

# *Many to Many*

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*“Many to Many” under the aegis of Operation Peace Through Unity is a communicating link between “we, the peoples” of all nations, races, creeds and ideologies offering in the spirit of the preamble of the United Nations Charter an instrument for the furthering of better relationships based on deepening mutual understanding and the aspiration to promote unity and cooperation beyond all differences.*

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- I. Editorial: CLIMATE CHANGES**
- II. Inter-Generational Responsibility**
- III. New multi-faith alliance for the protection of rainforests**
- IV. “Faith Over Fear”**
- V. ‘New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants’**
- VI. United Nations Ocean Conference**
- VII. Department of Peacebuilding Act 2017**
- VIII. Reflections on US Department of Peacebuilding Act of 2017**
- IX. UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons**
- X. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017**
- XI. UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021**
- XII. United Nations Alliance of Civilisations**
- XIII. World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought**
- XIV. 2017 Session of ECOSOC**
- XV. The Great Invocation**

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## I CLIMATE CHANGES

Wherever there are manifestations of Life there seem also to be seasons. On our planet the passage of the Sun signals the arrival of shifting seasons, each enabling the continuous unfolding of the fullest possible potential of every lifeform on all levels of livingness. Every species will give birth and seeds will grow; each life giving and receiving within an overall economy, creating together an environment sustaining each and all. At each overlapping of seasons a backward and forward pull will test, challenge and prepare every species for future growing.

At the dawn of the much larger season of a millennium two major streams of influence are reaching our planetary home; the one which has through centuries been taking us to this point on the evolutionary journey, and the one which will be providing the future climate and conditions for further development of all planetary life and relationships.

With curiosity, zest and resolve humanity has through time explored and discovered the mechanics of cause and effect, a knowledge which has greatly enhanced the comfort and quality of life of human beings. Through the ages the planetary environment has been the willing and generous provider of all needs and requirements. But while exploring and exploiting the essences and qualities of every species known to us, from microscopic to the largest units of life, we have yet to learn to establish relationships based on a true sense of mutuality and respectfulness. Self-interest, sentimentality and brute force have tended to be the predominant qualities displayed in most interactions.

In their messages from the moon the astronauts shared their deep sense of awe when seeing, for the first time, the wondrous beauty of the blue sphere of our planetary home, while also expressing their serious concern when noticing from space the, human-made, open wounds covering the body of our Mother, the Earth. Despite these and other warnings, our behaviour and mind-set still seem largely stuck in old tracks, belonging more to the notion of a flat earth - to be conquered and ruled. And, despite many ground-breaking achievements within science and technology, education and the arts, the doctrine of 'divide and rule' is still succeeding - albeit with increasing difficulty - in maintaining power and control of most if not all human affairs.

However, in the warming rays of the new - Aquarian\* - millennium the scientists' warnings from a lifeless planet have taken root in many human hearts and added momentum to the rapidly increasing number of voices throughout the planet, who speak of the urgent need for the change and transformation of all relationships - everywhere. In the resolution, adopted (in 2015) by the UN General Assembly, entitled: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 17 goals were carefully formulated after extensive consultation from throughout the entire world community.

As with all good intentions the realisation of these goals will depend on the resolve of us - each and all.

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*\* "The Presiding One looked forth upon the sons of men, who are the Sons of God. He saw their light and where they stood upon the Way which leads back to the Heart of God. The Way sweeps in a circle through the twelve great Gates, and, cycle after cycle, the Gates are opened and the Gates are shut. The Sons of God, who are the sons of men, march on."*

(Quote from the "The Labours of Hercules", published by Lucis Publishing Company)

## **II Inter-Generational Responsibility**

Speaking on Climate Action at the New York University and the Stern School of Business, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, expressed his gratitude, saying that he could not think of a more *‘wonderful mix of scholars and scientists, students and activists, investors and entrepreneurs – the people who, together, are making climate action real’*.

