



REPORT - United Nations Liaison Committee

June 25, 2020

This is a summary of the United Nations Liaison Committee Report in which global issues such as human rights, migration, refugees, health, inequality, poverty were presented as seen through the perspective of the United Nations. Moreover, the report offers an overview of current trends that, according to the United Nations, could have an impact on human rights.

Furthermore, this report presents a perspective on the vision of the Seventh-day Adventist Church on the importance of championing religious freedom and the promotion of social, moral, and spiritual values.

Pastor Nelu Burcea, PhD

*GC Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Associate Director,
United Nations Liaison for the Seventh-day Adventist Church and
the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA)*

“It is our duty to do all in our power to avert the threatened danger. We should endeavor to disarm prejudice by placing ourselves in a proper light before the people. We should bring before them the real question at issue, thus interposing the most effectual protest against measures to restrict liberty of conscience.”

Ellen G. White - 5T 452

AGENDA

June 25, 2020

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- 01 Meditation and prayer - Abner De los Santos
 - 02 Review committee terms of reference
 - 03 United Nations – nature and functions
 - 04 Adventists at the United Nations – reaffirming our values and vision
 - 05 Current important issues on the United Nations Agenda
 - 06 Significant trends in the United Nations vision that impact human rights
 - 07 Future events and activities
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01

MEDITATION

Abner De los Santos

Praise be to the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me. Psalm 144: 1-2

Elder Abner De los Santos emphasized that Psalm 144 invites us to bless the Lord for being our trainer, our fortress, our high tower, our deliverer, our shield, our refuge, our strength. and our victory. Despite human shortcomings, God cares for us. He is able to rescue us from every danger and is always ready to help us exercise good leadership.

Living in a world where we experience dangers of every kind, it's comforting to know that God has promised to protect His people.



02

Review committee
terms of reference

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Review relations between the Church and the United Nations.
2. Ensure appropriate development of bilateral relationships between the Church and the United Nations.
3. Develop awareness of Church-United Nations activities.
4. Prepare proposals to provide General Conference participation in worthwhile initiatives of the United Nations and other international bodies.
5. Maintain perspective and give counsel on United Nations developments in the areas of human rights, religious freedom, health, education, humanitarian aid, and other areas of mutual interest.

MEMBERS

De Los Santos, Abner, Chair (GC)
 Diop, A Ganoune, Vice-chair (GC)
 Burcea, Nelu, Secretary (GC)

Beardsley-Hardy, Lisa M (GC)
 Blanchard, Gary (GC)
 Johnson, Orlan (NAD)
 Koh, Linda Mei Lin (GC)
 Krause, Bettina (GC)
 Landless, Peter N (GC)
 Mikov, Paul
 Ng, G T (GC)
 Costa, Williams S Jr (GC)
 Orion, Daisy J F (GC)
 Small, Heather-Dawn K (GC)
 Wilson, Ted N C (GC)
 Zinke, E Edward (Layperson)
 Teewen, Frank (ADRA)
 McFarland, Todd R (Legal Advisor)

03

UNITED NATIONS Nature and functions

Many of you are already familiar with the UN Departments and Philosophy. However, to understand the context of the United Nations Liaison Report, there will be a brief introduction about the UN departments, emphasizing the departments that have a connection to human rights or other topics of interest to the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

The United Nations is considered to be the most internationally represented and most powerful intergovernmental organization in the world. Its key priorities for the promotion of sustainable development are the promotion and the protection of human rights, maintenance of international peace and security, development of Africa, coordination of humanitarian assistance, promotion of justice and international law, disarmament, drug control, crime prevention, and combating terrorism.



UNITED NATIONS KEY PRIORITIES

- 01** Promotion of sustainable development
- 02** Maintenance of international peace and security
- 03** Development of Africa
- 04** Promotion and protection of human rights
- 05** Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance
- 06** Promotion of justice and international law
- 07** Disarmament
- 08** Drug control, crime prevention and combating terrorism

[Source: www.un.org/annualreport/files/2019/09/Annual-report-SG-2019-EN-Complete-Web.pdf]

The organization's mission is to preserve world peace having 6 principal organs such as:



General Assembly

is the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN. All 193 Member States of the UN are represented in the General Assembly, making it the only UN body with universal representation.



Security Council

has primary responsibility, under the UN Charter, for the maintenance of international peace and security. It has 15 Members.



Economic and Social Council

is the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as implementation of internationally agreed development goals.



Trusteeship Council

provide international supervision for 11 Trust Territories that had been placed under the administration of seven Member States, and ensure that adequate steps were taken to prepare the Territories for self-government and independence.



International Court of Justice

is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. Its seat is at the Peace Palace in the Hague (Netherlands). It is the only one of the six principal organs of the United Nations not located in New York.



Secretariat

comprises the Secretary-General and tens of thousands of international UN staff members who carry out the day-to-day work of the UN as mandated by the General Assembly and the Organization's other principal organs

[Source: www.un.org/en/model-united-nations/un-structure]

THE 4 PILLARS OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The foundation upon which the UN was created is described in the Preamble of the UN Charter. There are four areas that are the pillars of the UN

01. Peace and Security

The United Nations was created “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind.”

Peace and Security

02. Human Rights

The UN Charter also begins by affirming “faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.”

Human Rights

03. The Rule of Law

UN aims “to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained.”

The Rule of Law

04. Development

The main components of development are: Living a long and healthy life; Being educated; Having a decent standard of living; Having the freedom to participate in the life of one’s community.

Development



The UN Charter established The Economic and Social Council in 1945 as one of the six main organs of the United Nations. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is at the heart of the United Nations system to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. It is the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals. It is also responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits.

