



INTERNATIONAL FORUM OSLO

NEWSLETTER

December 2021
Issue No. 470

COMING UP:



Christmas Meeting December 6
At Vinderen Senior Centre



January 10 Monthly Meeting
Former Prime Minister Kjell-Magne Bondevik
'The Oslo Peace Centre'



**January 25 Diplomatic Salon at the Spanish
Residence**
'Why Edmund Burke is Still Relevant'



INTERNATIONAL FORUM

P.O. Box 1505 Vika, 0117 Oslo, Norway

Website: www.iforum.no Email: int.forum@online.no

Visiting address:	Kronprinsens gate 3, Victoria Passasjen
Board 2020 – 2021:	Anita Pratap (President), Sissel Lindeman, Yan Donko, Gulhan Çorman, Wenche Mohr, Elizabeth Rasmussen, Elizabeth Groth Kolby (Deputy) Lien Nguyen (Deputy), Jessie Sandosham (Deputy)
Office Coordinator:	Dorota Steensland
Office Team:	Patricia Blackwell, Karin Skoglund
Office hours:	Please send enquiries by email
Editor:	Elizabeth S. Rasmussen
Editorial Team:	Elspeth Walseth, Josephine Kamsvåg
Secretary:	Elspeth Walseth
Treasurer:	Anne-Lise Fasteland
Auditor:	Verena Krienke
Committee Leaders:	
Monthly Meetings	Laila Hægh Berit Lindstrøm
Special Events	Mona B. Reinboth
Art	Jane Steenbuch
Activities	Anita Solheim



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DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING ARTICLES

For the **January Newsletter** is **Wednesday, December 15**. Please send your contribution to Elizabeth S. Rasmussen and to int.forum@online.no.

The Editor and the Editorial Team reserve the right to edit all material.



From the President

Dear Members,

This year, with all its ups and downs, is a reflection of Life itself. The year certainly ends on a happier note than 2020. We have no further lockdowns (as yet), most of us are vaccinated, we can be with family and friends, we attend events, our 'happy feet' members have resumed their travels, malls are full with shoppers and restaurants are busy with *julebord* gatherings.

The pandemic is far from over, but the return of festivities is proof of the human capacity to overcome adversities. Nobody imagined that a new vaccine could be developed and delivered in one year – this had never been done before. Just as we marvel at new achievements, we hold dearly on to our old traditions.

Christmas is one such tradition that makes December so festive with carols and colours, cakes and cookies, comfort and celebrations and above all gifts and cosy times with our loved ones.

December is also the month when the story of one year ends and another begins, when we say farewell to the year we leave behind and greet the one to come. An ending that heralds a new beginning. December brings unique perspectives, which is why, along with celebrations, it is also a month of introspection. We mull over mulled wine: what went right and what went wrong, seeing how far we have come by remembering where we started, what to leave behind and what to carry forward into the coming year. The month of December lets us reflect and enjoy.

With Seasons' Greetings, I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Regards,

Anita Pratap

President

FROM THE OFFICE

Many of you probably wonder about the icon that you see on the emails sent from International Forum.



GNIST is part of our administrative system – StyreWeb – but a feature that **we don't use**. Unfortunately, we cannot remove it from emails which are sent via StyreWeb. However, it contains no hidden or additional information, so please do **NOT** open it.

All the information that we send is either in the email or in any enclosed pdf attachment.



The **Office** will be **closed until the middle of January**, so please sign up for events to the person responsible for it.

NEW MEMBER



This month the Board is very happy to welcome two new members:

REMINDER PRE-CHRISTMAS MEETING

December 6 at 17:45 for 18:00.

Please see the November *Newsletter* for more information.

COMING EVENTS

JANUARY MONTHLY MEETING

Kjell Magne Bondevik



Mr Bondevik is a Norwegian Lutheran Minister and well-known politician. As leader of the Christian Democratic Party, he served as the Prime Minister of Norway from 1997 to 2000, and from 2001 to 2005, making him, after former prime minister Erna Solberg, Norway's second-longest serving non-Labour Party prime minister since World War II.

Currently, Bondevik is President of the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights.

Mr Bondevik will talk about the Centre and its mission.

