



# WFWPI OFFICES FOR UN RELATIONS NEWSLETTER



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## UN's Priorities for 2022

*By Mako Mori*

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres spoke to the General Assembly on January 21, 2022, urging countries to unite towards a more equal and hopeful world. Mr. Guterres laid out the five UN priorities for 2022, calling it a “five-alarm global fire.” He urged Member states to act now and go into emergency mode surrounding the five action areas: Combating COVID-19, Transforming the Global Financial System, Take Urgent Climate Action, Put People First in the Digital World and Building Sustainable Peace.

The Secretary-General spoke first and foremost, about preventing the spread of the coronavirus. He raised his concern for the inequalities that have become more and more prevalent with the unequal distribution of vaccines and support.



### **Vision**

Women working together to realize one global family rooted in a culture of sustainable peace.

### **Mission**

Empowering women as peacebuilders and leaders in the family to transform the community, nation and world.

Through education, advocacy, partnership, reconciliation and humanitarian service, WFWPI aims to create an environment of peace and well-being for future generations and people of all races, cultures and religious creeds.

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## UN's Priorities for 2022 (Cont'd)

On the second alarm, Mr. Guterres expressed his concern about the failure of the global financial system. He highlighted specific examples of especially in middle-income nations, debt relief is denied, despite the rising poverty levels. This negatively affects women's empowerment, as most of the world's poorest consist of women and girls.

The Secretary-General called for action on the climate crisis, as the world is far off track in limiting the temperature rise, as promised in the Paris Agreement. It was reported that in 2020, "climate shocks forced 30 million people to flee their homes -- three times more than those displaced by war and violence." He called to look to young people as a source of inspiration, as many, including WFWPI, are committed to the climate crisis as an urgent priority.

Alarm four was on the topic of technology and cyberspace, and the UN chief pointed to the reality in which women lack internet access far more than men. But Mr. Guterres highlighted the hopeful fact that "simply connecting schools (with low connectivity) to the internet can grow GDP by 20 percent." Therefore, the Secretary-General proposed a Global Digital Compact as an initiative to foster global digital cooperation.

Finally, Mr. Guterres shared how at this time, records indicate the "highest number of violent conflicts since 1945." He reassured the public that the UN stands for peace and "conflict resolution is at the heart of the proposed New Agenda for Peace." The Secretary-General closed by reaffirming women's key role in the peacemaking and decision-making processes.

As the roadmap to a more hopeful future is outlined, WFWPI, would once again like to align our efforts to the UN's priorities, especially their focus on climate action and women's peace and security. The climate crisis is a global concern, and although it is easily ridden with fear, it is also an opportunity for collaboration and solidarity. We have seen this first hand, through the Giving for Good Climate Action Projects in 11 countries around the world. Each need in the community is unique and women have been at the forefront of taking care of their families and communities. It is truly empowering to see women bringing people together to fight for a cause greater than themselves. The Climate Action projects have brought a sense of oneness and partnership as a global family. We hope to continue empowering women while healing the Earth, together with the UN.

## ACTION AREAS 2022

UN Secretary-General António Guterres



Tackle the pandemic



Transform the global financial system



Take urgent climate action



Build sustainable peace



Put people first in the digital world

## Preventing and Combating Crimes That Affect the Environment

*By Renate Amesbauer*



At the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) in Kyoto, Japan in March 2021, any crime that affects the environment has been highlighted and prioritized more than ever before: So much that the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) is calling together an “Expert Discussion on Crimes that Affect the Environment.” Not only is it that wildlife of species of animals and plants are being endangered, but it is also that the livelihoods of people at stake.

A deep concern was expressed about all those who have been injured, threatened or exploited by organized criminal groups involved in or benefiting from crimes that affect the environment. Concerns were also expressed by those whose living environment, safety, health or livelihoods are endangered or put at risk by those crimes, affirming its resolve to assist and protect those affected, in accordance with national law.

Deep concern was also put forth about the fact that activities of organized criminal groups that affect the environment hinder and undermine efforts undertaken by States to protect the environment, promote the rule of law and achieve sustainable development, including efforts to contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Recognizing that there are even more possible effects of crimes that affect the environment, they may also have a negative impact on economies, public health, human safety, food security, livelihoods and habitats. There are even more points

raised in this connection. At the 14th UN CCPCJ gathering, Heads of State and the Government, Ministers and Representatives of Member States had expressed their deep concern about the negative impact of crime on the environment and affirmed their endeavor to adopt effective measures to prevent and combat crimes that affect the environment. This includes illicit trafficking in wildlife, including, flora and fauna that are actually protected by the Convention on International Trade and classified as Endangered Species. There is also the topic of hazardous wastes and other wastes and the trade in precious metals, stones and others.

