



WFWPI OFFICES FOR UN RELATIONS NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE

Feature Article

32nd CCPCJ

Peace

*2nd Annual Conference on “No
Peace Without Women”*

WFWPI'S HLPF Side event 2023

Human Rights

Human Rights in Ukraine

*Intergovernmental Working
Group on the Right to
Development*

32nd Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice “Healing Family Relationships is Healing Society and reducing Vulnerability of Young People”

By Rennate Amesbauer

At the 32nd Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) at UN Vienna, the WFWPI Office for UN Relations in Vienna organized a side event on the topic: “Healing Family Relationships is Healing Society and reducing Vulnerability of Young People.”

Dr. Maria Riehl, Director, WFWPI Office for UN Relations in Vienna, warmly welcomed the speakers. She explained that the focus of WFWPI has been on peace through reconciliation in “Bridges for Peace” activities for many years. Now the priority has shifted to education for peace, starting in the family. In this context, she emphasized that the family provides space for each of us to discover our unique value, our abilities and our way to contribute to society. Dr. Riehl then introduced the moderator, Ms. Kyung In Van den Ven. Ms. Van den Ven works with unaccompanied minors in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Veronika Lippert, Chairperson, ‘Elternwerkstatt’ (Parents’ Workshop), then spoke, presenting their program which is designed to support parents to educate and guide their children in a non-violent manner, based on humanistic psychology. This method emphasizes a positive parent-child relationship based on understanding, appreciation and communication.



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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32nd Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice “Healing Family Relationships is Healing Society and reducing Vulnerability of Young People”(cont.)

Ms. Lippert highlighted the features of the Parents Workshop: it offers parents a friendly and communicative atmosphere where they feel understood, they can share experiences and ask questions. The court and child and youth welfare office support courses for parents, and in some cases, encourage parents to participate. The cost of the training is partly subsidized by the state. The programs support parents in a variety of areas: understanding child development; managing challenging behaviors; teaching parent-child bonding and parental skills. Parents learn non-violent communication, which prevents violent, aggressive behavior.

Mr. Patrick Erlandson, Founder and Director of “FATHER-CON,” described his experiences with human trafficking while working with UNHCR-America. His observations and his numerous talks with victims that survived their experience shocked him deeply. His own experience as a father also gave him an insight into the important role of fatherhood in children’s lives. Fatherlessness and absentee fathers seem to be a major cause of vulnerability in girls and boys. The impact of this on a child's life has been poorly understood in general; too many men underestimate their value in child development. As a result, Mr. Erlandson founded “Father-Con,” to create space for men to learn about their role as fathers, reflect on their past and heal from painful experiences they might have endured themselves. Mr. Erlandson concluded with the following quote from UNICEF Chief of Early Childhood Development, Dr. Pia Britto: “More than just an extra set of hands, fathers are one of the best child development resources we have, and if we are going to give children the best start in life, we all need to fully recognize and utilize this role.”

Dr. Wadih Maalouf, UNODC-Family United-Universal Family Skills Programme, explained the value of strengthening family relationships, improving communication and providing a safe space for children to ask questions and to feel understood. Research shows that this has a preventive effect in the case of drug abuse, as well as other problems such as teen pregnancy, youth gangs, crime and violence. Dr Wadih expounded on the wide variety of programs reaching out to families in different circumstances. Some are especially designed to support families in challenging situations, such as war and displacement, or other factors like climate change. UNODC-Family United implements its programs in the developing world in cooperation with the local governments. Being a father himself, Dr. Maalouf always speaks with great enthusiasm about the importance of strengthening family ties for the sake of the individuals, but also for creating a healthy society.

Carolyn Handschin-Moser, Director, WFWPI Offices for UN Relations, gave a brief overview of the widespread programs of WFWPI in over 120 countries, noting that each has an element to strengthen families and enable families to have a stable and healthy lifestyle through teaching about family relationships. Ms. Handschin then described a project of WFWP Japan in three of Peru’s largest cities where needy families come to collect food. Managing a family while in poverty is a big challenge, but it became much greater during the COVID-19 pandemic, frequently resulting in violence. The WFWP members used the opportunity to teach the women how to show affection and how to communicate in a positive way with their husbands and children. Eventually, thousands of women and families could be helped through this initiative. Many women have shared how they restored their relationship with their children who returned home and how they created a more loving relationship with their husbands.

