



NGO NEWS

BY TERESA KOTTURAN SCN AUGUST 2021

Uniting the World to Tackle Climate Change: COP26

The United Nations Annual Climate Change Conference is called COP (Conference of Parties). Parties are signatories to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a treaty signed by 197 Parties (196 countries and EU) in 1994. [COP26](#) will be hosted by the United Kingdom in partnership with Italy in Glasgow from Oct. 31 – Nov. 12, 2021. The summit, which will see more than 190 world leaders, representatives of civil society and business, will focus on “Uniting the World to Tackle Climate Change,” for the climate crisis that is unfolding around the world requires not just ambitious targets and commitments, but urgent action. In 2015, at COP21 every country agreed to work together to limit global warming to 1.5 degree-Celsius and committed to make national plans – Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to reduce their emissions. They also committed to communicate and update their targets every five years to reflect their highest possible ambition and progression. Last year marked the first of these five-year cycles, and all countries are expected to present their updated NDCs.

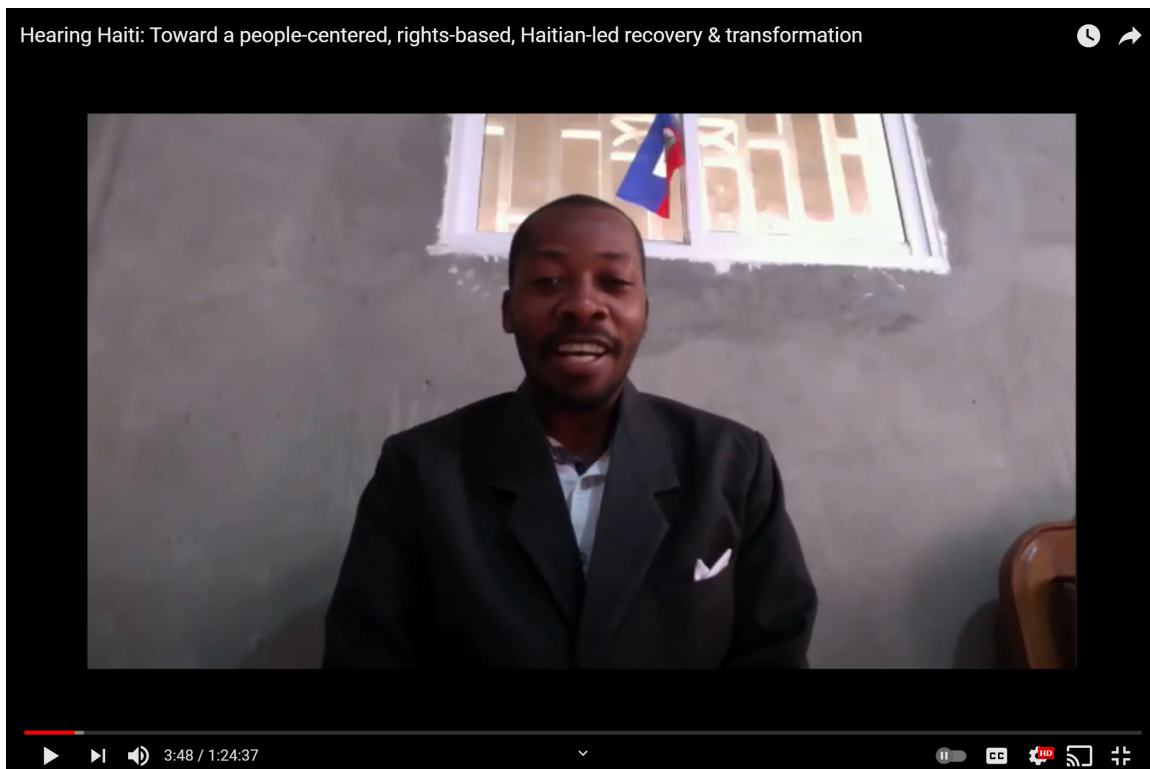
Are we on track to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees? The answer is an emphatic “no.” Experts say, “We have progress made in recent months to bend the temperature curve closer to 2 degrees.” Why does limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius matter? At 2 degrees of global warming, there would be widespread and severe impacts on people and nature. A third of the world’s population would be regularly exposed to severe heat, leading to health problems and more heat-related deaths. Most of the water coral reefs would be destroyed, and the Arctic sea ice would melt. At 1.5 degrees Celsius, the impacts would be serious, but less severe – lower risks to food and water shortag-

es, economic growth, and extinction of fewer species.