A determination was made to prevent and combat crimes that affect the environment by making the best possible use of and by strengthening legislation, international cooperation, capacity-building, criminal justice responses and law enforcement efforts, dealing with transnational organized crime, corruption and money laundering linked to such crimes, and illicit financial flows derived from such crimes, while acknowledging the need to deprive criminals of proceeds of crime. Reaffirming also that States are to carry out their obligations to combat transnational organized crime as well as corruption in a manner consistent with the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and international law and with human rights and fundamental freedoms. as corruption in a manner consistent with the purposes and principles set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and international law and with human rights and fundamental freedoms.



## The NEW Human Right to a Clean, Healthy, Safe, Sustainable Environment

*By Carolyn Handschin*



Applause filled the room on October 8, 2021, an infrequent occurrence at the Human Rights Council (HRC) chamber, when the long-fought-for resolution to a safe, healthy, sustainable environment was adopted. To reach this historic day, explained David Boyd, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, and the Environment, “took literally millions of people, and years and years of work.”

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other global instruments of the day, with other looming concerns, did not address the environment. It was rather in the 1960’s that a wave of advocacy for protecting the environment grew vocal. Several years later, emanating from the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, The Stockholm Declaration and Plan of Action was adopted that provided incentive and tools for the negotiation of national action plans and a further catalyzation of civil society toward environmental issues. An additional, significant outcome was the creation of a new UN agency, the UN Environmental Program (UNEP).

Concerted efforts in the mid 1990’s led by Costa Rica, South Africa and Switzerland tabled a series of HRC resolutions on “Human Rights and the Environment” but were opposed by governments of several large nations. In 2006 when the Commission on Human Rights was recreated as the Human Rights Council, the nation of Maldives, with very real concerns at home, revived the debates between human rights and environmental harm.

In 2012, the Council created a new post, appointing John Knox as the independent expert to clarify human rights obligations related to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy, sustainable environment. Collaborating with scholars and pro bono attorneys during his six year mandate, a remarkable study on existing human rights treaties and instruments, national and regional tribunal studies and laws,



UN resolutions related to the environment were produced. Their remarkably consistent conclusions were, explained. Dr. Knox, “The protection of human rights and the protection of the environment form a virtuous circle...The exercise of human rights such as rights to information and public participation and decision-making helps to ensure the protection of the environment, good health, food and water, adequate housing, and the highest standard of living; and a healthy environment helps to ensure the full enjoyment of all human rights.”

By 2020, there was a political momentum towards universal recognition, led by the Maldives, Costa Rica, Switzerland, Slovenia, Finland, Fiji, Morocco and Monaco. The UN Special Rapporteurs, and academics, and many environmental activists signed a letter to a core group of governments in support of the R2E mandate, imploring them “to seize the historic opportunity now before us and to publicly commit to tabling the necessary resolutions before both the Council and the General Assembly by the end of 2021 – in time for the 50th anniversary of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 2022.

With whirlwind speed, it was endorsed by both UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, and over 1000 civil society groups. Finally, seventy other governments on the HRC voiced their commitment and 15 UN agencies concurred in an exceptional declaration.

This is part of the story behind the thunderous applause at the Dialogue of Civilizations chamber at the United Nations in Geneva on October 8, 2021. Although Human Rights Council resolutions might not be legally binding, they have proven over and over again to drive strong political commitments, much more assuredly when a concerned civil society engages in partnership with their governments for local implementation.

