



Medical Mission Sisters and the UN

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Dear Readers,

As the first issue of the MMS and the UN this 2021, I would like to introduce to you the two Religious NGOs at the UN system which we are member of; and making our presence at the UN contributing more to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Justice Coalition of Religious (JCoR) is a group of 19 non-governmental organizations of Roman Catholic women and men Religious at the UN Headquarters in New York, whose goal **is to contribute directly to a just implementation of the UN's SDGs through capacity building and advocacy at the UN as well as at the country level.** In 2019, JCoR began to facilitate a series of **advocacy workshops** in Latin America and the Caribbean, East Africa region and India.



In February 2020, a workshop was conducted in Uganda where two of our sisters, Immaculate Tusingwire and Cristine Lenkuru were able to join. Due to the pandemic, workshops in other countries were put on hold. This year, JCoR will begin the workshops via video conferences in Zambia and Zimbabwe. JCoR also facilitates participation of member organizations and other NGOs in **endorsing joint statements** on pressing issues, and **sponsoring side events** for UN conferences and meetings. Find out more about JCoR at <https://jcor2030.org/>

Religious at the UN (RUN) is an informal gathering of approximately 60 sisters, brothers, priests and others. They represent over 200 religious congregations serving in 186 countries and constitute 30 NGOs accredited by the United Nations with special consultative status through the Economic and Social Council (EcoSoc). Since 1997, RUN have met monthly to **reflect together on critical global justice issues** that impact their constituencies.

In our January 2021 meeting, the education session focused on **UN Advocacy for Persons With Disabilities (PWD)**. Bethany Brown, our resource person, a human rights advisor for the International Disability Alliance defines disability as something that hinders persons to equal access to interaction with the world. Bethany highlighted the special concern now among the persons with disabilities vis-à-vis the COVID-19 pandemic such as: risks of violence toward PWD heightened during public health lockdowns, barriers to accessing healthcare, and inaccessibility to web-based meetings (lack of screen-reader technology for the vision impaired and captioning for the hearing impaired).

RUN also serves **as a supportive community** to orient new Religious NGO representatives to the UN.

Like many groups around the world, the regular meetings of JCoR and RUN have been held virtually since the lockdown. Both groups have observed that one of the advantages of virtual meetings is that more members are able to join. But we cannot deny the fact that members are also missing the snacks together, and the in between conversations which are enjoyed at in-person meetings.

EVENTS

14 January – The faith leaders of communities of color in the U.S. held a virtual discussion on COVID-19 vaccine. The objective was to get correct information to help them make the decision for themselves. Dr. Vivek Murthy, the Surgeon General of the Biden-Harris Transition Team and COVID-19 Task Force Co-Chair addressed the questions on issues of health disparity among the communities of color, the right of everyone to access the vaccines, government plans for the vaccine distribution, and the effectiveness of the vaccine. The invitation of this event was forwarded to Frankie Vaughn, UNA Coordinator for sharing to the Unit membership.

22 January is a commemorative day for Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entry into force, the first international treaty to comprehensively ban nuclear weapons. Around the world, the anti-nuclear weapons campaigners marked the historic day with at least 172 events, from commemoration, to protests, to educational events. The countries that have joined the TPNW are bound to adhere to the treaty's prohibitions and implement its obligations. Medical Mission Sisters, through the JCoR endorsed a Joint Interfaith Statement on the Entry into Force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 59th Session of the Commission for Social Development (CSoD59) will take place from February 8-17 in an in-person and digital format, and will address the following priority theme: **“Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all”**. Be informed about the impact of digital technology and transformation on health, climate, education, migration, ageing, youth, Indigenous Peoples communities, and many others. **For list of interesting events and discussions, and how to register, click: <https://teamup.com/ksftz13i7fw9ruy2je>. Please bear with the connecting to the server. It takes few minutes.**

You are all invited to join especially for the JCoR-sponsored side event in this CSoCD59:

15 February 1:15-2:30 p.m. (Eastern Time: US and Canada)

Theme: Serving Across the Digital Divide: Catholic Religious Witness to the Role of Digital Technology in Social Inequalities. Our Associate, **Naydesign Joan Talasan** from Unit Philippines will be one of the speakers. She will be sharing the impact of digital technology in the communities of Indigenous Peoples (IP) and among the students of MMS IP school in Bukidnon. **Register here for this event on or before February 14: <https://bit.ly/3oFmXYL>**. We hope to see you there!

RESOURCES

Want to know and learn about the UN at the comfort of your homes, offices and communities? Here are three opportunities with the respective links:

1. For UN Live and on demand videos: <http://webtv.un.org/>
2. Virtual tour at the UN, New York (for a fee): <https://visit.un.org/content/virtual-tours>
3. UN Library: <https://www.un-ilibrary.org/>

Please feel free to share these with interest groups, mission partners, and others.

“And so, we lift our gazes not to what stands between us but what stands before us.”

-From the poem, The Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorem