

International Day of Peace & the UN70th Anniversary

Co-Chairs and Moderators, Margo LaZaro and Yvonne O’Neal opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanked H.E. Mr. Federico Gonzalez, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Paraguay to the United Nations and his staff for their support. Margo mentioned that we officially launched our Partnership Alliance for Peace Education: Building Cultures of Peace for Sustainable Communities Globally. They also thanked the NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values & Global Concerns; United Nations to Change a Life; Global Family; International Council of Women; World Federation of Ukrainian Women’s Organizations; UNDP Policy & Strategy Group; The World We Want Platform; Global Family for Love & Peace; Peace Boat US; Parliamentarians for Nuclear Nonproliferation & Disarmament and UNFOLD ZERO. Moreover, the co-chairs spoke of the important role NGOs played in producing the final draft of the Sustainable Development Goals. They specifically elucidated that SDG 16, which states, “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” is an important aspect of the SDGs.

Margo introduced H.E. Mr. Mogens Lykkesøft, President of the UN70th General Assembly. On 15 June 2015, the United Nations General Assembly elected Mogens Lykkesøft of Denmark to serve as the President of its seventieth session, which runs from September 2015 to September 2016. At the time of his election, Mr. Lykkesøft was the Speaker of the Danish Parliament, a position he had held since 2011. H.E. Mr. Lykkesøft thanked the co-chairs and the committee for inviting him to our meeting in observing the International Day of Peace. We must honor this day of peace, as the 2030 agenda says, “there will be no peace without Sustainable Development and there will be no Sustainable Development without peace”. In his statement, he elucidated that one of his key priorities is to focus on rapid implementation by partners and actors because the hallmarks of the agenda is multi stakeholders’ partnerships. Furthermore, he explained that member states do not always live up to their responsibilities and it is up to civil society to hold them accountable. It is critical that governments understand the urgency to act now before it’s too late. Civil Society must play their roles to ensure that leaders play their role.

Margo introduced H.E. Mr. Ib Petersen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations. Ambassador Petersen has been the Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of SE4ALL and Co-Facilitator for the intergovernmental consultations on the organizational modalities for the Post-2015 Summit. They explained that Ambassador Ib Peterson has been a wonderful supporter of the NGOCS D and they gracefully thanked him for his continuous support. Ambassador Petersen began his remarks by echoing President Lykkesøft’s remarks “the world needs civil society for the success of the Sustainable Development Agenda”. Furthermore, he explained that after more than 2 years of negotiations, we came up with an agreement. That Sunday evening when we agreed on the text, it was a very special evening. This new agenda is an objective agenda. It underlies the need for peace and stability which is Goal 16, if you remember from the open working group, the goals and targets encompass a variety of topics and it is universal. All countries contributed and all countries will benefit. We are moving on and now we have to start implementing, civil society will play an important role in the implementation process. Civil Society also has a role in communicating the goal. This is an agenda for all, that is: private sector, government and civil society. He completed by saying that we are all here to work together.

Margo and Yvonne welcomed H.E. Mr. Hahn Choong-hee, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations, the NGOCS D newest Honorary Advisor. He was elected as Chairperson of the 47th Session of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) for a 1-year term from July 2014 to July 2015. Ambassador Hahn began his remarks by explaining that there can be no Sustainable Development without peace and peace is more than an absence of war. People deserve to live a life of dignity. He further explained that we need to strengthen the culture of peace, as we all know the famous phrase in UNESCO, “since war begins in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that defenses of peace must be constructed”. He further emphasized the importance of education, global citizenships, human dignity and tolerance. He spoke of the importance of tackling inequalities and social inclusion. “We have to work on inequalities, what it means in countries and between countries. It can lead to violence, and with Korea as the President of ECOSOC, we will like to have a special conference on inequalities in March 2016 to find solutions”. He ended his statements by thanking the co-chairs and committee for planning this important meeting, “it is important that we have all the stakeholders on the table as we all responsible for promoting the culture of peace.”