- DATE/TIME:** Monday, **January 10** at 18:45 for (19:00)
- SIGN UP:** To **Laila Hægh** as soon as possible and **no later than Wednesday, January 5**
- PLACE:** Vinderen Seniorsenter, Slemdalsveien 72, 0373 Oslo
- PRICE:** NOK 105.- **Please sign up before you pay.** Payment preferably by **bank transfer** to the Forum account: No cash will be handled at the venue.
- Please **state the event and your name** in the transaction (in the KID-number box for bank payments and in the dialogue box for VIPPS)
- TRANSPORT:** T-Bane 1 to Vinderen. Pay parking until 20:00 in the adjoining area.
- GUESTS:** Guests are welcome if there is room.
- No-shows will be charged.**
- For last minute cancellations, please call Laila Hægh,

SPECIAL EVENTS

Visit to the Christmas Exhibition at Norway Designs

December 7



The Special Events committee has the pleasure of inviting Forum members to the Christmas exhibition at Norway Designs on Tuesday, December 7.

Norway Designs, the famous shop just across the road from the Nationaltheatret station, is an institution. Every year in December, people come from far and wide to see the traditional Christmas exhibition that the shop puts on every year. It is truly wonderful. However, this year it will be for the last time in these premises. In the spring, Norway Designs will be moving to Lille Grensen further into town.

Mr. Trond Kinn, the leader of the shop, will guide us around the premises and tell us about the history of Norway Designs.

Norway Designs was established in 1957 by Per Tannum and is a lifestyle store focusing on Norwegian design and handicrafts from Norway and the Nordic countries. The company believes in quality and sustainable production, good design and a holistic thinking that takes care of the small, unique quality products.

Norway Designs has always been, and will continue to be, a concept that breaks the traditional framework for what it means to be a store.

Their identity is rooted in cultural development. They work to make room for Norwegian design and handicrafts, lift objects into the light and expand the space they are in.

Norway Designs has been a mecca in Norwegian design and crafts since 1957.

The guiding is free of charge but we are asking for a small sum for a gift of appreciation for Mr. Kinn

DATE/TIME: Tuesday, **December 7** at 9:50 (for 10:00)

SIGN UP: To **Mona B. Reinboth** by email as soon as possible and no later than **Friday, December 3**

PLACE: Stortingsgaten 18, Oslo

PRICE: NOK 25,- **preferable** by **bank** payment to the Forum account: **No cash** will be handled during the pandemic. In the transaction, please **state the event and your name** (in the KID-number box for bank payments and in the dialogue box for VIPPS)

TRANSPORT: Trams and buses to Nationaltheatret station.

Forum members have priority. Guests are welcome if room. Cancellations after the deadline and no-shows will be charged.

For last-minute cancellations, please call Mona B. Reinboth on mob.: 948 82 895

PRE-ANNOUNCEMENT SPECIAL EVENTS

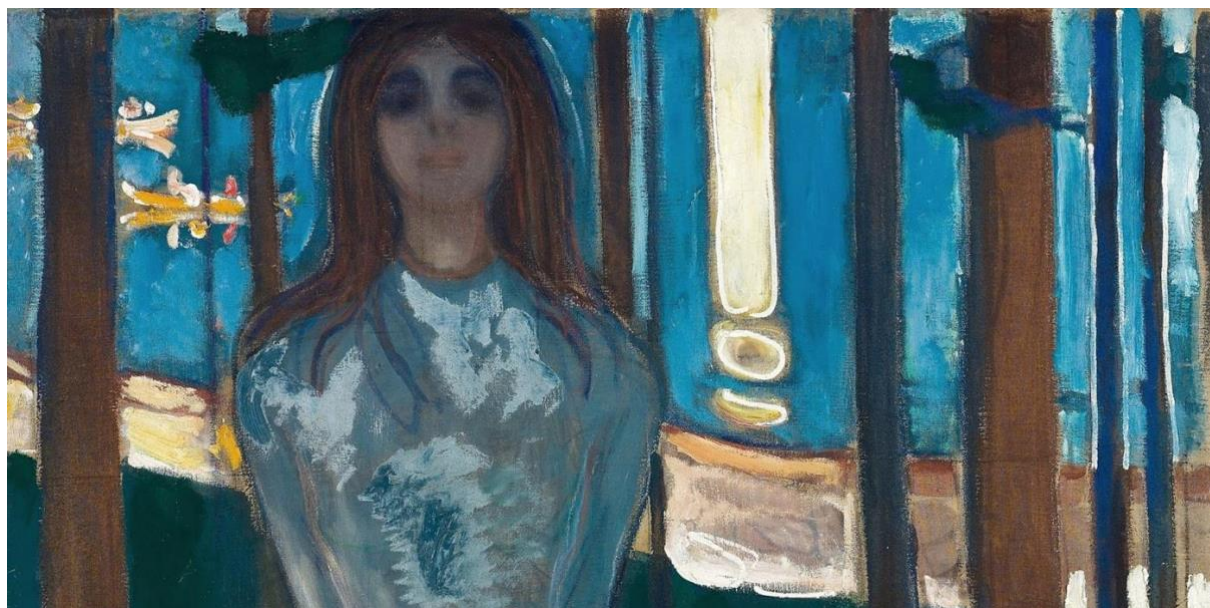
January 26 - Please save the date!



