



Partnership for Global Justice

April 2017

# Partnership For Global Justice Monthly Newsletter

Welcome to the Partnership for Global Justice Monthly – a newsletter about PGJ programs, news from the United Nations and its briefings, and information about the activities of our participating membership. With this Monthly, we invite our members to provide updates of their social justice initiatives and share their related experiences. Please respond to this posting with a comment on our blog or send your thoughts to [partnershipforglobaljustice@gmail.com](mailto:partnershipforglobaljustice@gmail.com).

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## LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear PGJ Members,

April is a time of celebrating life: the life of the Resurrected Christ, the life of Earth, the life of indigenous peoples as they celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the new life in nature, and the new life in you. Personally, I am rejoicing in being back in the office after my February fall and surgery which required, and still requires, physical therapy. However, it has also given me a new perspective on my health and the sufferings of others.

On April 22, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Paris Agreement. That was a joyous occasion, full of hope and life. Given the recent events in the United States, we face a struggle to meet the goals of that agreement as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. One of the Goals, Goal 14, states *Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development*. Living on Long Island I have come to a greater appreciation of ways the oceans are essential for food and for climate – and how they are being polluted. So, I challenge myself and you not to use any plastic bags and to recycle other plastics.

The UN is hosting a Conference on Oceans June 5-9. Here is the link to the home page for that conference. <https://oceanconference.un.org/> I encourage you to watch some of the webcasts or to attend some of the sessions if possible.

The PGJ Board has begun planning for the 2017 Annual Meeting which will be held in the Weber Retreat and Conference Center from October 23-26. The Weber Retreat and Conference Center is located on the Adrian Dominican Sisters' Motherhouse campus. Adrian is located in southeast Michigan in Lenawee County. Our address is 1257 East Siena Heights Drive, Adrian, Michigan, 49221-1793. Here is a link to the home page: <http://weber.adriandominicans.org/>

I take this opportunity to ask if you know any persons who would benefit from a day at the UN. The candidates and formation directors of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ will be in attendance on June 9, and would welcome formation personnel from your congregations. Please let me know if you are interested by May 22.

May the Peace of Christ fill your hearts, your homes and your communities.



JoAnn Mark, ASC  
Executive Director



## March 23 General Assembly High-Level Action Event: Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Agenda



### Part 1: Panel: Taking Stock on Climate – Ambition and Action

Moderator **Andrew Steer** President and Executive Officer, [World Resource Institute](#)

**Dr. Hoesung Lee**, current Chair of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), pointed out some startling changes in our climate: we increased global temperatures by one degree between 2015 and 2016. This is very clear evidence that the planet is warming. Since the 1950s, the temperature has changed more than it had for millennia. The oceans continue to warm, acidify, and lose oxygen, and the biomass of marine fish is being greatly reduced. Rising water levels are already threatening coastal regions. *[More on Oceans after June Conference.]*

The human influence on climate is clear, Dr. Lee assured us. To maintain the Earth's temperature at less than a 2-degree increase *[Scientists say we need to raise it no more than 1.5 degrees to avoid devastating consequences]*, will demand a great reduction in carbon emissions.

The [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and efforts to slow climate change are “mutually supportive,” said Dr. Lee. Efforts to increase food availability, for instance, can include reducing the food waste we currently have. This will feed the people and also reduce the stress on the environment, because food production is one of the largest producers of carbon emissions. *[You can measure your [food's carbon footprint](#)]*. Dr. Lee was very firm in declaring that we cannot continue with “business as usual” and noted that adaptations for climate change will stabilize not only the planet but also the human environment, including the economy. We need to support the scientific research to address these needs.

Dr. Lee then showed a three-minute video, *Mission 2020 Necessary, Desirable, Achievable*, by Johan Rockstrom. The premise of the video is that we are “pushing Earth out of the Goldilocks equilibrium,” by which Earth can support human life.

Dr. Lee concluded his very sobering presentation by saying that we must “bend the curve of emissions by 2020” and become fully “carbon neutral” by 2050. In order to succeed, we must halve our emissions every decade, at every scale, from individual to nation.

**Secolene Royal**, Minister of Environment, Energy, and Marine Affairs of France, told us he was very proud of how quickly the world's nations ratified the Paris Agreement. To date, 137 countries have ratified the Agreement; only 58 have not yet done so. Some of these have long ratification processes or are in the middle of elections, which slows the process.

On implementing the Paris Agreement, he said that there are now about 20 texts on implementation to adopt. There are two key matters on implementation: We have to stick to our ambition of a less-than-2- degrees increase in temperature and we have to balance our adaptation, especially for African countries and Small Island States.

A First Report on climate assessment is being prepared; this involves contacting each country to be sure they are reducing carbon emission in their energy use. The good news is that the cost of renewable energy is dropping, narrowing the difference with fossil fuels.

As for funding the implementation, Dr. Lee reported that the news is good. Public and private funding are being identified to meet the \$100 billion a year goal agreed to in Paris. All international bodies now have green funding, and investors are shifting toward green investments. France has issued the first [Green Bond](#), very successfully; this Bond is “now being marketed everywhere.”

Coalitions are forming to implement the SDGs and implement the Paris Agreement. These coalitions, he said, are focused well: for instance, on African nations, where there are many different coalitions for the SDGs – focusing on water, gender, etc. He particularly praised Senegal for bring to the Security Council the connections between access to water and security.

