



# **Spiritual Leadership & the United Nations**

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Why & How Religious Congregations Engage with the UN System

# ***Why* Religious Congregations Engage with the UN System**



# THE UN CHARTER:

## WE, THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS, DETERMINED

- to **save succeeding generations from the scourge of war**, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and
- to **reaffirm faith** in fundamental human rights, in the **dignity and worth of the human person**, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and
- to **establish** conditions under which **justice** and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and
- to promote **social progress and better standards of life** in larger freedom,

# THE UN CHARTER:

## AND FOR THESE ENDS

- to practice tolerance and **live together in peace with one another as good neighbours**, and
- to unite our strength to **maintain international peace** and security, and
- to **ensure**, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, **that armed force shall not be used**, save in the common interest, and
- to employ international machinery for the **promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples...**





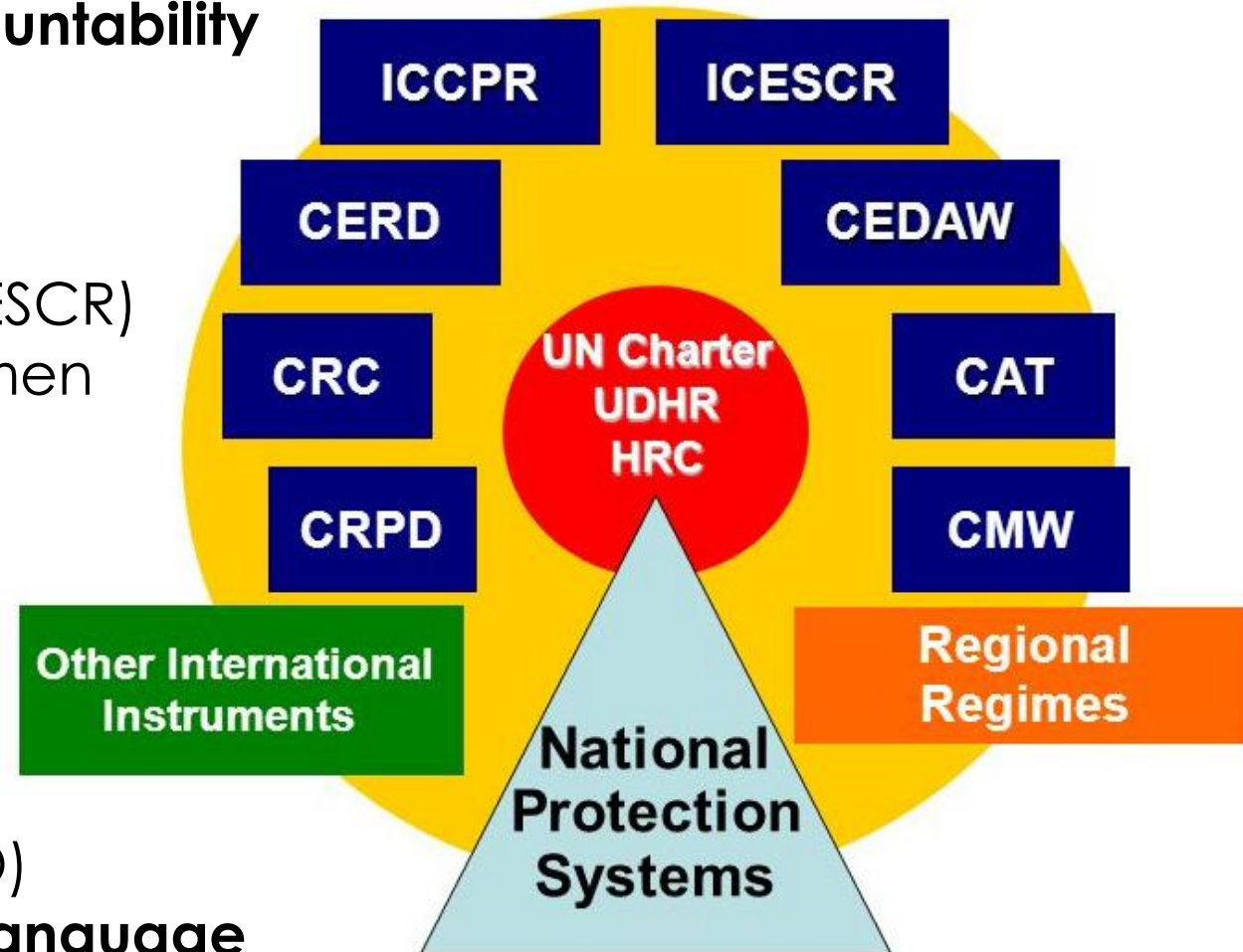
# CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

