



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

San Francisco Chapter

IN
SUPPORT
OF

UN75
2020 AND BEYOND

SHAPING
OUR
FUTURE
TOGETHER



UN75 CHARTER DAY DIALOGUES REPORT

*IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS
CHARTER SIGNING IN SAN FRANCISCO | JUNE 26 2020*



PRESENTED BY:

UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF THE USA—SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER

UN75 CHARTER DAY DIALOGUES REPORT

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

CHARTER SIGNING IN SAN FRANCISCO | JUNE 26 2020

AFGHANISTAN | ALGERIA | BANGLADESH | BRAZIL | CAMBODIA | CAMEROON | CHILE | COLOMBIA
DR CONGO | THE CZECH REPUBLIC | EGYPT | EL SALVADOR | FRANCE | GHANA | GUATEMALA | HONDURAS
INDIA | IRAQ | KENYA | LIBERIA | MALTA | MOLDOVA | MYANMAR | NEPAL | THE NETHERLANDS | NIGERIA
PAKISTAN | PERU | THE PHILIPPINES | RUSSIA | SENEGAL | SIERRA LEONE | SOUTH AFRICA | SOUTH SUDAN
SWEDEN | THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA | VENEZUELA | YEMEN



UN75 CHARTER DAY DIALOGUES REPORT

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER SIGNING IN SAN FRANCISCO

Hosting Team

Fyodor Ovchinnikov (*Head of Process*) | Swagata Sen | Tatiana Vekovishcheva | Jazzmin Gota (*Report Design and Editing*)

Rapporteurs

Ambassador Richard Narich

Secretary-General, French Association for the United Nations

Mr. Joshua L. Cooper

National Council Member, United Nations Association of the United States of America

Ms. Kulsoom Siddiqui

Manager of Partnerships, External Affairs, and Fundraising, United Nations Association of Pakistan

Ms. Norma Rojas

President, Venezuelan Association for the United Nations

Rev. Dr. Mark Nii Lamptey

Director of Communications, United Nations Association—Ghana

Verified Participants and Delegates

Abdeldjalal Ch., AbdulRasheed Usman, Abubakar M. A., Afolabi T. O., Afrah Saleh Mohammed AlEsbili, Agu A. Ch., Agustina Singh, Ahmadullah Spinghar, Aliyan Hidayatallah, Amanullah Asim, Andrea Romaoli, Anuska Khadka, Areesha Shaikh, Arif R. Sh., MD. Arif I., Ayaan M. Siddiqui, Barbara A., Barbara M., Belinda Reynolds, Berenice Mercedes Alvarado Ayestas, Bishop Peter Kojo Sackey, Brian James Andersen, César A. C., Chea Lyhak, Chea Oudom, Chhour Muy Kieng, Dan B., Debo B., Deirdre Araujo, Duaa Mohsin Qazi, Elsia G., Eslam Khalil, Fadhil M., Faith B. K. Jr, MD. Firoz A. S., Ghazala Khan, Ginny H., Guillermo Ulloa Zavalla, Gwendalle C., Hiba Ahmed, Himat K., Hunain Muhammad Iqbal, Iliyan Alkarim, James Apronti, Jawaid Ahmad Mir, Jeanne Betsock Stillman, Jecinta Ogah Onume, Jennipha-Laurén Nielsen, Joel A. D., John Buckle, John Jethro L. Manangan, Joseph K. S., Joshua Cooper, Juan José O. A., Juan Manuel Borráez, Judith H., *Julie Obi**, François Kazadi K., Khalid Yunis, Kulsoom Siddiqui, Kumar V. Lamiyah Malik, Sonia Lim Lai Ch., Luis Carlos Chavez Morales, Luz Rooney, Lynn Chittick, M. Ezhilarasu, Magdalena Silva Aguayo, Marcial K. P., Maria Suloeva, Mariam Khan, Mark Chester Tungcul, Michael Stam, Michelle Zeyang Song, Mishal Birgees Khan, Mohan S., Muhammad Omer Raghil, Muhammad S. I., Naba Imran, Ndiaye K., Nida R., Nishma Mistri, Norma Rojas, *Norn Samnangseymony**, Nuria Serina, Oviza Chom, Paradang Clement Gogwim, Patience Sewuese Yaakugh, Pedro C., Peggy K., Phalguni Sundaram Biswal, Pierre Z. N., Pourakh Subedi, Reon van der Merwe, Rev. Dr. Mark Nii Lamptey, Amb. Richard Narich, Rumiyya Ali, Sa Vachna, Saif Rasul Khan, Sati Gapshuwar Grace, Sheharyar Zameer, Silvio L. Jr., Soheila B., Sotheareach Krouk, Syed Mashhood Ali, Syed Moosa Raza, Taehwan Kim, Tatiana Vekovishcheva, Tiago S. B., Tim Barner, Tum Sokuntararith, Umair Siddiqui, Ung ChanVicheka, Vania Alexandra Llerena Velásquez, Victor Sidor, Widyan Salem Mubarak bin Gadem, William Dario M. T., Xavier Webb, Yeh Kyhok, Yimoda X. A., Zoya Afzal Hussain

