



NEWSLETTER

April 2019



The International Organisation for Least
Developed Countries (IOLDCs) -
Organisation Internationale pour les Pays
les Moins Avancés (OIPMA)

www.ioldcs.org

Intersessional high-level panel discussion on the incompatibility between democracy and racism: identifying challenges and good practices

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

IOLDCs attended this event, where it was discussed the number of incidents of racist and xenophobic hate speech has been rising over recent years, with arrivals of migrants and refugees. The immigration debate has often been structured by the left vs right wings. Some politicians in the rights wings are taking a pro-freedom perspective on speech to defend hate speech and bigotry against other's cultures. Moreover, with the arrival of new immigrants, tensions arise as they adapt and try to fit in the culture.



How can we overcome hate crimes and racism?

- 1) Firstly, the community members must take action with initiatives to consolidate tolerance and peace.
 - 2) Secondly, people need to speak up. Hate is an open attack on tolerance and democracy. Remaining silent obstructs the way towards eradicating hate.
 - 3) Thirdly, empathy with the victims. Victims may feel isolated and alone. Understanding and help are vital to protect them and prevent further hate events.
- Fighting racism and discrimination should also take in consideration the importance of history. It is important to show that humans share a common history. Scholars and scientists are there to recall the importance of the dynamics of exclusion and exploitation in our societies.

SUSTAINABILITY WEEK: *Our plastic future. Can oceans survive?*

GRADUATE INSTITUTE

One of the biggest unsustainable and polluting practices in this century has been the use and accumulation of plastic, which accounts for around **8 billion** in the world. IOLDCs attended this event in line with its commitment to fight climate change and protect the environment we live in.



Some of the frightening details given were, for instance, that 90% of seabirds have fragments of plastic in their stomach and by 2050 it will reach 99%; every minute one garbage truck of plastic enters the ocean and we eat 5 grams of plastic every day.

Although the urgency to address this issue, no global rules, standards or recommended practices exist. Therefore, there is no clear obligation concerning preventive measures, there are no common reporting, monitoring and review mechanisms and the financial

mechanisms for supporting states in their efforts are inexistent. Moreover, there is a significant gap in national and regional legislation and commitments.

For this reason, the event highlighted the importance of having a new **International Legally Binding Agreement**, which should effectively address:

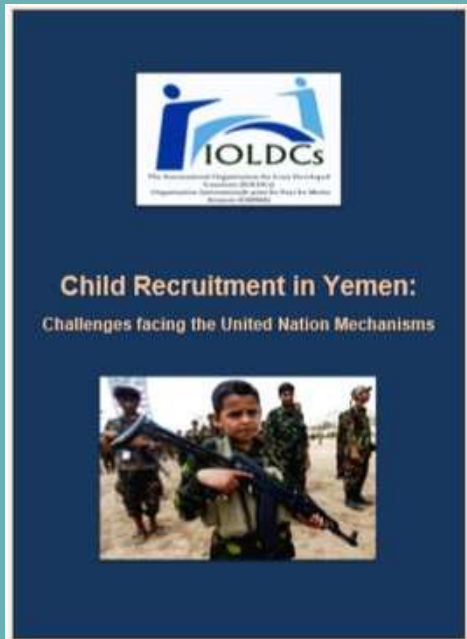
- National targets to prevent, control and remove marine plastic pollution
- Global architecture to coordinate, report and review
- An intergovernmental panel of experts and harmonized measurements and monitoring
- Global standards on high-risk materials and disposal methods
- Implementation support mechanism (finance, technology, capacity building)



The situation in the Middle East - Security Council, 8512th meeting

SECURITY COUNCIL

As one of IOLDCs' main activities, child recruitment is in the agenda of the NGO, having a particular focus on Yemen, as our last report has demonstrated.



We could consider this event a major step towards an effective political remedy to the war of Yemen. In comparison to other panels, the words children and women have been very present and there is a clear awareness that children's reintegration and the prevention of their recruitment is an urgent need. Following the report released by IOLDCs in the month of February 2019, which was sent to all UN Agencies and bodies concerned with the conflict and in particular, with child recruitment, we have found (intended or not) analogies to our report*

Although the numbers stated by miss Gamba are still below the data gathered by IOLDCs thanks to NGOs working in the ground, it was stated the major recruitment undertaken by the Houthis as well as the duties developed by children in the conflict. Ms. Gamba recognized the influence of such militia in these practices and the **indoctrination of children** as an important factor to incite children to join the parties to the conflict. As in IOLDCs' report was stated, children have been recruited from schools, orphanages and communities.

