

IASSW United Nations Team of Representatives Newsletter—February 2021



UN's Commission for Social Development to Meet February 8-17

The United Nations Commission for Social Development will hold its annual session from February 8-17. Almost all sessions will be held online, making this meeting accessible to all. The priority theme is **“Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all.”** The theme was agreed a year ago, recognizing the growing significance of digital technology and serious gaps in global coverage. Current realities necessitate a second theme of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

There will be five Virtual High-Level Panels as listed below. The usual time for UN sessions is that morning sessions begin at 10:00 EST and afternoon sessions begin at 3:00. You may want to check the website to be sure that starting times have not been changed.

Here are the scheduled panels:

1. “Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all”; Monday February 8th-3pm EST
2. Ministerial Forum on “Promoting multilateralism to realize inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development and its social dimensions”; Tuesday February 9th-10am EST
3. Emerging Issues on “Social policy to promote a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery: Building back better post COVID-19 for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”; Wednesday February 10th-10:00am EST
4. Interactive dialogue with senior officials of the UN System on the priority theme; Wednesday February 10th-3:00pm EST
5. Multi-stakeholder Forum on the priority theme. Friday February 12th-3:00pm EST

You can watch live **through UN WebTV** at <http://webtv.un.org/> in all six United Nations' official languages.

For more information and updates to the schedule, visit:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/united-nations-commission-for-social-development-csod-social-policy-and-development-division/csod59.html>

IASSW representatives are active in the NGO Committee for Social Development, closely aligned with the official UN Commission. The NGO Committee has drafted a Civil Society Declaration that will be presented at the Commission meeting. IASSW has signed on to the Declaration; it can be accessed at: www.ngosocdev.org

The NGO Committee will be sponsoring a Forum during the Commission. Registration is separate and can be accessed at:

<https://ngosocdev.org/civil-society-forum-2021/>

IASSW TO CO-SPONSOR SIDE EVENT

IASSW has been invited to participate in a side event organized by the International Council on Social Welfare as part of the UN Commission for Social Development. It will be held online (how appropriate given the topic!) on February 9th from 10:00-11:15am EST (New York time). The title of the session is:

“Social inclusion through digital inclusion in the context of sustainable development: trends and challenges.”

Panelists include Prof. Lynne Healy (U.S.A., IASSW Main Representative to the UN),

Professor PK Shajahan (India, Vice-President of ICSW and Member of the Board of IASSW), and ICSW members Dr. Suh San-Mok (Korea, President), Prof. Antonio Lopez Palaez (Spain, Executive Director), Prof. Driss Guerraoui (Morocco, MENA Region ICSW), and Dr. Sergei Zelenev, panel organizer and Special Representative of ICSW to the UN.

See this link for a full draft list of side events: <https://teamup.com/ksftz13i7fw9ruy2je>

The site indicates that this side event will be webcast.

Social Development Subcommittee Completes Inequality Study

Lynne Healy

Towards 2030: Grassroots Experiences with Inequalities has been published by the NGO Committee for Social Development. The report summarizes the findings of a survey of grassroots community organizations to gather insights about local experiences with inequalities and determine whether the situation has improved since the adoption of the United Nations Agenda 2030. A number of the Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address inequality; most notably, Goal 10 is to reduce inequalities within and between countries. There are also Goals to eliminate extreme poverty, promote gender equality and ensure access to adequate food, health care, education, water and sanitation.

The survey was conducted in mid-2019 and distributed in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and Arabic. There were 208 responses from across 48 countries representing all regions of the world and a mix of high income, middle income and lower

income countries. Several IASSW members were among those answering the survey. It is important to note that the survey was conducted before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even at that point, it was evident that inequality is multidimensional. Respondents reported gaps in access to education, housing, health care, and employment as well as income inequality. Women and children suffer the most from inequalities, but many other groups are also affected. In many countries, some groups also suffer from fewer opportunities to participate in economic, social and political life. Over 40% said that participation in economic life had worsened since 2015 and almost as many reported the same about political participation.

