



# WFWPI UN OFFICE NEWSLETTER

*An Official Newsletter of WFWPI*



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## WFWPI Launches Giving for Good Project to support SDGs 12 and 13

*By Merly Barlaan*

With the recent news of floods, droughts, alarming heat levels and other environmental calamities being experienced all throughout the world, it is no doubt that solving the climate issue is one of the greatest challenges of our time.

As an initiative to help educate, raise awareness and take action on the importance of building the Earth's sustainable future, Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) launched Giving for Good International (GFGI) in 2020, under the leadership of Dr. Sun Jin Moon, Senior Vice President of WFWPI. GFGI is now a new signature project of WFWPI that aims to conserve the Earth and all life through outreach, humanitarian aid and circular fashion.

The "Giving for Good" Auction held in February of this year, auctioned off new or gently used clothing, shoes and accessories, from the closet of Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, co-founder of WFWPI, and her family's closet. Environmental sustainability is a concern close to the heart of Dr. Moon and she expressed her full support and enthusiasm for this fundraiser. The GFGI auctions have raised more than \$200,000 since 2020, to support the global effort to mitigate environmental degradation.

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### **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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# GIVING FOR GOOD AUCTION 2021

On July 16, 2021, WFWPI announced the 10 winners for the GFGI Climate Action Project Grant, as WFWPI's contribution to the "United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030" which was launched by the United Nations in June, 2021, to promote the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Specifically, to facilitate global cooperation for the restoration of degraded and destroyed ecosystems.

GFGI Climate Action Project Grant supports projects and activities related to solving environmental issues aligned with UN SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, Ensure good use of resources, Improving energy efficiency, Sustainable infrastructure, Providing access to basic services, Green and decent jobs, Ensuring a better quality of life for all; and SDG 13: Climate Action.

The following 10 projects were granted funding from the proceeds of WFWP Japan's Giving for Good Auction held in December, 2020.

In addition to WFWPI's "Permaculture Peace Garden" project in the Philippines and "Green Solar Energy for the African Villages" in Kenya, the following 10 winners will be funded by the 2021 GFG Auction proceeds.

**Projects Funded By WFWP Japan's GFG Auction**

- Senegal** - Support for management of vocational training schools "JAMOO1 & JAMOO2"
- Solomon Islands** - Educational equipment support for the "New Hope Academy"
- Bangladesh** - Repairing the school building and replacing desks and chairs of the "Jaigeer Elementary School"
- WFWP USA** - Support for Black women's organizations and COVID-19 relief, in which the Black community has been disproportionately affected.
- Niger** - Construction of water tower and water supply facility at General Health Center in Madeni Tadeta Village (Constructed by WFWP)
- Thailand** - Installation of Water Purifier for the "Sawajjeek Pitthayakom School"
- Afghanistan** - Support for after-school programs such as character education for Afghan refugee students of the "Sayed Jamalludin Afghan School" in India
- Cuba** - Support for Character Education Program
- Bangladesh** - Expenses for management of the "Jaigeer Elementary School"
- Rwanda** - Equipments to construct "New Hope Technical School"

**2021 GFGI Climate Action Project Grant Winners**

1. **ALBANIA** - REDUCE-REUSE-RECYCLE CAMPAIGN
2. **BRAZIL** - CLEAN DRINKING WATER FOR FAMILIES LIVING IN RIVERSIDE COMMUNITIES
3. **BURKINA FASO** - ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND CALL TO ACTION
4. **CAMEROON** - SEPARATION OF WASTE AND COLLECTION OF CHEMICAL WASTE FOR A HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENT
5. **GHANA** - SCHOOL MOBILIZATION FOR RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
6. **MALI** - LET'S IMPROVE THE LIFE AND HEALTH OF FAMILIES WITH SOLAR LIGHTS
7. **PARAGUAY** - CUBIERTA ROGA (TIRE HOUSE) COLLECTION CENTER FOR OUT OF USE TIRES
8. **SOUTH AFRICA (LIMPOPO)** - CLOTH NAPPY GREEN PROJECT
9. **SOUTH AFRICA (SOWETO)** - SOLAR POWER AWARENESS PROJECT IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN SOWETO, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA: "GIVING THE GIFT OF LIGHT"
10. **ZAMBIA** - COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT BY STRENGTHENING TREE PLANTING IN AREAS WHERE THERE HAS BEEN DEFORESTATION AS A RESULT OF CHARCOAL BURNING

As an NGO that promotes the world as one global family, we cannot turn a blind eye to the devastated planet, which affects the well-being and safety of our entire global family. WFWPI hopes that GFGI can establish a tradition of recognizing and supporting climate action projects that contribute to the healing of the planet. 🌍

## Right to Development and the Call for Global Equality

*By Srruthi Lekha Raaja Elango*



The Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development, convened May 17-21, 2021, engaged in debates in the effort to establish a binding treaty on the Right to Development.

