



WFWPI OFFICES FOR UN RELATIONS NEWSLETTER



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Permaculture: A Universal, Hopeful Practice for Building Back Better - HLPF Side event

by Mako Mori

On July 7, 2022, the WFWPI Office for UN Relations in New York, in collaboration with the World Council for Psychotherapy and the International Association of Applied Psychology, hosted a virtual Side Event during the 2022 UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF 2022), under the theme "Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030. Agenda for Sustainable Development."

The working theme of the Side Event was "Permaculture: A Universal, Hopeful Practice for Building Back Better." To ensure sustainable, inclusive and resilient recovery from the pandemic, WFWPI highlighted permaculture as a universal holistic practice to build back better, provide food security, heal our planet and our bodies, build bridges between local government and civil society and meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The program featured perspectives from expert permaculture



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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HLPF Side Event Cont'd



practitioners, community leaders, educators and governmental leaders and was followed by a roundtable discussion. Speakers identified practical solutions and successful practices while encouraging the creation and implementation of policies that support resilience and partnerships toward the well-being of people and the healing of the planet.

Mrs. Merly Barlaan, Director of the WFWPI Office for UN Relations in New York, opened the Side Event by introducing WFWPI and its environmental work through the 12 Giving for Good projects around the world. Permaculture education was shown in a lively video, showcasing the WFWP Philippines project managed by young WFWP leaders in Bohol. This project focuses on improving destructive farming practices, starting from the soil up. Mrs. Barlaan stressed the importance of the Permaculture Literacy Project saying, “Since we launched this project, one of the most important lessons for me was understanding that our planet is at a breaking point; soil building is fundamentally as critical as peacebuilding.”

Next, Mr. Mezang Akamba, First Counselor from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cameroon to the United Nations, shared his Opening Remarks, praising WFWPI’s work in the area of peacebuilding and environmental sustainability. Mr. Akamba, expressed hoped for collaboration and strong action-oriented commitment, stating that, “It is time to act. It is time to act for the greatest benefit of the most needy.”

Dr. Sun Jin Moon, WFWPI Senior Vice President, reaffirmed the history and mission of the UN and the importance of coming together to contribute to the 2030 agenda. Dr. Moon spoke on the evident climate disasters but also offered hope for the future, explaining that although the existential threat is upon us, by managing sustainable changes in human activity we can save our planet and our people. She ended her speech reminding us of our collective mission, to “protect and preserve the balance and health of our planet and its people, for future generations to come.”

Ms. Yani Dutta, Founder of the Regenes Project in Bohol, spoke on the large-scale restoration of degraded ecosystems in the Philippines. Ms. Dutta spoke on her permaculture journey, sharing honestly how at first, she had to grapple with her sense of hopelessness, feeling that “there is nothing I can do” towards the “global problems which are much too big and much too complex.”

What gave her hope, she went on, was seeing bamboo trees that were hit hard by a category 5 typhoon grow even bigger and more vigorous only six months later. In this way, she felt the principles of nature were universal and resilient, reminding her that “life will always find a way.” Ms. Dutta described permaculture as a hopeful practice which helps one learn how to design as nature, think and feel like nature and to realign with natural principles of nature “to ensure our practices cause more good than harm.” She gave prominent examples of healing taking place all over the world, in locations such as Jordan, India and China.

Director Michaela Glatzl, Advisor for the Austrian Women Farmers Working Group (AWFWG), Austrian Chamber of Agriculture, spoke on the work being done in the Austrian government, which incorporates planetary healing into our mental health and wellbeing. DI. Glatzl asked the audience to close their eyes and introduced imagery and sensory description of what she calls the Green Care Farm. This project is a social innovation with the “aim to build bridges between agricultural and social challenges” and addresses the country’s issues of crippling physical and mental health, special education needs, care for the elderly and lack of rural development. The Green Care Farm offers an experience for people to get educated, take care of their well-being and help them integrate better into society, while also promoting rural development in Austria.

Dr. Judy Kuriansky, Clinical Psychologist and Professor at Columbia University Teachers College, brought enthusiastic passion and energy while making the critical link between building back better, food security and mental health. Dr. Kuriansky highlighted the “silver lining” to this COVID-19 pandemic which is the “rare opportunity for transforming food systems.” Dr. Kuriansky described the interconnectedness of all the 17 SDGs visually, to help the audience understand the inextricable link between the health of the planet and its people. She also spoke on the importance of transforming “eco-stress” into actionable change in peoples' behavior and relationship with the environment. Dr. Kuriansky ended with the powerful reminder of “love, togetherness, belief that things will get better and hope.”

Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, President of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women at the United Nations in Geneva, ended the program with Closing Remarks, stating that “with every panel like this, we become not more convinced that it's necessary, but more convinced there is something that I can do to contribute.” Mrs. Handschin shared how hopeful it is to have a trending attitude of togetherness rather than separation and expressed her excitement that this Side Event showcases “what women are doing for the world.”



Human Rights Council 50th Session

By Carolyn Handschin



On June 13, 2021, the 50th Session of the UN Human Rights Council (Hybrid) was opened with a commemorative video and high level panel. The video illustrated the re-thinking of the Commission on Human Rights (1946-2006) and the creation, over one year, of a more requisite entity. The institution-building package of the new Human Rights Council included an innovative infrastructure for peer evaluation (Universal Periodic Review), an Advisory Committee think tank for advice on issues, and expansion of what is viewed as the most accessible UN human rights mechanism, the working groups, special rapporteurs and independent experts, and high expectations.

HE Ambassador Federico Villegas, President of the HRC, introduced the speakers of the high level panel in saying that let's not forget that "strengthening the HRC remains our collective responsibility." All speakers gave praise for the council's merits, all tempered with reminders for the need for vigilance in today's precarious state of affairs. There was more than one mention for Geneva and New York to collaborate more closely.

In his remarks, UN Secretary General, HE Antonio Guterres, spoke of the Council's early warning mechanisms, the special sessions for urgent situations, and the HRC resolutions that have catalyzed the debates of the General Assembly and Security Council on peace, security and development. "Today more than ever, we need a strong multilateral system anchored in human rights, and this Council will play a critical role in making it a reality."

General Assembly President, HE Ambassador Abdulla Shahid, referred to the prominence that human rights plays in the new social contract of the UN SG's "Our Common Agenda," and that we must "scale up our efforts," reminding all that the Council is the main platform for the core principle of the United Nations, the respect of human dignity.

The next speaker, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mme. Michel Bachelet, provided an overview of the accomplishments of the HRC; 16 years open honest and transparent dialogue, 49 regular sessions, 34 special sessions, 1372 resolutions, 10 new mandate holders and importantly, gender balance. The Universal Periodic Review has also just completed three full cycles where all countries receive the same scrutiny of their human rights standards.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Another panelist was a member of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Speaking by video from Argentina, she described her organization as one that had the goal of finding the children stolen and illegally adopted during the 1976-83 Argentine military dictatorship. Their representatives made the difficult trip to Geneva each year to plead their case at the Commission on Human Rights. She too, now ninety-one years old, had come to Geneva many times herself. Unable to influence their local and national government, they brought their case to the world stage. They became experts in areas such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and later, the Convention on Enforced Disappearances to advocate for their concerns publicly. “Our memory, our healing, is still going on. We fought with our lives.”

Civil society has always played a significant role in the Council’s deliberations and decision making. Until the pandemic hit, an influx of human rights advocates from every corner of the globe descended upon Geneva each year with reports of hidden or misunderstood violations, their causes and prospects for solutions, hoping to be listened to by the decision-makers they couldn’t reach at home. Information is shared through detailed statements and explicit photos, and interactive panel debates among victims, experts and audience. Passionate discussions around low tables in the Serpentine Lounge continue all day, where the Women’s Federation for World Peace too, has been engaged for nearly every HRC session over the years. On June 27, about 80 NGOs met with the Director General (DG) of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Mme. Tatiana Valovaya. Representing our concerns that COVID-19 restrictions do not continue to provide an over extended excuse to make it nearly impossible for NGOs' direct participation at HRCs, I took the floor. It also followed up upon a letter the NGO Committee on the Status of Women had written almost a year ago. I took the floor to that question as well as to request more suitable equipment for hybrid informal meetings in the NGO Lounge, that we are all being encourage to make. The DG took several minutes to reassure us that she will look into both matters.

Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development

By Srruthi Lekha Raaja Elango



Right to Development was established in the Declaration of the Right to Development in 1986. Despite its existence for nearly 40 years, many member states, civil society actors and the common people are unaware of this human right and how it impacts our day-to-day lives. The Declaration on the Right to Development defines the right as an inalienable right, which means it cannot be violated by any means.