Moreover, Ms. Gamba made clear, which was also one of the main arguments of IOLDCs' report, the **lack of availability to enter to the conflict areas and gather information**. This time, on the contrary to what she said in her panel discussion during the 40th session of the HRC, she did not mention the need to improve the functioning of the **MRM mechanism**. This is, according to IOLDC's findings and conclusions in its report, an imperative need to effectively address the reintegration of children after the conflict. If exact numbers are not given, many children will still remain in the shadow, waiting for their release.

*Available from:

<http://ioldc.org/child-recruitment-in-yemen-and-challenges-facing-the-united-nations-mechanisms.pdf> (English)

ioldc.org/child-recruitment-in-yemen-and-challenges-facing-the-united-nations-mechanisms.pdf (Arabic)

Making Gender Dimension Count in Health Research and Programmes

GRADUATE INSTITUTE

IOLDCs participated in this event, drawing important conclusions on gender related health research and programmes.



Gender equality and women's rights are central to the design and the delivery of universal health coverage. There is a need to urge an intersectional approach to leave no one behind (including youth, race, ethnicity, caste and class, disability, older women and any other marginalized identity). There is a general agreement that effective social protection is necessary to manage risk and vulnerability, but often there is a disagreement about the causes of that vulnerability, who is responsible for reducing it, and the attention paid to human rights.

It is important to understand the implications for **Universal Health Coverage** program direction because it would affect the quality and effectiveness as well as the gender dimension of it (gender equality and women's human rights). Although significant social progress has been made, the application of the principles behind the legislation to women's health and gender-based research have not been so positive. There are still significant barriers to research. For instance, a lack of **funding** for research on medical gender studies or existing **gender bias** and **misconception** through the health-care system, namely medical research to disease diagnostic and treatment approaches.

Qualitative research is underestimated in medical research, but this type of methodology has the potential to inform and improve health care decisions. In fact, **quantitative** methods are not enough to analyse some complex health care environments when a lot of varied information is needed.

A perspective of gender equality and equity is an important key issue. It is fundamental to promote equality between girls and boys and women and men. This reflection includes the concepts of gender, gender norms, gender equality and gender mainstreaming, the role of culture and the role of violence.

It is also important to include more **sex-disaggregated data**, as a gender mainstreaming tool. Many statistics from the government rely on this indicator. It reflects the realities of the lives of women and men and policy issues relating to gender. It allows the measurement of gender differences on different social and economic dimensions (Tobacco, alcohol, etc.).

The focus must shift towards the development of new technologies and the role that women have played in this, and how to include them more in the process. Moreover, as technology has social and cultural implications, it is important to investigate the relationships between technology and identity categories such as gender, race, class and sexuality.



Climate change, Social Movements and Peasant Agroecology

GRADUATE INSTITUTE

IOLDCs participated in this event focused on Climate change and our global corporate food system, agroecology and rural social movements and scaling up peasant agroecology.



Farmers are the most affected group by climate changes due to the following changes: Global warming, climate unpredictability and severe and extreme weather events (hurricanes, cyclones, floods, droughts). Moreover, the impact of the industrial corporate food system on climate change accounts for 11 to 15% in agricultural activities, land clearing and deforestation for 15 to 18%, food processing, packing and transportation for 15 to 20% and decomposition of organic waste 3 to 4 %. Consequently, the total emissions of the food system are 44 to 57% of total global greenhouse emissions.

The event introduced “*La via campesina*”, an international movement which coordinates the organization of small and middle peasant, agricultural workers, rural women of indigenous community around Asia, Europe, America and Africa. Their main priority is to promote local production in order to eliminate the emissions for long-distance transport.

For instance, Industrial farmers in the North use 5 times more commercial energy per kilo of grain than African farmers; to produce a kilo of rice they use 80 times more than a Filipino peasant or bringing a kilo of asparagus from to Switzerland during the summer requires 5 litres of petrol. To produce the same kilo locally uses only 0.3 litres.

The conclusion is that by re-localizing production through food sovereignty, major advances in climate action would be made, also interlinked with other SDGs and the impulse of developing economies.

HEARTBREAKING NEWS FROM THE FRONT LINES

The last victims that the war of Yemen has taken are found in Dhamar where **150 bodies** pertaining to militias have been found dead. Among them, many **children recruited by the Houthis** whose parents did not know they had been recruited.

IOLDCs' representatives stated that the hospitals are overwhelmed, receiving many wounded and injured from the conflict in Dhamar.



"HASM" BATTALIONS, BELONGING TO THE ISLAH PARTY "MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD" ARE PAVING THE WAY FOR ISIS AND AL-QAEDA IN YEMEN

April 2019, another plan is being carried out on the ground by the Muslim Brotherhood and its representative, the Islah Party, to turn the city into something like a Muslim emirate, according to informed sources.

A Yemeni source said that Muslim Brotherhood leaders justified this as using the devil against the Houthis. But gradually, it has turned out into a process of localization of al-Qaeda subjects and a resurgence in the city.