# THE HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK:

**Aims to establish global consensus & accountability toward realization of:**

- Universal human rights (UDHR)
- Civil & political rights (ICCPR)
- Economic, social, and cultural rights (ICESCR)
- Elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW)
- Elimination of torture (CAT)
- Rights of migrant workers & their families (CMW)
- Rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD)
- Rights of children (CRC)
- Elimination of racial discrimination (CERD)

**...principles of Social Teaching in secular language**



# SDGs

the UN's AGENDA for 2015-2030:



**SECULAR ROAD MAP to the REIGN or CITY of GOD**



# The POLITICAL is SPIRITUAL

“It is important to realize that there is an element of spirituality needed in what we do...”

Stop the trend of dividing humanity to ‘us’ and ‘them.’ The most important word in the world is **TOGETHER.**”

-H.E. Jan Eliasson  
former UN Deputy Secretary General



# The POLITICAL is SPIRITUAL

“The United Nations and its agencies deal with a comprehensive range of issues affecting global communities, including human rights, population, food, agriculture, health, trade and children. For each of these issues, **religion often plays a powerful complementary moral, social, economic and political role for disenfranchised communities.**

Every religious tradition has leaders and networks providing food distribution, health care, education and conflict mediation. **Religious social service networks, which preceded the UN and governmental entities, reach more people and are more deeply entrenched than any other organization.”**

-Dr. Azza Karam (former Senior Advisor of UN Population Fund) &  
Dr. Matt Weiner (Associate Dean of Princeton University's Office of Religious Life)

# The POLITICAL is SPIRITUAL

“The spiritual dimensions of the work of the United Nations tend to be overlooked and underappreciated. Yet, the tenets set out in the Charter – peace, justice, equality, the dignity and worth of the human person – echo the teachings of the world’s religious traditions and summon us all to reduce human suffering

...As we reflect on [*Laudato Si'*] in 2021, the state of our common home is broken...This is an epic policy test. But ultimately this is a moral test.”

**-H.E. António Guterres,**  
UN Secretary General  
in foreword for the [\*Laudato si' Reader\*](#)

# The SPIRITUAL is POLITICAL

“**Politics**, though often denigrated, **remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good.** We need to be convinced that charity ‘is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic and political ones)’ ... I am firmly convinced that **openness to the transcendent can bring about a new political and economic mindset** which would help to break down the wall of separation between the economy and the common good of society.”

**-Pope Francis**

*Evangelii Gaudium, 2013*

# The SPIRITUAL is POLITICAL

“**[The Church]** cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she **cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument** and she has **to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice**, which always demands sacrifice, **cannot prevail and prosper**. A just society must be the achievement of politics, not of the Church. Yet the promotion of justice through **efforts to bring about openness of mind and will to the demands of the common good** is something which **concerns the Church deeply.**”

