



WFWPI OFFICES FOR UN RELATIONS NEWSLETTER



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67th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

By Christine Rose Bulayo

The 67th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) was held from March 6-17, 2023, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. This session was attended by government officials, UN representatives, civil society organizations and women's rights activists from around the world, and focused on the theme, "Empowering Women and Girls Through Education and Training in the Age of Information Technology." The aim of the session was to review progress and identify challenges in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

The Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) brought a delegation comprising of 30 members from different WFWPI chapters around the globe to participate in CSW67. Prior to the start of CSW67, the delegation attended a 3-day hybrid UN Advocacy Training during which time they were equipped with the necessary knowledge, tools and strategic skills to participate actively in the sessions. Through this training, WFWPI leaders were also empowered to create local impact that support the UN in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The training was organized by the WFWPI Office for UN Relations in New York and speakers included representatives of the WFWPI Offices for UN Relations worldwide, led by the Chief Administrative Officer and Deputy Director of the WFWPI Offices for UN Relations, Mrs. Merly Barlaan and the IVP, Director of the WFWPI Offices for UN Relations and President of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women at the United Nations in Geneva, Mrs. Carolyn Handschin. (cont. on p.3)



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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67th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (cont.)



CSW67 became a platform for WFWP delegates to share WFWP’s perspective on peace and the work of its global chapters, centered on the co-founders’ vision of creating a world of sustainable peace through encouraging interdependence, mutual prosperity and universal values.

CSW also provided an opportunity to meet individuals and partners crucial in developing activities that will create a positive impact on the world. During the session, the WFWPI delegation met with delegates from their respective countries, which opened new opportunities for partnerships and collaboration. One success story is how the WFWP Philippines team met the Philippine government delegation to CSW, which led to an invitation for WFWP to speak at a Philippine-led side event organized by the Department of Science and Technology - Science Education Institute. They were able to share WFWP Philippines’ best practices that have been implemented in their community and highlighted the importance of collaboration between the government and civil society to create a regenerative, sustainable and safe environment for all.

CSW67 concluded with the adoption of a set of agreed conclusions by the UN Member States, which emphasized the need for gender-responsive education and training to empower women and girls in the age of information technology. The agreed conclusions also highlighted the importance of addressing gender-based violence, promoting women's economic empowerment and ensuring women's participation and leadership in decision-making processes.

Overall, the CSW67 provided a platform for stakeholders to review progress and identify challenges in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. WFWPI's participation in CSW67 contributed to this effort by empowering its leaders and promoting its community works, which align with the CSW67 theme and the SDGs.

Commission on the Status of Women “Consultation Day Geneva”

By Carolyn Handschin

“CSW Consultation Day” is a long-standing tradition organized by the NY NGO Committee on the Status of Women to orient participants coming to New York each year to attend the UN Commission on the Status of Women. In 2021, locked down by COVID, the Geneva Committee on the Status of Women (NGO CSW Geneva) decided to hold its own virtual Consultation Day, catering to Geneva-based institutions, government missions and NGO networks under the banner of, “Geneva- Heart of Human Rights & Service to Humanity.” Since then, a Geneva-hosted “CSW Consultation Day” has been held annually during CSW and is becoming a tradition.

The CSW67 theme was focused on access to education through technology to improve the lives of women and girls, and to exacerbate harmful consequences of those developments. The Geneva Consultation Day presenters included the Ambassador of Fiji and four United Nations bodies, as well as experts from NGO CSW Geneva and youth activists in each of the three sessions. (Full recording: <https://ngocsw-geneva.ch/>)

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNICEF, both speakers at the event, have been instrumental in establishing an interagency partnership around the theme “Connectivity in Education” that has been much lauded. Below are excerpts from the presentation of Mr. Sanjay Wijesekera, Programme Director, New York HQ, UNICEF:

“Adolescent girls in almost every context face tremendous barriers to accessing the information, services, resources and support they need. These constraints deny them the ability to make informed decisions and choices for themselves and to care for their health and bodily autonomy. School dropout, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and violence are real risks. Adolescent girls end up taking on two to three times more household chores, compromising their right to learn and play.”



