

# Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations Newsletter



*Bringing the United Nations to the Anglican Communion*



*Image courtesy of enb.iisd.org*

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## The 2019 High-Level Political Forum

The [High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) (HLPF) takes place every July. It is an opportunity to evaluate every country's progress towards achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) through the submission and presentation of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), as well as the overall global progress to reach the Goals by the 2030 target date. This year, the SDGs being evaluated were [Goal 4- quality education](#), [Goal 8- decent work and economic growth](#), [Goal 10- reduced inequalities](#), [Goal 13- climate action](#), [Goal 16- peace, justice and strong institutions](#), and [Goal 17- partnerships for the Goals](#). The Forum is also a space for dialogue and sharing of best practices between government officials, civil society, and UN agencies on projects and policies to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs.

Among the countries that presented VNRs in 2019 were South Africa, Fiji, Vanuatu, and New Zealand. Although most countries recognize that progress to reach all the SDGs by 2030 isn't on-track, all agreed that Agenda 2030 has led their country down a better route towards sustainable development. You can find full coverage of the VNRs [here](#).

For the 2019 HLPF, the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations (ACOUN) submitted a strong [statement](#) focusing on progress towards [SDG 13](#) and particularly on climate-induced forced displacement. This is a critically important issue for many parts of the Anglican Communion, such as Pacific and Caribbean island states that face the brunt of damage from natural disasters, which often results in displaced communities, the impact of rising sea levels and overfishing. The statement emphasized the work of churches, agencies, and networks of the Anglican Communion in addressing these challenges and building local resilience, as well as calling on Member States to implement key international agreements to protect displaced communities better.

## Faith actors and the UN partner to achieve the SDGs



*Panel discussion during the Kofi Annan Briefings*

Platforms for faith actors to share about their perspectives, programs, and partnerships with the UN have increased in recent years. The [Kofi Annan Briefings](#), organized annually by the [UN Interagency Task Force on Engaging Faith-Based Actors for Sustainable Development](#) are now a key part of the UN calendar, providing an opportunity for a full day of panels and conversations between UN entities and faith actors, leading to new and deeper partnerships and projects between those assembled.

This year, Jillian Abballe, head of the ACOUN office in New York and UN Advocacy Officer, spoke on a panel titled: "Intergenerational Gender Dialogue: Realizing equity now, leaving no one behind" alongside other faith-based representatives and chaired by Ms. Lopa Banerjee, Director of the Civil Society Division of UN Women, and Dr. Naser Haghamed, CEO of Islamic Relief Worldwide. Jillian emphasized the need to develop new and creative ways to accelerate action and plug the gaps on the road to ending gender inequality. She also emphasized the

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importance of engaging young people in this work, and the work of the Task Force—not just through increased numbers, but also through meaningful.

Archbishop and Primate of Central America, the Most Revd. Julio Murray also participated and spoke on a panel titled: “Shared Values Between the World’s Major Religions and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.” He focused on how faith communities can champion children’s rights and end violence against children around the world.

The ACOUN also convened a breakfast roundtable for ecumenical partners to share their perspectives on HLPF and make commitments to work together on climate advocacy in order to encourage stronger collaboration between Christian organisations at the UN.



*Lynnaia Main, Representative to the UN for the Episcopal Church, The Most Reverend Julio Murray Thompson, Jillian Abballe, ACOUN Advocacy Officer and Head of NY Office*

## Small Island States fight for Immediate Climate Action

Sustainable Development Goal 13, which calls for urgent climate action, was one of the goals under review at this year’s High Level Political Forum. Climate change is an existential threat to peace and security, human rights, economic prosperity and cultural and ecological preservation, especially in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The HLPF was a timely opportunity to highlight this issue, which is of particular concern to the Anglican Communion, as so many parts of the Communion have been suffering the devastating effects of climate change for many years.

The United Nations has been mindful of the devastating trend that climate change and natural disasters have set for those countries with particular vulnerabilities, and agreed the [Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\) Accelerated Modalities of Action \(SAMOA\)](#) Pathway in 2014. This resulted in more than 300 multi-stakeholder partnerships in support of SIDS, including pledging technical and financial support and investment.

At this year’s HLPF, member states reviewed the SAMOA Pathway, with the main outcome being that SIDS receiving support need to prioritize channeling investments from the international community into building human capacity and funding local grassroots initiatives.

Representatives from SIDS shared that achieving sustainable development and climate resilience is a long and costly process that cannot be accomplished in the short-term. Many SIDS use the majority of their GDP to rebuild after natural disasters, and usually only in time for another disaster to come along. Without capacity building support, the endless cycle of climate destruction will be unbreakable.