**-Pope Benedict XVI**

*Deus Caritas Est, 2005*

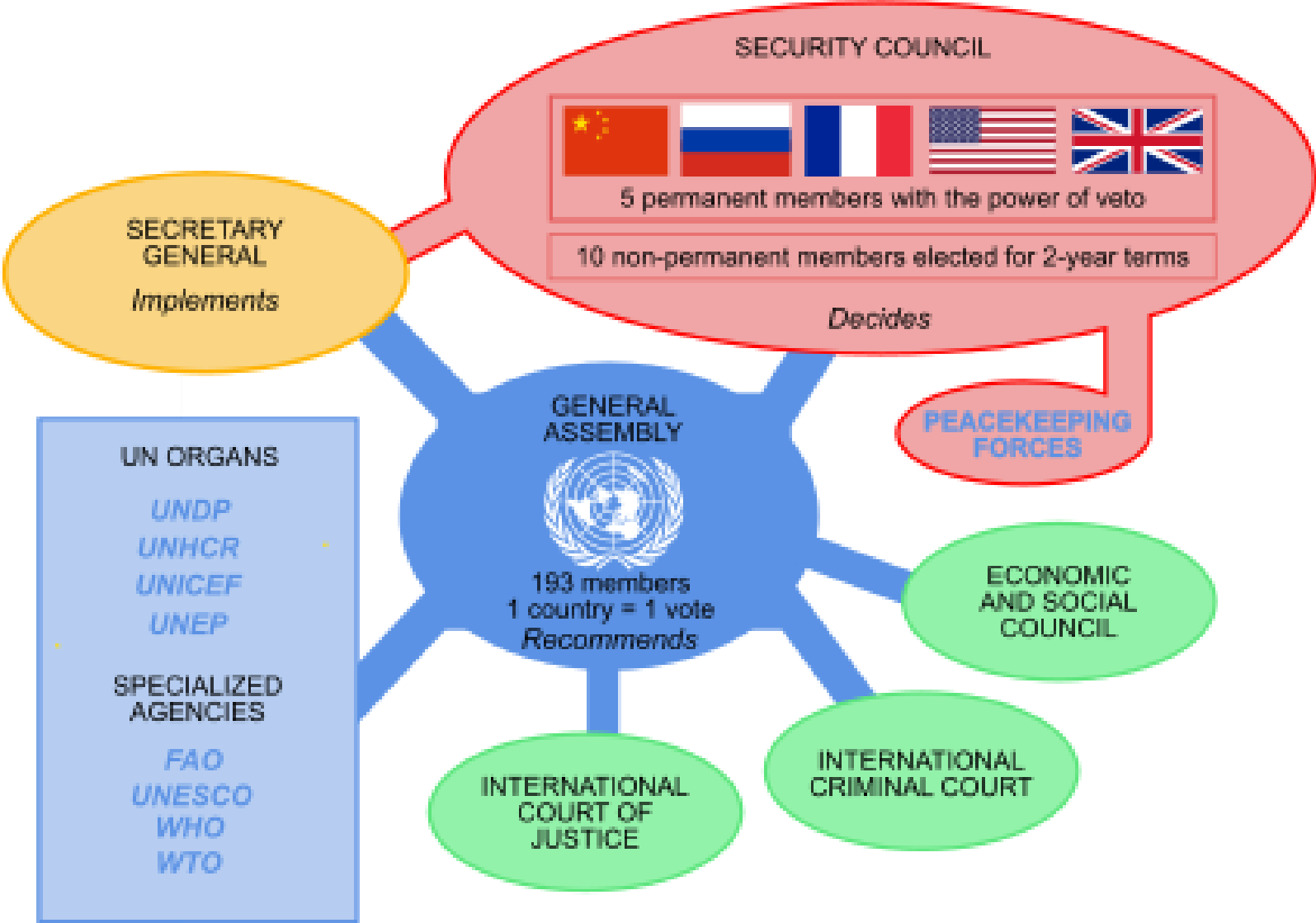


# ***How Religious Congregations Engage with the UN System***



# Catholic Religious NGO Presence at the UN

- In the UN system, we are considered NGOs (non-governmental organizations)
- ~30 NGOs accredited to represent over 200 Catholic Religious congregations



# Religious Voice at the UN

- **Expert:** provide insights from members' work ministering to the poorest and most vulnerable populations "on the ground"
- **Impartial:** represent communities that span many nations and have no national identity
- **Credible:** known to *practice* values of care for human dignity of all and for the natural environment through lives of intentionality and dedicated service
- **Steady and stable:** maintain positions based on constitutions and principles older than UN and many nations; bring continuity and cohesion to global conversation that governments with frequently changing leaders/politics cannot
- **Collaborative:** speak and work through coalitions and committees that model for governments how to prioritise common goals and common good ahead of individual glory or achievement

