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My annual letter provides an account of my life in 2013 with its varied events, cultural activities, family occasions, renewed and new friendships and travels to different parts of the world. With it I send warmest greetings to family and friends for Christmas and the New Year. The opera festivals in Aix-en-Provence and Wexford, as well as performances at the Opera, Conservatory and Victoria Hall in Geneva, the Concerts at the Temple in Ferney Voltaire, and evenings at Ted Talbot's, have provided some of the year's opportunities for enjoyable music. I only made one of the performances at the Festival of Montperreux. Unfortunately, I missed the festival in Fez and was not able to get tickets for Bregenz and Bayreuth. The weddings of Will Beaton and Johnlee Romero; of Virginia Doss and Francesco Dadaglio; and of Yuri Saito and Jean Philippe Havaux, as well as my own 75th were times for celebration and joy. I was sorry to miss the wedding of Jean-Charles Kouadio in October. The deaths of Raymonde Castelletti and Jacky Mas were not altogether unexpected, but that of Per Kulling in a road accident at the end of May was quite a shock. I regret not being able to make the funeral of Dominic Beer. The memorial service for Tony Haines brought me together with members of the family that I had never met. In addition to family, I have had the visits of many friends, including: Vajira Liyanage from Sri Lanka (who came again for three months touring Europe, using Divonne as his base), his brother Sumedha, while visiting family in London; Kenneth Hartigan Go from the Philippines (who is regularly at WHO Meetings); Jens, Katrin and Thomas Pages, who visit each year; Sam Adu Kumi with his new wife, Lilian from Ghana; Abdoulaye Gassamar, a Senegalese friend from Paris; Boniface Chibwana, from Malawi; Darren Roberts and David Timbs, from Australia; and UNEP/IEO colleagues. A lively Christian Community continues in the Pays de Gex. At the Eglise Protestante Unie de France we have managed well during the interregnum. Pastor Ho preached with a view in May and will join us in July 2014. In the summer we had a series of BBQ open houses, as well as three Advent evenings at parishioner's homes. The Lectio divina, lead by Anne Coïdan, has continued during the year, as has the GROG ecumenical group and the fruits of 18 months of preparation were realised in the Exhibition "Faith, What an Adventure!" We had our ecumenical service in January. I also worship, as the occasion arises, with the Anglican community in Divonne. The garden flowers were a picture, but the vegetables variable and late. The fruit were quite mediocre. However, I made a number of jars of black and red currant jelly and peer jam. February was exceptionally dry and the early summer very wet until the end of June then we had a glorious summer and early autumn. I decided to enter the i-Pad age; but find that the Internet connection is not always reliable. I am on Face Book, but rarely ever post, except for sending good wishes for various festivities and anniversaries, use it mainly as a messenger service for social contacts, where I keep abreast with friends who post regularly; and have made some interesting friends such as: Mosahar and Farhad, musicians from Iran who tell me about the latest trends in Trance; Eric, Lucien and Robert from Rwanda; Edward and Stephen from Kenya; and Bharati, Umer and Soha from India. From the beginning of the year I have been clean shaven, although friends, who see me occasionally, still ask "what has happened to the beard?" I discovered that obtaining a new UK passport can be quite complex as they are issued from Durham!

Despite a year of discussions, there has been no final decision about how UNITAR will be integrated into a new United Nations Knowledge Organisation. Our colleague Jonathan Krueger, who heads the UNITAR Chemicals and Waste Programme is leaving at the end of 2013 to undertake further studies and Brandon Turner moves from Hiroshima to the USA. My appointment as a United Nations Associated Fellow, has been renewed till the end of 2014. The celebrations for the 50th Anniversary of UNITAR were initiated at the end of November.

Following Christmas and New Year with the family in Coventry, Anand and I came back to Divonne in time for the Mayor's reception on 6 January, which was followed at Cecilia and Sharon's for their traditional lunch for Cecilia's birthday, where it is always pleasant to meet their Scandinavian and other friends. Two days later there was the funeral for Raymonde Castelletti with friends and family. My Open House for the New Year, was on 12 January, when we had some 30 people; fewer than expected due to illnesses. Jason joined us from Zurich. It was a great evening and we got through a good number of magnums of champagne as well as white and red wine and plenty of food. There was dusting of snow the morning Anand left for Delhi, but no delays to his flight. The fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury (INC5) was held at the Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG), from 13 to 18 January 2013, which resulted in an agreed text which gave birth to the "Minamata Convention on Mercury", subsequently adopted and opened for signature in Japan on 10 October 2013. It was an excellent opportunity to catch up with representatives of many countries with whom I am working with UNITAR. The Swiss government gave two receptions with typical traditional dishes. It was also Christian Unity week and we had our joint Ecumenical Service on the Sunday afternoon at Saint Etienne Roman Catholic Church in Divonne, organised by the GROG. The format had been prepared by the Churches of India. The Anglican Minister, Julia Chamberyon made an excellent exegesis of the Biblical passages; linking to the theme of India and the outcasts. Ravi Shankar's music set the scene.

The weather in Conakry, Guinea was pleasant at the end of January and I stayed again at Le Petit Bateau on the port which is away from the hustle and bustle of the centre of town. There was a lovely light as the sun was sinking on the horizon sitting at the pool over a beer after the meeting, where I chatted with others staying at the hotel. One was Japanese from Kyoto and a

specialist in chimpanzees (works at a Primate Research centre at the University of Kyoto) and his group had arrived from the mountainous Bossou forest area some 1150 km from Conakry and near the frontier with Liberia and the Ivory Coast. The team follows the chimpanzees and a Guinean Botanist studies the changing diet of the chimpanzees as well as the flora of the forest. More than 200 plant species, representing approximately 30% of available species in the habitat, are consumed by them. The forest is also a source of traditional medicines for the rural population. Delicious mangoes were in season. I found a couple of masks to add to my collection and was back home for the Chinese Lunar New Year (Year of the Snake), but celebrated the evening with the Mexicans, organised by Escuento de dos Mundos, where we had Latin American dancing (putting me in the mood for the Florida wedding a few days later).

Mid-February, I left the freezing weather of Geneva for Florida and the wedding of Will Beaton to Johnlee Romero in West Palm Beach, taking the BA flight to Miami. From the airport there would normally be a 90 minute drive, but with afternoon rush hour traffic and a thunderstorm it took four hours to reach Singer Island and the Sea Spray Hotel, located conveniently next door to where the wedding reception was to be held. Singer Island is a narrow long island parallel to the mainland, with elegant houses among the everglades and mangroves. Next day I explored the region; and in the evening joined the pre-wedding dinner for family and out of town guests, held at Johnny Longboats, a lively beachside seafood house and Tiki Bar with a friendly atmosphere. We were some thirty guests and had an enormous choice of menu, sharing dishes. The occasion enabled me to meet Jeanlee and the bride's Cuban family as well as Will's, including his step mother from Denver and his brother Alex, who has made three tours of duty with the US military in Iraq. I retired at a reasonable hour but the wedding party continued till 4 am. The weather had been mixed with some rain but the Saturday boded well with sunshine. The church ceremony (not a mass) was held in the afternoon at Saint Paul's Roman Catholic Church; the hymn book was in English and Spanish. Talking later with the priest he considered that the next Pope should be more pastoral than Benedict 16 (who is an intellectual and a theologian), as the church should have a leader who was closer to the ordinary people and their needs (it is interesting to observe what evolved when Francis was elected). I was pleased to see Grahame Hockton and his wife again. We went directly to the reception at the Palm Beach Community (behind the Sea Spray) where drinks were served on the terrace. The couple had photos taken on a board walk nearby that lead to the beach. It was quite chilly in the wind. I was at a table with part of the family that had come from Denver. Johnlee's grandmother, a lively person, was beside me. She thoroughly enjoyed dancing; and we had plenty of Latin American rhythms. The meal was buffet style. We had the traditional cake as well as the garter throwing etc., and a few speeches. The music stopped at 11 pm., so not a late night. We were invited for brunch next day at the "Two Drunken Goats" near to Johnny Longboats, to say farewell to the bride and groom who left for their honeymoon on a cruise ship. That afternoon I went to the Opera in West Palm Beach for the matinee performance of Rossini's "La Cenerentola" (Cinderella), conducted by Will Crutchfield, which was enjoyable. These provincial operas make an effort to encourage younger singers with traineeships and they get the minor or secondary roles (such as Don Magnifico and Clorinda). Grahame Hockton and I met in the evening for dinner at Johnny Longboats. It was good to catch up after a decade. Grahame, born English is an American citizen and is married to an English girl. He runs a ship engine maintenance company, unaffected by the economic situation, as his clients can spend 5 million dollars on a yacht!