Since 2015, the Islah Party "Muslim Brotherhood" in Yemen has been implementing a plan to seize the city of Taiz in Yemen using ISIS and al-Qaeda and the inclusion of these groups under their umbrella of the so-called "Yemeni resistance".

A source related to the Arab Sky News reported that the first group of ISIS entered Taiz with 4 transport vehicles at the first half of 1915 in coordination with the Brotherhood leaders, although the opposition from field activists and politicians.

Within six months, the so-called "Hasm" Battalions, a joint force of the Muslim Brotherhood and the extremists, amounted, in a short period of time, to 1,000 fighters from different provinces. They were led by the al-Qaeda commander Adnan Rezaq, who later received an official rank under Major General in the Yemeni army. In the meantime, the Islah party had given "Hasm" Battalions a number of schools and headquarters to be converted into military barracks.

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The integration of extremist subjects in the field has been led and implemented by the military commander of the Muslim Brotherhood, Abdo Farhan Salem, one of the supervisors of the recruitment of the Afghan Arabs during the war in Afghanistan, who has a close relationship with Al- Qaeda.

According to the head of the Center of Studies, Abdul Sattar Al-Shammari, in an interview for Sky News Arabia, the Islah Party "Muslim Brotherhood" has transformed Taiz into an official Muslim emirate, after having succeeded in controlling all institutions.

The Brotherhood has been working to establish prisons and secret and public detention centres, where many of the activists who oppose them have been lodged.

These practices provoked public and political anger in Taiz.

However, the reformist battalions of the security services have dealt with this with repression, assassinations and abductions, according to several sources.

About Terrorism in Yemen the IOLDCs please see the following links of the written statements by IOLDCs:

<http://ioldcs.org/The%20United%20Nati on%E2%80%99s%20Counter-Terrorism%20Strategy,%20Challenges %20and%20the%20Perspective,%20a nd%20the%20Role%20of%20Member %20States.pdf>

Peace and Tolerance to overcome hate and extremism

After the recent terrorist attacks based on religious bigotry in Christchurch and Sri Lanka, IOLDCs stresses the importance of The Document on Human Fraternity for world peace and living together” signed on



Source: (Vatican.va, 2019)
<http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/events/event.dir.html/content/vaticanevents/en/2019/2/4/fratellanza-umana.html>

February this year in Abu Dhabi during the visit of his holiness Pope Francis with Sheikh Al-Azhar, in the presence of several worldwide religious leaders.

We affirm also the importance of awakening religious awareness and the need to revive this awareness in the hearts of new generations through sound education and an adherence to moral values and upright religious teachings. In this way we can confront tendencies that are individualistic, selfish, conflicting, and also address radicalism and blind extremism in all its forms and expressions.

IOLDCs believes that this is a powerful instrument to respond with **peace and tolerance** to the atrocities committed against humanity as a result of hate and extremism.

Find our written statement presented at the 40th HRC session:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=https%3A%2F%2Fioldc.org%2Fengine%2Fdownload.php%3Fid%3D12%26area%3Dstatic%26viewonline%3D1>

RETHINKING CLIMATE CHANGE, SECURITY AND MIGRATION: FROM VICIOUS TO VIRTUOUS CYCLES

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT HOUSE I

IOLDCs had the pleasure to participate in this very interesting event held in Geneva. With the main presentation given by prof. Barnett, it was discussed migration and armed conflict in the context of climate change. Mr. Barnett pointed out what are the synergy among these three

phenomena and their interlinkages, as well as the disagreements when it comes to approaches, methods, evidence and analysis. He furthermore suggested a new kind of evidence based on the causes of peace, looking also at cases where violence is likely but does not happen to learn what may amplify or reduce violence. Barnett highlighted that peace-building and climate adaptation are interdependent. Thus, recruitment into armed groups arises when people have little to lose, and a sense of something to gain. Vulnerability to climate change arises when people have no options to adapt. Both arise from a lack of choices (choosing peace and/or to adapt to climate change).



Peace-building and adaptation can both be advanced through practices that expand people's freedoms. For instance, economic opportunities, political freedoms, social opportunities, transparency, social protection, etc.

Another suggestion was to urge confidence building through cooperation on climate change.

For example, there is strong evidence of significant formal cooperation among river basin riparian states enhances adaptation and reduces risk of armed conflict.

RETHINKING CLIMATE CHANGE, SECURITY AND MIGRATION: FROM VICIOUS TO VIRTUOUS CYCLES

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT HOUSE I

According to Barnett, the key points to make peace resilient to climate change are:

1. Through knowledge about peaceful responses to climate change.
2. Through policies and programs that give people choices to adapt to changing social and environmental conditions.
3. Through strengthened international cooperation on mitigation and adaptation.