SIDS also collectively called for urgent action and commitments from larger, more developed countries who are responsible for the majority of greenhouse gas emissions that affect the climate. A knowledge-sharing platform for all countries working to build climate resilience was suggested as a means to improve South-to-South collaboration, efficiently address and implement solutions, and exchange best practices and successful climate initiatives. This should not ignore, however, the vital participation of larger, wealthier states in the.

## ACOUN Advocacy: Sharing the messages of the Anglican Communion

During HLPF, the ACOUN's messaging and influencing strategy was focused on highlighting climate-induced displacement as an urgent issue the response of churches across the Communion to this issue, and promoting the recent resolutions of the Anglican Consultative Council on the climate emergency and climate resilience. Working particularly to highlight Anglican voices from SIDS, ACOUN recognized the limited capacity and resources in these countries to participate actively in key UN spaces, often having small Missions in New York and particular challenges in facilitating civil society representation.



*Jack Palmer-White, Permanent Representative to the UN for the Anglican Communion, Permanent Representative to the UN for the Bahamas, Sheila Carey, Jillian Abballe*

Invitations to meet to discuss the ACOUN's written statement and wider priorities were sent to the Missions of the Solomon Islands, the Philippines, Fiji, the Bahamas, India, Japan, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, with meetings taking place with senior representatives from the United Kingdom and the Bahamas.: In both meetings, the governments were encouraged to prioritize climate resilience and not overlook the millions of people who are being forced out of their homes due to natural and climate-related disasters. As co-facilitator

of the HLPF Political Declaration, the Bahamas expressed their ongoing commitment to the Forum's goals as well as sharing specific concerns as a small island state, hoping that larger countries will continue to take their unique needs into perspective when crafting policy on climate action.

## Looking Ahead to the United Nations General Assembly

From 17-30 September 2019, the United Nations will host the [74<sup>th</sup> annual General Assembly](#) in New York City (UNGA74). The General Assembly is a forum that serves as a place where world leaders convene to discuss the most important issues of our time and make critical decisions for collective action.

During the key week of the Assembly, [five high-level summits](#) will take place, where decisions and commitments will be made on climate action, universal health coverage, the Sustainable Development Goals, financing for development and Small Island Developing States. Heads of State and Government have been urged by the UN Secretary-General to come to these meetings with concrete actions to accelerate progress in each of these areas.

The ACOUN will be demonstrating the Anglican Consultative Council's commitment to a number of these issues in clear ways. The office has produced a briefing paper for the organizers of the Climate Action Summit, setting out how the Anglican Communion is already an important partner in the goals of the Summit ([see our website for more details](#)). In 2020, following the request from the Anglican Consultative Council, an Anglican Communion engagement strategy on the SDGs will be published, to encourage the Communion to engage more intentionally with the Goals.

The Office will also, build on the advocacy work undertaken earlier in 2019 in relation to the particular needs and vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States. This includes highlighting the importance of engaging faith communities as credible partners who are already speaking prophetically, mobilizing local communities, and actively working to respond to human need, transform unjust structures, and safeguard the integrity of creation.

We will be sharing the proceedings of UNGA74 via Twitter so make sure to follow us [@AnglicanUN](#).

## UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Annual NGO Consultation in Geneva

In July 2019, the ACOUN team participated in the annual [UNHCR consultation](#) held in Geneva, Switzerland. This annual gathering of non-governmental organisations, under the theme of ‘Working Better Together’, featured two days of panel discussions and high-level conversations on refugees, migration, disaster preparedness and climate change in the context of global migration, data and measuring progress, statelessness, and stronger partnerships. The Communion’s Representative to the UN, Jack Palmer-White, used the opportunity to highlight the key role churches play in birth registration, which is an important protection against statelessness.

The final day of the Consultation focused on briefing on the upcoming Global Refugee Forum, taking place in December 2019. The Forum is the first opportunity for UN Member States and other stakeholders to announce concrete pledges and contributions towards the objectives of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). You can learn more about the Global Compact on our website. During the Consultation, ACOUN staff met with other faith-based partners to plan faith participation at the Forum.

Since July, there have been very positive developments and the ACOUN team are facilitating the engagement of a number of Anglican provinces in making joint pledges, centered around themes such as education, assisting in resettlement, and using their local influence to promote peaceful and inclusive communities. For more information, please contact [jack.palmer-white@anglicancommunion.org](mailto:jack.palmer-white@anglicancommunion.org).

“What can be done to build capacity for local grassroots institutions such as churches and other faith actors to support efforts to gather more and better data, so that it can be used usefully by states and UN agencies, and do the panellists have experience of working with faith actors in this way?”



*Image courtesy of [anglicancommunion.org](http://anglicancommunion.org)*

If you wish to be more involved with ACOUN please go to: [bit.ly/acoun](https://bit.ly/acoun)