The Special Events Committee invites you to a visit to the New Deichman Library (Oslo Municipal Library) in Bjørvika on January 26. More information will come in the January *Newsletter*.

ART COMMITTEE
EDVARD MUNCH UENDELIG

January 13



We are all very excited to experience the new Munch Museum! At this exhibition, we shall be swept into Munch's world in a way that we have perhaps not seen before. An in-depth look at his ideas, his work processes, and the deeply human condition that he wished to portray, still touches the lives of people today.

A journey through the themes and motifs that Munch explored throughout his life: anxiety, death, love, and loneliness. Be surprised by unknown works and unexpected aspects in the world of Munch's paintings, graphics, drawings, photographs, and sculptures.

DATE/TIME: Thursday, **January 13** at 10:15 for 10:30.

SIGN UP: To **Katarina Plavnik** by email as soon as possible, but no later than Wednesday, **January 5**. Please **sign up before you pay**.

PLACE: Edvard Munchs plass 1, Bjørvika.

PRICE: NOK 255.- (includes entrance fee). Payment **preferably** by **bank transfer** to the Forum account: Please **state the event and your name** in the transaction: **your name and the event** in the KID-number box for bank transfers and the dialogue box for VIPPS.

Maximum number of participants: 20 persons.

Guest are welcome if there is space available.

Cancellations *after the deadline* must be sent to **Katarina Plavnik** by email or telephone.

Cancellations and no-shows will be charged as this is a pre-paid event. Members on the waiting list will receive a refund.

DIPLOMATIC SALON

Why Edmund Burke Is Still Relevant

January 25, 2022 at 16:00

At the Residence of the Ambassador of Spain



Philosopher and statesman Edmund Burke was born almost 300 years ago, but his political thought still resonates around the world. Born in Ireland and a member of the British Parliament, he rejected American independence, but was sympathetic to the grievances of the colonies. He opposed the French revolution, slave trade and the British East India Company. Burke believed revolutions and imperialism had a way of unleashing monsters. History has proven him right... again and again.

Over wine and tapas, we shall discuss Burke's legacy and why he still matters.

The Salon is hosted by the Ambassador of Spain, José Ramón García Hernández, who has written a doctoral thesis on Edmund Burke.

Ambassador Hernández will share his insights on why today's global politics still make Burke relevant.

Remarks by H. E. **Keith McBean**, Ambassador of Ireland; H. E. **Ulises Canchola Gutiérrez**, Ambassador of Mexico; and Mr **José Juan López Portillo**, Counsellor at the Embassy of Mexico in charge of innovation and knowledge economy. He has written a paper on ‘Why Read Edmund Burke Today.’

DATE/TIME: Tuesday, **January 25** at 16:00

SIGN UP: To Anita Pratap. _____

PRICE: NOK 95.- for gifts, **preferably** to be paid into the Forum account:. **Please state your name, date and name of event in your payment:** in the KID-number box for bank payments and in the dialogue box for VIPPS.

ACTIVITIES AND COURSES



The Photo Group

Learn how to make custom-made cards for all occasions to show friends and family that you really care.

The Photo Group offers a course for making Christmas cards using your own pictures. The teaching will be held both on Zoom and at a workshop at Gunnel Anita's home. It is of course free of charge.

If you are interested, please contact Gunnel Anita Solheim.

A date will be fixed when people have signed up.

