



# NGO NEWS

BY TERESA KOTTURAN SCN AUGUST 201

## High Level Political Forum 2019

### Growing Inequalities Threaten Sustainable Development

In 2015, the Heads of States embraced the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with ambition, aspiration and high hopes to pave way for a paradigm shift in the way the world viewed development; to move from development centered on economics to a people and planet centered sustainable development to transform the lives of people everywhere. The pledge to “leave no one behind” was the defining feature of this agenda.

Four years on, is the world on track to achieve the 17 goals and 169 targets? Has ambition been translated into action?

From July 9–19, global leaders and stakeholders gathered at the UN to review and follow up on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The theme of High Level Political Forum 2019 was: “Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality.” The SDGs reviewed this year were:

- 4 — Quality education and lifelong learning;
- 8 — sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all;
- 10 – reduce inequalities within and between countries;
- 13 — Urgent action on climate change;
- 16 — promote peaceful and inclusive societies and provide access to justice for all.



Forty-seven countries presented their voluntary national reviews during the forum. At the completion of the first four-year cycle of implementation, the Secretary General submitted a progress report on the SDGs. According to the report, “progress has

been slow on many of the SDGs, and the most vulnerable people and countries continue to suffer the most. The global response thus far has not been ambitious enough.”

Even though the markets are booming, global targets to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 will not be met, for the pace of poverty reduction is decelerating. The poverty rate for children is twice as high as for adults. Currently 700 million people subsist on \$1.90, and 1.3 billion live in multidimensional poverty. Hunger is on the rise for the third consecutive year: 821 million people are undernourished. Conflicts and instabilities in many parts of the world have intensified and have displaced 68.5 million people.

Gender inequalities continue to persist because of insufficient progress on structural issues at the root of gender inequality. No country in the world is on track to attain gender equality by 2030, and women continue to be hampered by discriminatory laws, unequal access to opportunities and protections, high levels of violence and damaging norms and attitudes.

Although considerable progress has been made in

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## High Level Political Forum 2019 *continued*

school enrollments, 262 million children and youth ages 6–17 are still out of school, and more than half the children and adolescents are not meeting minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics. A complete transformation is needed in the education sector to make it more inclusive and to integrate the vision of SDGs, especially global citizenship and sustainability in curricula. Many developing countries still lack basic infrastructure and facilities, and trained primary school teachers to provide effective learning environments. There is need to recognize education as a public good and not a private commodity. More public investing is needed in early childhood interventions, education of girls and reaching those left behind—children in conflict zones, refugee/migrant camps, urban slums, etc.

Half of all the people employed today are engaged in the informal sector. Informal workers suffer greater deficits in decent work and living wages, compared with formal workers. Often informal workers are stigmatized and criminalized while attempting to earn an honest living. 30 per cent of young women and 13 per cent young men are not in education, employment or training. Youth were three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. Four billion people worldwide lack access to social protection.

Inequalities and large disparities remain in income and wealth and in access to food, health care, education, land, clean water, political representation, and other assets and resources essential for people to live with dignity. Such inequalities reduce social mobility and keep people in intergenerational poverty, thus hindering progress toward the objective of “leaving no one behind.” Inequality is not natural or inevitable; it is a consequence of flawed policies, laws, cultural norms, corruption and other issues which can be addressed. Elimination of systemic discrimination and marginalization requires political will to design policies that support the most vulnerable groups, to provide high quality essential services, such as social protection, healthcare, education, water and sanitation, energy and the internet. It is equally important to address the concentration of wealth, income and decision making power at the top and the link between economic and social exclusion and decision making power. Reducing

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With the rising greenhouse gas emissions climate change is occurring at rates much faster than anticipated and its effect are felt worldwide. Ninety percent of the natural disasters over the past 30 years are related to climate change and extreme weather events.

Climate change is affecting national economies and lives. States need to increase ambition to bring about a 45 percent reduction of emissions by 2030, and carbon neutrality by 2050.

SDG 16 (promote peaceful and inclusive societies and provide access to justice for all) is the moral backbone of the 2030 Agenda. But the statistical snapshot states that “in recent years, no substantial advances have been made” towards ending violence, promoting the rule of law, strengthening institutions at all levels or increasing access to justice. There is no protection for civil rights and human rights activists. Half the world’s population has no access to justice. Number of trafficking victims have grown and the majority of victims are trafficked for sexual exploitation (83 percent are female) or for forced labor (82 percent are male). No effort has been taken to include children, youth and women into policymaking processes. Good governance, rule of law, fiscal management, human rights, adoption of a people-centered approach to public policies, economic opportunities, participation, etc., are necessary for peaceful, inclusive societies where all have access to justice.

