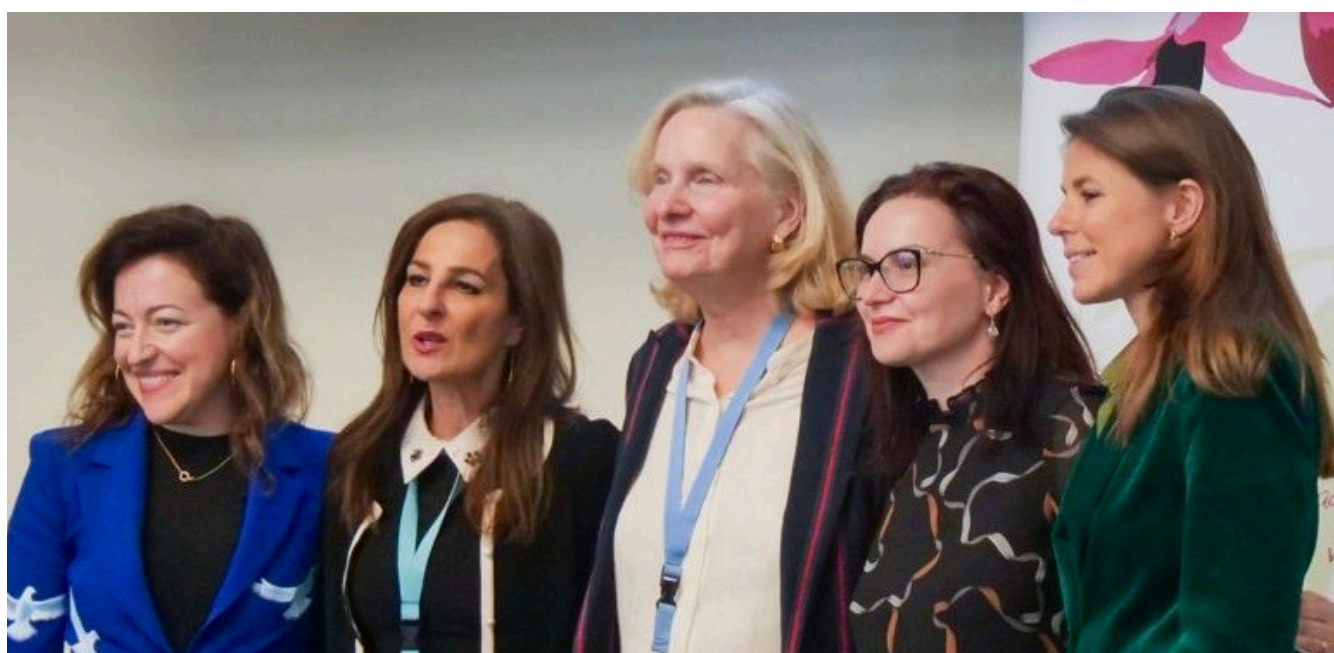




Women's Federation for World
Peace International (WFWPI)
UN Office Geneva



September - October 2025 UN Office Geneva Report

Prepared by:
Mara Probst and Léa Petrequin



Dear readers, colleagues and friends,

With humble appreciation to all those who have contributed through their commitment, their passionate and convincing advocacy, their writing, artistic and technical skills, to this remarkable collection that covers merely two months of our Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) United Nations Office in Geneva.

Thank you so much to the current team and those many who have prepared the way.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Handschin-Moser
Director

Lea Petrequin, Joseph Samuel Dunford, Mara Probst, Mariia Anapreichyk, Naïda Ugan, Sandra Aboagye Brenyah, Vladimir Picot ,Isabella Pelucchi,...

Table of Contents

Page 8

60th session of the Human rights Council
Advocacy Training Participants

Pages 9 - 10

WFWPI written statements submitted to the 60th session of the
Human Rights Council

Pages 11 - 13

Report on the Leadership and Advocacy Training (LAT)
Workshop series
As a preparation for the 60th session of the Human Rights
Council

Page 14

Leadership Spirit as a Female Speaker : Inspiring Youth
Through Advocacy
Reflection on My Experience at the LAT Workshop

Pages 15 - 16

Oral Update by the High Commissioner (presentation only)
60th session of the Human Rights Council

Pages 17 - 18

Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to
development
60th session of the Human Rights Council

Table of Contents

Pages 19 - 20

Protecting Human Rights in the Face of Ocean Pollution :
Access to Justice and a Toxic-Free Future
Side-Event, 60th session of the Human Rights Council

Pages 21 - 22

Status of Ukrainian POWs, Civilians and their Families
Side-Event, 60th session of the Human Rights Council

Pages 23 - 24

Combating all forms of discrimination and racism
60th session of the Human Rights Council

Page 25

Side-Event at the United Nations Offices at Geneva

Page 26

Empowering women through education, protection innovation,
global practices and norms
Palais des Nations, Geneva

Pages 27 - 30

No Peace Without Women
Organized by WFWPI and Universal Peace Federation (UPF)
Palais des Nations, Geneva

Table of Contents

Pages 32 - 33

12th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development
Palais des Nations, Geneva

Page 34

WFWPI Pledge for 40 years of the Right to Development
Palais des Nations, Geneva

Page 35

17th session of the Social Forum
Advocacy Training Participants

Pages 36 - 37

Opening Remarks of the Social Forum
Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Pages 38 - 39

Keynote Panel of the Social Forum
Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations, Geneva

Pages 40 - 41

Enhancing the Right to Education : emerging challenges and enabling factors
Side-Event, Social Forum, Room VII

Table of Contents

Page 42

Exploring the Potential of Artificial Intelligence to Foster Inclusive Education in Africa

Side-Event, Social Forum at Palais des Nations, Geneva

Pages 43 - 44

The Transformative Power of Human rights Education and the Rights to Development and Reparation in Achieving Gender Equality and Reducing Poverty

Side-Event, Social Forum at Palais des Nations, Geneva

Page 45

Statement - Empowering learners to act : Education as a driver for climate and environmental justice

Social Forum, Assembly Hall, Key Panel Discussion

Page 46

Statement - “Education as a Driving Force to Leave No One Behind”

Social Forum, Assembly Hall, Panel “Education for civil rights – Freedom, safety and accountability”

Page 47

Statement - Critical Media Literacy and Civic Education in the Digital Age

Social Forum, Assembly Hall, Panel “Education for political rights – participation, citizenship and voice”

Page 48

Statement - The Right to Education : a cornerstone for the realization of all Human Rights

Social Forum, Assembly Hall, “Closing Session – Roundtable on Recommendations : The Future of Education for Human Rights”

Table of Contents

Page 49

Statement - The Right to Education as a foundation for achieving all Human Rights

Social Forum, Assembly Hall, Closing Session – Roundtable on Recommendations : The Future of Education for Human Rights

Page 50

Statement - Human Rights Education for, with, and by youth
Social Forum, Assembly Hall, Panel “Human Rights Education for, with, and by youth - taking action to advance promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights for all”



60th session of the Human Rights Council



Advocacy Training Participants



WFWPI written statements submitted to 60th HRC

United Nations

A/HRC/60/NGO/344



General Assembly

Distr.: General
23 September 2025

English only

Human Rights Council
Sixtieth session
8 September–3 October 2025
Agenda item 5
Human rights bodies and mechanisms

Joint written statement submitted by Women's Federation for World Peace International, International Alliance of Women, International Council of Women, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Soroptimist International, Universal Peace Federation, Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, Dianova International, Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO), Graduate Women International (GWI), International Association for Religious Freedom, Co-ordinating Council for South Asia, International Association of Youth and Students for Peace, Inc., Medical Women's International Association, Mothers Legacy Project, National Alliance of Women's Organizations, Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI) Limited, Soroptimist International of Europe, Soroptimist International South East Asia Pacific, Tandem Project, The, US Women Connect, Widows Rights International, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status*

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[18 August 2025]

To see all the statement, please follow this link :
<https://www.wfwp.org/latest-un-news/geneva-statement>



Overview of the statement

A/HRC/60/NGO/344

Human Rights and the United Nations Crisis: Protecting Women, Security, and the United Nations System

The Link between Liquidity Issues, Human Rights and Global Governance

Women's Federation for World Peace International, the NGO Committee on the Status of Women Geneva and other cosignatory partners to this statement, including the sister organization, NGO Committee on the Status of Women Vienna warn that the UN's liquidity crisis is not just a financial issue but a looming humanitarian crisis. It undermines the Human Rights Council's ability to protect vulnerable groups, including women, girls, and marginalized communities.

Funding delays stall investigations, treaty reviews, missions, and complaint mechanisms, potentially costing lives. Beyond operational setbacks, the crisis threatens the UN's credibility as a neutral defender of human rights and risks reducing its founding principles to empty promises.

The United Nations at 80 should not only be seen as a milestone but also as a turning point; a true moment for reflection and bold transformation. The world needs global governance. We live in a time where the rule of international law is undermined. The Human Rights Council must take a stand and put forward concrete suggestions for sustainable and equitable change.