Anita Solheim

R E P O R T S

NOVEMBER MONTHLY MEETING

Professor Knut Anton Mork

The Green Shift, 'Yes We Can!'

Professor of Economics Knut Anton Mork started by quoting British Prime Minister Boris Johnson at the opening of the COP26 in Glasgow on Monday, November 1: 'It's one minute to midnight on that doomsday clock.' Mr Mork is – on the whole – rather positive about the future, and is not yet ready for the end of the world. He quoted from Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2 in C minor: 'Cease from trembling! Prepare yourself to live!'



The initial target cap on the global average temperature of 1.5°C is probably not realistic, but Mr Mork believes that a 2-degree target is possible. In order to not exceed that cap, world leaders need to take action now.

The Norwegian petroleum sector is – in a global perspective – not big. The Norwegian oil industry only represents a couple of percentage points of the fossil fuel sector. In all, the Norwegian industry employs roughly 25 000 people, and the service sector represents a similar number of employees. Approximately the size of our public sector.

Norway needs to step up and start doing what other countries do not: People need to learn how to live without fossil energy. Rich nations must assume leadership. Three important elements make Norway especially suited for the inevitable green shift: an established oil and gas industry that is meticulously regulated and heavily taxed, and which has already started the process of

finding alternative activities and sources of energy; a fairly diverse general economy; and not least a stable democracy.

The oil sector has generated a series of highly competent actors such as companies specialising in financial services, technical know-how, legal services, communication experts, IT services, robotics and food providers, just to mention a few. All of these are needed for the green shift.

A scarcity of workers with special skills and competence has led to an increase in wages, as all sectors are vying for the same people. However, we cannot expect revenues to remain at the same level as before. Norwegian salaries are roughly 10% higher than those of Sweden and Denmark.



So, how can we be weaned off oil and gas and the associated wealth? Demands and prices are still high. The IEA (International Energy Agency) claims that no further investments will be needed if other solutions are implemented. Other nations will probably not be able to compensate for the Norwegian oil and gas production. The important thing is to send a clear signal to world leaders that countries and companies must cooperate in the quest for sustainable solutions to our energy needs.

The truly difficult sector and litmus test of the governments' dedication to the cause will be aviation and shipping. A clear 'last date' must be established, governments must not only stick to this date, but help finance good sustainable

initiatives, and encourage increased public-private cooperation and the implementation of different societal structures.

We have the technology. Our banks are increasingly turning to sustainable financial products. Norway's 'oil fund' allows the authorities to lead the way.

After the lecture, Professor Mork took questions from the audience. A truly positive outlook on a fragile and seemingly uncertain future of humanity!

Elizabeth Rasmussen

SING SONG

November 4 at the Italian Embassy Residence

In the October IF *Newsletter*, our President, Anita Pratap, wrote that research indicates that one reason nuns live longer lives is that they sing a lot.



After a couple of hours spent in song with a wonderful chorus of women at the beautiful Italian Embassy residence of Maria Rosaria Gallo Colella, the joyfulness that permeated the air was a clear testament to the energising and positive effects of singing.



We really had a great time!

Without doubt, our enthusiasm was fuelled by the experienced leadership of Lydia Rostad, with accompaniment on the piano by Elisabeth Solem.

Our 'songbook' was an eclectic mix of everything from well-loved Norwegian and Swedish melodies to popular American and British tunes, with special attention paid to Vera Lynn.

We were also told that talking is an excellent exercise to prepare the vocal chords for singing, so we diligently 'practised' during our coffee break, compliments of our hostess, Rosaria.



Immense thanks to everyone that made this event possible and I know that I am not alone in hoping that we will have more informal occasions like this to be able to come together for fun and song!

Trudy Brand-Jacobsen

Walking Group



Eight happy ladies walked down along Akerselva from the Technical Museum, stopping for a coffee break at *Hønse-Louisa's* house roughly mid-way down ['Louisa's chicken coop'].

Berit Lindstrøm

November Diplomatic Salon

The Wine Traditions of Georgia

Wednesday, November 11



Forum President Anita Pratap started by thanking H. E. Maia Kipshidze for organizing this Salon on Georgian wine. Present were also the new Consul General to be of Georgia to Trondheim, Marit Holand, lawyer and wine expert. She talked about her love for Georgia, which she has visited at least once a year over the last decade. Ms Katia Kurua, wine importer, also talked about Georgian wines.