Quoting the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which states that ‘human influence on the climate system is clear’, and ‘the more we disrupt our climate, the more we risk severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts’, he stressed the responsibility of present generations to act, not only for the welfare of present but for coming generations. While Climate Change is a direct threat in itself, it is also a ‘multiplier of many other threats - from poverty to displacement to conflict’. The effects of climate are felt throughout the world; they are dangerous and accelerating, so it is ‘absolutely essential that the world implements the Paris Agreement – and that we fulfil that duty with increased ambition’. Stressing this point, the Secretary-General added the following three reasons: *“Climate change is undeniable. Climate action is unstoppable. And climate solutions provide opportunities that are unmatched.”*

Acknowledging his predecessor, Ban Ki-moon’s *‘immense efforts’* in bringing governments together in Paris, who subsequently adopted the Paris Agreement and pledged to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius, he also reminded the meeting that this was the first time, at a time when division reigned in so many other areas, that the world came together *‘to address this global challenge collectively’*. This is enabling the global community to work together *‘on an issue that none of us can solve on our own’*, stressed the Secretary-General. Today, 147 Parties, representing more than 82 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, have ratified the Paris Agreement, and every month more countries are translating their Paris pledges into national climate action plans. It is also increasingly understood that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goes hand-in-hand with limiting global temperature rise and increasing climate resilience.

The UN Secretary-General also pointed out that, if any government doubts the global will and need for this accord, that will be a *‘reason for all others to unite even stronger and stay the course’*. It is *‘reason to build ever broader coalitions – with civil society and business, with cities and states, with academia and community leaders’*. Further to this, thousands of private corporations, including major oil and gas companies, are taking their own action. *‘They know that green business is good business, and not just the right thing to do’*.

He committed himself to rallying *‘the full capacity of the United Nations development system behind climate action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development\*, especially at the country-level. Because that is where true change will be achieved’*. The Secretary-General also mentioned his intention to convene a dedicated climate summit in 2019 *‘to make sure we reach the critical first review of Paris implementation with the strong wind of a green economy at our backs’*.

*‘I call on all leaders of government, business and civil society to back the most ambitious action on climate change for the benefit of this generation and generations to come. ... All of us – governments, businesses, and consumers – will have to make changes. More than that, we will have to **be** the change’*.

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2017-05-30/secretary-generals-climate-action-address>  
\*<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

### **III New multi-faith alliance for the protection of rainforests.**

In a statement issued by Dr William F. Vendley, Religions for Peace (RfP) Secretary General, announced its campaign to protect the world's rainforests and the indigenous peoples who take care of them. This alliance of religious and inter-faith partners is greatly strengthened by strong support from the Rainforest Foundation of Norway and the UN Development Programme.

Appealing to religious communities of all faiths and stressing the vital difference that people, uniting in a common cause, can make, he said: *'if deforestation ended today and the degraded forests were brought back to health, tropical forests alone could reduce current annual climate-altering global emissions by up to 30%.'*

The full statement of this multi-faith, action-oriented alliance can be read in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese and is available on: <http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?m=1112171845262&ca=90ba6a94-ff1c-4090-baea-c4caba9c44eb>

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### **IV "Faith Over Fear"**

"Faith Over Fear" is the name of a worldwide campaign which calls on all religious people and leaders of all denominations throughout the world to overcome fear, misunderstandings and stereotypes, and to publicly commit to welcoming and supporting refugees.

The campaign is being launched by Religions for Peace and UNICEF and a global coalition of religious leaders and faith communities throughout the world, and short documentaries are highlighting and portraying how families in increasing numbers within numerous countries are opening their hearts, homes and communities to refugees. *'There are no walls high enough to protect us from the suffering of refugees,'* says Dr. William Vendley, Religions for Peace, and *'each believer, each mosque, synagogue, church and temple can make a vital difference'*. (<http://www.WeChooseFaithOverFear.com>)

The Statement (2nd of June 2017) entitled 'Ethics in Action - Statement on Migration' points out that all human beings live today as a result of migration, whether by themselves or their ancestors, and that *'migration is a matter sometimes of choice, often of need, and always an inalienable right.'* Whether caused by wars, poverty, environmental degradation and climate change we are today facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, and - for the first time in history - half of all refugees are children and youth. The Statement stresses that *'preventing the mass forced displacement of peoples has become one of the great ethical challenges of the 21st century'*.

