



# The UN & You

BY DR. JIMMY WALTERS – FEBRUARY 2024

## From the NGO Desk

Once a year, Civil Society has a unique opportunity to coordinate and present a day of advocacy, learning, and collaboration (known as the Civil Society Forum) within the UN Headquarters as part of the larger Commission for Social Development (CSocD). I was fortunate to be a part of the planning committee for this year's forum and related events.

Troubled by the increased injustices and crises in our world, the slow-moving nature of the UN can easily lead to frustration and doubt. As we met often to plan for the forum, I found myself pondering in prayer whether our work was making any difference to those in need?

However, this reflective question started to find an answer as I gathered with friends from the Sisters of Charity Federation and other committed religious and secular NGO representatives during the commission.

I noticed a stir in my heart as the seeds planted months ago were starting to bear its fruit. I was no longer weighed down by doubt but transformed with hope. The hope of my colleagues was contagious, and the direct link to the grassroots efforts of our congregations reminded me of our responsibility to not only provide charity, but to vigorously address the systemic challenges that lead to injustice in all its forms.

As the commission concluded this week, it was clear that we, as Civil Society, do have an impact, and in fact, some countries are asking for us to speak even louder and to continue to share the voices of those at the grassroots level.

Specifically, Fergal Mythen, the Irish Ambassador, during a sponsored side event, asked us to “push back on the push back.” Other countries urged us to “never give up.”

As the commission concluded, there were resolutions and expectations set for the future. While the challeng-



*Breakfast with the Bureau prior to the start of CSocD62. NGO representatives from the NGO Committee on Social Development with representatives from UN Agencies and Member States.*

es remain, and the injustices are no less than they were prior to the commission, there is a renewed hope in the power of Civil Society and an energy and further direction that is gaining momentum among our NGO representatives.

In conclusion, allow me to share some lessons learned from this commission:

- 1. The voices from the grassroots are essential for our ministry at the UN.** Many delegates are either unaware or wish to ignore the realities of their people. We are charged to raise these voices, not only in telling their stories, but by creating a space for those most negatively impacted by societal injustices to speak before all stakeholders and to have their voice heard. I am working with our NGO liaisons to identify those within our collaborative efforts to tell their stories at future UN-related events.
- 2. Language is important, and it is also a key point of contention at the UN.** Member States seek compromise in language for all resolutions and future planning, often avoiding the specific injustices and discrimination, especially toward women. Civil Society must continue to explicitly name these concerns.
- 3. We must continue to acknowledge the intersection of issues.** During one session, the United States spoke to the importance of the care of



*Vincentian Family at CSocD62*

*First row from left: Sister Carol DeAngelo, SC (New York); Pat Mule (AIC), Linda Sama (AIC), Sister Grace Hartzog, SC (SC Federation executive director); MaryAnn Dantuano (AIC).*

*Second row from left: Renato Lima, SSVP; Tiffany Connolly (IGH), Lydia Stazen (IGH), Grace Bagdon (Intern, CM), Jimmy Walters (SC Federation), Jim Claffey (CM), Rev. Gervais Kouam, CM.*

children, but they would not connect this need to the realities of migration. All issues intersect, and we cannot look at one of the SDGs without recognizing their connection to the other development goals.

4. **There is power in our collaboration.** As the Sisters of Charity Federation along with other religious and spirituality representatives at the UN, as well as Civil Society, UN agencies, and Member State representatives, we must continue to work together with our hearts and minds focused on improving realities for those in need and upholding dignity in all its forms.

The work must continue, but we do it with great hope as we learn, grow, seeking peace and justice. As St. Vincent de Paul wrote, “Live together as having but one heart and one soul so that by this union of spirit you may be a true image of the unity of God.”

### **CSocD62 Follow-Up Resources**

As we go to print, the formal resolutions and documents are still in [draft form](#). There is hope and excitement in that adequate and affordable housing are specifically addressed in the resolutions, which opens new possibilities for our committee work in the Working Group to End Homelessness.

We can also share that next year’s theme for CSocD63 will focus on “strengthening solidarity, social inclusion and social cohesion,” leading to the second World Summit for Social Development in 2025, as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Finally, thank you to all who endorsed the Civil Society Declaration as we exceeded 1,000 signatures and

the Sisters of Charity Federation was very well represented.

### **Vincentian Family at the UN**

The Vincentian Family is a dynamic and critical team in our advocacy work at the United Nations. While each representative has various responsibilities and participates in similar and different committees, there is unity (and even some measurable success) in our attempt to contribute to ending homelessness.

During CSocD62, many members of our Vincentian Family team met in the UN to network and share ideas (above photo).

### **CSW68**

As CSocD62 concludes, we now turn our attention to CSW68 (Commission on the Status of Women). CSW takes place March 11–22 at the UN.

The priority theme is “Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.”

More updates will be shared on our X (formerly known as Twitter) page [@ngoscfederation](#) leading up to, and throughout, the commission.

*Dr. James Walters, EdD, represents the Sisters of Charity Federation NGO at the United Nations. Jimmy educates federation members and the public on the services and activities of the United Nations.*  
[jwalters@sistersofcharityfederation.org](mailto:jwalters@sistersofcharityfederation.org)