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EMBASSY OF ARGENTINA, WASHINGTON, D.C.

# ARGENTINA IN FOCUS

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MAY 2021 // NEWSLETTER



## INITIATIVES AND ADVANCES TO ADDRESS COVID-19 AND FUTURE PANDEMICS

The COVID-19 pandemic caught the international community off guard. In retrospect, the reality would have been less dramatic if we had been better prepared to face this type of crisis.

One of the lessons learned from the current crisis is that even if there is a more desirable response to the pandemic in a given country or geographic area, there will be no effective and definitive answer to this scourge if it is not implemented effectively on a global scale. In a pandemic, no one is saved alone.

On April 26 in New York, together with South Africa, Norway and Japan, Argentina was co-host of a high-level virtual dialogue promoted by the

United States, to discuss how to better prepare to face future pandemics.

This event, which was attended by Vice President Kamala Harris; the Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres; the Co-Chair of the Independent Panel on Preparedness and Response to a pandemic, the former President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf; the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, and the Prime Minister of Norway, Erna Solberg, among many other representatives of governments, organizations and civil society entities, was the starting point of a series of meetings that will bring together governments, international organizations, civil



Once again, I share with you the latest edition of our Embassy Newsletter. This edition includes an article about U.S. initiatives at the United Nations to address the international response to COVID-19 and future pandemics.

In this edition we include an interview to the artist Silvia Levenson, who participates on the exhibition "Uncomfortable Shoes: The Politics of Being a Woman", about her artistic vision on human rights.

Finally, an article on the meeting of the G20 Sustainable Finance Study Group about the green and inclusive post-pandemic recovery.

Jorge Argüello  
Ambassador to the United States

## THE GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS SHOULD PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO RETHINK ABOUT MORE INCLUSIVE HEALTH SYSTEMS AND TO REDEFINE THE VALUE OF INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY.

society and opinion leaders to reach a consensus on the next concrete steps that must be taken so that the world is better prepared to face the next pandemic.

In general, the participants' interventions reflected the concerns presented by the organizers, such as the need to learn from the lessons left by the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of ensuring that a well-functioning global system is in place. The consensus reached is that there will be new challenges, and that it is just a matter of time before they occur. There was also agreement that the world is currently facing global problems of an unprecedented nature; that the tools available to the international community have not been effective; and that the prevailing systems must be reformed to face these challenges. This implies a new vision is required, and although not blaming or holding anyone responsible for what has happened, knowing what should be done is important.

Argentina took part in this initiative with the conviction that the global health crisis should provide an opportunity to rethink about more inclusive health systems and to redefine the value of international solidarity.

Likewise, we also value very positively the United States government's decision to support the temporary suspension of patents for vaccines

against COVID-19 that is currently being negotiated at the World Trade Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. The immediate precedent of this is an initiative that was presented by India and South Africa at the WTO, with the endorsement of many other countries, including Argentina.

The announcement, made on May 5th by the U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai, was immediately appreciated by our country. President Alberto Fernández made reference to this when he wrote "I celebrate that the government of @JoeBiden supports the suspension of patents on COVID-19 vaccines", because it is important that everyone has access to health. He also added: "From the beginning, even at the G20, I have stressed that it is imperative that vaccines be a global public good. I reiterate our commitment to promoting an effective licensing system that recognizes patents but guarantees the global supply of vaccines."

Foreign Minister Felipe Sola also publicly welcomed the U.S. decision, noting that "it implies the possibility of an increased production" of vaccines.

One of the most negative impacts of the pandemic has been the increase in inequality which especially affects the most vulnerable groups and women and girls. We must continue providing initiatives and mechanisms that allow everyone to be protected, not only throughout the present crisis, but also to better prepared to face future ones. The Argentine Government will continue working on this with the other members of the international community and supporting good decisions and initiatives, such as the ones mentioned above, that can help overcome this difficult moment. ■



## ART AS A SYMBOL OF CHANGE IN SILVIA LEVENSON'S GAZE

An invitation that encourages us to think that the idea of eliminating the dominator /dominated duo is becoming a reality. " Uncomfortable Shoes: The Politics of Being a Woman", opens a space for reflection, in which art and society go hand in hand.

"If we see glass shoes with spikes inside, like Silvia Levenson's or Annette Turrillo's shoes of the oppressors, are we really talking about footwear or rather about female icons that threaten their life and freedom?", said Gabriela Rosso, curator of this exhibition at the RoFa Art Gallery in Potomac, Maryland.

Levenson, an Argentine artist based in Italy, began working with glass after visiting a Bertil Vallien exhibition in New York. She then learned about this technique and enriched her works, which target issues such as immigration, repression, dictatorship, or topics that link the role of women and society.