Pope Francis is quoted as stating that we have the duty to welcome, protect, promote and integrate all who seek refuge. Ethics in Action calls for an approach which is based on the fullest possible development of each person and all people, allowing them to become active agents of their own development. This will include *'the full integration of migrants into the economic, social, political, and cultural life of the nation or their choice for a speedy and safe return to their homelands as circumstances permit'*. Also recognised is the need of children for a 'safe haven' and a sense of home, as well as a *'decent education, and an appropriate response to any physical and mental health challenges'*.

The 'Ethics in Action' statement outlines – in eleven points – the pledges agreed upon, the first point underscores the commitment: *'to forge a partnership with the UN Sustainable*

*Development Solutions Network, academicians of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, and other experts, to provide scientific evidence on the roots of today's forced migrations in wars, extreme poverty, social exclusion, climate change, and environmental degradation. We pledge to be guided by best practices on mental health and trauma, legal protections, education, and well-being of asylum seekers, refugees, and irregular migrants in varied destinations.'*

Among other pledges are: the call upon all stakeholders, religious communities, civil society, business and governments to take 'concrete steps to end wars, stop the arms trade, overcome poverty, and halt man made environmental degradation...' (from point 2);

That: *'Migration policy should be based on a co-responsibility between origin, transit and destination countries—this includes distribution mechanisms for refugees based on international agreements - ideally within the United Nations* (from point 4);

To: *'promote moral education – among children and adults alike – to inculcate the norms, virtues, and values of empathy, compassion, solidarity, and care for our common humanity and common home, which incorporates obligations towards migrants and refugees'* (from point 9), and

To: *'encourage governments to increase budgets for peace and support for sustainable development, not for arms and military spending – the best response to the migrant crisis is to cultivate solidarity for people and care for the planet, not wars.'* (point 11).

<http://rfp.org/sites/default/files/publications/Ethics%20in%20Action%20Statement%20on%20Migration%20June%202%202017.pdf>

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## **V 'New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants'**

The 'New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants', adopted 19 September 2016 by the UN General Assembly, is committed to *'strengthen and enhance mechanisms to protect people on the move'* and outlines 4 key objectives of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which are to:

- Ease pressures on host countries;
- Enhance refugee self-reliance
- Expand third-country solutions; and
- Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

The New York Declaration calls upon the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to propose a *'global compact on refugees'* in his annual report to the United Nations General Assembly in 2018, to build upon the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. It also provides for negotiation of a second compact for *'safe, orderly and regular migration'*, both of which are to be *'separate, distinct and independent'*.

<http://www.unhcr.org/new-york-declaration-for-refugees-and-migrants.html> ;

<http://www.un.org.al/news/global-compact-sets-improve-migration-management>

*"This not about sharing a burden. It is about sharing a global responsibility, based not only the broad idea of our common humanity but also on the very specific obligations of international law.*

*The root problems are war and hatred, not people who flee; refugees are among the first victims of terrorism."*

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres

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## **VI United Nations Ocean Conference**

Opening the UN Ocean Conference (5-9 June) the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, called for a ‘new strategic vision’ for restoring health to the world’s seas, and urged that for this to happen the very first step would have to be to ‘end the artificial dichotomy between economic demands and the health of our seas’. While numerous reports, global commissions and scientific assessments are describing the increasing serious damages to the world’s most vital life support system, governments ‘are not making full use of the tools available, including the Convention on the Law of the Sea’, said the Secretary-General.

Together we have created these problems, and together, ‘with decisive, coordinated global action, we can solve them’, he said and added, the political will which ‘led to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda must now be translated into funding commitments’.

<http://climateobserver.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Summary-list-of-Addis-pledges-by-ICCG-Climate-Policy-Observer.pdf>

The President of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Peter Thomson (Fiji) also stressed that the time has come to correct wrongful ways. It is, he said ‘*inexcusable that humanity tipped the equivalent of a garbage truck of plastic into the ocean every minute of the day*’. Further to this, illegal fishing and harmful fisheries subsidies are driving fish stocks to collapse and greenhouse gases are causing sea levels to rise. We are here on behalf of humanity, the UNGA President reminded the meeting, “*to restore sustainability, balance and respect to our relationship with our primal mother, the source of life, the Ocean*’.

The President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava (Zimbabwe), pointed out the direct impact of oceans on poverty, education, health, economic growth, food security and job creation, urging that solutions be put in place to ‘ensure that oceans remained a source of life and human well-being for generations’.

UN Ocean Conference concluded with a Call for Action to Restore Ocean Health, Protect Marine Ecosystems through Stronger Partnership.

During the closing session of the Ocean Conference it recommended that its outcome document, “Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action’ be endorsed by the UN General Assembly at its seventy-first session. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sea2056.doc.htm> and <https://www.un.org/apps/news/html/oceans.asp>

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## **VII Department of Peacebuilding Act of 2017 Recently Reintroduced in U.S. Congress**

April 9, 2017

On February 16, 2017 Representative Barbara Lee (CA-13) reintroduced in the 115<sup>th</sup> Trump Congress an updated version of her *bill to establish a cabinet-level Department of Peacebuilding* (DoP). With 31 co-sponsors and the most extremely polarized political climate ever, **H.R.1111** now sits impatiently in the House Oversight and Governmental Reform Committee awaiting the light of day. **Heavy lifting through the concerted grassroots advocacy of the national DoP campaign is needed to drive this bill forward.** Sadly the legislation remains relatively unknown despite consistent reintroduction in each of the 9 millennial congressional sessions since July, 2001 when former Rep Dennis Kucinich first proposed it (two months before 9/11). Bernie Sanders was an original cosponsor back then from the House. A companion bill even made it to the Senate during its 2005 heyday.

**The DoP idea has been around since America's founding.** Dr. Benjamin Rush, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was first to propose a cabinet Peace Office when our Constitution (whose preamble prescribes “peace”) was first drafted. He had the wisdom to want balance to their newly created Office of War, one of only four *original* federal departments. **Dr. Rush considered lack of a Peace Office a basic inherent flaw in our government.** In 1935 the first DoP bill was introduced in the Senate. Then interest piqued again in the late ‘60’s / early ‘70’s, when various *DoP bills miraculously received much political traction from both sides of the aisle.* Ah, those were the (Vietnam War era) days!

It is lack of “political will” that makes the bill falter. What will it take to muster the political courage necessary to transform from our culture of violence to a culture of peace? Nothing short of challenging the destructive Military-Industrial-Complex worldview etched for eons in our collective-consciousness. Contrary evidence now abounds through the science of “nonviolence” showing that a comprehensive, systematic, practical, proactive, cost-effective peacebuilding approach reduces “violence” at all levels. Yet unwise, dysfunctional political obstacles persist. We, as citizens, must strengthen our resolve to lead the way advancing the power of “nonviolence” through a DoP, if we want our members of Congress to follow.

A DoP would better enable our government to fulfill its basic constitutional “peace” mandate if “nonviolence” were an organizing principle guiding all governmental actions. It would send a positive U.S. peace message to the world, as well as assist politicians and civil society alike in accessing the collective “political will” of our better angels to promote **the global movement for a culture of peace.** The UN has established (via resolution) **government’s essential role in promoting a culture of peace.** If “nonviolence” were a worldwide integral governmental policy objective, a sustainable culture of peace would more likely emerge.

For over a decade now, a growing global network urges governments worldwide to create various **“infrastructures for peace”** such as *ministries, departments, offices, councils, academies* etc. to focus exclusively on building peace structures that support “nonviolence” at all levels from inner to international to earth justice. Some countries already have them. (Global Alliance for Ministries and Infrastructures for Peace -- [www.gamip.org](http://www.gamip.org) )

According to bill H.R. 1111, the federal U.S. DoP would be structured as follows:  
Office of Peace Education & Training, Domestic Peacebuilding Activities, International Peacebuilding Activities, Technology for Peace, Arms Control and Disarmament, Peacebuilding Information and Research, Human Rights and Economic Rights plus an Intergovernmental Advisory Council and a Federal Interagency Committee on Peace.

