

Spiritual Leadership, Collaboration, and Migration Advocacy at the UN

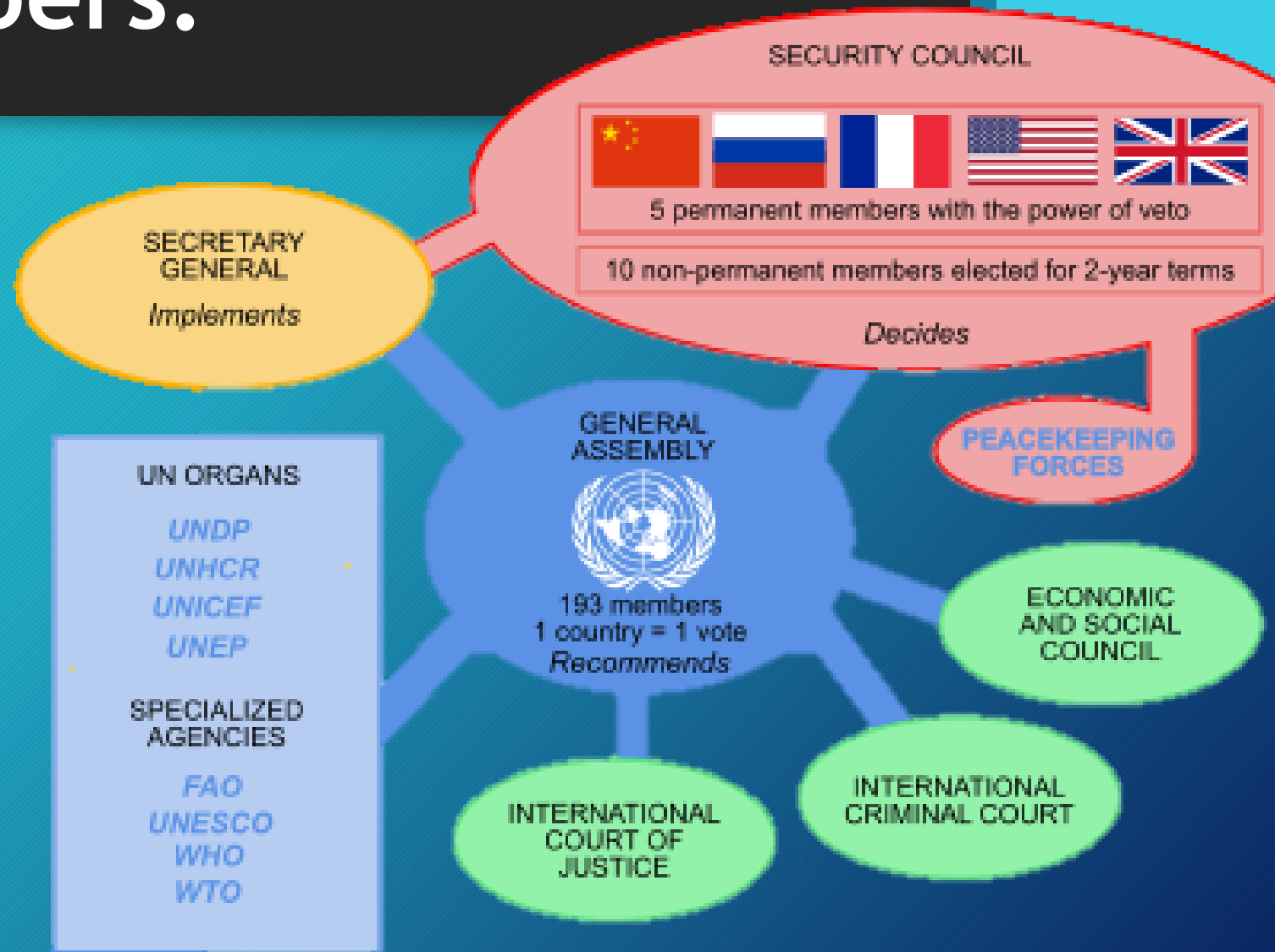


*Teresa Blumenstein
Justice Coalition of Religious
Migration Advocacy Workshop for Zambia
June 2024*

Introduction

Presence by Numbers:

- Over 30 NGOs representing congregations of Catholic women and men Religious accredited with ECOSOC and/or DGC
- These 30 NGOs representing over 200 congregations
- Collectively present at the UN for over 20 years



Important contributions:

- Bring **expertise** by providing insights from members' work ministering to the poorest and most vulnerable populations at the grassroots level
- Bring **impartiality** as most are present in many nations and have no national identity
- Bring **credibility** as groups known for *practicing* a life of profound dedication to human dignity of all and care of the natural environment
- Bring **stability and cohesion** to multilateral process as groups who have had constitutions longer and maintain positions and representatives at the UN longer than many nations
- Bring **collaborativity** as a highly team-oriented family of small NGOs who speak and work primarily through coalitions and committees

Why Religious Congregations Engage with the UN System

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 Political is Spiritual

UN General Assembly Protocol, Rule #62:

One minute of silence for personal prayer or meditation at the opening and closing of each session

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.”

