



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 # 123

RSHM at the UN

September 2021



*This year's opening of the 76th UN General Assembly took place in late September at a time when the world was beset by ravages of COVID-19, the accelerating climate crisis, rising inequality and unfolding humanitarian disasters. The urgency of the moment was reflected in the theme: **Building resilience through hope to recover from COVID-19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalise the United Nations.** In hybrid format, prerecorded and live videos of speeches by Heads of State across the globe punctuated the in-person ones delivered from the rostrum in the General Assembly Hall during **10 days of General Debate**. The need for tackling global*

problems with re-invigorated multilateral cooperation was a recurrent theme, sometimes contradicted by contested nationalist voices. Signs of hope were evidenced in new alliances and pledges made by member states, expressed by powerful new and diverse voices. Occasional protests brought color and voice to the streets surrounding the UN HQ in New York. In this issue of News from the UN we share some small glimpses of the associated events.

Our Common Agenda

At no time since the Second World War has humanity faced such shared trials as COVID-19 and the climate crisis. "We are at a pivotal moment. The choices we make now could put us on a path towards breakdown and a future of perpetual crisis; or breakthrough to a greener and safer world". These stark words formed the introduction to the landmark report

launched by UN Secretary General on 10 September - **Our Common Agenda**. As he noted during the launch, "Covid-



19 is a wake-up call – and we are oversleeping". The report offers a vision for the future, expressed at a time of great adversity but grounded in solidarity and common cause and invoking a more representative form of global decision making with greater involvement of youth.

The Common Agenda builds on 12 commitment areas identified by Member States in the [UN75 Declaration](#) which

UN Food Systems Summit



From pre-Summit statements to boycotts, controversy surrounded the first-ever **UN Food Systems Summit** held in hybrid mode during the

UNGA on **23rd / 24th September**. Convoled by the UN Secretary General in collaboration with the Rome-based UN food agencies, it provided a virtual platform for 150 diverse voices. These ranged from Heads of State, UN Agencies and corporate CEOs to women farmers working in cooperatives and indigenous youth. In her opening words to the Summit, the **UN Special Envoy to the Food Systems Summit, Dr Agnes Kalibata of Rwanda** noted that although "although we thought our food systems have been designed to provide us with food, instead we were faced with obesity, hunger, malnutrition and biodiversity loss".

Did you know that:

- ✓ The **wealth of billionaires** increased by over **\$3.9 trillion** between March and December 2020, while **4 billion people** are still without any form of basic social protection.
- ✓ Nearly **one in three people** in the world (2.37 billion) did not have access to **adequate food** in 2020
- ✓ **92 % of African women** are in the informal economy. This keeps them outside of social security systems.
- ✓ In **88 countries**, laws restrict the jobs & hours that women can work, affecting 1.6 billion women in all.
- ✓ **\$9.2 trillion** is estimated to be the cost to the global economy in 2021 if developing countries do not have equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.

the **UN Secretary General** notes can only be addressed through a reinvigorated multilateralism. In preparing the report he drew on widespread consultation, advice and information channeled through **4 streams**: *UN Member States, Civil Society consultations, the "Next Generation Fellows" youth track, and influential thought leaders.*

➡ [Watch the video](#)

➡ [Watch the video](#)

The lead-up to the **Food Systems Summit** involved wide consultation and cooperation designed around 5 action tracks: *ensuring access to safe and nutritious food for all; a shift to sustainable consumption patterns, boosting nature-positive production, advancing equitable livelihoods and building resilience to vulnerabilities shocks and stress.* More than **2,500 proposals** were put forward to fix the broken food system. Commitments were made, including the **Zero Hunger Private Sector Pledge which involved** 42 companies pledging USD 345 million to contribute to ending global hunger. However, accountability challenges persist, Words are not actions, and deeper issues relating to decisions made to ensure company profitability versus the fundamental human right to food remain. Systemic change is never easy.



[Read more..](#)

Watch a [short video](#).



"We develop new technologies with which we are able to increase the planet's capacity to bear fruit, yet we continue to exploit nature to the point of barrenness, thus expanding not only the deserts of the earth, but also internal spiritual deserts. We produce enough food for all people, but many go without their daily bread. This "constitutes a genuine scandal", an offence that violates basic human rights".
 (Pope Francis – Message to **pre-Food Summit** in July 2021 *(ending July)*)



UN response to COVID

Since March 2020, **UN country teams in 162 territories** mobilized to address the impact of the pandemic

- **240 million people** received essential health services
- **36 million** received critical **water and sanitation** supplies
- **1 in 10 children** globally received UN backed **distance learning support**
- **1.1 billion units of PPE** supplied to 170 countries.
- **218 million COVID vaccines** were delivered in 138 countries and territories.

➔ Watch [the short video](#)

The **Global Women's Assembly for Climate Justice**

was a virtual gathering of women held from September 25th – 30th organized by **WECAN the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network**. It brought together

more than 1,000 women from across the globe, participating in 20 different panels giving voice to 100 climate leaders from 40 different countries. The sessions highlighted grassroots solutions from the frontlines and the protection and defense of Human Rights and Nature. A **strong "Call to Action" for climate justice** was delivered to governments and financial institutions worldwide during the UNGA 76 on the road to the UN Climate Conference in Glasgow – COP 26.



➔ [Read more](#)
 ➔ [Watch the video](#)

Nuclear Weapons – UN work for peace and security



Addressing the threat of nuclear weapons has been central to the work of the United Nations since its inception, **UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres** said in his statement for the **International Day of the Elimination of Nuclear weapons**, September 26th. He noted that despite the reduction in the overall number of nuclear weapons globally, **14,000 are stockpiled around the world**, representing the highest level of nuclear risk in the last four decades. In a special briefing session of the UN Security Council, members discussed the urgency of redoubling efforts for the universal ratification and entry into force of the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty – which has been open for signature for 25 years. **Five countries (including the United States)** have **signed** but **not ratified** the treaty and **three (including North Korea)** have **neither signed nor ratified** it. In the meantime, nuclear states, with the exception of North Korea, abide by the de facto moratorium on nuclear testing and the treaty organization monitors nuclear activity globally.

➔ [Watch the short video](#)

RSHM Briefs

★ During the last few months our **RSHM NGO** has been able to support various collaborative initiatives with other NGOs at the UN by signing on to various **letters and statements**. This joint action is a way of responding to our General Chapter call. The statements we have supported have included, among others, the following:

- A [Quaker peace statement](#) for the **International Day of Peace (21st September)**
- [Climate Justice Now: A Call to Action to Governments and international financial institutions](#) demanding urgent and immediate climate action in the lead up to the UN COP 26
- [An open letter to the Human Rights Council](#), calling for the establishment of a Special Rapporteur on **Human Rights and Climate change**.
- The [Healthy Planet, Healthy People](#) Petition

➔ See the links

Distribution

Institute Leadership Team; Provincials/ Regionals, JPIC Animators;
 Global Network of RSHM Schools; UN Interest Group
 Translation by **Maria Luisa Pinho, RSCM**

★ From 28 – 30 September, the **"JPIC JOVEM" RSCM Social Forum** was held in Brazil. Students from the 5 schools in the "Sagrado" Network of RSCM Schools in Brazil addressed the challenging theme **"The day the world ended - reflections on the construction of the new world from a youth perspective"**. **Our voice, intelligence and heart at the service of ?...."**

Organized into working groups across the five schools, students addressed challenging issues that impact life in society and the global common good. They worked together to identify problems and proposed strategies and actions which were then presented in a virtual session on Zoom at the close of the 3 day event.



➔ Watch the [short video](#)