Leaving at midday I had about 170 miles to drive to Sarasota on the Gulf of Mexico; where I stayed with Frances Delaney, a Canadian friend from Ottawa who escapes the winter for her condominium in Florida, set in a peaceful golf course on the outskirts of the town. Jono, Frances' lovely giant poodle dog welcomed me and we soon settled down to a glass of white wine. In the evening we went to a very popular restaurant, "Patrick's", in the centre of town and were joined by another Canadian friend, for a delicious steak meal. Frances has her own fresh orange juice from a tree outside her back yard. It was a leisurely morning and the weather improved to a mild sunny day. I went to the Outlet Shopping Centre at Ellenton; and did some basic shopping for luggage and casual clothes, returning late afternoon via the coast road. In the evening we went to a local fish restaurant for dinner. Next day we started at the Ringling Museum, which is located in an estate on the Bay Shore coast road, with a distant view of the island strip. It was established in 1927 as the legacy of Mable and John Ringling for the people of Florida and the State University assumed governance of the Museum in 2000. Designated as the official state art museum for Florida, it houses more than 10,000 objects in twenty-one galleries of European paintings as well as Cypriot antiquities and Asian, American, and contemporary art. The Ringling family were Circus owners in the late 19th century and made their fortune in entertainment, bringing the circus to town for one day. They were interested in fine art and travelled in Europe in the early 20th century collecting paintings and sculptures, which are now exhibited in a museum galleries on the estate. Also there are two museums related to the circus, one of which houses a model of the original circus built by Howard Tibbals. The house itself is in ornate Italian style, suitably furnished. Ca'd'Zan, (Venetian for "House of John"), is the waterfront residence built in Venetian Gothic style for Mable and John Ringling. The mansion was designed by architect Dwight James Baum, with assistance from the Ringlings, built by Owen Burns, and was completed in 1926. Overlooking Sarasota Bay, the mansion became the centre for cultural life in the region for several years. The residence was restored in 2002. It was mild enough to eat on the veranda and in the evening. Frances took me into town to see Puccini's opera "Turandot" at the Sarasota Opera. The performance was quite good, although not the famous voices that we hear in the major European and North American Opera Houses. Despite being reminded at each interval a mobile phone peeped several times. Also someone near me was singing out aloud the final aria (which in fact Puccini did not write but was completed by Alfano). Next morning I left for the return flight to Europe, crossing the Sunshine Bridge across the Bay to Saint Petersburg, where I visited the famous Museum with paintings by the renowned surrealist artist Salvador Dali, who was born in Figueres in Catalonia, northern Spain on 11 May 1904 and lived part of his life in the USA when the Spanish Civil War began and then part of his life in France. There is now a beautiful new

museum on the harbour with a nice garden and with the paintings well presented. I visited many years ago and at the time the museum was in a large hanger type building. I continued to Tampa airport for the American Airline flight to Miami, where I transferred to the British Airways flight to London later in the evening, arriving back home late afternoon next day.

With the restrictions on all but humanitarian United Nations missions to Mali we were obliged to launch the Mali project from Geneva, using a Skype connection, which was totally unsatisfactory. Almost at the beginning of the Workshop we had to abandon the video component as the band width did not allow both visual and sound communication together! I made my opening remarks followed by the Minister in Bamako with the text prepared beforehand; and then we had the questions and discussions in Bamako, which is very difficult when you cannot visualise the person who is speaking. Projecting the Power Point presentations from Geneva soon ran into problems and we had to leave the projection over Skype. For the second workshop in early April we set up a Conference communication via Nairobi and the UNDP office in Bamako using the UNDP facilities in Geneva, which was only marginally more satisfactory! The quality of the vision was good, but the video often blocked and we had to work with sound only. The two hour time difference also made it complicated.

The Gala Evening for the UK premier of George Benjamin's "Written on Skin" with text by Martin Crimp, directed by Katie Mitchell was held on 18 March at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden to which the Aix patrons were invited. Champagne was served before 15 of us went on a back stage tour of the theatre, which is most impressive. After a brief history (the theatre burned twice) we went to the orchestra pit, from where I took a photo from the conductors podium; then via Edward VII's smoking room to the real back stage and where they assemble and put in place the sets for the coming performances. The sets and costumes are stored in Aberdare in South Wales and transported back and forth! The oldest set is for La Boehme from 1935 and there are costumes from 1919! Some sets can be wheeled on to the stage of the theatre, but for many the whole floor is put in place. There are special springy floors for the ballet performances. Prior to the performance there was a champagne reception. We had good seats in the centre of the Grand Circle. The opera was performed without an interval, but two lowering of the curtain (unlike in Aix). It was sung in English and I understood it better for the second viewing. It remains gripping and shocking. There are three distinctive aspects of the opera: the dramatic music which follows emotions of the story; the strange way in which the dialogue is largely written in the third person; and the scenery with the movement from the present day to the 13th century, reflecting the wish of the "Protector" to have an illustrated account of the present and future. Barbara Hannigan sang Agnès, Christopher Purves the Protector and Bejun Mehta the Boy. For a modern work I liked it very much. It lasted about 95 minutes, after which we made our way to the Ballet room for the formal dinner. The performers had their party, but George Benjamin and his partner joined us for dessert. I had a few words with him and he remembered our discussion with Anand in Aix about the influence of Indian music in the work. I was at a table with an interesting group of people including besides me Mrs Sarah Tompkins from South Africa who had property in the Great Kuru and was resisting pressure to develop tar sands and the potential impact of bringing sea water from the coast and desalinating it for hydrocarbon extraction.

I was in Coventry for the Mothering Sunday weekend with the family. Catherine and I saw a mediocre performance by the Moscow Ballet of Delibes' "Coppelia" at the Belgrade theatre. There was a bitter wind which continued through the weekend. Yvonne Stone conducted the service for Mothering Sunday at Warwick Road United Reformed Church. We had the family lunch at an Italian Restaurant in Leamington Spa. Some snow had fallen over night but this did not prevent normal air traffic at Birmingham airport from where I flew via Paris to Amman for preparing an activity to promote the implementation of the International Health Regulations with respect to chemical events (IHR) in the countries of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. Maher, from the WHO Centre for Environmental Health Activities (CEHA) met me and I was soon at the Regency Palace Hotel, which is a short walk from the CEHA office. During the next week I worked with Mazen Malkawi and Basel Al-Yousfi on planning a Consultation and Workshop. We made contact with Mohammed Kasheshneh and colleagues from the Ministry of Environment, as well as the Jordanian Civil Defence to talk about chemical emergency preparedness and response capacity. They now have four teams covering the north, central and south part of the country, and Aqaba. I was impressed by the progress that had been made since our IPCS workshop on the subject in 1996 at which one of the colleagues had been. Jordan receives considerable support from the USA in the context of terrorism prevention and response. It was a pleasure to work with motivated people and those who know what they are doing and what they need.

The weather was sunny and relatively mild in the day, so as we worked a continuous day, by 4 pm I could be free to re-explore Amman. I saw no sign of the private visit of Prince Charles and Camilla; but no doubt it was different when President Obama visited the following Friday (I had already left). Late one afternoon I went down to the centre of Old Amman to visit the Roman Palace, which now has a large recreational space in front of it, which is being expanded. There is also a good view from the Citadel nearby. On the Saturday I made a trip to Umm Qais and Jerash with Hazeen one of the office drivers. We took the main dual carriage highway north towards Irbid, which has grown considerably since my last visit a decade or so ago. A rather overcast sky gave way to a brighter day but not too hot. We got to the site before 11 am and already there were a fair amount of visitors both Jordanian and foreigners. The site was very stony so tiring on the feet; but the countryside was green, after good winter rains, and full of wild spring flowers so a carpet of colour everywhere. Umm Qais, the site of the ancient Hellenistic-Roman town of Gadara, is situated in the extreme north-west of the country, where the borders of Jordan, Israel and Syria meet, perched on a hilltop (378 metres above sea level), overlooking the lake of Tiberius, the Golan heights and the Yarmuk gorge. Situated on a ridge, which falls gently to the east but steeply on its other three sides, the town was always potentially of strategic importance. By the third century BC the town was of some cultural importance. It was the birthplace of the satirist Menippus, a

slave who became a Cynic philosopher and satirised the follies of mankind in a mixture of prose and verse. It capitulated shortly afterwards when besieged by the Seleucid king Antiochus III of Syria. The region passed in and out of the control of the Seleucid kings of Syria and the Ptolemies of Egypt. In 167 BC the Jews of Jerusalem rebelled against the Seleucids, and in the ensuing conflict in the region, Gadara and other cities suffered severe damage. In the early first century BC Gadara gave birth to its most famous son, Meleager. He was one of the most admired Hellenistic Greek poets, not only for his own works but also for his anthology of other poets, which formed the basis of the large collection known as the Greek Anthology. In 63 BC, when the Roman general Pompey placed the region under Roman control, he rebuilt Gadara and made it one of the semi-autonomous cities of the Roman Decapolis, and a bulwark against Nabataean expansion. But in 30 BC the Roman emperor Augustus placed it under the control of the Jewish king Herod. The historian Josephus relates that after King Herod's death in 4 BC Gadara was made part of the Roman province of Syria. In the first century AD Jesus drove demons out of a man into swine 'in the country of the Gadarenes'. In AD 66 at the beginning of the Jewish revolt against the Romans, the country around Gadara was laid waste. The 2nd century AD Roman aqueduct to Gadara supplied drinking water through a channel 170 km long; its longest underground section, running for 94 km. Gadara continued to be an important town within the Eastern Roman Empire, and was long the seat of a Christian bishop. With the conquest of the Arabs, following the Battle of Yarmouk in AD 636 it came under Muslim rule. Around AD 747 it was largely destroyed by an earthquake, and was abandoned. We made a leisurely tour of the site, where the main road runs east-west for 1.7 km. There is a good view over the Yarmuk gorge to the Golan (now occupied by the Israelis) and to Lake Tiberius. The Israelis control 95 % of the water outflow from the lake. Walking around the site gave a feeling of how it must have been for Jesus and his disciples. We ended at the museum which contains a few partial statues and mosaics as well as a few old coins and basalt tombs. We descend into the Yarmuk gorge to visit the hot springs where one can supposedly bathe. There are two Jordanian army check points on the descent so I was glad that I had my UN Certificate. One can see the Israeli frontier posts on the top of the ridge.

