

Dear Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva,
Dear Permanent representative of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva,
Dear State Councillor,
Dear Vice-President of the Executive Council,
Dear President of the Fondation pour Genève,
Excellencies,
Distinguished members and friends,

It is a pleasure to welcome you this evening to the Domaine de Collex, as we gather to pay tribute to a man whose voice and leadership have become synonymous with dignity, courage, and steadfast compassion: Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

For over forty years, Filippo Grandi has stood at the frontlines of some of the most complex and pressing humanitarian crises of our time—from the Middle East to Southeast Asia, from Africa to Europe. He has led not only with wisdom and pragmatism, but also with a deep human empathy that reminds us that behind every refugee statistic lies a name, a story, a life uprooted.

Under his leadership, UNHCR has navigated a landscape marked by rising displacement, shrinking humanitarian space, and mounting geopolitical tensions. Conflict, climate change, persecution, and instability have tested the very foundations of international protection. Yet, in the face of these challenges, Mr. Grandi has never ceased to call the international community to its moral duty. He has reminded us—relentlessly—that neutrality must never become indifference, and that compassion must always lead to action.

This evening is more than a tribute to an exceptional career. It is also a collective call to action—a call to support International Geneva in its entirety.

In a time of fragmentation and uncertainty, International Geneva must remain a beacon of resilience, multilateral dialogue, and concrete solutions. To achieve this, our institutions must continue to adapt, to innovate, and to unite. The mission of the United Nations and its humanitarian agencies is not frozen in time; it is living and evolving—shaped by global shifts and local realities.

Filippo Grandi embodies this evolution. He personifies both continuity and reinvention. He understands that to protect people, we must first strengthen the institutions that serve them.

Let us take this moment to reaffirm our collective commitment:

To the values that define us — solidarity, humanity and dialogue— values that transcend borders and political divides, and that have guided the work of the United Nations and its agencies since their inception.

Let us also reaffirm our commitment to the enduring role of International Geneva — as a trusted space for multilateral engagement, principled negotiation, and innovative diplomacy. And let us never forget the responsibility we all share in upholding and reinforcing the multilateral system, especially at a time when it is under strain and yet more essential than ever.

Let us continue to invest — politically, intellectually, and morally — in Geneva as a center of global governance. And let us ensure that organizations like UNHCR are equipped, supported, and empowered to meet the challenges ahead.

Mr. Grandi, thank you for your tireless devotion. Your presence in Geneva has inspired us to build bridges where others build walls, and to lead with humanity in a world that so desperately needs it.

As you approach the final chapter of your mandate, we wish you strength and fulfillment in bringing this remarkable journey to a close in the best possible way—and every success and joy in the new chapters that will follow.

Thank you.