

2017 UN High Level Political Forum


Faith-Based Side
Events -
Highlights



UN Secretary-General António Guterres speaks at the launch of the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes.
Photo: UN Photo/ Eskinder Debebe

2,558 
Participants

159 
Side Events

23 
Faith-Based
side events

INTRODUCTION

Having been attended by over 2,558 individuals, the 2017 **High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development** was highly participatory. The HLPF was an opportunity to highlight on the progress made towards the 2030 development agenda from governmental and non-governmental perspectives. 147 side events

were held during this Forum - compared to 106 in 2016. Out of the 147 side events, 23 were on/with faith-based issues and organizations (FBOs), as communicated to the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development, which is convened by UNFPA. This report is not an overview of all the faith-related events, but will briefly highlight a select few which involved members of *the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development*.

LAUNCH OF THE PLAN OF ACTION FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND ACTORS TO PREVENT INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE THAT COULD LEAD TO ATROCITY CRIMES

“

I firmly believe in the power of faith leaders to shape our world for good

I have been struck by the consonance of key precepts and core values between the different faiths.

Indeed, faith is central to hope and resilience.

António Guterres – UN Secretary-General

In societies that are fragile as a result of political or other forms of instability, hate speech can be a key trigger to violence that can lead to atrocity crimes. As the UN Secretary-General Mr António Guterres rightly puts it “hate speech sows the seeds of suspicion, mistrust and intolerance”. Hate speech and incitement are most effective when the speaker is a person of influence. And

Religious leaders and actors have been responsible for hate speech and incitement - but have also been responsible for preventing and countering incitement by spreading alternative messages of peace and tolerance. For this reason, the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect (the “Office”) has decided to engage these eminent personalities as part of its wider atrocity prevention efforts. To this effect, a series of broad consultations and constructive discussions with religious leader around the world, known as the Fez Process, took place between April 2017 and December 2016. These discussions subsequently culminated with the development of the “Fez Declaration” and the Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes (thereafter Plan of Action).

Watch the entire event
on UNTV:

[Fez Plan of Action launch](#)

Read [SG's Remarks](#) as
delivered or [watch here](#)

► Members of the advisory team that contributed to the crystallisation of the Fez Plan of Action pose for a photo with the UN Deputy Secretary General Ms. Amina Mohammed.

From right to left is:

Azza Karam, Peter Prove, Agness Callarnard, Mohammed ElSanoussi, Faisal Bin Muaammar Amina J. Mohammed, Adama Dieng, Simona Cruciani, Gillian Kitley, Ibrahim Cheema.

Photo: UNFPA/Leeroy Mapulanga



The Plan of Action is the first to focus on the role of religious leaders and actors in preventing incitement to violence that could lead to atrocity crimes. The Fez Process has been led by United Nations Under Secretary-General and Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, and it involved religious leaders and actors representing different faiths and religious minorities groups, as well as faith-based organizations around the world. UNFPA was part of the advisory team that contributed to the

development of the Plan of Action. In launching the Plan of Action, the UN Secretary-General Mr António Guterres expressed concern at the alarming rise of offline and online hate speech. He nonetheless was hopeful that “the Plan of Action sets out a broad range of ways in which religious leaders can prevent incitement to violence and contribute to peace and stability.” In this context, he “urge[d] the widest possible dissemination and implementation of [the] Plan of Action.”

In its capacity as **Convenor of the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development, UNFPA supported the UN Office of the Special Advisor on Prevention of Genocide, as part of a Steering Group of UN and faith-based partners.**

ENGAGING YOUTH ON SRHR IN FRAGILE SETTINGS



A photo from the event Engaging Youth on SRHR in Fragile Settings Photo: JEUNE S3

This side event was convened by the JEUNE S3 Alliance; whose members include Cordaid, Population Services International (PSI) Europe, Swiss Tropical Public Health (TPH) Institute, Young Women Christian Association (YWCA). As an alliance, JEUNE S3 aims to achieve that young people from 10- 24 years old (especially girls from 10 to 14 years old) and key

populations are able, motivated and have the opportunity to make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and that their sexual and reproductive rights are respected. In line with this, the side event – convened in close collaboration with UNFPA – sought to:

- Raise awareness of the specific SRHR issues for young people in fragile settings
- Share recommendations and best practices on creating an enabling environment for youth in fragile settings
- Call for action and commitment of resources to youth SRHR in fragility

At the end of it all the conveners, and the participants can take forward advocacy messages and action points to their respective networks and organizations.