We made our way back south and took the diversion to Jerash and the old Roman town, which is the site of the ruins of the Greco-Roman city of Gerasa, also referred to as Antioch on the Golden River, which was supposedly founded by Alexander the Great, or his general Perdiccas who settled there with elderly Macedonian soldiers, during the spring of 331 BC, when Alexander left Egypt, crossed Syria and then went to Mesopotamia. Jerash is considered one of the most important and best preserved Roman cities in the Near East. It was a city of the Decapolis, and the birthplace of the mathematician Nicomachus of Gerasa. Recent excavations show that it was already inhabited during the Bronze Age. After the Roman conquest in 63 BC, Jerash and the land surrounding it were annexed by the Roman province of Syria and in AD 90, it was absorbed into the Roman province of Arabia, which included the city of Philadelphia (modern day Amman). The Romans ensured security and peace in this area, which enabled its people to devote their efforts and time to economic development and civic building activity. In the second half of the first century AD, it achieved great prosperity. The Emperor Trajan constructed roads throughout the province and more trade came to the city. The Emperor Hadrian visited Jerash in AD 129-130 which was celebrated by the construction of the triumphal arch (or Arch of Hadrian). The city finally reached a size of about 800,000 square meters within its walls. The Persian invasion in AD 614 caused the rapid decline of Jerash. However, the city continued to flourish during the Umayyad Period. In AD 749, a major earthquake destroyed much of the city and its surroundings. During the period of the Crusades, some of the monuments were converted to fortresses, including the Temple of Artemis. Small settlements continued in Jerash during the Ayyubid, Mameluk and Ottoman periods. Excavation and restoration of Jerash has been almost continuous since the 1920s. The visit begins, after the Hadrian Arch, at the Temple of Zeus, a large theatre and the nearly oval Forum, which is surrounded by a fine colonnade, leading to the long colonnaded street or cardo, with the North Gate at the end and the north theatre. Then I climbed up to the magnificent Artemis temple, taking the upper way back to the south theatre and the Zeus Temple. Locals and tourists stop and chat with you. One Jordanian youth had a strong North England accent which he said he learned by watching TV! There are many Iraqi and Syrian students as well as Saudi and other nationalities that readily make conversation and subsequently want to chat on Face book (not always so easy through a Google Arabic translator!). It is impressive to see the major effort which the Jordanian government is making to construction accommodation for refugees, earlier from Iraq and now from Syria. Syrians readily take jobs in the service sector.

The return Air France flight to Paris was at 02.40 am from the new Queen Alia Airport, formerly opened two days earlier, which is spacious but was still not fully functioning. The cramped flight in cattle class was not pleasant where the seats are so tight that one's knees touch the seat in front. I left my main bag at Charles de Gaulle airport and went into town for the Aix Gala evening and was able to get into the Residence Concorde hotel room to relax. I had hoped to get my British passport renewed at the UK Chancery but was informed all new passports go to the UK and are printed in Durham. There is a special "same day" service at the Passport Office in London, at an additional cost, otherwise it takes up to 4 weeks, which I subsequently did by post from Divonne. It was time for lunch so I repaired to the Terminus du Nord for a selection of excellent oysters, washed down with half a bottle of Pouilly fumé. The Gala evening for the Aix Festival was held at the Hotel de la Marine in the Place de la Concorde. Security was strict but fortunately I had remembered my passport and there was someone from the Festival administration at the entrance gate. There was a meager glass of champagne as we waited for the recital at 8 pm with an introduction by the deputy director of the Naval Ministry, giving some of the history of the building; then the President of the Comité d'Honneur, Mme Claire Chazal, followed by Bernard Fouccroulle, the festival director. The recital was of Mozart Arias given by Ana Maria Labin (Rumanian soprano) and John Chest (American baritone): from La Finta Giardiniera; The Marriage of Figaro; Zaide; Don Giovanni and The Magic Flute: an excellent performance. Bruno Roger spoke afterwards to thank the performers and the Festival supporters. Dinner followed and we started with asparagus in a Parmesan sauce (blanc de blanc de Domaie d'Ott,

2011); Volaille fermier et morilles (St Estephe Chateau de Pez 2007) for the main course and Poire pochée à la vanille for the dessert, served with Emavoira port wine. We gathered again in the recital hall for coffee and calice d'Aix. I was back in Divonne the following afternoon; initially without my suitcase, picked up by another person, but who returned it later.

Our new Church Council was inaugurated at the service on 24 March conducted by Pastor Magali Girard; Cornelia and I represented the church community in the dedication. Holger Neupert is our new President. Two days later I was in Abidjan for the Validation workshop of the project to promote the ratification by the Ivory Coast of the Amendment to the Basel Convention on Toxic Waste. As the Amendment required Parliamentary approval we included four Deputies in the meeting, and they took a lively role in discussing the economic and legal implications of the Amendment. Several weeks later the parliamentary ratification was approved, and the Ivory Coast was able to make a formal announcement at the Conference of the Parties six weeks later. This modest, Swiss funded UNITAR project demonstrated how within a period of a few months (December to March) it was feasible for a country to examine the economic and legal implications of ratification of a UN convention and proceed with the ratification process in a timely manner. While in Abidjan I had the visit of my friend Jean-Charles Kouadio, who came from Yamoukamesti, the political capital. Unfortunately, I was not able to participate in his marriage in October. I also met with another friend Tommy. I was back on Good Friday and joined the Anglicans for a moving service based on Stephen Cotterell's book "The Nail". Easter weekend we advanced the clocks for summer time and started Easter Day at dawn in the garden at the Ferney church around a fire we lit to proclaim the "Resurrection". It was chilly and we had a service in the church followed by breakfast. The main Service was at 10 am with Communion. I went to lunch at Jacqueline Forget's with other friends. Then on Easter Monday I organised lunch with eight friends. Sharon and Cecilia were back in Divonne and Carol had a nice dinner party with Jorgito. We had a clear mild spell in early April, even warm enough to eat outside; and some spectacular views of the mountains; as the sun sets over the Jura the snow capped Alps become pink. The weather held for the annual French Protestant Consistory meeting held in Annecy. Interestingly, most of the pastors of the region are women. Kenneth was at the WHO Medicines Safety Committee and it was good to catch up with some friends on the Committee, as well as to meet Kenneth's niece, Camille, who is studying in Lausanne, which gave an opportunity for a culinary delight at the Auberge de Bogis-Bossey. I had a series of visitors. Darren Roberts came over from Cambridge and was joined by his partner David Timbs, who is Vice Consul at the Australian Embassy in Tehran. My Malawi friend, Boniface Chibwana, who is doing a research degree in Bochum Germany, came at the weekend: we started with 11 for a dinner party, including several Africans who were at the "super-COP"; had dinner at Bernd and Lotty Dieterich; and introduced Boniface to the workings of the COP. Sumedha Liyange (Vajira's brother), was in London to see his son, Sam, and came over for a few days to stay with me; we took advantage of the best day to go into the Vaud Alps, and also had a nice international dinner party.

The "Super-COP" (Conference of the Parties for the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions) ran from 28 April to the 10 May, with many days of intensive negotiations. It was a pleasure to see the Ivory Coast announcement about the Ratification of the Basel Amendment, as well as to catch up with so many people with whom I am working in countries. We had a couple of pleasant receptions given by the Swiss Government. I took the opportunity to organise a couple of dinner parties to invite mainly the African delegates. The Geneva Book Fair was held at this time with a Mexican theme and Daniel Takaki invited me. I went to the inauguration by the Swiss Canton and at the Mexico booth there was an opening followed by Mariachi singers and a glass of Mescal. Orthodox Easter was on 5 May and before going to the Midnight Service I was at Craig and Cristina's for dinner. The Service was taken at a cracking pace and the Saint John Chrysostom homily came after an hour, only in Russian and French. The Saint John's Gospel reading came at 2 am., which we did have in Russian, Latin, Greek, French and Rumanian. An hour later after the consecration of the host we had the Credo and Lord's Prayer and as the host was distribute I discretely left. On Whitsunday I was invited by Anne to celebrate Jacqueline Forget's birthday. Next day I flew to Naimey, where I stayed at the Hotel Univers, with its bungalow rooms in the form of a cylindrical African hut. It was the validation meeting for the Niger SAICM Implementation Plan and we had an active NGO participation with five proposals for partnership projects (all related to public awareness and safe use of pesticides). I also introduced the GHS. I planned to catch up with Aboubakar Waiss (former DG in Djibouti) who heads the FAO office, but there was a Ministry of Agriculture mission to the national forest, to which I was invited but the time was too short, before returning to 10°C in Geneva after 45 °C in Niamey. The World Health Assembly had convened and Kenneth was back in Geneva with the Philippine delegation, whom I invited for the Sunday lunch. We were ten and I roasted three ducks. My selection of cheeses and wines was well appreciated.

The following Tuesday morning I flew to Copenhagen via Munich for the 49th EAPCCT Congress. Anand had already arrived from Delhi. That evening with Alison Jones, the dean of the Medical School at Woolangong University, we explored the "Salt" restaurant, an updated version of the Parisian brasserie where the cuisine is contemporary Scandinavian, with a touch of French; joining the Norwegian group at the bar back in the hotel later. The main part of the Congress opened next day. Hugo Kupferschmidt gave the Louis Roche lecture on "Antidotes", and the opening reception was held at the Town Hall, which is in splendid Italianate style architecture. We got a tour of the building with an introduction by the public-relations officer. After the cocktail party we visited the Tivoli Gardens opposite. This famous amusement park and pleasure garden opened in 1843 and is the second oldest such park in the world, with over 4 million visitors a year. There were excellent scientific sessions at the Congress. I took the opportunity to visit the new United Nations building which houses the WHO European Regional Office and discuss the implementation of the IHR with colleagues. The Congress Dinner was held at the Moltke Hall, an early 18th century two storey Baroque style town mansion, subsequently acquired in 1930 by the Guild of Craftsman of Copenhagen. Catherine and Nelson joined us for the banquet. It was a glorious first of June and we spent the day exploring central Copenhagen, which

is easily done using the on and off sightseeing bus, associating it with the corresponding boat, which covers the main sites. We did the complete tour then went back to the Little Mermaid, Royal Palace and the Cathedral. Copenhagen is a splendid city. In the evening we had a delicious meal at the Fischer Restaurant where Simon Slessor works.