Each year, ECOSOC structures its work around an annual theme of global importance to sustainable development. This ensures focused attention, among ECOSOC's array of partners, and throughout the UN development system. The themes of the previous years were:

2017 - "Eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions through promoting sustainable development, expanding opportunities and addressing related challenges"

2018 - "From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities"

2019 - "Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality"

2020 - "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development."

The Seventh Day Adventist Church and the International Religious Liberty Association have since 1985 and 2003 respectively been "UN-accredited NGOs in Special Consultative Status to the UN Economic and Social Council. Currently, there are 5,451 NGOs in special consultative status with the ECOSOC.

[Source: www.un.org/ecosoc/about-us]

How does the UN promote and protect human rights?

High Commissioner for Human Rights 1



The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has lead responsibility in the UN system for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Human Rights Council 2



The Human Rights Council, established in 2006, replaced the 60-year-old UN Commission on Human Rights as the key independent UN intergovernmental body responsible for human rights.

Human Rights Treaty Bodies 3



The human rights treaty bodies are committees of independent experts that monitor implementation of the core international human rights treaties.



4 Special Procedures

The special procedures of the Human Rights Council are prominent, independent experts working on a voluntary basis, who examine, monitor, publicly report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective.



5 UNDG-HRM

The UN Development Group's Human Rights Mainstreaming Mechanism (UNDG-HRM) advances human rights mainstreaming efforts within the UN development system.



6 Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect

The Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide acts as a catalyst to raise awareness of the causes and dynamics of genocide, to alert relevant actors where there is a risk of genocide, and to advocate and mobilize for appropriate action.

HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) works to offer the best expertise and support to the different human rights monitoring mechanisms in the United Nations system.

The human rights treaty bodies are committees of independent experts that monitor implementation of the core international human rights treaties.

There are ten human rights treaty bodies composed of independent experts of recognized competence in human rights, who are nominated and elected for fixed renewable terms of four years by State parties.

[Source: www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/Pages/HumanRightsBodies.aspx]

- Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
- Human Rights Committee (CCPR)
- Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Committee against Torture (CAT)
- Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW)
- Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT)
- Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED)

The **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it has been translated into over 500 languages.

ARTICLE 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

ARTICLE 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

ARTICLE 26

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

[Source: www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/]



THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF Human Rights

Preamble recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Article 1 All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2 Everyone has all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Article 3 Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4 No one shall be subjected to slavery or servitude; no one shall be a slave. Slavery and the trade in slaves shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5 No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6 Everyone has the right to recognition as a person before the law.

Article 7 All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal treatment before the law.

Article 8 Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted by the constitution or by law.

Article 9 No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10 Everyone has the right to a fair and public hearing by the competent national tribunals for the determination of his rights and obligations.

Article 11 (1) Everyone has the right to a fair and public hearing by the competent national tribunals for the determination of his rights and obligations. (2) No one shall be held guilty of any crime until he has been proved guilty by the competent national tribunals.

Article 12 No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13 (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the frontiers of each country. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14 (1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. (2) No one shall be subjected to persecution.

Article 15 (1) Everyone has the right to a nationality. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality.

Article 16 (1) Everyone has the right to marry and to found a family, which is the basis of the society. (2) Men and women of full age, without any limitation based on race, nationality or religion, have the equal right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. (3) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. (4) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17 (1) Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

Article 18 Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19 Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without any interference by public authorities or by individuals.

Article 20 (1) Everyone has the right to peaceful assembly and to associate with others in peaceable manner. (2) No one shall be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21 (1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country. (3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be manifested in periodic elections which shall be by secret ballot and shall ensure the free expression of the voters' will.

Article 22 Everyone has the right to such social, economic and cultural conditions as are necessary for the full development of his personality.

Article 23 (1) Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. (2) Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. (3) Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration which shall include wages and benefits in accordance with the principles of justice.

Article 24 Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25 Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Article 26 (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Article 27 (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of his community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. (2) Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

Article 28 Everyone is entitled to such social and international order and conditions as shall ensure the fulfilment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration.

Article 29 (1) Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible. (2) In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject to such limitations as are necessary for the respect of the rights and freedoms of others and for the satisfaction of the moral, social and legal requirements of the community. (3) These rights and freedoms shall be exercised by everyone in conformity with the principles and standards of the United Nations.

Article 30 Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights



INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

I. FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF

1. Freedom to adopt, change or renounce a religion or belief
2. Freedom from coercion
3. The right to manifest one's religion or belief
 - a) Freedom to worship
 - b) Places of worship
 - c) Religious symbols
 - d) Observance of holidays and days of rest
 - e) Appointing clergy
 - f) Teaching and disseminating materials (including missionary activity)
 - g) The right of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children
 - h) Registration
 - i) Communicate with individuals and communities on religious matters at the national and international level
 - j) Establish and maintain charitable and humanitarian institutions/solicit and receive funding
 - k) Conscientious objection

[Source: www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomReligion/Pages/Standards.aspx]

II. DISCRIMINATION

1. Discrimination on the basis of religion or belief/ inter-religious discrimination/ tolerance
2. State religion

III. VULNERABLE GROUPS

1. Women
2. Persons deprived of their liberty
3. Refugees
4. Children
5. Minorities
6. Migrant workers

IV. INTERSECTION OF FREEDOM OF RELIGION OR BELIEF WITH OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS

1. Freedom of expression including questions related to religious conflicts, religious intolerance and extremism
2. Right to life, right to liberty
3. Prohibition on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

V. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

1. Derogation
2. Limitation
3. Legislative issues
4. Defenders of freedom of religion or belief and non-governmental organizations

INTERNATIONAL DAYS

The United Nations observes designated days, weeks, years, and decades, each with a theme, or topic. By creating special observances, the United Nations promotes international awareness and action on these issues. I would like to focus for a few minutes on the date of August 22 - “International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief.” A while ago, despite the fact that this seems impossible as discrimination and persecution are increasing throughout the world, I continued to discuss and lobby to most of the UN Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights and High Commissioners for Human Rights for having a special day dedicated to the protection and promotion of religious freedom. God has blessed our request, and starting with the spring of 2019, the United Nations offices have begun to think of a special day to promote religious freedom. So, they decided the August 22nd to become the day for “International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief.”

