

Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations (ACOUN): Report to ACC17

Introduction

1. The Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations (ACOUN) represents and raises up the voices, experiences and expertise of the Anglican Communion on the global stage, specifically in the context of engagement with the secretariat, agencies and member states of the United Nations.
2. Since the last report to the Anglican Consultative Council in 2016, there has been a significant overhaul of how this work is structured. As set out in the May 2018 and September 2018 reports to ACC Standing Committee, the Anglican Communion's representation at the United Nations is now led by one ACO Director, Jack Palmer-White, who is the Permanent Representative to the United Nations. The Permanent Representative has oversight for all UN engagement, a departure from the previous structure whereby activity in Geneva and New York was undertaken by separate teams. The Permanent Representative is supported by a UN Advocacy and Head of Office, Jillian Abballe, based in New York, and two part-time Administration and Research Assistants, based in London and New York.
3. The work of ACOUN is now focused around a Strategic Plan that was endorsed by Standing Committee in May and September 2018. The vision articulated in the Strategic Plan is for the UN to partner more effectively and enthusiastically with local churches around the Anglican Communion, so that they are acknowledged as vital, credible, durable, sustainable, equitable and locally committed partners. The core component of this strategy is a 'Provincial Engagement Plan', which puts provinces of the Anglican Communion at the heart of ACOUN's work, recognising the importance of connecting global activity with the local, grassroots ministry of provinces, dioceses and agencies of the Anglican Communion.

ACOUN and Intentional Discipleship

4. At ACC16, the Season of Intentional Discipleship was "launched against a backdrop of huge global challenges such as unprecedented levels of migration; the constant threat of conflict among nations and peoples; religious, ethnic and tribal violence, gender-based violence; economic deprivation and poverty; the challenges of climate change; declining church attendance in parts of the world and rising liberal secularism."
5. Wider participation in the work and relationships that ACOUN facilitates between parts of the Anglican Communion and the United Nations is one way to articulate the commitment of Anglicans and Episcopalians to intentional discipleship. It is a tangible way to demonstrate to the world that "Christians living 'Jesus Shaped Lives' have a positive impact on their communities, homes and workplaces". The work that ACOUN convenes and supports is also one articulation of the common Anglican/Episcopalian commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic and integral mission. This work is not a 'bolt on' activity for the Anglican Consultative Council, but embodies the core understanding of what it means to be an Anglican and is able to share this in a generous and sensitive way with the states, agencies and civil society actors that form the United Nations ecosystem.

The Anglican Communion - United Nations relationship today

6. In the last three years, the relationship between the Anglican Communion and the United Nations has been operating in a tension between a growing willingness in many parts of the UN to partner more actively with faith actors, and a wider context of shrinking space for civil society (including faith actors) to participate meaningfully in global decision-making. One particularly positive expression of the Anglican Communion's growing reputation in the UN context is ACOUN's membership (in partnership with the Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury) of the newly-created UN Faith Advisory Council for the United Nations Interagency Taskforce on Religion and Development. As members of the Council, Anglican perspectives and priorities are being included in the UN-faith actor agenda in a way not previously available.
7. Although the structure, staffing and strategy of ACOUN have undergone significant change since ACC16, there has been continuity in working on the policy areas identified as priorities by the ACC:

Migration, Refugees and Displacement Birth Registration and Statelessness Women's Rights	Global Health The Environment Indigenous Rights
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8. The Standing Committee receives regular updates on activities in each of these areas of work. Some particularly important developments that should be brought to ACC's attention are highlighted below:
 - ACOUN is bringing Anglican expertise to the implementation of the newly-agreed Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration – for example through grassroots Anglican participation (Refuge Egypt – Diocese of Egypt) in the annual UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) dialogue, which in 2018 focused on refugees in urban settings.
 - ACOUN advocacy has contributed to a widening acknowledgement by UN agencies of the role that churches play in the goal to achieve universal birth registration by 2030 (SDG Goal 16.9), recognised in official UN documentation. ACOUN has also supported advocacy efforts in the Bahamas to understand and change nationality laws that discriminate on the grounds on gender.
 - There has been a continued Anglican presence at the UN Commission on the Status of Women. In 2019, a delegation of 8 women was selected based on their expertise on the session's theme, with planning focused on supporting delegates to identify key opportunities to advocate on behalf of their provinces, before, during and after the meeting.
 - ACOUN was part of the steering committee for a workshop in February 2019, which developed an ambitious roadmap for 'Strengthening collaboration among faith-based organizations, multi-lateral organizations, governments, and civil society in addressing HIV risk, provision of services, and advocacy'. Refuge Egypt – Diocese of Egypt were sponsored to participate in the workshop and make a presentation on their work supporting refugees and migrants living with HIV.
 - The Anglican Consultative Council successfully applied for accreditation with the UN Environmental Assembly in November 2018. A delegation of 5 Anglicans will represent the ACC at the 4th UN Environmental Assembly in March 2019.
 - Progress has been made on applying for accreditation with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will enable Anglican voices to be better represented in global

efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Plans are being developed for ACC participation in the 2020 meeting of the UNFCCC.