On targeted programs for girls, with girls:

“Every girl should have access to learning and skills programs, in and out of school, so that they can make decisions about the future they want. Research tells us these programs are most effective when they are girl-centered, and girls have access to peer support networks, mentors and job shadowing opportunities linked to sectors with job opportunities.”

On investing in the reduction of restrictive gender norms:

“Girls’ access to and use of basic technology, such as mobile phones, is dramatically restricted by negative social norms that prevent them from having the same freedoms as boys. Girls are also underrepresented in the tech industry, including gaming. We need more devices in the hands of girls, linked to opportunities to learn the skills they need to innovate and create online and offline. These programs need deep investment in communities and families so that girls’ access to learning and IT does not involve risks to their safety.”

On investing in adolescent girls’ transition from learning to earning on an equal basis with boys:

“More investment is needed in programs that empower girls to influence the tech industry from within, by becoming developers, designers and coders. By 2025, UNICEF will support girl-centered programs in 30 countries that will directly impact 20 million adolescent girls, providing skills, learning, protection and other opportunities.”

On the need for meaningful partnerships with women and girl-led networks and organizations:

“We are committed to channeling more flexible resources to you, and to stand beside you as you advocate for change. This is especially important in humanitarian crises, where civil society is a lifeline for women and girls. A sincere thanks to the NGO CSW Geneva for inviting UNICEF to be part of this very important consultation. I look forward to hearing your priorities and suggestions. Your partnership is invaluable.”



The banner features a light blue background with a white curved shape in the center. In the top left corner, it says '1973-2023 NGO CSW Geneva' with a logo of a hand holding a globe. In the top right corner, it says 'UN WOMEN' with the UN logo and 'United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women'. The central text reads: 'CSW 67 CONSULTATION DAY' in large yellow letters, followed by '“Geneva- Heart of Human Rights & Service to Humanity”' in green, 'Tuesday, February 28, 2023' in green, and '4:00- 6:30 pm CET' and '10:00- 12:30 EST' in green.

The 67th Commission on the Status of Women Parallel Event: Partnership in Equipping Women and Girls with Technological Resilience, Discernment and Protection from Digital Dangers

By Naomi Ito

On March 9, 2023, the Women’s Federation for World Peace International hosted a parallel event for the 67th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67). As the priority theme of the CSW67 was, “Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls,” the topic for the parallel event was, “Partnership in equipping women and girls with technological resilience, discernment and protection from digital dangers.” More than 40 attendees joined on-site and more than 90 attendees joined live online.

The first speaker, Dr. Karen Smith, is the CEO of Global Development Enterprise and NGO Academy, providing practical guidance to leaders driving transformative social change. She brought awareness to the importance of developing our “soft” power skills which are communication, emotional intelligence, resilience and negotiation. Soft skills are vital to have but they take time and are hard to develop. Gender inequality is just one of the social issues of the bigger issue that we are facing because of the pace of the growth of technology. Our traditional structures of institutions cannot grow as fast as technology is changing. She made the presentation understandable by breaking it down into pieces and explaining the mechanism of our human emotion and survival instincts.



The second speaker, Ms. Atefeh Riazi, is the chief information officer of Hearst and serves as the United Nations assistant secretary-general and CITO. She brought profound contributions by emphasizing the importance of raising our children with the right message so they can be educated to have a voice in the tech industry. Tech is changing the world and has brought impact on social, economic and financial issues but many do not have a voice because they are wired to think that they are not worthy to have a voice. She encourages women to have a voice and engage in the important issues we are facing today.

The third speaker, Mrs. Adriana Gascoigne, is the founder and CEO of Girls in Tech and serves on WAPPP and Harvard Kennedy School's Women in Public Policy Program board. She established Girls in Tech to be a global force delivering local education and opportunities for women with the goal to eliminate the gender gap in technology. She focuses on giving women and girls the opportunity to be trained and educated in STEM. She brought inspiration to the crowd by presenting her initiatives of educating and building confidence in women, and through her works with organizations and companies by advising on how to support the development of women in tech.