Women and girls have been suffering through violations of economic and social human rights, poverty and many other violations impacting their development process. The Right to Development emphasizes the importance of development for women and girls and the contribution of development to the fulfillment of other human rights for women and girls. It is a very crucial human right in noting the amount of violations we have in the world in terms of poverty, conflict, crisis, sustainable development, climate change and women's rights.

The intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development is a Human Rights Council mandated body which has been working for the development and the establishment of a legally binding instrument for the right to development called the International Covenant on the Right to Development. This has been a very interesting and serious debate at the Human Rights Council as we see polarization between countries in the debate. The developed countries are not so welcoming of the international covenant or any legal binding instrument while the developing and least developed countries see this as an opportunity and a means for them to uplift themselves and establish equality in the world. The intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development's 23rd session was held at the United Nations in Geneva from the 16th May until the 20th May 2022, where they discussed and debated a revised version of the draft Covenant on the Right to Development.

This Covenant, once established, shall be able to hold member states, businesses entities, institutions and individuals accountable for their duty and violations of human rights and the right to development. Noting the political difference in the room amongst the developed and third world countries, it has been very difficult to mobilize the establishment of a legally binding instrument.

This is exactly where the importance of the participation of the civil society lies. Civil society organizations and other international organizations have been acting as mediators and negotiators trying to establish a political agreement amongst the member states. Amongst this debate the Women's Federation for World Peace International through the Office for UN Relations in Geneva, has been exponentially working with the intergovernmental working group on negotiating a legally binding instrument. WFWPI has submitted comments, suggestions and statements emphasizing the importance of the creation of a legally binding instrument to protect the rights of many and especially those of women and girls. Our suggestions have been highlighting the importance of protecting the rights of women and girls in situations of conflict, poverty and inequalities. We have been emphasizing the importance of an equitable and inclusive development process through international cooperation.

The intergovernmental working group is expected to meet once again at the UN Office of Geneva to debate further on the draft Covenant. Once agreed by a majority of member states, it shall be sent to the Human Rights Council and then to the UN General Assembly in New York for the final debate and voting. If it succeeds in establishing a majority vote, the International Covenant on the Right to Development shall start to exist as a legally binding instrument amongst other covenants such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, etc. This are historic debates and moments of which Women's Federation for World Peace is proud to be a part.

AARHAUS Convention and the Human Rights Council

By Krithi Ramaswamy

The 50th regular session of the UN Human Rights Council took place in June and July 2022. With representatives from governments across the globe, key civil society actors and NGOs, and members of international organizations interacting with one another, the UNHRC proved to be a stimulating space for discussion and deliberation. Addressing human rights situations in 47 member states, as well as current events that are shaping our world continuously, the UNHRC provided a platform for all voices during this session.

Over the past few decades, the need to address the climate crisis and worsening environmental situations across the globe has become a crucial part of such international agendas. Furthermore, it is increasingly being acknowledged that the climate crisis is intrinsically linked to structures of inequality; with women, indigenous people and populations of lower income countries facing more dire circumstances. It was with this in mind that the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters was adopted on 25th June, 1998. Popularly known as the Aarhus Convention due to the meeting taking place in the Danish city of Aarhus, this convention became a new kind of environmental agreement.

By linking human rights with environmental rights, the Aarhus Convention attempts to acknowledge our obligation to future generations by vying for sustainable development through partnership and bilateral engagement with governments, the public and other stakeholders. At the heart of the Aarhus Convention is the goal of protecting every person's right to live in an environment adequate to their health and well-being. Essentially, the Convention is not just about environmental rights, but also about the fundamental relationships between the public and their governments, urging us as citizens to engage more fully with those who represent us, and be aware of our rights to a safe environment.

These core tenets of the Aarhus Convention have served as guiding pillars for the past twenty years, and were raised once again during the 50th session of the UNHRC. On June 23rd, an Informal Consultation was held as part of the UNHRC, wherein civil society members in particular spoke on the importance of civil society and NGO work in the environmental domain.

Specifically, the themes of public participation and plastic governance were discussed at length. The Special Rapporteur noted that public participation has been minimal in the making of plastic policies, which has increased the fact that certain groups and persons are particularly exposed to hazards caused by plastics. The mandate of the special report on this topic calls further for better quality of public participation in plastic governance. Furthermore, in discussing environmental democracy, the speakers raised the point that there is no global mechanism about plastic usage yet, urging the UNEP to take this critical matter into consideration.