Mr. Royal cited two examples of successful work for implementation: for SDG 7 [*Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all*], great progress is being made for Africa in renewable energy. The goal was to produce 10 gigawatts of sustainable energy by 2020, and 3000 gigawatts by 2030. Nineteen projects are already beginning. On SDG 9 [*Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation*], \$30 million annually is being committed to work toward energy and carbon targets.

Before the Paris negotiations, the oceans were not considered in discussions of climate change, but now eighteen coalitions are dealing with oceans and climate initiatives, with funding from many nations. These include dealing with plastic pollution of the oceans and coastal erosion in West Africa. “We have our toolbox, Multilateralism,” Mr. Royal declared; “humanity has taken a huge step forward the SDGs.”

**Luke Daunivalu**, Charge D’Affaires to the UN from Fiji, told us about the preparations for the next Conference of Parties (COP23) to assess progress on the Paris Agreement, which will be hosted by Fiji and held next November 6-17 in Bonn, Germany.

As an island nation with fewer than 1 million people, Fiji is especially feeling the effects of climate change. Last year, for instance, Fiji was pounded by two huge cyclones just a few weeks apart. For such nations, Mr. Daunivalu maintained, “Carbon emissions reduction is more urgent than ever before. . . Failure is not an option.” We must build on the momentum of past years, he urged us, and work together to ensure that the Paris Agreement Rule Book is completed by COP24 (2018). This will identify and balance what all states, businesses, NGOs, etc. will do to advance the global climate agenda.

[Green Climate Fund](#) Director **Howard Ramsey** told us that for a long time he saw attending to climate change as a burden, but he now sees the transition as a source of creativity and opportunity. While “momentous investment in climate change is now underway,” this is not true for the most vulnerable developing countries. The Green Climate Fund helps developing countries take action that will fulfill their development goals while they reduce climate change.

We must use our public resources (currently \$410 billion) wisely, Mr. Ramsey said, but the needed adaptations will require trillions. We must use what we have to leverage billions more. Investments, to be fully effective, must be shaped by the legitimate aspirations of the country, to be transformative for them, creating markets, for instance., to change the global economy and make a contribution to sustainable global development.

Governor **Jay Inslee** of Washington State noted that, in our progress from stone axe to space flight, we did not purposely destroy the planet, but we must move to counter the effects of our fossil fuel-based development. Washington State (which he remarked is the closest point in US to Fiji) is an innovative state, working to deal with forest fires and acidification of the oceans. Since 2006, US west coast states and British Columbia have been shutting down coal plants, increasing electric transportation, capping emissions, and battling ocean acidification. Forty-plus jurisdictions have formed this international alliance.

Bragging a little, Gov. Inslee said that “Progress in Washington State will not be stopped by anyone at any time. Our confidence will not be suppressed.” The States, rather than the federal government, he noted, have been the “laboratory of democracy,” so we can count on the state of Washington to move forward. “Our people want more great jobs,” he said, “less carbon pollution, less ocean devastation. This is an opportunity.”



Gov. Inslee concluded by saying that he saw the United Nations as the United People, and thanked the UN for our help in protecting his grandchildren.

The final speaker was **Princess Abze Djigma** of Burkina Faso, an engineer and innovative entrepreneur. She began by saying that what is important is the impact on the people. The solutions to climate change are there, she said, quoting a Burkinabe saying: “Solutions are right there; you just walk in and out without seeing them until someone shows them to you.”

She has seen much progress, with business moving forward. Students are also benefitting: 90% of their children now have education, as opposed to 15% in the past.

While Burkina Faso is able to do a certain amount locally, she emphasized the need for an African platform for technology. This would make vocational training more effective, learning to recognize what is good for a particular country or region and what is not, and what can be adapted to their climate. (Burkina Faso was at 41degrees C the other day, she said – that is 105.8 F– in March!)

Burkina Faso is training 5000 youth in sustainable energy fields, to accelerate their commitment to the Paris Agreement. One initiative is [MAMA-light](#) sustainable products, which the Princess sponsors. She is hoping for funding from the Green Climate Fund and COP23. She praised the investments they have been making to create innovations and said they are what drew her to this Forum.

***“We must ‘bend the curve of emissions by 2020’ and become fully ‘carbon neutral’ by 2050. “***

**– Dr. Hoesung Lee, current Chair of the International Panel on Climate Change**



***We need to “address the gaps between pledges and action” to stop temperature rises and emissions, and to “focus on delivering major actions to limit devastation to countries most affected by climate change.”***

**– Representative from Ecuador for the Group of 77 and China**



## March 23 High-Level Action Event: Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Agenda



### Part 2: High-Level Member State Statements

*In this portion of the program, Member States described their achievements and needs to achieve the SDGs and manage the effects of Climate Change. Peter Thomson, president of the General Assembly moderated the session.*

A representative from **Slovakia** reiterated the importance of connecting the SDGs and efforts to manage climate change. These efforts are complicated by the fact that climate change is increasing the number of conflicts, refugees and the struggle for resources. Much greater effort is imperative to promote economic development and technology in developing countries. Governments must encourage private sector innovation in these areas and in creating strategies for human development and conflict resolution. He reminded us that 2016 was the warmest year on record but also the year in which we saw the greatest commitment to act together to counteract the effects of climate change.