Two WFWPI Representatives to the UN, Mrs. Carolyn Handschin and Ms. Srruthi Lekha Raaja Elango, attended the sessions and contributed to the discussion, lobbying and debates. The debates began with introductory statements from UN Member States and were followed by civil society representatives. During its intervention, WFWPI reflected on the need for the global community to take responsibility for filling in the gaps of global parity and realizing the right to development for all.

The statement was well received by members of civil society and was closely aligned with statements made by other CSOs and a number of UN Member States in Asia and the developing world in the following days as the draft convention was discussed. The second and the third days focused on articles, debates and discussions regarding the preamble of the draft convention. WFWPI contributed various thoughts and suggested additions to the draft convention as well.

The discussions were based upon the principles of prioritizing the victims of poverty, global parity and other inequalities. Statements also mentioned that as civil society, there is a great need for increased investment in the sector of education and training of children and youth, the unemployed and the underskilled to facilitate development.

Statements acknowledged the detailed and impactful work of the drafting group of experts of the draft convention. The statements addressed the importance of peace and security as well, as its absence affects a huge part of society due to resulting human rights violations. WFWPI also promoted the role of partnership with civil society in this respect, as CSOs are major focal points in addressing human rights violations, especially in developing and in least developed countries (LDCs). Therefore, it was noted, cooperation between CSOs, governments and the UN needs more strategic conversation, especially in regard to funding and

closer partnerships for more efficient implementation.

The statements also highlighted the need for stronger institutions facilitating the right to development, socially, economically and politically. Developing and least developed countries have suffered through conflicts and exploitation, which has led to instability in the institutionalization of positive peace and therefore protection of human rights. There are societies where institutions need strength and support to fulfill the duty of protecting the right to development. The statements therefore suggested the inclusion of the principle of stronger institutions, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

The final discussion in the committee was on the articles regarding "obligations and duties" in realizing the right to development. WFWPI noted that the obligations stated in the articles were primarily negative obligations, asking state parties and international organizations to refrain from or to not take certain actions, obliging them to protect RTD, and suggested the articles include more positive obligations instead. To support this suggestion, WFWPI cited how the commitment to development is similar parallel and complementary to the commitment to protecting climate, that the recent trend in climate agreements have been to agree to positive obligations and therefore the world needs similar trends in the area of development as well.

Overall, WFWPI representatives strongly urged member states to remember that there still exists poverty, war, mass atrocities and much more, which require more than just the negative obligations to not do something in order to be resolved. The Member States were urged to ensure that state parties do something in the form of positive obligations, especially in taking greater responsibility for development in LDCs and other developing countries.

The session concluded after a lengthy debate among Member States trying to reach consensus on the draft report, with notable reluctance on the part of some developed countries in turning the work of this group into a binding treaty. WFWPI nevertheless encouraged Member States and supported the efforts of various developing countries and other NGOs in their negotiations in substantializing draft convention into a binding document. WFWPI also took the floor in the closing statements to pledge its support of the work of the international community and concluded their statement noting the importance of maintaining hope for development and global peace to be realized. 🌍

## **The 41st Human Rights Council Appoints Reem Alsalem 5th Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women: A Look at the Mandate**

*By Carolyn Handschin*



In order for the work of the Human Rights Council (HRC) to be effective, a growing team of independent experts, special rapporteurs or working group members is regularly appointed. Elected for three years, not paid, they act independently of governments to play an important role in monitoring nations and policies by reporting the results of visits, interviews and research back to the Council. This group, called Mandate Holders, has been increasing over time, now covering 11 country mandates and 44 thematic mandates, including violence against women.

One of the seven mandate holder vacancies to be filled during the 47th Human Rights Council (June 21-July 9, 2021) was a new Special Rapporteur on "Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences." According to a well-established process, 27 eligible candidates had registered, and it was the task of the Consultative Group of Ambassadors in Geneva to narrow the list to three experts through virtual interviews conducted over a month, and propose those to voted upon at the 47th HRC.

The mandate for a Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls was established in March 1994 through a resolution of the Human Rights Commission, predecessor of the Human Rights Council. This followed the historic Vienna World Conference on Human Rights a year earlier, when for the first time violence against women (VaW) was officially recognized by the international community as a crime.