What needs to happen at COP26?

1. Countries are being asked to come with ambitious 2030 emissions reductions targets that align with reaching net zero by the middle of the century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach. Updated targets are not sufficient; they must be translated into action. It is time for developed countries to phase out coal power, and all countries should commit to not opening or financing any new coal-fired power stations around the world. Protecting our forests can help in removing carbon from the air; yet every few seconds, a football size forest is destroyed for industrial agriculture. Switching to zero emission transportation modes, by ending the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030, can reduce carbon emissions. It would require investment in renewables and clean technologies and the cooperation of the industry.
2. Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats – since climate is already changing and will continue to change as we reduce emissions, countries need to protect and restore ecosystems, build defenses, put warning systems in place, and make infrastructure and agriculture resilient to avoid loss of homes, livelihoods and lives. Climate change is an existential threat for millions of people living in Small Island States and other vulnerable areas. The international community must come to the assistance of these people to

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Hearing Haiti

The Latin American Confederation of Religious (CLAR) approached the Religious at the UN in March to take action in response to the increasing unrest in Haiti. CLAR urged us for political advocacy “at the UN to pressure the governments of the continent to end their indifference and apathy in the face of the humanitarian, legal and political crisis facing the Haitian people.” The absence of a legitimate government has created widespread anarchy, corruption, gang violence, insecurity, kidnappings for ransom, and killings of innocent people. People live with no effective law, no justice and a failed economy leading to hunger, food insecurity, lack of decent jobs and in general without hope. A response team from the Justice Coalition for Religious – JCoR, comprising NGO Representatives of Passionists International, Dominican Leadership, Claritians, Sisters of St. Joseph and Sisters of Charity Federation, and Mercy International Association (not a member of JCoR) met with various contacts in Haiti and Latin America to understand the situation on the ground. We also networked with Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth and Dominicans who had formed a Haiti Coalition for advocacy at various levels in the United States. They provided us a glimpse into the troubling environment in which they ministered to the people of Haiti, and their co-workers provided valu-

able information for our engagement.

Based on these conversations, as well as the various news articles and statements coming out of Haiti, we wrote letters to the Permanent Missions of the United States, Canada, France, Mexico, Ireland, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominican Republic requesting them to address the complex nature of Haiti’s struggles and concerns in the Security Council and for a meeting with us virtually. As a follow-up, we were able to meet with an official from Canada to present the concerns of the people of Haiti. The UN Security Council held a hearing on Haiti on June 17, 2021.

The next step involved “Hearing Haiti” to listen to the voices from Haiti to support a people-centered, rights based, Haitian led process of recovery and transformation. On June 24, 2021, representatives of UN Member States, JCoR member organizations and civil society partners were invited to hear the experiences and insights of Haitians and their allies within Haiti during this time of political and economic tensions, public health strains, which have combined to form an unprecedented, existential crisis in the country. You can listen to the testimony given during the hearing: [Watch video \(YouTube\)](#)

Based on the testimonies received during “Hearing Haiti” as well as through a questionnaire, we drafted a report for submission to Haiti’s upcoming Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council in Geneva in 2022.

Advocacy for a Nuclear Weapons-Free World

Though there is a reduction in the number of nuclear weapons since the Cold War, the nuclear armed countries have made up their loss by increasing the number of weapons on high operational alert, thereby increasing the risk of nuclear detonation, either by accident or design. Nuclear weapons are an existential threat to the peace and security of humanity.

The most vulnerable region is Asia, with four of the world's nine nuclear powers (India, China, North Korea and Pakistan), the rest being the United States, United Kingdom, France and Russia. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, these nine countries collectively possessed an estimated 13,080 nuclear weapons at the start of 2021. Of the 3,825 nuclear weapons currently deployed with operational forces, around 2,000 of them, belonging to Russia and the U.S. were kept in a state of high alert. The U.S. and Russia continue to implement the reductions agreed to in the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). On March 3, these countries exchanged documents to extend the treaty until February 2026.