Following this decision, it is expected that all Member States, as well as the civil society and the private sector, actively observe this International Day and play an important role in promoting the freedom of religion or belief. It is a calling and an opportunity for a more serious involvement to combat intolerance, discrimination and violence against people on the basis of their religion or belief and to promote interfaith initiatives. We have to work together with all capable entities to enhance the implementation of international human rights standards that protect individuals against discrimination and acts of violence based on religion or belief. It is important that we also increase interreligious, interfaith and intercultural initiatives, and expand human rights education in a comprehensive manner as a key catalyst for change. Acts of terror are intended to intimidate members of religious communities and, as a result, to hold them back from practicing their faith. This international day is an occasion to educate the general public on the issues of religious liberty and to mobilize religious groups, mass media and politicians to address this growing problem. The existence of this international day is another opportunity for us and could prove to be a powerful advocacy tool (Source: <https://www.un.org/en/events/victimsofreligiousviolenceday/background.shtml>).

- 24 January
International Day of Education
- 20 February
World Day of Social Justice
- 1 March
Zero Discrimination Day
- 21 March
International Day for the Elimination
of Racial Discrimination
- 24 March
International Day for the Right to the Truth
concerning Gross Human Rights Violations
- 5 April
International Day of Conscience
and for the Dignity of Victims
- 7 April
World Health Day
- 16 May
International Day of Living Together in Peace
- 15 May
International Day of Families
- 21 May
World Day for Cultural Diversity for
Dialogue and Development

INTERNATIONAL DAYS

22 August

International Day Commemorating
the Victims of Acts of Violence
Based on Religion or Belief

- 12 August
International Youth Day
- 19 August
World Humanitarian Day
- 22 August
International Day Commemorating the Victims
of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief
- 21 September
International Day of Peace
- 17 October
International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- 16 November
International Day for Tolerance
- 25 November
International Day for the Elimination of
Violence against Women
- 2 October
International Day of Non-Violence
- 9 December
International Anti-Corruption Day
- 10 December
Human Rights Day
- 20 December
International Human Solidarity Day

See all of the United Nations International days: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/observances/international-days/>

A photograph of the United Nations Secretariat Building in New York City. The building is a large, light-colored stone structure with a prominent entrance. Above the entrance, the words "UNITED NATIONS" and "NATIONS UNIES" are inscribed in large, dark letters, separated by the United Nations emblem. In the foreground, a large number of national flags are flying on tall poles, creating a colorful border around the building. The sky is clear and blue.

UNITED NATIONS  NATIONS UNIES

04

Adventists at the United Nations *Reaffirming our values and vision*

Since 1985, Adventists have been actively engaged in consultation with the United Nations (UN) in the protection and promotion of religious freedom. Throughout the years, we have participated in debates, interactive dialogues, panel discussions, and official meetings with the purpose of advancing concepts such as the development of education, health and non-discrimination, and helping to raise awareness on relevant issues related to Adventist values.

Additionally, the organization of events every year on topics of current issues relating to the United Nations sustainable goals constituted an important area of our work.

Meeting official government delegations and other NGO representatives, attending international conferences, diplomatic gatherings and events helped us in developing opportunities for networking and lobby with the purpose of protecting and promoting human rights. The Adventist Church has certain values that could successfully meet the present needs of mankind.

In the following pages, official statements of the Seventh-day Adventist Church will present its vision relating to religious liberty as a fundamental human right. The church urges the United Nations, government authorities, religious leaders, and non-government organizations to consistently work for the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



For more than a century Seventh-day Adventists have been active promoters of religious freedom. We recognize the need to champion freedom of conscience and religion as a fundamental human right, in harmony with the instruments of the United Nations.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a presence in 209 countries. With some exceptions, however, Adventists constitute a religious minority, and have at times been subject to restrictions and discrimination. Consequently, they have felt it necessary to stand up for human rights.

This statement was approved and voted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Administrative Committee (ADCOM) and was released by the Office of the President, Robert S. Folkenberg, at the General Conference session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, June 29-July 8, 1995

Religious liberty includes the fundamental human right to have, adopt, or change one's religion or religious belief according to conscience and to manifest and practice one's religion individually or in fellowship with other believers, in prayer, devotions, witness, and teaching, including the observance of a weekly day of rest and worship in harmony with the precepts of one's religion, subject to respect for the equivalent rights of others.

Excerpt from General Conference Working Policy (2014-2015) pages 353-355

The public affairs and religious liberty (PARL) department promotes and maintains religious liberty, with particular emphasis upon liberty of conscience. Religious liberty includes the human right to have or adopt the religion of one's choice, to change religious belief according to conscience, to manifest one's religion individually or in community with fellow believers, in worship, observance, practice, witness, and teaching, subject to respect for the equivalent rights of others.

General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Church Manual, 18th Edition (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2010) pages 92-93.

The General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department is responsible for developing global religious liberty strategies and programs for the Church. This program will include appropriate strategic contacts and relationships with various governments, the United Nations, especially the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Commission, and the United States Congress and State Department.

Excerpt from General Conference Working Policy (2014-2015) pages 353-355.

The Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department, one of the original core departments of the Church, was established to promote and maintain religious liberty, with particular emphasis upon individual liberty of conscience. In so doing, the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department is involved in government relations, inter-church contacts and, where indicated, networks with non-governmental organizations which have kindred goals in upholding religious freedom. The department not only works for the religious liberties of both individual church members and organized entities of the Church, but also supports the rightful religious liberties of all people.

In view of the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the "great controversy" and the climactic events of human history involving union of church and state, eliminating the free exercise of religion, and resulting in persecution of the faithful remnant, the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department monitors and seeks to interpret prudently current trends that may reflect the prophetic scenario.

Excerpt from General Conference Working Policy (2014-2015) pages 353-355.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church strongly supports freedom of speech in general, and freedom of religious speech in particular. Although freedom of speech is guaranteed in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, efforts continue to limit speech at both the national level and at the United Nations. In both settings, significant focus has been placed on limiting speech that offends the religious beliefs of the hearer. Seventh-day Adventists affirm sensitivity and respect in all communication. We are thus concerned about speech designed to offend religious sensibilities. However, we believe that ceding the right to the state to control religious speech creates a far greater threat to the autonomy of people of faith than that posed by offensive speech. Indeed, there are numerous examples today of states citing a desire to protect religious feelings to justify the forceful silencing of peaceful religious speech.

This statement was approved and voted by the Executive Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists on June 23, 2010, and released at the General Conference Session in Atlanta, Georgia, June 24-July 3, 2010.

While both the United Nations and various religious bodies have proclaimed the first decade of the 21st century as a decade for the promotion of peace and security in the place of violence in its various forms, a new and insidious dimension of violence has emerged: organized international terrorism. Terrorism itself is not new, but worldwide terrorist networks are. Another new factor is the appeal to so-called divine mandates as the rationale for terrorist activity under the guise of culture war, or even “religious” war.

This statement was voted during the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee on April 18, 2002 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Justice - Unfortunately, the world is rampant with injustice and a fallout of injustice is strife. Justice and peace join hands, as do injustice and war. Poverty and exploitation breed discontent and hopelessness, which lead to desperation and violence.

On the other hand, “God’s word sanctions no policy that will enrich one class by the oppression and suffering of another.”

Justice requires respect for human rights, in particular religious liberty which deals with the profoundest human aspirations and undergirds all human rights. Justice requires nondiscrimination, respect for human dignity and equality, and a more equitable distribution of the necessities of life. Economic and social policies will either produce peace or discontent. Seventh-day Adventist concern for social justice is expressed through the support and promotion of religious liberty, and through organizations and departments of the Church which work to relieve poverty and conditions of marginalization. Such efforts on the part of the Church can, over time, reduce resentment and terrorism.

This statement was voted during the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee on April 18, 2002 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church operates what may be the second largest worldwide parochial school system. Each of its more than 8,800 schools, colleges, and universities is being asked to set aside one week each school year to emphasize and highlight, through various programs, respect, cultural awareness, nonviolence, peacemaking, conflict resolution, and reconciliation as a way of making a specifically "Adventist" contribution to a culture of social harmony and peace. With this in mind, the Church's Education Department is preparing curricula and other materials to help in implementing this peace program.

The education of the church member in the pew, for nonviolence, peace, and reconciliation, needs to be an ongoing process. Pastors are being asked to use their pulpits to proclaim the gospel of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation which dissolves barriers created by race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and religion, and promotes peaceful human relations between individuals, groups, and nations.

This statement was voted during the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee on April 18, 2002 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

In support of Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments, and in harmony with its beliefs and its history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is fully committed to promote, defend, and protect religious freedom for everyone, everywhere. To that end, we will continue to cooperate with the United Nations Human Rights Commission and other international agencies and religious organizations to encourage every nation to implement the fundamental right of religious freedom. In addition, we will continue to promote dialogue and better understanding between governmental authorities and people who belong to religious minorities.

This statement was voted during the Annual Council of the General Conference Executive Committee on Wednesday, September 29, 1999 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Today the UDHR is often violated, not least Article 18. Intolerance frequently raises its ugly head, despite the human rights progress accomplished in many nations. The Seventh-day Adventist Church urges the United Nations, government authorities, religious leaders and believers, and non-government organizations to consistently work for the implementation of this Declaration. Politicians, trade union leaders, teachers, employers, media representatives, and all opinion leaders should give strong support to human rights. This would respond to and help reduce growing and violent religious extremism, intolerance, hate crimes and discrimination based either on religion or anti-religious secularism. In this way, the Universal Declaration will grow in practical importance and luster, and never risk becoming an irrelevant document.

This statement was voted by the General Conference Administrative Committee, November 17, 1998, and released by the General Conference Office of Public Affairs.

A wide-angle photograph of the United Nations Security Council Chamber. The room is large and circular, with a large, ornate mural on the back wall. The mural depicts various scenes of human history and conflict. The room is filled with people seated around a large, curved table. The lighting is soft and even.

05

Current important issues on the United Nations Agenda

REPORT - United Nations Liaison Committee

CURRENT IMPORTANT ISSUES ON THE UN AGENDA

As an international organization, the United Nations aims to address issues that transcend national boundaries and cannot be resolved by any one country acting alone.

To its initial goals of safeguarding peace, protecting human rights, establishing the framework for international justice and promoting economic and social progress, in the seven decades since its creation the United Nations has added on new challenges, such as climate change, refugees and AIDS.

While conflict resolution and peacekeeping continue to be among its most visible efforts, the UN, along with its specialized agencies, is also engaged in a wide array of activities to improve people's lives around the world – from disaster relief, through education and advancement of women, to peaceful uses of atomic energy.