As if trying to make up for such a shameful oversight, the General Assembly was quick to follow up that same year with a "Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (DEVAW)," a non-binding tool that frames gender violence as a threat to "the peace and development of nations." With this high level framework in place, and in tandem with the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) passed in 1979, its reports and debates have significantly influenced the creation of other international and local bodies, and many decisions taken since. It was in 2008 that the servicing of the CEDAW Committee was moved to Geneva under the auspices of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, under the same roof as all HRC mandate holders.

During the 25th anniversary of the creation of the post in 2019, Ms Dubravka Simonovic presented a report that included a brief history of the post, and the contributions that it had made to the 25 year review of the Beijing Platform for Action, and the 20 year review of the Security Council 1325, both in 2020. Her analysis highlighted the positive changes in the global context of women's rights, but also the systematic discrimination and normalization of some aspects, citing the MeToo manifestations for breaking the silence.

Since 1994, there have been four Special Rapporteurs on VaW, each bringing a different focus and new discoveries to the mandate. Radika Coomaraswamy (1994-2003), the first

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Special Rapporteur insisted upon adding the phrase, "its Causes and Consequences" to the mandate title, a brilliant addition, which focused and protected it in many ways. Her work was very much in the area of standard-setting and violence perpetrated by states, including armed conflict. This contributed to the historic Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000.

During the tenure of Yakin Ertürk (2003-09), the mandate was expanded to include formal annual reports to the General Assembly and to the Commission on the Status of Women. In her first report, she focused on developing effective implementation of norms to end violence against women and insisted that prevention be a part of the due diligence of states. She insisted on accountability of states and the need for sustainable funding sources for implementing recommendations.

Rashida Manjoo (2009-15), initiated the good practice of regular regional consultations with civil society organizations and a focus on the obligations of states, including reparations for victims of violence. Through her visits she insisted on the prioritization of gender-based concerns at the domestic level, encouraged governments to listen more attentively to autonomous bodies and civil society voices, and establish suitable mechanisms to do this.

The outgoing, but very active Dubravka Simonovic (2015-21) has given attention to several emerging issues, including on-line violence against women and violence against women in politics. She contributed to a femicide/gender-related killings watch. She also reviewed the obligations of governments to provide protection measure and shelters and advocated for global statistics. In an address to the GA in 2015, she defined the changed landscape around the issues and requested a stronger focus on prevention, implementation challenges and very importantly, a better collaboration and strategizing among relevant bodies.

With the new appointment of Ms. Reem Alsalem, another chapter and new opportunities in understanding and responding violence against women in all its facets will be explored. Having worked extensively for UN-Women, OHCHR, UNICEF and IOM, as well as for non-governmental organizations and academia, the Council noted Ms. Alsalem's successful field experience over years and expertise in transitional justice and migrant issues. She will be building upon a mandate that has become a "visible, respected and credible women's human rights mechanism to guide States, civil society actors, the international community and other relevant stakeholders on the elimination of violence against women, its causes and consequences." 🇮🇪



## WFWPI Hosts Side Event for the 30th Commission of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

*By Rennate Amesbauer*



On May 17, 2021, WFWPI in cooperation with the “Earth Foundation” and government representatives from Kenya and the Philippines, hosted a side event for the 30th Commission of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). CCPCJ is organized annually by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), with the topic for this year being: “Effective measures to prevent and counter the smuggling of migrants, while protecting the rights of smuggled migrants, particularly women and children, and those of unaccompanied migrant children.” The theme WFP chose for this year’s side event was “New Village Development-To Counter Involuntary Migration and the Smuggling of Migrants.”

The welcoming remarks were given by Dr. Maria Riehl, PhD Director of WFP UN Office for UN Relations Vienna and Vice Chair of the NGO Committee on Peace. Referring to the problem of involuntary migration and related crime caused by poverty, poor education and unemployment for women and youth in particular, Dr. Riehl emphasized the need to find solutions through technical advancements and cooperation within and between communities. She introduced the three panelists, who demonstrated their projects as best practices for the enhancement of rural living standards, thus minimizing the need for migration.

The Opening Remarks by H.E. Stella Mokaya Orina, Deputy Permanent Representative, Embassy of the Republic of Kenya, began with a fact in which African

people usually settle in areas with access to electricity, a factor that can greatly influence immigration. H.E. Orina shared that due to Kenya’s privileged location in the world, it is not difficult to produce solar energy. Therefore, the government is currently making great strides towards providing adequate lighting to homes, businesses, institutions and irrigations. This project is being implemented in 12 counties, the majority of which are in rural areas. Solar powered street lighting systems are already in place in many towns and cities. H.E. Orina is convinced that green energy is the future and that through partnerships with WFP and other institutions it will be made widely available.