The fourth speaker, Engr. Christine Rose Bulayo, is the regional secretary-general for WFWP Asia Pacific 1. She is also a computer engineer and a senior high and college instructor. She brought her unique perspective of ways we can integrate permaculture and digital technology with a holistic approach. Permaculture is an approach to development of ecosystems intended to be sustainable and self-sufficient. She presented how we can integrate digital technology into our daily lives and create a safe, green and digital environment where both men and women can equally participate.

At the end, there was a roundtable discussion and a Q&A session involving the attendees to participate through questions. Overall, the participants felt educated and enlightened by the content and inspired by some of the initiatives that the speakers presented. The event brought experts and practitioners from various fields of tech to share their wealth of information, and discussed the ways to ensure that all women and girls are equally and properly equipped and protected to be resilient, discerning, knowledgeable and empowered in this digital age.



**Encouraging
Involvement of Young
People in Community
Development and
Entrepreneurship -
To counter the abuse of
Narcotic Drugs and
other Criminal
Activities**

By Renate Amesbauer



On March 17, 2023, WFWPI hosted a hybrid side event at the 66th Session of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs. The event was on the theme: “Encouraging Involvement of Young People in Community Development and Entrepreneurship - To counter the abuse of Narcotic Drugs and other Criminal Activities.”

Dr. Maria Riehl, Director of the WFWPI Office for UN Relations in Vienna, warmly welcomed everyone. In her opening words Dr. Riehl highlighted the role of the family as the cradle of every human being and society, she explained its importance for instilling basic values and good character development.

Her Excellency Ms. Mary Wangui Mugwanja, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Republic of Kenya, next outlined the situation of young people in Africa. In Kenya, for example, over 80 percent of the population are under the age of 35. Since youth are the future, she stressed the importance of guiding and mentoring them properly. She then presented an overview of the extensive programs in Kenya to support youth and provide opportunities for a hopeful future, such as providing funds to support entrepreneurship, women and disabled persons, a Kenyan youth employment enterprise involving the youth in decision making and recently having several high-ranking positions filled by younger professionals.

Mr. Batware, Programme Officer, UNODC Civil Society Unit, mentioned numerous programs undertaken by the UNODC to strengthen the resilience of youth to counter drugs and crime. He emphasized the value of peers, and the potential of those who have recovered from addiction. Rehabilitated addicts can talk to and mentor those who are at risk. In conclusion, he quoted Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the UN: “Young people should be at the forefront of innovation; empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace.”

Dr. Susan Kone, International Vice President of WFWP Africa and President of WFWP Kenya, then spoke on the topic, “Youth Empowerment for Peace and Prosperity.” She highlighted the importance of education, in particular “character education,” a term for educating on ethics. A positive impact has been observed in schools where character education programs are conducted regularly. Students’ grades improve as does general behavior. Referring to the impact of sports and martial arts clubs developing in the villages, Dr. Kone said these clubs not only train in physical fitness, but also provide mental training, which in turn shape one’s character. Such activities protect the youth from unhealthy lifestyles. Moreover, several graduates have experienced quicker access to employment, particularly with the police force or security services. WFWP’s activities can be accessed at www.wfwp.org.



Flevian Machoka, Action Youth Development - Uganda (AOYDE), spoke about, “Countering the Abuse of Narcotic Drugs and Criminal Activities.” She briefly outlined the situation of Ugandan youth. Due to lack of opportunities, the youth are more vulnerable to drug and alcohol abuse. Unfortunately, this is often portrayed as harmless and “cool.” AOYDE members, who work on a voluntary basis, often using their own resources, encourage young people to reshape and redirect their lives, make healthy decisions and remain in or return to education. Professional skills training courses open doors, which enable young people to earn a living. AOYDE’s resources are located on their website, <https://actionyouth.org>.

Peter Deininger, Peace Designer Coordinator of the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace (IAYSP) was the next presenter. Mr. Deininger spoke enthusiastically about the Peace Designer program, which encourages youth to become actively involved in projects shaping their community, becoming agents of change rather than passive partakers of society. The training is not limited to activities, it also trains participants to become a person of integrity with a strong sense of responsibility, empathy and service to others. More information is provided at www.yospace.org.