Yvonne and Margo introduced Ms. Marie Paule Roudil, Director of UNESCO Liaison Office New York. She previously was Head of the UNESCO Liaison Office in Brussels and the UNESCO Representative to the European Union having been appointed to that position in October 2010. In her remarks, she explained that UNESCO is a specialized agency that needs civil society. Further, she explained that we have to working together, to build peace in the minds of people around the world, through the cooperation in the areas of education, culture, communication and science. Mutual understanding between the people around the world is a must. Without peace no Sustainable Development is possible, human rights and dignity must be our starting point, education remains a key to how we communication. Tolerance is not enough, we also have to understand people, and education has always been the response of UNESCO in violence extremism. Promoting learning to live together.

Margo and Yvonne introduced Mr. William Yotive, Project Manager of the United Nations Global Teaching and Learning Project within the Outreach Division of the UN Department of Public Information. Mr. Yotive is one of the focal points on youth for the UN Department of Public Information including the UN Cyberschoolbus Program. Mr. Yotive explained that the initiative, partnership for peace and dignity for all has two parts, the parts are important to recognize individually but its important to notice that they are intertwined with each other. Partnership for peace is something that the Secretary General has put great emphasis on and in his synthesis report on the Post-2015 agenda, he wrote “The road to dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet, achieving that depends on partnerships, which are an essential element in charting the world map to achieve dignity over the next 15 years and building peace around the world”. Further, dignity for all aims to highlight the fundamental principle that is articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the principle is the dignity and worth of the human person which is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. This is what drives the work of the UN. One of our main components is to keep the public at large, civil society, informed about the work of the United Nations. That responsibility has transformed to engaging the public on the work of the organization and young people have been an enormous component of that. About 200,000 to 400,000 students engage in the model UN program yearly and it is important because it is the first step that introduces many young people to the UN, this also includes the Secretary General of the UN as well as many ambassadors and UN employees. An important aspect of the outreach program is to teach young people how the UN goes about making its decisions, understanding that the UN is an institution and about 80% of the decisions made at the UN are by consensus.

*After Mr. Yotive’s remarks, the Co-Chairs Margo & Yvonne and together with Secretary Modou Cham presented Mr. Yotive with the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development-NY Declaration of Appreciation and he is now an Honorary Lifetime member of the NGOCS D.

Margo and Yvonne introduced Mr. Ravi Karkara, Strategic Adviser, Partnership to the Assistant Secretary-General & Deputy Executive Director of UN-Women & Co-Chair of the Policy Strategy Group, for the World We Want Platform. Mr. Karkara explained that the World We Want 2015 is an online platform aimed at finding out peoples’ views on sustainable development and visualizing proposed solutions to development related issues.

The World We Want Platform is the biggest survey conducted by the Secretary General's office, it engaged 192 countries and 80% of the people that took the survey took it as a paper ballot. The survey also houses more than a million quantitative data. The campaign was developed to reach out to people worldwide, survey them and ask "what would make your life better?" Furthermore, at the time the survey reached 3 million votes, the question of whether peace should be added to the SDGs came up and the survey was drawn for reference. Young people vocally elucidated that protection from crime and violence and peace is a priority to them. Whether it's North America, Africa or India, young people said "we need peace". Further, Mr. Karkara explained that in the first World Conference of Peace in 1936, young people also said that, peace is a priority for them. Mr. Karkara concluded his statements by explained that for him, peace means putting people first, putting human rights first across the board. We must end all forms of discrimination.

*The Co-Chairs directed Mr. Karkara to view the screens and monitors in the conference room where there appeared a Happy Birthday message to Mr. Karkara from the NGOCS D Team appeared to acknowledge his Birthday.

The co-chairs introduced H.E. Mr. Carlos Garcia, Former Ambassador of El Salvador to the United Nations, Founder of United Nations to Change a Life. Mr. Garcia has been a career diplomat from El Salvador that served his country in the United Nations from July 1996 to June 2014, in different positions and ranks, being his last one as Permanent Representative of El Salvador to the United Nations. He is also Founder & CEO of CG Global Consultant, as well as the Founder of United Nations to Change a Life and an active member of several other companies and Non-Governmental Organizations. Ambassador Garcia explained that millions of young people around the world experience physical and sexual violence and 603 million women live in countries where domestic violence is yet to be considered a crime. Prevention of violence and building a culture of peace includes Media and Arts, faith community, hip pop/sports, food security, mental health, indigenous people, political leaderships, cyber security, job creation and business, education, critical thinking, gender violence and ecosystem to change the soil of local communities.

