

93 Village Crescent
Peterborough, Canada K9J 0A9
16 August 2022

Retirement of Dr. Juraj Riecan from the United Nations

Dear Juraj,

I remember very well your first days in the UNECE, when you joined the ECE Statistical Division in a P-2 post through the national competitive examinations. As you will recall, at that time I was the Chief of the Social and Demographic Statistics Team, and when you joined the Division we had assumed that with your background the best fit for you would be to assign you to the IT-related team in the Division, in part because we managers in the Division had assumed it would be an easier entry point into the work of the Division for you because that team was headed by a compatriot of yours at the time.

Even though you were not a member of my team, I watched and admired how well you succeeded in carrying out the duties and responsibilities that your supervisor had assigned to you, despite the difficulties you sometimes encountered in that situation. However, I came to the conclusion that your long-term potential would be much better served if you were given the opportunity to work in a different team in the Division which used different approaches to what you had been exposed to in the IT-related Team. Unbeknownst to you, I raised that idea at one of the Divisional meetings of Section Chiefs, and the Director of the Division thought it was a good idea to rotate junior staff in the Division like that, and to my delight, he decided to assign you to the Social and Demographic Statistics Team where you would work under my general direction. And naturally, I was delighted that that was the decision the Director of the Division took.

In the following years when you worked under my supervision in the ECE as either the Chief of the Social and Demographic Statistics Section or as Secretary of the Conference of European Statisticians, I never had to give you detailed instructions about how to carry out your duties. I simply stated what the objective was, and I left you to carry out the assignments. And when I later met with you to see what the results were and you showed me what you had done, I very often found that the way you had accomplished the task was a much better way than the way I would have completed the assignment if it had been given to me. I mention this because it is important, and also because I think it exemplifies your innate abilities in a very real sense. In addition, I must also mention how much I came to rely on you to assist me in carrying out delicate and sensitive staff relations issues that we sometimes had to encounter in the Division, and also how you assisted me in working with the ECE Bureau and the ECE Permanent Missions in carrying out and overseeing the supportive work I provided to the Permanent Missions in its in-depth review of the ECE that the Member States carried out in the 1998-1999 period. That too was a very difficult and sensitive assignment, but you always carried out your responsibilities in that work in a totally professional manner, and with complete discretion and honesty.

The years passed, and because of your competence you left the ECE Statistical Division and moved on to head up the ECE's Dissemination and Statistical Information Systems Section, which was a post that you served in for over 4 years. In that post you and team provided IT support to all Divisions of the ECE, including the Statistical Division where I as the Deputy Director of the Division continued to observe and appreciate the superior way in which you and your staff provided IT support to the entire ECE office and updated the Office's IT software and hardware. Here too, you excelled in carrying out your important duties and responsibilities in this complex computer-oriented assignment.

Even though my first-hand knowledge of your work performance ended in 2003 when I retired from the UN, I continued to follow your career development both in the ECE and later in ESCWA where you became the Director of ESCWA's Statistics Division. I was able to do this not only through my continued professional contact and relationship with you, but also through my many other long-term personal and professional relationships with the very wide network of international statisticians working in the UN and in other international and supra-national organizations who have continued to liaise and work with you while you have worked in ESCWA. Through these many personal and professional contacts and friendships, I have been able to keep abreast of the continuing excellent ways in which you have been carrying out your responsibilities in ESCWA, and I have obtained nothing but highly praiseworthy feedback from these colleagues throughout these many years after I retired from the UN.

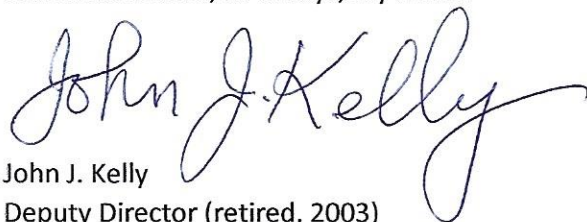
In short, throughout your career you have demonstrated that you have a deep sense of commitment to the United Nations as an institution, and to what the Organization is intended to stand for. You are an extremely honest, straight-forward individual who has a deep sense of "fair play to all", and who has always been focused on doing things correctly and with a full sense of professionalism, integrity and commitment, not only to all the Member States you have been called upon to serve, but also to the staff you have supervised and/or worked with collaboratively, regardless of what grade in the UN hierarchy that they had in the posts that they occupied.

You have also been an outstanding Manager of staff, whether they be at the professional, technical or clerical level, for you are gifted at recognizing the potential of all staff members and in being able to successfully work with them, and in being able to identify important ways in which all members of an international staff can contribute in significant ways towards the Team's, the Division's and the Organization's overall goals and objectives.

Juraj, you have every right to feel very, very proud of the many accomplishments that you have achieved throughout your UN career during the past 30 years. You have contributed greatly towards helping many different member States at different levels of statistical development to develop and improve their national and sub-national statistics, not only in the ECE and ESCWA regions, but also in other parts of the UN system through your work during those years in collaboration with the staff of many different international and supra-national organizations. You can be assured that the significant contributions that you have made to the field of official statistics in many different countries will endure many years after the date of your retirement from ESCWA and the UN.

In closing, I wish you and Denisa a well-earned happy and healthy retirement back in your home country of Slovakia. You both have worked very hard for it, and have really earned it!!!

With best wishes, as always, my friend

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "John J. Kelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "Kelly" clearly legible. The middle initial "J." is smaller and less distinct. The signature is written on a white background.

John J. Kelly
Deputy Director (retired, 2003)
Statistical Division, UNECE