Strengthening the tripartite collaboration between the UN, Member States, and civil society is essential to building resilience in times of crisis. We recommend that the Human Rights Council establish a new multi-stakeholder entity that amplifies the local voice, strengthens inter-agency linkages, and fosters genuine partnerships.

We all recognise that the UN human rights system is not just a safeguard for the vulnerable, but a safeguard for all nations. Its collapse would not be contained within any single country's borders. When it weakens, no country is immune.

History has shown that unchecked human rights violations in one region fuel instability, displacement, radicalization, and insecurity elsewhere. Refugee flows increase, borders are strained, and regional instability undermines trade and economic growth.

We cannot allow financial neglect to dismantle decades of progress, nor can we stand by while the world's most vulnerable are silenced. Timely funding is the lifeline of justice, stability, and peace.

To see all the statement, please follow this link :
<https://www.wfwp.org/latest-un-news/geneva-statement>



7 SEPTEMBER 2025

Report on the Leadership and Advocacy Training (LAT) Workshop series

As a preparation for the 60th session of the Human Rights Council

written by Naida Ugan

This two-day workshop series was held to empower and amplify emerging civil society voices through meaningful engagement with the United Nations in Geneva. The first day focused on building foundational knowledge of UN structures and demonstrating how international instruments are applied to enforce human rights laws for fostering global peace. The second day enhanced peer-to-peer collaboration, encouraging participants to unite their efforts for greater collective impact.

Throughout the event, speakers shared their expertise to deepen participants' understanding of critical global challenges, which were further discussed at the 60th session of the Human Rights Council. The interactive format aimed to equip new leaders with practical knowledge of UN mechanisms while linking them with seasoned NGO representatives.

Carolyn Handschin, Director of WFWPI and liaison at the UN Geneva, opened the workshop by discussing the evolving role of civil society within the UN system. She highlighted civil society's dual function as watchdog and partner in shaping international norms.

Naïda Ugan, a legal consultant and linguistic expert as well as a former LAT participant, presented on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA), underscoring its foundational role in combating racism and racial discrimination through robust legal frameworks. She emphasized the necessity of an intersectional, victim-centered approach across all forms of discrimination. Naïda also highlighted the first International Day of Women and Girls of African Descent, commemorated on 5 July 2025, adopted by the General Assembly's Resolution A/RES/78/323 on 13 August 2024. This milestone honours their historic and ongoing contributions and marks the launch of the Second International Decade for People of African Descent (2025–2034), reinforcing the urgent call for global solidarity, systemic change, and sustained advocacy.

Mariia Anapreichyk, an International Human Rights Law graduate and consultant at WFWPI, addressed the right to a clean, healthy, and safe environment. She delivered a compelling message on the widespread ingestion of microplastics, stating, "We consume up to 5 grams of plastic per week." She stressed that the greatest threat posed by microplastics is their invisibility, calling on participants to raise awareness and advocate for action. Mariia discussed the role of the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change, highlighting the financial and policy challenges states face in tackling environmental degradation. She also introduced the concept of Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE), connected to Article 6 of the United Nations Framework Convention Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement, as a framework to empower communities in climate policymaking and promote sustainable development.



Mara Probst, a Human Rights consultant and journalist, led a session on journalistic integrity and responsible reporting at UN events. She clarified distinctions between public and closed sessions and explained critical reporting protocols such as off-the-record information, the Chatham House Rule, and U3 classification, equipping participants with ethical tools for effective communication.

Sandra Aboagye Brenyah, a Human Rights consultant focusing on the right to education at WFWPI, presented “Education & Inequality: Bridging the Divide Towards a Just Future.” Referring to Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states “Everyone has the right to education,” Sandra contrasted this principle with the reality that 57 million children remain out of school. She highlighted the global digital divide, noting that nearly 2.9 billion people lack internet access, with only 6% of households in low-income countries connected compared to 87% in high-income nations. She warned that advancements in artificial intelligence and the digital economy risk marginalizing those without early technology access. Sandra called for urgent action, including infrastructure development, digital inclusion, scholarships, and equitable recognition of qualifications, concluding that “Equal education for all is not a dream—it’s a duty.”

Berthe De Vos-Neven, newly appointed Director of Advocacy for the 2026–2027 biennium at Soroptimist International, brought passion and expertise to her session on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Despite CEDAW’s status as a legally binding treaty, she noted it remains underutilized and largely unknown globally. Berthe stressed the urgent need to raise awareness and make CEDAW relevant to younger generations through strategic communication and digital tools. She cited alarming statistics, such as one in three women experiencing violence from a partner, and highlighted complementary regional instruments, including the Belem do Pará Convention, Maputo Protocol, and Istanbul Convention. She called for stronger institutional mechanisms, such as women-focused police stations, structured legal submissions, and enhanced collaboration between civil society and governments. Berthe’s session underscored the vital importance of translating global treaties into effective local action.

The workshop included a Human Rights Council mock session, where participants simulated real-world advocacy and negotiation. The Chair opened by stressing the significance of collaboration, respectful dialogue, and evidence-based contributions. The Subcommittee on Education presented a resolution to improve global healthcare education, including mandates for the World Health Organization (WHO) to set standards, introduce periodic reviews, and draft a treaty facilitating freedom of movement for medical professionals. Despite an amendment proposing to restrict the treaty’s application to emergencies, the subcommittee rejected it, emphasizing the global healthcare workforce shortage and the necessity for open professional mobility. The session ended with voting, reflecting consensus and realistic diplomatic dynamics.



Overall, the Leadership and Advocacy Training workshop achieved its core objectives by enhancing participants' understanding of UN human rights mechanisms and fostering confident engagement in international advocacy. Through expert presentations and immersive simulations, the event encouraged meaningful dialogue across generations and regions while raising awareness of urgent issues such as racism, education inequality, climate justice, and gender-based violence. The insights and strategies developed during the workshop will contribute significantly to ongoing global efforts for justice, equity, and peace. This workshop stands as a testament to the power of informed, connected, and committed civil society actors to influence international policy and promote a more just world.





7 SEPTEMBER 2025

Leadership Spirit as a Female Speaker: Inspiring Youth Through Advocacy

Reflecting on My Experience at the Leadership and Advocacy Training (LAT) Workshop

written by Naida Ugan

Participating as a female speaker at the recent Leadership and Advocacy Training (LAT) workshop was not only a personal and professional milestone but also a powerful demonstration of leadership that resonates deeply with youth, especially young women aspiring to create change.

As a legal consultant, linguistic expert, and former LAT participant, presenting on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA)—a cornerstone framework in combating racism and racial discrimination—offered me a unique platform to embody leadership in action. This experience showcased how women's voices can powerfully influence global human rights conversations, including themes on the 60th Human Rights Council agenda.

Being a female speaker in such a prestigious forum challenges traditional norms and stereotypes that often silence or marginalize women, especially young women. It sends a clear message to youth everywhere: leadership is not defined by age or gender but by courage, knowledge, and the willingness to speak out. My presentation underscored the vital need for intersectional, victim-centered approaches to human rights advocacy—a call for inclusivity and empathy that young leaders must champion.

Highlighting the first International Day of Women and Girls of African Descent during the workshop was particularly poignant. This milestone, alongside the launch of the Second International Decade for People of African Descent, amplifies the importance of recognizing and elevating marginalized voices—a principle that female youth leaders embody by breaking barriers and inspiring collective action.

Speaking at LAT also allowed me to connect across generations and cultures, fostering a shared leadership spirit grounded in collaboration and mutual empowerment. For young women watching, seeing peers and mentors actively engaged in global advocacy demonstrates the power of representation and the impact of owning one's voice.

The process of preparing and delivering my presentation reinforced the leadership skills essential for youth today: critical thinking, effective communication, and resilience. It affirmed that leadership is a dynamic journey of continuous learning and influence, not just a position or title.

Ultimately, being a female speaker at LAT was a vivid illustration of leadership as service—using expertise and voice to uplift others and challenge injustice. For young women and all youth, this example illuminates a path forward: to lead boldly, embrace diverse perspectives, and harness their potential to shape a more just and equitable world.



8 SEPTEMBER 2025

Oral Update by the High Commissioner (presentation only)

60th session of the Human Rights Council

written by Léa Petrequin

Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) had the honor to assist to the Oral Update by the High Commissioner in the Assembly Hall of the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Volker TÜRK, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, opened the discussion by pointing out that all human rights are both the cornerstones of prosperous societies and bonds of trust. Human rights refute violent conflict and injustice and are the antidote to them. In this sense, human rights are the compass that allows us to navigate the troubled waters of the various crises we may face.

However, these rights are being undermined and violated in all four corners of the world. International law, which ought to lead the world towards enduring peace and respect, is being undermined. Regretfully, disengagement is growing, and the rule of law is being ignored everywhere. The rules of war are being undermined everywhere, and those who break them go unpunished. The number of civilian deaths is rising in many parts of the world right now, as are intentional attacks on civilian targets and property, airstrikes, the number of prisoners of war being arbitrarily detained, the danger of additional violence to citizens, and grave violations. But only when international law is upheld will peace be restored. In this regard, it has been said that the international community is failing to fulfil its obligations: no one is taking action to prevent war crimes from being committed.