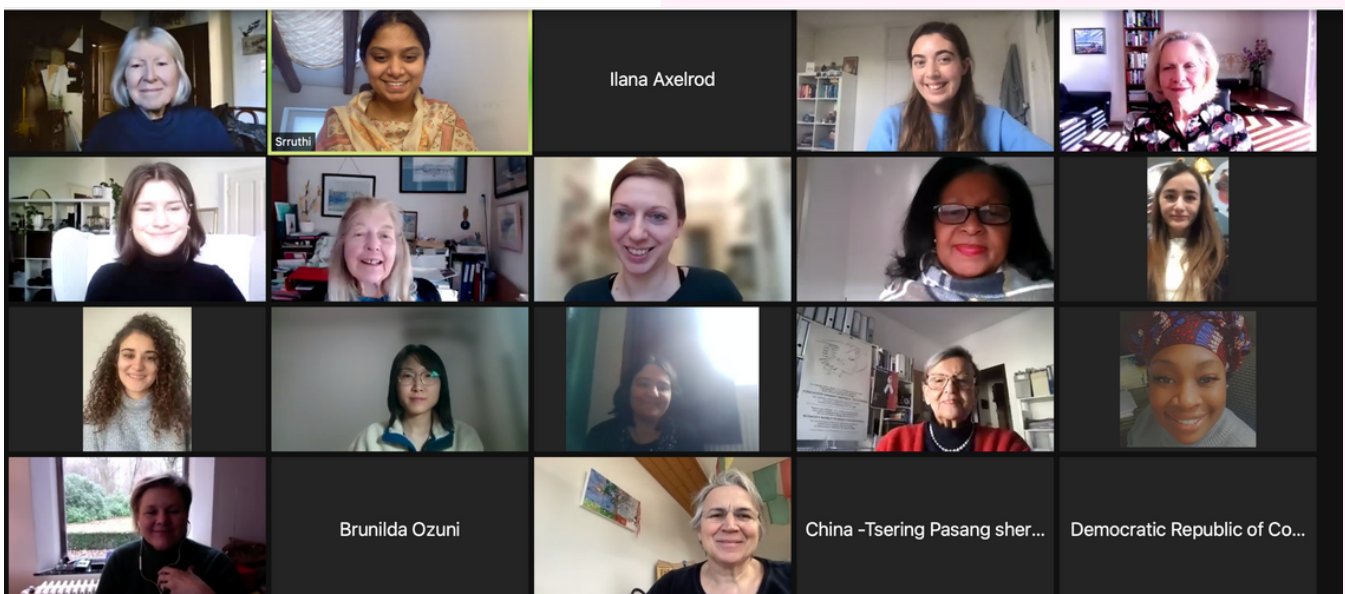
## Global Youth Conference Hosted by the NGO CSW Geneva as a New Path to Inclusive Advocacy

By *Srruthi Lekha R.*

The rapid onset of change in the social, economic and political scenario in the world has also invited changes into the UN systems, which further has moved organizations to work in the changing space, especially the virtual world. The Global Youth Conference on the Commission of the Status of the Women organized by the NGO CSW Geneva with Polity Link International aimed to make a difference in the arena of discussion, focusing on the key areas concerning women and gender equality with respect to climate change, environmental and disaster risk policies and programs. The approach to this conference used a MUN approach with a very intersectional and intergenerational method of debates and discussion.

Highlighting the key areas of discussion and involving participants from various countries of the world, the conference was a platform for issues to be raised and discussed, policies to be framed and decisions to be made. The deliberation and discussion, allowed everyone to share a common space where innovative ideas were exchanged. Around 100 young participants from all over the world, with a specific majority from lower-income countries created a great impact at the conference, through its diversity and inclusivity. The conference successfully hosted dialogues, debates and interactive sessions to write a draft agreed conclusion, which was then unanimously agreed upon by all delegates participating.

The conference was not only a place of impact but a platform for empowerment and sharing knowledge. With creative and youthful ways of sharing knowledge, the conference hosted side events that used creative games to raise knowledge and awareness about crucial issues of women and girls globally. Expert speakers from organizations such as the United Nations Peacekeeping Office and other major international organizations graced the sessions through their keynote speeches and addresses, which were received very well with inspiration from the young participants.



## GFGI Climate Action Grant Post-Project Evaluation

*By Mako Mori*



On January 26 and 28, the WFWPI Office for UN Relations in New York held the GFGI Climate Action Grant Post-Project Evaluations for 12 projects which were awarded funds through GFGI in the summer of 2021. The purpose of this meeting was to review the challenges and best practices of each project, as well as to receive feedback on any challenges. We believe it is vital to continue to adapt each program to meet the unique needs of their communities.

In the first part of the program, each of the projects was presented for five to seven minutes. It was truly inspiring to see how their visions were actualized in reality over the course of a few months. All of the projects told impactful stories of creative climate adaptation initiatives, including inspiring stories of unified efforts of women leaders, which displayed resilience and resourcefulness as a hopeful approach to solving the planetary emergency we are experiencing.

WFWP Albania's Reduce-Reuse-Recycle Campaign made waves on Albania's news station and schools. They encouraged young people to mobilize for an awareness campaign on the excessive use of plastic bags and bottles and the pollution that it caused in Albania including the Adriatic Sea. WFWP Brazil was able to provide 200 families with clean drinking water along the coast of the Amazon River. Used tires in Paraguay are now repurposed into beautiful park planters. Babies in Limpopo, South Africa are now using environmentally clean and income-generating cloth nappies. The solar lamp projects are lighting homes in Kenya, Mali and South Africa, helping women and children to be productive even after sunset.