Source: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/global-issues-overview/>

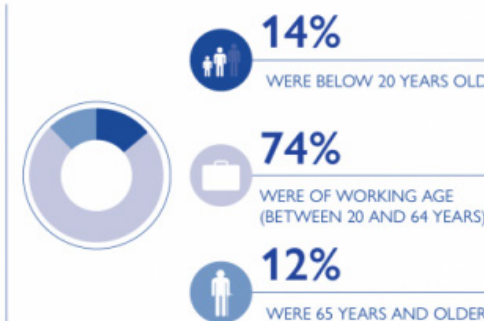
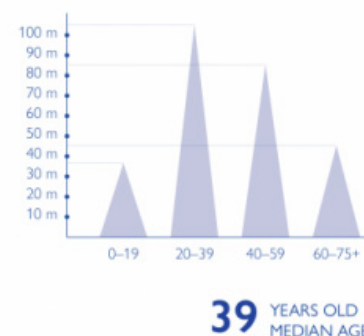
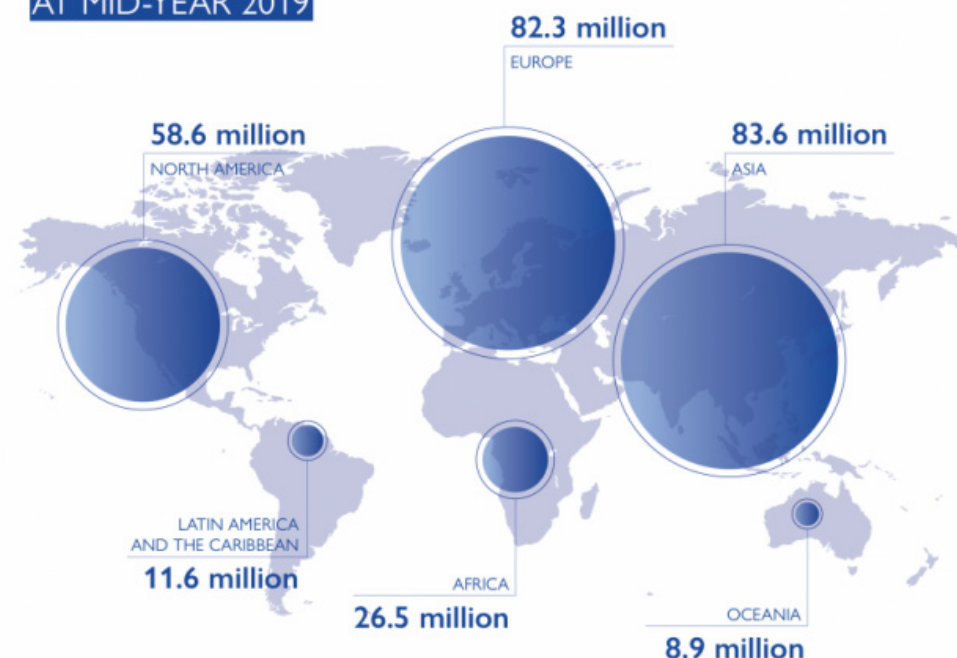
MIGRATION

Today, more people than ever live in a country other than the one in which they were born. In 2019, the number of international migrants worldwide – people residing in a country other than their country of birth – reached 272 million (from 258 million in 2017). Female migrants constituted 48 per cent of this international migrant stock. While many individuals migrate out of choice, many others migrate out of necessity.

There are an estimated 38 million migrant children, three out of four international migrants are of working age, meaning between 20 and 64 years old. 164 million are migrant workers. Approximately 31% of the international migrants worldwide reside in Asia, 30% in Europe, 26% in the Americas, 10% in Africa and 3% in Oceania

[Source: Global Migration Data Portal]

INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS AT MID-YEAR 2019



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019).
International Migrant Stock 2019 (United Nations database, POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2019).
See <https://bit.ly/Migration2019>.

© IOM's GMDAC 2019

REFUGEES

According to the UN Refugee Agency, at least 79.5 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes. Among them are nearly 26 million refugees, around half of whom are under the age of 18. While many individuals migrate out of choice, many others migrate out of necessity. There are also millions of stateless people, who have been denied a nationality and lack access to basic rights such as education, health care, employment and freedom of movement.

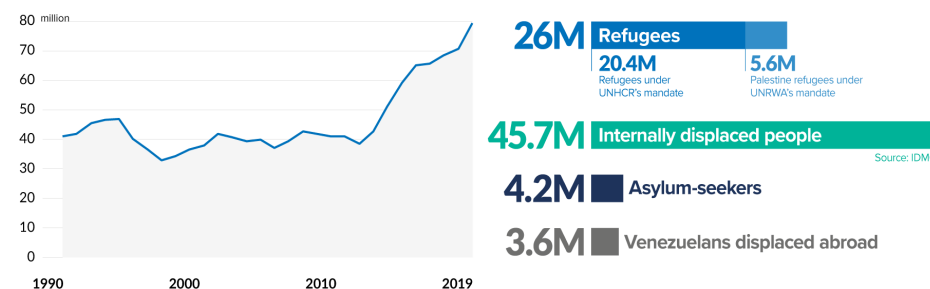
Nearly 1 person is forcibly displaced every 2 seconds as a result of conflict or persecution and 1 per cent of the world's population have fled their homes as a result of conflict or persecution.