H.E. Deena Joy D. Amatong, Chargé d’Affairs of the Philippine Embassy, emphasized the importance of this topic for the Philippines and their willingness to engage with partners active in the field. Government data for 2019 revealed that 2.2 million Filipinos were working overseas, over half of whom were women working primarily in elementary occupations and in sales and service industries. Those who went overseas through smuggling or human trafficking were not included in the data. The Philippine government is aware that domestic economic development dimensions need to be considered to ensure that migration becomes a choice rather than a need, and that involuntary migration fuels human trafficking. Thus, wide-ranging efforts from the government to private sectors are needed. H.E. Amatong shared plans of the Philippine government leading up to 2040, which are designed to ensure a

stable and secure life for Filipinos as well as counteract the need for involuntary migration.

Next, Ms. Merly Barlaan, Chief Administrative Officer and Deputy Director for WFWPI Offices for UN Relations, shared a project very dear to her heart. The “Permaculture Peace Garden” was initiated seven years ago to counter forced migration and create holistic communities for a healthy planet. Sustainability will be realized through practicing the universal value of stewardship leading to peaceful coexistence between people and the planet. Quoting Bill Mollison, she defined permaculture as a method of land management with the principles of regenerating agriculture, rewilding and community resilience and working in tune with nature. It can counter the cost of migration, but the project’s success depends on investment by partners to generate local employment and reduce the need for a working parent abroad.

Ms. Susan Kone, President of WFWP Kenya, shared how electricity does not only light up villages and homes but empowers women as well. Growing up in a home with just one kerosene lamp, Ms. Kone advocated for installing more lights in the African villages through the “Green Solar Energy for African Villages” project, which is sponsored by WFWPI. With this project, the type of home is not important because the panels can be installed anywhere. A few of the advantages include: its renewability, its low-cost and unlike other systems, it does not require a lot of maintenance. This helps many families that live in 2-4 room houses with just a single lamp. Moreover, the solar lamps allow children to study after sunset and allow parents to complete household chores at home, increasing productivity.

Mag. Franz Nahrada, founder of the Earth Society Foundation, is an advocate for a reversal of the current trend towards “urbanization” and in the direction of “ruralization.” Both developing countries and the Western world are experiencing an exodus of young people and families from villages to cities, leaving villages with a proportionally high elderly population. The cause of village depopulation frequently lies in the lack of educational opportunities. Mr. Nahrada highlights the need for a “Village University” through partnership with universities in the cities. He referred to an unforeseen benefit of the COVID-19 crisis, which is the growth and development of distance learning, already widespread in Austria.



The closing remarks were given by Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, Director of the WFWPI Office for UN Relations, who shared how important partnerships are and how creating opportunities on the ground can appeal to local and national governments and decision-making leaders.

Alongside that, the civil society can be taught how important these projects are, and through events learn the type of responsibility they have as well. If leading organizations and civil society members come together, with the resources, the ideas and the creativity, these types of projects can be even more fruitful and expansive.

In March of this year, WFWPI was able to participate in the 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Kyoto, Japan. Ms. Moriko Hori, President of WFWP Japan, represented WFWPI, making two verbal statements. Ms. Hori read a statement that represented the values of WFWPI stating: “WFWPI is convinced that quality education on all levels is one of the most fundamental elements for the healthy development of a society, and its resilience against crime...Youth and families less isolated, better educated and more engaged make societies more resilient to crime.” 🌱



## Youth Peace Conference - Palestine & Israel Peace Accord

*By Srruthi Lekha Raaja Elango*



On April 11 - 12, 2021, the WFWPI UN offices in Geneva and Vienna with WFWP Middle East jointly organized the "WFWP Youth Peace Conference - Palestine & Israel Peace Accord," with various special sessions taking place earlier in the month. Prior to the conference, WFWP held a number training programs with UN Peacekeeping officials, Government representatives from Israel and Palestine and other civil society leaders, who instructed the delegates and participants on the key issues of concern, diplomacy, peace building measures and more.

The first of these special sessions was hosted on March 12, 2021, on the topic "Peace building and the role of foreign policy" with civil society experts and the representatives of WFWPI. A short film on the model of security dilemma was screened for the participants. This was followed by a fruitful discussion on the role of foreign policy and the obstacles to peace building due to the security dilemma.

The second special session was held on March 26, 2021, on the topic "Peacekeeping and peace mediation," for which Mrs. Svejtlana Jovic, Team Leader, United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon SW Civil Affairs was the speaker. She conducted a very informative seminar on peacekeeping, the UN Peacekeeping force and their process, role in the region, and strategies of peace mediation. This provided the participants with the knowledge and perspective of a peacekeeper, which would help in their negotiations towards a peace agreement transcending political perspectives.

