

## Reflections on the Caux Forum 2023

Compiled by John Bond, Initiatives of Change UK

This year's Caux Forum brought over 500 people to the Caux Initiatives of Change conference centre in Caux, Switzerland for 10 days of meaningful and inciteful exchange.

30 – 40 volunteers, in addition to the core committee, managed everything from the reception desk to the simultaneous interpretation, to the sound and video technology. Themes had to be developed, speakers to be invited, money raised, publicity circulated. The world network of IofC got behind it, and the result was an overflow Forum, with many having to sleep at a hotel in Montreux because there was not enough room at Caux.

The Caux Forum focused on two themes vital to our societies today – 'Healing the wounds of the past' and 'Trust and integrity in democracy'. **Claude Bourdin** from France, who led the team developing the latter theme, said that they had been able to create a stimulating and challenging event thanks to the full trust between the organisers. 'It showed what can be achieved when IofC's global network is mobilised.' His colleague **Arpan Yagnik** said that their aim was to inspire, equip and connect all who wanted to build trust and integrity in their national affairs.

**Mike Brown** from Australia said that the Forum 'demonstrated the yearning to be part of a global community'. His wife Jean said that the event had affirmed the 'uncommon space' which IofC creates through self-honesty and inner listening in a moral and spiritual context. 'We need to provide those spaces in our own countries as well as Caux,' she said.

The Lebanese participants included a senior Bishop, **Monsignor Michel Aoun**, and former fighters from opposing sides in Lebanon's civil war who are now working together for peace. Also at Caux was university lecturer **Wadiaa Khoury**, who launched the initiative Teachers as Agents of Social Change in Lebanon. They are now developing a programme for national reconciliation in their deeply-divided nation.

From Cameroon came **Marienne MakouDEM**, who is active in the Trustbuilding Program in her country. Caux 'made more ardent my flame for healing my country,' she said. 'On my return to Cameroon I co-facilitated a fruitful dialogue between the Anglophone and Francophone students in two universities. I look forward to continue to build bridges between our two linguistic communities.'

**Nur Hayati**, the national coordinator of IofC Indonesia, said she had come to tell of their work of healing in Indonesia, and to seek healing for her personal wounds. On their return she and her colleagues went to Bandung, where they held a Peace Week with speakers both local and, through the internet, from many other countries. 'Today we finished a workshop in Bandung which brought together 14 different communities,' she told the Global Community Forum.

The keynote speaker at the Opening Ceremony was **Elena Zhemkova**, executive director of Memorial, a human rights organization that was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022 along with Ales Bialiatski, a pro-democracy activist from Belarus, and the Ukrainian human rights organization Centre for Civil

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the world's divides**

Liberties. She said that she had been grateful to meet Ukrainians at Caux. Talking with them had helped her to better understand her own responsibility for the tragic war.

Sri Lankan participants at Caux included two prominent Buddhist monks. Amila, a young Sri Lankan who was also there said that they are now working together for a youth dialogue bringing together Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim young people.

From Britain **Patrick Young**, a theatre director, had been fascinated to see a ‘very compelling’ play performed in the Caux theatre. This had started him thinking about the role of the arts in the work of IofC, and how he could contribute towards this.

**Maya Fiaux**, who has devoted many decades to the work of Caux, said that she had left after the Caux Forum ‘with a certainty that there is a good future ahead.’