Also, the High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted that it is quite unfortunate and concerning that many agreements have been withdrawn. International and regional collaboration is consequently being undermined. Unfortunately, a lot of states are ruled by their leaders in an absolute manner; this needs to change.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights is concerned about the alarming increase in executions in certain states. Additionally, he is warned that many states treat international human rights law like an à la carte menu, ignoring it entirely. In this way, a lot of military leaders are suppressing public space, suppressing opposing viewpoints, reacting in a very military way, suspending non-governmental organisations, and drastically limiting media freedom. As a result, a decline in justice and truth has been observed in certain states. In addition to targeting independent journalists, hate speech is growing more common, escalating tensions and separating society.



All people are protected by international human rights law, yet attacks on minorities are becoming more frequent. In many states, excessive force is still being used. Furthermore, in European governments, breaches against Roma populations are widespread. Roma communities no longer have any representation in the European Parliament. The number of stateless people is rising as a result of restrictions on the right to apply for asylum and a rise in the revocation of several nationalities.

Furthermore, the High Commissioner for Human Rights explained that the United Nations Charter ushered in a new era: the sovereign equality of states. But sovereignty also entails a duty to one's constituents, even political rivals. Everyone is negatively impacted if this is not honoured. Therefore, universal jurisdiction—which some governments have already adopted—is crucial when sovereign states are unable to hold a suspected criminal accountable for the most heinous crimes.

Finally, Mr. Volker TÜRK concluded his speech by reminding us that our human rights are our rights from birth, that everyone is entitled to them. No one is completely safe when human rights are violated. Therefore, « Together we need to save 80 years of cooperation. »





12 SEPTEMBER 2025

Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to development

60th session of the Human Rights Council

written by Léa Petrequin

Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) had the honor to assist to the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Surya DEVA, on the right to development, in the Assembly Hall of the Human Rights Council.

The Special Rapporteur made a report on a nexus between gender equality and right to development. He explained that instead of treating gender equality and the right to development separately, « all the actors including states, businesses, UN agencies and development actors must see gender equality as a cross-cutting foundational issue and whatever else is being done is adopted from that particular lens ».

He highlighted that today's world faces crises of unprecedented scale: violent conflicts, the climate emergency, economic instability and widening inequalities. These crises do not impact everyone equally—women and girls are disproportionately affected. So all these challenges require international cooperation. Even if, it is difficult, there is no alternative. These challenges are transnational by nature and can only be addressed through shared commitment. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) recently reaffirmed that international cooperation is not a political choice but a legal obligation under customary international law. It is also a key pillar of the right to development. No country can progress alone.

Moreover, the Special Rapporteur explained that listening to women is essential. Development must not be done to women but with women. Rather than deciding for them, it is crucial to engage directly with women and girls, especially in countries receiving development assistance, and integrate their voices, needs and strategies. He added that : « women bring a lot of unique knowledge about resilience and often we do not see them having that knowledge. So women should not be seen as someone who are there and we have to help them, we have to rescue them. In resilience efforts, policies and strategies we should listen to women and their experiences and their knowledge and build it from their bottom up and use that knowledge to build local strategies which are going to mitigate the challenges about the climate disasters that we are witnessing with the flood ».

Furthermore, Mr. Surya DEVA mentioned that it is essential to address women's autonomy—including over their own bodies. In this sense, abortion is fundamentally about women's autonomy. So, there is no inherent contradiction between abortion rights and the right to life; on the contrary, respecting a woman's choice is essential to protecting her life and well-being.



Finally, the Special Rapporteur remembered that gender equality is non-negotiable and should be integrated into every area of public policy—budgeting, taxation, public procurement, trade agreements, environmental planning and economic recovery. Otherwise, there is no sustainable development without gender equality. In other words, it is crucial for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

States broadly agreed with the nexus made by Mr. Surya DEVA between gender equality and the right to development by highlighting that the right to development cannot be achieved without gender equality. Many States emphasized that all individuals—especially women and girls—should participate in the society, which will benefit for the development of the state.

Throughout this discussion, there was a shared understanding that equality between men and women is a central pillar of justice and public policy ; rooted in human dignity ; a cornerstone for peace, stability, national growth and sustainable development. It benefits entire societies, not just individuals.

Finally, States reiterated that gender equality is a precondition for SDGs. In this sense, it is necessary to bridge the huge inequalities including in terms of access to basic services. It should remain a global priority, leading toward a fairer international order where all human rights are fully enjoyed.



17 SEPTEMBER 2025

Protecting Human Rights in the Face of Ocean Pollution: Access to Justice and a Toxic-Free Future

60th session of the Human Rights Council - Side Event

written by Mariia Anapreichyk

On 17 September 2025, during the 60th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, a high-level side event titled “Protecting Human Rights in the Face of Ocean Pollution: Access to Justice and a Toxic-Free Future” was convened under the joint initiative of the Governments of Chile, France, Costa Rica, and Samoa. The discussion brought together state representatives, United Nations experts, members of civil society, and academic institutions to examine how ocean pollution, ranging from plastics and hazardous chemicals to industrial waste, poses a direct threat to the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and to explore how justice and accountability can be strengthened for the communities most affected by this global crisis.

Speakers underscored that ocean pollution is not merely an environmental problem but a human rights emergency. Toxic contamination of marine ecosystems violates the rights to life, health, food, water, and a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. For many coastal and island populations, these rights are not abstract principles, but daily realities intertwined with access to fisheries, clean coastlines, and cultural heritage. Yet, despite the scale of harm, affected individuals and communities face immense barriers to justice: legal, financial, and structural, that prevent them from holding polluters accountable. This persistent lack of access to justice perpetuates impunity and undermines the principles of equity and environmental integrity that the Human Rights Council seeks to uphold.

Ambassador Claudia Fuentes Julio, Permanent Representative of Chile, opened the event by emphasizing that access to justice must stand at the center of efforts to protect human rights from ocean pollution. She highlighted that remedies should not be symbolic but effective, encompassing prevention, reparation, and guarantees of non-recurrence. Nella Pepe Tavita-Levy, Samoa’s Ambassador, spoke passionately about the plight of small island developing states, where marine pollution is not a distant environmental concern but a direct existential threat. She described how the Pacific region, already burdened by climate change, faces devastating consequences from plastic debris and chemical contamination that compromise livelihoods, health, and food security.

Marcos Orellana, the UN Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights, warned that marine pollution from plastics, mercury, and persistent organic pollutants continues to violate numerous human rights obligations. He reminded participants that while legal frameworks such as the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm, and Minamata Conventions have made progress, they remain fragmented and insufficiently integrated into human rights law. He presented the 24 guidelines developed under his mandate to strengthen access to justice and effective remedies in cases of toxic exposure, urging states to adopt them as binding standards.



Other panelists, including representatives from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL), pointed to the need for greater coherence among global environmental treaties. They warned that ongoing negotiations on a new global plastics treaty and the recently adopted Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) must embed human rights principles at their core. Without this integration, global frameworks risk leaving the most vulnerable communities: those on the frontlines of pollution, without protection or recourse.

Throughout the discussion, a clear consensus emerged: the degradation of the oceans is inseparable from the erosion of human dignity. Pollution is not only destroying marine life and biodiversity but also silencing the voices of those whose survival depends on a healthy ocean. The event reinforced that environmental harm must be treated as a human rights violation and that legal systems must evolve to reflect this reality. Access to information, participation in decision-making, and effective remedies are indispensable components of the right to a clean and healthy environment, and governments must ensure that these procedural rights are upheld at both national and international levels.

Participants called on states to strengthen legal frameworks for accountability, ensure access to justice for affected populations, and provide reparations for environmental damage. They urged governments to enable community participation in environmental governance, ensure transparency in pollution monitoring, and support civil society initiatives that document and litigate cases of toxic harm. The upcoming global plastics treaty and implementation of the BBNJ Agreement were identified as key opportunities to embed human rights obligations and establish mechanisms for redress.

The event concluded with a strong message of solidarity and urgency: protecting the oceans is inseparable from protecting human life and dignity. The path toward a toxic-free future requires not only cleaner technologies and stronger environmental regulations but also justice for those who have suffered the consequences of pollution. The recognition of ocean pollution as a human rights issue marks an important step forward in redefining global environmental governance. To secure a truly sustainable and just future, the world must act decisively: anchoring ocean protection in the principles of human rights, equity, and accountability.



25 SEPTEMBER 2025

Status of Ukrainian POWs, Civilians and their Families

60th session of the Human Rights Council - Side Event

written by Mariia Anapreichyk

On 25 September 2025, at the 60th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC60) in Geneva, the Permanent Mission of Ukraine, together with the Coordination Headquarters for Prisoner-of-War Affairs, hosted a side event titled “*Held in Limbo: Russia’s Abuse of Ukrainian POWs, Civilians and Their Families.*” The discussion offered an opportunity for states, UN experts and civil society to reflect on the current situation of Ukrainian prisoners of war (POWs) and civilian detainees, and to exchange views on avenues for promoting respect for international humanitarian law and human rights standards.