The final special session was held on April 2, 2021, on the topic "The role of youth in peacekeeping and governance." Speakers included Mr. Orima Malkin, Ministry of youth affairs, Israel and Mrs. Samia Elwazer, Member at General Union of Palestinian Woman. This was one of the most powerful sessions, during which the need for friendly communication between the both sides was highlighted. The speakers met in advance to greet and share perspectives with each other to reach a common ground while addressing the participants. During the session, they shared their personal stories and related their experiences to the course of conflict's history.

Their efforts were well received by the participants, who were motivated to apply the practice of listening and sharing in their own negotiations during the Youth Peace Conference.

The Youth Peace Conference simulated a UN Peacebuilding Commission with delegates from Palestine, Israel and other countries participating. This conference began with an opening ceremony on April 11, with speakers from Israel's Ministry of Youth Affairs, representatives from Palestine, academicians from Cyprus and WFWPI leadership - Mrs. Julia Moon. Following the opening ceremony, the delegates engaged in heated negotiations on the issue of Palestine and Israel. Topics addressed included the role of history, land, religion, identity and political affairs in the region.

The Chair and the Vice Chair of the conference mediated effective strategies and developed very well-defined rules of procedure in prioritizing the sub agendas in discussion for the peace agreement. After two days of debates, the delegates reached a peace agreement, which had clearly established a successful peace process for the issue. The agreement also had agreed conclusions resolving the issues of land, nationality, identity, sovereignty, trade, economy and other social affairs. The peace agreement was adopted in the closing ceremony, followed by a feedback session with the participants and the audience, who observed the debate throughout the conference. The exchange of emotions, gratitude and mutual appreciation brought the conference to a very satisfied and hopeful end.

Our experts from the ministries of the governments of Israel and Palestine as well as from the UN warmly welcomed the efforts and success of the WFWP Youth Peace Conference. WFWP was honored to have facilitated an event that equipped young adults with the power of diplomacy and peace mediation and hopes to further develop these efforts in the future. 🌱

## **Bottom-up Approaches to Implement the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Nagorno-Karabakh**

*By Claudia Ditel*



This year marks the 21st anniversary of the United Nations Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which launched the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The WPS agenda addresses the impact of the war on women and stresses the importance of women's equal engagement in conflict transformation, in addition to the need of protecting women and girls from conflict-related violence.

To date, the resolution remains not sufficiently implemented in many areas in the world affected by conflict. One of these areas include Nagorno-Karabakh, in South Caucasus, which is an unrecognized, de facto, autonomous Republic within the territory of Azerbaijan, although it is composed entirely by Armenians. The first war was fought in the early 1990s and ended with the occupation by Armenian troops of seven regions surrounding the small Nagorno-Karabakh, generating around 700,000 Azeri Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The conflict remained frozen until September 2020, when Azerbaijan launched an offensive. The November 9 ceasefire opened the way for the progressive reopening of borders and implementation of infrastructural projects across the region.

However, so far the negotiation process falls short of involving communities in the peacebuilding process. Women in particular remain marginalized, yet they experience the conflict on many levels, as victims not only of the direct effects of the protracted conflict but also of the indirect effects. Displaced women are living in temporary hosting facilities with poor sanitary conditions and scarce gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance. They are not able to come back anytime soon in the reoccupied territories due to the presence of landmines. In addition to that, many women lost their children, husbands and family members in the last conflict. As described in the 2019 Kvinna Till Kvinna report, women are used to taking on greater burden to provide for the family's income after the man's loss or injury and face economic insecurity. Some women are forced to turn to survival strategies, such as prostitution or smuggling of illegal goods, while young girls risk to be victims of early marriages.

Eventually, conflicts generate highly militarized societies, which are based on a patriarchal culture and strong gender stereotypes. It is not by chance that Armenia and Azerbaijan present two of the highest sex ratios at birth in the world, due to male preference. Moreover, the military sector draws resources from the welfare sector. Hospitals but also shelters and hotline services for victims of domestic violence suffer from lack of resources. Yet, the Caucasus registers alarming rates of domestic violence and still conservative forces in Azerbaijan and Armenia halt the ratification of the 2011 Istanbul Convention Against Violence Against Women. Unsurprisingly, feminists and pacifist activists in both countries advocate for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and the construction of a culture of peace.

In sum, the protracted conflict exacerbates women's marginalization and violence against women, generating a continuum of violence even after a ceasefire. Women usually elaborate an anti-nationalist narrative to the extent that they refuse patriarchy and the war. This suggests that women's narrative constitutes a powerful point of belonging across the borders. For this reason, it is important to create safe spaces and opportunities for women to engage in an inter-ethnic dialogue. The international community should enhance peace and reconciliation by creating peace zones for meeting each other to create circles for information sharing and support to women.