Before the wine tasting, we were given an introductory speech by the Ambassador and watched a short film about what archaeologists have discovered about the history of wine in Georgia. It has now been established that wine-making originated in the area some 8000 years ago, towards the end

of the Neolithic period. The technique has hardly changed since then. Almost seven millennia later, Herodotus (484 – 425 BC) mentions Georgian wine in his *Historiai* ('investigations').

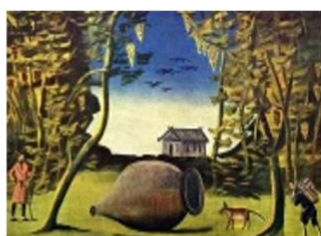
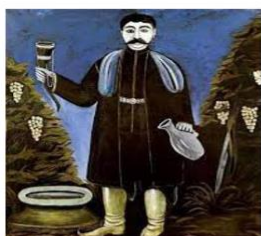


Kevri



Bronze statue from 7th century BC

Wine has always been a great part of the country's culture ever since. There are more than 400 different grape varieties in the country. Although all regions have wine-making, the eastern parts of the country are particularly productive. The quality of Georgian wine has improved after the liberation from the Soviet Union in 1991, and in particular after the last war with Russia in 2008. Russia imposed an embargo on all Georgian products. Russia had been the main buyer of Georgian wine. Producers then turned to other markets in the west, and today wine is made both in steel barrels and in the old way, in *Kevri*, large earthenware vessels used for the fermentation, storage and ageing of the wine.



Wine is also omnipresent in the works of famous Georgian artist Niko Pirosmani (1862 – 1918).

The vessels resemble egg-shaped amphorae without handles. They are either buried below ground or set into the floors of large wine cellars (*marani*). The earthenware gives a special taste to the wine.



Typical wine cellar – *marani*



Traditional drinking horn

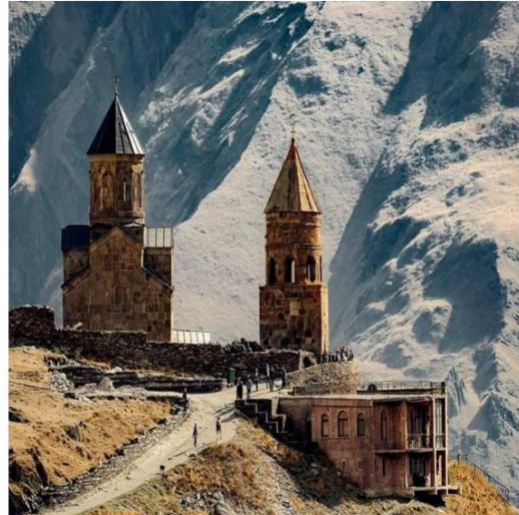


In Georgia, wine is a constant presence. The statue of Mother of Georgia, a tall aluminium figure of a woman in Georgian national dress, was erected in 1958, when the capital Tbilisi celebrated its 1500th anniversary. Mother of Georgia symbolises the national character: in her left hand, she holds a bowl of wine to greet those who come as friends, and a sword in her right hand for those who come as enemies.

We have to remember that Georgia is at a crossroads between north and south, east and west, and has been invaded repeatedly throughout the country's history.



Today, there are 39 different types of Georgian wine at Vinmonopolet. Absolutely worth a try!



Spectacular mountains dominate much of the country.



Anita Pratap, H. E. Maia Kipshidze, Marit Holand, and Natia Kurua

Also present at the event was Ken Engebretsen, President of the Norwegian Sommelier Association.

To thank her for organizing this ‘trip’ to Georgia and its wine traditions, International Forum presented the Ambassador with a small traditional brooch (*sølje*).

Elizabeth Rasmussen

IMPRESSIONS OF NORWAY

GOODBYE TO THE KINGDOM OF NORWAY

by

Ambassador of South Africa to Norway, H. E. Selaelo Ramokgopa

One of the countries in which I resided during my younger days in exile was the Republic of Tanzania, near the town of Morogoro in a former sisal plantation in Mazimbu. The African National Congress had established a school for the youth and students who left the country following the Student Uprisings of 16 June 1976, which changed the landscape of South African youth activism for ever.



The school received support from international funders, including NORAD. I also remember when one of my colleagues was selected to accompany a delegation to the Scandinavian countries and when he came back with pictures of houses with green grass rooftops, and breath-taking waterfalls that he had taken in Norway. I could then only wish I were there!