**Participants who were recognized as UN75 Charter Day Dialogues Ambassadors for their outreach efforts*

General Partners of the UN75 Charter Day Program | June 26, 2020

United Nations Association of the USA, San Diego Chapter | University of San Francisco | American Legion Post 315



UN75 CHARTER DAY DIALOGUES REPORT

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER SIGNING IN SAN FRANCISCO

“There was a strong sentiment in our conversations that we are citizens of humanity and world citizens and that our leaders should think first of humanity and then of national interests.”

Collective Narrative, UN75 Charter Day Dialogues



UN75 CHARTER DAY DIALOGUES REPORT

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER SIGNING IN SAN FRANCISCO

UN75 CHARTER DAY DIALOGUES

A monumental act of creation took place in San Francisco at the War Memorial Opera House and Veterans Building from April 25, 1945, to June 26, 1945: after two months of negotiations and consultations the United Nations Charter was signed by all delegations. To commemorate this event, the United Nations Association of the USA, San Francisco Chapter (UNA-SF) and its partners hosted a series of online events on June 26-27, 2020 that started with international dialogues on past, present, and future of the United Nations (UN) and its Charter.



Participants and delegates from at least thirty eight countries gathered online to contribute with their perspectives. Twelve United Nations Associations (UNAs) from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas sent delegates or were represented by members and volunteers. Participants' experiences included employment, contract work, or volunteer service with the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM-UN), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU-UN), UN Volunteers, and the Permanent Mission of Colombia to the UN.



UN75 CHARTER DAY DIALOGUES REPORT

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER SIGNING IN SAN FRANCISCO

In the spirit of democracy and inclusion, UNA-SF made strategic efforts to include people from different walks of life along with current and former UN employees, diplomats, and UNA leaders. Interested members of the general public were included if they were members of their local UNA or if they were unable to join a UNA for reasons beyond their control (mostly because their country did not have a UNA or their UNA did not have a clear way to become a member).

The UN75 Charter Day Dialogues were advertised to over 100,000 people around the globe. Over 2,500 expressed interest in the event, over five hundred people registered, over three hundred people were declared eligible for participation (sensible responses to registration questions, self-reported proficiency in English, and UNA/UN affiliation or verified barriers to joining a UNA), attendance of one hundred and twenty one participants and delegates was verified.

A tailored version of the participatory process called World Café was used to combine the benefits of small group conversations and cross-pollination of diverse perspectives of the group-at-large. During the World Café, participants and delegates rotated across several virtual breakout rooms to share their perspectives, link ideas, identify patterns, and articulate insights. After that group representatives worked with five Rapporteurs to come up with summaries of the conversations. All participants and delegates had an opportunity to add to the summaries by filling out a Google form if they felt that something important was missing.

All summaries and comments were processed into a collective narrative in accordance with the Collective Narrative Methodology. Every idea included in this report can be traced back to the summaries shared by the Rapporteurs or the comments submitted by participants and delegates. Likewise, every idea shared by the Rapporteurs or properly submitted by a participant or a delegate was included in this report. UNA-SF does not automatically endorse any ideas presented in this report but it is committed to making voices of all participants and delegates heard. Key points of this report were submitted to the UN through the UN75 Feedback Form contributing to the #UN75 Global Conversation started by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres in January 2020.