The 2030 Agenda can only be implemented through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. But public awareness of the agenda at grass-roots and community levels is low. Grass-roots civil society organizations are reaching out to the marginalized and vulnerable groups. Without adequate awareness, behavior change for sustainable living is not possible. Along with the shrinking civil society space, the tendency today is to involve larger non-governmental organizations and not community based organizations for partnerships with governments. Systemic gaps that need to be addressed are: focus on most vulnerable; adequate and well directed financing; strengthening institutions to make them more effective and inclusive; bolstering implementation at the local level and engaging all stakeholders.

# View HLPF Presentations on UN WebTV

*Technology has made it possible for all of us to engage in events and meetings anywhere in the world. Many people do engage with the UN through the UN WebTV Live & On Demand program. Below are links to some of the important speakers of the HLPF ministerial segment to help you learn about the state of our world and where we need to engage our energy and resources.*

## Proceedings of the HLPF – July 16, 2019

- **Inga Rhonda King** (President of the Economic and Social Council) [opening remarks](#). “We owe it to children to realize “the future they want.”
- **António Guterres** (UN Secretary-General) [opening remarks](#). He offered reflections on “the inclusion imperative,” saying development is not sustainable if it is not fair and inclusive, and if equality does not result from economic growth. He said we need dramatically increased public and private investment for the SDGs, fulfillment of development financing commitments, robust mechanisms to finance global health, and massive investments in teaching people how to learn, for lifelong learning.
- **María Fernanda Espinosa** (General Assembly President) [opening remarks](#). Ensure visible achievements in reducing extreme poverty, child mortality and access to childhood education. She called for policies to account for the multidimensional nature of poverty, for avoiding devastating impacts of climate change, which also “makes business sense,” and for empowering women and girls—“the closest thing we have to a magic formula.”
- [Keynote](#) by **Mary Robinson** (The Elders). She depicted a possible world in which a privileged few live in comfort, surrounded by barbed wire fences, beyond which everyone else faces climate chaos, persecution and violence. To avoid this future, she noted the need for a focus on justice, which she said is the thread that runs through each of the 17 SDGs.
- [Keynote](#) by **Richard Curtis**, screenwriter, producer and filmmaker. The goals have primed people for action, amounting to a unique opportunity. Governments should ask themselves, “who could make this happen faster,” every time they face a challenge in national implementation. There is need for “new vision, new partners, and increased energy to go for gold.”
- [Keynote](#) by **Hoesung Lee**, chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He explained that global warming is already impeding progress towards some SDGs, for example driving outmigration in agriculturally dependent countries. He said that the 1.5 degree warming limit would help achieve most SDGs, but it also creates some trade-offs that must be balanced.

## UN Environment Programme Welcomes New Executive Director



Danish economist and environmentalist Inger Anderson took over as the executive director of the [UN Environment Programme](#) based in Nairobi, Kenya, at a critical time for humanity. She promises to prioritize greater action on climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution during her four-year tenure. She comes to the job with lot of hope: “From environmental and scientific assessments we know that it is entirely possible for humanity to fix the problems we have caused. Now, more than ever, the will to act is in place.” She wants to work with partners and donors to define the priorities of the organization. According to her: “The best tool at our disposal is global unity. With challenges as monumental as those we all face, we will succeed together or we will fail together.” Prior

to taking up this position, she worked as the director general of the International Union for Conservation of Nature since 2015. She has held various leadership positions at the World Bank (15 years) and the UN (15 years.) She brings a passion for conservation and sustainable development with her vast experience in development economics and environmental sustainability and policy making.





## Human Trafficking Discussion Panel

The Holy See organized a discussion panel on “Faces in the Fight Against Human Trafficking” to mark the 10th anniversary of the Talitha Kum Network & World Day Against Trafficking in Persons and photo exhibit “Nuns Healing Hearts” by Lisa Kristine at the UN on July 29.

This event showcased the compassionate and transformative ministry of women religious around the world against human trafficking through the [Talitha Kum](#) network, restoring dignity and liberty to enslaved women and girls. Sister Melissa Camardo, SCL, spoke about the work of accompanying trafficking survivors at [LifeWay Network](#), a collaborative ministry of Sisters of Charity of Halifax, Sisters of Charity of New York and other religious in New York. Other speakers included Sister Grabiella Bottani, SMC, international coordinator of Talitha Kum; Lisa Kristine, photographer of the exhibit; Ansa Noreen, a survivor who was accompanied by LifeWay Network; Fr. David Charters of the Holy See, and Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorando, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

A number of federation members participated in the event: Sisters Sally Duffy, SC (Cincinnati); Mary Canavan, SC and Maureen Dunne, SC (New Jersey); Sister Carol De Angelo, SC (New York); Melissa Camardo, SCL (Leavenworth), Michelle Loisel, DC; Teresa Kotturan, SCN and Mary Ellen O’Boyle.

Sally Duffy is a founding board member of U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking. She is also on the executive committee and serves as secretary of USCSAHT. Michelle Loisel, DC, is a member of the Survivor Support working group of USCSAHT, a collaborative, faith-based national network that offers education, supports access to survivor services, and engages in advocacy in an effort to eradicate modern-day slavery.

[View video of this event](#) on UN Web TV.



Welcome new  
NGO liaison

*Sister Katherine McGrath, SC,  
is the new NGO liaison from  
the Sisters of Charity of Halifax,  
Nova Scotia, Canada*

# Haiti Update: Peacekeeping and Development

If you have been wondering about how Haiti is doing these days, some historic events have taken place, which are not reflected in the mainstream media. On June 25, the UN Security Council approved a resolution (2476(2019) to establish the UN Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) on Oct. 16 to support the country's government in strengthening political stability, good governance and an inclusive inter-Haitian dialogue. This office, headed by a special representative, will replace the peacekeeping mission, putting an end to 15 years of peacekeeping presence in the country.

The special representative will assist in planning and executing elections; reinforcing the Haitian National Police through training on human rights; responding to gang violence; developing an inclusive approach

with all segments of society to reduce intercommunal violence; ensuring compliance with international human rights obligations; improving prison oversight; and strengthening the justice sector by adopting and implementing legislation to reform it. The office has to be staffed with experts in all these areas to turn around the country to let all Haitians to enjoy stability, human rights, democracy and the rule of law and improvement in living conditions.

One disappointing aspect of the resolution is the removal of climate change references, as Haiti is very vulnerable to effects of climate change. In solidarity with Sisters of Charity Federation members who minister to the people of Haiti, let us pray for a paradigm shift, to help ensure peace-building and stability.

Wantoe T. Wantoe is an international student from Liberia at the College of Mount Saint Vincent double majoring in public policy and sociology. He is a passionate advocate of issues related to human suffering justice, care of the earth and sustainable development. Since high school, he has been engaged in advocacy at the national, regional and international levels. The ebola crisis that gripped Liberia energized him to organize youth to spread awareness and take preventive measures. Through regular blogs, he shared the tragic stories of the suffering people. In 2015, he was part of the drafting group for the Doha Youth Declaration on Reshaping the Humanitarian Agenda. In May 2016, at the invitation of UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, he delivered a statement at the UN World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey.

In 2017, he received the Friendship Ambassador Foundation humanitarian scholarship during the 21st Youth Assembly in New York. At the Mount, he has organized a club called "Phins for Change." He is also director of the 2019 Millennium Fellowship Class and Campus Network (MCN) at the college, organized by UN Academic Impact.



Welcome  
new youth  
representative

## - UPCOMING - EVENTS & NEWS

- August 26–28: 68th UN Civil Society Conference
- September 17: Opening of the 74th Session of UN General Assembly
- September 21: UN Youth Climate Summit
- September 23: UN Climate Summit 2019
- September 23: UN High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage
- September 23 -24: SDG Summit
- September 25: UN High Level Dialogue on Financing for Development
- September 26: High Level Meeting to Review of Progress on Samoa Pathway – Small Island Developing Countries



Sister Teresa Kotturan, SCN  
NGO Representative  
747 Third Avenue, Second Floor # 213  
New York, NY 10017  
scfederationunngo@gmail.com  
facebook.com/ngoscfederation  
@ngoscfederation  
[sistersofcharityfederation.org/ngo](http://sistersofcharityfederation.org/ngo)  
Vincentian Family: [famvin.org](http://famvin.org)