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Building an Inclusive Society

By Connie Rensink

In May, SDG Action hosted [Building an Inclusive Society](#), a UN75 dialogue with a panel of experts and activists working on diversity and inclusion.

The opening keynote speaker, Fabrizio Hochschild-Drummond, UN Assistant-Secretary-General for Strategic Coordination, outlined economic and social fallout larger than the health impact of COVID 19: closed schools and the fact that girls are the majority without access to technology; women making up most of the front-line workers; increases in domestic violence; the virus taking a higher toll on the indigenous communities and African American men.

Next, he called for a rally of solidarity and equity, inviting the audience to focus where people are most vulnerable; booster health systems including mental health, and create jobs. He emphasized the importance of working across geographic borders and between business leaders, policy makers, and civil society. He compared COVID19 to Climate Change and reminded listeners that “we will not win anywhere unless we win everywhere.” He summarized that this is a time for reflection about where we are heading and reaffirming the UN charter “We the peoples...” He urged the audience to participate in [UN75 Survey](#)

Moderator Arrey Obenson (CEO of Transformunity) asked panelists, “What should the international community prioritize to recover better from the pandemic?”

Mohammed Sabo Keana from Almijiri Child Rights Initiative works with children in Nigeria who have to beg before they eat. Self-isolation doesn’t work for them. He expressed the need to address inequalities of basic human rights of water, food, and healthcare. He also said that with the continued population growth there can be an opportunity if properly managed but are currently a deep challenge with the disparity and lack of systems.

Emmanuel Jal, Former Child Soldier, Recording Artist discussed climate change. He told a fable of a monkey whose hand got caught because it wouldn’t let go of the food

inside a gourd. He compared the story to the love of systems, phones, cars, flights, and other items that don't always contribute to the good of all. He finished by asking "WHEN global warming hits, what are we going to do?"

Katlego Kolanyane-Kesupile, Cultural Architect and TED Fellow, focused on inclusivity. She wondered why we refuse to change the systems that perpetuate gender inequality for *all* genders and framed it this way: "Instead of inviting everyone to OUR party, what do we need to do to ensure everyone can come to this party, and that they will enjoy this party? What are we doing TOGETHER, what do WE need to change?" She reiterated that equality isn't something you talk about once and hope it survives. It has to be cared for and fed to grow.

Thalita Gelenske, CEO, Blend EDU, brought up global trends that will most impact forward progress. One trend she spent some time on is the idea of risk from new technology. Automation will eliminate jobs and we can counterbalance that with the education to adapt. It will be critical to plan training with an equity lens. She also quoted "When you have enough data you don't have to send soldiers to control a country" and explained that global collaboration with human rights as a central element will be key to managing this new age.

There were several other questions for the panel and a robust discussion around solidarity during this global crisis and the importance of countries working together. You can see the recording [HERE](#).

The closing keynote speaker, Marina Ponti, started by saying "Nobody is too young to live, and nobody is too old to learn" and that she thinks the world is ready to be shaken up to change. She called for more actors being active from all sectors of life, working together to find solutions. She invited the audience to celebrate solidarity, address root causes of inequality, and remember the butterfly effect that it is the little things that make a difference.

Some Suggested Activities and Resources from the UN

By Grace Murphy

1. The United Nations is marking its 75th anniversary at a time of great challenge, including the worst global health crisis in its history. Will it bring the world closer together? Or will it lead to greater divides and mistrust? Your views can make a difference. Your responses to [THIS SURVEY](#) will inform global priorities now and going forward. But if you are not a "survey person," look at it anyway because the topics are what the UN thinks are relevant for the future and we should know what they are.
2. Think about subscribing to PassBlue. (Passblue.com) The articles are by independent journalists and often give a non-UN opinion. Recently, there was an article on the UN's Sergio de Mello, the subject of a new film. It will make you

wish you had known him. The article also references a biography about him by Samantha Power, former US representative to the UN. (Subscribing does not involve money, unless you wish to donate.)

3. The latest information from Academic Impact and Ramu Damodaran, Deputy Director for Partnerships and Public Engagement in the United Nations Department of Public Information's Outreach Division., can be found at <https://academicimpact.un.org>. It features an SDG of the Month and gives news about how colleges worldwide are tackling them. Many activities are appropriate for classroom use.
4. UN WIRE from the United Nations Foundation will give you a brief summary of a wide range of topics and refer you to the original source so you can read what interests you. You can access it at https://www.smartbrief.com/un_wire.
5. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists is a newsletter which you can find at <https://thebulletin.org>. Usually there is an article on climate as it relates to the news of the day. Also, nuclear power, weapons and artificial intelligence are hot topics.



There are many other possibilities, but these are my personal favorites.

YOUR UN REPRESENTATIVES –

The DKG members listed below are your official representatives at the UN DGC (UN Department of Global Communications) and ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council.) All of them also work with CTAUN. You can email us for further information.

Eileen Venezia, NY, Primary Representative, Member of DKG Educational Excellence Committee, CTAUN Director-at-Large: evap114@aol.com

Anne-Marie Carlson, NY, Past Chair of NGO/DPI Executive Committee, Chair of CTAUN: dfcamc@aol.com

Joan Goldstein, NY, CTAUN Representative: joantess@rcn.com

Ann Grosjean, CT, CTAUN Representative: acgrosjean@gmail.com

Grace M. Murphy, NY, Vice-Chair of CTAUN: gracemm630@aol.com.

Lochie Musso, NY, DKG@UN Newsletter Editor, Secretary of CTAUN lochie@optonline.net

Connie Rensink, TX/NY, DKG International Member-at-Large, CTAUN Representative: connie.rensink@yahoo.com

Emilie Stris, NY, CTAUN Representative: ejstris@hotmail.com