Bottom-up approaches can create opportunities for women to become the protagonists of grassroots initiatives, possibly income generating, to empower women and to overtake the women-as-victims paradigm. Communities of practices should be implemented to the design of gender sensitive and concrete development projects, in which local women from both sides are engaged in activities of common interest, such as small-scale business, resources management, mine risk education, environmental protection or early warning system mechanism for victims of violence.

Peacebuilding is not only implemented in high-level meetings and conferences. Peace, trust and dialogue are built by the grassroots population first and foremost. Bottom-up approaches could constitute a promising and innovative path toward the localization of the WPS agenda in places where it falls short of being implemented. This would not only be beneficial for the economic security and the knowledge agency of women themselves, but it would be advantageous also for the security of entire communities.

The 2015 Global Study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 conducted by UN Women proves that women's participation increases the probability of a peace agreement lasting at least two years by 20 percent, and by 35 percent, the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years. Hence, investing in women in Armenia and Azerbaijan is not only a matter of justice but also a potential for conflict transformation. 🌱

## CSW65 and Partnerships for Peace: "The Journey of 1325 and Women's Leadership"

By *Carolyn Handschin*



The 65th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW65) in March of 2020 was held for the first time as a virtual event. While the many benefits of daily personal contact and unplanned and exciting opportunities that always arose in New York City had to be sacrificed, it did provide a broader outreach to new participants and normally unreachable speakers. The theme of this session's government debates revolved around women's effective participation and decision-making in public life. Thousands of concerned citizens, mostly women, weighed in through a vast virtual platform with their expertise, lived experience, challenges and proposals.

Each year, Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) would bring nearly one hundred members and guests from around the world to experience the UN debates and civil society forum, providing advocacy and networking opportunities. Each year statements would be submitted according to the theme, and events organized so that governments could benefit from local expertise and insight in making their recommendations. The presence of civil society also ensured that envoys would be sent home with knowledge and enthusiasm for implementation.

"The Journey of 1325 and Women's Leadership: An Intergenerational Dialogue Between First Ladies and Emerging Leaders" was the theme decided for the WFWPI parallel event to the CSW65. There has been a growing disappointment in what seemed to be a widening gap between civil society access and influence in the working methods of government at the United Nations (UN). With good will, solutions can be worked out, but COVID-19 cannot take the entire blame.

WFWPI decided to bring together two elements that could influence better understanding and partnership: young aspiring leaders and a rather untapped and effective category of leadership and soft diplomacy, First Ladies. Their role in protecting the well-being of the nation and creating platforms for youth has been a significant model in implementing the UN Security Council resolution (UNSCR) 1325 with an intergenerational approach.

WFWPI had the great honor of co-hosting the inaugural assembly of the International Association of First Ladies for Peace (IAFLP) in Korea in January 2020, together with its founding organization,

the Universal Peace Federation. It was a remarkable event to hear the stories and issues of these women who shared a common position and concern for their nations, and to learn how they influenced nation-building, and how it influenced them. This played an important role in developing the theme and finding speakers for this CSW event.

The CSW event opened with a welcome from the moderator, Ms. Merly Barlaan, Deputy Director of WFWPI UN Office, who explained that the interactive dialogue will focus on the Journey of 1325 and the impact of women's leadership for protecting rights and delivering justice through mutual cooperation and securing sustainable peace. Opening remarks were given by Mme. 'Mammusa 'Masekoalane Majoro, Spouse of Prime Minister, Kingdom of Lesotho, who touched the hearts of all when she said, "Raising such a generation of women who possess confidence to make it on their own, without subjecting themselves to abuse, is a mission worth dying to give birth to."

An Opening Address followed, delivered by Dr. Sun Jin Moon, Senior Vice President of WFWPI and Founder of Giving for Good International. Citing alarming statistics caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, she reminded the audience that all must be aware of the challenges, yet also be able to reach for the higher consciousness where the seeds of hope can flourish and where women's input is essential.

Ms. Blessie Dhakal, Chair of IAFLP, introduced the First Ladies and the program continued with brief introductory personal remarks from them: Mme. Fionnuala Kenny, spouse of former Prime Minister of Ireland; Mme. Callista Mutharika, First Lady of Malawi and member of Parliament; and Hon. Maria Flores de Aleman, former First Lady and National Assembly member in Nicaragua. The three young leaders were also introduced; Ms. Srruthi Lekha, UN Representative for Peacebuilding and Youth Leadership at WFWPI UN Office Geneva; Ms. Amanda Bradley, Legal Service Team Assistant at Davis Polk Wardwell; and Ms. Jungsoo Moon, Master of Public Policy and International Relations, University of Tokyo. Hoping to balance spontaneity, knowledge and experience, the second part of the session was a round table discussion among the women leaders and the younger participants.

