

**MESSAGE TO THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (EAIS)
FROM MS. TATIANA VALOVAYA, UNITED NATIONS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS OFFICE AT GENEVA**

Dear Professor Caneva, dear students,

At the start of 2020, we could not have imagined that a disease outbreak would turn the world upside down in such a short time and in such a dramatic way: hundreds of thousands of lives lost all over the globe, nationwide lockdowns, economic activity at a standstill in most of the world, increased border controls, and many other unprecedented measures. Italy has sadly been one of the hardest-hit countries, but it has inspired the world with its resolve, solidarity and compassion.

COVID-19 has also greatly impacted the world of diplomacy and the work of international organizations like the United Nations, from transforming intergovernmental meetings into virtual events, to affecting our ability to help resolve conflicts globally. The United Nations system is ‘rebooting’ on the go, adapting to this new reality, while being fully mobilized and working across the globe to continue delivering on its mandate.

The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the most acute challenges to international cooperation since the end of World War II. We are facing multiple crises — an ongoing global health emergency, a financial crisis, and a collapse in commodity prices — which compound the existing global threats of climate change, conflict and poverty. Like COVID-19, none of these recognize borders.

Complex challenges such as these cannot be dealt with independently or in silos. This pandemic has already made it abundantly clear that weakening multilateralism and strengthening unilateral approaches could plunge the world deeper into chaos. More than ever, a strong multilateral system is the only solution to global crises like COVID-19. The closer we all work together, the more likely we are to make real, meaningful and swift progress.

As leaders of the future, you have an important role to play, today, in rejecting fear, mistrust and hate, and instead, advocating for inclusiveness, cooperation and multilateralism.

I am sorry that the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the cancellation of your study trip to Geneva. However, I encourage you to find other opportunities to expand your understanding of the world around you and your engagement with the United Nations. One place to start is by participating in the global conversation for the United Nations 75th anniversary at <https://www.un.org/en/un75> and sharing your views on how we can shape the future together. We would welcome your experiences and ideas.

I also hope, one day, to be able to welcome you to UN Geneva.

Tatiana Valovaya



Director-General
United Nations Office at Geneva