From the environmental awareness campaign in Burkina Faso, the reforestation project in Zambia, to the Permaculture Literacy Program in the Philippines, WFWP chapters are creating a wave of women-empowering climate adaptation initiatives, influencing young minds and helping shape local policies towards mindfulness and earth-healing lifestyles.

The second part of the meeting was led by Ms. Merly Barlaan, CAO and Deputy Director of the WFWPI Office for UN Relations in NY, who gave training on the "Key Components of Sustainable Projects" from conceptualization to institutionalization. Ms. Barlaan spoke in-depth about Project Management, Partnership Opportunities, and Fundraising and Sustainability. In her presentation, Ms. Barlaan emphasized the importance of framing our messages and aligning our projects to the local and national agenda as it is integral to the process of creating partnerships and finding sponsors who resonate with our vision.

The third portion of the meeting was led by Ms. Amber Lefevre, a WFWPI Office for UN Relations NY intern. Ms. Lefevre conducted research on each of the country's environmental promises and plans. The reason for this is so that each of the countries attending this meeting would be more aware of their own country's plan for the future. When the projects can supplement and help the country reach its goals, the government is most likely to grant funding. Many of the project leaders expressed their gratitude to Ms. Amber for her dedicated efforts to provide promising research and resources that could help them in developing future partnerships and areas of focus.



## **CSW66: An Opportunity for a New Level of Partnership?**

*By Carolyn Handschin*

Following the 65th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March of 2021, where virtual and pre-recorded events replaced the always-exciting inter-personal opportunities to liaise with government representatives of the previous years, civil society networks decided collaboratively to raise their lists of growing concerns. The more focus and discussion on what is called, “the methods of work” of the CSW, the more clear it became that the spaces for civil society to actually influence debates and decisions were inadequate.

The responses of civil society groups, regionally and globally, sparked healthy communication with the new CSW66 Chair, Ambassador Mathu Joyini, her secretariat, as well as with the new UN Women Executive Director, Ms Sima Sami Barhous. The NGO Committee on the Status of Women in Geneva took action quickly, gathered their thoughts and prepared a letter in July, less than four months after the CSW65 sessions. An assessment with six key recommendations was sent signed by the Committee President, Carolyn Handschin (WFWPI) and committee members, representing sixteen international NGOs.

“While NGOs appreciate that the CSW is a UN process driven by States, we believe the constructive participation of civil society is essential, as without this, it is difficult for civil society to take ownership of the Agreed Conclusions or support their implementation. This hinders progress in achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment. Civil society involvement can enhance the impact of government interventions, offer different insights from those in official circles, help the government determine the level of local support for its policies, build mutual understanding, increase support for policy decisions and increase civil society’s ownership of the jointly agreed recommendations and actions.” Promptly responding to this and other critical evaluations of their working methods, the new CSW66 Chair invited concerned NGOs to a briefing where several good practice initiatives of government/ civil society partnership were showcased and discussed in relation to the CSW. The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development and two Vienna-based Commissions; the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) were given the floor to describe their ways of partnering with civil society. The HLPF, possibly the most advanced in this area, was established as an outcome of the Rio + 20 Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012.

Its founding resolution boldly stated the important consultative role of major groups at the international level, “in order to make better use of their expertise”. While preserving the intergovernmental core of the Forum, modalities for participation by other groups, including NGOs were stressed from the onset, including their access to all information, right to intervene at formal meetings, and opportunities to submit documents.

The review of “functioning of its methods of work” is not new to the CSW, nor any subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly (GA) and ECOSOC. GA Resolution 50/227 of 1996 was already calling for “Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields”. Similar requests were made for the CSW in 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2017. The 2015 ECOSOC Resolution 2015/6 is the basis of reference for the current discussions between governments and civil society to enhance the impact of the work of the Commission (CSW66). That is a very positive, encouraging aspect of the institution; while there is continuity (recalling, reaffirming,) there is, as well, an honest openness to re-evaluation and renewal.

These are some of the recommendations gathered from the NGO CSW’s, North American and European Caucus, Women’s Major Group, etc. for improving methods of work -that have been cited in various communications with the CSW66 secretariat. They include access to government deliberations with additional time to intervene, including in preparatory processes; a civil society liaison in government delegations; rotation of the CSW conference to different regions to encourage more regional participation; regular reporting of other UN entities to the CSW on their compliance to the themes; broadening (digitalizing) the space for ongoing CSO discussions with governments and UN; reviewing the decision making processes for Agreed Conclusions, and finally and so importantly, continued review of partnership for implementation.