**We need a cabinet-level Department of Peacebuilding (H.R. 1111) to:**

- ! focus on **preventing violence** domestically and internationally
- ! expand civilian capacity for **nonviolent conflict intervention**
- ! fund the many community-based **violence prevention “best practices”**
- ! uniformly **teach peacebuilding skills** to American’s school children
- ! address root causes of terrorism to **enhance homeland security**
- ! support our military with **complementary approaches** & post conflict reconstruction
- ! mandate a **U.S. Peace Academy** to counter-balance all our vast war institutions

**Please join the national DoP campaign.** Global resistance to the unprecedented new Trump presidency is deep upon us. A DoP is urgently needed now more than ever at this precarious time with earth and democracy in the balance. How better to “resist” than to positively “insist” and “persist” for a DoP -- whose worldview of *strength through peace* challenges the entrenched Military-Industrial-Complex worldview of *peace through strength*. Nonviolent dialogue between these opposing worldviews is essential for reconciliation. DoP advocacy naturally facilitates such critical conversation. A new emphasis this year is on creating more state & local “infrastructures for peace” to expand our communications. Join the effort however you can -- no action to promote H.R.1111 is too small or unappreciated.

See Bill H.R. 1111 details at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1111>.

Join monthly action calls hosted by Nat'l DoP Comm. & lobby Members of Congress by calling 202-224-3121.

Email **National Department of Peacebuilding Committee** – [Nancy@peacealliance.org](mailto:Nancy@peacealliance.org)

URL: [bit.ly/dopcampaing](http://bit.ly/dopcampaing) & the Peace Alliance -- [www.peacealliance.org](http://www.peacealliance.org)

\* \* Sign Scotty’s & John’s civil society **PeaceNow petition to the United Nations urging departments of peace worldwide** so we can present it to the UN General Assembly this year!! <http://www.peacenow.com/>.

Written by Anne Creter ([annecrets@aol.com](mailto:annecrets@aol.com)) - National Department of Peacebuilding Committee Ally; Global Alliance for Ministries & Infrastructures for Peace; UN NGO Rep. Peace Through Unity Charitable Trust ([www.peacethroughunity.info](http://www.peacethroughunity.info)) and Global Movement for the Culture of Peace at the UN ([www.gmcop.org](http://www.gmcop.org))

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## **VIII Reflections on US Department of Peacebuilding Act of 2017**

The article by Anne Creter, *Department of Peacebuilding Act of 2017 Recently Reintroduced in U.S. Congress*, reinforces the idea of having balance at central government level between promotion of peace and military action. While there are Departments of Defence, of security and other promotions and protections to military style solutions to conflict, the matching departments and spokespeople for peace and conflict resolution are missing. A Department of Peace – or other infrastructure for peace - has been proposed since the US Declaration of Independence and on many subsequent occasions, in the US and other countries.

The concept and a voice for peace, although not always clearly defined, is likely to continue as a request of central governments despite having to wait for acceptance. Each time it is raised, a wider group of better-informed advocates is created. And this helps to underscore the importance of concerted action by individuals.

The promotion of each individual contribution to peace has been championed by such as Gandhi, Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King among many others. Each of us can make a difference simply by making even small changes to our lifestyle and mind set. In the current jargon, this will eventually reach a tipping point when ‘peace’ will become the normal way of living and settling differences.

So, peace promotion is necessary at all levels, from individual through local, to national and international. However, before any government, central or local, will take action, they must be become aware of their constituents’ demands for it. This brings us back to individual action for change.



A range of actions are shown in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which provide a comprehensive and universally agreed upon blueprint for the survival of our planet and all living on it. Any action taken on any one of the 17 goals– although preferably more than one! – will make a difference. But these actions must come from the individual, in the first instance. Working together as good neighbours, with mutual respect for all, will make a cumulative addition to a country’s performance in reaching the SDGs. It is interesting to note in the UN Secretary-General’s Second SDG Progress Report, that progress is, in fact, being made in most of the 17 goals, although more needs to be done if the targets are to be met by 2030 in all 17 goals by all governments who signed up.

<http://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-secretary-general-issues-second-sdg-progress-report>

On a local level, a Peace City can create a positive and supportive environment, and assistance where needed, to enable people to work together to improve their neighbourhood by exercising cooperation and mutual respect. When people are respected for themselves they are likely to realise that they have skills which can be employed for good – for themselves and their neighbourhood.