COLLECTIVE NARRATIVE

UN75 CHARTER DAY DIALOGUES

Coming Together as Global Citizens in the Face of the Pandemic | Prioritizing Climate Issues that Encircle All Sustainable Development Goals | Maintaining International Peace, Resolving Conflicts, and Focusing on Security | Addressing Poverty as a Complex Issue by Building a Reliable Ecosystem | Redefining Sovereignty and Redesigning Policies to Liberate Citizens from the Tyranny of Corruption | Building Broad Coalitions to Promote Inclusion and Fight Racism Domestically and Globally | Updating the Definition of Gender Equality, Empowering Women, and Advancing LGBT Rights | Addressing Mental Health Issues by Promoting Well-Being around the Globe | Ensuring that the UN and Its Member-States Walk the Talk to Manifest the Values of the UN Charter | Increasing Involvement of Business and Civil Society in the Work of the UN | Reforming the Security Council and the UN in General to Ensure a More Fair Representation of Countries, Regions, and Peoples

During these UN75 Charter Day Dialogues marking the 75th anniversary of the United Nations (UN) Charter signing in San Francisco, deliberations on the past, present, and future of the UN featured a hope for brighter days ahead for the UN and the world. On this day we commemorate a step towards international stability, and there is a hope that the great work of the UN in the next twenty five years will make peace and security prevail in the world.

The Preamble of the UN Charter established conditions that help maintain justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law. Many of us agreed that this is as relevant today as it was before. Some of us asserted that the UN has been essential for human evolution towards a dignified life and that in the last seventy five years the UN in its current form has transformed humanity's understanding and commitment to issues such as human rights, human security, climate change, etc. The UN has also done a remarkable job in the last seventy five years as a nuclear inspector through its International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and also has done successful work on disarmament. The period of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was mentioned as a reference to buttress some points adduced.

As we discussed UN priorities for the next twenty five years, we talked about intensifying the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: recovering economies, especially in developing and underdeveloped countries, prioritizing health to be ready to fight another pandemic if it happens again, amplifying the universal call for action to end poverty, fighting corruption and terrorism, promoting respect of human rights,

protecting the planet in the face of climate change, and ensuring that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. In our conversations there was a call for the United States to prop up the United Nations, especially financially.

Coming Together as Global Citizens in the Face of the Pandemic

The COVID-19 crisis exposed many existing issues and exacerbated what was already there, such as gender violence. It has also brought new challenges and we need to find new ways to protect countries: new measures should be one step ahead of new threats. The themes that were highlighted in our conversations were the management of the COVID-19 pandemic and how governments are protecting human rights.

COVID-19 has opened the door for us to come together as a global community and use online tools to discuss our issues, best practices, and recommendations. We need to keep the conversation going and turn the current crisis into an opportunity for greater action. We can recover better by centering the environment, addressing inequity, and maintaining the connections that technology and the Shelter in Place adaptations have afforded us.

Pandemic has no boundaries. We discussed the idea that we should see one another in that context: if anyone is affected, all are impacted. There was a strong sentiment in our conversations that we are citizens of humanity and world citizens and that our leaders should think first of humanity and then of national interests.



Prioritizing Climate Issues that Encircle All Sustainable Development Goals

Most of us found the wording of the Preamble of the UN Charter to be well crafted and straight to the point as it touched on human rights, cultural issues, and other related topics. However, as we discussed the need to specifically prioritize gender equality, many of us also felt that environmental matters should be brought to the forefront and take the central stage as climate issues encircle all the Sustainable Development Goals.

The original document of the UN Charter does not include climate change or global warming so many of us think that it should be updated. We talked about how the United Nations is addressing climate change and what progress can be done in that area. Concentrating on global warming, we need to include related issues such as climate refugees, economic crisis, ensuring safety of development programs, establishing laws to support agriculture and organic farming businesses, and so on.

Many of us believe that climate change issues should be prioritized in the next twenty five years. These issues affect us today and will keep affecting us in the future if we fail to tackle them seriously. The Preamble also needs to incorporate the crisis of the environment in general as it is one of the collective challenges that we face today as a global community. This crisis should be included, highlighted, and treated with utmost importance. Global warming caused by greenhouse gases, polluted air, water, and soil—all this will continue to affect us if we still continue polluting the environment.

In this context, there was a discussion of the fact that a lot of countries that are more developed are responsible for a higher percentage of emissions that contribute towards climate change, while less rich countries are facing the brunt of it. For instance, Pakistan is the seventh among countries that are most at risk due to climate change while only contributing 0.1% of global emissions. In these conversations some of us suggested that major members of the Security Council should be held accountable for their actions that affect other countries. This was brought up in relation to the actions on dams that affect people downstream as well as the release of carbon emissions. For example, China was mentioned as one of the worst polluters in the world.

Maintaining International Peace, Resolving Conflicts, and Focusing on Security

As we discussed peace and development, we agreed that maintaining

international peace, resolving conflicts, and focusing on security is still required. The first point of the Preamble, which is about saving succeeding generations from war, is as relevant today as it was seventy five years ago, considering the current world issues.

Some of us advocated for Russia's participation in constructive international processes despite the conjunctural trends while others argued that Russia should be held accountable for its intervention in Syria, and the Syrian regime should be held accountable for atrocities committed against its own people. Similarly, some of us condemned the Sri Lankan war against its own people based on linguistic differences; supposed massacres of Muslims in India, terrorism in Pakistan and Nigeria, as well as problems with militancy, elections, and inclusiveness in Nigeria and in Africa in general. Some of us brought up the point that the spread of terrorism in Africa should be seen as a threat to global peace and development which must be addressed with a multifaceted approach.

Some of us noticed that certain participants did not respect others because of their country's political problems while others were happy to see people from a country that is on the opposite side of a political dispute who believe in the brotherhood of the two nations. In the case of India and Pakistan there was a notion that once the main issue these countries are facing—the Kashmir problem—is resolved, the hate will end.

In the meantime, some of us reported that human rights in Yemen are being violated and the laws are not working. The country appears to be in a state of emergency in a number of areas: there is discrimination, gender-based and other types of inequality, absence of human rights protections, deteriorating community health with millions of people lacking access to healthcare, education, and housing, financial need created by the depressed economy, rising crime rates, violence, and general lack of adequate support for people who suffer from these difficulties.

What is going on in Yemen is sad and frustrating for Yemeni youth. Opportunities for young people are lacking in Yemen, there is a need to improve the situation with gender equality and access to education, and it is not secure to live there anymore. This makes Yemeni people confused but they hope that the future will be better. Specifically there is a hope that the conflict in Yemen will stop, that the United Nations will become more present in all parts of the world, and that more youth participation will be available, especially as it relates to supporting the current generations in what they are going through. This hope is dear like a close friend but it becomes more and more distant. In this context, many of us expressed the opinion that the Security Council should look into the ongoing issues in Yemen and Kashmir.



In addition to that, we discussed that the emergence of new technologies creates the need for us to pay attention to new threats, to monitor information on technology and cybercrime. Also, the technological age is bringing new weapons and new forms of war and in the spirit of the Preamble of its Charter the UN should expand its disarmament efforts to these new areas to protect the new generations and avoid the Third World War.

Given that Ghana and other African countries have elections running from 2018 to 2021, it would be helpful if United Nations Associations are supported in embarking on peace campaign activities. UNA-Ghana, for instance, organized peace football matches between the main clubs just before the last elections and this became part of why Ghana was touted as a peaceful country that avoided the type of large-scale violent conflicts that affected other countries in West Africa. Another example is that UNA-South Africa expressed the intention to work more directly with African NGOs.

Addressing Poverty as a Complex Issue by Building a Reliable Ecosystem

An opinion was brought up that if we want to achieve international development and peace, first and foremost we must concentrate on ending poverty which is Sustainable Development Goal #1. We discussed the idea that Africa needs a level trading market for economic buoyancy and that people in developing countries need to use foreign aid more effectively. We also discussed the need for a development strategy that would make a significant humanitarian impact on destroyed nations.

We also discussed overcoming the digital divide that is exacerbating inequality. For example, there is a need to share technology with rural areas and developing countries such as Cambodia where children are being left behind as they do not have access to the Internet in many rural areas.