The UN agency that helps refugees is UNHCR (also known as the UN Refugee Agency), which emerged in the wake of World War II to help Europeans displaced by that conflict. UNHCR is the lead agency with respect to the protection of refugees and the internally displaced. Along with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), it is the lead agency for camp coordination and management. And it shares the lead with respect to emergency shelter with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

[Source: www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/migration/index.html]

79.5 MILLION forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2019

Source: UNHCR / 18 June 2020



1%
of the world's population is displaced



80%
of the world's displaced people are
in countries or territories affected by
acute food insecurity and malnutrition



73%
Hosted in
neighbouring
countries *



68%
Came from just
5 countries *

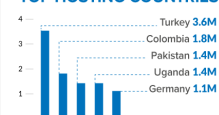


40%
of the world's displaced people
are children



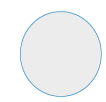
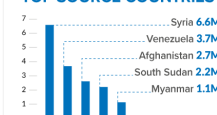
85%
Hosted in
developing
countries *

TOP HOSTING COUNTRIES



* Data includes UNHCR refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad

TOP SOURCE COUNTRIES



4.2M
Stateless people



2M
Asylum applications
(in 2019)



107,800
Resettled to 26 countries
(in 2019)



5.6M
Returnees
(in 2019)



employs **17,324** personnel in **135** countries
(as of 31 May 2020)

We are funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions, with 86 per cent from governments and the European Union and 10 per cent from private donors

FOOD SECURITY

Noting that the global spread of COVID-19 this year has sparked “the worst humanitarian crisis since World War Two”, Executive Director of the World Food Programme David Beasley (bisli) pointed to deepening crises, more frequent natural disasters and changing weather patterns, saying “we’re already facing a perfect storm”. He said, “famine (feamen) is a very real and dangerous possibility”. Mr. Beasley also raised the need for early warning systems.... : “If we don’t prepare and act now – to secure access, avoid funding shortfalls and disruptions to trade ...we could be facing multiple famines of biblical proportions within a short few months.”

The latest available estimates indicate that about 821 million people in the world were undernourished in 2017. One in nine people do not get enough food to be healthy and lead an active life. Hunger and malnutrition are biggest risks to health worldwide — greater than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. Considering all people in the world affected by moderate levels of food insecurity together with those who suffer from hunger, it is estimated that over 2 billion people do not have regular access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food, including 8 per cent of the population in North America and Europe.

The UN agencies working for food security are:

- The World Food Programme (WFP),
- World Bank
- The Food and Agriculture Organization
- International Fund for Agricultural Development

[Source: Global Migration Data Portal]



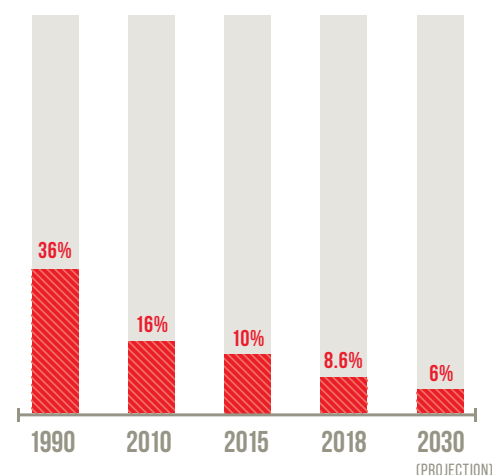
POVERTY

While global poverty rates have been cut by more than half since 2000, one in ten people in developing regions still lives on less than US\$ 1.90 a day - the internationally agreed poverty line, and millions of others live on slightly more than this daily amount. Significant progress has been made in many countries within Eastern and Southeastern Asia, but up to 42 per cent of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa continues to live below the poverty line.

Poverty entails more than the lack of income and productive resources to ensure sustainable livelihoods. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion, as well as the lack of participation in decision-making. In 2015, more than 736 million people lived below the international poverty line. Around 10 per cent of the world population is living in extreme poverty and struggling to fulfil the most basic needs like health, education, and access to water and sanitation, to name a few. There are 122 women aged 25 to 34 living in poverty for every 100 men of the same age group, and more than 160 million children are at risk of continuing to live in extreme poverty by 2030.

[Source: www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/poverty/index.html]

THE WORLD IS NOT ON TRACK TO END POVERTY BY 2030



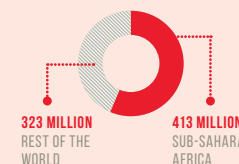
**MORE THAN 90% OF DEATHS
DUE TO DISASTERS OCCUR IN LOW-
AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES**



55%

OF THE
WORLD'S POPULATION
HAVE NO ACCESS TO
SOCIAL PROTECTION

736 MILLION
PEOPLE LIVED
IN EXTREME
POVERTY IN 2015,
413 MILLION
IN SUB-SAHARAN
AFRICA



ACCESS MORE DATA AND INFORMATION ON THE INDICATORS AT UNSTATS.UN.ORG/SDGS/REPORT/2019/

GENDER EQUALITY

Women and girls represent half of the world's population and, therefore, also half of its potential. Gender equality, besides being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieve peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development. Moreover, it has been shown that empowering women spurs productivity and economic growth. Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go to achieve full equality of rights and opportunities between men and women, warns UN Women. UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

There are multiple forms of discrimination: Place of birth or residency, Religion, Age, Race & ethnicity, Sexual orientation, Disability, Economic or social status, and many other factors

[Source: www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/gender-equality/index.html]



CHILDREN

Every child has the right to health, education and protection, and every society has a stake in expanding children's opportunities in life. Yet, around the world, millions of children are denied a fair chance for no reason other than the country, gender or circumstances into which they are born. Children who live in extreme poverty in low income countries, especially in remote areas, are more likely to be underfed and malnourished. They are least likely to have access to safe water, sanitation and healthcare. One in three children is not growing well because of malnutrition.

According to the 2019 edition of *The State of the World's Children* (SOWC) examines the issue of children, food and nutrition, providing a fresh perspective on a rapidly evolving challenge. Despite progress in the past two decades, one third of children under age 5 are malnourished – stunted, wasted or overweight – while two thirds are at risk of malnutrition and hidden hunger because of the poor quality of their diets. At the center of this challenge is a broken food system that fails to provide children with the diets they need to grow healthy.