Introducing the presentation on migration given by Dina Ionesco (IOM), Mr. Barnett talked about migration and the wrong vision of it. Most of the time considered as a threat to States and its security, migration can offer very positive outcomes as well.

On the other hand, we cannot assume that everyone affected by climate change would like/have to migrate. Firstly, many people see migration as a last resort. Secondly, many times migration is only an option for people who are highly skilled and capable to get a job opportunity and/or visa permit somewhere else.

In conclusion, there is a high degree of uncertainty about the effects of climate change on armed conflict and forced migration. Causality is complex, the magnitude and timing and geography of climate impacts is uncertain, human responses are uncertain.

However, precautionary and evidence-based responses are necessary and possible. This involves fostering the evident synergies between adaptation, peace-building, and migration.

The respondents from IOM and ICRC opened the floor for more discussion which indeed brought together other points of view. In particular, one in which IOLDCs could not agree more: the gender perspective of climate change, sometimes the forgotten and invisible one.

BRIEF REPORTS SERIES

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN LDCS

IOLDCs is extremely committed with SDG 5 and the empowerment of women in LDCs. Despite all the achievements, made at the International level, a number of challenges are still presented for women. Women still do not have access to make their voice heard, especially in the least developed countries. Sexual abuses, discrimination and racism are some of the principal challenges they still face.

In **Nepal**, the “menstruation hut” killed the life of a mother of two children (BBC, 2019). Women and girls during their menstruation or after giving birth are categorized as impure and to bring misery. Consequently, they are obliged to sleep in huts, outside the house and are not allowed to touch iconic and religious figures, nor to have personal contact with men. This is known as the Hindu practice of Chhaupadi, this tradition was banned since 2005 by the Supreme Court and became criminalized in 2017. However, in rural areas this practice is still present, representing a shameful act of discrimination against women and brings vital consequences. Although Nepal ratified the CEDAW in 1990, the country is failing to enforce it in some areas (FOREIGN POLICY, 2019).

On the other hand, **South Sudan** is among the countries with the highest percentages of violation of women’s rights, which may even attain the extent of war crimes. A human rights report released by the United Nations (UN) condemned sexual violence against women and girls. According to this, at least 175 women and girls were victims of sexual violence and abuse in the last three months of 2018 (VOA, 2019). The UN investigating bodies expressed that the South Sudan government has taken no real steps towards accountability (VOA, 2019).

According to the UN **Maldives** (2016) women are still the ones who take care of children and take care of domestic chores which makes it difficult for them to engage in political and economic life. Recently this month of April 2019, in **Bangladesh**, a 19-year old girl was set on fire after she denounced the sexual abuse she suffered by her teacher (BBC, 2019). Nusrat was decided to denounce the person who abused but she did not find support by the police who treated the case as a “no big deal” and shared her witness on social media. Days after, the news spread the voice on her sexual harassment.

16 Days of Activism

End Violence against Women & Girls



#HearMeToo #NiUnaMenos #TimesUp #BalanceTonPorc

At the same time, after the arrest of the teacher, people gathered to blame Nusrat, organizing protests in the streets. When Nusrat decided to get back on track at school, a fellow student convinced Nusrat to go to the rooftop and with 4 other people set her on fire.

Nusrat was taken to the hospital with 80% of her body burned by the kerosene. Her last words were: “*The teacher touched me and I would fight this crime till my last breath*”.

BRIEF REPORTS SERIES

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN LDCS

Conclusions and recommendations

Discrimination and abuses against women in LDCs may take different forms but the aftermath is the same: an attack against the moral and physical integrity, dignity, health and many other human rights of women.

The above examples are strong evidence that women rights' violations are felt on a regular basis, and people are dying as a result. As the case of Nusrat shows, women do stand up for their rights and want their voice to be heard. However, social, political and cultural barriers often play against their empowerment and well-fare in many countries.

This eventually forces women to remain the silent victims of male-dominated societies.

Accountability is vital to reinforce the voice of women. Perpetrators must be held into account and law, policies and standards cannot contradict women's' rights, but rather protect women who speak up and suffer from such atrocities.

On the other hand, it is crucial to ensure access of women in LDCs to **education** in order to raise the awareness and understanding of inequalities and gender-related crimes. This would pave the way for naming and shaming perpetrators.

In addition, governments should take real steps in order to **reform institutions** such as security services, which should act with professionalism at any time.

Stronger collaborations between NGOs, National Institutions and IO are required in order to follow-up discrimination and crimes against women and access to data.

Gender equality and gender parity are crucial for the realization of UN 2030 Agenda and these elements should receive greater attention by stakeholders.

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Maison Internationale De L'environnement (MIE 2)

Chemin de Balaxert 9

1219 Châtelaine

Geneva- Switzerland

www.ioldcs.org

info@ioldcs.org

Tel: + 41 22 303 05 02