As many of us shared the opinion that providing access to education is key to addressing poverty, some of us raised the point that in countries like Pakistan where more than half of the population lives below the poverty line basic needs should be covered before access to education becomes relevant. Despite the obvious value of education, if a person dies from hunger, this person cannot benefit from education.

Overall, we have to fight for people's right to live a life, and not just any life but a good life. We should work on providing free education, access to healthcare programs and, obviously, food so that people could live and not just survive. We talked about the need to build a reliable ecosystem to establish social, economic, political, and gender equality to avoid more

wars and death from starvation. In order for the UN to deliver on its promises of international peace it should ensure that people's basic needs are addressed. One step further in that direction according to some of our perspectives would be to increase UN presence in each country to identify people who genuinely need basic support and make sure their needs are adequately covered.

Some of us also shared the opinion that poverty might not be an issue by itself but it definitely becomes an issue when it deprives people from a dignified life. This opinion is grounded in the presumption that there will always be economic differences but if poor people have the same opportunities as rich people, then both rich and poor would be able to choose their future and take care of their security and dignity. We discussed the notion that some countries have many laws that prevent people from prospering and that our civilization can no longer carry that burden. We talked about the need to consider cultural issues including the experiences and opinions of those living in poverty so that UN policy making is not dominated by the upper classes and the recommendation for governments to be more directly involved in achieving the SDGs.

Redefining Sovereignty and Redesigning Policies to Liberate Citizens from the Tyranny of Corruption

In our conversations about the UN Charter, we learned that corruption is a concern worldwide, but especially in the Americas and in the Balkans Region. As an example, we discussed the assessment that countries like Brazil have been taken over by organized crime: criminals steal money from Brazilians, buy houses outside Brazil, gain a visa and live as though they are honest and respectable citizens while bringing organized crime and terrorism to their new country. In the meantime, ordinary citizens are under great pressure in certain countries in Asia, Balkans, and the Americas. The issue is so serious that we considered suggesting that the Preamble of the UN Charter could add "corruption" alongside with "war".

Some of us argued that the reason why such crimes as poverty, money laundering, and human trafficking do not meet adequate barriers and are on the rise is because laws that were made to prevent money laundering and corruption do not affect criminals. Due Diligence and KYC Assessment have requirements based on one's financial situation and since criminals tend to have a good financial situation and a clean record they cheat the system. At the same time, these laws are affecting ordinary people, the citizens, for example, by preventing small entrepreneurs from creating more jobs that are required for a dignified life.



UN75 CHARTER DAY DIALOGUES REPORT

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER SIGNING IN SAN FRANCISCO

Therefore some of us suggested that we should make laws that really affect criminals instead of creating barriers for citizens who are engaged in good business. One possibility we explored is creating a system of laws that would specifically focus on politicians and other people who are likely to be involved in corruption.

Those of us from Sudan joined the calls for more attention to government corruption and advocated for using diplomatic solutions to bring countries in alignment with the international law and make changes from within those countries rather than from New York or Geneva.

Another important point is that some of us feel that sovereignty is an obstacle in dealing with many issues that should be addressed by international institutions. Some of us suggested that in order to deal with climate change and work on achieving equality and justice the UN needs to focus on international cooperation and liberate citizens from corruption. That argument implies that amendments to Article 26 of the UN Charter would be necessary to overcome the sovereignty obstacle and enable effective action of the Security Council.

The key point is that corrupt governments tied to organized crime should not be able to use sovereignty to prevent the UN from ensuring that Human Rights are respected or from liberating people from the poverty and death that corruption brings. We remember that sovereignty was created to protect people and that it is not meant to protect politicians and members of corrupt governments. In our conversations sovereignty was affirmed as a relative principle that should protect public interest rather than serve as a cover to protect the evil. Therefore, some of us advocated for amending Article 26 of the UN Charter to empower the Security Council to interfere and protect citizens' sovereignty when it is stolen by corrupt governments.

Building Broad Coalitions to Promote Inclusion and Fight Racism Domestically and Globally

As we discussed human rights violations and discrimination based on race, caste, or religion, we talked about state actors putting themselves above the law and torturing civilians. We also discussed that those who are not from rich countries are discriminated against which is tied to the topic of racism in general. In the light of the need for the UN to make more emphasis on actions against racial discrimination, terrorism, and corruption, some of us pointed to a disconnect between the UN values and the reality of what actually works. This prompted a recommendation for the UN to consider an intentional effort towards building Global Citizenry through civil society

organizations and individuals who are championing the anti-racism cause.