In general, constructive dialogue aimed at disarmament has slowed down; no progress has been made in either inter-Korean talks or talks between North Korea and the U.S. Globally, there is increased rivalry and mistrust among countries as well as competition for military applications of new technologies. Yet, the entry into force of the [Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons \(TPNW\)](#) on Jan. 22, 2021 offers an opportunity for productive dialogue. The Nuclear Weapons States should abandon their hostility towards TPNW and work towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

The [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons \(ICAN\)](#) has called on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for a non-nuclear alliance - to join the UN ban on nuclear weapons; for all NATO members are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the three members who possess nuclear weapons have made “unequivocal undertaking... to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.” According to *The New York Times*, there is growing support for the new UN treaty among NATO members. “In Belgium, the government has formed a committee to explore how the treaty could “give new impetus” to disarmament. In France a parliamentary committee asked the government to “mitigate its criticism” of the treaty. In Italy, Parliament asked the government to “explore the possibility” of signing the

treaty. And in Spain, the government made a political pledge to sign the treaty at some point.”

On June 16, 2021, U.S. President Joseph Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin jointly agreed with the principle that “a nuclear war can cannot be won and never be fought” and announced their intention to begin an integrated strategic dialogue for “future arms control and risk reduction measures.” Their declaration did not reflect the concern of humanity: the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. According to Nuclear Threat Initiative, an American non-governmental organization, the five countries recognized as possessing nuclear weapons should join the dialogue to eliminate the threat of the extinction of human life.

On the other hand, a new report, [“Complicit: 2020 Global Nuclear Weapons Spending”](#) (ICAN) shows while the world was battling the COVID-19 pandemic with inadequate healthcare infrastructure and public health measures, nine Nuclear Weapon States spent \$72.6 billion on their nuclear weapons. This amounts to \$137,666 every minute. This spending was not driven by security threats, but by businesses and lobbyists. Research by ICAN revealed that “a dozen companies got \$27.7 billion in new modified contracts to work on nuclear weapons. Those companies then spent \$117 million lobbying decision makers to spend more money on defense. And they also spent upwards of \$10 million funding most of the major think tanks that research and write about policy solutions about nuclear weapons.”

A breakdown of spending by countries:

- United States: \$37.4 billion
- China: \$10.1 billion
- Russia: \$8 billion
- United Kingdom: \$6.2 billion
- France: \$5.7 billion
- India: \$2.4 billion
- Pakistan: \$1 billion
- North Korea: \$667 million

The top five companies profiting from nuclear weapon contracts:

1. Northrop Grumman (\$13.6 billion)
2. General Dynamics (\$10.8 billion)
3. Lockheed Martin (\$2 billion)
4. Raytheon Technologies (\$449.5 million)
5. Draper (\$342 million)

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Indigenous women's groups performed at the opening ceremony at the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico. Photo: UN Women/Dzilam Méndez (Source: <https://forum.generationequality.org/generation-equality-forum-mexico-city>)

Generation Equality Forum

[Generation Equality Forum](#) is a global movement for gender equality, convened by UN Women, in partnership with civil society and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France. This movement is a follow-up to the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, a historical turning point for gender equality at the international level. Yet, 26 years later, too little has changed, and what progress was made has been wiped out by COVID-19, which disproportionately impacted women. At the current rate of progress, more than 2.1 billion women and girls will live in countries that will not reach any key gender equality targets by 2030.

The first Generation Equality Forum took place in Mexico City in March and the second one in Paris from June 30–July 2, 2021. The Forum in Paris engaged nearly 50,000 people in a mainly virtual format. The forum brought together governments, corporations, NGOs, youth-led groups and Foundations to launch a five-year action journey to achieve irreversible progress towards gender equality, founded on a series of concrete, ambitious and transformative actions.

The [Generation Equality Action Coalitions](#) will focus on six critical issues that underpin gender equality:

1. Gender-Based Violence ([watch video](#))
2. Economic Justice and Rights ([watch video](#))
3. Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights ([watch video](#))
4. Feminist Action for Climate Justice ([watch video](#))
5. Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality ([watch video](#))
6. Feminist Movements and Leadership ([watch video](#))

Each Action Coalition blueprint lays out a vision for success, priority actions, strategies and targets to achieve it. Commitment Makers from all sectors of society will provide resources, lead advocacy, implement law and policy change and establish programs to help make the blueprints a reality. An accountability system is being built into the process for Commitment Makers to report on their progress. The UN Women will monitor progress towards Action Coalition targets.

