

1 – 4PM: Co-Chairs Margo LaZaro and Yvonne O’Neal welcomed everyone to the meeting and elucidated that this month’s meeting is entitled, “The Importance of the High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development and All Stakeholders in 2016 and Beyond.” The Co-Chairs said that the Executive Board has approved the General Membership Committee Minutes for November and the agenda for our meeting together with the Secretary and Treasurer Reports during the Executive Board meeting.

Margo and Yvonne introduced Professor Jan W. Dash, NGOCS-D-NY Lead Adviser on Climate Change. Professor Dash is also the Managing Editor of the Climate Portal website for the Unitarian Universalist UN Office. Professor Dash elucidated in detail, the Paris Climate Agreement and the Road Ahead. He spoke of climate change as a survival issues which we must act on now if we are to survive the increasingly dangerous natural disasters. We can mitigate climate change, the first goal is to recognize the problem and practice climate change risk management. In Agenda 2030, member states have agreed to urgently combat climate change. Further, in Paris, we agreed to: reaffirm the goal of limiting global temperature increase well below 2 degrees Celsius, while urging efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees; establish binding commitments by all parties to make “nationally determined contributions” (NDCs), and to pursue domestic measures aimed at achieving them; commit all countries to submit new NDCs every five years, with the clear expectation that they will “represent a progression” beyond previous ones; reaffirm the binding obligations of developed countries under the UNFCCC to support the efforts of developing countries, while for the first time encouraging voluntary contributions by developing countries too and extend the current goal of mobilizing \$100 billion a year in support by 2020 through 2025, with a new, higher goal to be set for the period after 2025; Call for a new mechanism, similar to the Clean Development Mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol, enabling emission reductions in one country to be counted toward another country’s N.D.C. Moreover, the Paris climate agreement called for the participation of all: government, civil society and private organization. All countries that participated compromised and agreed on the agreement, making it a diplomatic success. The agreement is a solid agreement, better than we expected and it builds on previous conferences that started in 1992. One of the main difference from the previous COPs is the INDCs which is a voluntary national determination of contributions in the context of a nations priorities, circumstances, and capabilities under the global framework towards a low carbon future. A total of 184 countries submitted INDCs before the conference. The agreement is a hybrid binding agreement (some parts are binding and other are not binding). As an international agreement it is a treaty, however for the United States, it is not a treaty. This is because congress will not approve the agreement if it was a treaty. One of the main issues of the climate change discussion is the pseudo-science rhetoric in the right wing media. In ending his presentations, Professor Dash gave committee members advice on how to get involved in the implementation process moving forward. He advised that we ask for stronger INDCs in the next review. Most importantly he asked everyone to be optimistic, we do not have the luxury to be pessimistic because there is no alternative.

Margo and Yvonne introduced Dr. Louise Kantrow, the Permanent Representative of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC). Dr. Kantrow spoke of the importance of business engagement with governments and NGOs at the UN. The ICC has been working with in the international community since the creation of the League of Nations. Established in 1919, the ICC is the oldest and most represented business organization in the world. Within its two global networks, the organization encompasses 6.5 million companies. The founding ideals of the ICC is that it will be easier for countries to establish peace if they are economically tied. She further explains that the ICC, through its Commission on Environment and Energy, has been engaged in serving as the main focal point for business in the UNFCCC, attending all its sessions, as well as the UNCSD. The ICC has been represented by a large number of business leaders in the major 2015 conferences, over 700 hundred business representative went to the Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, over 500 representatives came to the Sustainable Development Summit in New York, and over 1000 representatives went to COP 21 in Paris. The organization is also the secretariat of the G20 – B20, one of the outcomes in the 2015 G-20 summit in turkey is the launch of the SME forum which will be a major capacity building initiative. In ending her statements, she explains that now the real tough work begins with the indicator framework and the HLPF and the business world is ready to help in the process.

Margo and Yvonne introduced Mr. Ruslan Bultrikov, the Counsellor and Second Committee Expert at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the United Nations. Mr. Bultrikov thanked the NGOCS-D for the opportunity to talk to the NGO community about the HLPF. He explained that Kazakhstan had the opportunity to chair the 20th UNCSD which is now replaced by the HLPF. There have been many lessons from the success and the short comings of the UNCSD. The establishment of the HLPF is a historic event and it creates a universal platform to strengthen the message of the United Nations on the importance of Sustainable Development. He further elucidated that the forum will convene Heads of State and Government every four years, under the auspices of the General Assembly, to promote the implementation of sustainable development and address new challenges. They will also meet annually for three days at the ministerial level, under the auspices of ECOSOC. The discussions will transform into a negotiated declaration which will provide high level policy guidance.

