Palais is the largest conference centre in the world. It is the centre of 23 intergovernmental organisations, 250 non-governmental organisations (NGO), about 200 permanent missions and consulates. Alongside 600 multinational companies and HQ for HRC (Human Rights Council) and OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) – all striving to perpetuate the idea of peace or at the very least a more peaceful world.

Soroptimist International has five voluntary representatives in Geneva. They represent our organisation and are active with the Human Rights Council, Charter Bodies, CEDAW, CRC, ILO, Water, Migrants and NGO Committees.

In other words they do tremendous work using what information they get from Federations and funnelling it to the right groups.

The Reps identify Human Rights mechanisms to engage with women and girls, education, gender equality, older women, rural women and the girl child. They map and prioritize recommendations. They then plan follow up actions.

We still have no gender equalities; Violence Against Women persists, and, there is a risk of it regressing.

The Reps feel we need closer collaboration to benefit women by our projects and actions from clubs.



We should be researching gender aggregated data and hold governments accountable to the commitment they have made towards development projects regarding women.

This photo is of the Council Chamber, a 400 seat room and the current home of the Conference on Disarmament.

“depicting that which unites and separates mankind”

By the artist José-Maria Sert. Evoking the end of scourges, war, slavery and epidemics. Spain gifted the paintings to the Palais des Nations.

To reiterate our clubs should be aware of the work that is being done and could be done in the following areas:

CEDAW – The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women and the International Bill of Rights for Women adopted in 1979.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Equality in the World of Work. Remember – Water is Equality. Migrants. CSW and ending FGM.

Ageing Women and Elder Abuse. Human Rights Education and Learning.

Geneva is the ideal place to work for women's rights and it has been 72 years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1945) and 22 years since Beijing (1995).

Our Representatives feel they cannot get concrete results without communication and information exchange with their grass-roots ie. clubs. Closer collaboration through our Four Federations will improve the work of the United Nations Representatives and will benefit women and not only those of our network.

Finally, let's develop projects in Scotland North that directly influence governments to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).

Janice Wilson

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