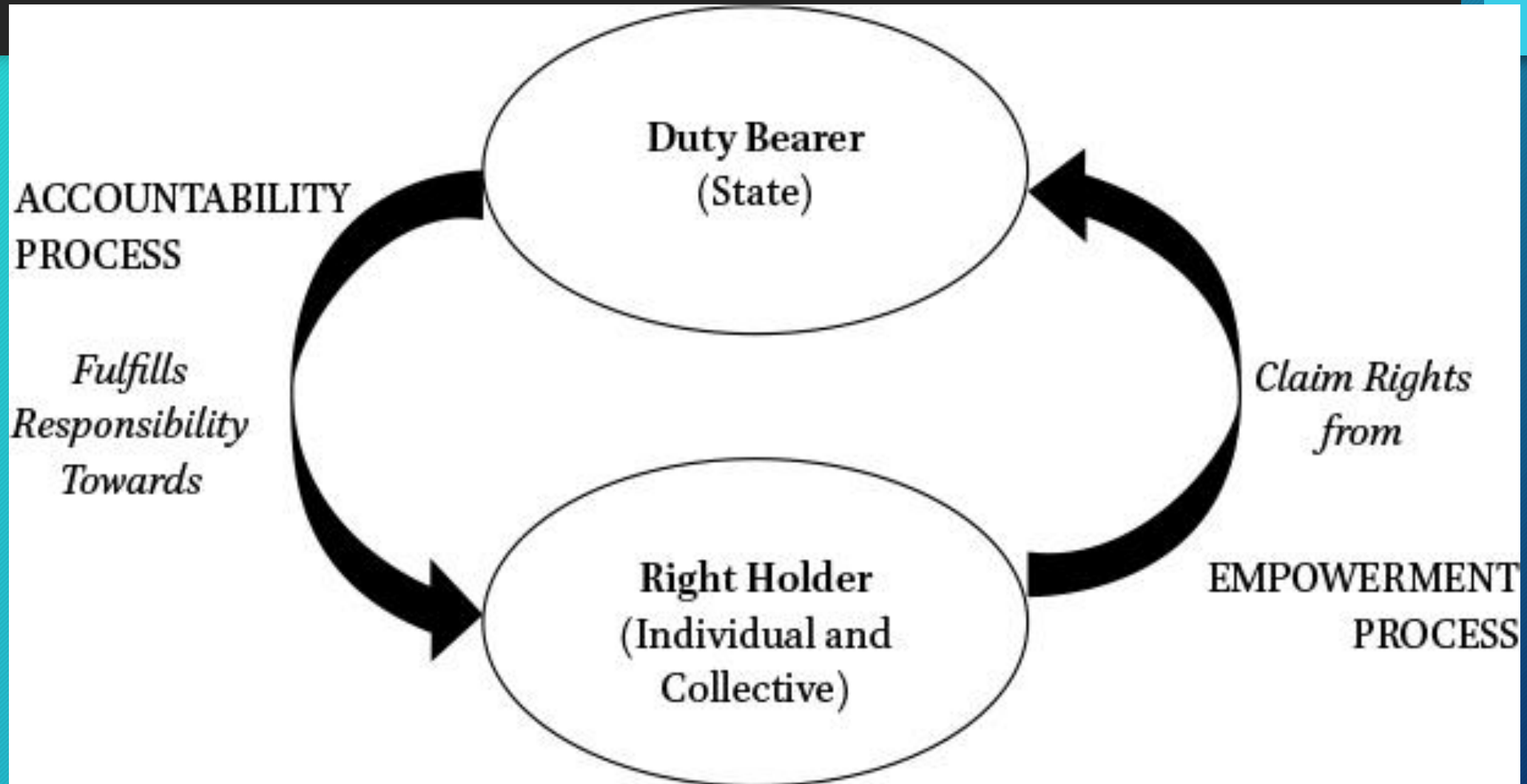
-Pope Benedict XVI

Deus Caritas Est, 2005

How Religious NGOs Work at the UN



Rights & Responsibilities



Duty-Bearers' Responsibilities

Respect



Refrain from interfering with the enjoyment of the right

Protect



Prevent others from interfering with the enjoyment of the right

Fulfil



Adopt appropriate measures towards full realisation of the right

Rights-Holders' Responsibilities

To hold duty-bearers accountable through participation in an empowerment process we call...