The representative from **Tajikistan** reported that the Republic has now completed ratification of the Paris Agreement and deposited its commitment with the UN yesterday. He cited the increased impact that climate change is having on the social and economic health of Central Asia: over the past 60 years, temperatures have increased 1 degree C, leading to intensified meteorological conditions. Dry and wet seasons have been disrupted, increasing numbers of natural disasters, like landslides and mudslides, and putting great stress on the country's fresh water. Adding to this is the degradation of glaciers: up to 1000 glaciers have disappeared, he told us. This threatens the sustainable development of Central Asia, and increases the need for coordination of water distribution.

Tajikistan has made progress in controlling emissions; 98% of electric power is now created by hydropower. It has the lowest levels of carbon emissions in the region. The country has a national action plan to mitigate climate change effects and is working on adaptation, studying ways to protect the remaining glaciers. All of this will require international relationships and urgently needed additional financing.

The representative from **Norway** declared the SDGs a "transformative global roadmap," since we have "No Planet B." He declared that the world needed continued political leadership to act on commitments we made. Norway is committed to reducing its emissions by at least 40% by 2020, is making national efforts, for instance to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. Norway also contributes to support developing countries. In Paris, they agreed to reduce emissions from tropical forests.

He concluded by declaring that there has been too much focus on the costs of action – but what is the cost of no action, inaction? he asked. These will far exceed the costs of action.

The representative from **Finland** reminded us that temperatures are rising much faster than predicted, so the transfer from fossil fuels and increases in efficiency have to be faster than we are doing now. He spoke of the important role of "sub-national" entities. Municipalities, for instance, have created a network to reduce emission by 79% by 2030 and reduce all greenhouse gasses. This has proved to have economic benefits and created many new jobs. Finland's national action plan is to be [carbon neutral](#) by 2030, recognizing that the nation has national and global responsibilities.



A representative of **Egypt and African Ministers on Environment** reminded us that Africa has contributed the least amount of emissions but has suffered the greatest effects of them – especially in sea level rise and increased desertification– while having the least resources to cope with these effects. Estimates place adaptation costs at \$12-15 billion annually, but Africa has only about \$3-5 billion available. Two major initiatives are [African Renewable Energy Alliance](#), including MAMALight (mentioned above) and the [African Adaptation Initiative](#). These initiatives have clear and measurable goals, but success will be based on international support, sustained and reliable financing, technology transfers, among other things.

A needs assessment process for each country is essential to assess particular challenges and aims, and to avoid efforts that will cause environmental damage and become barriers to trade. The group is committed to 20% renewable energy sources by 2020. For Africa, the stakes are too high to not succeed, so we must make the hard decisions to combat climate change.

Other nations expressed their commitment to acting on climate change and reported similar actions and challenges. The representative from **Ethiopia** emphasized the connections between climate change and poverty and called for the “widest possible international cooperation.” The **Senegal** representative spoke of climate change as the “major concern for the future of our planet.” The **Swedish** representative emphasized the importance of political leadership at all levels, from the UN to individuals, and of keeping in mind the interconnections of climate change, food security, water, human rights and general security. Research partnerships for evidence and analysis and on how to move forward are essential, as is more emphasis on conflict prevention.

***“Climate change is the major concern for the future of our planet.”***  
– Representative from Senegal



## March 23 High-Level Action Event: Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Agenda



### Part 3: Statements by Groups of Member States

A representative from **Ecuador for the Group of 77 and China** spoke of the need for political momentum to meet obligations, especially in adaptation and mitigation. We need to “address the gaps between pledges and action” to stop temperature rises and emissions, and to “focus on delivering major actions to limit devastation to countries most affected by climate change.”

Adequate and reliable financial and technical assistance must be given to must those with limited resources to adapt and mitigate. Those nations most affected also need capacity building.

The representative from the **European Union** reminded us that climate change is not yet in check even for 2 degrees, and that this has “direct security impacts.” The EU has committed 40% of its development funds to climate- relevant projects and is providing public finance for Africa and other vulnerable areas, and have included reducing emissions and energy reduction in all their policies. The EU encourages the Security Council to continue examining climate change’s impact on security.

The final speaker I heard [*72 others had applied to speak!*] was a representative from the **Maldives for the Small Island Developing States (SIDS)**, who emphasized the connections between addressing climate change and the SDGs. The SIDS “know the toll” of continued use of fossil fuels “all too well:” warming seas, depleted fish stocks, coral bleaching are already affecting their critical economic base and causing coastal erosion, as it is in the Caribbean as well. During Cyclone Winston, Fiji lost 10% of its land. The SIDS need full cooperation of all Parties to the Paris Agreement and commitment to a less than 1.5-degree increase of temperatures. Adequate, predictable financial sources and technology transfer are urgently needed by SIDS, who disproportionately suffer the effects of climate change. A commitment of \$100 billion by 2020 is essential. The representative closed with this plea, “All sectors need to mobilize resources quickly – our lives and societies depend upon it.”



## March 23, 2017 DPI/NGO CSW Briefing: "Youth Partnerships and the SDGs: Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls"



This Briefing was part of the CSW session on Women's Empowerment through Economic Opportunities. Secretary-General **Antonio Guterres** opened the CSW. His address is available [here](#). Pictures from the CSW and informational graphics on women and work are available [here](#). Clicking on the blue circles will show more data in each category.

The **Moderator** opened the session by reminding us that wage gap between men and women is globally an average of 23%.

[Mossoma Alam](#), a Youth Representative for Department of Public Information and for the International Association of Psychologists, recounted some statistics like those in the charts mentioned above: Estimates say that if women reached parity with men, the world's economy would be 28% higher; only 4% of the CEOs of Fortune 500 companies are women. In some places, such as Arab states, there is 50% more unemployment of women than men.