A key question asked in the survey was whether the situation with inequality had improved since the adoption of the SDGs in 2015. Close to half of the respondents reported that there had been little or no change. A positive finding was that slightly more of the rest (26% of the total respondents) said that there had been improvements and only about a fifth (21%) said that the situation had worsened. The results differed by country income level of the respondents. The positive news is that about 40% of respondents from lower income countries said that the situation had improved, compared to only 14% of those from high income countries. The most frequently cited areas of improvement were education and health, followed by gender equality. These findings suggest that the Millennium Development Goals have made an impact in poorer countries, as these targeted primary education and health services. Austerity policies in some high and middle income countries and anti-migrant policy have contributed to more equality in these places.

Among the recommendations made are to closely monitor progress on Goal 10 with disaggregated data, to strengthen social protection programs, and to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable. Participatory approaches and coordinated efforts by governments and NGOs are needed.

There is much more in the report that can be accessed at: <https://ngosocdev.org>

The Committee will sponsor a UN side event on Monday, March 1 from 1:00-2:30 pm New York time. A link will be posted later on the NGO Committee website (<http://ngosocdev.org>).

IASSW is an active member of the NGO Committee on Social Development and the Grassroots Task Force, with Lynne Healy serving as the association's representative. IASSW/University of Connecticut social work intern Zozan Antar also contributed to the study.

UN NGO Committee on Migration: Updates by Rebecca Thomas and Marciana Popescu

The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) is well represented at the NGO Committee on Migration (CoM). Dr. Marciana Popescu, Associate Professor, Fordham University and Dr. Rebecca Thomas, Associate Professor, University of Connecticut are the two faculty persons on the committee and are our regular representatives. Marciana Popescu was also elected as a board member-at-large for the NGO Committee on Migration, and started serving on the board in September 2020. In addition, there are four social work students working with the CoM: Katie Zabronsky, Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College, Emily Duszlack and Emma Heintz, from the University of Connecticut, and Shenae Osborn, from Fordham University.

The mission of the NGO Committee on Migration (CoM) is to encourage the protection and promotion of migrants' human rights in accordance with the United Nations Charter. As a member of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CoNGO), we are in consultative relationship with the United Nations.

In the 2020-2022 term, the CoM is focusing on four areas, each of which is being addressed by one of the four subcommittees:

- Migrants in Vulnerable Situations / Mixed Migration (Marciana Popescu is a co-convener of this subcommittee)
- Refugee & Migrant Children
- Climate-Induced Displacement

Xenophobia & Social Inclusion

The committee and respective subcommittees meet monthly (every second Thursday of the month). There is a special topic selected for each month, with invited speakers addressing different aspects of migration and related issues of relevance for the works of the committee. The first CoM meeting held in October focused on the 2020 Global Forum for Migration and Development (that took place in January, 2021). There were two speakers at that meeting: Alex Zalami, head of the 2020 GFMD Taskforce, and Sophie van Haasen, Coordinator of GFMD Mayors Mechanism. Both speakers discussed expanding stakeholder engagement in the 2020 GFMD, hosted by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Sophie Van Haasen spoke to the urbanization of spaces because of migration from rural to urban spaces because of climate change pushing people into the cities seeking

employment resources. Alex Zalami spoke about his role as head of the 2020 GFMD Taskforce and his belief that cities need to buy into their plans on migration for it to be an effective policy.

The November meeting began with committee members discussing the International Migration Review Forum, taking place in 2022, which will follow up on how the Global Compact for Migration is being implemented all around the world. Another focus of the meeting was youth and migration regarding contributions to the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and the impacts of Covid-19 on youth migration. There were three guest speakers presenting on the topic: Marta Verani from Global Focal Point, Migration Working Group, and UN Major Group for Children & Youth; Jillian Montilla, a research advocate for European Network of Migrant Women; and Violeta Gomez-Urbe, Manager of Outreach and Organizing at the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs in New York City. The overall theme of this meeting focused on the impact that young people can have on migration, particularly youth-led activism groups, focusing on closing child detention centers, and the wider need to educate youth on the issue of migration.