# ROLE of NGOs in the UN SYSTEM

- “Get **in** the way”
- “Get **out of** the way”
- Model **a new** “way”



# “GETTING *IN* THE WAY”

**Occupying space in places of power on behalf of those who can't be present** in order to raise awareness of an injustice in progress and to infuse the global conversation with the perspectives, experiences, and needs that would otherwise be absent

- Speaking from the floor of the UN or submitting written statements and recommendations (literally termed "interventions") during major meetings or negotiations
- Writing letters to and seeking meetings with governments' representatives to the UN
- Participating in the political systems of our respective nations (via voting, lobbying, etc.)
- Physically protesting or demonstrating near UN Headquarters or Member States' missions to the UN

# “GETTING IN THE WAY”





# “GETTING *OUT OF* THE WAY”

**Creating and giving space within places of power for those who face the greatest barriers to that space so that they can assert their own voices, perspectives, and experiences**

- Organizing events and opportunities for marginalized individuals to speak at the UN
- Providing financial or technological support and training to facilitate marginalized individuals' participation in UN meetings
- Collecting testimony of marginalized groups and submitting it to UN processes and Member States
- Ensuring marginalized groups are aware of the UN's open calls for input through which they can express their concerns and ideas directly
- Amplifying statements of marginalized groups by sharing them with our networks via social media, newsletters, or other platforms

## Testimony

### Akeyo

Single Mother of Five from Mukuru Slum, Experiencing Housing Inadequacy, Kenya

# Hidden Faces of Homelessness

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH ON FAMILIES

“ I wanted to move, but couldn't afford it. I had no option but to live with the water in my house, waiting for the water to dry up. It is not yet dried up. I have been living in the same place for 15 years now, and each year it is the case that it has flooded. This time I was forced to pour some garbage in front of the door to make a space to pass. I cannot go to the toilet at night because it is far away outside and there is no sight, I can't see [not to step in water]. Despite living 15 years there I am lucky. I am lucky that I have never been contracted with cholera. I stay at the center of where the flood water comes to. For that reason the flood water has actually stayed near my home for close to five years, and it even turns its color. When the rains are over the water turns into some sort of black color - its from the sewage system. ”

# “GETTING OUT OF THE WAY”





# MODELING *A NEW* “WAY”

Continually **evaluating our role in unjust systems and modifying our behavior** to lessen the burden our actions place on other's ability to access their basic needs

This includes assessing:

- What we buy, wear, and eat
- What we dispose of as waste and how
- How we travel and how often
- Where we invest our money
- How we work with others (committees and coalitions that unite around a common goal and place it ahead of individual credit or status)

\*Best evidence that a new world is feasible—not fantasy!

# MODELING A "NEW WAY"





# MODELING A NEW "WAY"







**MODELING  
A  
NEW "WAY"**



# MODELING A NEW “WAY”

United Nations

E/CN.6/2022/NGO/XX



**Economic and Social Council**

Distr.: General  
December 2021

Original: Language

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**Commission on the Status of Women**

Sixty-sixth session

14-25 March 2022

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

**Statement submitted by Casa Generalizia della Societa del Sacro Cuore, Congregation of the Mission, Congregations of St. Joseph, Dominican Leadership Conference, Edmund Rice International Ltd., Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary-Loreto Generalate, International Presentation Association, Loretto Community (Sisters of Loretto), Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers, Passionists International, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Salesian Missions Inc., Sisters of Charity Federation, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, UNANIMA International, and VIVAT International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\***

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/21.

*“As members and partners of the Justice Coalition of Religious, a global community of Catholic Sisters, Brothers, priests, and their partners in mission, we uphold a commitment to the care of the natural environment as a foundational principle of our social teaching, our responsibility to one another and to future generations.*

*We also hold firm to our vision of a world in which the equal dignity of all people, women, men, girls, and boys is reflected in the reality governing every nation, community, and family...”*

# MODELING A NEW “WAY”

*“Acknowledging that our own faith communities have played our role in the entrenchment of both patriarchy and colonization, we are now making efforts—on scales large and small—to deconstruct our contributions to a culture of sexism and objectification of human and non-human beings and to build, in its place, a culture of equity, reciprocity, and sustainability.*

