



**UN General Assembly 78 : High Level Summits and the General Debate**

**The Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the Future we Want**


World leaders met at the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit** from 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> September during the **High Level week of UNGA 78** in New York. They acknowledged that at the midpoint of the 15 year period of implementation, the SDGs are perilously behind, with only 15% of the targets being on track to be met by 2030. With the climate emergency wreaking havoc on lives and livelihoods, 110 million people forcibly displaced and tens of millions having fallen into poverty since the COVID pandemic was declared in 2020, inequalities have deepened. **As UN Secretary General** noted *“The SDGs aren’t just a list of goals. They carry the hopes, dreams, rights and expectations of people everywhere.”*



Despite the political divisiveness and global tensions, Heads of state formally adopted a **negotiated Political Declaration**, thereby committing themselves to accelerating their efforts to deliver the **2030 Agenda** and affirming that the SDGs remain the “global roadmap” out of crises towards sustainable development.

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A recurring theme throughout events during the High Level week of UNGA was the importance of listening to the voices of **children and youth** – the generation closest to the future we are creating by our actions or the failure to act to address the crises of our world today.

 Watch the [short video](#)

**Climate Ambition Summit**

The 20th September **Climate Ambition Summit** was convened by the **UN Secretary General** last December as a **“No nonsense”** summit, aiming to feature global leaders who have responded to his call for accelerated urgent action to tackle the climate crisis. It was to be a platform for the *“first movers and doers”*, with no exceptions and no compromises.



It aimed to champion credible, tangible solutions to the climate crisis with the goal of inspiring other leaders. High level speakers were required to present credible, ambitious actions, plans and policies. In three minute presentations

without the usual protocols being observed, **Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ministers of the Environment** together with a few CEOs and NGO leaders gave report cards of what they had already done and spelled out concrete actions to implement their commitments relating to the Paris goals of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees and reaching net zero carbon emissions.

Notably absent from those selected as “first movers and doers” were the world’s major greenhouse gas emitters: **the USA, China, India Russia, France and the United Kingdom**. Between them, they account for more than half the world’s emissions. A **Chair’s summary** will present the main outcomes of the Summit.

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**Climate Change Fast Facts**

- **Climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity. Every year, environmental factors take the lives of around 13 million people.**
- **Half of emissions cuts must be in place by 2030 to keep warming below 1.5°C.**
- **Governments subsidized fossil fuel production to the tune of US \$7 trillion in 2022.**
- **Systems to produce, package and distribute food generate a third of greenhouse gas emissions**
- **The ocean generates 50% of the planet’s oxygen, absorbs 25% of all carbon dioxide emissions, and captures 90% of the excess heat generated by these emissions.**
- **Shifting to a green economy could yield a direct economic gain of \$26 trillion through 2030 compared with business-as-usual.**
- **A circular economy, based on the principles of reduce, re-use and recycle, could create around 6 million new jobs in recycling and waste management.**

## Climate March : Calling for an end to Fossil Fuel Dependence



The burning of fossil fuels like **coal, oil and natural gas** remains the primary driver of global warming. Despite the growing climate crisis and uncontestable scientific evidence from the **UN FCC** in the latest report, governments continue to grant new mining licenses and open up new oil pipelines, providing heavy subsidies to the fossil fuel industry.




On the eve of the **High Level week of UNGA, civil society groups and joined forces** in a march calling global leaders to scale down and quickly pivot away from fossil fuels which are dangerously heating the Earth. **RSHM** joined other faith-based groups at a special Mass, followed by a presentation by youth from the **Laudato Si Movement**. We then converged with other groups on the march to the UN which drew an estimated **75 000 people** from around the country.

## UnMute Civil Society.



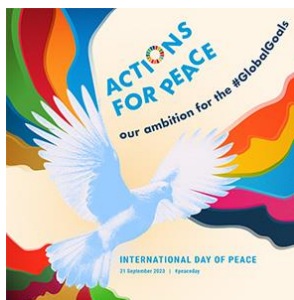
In commemoration of the **75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, the Assistant Secretary General for Human Rights hosted a roundtable on 13<sup>th</sup> September focusing on *“Civic space: enhancing participation through strengthened partnerships”*. The goal was to enhance the possibilities for civil society participation in UN processes, sharing good practices and soliciting commitments from Member states. The Ambassador of Cost Rica and co-founder of **“Unmute Civil Society”** highlighted the importance of the rich experience brought by NGOs in all areas of the UN’s work and the need for more democracy and inclusivity.

The Ambassador of Morocco noted that Civil Society is the *‘conscience of human kind’*, awakening us from slumber and spurring us to address pressing issues”. Noting that the UN Charter begins with *“We the Peoples...”* the Ambassador of Canada to the UN reminded all present that rights don’t belong to Governments but to people and that partnership with Civil society is not an *‘add on’* but is fundamental to the fulfilment of human rights.  [Read more.....](#)





[Join the voices](#) calling for an end to our dependence on fossil fuels and the negotiation and adoption of a **Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty**.


## International Peace Day



The Peace Bell Ceremony was held at the UN HQ on 13<sup>th</sup> September this year in anticipation of the actual **International Day of Peace** (September 21<sup>st</sup>.) which fell during the High Level week. The theme chosen for this year’s global celebration was **“Actions for Peace: Our ambition for the Global Goals”**. It is a call to action that recognizes our individual and collective responsibility to foster peace. This was stressed by the President of the General Assembly and the UN Secretary General in their brief “addresses.” *“For people and planet alike, we can – and we must – push for peace”*.

 Watch [the short video](#)  
 Watch the [Secretary General’s message](#)

## Early Childhood Education : Conflict Prevention

The link between **early childhood education (ECD)** and conflict prevention may not seem immediately apparent. However, in a recent event in commemoration of **International Peace Day**, a panel organized by the **Early Childhood Peace Consortium** admirably spelled out the societal risks from the lack of ECD services and the great potential they offer in building social cohesion and laying the foundation for a culture of peace. Specific ways in which ECD programmes can contribute to peacebuilding include providing safe, caring and loving environments for young children, promoting positive attitudes and skills, reducing violence and diminishing inequities, thereby serving as platforms for community cohesion, tolerance of diversity and social justice. One such programme is **“Alhan Simsim”** the early learning programme developed in conjunction with **International Refugee Service** and **Sesame Street** for children in the Middle East who are in refugee camps or unable to attend in-person centers. The session was followed by a reception at UNICEF where a joint children’s choir sang an original composition **“Seeds of Peace”**. 



Watch a [short video](#)