The session concluded with a vital discussion on the importance of involving indigenous people in meaningful ways when it comes to environmental concerns. By understanding and valuing indigenous ways of interacting with nature, the hope is to form more respectful relationships with our environment, which can be translated into a healthier and more sustainable world.



Panel Discussion and Report: Human Rights of People in Vulnerable Situations in the Context of Climate Change

By Carolyn Handschin

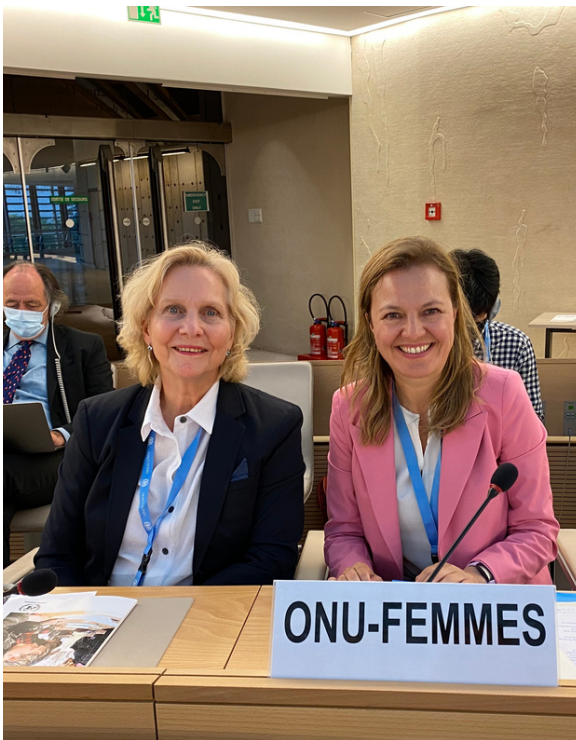
“I am encouraged by the adoption of two human rights resolutions on human rights and climate change last year. For countries like small island states, they correspond to the Right to Life.”

- HE Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly.

In its 49th Session, the Human Rights Council appointed Ian Fry of Tuvalu as the first Special Rapporteur on the “Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change” (Resolution 48/14). Independent experts are considered as extensions of the Human Rights Council as it receives reports and data each day from around the world.

Mr. Fry presented his first report at the 50th Session, at the time of the Panel on the “Human Rights of People in Vulnerable Situations in the Context of Climate Change.” It identified several thematic priorities that the Special Rapporteur will focus on during his mandate, Human Rights and Climate Change: Loss and damage, displacement, intergenerational justice, corporate accountability and new technologies.

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women’s Task Force on Climate and Health prepared an oral statement that was delivered on behalf of the Committee by its President, Mrs. Carolyn Handschin.



UN WOMEN DIRECTOR



SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Giving for Good 2022 Fundraiser: Healing Our Home, Our Shared Calling

By Mako Mori



The Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) Office for UN Relations in New York hosted its 2nd Annual "Giving for Good" virtual auction from July 17 to July 31, under the theme, "Healing Our Home, Our Shared Calling."

For this year's "Giving for Good" online auction, some of the key items that were up for bidding were clothing items donated by the Co-founder of WFWPI, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, and WFWPI Senior Vice President and Giving for Good Founder, Dr. Sun Jin Moon, as well as a replica crown won by Miss Earth 2017, Karen Ibasco, and a gorgeous clutch donated by Miss International 2005, Lara Quigaman. It was wonderful to see that GFG's mission was able to resonate and build new partnerships with influential Beauty Queens this year.

In conjunction with the auction, a Virtual Event Fundraiser was held on July 29 to showcase the impact of the environmental projects funded by last year's GFG auction. The Virtual Event showcased GFG's impact around the world, in particular highlighting the "Cloth Nappy Project" in Limpopo, South Africa, the "Permaculture Education Program" in Bohol, Philippines, as well as the "Lighting Up African Villages Project" in Kenya. Each presenter shared the unique environmental challenges faced by their community as well as the solution their project aimed to address. It was an inspiring time, which made the audience feel that this global climate crisis is an issue that involves each of us, but the solution also lies within each of us.

