

Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations Newsletter

Bringing the United Nations to the Anglican Communion

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UNCSW65: Reflections from the Anglican Delegation



In March, the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations welcomed eight women from across the Communion to participate in the 65th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW65). The session focused on the theme of “Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls”. The Anglican delegates brought significant experience on these issues to the virtual gathering.

You can learn more about the conference [here](#) and check out the ACOUN's UNCSW Twitter campaign [here](#). An official report will be published at a later date.

The Anglican delegation was made up of: Robyn Boosey (Church of Australia), Bridie Boyd (Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia), Revd. Bianca Daebis (Episcopal Anglican Church of Brazil), Martine Dushime (Church of Burundi), Clare Hendricks (The Episcopal Church), Bishop Sarah Mullally (Church of England), Amal Sarah (Church of Pakistan) and Revd. Navina Thompson (Church of the Middle East and Jerusalem). We asked some of the delegates to share reflections on their participation and experience at UNCSW.

Reflections from Amal Sarah, The Church of Pakistan

Based in Lahore, a metropolitan of Punjab, Pakistan, it seemed as if we live in a valley of oppression, where young girls are raped and deprived of education, where women become targets of domestic abuse, and where the violation of the rights of women and girls is an accepted norm. Being an Anglican delegate, I got an opportunity to reset my lens and look at the world and the faces of the same forms of abuse that we experience in South Asia on the whole and Pakistan particularly. A woman facing domestic abuse in a far-flung village of Punjab is no different than the one sitting in the



Amal Sarah, The Church of Pakistan

halls of the United Nations. UNCSW65 provided an avenue to take a worldwide view and see faces of oppression and denied rights, which is not just the case in Pakistan but a menace hitting every corner of the earth for centuries. In one way or another, we are all on the same boat.

The UNCSW65 opened my eyes and I reflected upon different practical steps that we as church leaders need to take into action as the responsibility lays on each and every individual to do so. I plan to further uplift our young women and girls in Pakistan as most of them are victims of oppression, facing domestic abuse on a daily basis and having no voice in making independent decisions as it undermines the family honor. Moreover, ‘importance of education’ seemed an obsolete school essay topic but CSW65 made me realize there is still a need to educate people on the importance of acquiring education, especially for young girls, if we desire to make them independent decision makers, fight all forms of abuse and live a life free from injustice and discrimination.

I found UNCSW65 to be an amazing platform and a connecting bridge with people from all around the world. Hearing stories of pain and happiness, overcoming injustice, success and transformation and much more, which made me realize that nothing in the world hinders your success if you have determination and courage to face all hurdles that come your way. I believe that the concept of being on the same boat has strengthened me a lot and I look forward to creating more ripples by dropping a pebble of hope in the sea of oppression to make some difference, transform lives and save a soul.

Reflections from Bridie Boyd, The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

Attending UNCSW65 was an incredible experience. Whilst it was heartbreaking to hear of all the struggles women still face across the globe, it was remarkable how many people came together to stand up for women everywhere and seek to make things better for them. It was special to see various faith groups working to create change within their communities and striving to be a part of the global



Bridie Boyd, The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

movement for equality. It was also incredible to see many religious institutions beginning to raise up women and girls within their faith context, and taking ownership for the need to improve gender equality within their own belief structures. There were some lovely stories and speakers discussing how groups are reworking traditions to be more inclusive; something as simple as having women preaching can have a huge impact on girls and young women, and lets them know they are valued and able to speak within their own faith group.

One of the points that struck me deeply was how faith communities can be impactful upon wider society and how programmes run inside faith institutions can affect the culture outside of the community. For example, an anti-domestic violence programme run inside a church can impact domestic

violence outside the church. Sometimes it is easy to forget that while we as Christians are not ‘of the world’ we are still ‘in the world’ and we need to remind ourselves that our actions (positive or negative) go beyond the walls of where we worship.

Having been inspired, and having had my hopes for the future of women boosted, I am excited to carry on encouraging young women to take part in church governance and to strive for leadership roles in their faith community. My sincere hope is that churches across the globe are willing to let them lead.

Reflections from Bishop Sarah Mullally, The Church of England

It was a privilege to meet with women from across the Anglican Communion at CSW65. There was joy in worshiping together and working together. It raised for me again the need for persistence in ensuring that women’s voices are heard in every level of political, social and faith life of our communities.

It was a good coincidence that I was working on the Domestic Abuse Bill as it gained Royal Assent in the UK Parliament while UNCSW65 was taking place. We gained ground in ensuring that non-fatal strangulation was recognised in law and that some financial barriers to migrant women in reporting abuse were removed. However, we still have some way to go to ensure that the UK Government will uphold its promise to treat victims as victims first and first foremost and at least ratify the Istanbul Convention before it marks the 10 year anniversary of the signing of the Convention in 2022.



Bishop Sarah Mullally, The Church of England

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: Engaging Indigenous Anglicans

The 20th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) was held this April with the theme: “Peace, justice and strong institutions: the role of indigenous peoples in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16” to which the Anglican Communion Office at the UN released a [statement](#) based on the issues indigenous Anglicans are facing today. The Anglican Communion’s Office at the United Nations (ACOUN) was delighted to support three delegates to participate in the Forum: Reverend Ruihana Paenga and Reverend Christopher Douglas-Huriwai, both from the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, and Donna Bomberry, from the Anglican Church of Canada. The delegates attended meetings and events where they advocated for the issues faced by indigenous peoples in their respective Provinces and regions of the world. Donna shares, “I was most interested in who the Canadian politicians were and what they have to say on the issues. I rarely get to hear their views on Indigenous issues in Canada. It was all a learning experience, and I now need to get connected to my ecumenical coalitions to see what they are doing on some of the issues.”