Ms. Alam reviewed arguments – myths mostly, she said – against equal employment of women: the myth that women have not invested in education, training and experience. Some women hold themselves back from applying for higher positions, which leads some to believe women have limited abilities. Women generally put themselves forward less, and when they do, they face social costs. Ms. Alam also noted that some are afraid of women taking charge. A major obstacle is what she called "homosocial reproduction," which means "a society reproduces in its own image" because people tend to hire those similar to themselves. Including women, for instance by making available more flexible hours, affordable child and elder care, would make economy go up and tap the skills of more talented people to bring greater organizational success.

Documentary Photographer [Ismail Ferdous](#), who is based in New York City but originally from Bangladesh, has covered employment, trafficking and the refugee crisis around the world. He sees himself as a "Witness of women's strength." One of his major projects is documenting women garment workers in Bangladesh garment workers, such as the [Rana Plaza Collapse](#), a 2013 incident in which 1130 died and thousands more were injured.

Bangladesh has the second largest garment industry in the world, after China. The garment industry is the most female-intensive industry; 80% of Bangladesh's 4 million garment workers are women. This is a growing sector of the economy: in 2009-10, all aspects of garment-making comprised 9-10%; by 2014 it made up 64% of Bangladesh's national economy. The work has meant empowerment for women as they found work and earned a salary. This has led to recognition of women's economic contributions and made the government more conscious of women's rights. It has also helped many women move out of poverty and be able to provide education for their children and to grow as individuals.

Mr. Ferdous warned us as an international community to be global minded and to keep companies from competing unfairly against each other, which leads to unsafe conditions like those that caused Rana Plaza's collapse.

***"Almost 60% of Afghan girls are married before age 16."***

**– Nahida Moradi, from the School of Leadership of Afghanistan**





**Ourania Yancopoulos**, of the Group of Friends for Gender Parity [and recent candidate for UN Secretary-General], began by praising the UN lobby exhibit of the time, [HERStory: a celebration of leading women in UN history](#). The United Nations, she pointed out, although more than half its Members profess to be working for gender parity is still far from achieving it.

As of 2016, only 21% of Secretariat employees were women. There are 424 male chairs of UN Committees and only 4 women. She praised such early

women leaders as Nobel Peace Laureate [Alva Myrdal](#); [Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit](#), first woman to serve as President of the General Assembly (1953); and Angle Brooks Randolph, second woman President of the General Assembly (1969).

She also mentioned other major leaders, first female heads of their countries, Norway's [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), [Helen Clark](#) of New Zealand, [Mary Robinson](#) of Ireland, and [Michele Bachelet](#) of Chile.

Ms. Yancopoulos said that we need to “re-brand” public spaces from “man space” to women-friendly and highlight the women who are already there, actively looking for women to follow.

We must lead by example and include women in peacekeeping, especially. This requires good data gathering and managing, as well as holding institutions accountable. “Where rules are silent,” she asserted, “women are usually not considered,” so we must make the rules explicitly include women.

**Nahida Moradi**, a young woman from the School of Leadership of Afghanistan and now studying in Oregon, told us that growing up she saw that women were unaware of their rights. Some legal and cultural barriers she observed: In 2009, laws denied women the right to leave their homes for school. Women could not get employment without permission of their husbands’ permission; they could not be guardians of their children in divorce, and could not inherit money or property.

Almost 60% of Afghan girls are married before age 16, which means no education. This is bad for the economy, she said. Also only one in twenty girls are educated beyond eighth grade. Education is most important and the key to empowering women.

She explained that there is now a battle for legal status for women, including education about their rights and about how other women in world are treated. They need rights to their children, too. If the female half of society is not economically empowered, the other half will not succeed, either. She encouraged young women: “You girls all have brains and strengths...go as far as you can go.”

***“We need to re-brand public spaces from ‘man space’ to women-friendly spaces.”***

**– Ourania Yancopoulos, Group of Friends for Gender Parity**



## March 31, 2017 Celebration of World Autism Awareness Day (2 April)

### Keynote Speaker at World Autism Awareness Day

by Patrick Del Re, PGJ Intern and Molloy College student

The UN observed **World Autism Awareness Day** on Friday, March 31. In general, World Autism Awareness Day is celebrated on April 2nd, as the beginning of World Autism Awareness Month. Its purpose is to turn an otherwise blind public eye to the issues and concerns of people with autism and their families. Charities devoted to raising money for autism awareness and to the concerns of those with autism hold many different types of fundraising and awareness-raising events throughout the month.

In cooperation with these charity groups, in 2008 the UN declared April 2 World Autism Awareness Day. The UN continues to hold yearly events in observance with this day to raise awareness, on an international level, for the concerns of people with autism. The theme this year was "*Towards Autonomy and Self-Determination.*" This focus on autonomy and self-determination recognizes an autistic person's right to live freely in international societies.

The keynote speaker of the morning session, Professor **Simon Baron-Cohen** of the Autism Research Centre at the University of Cambridge, argued that autistic people in general do not currently enjoy the basic human rights that others without autism enjoy. These basic human rights largely involve autonomy, as people with autism are often silenced and their concerns ignored. Baron-Cohen called for the de-stigmatization of autism, as he declared that rights for people with autism are currently less than those for people with other mental challenges. He compares autism with dyslexia, as dyslexia is currently considered a normal, acceptable challenge that individuals deal with on a daily basis. However, dyslexic people are not stigmatized even close to the extent that autistic people are. Baron-Cohen argues that in a classroom or workplace, ample time is (rightly) given to a dyslexic person to read or write something. By contrast, autistic people are not given those same opportunities in those same situations to remain up to speed with people who do not have autism.

