



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**.



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RSHM at the UN

June/July 2024

International Day of Women in Diplomacy

Historically, international politics and diplomacy has been seen as the preserve of men. Although women played a significant role in the early days of the United Nations, the statistics show that they have been underrepresented and their role in diplomacy has seldom been recognized. Yet hard evidence supports the contention that where women lead there is more success in negotiation and maintenance of peace. Two years ago, the state of Maldives with other co-sponsoring member states drafted a resolution calling for an annual commemoration of an **International Day of Women in Diplomacy**. The resolution was adopted by the UN General Assembly and June 24th 2024 represented the second time that the commemoration was celebrated. This

year, the five women serving as Permanent Representatives to the UN who currently serve on the 15 member **UN Security Council** engaged in a webcast 'fireside chat'. Each one shared her story, outlining the journey that had led her to this key diplomatic position and identifying both her challenges and her hopes.



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High Level Political Forum (HLPF)



Held annually in the month of July, the **High Level Political Forum** serves as the main platform for the follow up and review of progress of the **Sustainable Development Goals** and the Agenda 2030 which was agreed on unanimously in 2015 by all 193 member states making up the United Nations. This year the theme was 'Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: The effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions'. The in-depth review during the 10 day meeting **from 8 – 18th July** highlighted SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and SDG 17 (Partnership). More than 250 high-level special events, VNR labs, side events and exhibitions took place in person and online. As part of the SDG review process, 36 Member states presented their "**Voluntary National Reviews**", showcasing their progress on the selected SDGs and naming their challenges. Participants from NGOs and Civil Society participated actively – sometimes corroborating and often challenging the official government findings. This year, three countries in which RSHM live and minister were among the countries presenting their VNRs: **Brazil, Mexico and Zimbabwe**.

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A Failing Grade on SDG Progress



When UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, launched the **2024 Sustainable Development Goals Report** in a press conference at the end of June, he noted that the annual SDG "report card" shows "the **world is getting a failing grade!**" Nearly half the targets associated with the 17 SDGs are showing only minimal or moderate progress, while over one-third are stalled or going in reverse. Only 17% of the targets are on track to be achieved by 2030. Some of the reasons given for this dismal performance were identified as being the lingering effects of the **COVID-19** pandemic, the escalating conflicts and geopolitical tensions in the world and the worsening climate chaos. "Our failure to secure peace, to confront climate change and to boost international finance is undermining development. We must accelerate action for the **Sustainable Development Goals**, and we don't have a moment to lose," the Secretary General stressed.

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From the SDG Report 2024



Only 17% of SDG targets are on track to being achieved by 2030

- Despite increasing efforts to **expand social protection**, significant coverage gaps **left 1.4 billion children uncovered** in 2023.
- In 2023, **about 733 million people faced hunger, and 2.33 billion people experienced moderate to severe food insecurity**.
- Globally, an estimated **1 billion meals of edible food are wasted every day: equivalent to 1.3 meals per hungry person per day**
- **One in five people** reporting being asked to pay or having paid a **bribe** to a public official in the **last 12 months**
- **The 10 high-risk climate vulnerable countries** contribute least to climate change, accounting for only **0.5 per cent of global emissions**.

HLPF Side Events: Some brief glimpses

★ Climate change is a significant ‘threat multiplier’ for children. Climate shocks have caused increasing violations of rights of children, - increasing all forms of violence against them as well as reducing food supplies, discontinuing school attendance and increasing the risk and prevalence of child labour. Important examples from the field shared by **CARITAS, World Vision and UNICEF** highlighted the impact. Personal testimony also illustrated the importance of children’s active engagement as human rights and environmental defenders and the emerging leadership roles they can play at local, national and regional levels.



➡ [Read more](#) ➡ Watch a [short video](#).

★ **COVID-19** led to the first rise in extreme poverty in a generation. *Who is most affected; most likely to be left behind?* Case data reveals the predominantly female face of those affected. However, the household surveys on which most countries depend for data rarely break down the information by sex, and the gendered dimension of extreme poverty remain hidden or under-reported. In an informative side event by **I-Count** and partner organizations, examples from **Tonga, the Solomon Islands and South Africa** helped to shed light on the urgent changes needed to better assess the needs of many poor people who are hidden in non-poor households and those differentially impacted by Climate change and the escalation of wars and conflict.



★ “As people of the desert, water is everything to us....” Introducing the special event launching the first **System Wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation**, - the first in 46 years - the Permanent Representative for the **United Arab Emirates** (UAE) outlined the case for a clear and unified approach to addressing the issue of water scarcity today. With 2.2 billion people lacking access to clean drinking water and safely managed sanitation services, the world is far from realizing the goal set for 2030. Major challenges include the slow progress on **SDG 6**, the decreasing level of funding, increasing water stress and unpredictability of rainfall as well as the lack of an integrated coordinated approach to transboundary challenges.



