



UNGA CONFERENCE 2019

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DECLARATION

UNGA CONFERENCE 2019 Transforming Our World: Inclusive Social Development for All

Date/Time

25 September 2019, Wednesday
9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Venue

4W43 Conference Hall
4 West 43 Street New York, NY 10036

Organizer

Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF)
In Collaboration with 36 NGOs from 24 Countries

Prepared by

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Preamble

Inspired and guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and recalling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to development, the Journalists and Writers Foundation (JWF) in collaboration with 36 NGOs from 24 different countries organized an international conference to run alongside the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA, 2019). The UNGA Conference 2019 theme was: **Transforming Our World: Inclusive Social Development for All**. The JWF invited practitioners from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America, North America and all leaders associated with promoting humanity to make the world a more inclusive community.

The objectives of UNGA Conference 2019 were (1) to create a platform to debate on UN Global Agenda 2030 to Transform Our World; (2) to develop strategies and policy recommendations for Inclusive Social Development to ensure equal access to basic services for all; (3) share innovative ideas and practices for youth empowerment through inclusive and meaningful participation in achieving sustainable development, (4) ensure human rights and rule of law for social and economic development for all, and (5) propose a framework for an action plan to follow-up on the outcomes of the conference and building partnerships.

The UNGA Conference 2019 made reference to what the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) formally adopted four years ago as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sustainable Development Goal #16 is to “*promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.*” The successful implementation of SDG Goal #16 is at the core of the activity of the Journalists and Writers Foundation since being founded in 1994 as well as its global partners that fully support SDG Goal #16.

The organizers and partners adopted these objectives for the UNGA Conference 2019:

- Promote social justice, human rights protection, and strengthen rule of law and democratic values that ensure social justice, equality and sustainable peace.
- Share common practices for policy development as well as opportunities and challenges for policy change within different judicial systems.

Transforming our World

Understanding transformation is very important. The JWF fraternity believes that “Significant problems of today cannot be solved with the same level of thinking which created them.” As stated by Albert Einstein (as cited by Pierli and Selvam, 2017). In addition, Sullivan Roland adds that “those that can change themselves and can lead change and transformation will be rewarded beyond imagination” (as cited by Pierli and Selvam, 2017).



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Akman (2008) argues that ‘social transformation’ is an ambiguous term and concept. Therefore, right at the outset, there is a need to discuss the terminology. Pierli and Selvam (2017) see social transformation as not simply identified with development (Castles, 2001). While social transformation and development cannot be considered univocal, social transformation is considered broader than ‘development’, particularly in cases where development term is meant to refer only to economic growth. Therefore, social transformation is a set of processes in which individuals and groups of people bring about large-scale social change with an aim of enhancing quality of life. Pierli and Selvam (2017) conclude that in this sense, transforming our world and bringing about an inclusive society, we need to go beyond development (Castles, 2001). The expected outcome of social transformation is quality of life (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993), which is understood as the wellbeing of individuals and groups in a given society.

Indicators of quality of life include not only economic growth but also systems such as education, healthcare, political structure, environmental care and leisure activities that safeguard the “capabilities” (Nussbaum, 2003) for the functioning of all members of a given society or a nation in order to enjoy wellbeing. In psychological terms, wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2008) is construed and measured in terms of subjective wellbeing that includes life satisfaction (Diener, 1984), psychological wellbeing (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), and social wellbeing (Larson, 1993). Lastly, any social problem cannot be approached from a singular point of reference e.g. education or health but looking what education should do and has not been able to do that. Perhaps, the main challenge to offering transformative education is the political structures, economic, social, deprived technology, environment, culture and the types of theologies society embraces but blind to new ongoing transformation within the structures.

Therefore, built around these few definitions on transformation, the JWF and its global partners presented and discussed the UNGA Conference 2019 theme of Transforming Our World: Inclusive Social Development for All under three panels as follows.

PANEL 1: Inclusive Social Development in achieving the Global Goals 2030

The Panel 1 aimed to convene the role of inclusive social development policies and practices that help the United Nations achieve the Global Goals 2030. The panelists and participants discussed major issues concerning social inclusion and inequalities that play significant role in sustainable development and peace globally.

The panelists focused on current challenges and potential opportunities around key aspects of social integration policies and access to basic public services. The panel session on inclusive social development helped to lay the ground for the following debates.



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On social integration policies that promote access to basic public services. The role of the culture of peace in social cohesion and inclusiveness was an important conclusion. To achieve this, the place of civil society participation to facilitate social development is of great importance. The discussion emphasized why bringing the rule of law and democracy into the equation could help reduce inequalities and implement social development policies.

