On the morning of May 11, 2015 our beloved colleague Dr Hans Joerg Geiser passed away. Hans was a Swiss national and proud resident of Trinidad and Tobago. Last year, around this time, Dr Geiser distributed a brief autobiography titled: MEMORIES of a Great Journey. Under his name was written “Globally Connected, Locally Anchored”. In fact, that label was Hans’ mantra.

He was indeed well connected; with friends and colleagues all around the globe, many of them within the United Nations system and its specialized agencies, or from within academia. Dr Geiser began his academic career as an Assistant Lecturer and Research Assistant at the Graduate Institute of International Studies at the University of Geneva in 1966. From 1969 to 1970, he was Assistant to the Director of Public Health Policies at SANDOZ in Basel, Switzerland. After completing his MA in Law at University of Fribourg, Switzerland in 1972, he became a member of the Swiss team that helped develop a Graduate International Relations institute for the Caribbean region – the Institute of International Relations, located at the St Augustine Campus of The University of the West Indies.

From 1972 to 1974, Dr Geiser served as Lecturer at the Institute of International Relations, leaving to head up the UNITAR’s International Law Training programme for government legal advisers and university professors from various developing regions in New York.
As Chief of the European Office of UNITAR, between 1976 and 1981, Dr Geiser acted as liaison between the UN Specialized Agencies and European-based international organizations. A year later, he was involved in developing and implementing a large number of technical and professional training programmes for staff of the World Bank in Washington, DC. Then he went back to New York from 1983 to 1989 to direct the UNITAR programme in multilateral diplomacy, international co-operation and international human rights law, working specifically to help build capacity in these areas for developing countries.

In 1989 Dr Geiser was appointed by Kofi Annan to be the Director of the Training Department at the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization in Turin, Italy. Concurrently, he served as the first Director of the United Nations Staff College in Turin – a training facility that he designed and managed. This facility was geared to offering UN system-wide training for senior UN officials.

Nine years later Dr Geiser would return to the Caribbean as UNDP Resident Representative and UN System Resident Coordinator with responsibilities for Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. After that tour of duty with the UN, he lectured at the Institute of International Relations on Sustainable Development and Human Rights on and off until this semester when he delivered his final class to students at the Institute.

His roles at the helm of the Sub-Regional Office of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and as a consultant to the Minister of Foreign Affairs added to the Dr. Geiser’s public service repertoire. But he will also be remembered for his love of Calypso, his membership on the Board of the Sunshine Awards in New York (from 1989 until his death) and his membership on the Board of ETeck (from 2010 until his passing).

Dr. Geiser surrounded by his students on the last day of his Human Rights and Sustainable Development class this semester.