

The MEIG Programme helps to build a career in International Geneva



© UNIGE

AUGUSTINE SOKIMI

My name is Augustine Sokimi and I am a graduate of the Master of Advanced Studies in European and International Governance (MEIG)¹ at the University of Geneva. This is the story of my professional journey to International Geneva.

I arrived in Geneva on 31 December 2017. My wife was posted as a diplomat based in Geneva and hence, our decision to move here together. We hail from Fiji (which rests somewhere in the centre of the Pacific Ocean), a long way away from Geneva. I have lived my entire life by the sea. Coming to Geneva was a very new experience, Switzerland being landlocked, and Geneva being surrounded by mountains, and the sea nowhere in sight. The first time I saw the Geneva Lake, I thought to myself: “how beautiful, but it is not the sea”.

Homesick was how I started my journey, yet I was optimistic that I would find my place in Geneva with renewed purpose. I left Fiji as an aspiring legal practitioner, having finished my first five years of practice. They were good years which allowed me to delve into diverse areas of law and steadily progress professionally. Accordingly, upon arriving in Geneva, I was confident that I would find

an opportunity to advance professionally in my career. In this regard, the first three years of my stay in Geneva proved quite difficult. Simply put, I could not find a job that was right for me.

Since there were no work opportunities forthcoming, I decided to reorient myself professionally. In September 2018, I decided to complete a university programme and at the same time, I interned with the Permanent Mission of Fiji to the United Nations in Geneva, assisting with its work at the Human Rights Council (HRC). In early 2020, the then Fijian Ambassador suggested I apply to the Master of Advanced Studies in European and International Governance (MEIG) at the University of Geneva. The MEIG combines the academic excellence of the University of Geneva, the *Centre d'études juridiques européennes*² and the Global Studies Institute (GSI)³ with the expertise of practitioners from diverse international organisations and bodies in Geneva and Brussels. It comprises ten thematic and methodological modules followed by an end-of-study project. After two core modules on the functioning of the United Nations system and European Union institutions, the MEIG covers a wide set of thematic fields such as human rights and migration; peace, security, and humanitarian affairs; digital governance; international trade and development; etc. Convinced by this particular curriculum and the excellence of the faculty as a means of advancing in my career, I applied accordingly and embarked on my learning journey in September 2020.

By January 2021, I was offered a one-year engagement as Third Secretary with the Fiji Mission in Geneva. Fiji had taken the HRC Presidency and I was recruited as an expert to take on their human rights portfolio for the duration of their presidency. This was the first real job that I had in three years and it came midway through the MEIG. With work and studies running concurrently, I worked a lot of late nights to balance my professional and academic commitments.

I also found what I had learned with the MEIG spoke to the work that I was engaged in. While I was familiar with the HRC, I came to realise that over the years I had developed a sort of human rights focused “tunnel vision”. The MEIG allowed me to look at the international organisations in Geneva holistically, assessing where my work was relevant in various fora. I began seeing the relevance of human rights discourse in international governance beyond the HRC and its relevance to the work of the World Health Organization, the World Trade Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, among others. I began to draw on the work of these organisations in formulating my advice and found that it made me more effective in my role as the Fiji Mission’s human rights expert.

In December 2021, my work with the Fiji Mission came to an end and by then I had successfully completed the MEIG. I graduated in July 2021 and

was awarded the MEIG Geneva International Prize 2021, supported by Caran D'Ache, for having scored the highest average for the cohort. Presently, I am engaged in consultancies with the Permanent Mission of the Marshall Islands to the United Nations in Geneva and the Convention against Torture Initiative (CTI).

As Legal Counsel to the Marshall Islands Mission, I deal specifically with their efforts to address their nuclear legacy. Between 1946 and 1958, sixty-seven nuclear bombs were tested on the Marshall Islands while administered under a United Nations trusteeship. These nuclear weapon tests have had devastating impacts on the environment and intergenerational adverse impacts on the health of the Marshallese people. In this regard, the MEIG has greatly assisted in my work given

the importance of translating the Marshall Islands' priorities in the context of international governance. The MEIG has equipped me with the expertise to provide sound advice on the available international governance mechanisms that can assist in its efforts to address the nuclear legacy. For instance, at the current 51st HRC session, we intend to present a resolution seeking technical assistance to address the human rights implications of this nuclear legacy.

As CTI's Pacific Adviser, my work focuses on assisting Pacific Island States that have yet to ratify the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) in advancing their efforts towards ratification. In this regard, the MEIG has greatly assisted in my assessments on how to harness greater regional commitment

to UNCAT ratification. Universal UNCAT ratification requires consideration of various regional and national priorities in devising effective strategies. This falls squarely within the MEIG which trains participants to consider governance questions holistically from the national to the regional and international levels.

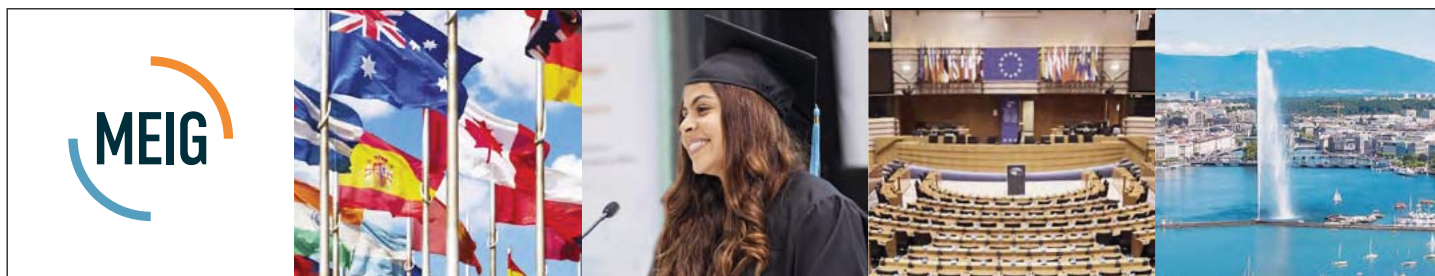
I am fortunate to have participated in the MEIG. It contributed greatly to my career development in International Geneva and I would strongly recommend it to anyone who envisages a career focused on international governance. This executive education programme features distinguished professors and practitioners as guest speakers, coming from different institutions and top universities in Europe and beyond, selected based on their expertise relevant to the core subject of each module. A distinct feature of the

MEIG is the organised study trip to the EU institutions in Brussels and the sessions held at the various international organisations in Geneva, which takes the learning experience well beyond a theoretical discussion on European and international governance to foster a practical understanding of how these systems function in reality. ■

1 More information about the programme at www.meig.ch/ and www.unige.ch/formcont/cours/meig

2 More information at www.ceje.ch/en/

3 More information at www.unige.ch/gsi/en/home/



Take over an executive function in an international environment!

A **unique learning** experience at the University of Geneva in cooperation with the United Nations Office at Geneva

A programme designed for **graduates** and **professionals** with different backgrounds

Interdisciplinary teaching team composed of **top academics** and **practitioners**

Provide a deep understanding of the **political, economic, social and legal aspects** of European and International Governance

Acquisition of skills indispensable for **future leaders**

Build an exceptional **network** in Geneva and beyond

Apply Now!

From September to July
10 modules over 6 months

Followed by 3 months for either
– An internship
– A professional project
– A master's thesis

Programme to be achieved in 1 or 2 years. Possibility to participate in individual modules

#MEIG_Programme