Dr. Wolfgang Beiglböck, International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAP), an initiative of the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), spoke on the “Treatment and Rehabilitation for Young Persons Who Use Drugs in Austria.” Dr. Beiglböck described the activities of the Anton Proksch Institute (A.P.I.), situated on the outskirts of Vienna. This institution is a place for treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts and other kinds of addicts. Starting with detoxification, they move on to short- and long-term treatment options. They also help with assisted housing and, if needed, provide aftercare for months and years. The A.P.I. offers comprehensive treatment, adapted to the specific needs of the individual client. For more information, visit their website at www.api.or.at.

UN Advocacy Workshop and Social Forum

By Srruthi Lekha Raaja Elango

The UN Advocacy Workshop, which was held parallel to the UN Social Forum 2022 on November 3rd and 4th, 2022 at the WFWPI UN Office in Geneva, provided an opportunity for 12 young professionals from 10 different countries to learn about advocacy at the United Nations.

During the workshop, participants learned about the important role of youth and their leadership at the UN. They also discussed the obstacles faced by young people in assuming leadership roles and developing their personality and public speaking skills. Additionally, they learned about negotiation and mediation techniques and strategy building, which are essential skills for effective advocacy work.

As part of the workshop's agenda, the youth participated in the Social Forum at the United Nations Office in Geneva, where they delivered statements as delegates of WFWPI. They also had the opportunity to meet with officials from UN Women, OHCHR and other important organizations to discuss their concerns and ideas.

At the heart of the Social Forum is the belief that everyone's voice matters, and that inclusive and participatory dialogue is essential for creating positive social change. The platform provides a space for people from all walks of life to come together, share their experiences and perspectives and work towards common goals.

The Social Forum is not just a one-time event or conference. It's an ongoing process of dialogue and collaboration that takes place through a variety of channels, including online forums, social media platforms and in-person gatherings. The platform is open to anyone who wants to participate and encourages diversity and inclusivity in all its activities. The UN Advocacy Workshop and the UN Social Forum are both important initiatives that provide a platform for dialogue and collaboration on a wide range of social, economic and political issues. Through these events, young people from around the world can come together to share their experiences, perspectives and ideas and work towards common goals.



Youth with Chair of Special Mechanism and making Oral Statements

Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development, 7th Session at the UN Headquarters, New York

By Srruthi Lekha Raaja Elango

The Right to Development (RTD) is a fundamental human right that encompasses the freedom and ability of individuals and communities to actively participate in, contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political progress. It emphasizes the importance of equitable and inclusive development that leaves no one behind. It is crucial for the WFWPI to act as a leader in educating people about the right to development because it aligns with WFWPI's commitment to empowering individuals and communities, particularly women and youth, to thrive and reach their full potential. By raising awareness and promoting understanding of the right to development, WFWPI can foster a global movement towards sustainable and inclusive development that respects the dignity and rights of all individuals.

It was with this determination that WFWPI hosted a training workshop on the Right to Development on April 2, 2023, to prepare a delegation of WFWP representatives to effectively participate and encourage implementation of the mandate of the UN on the Right to Development. Ms. Srruthi Lekha Raaja Elango facilitated the workshop and represented WFWPI in several discussions. Her expertise as an independent consultant on development and human rights was an added benefit to the participation of WFWPI in the sessions. The delegation of WFWPI, led by Ms. Merly Baarlan, Director of the WFWPI Office for UN Relations in New York, and coordinated by her office, included women and youth from different parts of the world. Continuous partnership and cooperation between and amongst our WFWPI UN Offices was a key strength to this process.





The Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development concluded its seventh session and expressed gratitude to member states, civil society, UN experts and academics for their productive discussions and substantive engagement. The questions, answers and suggestions made during the three-day session were welcomed by the Mechanism, and will be used to formulate the conclusions, outcome and recommendations of its annual report which will account for this session and the sixth session held in Geneva in October/November 2022. The annual report is set to be submitted to the 54th session of the Human Rights Council in September 2023.

