

NGOCSD-NY General Membership Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 25th, 2016, 3:00PM-5:00PM at the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations
Submitted by Andrij Dobriansky on behalf of Chris Dekki, Secretary

NGOCSD-NY Co-Chairs Margo LaZaro and Yvonne O'Neal began the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking H.E. Ambassador Amrith Rohan Perera, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, for the Mission's outstanding support, including co-hosting our meeting, and providing some of the refreshments. Margo and Yvonne also thanked Ms. Sonali Samarasinghe, Minister Counsellor of the Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, for taking part as our meeting's moderator. This month's NGOCSD-NY General Membership meeting's theme was then announced: "The Role of Education in the Implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda."

Margo and Yvonne introduced H.E. Ambassador Sabarullah Khan, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations, to deliver the opening address. Ambassador Khan began his remarks by recalling the modern history of education in the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, beginning with Universal Education which was enacted into law in 1939. Currently, Sri Lanka boasts a 97% rate of education through the secondary level. The nation's Secondary Education standards are currently undergoing a series of reforms, which will include the proliferation of "e-libraries" and more "learning hubs" throughout the country. There is now a national "E-Learning Portal," which includes numerous educational games for students, as well as a database of past exams and written papers for students to use as a learning resource. The nation of Sri Lanka believes that Education can be a means of providing social unity on a national scale. Post-conflict reconciliation only happens where robust Education policies exist. Towards this goal of universal education, students in Sri Lanka will have access to primary schools located no more than 2 kilometers away from any household with children, and secondary schools within 4 kilometers. Sri Lanka established a minimum age of employment as 16, aiding in maximizing education rates through the secondary level. The goal of gender equality can also be helped through more inclusive education, and making continuing education a lifelong goal.

The Co-Chairs thanked Ambassador Khan for his opening address and remarked that after hearing what he had to say, that truly no child in Sri Lanka will be left behind, then they welcomed the meeting moderator, Ms. Samarasinghe, to address the meeting. Ms. Samarasinghe also praised Ambassador Khan's remarks, and stressed that Education is the most important way for us as a society to implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda. To emphasize this point, she cited UNESCO's findings that schooling, year by year, increases a nation's GDP.

Ms. Samarasinghe then invited the next speaker to the podium, Ms. Marie Paule Roudil, Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office in New York. Ms. Roudil also praised Ambassador Khan's remarks, and thanked NGOCSD-NY co-chairs Margo LaZaro and Yvonne O'Neal for inviting her back to speak to at this meeting. In her estimation, never has the worldwide rate of Education been more important a goal as today. Since 2000, much progress has been made towards increasing access to education worldwide, but we unfortunately remain far behind in some areas, especially in countries with conflict situations. 57 million children is the total UNESCO estimates do not attend primary schools. 32 million of those are young girls. If we were able to ensure universal basic education, it is estimated that over 100 million people would be raised out of poverty. Furthermore, an educated population is more likely to use healthcare services more often. Health and Education are too often dealt with as separate issues, but in actuality, Ms. Roudil believes that they should be talked about together. Education is a core goal of the Sustainable Development agenda, because it stands as the most powerful weapon to combat poverty, human rights abuses, gender inequality, and other societal ills, because it allows people to make informed judgments about societal issues that need attention. Ms. Roudil praised Sri Lanka's excellent progress and standing on education and she finished her remarks by asking for the participants at the UN and globally to not to spend too much time negotiating how to achieve universal education, but to do it now.

Ms. Samarasinghe thanked Ms. Roudil for her address, and added that UNESCO studies have shown that people who have completed secondary level of education are more tolerant of those who speak different languages, as well more accepting of gender equality. She then invited the next speaker to the podium, Mr. Narinder Kakar, Permanent Observer of the University of Peace to the United Nations.

Mr. Kakar began by thanking NGOCSD-NY co-chairs Margo LaZaro and Yvonne O'Neal for inviting him to speak, as well as Ms. Samarasinghe for the kind introduction. As described by Mr. Kakar for the benefit of

those unfamiliar with his institution, the University of Peace (UPEACE) was founded in 1980 pursuant to a resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly, a noble aspiration in the spirit of the founding UN charter. The nation of Costa Rica then followed this resolution up by volunteering to donate the required tracts of land. UPEACE has followed up on those noble ideals by devoting courses of study on Sustainable Development, Sustainable Agriculture, and Global Climate Change, among others specializations. Echoing points raised earlier by Ms. Roudil, Narinder expounded on the links between Education and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, specifically citing Goal #13, which calls for improving Education and awareness of Global Climate Change.

Ms. Samarasinghe thanked Mr. Kakar for his address, and then asked the next speaker to the podium, La Neice Collins, Communications Officer for United Nations Academic Impact.

Ms. Collins also summarized the genesis of her institution, Academic Impact, which was founded to engage a younger population, after many in the NGO community came to understand that the Model UN was not engaging the interest of the youngest generation of potential leaders. Academic Impact has been at the forefront of inventive partnerships, such as the UNHATE Foundation, a partnership with United Colors of Benetton, which seeks to create a new culture against hate. In 2015, UNHATE sponsored the creation of the student project *People of Palestine*, a photo journal website through which Palestinians can tell their stories about their experiences, history, culture and ideas. A second student project aimed to provide skills training for Muslim women in Germany, who often face discrimination in the employment sector.

Ms. Samarasinghe thanked Ms. Collins for her address, and then invited the next speaker to the podium, Ms. J. Paige Propper-Sanborn, Co-Founder and President of the Zariiki Nursery and Primary School in Tanzania. Ms. Propper-Sanborn described her experience in establishing the school in Tanzania, near the Northwestern edge of the Serengeti National Park. Through videos, pictures, and narration, Ms. Propper-Serengeti told the story of Susan Nicholaus, a teacher who returned home to Magu-Mwanza to educate the children of her small, hometown village. She mentioned the first children came to school, because they were receiving a meal and an education was second. They now feed the students two meals a day. After several years of fundraising initiatives, the school now boasts an enrollment of over 200 children.

Ms. Samarasinghe thanked Ms. Propper-Sanborn for her presentation, and then asked the next speaker to the podium, Lirone Glikman, founder and innovator of Global Impact Alliances Project, which seeks to empower and educate women & youth from around the world. Since beginning this initiative in 2011, Ms. Glikman has worked with thousands of students, women, and NGO leaders, including members of the LGBT community in Israel spurring them towards empowerment and entrepreneurship.

Ms. Samarasinghe thanked Ms. Glikman for her address, and then asked the next speaker to the podium, Mr. Iran Nazario, Director of Peacebuilders and community relations at COMPASS Youth Collaborative. Mr. Nazario shared his powerful personal experiences that led to his work as a peace builder beginning with being homeless at 11 years old and serving time in prison to the work he is dedicated to doing now which has helped over 10,000 youth. The COMPASS Youth Collaborative seeks to bring initiatives from the UN into the streets of every city.

Chairs Margo & Yvonne thanked Ms. Samarasinghe for being our Moderator and they adjourned the meeting at about 4:45PM and welcomed everyone to enjoy the refreshments provide by the Mission of Sri Lanka and the NGOCS-D-NY.