This stigmatization (or even ignorance) of autistic people interferes with their rights to autonomy. People with autism have the capacity for self-determination; they just approach it in a different way than other people do. This lack of autonomy can change, he argued, with a greater awareness of and empathy towards people with autism. Autonomy and self-determination will not be achieved until the struggles and concerns of persons with autism are taken into consideration by everybody. The struggle for equal rights for all is an important one for all people, not just those who do not currently enjoy those basic human rights. As in any other case, achieving equal rights for autistic people will come with a greater recognition of their concerns and challenges in society.



## World Autism Day “Toward Autonomy and Self-Determination” Opening Speakers

by M. Doretta Cornell, RDC



*[I won't repeat what Patrick said on previous page; here are a few more bits of information offered by Professor **Simon Baron-Cohen**.]*

Prof. Baron-Cohen believes that because about 1% of the world is on the autism spectrum, it is not a disease but “an example of the neuro-diversity of human brains.” That is, the brains of persons with autism just work a little differently; we must learn to respect that difference.

Prof. Baron-Cohen also reviewed a little history of human rights: The concept only became widely recognized after the Holocaust, in the UN's [Declaration of Human Rights](#). Besides the murder of many people who were seen as “different” in the Holocaust, the Eugenics movement in the United States and elsewhere had led to the death of many with autism. However, the Declaration of Human Rights has not proved capable of extending rights to all people, so other declarations, such as the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), have been developed to focus on neglected populations.

One in five persons with autism are excluded from school, Prof. Baran-Cohen told us, and half of rest were bullied. In France, 80% do not go on to secondary school. Being deprived of the right to education deprives people of their future potential. Also involved is the right to access of other public services, including those for mental health. He noted that a very high rate of persons who commit suicide had some autism.

The right to work is also restricted for those with autism: only 15% adults are full employed. This deeply affects their feelings about themselves and puts them at a high risk for depression. He was happy to report that some enlightened employers are setting an example of reasonable adjustments to persons with autism. However, in much of ordinary life, ignorance of autism can lead to people being ejected from supermarkets, movies, etc. Many therefore suffer from loneliness and lack of friends.

People with autism often lack the protection of the law, as well: one in five have been stopped by police. His research shows that two-thirds of cops have had no training in interviewing someone with autism, and autism is also not recognized as a mitigating circumstance by most judges.

Those with minimal verbal ability are the most discriminated against.

Prof. Baron-Cohen concluded by calling for greater monitoring of human rights violations.



## World Autism Day Panel 1: Supported Vs. Substitute Decision-making

[Threaded throughout this panel were excerpts from the film [“Swim Team.”](#) about a New Jersey team comprised of young men with autism, with comments by their coach about the successes and challenges the young men faced..]

Prof. **Theresia Degener**, Chairperson of the [UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), addressed us from Geneva. She spoke of the need to respect the inherent dignity and right to autonomy for all people, recommending a shift from a medical model, in thinking about autism, to a social model and human rights model, which focus on the rights of an individual as a person, not on a condition. Such a stance does not allow restriction of human rights because of a disability; all are equal before the law. Many guardianship laws violate the rights outlined in the Declaration.

Changes could allow for solutions that recognize gradations of abilities and needs: some few may need legal guardianship (“substitute decision-making”), but most will need supported decision-making. But in many places, laws require guardians to have all decision-making powers. Allowing supported decision-making is similar to what most people need for complex decisions (such as consulting a lawyer in certain situations, or a specialist for treatment). Such accommodation would lead to less institutionalization. Of course, the amount and kind of support must fit the needs of the individual. “With adequate support,” Prof. Degener declared, “Nothing is impossible.” Substitute decision-making must be outlawed and the media must tell the world that guardianship laws must be repealed as a human rights violation, she declared.

**Prof. Robert Dinerstein**, Professor of Law at Washington College of Law of American University, also spoke for supported decision-making in relationships and practices, so that persons with autism can determine what they want for their own lives. Various countries are trying new arrangements: some have adequate supported decision-making systems; some, like Bulgaria, the United States and Israel, have pilot projects letting people know there are alternatives to guardianship. Much more education about this is needed.

**Zoe Gross**, Director of Operations of the [Autistic Self-Advocacy Network](#), explained more about difficulties with guardianship: a guardian could force an individual to have surgery, for instance. And in some states, those with guardians cannot vote. It is also difficult to get out of being in guardianship. Therefore, advocates must emphasize that persons with autism have needs and preferences; some may have difficulty expressing these and may need other media (for instance, using pictures) to communicate a preference. Not enough research has been done, Ms. Gross said, into how to provide access to communication alternatives. Much more awareness is needed of how people make decisions and ways in which they can express them.

**“Because about 1% of the world is on the autism spectrum, it is not a disease but “an example of the neuro-diversity of human brains.” That is, the brains of persons with autism just work a little differently; we must learn to respect that difference”**

– Professor Simon Baron-Cohen, at World Autism Awareness Day 2017



## Panel 1 Individual Milestones and Legal Capacity: A. The Road to Independent Living: From Early Intervention through College

*[This portion of the Day was most impressive – most of the presenters were persons with autism or family members, sharing their own experiences.]*

The first presentation in this Panel was by **Daniel Emig**, Self-Advocate and [Rooster Ranch](#) Leader, of the [Autism Housing Network](#). A friend read the talk Mr. Emig had prepared. He told of being bullied as a child and feeling lost, with “nothing to do” so he got into trouble. He was sent to his uncle, but he could not do the work as expected, so the uncle threw him out.