The Co-Chairs introduced Mr. Mark E. Fowler, Managing Director of Programs at the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding. Mr. Fowler is responsible for program development, project management and the expansion of Tanenbaum programs nationally and internationally and leads the design and implementation of all Tanenbaum trainings. In his remarks, Mr. Fowler explained that the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding promotes mutual respect with practical programs that bridge religious difference and combat prejudice. Next, he spoke about the multifaith Alliance for Syrian Refugees which is a project of the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding in cooperation with JDC. In this structure, MFA's mission is to mobilize global multifaith support to alleviate the Syrian humanitarian crisis, heighten awareness of its growing dangers, and advance future stability in the region. We accomplish this through various programs, including: Track II Diplomacy: Fostering diplomatic relations across cultural and faith lines; Speaking Tours: Raising awareness of the crisis through various speaking engagements; Government briefings: Presenting our peace and humanitarian work to various government entities in the U.S. and abroad; Raising Funds: to support organizations working on the ground to deliver direct aid.

The Co-Chairs introduced Ms. Sarri Singer, Founder & Director of Strength to Strength, a non-profit organization which focuses on bringing together victims of terrorism around the world and assisting with long term psychological care. She was born in Lakewood, New Jersey and is the daughter of New Jersey State Senator, Robert Singer. Until 9/11, she worked two blocks away from the World Trade Center. Ms. Singer shared her own experience of surviving a terrorist attack and the strength he found to help many others to re-build their lives.

The Co-Chairs introduced Ms. Ana Saldarriaga, Global President of AIESEC International, and headquarters in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Ms. Saldarriaga was born in 1988 in Medellín, Colombia and began volunteering at the age of nine. Inspired by a cousin born with brain paralysis, she studied to be a Product Design Engineer at EAFIT University to design products for disabled people. In her presentation, Ms. Saldarriaga advocated for involving youth in peace building through promoting youth leadership and engagement, solution oriented awareness and global citizenship.

Co-chairs introduced Ms. Kehkashan Basu, 15-year old Founder of Green Hope, a youth organization which seeks to provide a networking platform to children and youth in the region to carry forward the Rio+20 legacy through several environmental workshops and ground level projects on biodiversity conservation, waste segregation and reversing land degradation.

Margo introduced a video from Mr. Xiuhtezcatl Roske-Martinez, NGOCS D Honorary Indigenous Youth Adviser on Culture of Peace and Climate Change Initiatives and the Founder & Director of Earth Guardians. He is a 15-year-old indigenous environmental activist, hip-hop artist and public speaker from Boulder, Colorado. He has spoken at over 100 events around the world. Earth Guardians, is a International youth based environmental non-profit organization that is committed to protecting the water, air, earth, and atmosphere. He stressed the importance of building a culture of peace for our Sustainable Future.

Yvonne and Margo introduced Mr. Juan Carlos Uribe Vega, International Coordinator for Peace Boat. Before joining Peace Boat in 2010, Mr. Vega was actively involved in environmental education and social justice advocacy with local and international organizations in Japan. Traveling with the Peace Boat around the world as a volunteer interpreter helped him connect underlying issues threatening peace and security in local communities, and reflect on the situation of his own home countries of Colombia and Venezuela. Mr. Vega presented the programs that Peace Boat has for Peace Education and he expressed he interest in working with the NGOCS D initiative: Partnership Alliance for Peace Education: Building Cultures of Peace for Sustainable Communities Globally.

Margo & Yvonne: welcomed a number of reflections from those attending the meeting.

Margo acknowledged the 2006 UN International Day of Peace poster that appeared on the monitors in throughout the meeting.

There was a Q&A session following all of the presentations.

The Co-Chairs thanked all of our volunteers for their support of our NGOCS D International Day of Peace and UN70th Anniversary meeting.

Margo invited Ms. Kehkashan Basu with her guitar to the front of the room to sing: *Kehkashan's Song for a Culture of Peace*

The Co-Chairs adjourned the meeting at 6PM