The Action Coalitions, comprised of Commitment Makers and other diverse stakeholders, will employ the following core principles.

- Intersectionality: multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination experienced by women and girls because of their identities, realities, backgrounds; and unequal access to power and resources and addressing them.
- Feminist Leadership: explicitly and intentionally redistribute power and responsibility in a way that is inclusive, participatory, and mindful of gender, age, race, social class, sexual orientation, ability and other intersecting identities.
- Transformation of structures, systems and power that reinforce inequalities as an end goal, and build a collective vision through approaches that value co-creation, dialogue, shared perspective, and centering voices of historically marginalized groups. Youth leadership is critical to the transformative vision of the Generation Equality Action Coalitions.

This action agenda has received \$40 billion in financial commitments from governments, philanthropy, civil society, youth organizations and the private sector. Lack of financing was a major reason for the slow progress in advancing women's rights in the past. We all have a role to play in advancing gender equality, so learn more about an Action Coalition that you are passionate about and engage in a manner that works for you.

Recordings of select sessions of the Paris Forum are available on the [Generation Equality Forum YouTube channel](#).

Post-Pandemic Research: Giving Communities a Voice

The [NGO Committee on Financing for Development](#), in collaboration with Salesian Missions, conducted surveys in seven countries as part of a research project to see if sustainable development goals are on track; specifically, what are the experiences of the people on the ground as the pandemic is exposing the fundamental weaknesses in our global system. The objective of the research was to bring evidence-based advocacy and grassroots voices to focus on the need for financing for sustainable development and climate change.

The research began by analyzing the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement, their commitments and their translation to the grassroots level. Investigation of these documents revealed that while they spoke of important commitments around social protection, financial inclusion, and climate finance, they were lacking enforcement mechanisms or benchmarks that might ensure that such commitments translate to substantial change for those communities around the world who need it most, which often are the communities where we NGOs work.

The survey, disseminated through our NGO partners in India, Nepal, Philippines, Haiti, Mexico, Senegal and Kenya, measured access to key services in the categories of social protection, financial inclusion and climate finance and how access to those services was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. (For the Sisters of Charity Federation, six members of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth ministering in India and Nepal administered surveys.) The results around social protection services varied widely from country to country, with notable decreases in social security in Mexico and the Philippines. Access to financial and digital inclusion were maintained during the pandemic through mobile phones, and mobile financing provided widespread access to financial services, especially in Kenya, Mexico and the Philippines. During the pandemic, climate adaptation and mitigation programs decreased drastically in all seven countries. This is an indication that when a community is impacted by disaster, climate programs are first to be let go.

Based on these findings, some of the broad

policy asks are strengthening the social protection commitments and financing programs, prioritizing digital financial services as a means to increasing financial access for all and building resilience into climate action initiatives and funding them to avoid systemic shocks. These steps can help in the implementation of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

These findings and asks were presented in a side event, which was co-sponsored by the SC Federation during the [ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development](#) on April 15, 2021. The SC Federation was part of another side event during the Financing for Development Forum on “Digital Inclusion: Pathways to promote an inclusive post-COVID-19 socio-economic recovery” on April 12.

Financing for Development forum
12-15 April 2021

2021 VIRTUAL SIDE EVENT

NGO Committee on Financing for Development

GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH FINDINGS:

"Asks" to Strengthen Social Protection, Digital and Financial Inclusion, and Climate Finance in a Post-COVID-19 Era

VIRTUAL PANEL SESSION
THURSDAY, APRIL 15TH
7:30-8:45 AM EST
[Register Here](#)

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avert, minimize and address the loss and damage that is already occurring from climate change. All countries must produce an “Adaptation Communication,” a summary of what they are doing and planning to do to adapt to the impacts of climate change, the challenges they face, and the help they need. These plans will help countries learn together and share best practices.