Ms. Rosario del Pilar Diaz Gravito, the founder of the Millennials Movement making her intervention at the side event “Ban Hunger and Poverty, Not People” Photo: UNFPA/Leeroy Mapulanga

The Church World Service and the Hunger Project co-hosted this side event. The discussions focused on the need for integrated, gender-focused community led solutions that economically empower persons on the brink of displacement and migration. Unlike most of the side events, the discussants took a micro approach by looking at communities in Latin America. Following the theme of the event, the UNFPA representative noted that people should not always look outside their communities for resources needed to eradicate poverty. She observed that each country or community (whether developed or not) has people who are wealthy and can greatly contribute to the fight against hunger. These people are not only political leaders but also local men and women entrepreneurs searching for worthy causes. Learning how to seek them and

their support is a necessary skill for young people and civil society. Other panellists at this event included Ms. Rosario del Pilar Diaz Gravito, the founder of Millennials Movement, who particularly emphasized on the importance of taking infrastructure development to hard-to reach places if the problem of forced migration/displacement is to be reduced. Meanwhile, Mr. Ravi Karkara of UN Women added a gender perspective to this discussion by highlighting the seminal work of UN Women with youth groups as a turning point for behavioural change and social transformation. Speakers included Andrew Fuys and Maurice Bloem from Church World Service, an FBO which leads in service provision, advocacy and knowledge building, including around migration.



Rev. Welinton Pereira from World Vision, Brazil speaks at the event 'Linking reducing inequalities to eradicating poverty'. From left to right is: Elias Szczytnicki, Marcela Suazo, Rev. Carlos Temez, Rev. Welinton Pereira, Carlos Rauda, Elena Cedillo, Adriana Opromolla and Azza Karam. Photo: UNFPA/Leeroy Mapulanga

LINKING REDUCING INEQUALITIES TO ERADICATING POVERTY IN THE CHANGING REGION OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: THE PERSPECTIVES OF FAITH COMMUNITIES

This event was co-convened by UNFPA and 9 other organizations including Caritas, ACT Alliance, World Vision, among others. The event, which was moderated by UNFPA, traversed the resultant impact – on poverty levels – of reducing inequality. And Ms. Adriana Opromolla pointed out that Caritas is concerned for a just dimension which the market does not guarantee because it is wasteful and consumeristic. She proposed that there is need to install mechanisms for collaboration, information access and mobilization of resources that will govern implementation structures for SDGs at both national and local government levels.

Reverend Carlos Tamez observed that “it’s a great challenge and unforgivable sin” to have 66 million people living in extreme poverty. To this effect, he

shared tools that the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) has developed in order to position and mobilise churches to work together in a targeted fashion. He also observed that the interlinkage characterizing SDGs may also constitute vulnerabilities because not one single institutions can tackle all SDGs. He stressed that poverty is not only defined economically but encompasses other dimensions like access to school and to credit, among other things; underlining the need for alliances and frameworks of regional action which should include political commitment with governments, heeding voices of the poor and of the churches, ensure the participation of FBOs in national action plans and their roll out; and tackling root causes of inequalities.

FAITH-BASED PARTNERSHIPS: VEHICLE FOR ACHIEVING THE SDGS

The side event on Faith-based partnerships: vehicles for achieving the SDGs was co-convened by the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations and the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development, in partnership with

the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local communities (JLI). The event theme echoed the tenets of SDG #17 and focused on the following questions: what are the milestones achieved by diverse FBOs, since the launch of the SDG agenda,

as regards to SDGs 1,2,3, and 5; what have some UN System entities been able to achieve themselves in terms of their own outreach and partnership with FBOs, since the launch of the SDGs in September 2016; what are some of the ongoing challenges of partnership between the UN and the FBOs around these SDGs; and what are some concrete recommendations - and commitments - from the FBOs to the UN system for enhanced engagement around the above SDGs, which can be reported on at the next HLPF in 2018? The panel was chaired by H.E. Ambassador David Donoghue, and included **Marielle Ali**, Director of Social and Humanitarian Affairs, UN Association; **Jamil Ahmad**, Deputy Director, UNEP New York Office; **Charles Badenoch**, Vice President, Global Advocacy and Justice for Children at World Vision International; **Jean Duff**, Coordinator, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities; and **Anwar Khan**, CEO of Islamic Relief USA. All panelists concurred with the premise that FBOs and faith leaders have a moral imperative to actively participate in the 2030 development agenda because the goals are in line with basic tenets of all religions.

Ambassador Donoghue is owed a huge debt of gratitude for a legacy rich in constructive engagement and the courage to highlight the difficulties and enable the consultations, and the means, to address them. Ms. Duff's presentation provided a cogent and powerful evidence-based argument for the role of religions, the challenges and the recommendations we all need to pay heed to going forward with Agenda 2030, and the

important intersections between the various SDGs being reviewed in this HLPF.

