

On 10th December 2018 we shall be celebrating the 70th anniversary of the writing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document that proclaimed the rights which everyone is inherently entitled to as a human being regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Sadly we are aware that in many parts of our world it seems that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is still an aspirational document. Each day globally and in our own countries we see too many incidences of the rights of the marginalised being ignored. Without doubt there are organizations defending those who are subjected to forced migration, political oppression, trafficking and exploitation in many forms.

UNANIMA International is in its 16th year as an NGO at the United Nations and like all NGOs is experiencing a changing political and social reality. At the recent Board Meeting of UNANIMA International Jean Quinn DW, Executive Director addressed some of these challenges as the landscape of the United Nations changes.

Jean noted some of these changes:

- The growing influence of the Business sector in the political discourse and agenda setting
- The fragmentation of global governance and the weakening of representative democracy
- Unstable financing that threatens the sufficient provision of public goods
- Lack of monitoring and accountability mechanisms
- Increasingly NGOs must compete with the private sector (Business) to have the voice and the voices of members heard in the UN process
- United Nations and changing collaboration

Her reflection on this changing reality was that if we as an NGO are to have any influence NGOs have to strengthen their collaboration and connectedness with other organisations, with Committees Agencies and with Member States.

UNANIMA International's members work at the grassroots, people are at the centre of our agenda and every person is important. People are at the centre of the UN 2030 Agenda also. As stated the Agenda is a plan of action for people, our planet and the wellbeing of all peoples.

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

To bring about authentic and sustainable change the Agenda is based on 17 goals bringing together 3 pillars of Sustainable Development.

- Social
- Environmental
- Economic

The values underpinning the Sustainable Development Goals

- Retributive Justice
- Economic Justice

- Social Justice
- Environmental Justice

As we are well aware grass roots communities/organisations know the issues however these issues have to be resolved both locally and internationally. UNANIMA members are well placed to act in both arenas.

Two examples in recent times were the written interventions presented by UI.

- 1) Joint letter of Catholic Task force for Africa and RUN to the Conference of Bishops in DR Congo offering solidarity and support amid violence. (Co signed by the Ursuline Sisters, Missionaries of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Congregation of Sisters of St. Brigid, Cong of the Sisters of Mary, Daughters of Wisdom and Holy Sisters Union
- 2) Testimony by Colleen Jackson RSCJ and Brigid Arthur CSB on their grassroots immigration and asylum seeker ministries in UNANIMA by Teresa Blumenstein to the NGO Committee of Migration

Many of you are involved in organisations and actions that are making an incredible difference to many people and we would like to hear more from you regarding your work.

As we recognise the 70th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights next month let us celebrate the dedication of so many people of goodwill and to challenge systems and governments that deny justice to all people and to our planet.

Margaret Fyfe

6th November 2018