

## Opening Remarks – GVA2 Dinner-Debate on the Consequences of Decisions Taken by the Trump Administration on Multilateralism and Geneva's International Ecosystem – May 21, 2025

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the GVA2 association, we warmly welcome you and sincerely thank you for joining us this evening. We hope this dinner-debate will spark meaningful exchanges, insights, and reflections.

We have chosen to dedicate this evening to a timely and highly relevant issue for our city: the **consequences of decisions made by the Trump administration on Geneva's international ecosystem and, more broadly, on multilateralism.**

As you know, Geneva is not merely an administrative hub for the United Nations. It is a center for negotiation, coordination, assistance, and innovation in diplomacy, global health, and humanitarian affairs. Today, our city is facing major challenges at a time when multilateralism is being increasingly questioned.

The erosion of global trust in international cooperation, fueled by geopolitical tensions and nationalist retreat by certain states, is weakening International Geneva. This crisis of legitimacy is further exacerbated by excessive financial dependence on a handful of historic contributors. Multilateralism, historically shaped by the West, struggles to reflect today's global order.

With over **40 international "technical" organizations, more than 460 NGOs, and 180 permanent missions**, Geneva's international ecosystem is truly unique. It benefits from an exceptional concentration of global actors working in areas ranging from health to human rights, trade, and innovation. Its neutrality, role as a dialogue facilitator, and proven expertise make Geneva a vital actor in multilateralism and a valuable asset to Swiss foreign policy.

Yet today, relocation plans by several UN agencies directly threaten the survival of this ecosystem, which still counted nearly **34,000 employees** in 2019. A 2024 study by the Fondation pour Genève also revealed that **39% of surveyed NGOs** would consider leaving the canton if other key organizations in their field were to depart—threatening a gradual weakening of International Geneva.

While this crisis has triggered long-overdue reforms, the abrupt nature of the changes and the urgency of the decisions taken are now having direct consequences on operations in the field.

How have institutions and international actors adapted? What resilience strategies have been implemented? And above all, what does this period tell us about the dependence of multilateral efforts on the political will of a few states?

To explore these questions from different angles, we are honored to welcome three distinguished speakers tonight:

- **Michael Møller**, former Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva and staunch advocate of multilateralism. Drawing from his leadership at UNOG, he will share a broad perspective on the impact of U.S. disengagement on the UN and on Geneva.
- **Anil Soni**, CEO of the WHO Foundation, who will speak about the consequences in the field of global health and Geneva's continued central role despite ongoing crises.
- **Cecilia Roselli**, representative of the Norwegian Refugee Council, an organization active in some of the world's most fragile regions. She will share concrete testimony on how U.S. budget cuts have affected humanitarian action.

We warmly thank them for their presence and commitment.

Lastly, a heartfelt thank-you to all of you for your continued support and curiosity.

We now hand the floor over to our speakers.

We wish you a very pleasant and enriching evening.