



“The Radical Catalyst of Faith: Driving Civil Society Contributions to the SDGs”
The 2023 Kofi Annan Briefing on Faith and the Sustainable Development Goals

Thursday, September 21, 2023, from 12:30 - 3:30 p.m. EDT
8th Floor Church Center, 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY, 10017

Background:

In September 2022, newly elected President of the General Assembly Csaba Kőrösi said that it was timely and more necessary than ever to “re-dedicate ourselves to the SDGs” as the world falls behind. The fact of the matter is, however, that religions and faith-based actors have always been dedicated to the work of Sustainable Development.

When the SDGs were inaugurated in 2015, faith-based organizations viewed them as a natural extension of the work they were already doing. Now, with all eyes on 2030, the role of faith-based organizations cannot be overlooked or minimized.

Faith-based organizations have the ability to convene, inspire, and mobilize scores of adherents to seek out the poor and needy, protect and strengthen society, and preserve our natural resources. This event, coming at the halfway point of the SDG time frame, will show how faith-based actors and organizations are actively contributing to accomplishing the SDGs, as well as demonstrate their continued commitment to the same.

Briefing Overview:

This briefing comes the same week as the SDG Summit 2023. This summit aims to take stock of where the world is on the path to accomplishing the SDGs. Similarly, this briefing will look at how faith-based organizations have partnered with UN agencies to contribute to the SDGs. After a brief welcome and background to how we got to this point, the two main panels will focus on what is currently being done in partnerships, and how we hope to continue and strengthen these partnerships through 2030.



Objectives:

- To raise awareness of the contributions of faith-based actors and organizations to the Sustainable Development Goals within the context of partnerships with the United Nations.
- To explore the relationship between faith and human rights vital to the SDGs.
- To provide a platform for discussion on the benefits to governments and United Nations agencies in collaborating with faith-based organizations.
- To share experiences and best practices from different perspectives on how to more fully incorporate faith-based actors into discussions at the United Nations.

Topics:

The event will cover the following topics:

- How faith-based actors and organizations collaborate with all sectors of society (interfaith, intergovernmental, and secular), in the accomplishment of the SDGs;
- Recommendations for further collaboration through the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development; and
- The prophetic and moral voice of faith-based actors and organizations.

Format:

The event will be moderated by one IATF and one MFAC co-chair. Pending approval, Caterina Tino will represent the IATF (TBC), and Gopal Patel will represent the MFAC.

The event will be follow this approximate schedule:

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| 12:30-1:00 p.m. - | Light lunch and networking |
| 1:00-1:15 p.m. - | PAST - Welcome remarks and history of the MFAC from one Executive Director of an IATF UN agency and one MFAC organization head |

We are trying to show the already existing partnerships between faith-based groups and UN organizations. Therefore, these remarks should be focused on partnerships and not simply what the individual organization/agency has done to support the SDGs.



Note: instead of an Executive Director of an IATF UN agency and an MFAC organization head, these remarks may also be made by an IATF and an MFAC co-chair.

1:15-2:20 p.m. - PRESENT - How are we currently coming together as diverse faith-based organizations in partnership with the United Nations pertaining to the common challenges?

Accomplishing the SDGs is a group effort. No one country can do it alone; no one organization can do it alone. Nevertheless, each organization has certain specialties that can and do work in harmony with others. While speakers will be chosen because they have the listed areas of expertise, they should also explore how their partnerships have allowed them to overlap with other areas of expertise. For example, when we focus on aiding refugees and migrants, how has that also served to empower women, or how are we bringing youth leadership in the fight to protect the environment and mitigate the effects of climate change?

1. Poverty alleviation through provision of services, and rights to those services to include SDGs 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and well-being), 4 (quality education), 6 (clean water and sanitation), etc.
 - a. Rabbi David Rosenn, Executive Director, Hebrew Free Loan Society (CONFIRMED)
2. Sustainability, particularly regarding climate change, environmental degradation, biodiversity, and earth stewardship to include SDGs 12 (responsible consumption and production), 13 (climate action), 14 (life below water), 15 (life on land), etc.
 - a. Ms. Naomi Morenzoni, SVP Philanthropy, Salesforce (CONFIRMED)
3. Leave No One Behind, with a focus on Gender Equality, and to include SDGs 5 (gender equality), 8 (decent work and economic growth), 10 (reduced inequalities), etc.
 - a. Ms. Zahra Al Hilaly, Co-Founder, Christmas Island Youth Project (CONFIRMED)



4. Building peaceful, inclusive societies in partnership with multilateral organizations, to include SDGs 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), 17 (partnerships for the goals), etc.
 - a. Dr. Francis Kuria, Secretary General, African Council of Religious Leaders, Religions for Peace (CONFIRMED)

5. United Nations Perspective
 - a. Mr. Jacek Tyszko, Senior Adviser, Influencing and Partnerships, UNAIDS (CONFIRMED)

2:20-2:35 p.m. - Short break and reconfiguration of the panelists

2:35-3:30 p.m. - FUTURE: Although there are a lot of partnerships and accomplishments to be proud of, the SDGs are delayed, and there is much work to be done before 2030. This panel will invite four people to be respondents to the first panel, and explore questions such as: What are the possibilities for future collaboration in the Aforementioned Areas? How can we overcome inherent challenges in working within an incredibly diverse environment? What trends have we noticed that will play a role in future cooperation (demographic, climate, conflicts, etc.)?

Note: The panelists for this session will act as respondents to the first session. They will react and add to the comments of the first panel. Thus, they will need to prepare less in advance of the event, and speak for a shorter amount of time. After their remarks, the Moderator will facilitate participation from all of the attendees for comment.

1. Poverty Alleviation (see description above)
 - a. Sharon Eubank, President and CEO, Latter-day Saint Charities (CONFIRMED)

2. Sustainability (see description above)
 - a. Maja Groff, Climate Governance Commission (CONFIRMED)



3. Leave No One behind (see description above)
 - a. Birgitte Qvist Sørensen, General Secretary, Danish Church AID (CONFIRMED, in person)

4. Peaceful, inclusive societies (see description above)
 - a. Mr. Issah Toah, Founder of African Students for Interfaith Tolerance (CONFIRMED)

5. United Nations Perspective
 - a. Deepa Risal Pokharel, Senior Advisor, Social and Behavior Change, UNICEF (CONFIRMED)

The entire event will be livestreamed for remote participation.

Participants:

The event will bring together representatives from different stakeholder groups, including faith-based organizations, United Nations administrators, policymakers, academics, civil society organizations, and individuals with expertise and interests. Additionally, the event will be held in conjunction with Religion for Peace's (an MFAC member) high level meetings, and many of those participants are expected to be present.

Outcome:

The event aims to produce a set of recommendations for policymakers, civil society organizations, and religious communities on how to more fully integrate faith-based organizations into the policy and programmatic framework of the United Nations. The recommendations will be disseminated widely through various channels to ensure their visibility and impact.

Speaker guidelines: While the speakers will be representing their various organizations, the focus of the remarks should not be annual reports of their organizations. Rather, the speakers will concentrate on how they have worked both in an interfaith manner, and in harmony with governments and secular NGOs. The remarks will focus on the good that has been done, the lessons learned, and the hopes for the future.

MFAC



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To the United Nations
Interagency Task Force on Religion and Sustainable Development

Sample questions to ponder while preparing remarks include:

1. How have you overcome inherent challenges?
2. How have you worked to institutionalize this kind of cooperation and collaboration?
3. What has been the impact and value added - both to others and within your own organization?
4. What kind of measures have you put in place to quantify the impact?