



## High Level Political Forum




The July session of the **2023 ESOSOC High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)** marked the halfway point between the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015 and its 2030 deadline. The focus was placed on review of progress of **five Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 6,7, 9, 11 and 17)**.

**UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres** did not mince his words when he launched the special edition of the **UN SDG Progress report** which provided a sobering assessment of the current situation regarding the 2030 Agenda. Just 12% of the **SDG targets** are on track, nearly 50% are moderately or severely off-track and about 30% have either stagnated

or regressed below the 2015 baseline. *“Halfway to the deadline for the 2030 Agenda we are leaving more than half the world behind....Unless we act now, the 2030 Agenda will become an epitaph for a world that might have been.”*

**Thirty eight countries** presented their in-depth **Voluntary National Reviews** highlighting their areas of progress to date, initiatives developed and challenges faced in the implementation of the SDGs. The presence of a larger country delegation made it possible for them to share exhibits and / or present side events highlighting initiatives taken.

The impact of COVID, climate change, conflict and lack of finance were frequently cited as explaining the often disappointing lack of progress made. Participants underlined the need to accelerate implementation, sharing good practices that could be replicated and discussing ways of scaling up initiatives already piloted. As one representative from the Philippines noted *“We have not failed. The deadline is still ahead of us.”*  [Read more....](#)

Five of the 38 countries presenting their VNRs this year were countries where RSHM live and minister; namely:

**France, Ireland, Portugal, Timor-Leste and Zambia.**

### Timor Leste

It was only in 2002 that Timor Leste achieved its independence. What did the youngest member state of the United Nations report in its second VNR?. Focusing on the importance of putting people at the center of development, Timor Leste structured its report in the form of a **SWOT** analysis, highlighting the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats and noting the impact of the pandemic and extreme climate events in attaining the SDGs. Youth postcards with the dreams of children at the time of Independence in 2002 were presented to the President and echoed in the voice of the same youth representative addressing the UN today.

 Watch the [short video](#) re **Timor Leste VBR**



### Zambia : Leaving No one behind.

In presenting its **second voluntary national review** on progress in achieving the sustainable development goals, **Zambia** stressed the importance of partnerships between Government and civil society in addressing the many challenges faced, especially in *“last mile delivery of services to the most vulnerable”*. One particular focus in Zambia’s presentation was the importance of a child-centered approach to social protection policies to *‘leave no one behind’*. At the global level, Zambia has shown itself to be a **champion in addressing the problem of child marriage**. However, the differential rate of school enrolment for girls in secondary and tertiary education continues and various initiatives to address this have been launched.

 Watch the [presentation of Zambia’s VNR.](#)



### A snapshot of the SDGs in focus during HLPF July 2023

- **SDG poses 6** (clean water and sanitation) is “*alarmingly off-track*”
- While achieving **SDG 7** (affordable and clean energy) poses “*an unprecedented challenge,*” the Goal is still achievable by 2030 with scaled-up ambition and the right policies;
- “*There is hope*” for **SDG 9** (industry, innovation and infrastructure), with progress on some targets such as mobile network access but more action needed on others. More support is needed for innovation and infrastructure in least developed countries (LDCs);
- Challenges to achieving **SDG 11** (sustainable cities and communities) include a growing urban divide, inadequate housing, and limited access to public transport. 1.1 billion people still live in slums or slum-like conditions in cities.
- While there have been advances in some areas of **SDG 17** (partnerships for the Goals), such as development aid, remittance flows, and access to technology, funding for development remains a major challenge, particularly in low-income countries.



## Hiroshima and Nagasaki – Peace Commemorations.



This year marks the 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the atomic bombings of **Hiroshima** and **Nagasaki** on August 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> respectively. Commemorations in and around the UN included the 30<sup>th</sup> annual interfaith Peace Gathering organized by the Heiwa Peace and Reconciliation Foundation of NY which was held in 3 parts and concluded with a closing peace prayer ceremony at the interfaith chapel of the Church Center for the UN. Faith leaders from Hiroshima and Nagasaki shared their peace messages which had been compiled into a short video

introduced in the prayer event. **Pax Christi NY** featured among the representatives of different faiths in attendance who offered prayers and invocations for peace.

## 2023 UN Human Rights Prize

Just one year ago, the United Nations General Assembly **adopted the resolution** to universally recognize the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as an inalienable human right. This endorsement was largely due to tireless advocacy on the part of many civil society and **faith-based** groups around the world who joined a Coalition by signing and endorsing the Global Call for the universal recognition of that right. We as RSHM were among them. In recognition of the key role that members of the **Global Coalition of Civil Society, Indigenous Peoples, Social Movements, and Local Communities** had played in advocating for the recognition of that right, the UN announced on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023 that the Coalition was one of six recipients to be awarded the **2023 UN Human Rights Prize**. The award will be presented on December 10<sup>th</sup> during the 75<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the UN Declaration of Human rights.



➡ [Read more....](#) ➡ [also](#)

## RSHM NEWS Briefs

★ **JCoR-Zimbabwe** convened a workshop on peacebuilding and **SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions)** in the lead-up to Zimbabwe's national elections on August 23<sup>rd</sup>. **Srs. Naomi Muulu RSHM and Joyce Rushinga RSHM** participated in the workshop in Mutare which included discussion of SDG 16 and how to analyze available data to assess Zimbabwe's progress towards achieving it. Concrete ideas were also shared about how to promote a culture of peace.

By way of outcome, 25 women and men



religious were mobilizing to serve as official election observers in efforts to promote a peaceful and democratic election process on August 23<sup>rd</sup>.



➡ Read the latest [JCoR monthly bulletin.](#)

★ **Marymount International School, Neuilly** ran their **Walk for Water** campaign during the period April – June, Lessons and activities raising awareness about water access, water scarcity and its impacts on people's lives were given to all classes. One exercise revealed the difficult choices to be made when people are limited to only 20 litres a day. **A visit to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** in Rome demonstrated the importance of hydroponics to food production. The annual campaign ended with Grades 4 – 8 participating in a 5km walk on June 22<sup>nd</sup>. Donations contributed were directed to the RSHM Life Care Center in Chinhoi, Zimbabwe.



➡ Watch the short [video.](#)

### Distribution

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★ **Srs. Jacquelyn Porter and Virginia Dorgan RSHM** participated in several sessions of the High Level Political Forum at the UN in mid-July, including one organized by Portugal on **“Towards a Renewed Social Contract. Lessons learnt from the Portuguese VNR”**. As Sr. Jacquelyn noted: *“Portugal's presentation was noteworthy in that it reflected how much can be accomplished at the local level. Not only did attendees acknowledge that it could serve as a model for other countries, but RSHM participants noted how many of Portugal's accomplishments aligned with our own goals for social justice and sustainable development”*. At the end of the event each participant received a gift – a board game on the SDGs in both English and Portuguese as a way of encouraging awareness raising about the **Sustainable Development Goals**.