We should support anti-racism while working on international security, and at the same time we should also pay attention to minorities within each country. The rights of minorities should be highlighted and described well. Indigenous peoples must be mentioned and equality for Black Lives should be part of the conversation. There was a call for Americans specifically to address Black Lives Matters, vis-à-vis the George Floyd issue, drumming home the call for increased action against racism and terrorism, worldwide.

We also discussed the need to rise and address the issues of the elderly and the importance of making the younger generation feel that everybody is on the same plane. We can specifically create systems change in rural areas based on multi-generational needs and witness our youth joining in to do the work. Acknowledging that underrepresentation of youth is still an issue, some of us pointed out that youth are more welcome in the UN than ever before.

Updating the Definition of Gender Equality, Empowering Women, and Advancing LGBT Rights

Many of us had an impression that important issues related to human security and human rights were discussed the most. Many remarks were made in relation to human rights. Some of us raised questions about how human rights help with situation analysis in India and whether approaches based on human rights bring anything new to capacity development. As we discussed how different communities suffer from human rights abuses, human rights were recognized as the base of civilization but some of us also suggested that a redefinition is needed going forward to avoid frustration, especially among young people.

Some of us also pointed out that although there has been an improvement in women's rights and the inequality gap is being reduced, one thing is still missing: some people do not identify as men or women so the progress driven by the UN is not relevant to them because they are not included in the current framing of gender equality. This realization is something that has changed over time so many of us think that all genders, not just male and female, should be mentioned in the Preamble of the UN Charter. Also, as we discussed LGBT rights, there was a suggestion for a Convention that would compliment the Yogyakarta Principles¹.

We also discussed other aspects of Gender Equality, especially as they apply to African countries. For example, we talked about women representation

¹ Editorial Correction: Original document mistakenly listed the Yogyakarta Principles as the Jakarta Principles, the current document has this phrase corrected.



UN75 CHARTER DAY DIALOGUES REPORT

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS CHARTER SIGNING IN SAN FRANCISCO

in governorship positions in Nigeria and some of us also pointed out that only 25% of women from West Africa are regionally represented in the UN System.

In our conversations we engaged with the idea that inclusion of women and girls in the UN System is closely related to education. We had a great discussion on education of women and girls being essential for the future as an uneducated woman or child is a detriment to the economic and social development of the world. There was a call for mentoring women and girls on issues that they are passionate about so that they could navigate the United Nations equally well and also empowering women by raising awareness through small community groups (post pandemic) as not all women have Internet access, especially in the Global South. We agreed that women empowerment, equality, and gender parity are much needed.

Another critical point we discussed is creating conditions to address issues related to abandoned children, abortions, and survival of mothers. It is very common in different countries that girls commit suicide because they are pregnant and their families do not accept them that way. A lot of them are thinking about an abortion and the lack of proper conditions for addressing this issue leads to the main problem: girls are dying. Those of us who brought up this issue argued that even though this does not necessarily mean that legalizing abortion is the only solution, this does mean that we should work on improving the lifestyles of these girls so that they are not pushed towards hurting themselves (by suicide or death caused by an abortion) or someone else.

Addressing Mental Health Issues by Promoting Well-Being around the Globe

As some of us were advocating for prioritizing health security in all Third World countries, we specifically discussed preventive care for women and children and well-being was brought up as a really underrated goal. Mental health is of utmost importance: it is an issue that affects a very significant part of the population, especially in this time of the pandemic, resulting in increased rates of depression and suicides.

The UN should place emphasis on this to bring about an effective change: mental health awareness among all genders needs UN support. That should be addressed particularly in developing nations where youth are especially under a lot of stress and cannot talk about their concerns openly.

Also, some of us suggested that United Nations Associations across the globe should make efforts both in spreading awareness among people in order to help them realize the significance of stress in our daily lives and

conducting events to help people cope with it.

Ensuring that the UN and Its Member-States Walk the Talk to Manifest the Values of the UN Charter

Overall, many of us think that the UN is indeed still relevant today as its agencies drive progress towards all the Sustainable Development Goals and provide great value in such areas as peace and security, human rights, and gender equality. In our conversations we observed the model of the UN to be revolving or changing and there was a call for conferences that have shaped the UN over the years to continue into the future.