Participants noted that the ongoing conflict continues to raise complex humanitarian and human rights concerns, including the treatment of detainees and the challenges faced by families seeking information about their relatives. The event highlighted the importance of ensuring transparency, access for impartial monitoring bodies, and adherence to established international obligations aimed at protecting all persons deprived of liberty.

Speakers outlined three main areas of concern: the reported mistreatment of Ukrainian POWs; the detention of Ukrainian civilians and the uncertainty experienced by their families; and the limited access granted to international monitoring organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The discussion underscored that regular, unhindered access by neutral humanitarian actors remains essential for safeguarding detainee welfare and for building confidence among all parties.

The Permanent Representative of Ukraine shared the government’s perspective on these issues and emphasised the need for strengthened cooperation with international mechanisms. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, Mariana Katzarova, referred to findings from her mandate and encouraged continued constructive dialogue aimed at improving protection standards, ensuring humane treatment, and promoting accountability in accordance with international law.

The event also provided space for personal testimonies from individuals previously held in detention and from family members of those who remain unaccounted for. Their contributions offered insight into the human dimension of the issue and highlighted the importance of communication, transparency, and family contact during times of conflict.



In concluding remarks, participants reaffirmed the need for sustained international engagement to support compliance with humanitarian and human rights norms. They encouraged enhanced documentation efforts, continued dialogue with all relevant actors, and further cooperation with international monitoring bodies. NGOs with ECOSOC status were encouraged to remain actively involved in UN mechanisms, contribute to evidence-based reporting, and support initiatives that prioritise the wellbeing of detainees and their families.

Overall, the side event underscored the value of multilateral dialogue in addressing sensitive issues arising in situations of armed conflict. It highlighted the role of the Human Rights Council in facilitating constructive exchanges and in promoting approaches aimed at protecting human dignity, supporting affected communities, and fostering conditions for future reconciliation and peace.



1 OCTOBER 2025

Combating all forms of discrimination and racism

60th session of the Human Rights Council

written by Naida Ugan

When discrimination is building up, the world is silent. At the 60th session of the Human Rights Council, delegates, experts, and civil society organisations gathered to evaluate progress and challenges in implementing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) — the global blueprint to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. More than two decades after its adoption, in February 2002, participants warned that disinformation and neglect of the DDPA continue to undermine victims of racism and erode accountability. The fear of “the other” continues to divide societies, while awareness of the DDPA remains alarmingly low. It was meant to be a living framework for equality. However, twenty-four years later, youth participation and awareness remain minimal.

“How can young people hold governments accountable,” one civil society participant asked, “if they don’t even know the DDPA exists?” Civil society actors stressed that the DDPA remains largely inaccessible: few updated materials from the UN, limited translations, and no youth-friendly versions. They urged that the Declaration move from being a technical policy reference to a people’s movement. They called for concrete steps to revive its spirit and translate and simplify the DDPA for public education, particularly for youth audiences, integrate anti-racism education into national curricula and

professional training, support civil society participation in DDPA monitoring and policy dialogue and

ensure stable funding for DDPA implementation. Without full acknowledgement and visibility of the DDPA, speakers agreed, justice for victims of racism remains incomplete.

Several Member States delivered strong interventions reaffirming their commitment to the DDPA as the cornerstone for combating racism and related intolerance. Their statements underscored the shared responsibility of states to translate commitments into measurable progress. Delegations upholding universal human rights, denounced linguistic discrimination and called for the protection of minority and Indigenous languages as part of cultural dignity; linked the debate to Black History Month, drawing attention to the enduring impact of systemic inequality and pay disparities, stressed the urgency of reparatory justice and accountability in law enforcement and governance; called for stronger implementation of the DDPA, including national action plans, data collection, and inclusive policymaking. These interventions demonstrated that Member States remain central to transforming the

DDPA into concrete national action, guided by transparency, education, and human rights for all.



Several interventions recalled that racism is not abstract — it is embedded in historical and economic systems that continue to shape lives today. Side events on Combating Racism through the DDPA explored the historical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of discrimination. Discussions reaffirmed that gender equality, racial justice, and social inclusion are inseparable, and that empowerment begins with education, recognition, and reform. Testimonies referenced the Caribbean diaspora in post-war Britain and the lasting legacies of slavery, including Jamaica’s repayment of loans used to compensate slave owners as recently as 2015. Speakers urged that victims of racism be heard not merely as witnesses to pain, but as visionaries for justice and renewal.

The mechanisms for the implementation of the DDPA, such as the Independent Eminent Expert on the DDPA, representing the Western European Region, addressed the Council and presented twelve priority measures to dismantle systemic racism, including:

- Ending racial profiling;
- Increasing diversity across justice systems;
- Ensuring fair sentencing and adopting public health approaches to crime;
- Advancing reparatory justice and confronting historical legacies.

The Expert reminded delegates that systemic racism is a legacy of history, and that effective monitoring, reporting, and reparatory measures are essential to protect human rights today.

As the world approaches the 25th anniversary of the DDPA in 2026, participants agreed that the moment must be seized to transform commitment into action. Addressing racism requires both honest recognition of historical injustices and empowerment of communities — especially persons of African descent, migrants, and marginalized groups.

“The DDPA must evolve from a policy document into a global movement — one that advances truth, justice, accountability, and human dignity for all.”



Side - Event at the United Nations Offices at Geneva





7 OCTOBER 2025

Empowering women through education, protection, innovation, global practices and norms

Palais des Nations

written by Léa Petrequin

Bringing advocates for girls education together, an uplifting event on October 7 to celebrate the International Day of the Girl Child was hosted at the UN in Geneva by CLEF, UNWomen, NGOCSW Geneva, WFWPI, Hand in Hand, Soroptimist.

Within the CSW, one of the most important emerging areas is information technology and artificial intelligence, which are reshaping our societies and raising new issues. Education must be understood as a social pact, not something that exists only within schools. For girls, education is not only a personal goal but also a way to anticipate their future role in society, sometimes as mothers, but above all as agents of peace. Education stands at the core of a global strategy for peace.

A striking report of UNWomen, UNICEF on "Girl Goals" prompted a study with young advocates on the relevance of disaggregated goals for girls by WFWPI that was reported in Carolyn's plenary presentation. Essentially, girl goals are not only incentive for girls to know how high they can aim, but setting a high bar for governments and society to be accountable for."

We must plan with them, not just talk about safe spaces, but create places where girls can speak, discuss, participate, and meaningfully engage in shaping their future. There are important concerns about child labour, and that educating children is essential to improving the quality of their lives.

Today, 12 million girls are married every year before the age of 18. In this reality, education becomes liberation—a transformative power for the future. Ensuring access to education is not an option; it is a collective obligation.

By empowering girls, we move closer to building a more peaceful and sustainable world. And at the foundation of all of this lies one principle: protection—protecting their rights, their voices, and their dreams.





16 OCTOBER 2025

No Peace Without Women

Organized by the Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) and the Universal Peace Federation (UPF)

Room VII, Palais des Nations, Geneva

written by Mara Probst and Mariia Anapreichyk

The conference “No Peace without Women: No More War - Can We?”, was co-organized by the Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) and the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) as two distinguished panels of UN officials, government representatives, journalists, and civil society leaders highlighting the indispensable role of women and faith-based actors in peacebuilding and the prevention of war. Other partners were UN Women, NGO Committee on the Status of Women Geneva, World Council of Churches, Global 100 Women, International Association of First Ladies for Peace, Soroptimist International, International Association of Youth and Students for Peace, LDS Charities, and the Geneva Interfaith Intercultural Alliance.

Session I – No Peace without Women

Ms. Carolyn Handschin, Director of the Office for United Nations Relations Geneva at WFWPI, opened the session by explaining how recent regional conflicts led to the formation of a network of women leaders under the “No Peace without Women” banner, uniting for global solidarity and shared responsibility to end war. WFWPI, the IAFLP, and UN and government partners launched conferences across Europe and the Balkans, inspiring similar initiatives elsewhere. This conference marks the second time the movement returns to the United Nations in Geneva. Ms. Handschin stressed that everyone has a unique contribution to make, highlighting the need to “create a vision and standard for peace that starts within the family,” and drawing attention to the vital, often undervalued, role of mothers. She emphasised that “No peace without women” is not exclusive of men, but a call to prioritise and empower girls and women to understand and be supported in their responsibility for community building, reconciliation and restoring global order.

Ms. Kate Forbes, representing the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), highlighted the humanitarian dimension of peace. She reminded participants that climate change and armed conflict are increasingly interlinked and that women and children bear the heaviest burdens. “Peace is about dignity,” she said, “about ensuring that families can build their lives without fear.” Forbes also noted that the majority of Red Cross volunteers worldwide are women, embodying the principle that peace “is not a document, but an act of service - people standing side by side.”



Ms. Asya Varbanova, Head of the Humanitarian Section at UN Women, presented alarming data on the persistent exclusion of women from peace processes. In 2023, women made up only 9.6% of negotiators, 13.7% of mediators, and 26.6% of signatories to peace agreements. Only a quarter of peace accords even mentioned gender, and none included women's groups as signatories. She noted a doubling in the number of women killed in conflicts and a 50% rise in cases of conflict-related sexual violence. "We have the evidence, we have the frameworks, but what we lack is political will," she stated, calling for increased funding for women's local peace organizations and full implementation of UNSCR 1325.