The December meeting's topic was "Regional Spotlight on Europe- New Pact on Migration and Asylum & GCM Regional Review". Michele Levoy, Director of the Platform for the International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, and Sergio Carrera, Senior Research Fellow and Head of the Justice and Home Affairs Programme at the Centre for European Policy Studies, were the speakers of that meeting. The NGO Committee on Migration (NGO CoM) is hosting a side event at the Commission for

Social Development (CSocD), entitled “Can a Mouse Transform the Lives of the Youngest, Uprooted Children? ICT, Forcibly Displaced Families and Early Childhood Interventions.” This event is co-sponsored by the NGO CoM and is scheduled for 17 February 2021. The following speakers are currently confirmed for this event:

- Danielle De La Fuente, Founder & Executive Director of Amal Alliance
 - **"Education Disrupted: Reimagining Learning during the Pandemic"**
- Niels Peter Rygaard, Co-Founder & CEO Fairstart Foundation
 - **"How can governments and NGOs cooperate to improve the mental health and education of abandoned children?"**
- Isabel Christina Granada Garces, Senior Sector Specialist, Migration Initiative - Inter-American Development Bank
 - **"Piloting Digital Solutions for Migrant Children in Colombia, Peru, and Brazil"**
- Aaron Meyerson, Deputy Chief Technology Officer for Broadband, New York City Mayor's Office of the Chief Technology Officer
 - **"The NYC Internet Master Plan and Bridging the Digital Divide"**

The four above-mentioned subcommittees have been working hard on furthering their priorities, each of them taking on several projects:

Migrants in Vulnerable Situations / Mixed Migration

This subcommittee is focusing particularly on the implementation of the Global Compact on

This subcommittee is focusing particularly on the implementation of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM), particularly in reference to objectives 5 (Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways to safe, regular migration); and 7 (address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration). Marciana Popescu and Eva Sandis are coordinating a project focusing on documented migration narratives to identify challenges in situations of mixed migration, and some good practices/examples of GCM implementation progress; findings of this study will be used to prepare for meeting with member states/mission visits, and to advocate for more consistent implementation of the GCM. The subcommittee also decided to actively engage in learning about the overlaps between the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the GCM, in relation to mixed migration. As the February Committee meetings is focusing on the GCR, each member of the subcommittee was assigned one relevant document to review and present at the subcommittee meeting prior to the general meeting. Several questions for the speakers joining us at the general meeting are being prepared.

Shenae Osborn is the Fordham MSW student intern in this subcommittee, and she is also taking minutes for the monthly meetings.

Refugee and Migrant Children

The Subcommittee for Migrant and Refugee Children of the NGO Committee on Migration seeks to encourage the support and protection of our most vulnerable global population, migrant and refugee children, and the promotion of their human rights.

The subcommittee is focused on advocacy for early childhood development (ECD) via its initiative launched in 2020, Brighter Futures. Subcommittee members have been working to

gather data on the population of children who are migrants and refugees in New York City as part of efforts to gain a better understanding and advocate at the local level.

The subcommittee is hosting an event alongside the 59th session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD59) that will explore the role of Information Communication Technologies in providing support during early childhood for forcibly displaced families.

Climate-Induced Displacement subcommittee

The NGO Committee on Migration wrote and requested signatures from **member organizations**, on a letter to the US Mission addressing climate displacement. The letter encouraged US leadership to take action, especially in the interrelated areas of environment and human mobility, and invites collaboration and partnership between the NGO Committee on Migration and the US government in the term ahead.

Xenophobia & Social Inclusion

This subcommittee has developed a survey to collect data to assess the impact of COVID -19 has had on the migrant population in relation to xenophobia and social exclusion. This survey is available in English, Spanish, and French.

The website provides a digital calendar for a complete record of upcoming migration-related events with all relevant details. Visit at: <https://ngo-migration.org/>

Newsletter submitted by Lynne Healy, Main Representative
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SAVE THE DATE

38th Annual Social Work Day at the United Nations
Responses to COVID 19: Standing together makes us stronger
March 16, 2021 Noon- 2 PM

Student Global Conference
March 14, 2021 Noon- 2 PM

Sponsored by the International Association of Schools of Social Work, the International Council of Social Welfare, and the International Federation of Social Workers