

World Wide Web is 'creation of volunteers': Berners-Lee GENEVA, 30 October 2001

The World Wide Web is a collaborative venture and a "creation of volunteers", said Tim Berners-Lee, the British scientist credited for inventing the Web in 1989.

"In developing the Web as a volunteer, I was not alone," he told a webcast at a UN open doors event late Sunday in Geneva via video conference link from Boston, where he directs the World Wide Web Consortium at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The Web, he said, was "developed by volunteers all over the world." He said he started out the idea by putting out some software on the Internet. "It was picked up by people, who just like me, were really doing it on the side...The Web is a grassroots thing. I was not the only person at all, by a very long way, to put in volunteer time."

Mr. Berners-Lee was answering email questions and addressing comments from a live audience at the UN offices in Geneva during the UN Open Days, which were held under the theme of the UN International Year of Volunteers 2001.

Sharon Capeling-Alakija, Executive Coordinator of the **United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV)**, referred to Mr. Berners-Lee as the "number one volunteer in cyberspace, because of the enormous gift he gave the world in the World Wide Web".

In response to an email question from UNV Online Volunteering Specialist Jayne Cravens, Mr. Berners-Lee said he was pleased to hear that people were volunteering from their homes to assist development efforts around the world. "It is music to my ears to hear that this is happening," he said, adding that in the area of Web technology, volunteers translate specifications into different languages in efforts to extend the reach of technology.

Also participating in Sunday's webcast via remote link was Sean Osner, a UNV Programme Officer with the Jordan Information Technology Community Centre project. Mr. Berners-Lee told him he "would not be one to say that Internet access should be promoted above health care, clean water, contraception and so forth around the world". However, it was important to ensure low bandwidth connectivity "to more places, into every village rather than to get (Web) video in some cities".

This webcast and another moderated by Jayne Cravens on Saturday on the role of volunteers to address the Digital Divide, were sponsored by CERN, the European Particle Physics Laboratory in cooperation with UNV and the International Telecommunication Union.

View the webcasts at: <http://unv.web.cern.ch/UNV/programme.htm>

Webcasts can be viewed one at a time with RealPlayer (see the web site for technical requirements). When viewing, please be aware that:

For Saturday, you can fast forward to about 2.55 to get right to the essence of the broadcast. The Saturday webcast is mostly in English and some in French. The Sunday webcast features a sign language interpreter. Each broadcast is 40 - 50 minutes long. Written transcriptions of the Sunday web cast is now in the works, and will be posted to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/undayoctober2001/>.

Saturday's live web cast features:

- Comments from Sean Osner and Jinan Shafeq El Nakshabandy, of UN Volunteers and the UNITEs initiative in Jordan
- Comments from Nicolas Fleury, veteran UN Volunteer, in Geneva
- Jayne Cravens, Online Volunteering Specialist at UN Volunteers in Bonn, Germany
- a six minute video about UN Volunteers

Sunday's live web cast features:

- Tim Berners-Lee, inventor of the World Wide Web
- Sharon Capeling-Alakija, Executive Coordinator of UN Volunteers
- the first three minutes of the video about UN Volunteers (see Saturday for complete broadcast)
- three minute video regarding CERN
- a live performance of the song "Surfing on the Web", interpreted by "Les Horribles Cernettes"

This discussion group created in conjunction with this live webcast is continuing. Anyone with questions or comments relating to the Internet and how it's being used to "help humanity", particularly in relation to the Global Digital Divide, can visit: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/undayoctober2001>

Three online volunteers from [San Francisco Women of the Web](#) continue to moderate this group.

UNV is the volunteer arm of the UN system. It extends hands-on assistance for peace and development in nearly 150 countries. Created by the UN General Assembly in 1970 and administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNV works through UNDP country offices to send volunteers--two-thirds of them from developing countries--and promote the ideals of volunteerism around the world.

For more information about this news release, contact: [Richard Nyberg](#), (49 228) 815 2223

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