All were asked several guiding questions that gave opportunity for profound and personal sights that could have continued for hours: What are the challenges to women's empowerment and what is needed to encourage more women to public leadership in your nations? How could education influence the implementation of UNSCR 1325? How has this resolution influenced women and girls in your country, and what is still needed so that women and girls can contribute to ending discrimination and aid in preventing violence and abuse? The interactive discussions were so engaging that it was extended for 20 minutes.

Director of the WFWPI Office for UN Relations, Ms. Carolyn Handschin, closed the session with a reminder, "Like the experience of the women who came from all over the world to Beijing 26 years ago, their lives were changed by listening to one another, and realizing that they share similar dreams and goals that they would retell to their daughters, friends and colleagues. This meeting today brings in that additional factor, a critical and potentially very enjoyable one of intergenerational listening, trust building and partnership on the path of peace." 🌍

## High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2021

By Mako Mori



From July 6 to 15, 2021, WFWPI delegates virtually attended the annual High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The HLPF is the core United Nations platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The theme for this year's HLPF was: "Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development."

Over the course of several days, UN Member States and entities, civil society and other stakeholders invested in the HLPF came together to discuss ways to ensure a sustainable and resilient recovery from COVID-19 that will put the world on track to realize the 2030 Agenda. In particular, while all 17 SDGs are inextricably linked, and progress or setbacks on one affects the others, this year's HLPF focused their discussion around SDGs 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and well-being), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 10 (reduced inequalities), 12 (responsible consumption and production), 13 (climate action), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and 17 (partnerships toward the goals).

In the opening of the HLPF, speakers called for sustainable, resilient post-pandemic recovery, while stressing that no one should be left behind. H.E. Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council, shared an optimistic message stating, "The 2021 session provides a paramount opportunity to show unwavering commitment for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda despite the obstacles and challenges posed by the pandemic."

Following the opening segment, the forum held three panel discussions, entitled, "The SDGs in time of crisis: A sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 as an opportunity to realize the SDGs," "Ensuring that no one is left behind" and "Building resilience against future shocks through structural changes and investment in sustainable infrastructure." The forums offered a further basis for a multilateral effort to resume and accelerate progress to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

The second week of HLPF focused on the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), in which 42 Member States representatives shared reports about their country's progress on the SDGs. The purpose of the VNRs is the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, so that the countries can learn from one another and be encouraged that they are not alone in this effort. The representatives of Member States shared about the drastic negative impact COVID-19 had on their country's progress towards the 2030 Agenda, while reaffirming their commitments to learn from the pandemic's lesson and get back on track.

The recurring statements made throughout HLPF was the unfortunate fact that COVID-19 had reversed the progress towards the 2030 Agenda. ECOSOC recognized and was concerned with the fact that the extreme poverty rate rose for the first time in a decade, with over 124 million living in poverty. Many other issues, including economic development, inequalities and climate, which were initially improving had been backtracking and exacerbated due to the pandemic.

Civil society responded strongly, saying that "although COVID-19 did not aid in advancing the goals, we must remember that even before the pandemic, we were not on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030."



Civil society was adamant that the pandemic cannot be used as an excuse for the failure to meet the goals and called for more proactive measures, as well as increasing accountability for Member States and their promises.

In the concluding meeting of the HLPF, governments adopted a comprehensive Ministerial Declaration reflecting Member States' commitments to gather together in a global push to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic and build back stronger through inclusive, sustainable recovery plans. H.E. Munir Akram, referred to the unanimously adopted Ministerial Declaration as a "beacon of hope" in a time when the world faces monumental challenges.

In adopting the Ministerial Declaration, the Forum committed to a variety of ways States and the international community can help to advance pandemic recovery, while, at the same time, boost progress towards realizing the SDGs. The Forum recognized that the crisis caused by the pandemic has clearly shown the world's vulnerabilities and inequalities among countries, highlights systemic weaknesses, challenges and risks, as well as threatens to backtrack progress made towards the SDGs.

It also called on Member States to commit to a number of actions, including to rapidly scale up and expand vaccine production globally and to promote public engagement and innovative partnerships through a

whole-of-Government approach, regional and local mobilization and actions, meaningful participation and involvement of communities, people, civil society, volunteers, academia and the private sector.

Ms. Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, concluded the high-level segment of its 2021 session by urging all to unite, saying "With political leadership, solidarity and unity of purpose, we can end the pandemic, secure major improvements in people's lives between now and 2030, and keep the promise of the 2030 Agenda."