➡ [Read more....](#)

★ Children are disproportionately represented among victims of trafficking worldwide with one in every 3 persons trafficked being a child. At a side event on **Accelerating Action on SDG 16.2 to Leave no child behind in the fights against Trafficking in persons** representatives of several agencies shared concrete examples of how they are addressing this egregious global problem. “When I was trafficked I did not know I was a trafficking victim...In China, we were not taught the word consent.” Now working with immigrant groups in the USA a lived experience and UN Global Goals ambassador, Eileen Dong explained how, in the services she provides to survivors of human trafficking, she works to create a cultural shift, enabling victims to feel empowered to speak out against violence and exploitation.



JCoR engagement at the High Level Political Forum

The **Justice Coalition of Religious (JCoR)** made up of 23 NGOs of Catholic religious women and men’s congregations having an NGO representative at the UN in New York, facilitated global engagement at the HLPPF this year. An online programme prepared ‘**digital delegates**’ by educative presentations during monthly Zoom webinars, before and



during the HLPPF. A **Guide**, produced in 4 languages, and having helpful information and facilitated by hyperlinks was widely circulated as well as shown on the website. An informative Orientation session and welcome lunch provided an opportunity for in-person JCoR delegates from Mexico, Brazil, Spain, Zimbabwe and South Africa who had come from countries presenting their VNRs to meet one another and exchange experiences. Several evening reflection sessions were held to help ‘debrief’ the experience. Finally the “**JCoR SDG Lab**.” Series provided an online opportunity to showcase Catholic Religious and their partners’ perspectives on progress and present good practices of initiatives contributing to sustainable development. **Sr. Beatrice Magaya RSHM** was among the presenters on **Monday 22nd July**, sharing about the **RSHM Life Care Center in Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe**.



➡ Look at the [JCoR Guide](#) to the HLPPF.

Reflection by Sr. Beatrice Magaya RSHM

It came as a surprise when I was asked to attend the **UN High Level Political Forum** held in **New York** from **8th – 18th July**. To be honest, when I heard this, I was afraid that because Zimbabwe's political situation is terrible they will have my head on a platter in no time! I became comfortable with the idea only when I heard there were 2 more Zimbabwean religious women going to this forum through **JCoR**. When I got in touch with them, they were comforting and reassured me that we will be safe when we come back home to Zimbabwe.

Getting a visa was not easy. Had it not been for Kathleen Murphy RSHM who knew the Ambassador (who had been her former student) I am sure I would have missed this great experience. I got the VISA only 4 days before travelling.



It was my first visit to the United States and the Eastern American Area. I could not have imagined how long the journey was. **The United Nations** appeared to me as this giant world, enormous enough to fit every country. As Sr.

Veronica took me around, I didn't know whether this conference room or the other one I had seen was more beautiful, more prepared or more official.

I learnt that there are people who have dedicated their lives to see the world changing for the better through the Sustainable Developmental Goals and Agenda 2030. I had to go to the UN to listen what was meant by "leaving no one behind" and to appreciate the SDGs and the **Justice Coalition of Religious**

(**JCoR**), thanks to Sr. Veronica who has inspired me so much with so much dedication to the United Nations activity on behalf of the congregation and for the world.



An awakening experience in my life

Interacting with so many organizations and getting connected was another high moment at the UN. I listened to organizations like **World Vision**, and learnt how they are contributing to accelerating progress in many countries towards the realization of the SDGs. The organization acknowledged how it needs to be accountable to children for they are the owners of the future. Another side event that was emotional for me was the one on human trafficking. I was shocked that the examples used were from Zimbabwe. Courageous young people standing up and speaking up to be heard by the people. A 16 year old spoke with confidence. I was so touched by her efforts towards the support of other girls and her own environment.



I realized that the world is big but we can transform life wherever we are. I learnt that the one life I touch contributes to the SDGs and to life. I felt so happy to share our mission in Chinhoyi in connection with the SDGs. I was so glad to be able to share our contribution with the world.

The **Voluntary National Reviews** came as a surprise in that our opinions as citizens of the country mattered to the world. It was very sad to witness the injustice that we experience in our country here in the US when the civil society representative was threatened. That gave me courage to speak about our reality during the side event organized by JCoR.



As I finish my time here in Tarrytown I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for enabling us to express our charism in our own Institute so that all my have life as we walk this journey to our General Chapter in 2025.

Sr. Beatrice Magaya RSHM

➡ Read the article in [Global Sisters' Report](#).

Distribution

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