The next day we picked up a brand new AUDI A4 S series AVIS hire car, starting by exploring the Danish side of the Oresund rather than crossing to Sweden immediately: so made our way north to Helsingor. Hamlet's castle is on the headland of the sound which is only four kilometres across to Sweden. The ferry crossing to Helsingborg is 30 minutes and we were soon on the Swedish motor way system and headed south towards Lund, but branched to Ortofter Slot, where Simon and Angelika live in a lovely cottage. They received us royally. Next day we visited the historical part of Lund, founded around 990, when Scåne belonged to Denmark. It soon became a major Christian centre of the Baltic Sea region, at a time when the area was still a frontier area for Christian mission. From 1103 it was the seat of an archbishop with its towering Cathedral, built around 1090-1145. The University traces its roots to 1425 although the current university was not founded until 1666 after Sweden acquired Scania in the 1658 peace agreement with Denmark. In the afternoon we continued to explore Malmö, the administrative centre of Skåne, founded in 1275. By the mid-16th century it was the most fortified city of Sweden. While other historical buildings remain there are now little of the fortifications. The following day we drove first to the reconstructed Viking Village of Fotoviken on a windy peninsular near the southern tip of Sweden; then to the "stone boat", at Kåseberga, reminiscent of Stonehenge, where we had a brisk climb up the cliff side to the site which is a series of vertical stones in the form of a boat.

Saying farewell to Simon and Angelika we headed across the Oresund Bridge to Copenhagen airport, from where we flew via Oslo to Kirkenes in the far north of Norway on the river Pasvielva, which forms the frontier with Russia, landing in brilliant sunshine which accompanied us most of the time north of the Arctic Circle. We had a dinner of arctic char as starter and medallions of Reindeer for main course. One waiter was Russian from Murmansk and the other a Sami from the countryside (so for her Kirkenes was the big city!). It is always difficult sleeping the first night under the midnight sun. Kirkenes borders Russia and Finland, with a population of about 50,000, and compared with the rest of Finnmark the area is quite fertile. A few days earlier temperatures had reached 30°C. It does not take long to explore the town. Early afternoon we boarded the MS Vesteralen, which was to be our home for the next six days as we travelled south along the coast to Bergen. The Hurtigruten line was set up in the 1880s to provide a daily boat connection service to the settlements along the Norwegian coast where the road system was sparse. The accommodation was simple and adequate, while the food was sumptuous. Sailing at 14.30 pm our first stop was at Vardo where we had an hour for a quick visit to the octagonal fortress of Vardohus with its four towers; built in 1737. It was a strategic area in the Second World War as the German U-boats were active against the convoys taking provisions to the Russians in Murmansk. The fort was laid out to represent the various periods that it had been used and there was an example of the Enigma machine. It is at the most easterly point of Norway at 31degrees 10minutes 10 seconds East (the same as Cairo, Egypt). There were two stops during the evening at Batsfjord and Berlevag; then at Mehamn and Kjollefjord in the night. At 6 am we gathered in the cafeteria for coffee and biscuits in preparation for our excursion to the North Cape, leaving by bus from Honningvag. The North Cape is on the Island of Mageroy and it takes 45 minutes to climb to the plateau 307 metres above the ocean; the Barents Sea to the east and the Norwegian Sea to the west and the Cape has a 180 Degree view to the Arctic Ocean. It is at 72 degrees 10 minutes 21seconds North and 2,080 kilometres from the North Pole. There is a well organised visitors centre and we started by seeing a film about the North Cape, which (like the museum in the building) traces the history from the naming by the British seafarer Richard Chancellor in 1553 (looking for a passage to India via Siberia!); and visits of Louis-Philippe of Orleans in 1795, and the Swedish-Norwegian king Oscar II. There is an ecumenical chapel in the rock and a lookout over the sheer cliffs to the sea below, which was quite calm. A buffet breakfast was served. Outside there are two monuments as well as several sculptures placed at the Cape by children of different parts of the world. After the winter many reindeer are brought from the mainland by the Norwegian navy; but fattened up on Mageroy they have to swim back to the mainland in the autumn! The plateau is above the tree line so the countryside is tundra. Mageroy is now connected to the mainland by a series of tunnels and bridges and the bus took us back to the boat at Hammerfest, considered the world's most northerly city. It was a lovely surprise when we stopped in Skjervoy to find on board Marianne Solbakken, Anand's friend from Tromsø. Marianne is a delightful person and she had brought photos from India as well as her country home. She showed us how to eat shrimp and took photos which went on Facebook! We arrived in Tromsø at 23.45 pm and said farewell to Marianne. Buses took us to the Arctic Cathedral for the midnight concert, with a selection of works, including, two pieces by Grieg and a final work by John Rutter. I slept soundly and woke as the boat was passing through the Risøyrenna dredged canal, between the islands of Hinnøya and Andøya, which allows the boat to get through to Risøyhamn and on to Sortland, which houses the headquarters of the Norwegian coastguards and where we were received by the local brass band. At Stokmarknes there is Hurtigruten Museum on the quay, which records the starting of the Vesteralen Steamship Company by Richard With in 1881.

We passed to the east side of the Lofoten through the wall of mountains by the Raftsundet, a 20 kilometres long strait which separates the Lofoten and the Vesteralen Islands; with towering rock faces on either side, up to 1000 m. At the west end of the strait is the 2 km long Troll Fjord, which is 100 metres wide at its mouth. It was calm, and we entered the fjord with the sheer cliffs rising up to over 1000 m. The manoeuvrable ship did a spin turn at the end of the fjord. In stormy weather there is always the risk of rock falls, which the ancient sailors ascribed to the trolls showing their anger. The fjord is a breeding ground for fish and there was famous "Battle" of the Troll Fjord in 1880, between the sailing boat fishermen and the new steamboat fishermen. The Vesteralen ladies formed a choir and sang some traditional and international songs as we went through the fjord. We spoke with one of them afterwards who seemed to be happy living in the far north. As we were going on the excursion to the Lofoten

Islands we had to have an early dinner. Much of the day was with high cloud, but we got some rain on the Lofotens. We reached the picturesque capital Svolvær at 18.30 pm. and buses were waiting to take us on the excursion. Fishing is the main economic activity and there are large racks for air drying cod (stockfish). Some cod is preserved through salting to make bacalau and is exported to Portugal, Spain and France. The Lofoten Islands are green with some areas for agriculture on the east side of the Lofotenveggan, the mountain wall which protects the islands from the west gales, and is among the oldest granite rock formations dating from two and a half billion years. The Gulf Stream brings mild weather and huge amounts of cod come for spawning from January to April. The Lofoten Islands are the mildest place for the latitude of 68 Degrees North! There are sandy beaches on the west coast and there had been temperatures up to 30 degrees C since 17 May: and had only just turned cold and damp! Each island is different. Most villages are privately own and are as the result of rich fishing. We went across to Henningsvær, a small fishing village on several small islands which is a tourist place with an interesting Kark Erik Harr art gallery of local painters. There are also a lot of old fishermen wooden houses, painted red (originally with fish blood and fish oil), constructed by the King for fishermen, who traditionally just lived and slept under their upturned boats. Many are now restored and modernised as summer cottages for rent. The boat had reached Stamsund by the time we returned to it and set sail for the mainland. I got up for the Arctic Circle crossing ceremony which consisted of a spoonful of cod liver oil followed by a tot of whisky. The oil had a bowel loosening effect all day! I went straight for breakfast to lose the taste of the oil! Petter Dass, the 17th century author and poet has his statue in Sandnessjøen where we docked for an hour. Dass' father was a Scottish trader (Peter Dundas). Until recently access to the Norwegian west coast was easier and closer by sea from Scotland than over land from Oslo. Sailing away, we passed the Severn Sisters, a series of mountains around 1000m on the port side coast. We also passed the Alstahaug church, dating from 1100s where Petter Dass was the priest. Bronnoysund is considered the half way point between the North Cape and the southern tip of Norway, leaving which a short detour was made to see a mountain with a hole in it: a strange phenomenon. Next morning we were in Trondheim, a settlement founded in 997 as a trading post, and it was the capital of Norway during the Viking Age until 1217. As early buildings were mainly of wood the city has been destroyed many times by fire. It is the third town of Norway. The Nidaros Cathedral dominates the town. Leaving we sailed passed the Monksøya, an island where the Benedictine monks built a monastery in the 11th century. There was more agriculture along the coastal strip as we travelled south. The short stop in Kristiansund enabled a brisk walk, but unfortunately, Cecilia and Sharon had not yet arrived at their summer residence. In the open sea off the coast it was brilliant sunshine with whales and dolphins near the ship. Later we passed a large gas collection point which then pipes gas to the UK. In Molde the "MS Lofoten" (now the oldest of the Hurtigruten ships) docked beside us and I was intrigued to visit again as I had taken the boat twenty or so years earlier. It is quite small, built in 1964: but has lovely wooden panelling and only two small lounges. Early afternoon we docked in Bergen, making a city excursion. The town is on two bays and surrounded by mountains. Norway's second city, Bergen was a trading centre from 11th century and the capital in the 13th century and from the end of the 13th century became a bureau city of the Hanseatic League. Until 1789, Bergen enjoyed exclusive rights to mediate trade between Northern Norway and abroad. The quays are a World Heritage Site. A téléphérique takes one to some 1000 metres above the city, where the view is spectacular in brilliant sunshine. Pierre, Sofie and Capucine Taron were our dinner partners on the boat and we met for a final meal together in the old town.