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Silvia Levenson's work exhibit at RoFa Art Gallery.



## THE NEW FEMINIST GENERATIONS IN ARGENTINA AND LATIN AMERICA PROPOSE AN INCLUSIVE, ANTI-RACIST FEMINISM AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE HETEROPATRIARCHY.

This is an ongoing theme in her work that highlights the commitment of art to social and political reality. In 2015, Levenson presented her exhibit "Disappeared Identity" at the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center with the collaboration of the Argentine Embassy. This traveling exhibition began at the Casa de Las Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo at the former Esma in Buenos Aires, which showcases this organization's work, focused on recovering the identity of children born in clandestine prisons and were given up for illegal adoption during the dictatorship (1976-1983). After the exhibit was shown in several museums around the world, this installation, made up of 130 little glass dresses, is currently part of the Tutsek Foundation collection in Germany.

The works of this Argentine artist are in public and private collections, and can be seen in major museums, such as the Casa de las Américas (Cuba), the Altare Museum (Italy), the Fine Art Museum (Houston), the New Mexico Museum of Art (Santa Fe) and the Corning Museum of Glass (New York). In 2004, Levenson received the Rakow Commission Award from the Corning Museum of Glass in New York, and in 2008 she was nominated for the Bombay Sapphire Prize.

### **Argentina in Focus: Why did you emigrate to Italy?**

**Silvia Levenson:** During the military coup of '76, I

was 19 years old, pregnant and carrying out political activities in a left-wing group. In 1980 we had to emigrate to Italy with my 4-year-old and 11-month -old children because we were persecuted during the dictatorship. We went there because my father-in-law was born in Gorizia and we could obtain a dual citizenship. What happened at that time changed my life, as happened to the majority of Argentines of my generation and has also undoubtedly influenced my artistic work.

### **AIF: Why did you choose these materials and the issue of social commitment?**

**SL:** Most of my work is done in glass. I am attracted to the ambiguity of this material because we use glass to protect and isolate ourselves in our homes, but at the same time, we know that this same material that protects us, can break into a thousand pieces and harm us. It is a metaphor for the emotional short circuit that takes place between what we see and what we know. I am a woman, an immigrant and a Latina. I am not only "in solidarity with ...", as I transform my vision of the world and life into objects and installations through what has been, and continues to be, my personal experience. As an artist I must be part of the fight against gender violence and racial discrimination.

### **AIF: From what perspective do you approach these issues?**

**SL:** In 2019 and in 2020, Natalia Saurin and I presented an installation entitled "The most dangerous place", which alludes to a United Nations study that concludes by saying that, for women and girls, the house is the most dangerous place. The exhibition gathered 120 ceramic plates with phrases used to minimize and justify violence against women, "she provoked it",

"he was a good boy", and other similar comments. In 2019 we showed this installation at Palazzo Vecchio in Florence and in 2020 it was shown in Rome at the Casa Argentina, as part of the exhibition "Ni una menos".

**AIF: What is the focus of the works exhibited at the RoFa Art Gallery?**

**SL:** At RoFa Projects I am currently exhibiting objects that outline the contradictions of women's position in our society: a beautiful wedding cake made of blown glass accompanied by a hammer that suggests its destruction; furniture in which we cannot relax; perfumes and cosmetics that promise us miracles and happiness; beautiful and uncomfortable dresses; impractical shoes and purses made of safety glass that contain sharp and dangerous objects. In my work I explore the house as a closed space, but also as a battlefield in a war in which we participate, totally unprepared.

**AIF: What do you share with the rest of the artists at the RoFa exhibit?**

**SL:** The new feminist generations in Argentina and Latin America are proposing an inclusive, anti-racist feminism and a deconstruction of the heteropatriarchy. That is why I am very happy to exhibit at RoFa Projects with other Latin American artists that produce art that rattles consciences and generate changes in our societies.

**AIF: What is the aim of these series of works at RoFa, and how does it relate to other series that also include sharp objects?**

**SL:** All this work is about the discomfort of being a woman in a society that is based on patriarchy. Many of my pieces are apparently beautiful or elegant, such as dresses, purses and shoes, but they are all objects that hinder or block movement.

It is my response to the demand made by this society to girls and women, that is: be "beautiful", passive and obedient.