WFWPI's HLPF 2023 Side Event

By Christine Rose Bulayo

This year marks the midway point of the UN 2030 Agenda. From July 10-19, world leaders gathered at the United Nations in New York for the 2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). It was held under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council. The theme was “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels.”

On July 18th, WFWPI hosted a hybrid side event at the NYCE Social Hall in New York City. Ms. Merly Barlaan, Director of WFWPI’s Office for UN Relations in New York, opened the event with a roundtable discussion on the topic, “Integration and Impact of Digital Technology in developing countries in the context of the Right to Development.” The discussion aimed to explore solutions to the challenges faced by developing countries in effectively utilizing digital technology to build sustainable cities and communities, ensuring that digital technology reaches its full potential for the good of humanity while preventing and mitigating all its destructive potentials.

Ms. Srruthi Lekha, UN Representative of WFWPI moderated the expert roundtable discussion.

Dr. Rior Santos, the Regional Project Manager of the SDG Fund for Digital Transformation in Micronesia for the United Nations Office for Projects and Services (UNOPS), highlighted digital initiatives that had already demonstrated positive impacts on education, healthcare and environmental conservation in the region, stressing the importance of collaboration and partnerships as essential drivers of successful implementation.

Dr. Frank Kaufmann, President of the Twelve Gates Foundation, touched upon ethical considerations related to digital technology, such as data privacy, digital rights and inclusivity.

Ms. Priscilla Garces, Founder of Always Forward, emphasized the importance of accessibility in digital solutions and called for collaborative efforts among disability advocates, technology developers and policymakers to ensure inclusivity.

Mr. Rodrigo Tello, a Fintech consultant from Mexico, explored the transformative potential of financial technology in promoting financial inclusion and economic development in developing countries.

Ms. Arshia Dutta, a young programmer from India, presented a project that promotes circular fashion, called Fashion-scious, a mobile APP that she personally developed addressing problems such as the footprints of pollution left behind by the fast fashion industry.

The second part of the event was an SDG Exhibit. It provided a platform for exhibitors from 10 civil society organizations to showcase their projects. The side event left a positive and lasting impact, fostering a sense of community and commitment, and forging collaboration and partnerships to achieve the UN SDGs by 2030.



2nd Annual Conference on “No Peace Without Women”

By Carolyn Handschin



The second conference in the series entitled “No Peace Without Women” was held on June 13, 2023, at the Parliament in Pristina, Kosovo. Sponsors and partners were the Kosovo Office of the Prime Minister and the EUME branches of WFWP, the WFWPI Office for UN Relations, the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and the International Association of First Ladies for Peace (IAFLP).

The conference opened with an address from the Prime Minister of Kosovo, HE Albin Kurti, who had excused himself from an urgent meeting on the situation in the north of Kosovo to do so. HE Liza Gashi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and HE Emilia Redžepi, Deputy Prime Minister were also speakers and played critical roles in the preparations and in extending invitations to Members of Parliament. The event was attended by 120 leaders, 12 of whom were Ambassadors from different nations of Europe and the Balkans, with over 20 media outlets covering the event.

The conference was a great success, and a model of the peace and reconciliation process when women are involved, that aims to be propagated further. A safe space was created in a tense region where women could speak honestly of their scars and conclude that working together for peace and mutual development was the only solution. As the series theme alludes, women must and can take a leading role in defining a new mindset, on solving differences through dialogue, reconciliation and shared development plans, rather than through violence, enmity and hate.

Besides those attending from the region, First Ladies, former presidents, government ministers, members of parliament, business and financial leaders and youth, there were messages of concern and support coming from the Head of the UN Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva, Olga Algayerova, and Nobel Laureate, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Sally Becker, a humanitarian aid worker credited with saving hundreds of children’s lives during the Kosovo war, returning for the first time, was one of the speakers. She captivated the audience with her testimony, including being imprisoned and shot. Her unwavering commitment to forgiveness and peace resonated with everyone, many of whom had experienced the trauma of war in their immediate surroundings.

The founder of WFWP and UPF, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, is presently calling for a greater focus on peace education for mothers. It is mothers who naturally shape the values and beliefs of their children, therein lies the hope of instilling a culture of peace that starts in the home, and promotes the shared leadership between women and men. This is especially important in countries like Kosovo, where traditional family values are deeply ingrained.

