



Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary

NGO with special consultative status in the **Economic and Social Council** of the United Nations since **2013** and with the **Department of Public Information** since **2006**.

News from the UN # 110

RSHM at the UN

May 2020

The year **2020** marks the **75th anniversary** of the founding of the **United Nations**. Since the opening of the General Assembly last September, the Secretary General has been very clear. This would not be an anniversary that would be marked by big celebrations. Instead, he called for the UN to use it as an opportunity to be in dialogue with people about **"The World we want and the UN we need"**. The anniversary year was to be a year of dialogue when we would come together to discuss our priorities as a human family, and how we can build a better future for all. At the end of March the Secretary General said *"Everything we do during and after this crisis must be with a strong focus on building more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change and the many other global challenges we face."*

Covid-19 is a stark reminder of the need for cooperation across borders, sectors and generations. In this issue of **News from the UN** we highlight some of the virtual events that have engaged us during the month of May.

COVID 19 and the UN Response.

On May 7th, the UN Secretary General launched the **Updated Global Humanitarian COVID 19 Response Plan**, calling on world leaders to *"step up for the world's ultra-vulnerable people in a spirit of solidarity, compassion and foresight"* *"Humanitarian aid is not just a moral imperative, it is a practical necessity to combat the virus"* he noted.



The appeal has been extended from 2 billion to 6.7 billion dollars and nine more vulnerable countries have been added to the list with others still on a watchlist. In a webinar the following



"A COVID-19 vaccine must be considered a global public good. Not a vaccine for one country or one region - but a vaccine that is affordable, safe, effective, easily-administered, and universally available - for everyone, everywhere."

UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres at the launch of the global collaboration to accelerate the development, production and equitable access to new COVID-19 tools.

day, heads of UN Agencies reported on specific needs and programmes to address them.

- The **World Food Programme (WFP)** is already reaching out with food supplies to more than 100 million people affected by severe food insecurity and a broken global supply chain.
- Through the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, testing kits and protective clothing have been shipped to 125 countries.
- A total of 1.5 billion is addressed to needs of refugees and migrants trapped in transit countries, where basic conditions in refugee camps and impromptu shelters do not allow for social distancing and simple handwashing hygiene, and NGOs together with **UNHCR** are struggling to respond. ➡ [Watch the video](#)

UN75 PEOPLE'S FORUM

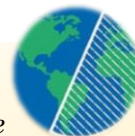
From **14 – 15 May, UN2020** and **Together First** virtually co-hosted the UN75 People's Forum. We were among the more than 600 people including UN officials, civil society experts and other stakeholders who participated virtually, from 75 countries around the world spanning many time zones. The theme of the two day event was **"The Future we want, the UN we need"**. Participants discussed how to strengthen a people-centered multilateralism needed to address global risks and revitalize the UN during its 75th anniversary year. It was noted that the world's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to transform global governance to reflect a new reality, just as the UN emerged from the ashes of World War II. A **"People's Declaration"** with a Plan for Global Action was presented to the President of the General Assembly. The declaration offers a civil society perspective on how to promote UN values, norms and principles embodied in the UN Charter through Global Citizenship Education; how to promote partnerships for peace, sustainable development, human rights and climate action. It offers concrete proposals aimed at revitalizing the UN. ➡ [Watch the short video....](#) ➡ [Read the declaration](#)



COVID 19 and Inequality



In ways not even imagined, **COVID 19** has made clear both our global vulnerability and our global interdependence. It has also revealed and exacerbated the ugly face of inequality within our societies. Everyone is affected but not all are affected equally. As a recent speaker noted. *"We are all in the same storm but not all in the same boat"*. During the month of May we were able to participate in several online meetings and webinars which highlighted these inequalities and the urgent need to address them.



Frontline workers are often “invisible, undervalued, underpaid” and yet they are keeping us alive! As many have stressed, this is an opportunity to dismantle patriarchal practice, address racism and develop systemic alternatives which put life at the center of an economy which values interdependence.

➡ [Watch the video](#)

Did you know that

- In 2018, the **26 richest people** in the world held as much wealth as half of the global population (the **3.8 billion poorest people**), down from 43 people the year before.
- women and girls put in **12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work each and every day**. This amounts to a contribution to the global economy of at least **\$10.8 trillion a year**, more than three times the size of the global tech industry.
- **persons with disabilities** are up to **five times more likely** than average to incur catastrophic health expenditures
- For the **12th consecutive year** global freedom declined in 2018, with **71 countries** suffering net declines in political and civil liberties.
- If the **richest 1%** of the world paid only **0.5% extra tax on their wealth** over the next 10 years the investment needed to create **117 million jobs** in sectors such as childcare,

Laudato Si week.

May 24th marked the **fifth anniversary** of the publication of **Pope Francis’ encyclical, Laudato Si**. The week was celebrated around the world and marked by a number of online prayer events; inter-faith discussions, webinars and online retreats. More than 1,000 people participated in the opening webinar of the series of online workshops led by global climate justice leaders including the Vatican’s **Cardinal Peter Turkson**, **Greenpeace Asia’s Yeb Sano** and the **Paris climate agreement architect Christiana Figueras** (formerly UNFCCC head). Speaking of the urgency of its core message, she noted “Climate change is the **mother of all injustices**. Never has it been put as beautifully and compellingly as in *Laudato Si*”.

“Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan” Laudato Si, # 164



“We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels – especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas – needs to be progressively replaced without delay”. Laudato Si 165

➡ [Read more about it....](#)

➡ [Watch the video](#)

A Just transition : An indigenous experience



As the world struggles to cope with COVID 19, attention is being drawn to the close link between how we treat mother earth, the fragile balance of our ecosystem, and human health. **COVID 19** has also highlighted that violence against the earth and violence against women are closely interrelated.

Indigenous communities face high rates of infection and fatality linked to the presence of “men camps”. Included in recent webinars presented virtually by NGOs, was the testimony of several indigenous women leaders associated with “**Women’s Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN) International**”. They shared some existing pathways to strengthen and replicate as we re-envision the post-COVID future and move to a just recovery and a just energy transition. **Melina Looubican Massimo** shared the community-based solar energy project she initiated in her indigenous territory near the “**tar sands**” of Northern Canada, an area which has been despoiled by oil extraction and the consequences of oil spills. ➡ [Watch the video](#)

A continent at the Crossroads



The **Pan African Climate Justice Alliance** is an alliance of more than **1000 civil society groups from 48 countries** in the African

continent. They work together to concretize a shared vision, a people-centered, rights-based, just and inclusive approach to addressing climate change and the environmental challenges facing humanity and the planet. With the postponement of the UN Climate meetings they are trying to strengthen online advocacy. In a recent webinar they shared expertise and experience relating to the “**double jeopardy**” of COVID-19 and worsening impacts of the climate crisis. Both are existential threats. The pandemic serves as a wake-up call to address the underlying factors that make Africa the continent most vulnerable to climate change. Lessons learnt show the importance of ‘**early warning systems**’, not only for extreme weather events but also for global health pandemics. **Strengthening resilience** is key to climate mitigation and adaptation, as it is also at the heart of addressing the social and economic impact of COVID 19.

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