Ms. Giulia Clara Kessous, UNESCO Artist for Peace, offered a profound reflection on the art of negotiation. "Women negotiate differently," she said, "not to win, but to ensure shared survival." She called for a paradigm shift toward "a diplomacy of collaboration," proposing a 40% quota for women in formal peace processes. Citing economic data, she observed that the cost of war now exceeds 19 trillion USD annually, or 13% of global GDP, making peace "not only a moral imperative but an economic necessity." Her call to "choose life over victory" resonated deeply with the audience.

From a journalistic perspective, Ms. Olivia Le Poidevin of Reuters offered firsthand testimony from conflict zones, including Ukraine, Gaza, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. She recounted her experience reporting from hospitals in Lebanon after the Hamas attack of 7 October 2023, quoting doctors who told her, "The longer the war goes on, the more women we will have to treat." Ms. Le Poidevin highlighted that women often bear invisible burdens as widows, heads of households, and survivors of sexual violence. Yet, she emphasized, and she witnessed that "even in the darkest moments, women do not give up - they continue to heal, rebuild, and lead."

Ms. Patricia Elias, Intergovernmental Advocacy Director at G100 Women, closed the first session by reminding participants that gender equality is not peripheral to peace - it is its foundation. Referring to ongoing women-led peace initiatives in Libya, she called for women's equal participation in decision-making at all levels, urging the international community to "act for peace now" and ensure that "we do not fail women again." We are calling for a network, joining hands globally around this call for No Peace without Women.

Global Call to Action for Partnership for No Peace without Women/ No More War:

All speakers rose to voice agreement

Session Closing with Ms. Anna TORRES, Ms. Guila KESSOUS: Singing in their public debut, "Mothers of the Earth", Grammy 2026 submission



Session II – No More War: Can We?

The second session, moderated by Mr. Heiner Handschin, President of UPF Switzerland, explored faith-based and educational approaches to peace. In his opening remarks he emphasized the untapped potential of a faith-based approach in peace processes. There is a need for a greater inclusion of the wisdom and efforts of the world's religions, combining them with political, economic, and social perspectives.

On the outset of the conference, a message of endorsement of the event of H.E. Ambassador Mxolisi NKOSI of South Africa, was read. He stated that “South Africa’s own journey from oppression to freedom, has taught us that peace is never the mere absence of war, but the presence of justice, dignity, and inclusion. Women were at the heart of our liberation struggle, and they remain central to our ongoing efforts to build a democratic, equitable, and peaceful society. South Africa stands firmly with all those governments, faith communities, and civil society organizations who work tirelessly to promote peace and reconciliation. We commend the Universal Peace Federation and its partners for providing a platform where diverse voices can come together in the service of humanity.”

Ms. Frédérique Seidel of the World Council of Churches (WCC) reflected on the importance of healing as a prerequisite for sustainable peace. She drew from the Council’s global work with children and communities, emphasizing that “if you want lasting peace, you must help children heal the ruins of their souls.” Citing Poland’s post–World War II recovery and Rwanda’s reconciliation process, she stressed the transformative power of education and interfaith collaboration in preventing violence and fostering resilience.

Ms. Paulette Lacroix, representative of the International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC), presented the new publication “A School for Peace - Towards a Global Educational Fraternity.” She explained that education is “a lever for reconciliation and equality,” rooted in Pope Francis’ vision of the Global Educational Pact. “Peace is built in classrooms,” she said. “Teaching is already sowing the seeds of hope.” Lacroix called for global efforts to train teachers as peacemakers and to ensure girls’ access to education, inclusion, and safety.

From a youth perspective, Ms. Ejona Icka, Director of IAYSP office for UN relations, youth leader and peace activist. She reported on the recent peacebuilding work of youth bringing political leaders together in divided Mitrovica. She urged governments and donors to dare to invest in young people. “If you don’t know what to do with your money, invest in youth,” she said, stressing the potential of intergenerational collaboration to transform conflict into cooperation- enjoyably.



Mr. Stefano Bosco director of public and international affairs of the LDS community drew on studies linking faith, purpose, and psychological well-being, emphasizing that the foundation of peace lies in finding meaning through faith. Through a faith-based approach, starting in the nurturing environment of the family, peace can be learnt, practiced and taught. Simple traditions learned and upheld in families can be a foundation and future security of peaceful and cohesive communities.

Mr. Jacques Marion, Chairman of UPF Europe and the Middle East, wrapped up the conference by emphasising the spiritual side of peace. He noted that, although the United Nations was established without a religious chamber, it is time to introduce an Interreligious Council alongside political bodies. “Religion has too often divided humanity,” he said, “but if it can divide, it can also reconcile.” He encouraged faith communities to uphold human dignity and peace as sacred duties, echoing the conference’s central message: there can be no peace without women and dialogue. He criticised recent government crackdowns on faith-based organisations and the imprisonment of faith leaders, citing cases from Japan, and the eradication efforts of an entire faith community and unjust imprisonment of faith leaders in South Korea.



Key Conclusions:

- Women’s participation in peace processes remains alarmingly low, yet their inclusion leads to more durable and inclusive outcomes.
- Peace begins at the local and family levels and depends on dignity, education, and inclusion.
- Education and interfaith collaboration are indispensable tools for long-term peacebuilding.
- The international community must act urgently to resource women’s local organizations and ensure gender equality in all peace and security processes.
- As reiterated by several speakers, peacebuilding must become the norm, not the exception.



12th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development



26 OCTOBER 2025

12th session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development (EMRTD)

Palais des Nations

written by Naida Ugan

The Twelfth Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development (EMRTD) convened in Geneva marks the 40th anniversary of the 1986 United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development. The session brought together Member States, United Nations agencies, civil society organisations, academic experts, and regional representatives to reaffirm the fundamental principle that development is not a privilege but a human right.

During the session, participants reviewed the evolution of the Right to Development framework, recalling key milestones, including the Rio Declaration of 1992 and the Vienna Declaration of 1994. Attention was also drawn to the four essential mechanisms of the Expert Mandate, namely the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development, the establishment of a Panel on the Right to Development, the advancement of a legally binding international instrument, and the strengthening of the Expert Mechanism as a tool for cooperation and implementation.

Delegates emphasised that the Right to Development is a fundamental, inalienable human right and called for renewed multilateral commitment to its full realisation. Forty years after the adoption of the Declaration, participants observed that progress remains uneven. Persistent global inequalities, debt dependency, climate change, and technological divides continue to undermine the full implementation of this right.

In addition, the session highlighted the importance of reconciling collective and individual rights within the development framework. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Inter-American human rights system were cited as effective models recognising both dimensions. Delegates stressed that international and regional jurisprudence provides sufficient guidance for balancing these rights while preventing potential abuses.

One of the key themes discussed were climate finance and environmental justice, identified as critical challenges to sustainable development. Discussions centred on carbon monetisation and forest finance mechanisms as tools to enhance local resilience, if safeguards, transparency, and community participation are guaranteed. Article 6 of the Paris Agreement was highlighted as a key instrument for mobilising climate finance for development. Case studies from Indonesia and Peru illustrated how locally driven environmental governance fosters trust and sustainable outcomes. It was emphasised that climate finance should complement, rather than replace, the Right to Development.



Subsequently, the impact of emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, was also addressed. Experts warned that the digital divide could exacerbate existing inequalities if not adequately addressed. Delegates stressed the principles of justice, equity, and sustainability, advocating for equitable access to technologies and the protection of digital diversity to preserve the plurality of knowledge and thought. Full participation in the digital age was identified as an essential component of development.

Moreover, several delegations highlighted that the current international financial system constrains developing countries rather than supporting their progress. As a result, calls were made for reforms in multilateral financial institutions, suppression of illicit financial flows, and taxation of transnational corporations. Transforming the global financial architecture to ensure fair trade, transparent debt relief, and equitable access to resources, including critical minerals, was deemed necessary to support sustainable development and reduce global dependency.

The link between climate-induced migration and development was also underscored, with projections indicating that up to 1.2 billion people could be affected by 2050. Participants called for policies grounded in the rule of law and human rights to ensure safe, dignified, and lawful migration. Concerns were expressed regarding restrictive migration policies in the Global North, which risk undermining international obligations and the protection of human mobility.

Furthermore, women, youth, and indigenous peoples were recognised as central to the realisation of the Right to Development. Gender equality and youth empowerment were emphasised as cross-cutting priorities, particularly in the context of climate adaptation and digital inclusion. In this regard, the Women's Federation for World Peace International reaffirmed its commitment to advancing human dignity, equality, justice, and shared prosperity for current and future generations, underscoring the importance of inclusive and sustainable development.