Mr. Badenoch's arguments were an important clarion call to the policy-making communities, backed by concrete examples (including highlighting WVI's signature approach - Channels of Hope – which rallies faith leaders around their sacred texts to enable them to become change agents realising human rights) for why faith actors are critical drivers of SDG realization. His remarks, and his advice for the quintessential necessity of collaboration across all sectors, are an illustration of how World Vision is strategically equipped to carry out its mandate within the SDGs in partnership with the United Nations. Mr. Khan presented a strong evocation of how central leadership is, and can be, to the work on and with faith communities. His remarks emphasized the need for learned discernment in dealing with religious actors, acknowledging the unique strengths while paying heed to the lessons learned from existing partnership experiences, which Islamic Relief USA continues to skilfully steward.

Ms. Ali shared a concrete instance of ecumenical cooperation which has produced significant collaborative capital over its many years of existence, and continues to provide an important potential to the localisation of the SDGs here in the US and elsewhere. Moreover, she both spoke to and personified, the unique and critical role that youth voices and experiences must continue to play, in order to leave no one behind.

Panelists concurred with the premise that FBOs and faith leaders have a moral imperative to actively participate in the 2030 development agenda because the goals are in line with basic tenets of all religions.

MOBILIZING RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES TO ACT WITH SOLIDARITY AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY TO END POVERTY

The side event which ran under the theme “mobilizing religious communities to act with solidarity and shared responsibility to end poverty” brought together a diverse team of panelist that explored the ethical dimension of the 2030

development agenda while giving practical approaches to its realisation.

The panelists with a religious background noted that while development discourse should be approached in a pragmatic way using the tools of

science and technology; it is equally important to establish strong ethical underpinnings to this approach.



Archbishop Bernardito Aua, the Holy See's Permanent Observer to the United Nations, noted that "we are living at a time in which many, especially in developed nations and here at the United Nations, like to bracket the most important questions, like those about who we are, where we come from, where we're going, how we should treat each other, and what is good, true, and genuinely beautiful... [but] within the specific context of the sustainable development agenda, if we lose sight of these fundamental human coordinates, there's the serious risk that the SDGs may be understood in only partial ways, through excessively economic, environmental, or

sociological lenses, while missing their deeper ethical and anthropological context and purposes."

Meanwhile, UNFPA representative delivered an intervention from the UN system perspective by way of giving an account on how the UN partners with faith leaders and religious institutions. The presentation shared key lessons learnt from the partnerships; which included the dual instrumentalisation (by some secular development entities of FBOs, as well as by some FBOs of some secular entities); and the need to appreciate that morality, and moral voices, should not be limited to religious actors only, but in order to become powerful agents of SDGs, these efforts have to encompass all civic actors at local, regional and global levels. Speaking at the same event, Professor Jeffrey Sachs the director of UN Sustainable Development Solutions noted that there are a lot of individuals in the private sector with a lot of money to help in the implementation of the SDGs, however, they lack a moral imperative to do so and hence do not spend the money. He thus, implored the faith leaders to reach out to these people and help them help people through the 2030 development agenda.



Professor Jeffrey Sachs the director of UN Sustainable Development Solutions delivering his intervention at the event; mobilizing religious communities to act with solidarity and shared responsibility to end poverty. Photo: Christine Mangale/Lutheran Office for World Community



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Cordaid, PSI Europe, Swiss TPH and World YWCA
invite you to participate in an session on

ENGAGING YOUTH ON SRHR IN FRAGILE SETTINGS

Join our Jeune S3 Youth Ambassadors and others
for a frank discussion on the role Youths play in calling for
their Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights in fragile settings



A flyer for one of the event co-convended by Jeune S3 (a consortium of Cordaid, PSI Europe, Swiss TPH, YWCA) UNFPA, Choice Norwegian Church Aid in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

CONCLUSION

“I firmly believe in the power of faith leaders to shape our world for good”. Sentiments such as this from the UN leadership coupled with the number of faith-related side events convened by civil society organizations, the private sector and the UN agencies, underscores the relevance of faith dynamics in the 2030 Development Agenda. This particular form of outreach to FBOs is part of the UN System’s commitment to ‘leaving no one behind’, particularly given the reach of most religious organizations anywhere in the world. Nonetheless, this outreach, and the partnerships formed around it, are not without challenges. Deliberate efforts remain required to ensure that the outreach with FBOs is at once inclusive of all religions, all civil society actors, and is country-driven, while remaining consistent with globally agreed policy decisions and priorities. As Anwar Khan noted, the United Nations system remains

the world’s largest convening entity. As such, it has a unique role in bringing together the moral, political, social, cultural and economic capital and capacities of the global community, to help ensure human rights and human dignity, as part of Agenda 2030. The deliberations and presentations made during the faith related side events belied the fact that religious institutions, faith-based NGOs/FBOs, religious leaders and communities of faith are all an integral – and often major parts – of civil society and political landscapes all over the world. They form part of the infrastructure, and human heritage, which delivers on development and humanitarian needs. As Rev. Wellington noted; “religion is part of the community; it has a place and a face”.