The return flight was via Frankfurt: Catherine and Nelson flew to the UK via Oslo. Alain Walon invited us for dinner with Jennifer; and Vajira Liyanage had arrived from Sri Lanka. It was wet most of the month of June; but did warm up with sunny periods so that we could get the bedding plants in place to give a wonderful picture of colour. We were able to have our GROG lunch outside after the AGM at the Ermitage. There was a lot of cleaning and arranging to do in the house in readiness for the arrival of family and friends for the party on 29 June; as each year a joint birthday celebration for Anand, Jason and myself. Alain also kindly provided a couple of rooms for guests. Chris was first to arrive and it was good to catch up with his Australian experience. It was the Fête de la Musique in Geneva where we listened to a number of live concerts both in the street and in the churches and concert halls. Adam arrived in time to help setting up for the party. On 25 June Daniel had arranged for a private visit for Adam, Anand, Chris, Vajira and I to the Alice Complex at CERN with one of his post doc. students, Indra Das. Security is tight and to get into the Cathedral chamber you have to pass a double set of doors with eye recognition (as in the James Bond film!). The detector is being serviced so it is easy to see how the system functions with the beam and particle collisions. Back home we had drinks in the front garden for my birthday. It was sunny but chilly. Catherine and Nelson arrived the next day; followed by Eddie Naya and Graham and Sally. Then we had a surprise on the Friday morning, Kami pulled up in front of the house and out got Claire with Caal and Daniel. Claire had told me she would not be able to come! Cathy Wilson and Jason joined later in the day. We had a good team with Costa and Michel to assemble the gazebo with an extension for the dining area, and two small tents for cocktails. Chris, Adam and Anand took over the cooking. It rained heavily in the night and through till noon; but by 4 pm the skies cleared to brilliant sunshine. I breathed a sigh of relief and table setting could begin. 107 places were set with a seating plan, so that when guests arrived almost all was done. I was delighted to have so many good friends for the occasion, and especially those coming from afar such as Frances Delaney from Canada, Stefan and Walter and Elvi Walber from Germany, Eve and Trevor Cole from Australia, Dominique Larré and Liliane Duport from Paris to mention only a few. Unfortunately, Alain Walon was hospitalised with pneumonia and could not join us. There were over one hundred guests and some friends only came for the cocktails and did not stay for dinner. We moved to the tables for dinner just before 8 pm and the food moved smoothly. After cold meats, smoked salmon and salads we had beef stew, chicken curry and vegetarian dishes, followed by a cheese plate and selection of desserts that friends had brought. Wilfried Kreisel made a very nice speech as well as Jonathan Kruger. I spoke later thanking everyone. Most people left around midnight but others continued and I retired at 3



am. Next morning I was up for Church in Ferney. Jan Petryka joined us for lunch. He was singing Tamino in Lyon and had driven the conductor to Geneva. It was really lovely to see him. The weather was glorious and the clearing up started!

The Fourth of July was a really hectic day; with the final clearing up after the party and preparing to leave for 2 weeks in the south of France. Packing the car was a jigsaw puzzle. Catherine, Nelson, Anand and I left Divonne at 1 pm to drive over 450 km. to Aix en Provence and arrived at the hotel around 6 pm. It was the opening night of the Music Festival with the Opera Rigoletto (by Verdi), which was staged in the courtyard of the old Archbishop's Palace, starting at 9.30 pm. Before the performance we saw the usual festival friends and met up with Michael Foley as well as Daniel Takaki who had come by train. The TV was filming. It was an interesting performance with the LSO conducted by Gianandrea Noseda, Robert Carsen producing and a good cast of singers: George Cagnidze as Rigoletto, and Irina Lungau as Gilda; and the Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir. The Duke was sung by a Mexican from Sonora, Artuor Chacon Cruz. Carsen set the opera in a circus with Rigoletto as the clown and some of the staging was very saucy (almost Pyian!), but I thought it accentuated the character of the Duke and other personae dramatis; and also the staging set off the music especially when Gilda is singing on a trapeze. It was a pleasure to see Siw Mikalsen from Stavanger Norway (who was there with her son Julien); and later Willem Bruls who came to work with the Academy. There was a reception at the interval and one at the end where we met the performers and musicians. Don Giovanni opened the next evening, with Marc Minkowski conducting the LSO in the Dimitri Tcherniakov production. The cast was different, apart from the Commendatore (Anatoli Kotschrgo) and Laporello (Kyle Ketelsen), but little changed from the initial production three years earlier. Although criticised by many, I still think it a very interesting interpretation. It works quite well putting all the characters under the same roof and in a family, and accentuates the madness of Giovanni, as well as his serpent like hypnosis of the women in the opera. There was a good reception afterwards and I spoke with Marc Minkowski and several of the singers but Dimitri Tcherniakov was elusive! The matinée concert with the HSBC laureates of the previous year provides the opportunity to spot future talent. The World premier of Vasco Mendonça's "The House Taken Over", produced by Katie Mitchell with the Schönberg orchestra conducted by Etienne Siebens was performed at La Grande Saint Jean. It tells the strange story of a brother (sung by Oliver Dunn) and sister (Kitty Whately) who live in a house, fastidiously following a daily routine, but systematically they feel rooms are haunted and they move into smaller and smaller spaces and end up in the kitchen; finally leaving the house. There was the usual cocktail afterwards. The Baroque Opera "Elena" written by Francesco Cavalli in the early 17th century but not performed for three centuries, since 1659 was given at the Jeu de Paume. Leonardo Garcia Alarcón conducted the Cappello Meditteranea in a production by Jean-Yves Ruf. Elena was sung by Emöke Barath and Menelas by Valer Barna Sabadus. Rodrigo Ferreiro sang Peritoo. There are several counter tenor parts. It is rather long at 3hrs 30 mins, despite a cut of some 45 minutes with much discussion between the conductor and producer! As Mark Minkowski commented to me as we emerged at the end the performance "one has to wait a long time for the beautiful quartet"! There was the usual reception afterwards where it was a pleasure to see Shirley Aphorp and to talk with the president of the Gulbenkian Foundation.

The drive to Draguignan, to stay a few days at Alain's, was leisurely via the north side of the Gorge de Verdon. There was a heavy thunderstorm in the mountains, just before we entered the gorge, which slightly cooled the air. Romy Sagna was there to greet us and we settle in; and were pleased to have the pool to relax. Late afternoon next day we returned to Aix for the Coro Gulbenkian in the evening at the Saint Sauveur Cathedral, conducted by Michel Corboz. The programme ranged from Bach and Almeida to Fauré, Poulenc and Milhaud. Mounir had joined Michael Foley and we ended up at the Armenia restaurant along with Willem and Shirley. It was another splendid warm day and perfect for a visit to the Luberon, starting with the Chateau de Coste, with its modern sculptures among the vineyards; then visiting the Abbey of Senenanque which is in the hills and surrounded by fields of lavender. The opening performance of Richard Strauss' very dramatic opera "Elektra" was that evening at the Grand Theatre, with Esa Pekka Salonen conducting the Orchestre de Paris in a production by Patrice Chéreau. As Elektra Evelyn Herltzius was brilliant and very moving and she is on stage the whole of the one hour and forty minutes. It was followed by a reception where we met the performers. It was sad to learn three months later of the death of Patrice Chéreau. The return to Draguignan was via the Mediterranean coast. A few days in the region is not complete without a visit to Grasse, starting in the old medieval town and then exploring several of the famous perfumeries such as Galimard and Molinard. Anand and I returned to Aix for the patrons evening on 13 July, a splendid occasion held at the homes of four of the festival sponsors, who live next door to each other in the beautiful countryside beneath the Sainte Victoire mountain. We started with a cocktail party and the first of two recitals: Mendelssohn string quartet and several arias sung by Philippe Do (with whom we shared a table at dinner); then we went next door to a yet more splendid house for the dinner in the garden and second recital of Argentinean music. I was rather taken aback when Bernard Foccroulle offered me on behalf of the Festival a framed page esquisse of Vasco Mendonça's "The House Taken Over" signed by the composer, which now hangs in the sitting room. It was a highly appreciated gesture. We were back in Draguignan for the French National Day, leaving the following day for Divonne; as Catherine and Nelson had their flight back to the UK and Anand to India for his competitive exam in which he did brilliantly and was accepted for a selective four month intensive course.

The splendid wedding of Virginia Doss and Francesco Dadaglio was held on 20 July with a simple church service in Rolle and magnificent reception at the Château de Bogis-Bossey. Mehdi, Vera and Yuri were elegant ladies of honour at the church entrance. After the service photographs were taken at the lake side before proceeding to the Chateau. The day was glorious and cocktails were served in the garden, from where there is a lovely view to the lake and Alps, before the dinner in a marquee. There was a nice mix of nationalities: English and Welsh from Alan Doss's side of the family; Egyptian from Soheir's side and Italian from Francesco's family; plus other friends. I was at a pleasant table with Alan's class mates from LSE and Wales as well



as with some Indians who have worked with Alan. There were a minimum of speeches one by Alan and the other by Francesco's brother. The dancing continued into the early hours and I finally retired at 4 am; glad I had taken a room in the Château as I could not have driven home! Next morning it was brunch in the garden and farewells. A few days later Win Eyles visited while Chris was on a geology course near to Megève. It was good to catch up after several years. They are now living at the Barbican. Anand's charming friend Carol Kelly from North Carolina stayed for a few days on her way to Zurich. The first day we made a tour of the classical sights of Geneva, followed by a dinner party for a dozen in the evening. Temperatures were well into the 30s°C so we headed for a day in the Vaud Alps mountains and Vajira accompanied us. Next day was the final performance of the Montperreux festival and we took the Jura route via St. Cergue the Joux Valley to the end of the Lake at Le Point across the parallel valley to Mouthe. The concert was held at the Salle Communal of Labergement Ste Marie, and was a takeoff of love songs from the opera. I did not recognise all 17 arias! After the performance, there was the usual "verre d'amitiés" to meet the performers as well as sponsors and Stuart Patterson, Alex, Michel Bercovier and Nicole Poinso. The drive back to Divonne by motorway was rapid. The Swiss National Day was glorious. Vajira and I went to the Baenninger BBQ in St. Batholémy, which was a most enjoyable evening with the traditional bonfire and fireworks.