As these discussions continue, it remains to be seen how much of the demand will be considered. However, it is also important that we, as civil society actors review our own credentials, and motives. Where access is difficult, a reflection must be made as to “why”? Do we hold ourselves to the same rigorous review that we demand from the governments? We may not get what we are asking until we do.



## The UN Dream: Intergenerational Cooperation and our Journey to Peace

*By Amanda Bradley & Mako Mori*



The United Nations Day is held annually on October 24 to celebrate the day the UN Charter went into effect, as well as to reflect upon the founding purpose of the United Nations. It also represents a day to reflect on the years of unrest following the end of World War II, and how the UN was founded as an intergovernmental organization to maintain global peace and security.

However, while the UN continues to pursue its founding purpose to end the scourge of war, there is always the risk of losing this progress without the presence of intergenerational cooperation and new perspectives and ideas. In order to commemorate the 76th Anniversary of when the UN Charter went into force and to reinvigorate the UN's founding spirit centered upon uniting under the banner of peace, Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) and the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP) organized a Virtual Forum on the topic of "The UN Dream: Intergenerational Cooperation and our Journey to Peace," on Friday, October 22, 2021. The forum was co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Philippines to the United Nations in New York. This forum was created to bring together representatives from the elder and younger generations, where inspiration and wisdom can be exchanged, as challenges and hopes are discussed in the UN's dream for peace.

In the Opening Remarks, H.E. Enrique A. Manalo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Philippines to the United Nations, highlighted the importance of instilling conflict resolution and peace-oriented values among the youth. Ambassador Manalo delineated how the youth are agents of change and engaging them is critical to inclusive nation-building.

Next, Dr. Rima Salah, Former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, delivered an empowering Keynote Address on the transformative potential intergenerational cooperation can have on world peace. Dr. Salah began by sharing how her motivation for building a world of peace was largely shaped by her childhood as a refugee. She emphasized the role each individual plays in this effort for peace, saying "it is the strength of our partnership, adults and youth that will shape the pace and direction of the progress we make so that the UN delivers on the goals and values of the Charter. It is our shared responsibility. The time is now."

## BRIDGING DIVIDES



Ms. Tarina Ahuja, Co-founder and President of the Greater Good Initiative, was the second Keynote Speaker. Ms. Ahuja spoke on the importance of building an exclusive world of peace and justice, ensuring to subdue the barriers that restrict the youth, as well as the importance of building a world of empathy to further achieve the UN dream. Her vibrant energy embodied the Sikh phrase she shared with the audience, “Chardi Kala,” which translates to “eternal optimism.” Ms. Ahuja shared how it is critical that in this time, “we hold onto another, care for another with sincerity, joining hands in our collective liberation.” The keynote speakers and representatives of the co-sponsoring organizations: Dr. Rima Salah, Ms. Tarina Ahuja, Ms. Katarina Connery and Mr. Miilhan Stephens, President of Youth and Students for Peace USA, then lead a very engaging and heartfelt discussion. The panel discussion was guided by the free-flowing synergy that was evident throughout, in which the panelists embraced the perspectives of one another so openly.

Ms. Katarina Connery, representing WFWP, shared her own valuable experience of intergenerational cooperation in the workplace by stating the importance of how as the younger generation, we must first have the heart “to listen and inherit,” then the elder generation can begin to trust us and give us more responsibility. This mindset of giving first rather than expecting to receive was a breath of fresh air.

Mr. Miilhan Stephens, representing IAYSP, made an important point about how the youth have the burning passion and energy to make a change but are often “not yet equipped” with the education, or “know-how.” He shared admirably about wanting to inherit the elder generation’s loyalty to one cause, to which they have committed their lives. These deliberations were a beautiful exchange of ideas and experiences and provided substantial guidance as to the future of the UN, the future of generations to come, as well as what our role can be as individuals to contribute to peace and justice.

Lastly, Closing Remarks were made by Ms. Merly Barlaan, Deputy Director of the WFWPI Offices for UN Relations, further highlighting the importance of the original founding principles of the UN and intergenerational cooperation between the younger and elder generations. Ms. Barlaan delivered a powerful message regarding the vital mission of WFWPI: “WFWPI envisions a world of peace and prosperity where women lead with a feminine leadership paradigm invoking the feminine maternal instincts of love, virtue, nurturance, wellbeing, cooperation and education.” She concluded the event, urging people to see the world as their own family, by quoting the WFWPI Statement submitted to the UN Commission on the Status of Women 66: “A family ‘leaves no one behind,’ seeking ‘universal peace in larger freedom’(A/RES/70/1).”