

Bringing a Passionist Voice to the United Nations



Passionists International is now in its 21st year at the United Nations working to bring the needs of those most marginalized to the international arena. Why at the UN? This is the one place where countries come together to make commitments and hold each other accountable to promoting peace, sustainable development, and the human rights and dignity of all people. It is a large, imperfect institution that often moves slowly as it struggles for consensus, yet it is also capable of establishing important rights and responsibilities as well as legally binding treaties.

Civil society also has an important role at the UN - of bringing the voices and lived realities of people who are struggling to survive in the midst of poverty, food insecurity, lack of health care, climate crises, violation of land and human rights, gender-based violence, armed conflicts, and multiple forms of discrimination to the table. As the UN calls for all individuals to have the right to a dignified life and livelihood, a sustainable future, and life free from violence and discrimination, Passionists International joins with other non-governmental and faith-based organizations in keeping Member States alert to the issues that are harming people, and accountable to their commitments and beyond. In this, those of us representing religious organizations see our work at the UN as Gospel space; “Our Common Agenda”/Sustainable Development Goals as a kind of secular blueprint for Shalom; and the UN’s efforts to address the climate crisis very much in line with Pope Francis’ vision for “Our Common Home”. We feel it is a privilege and responsibility to be there, to have an opportunity to influence meaningful policy with and on behalf of the world’s poorest and most discriminated against. And we look for your input from your part of the world.

This year the world is at a critical juncture with multiple intersecting events of great concern. For now, I would like to draw attention to Haiti, which has been in the midst of multiple crises that are reaching unfathomable proportions; and also provide information on COP27, a critical UN conference on Climate Change which will be held in November in Egypt.

Spotlight on HAITI

A priority area for Passionists International has been advocating for Haiti. As you are aware from Fr. Rick Frechette, the situation has become increasingly dire, and began well before the assassination of President Moïse in July of 2021. The number of kidnappings by gangs had already begun to increase in March of that year, and included clergy, partners, staff members at St. Luke’s and St. Damien’s, and fear gripped the Haitian people, unable to safely leave their homes. Thousands have been displaced by gang violence. A group of religious NGOs at the UN with partners in Haiti (Passionists, Claretians, Sisters of St. Joseph, Sisters of Charity Federation, Dominican Leadership Conference, Sisters of Mercy, all part of the Justice Coalition of Religious at the UN) began to meet and reach out to our congregations there for on-the-ground reports. We urged the Security Council to hold a special meeting to address the high level of violence and insecurity that was occurring. We held our own hearing to bring Haitian voices to share

their experiences and perspectives on what Haiti needed to stop the escalation of violence. We met with Permanent Missions of Canada, Ireland and Mexico to bring the experiences shared by our partners and followed up with updates from Fr. Rick and others. As conditions continued to worsen we continued to raise concerns about gang violence and their control over Haiti: blockage of fuel, food, water and medical supplies, growing hunger and malnutrition, fear and trauma experienced especially by women (kidnappings and sexual violence) and children witnessing and at-risk of daily violence, the recruitment of young boys, etc. We submitted a report on Human Rights violations during Haiti's Universal Periodic Review. We wrote a series of letters to Security Council Members, UN Member States, Special Rapporteurs (on violence against children and women, right to health and security, among others). The recent arrival of cholera has added another threatening dimension.

We continue to consult regularly with a human rights specialist who formerly worked in Haiti and has linked us with many contacts at the UN in his continued engagement as a consultant there. The Security Council has finally been meeting more frequently to respond to the multiple crises in Haiti, and recently passed a first resolution to sanction gang leaders and those in collusion with them - freezing their assets and mobility, and the trafficking of arms. A second resolution is forthcoming and more complex, aimed at providing non-UN international assistance to the Haitian National Police to address the violence, release the fuel depots and assist Haitian efforts towards building peace and security. There are efforts to "get it right" this time, ensuring that Haitians lead in determining their needs, versus the international community repeating a pattern of "meddling" that has been detrimental to Haiti's governance and setting of its own path. Still, in the midst of so much loss of life and rapidly deteriorating conditions, many Haitians remain skeptical of involvement of the international community and what form it may take. (Security Council meetings re: Haiti can be followed on webtv.un.org)

We continue to keep engaging with the UN wherever we can. That is what we can do from here. But it is Fr. Rick and his partners and fellow religious in Haiti who are living out what it means to be in solidarity with the people of Haiti, including reaching out to change hearts and minds of those embroiled in the web of violence. Their lives, like all Haitians, are at risk each day. Yet they are bringing food, water, medical supplies to those most forgotten, treating cholera, helping to release victims, ministering to grieving and traumatized families in the midst of heinous violence, experiencing violence themselves on the roads and in their neighborhoods. In recent letters to co-workers, friends and supporters, Fr. Rick writes:

"The atrocities are unbelievable, the tragedies are heartbreaking, the destruction is massive. Literally everything is falling apart... We all face daily dangers, even of death. Never has it been more important to focus on the individual and vulnerable person in front of us, in need and anguish. Never has it been more important to believe that by saving even one person, we can save the world. Never has it been more important to do even the smallest thing in the most correct way, with great care and dignity. This focus and dedication will save us mentally and emotionally, and bring spiritual and material blessing from God..."

“...when raids on human dignity are unspeakable, you and I have only one course of action: We must be fully human in everything we think, feel, do and say. We must witness to the highest vision of humanity and show the highest road... We know how to get where many others cannot reach, for the benefit of those trapped ... We are, these days, doing a ton of work getting in between the cracks and reaching the isolated...”

About those cracks that have become their path, he shared this prayer of Rumi:

I said: What about my eyes? He said: Keep them on the road.
I said: What about my passion? He said: Keep it burning.
I said: What about my heart? He said: Tell me what you hold inside it.
I said: Pain and sorrow.
He said: Stay with it. The wound is the place where the Light enters you.”

Peace and prayers for all of Haiti.

To learn more about Fr. Rick's work, visit: stlukehaiti.org

For a list of helpful news sources, feel free to contact me. See contact info below.

COP 27 – UN Conference on CLIMATE CHANGE

6-8 November 2022 Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt

This important summit will bring together governments, civil society, and other stakeholders to discuss impacts of climate change, towards greater commitment in addressing it. This year's summit will specifically focus on *the need to accelerate climate action*. According to recent UN reports, only 26 of the 193 countries that agreed last year to step up their commitments to fight climate change have followed through with more ambitious plans. Drastic reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are desperately needed to avert catastrophic climate impacts, environmental and human, yet many countries are seeking more fossil fuels.

The Justice Coalition of Religious has created a helpful GUIDE to COP27 for virtual participation, including background information on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement and others: <https://jcor2030.org/communications-guides/>
The Guide is available in English, Spanish, and French.

For a good summary of current issues, scroll down to “*More Resources*” see article: *The UN & You - COP27*, by Teresa Kotturan, SCN

See the list of “*Recommended Events*”, including **dates, time zones and links to participation**:

Shoeless in Sinai – A Digital Pilgrimage – An opportunity to join Catholic Religious delegates at COP27 and your sisters and brothers around the world in online prayer and fruitful dialogue in Egypt and inspired responses toward Earth Justice in every nation. *Translation will be provided.*

“SISTERS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT” WEBINAR: 3 November

Launch of [UISG](#)’s spotlight report on Catholic Sisters’ ministries for care of Earth;

INTERFAITH GATHERING IN THE SPIRIT OF TALANOA DIALOGUE @ COP27: 6 November

will bring together climate justice advocates to reflect on solutions from a holistic perspective. It will be a hybrid event (open to participation in Egypt and online);

GLOBAL PRAYER VIGIL FOR EARTH: 7 November

Join Catholic Religious delegates at COP27 and your sisters and brothers around the world in an online prayer service.

For more interfaith resources:

UN’s Faith for Earth Initiative: A rich interfaith resource for Care for the Earth. *Select language at top right of webpage.*

<https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative>

Looking ahead, more information to come... *Select language at top right of webpage:*

COP 15 – UN Conference on Biodiversity 7-19 December 2022, Montreal, Canada

<https://www.unep.org/un-biodiversity-conference-cop-15>

Governments from around the world will come together to agree to a new set of goals to address the deterioration of diversity worldwide, to protect and restore nature.

For more information about Passionists International and our work at the UN, please contact me: Annemarie O’Connor, Exec.Director/NGO Representative to the UN at: aconnam@aol.com or passionists.international@gmail.com Our website, in progress: passionistsinternational.org Our office is located at 246 E. 46th Street, #1F, New York, NY 10017

Meetings of the UN Security Council and other UN organs can be viewed on webtv.un.org
Check live schedule and/or featured recordings.

Peace and prayers for all.

October 2022

Passionists International

Steeped in the Catholic social justice tradition and our Passion for Life, we strive to amplify the voices of those affected by all forms of poverty, inequality, discrimination, exploitation and violence. We are committed to the care of all creation, the empowerment of women and girls, the promotion of peace and reconciliation, and the building of socially just and resilient communities.