HLPF 2021 culminated with a strong sense of global solidarity to recover from COVID-19 and to recommit to realizing the SDGs by 2030. It may be impossible to predict when another global emergency will strike, but the HLPF has taught us that global solidarity and the willingness to extend help to others who are less fortunate, will better equip us to overcome any future global calamities, together. 🌱

## A Global Commitment for Gender Equality - Generation Equality Forum

By Srruthi Lekha Raaja Elango



Photo courtesy of: <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/generation-equality-forum-40-billion-commitments/>

The Generation Equality Forum in Paris, held June 30 – July 2, 2021 connected almost 50,000 individuals through a primarily virtual platform, set up to discuss issues related to gender equality. The meeting launched a Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality designed by six Action Coalitions – multi-partner associations that are mobilizing around six themes deemed critical in realizing the gender equality agenda in all regions. The Forum likewise launched the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action, and reported new sexual orientation fairness drives zeroed in on well-being, sports, culture, and schooling.

"The Generation Equality Forum marks a positive, historic shift in power and perspective. Together we have mobilized across different sectors of society, from south to north, to become a formidable force, ready to open a new chapter in gender equality," said Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women. "The Forum's ecosystem of partners – and the investments, commitments and energy they are bringing to confront the greatest barriers to gender equality – will ensure faster progress for the world's women and girls than we have seen before." UN Women will maintain a critical role in driving the Forum's five-year action journey, overseeing the implementation of commitments to ensure accountability and progress during this time period.

Speaking to mark the close of the Forum on behalf of the Government of France, the host of the Paris Forum, Ambassador and Secretary General of the Generation Equality Forum, Delphine O, said, "After two years of collective work with Member States, civil society and

philanthropic and private organizations, we succeeded in raising the largest amount of investment to advance gender equality and women's rights ever. By implementing a new way of tackling global issues through efficient multilateralism, the Generation Equality Forum reversed the priorities on the international agenda and made gender equality, for too long underestimated, a long-term issue for the international community, along with climate, education and health. France will continue to be at the forefront to accelerate gender equality progress."

The USD 40 billion of investments confirmed at the Forum's close represents a change in resourcing for women's and girls' rights. Lack of financing is widely understood to be a major reason for slow progress in advancing gender equality and in enacting the women's rights agenda set at the outcome of the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women. By the close of the Forum, governments and public sector institutions had committed USD 21 billion in gender equality investments, the private sector USD 13 billion, and philanthropy USD 4.5 billion. UN entities, international and regional organizations committed an aggregate of USD 1.3 billion. In addition to these bold investments, many organizations made strong policy and program commitments, including 440 civil society organizations and 94 youth-led organizations. Forum organizers expect that the approximately 1,000 commitment-makers confirmed to date will be joined by many others over the next five years. With this strong solidarity through global commitments, one can confidently hope for global equality and change. 🌍

**WFWPI Youth Peace Conference:  
Thoughts From the Youth Participants**

"As this was my first conference, it was easy to understand and follow up with the procedure. All delegates were very knowledgeable about the topic and gave good arguments, and I learned a lot from it.

I want to stress that it was a really good experience and a way to see and try to understand other points of view on the matter, whether it was the opposing team or knowing where the other countries stand on regarding the issue.

I learned more about the educational system in Israel through the ideas of its youth, and how they are being raised and taught about Palestinians. It seemed like the Israeli delegates saw that only one side was causing the issue, referring to them as 'angry Palestinians,' which seems like a method to dehumanize the other side, and not seeing them and their issues that give them all right to be angry, you just see them as source of danger, and you give excuses to all inhuman things that are being done under the 'safety' excuse. I think these methods are the reason for prolonging the issue.

I was happy to see that as the conference progressed and by the end of it we could notice the changes in ideas and how everyone was able to compromise for the other and how everyone from all participants was united and made one decision. It only shows that with good arguments, proofs, good self-education about the matter and peaceful logical talk between both parties, things can begin to change."

-Amira (Palestinian Youth Representative)

"The conference was one of the most meaningful and enriching experiences I've ever had. I learned a lot, met people I would not meet elsewhere, was exposed to the work of the women's federation. But most importantly, the conference gave me an opportunity to learn more about myself as a citizen of the State of Israel. It showed me how important it is to know the history of my people and the facts about our existence as a nation and as a state in order to fulfill my duty to protect my country and our right to exist in it. Despite all the difficulties and misunderstandings, we were able to reach an agreement, thanks to the professional assistance of the conference organizers. Overall, it definitely was a meaningful experience, and thanks to it I better understood what path I want to take in the future."

-Faina Sazanov (Israeli Youth Representative)