The good weather continued in August and provided the conditions for a number of BBQs and dinners in the garden. Catherine, Nelson, Claire and the boys returned for a couple of weeks. Kami helped find scooters and tricycles for Caal and Daniel. The time was relaxing and we made few extended excursions; but were often invited to friends. A day with Christine and Jean-Pierre Carnal at their renovated farm in Noville at the far end of the Geneva Lake, made a good outing and we caught up with Stephanie and Tom as well as Rachel and their children. The musical genius; Darwin and his mother Rachel were staying with Jacqueline Forget and we met up for dinner. A Senegalese friend, Abdoulaye Gassama, visited for a long weekend and we made a tour of the Jura while the weather held. André Malumba was on vacation from Kananga at the Abbey in Saint Maurice where he studied to be a Roman Catholic priest and we spent a day together, making an excursion to the exhibition at the Pierre Gianadda Foundation in Martigny of the Impressionist painter Modigliani. We then drove up to the ski resort of Verbier, where there was quite a good view in the sunshine, especially from the famous modern church, completed in 1962, with its 40 metre spire that dominates the resort. The situation in the D.R.Congo is difficult; despite having much wealth in the country many people are poor and children are undernourished. André struggles to run a local children's canteen.

The wedding of Yuri Saito and Jean-Philippe Havaux was held in Brittany at the most westerly part of France. As it was many years since I had been in Brittany I decided to take a week to re-explore that area. It is a long way to drive alone, so I decided to fly to Nantes and hire a car, taking the south coast route to Brest, but avoiding the tourist beach resorts. In the Golfe du Morbihan I found a small auberge, converted from a 19th Century farm in a quiet village, with excellent fish and sea food of the region and modestly priced rooms. There was a settlement in Vannes predating the Roman conquest in 56 BC, and the walled town is one of Brittany's most attractive sights. The main gate into the city, Porte St.Vincent Ferrier, is named after the Spanish monk who died there in 1419 and became its patron saint; he is buried in the St. Pierre Cathedral, which is located in the old medieval quarter with its colourful streets and old houses. Auray, with the 17th century St Gildas church, was the next place of call at the head of the of the Golfe du Morbihan, high above its port St Goustan on the Loch. I headed down the peninsula to Locmariaquer, which has an imposing concentration of megalithic monuments of the 4th millennium BC. I first visited the flat stone dolmen which is on the beach. I found the main collection nearby and it is fairly extensive with the large Menhir (which is broken in three, probably as a result of an earthquake) and it dates from 4500 BC. The table des Marchands (nothing to do with commerce) dates from 3900 BC and contains a funeral chamber of 7 m long. There are two other dolmen on the site. At Carnac there is a very extensive and impressive set of megaliths, with various alignments. One is free to walk and explore. Dating from about 3000 BC there are two very impressive alignments: "Menac" with 1099 menhirs, arranged in 11 rows 1160 m long and 100 m wide; and "Kermario" with 1029 menhirs in 10 parallel lines, 1120 m by 100 m. At Concarneau I took the coast road towards Pont l'Abbé, stopping for the night at the Villa Tri Men in St Bénodet, standing on the hillside overlooking the setting sun. Locronan is a picturesque village with granite Renaissance houses along a central street leading to the Church of Saint Ronan and the Chapel du Pénity. The day was again splendid and quite hot in the sun and there are some historical houses in the centre of the village. Travelling north one comes to the highest point in Brittany; Ménez-Hom of the Black Mountains, which stands at 330 m. with a 360 ° view of the countryside and coast. Circumventing Brest I soon arrived in Podspoder and checked in to the brand new Eco Hotel, Chateau de Sable, which is right on the dunes with a view of the small harbour and a promontory overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. In the evening a group of the wedding guests went to the local crêperie, accompanying our selection of crêpes with cider from the barrel.

The wedding ceremony was held at the Chateau de Kergroadez (Brélès), built from 1598 to 1613, by Francois de Kergroadez, an associate in arms with Henry IV, and remains in the family. The castle was the fitting setting for a humanistic ceremony, for which there was lady master of ceremonies, and a violinist. Some 40 guests were greeted by the Brittany bagpipers as we entered the castle courtyard. With the glorious sunshine it was a very special occasion with secular readings (from "Le Petit Prince" and Hamlet Act III, Scene II: "Doubt thou the stars are fire; Doubt that the sun doth move; Doubt truth to be a liar; But never doubt I love") with the exchange of rings. They signed a parchment (but the marriage certificate was signed later at the town hall). We descended to the courtyard for the photos; then returned to the hotel for the vegan wedding breakfast. While the wedding party went to the town hall, I walked on the windy promontory. It was quite hot in the sun. Some people even swam and others surfed (in wet suits!!). The evening celebrations started with cocktails and then a buffet dinner with dancing later. For the dinner we had a mixture of vegan and seafood, which served as finger food was quite convenient. I enjoyed the good

dancing music and stayed the course until 2.30 am. If one advanced beyond the hotel lights onto the dunes there was a spectacular starlit night. Next day there was a crêpes brunch; the savoury, made from the dark buckwheat, with ham and cheese; the sweet crêpes, made from wheat flower and slightly sweet, were with different comfitures, including hazelnut chocolate. There was also champagne and wine. In the afternoon I made my way along the coast to St. Pol, continuing to Carante and Morlaix. I stayed the night in Trébeurden; next day setting off around the peninsular, via Trégastel and the rocky headland around Ploumanach with the rose granite highly eroded rocks and sandy bays. I walked to visit some of the area; then continued through Perros-Guirec and on to Tréguier, where the 18th century author Ernest Renan was born, with its picturesque houses and the cathedral of Saint Tugdual (14th and 15th century). I made a sight-seeing stop in Rennes the Brittany capital, with its colourful buildings, the St Pierre Cathedral and St Sauveur church, the town hall, theatre and Brittany Parliament. As I was leaving next morning for Geneva I slept near to the airport in Nantes.

There were the usual guests at the DPRK reception on 4 September, the only one held this year. The UNITAR/CWM retreat was held again at the Karlaganis home in Le Landeron, where we were well fed. It gave us the opportunity to catch up with what colleagues are doing and learn about some of the strategic policies, including the possible future direction of UN Knowledge (to be based essentially on UNITAR). With the problems of finding chairs for UN General Assembly Committees; it is considered that it may not be appropriate to put forward the new proposals in this UN term. There will be new possibilities with GEF and also in relation to enabling activities for the Mercury Convention. Waste is an area where we are still doing very little. It was sad to learn that Matthew Gubb was in hospital with a brain tumour; but I am pleased he has now returned to work.

My second cousin, Tony Haines, died a few weeks earlier in South Africa where he and Rosie were living, and a memorial service was held for him in London on 14 September, which Catherine and I attended. Tony's father was an Air Commodore and we had a common great grandfather. Tony's first wife, Pamela, was a writer who died 20 years earlier. We were in Cambridge at the same time when I was a student and Tony was a young medical doctor. Although not a funeral it was a rather emotional occasion remembering my own father and my uncle Ralph: many things said in the eulogy by his son Nick could have applied to Stan and Ralph. A reception followed at the Oxford and Cambridge Club, where I became acquainted with many "cousins" whom I had never met before, including a younger generation. It was a delight also to meet Rosie. A fortnight later I was back in the UK for the Cambridge alumni weekend. Meanwhile, I went to Clermont Ferrand where Sharat Chopra was visiting his daughter Spandana, who has a traineeship at Michelin. Sharat prepared a delicious traditional chicken curry. After lunch we went to the Puy de Dome, a nearby extinct volcano, before I made my way back to Divonne. The weather was glorious but a long drive of 340 km each way! It was also a pleasure to see Sam Adu Kumi and his delightful new wife Lillian for dinner as well as Claude Gerber and Roman, and to make the acquaintance of Esuna Dagarova, who was at Churchill College and came recently to Geneva to work at UNRISD. She is from the Republic of Buryatia in Russia near to Lake Baikal.

On the Friday night of the alumni weekend there was a sprig in the dining hall for the 1963 year to which I was invited. The traditional wine tasting followed dinner with three pairs of white and three of red. The whites were tricky but I got them all right; however, I failed on a couple of the reds! Saturday morning I had coffee with Michael and Mary Rycroft in the garden. In the afternoon there were two "Conversations" or debates to celebrate 40 years of the admission of female undergraduates in Churchill (with Kings, Claire and Lucy Cavendish Colleges). The first debate was on the role of women in Science, Society and the Future, with women who had been at one of the colleges in 1972 or related to the debate subject. The second was on Culture and Media with women who were in the television media or journalism, plus Ms Jane Purdon (Director of Governance at the Football Premier League). It was a most interesting debate. However, little was said about the Internet, although the dying role of the print media was recognised. The Churchill Association AGM preceded the formal dinner. There was a change in the dinner format with the speeches after the main course: then we descended to the Buttery for dessert and cheese with the port, claret and sweet wine. It lost the formality but meant that you could more easily mix. Sunil has to organise the dinner next year so we will see what he thought of this approach. Chapel was followed by coffee at the Moeller Centre; then I returned to the family in Coventry. Next day I flew back to Geneva in time for the big "Bosons and More" party at CERN, which ends the open house, held once every 4 years. I joined Daniel Takaki and heard how he was getting on in his new post as professor at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. The party was held at the Prévessin site of CERN. There had been 70,000 visitors over the weekend and for the party there appeared to be several thousands of people! The traffic was awful and I finally parked on the verge in the countryside (as did others) and walked to the event site, which was held in a huge tent (largest in Europe) and an immense arena stage for music. It had rained heavily so the ground was wet and muddy. We started with classical music given by the Swiss Romande Orchestra and the huge Zurich choir (Beethoven's 9th last movement and Rossini's Wilhelm Tell); followed by Alan Parsons Live Project rock group. There were free food and drink stalls everywhere with as much as you wanted. Between the two concerts there were speeches by the Director General and other notables and organisers. Standing and walking for hours I found rather tiring so I left before midnight while the party was in full swing.