The Chair of the EMRTD reiterated that the Right to Development is rooted in human dignity, equality, and peace, and is not solely a matter of economic growth. Delegates called for a turning point beyond the legacies of colonisation and Cold War dependencies, urging enhanced cooperation between the Global North and South. Quoting Amartya Sen, renowned Indian economist and philosopher, participants emphasised that development entails freedom not only from poverty and hunger but also the freedom to choose where to live, work, and share one's future.

The session concluded with a consensus that the Right to Development is a universal, inalienable, and fundamental human right. Delegates underscored that climate justice, digital inclusion, and debt reform must be integrated into development policies, while civil society participation is essential at all levels of decision-making. Multilateralism and solidarity were reaffirmed as central to achieving sustainable and equitable global progress. Participants agreed to continue showcasing progress by 2026, ensuring that no individual or nation is left behind.



27 OCTOBER 2025

WFWPI Pledge for 40 years of the Right to Development

Palais des Nations, Geneva

Thank you, Chair, and all the members of the expert mechanism on the Right to Development, distinguished delegates.

Women's Federation for World Peace International pledges to align our global Sustainable Development Goals programs with the Right to Development agenda, recognising the family as the cornerstone of society and essential to sustainable and inclusive progress.

We commit to integrating the Right to Development framework into our Human Rights Leadership and Advocacy Training Programs, which we have been running since 2005, empowering youths and promoting family-centred approaches for 20 years.

Through this commitment, WFWPI reaffirms its dedication to advancing human dignity, equality, justice, and shared prosperity for all generations.

Thank you



delivered by Naida Ugan



17th session of the Social Forum



Advocacy Training Participants



30 OCTOBER 2025

Opening Remarks of the Social Forum

Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations

written by Léa Petrequin

Women's Federation for World Peace International had the honor to assist to the opening remarks at the beginning of the Social Forum of 2025.

First of all, Ms PIPAN Anita, co-chair, explained that the foundation of human dignity is education. Education could play a key role in eradicating poverty and inequality. In addition to being a human right in and of itself, it also makes all other human rights possible. Education gives you power. It equips people with the knowledge and skills necessary to fully and actively engage in society, challenge injustice, and create more equitable and welcoming communities. All learners' needs and rights must be met via education that is available, accessible, acceptable, and flexible. Education must occur in settings that are inclusive, safe, and devoid of violence and discrimination. It is the major responsibility of the states to ensure that education is inclusive, accessible, and of high quality for everyone.

The co-chair highlighted that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development places a strong emphasis on education, particularly objective number 4, which calls for universal access to inclusive and equitable education and lifelong learning. Children are asking for their human rights. Unfortunately, she mentioned that an estimated 272 million children and teens did not attend school between 2023 and 2024. In addition, more than 100 million girls worldwide remain out of school while 240 million children with disabilities face barriers to access and participation. The rapid digitalization of learning left millions further behind.

Secondly, Ms FUENTES JULIO Claudia, the Vice-President of the Human Rights Council, made clear that to being a fundamental component of human dignity, the realisation of the right to education promotes inclusive societies, sustainable development, and peace. Education strengthens essential rights like the right to economic, social, and cultural independence, the right to a healthy environment, and the right to free speech, empowering both individuals and communities. So that, education is a fundamental entitlement that also serves as an enabler. At addition to putting lives at peril, attacks on education also jeopardise peace and sustainable development.

Therefore, it is essential to address education and gaps through collective action in order to achieve SDG 4 as well as to promote equality and advancement throughout the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, there has never been a clearer connection between education and peace, particularly in light of the escalating international war. Regrettably, in nations impacted by violence, over 52 million children were denied access to school.



Finally, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. TÜRK Volker, explained that investing in education has many long-term benefits. It has changed the globe by bringing skills and knowledge to our factories, fields, hospitals, and schools. Other liberties and rights are also advanced by education. People are lifted out of poverty by it. It gives children the ability to hold leaders responsible, identify discrimination, and participate in civic life. It fosters innovation and creative thinking. The best investment we can make in our economy is in education. It has contributed to a 40% decrease in extreme poverty during the last 45 years. So, Education is the best investment in security and it builds social cohesion and prevents conflict.

Sadly, Mr TÜRK said that bullying and discrimination against minorities are pervasive in schools. Those who view education as nothing more than a line item to be cut also weaken it. This occurs at a time when less than half of primary schools worldwide have access to computers or the Internet, one in ten adults and young people lack basic literacy skills, and a quarter of a billion children are still not in school.

The High Commissioner for Human Rights finished his statement by saying that « Education for all is not only a matter of rights and justice, it's about heeding the voice of reason ».





30 OCTOBER 2025

Keynote Panel of the Social Forum

Assembly Hall, Palais des Nations

written by Léa Petrequin

Women's Federation for World Peace International had the honor to assist to the keynote panel of the Social Forum of 2025.

First of all, Ms. SHAHEED Farida, special Rapporteur on the Right to Education affirmed that the right to education is a transformational and empowering one. Unfortunately, there is a lot of burden on our educational systems. Schools are attacked, shuttered, or used as shelters during emergencies.

Participation in socioeconomic life is made possible by education. However, education must be more than a means of producing employable skills. It fosters a feeling of both the individual and the social self and conveys values and idealised futures. In this sense, a person's right to education is their right to reach their maximum potential. People are prepared to engage in public life through education. Education can have a profoundly transformative effect on girls and young women. An effective investment in equality is to support girls' education. Moreover, education passes on identity, belonging, and memory to future generations ; it is a multigenerational process.

The special rapporteur explained that intergenerational justice must be paved the way through education. It assists in transforming rights from abstract concepts into actualised behaviours. Education must be viewed as a universal public and common good, not a commodity, a privilege, or a right for everyone, if we hope to create societies that are equitable, peaceful, and sustainable. Education is life itself, not just a means of preparing for it. Humanity is figuring out how to coexist both now and in the future.

Secondly, Ms. MASSOT Ana Luiza, director of UNESCO Geneva Liaison Office, highlighted that « education lies at the heart of all human rights ». It is more than just a right. However, data shows that we are still a long way from reaching SDG 4, which calls for universal access to high-quality education and opportunities for lifelong learning. Unfortunately, 272 million children and youth are still not enrolled in school, according to UNESCO's data. Also, 70% of children in low- and middle-income nations are unable to read a simple text by the age of ten, and attacks on educational facilities have increased by 44% between 2023 and 2024. Ms. MASSOT mentioned that « we are missing 44 million teachers so as to achieve SDG 4. These are not mere statistics. They are a call for action ».

Without education, no other right can be realized. Investing in education is investing in peace, sustainability and humanitarian agenda rights. Education is where all human rights meet. It is the fundatation of equality, dignity and freedom stand.



Thirdly, Mr. IBHAWOH Bonny, United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development, explained that human dignity, democratic involvement, and sustainable development in all its forms—economic, social, cultural, and political—are all dependent on education. The best way to convert rights into lived realities is through education. The right to development is merely a theoretical concept in the absence of widespread and fair education. Since education is essential to exercising all other rights, it is frequently referred to as a multiplier right. It offers those without a voice a voice.

It gives people the ability to actively and significantly engage in their communities and societies. Education guarantees that minorities, indigenous peoples, women, girls, and people with disabilities are not excluded from the advancement process. One of the most effective means of promoting justice is education. For economic justice, it is essential. It gives them the information and abilities they need to enter the workforce and escape the cycle of poverty. Mr. IBHAWOH mentioned three guiding commitments, which could refocus efforts : « education must be universal, financed justly with national and international resources and be transformative ».

Finally, Ms. MELINARD Whitney, President of Kopounoule Inc., affirmed that children and young people today are standing amid flooded towns, feeling anxious and frightened. For these young people, this is a humanitarian and human rights crisis rather than just an environmental one. Climate justice is human rights.

Every right has a duty, and freedom is only genuine when it does not rob others—including the next generation—of their freedom. These are lessons that education must impart. Ms. MELINARD proposes four key transformations : decolonize education, make education relational, ensure that education is actionable and make education accountable to justice. At the end, she said that : « education that centers equity must center young, not as victims to be pitted, not as symbols to be celebrated, but as leaders, as knowledge holders, and as decision makers ».



30 OCTOBER 2025

Enhancing the Right to Education: emerging challenges and enabling factors

Side Event - Social Forum, Room VII

written by Léa Petrequin

The aim of this side-event was to evaluate the lessons learnt and encourage a multi- stakeholder, inclusive discussion on the changing right to education in response to enduring and new issues. Especially, the first was to increase knowledge of how global changes and systemic injustices influence the realisation of the right to education. The second was to encourage cooperation and communication between experts, Member States, academia, the commercial sector, civil society, and other important players about the future of the right to education. Finally, it was necessary to present professional perspectives on important issues and future-focused tactics to protect and promote education as a basic human right.

In fact, cultural life — a right whose content is cultural: learning knowledge with its facets — and participation in cultural life — one must access and participate in education — are made possible by educational life.

One of the panellists underlined that crises have been more frequent and that conditions have gotten worse in recent years. The discussion took place because of the geographic and political divides between those who are impacted and those who make political decisions. When it comes to the right to education, learning, and teaching, distances between locations affect the gap between students and teachers. When these individuals are not present, we are discussing the rights of teachers and children in contentious situations. These physical separations between the institutions that carry responsibility and the people who have rights must be considered. Funding and procedures should be available for education. We must enhance leadership and bolster the presence of institutions in the most impacted communities.

