

WFWP USA: Media and SDG 17 - Bridging Divides and Fostering Connection

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On Saturday, July 29, 2023, WFWP hosted a Global Women's Peace Network (GWPN) Webinar on the theme "Media and SDG 17: Bridging divides and fostering connection." The theme was selected in observance of the annual conference that is held at the United Nations Headquarters every July, aimed at evaluating global progress made toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The virtual event was attended live by 30 people.

The emcee, Laura Hornbeck, GWPN Coordinator Texas, opened up the program by welcoming everyone and providing the background for the theme. She explained the meaning and importance of the 17 UN SDGs, which were adopted in 2015 by the UN "as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity." She went on to explain how SDG 17, on creating global partnerships for peace, aligns with the mission of

the Global Women's Peace Network, which is to enable women in leadership to share their energies and vision across all boundaries for the sake of solving global issues and realizing sustainable peace, and then introduced the topic being discussed in particular: the intersection of how media can create an environment for partnership through fostering connection among their audiences.

Kaeleigh Moffitt, President of WFWP USA, then gave her opening remarks. In her remarks, President Moffitt introduced the audience to the work and philosophy of WFWP's co-founders, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon. The couple believed strongly in the importance and responsibility of media in bringing people together through universal values and did just that in founding a number of newspapers and media outlets over the years of their work. "Everything we do in Women's Federation is led by this amazing woman who has this dream of bringing together people from all backgrounds centered on the idea of universal values." She concluded by expressing gratitude and optimism to the speakers, women who have a sense of fairness and equality that can bring people together through the use of media.

Next on the program was the panel of speakers. The first was Donna Paige Riley, founder of [Paige's Etiquette Seminars LLC](#). Ms. Riley addressed the issue of division in many communities today, and the role media has played in exacerbating these divides through reporting heavily on negative stories that make it difficult to have hope, and misinformation that makes it difficult to even trust what is conveyed. She emphasized the need to "figure out how to come together in lieu of continuing to drift apart" and discussed the approach she has taken in her work, to teach proper etiquette, helping people to treat one another with respect, compassion, fairness, honesty, and integrity. On the role of media, she stated that it has a "God-given responsibility to report the truth, be it negative or positive." This therefore makes it imperative that they make just as much effort reporting the positive as they do the negative. Finally, she conveyed how each individual has a responsibility to "guard their gates," being aware of what they consume, as well as what they put out into the world. Her personal experience on this is her efforts on her radio show, to be uplifting and encouraging to her listeners and to bring in some good news every time.

[Ritu Chopra](#) is a speaker, author, and producer, with experience in media broadcasting through her talk show. Ms. Chopra opened by addressing why the SDGs should be important to each of us as individuals. Referring to numerous issues affecting the world globally, such as climate change, technological advancements especially in artificial intelligence, and a number of other globally precarious issues, she noted that "awareness is needed, attention is needed, not just from the nonprofits or a few kind hearts or a program." It is here where she addressed how the media has a responsibility and ability to bring in transparency that can foster communication and connection needed to bring individuals around the world into awareness of what is going on and how to partner with one another to forward the SDGs in addressing these issues. Furthermore, she emphasized how through media, commitments made can be accessible to all, encouraging greater accountability and continued positive progress.

Lady Alicia Hamilton, the final speaker, is the [Founder of the New World Network](#), an International OTT (Over-the-Top) digital streaming and distribution platform broadcasting anytime, anyplace, anywhere in the world with Internet connectivity. She has been advocating for positive imagery in the media for decades "because I realized what we do will impact especially our children." She shared some of what she discovered on her advocacy journey, such as the impact of video games and social media on children, and called for the importance as adults to take more control over what to be exposed to and what to allow one's community to be exposed to. She raised the point that by having a personal filter, people can decide what information will affect their decision making and they can decide which content becomes profitable. Furthermore, she encouraged producers to take responsibility to create uplifting content, giving the personal example of how it was with this intention that she founded the New World Network.

The program continued with a roundtable discussion among the speakers, where they addressed questions from the participants, and concluded with final remarks from President Moffitt, who reflected the sentiments of the participants in expressing her gratitude for each of the speakers and desire to continue working together moving forward.



[Recording available here:](#)