

## Concept Note

### Intergenerational Spring Seminar Theme Panel

**Title:** Gender in an Intersecting World: Action at the United Nations

**Organizers:** Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office, Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations

**Date:** Thursday, April 11, 2019 3:00pm – 5:00pm

#### **Objective:**

This event aims to highlight the steps taken by the United Nations as well as its Member States and Agencies to move global systems towards gender equity. Emphasis will be placed on the need for gender-responsive policies to address all issues the UN works on, particularly racial and ethnic discrimination, climate change, migration, disarmament, and humanitarian relief. The event will build momentum towards a more appropriate global response to discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) – including establishing international laws that protect people who are threatened by violence or discrimination based on SOGIE. Speakers will discuss the progress made so far through the MDGs, SDGs, CEDAW, CSW, etc. and current initiatives underway at the United Nations. The event will address actions that have been undertaken to confront global gender inequities and recommendations for how youth and adult members of civil society and especially faith-based organizations can support these global efforts.

#### **Key Issues:**

The United Nations has taken critical steps in recent years to achieve parity in its upper leadership which now includes equal representation of women and men at the top levels. More must be done so that this trend is expanded throughout the UN system and that gender parity is achieved in Member States' national leadership as well. Even 73 years after the founding of the United Nations, when the Charter affirmed "the equal rights of men and women," reality is far from reflecting that aspiration of equality. Women around the world continue to face discrimination, oppression, and violence in all levels of society. People in all countries of the world continue to be victimized based on their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, often with little to no opportunities for legal recourse.

It is crucial for a global organization such as the United Nations to be responsive to the fact that gender equity does not simply equate the empowerment of women and girls, as implied in Sustainable Development Goal number 5. To truly achieve gender equity, Member States and Agencies must affirm and promote an understanding of gender that

is inclusive of all gender identities and expressions. People of all genders must be engaged in all levels of decision-making for agreed-upon policies to further gender equity. We must focus on achieving the targets SDG 5, acting to end human trafficking, to equally value informal labor, to fully respect the reproductive rights of all, to prevent gender-based violence, to end harmful practices such as early marriage and female genital mutilation, and to make change to further equality in economic and political life.

**Speakers: (to be confirmed)**

- H.E. Mr. Brian Flynn (Deputy Permanent Representative of Ireland to the UN)
- Bobbi Nassar (Co-Chair, NGO Committee on Human Rights)
- Ray Acheson (Director, Reaching Critical Will)
- Soon-Young Yoon (Chair of the Board, Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO))
- Moderator: Bruce Knotts (Director, UU-UNO)

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Recognition of the situation of women of color as well as transgender and non-binary individuals of all identities who have been historically excluded from efforts towards gender equality.
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