Advocacy!

Three Approaches to Advocacy:

- 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 infuse the conversation with the perspectives, experiences, and needs that would otherwise be absent.

We do this by:

- Speaking on the floor of the UN ("intervention") 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



Intervention for Fr. Stan Swamy, SJ

- Jesuit priest held as political prisoner on false charges related to his ministry to Tribal Peoples in India
- JCoR petition for his release:
 - Collected 8,864 signatures from individuals, 466 from organizations representing 100 countries and independent territories
 - Sent with letter to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- OHCHR spoke publicly against the imprisonment; called on Indian government for his release
- Was ultimately released but only to hospital due to case of COVID-19 that he did not survive



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

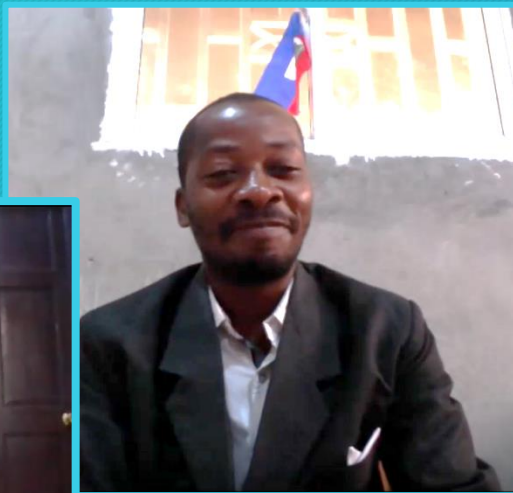
Akeyo

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



Getting *OUT OF* the Way

“ 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. ”





Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues



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 call “waste” and how we dispose of it
- How we travel and how often
- Where we invest our money
- How we communicate or use media
- How well 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!

IT'S HIGH TIME

WOMEN RELIGIOUS SPEAK UP ON
GENDER JUSTICE IN THE INDIAN CHURCH



Dr Hazel D'Lima
Cletus Zuzarte
Pallavi Xalxo
College of Social Work
Nirmala Niketan, 2019

A STUDY COMMISSIONED BY THE CRI (WOMEN)

Modeling a *NEW* Way



72 FAITH INSTITUTIONS DIVEST

RECORD NUMBER OF FAITH INSTITUTIONS DIVEST FROM FOSSIL FUELS
IN GLOBAL DIVESTMENT ANNOUNCEMENT AHEAD OF COP26



Modeling a *NEW* Way

United Nations

E/CN.6/2022/NGO/XX



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
December 2021

Original: Language

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.



Religious NGOs Modeling Leadership in Collaboration

Working through Coalitions



120 organizations promoting awareness of humanity's shared destiny throughout the full scope of the UN's work



>80 NGOs and Trade Unions from all parts of the world; advocate with ILO and other UN mechanisms for all forms of social protection



21 NGOs representing Catholic Religious congregations at the UN; formally participating in governance of a project to enhance advocacy collaboration and communication among their congregations and coordinate advocacy campaigns involving Religious advocates at different levels (local to UN)

Modeling a *NEW* Way





Modeling a
NEW Way

Religious NGO Committee Leadership & Participation



**NGO
Committee
on Migration**



**NGO Committee on
MIGRATION**

Basics:



Mission: To encourage the promotion and protection of migrants and their human rights, in accordance with the United Nations Charter

Members: Over 50 NGOs seeking to realize justice for migrants, refugees, stateless persons, internally displaced persons, and trafficked persons.

Meetings: Second Thursday of each month, 11:00am-1:30pm (New York time) (currently on Zoom, so anyone with an internet connection can join!)

Website: www.ngo-migration.org

Thematic Areas of Focus:

- Children in Migration
- Migrants in Vulnerable Situations & Mixed Migration
- Xenophobia and Social Inclusion
- Climate-Induced Displacement



Great entry point for engagement with:

- UN Member States' representatives to the UN
- Officials within UN Network on Migration & IOM
- Global Compact for Migration (and its review forum)
- Global Compact on Refugees (and its review forum)
- Global Forum for Migration and Development (GFMD)
- All UN Conventions related to migrants and migration
 - Refugee Convention
 - Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
 - Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (trafficking & smuggling)



Activities:



- Collect of good practices from our members and partners around the world
- Closely follow all migration-related meetings and fora organized at UN Headquarters (+ many in Geneva or other international meeting settings)
- Bring migration concerns into meetings on related topics (e.g. environmental concerns, social inclusion/discrimination)
- Seek meetings with UN representatives of governments to promote areas of concern and recommend language for UN agreements and declarations
- Create informational resources to inform decision-makers and our own global networks about concerns
- Educate and inform one another about new developments in global migration discourse
- Organize events in/near UN Headquarters to highlight/educate around areas of concern