Fortunately, a counselor helped him through the crisis. He “would have been lost,” he said, if he had not learned of Rooster Ranch, where he found support and a job as a ranch hand. This has helped him to be independent. He ended by saying that he wants to live in a supportive community and marry the girl he loves.

**Prof. Janet Mulvey**, Director of the [Oasis Program](#) at Pace University, explained this college-based program, which supports students with autism so they can attend college. Admission requirements are the same as for all Pace students. To help Oasis participants navigate the transition to freshman year, there is 12-week summer program, directed by a social worker and, among others, a young man who went through the program. Students have peer mentors who also serve as role models, who works with them for an hour each day, helping with executive functions, for example. Over the four years, this time is reduced.

A big challenge, Professor Mulvey told us, is educating professors who are just learning how to deal with students with autism.

In sophomore year, each student starts building a resume, taking Civic Engagement Courses (required of all students), as a first step to moving out of the protective environment. Juniors and seniors receive further preparation for employment, such as interview practice and paid internships. Last year, all of the seniors had paid internships during the summer, and half of them are now fully employed.

The next presentation was by **Lisa McCauley Parles**, Esq., Attorney for [Parles Rekem](#). Ms. Parles spoke of her family’s difficulty in getting help for her brother Andrew, who was nonverbal and exhibited dangerous behaviors (such as eating broken lightbulbs). After eight moves, Andrew finally found a school where he acquired some language skills, learned to ride a bike, and other skills. However, when he was seventeen, he had a regression, including injuring himself. Things were so difficult that his brother had to sleep with their grandparents. The family then found a residential program, but it was 1500 miles away.

Andrew then experienced difficulty with his sight; since he communicates by iPad, his sight was essential. After many surgeries, he recovered his sight and now does volunteer work.

The program he is in provides a safe place and support on his bad days when he cannot go out in public. In answer to a question, Ms. Parles said, yes, it has been difficult, but the family needed to work for Andrew’s safety and to lessen his suffering. The choices can be very hard if a parent is also the guardian. She said that options are needed, for housing, for instance, in individual resident, apartments, or a residential program. her family found that they needed an array of choices and to support each other.

**Zemi Yenus**, Founder and Director of **The Joy Center for Children with Autism and other Developmental Disabilities in Ethiopia**, spoke of her son, Jojo. She had been told that Jojo “would never be functional.” Today, he can function and is working – and a taxpayer – in Ethiopia and hopes to get married.

Asked how he learned to read and write, Ms. Yenus replied, “The Ethiopian way: little by little.”

Jojo then read us a little piece he had written, to much applause from the audience.



The situation in Ethiopia for persons with autism is a “tragedy,” Ms. Yenus said, because of the great poverty and lack of understanding about autism. Many persons with autism are just kept at home with their parents. Some are chained, most are forgotten. Therefore she began her journey to help Jojo. She began the Joy Center with four children, “to get them into sunlight and a good home and give their parents a break.” In setting up her program, Ms. Yenus researched indigenous knowledge, therapies for improving speech, etc., with government help.

The Center now has 80+ children, in several schools. The parents support them. Finally autism is becoming a known issue in Ethiopia

To conclude the Panel, the Moderator, **Sofia Lachapelle**, a Journalist with *Telemundo*, asked Daniel Emig how important friends were to him. He replied that with friends, he “feels insulated by love and warmth . . . comfortable.”

## Panel 2. Navigating Relationships: Dating, Marriage and Parenthood

Moderator **Caren Zucker**, a Journalist, TV Producer, and co-author of *In a Different Key: The Story of Autism*, asked, “What is more important than to love and be loved?” She told us a little about people she met while writing the book, and ended by telling us about her son. She is hopeful that he will find a good relationship. He is already preparing, she said; he gets dressed up and watches Disney movies, “because girls like Disney movies.”

Dr. **Julia Ejiogu**, Founder and Director of [Autism Care and Support Initiative, Nigeria](#), told us that initially this was a small organization that started with her as a volunteer. They offered therapy, etc., but were not goal oriented; for instance, they did not aim for autonomy. The [Global Autism Project](#) taught them skills they did not have; now the Initiative as Nigerian therapists. They start diagnosing early, to find out what the problems are. To develop the participants’ autonomy. they begin by introducing simple choices: what to eat, what to where, then move on to who to make friends with. Through practice and repetition, they teach manners as they would for any children.

The students practice how to greet others, adapting methods from other places to Nigeria’s customs, of greeting, for instance. The repeat and repeat “till it becomes part of their being.” She told us of a man with an adult son: he gave the son employment in his own company, and then chose a wife for him (a socially acceptable practice in Nigeria). The moderator asked if persons with autism could choose their own spouses. Dr. Ejiogu replied that, certainly they could, if they begin early to learn the skills of decision-making.

**Hillary Freeman**, Esq., an Attorney at [Freeman Law Offices](#), told us of her brother, who was born before the newer laws came about. He is nonverbal and enjoys Sesame Street. Ms. Freeman advocates for parents trying to get services for their children. Her passion, she said, is to help develop independence and relationships for college and workplace, skills such as how to engage in conversation.