Vajira discovered that his flight was 1 October to Colombo and not the following evening; so the day was busy helping him with the preparations for the departure. He had spent over three months in Europe and made a trip through the Balkan countries including Albania. As I was returning home from leaving Vajira at the airport I had an sms from Jason Haines, arriving to stay overnight at the beginning of his round the world trip. Never a dull moment! Trisha and Daniel joined us bringing an Indian take away, which was quite good. Daniel was very erudite in his explanations about the universe and matter. There is evidently only 4% hadronic matter in the universe and 23 % is dark matter and 73% dark energy! A few days later Vitaly Andreev, of Russian

origin studying theoretical physics in Munich and an intern at CERN, gave me a nice tour of the Antimatter Projects. Jason has sold up in Zurich and left to explore the world, carrying only a rucksack with 12.8 kilograms including laptop and shoes! There is a daily account of his trip with photos on Face book. Amazingly, he walked the four day "Jesus Trail" from Nazareth to Capernaum with only what he could carry in his pockets! The four concerts of the "Friends of the Organ" were held early in October at the Temple de Ferney, starting with baroque music for organ and violin; the splendours of Roman baroque sung by the Schütz Ensemble; "Lumière et ténèbres" from the French period of Louis 14th; and a brass sextet (two trumpets, tuba, cor anglais and 4 timpani) from the Republican Garde. Jens, Katrin and Thomas Page visited from Hannover and Jeet Singh and his girl friend Caroline from Zurich. I took the opportunity for a dinner party with game. The 2014 programme for the Festival of Aix en Provence was presented to the mécène at breakfast at the Vivendi Headquarters besides the Etoile and which has a lovely roof top garden. The programme will be: Die Zauberflöte directed by Simon McBurney; Haendel's Ariodante directed by Richard Jones; Rossini's opera bouffe Il Turci in Italia directed by Christopher Alden; William Kentridge with a video supported production of Schubert's Winterreise; and Katie Mitchell's direction of Bach's Actus Tragicus; plus a world premier of a piece by Manfred Trojan. The Frieburger Barokorchester will be the resident orchestra. The passing of Patrice Chéreau was lamented. I stayed the night with Kouroche Hazeghi. Those of us who helped establish the UNEP office in Paris in the mid-70s try to meet annual for a reunion. This year I invited everyone to Divonne. We were only a small group as Michel Bravo Gala could not travel and Dominique Larré was still recovering from an operation. Sylvio was in France from Mauritius; Michèle Greenwood came over from England; Patrick and Renée came from Dax. We had dinner at my place on the Friday evening. Saturday was good weather so we made an excursion to the Alpes vaudoises, returning for our dinner at Le Vieux Bois, an excellent meal; joined by Eritrean friends of Michèle.

I spent the night in Dublin, having tea with Marie O'Driscoll, on my way to the Opera Festival in Wexford, arriving in good time for the performance of "The Sleeping Queen" by Michael Balfe, who was born in Dublin and was in some way associate with Wexford, as the first opera (Rose of Castille) was by him; but spent most of his musical career in Italy and London. At the start of the performance there was a short presentation by the cast of Michael Balfe and his influence. It is not a great short work but amusing how the "queen" uses her position to advantage. The opera in the evening was "Cristina Regina di Svezia", by Jacopo Foroni. which has little basis in history and is a love triangle. Christina, the only surviving legitimate child of King Gustav II Adolph and his wife Maria Eleonora of Brandenburg was Queen regnant of Sweden from 1633 to 1654 succeeding her father at the age of six on the throne of Sweden upon his death at the Battle of Lützen. Being the daughter of a Protestant champion in the Thirty Years' War, she caused a scandal when she abdicated her throne and converted to Roman Catholicism in 1654. She spent her later years in Rome, becoming a leader of the theatrical and musical life there. As a queen without a country, she protected many artists and projects. She is one of the few women buried in the Vatican grotto. The opera was premiered on 19 May 1849 and recently revived in Gothenburg and Sweden. Directed by Stephen Metcalf and set in "Swedland" of the 1930s, it tells of Cristina's abdication in the context of her love partly for Gabriele (who is in love with the Queen's niece Maria) and her cousin Carlo Gustavo (future King). It starts with the brokering of the peace at the end of the Thirty Year's War by her chancellor and his son Erik being offered Maria in marriage, much to the consternation of Maria and Gabriele and the delight of the Messenius brothers who lead the conspirators against Cristina. The attempt to overthrow Cristina is thwarted by Carlo Gustavo, but Cristina decides to abdicate. There is interesting use of video film: the "Peace in our time" of Chamberlin; the marriage of the Queen mother and the London blitz for the burning of the palace. Gustavo arrives by parachute on the Island where the conspirators are meeting. The abdication broadcast is a takeoff of that of Edward VIII. Cristina is sung by the powerful and enormous Australian soprano Helena Dix and Maria by the mezzo soprano Lucia Cirillo. The Russian bass, Igor Golovatenko, sings Carlo Gustavo, and the tenor John Bellemer Gabriele. The singing is superb and the music a delight, conducted by Andrew Greenwood. There is an interesting twist in the ending as Cristina walks off to exile, although forgiven by Cristina to be freed and for Gabriele to marry Maria, the conspirators are shot and Maria forced to marry Erik! Afterwards I repaired to Simon's Place for a Guinness and met up with some of the singers. "The Elixir of Love" by Donizetti, which is light-hearted and great fun, is set in a Karaoke Bar, with all young dynamic performers. It was directed by Roberto Recchia and so could not be less traditional. Tom Faulkner sang the role as Dr Dulcamara, the quack doctor. It lasts an hour and a half and was very well performed. Verdi's opera "La Traviata" was performed as a short work at the Jerome Hynes Theatre. It was very gripping and black; directed by Stefania Panighini and very well sung by Anna Jeruc-Kopeec as Violetta, Daniel Szeili as Alfredo, and Jonathan Sells as Germont. The dark production highlights the cage or trap in which Violetta finds herself under the pressure of society and public prudishness, from which, despite wishing to do so, she cannot escape. This is portrayed by a table which forms a type of cage. "The Florentine Straw Hat" by Nino Rota (better known for his scores for films such as by Fellini and of the Godfather), is a light musical farce, telling of the wedding of Fadinard to Elena (sung by Claudia Boyle) and during his morning ride a straw hat of a lady, Anaide, is eaten by his horse. She is illicitly with her lover Emilio and cannot go back to her husband, Beaupertuis, without her straw hat. Fadinard (and wedding guests) chase all over Paris to find a replacement, ending up at the house of Beaupertuis. The piece is light hearted and well presented but weak as an opera (more an operetta). At the end when the wedding presents are opened, an identical straw hat has been there all the time at Fadinard's home! During the interval I bumped into Malcolm Herring we had a long chat, continuing afterwards at the Friend's Party at Whites. Later I talked with Eamonn Carroll and the new chairman Ger Lawlor. The Festival Mass of Thanksgiving was held at the Rowe Street Church at noon with the Mozart Missa Brevis in C (KV 220) Spatzen-Messe. When I arrived at 11.40 am the church was already packed with standing room only; and I eventually found a bench at a side altar. Aodhan Marken was the master of ceremonies with the celebrant Archbishop Charles John Brown (an American from New York) Apostolic Nuncio to Ireland, who also preached. The weather was sunny but very windy, with rain expected later, which was only light although other parts of Ireland and the British

Isles got heavy storms. I went back to the hotel for a coffee and at 4 pm went for the pre-opera talk (by Elisabeth Drwal, the lady behind the surtitles, a singing teacher, musician and stage manager) for the two opera works by Massenet. "Therese" is about the French Revolution and the putting of duty above love: and "La Navarraise" about the Spanish civil war, and a woman who places love above loyalty to her people. The same performers sing in both works, including Philippe Do and Damien Pass, who were in Aix. Both operas are set in Museums: Thérèse in a museum's restoration workshop where the historical figures come to life after the events by means of 18th century paintings of the French Revolution; and Picasso's Guernica for La Navarraise showing how an artist transcends historical subjects and events to make political and social statements. The Gala Concert was at 9 pm., with some 21 arias, some new and others always heard (such as the Cats Duet), so an enjoyable evening.

