

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends.

I join Ulrik and Maarja in welcoming you all to our event today. We, at the Graduate Institute, are absolutely delighted to co-host this event. Many thanks to our speakers, moderators and panel members for accepting to devote some of your time with us today.

4 years ago, the Director General of the UN Office in Geneva, Michael Moeller, whom I will introduce to you in a moment, invited Ulrik to speak to the International Geneva community at the Palais des Nations just up the street. I was curious about the title of Ulrik's presentation and decided to attend the event. The presentation had a strong impact on me and, since then, whenever I turn on the BBC, EuroNews or CNN, I think back on Ulrik's presentation. I have never listened to news the same way after that.

So it was quite a surprise to receive an email from Maarja last May asking us if we would be interested to co-host the 2nd Global Conference on Constructive Journalism. Beyond my personal interest in the topic we were quick to embrace the project for 3 reasons:

- First, one of our core missions here at the Graduate Institute is to produce knowledge that fosters a better understanding of global problems. As a community of scholars in the academy we are committed to advancing insight and debate in the social sciences and humanities. And as a community of publicly engaged scholars, we also seek to enrich policy debates at the international and local level, in particular those involving international actors. The Institute's mission is completely aligned with the concept of constructive journalism.
- Secondly, we launched the Albert Hirschmann's Centre on Democracy 2 years ago; this is our 9th research centre at the Institute. The centre seeks to understand what ails democracies worldwide and the growing disenchantment of citizens with democratic political power. Jointly with international organisations and media partners, it explores the relationship between democratic politics and fake news, and the role that a democratic oversight of the press might play in tackling it. We believe that constructive journalism is needed to deal with the impact of fake news on a daily basis, when people make up their minds in their everyday lives. Today, the need to

counter “the overproduction of opinionated opinion” – to quote Albert Hirschman back in 1989 – and the need to get the citizenry to engage critically in the polity, is as urgent as ever.

- And third we, in academia, work hand in hand with the media. We need journalists to make sure that our work does not stay on the shelves of our beautiful libraries (and you are welcome to visit our own library just across the hall at any time during the breaks – it closes at 10PM tonight!), and media needs us to give them a long-term view of the issues they are reporting on.

So this partnership between the Graduate Institute and the Constructive Institute makes total sense.

Ladies and gentlemen, for those of you who are here in the Maison de la Paix for the first time, I hope this will not be the last. We are a platform for bringing together different stakeholders to reflect on today’s most pressing international issues. We organise close to 250 events every year. Some are evening lectures or panels, some are lunchtime presentations, and some are whole day events like this one. All are free and open to the public. You can get invitations to our events by simply subscribing to our newsletters, or give us your business card when you leave and we will make sure you are on our list.

It is quite exciting for us to see so many of you in the room. This is proof that there is a real need to step back and look at our role in the state of the media today. Whether you are a journalist, an expert or simply a reader of news, you have a stake in this conversation.

So without further ado I will now give the floor to Michael Moeller, the DG of the UN Office in Geneva, with a particular thank for having flagged the concept of constructive journalism many years ago.