As a consequence, employment opportunities can be created which will add to the community economy. A further consequence is the reduction in the demand for support services and their cost. Increased education provision can lead to the reduction of health costs and police and corrections costs. Further employment opportunities in peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities will be created. The ‘peace’ industry’s contribution to an economy will be significant and will more than compensate for any loss of income from older industries.

A Department, or other infrastructure for Peace at the central government level is a cause which will benefit from your support – wherever in the world you are.

Kate Smith    K\_smith@clear.net.nz

Co-worker PTU

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## **IX UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons**

On the 7<sup>th</sup> July this year the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was adopted by 122 countries. The Treaty will be open for signature on 20 September and will enter-into-force when ratified by 50 States.

The “Lawyers’ Letter on the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons” points out that nuclear arms are the only kind of weapons of mass destruction not yet prohibited by an international convention ‘even though they are the most destructive and indiscriminate weapons ever created’.

The letter also states that, as lawyers ‘*we underline that the abolition of nuclear arms is required by an international legal obligation set forth in Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and embedded in United Nations practice going back to the very first General Assembly resolution, in 1946*’.

The letter further reminds the world community of the warnings issued already in 1947 by the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists (including Albert Einstein) that: ‘through the release of atomic energy, our generation has brought into the world the most revolutionary force since prehistoric man’s discovery of fire’, and: ‘***this basic power of the universe cannot be fitted into the outmoded concept of narrow nationalisms***”

<https://www.ialana.info/lawyers-letter/>

<https://www.ialana.info/topics/news/>

Resolution can be read here: <http://www.undocs.org/en/a/conf.229/2017/L.3/Rev.1>

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Marking the **Nelson Mandela International Day**, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated that *‘one the most important lessons we can learn from Nelson Mandela is that to make progress, we must look forward, however difficult that may be’*.

Recalling Nelson Mandela’s definition of a saint as being *‘a sinner who keeps on trying’*, the Secretary-General said that this is truly providing a message of hope in a world *riven with fear and cynicism*.

*“Nelson Mandela was known as prisoner 46664 for 18 years. But he never became a prisoner of his past. Sentenced to hard labour and solitary confinement on Robben Island, he rose above suffering and indignity to lead his country, and our world, to a brighter day.”*

The best tribute we can pay this great man is not in words and ceremonies but rather in actions that improve our world, said the UN Secretary General: *“Each of us can make a difference in promoting peace, human rights, sustainable development, and lives of dignity for all. Each of us can be inspired by Nelson Mandela’s example, and by his famous words: It always seems impossible until it’s done.”*

TEHRAN, Jul. 19 (MNA) –on Nelson Mandela International Day, 18 July 2017.

<http://en.mehrnews.com/news/126583/World-improving-actions-best-tribute-to-Mandela>

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## **X The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017**

Based on the latest available data, this 2017 Sustainable Development Goals Report highlights both the gains achieved and the challenges met as the global community continues to strive towards full implementation of all 17 Goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda carries the resolve and promise of world leaders to show leadership, to work together between themselves and all peoples to build free, cooperative and inclusive local and global neighbourhoods. The foreword to the Report points out that at the heart of this collective journey lays *‘a promise to leave no one behind.’*

The Report acknowledges that while progress has been made, the rate of progress in many areas is too slow: *‘the clock is ticking’*.

The full Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017 is available here:

<http://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-secretary-general-issues-second-sdg-progress-report>

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## **XI UN-Women Strategic Plan 2018-2021**

In her opening statement at the 2017 Annual Session of the Executive Board (27 June) the UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, reported on the implementation of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan and also informed the meeting on some of key points of the new Strategic Plan for 2018-2021.

Expressing her deep appreciation for the active engagement and open consultations with the Executive Board, she also pointed out that the new Strategic Plan will have stronger focus on creating the partnerships that will be required in order for us to be able to extend our reach. Extensive consultations have taken place with member states, civil society within the UN system as well as with the private sector, and also with those whose voices are often least heard, such as the International Disabilities Alliance.