Next, Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne, Introduced Dr. David Chadwick O’Connor, Permanent Observer Mission of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature to the UN and Former Chief of Policy and Analysis of the Division for Sustainable Development of UN DESA. Mr. O’Connor spoke about the Sustainable Development Goals and how they will be reviewed in the HLPF. Additionally, he spoke about the important role civil society plays in the review and implementation process. The distinctive difference with the SDGs are that they are an interlinked, universal and transformative agenda. Further the 17 SDGs show the complexity of the agenda. The SDGs and the Climate Agreement are universal, countries have agreed to act on areas like sustainable consumption and production, inequalities and climate change. It will take governments to focus on planning to implement this ambitious agenda by asking “*what does it mean for us?*”. The agenda can help change national legislation, for example, if we are working on doubling the energy efficiency then governments have to look to change their energy policies. Also, Civil Society needs to

reflect on how to work to implement this agenda. We should look at breaking silos, achieving synergies across goals, issues and communities of practice. There are high expectations for the HLPF and we are waiting on the Secretary General's reports which is expected to be published in January 2016. It will provide a road map for the way forward. Mr. O'Connor gave a proposal on how to think about organizing the thematic review of the SDGs at the HLPF. He explained that the 5Ps (People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace, Partnership) from the preamble of the 2030 agenda can act as a guideline in the four-year cycle of the review process. In the first year we should work on the first 5 goals (the people part) this will make sure no one is left behind. In Year 2, we should focus on people and prosperity: inclusions growth and employment and reducing inequality. In Year 3, we should focus on prosperity and planet and in Year 4 we can bring everything together: People, Prosperity and Planet as mutually reinforcing. Further, Peace and Partnerships cut across in all four years as they are essential conditions in the means of implementations.

Margo and Yvonne introduced Mr. Jeffrey Huffines, the Main UN NGO Representative for CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation. Mr. Huffines elucidated the importance of providing representation and participation amongst the nine Major Working Groups (MWGs). He further explains that we are now shifting gears to look at the CSO role in the HLPF. The responsibilities of the organizing partners in the NGO Major Group are: to help facilitate registration and participation, annual road map strategic and technical guidance, consult with regional, national, international networks for inputs in intergovernmental process, and identify NGO expertise in respective fields. Moreover, they provide communication and outreach strategy, regular updates, maintain NGO Major Group websites and social media pages. The annual meetings before and after the annual HLPF meetings, resource mobilization could be done in partnership with the United Nations Division for Sustainable Development. The committee is comprised of 3 Global OPs, i.e., North, South, and Gender balance. The nomination process will begin in early 2016. A nomination committee will be created but no member of the nominating committee can be placed on ballot and the purpose would be to produce a slate of candidates for election.

Next Co-Chairs Margo and Yvonne introduced Ms. Orsolya Bartha, the Senior Advisor on Sustainable Development, Human Rights and Gender Related Issues International Disability Alliance. Ms. Bartha represents Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). In her statements she explained that globally, 80% of people living with disabilities, live in poverty. Further, PWDs were left out of the MDGs but now have a space as a stakeholder to interact at the HLPF. In the 2030 Agenda, there are 7 references to PWDs and this shows that they are now globally recognized by world leaders who have committed to empower and lift PWDs out of poverty and onto economic prosperity. Ms. Bartha elucidated that for the implementation process of the SDGs, PWDs themselves have to speak-up. Moreover, the agenda should be brought close to people in civil society with calls for actions and a creation of a roadmap, but we will need all resources and legal guidance to implement the agenda properly. Although it was not written in the SDGs there should be access to necessary survival materials for all PWDs. Further, partnerships must be formed on the national, regional, and global levels. On the global level, we must maintain the final responsibility to remind states and governments what they committed to. The HLPF will be the ultimate task if agenda 2030 achieves what it promises.

Margo and Yvonne introduced Mr. Christopher Dekki, the Coordinator of the International Movement of Catholic Students - Pax Romana UN Advocacy Team. Mr. Dekki is a Youth Representative and an active youth leader for the Major Group of Children and Youth. He explained that advocacy is important so Major Groups are not left behind. The Major Groups are a platform that youth focused agencies and youth led organizations can use. The working groups in New York takes the process seriously, they facilitate voices of the multiple groups they work with and outside stakeholders around the world. They are keen on representing not just the groups, but holistic role of being in solidarity with partners. They are also active in 8 different UN processes: Habitat 3 process, HLPF process, FFD process, sustainable consumption process, formal UN process at world humanitarian summit, etc. Mr. Dekki further stated that the three pillars of sustainable development are better to focus on, than each goal individually. They should be looked at as foundation for each year. The major group provides access for all organization to have space to participate in and if people aren't participating, they won't realize their needs. Mr. Dekki closed his statement by elucidating that the process of reviewing the SDGs is not going to be easy.

There were brief reflections from a number of NGOs followed by a lively Q&A Session.

Meeting was adjourned at about 3:45PM

The Co-Chairs wished everyone a very Happy Holiday Season and they invited all to join our Holiday Dessert Reception.