Violence against children knows no boundaries of culture, class or education. It takes place against children in institutions, in schools, and at home. Peer violence is also a concern, as is the growth in cyberbullying. Children exposed to violence live in isolation, loneliness and fear, not knowing where to turn for help, especially when the perpetrator is someone close. Children's gender, disability, poverty, nationality or religious origin may all increase the risk of violence with the youngest being especially vulnerable as they are less able to speak up and seek support.

[Source: UNICEF]

Unless the world tackles inequity today, in 2030:

167 million children will live in **extreme poverty**



52 million children under age 5 **will die** between 2019 and 2030



60 million children of primary school age will be **out of school**



Source: UNICEF

The health, well-being and futures of **600 million** children in South Asia are at grave risk due to COVID-19

#LivesUpended

© UNICEF/UNI171626/PavelLar

HEALTH

The latest data available shows that:

- At least half of the world's 7.3 billion people are not receiving the essential health services they need.
- In 2010, almost 100 million people were pushed into extreme poverty because they had to pay for health services out of their own pockets.
- The risk of a 30-year-old person dying before the age of 70 years from a cardiovascular disease, a chronic respiratory disease, diabetes or cancer was 22 per cent for men and 15 per cent for women – most in low and middle-income countries.
- In 2017, an estimated 5.4 million children died before reaching their fifth birthday. 1 in 14 children dies before reaching age five. Yet, substantial progress has been made in reducing child deaths, with the global under-5-mortality rate having dropped by 49 per cent since 2000.

Source: www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/health/index.html





ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE & EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS

Article 1 - Universal Declaration of Human Rights

LIST OF HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Adequate Housing
Administration of Justice
Albinism
Business and Human Rights
Children
Civic Space
Civil and Political Rights
Climate change
Coercive measures
Conscientious objection to military service
Corruption and Human Rights
Cultural rights
Death penalty
Democracy
Detention
Development
Disappearances
Discrimination

Education
Environment
Executions
Food
Forced evictions
Freedom of Opinion and Expression
Freedom of peaceful assembly and of association
Freedom of Religion and Belief
Health
HIV/AIDS
Human Rights Defenders
Human rights education and training
Human Rights Indicators
Humanitarian action
Independence of Judiciary
Indigenous Peoples
Internal Displacement

International Order
International Solidarity
Land and Human Rights
Leprosy
LGBTI people
Local Government and Human Rights
Mental health and human rights
Mercenaries
Migration
Minorities
Nationality
Older persons
Plans of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights
Poverty
Privacy
Private military and security companies
Racism

Reprisals
Rule of Law
Safety of Journalists
Situations
Slavery
Social Security
Terrorism
Torture
Trade and Investment
Traditional values
Trafficking in Persons
Transitional Justice
Treaty Body Strengthening
Urbanization and Human Rights
Violent extremism
Water and sanitation
Women's human rights
Youth's human rights

06

Significant trends in the United Nations vision that impact human rights

Racism

After a three month long COVID-19-enforced break, the Human Rights Council resumed giving the green light to a rare Urgent Debate on racism, alleged police brutality and violence against protesters sickened by the killing of American George Floyd in police custody. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination called on the United States to make immediate structural reforms to end racial discrimination, and to uphold its obligations under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In its formal statement published online, the Committee urged the US to fully respect the Convention, which it ratified in 1994, and to ensure a wide understanding of the Convention among its law enforcement officials through training and education curricula.

Source: www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25957&LangID=E

Inequality

Today, wherever people live, they don't have to look far to confront inequalities. Inequality in its various forms is an issue that will define our time. In some parts of the world, these divides are becoming more pronounced. Meanwhile, gaps in newer areas, such as access to online and mobile technologies, are emerging. The result is a complex mix of internal and external challenges that will continue to grow in the future.

Groups such as indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees, and ethnic and other minorities continue to suffer from discrimination, marginalisation, and lack of legal rights. This is pervasive across developing and developed countries alike and is not tied to income. Inequalities of opportunity affect a person's life expectancy and access to basic services such as healthcare, education, water, and sanitation. They can curtail a person's human rights, through discrimination, abuse and lack of access to justice. In 2018, we saw the world's 12th consecutive year of decline in global freedom, with 71 countries suffering net declines in political and civil liberties.

Source: www.un.org/en/un75/inequality-bridging-divide

The Impact of Digital Technologies

Technologies can help make our world fairer, more peaceful, and more just. But technologies can also threaten privacy, erode security and fuel inequality. They have implications for human rights and human agency. Unequal access to technologies contributes significantly to discrimination and inequality. The digital space raises many difficult issues, in relation to privacy, freedom of expression, hate speech, discrimination, violence and exploitation (including against children), and sexual violence. Today, digital technologies such as data pooling and AI are used to track and diagnose issues in agriculture, health, and the environment, or to perform daily tasks such as navigating traffic or paying a bill. They can be used to defend and exercise human rights – but they can also be used to violate them, for example, by monitoring our movements, purchases, conversations and behaviours. Governments and businesses increasingly have the tools to mine and exploit data for financial and other purposes. Increasingly, digital cooperation between states – and a universal cyberspace that reflects global standards for peace and security, human rights and sustainable development – is seen as crucial to ensuring a united world. A ‘global commitment for digital cooperation’ is a key recommendation by the Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation.

Source: www.un.org/en/un75/impact-digital-technologies

A New Era of Conflict and Violence

The nature of conflict and violence has transformed substantially since the UN was founded 75 years ago. Conflicts now tend to be less deadly and often waged between domestic groups rather than states. Homicides are becoming more frequent in some parts of the world, while gender-based attacks are increasing globally. The long-term impact on development of inter-personal violence, including violence against children, is also more widely recognized.