Her firm provides services that persons with autism need, such as step-by-step instruction to develop social thinking and relationship skills for intimacy. Holding hands and recognizing cues can be learned, she said, just as we learn to brush our teeth. She encouraged people to keep looking for the services they need; there are plenty available.

**Anita Lesko**, a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist and Self-Advocate, was diagnosed at age fifty and is married to a husband with some autistic spectrum. Her diagnosis came by chance, she said, and being diagnosed helped her to see that she is not the only one with her sensory traits. For instance, she has learned that having no facial expression does not mean having no feelings.

Ms. Lesko said that, until she met her husband, she did not know she was not happy.. Now she can enjoy simple things and get “a beautiful feeling.”



As a child, she said, she had to just keep going. All her interactions helped her build skills. She recommends that parents start their child working around the house, sending them to greet guests at the door, for instance, so that they will start learning relationship skills. The “biggest thing” about her and her husband, she says, is that they accept each other.

**Walter Suskind**, Regional Spokesperson, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and Advocate for Sibling Engagement, said he wants his brother, who has autism to have a happy life and to find a girlfriend. His brother talks a lot about this. Siblings play an important role, walking through life with the person with autism for hi or her whole life. He works to have siblings trained to be the best advocates for their siblings. They also “fill void of loneliness” and help them build the ability to have relationships with other people. Relationships can be difficult for anyone, but are more so for those with autism, so it is important to begin early, with siblings.

*Two other panels followed these:*

***Panel 3. Vocational Training and Employment: A Key to Independence and Self-Sufficiency***

***Panel 4. the Way Forward: the 2030 Agenda and the Commitment to Leave No One Behind***



***“What is more important than to love and be loved?”***

***– Caren Zucker, co-author of In a Different Key: The Story of Autism***



## Preparing for the Oceans Conference

By Erika Sullivan, PGJ Intern and Molloy College Student

During the week of February 13, the UN held two different conferences with multiple sessions in [preparation for the Oceans Conference](#) that is going to be taking place on June 5th through June 9th. These sessions were held to discuss the problems facing the Oceans around the world and the kinds of solutions that may be possible to help alleviate these problems. (The program for the first conference, A World of Blue, can be found here: <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/unga17/programme.pdf> )



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Both preparatory conferences spent a considerable amount of time discussing the ways that the oceans are being damaged and put into jeopardy, and how the destruction of the oceans is having and will continue to have a negative effect on not only the marine life, but on all other forms of life, particularly humans. There was a particular focus on the importance of recognizing climate change and how combating it is a vital part of protecting and preserving the oceans.

A representative from Belgium noted that everyone loves the sea, so it would be smart to engage tourists in cleaning the sea and making them aware of how important clean oceans really are. It was also suggested that it would be smart to involve the cruise ship industry, to urge them to make a commitment to clean water.

There was also a great amount of discussion on the importance of education. Not only education for children about the ocean, but for adults as well. This kind of education is called [Ocean Literacy](#), led by the [World Ocean Observatory](#). If the public is more educated about the Oceans, how they work and how important they are, there is a greater chance that more people will care about preserving and protecting the oceans and a greater chance that things will actually get done.

One of the biggest problems discussed in both conferences was the incredible amount of plastics that are in the Oceans. The Russian representative noted that, at the rate we're going, the amount of plastics in the ocean may someday equal the amount of fish. Measures need to be taken to reduce the amount of plastics that are being used and getting into the oceans. There was a call for action to get more governments, both federal and local, involved. These governments are a necessity in stopping the use of so many plastics, especially plastic bags, from being used and getting into the oceans. A beached whale discovered recently was found to have over 30 plastics inside of it. Chemicals and plastics are also being found in our foods, and even in salt. These are only two examples of a much larger plastics problem that is plaguing our Oceans.

More information about the UN's assessment of the state of the oceans can be found here: <http://www.worldoceanassessment.org/> and more information about the problems being faced and the importance of the oceans can be found here: <http://www.conservation.org/what/pages/oceans.aspx> .

As was said at the World of Blue conference, there really is no "away" for our garbage and the problems facing the oceans. Everyone needs to push more towards embracing sustainable products and sustainability. Without more people caring about these problems and the state of the oceans, we as a planet and a race are doomed. Hopefully, the Oceans Conference in June will lay the groundwork for a unified effort to protect and preserve the oceans for years to come.



### Board Activities

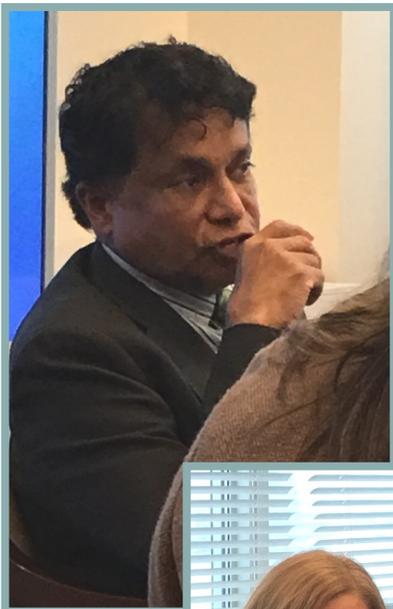
The PGJ Board has begun planning for the **2017 Annual Meeting** which will be held in the Weber Retreat and Conference Center from October 23-26. The Weber Retreat and Conference Center is located on the Adrian Dominican Sisters' Motherhouse campus. Adrian is located in southeast Michigan in Lenawee County. Our address is 1257 East Siena Heights Drive, Adrian, Michigan, 49221-1793. Here is a link to the home page: <http://weber.adriandominicans.org/>



### PGJ Orientations



On March 31, a group of **Molloy Doctoral Education students** spent the afternoon at the UN. They received a briefing about the current migration situation from Mr. **Bela Hovi**, Population Division Chief of Immigration Branch of UN DESA, and engaged in a wide-ranging conversation with Mr. **Ramu Damodaran**, Chief of the UN Academic Impact Secretariat, of the Department of Public Information, about education, the United Nations, and the world situation.