The Expert Mechanism also appreciated the support of member states to the Right to Development, and recognized their call to operationalize the Right to Development to address the multiple global crises such as geopolitical, financial and climate issues. The Mechanism acknowledged the contributions made on the topics of solidarity and international cooperation to overcome these crises and reaffirmed that the right to development is rooted in the universality, indivisibility, interrelation and interdependence of all human rights. The Mechanism stressed that the implementation of the Right to Development should not be viewed purely from an economic perspective, but rather should consider the constant improvement of the well-being of all individuals and peoples everywhere, where all human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully realized.

Reflection on the HRC Debate in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

*By Cristina Mayebe, Intern, UN
Office Geneva*

*The opinions expressed by the author
does not necessarily reflect the opinion
of WFWPI.*

On March 29, 2023, I attended a debate that was held during the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council in commemoration of the international day for the elimination of racial discrimination. The theme of the panel discussion was, “The urgency of combatting racism and racial discrimination 75 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”

The session started with statements of different UN member states discussing the issue of racism, the racial discrimination of Africans and people of African descent as well as the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action (DDPA).

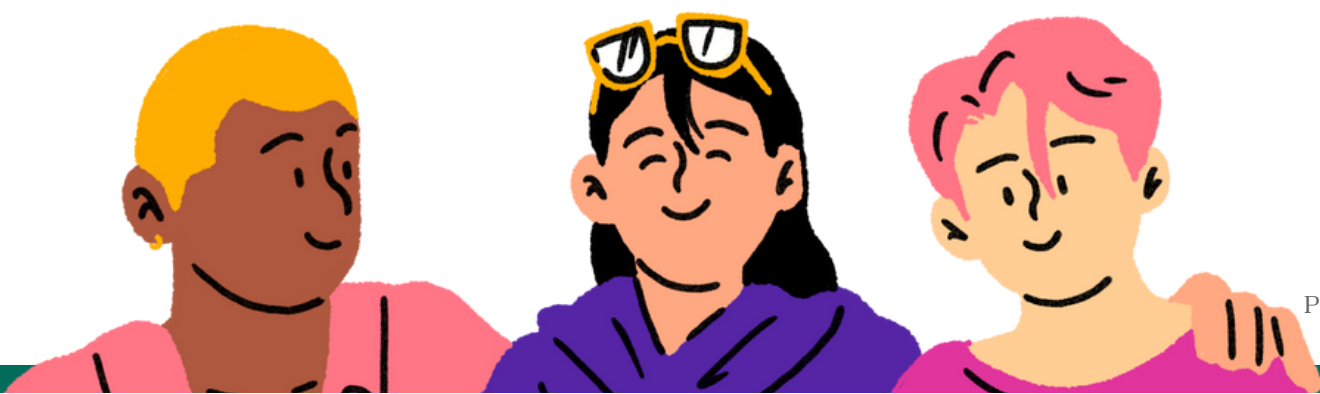
Different representatives of member states including countries like Botswana, Sri Lanka and the state of Palestine, emphasized the importance of recognizing the violations and injustice of the past against people of African descent and their current consequences. The representatives of EU countries and some other groups did not spend much time talking about the effect of racism on people of African descent but talked more about discrimination against migrants, Jews and Muslims, which can also affect people of African descent.

A representative from the China Foundation for Human Rights Development spoke about the discrimination of African Americans as well as Asian Americans in the United States, noting that a black person is three times more likely to be killed by the police than a white person. However, people of African descent face discrimination globally and are the most affected group during a crisis. For instance, during the COVID-19 crisis, Africans and people of African descent were denied entry to shops and supermarkets and were even marginalized and blamed for the speed of the virus’ spread in China. Also, during the Ukraine crisis, both Ukrainian and Polish military forces prevented Africans and people of African descent of all ages from fleeing the country.

Latin American and Brazilian associations acknowledged the need for initiatives by public administrations to adopt national policies to combat racism and mentioned an improvement of the elimination of systemic racism in their countries. This is the type of action I was expecting to see from representatives of the European Union who did not acknowledge the root of racism as colonization or the desire to implement the DDPA or other measures to combat racism.