“Religion is part of the community; it has a place and a face”

Rev. Welinton

“The United Nations System remains the world ‘s largest convening entity”

Mr. Anwar Khan

ANNEX 1: SCHEDULE OF FAITH AND RELIGION-RELATED SIDE EVENTS DURING THE 2017 HLPF

Organization(s)	Event Title	Date	Time	Venue
World Vision, ACDI-VOCA, Mercy Corps, Plan, Land O'Lakes	Gender Minimum Standards: strengthening organizational practices to achieve SDG 5	Tuesday July 11, 2017	1:15 – 2:30 pm	Church Center of the UN, 10th floor
Ciranda 2030, Plan, ChildFund, World Vision, Fundacion Abrinq, SOS Children's Villages from Brazil.	Tackling child poverty in Brazil: a multifactor agenda to leave no one behind.	Tuesday July 11	8:15 – 9:30 am	UN Secretariat, Conference Room B
Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN, and the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development	Faith-Based Partnerships: Vehicles for Achieving the SDGs”.	Wednesday July 12	1:15 pm- 2:45	UN Secretariat, Conference Room 11
Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the UN & CARITAS	Achieve Goal 2 and Goal 14: Implementing the Agenda 2030 in Kenya and Oceania	Wednesday July 12	1:15 – 2:30 pm.	UN Secretariat, Conference Room E
World Vision	What are countries' Voluntary National Reviews telling us?: Constituencies' & Children's Voices	Wednesday July 12	1:15 – 2:30 pm.	The Church Center of the UN 12th floor
World Vision and Global Coalition to End Child Poverty	Ending Child Poverty and SDGs interactions for the Best Interest of the Child	Wednesday July 12	8:15 – 9:30 am	UN Secretariat, Conference Room 7
Permanent Mission of Chile to the UN, Save the Children, World Vision, Plan International, SOS Children's Villages, Child Fund.	Bringing Children to the Table: Children's Contribution to the Implementation of the SDGs.	Wednesday July 12	3:00 – 4:30 pm	UNICEF House Dannye Kaye Centre
Bread for the World	Informal Dinner for Partner Organizations	Friday, July 14		

UN Office for the Prevention of Genocide, UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development KAICIID, Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers Peacemakers	Launch of a Global Action Plan for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes	Friday, July 14	3:00 pm	ECOSOC Chamber
Religions for Peace	Mobilizing Religious Communities to Act with Solidarity and Shared Responsibility to End Poverty and Promote Peace	Monday, July 17	1:30-3:00 pm	866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 120, New York, NY 10017.
World YWCA	Sexuality, Access, Rights and Respect for Youth in Fragile Settings	Monday, July 17	06:00 pm – 8:00 pm	UNHLPF Ministerial Meeting 17-19 July
Union Theological Seminary with Sukyo Mahikari NY Center	Spirituality and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Monday, July 17	1.00 – 5:00 pm	Sukyo Mahikari NY Center at 124 E31st New York
Sightsavers, World Vision, Together 2030, Leonard Cheshire Disability, Save Matabeleland, CEPEI, New Castle University, Justice, Development and Peace Commission, Philippine Social Enterprise Network.	Open, inclusive, participatory and transparent: How can voluntary national reviews support the pledge to “leave no one behind” in implementing the 2030 Agenda.	Monday, July 17		ONE UN Plaza Hotel
Religions for Peace Latin America and the Caribbean	Linking Reducing Inequalities to eradicating poverty in the changing region of Latin America and the Caribbean: Perspectives of Faith communities	Tuesday July 18	1:30-3:00 pm	Church Center for the United Nations (CCUN), 777 United Nations Plaza 2nd Floor
Church World Service	Ban Hunger and Poverty, Not People	Wednesday July 19	1:15 pm– 2:45 pm	Church Center for the United Nations (CCUN)
Religions for Peace Latin America and the Caribbean	Regional Committee Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Inter-Religious Alliance for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	Thursday July 20	09:00 am – 05:00 pm	World Vision International New York and United Nations’ Liaison Office, 919 2nd Ave. 2nd