- 2019 has been designated the International Year of Indigenous Language. ACOUN is working in partnership with the Anglican Indigenous Network and the ACO Communications Department to develop materials to affirm and support indigenous communities within the Anglican Communion in the celebration and preservation of indigenous languages.
9. In addition to these core areas of work, ACOUN's activity has widened into three additional areas, reflecting both new opportunities to work collaboratively with the United Nations and a changing global landscape in which the Anglican Communion can share important – perhaps unique – insights and experiences:
[Human Rights Accountability](#)
[Sustainable Development Goals](#)
[Peace and Security](#)
 10. Following on from recommendations made by ACO staff to ACC16, ACOUN staff have developed and promoted web-based material encouraging participation by more Provinces in the UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review process. This work has also been integrated into the ACOUN Provincial Engagement Plan, with relevant provinces approached regarding possible submissions. Other human rights mechanisms are also being more actively utilised, for example the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which received written and oral statements from the Anglican Consultative Council during a meeting on human trafficking of women and girls.
 11. Support for the Sustainable Development Goals – also known as Agenda 2030 or the Global Goals – has been articulated and demonstrated in many other parts of the Anglican Communion – for example the Anglican Alliance – and individual Goals were referenced in ACC16 resolutions. As set out in the recommendations of this report, ACC should consider how the Anglican Communion can develop its overarching strategic commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, recognising the unique role the Communion can play in the Goals' "universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity."
 12. The appointment of the Archbishop of Canterbury to the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation in September 2017 has created significant opportunity to influence and engage with the United Nations' work in the maintenance of international peace and security. The Archbishop's briefing at the UN Security Council on mediation and the settlement of disputes further emphasised the role that faith actors, and specifically Anglican leaders, can play in mediation and reconciliation efforts in their communities and at the national level. The growing role being played by Anglicans in the mediation of conflicts and reconciliation efforts can be supported through the strengthening of relationships with UN officials in national contexts and within secretariat operations. ACOUN can play an important signposting and supporting role to strengthen these links.

Progress and challenges since ACC16

13. The ACC16 resolution on UN Representation acknowledged the importance of representation, recognised the wide variety of UN programmes and agencies that had been engaged, and encouraged provinces of the Anglican Communion to support the work. Additionally, the ACC16 report from the Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva made a number of suggestions for how this work could be enhanced, particularly in terms of supporting provinces to become more engaged.

14. The ACOUN strategy approved by Standing Committee in May 2018 was developed to work within the mandate provided in Resolution 16.05. The report to Standing Committee (SC/2018-2/12) set out three changes needed to make the design and implementation of a Provincial Engagement Plan possible for ACOUN. These changes were:
 - Releasing the Permanent Representative to spend more time directly engaging with regions, provinces, dioceses and agencies of the Anglican Communion
 - Recruitment of the right additional staff support in Geneva and New York
 - Rebalancing how resources are used across different policy areas
15. Since May 2018, all three of these changes have been made successfully. Recruitment of a highly qualified UN Advocacy Officer/Head of New York Office and high calibre Administration and Research Assistants in both London and New York, alongside the rebalancing of resources to better support activity on issues beyond the UN Commission on the Status of Women has allowed the Permanent Representative to focus more on working directly with different parts of the Anglican Communion. The development of Provincial Engagement Plans for interested provinces is now a much more viable and sustainable possibility, which will serve to strengthen ACOUN's ability to represent the ACC in the most effective ways possible in the future.
16. Specifically addressing the suggested actions set out in the ACC16 reports on UN Representation, progress has also been made:
 - The appointment of Special Representatives for particular issues has been drawn into the remit of the Provincial Engagement Plans. As ACOUN works with particular provinces, it is hoped that Communion representatives on different issues will be identified and supported.
 - Regional seminars for bishops and other leaders continue to be an aspiration for ACOUN's work. ACOUN invites provinces, Primates and Provincial Secretaries to consider whether they would be interested in hosting or participating in seminars that could support capacity building of church leaders on how to engage effectively with UN partners. Early plans for a capacity building workshop on the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration in 2020 are being developed in partnership with the Lutheran World Federation.
 - The Provincial Engagement Plan and the ACOUN budget for 2019 (and future years) are focused on enabling wider participation for representatives from around the Communion at UN meetings. The ACOUN web pages now include an ['Expression of Interest'](#) form that anyone interested in participating in UN meetings can complete, and [a full calendar of UN events](#) at which ACOUN can support participation.
 - Web-based materials to support participation in the UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review have been published online and ACOUN staff are reaching out to provinces to encourage engagement. Similar materials and tool-kits will also be developed for other UN human rights mechanisms, such as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Conclusion and Recommendations

17. It is important to acknowledge the ACOUN staff members who have supported this work over the past three years. Canon Flora Winfield built a very strong foundation of relationships and goodwill in Geneva that has supported ACOUN's ongoing work very effectively. In New York, Rachel Chardon and Canon Jeff Gollither have given years of dedicated service to the life and work of ACOUN and the Anglican Communion more widely. Chris Curry, Rachel Jimenez and Ashley Lopez Olijnyk have provided vital administrative support in London and New York. The role and legacy of Beth Adamson, who died tragically in 2018, must also be acknowledged. Beth's passion for the rights of women and girls and her commitment to supporting the Anglican delegation to UNCSW each year has had a profoundly positive impact on the life of the Communion and her loss has been felt deeply among all who knew her.
18. The coming years hold many exciting opportunities for Anglican representation at the United Nations. In order to support the development of the ACC's representation at the United Nations, the ACOUN would invite ACC to:
 - Affirm current policy priority areas for ACOUN's work, or make suggestions for alternative engagement opportunities on new policy areas
 - Support the planning of regional seminars in provinces of the Anglican Communion
 - Commend the ACOUN Expression of Interest form to their provinces as a way to widen participation in UN meetings
 - Provide guidance on the most effective ways to communicate with provinces of the Anglican Communion on issues relating to UN engagement
 - Mandate the development of an ACC strategy on the Sustainable Development Goals, to guide Communion-wide engagement on the Goals from 2020 to the 2030 target date

Jack Palmer-White
Permanent Representative to the United Nations