As a UN NGO with ECOSOC status, the WFWPI Office for UN Relations in New York is committed to actualizing the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) with bold new projects to educate, enlighten, and make an equitable impact on climate change and share access to a sustainable way of life for all life on this earth. WFWPI launched Giving for Good International (GFGI) in 2020, and now GFGI is a signature project of WFWPI that aims to conserve the Earth and all life through education, circular fashion and funding of climate action projects. All proceeds of this auction will go to forwarding the work of Giving For Good, a signature project of WFWP, International a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

75th Anniversary of Philippine-Austrian Relationship

By Maria Riehl

On June 20, 2022, the Embassy of the Philippines invited the WFWPI Office for UN Relations in Vienna to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Philippine-Austrian relationship and 124th Philippine Independence Day which is celebrated on June 15.

The celebration was held in a historical room in the City Hall in Vienna. HE Ms. Irene Susan Natividad, Charge d’Affaires for the Philippines, the Special Ambassador from the Philippines and a Representative of the Austrian National Government and Municipality of the City of Vienna, explained to the invited guests the history of the development of the relationship between the Philippines and Austria. It all started with the help of young Philippine nurses in the Austrian hospitals after the end of WWII.

We could listen to wonderful music performances given by young Filipino musicians.

Today about 30,000 Filipino people, three generations, live in different parts of Austria and are well organized in the Philippine-Austrian Association. Most of them support actively their homeland in the Philippines.

At the end of the evening, we enjoyed Austrian-Philippine cuisine and renewed our relationships with one another. We look forward to future activities and projects for the well-being of both countries.



30th Anniversary of WFWP and a Bridge of Peace between Austria, Hungary and Slovakia

By Renate Amesbauer

A joint program was organized by three WFWP chapters – Slovakia, Austria and Hungary – on Saturday, May 28, in Bratislava, Slovakia. The program was dedicated to the 30th Anniversary of the founding of WFWP and featured a Bridge of Peace ceremony between Austria, Hungary and Slovakia.

From Slovakia, 28 participants including one couple, two men and WFWP guests took part. Austria was represented by 23 people (from 10 different nationalities), including three couples. Hungary brought 18 participants – 16 women including three young female students and a WFWP Peace Ambassador, who is a lawyer who made the law in Hungary that protects women from the problem of domestic violence, as well as three husbands.

The program started with a city tour in the morning and a typical Slovak lunch of duck, dumplings and red cabbage later on.

The event in the afternoon took place in the beautiful new Peace Embassy of Bratislava. Mrs. Katsuyo Bendzsa, President of WFWP Hungary, gave the Welcoming Address. The Address was followed by a presentation from the President of WFWP Slovakia, Mrs. Lubica Magnússon, about the founding of WFWP by Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon and her late husband, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, and about the life and accomplishments of Dr. Moon, or the Mother of Peace as she is called by many. Mrs. Renate Amesbauer, President of WFWP Austria, then spoke about the UN dimension of WFWP activity in Vienna. After that participants celebrated the 30th Anniversary with the cutting of cakes prepared and decorated beautifully by Ms. Viktoria Savčenko from Slovakia.

The Bridge of Peace ceremony took place in the second part of the program and was dedicated to peace in all Europe. Slovak and Hungarian songs sung by our Ms. Miriam Alexy, Ms. Dorota Šimeková and the entire Hungarian team, as well as a poem written by an Austrian representative, helped to prepare the atmosphere. Dr. Maria Riehl, Director of the WFWPI Office for UN Relations in Vienna, explained the meaning of the Bridge of Peace and the importance of reconciliation to heal the wounds of history, in order to move forward to lasting peace in the future.

The ceremony proceeded with 17 sets of three of women, each representing one of the three countries, and two sets of couples. Another two sets of three men joined together after some encouragement from the women! Everyone was moved and excited about newfound connections with one another and many found a deep meaning in why they had come together with those people of the three countries of Slovakia, Austria and Hungary.

At the conclusion of the ceremony participants sang the song "Let there be peace on Earth and let it begin with me..." with a prayerful heart while holding each others' hands, thinking and praying especially for peace in Europe to be established again. It was a wonderful ceremony, a day which was blessed with good weather and was filled with excitement and joy. We pray for hope that our neighboring countries will continue to be connected through good exchanges and to have a relationship centered on true love.

We would like to express our gratitude to the team in WFWP Slovakia for inviting us at this time for the program in Bratislava.