At the same time, while some of us talked about the UN as “the best organization in the world”, others argued that despite the fact that it has been around for seventy five years and many laws have been created, some of us still see no change in their part of the world while they do see the same 1% of the population benefiting from the progress. Seventy five years ago, the framers of the Charter clearly saw the challenges of a post-war world and some of us argue that seventy-five years later, especially during this time of pandemic, all of those issues have become challenges faced by communities today. So while there was a desire to avoid appearing hateful to the UN, some of us felt compelled to share that perspective and call for actions that help people rather than be satisfied with just talking. It is important to walk the talk.

There was a concern that while everything that everyone is talking about might be perfect, that does not mean that words can change anything. Do nations implement the Charter even though they have signed it? Accountability of member-states in the context of UN protocols and conventions came up very strongly in our discussions. We talked about the need for the UN to make more efforts to maintain compliance with international law and put pressure on member-states so that they adhere to its resolutions. It is important to hold member-states accountable for implementing conventions and protocols of the UN and its agencies that promote the protection of human rights around the world.

Increasing Involvement of Business and Civil Society in the Work of the UN

How will the UN ensure the crucial involvement of civil society is valued and not further eroded? Some of us suggested that bridging the gap between ordinary citizens and the UN is key to the future of human-centered development. A factual example was shared of the UN local office in Cambodia not being very receptive to individuals and there was a



discussion that the UN should have a stronger local and national presence.

Some of us also advocated for global partnerships to implement market-based solutions and provide services around the world. Profits from these services could be used as incentives for users and participants and to fund projects aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. When using these services people would also be able to voice their opinions and vote on priorities. This information would be accessible to software developers and scientists who would use it to enhance the effectiveness of the work towards achieving the SDGs while committing to transparency for people and maintaining the confidentiality of their information.

Reforming the Security Council and the UN in General to Ensure a More Fair Representation of Countries, Regions, and Peoples

Some of us pointed out that while the values of the UN remain timeless, the time has come for the institutions of the organization to better reflect these values. Recognizing that the UN Charter is seventy five years old we discussed the need for new structures to ensure continued progress. Even though the role of the UN in securing peace might have grown, much remains to be addressed, especially issues that depend on inter-state collaboration, and we are yet to see the results. For that we need to break the deadlocks that came up.

Building a more resilient multilateral system in a multipolar world is vital for ensuring our species can foster the necessary consensus to address the common obstacles to peace and prosperity that face us. In this regard, function follows form and the kind of political will required to achieve a more sustainable world can only be achieved if we reform the structures that facilitate international governance, bringing all “state-holders” (state

and non-state actors) to the table. If the UN fails to do this it risks losing relevance in an increasingly polarized, nationalistic, and volatile world.

As we discussed the need for a UN reform, there were strong voices that asserted that the UN Security Council does not achieve what it is meant to. We had a lot of conversations about the lack of democratic representation in the Security Council and the hypocrisy of its five permanent members.

A few points were discussed in relation to how the veto system has been operating for years, how we feel about it, and what we can collectively do to curb that. According to some of our perspectives, the problem arises partly from the fact that the five permanent members of the Security Council have veto power. Replacing veto power with the need to acquire a larger super-majority would give the Security Council more flexibility, while still enforcing dialogue.

Talking about the Security Council, some of us said that although the UN gives every country a platform to voice its perspective, some countries are louder and have more power than others. There was a notion that it is unfair if one country’s voice is valued more than another country’s voice because of wealth or politics and that we need equality for all UN member-states. Many of us believe that as a global family we should give equal rights to all nations and the UN Charter needs to be revised to support that.

As we reflected on how having five permanent members of the Security Council prevents other nations from being heard equally, there was a suggestion to combat the eurocentric or western-centric nature of the current Security Council by expanding its size with a focus on representing different regions of the world according to their population size. The idea is that securing equality of all the countries, rich or poor, in the Preamble of the UN Charter would promote social progress, freedom, and better standards of life.





UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA—SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
JUNE 26 2020

Photograph Credit: UN Photo/McCreary