*Under this common mission, our congregations have undertaken many ministries dedicated to supporting the human rights of women and girls in tandem with the pursuit of environmental sustainability.*

*Among our good practices in this vein are...”*



# MODELING A NEW “WAY”

- The Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame de Montreal in Cameroon are working with local partners to organize local awareness campaigns on the harmful effects of the use of chemical fertilizers and deforestation; training farmers on the use of ecological fertilizers; setting up tree nurseries that facilitate recharge of local water tables; and popularizing the use of ecological building materials and reduction of the use of plastic. They also work with OK Clean Water to convene women and girls by neighbourhood and lead them in reflection on their daily experiences in the light of the outlook of the natural environment. From these exchanges, the participants' sustainability awareness and motivation to take a leadership role in the transformation of their community emerges.

- The Sisters of St. Joseph of Annecy and the Canossian Daughters of Charity Servants of the Poor in India have provided housing and economic support to poor, migrant, and tribal women and girls who had been displaced by cyclones and other environmental disasters. The Canossian Daughters also partnered with other local organisations to assist in the rebuilding of homes destroyed by environmental disasters. In their schools, the Sisters of St. Joseph also encourage girls' leadership and engage men and boys in programmes raising awareness about the harm and falsehood of gender stereotypes.



# MODELING A NEW “WAY”

- The Don Bosco Green Alliance, which is active in 79 countries, oversees 474 institutional interventions to promote environmental education and campaign against use of plastic; work against deforestation; and encourage tree plantation. The Alliance employs a focus on the role of youth in addressing the climate crisis. They also promote use of alternate, sustainable energy and campaign against the use of fossil fuel. Women and girls comprise half of the global leadership team and more than half of participants worldwide.
- The Society of the Sacred Heart in Mexico has integrated environmental sustainability into the curriculum and culture of their schools. Educators in these schools offer sustainability training and work with students from early childhood to youth in the design, leadership, and realization of concrete environmental sustainability projects. Through this curriculum, girls are trained to lead the projects according to a participatory methodology of citizen action. Teaching staff are also engaged in these processes, so that the entire educational community is committing itself to sustainability leadership within their families, schools, and nation. In the municipality of Zapopan, the Society also leads the organisation Comunidad Crece, A.C., which facilitates forest fire safety training for women and girls and offers a women-led programme called Farmacia Viviente, which trains women to organically cultivate and utilize herbal medicines.







# Justice Coalition of Religious

— Justice at the heart of global transformation —

- HOME
- ABOUT US
- CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOPS
- COLLABORATION AT THE UNITED NATIONS
- RESOURCES
- CONTACT US



## WELCOME

We are a group of 19 non-governmental organizations that collectively represent over 200 congregations of Roman Catholic women and men from the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York. For centuries, congregations of Religious have served those who have

JOINT STATEMENTS

JOINT EVENTS

CAPACITY BUILDING

Select Language

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## JOINT STATEMENTS



The following statements were jointly submitted to the United Nations system by members of JCoR:

**Statement for the 57th Commission on Social Development**, February 2019: *Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage, and social protection policies* [ENG](#) [ESP](#) [FRA](#)

**Statement for the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women**, March 2019: *Social Protection Systems for Indigenous Women and Girls: Rural- and Urban-Specific, Inclusive Delivery Systems* [ENG](#) [ESP](#) [FRA](#)

**Response to call for stakeholder input into 2019 Sustainable Development Goal Summit**, May 2019 [ENG](#)

**Statement for the 1st ECOSOC High-Level Segment of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**, July 2019: *The Inseparability of Shortcomings and Progress toward SDGs 13 & 10* [ENG](#)

**Statement for the 58th Commission on Social Development**, February 2020: *Affordable Housing and Social*

Select Language ▾

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

Today ◀ ▶ January 2020 ▾

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	Jan 1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
				<a href="#">+1 more</a>	<a href="#">2 more</a>	<a href="#">1 more</a>
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	Feb 1
<b>JCoR</b>						

Events shown in time zone: Eastern Time - New York [+](#) [Google Calendar](#)

**SAVE the DATE**