Even during the right to reply section where member states responded to accusations of racism and racial discrimination, most stated that they were against all forms of racial discrimination, however they didn’t acknowledge any practice of racism or racial discrimination by their government, or mention measures in place to combat racism.

I believe that the right to reply section can be a communication starter for countries and communities with conflict to discuss the issues they face and how to resolve such issues.



75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Right

By Kia Saimoto, Intern, UN Office Geneva

The opinions expressed by the author does not necessarily reflect the opinion of WFWPI.

The 52nd session of the Human Rights Council was filled with topics that focus on the livelihoods of individuals and communities. It was historic to participate in the plans for the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that will take place on December 10, 2023, especially as it reinforces global commitment and celebrates the achievements of the HRC and its members.

The panel sessions surrounding the death penalty, the rights of the child, the rights of persons with disabilities and the elimination of racial discrimination were all relevant as well. Such concerns continue to prevail in varying national contexts, requiring tailored approaches to differing social, economic and political systems. When considering the treatment of children online and the types of access children have to the digital environment, these matters are rapidly developing and gaining interest alongside the development of technology itself. It could be observed that the development and distribution of technology has come at the forefront, while the awareness of rights of the child comes as an afterthought. Each area has been exacerbated by the recent COVID-19 pandemic and the capacities of the varying policies which may or may not address them have also been exposed as a result of the pandemic. There was remarkable value in the topics and discussions throughout the session.

As these issues of the HRC session are crucial for the advancement of the protection of human rights, there is clear pressure on the Council. Providing sustainable solutions in the face of lasting COVID consequences and in the development of political shifts has been challenging. The fact that we are not on track to fully achieve the 2030 agenda has pushed the Council into a difficult position to find ways to redirect or improve its actions to better achieve such goals. From observations, the Council itself and the recent 52nd session is generally effective for the protection of human rights across its member nations and potentially towards the influence of other non-member nations. The increased participation and dialogue from more members would however be beneficial to the session and to the discussions on forming realistic solutions and initiatives for the protections of human rights.



Youth and Human Rights Council

By Jana Kutaish, Intern, UN Office Geneva

The opinions expressed by the author does not necessarily reflect the opinion of WFWPI.



As someone who is passionate about advancing and defending human rights, I was privileged to observe the 50th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The discussion this year included a wide range of human rights topics, including the COVID-19 pandemic's effects and the continued fight against institutional racism and discrimination. The intensity and dedication of the many activists, human rights advocates and leaders of civil society that stood up during the different discussions and debates was one of the most impressive things about the session. They urged the UNHRC and member states to intervene to stop the human rights abuses and breaches they were experiencing by sharing their own personal accounts of injustice.

The session also emphasized the need to defend journalists and human rights advocates, who are increasingly targeted for attacks and threats due to their profession. We heard heartbreaking accounts of journalists and activists who have been persecuted for calling attention to violations of human rights, frequently with little help or protection from their governments. It is abundantly evident that the fight for human rights is far from ended as these and other reflections from the Human Rights Council's 50th session are considered. But amidst all the challenges and impediments, the enthusiasm and dedication of the numerous activists and human rights defenders who took part in the session have spread glimmers of hope. Simultaneously, the papers and presentations from the UNHRC and other experts offered important information and insight on a variety of human rights concerns. These reports stressed the necessity of a comprehensive and intersectional approach to human rights by highlighting the complexity and connectivity of many of the problems we confront.

When a group of young activists spoke up during a discussion on climate change and human rights, it was one of the most motivational moments of the event, I believe. These young people from different corners of the world discussed their opinions and urged the UNHRC to act more promptly and forcefully to address the climate catastrophe and its effect on human rights. Overall, the UNHRC's 50th session's observations reinforced the idea that promoting and preserving human rights for all people is of utmost importance. It is essential that we keep cooperating as we move forward to safeguard and advance human rights all throughout the world. Holding governments and institutions responsible for maintaining the value of human rights requires paying attention to and amplifying the voices of those who are most impacted by violations of human rights. The Human Rights Council's 50th session has demonstrated that there is still a lot to be done, but it has also served as a reminder of the power of collective action in delivering a more just and equitable society.