



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

UN Human Rights Council Intersessional Meeting: 3 December 2019

“Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda: Decade of Action and Delivery on the SDGs”

UNA-USA Written Statement: Submitted 3 December 2019

Established in 1943, the United Nations Association of the United States of America¹ (or UNA-USA) is a grassroots movement of Americans who support the United Nations. UNA-USA acknowledges this intersessional meeting of the UN Human Rights Council was endorsed by a consensus of the Council’s membership and is appreciative of the body’s continued focus on these interrelated and vital issues.

UNA-USA and its network of more than 200 college and community chapters across the U.S. acknowledge that human rights and the SDGs are inextricably linked. In preparation for the U.S. Universal Periodic Review in May 2020, UNA-USA backed more than 30 local consultations in communities and at universities across the country with its chapters and partners. The SDGs informed these dialogues and appear in the shadow reporting UNA-USA submitted to OHCHR for the U.S UPR.

During our 2019 Global Engagement Summit at UN Headquarters, we were proud to partner with a Group of Friends on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development co-chair in New York to discuss best practices for implementation and the importance of recognizing that the SDGs and human rights present two sides of the same coin. Additionally, to honor UN Day this year, UNA-USA chapters convened more than 150 events focused on the climate crisis, many of which included dialogues on climate justice rooted in fulfillment of the SDGs and human rights. We are also proud of the leadership that New York City has shown in producing its very own “Voluntary Local Review”, or “VLR”, to evaluate the city’s progress on the SDGs. In its latest VLR, New York City’s efforts to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity are explicitly aligned with SDGs 4, 10, and 16. Conducting a VLR is a best practice that we hope other cities will adopt with a firm commitment to leaving no one behind.

UNA-USA has learned three things from these experiences: First, understanding human rights as both an enabler and an outcome of the 2030 Agenda maximizes the potential for alliance building and raises the likelihood for implementation. Second, accomplishing the SDGs and leaving no one behind begins at home, in local communities and on university campuses, just like protecting human rights. Finally, it is no secret that young people are eager to be change agents for the SDGs and human rights. A 2018 Better World Campaign poll affirmed this ranking the environment, poverty, and human rights as top issues for young Americans.² As we enter a new decade, young people are more motivated than ever to make a global impact. The UNA-USA Youth Observer to the UN, for example, is one of several agents leading this movement of American youth activism. While today’s youth are not the generation that wrote the UN Charter, they are determined to be the generation to realize its promise.

UNA-USA is delighted to announce that it will help organize consultations in all fifty states to support the UN Secretary General’s call for the “biggest-ever global conversation on the world’s future” in advance of the 75th anniversary of the UN. We commit that human rights and the SDGs will be a mainstay in these discussions – whether in classrooms, community centers, or even online. UNA-USA looks forward to sharing the outcomes of these consultations with the UN Human Rights Council, OHCHR, and other partners.

UNA-USA remains firmly committed to pursuing the achievement of the SDGs and advancing U.S. human rights commitments.

¹ To learn more about UNA-USA, visit <https://unausa.org/>. Contact Ryan Kaminski, Policy Advisor: Human Rights, rkaminski@unausa.org.

² “National Survey of Generation Z and Millennials-Key Findings,” Public Opinion Strategies & Hart Research Associates: September 2018. <https://betterworldcampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/2018-Gen-Z-Millennial-Survey-Key-Findings-Memo-Final-Public-Opinion-Strategies-Hart-Research.pdf>.