



Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary

NGO with special consultative status in the **Economic and Social Council** of the United Nations since **2013** and with the **Department of Public Information** since **2006**.

News from the UN # 99

RSHM at the UN

February 2019

The Commission on Social Development CsocD 57



The **Commission on Social Development** which is tasked with addressing the “social pillar” of development, held its annual 10 day meeting at the UN in NY in February. Delegates to the Commission on Social Development highlighted the fact that inequality has become a defining issue of the present time that must be addressed through social protection policies. *“With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, combating inequality and social protection has moved to the centre of the policy agenda in all countries,”* said Cheikh Niang (Senegal), who was elected to Chair the Commission.. The emerging issue addressed the importance of Empowerment of people affected by natural and human-made disasters in order to reduce inequality and how to address the differential impact on persons with disabilities, older persons and youth.

➔ [Watch the short video](#)

Civil Society Forum

On Friday, February 15th, we attended the Civil Society Forum held during the Commission on Social Development. Representatives from a variety of NGOs came to share their experiences and give their input into a **Civil Society Declaration**, to be used in advocacy with member states. **Philip Alston, Special Rapporteur on extremum poverty and human rights** and Professor of Law at New York University, was the keynote speaker who delivered an address focused on the importance of gender and finance for social development. He pointed to the fact that austerity policies lead to a reduction in gender equality, and that human rights are absent from global legislation. He argued for more civil society voices in global policy making. This, he said, would give governments more leverage over negative practices of the private sector such as tax avoidance.



Homelessness



“Social protection requires a roof, not just a floor”. Although the global challenge of street homelessness is one of the most egregious signs of inequality and poverty, it has been left out of the global debate until recently. **The Working Group to end**

Homelessness is one of the newest NGO committees at the UN. It is advocating for attention to be given to provision of adequate safe and affordable housing for all, including those

who are street homeless.

At a side event during the Commission of Social Development the importance of addressing homelessness through the lens of human rights was stressed as a key strategy to tackle inequality. As the representative of the **Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing noted**, *“the experience of homelessness is an assault on dignity and on life. Human rights concerns that should trigger human rights responses”.* One of the panelists spoke movingly of her personal experience of being homeless, and in a city-sponsored shelter for 3 years where her identity was confined to a number and where she lost her sense of who she was; - her self-respect, her dignity and her name.

Fast Facts

- According to **UN HABITAT**, nearly **23%** of people globally lack adequate housing.
- Nearly **one quarter of the world’s urban population**, live in informal settlements. **In sub-Saharan Africa, the figure is >50%;**
- Although no reliable statistics exist on street homelessness, it is estimated that **approximately 100 million people are homeless and living on the street.**
- There are **1.2 million people (11% of the population)** on the government’s national housing waiting list in **Zimbabwe**

As a positive outcome of the advocacy work done on the theme, the Commission on Social Development has chosen as the priority theme for next year’s Commission session **“Affordable Housing and Social Protection for all to address homelessness”.**

➔ [Read more....](#)

Social Protection for Refugees : The Turkish example



The UN Mission of Turkey reported on their social protection system for Syrian refugees during an event at the Commission on Social Development. There are currently 5.5 million Syrian refugees, with approximately 4 million of them living in Turkey. The Turkish government has set up a program which gives early childhood care to 40,000 refugees, higher education to 20,000 refugees, and Turkish language education to 12,000 refugees. A unique feature of the program is that only 5% of the Syrian population in Turkey reside in temporary camps. Most are integrated into the local community.

➔ [Watch a short video](#)

UN Security Council Exit Briefing



In early February RSHM NGO attended the first-ever **Security Council “Exit Briefing”** at the UN HQ. Member states who had just completed their terms as elected members of the Security Council included **Bolivia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Sweden, and Ethiopia**. They spoke of the successes and failures of the Security Council within the last two years, and the necessity of reform for the structure of the council. Successes included the peaceful and timely resolution of a conflict in Gambia, which entailed the smooth transition of power from of a long-standing president to a new opposition party. The **Netherlands and Italy** had split their two-year term between themselves, and it was discussed as a practical way to allow the participation of more member states. The division of the Security Council between the “E10” - the member states who are elected for a two year term versus the five member states with a permanent seat was regarded as a great obstacle in reaching consensus. Frustrations were voiced surrounding the power imbalance, whereby one permanent member can veto resolutions approved by the rest of the council. Prevention, as opposed to addressing the aftermath of security threats and humanitarian crises was highlighted as both a cost-effective and life-saving approach to policy making. This unique event gave us insights into to how the Security Council functions and how reform could bring more effective and positive outcomes. ➔ [Read more](#)

Migration Week

The last week in February was **Migration Week at the UN** in New York with three different day-long events being hosted as a follow up to the signing of the **Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees in Morocco**, two months ago. In opening the week, the **President of the General Assembly, María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés**, noted that the week’s events “*send a powerful signal that multilateral cooperation on migration is both essential and working*”. Focusing on the important link between the Sustainable Development Goals and the two Global Compacts, representatives from governments, civil society, and international organizations shared experiences and good practices of implementation at the national and local levels. Among the main topics explored was the need to involve youth in addressing migration policy, the importance of good data and the need for genuine partnerships to address this global phenomenon through the newly established UN Migration Network.



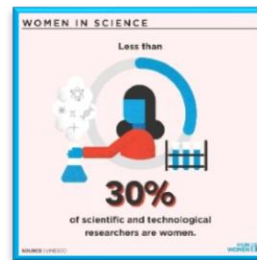
➔ [Watch a short video](#)

News briefs

• **Madison Weisend**, our newest intern, is a junior at Marymount Manhattan College, majoring in Environmental Studies, Politics and Human Rights, with a minor in Asian Studies. She is originally from Ohio, but chose to pursue her college education in New York City where she has the opportunity to gain valuable experience with organizations such as **RSHM NGO**. She is passionate about the issues of climate change and women's rights, and is excited to be working with us at the UN until the end of July.



- On February 11th, the UN **celebrated International Day of Women and Girls in Science**. Female scientists gathered from all around the world to celebrate with a panel discussion about the accomplishments and limitations of women and girls in science. **The panel was moderated by Julie Levey**, a seventeen-year-old aspiring medical doctor, who spoke with great confidence about her future in the medical field. She reminded the audience that women who bear children need to be supported in their return to the **STEM** field, and that their contribution to science is greatly valued.



Action Corner...



- Join the ➔ [UNHCR “a Billion miles to safety” campaign in solidarity with refugees.](#)
- **Protect creation:** ➔ [join the Eating simply Lent 2019 campaign](#)
- **Pray these 40 days of** ➔ [Lenten reflection with the SDGs.](#)
- **Follow us on** ➔ [Twitter](#) and ➔ [Facebook](#) during

CSW63 : 11 – 22 March.



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