Moreover, it was stated that everyone has responsibility for the development of an educational framework, which is why the right to education is more than just a mechanism. Unfortunately, the present difficulties are rooted in a vast vacuum of impartiality over education: a dearth of discussion on the subjects being taught. In addition, because history is being used to divide and wage conflict, we have reverted to the 1930s now. We are still waiting for the triggering effect of education since it is consistently violated. There is a regressive logic and we are unsure of how to escape it.



Additionally, according to the International Labour Organization, this issue is directly related to the mandate: lifelong learning is at the centre of the bridge that connects the right to decent employment with the right to education. Lifelong learning is by no means a universal right in reality, though. Basic education is free in practically every nation, but there are still significant gaps in access to higher education. Compared to persons from higher-income families, those from lower-income households are more likely to engage in education and training; yet, the more people contribute to society, the more education ought to be freely available to them.

Finally, it has been mentioned that the right to lifelong learning must be regarded as part of the right to education. Neglecting this idea has a clear human cost: too frequently, lifelong learning is only a catchphrase rather than a reality. Sincere investment is necessary for real advancement, especially in innovative projects that have the potential to have a long-lasting and fair influence. Above all, rights, not privilege, must be the foundation for educational access.



30 OCTOBER 2025

Exploring the Potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to Foster Inclusive Education in Africa

Side Event - Social Forum at Palais des Nations

written by Naida Ugan

The 17th Human Rights Council Social Forum focused on the contribution of education to the fulfilment of human rights for all. This side event, organized by the University of the Free State, South Africa, explored the dual realities of exclusion and innovation within Africa's education systems - emphasising the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in advancing inclusive education. In the digital era, AI offers new opportunities to transform education systems. However, its use in Africa remains minimal, with less than 1% of global AI development contributing to the continent. This gap highlights urgent issues of equity, access, and inclusivity.

On one hand, the discussion examined how educational exclusion in Africa often arises through cultural barriers, inadequate physical infrastructure, limited financial resources, and insufficient human capacity. Africa currently faces the highest rate of educational exclusion globally, with over 100 million children out of school. The issue extends beyond access to encompass quality and relevance. Despite being the world's youngest continent — with 70% of its population under 30 years old — less than 70% of technology design incorporates inclusive principles.

On the other hand, presenters explored how AI can be harnessed to promote equitable and inclusive education for all learners in Africa. Inclusive education was emphasized as a comprehensive concept, ensuring that all learners, regardless of socioeconomic status, ability, disability, language, or geography, can participate and thrive within the education system. Frankish and Ramsey (2014) define AI as a “cross-disciplinary approach to understanding, modelling, and replicating intelligence and cognitive processes by invoking computational, mathematical, logical, mechanical, and biological principles.” AI's potential lies in its ability to accelerate decision-making, personalize learning experiences, and expand access to educational resources. Nevertheless, it must be viewed as a tool for transformation, not a magic bullet. Current realities and critical risks were highlighted, including infrastructural gaps, financial limitations, and the shortage of trained educators. Without effective regulation, AI could widen inequalities and diminish educational quality. Teachers must therefore be trained and empowered to use AI effectively, but not be replaced by it. The African Union Convention on Cybersecurity and Data Protection (2014) was noted as a vital legal framework supporting ethical AI governance across the continent.

Ultimately, this event underscored that AI and inclusive education must intersect to ensure equitable learning opportunities for all in Africa. No one must be left behind — especially an entire continent.



31 OCTOBER 2025

The Transformative Power of Human Rights Education and the Rights to Development and Reparation in Achieving Gender Equality and Reducing Poverty

Side Event - Social Forum at Palais des Nations

Organized by Soroptimist International & Global Survivors Fund in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of The Gambia, UN Women and WFWPI

written by Mara Probst

The side event explored the vital role of Human Rights Education, the Right to Development, and the Right to Reparation in achieving gender equality and breaking cycles of poverty. Panellists emphasized the intersectional vulnerabilities faced by women and girls, particularly survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and reiterated the need for inclusive, gender-responsive approaches in education, development, and justice.

Key Discussion Points

Education as a Tool for Transformation and Reparation

Juana María Ibáñez Rivas, UN Independent Expert on the Right to Development, underscored education as both a fundamental human right and a gateway to realizing other rights. She emphasized the importance of women's *active, free, and meaningful participation* in development processes. Due to structural inequalities, women are often unable to access educational opportunities essential for their empowerment, economic independence, and full inclusion.

Echoing this, Esther Dingemans, Executive Director of the Global Survivors Fund, stressed that for children and young survivors of sexual violence, *“education is often the first form of reparation.”* Returning to school not only enables skill development but also builds resilience – resilience that is ultimately channelled into strengthening communities. However, to avoid retraumatization, she noted that education must be trauma-informed and accompanied by broader psychosocial, financial, and healthcare support.

Removing Barriers to Development and Equality

Adriana Quiñones, Chief of Human Rights and Non-Discrimination at UN Women Geneva, noted that women continue to face legal and structural discrimination that impede their participation in peacebuilding and development. While many global resolutions and mechanisms exist—including the Women, Peace and Security Agenda put in place with the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325—implementation and funding remain insufficient.



Quiñones highlighted that inclusion is not consultation alone: women and girls must shape programs from the outset. The contributions of civil society organizations and survivors themselves were emphasized as essential for identifying effective mechanisms and avoiding further victimization.

Systemic Gaps and Practical Recommendations

Across the panel, three recurrent gaps were recognized:

1. Insufficient infrastructure and accessibility: particularly in remote areas and for women and girls with disabilities.
2. Lack of representation and historical accuracy: Indigenous women and their histories are often absent from curricula.
3. Underfunding: long-term education and reparation programs lack sustained financial support.

The panelists called for stronger partnerships between governments, civil society, and international organizations to address these obstacles. Education must be safe, accessible, and built on principles of equality and non-discrimination.

Takeaways and Recommendations

- Education must serve as both prevention and reparation, empowering women and survivors while breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty and discrimination.
- Gender-responsive educational policies should include comprehensive sexuality education, consent awareness, and peace education.
- Collective and survivor-centred approaches are needed to ensure that reparation efforts are meaningful and transformative.
- Men and boys must be involved in education on equality to foster cultural change and prevent further violence.
- As Ms. Dingemans reminded us: *“We can’t heal what we don’t teach.”*

In closing, this session reinforced the urgency of centering women and girls in development and restoration processes. The shared message was clear: rights-based education, equitable development, and reparation are mutually reinforcing pathways towards gender equality, peace, and sustainable progress. All stakeholders - including states, UN entities, NGOs, and survivors themselves - must collaborate to make these principles a lived reality.





30 OCTOBER 2025

Statement - Empowering learners to act: Education as a driver for climate and environmental justice

Venue: Social Forum, Assembly Hall, Key Panel Discussion

written By Mariia Anapreichyk

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

As a representative of the Women's Federation for World Peace International, I would like to draw attention to the urgent impact of the climate crisis on children's education. According to recent UNICEF data, the climate crisis has already disrupted the education of more than two hundred and fifty million children worldwide. Each year, over one billion children are affected by climate-related disasters : floods, heatwaves, wildfires, and storms that destroy classrooms and learning environments. In three out of four such events, schools are forced to close. The consequences extend far beyond learning loss: children lose safety, stability, and access to vital social support systems. Just last week, a magnitude six earthquake struck western Türkiye, damaging schools and homes. In central Viet Nam, devastating floods submerged entire communities, leaving families displaced and classrooms destroyed. These are not isolated events — they are clear signs of a world where education itself is on the frontline of the climate crisis. Research shows that early exposure to extreme heat and environmental stress leads to an average loss of one and a half years of formal education. In low-income regions, this gap is even greater. We must act. Integrating disaster preparedness and climate education into school curricula through drills, teacher training, and cooperation with local emergency services can save lives and ensure learning continues.

A joint UNESCO–UNFCCC survey found that while ninety-five percent of teachers recognize the importance of climate and environmental education, less than forty percent feel adequately trained to teach it in their local context. Awareness is not enough. Teachers and students need practical, localized materials on how to act during floods, fires, or other emergencies developed in partnership with local authorities and adapted to regional risks.

Every student should know how to protect themselves, assist others, and communicate with local authorities before professional responders arrive.

Yet, the scale of current disasters demands coordination that goes beyond national borders. We therefore propose the creation of a cooperative mechanism to share training materials, methodologies, and rapid-response expertise.

This body could support resource-constrained countries, ensure continuity of education after disasters, and strengthen human security at the global level.

Education is one of the most powerful tools for prevention. It builds knowledge, discipline, and solidarity. If every school becomes a center for preparedness, the next generation will be ready not only to survive the challenges of the climate crisis but to shape a safer, more sustainable future for all.

Thank you.