Little did I know that later in my life, I would be a career diplomat and an official in the South African Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation. In 2017, I received a letter of appointment as Ambassador of South Africa to the Kingdom of Norway; I was

elated as it felt as though I had already been there! I began visualising the green grass rooftop houses and astounding waterfalls and enjoyed my ‘norsk’ lessons

taught by a Norwegian living in South Africa. The language was interesting, as it had many words in common with the Afrikaans language in South African. My teacher introduced me to the Norwegian open sandwich. I remember thinking: How could it be a sandwich if it's open?

When someone tells you about a place, you begin to have your own images of how you think the place looks. I had certainly not bargained for what I found upon arrival in January 2018. It was night and all I could see was snow; more and more, as I was driven up to Holmenkollen, where my official Residence is located. Once up there, I was further shocked to see cars literally buried under the snow, and garages and entrances to houses blocked by snow.



I wondered how people in Holmenkollen survived. I had never imagined that people had to dig their car out of the snow on a daily basis, let alone shovel a path to get out of their own home. That was my cold welcome to Holmenkollen! The warm welcome from the beautiful and lovely people of Norway, the colleagues at the Foreign Ministry, the diplomatic corps, the Norwegian friends and families I got to meet in Oslo and other cities that I

travelled, to certainly warmed my heart and kept me warm throughout the winters.

I even got to discover my favourite seasons, which are winter – despite falling in the snow – and autumn with foliage of beautiful hues. Most interesting was the spring and summer, during which the trees that had been only sticks during winter, became a greenery forest.



I was introduced to walking in the forests, loving the snow, picking mushrooms and berries, and enjoying beautiful views of the fjords. Oslo was a beautiful melting pot of cultures, creative arts, literature and music and still so much left to still explore; this definitely calls for a return as a tourist.

Arendalsuka was a melting pot of experiences and insight into Norwegian politics. Much was shared, networks made, and we listened to and participated in debates and analyses presented by Norwegian political party leaders, business representatives and political analysts. It was a great honour to be invited by Ms Anita Pratap, President of the International Forum, to participate as a panellist at the first ever Ambassador's Roundtable; and this during my very first visit to

and experience of Arendalsuka, held on August 18, 2021, under the theme 'Strategic Capitalism'.

This was no ordinary visit to the beautiful town of Arendal. We were thrilled by the warm reception of the Mayor, and my team and I were also warmly welcomed by the amazing IF Board member Wenche Mohr, who hosted us in her beautiful seaside home in the town of Tvedestrand.

It was indeed a pleasure to be the first female Ambassador to participate in the very first Ambassador's Roundtable... Arendal is indeed a must-go-to place for the diplomatic corps.



I walked through the streets of Arendal, full of colourful stands of the many political parties, businesses and civil society. It was amazing to meet and greet the various political leaders and CEOs. Particularly interesting was my encounter with representatives of the Pensioner's Party who gave me a retirement plan idea!

I certainly shall leave Norway satisfied to have made, together with my team at the Embassy, my humble contribution towards consolidating the historical relations between the Republic of South Africa and the Kingdom of Norway during my sojourn of duty. We can only work harder in order to continue to strengthen bilateral relations and collaborations in our areas of interest. I thank everyone that I have crossed paths with in various platforms for the lessons learned and the experiences exchanged.

Gosh, I will miss it all!

God Jul Everyone!



© Sidsel Jakhelln-Semb

Nisse, the mythical creature from Nordic folklore, is thought to be derived from Old Norse *niðsi*, meaning ‘dear little relative’. In the old days, *Nisse* hid in barns, ate porridge and tied cows’ tails together when annoyed. Now *Julenissen* appears pleased and serene in cosy Christmas togetherness with his little family.

With Seasons’ Greetings, we wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



INTERNATIONAL FORUM

Org.no: 994 566 806

President

Anita Pratap

Editor and Layout:

Elizabeth Rasmussen and Editorial Team

Dispatch Team:

Susan Hahla, Kerstin Petersen, Mona Reinboth, Mette Svadberg, Wenche Undrum, Elspeth Walseth and Patricia Blackwell

The Editor and the Editorial Team reserve the right to edit **all** material.

Date: December 1, 2021