Donna Bomberry, The Anglican Church of Canada

The ACOUN also organized an event on the margins of the UNPFII titled: “Identity at the Intersection of Indigeneity and Christianity: An indigenous dilemma.” The event provided a space for speakers like to confront the internal and institutional tensions in holding both Christian and indigenous identities, especially in spaces where Christianity is so heavily linked with historic oppression. The panel included Archbishop Mark Macdonald, National Indigenous Anglican Archbishop, Anglican Church of Canada, Reverend Bradley Hauff from The Episcopal Church, Rev Dr Hirini Kaa, Kaiārahi, faculty of Arts at The University of Auckland, Pastor German Loayza of the Bolivian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Seforosa Carroll, Programme Executive for Mission from the

Margins, World Council of Churches, and former UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Victoria Tali-Corpuz. Panelists agreed that the process of reconciliation between the Church and indigenous peoples needs to be active, ongoing and paired with a deep understanding of the interconnectedness between indigenous knowledge, traditions and spirituality and its cross into Christianity, embracing both identities simultaneously.

We are grateful to The Episcopal Church, The Lutheran World Federation, The World Council of Churches and The United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society for supporting this event as co-sponsors.

One of the key outcomes of the UNPFII was the establishment of an International Decade of Indigenous Languages, beginning in 2022. The Decade will be a time where all States and other stakeholders are called to work towards preserving the traditional knowledge and customs carried by indigenous languages. **The ACOUN will share more about how Anglicans around the world can be involved in this work ahead of the launch in 2022.**

The ACOUN is engaged with indigenous issues beyond the Permanent Forum, including consulting on an submission to the forthcoming General Recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on the rights of indigenous girls and women. General Recommendations provide guidance to signatories to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on how they should meet their treaty obligations as they relate to more specific areas of policy. The ACOUN hopes to produce a written submission which will highlight the efforts and challenges of indigenous Anglican women and girls and amplify their struggles and achievements in this particular Forum. **If you would like to participate in consultations for the ACC's submission, please get in touch using the contact information at the bottom of this newsletter.**

Indigenous voices and wisdom are also at the heart of Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) planning for this year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow. The Anglican Indigenous Network is part of the Working Group for this work, and the Working Group is particularly focusing on how it can support the implementation of ACC resolutions that speak to the impact of climate change on indigenous communities.

If you want to learn more about the Permanent Forum, including further outcomes and virtual regional dialogues, [click here](#).

You can also watch the full webinar [here](#) and you can check out the ACOUN Twitter campaign in honor of the Permanent Forum [here](#).



A snapshot of the panelists from the event: "Identity at the Intersection of Indigeneity and Christianity: An indigenous dilemma."

The Commission on Population and Development

A Reflection from Jillian Abballe, Advocacy Manager and Head of New York Office for the ACOUN

Climate change, the impacts of the COVID19 pandemic, and worsening food insecurity were the major focus of the ACOUN's written statement to the 54th Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development (CPD54). The Commission, held at the United Nations in April, focused on



Jillian Abballe, Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations

population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development. The statement, which was written by the ACOUN with input from the Anglican Alliance, was one of only twenty civil society statements accepted as an official document to the Commission and showcased Anglican responses to the interrelated impacts of climate change, COVID19, and food insecurity.

During the Commission, I was able to address the multi-stakeholder panel on the CPD54 theme which featured researchers, academics, practitioners, and UN representatives.

My intervention focused on the inclusion of faith actors in strategies to address food insecurity as well as the importance of building resilient and culturally-appropriate food systems in low-lying small island states. Respondents emphasized the important role of churches and religious leaders in offering innovative, context-specific solutions and advocating - at the community and national level - for transformative pathways to sustainable food systems. Faith-based organizations have been noted as key stakeholders at the UN Food Systems Summit, which will take place in September. However, there has been concern expressed that the Food Systems Summit is over-emphasizing corporations and not truly representative or inclusive. You can read more about civil society and indigenous peoples' engagement in food security and the Summit [here](#). If you want to contribute to this issue, you can sign up to the Faith and Food Coalition, "a coalition of faith-based organizations bringing together voices from around the world to contribute to the UN Food Systems Summit." You can find the link to their website [here](#).

2021 was a notable year for the Commission as it was the first time an Agreed Resolution was adopted by consensus after many years of member states failing to reach agreement. We should celebrate these successes of intergovernmental collaboration and encourage our leaders to continue working together towards the betterment of our world for all people.

You can learn more about CPD54 [here](#) and learn more about the Food Systems Summit [here](#).

Looking Ahead

Our office will be participating in other UN conferences and events throughout the year including the **High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development** (6 to 15 July), the **76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly** (14 to 21 September) and the **United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26)** (1 to 12 November). We are always delighted to assist members from the Communion in participating at these conferences. If you are interested in getting involved, please email us at un.rep@anglicancommunion.org or go to: bit.ly/acoun.