According to the *World Summit for Social Development*, inclusive society means “a society for all” that recognizes the rights and responsibilities of individuals and societies with active participation in social, economic, and political affairs at all levels. Governments have to develop a mechanism to ensure the promotion and protection of inclusive societies through striving towards the rule of law and access to justice, trust between public and private institutions, and social integration, communication, and sense of belonging among the members of the society. The principles of diversity, the culture of peace, mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect are important ingredients in building peaceful, inclusive, and resilient communities. The United Nations underlines the significance of active participation in decision-making, equal opportunity for education and employment, and access to public services for all citizens as part of the UN Agenda 2030. The promotion of these rights and responsibilities increases social and economic development whereas denial of these rights leads to conflicts and violence.

Globalization has also posed new challenges and opportunities for nations to cope with widened inequalities among nations. Negative effects of globalization impact vulnerable groups and societies in accessing basic resources, social services, and opportunities. It is imperative for decision makers and educational institutions to prepare the youth with the 21st century knowledge, competency skills, and abilities to address the needs of the global markets.

Conclusion:

The panelists concurred that we should stop preaching but share thoughts on good service delivery with humility. Therefore, a core element in transforming the world is being starting from the self before reaching out. If ONE is not transformed to get rid of prejudices, how can I transform the world? Two, an inclusive economy, media freedom and human rights are important to Transforming Our World: Inclusive Social Development for All. It calls for respect for peoples’ rights to movement and migration, respect for refugees and respecting their culture and human rights. The promotion of diversity, reduction of barriers and acceptance of all people where they are helps to bring about Transformed World and Inclusive Social Development for All. Civil societies have the arduous task of eliminating all obstacles that hinder the direction towards transforming Our World for inclusive Social Development for All. Civic education and sound communication within the receptive respective communities where refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons seek solace. Brazil, Mexico, Uganda, Kenya, Eritrea, the Sahel-Maghreb and Mediterranean regions stood out.



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PANEL 2: Advancing Youth through Social and Economic Empowerment

The Panel 2 session focused on current policies and practices in advancing youth through social and economic empowerment and how multi-stakeholders can work in collaboration to support youth-led initiatives and organizations.

As a fundamental right acknowledged by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the youth plays a crucial role in achieving the sustainable development through active and inclusive participation. Youth empowerment means helping young people to attain the 21st century knowledge, develop competency skills, become global citizens responsible for the people and the planet through communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. It is the responsibility of the state and non-state actors to create opportunities to youth to attain necessary information, skills, and tools to become independent, responsible, and productive citizens.

Specific issues addressed under this sub-topic included: youth empowerment, youth participation, volunteerism, education, and girls and young women. It was pointed out that key priorities and challenges in access to quality education should be addressed. The youth should be prepared to develop, improve life and garner entrepreneurial skills to face the rapidly evolving labor market.

Another key challenge was about helping the youth move from consultation to collaboration. The youth tend to be excluded from processes that should transform their lives. The call was to create a meaningful and sustained youth participation in the decision-making mechanisms. It was clear that the youth, as stakeholders, should play a major role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. It means advocacy, awareness-raising, and capacity building should be taken up by civil society organizations.

The panelists agreed that the Youth represents one third (1/3) of the world population and one cannot talk about social and economic development without meaningful participation of the youth who are most affected by the outcomes of the Global Agenda 2030. The Youth has always been considered as a major human resource for sustainable development by the United Nations. Young people are agents of social change, economic growth, and social development. Consequently, youth participation in the decision-making and implementation processes is critical for sustainable development. The *UN General Assembly resolution 58/133* also reiterates the “importance of the full and effective participation of youth and youth organizations at the local, national, regional and international levels in promoting and implementing the World Programme of Action and in evaluating the progress achieved and the obstacles encountered in its implementation”.



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For the Youth to potentially contribute to the UN Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, we should aim for the SDG Goal #4, which aims to “*ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.*” Inclusive and accessible quality education plays a crucial role in empowering youth who will transform our world with innovative and creative ideas in the 21st century.

All stakeholders, especially the public and private sector, should recognize the significance of quality education in youth empowerment. However, the panelists recognized a gap between the policies and the practices when it comes to the implementation of sustainable development goals. Public funds and investment in the education of youth are not sufficient for successful outcomes. Recalling Jayathma Wickramanayake, UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth repeatedly underlined the importance of meaningful youth participation across the UN Development Agenda.

The 2019 ECOSOC Youth Forum addressed the challenges, potentials, and need of the youth populations around three major themes ‘Empowerment, Inclusion, and Equality’ for meaningful youth participation. The most pressing challenges faced by the youth globally are identified as unemployment, poverty, and illiteracy. The UNGA Conference 2019 aimed at following up on the same agenda to address the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal #4 on Quality Education, Goal #8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth, and Goal #10 on Reduced Inequalities, and Goal #16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

PANEL 3: Protection of Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights

The Panel 3 session deliberated on the commitment to protection of human rights and access of social services to leave no one behind. The speakers offered multiple perspectives and practices on how human rights could reduce inequalities, eliminate the causes of poverty, and prevent internal and global conflicts. This session highlighted how realization of economic, social and cultural rights plays an integral role in sustainable peace and conflict prevention.

Specific issues, which came out of the panel discussion, were about the promotion of cultural rights in building peaceful societies. Creating a human rights-based approach to the UN Development Agenda. Being aware of the violation of human rights leading to social unrest, there were countries identified where violation of human rights is rampant. It meant *Country-based Analysis* mechanism on abuse and violation of human rights should feature in upcoming policies for Transforming Our World: Inclusive Social Development for All. Early warning mechanisms of human rights to prevent conflicts should be picked early enough and support reduction of inequalities in access of social services, challenge lack of democratic space of an active civil society and lack of media freedom.



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To this end, the UNGA Conference 2019 participants join the international community in ensuring that Transforming Our World: Inclusive Social Development for All is a concerted effort by all global citizens, people who strive for the highest call to universal values reflected in different UN Charters. The participants who attended the UNGA Conference 2019 have arrived at the following resolutions.

Key Highlights and Declarations

Based on these discussions from the guest speakers, panelists, conference participants representing all continents and JWF and its global partners, these are key resolutions.

- 1. Observing Human Rights.** According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), fundamental human rights, human dignity, equal rights should be part of policy development.
 - The fundamental human rights, human dignity, equal rights should be part of policy development promoted and protected by all UN Member States as the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.
 - Respect to human rights, human dignity, and equal rights of women and men promote social development and prosperous life for all regardless of diverse backgrounds.
 - *We, as the participants of the UNGA Conference 2019, declare that by all people, stakeholders, all the UN affiliated states, should live and uphold the above UDHR principles and slowly but steadfastly move towards Transforming Our World for Inclusive Social Development for All.*
- 2. Ensure Equality and reduce inequality.** It is a mutual responsibility for individuals and societies to ensure equality (parity).
 - Reduce inequality (disparity) in the enjoyment of fundamental rights.
 - Freedoms, and opportunities for education, employment, healthcare, and other resources for all for sustainable peace and development, should give purpose for Transforming Our World for Inclusive Social Development for All.
 - *We, as the participants of the UNGA Conference 2019, call for the international community to ensure equality and work towards transforming all conditions that promote inequality. In doing this, the international community will Transform Our World for an Inclusive Social Development for All.*
- 3. Improved Public Policies for protection of individual wellbeing.** Public policies have to protect equality, equity and social justice by ensuring rule of law and access to justice, improving access to public services.
 - Providing equal opportunities for employment, establishing cooperatives and private institutions, ensuring easy access to healthcare.



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- Enhancing access to quality education for boys and girls equally, especially in every country and communities that host migrants/refugees and those unjustly imprisoned.
 - *We, the participants of the UNGA Conference 2019, declare that all people should work towards improved public policies that work towards the protection of individual wellbeing. In doing this, we shall be moving towards Transforming Our World for Inclusive Social Development for All.*
- 4. **Rule of law affects the World.** We are aware that Migration is tough. Transforming local communities to embrace migrants is difficult. It calls for changing the way people think and helping them to think outside the box.
 - The international community called to put hands together and make a change. Many strategies could be developed e.g. using sports.
 - Sports captivate people. In sports, we develop people. Sports bring people together.
 - *We, as the participants of the UNGA Conference 2019, declare that rule of law is the entry to transforming our world. Minorities and migrants need protection and support to find a new life in a new country.*
- 5. **Mentorship and Nurturing Social Transformers.** Drop the phone and pick a friend is what the youth are calling for. Young people need to find mentors. However, older people too need to find young mentors.
 - *We, as the participants of the UNGA Conference 2019, declare that to bring about a transformed inclusive world, mentorship to nurture social transformers should be part of the UNGA agenda of Transforming Our World for Inclusive Social Development for All.*
- 6. **Collaboration with governments to bring change and transformation.**
 - Transformation, inclusion means empathy. The JWF and its global partners organized the conference because people whose lives are affected by others affect us.
 - We hold hands and transform the world together. However, our collaboration with existing governments is of paramount importance. Economic challenges and economic run down, poor Governance, all call for efforts to move globally together.
 - The JWF and its global partners call for finding mechanisms and strategies of working closely with host nations.
- 7. **Interreligious dialogue among communities.** Tolerance is key, respecting different traditions and knowledge for each of them.
 - Solidarity and compassion are values that help to reach out to the 70 million global refugees. Protection and assistance to refugees.
 - The government policy is to help all people even refugees. Recognition of stateless persons since 2016 is globally accepted resolution.
 - *We, as the participants of the UNGA Conference 2019, call for an inclusive international community through interreligious dialogue in transforming Our World and enhancing an inclusive Social Development for All.*



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Note: This Declaration of the UNGA Conference 2019 is compiled by Dr. Reginald Maudlin Nalugala, Tangaza University, Nairobi. The declaration aims to serve as recommendations by scholars, practitioners, and experts for policy change and actions to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

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