My first exhibit with shoes had to do with my interpretation of Cinderella. In that fable, a poor and discriminated girl obtains happiness, wealth and even goes up the social ladder when she marries the prince. By adding a nail to that glass slipper, I point out the unlikelihood of this stereotype under which many generations of women have been raised, and is based on economic and emotional dependence. ■

*"Uncomfortable Shoes: The Politics of Being a Woman" is on display at the RoFa Art Gallery in Potomac, Maryland, and runs through May 15.*





Members of the G20 Sustainable Finance Study Group.

## TOWARDS A GREEN, MORE RESILIENT, AND INCLUSIVE RECOVERY

Climate change is a reality that affects us all. Although its impact is symmetrical, its consequences hit countries' economies asymmetrically. Moreover, the social and economic impacts of the Covid-19 crisis cannot yet be fully estimated, putting fiscal accounts under stress in many countries and leaving little room to continue working on the transition to a greener economy.

There are several trajectories for enhancing climate action and sustainability, depending on the resources and possibilities of each country, and without neglecting adaptation and mitigation measures as well as international commitments. These trajectories comprise common but differentiated responsibilities between advanced and developing economies to achieve sustainable development.

In this sense, Argentina recognizes the imperative need to work towards a financial system that is aligned with the goals of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. A financial system that provides more financing options, particularly for emerging market economies, developing and low income countries, is needed.

Prior to the economic and social crisis induced by the Covid-19 pandemic, the United Nations estimated that \$5-\$7 trillion of investments were needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda. At today's level of both public and private investment in SDG-related sectors, developing countries still face an average annual funding gap of USD 2.5-3 trillion.

Recognizing the urgency of this scenario and in order to provide leadership on the mobilization

## THE ADVENT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS DEEPEINED THE STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES BETWEEN COUNTRIES AND THE VULNERABILITIES OF SOCIETIES, INCREASING THE COMPLEXITY OF ENHANCING CLIMATE ACTION.

of private finance and effective deployment of official sector finance to support international sustainability goals, the G20 -under the Italian presidency- has decided to re-establish the Sustainable Finance Study Group (SFSG), within the Finance track.

Launched in 2016 during China's G20 presidency, the Green Finance Study Group was mandated to identify institutional and market barriers to green finance and develop options on how to enhance the ability of the financial system to mobilize private capital for green investment. In 2018, during the Argentine G20 presidency, its remit was expanded to consider additional aspects of sustainable development alongside environmental ones and the group was renamed "Sustainable Finance Study Group (SFSG)". During 2016-18, the Group facilitated the formation of a global consensus on the need to scale up green finance, and focused global attention to a range of key topics for the development of sustainable finance worldwide. In 2019 regrettably, the study group was closed.

The first meeting of the relaunched SFSG was held virtually on 26th March 2021, co-chaired by China and the United States, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as secretariat. The Members tasked the Group to develop a multi-year roadmap on sustainable finance to address the most pressing

issues related to sustainable development and climate action.

As it was agreed by G20 members, the SFSG's will focus its work in 2021 on three main areas:

- A. Overcoming informational challenges by improving sustainability reporting;
- B. Improving compatibility of approaches to identify, verify and align investments to sustainability goals;
- C. Role of International Financial Institutions in supporting the Paris Agreement.

At their last meeting, G20 Ministers and Governors concurred, that addressing climate change and promoting greener, more resilient and inclusive societies and economies had become a cross-cutting priority. They also agreed that the Study Group will be upgraded to a fully-fledged Working Group. This decision marks a milestone that would enable the SFSG's work to address today's most relevant challenges while setting a long-term development vision.

Mobilizing sustainable finance is essential for global growth and stability. In line with this, Argentina has taken decisive steps to strengthening and deepening its financial system and domestic capital market thereby creating, in 2020, Sustainable Finance Roundtable.

The Roundtable -which brings together all key public sector stakeholders of the Argentinian financial system is led by the Ministry of Economy and its main objective is to develop a National Strategy to foster Sustainable Finance in the country.

The main objective is to mobilize, in a scalable way the necessary resources to catalyze public and private investments that contribute to achieving economic and social objectives in the framework



of the SDGs, including climate change mitigation and adaptation targets in the country.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has deepened the structural inequalities between countries and the vulnerabilities of societies, increasing the complexity of enhancing climate action.

While the response to the pandemic is asymmetric, according to each country's circumstances in dealing with its consequences, climate responsibilities - although differing - are shared.

By fostering a culture of a sustainable financial system, channelling large-scale public and private investments that include ESG factors, we have the opportunity to reactivate economies under cleaner and more resilient production models and to build a better future for all, taking care of our planet, our common home.

The challenges ahead are not minor, but the focus clear. There is a pressing need and our strong commitment to an Argentina that develops in an inclusive and sustainable manner. The time is now. ■

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