<https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1j/k1jb4kxurp>





30 OCTOBER 2025

Statement - “Education as a Driving Force to Leave No One Behind”

Venue: Social Forum, Assembly Hall, Panel “Education for civil rights – Freedom, safety and accountability”

written By Naida Ugan

Distinguished delegates, panelists, and fellow advocates,

As a representative of the Women’s Federation for World Peace International, I am honored to stand before you to reaffirm that education is not only a fundamental human right, but the cornerstone for realizing all other human rights.

This Social Forum’s focus on education’s role in respecting, promoting, and fulfilling human rights is both urgent and essential. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action 2001 remind us that education is a powerful tool to dismantle racism, discrimination, and systemic exclusion. But to be truly transformative, it must be inclusive and intersectional, addressing the multiple identities and challenges of those who remain marginalized.

We must equip youth—especially from underrepresented communities—with legal literacy, knowledge of their rights, and the confidence to lead inclusive societies. Sustainable Development Goal 4 aims are central to human rights—education must challenge entrenched norms and ensure equal voice and opportunity for all.

In our digital age, we must also bridge the digital divide and combat misinformation, ensuring education empowers learners with critical thinking and civic responsibility.

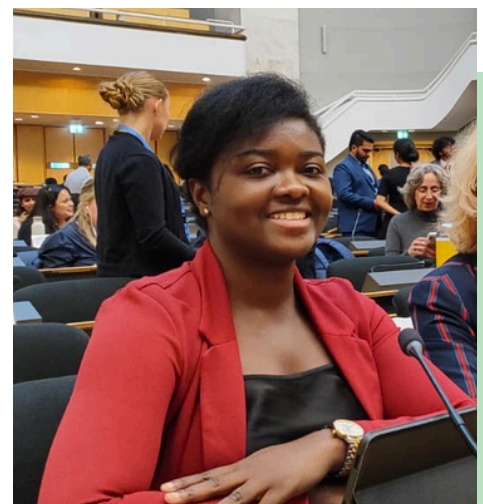
To move from commitment to action, allow me to propose three key resolutions :

- First, we must strengthen inclusive and equitable education systems. Member States should design policies and financing mechanisms that prioritize marginalized learners and decentralize resources so every school can meet its students’ needs. Inclusive institutions must reflect diversity and equity in leadership, curriculum, and teacher training.

- Second, we must enforce anti-discrimination and gender-responsive frameworks. Governments are urged to adopt and implement legislation protecting against bias in education. Human rights and gender-sensitive education must be integrated across all levels of schooling, while temporary special measures—such as quotas—can help ensure fair representation and opportunity.

- Third, we must empower civil society and youth as agents of accountability. Civil society organizations and youth-led movements should be supported to monitor policies, advocate for reform, and contribute to national education strategies. Their participation ensures that systems remain transparent, responsive, and just. Education is not merely a right to claim—it is a shared responsibility to uphold. By working together—States, UN bodies, civil society, and communities—we can create education systems that are inclusive, equitable, and transformative.

Let us commit to leaving no one behind in education, and in doing so, build societies where human rights truly flourish for all. To create more inclusive and just societies, it is thus crucial to leave no one behind (LNOB) in education.



Thank you. <https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k18/k180qt8b0v>



31 OCTOBER 2025

Statement - Critical Media Literacy and Civic Education in the Digital Age

Venue: Social Forum, Assembly Hall, Panel “Education for political rights – participation, citizenship and voice”

written by Mara Probst

Distinguished delegates, excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

As a representative of the Women's Federation for World Peace International, I am honoured to be here today to reaffirm that education is a fundamental human right which empowers individuals to understand their rights, raise their voices, and participate meaningfully in shaping their societies.

Today, education carries a responsibility far beyond the transmission of knowledge. It must cultivate empathy, respect, and critical thinking to help citizens navigate a complex reality shaped by misinformation and polarization. In a world where over 70% of young people obtain political information from social media and other digital platforms, the danger of misinformation is omnipresent. In line with UN General Assembly Resolution 78/213 on human rights in the digital age and the UN Global Principles for Information Integrity launched in 2024, critical media literacy has become essential — enabling individuals to distinguish truth from manipulation and to make informed, responsible decisions in public life.

For women and girls, education has an even deeper dimension. Earlier this year, the Women's Federation for World Peace International hosted the event “No Peace Without Women,” which emphasized that peace is more sustainable when women are actively involved in negotiations and peace processes. Around the world, women are too often excluded from political spaces or silenced in public debate. Yet, when given the opportunity, they bring perspectives rooted in cooperation, compassion, and long-term vision. Ensuring equal access to civic and political education empowers women to become active agents of change grounded in dialogue and human dignity.

We have seen that when young women and men are equipped with civic knowledge, media literacy, and moral leadership, they become powerful agents of peace and democracy. Civic and political education, together with media literacy, empower individuals to participate meaningfully in democratic life - to question information, make informed choices, and use their voices responsibly.

Thank you.





31 OCTOBER 2025

Statement - The Right to Education : a cornerstone for the realization of all Human Rights

Venue: Social Forum, Assembly Hall, Closing Session – Roundtable on Recommendations : The Future of Education for Human Rights

written by Léa Petrequin

Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a representative of the Women's Federation for World Peace International, we want to reaffirm that education is not just a simple human rights, but the foundation for achieving every other human rights, as the General Comment No. 13 of the Committee on Economic, Social and cultural Rights has highlighted.

In application to the principle of indivisibility and interdependence of human rights affirming in the Universal Declaration of Human rights and during the Conference in Vienna in 1993, the access to education ensures that no one is left behind.

Through education, people find their voice, they defend their rights and the rights of others. Because without knowledge, rights remain only words on paper. It is through learning that they come to life.

Education drives innovation, creates opportunities, reduces inequality, and promotes tolerance and understanding. It lays the foundation for peace and inclusive growth. By investing in education, societies invest in their own freedom, dignity, and future. They invest in the promise of a fairer, more equitable world, where opportunity is a right shared by all.

This is the reason why, it is necessary for the entire international community — States, UN bodies and civil societies — to take actions in order to prevent, affirm and reinforce the right to education.

Thank you.





31 OCTOBER 2025

Statement - The Right to Education as a foundation for achieving all Human Rights

Venue: Social Forum, Assembly Hall, Closing Session – Roundtable on Recommendations : The Future of Education for Human Rights

written by Joseph Samuel Dunford

Distinguished Delegates,

We at the Women's Federation for World Peace, reaffirm that education is not just about a single human right, but the foundation for realising every other right and freedom, a sentiment which was clearly illustrated by every single panel discussion at this social forum. This indivisibility and interdependence of human rights is duly established in the Universal Declaration of Human rights.

Access to education is integral to ensuring that no one is left behind. Therefore, as we live in a period of more global conflicts than at any time since the Cold War, we must remember that girls in conflict zones are 90% less likely to be in secondary education than in regions without conflict.

Our message today, is that through knowledge and understanding, human rights doctrine is brought to life. Education equips individuals to transmit their grievances, defend their freedoms, and advocate for the rights of others.

This week, at the 12th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development, we presented an example of education's potential for empowerment through the Leadership and Advocacy Training programme — which has been running for over twenty years, proudly fulfilling on the Global Sustainable Development Goals. With coaching on UN procedures, statement writing, and strategic networking, this initiative empowers the next generation to be visible and credible contributors to global human rights policy.

Education drives innovation. It empowers young people to create opportunity. It reduces inequality and fosters tolerance and understanding.

Therefore, by investing in education, societies invest in peace. States, UN bodies and civil societies should take action to prevent, affirm and reinforce the right to education, including for children in conflict.

Thank you very much.





31 OCTOBER 2025

Statement - Human Rights Education for, with, and by youth

Venue: Social Forum, Assembly Hall, Panel “Human Rights Education for, with, and by youth - taking action to advance promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights for all”

written by Joseph Samuel Dunford

On behalf of the Women's Federation for World Peace, I would like to highlight the mutual benefits of integrating human rights education into peace training programmes during times of conflict.

We are living through the most violent period of human history since the end of the cold war, which disproportionately affects young people, and particularly, young women. The Peace Research Institute Oslo reported that more conflicts occurred last year than in any year since 1989.

As supported by a 2020 paper produced by the OHCHR, peace education can help young people to become key actors in addressing the hostilities and mistrust between communities that leads to conflict. By incorporating human rights education, young people can spread human rights norms of inclusion throughout societies, including female empowerment, and facilitate young women's role in the peacebuilding process.

An example of such a project is presented by the Young Women for Peace and Leadership program in the Democratic Republic of Congo, whereby young women became agents of social change within society while boosting women's participation in peacebuilding. Hence, the peacebuilding stage is a crucial moment for the intervention of human rights education, as according to UN Women, the probability of a peace agreement lasting over 15 years is increased by 35% when women participate in the process.

Human rights education can teach young people to value the crucial role of diverse voices in politics, and provides the space and educational tools for young women to participate in peacebuilding. This is essential for enshrining gender equality in new political institutions that rise after the conflict.

Therefore, instituting human rights education initiatives should not wait for times of peace and political stability, as the window of opportunity is open during the conflict.

Thank you for your time.