### Art Exhibit at the UN - MercyFirst

Eileen McGann, Director of the Arts and Creative Therapies of [MercyFirst](#), announced that MercyFirst has been approved to present an **Art Exhibit** from June 12-16, 2017, in the Delegate area (not open to the general public) at the United Nations in New York. Congratulations to Eileen and MercyFirst for having been chosen for this honor!



**Together**  
**Respect, Safety and Dignity for All**

Eileen writes, “The art show is being supported by the [TOGETHER Campaign](#) and will focus on the works we have done that unite all of our youth – host country, migrants and refugees – to increase awareness, tolerance acceptance and work toward social justice. This includes a project ABOUT ME as well as the art exchange with refugee children in Istanbul.” Eileen promises more information as the project is developed.

Those of us who attended the Partnership Annual Meeting last October will remember the display Eileen brought of MercyFirst’s work connecting young people at their center with their peers around the world.



## Acting Against Trafficking of Persons



Arthur Zeitler, PGJ Intern and Molloy College student, greets Lima James when Ms. James spoke at Molloy College on April 12.

Arthur comments: “Lima James is the head of the [LifeWay Network](#), a human trafficking organization based in New York that provides shelter and housing to female victims. I spoke to her in the course of my internship and greeted her in person last Thursday when she was invited to speak on my campus for the first time. “



## US Government Threatens to Pull Out of the UN

by Patrick Del Re, PGJ Intern and Student at Molloy College

On January 3, 2017, Alabama Representative Mike D. Rogers proposed the [“American Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2017”](#) (H.R 193) to Congress. The Bill was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. The bill proposes a repeal of the 1945 [United Nations Participation Act](#), withdrawal of any US funds from UN operations, including in peacekeeping operations, and a repeal of the Environment Program Participation Act of 1973 and of the US’s participation in the World Health Organization.

No vote or serious consideration of the bill has yet been undertaken in the House. The bill is currently co-sponsored by eight other Republican representatives, but seems to have no other support. Rep. Rogers does not sit on the Committee on Foreign Affairs and therefore likely does not have much leverage with them, according to Business Insider.

The Bill has been proposed to no avail by Republican representatives each year for the last twenty years, according to Snopes.com. However, the political climate for this particular year (and the following three after it) differs vastly from that of the last twenty. Since his “America First” Inauguration Speech, President Trump and his administration have made it abundantly clear that they have little to no interest in foreign affairs. Executive orders re-instituting the so-called “global gag-order” and halting entrance to the country by people from specific largely Muslim countries are just the first examples of this administration’s disregard for global politics.

From frequent promises made by the President to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement and support for nuclear arms proliferation arise anti-global, anti-peace, anti-survival sentiments that are being increasingly echoed worldwide. Couple those sentiments with a thin-skinned President who has belittled critical actresses and challenged the Pope’s knowledge of Christianity, and this often-disregarded bill becomes a little more serious. Before taking office, President Trump took to Twitter to declare the UN a “club for people to get together, talk, and have a good time.” Clearly, the President (and the sponsors of this bill) do not realize the magnitude of the organization’s success in preventing another World War.

The implications of H.R. 193 are far-reaching. Passed or not, this bill supports this administration’s worrisome “America first” mentality. As this sentiment has passed from the fringe into the White House, it has given anti-globalists a powerful voice. According to Business Insider, Senator Lindsey Graham is reportedly drafting a bill that would withdraw American financial support from the UN. Without US financial support, the UN would lose roughly one fifth of its budget and would be severely limited in the humanitarian, environmental, and peace-keeping work that it performs.

It is important to remain vigilant, for, as global citizens and members of an NGO, we cannot allow Republican lawmakers to undermine over 70 years of peace and cooperation between nations. Antiquated, anti-global notions of America must not interfere with keeping peace and advocating for a safer, cleaner world.

*[Editor’s Note: Please call, visit or write to your Congressional Representatives and Senators to make known your belief that the United States must remain part of the United Nations and fully fund our share of its operations. Although no actions has begun in Congress, the alt-right media has a virulent campaign going against the U.S. remaining in the UN.]*

# PARTICIPATE IN UN ACTIVITIES

The UN is hosting a **Conference on Oceans** June 5-9. Here is the link to the home page for that conference. <https://oceanconference.un.org/> I encourage you to watch some of the webcasts or to attend some of the session if possible.



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## Orientation

Orientation on June 9 for individuals in formation with religious congregations. Please contact Sr. JoAnn for more information: 212-682-6481 [Partnershipforglobaljustice@gmail.com](mailto:Partnershipforglobaljustice@gmail.com)

## Let's Keep Connected:

Please link the Partnership for Global Justice Website to your community's website.

<http://www.partnershipforglobaljustice.com/>

## Watch UN Events Live

As always, you can watch live coverage (and often stored videos) of major UN events at the UN [WebTV channel](#). Click the language button to hear them in English). A list of daily events is listed in the UN Journal at 11 pm the day before. Webcasts are indicated by a small red icon of a camera.