Separately, technological advances have raised concerns about lethal autonomous weapons and cyberattacks, the weaponization of bots and drones, and the livestreaming of extremist attacks. There has also been a rise in criminal activity involving data hacks and ransomware, for example. Meanwhile, international cooperation is under strain, diminishing global potential for the prevention and resolution of conflict and violence in all forms.

Source: www.un.org/en/un75/new-era-conflict-and-violence

The Climate Crisis

Although the link between climate change and human rights seems forced, a deeper study indicates that both these are very closely interconnected. Climate change is indeed an environmental issue hampering human rights. Climate change causes more extreme weather events, exacerbates malnutrition and fuels the spread of diseases. No corner of the globe is immune from the devastating consequences of climate change. Rising temperatures are fueling environmental degradation, natural disasters, weather extremes, food and water insecurity, economic disruption, conflict, and terrorism. Sea levels are rising, the Arctic is melting, coral reefs are dying, oceans are acidifying, and forests are burning. It is clear that business as usual is not good enough. As the infinite cost of climate change reaches irreversible highs, now is the time for bold collective action.

Climate change is a major threat to international peace and security. The effects of climate change heighten competition for resources such as land, food, and water, fueling socioeconomic tensions and, increasingly often, leading to mass displacement.

Source: www.un.org/en/un75/climate-crisis-race-we-can-win

Women and Girls

Equality between men and women was a core tenet enshrined in the UN Charter in 1945. Yet, 75 years later, women and girls live in a world of widespread gender inequality.

Violence against women remains a human rights abuse on a massive scale. One in five women globally has experienced sexual and/or physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner in the past year. Current economic models have failed to generate progress and prosperity for all. The economic opportunity gap widened this year compared to last year, following an overall stall from 2006-2020. While extreme poverty has declined dramatically between 1990 and 2015, across regions, poverty remains gendered.

Globally, women aged 25-34 globally are 25 per cent more likely than men to live in extreme poverty. Most of these women lack access to social protection and public services that would provide them with sustainable routes out of poverty.

Despite progress in girls' education, nearly half a billion women and girls aged 15 years and over are illiterate and just 39 per cent of rural girls attend secondary school. Power and decision-making remain overwhelmingly dominated by men.

Gender equality remains unfinished business in every country of the world. Women and girls have less access to education and healthcare, too often lack economic autonomy and are under-represented in decision-making at all levels. The progress that has been made towards gender equality over the past quarter of a century, though slow and incremental, does however show that change is possible.

Source: www.un.org/en/un75/women_girls_closing_gender_gap

Shifting Demographics

Although population and human rights are separate issues, they are not independent of one another. Demographic trends and population policies continue to present evolving and, at times, new challenges to human rights. Among the specific demographic issues dealt with are: mortality, fertility, abortion, internal migration, international migration including refugees and undocumented migrants.

The world's population is expected to increase by two billion people, from 7.7 billion at present to 9.7 billion in 2050, before reaching a peak of nearly 11 billion by the end of the century as fertility rates continue to decline. During this period, the global population is projected to become more and more urban, while children below age 5 will be outnumbered by persons aged 65 or above.

Meanwhile, people are on the move. People move for many reasons, including work, family and education. A growing number, however, are leaving their homes and communities as a result of violence, persecution, deprivation or disasters, including as a result of climate change. Together, these factors have led in recent decades to a record high in the number of forcibly displaced persons. Since 2012, the number of refugees under the care of the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR, has nearly doubled. Nearly four out of every five refugees live in a country that shares a border with their country of origin. Human traffickers have exploited the vulnerability of migrants.

Source: www.un.org/en/un75/shifting-demographics

Investing in Health for an Equitable Future

Good health is a fundamental human right and a pillar of economic opportunity, yet for too many people around the world it is elusive (alusiiv). While significant strides have been made, such as in increasing life expectancy, progress has been unjustly uneven. Today, it is consider thath the humanity is we are at a sticking point – those within reach have realized the benefits of evolving technologies and care in health, yet the global community is struggling to reach the most vulnerable among us.

Meanwhile, today the world faces growing threats that could undermine hard-won gains and create additional headwinds toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3). Evolving trends in demographics, urbanization, and technology are impacting disease patterns, care, treatment, and health systems. On top of this, countries are not yet investing enough resources in core health priorities and systems, especially primary healthcare.

Source: www.un.org/en/un75/investing_in_health_for_equitable_future

Concluding remarks

This report aims to bring to attention the current pressing problems that humanity is facing as they have been reported by the UN. Our world is facing rising inequality, increasing hatred and intolerance, unemployment, demographic change, and rapidly growing numbers of migrants and refugees. The threat of pandemics represents a challenge for the international community and many are afraid about the future of global public health.

While the challenges we face are real, we should not be discouraged but rather persevere in prayer to better understand the mission we have at this time. Despite the negative news, we should remain optimistic about the future of this world because we strongly believe that God is still in control and He will not abandon us.

We must continue to promote the values we hold and show our love for others while working to protect and promote human rights in general and championing religious liberty in particular.

As Ellen White stated, “We should keep before us the rich promises that He has left on record. We should study the great waymarks that point out the times in which we are living” {Ellen G. White, 4MR 163.2}. “We are to see in history the fulfillment of prophecy, to study the workings of Providence in the great reformatory movements, and to understand the progress of events in the marshaling of the nations for the final conflict of the great controversy.” {Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church 8:307}

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United Nations Liaison for the Seventh-day Adventist Church and
the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA)*



07

Future events and activities

In order to promote Religious Liberty, the SDA Liaison to the United Nations will write reports and articles on religious liberty or on topics that relate to human rights and will organize events such as Symposiums, Religious Liberty Concerts, Conferences, Diplomatic Luncheons and Dinners.