3. Mobilize finance to realize the above goals. In order to deliver on the first two goals, developed countries must deliver on their promise, made in 2009, to raise \$100 billion in climate finance per year. Beyond climate finance, private sector should align their investments and spending decisions to achieve net zero. It also means that insurers, investors and other financial firms commit to ensuring their investments and lending are aligned with net zero. Central banks and regulators must ensure that our financial systems can withstand the impacts of climate change and support transition to net zero.
4. The challenge of climate change demands that we work together to deliver. Parties need to finalize the Paris Rulebook (rules needed to implement the Paris Agreement). They need to turn ambition into action by accelerating collaboration between governments, businesses and civil society. These negotiations should ensure that no issue is left behind and everyone’s voice is heard. They also should remove barriers that prevent the participation of people from communities vulnerable to climate change, including indigenous peoples. Finalizing the Rulebook is the beginning of the transformative journey ahead – for collaboration among governments, businesses and civil society to turn ambition into action.

Progress on the Road to COP26

- Around 70 percent of the world’s economy is now committed to reaching net zero.
- More than 80 countries have formally updated their NDCs, and all G7 countries have announced new NDC targets to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.
- Solar and wind are now cheaper than coal and gas power plants in two-thirds of countries in the

world.

- More than 1,500 businesses, investors, regions and cities have joined the Race to Resilience – committed to take action on adaptation to build a resilient future.
- Over 40 countries and organizations have joined the Risk-informed Early Action Partnership committing to make 1 billion people safer from disaster by 2025.
- Seventeen central banks have committed to stress testing their financial system against climate risks.

COP26 is a golden opportunity for us to engage in advocacy to end the era of dependency on fossil fuels and to allow nature to heal. The unsustainable modes of consumption and production even in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic indicate that greed is overtaking the need for solidarity to nurture the health of the people and planet. We should also focus on climate justice, for climate change is resulting in “triple injustice” – hitting hardest the countries least responsible for climate change; disproportionately impacting the poor and vulnerable communities; and leaving a legacy of risks and hardship for young people and future generations. It is incumbent upon us to ensure that climate action directly address the injustices of climate change. Since climate change will threaten the enjoyment of basic human rights and freedoms of many, there is urgency to advocate for environmental rights. Environmental rights mean access to unspoiled natural resources that enable survival, including land, shelter, food, water and air. Nature-based solutions are needed—the conservation of ecosystems and biological diversity are vital to climate mitigation and adaptation.

Get Involved in COP26

In 2015, at the COP in Paris, governments formally recognized the need for everyone to work together to face the challenge of climate change. Race to Zero is a UN Campaign to rally leadership and support from businesses, cities, regions, investors and universities to build a healthy, resilient, zero carbon economy. Non-state actors/civil society can join the Race to Resilience to take action to strengthen the resilience of people from vulnerable groups and communities to climate risks. Follow @COP26 on Twitter and Instagram for updates on how you can get involved, or visit the web site <https://ukcop26.org/> for more information.

Federation Leadership Meeting 2021

“Connecting and Collaborating with Compassion and Courage” was the theme for the virtual gathering of the Sisters of Charity Federation Leadership in June. It was hoped that the theme will help the group to “foster and experience compassionate conversation and courageous decision-making.” The NGO representative and congregational NGO liaisons joined leadership on the first day for celebrating our work and to share the challenges for the future. A short video conversation on the role and responsibilities of the NGO Representative at the UN was presented. The NGO liaisons presented three videos to showcase their engagement on Racism, Climate Change (photo below right) and Intersectionality. Following the presentations, leadership teams and their NGO liaisons joined in break-out rooms to process what they heard. The NGO Representative prepared a paper on “Connecting and Collaborating with Compassion and Courage for the Decade of Action on SDGs – An Integrated Approach to Advocacy” as a pre-read to the leadership. A PowerPoint presentation on the paper highlighted the urgency to reimagine the future for collaboration in advocacy through social media, given the limited avenues for direct engagements on the SDGs among the Federation membership. Participants were invited to “dare to dream big... to be led by the power of the Spirit of boldness, to embark on a journey of advocacy to restore dignity to people and planet, for an inclusive world, where everyone/ everything has a place.” They were also urged to take steps to create a platform for collaborative advocacy, especially to “do what is before us” in our globalized world. Following the presentation, participants gathered in small groups to reflect on the opportunity and the invitation for a new approach to advocacy.