The **'HeForShe'** Campaign, initiated by UN Women (September 2014), has the goal of encouraging and engaging men and boys to take action against any of the 'negative inequalities' facing women and girls in different parts of the world. The 'HeForShe' idea is based on the understanding that "gender equality is an issue that affects all people – socially, economically and politically –it seeks to actively involve men and boys in a movement that was originally conceived as 'a struggle for women by women' ([www.heforshe.org](http://www.heforshe.org))

The new Strategic Plan aims '*to provoke significant and durable progress, with as many partners as possible and without delay*'. Partnership, innovation and the use of data will be 'key features'. The plan addresses: '*multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination*' and will pay '*particular attention to young women, older women, women with disabilities, indigenous women, rural women, and other vulnerable groups that experience discrimination.*' It will also aim to address structural barriers to gender equality across all the Strategic Plan outcomes 'so that change is not subject to reversal and is truly transformative'.

Referring to her call for 'constructive impatience' at this year's '**Commission on the Status of Women**', the UN Women Executive Director suggested that this be seen as the 'keynote', for us to make sure that: '*we use the full power of our mandate to leave no one behind, and that we are mindful of the long wait many have endured already*'.

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/executive-board/documents/strategic-plan-2018-2021>

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## **XII United Nations Alliance of Civilizations**

On the 18 July 2017 a panel discussion took place at the United Nations, organised by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) on the urgent theme of 'The Role of Religious Leaders in Peacebuilding in the Middle East'.

The three monotheistic religions of the region were represented by Sheikh Imad Al-Falouji, Chairman of the Adam Center for Dialogue of Civilizations in Gaza, Rabbi Michael Melchior, Community Rabbi in Jerusalem and President of the Mosaica Religious Peace Initiative, and Patriarch Theopilos III of the Greek Orthodox Church.

The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, warmly welcomed this initiative and saw it as an opportunity for paving the way toward a future of tolerance, compassion and mutual understanding - leading to a 'just and lasting peace'. Throughout the world there is a spiralling wave of discrimination and stereotyping of people who are sometimes referred to as '*the other*' he said, and pointed to the need for '*expanding the space for dialogue with local and regional leaders, and other people with a voice and influence within their communities*'.

The panel participants discussed concrete actions which could help foster mutual understanding and also the prevention of 'extremist ideology'. Confirming that each of their religions were rooted in peace, they agreed that religious leaders need to work together to create a 'counter-narrative' against extremist ideologies; to summon their communities to live

in peace side by side in the Holy Land, and infuse a spirit of peace in youth and new generations.

Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, who assumed his position as High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations in February 2013, concluded the meeting and underscored the enduring commitment of UNAOC to strengthen the dialogue among religious leaders and their contribution to peacebuilding. The full event can be watched at <https://www.unaoc.org/2017/07/the-role-of-religious-leaders-in-peacebuilding-in-the-middle-east/>

UNAOC was established in 2005, as the political initiative of UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan and co-sponsored by the Governments of Spain and Turkey. The UNAOC High Representative and Secretariat are operating from New York and maintain a global network of partners which includes *'states, international and regional organisations, civil society groups, foundations, and the private sector to improve cross-cultural relations between diverse nations and communities'*.

In its Mission Statement the UN Secretary-General describes the UNAOC as 'a soft power tool for bridging divides', promoting understanding between countries or identity groups and preventing conflict and bringing social cohesion through:

- Contacts and dialogues with stakeholders
- Development of targeted projects
- Advocacy, including direct public statements or appearances by the High Representative or UNAOC staff
- Interventions to defuse religious and cultural tensions by mobilising third parties that can act as forces of moderation and understanding, such as religious leaders, grassroots organisations, youth leaders and women leaders.