YOU ARE INVITED TO

DANCING ACROSS BORDERS: BRINGING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER THROUGH DANCE

IN PERSON LOCATION:

PERMANENT MISSION OF
CANADA TO THE UNITED
NATIONS
466 LEXINGTON AVE, 20TH
FLOOR/ÉTAGE
NEW YORK, NY 10017

DEC. 14, 2023 - 3:00PM - 4:15PM

Organized by the NGO Committee on Migration
and Battery Dance

Sponsored by the Group of Friends of Migration,
the Global Compact for Migration
Champion Countries Initiative, and the
Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations

Celebrate International Migrants Day with Battery Dance - a refreshing alternative approach to healing across divides using dance to bring communities together. Their Dancing to Connect and Dancing for Trust initiatives integrate migrant youth into receiving communities around the world. These transformative initiatives make a lasting impact in a short span of time, and help to create inclusive and cohesive societies.

About The Event

The program will consist of a 75 min panel. Speakers include Jonathan Hollander, Founder/Artistic Director of Battery Dance; Emad Salem CEO of Battery Dance; Elena Korbut, Executive Director of PAIR, largest refugee resettlement agency in Texas; Mahmoud Haji, Founder and Chairman (Vorsitzender) of WISA - Wir sind angekommen e.V., Germany

This is a hybrid event

Please RSVP to attend in person or virtually
by visiting

<https://forms.gle/RdMHgYiHT3amvNLw8>

by 5pm on Dec. 11th.



Champion countries
initiative



Permanent Mission
of the Federal Republic of Germany
to the United Nations
New York



FRIENDS OF
MIGRATION

Resources for Migration Advocacy:



- Global Compact for Migration “At a Glance” ([view in English](#) or [in French](#))
- Collection of good practices from our members and partners around the world for implementation of the Global Compact for Migration ([view here](#))
- Booklet on rights of child linked with Global Compacts on Refugees and for Migration ([view here](#))
- Brochure on climate-induced displacement ([view here](#))
- Infographic on facts and myths about migrants and migration to combat xenophobia ([view in English](#) or [in French](#))
- Weekly Update newsletter ([subscribe here](#))

Incoming Leadership Team: Strong Religious Representation!



- Chair: rep of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas
- Vice Chair: Associate Coordinator of JCoR and rep of the Sisters of Loretto
- Secretary: rep of UNANIMA International (coalition of 25 congregations of Catholic Sisters)
- Member at Large: rep of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd

NGO Committee
to STOP
Trafficking in
Persons

NGO COMMITTEE TO
STOP
TRAFFICKING
IN PERSONS

Basics:



Mission: To work together with private sector partners to strengthen the programs and policies of the United Nations and member states that will bring an end to human trafficking in all its forms worldwide

Meetings: Second Tuesday of each month, 11:00am-1:00pm
(meeting recordings posted on website afterward)

Website: www.cstip.org

Activities:



- Gather and disseminate information about the social and economic conditions in local, regional, and international settings that contribute to the vulnerability of individuals to being trafficked
- Collect data from our members and partners that contribute to the mapping of prevalence of human trafficking and promising practices in addressing human trafficking
- Focus attention on the elimination of the demand side of human trafficking, following the enormous illicit profits generated and transferred globally by human traffickers
- Organize events that bring together experts in aspects of human trafficking to discuss best practices and produce reports of these meetings to inform more comprehensive and effective policies to address human trafficking
- Advocate with member states for stronger implementation and the allocation of additional resources to their anti-human trafficking obligations under international and national legal commitments
- Promote the necessity of cooperation between diverse duty bearers at local, national, regional and international levels as essential to ending human trafficking

Questions?

Reflecting on Advocacy in Practice

✧ PERSONAL REFLECTION ✧

Write down a brief description of a circumstance or setting in which you have observed that an individual or a group's rights were

- * violated by government,
- * were not adequately protected by government, or
- * were not adequately fulfilled by government.

In response to the situation you described...

- ✧ Are you aware of anyone who became an advocate for the “rights-holder” by *“getting in the way”* of the injustice?
- ✧ Are you aware of anyone *“getting out of the way”* by providing an opportunity for the “rights-holder” to claim their own rights?
- ✧ Are you aware of anyone *“modeling a new way”* for the duty-bearers to respect, protect, or fulfilling the right that was being violated?

What other actions or approaches to advocacy could you, as Religious and their partners, have contributed to in this situation?