Nuclear Weapons *continued from page 3*

It is also known that banks, pension funds and investment firms invested \$748 billion in the production of nuclear weapons between 2017–2019, putting savings into weapons of mass destruction leading to unprecedented humanitarian suffering.

An informed and effective public constituency is a must for nuclear arms control. Public mobilization has resulted in bilateral and multilateral agreements to end nuclear testing, curb the spread of nuclear weapons and know-how, and to cap and verifiably eliminate nuclear arsenals. Our advocacy for a just and peaceful society should begin with disarmament and abolition of war. The belief that militarism and war will usher in peace is a myth, for violence has never promoted peace. To build a culture of peace, we need to join hands with those who are on forefront of advocacy for disarmament – militarism intersects many other issues. Listen to Rachel Small, World Beyond War,

Canada Organizer to learn more about disarmament: [Watch video \(YouTube\)](#)

An interesting event: “[Nuclear Games](#),” organized by a coalition of NGOs, anti-nuclear activists and youth leaders is happening in Tokyo as the city is hosting the Olympic games. It is an innovative film and on-line platform addressing nuclear history and the risks and impact of nuclear weapons and nuclear energy. Nuclear Games shines a light on “nuclear issues which are deliberately downplayed by governments. The games tell the stories of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Chernobyl disaster, the victims of uranium mining and nuclear testing, etc. “Nuclear Games” a great tool to engage people in the nuclear disarmament movement.

Nuclear disarmament; follow-up to the advisory opinion on the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons; reducing nuclear danger. Report of the Secretary-General: [Watch video](#)

The high-level political forum (HLPF) is the United Nations



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

platform for follow-up and review of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) and the SDGs. The [2021 HLPF](#) was held July 6-15 with the theme, “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.” The HLPF reviewed the following 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. The forum also considered the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs. Forty-two countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) highlighting their initiatives and commitments during the Ministerial segment.

Participants highlighted the increased poverty rates and hunger, decreased number of children in school, job losses, increased debt burdens, growing inequalities, along with increased human rights violations. Lack of consensus on Ministerial Declaration prior to the meeting, led to voting on amendments submitted by Russia on climate change, gender and biodiversity on the last day. These amendments were not approved, for they would have undermined the Paris Agreement and global biodiversity goals. In fact, the language of the text reflected the growing international acknowledgement of the inseparability of climate change and biodiversity. The proposal by Israel to delete a paragraph on the realization of the right to self-determination of peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation was rejected. The Holy See tried to promote the rights of children and their participation in SDGs in the context of the family; Russia objected.

The call of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, “Let us renew our determination to build a strong, sustainable and inclusive recovery from the pandemic, and to take decisive action together to defeat the climate crisis and keep the promise of the 2030 Agenda,” was not reflected in the declaration. Despite the urgent calls from participants, UN agencies and governments for ambitious commitments on universal social protection, formalization of informal workers, gender

equality, climate change, pollution, biodiversity, digital divide, financial

reform, vaccine equity, and pharmaceutical monopoly, the declaration adopted by the ministers reflected a lack of political will. According to the Major Group and Other Stakeholders (NGOs), the HLPF failed to come up with “bold and transformative recommendations for action” in the context of increased rates of poverty and hunger, decreased number of children in school, job losses, increased debt burdens, growing inequalities, along with increased human rights violations. It failed to explicitly commit to extend social protection coverage, respond to the climate crisis, recognize the centrality of human rights and gender equality to sustainable development, new debt relief and financing architecture, the need to strengthen civil society participation and democratic governance.

Many speakers emphasized the fact that “we have the knowledge, the science and the technology to create a sustainable world.” What is needed is unity of purpose, effective leadership from all sectors, and urgent, ambitious action. This is reflected in the words of Volkan Bozkir, President of the General Assembly: “Rarely has a society been given the opportunity for such a radical change. For the first time in generations, we have widespread public and political support for transformational change. The question remains, can we turn this opportunity into reality?” In his closing remarks, the ECOSOC President, Munir Akram, emphasized the need for: “Building peaceful, equal and inclusive societies requires a people centered approach that protects the most vulnerable and ensures all voices are heard. We must engage all actors... expand international cooperation, facilitating open access to technologies, including vaccine, knowledge and solutions.” The Decade of Action invites everyone to play their part in realizing the 2030 Agenda amidst all the challenges we face.



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