

WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

We scour the globe to source the brightest ideas and bravest moves going into 2022, from the UK's new meteorological machine and Egypt's medical resort to the Austrian townsfolk happy to be Fugging.

USA

Mission statement

UAE's new diplomatic presence

In Manhattan's Turtle Bay are streets on which cars with blue diplomatic number plates outnumber the Empire State's black-and-yellow ones. The heart of this neighbourhood is the headquarters of the UN, around which an arterial network of diplomatic activity has evolved. Three blocks from the General Assembly building is the latest architectural addition to this network: the new home of the Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the UN.

Speaking to *The Forecast*, Chris Cooper, a partner at architecture firm SOM, which designed the building, sums up the central challenge to the commission. "How do you design a building that's culturally appropriate to the UAE but isn't foreign to the city that's hosting it?" he says. For the answer, look to the structure's façade: it's grounded in place through the use of Indiana limestone,



PHOTOGRAPHER: MAX BURKHALTER

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the same material used in the city's Empire State and Rockefeller buildings but is adorned with Emirati symbolism through piers sculpted to evoke the curves of a palm frond.

That's not the only symbolism to be found in the structure. The new Permanent Mission building is emblematic of the UAE's sustained investment in diplomacy since the country was founded in 1971. Its efforts have turned the small nation into a leader when it comes to foreign policy. In 2020 it became the first Persian Gulf state to normalise diplomatic relations with Israel, while on 1 January 2022 the UAE will commence a two-year term on the UN Security Council.

Behind the country's foreign relations is a dedicated diplomatic staff.

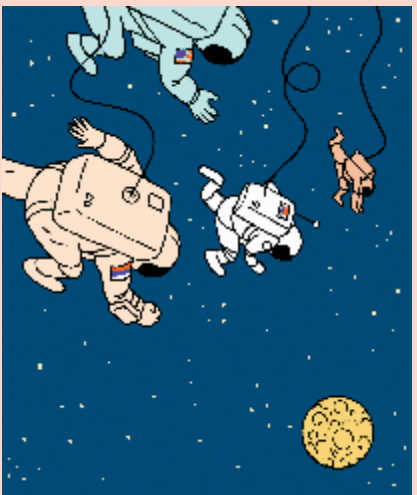
Heading up the Permanent Mission of the UAE to the UN is ambassador Lana Nusseibeh. The new mission building enhances her work both practically and symbolically, often at the same time. “On the eighth floor, instead of a series of C-suite offices, we have meeting rooms modelled after the *majlis*,” says Nusseibeh, referring to the traditional “sitting places” where Emirati communities gather for meetings. “The concept of the *majlis* is part and parcel of our political identity. It’s where consultation happens between leadership and people. So it’s a very significant and reflective space where high-level delegations from the UAE can meet their counterparts.”

In recent years, legacy international organisations have come under scrutiny. Bodies such as the UN are said to



be based on a defunct idea of the world order, unable to respond effectively to this century’s problems. Nusseibeh acknowledges that global challenges today are very different from when the UN Charter was drawn up. “We don’t have interstate wars in the same way,” she says. “We have ethnic, religious and other types of identity conflicts; massive expansion of terrorist networks around the world; and more complex economic issues. And, of course, pandemics.”

But far from providing reasons to abandon the UN, Nusseibeh says that these factors make it more vital. “When you have this increasingly complex global environment, having an organisation that belongs to countries but is also seen as above the geopolitical fray is more essential than ever,” she says. — HHS



SOUTH KOREA
Shooting for the moon
Space race accelerates

South Korea has long been in the space race. The Korea Aerospace Research Institute was founded in 1989, while the country’s first carrier rocket, a modified Russian design called *Naro-1*, blasted off in 2009. But, significantly, the country launched its first self-built carrier rocket, *Nuri*, in October 2021, signalling an expansion of its

space ambitions. Its government is now seeking a 2022 space budget of 640bn won (€470bn), a chunk of which will go towards the lunar orbiter, *Pulhfinder*, due for launch in August.

“South Korea aspires to play a dominant role in technology,” for lunar resource development,” says Naimana Goswami, a strategic analyst in space policy. “As a signatory to the US-led Artemis Lunar Accords, proving lunar capability builds its credibility as a partner.”

There is also a military imperative. South Korea has recently been given a freer hand with rocketry: in May, the US lifted a 42-year restriction on South Korea’s development of missiles. “As concerns over

China’s anti-satellite weapons and North Korean missile development grow, the need increases for South Korea to develop military space capacities,” says Goswami.

The Asian country is not alone in this line of thinking: the US itself has inaugurated a new branch of its military, Space Force. The spectre thus raised is the ominous one of a full-blown, elbow-out sprint for the stars.

“This might end in two ways,” says Goswami. “One is

“South Korea aspires to play a dominant role in technology for lunar resource development”

where we develop regulatory mechanisms, signed by a majority of countries. The alternative will be determined by first come, first served. Take a scenario where a Chinese base on the lunar south pole has a non-inference zone, so anyone else requires permission to land. This will result in a scramble for first-mover advantage.” And South Korea, it seems, wants to be part of that scramble. — AM



UK
Take a bough
Maintaining the lungs of London

The rotary blade ceases its infernal roar, to be replaced by the sound of creaking. I take a few steps back. The severed branch, loosening its tendrils, braces for descent. It hits the ground with a dull thud, bounces, pirouettes and crashes into the driver’s door of a large white truck. “That’s going in the damage report,” yells James Hedges, the aprily sunnamed arboricultural manager for the London borough of Greenwich.

Hedges and his small team are responsible for tending 117 parks and open spaces throughout the borough. Theirs is an expansive beat and a burgeoning trade. Arbovy (often called tree surgery) has its roots in logging and other manual work carried out under the umbrella term of forestry. But as awareness grows around the importance of plant life, the arborist’s remit is becoming increasingly conservalational.

Still, the popular perception of tree surgery remains that of gnarled men swinging from mighty oaks, chainsaw in one hand, roll-up cigarette in the other. The reality, from where I’m standing, doesn’t seem far removed, even if Greenwich arborists Danny and Dave wear specialist climbing harnesses,

“What you hear is the chainsaw. But a large part of my job is conservation: we plant more trees than we fell”

helmets, goggles and ear protection – and smoke only as a post-op indulgence. The pair are working the Tarn, a small park that’s one of many fronts in the battle against a deadly scourge. Ash dieback is an aggressive fungal disease that’s endemic among European ash trees. The arborist’s job involves identifying stricken plants, then treating, pruning or, as a last resort, amputating their limbs. Just as harmful are menaces such as sweet-chestnut blight and oak processionary moths, which bear hairy offspring that devour leaves.

The Greenwich team has an impressive arsenal to use against these bio-insurgents. “We’ve got everything from hedge-cutters, trimmers and blowers to chainsaws and ride-on mowers,” says Hedges. But despite the kit, the arborist’s role is mostly pastoral.

“What you hear is the chainsaw,” says Hedges. “But a large part of my job is conservation: we plant more trees than we fell.” He is as good a position to know this as anyone. “My grandad started a plant nursery when he was in the fire brigade,” he says. “After the war he moved into grounds maintenance, which eventually became tree surgery.” Though he initially resisted the call of the saw, Hedges eventually made his way back to the family trade in Greenwich.

Greenwich is home to more than 50,000 trees, a vast number for an inner-city district. They absorb London’s harmful fumes, converting them into oxygen. Without proper care, these pockets of urban wilderness would wither and die. Hedges and his team ensure Londoners can breathe easy. — ASE