The “No Peace without Women” conference has received strong support from political leaders, providing evidence of the growing recognition of the need to involve women in peace processes, and helping to amplify the voices of women regarding the importance of a holistic approach to establish more inclusive and sustainable peace agreements. Participants returning to their nations throughout the Balkans were already anticipating the next “No Peace without Women” event and campaign in their region.

Human Rights Protection in Ukraine: A Crucial Focus for the Human Rights Council in 2023

By Srruthi Lekha Raaja Elango

In recent years, Ukraine has been grappling with significant human rights challenges arising from its ongoing conflicts, political transitions and social transformations. As the Human Rights Council sets its agenda for 2023, it is imperative that the protection of human rights in Ukraine becomes a primary focus. By prioritizing this issue, the international community can play a vital role in supporting Ukraine's journey towards a more just and inclusive society.

First and foremost, the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine has resulted in a multitude of human rights violations. Civilians have endured the devastating consequences of armed conflict, including indiscriminate shelling, displacement and loss of life. The protection of civilians and ensuring respect for their human rights, as enshrined in international law, must be of paramount concern. The Human Rights Council should actively engage with the Ukrainian government to promote accountability for human rights violations, encourage dialogue and facilitate humanitarian assistance to affected populations.

Moreover, Ukraine continues to face challenges in the areas of freedom of expression, media freedom and the protection of journalists. Threats, harassment and violence against journalists have hindered the free flow of information and impeded public access to diverse viewpoints. The Human Rights Council should advocate for a safe and enabling environment for journalists, emphasizing the importance of media independence and the rule of law. Support for capacity-building initiatives and the promotion of ethical journalism can contribute to strengthening democratic institutions and fostering public trust.

The protection of minority rights is another critical area that requires attention in Ukraine. Discrimination and marginalization persist against ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities. The Human Rights Council must work closely with the Ukrainian government to ensure the implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation and policies that address the specific needs and challenges faced by minority communities. Strengthening intercultural dialogue and promoting diversity can foster social cohesion and prevent further polarization within Ukrainian society.

In conclusion, the Human Rights Council has a unique opportunity in 2023 to focus its attention on the protection of human rights in Ukraine. By addressing the challenges faced by Ukraine head-on, the council can contribute to fostering a culture of respect for human rights, strengthening the rule of law and supporting Ukraine's journey towards a more inclusive and democratic society. Through collaborative efforts and a steadfast commitment to human rights principles, we can strive for a brighter future for all Ukrainians.

Peace for
Ukraine



The Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development, Geneva

By Srruthi Lekha Raaja Elango

The Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development, established by the United Nations General Assembly, convened its latest session from the 15th until the 19th of May 2023 at the UN Headquarters in New York to address critical issues related to inclusive development, equity and sustainable growth. The session saw active participation from governments, civil society organizations and experts from various fields. One of the key highlights of the session was the renewed commitment by member states to prioritize the right to development as an essential human right. Recognizing that development should benefit all individuals and communities, efforts were made to address structural inequalities and systemic barriers hindering progress in many regions.

Participants discussed the importance of integrating the right to development into national policies and legal frameworks. They emphasized the need for governments to adopt an inclusive and participatory approach, engaging with civil society organizations and marginalized communities to ensure the right to development is effectively implemented. Furthermore, the session explored innovative approaches to financing development projects. Sustainable financing mechanisms, such as public-private partnerships, impact investing and leveraging digital technologies, were discussed as means to mobilize resources and support the implementation of development programs at scale.

The role of technology and digitalization in promoting inclusive development was another prominent topic during the session. Recognizing the transformative power of technology, participants highlighted the need to bridge the digital divide, ensure digital literacy and protect individuals' rights in the digital realm. The session also addressed the importance of international cooperation in achieving the right to development. Member states emphasized the significance of partnerships, knowledge sharing and capacity-building initiatives to support developing countries in their pursuit of sustainable development.

Civil society organizations played a crucial role in the discussions, advocating for the rights of marginalized groups and underserved communities. Their contributions brought valuable perspectives and experiences to the table, highlighting the importance of grassroots movements in driving meaningful change. As the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development moves forward, it is imperative for civil society organizations to continue engaging with policymakers, fostering dialogue and holding governments accountable for their commitments.