The Opera Europa Conference met this year in Wexford and I was co-opted to join the Aix Festival delegation and it was a pleasure to be with Jerome and Magali. Participants were welcomed by David McLoughlin, David Agler and Breda Cashe of Wexford Opera. The keynote address was given by Jimmy Deenihan (Minister for the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht), followed by Alex Beard who is incoming CEO of the Royal Opera House and taking the job after 20 years at Tate Modern. Both made very interesting presentations. Nicholas Payne, Director of Opera Europa, introduced the conference themes. A sumptuous reception was given at Green Acres with seafood curry and beef stew, and Irish cheeses plus a good selection of Irish whiskies. I talked with a number of people including Paul Hennessy, Cate, Eammon Carroll, Ger Lawor and the cousin George, who is mayor of Wexford (he recognised me and remembered my name!). We continued for the performance of Cristina Regina di Svezia. One sees more in a second viewing, which I enjoyed. Next day the Conference theme of Cultural tourism was introduced by the Gary Breen from the Irish Tourist Board. David Pountney from the Bregenz opera made some interesting observations and I was surprised by their success with little resources and a small town support. They capitalise on the location. Marc Scora talked about Santa Fée and Glimmerglass (a beautiful location at Cooperstown in Up-Sate NY but little accommodation). Malgorzata Dabrowa-Kostka spoke about Crakow. I met with Michael Gielata after the coffee break. In the afternoon there was a session on Getting support abroad: International friends. Jérôme Brunetière was among the speakers moderated by Alex Reedijk of the Scottish National Opera (Glasgow), which is exceptional as it does not have a specific theatre. I said a few words in the discussion of my support for both Aix and Wexford. Interestingly a number of opera and festivals are now courting the Chinese (not yet the Indians or Gulf countries). After the coffee break there was a session on Devoting funds to raising funds and an interesting presentation of a Deloitte study of 12 operas and their financing strategy. For every dollar invested seven to eight were generated. In the evening I was back in Dublin for an early flight home.

Back in Divonne I discovered that my neighbour, Jacky Mas, had passed away: and Alain Walon had had a break in while he was asleep and his car stolen; later found abandoned and burned out, the wheel chair in the boot completely melted! Jacky's funeral was simple with family and a few friends and neighbours. Janine is well supported with her family. Alfred Walker was singing the lead role in Wagner's Flying Dutchman at The Geneva Wagner Festival, and we were able to find an afternoon to meet up for a delicious lunch at the Auberge de Bogis-Bossey and interesting conversation. It was the Paris version (which Wagner never saw) written two years before the revised version opened at the Semper Opera in Dresden. Set in Scotland rather than Norway in the Dresden version. The Flying Dutchman is a legendary ghost ship that can never make port and is doomed to sail the oceans forever. The myth is likely to have originated from 17th-century nautical folklore. In ocean lore, the sight of this phantom ship is a portent of doom. The production was by Alexander Schulin (who assisted Patrice Chéreau in Aix for the Elektra), conducted by Kirill Karabits. Alfred Walker sang the Holländer, Dimitry Ivaschenko, Donald, Ingela Brimberg Santa, Eric Cutler Georg, Kismara Pessatti Mary, and Maximillian Schmitt as the Steuermann. The scenery was plain with a downward sloping stage narrowing to a back entrance. There were a few side video projections for effect. Next day was Reformation Sunday the date closest to October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, sparking the Protestant Reformation, with the four "solas" (Sola Fide: By Faith Alone; Sola Gratia: By Grace Alone, Solus Christus: By Christ Alone, Sola Scriptura: The Bible and Only the Bible). I managed to see Claude Gerber with Vittorio Cammarota for coffee. Vittorio, who works for the UN Information Centre in Pakistan, told us about life in Islamabad where there are a lot of security problems. Claude has just been for a month in Abu Dhabi for the film festival and was about to leave for Costa Rica. The GROG (Gex region Ecumenical Reflection Group) to which I belong had the opening of its Exhibition on "Faith What an Adventure!". Over a period of 18 months we had worked preparing a series of panels with photos and text evoking aspects of faith such as doubt, risk, confidence, audacity, encounter, sharing and looking to the future. We had a reception for the formal opening; then on the Sunday afternoon there was a round table with three speakers from different confessions. On the Sunday morning we had our joint French Protestant Anglican service.

I left next day for Istanbul and Michael Foley's 60th Birthday party. Turkish Airlines has the best Economy class that I have been on. The "Homage" where Michael lives is in a quiet side street near Taksim Square and Independence Avenue. The apartments have a sitting room, adjoining a kitchen and two bedrooms and a bathroom, nicely, furnished with some original photos taken by Ara Guler, the well-known Turkish Armenian photographer born in 1922 in Istanbul. In the evening we had a relaxed dinner at a typical Turkish basement restaurant with an excellent selection of cold and hot dishes, washed down with good local red wine. As we walked back through the series of arcades and markets one sees the vibrancy of the night life in central Istanbul. Next day we walked round the old part of town to Istiklal Avenue and then descended towards the Bosphorus: stopping off to visit the "Museum of the Innocence" displaying a collection evocative of everyday life and culture of Istanbul during the period in which the Orhan Pamuk novel is set, which is an account of love between a wealthy businessman Kemal and a poorer distant relation Füsun during the period 1975 to 1984 in Istanbul. Right on the water front is the Kalig Ali Pasha

mosque and the argali cafes, which the government is slowly trying to eliminate (along with the open sale of alcohol). Next door is the Istanbul Modern, based on the Tate Modern in an old warehouse. It is well located on the Bosphorus, almost at the entrance to the Golden Horn and opposite the Topkapi and the Hagia Sophia, with the Princess Islands in the back ground. We went through the upper floor which has a magnificent collection of modern Turkish artists, as well as video productions, then we repaired to the terrace and sat in the sun having a late lunch. We took the subway (second oldest after the London underground) to Istiklal and walked back to the apartment. The birthday dinner was at the Cokcok (Thai) restaurant run by Bekir who manages the Homage. We had excellent food with French and Turkish wines. There was a birthday cake at the end. When all of the guests from the restaurant had left we had music for dancing till midnight.

Next afternoon I flew to Abu Dhabi, continuing by bus to the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Dubai for the Asian and Pacific Association of Medical Toxicology Congress. Anand had arrived earlier from Delhi and we joined the Norwegian contingent et al. at the Harvester's bar. The main Congress began next morning at the Zayed University and was a joint session with ICEM, the Emirates Emergency Medicine Association. Shuttle buses went every hour between the hotel and University. Surprisingly the day was partly wet. Andrew Dawson gave the Honorary Fellow lecture. The Congress dinner was held that evening at the "Attendance", which is beside the Bujh Kalifa Tower and with a water fountain display in the square below. The food was good, but alcohol was not served. Afterward we walked though the Dubai shopping mall to the square with the fountain in time for the display. There were some interesting sessions at the Congress, which was a good opportunity to see many friends, as well as make new ones. During the night there was heavy rain and thunderstorms, which I did not hear, but opening the curtain in the morning I was surprised to see roads flooded and large pools of water! The shuttle bus had to make some diversions to avoid flooded underpasses. One realised that the roads have no drainage system in the Emirates! But, it only rains on 3 days a year! Coaches took us to the evening excursion on a dhow in the creek (which is now built up and no dhow ship building or fishermen's houses, as when I visited in the 1970s). We just sailed up and down the creek. Entertainment was provided by a traditional group; first a swirling Dervish and belly dance; then the Emirati musicians who dance with canes. There was a buffet supper, which provided another opportunity to chat with friends. The Congress finished on the Saturday and we had the Sunday for sightseeing. It was sunny and mild. We took a taxi to the Burj Al Arab Hotel which looks like a sailing ship (the penthouse suite is only several thousand Euros a night!). You cannot get in the grounds without a reservation which can be made on line or by telephone with a credit card (afternoon tea was 275 Dhiram per person). We walked to the neighbouring Oasis Beach Tower and Dubai Marina, which is like a small Venice with waterways. There is one good view of the Burj Al Arab Hotel from a place in the complex; but apart from taking a boat one cannot get any closer. We also went to the famous Palm Jumeirah, built on an artificial island, with hotel Atlantis at the far end overlooking the open Gulf. The metro took us back into town, where we went to the top of the famous Burj Khalifa, one of the tallest buildings in the world. The lift takes only 1 minute and travels at 10 meters per second. The view is spectacular, but it was starting to get dark. I had a direct Emirate 7 hour flight back to Geneva which went smoothly, with a three hour time difference.

The beginning of UNITAR's 50th Anniversary Celebrations were held in the Kazakh Room at the Palais des Nations, an event with the G77, which was established at about the same period. The event was to sign an agreement between UNITAR and Algeria, which was providing a million dollars a year for three years for training in G77 countries. After welcoming remarks from: Ambassador Miguel Carbo, (Representative of Ecuador to WTO and Chairman of the G77 and China, Geneva Chapter); Michael Møller (Acting DG of UNOG); and Sally Fegan-Wyles (Acting DG of UNITAR), the former DG, Marcel Boisard, gave an historical review of UNITAR. Before signing the agreement the Algerian Ambassador spoke about the decision to provide financial support to UNITAR. A reception followed with a birthday cake. I continued to Victoria Hall for the symphony concert with Sir John Eliot Gardiner conducting the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique; the programme including Beethoven's 2nd and 8th symphonies.

I was to have left next day to Jordan for the workshop on developing capacity to implement the International Health Regulations for Chemical Events, but the meeting had to be postponed till February; the week was immediately filled with pending activities and invitations for dinner! For Advent Sunday, the beginning of the ecclesiastic year we had our annual church choucroute lunch. There was a nice office farewell lunch for Jonathan Krueger, as well as a concert with the Camerata Bern playing music by Mendelssohn. It was towards the end of the short rains in equatorial Gabon where I was a few days in Libreville for the final meeting of the Project to strengthen capacity to implement SAICM in Gabon. I was pleased to see the active participation of WHO and its support for establishing a poisons centre in the country. Interestingly, Gabon is different from most African countries, with a population of only 1.8 million, 80% of which live in the four main urban areas of the country; most of which is equatorial forest. There is a very small rural population. I was back in Europe in time for an amusing and unusual performance at the Geneva opera of *Die Fledermaus* (The Bat) by Johann Strauss Jnr. Sung in French the performance had many "sous-entendu" and plays on words, followed by dinner at Jacqueline Forget's. The third Advent evening was at Anne and Patrick Coidan for a *lectio divina*. Christmas is with the family in Coventry; then back to Divonne for the New Year, leaving on 5 January for the Comoros.



