<https://pluralplus.unaoc.org/partners/> this page contains information on the various organizations collaborating with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations on the PLURAL+ Video Festival

***'Our collective blind spot reflects paradigms of thought that legitimize three major divides that characterize our current age: the economic divide, the political divide, and the cultural-spiritual divide.'***

*Otto Scharmer*

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### **XIII World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.**

17 June 2017

An International Seminar on Drought took place June this year in Rome, co-organised by Iran, the Netherlands and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). At this meeting the FAO Director-General, Jose Graziana da Silva urged for a change in focus regarding relief response to droughts, pointing out that for years the response to drought relief had largely been focussed on *'rushing to provide emergency assistance and to keep people alive'*. While this will always be important: *'investing in preparedness and resilience is essential,'* he said. Such a change would help put countries *'on a footing to act quickly before it is too late'* and mean that farmers and rural communities would be better positioned to cope with extreme weather when it does hit. *"People die because they are not prepared to face the*

*impacts of the drought - because their livelihoods are not resilient enough",* said the FAO Director-General.

During the seminar the focus of the attending representatives from the academic, science, humanitarian and policy-making communities discussed how best to make the needed changes in drought management; how to introduce improved technologies to farmers and enable the shift from reactive to proactive responses’

The President of the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), Gilbert F. Houngbo, emphasised the need to break the ‘cycle of crisis, disaster and relief’ and called on the international community to be *proactive*, and to think not just of today’s emergencies, ‘but also of how to prevent tomorrow’s’. This will mean investing in smallholder farmers, to *‘help them address productivity challenges, give them access to markets and finance and most importantly encourage climate-smart agriculture so that when the drought inevitably comes, they have the tools they need to survive and thrive’*.

At this event a ‘memorandum of understanding’ was also signed by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and FAO, which will deepen their cooperation to respond to the climate variability and climate change that are representing *‘an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies, natural ecosystems and food security’*. These two organisations will work closely together on improving ‘agro-meteorological’ data; improving also the tools and methods as well as access by small farmers to products and services, which will help them prepare for droughts. WMO Secretary General Petteri Taalas pointed out that the Organisation provides guidance and scientific information which will strengthen national services, responsible for addressing drought risks to agriculture. Countries were urged to take early action against drought and *‘move towards a more proactive approach’*.

The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was established in 1994 and is ‘the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management’. The Convention is committed to working together with local people to combat desertification, land degradation and improving the living conditions of local people. In its 10-Year Strategy (2008-2018), adopted in 2007, the Convention added the goal: *“to forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and to mitigate the effect of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability”*.

In deep recognition of the intimate connectedness of the dynamics of land, climate and biodiversity the UNCCD works closely with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to meet these *‘complex challenges with an integrated approach and the possible use of natural resources’*  
<http://www.un.org/en/events/desertificationday/> <http://www2.unccd.int/publications>

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## **XIV 2017 Session of ECOSOC**

The comprehensive theme for the 2017 session of the UN Economic and Social Council which took place from 10 to 19 July was: *“Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges.”*

The annual forum is designed to be a platform for discussing implementation of the anti-poverty agenda, and for Governments to learn from each other, and this year’s discussions included presentations from 44 countries that had volunteered to give progress reports as well as some 120 side events.

In his closing remarks the ECOSOC President Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava said that the challenges facing the global institutional system require *‘a new assessment of how the promise of sustainable and equitable growth can be turned into reality for all people around the globe’*. There is, he added, a growing consensus that *‘the interconnected and global nature of challenges in all dimensions of sustainable development – the economic, social and environmental – cannot be solved by one nation alone’*.

Addressing one of the high-level events the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, also urged all public institutions to embrace the 17 Goals of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. When governments function properly the *‘collective expertise from across the public sector can be mobilized and brought to bear on the most pressing decisions confronting a country’*, she stated. Together they will be able to work out how best to end poverty, reduce inequality and tackle climate change, but only if *‘driven by visionary and committed public leadership, adequate resources and capacity and the exchange of lessons learned’*, she stressed.

<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/events/2017/ecosoc-high-level-segment-eradicating-poverty-all-its-forms-and-dimensions-through>

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## **XV The Great Invocation**

From the point of Light within the Mind of God  
Let Light stream forth into the minds of men  
Let Light descend on Earth

From the point of Love within the Heart of God  
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men -  
May Christ return to Earth

From the centre where the Will of God is known  
Let purpose guide the little wills of men  
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men  
Let the plan of Love and Light work out  
And may it seal the door where evil dwells

Let Light and Love and Power restore the plan on Earth