

With Hearts as Wide as the World

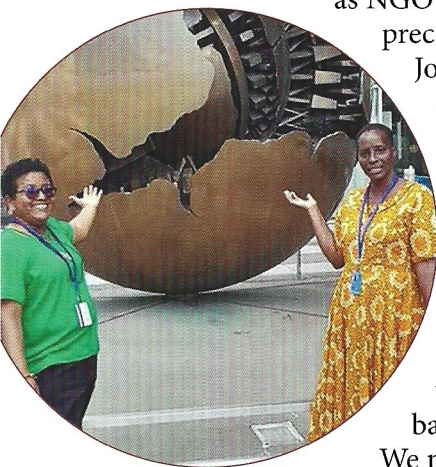
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur at the United Nations

By Sr. Isabelle Izika, SNDdeN NGO Representative at the United Nations



Since Saint Julie Billiart founded the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) in a small French village two hundred and twenty years ago, our Mission has been unwavering. **Our hearts, as wide as the world, seek to make known the goodness of God with others across the globe, a mission that has led to our presence on five continents.**

Since 2001, SNDdeN have been present at the United Nations (UN) as an accredited Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) to the Economic and Social Development Council (ECOSOC). Now, I serve as NGO Representative for the Congregation, preceded by three other SNDdeN: Sisters Joan Burke (USA), Jean Stoner (USA) and Amarachi Ezeonu (Nigeria).



Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur NGO

As an international Congregation of Catholic Sisters serving in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America, we firmly believe that we can make a significant difference based on our experience on the ground.

We provide feedback and suggestions during the discussions that shape policies and programs impacting peoples' lives in education, health care, climate change, environmental issues, and other critical matters. As Saint Julie taught us, it is important to reach out to those in the most abandoned places and to lift up their stories and their needs so that they might live lives in a safe environment, with dignity and the means to provide for themselves and their families.



(From L to R): Sr. Elizabeth Chinamo Boroma, Sr. Lucyane R. Diniz and Megan Novak on their way to the UN.

As SNDdeN NGO Representative at the UN, my ministry involves sharing knowledge and global news from the organization with Sisters on each continent where we serve. This service in sharing keeps us all informed and connected to the United Nations and among ourselves. We also invite Sisters, Associates, and colleagues to participate in relevant sessions, conferences, and forums when they occur at the UN headquarters. An example of such a program was the recent High-Level Political Forum 2024 (HLPF) on Sustainable Development.

SNDdeN UN Participants

Annually, the UN Forum offers an opportunity for a certain number of governments to report on their progress in achieving their country's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This year, among the thirty-seven participating countries were six where the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur serve: Brazil, Congo Brazzaville, Kenya, Peru, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.

In preparation for this important Forum, our SNDdeN NGO Office at the United Nations, through the Justice Coalition of Religious (JCoR), joined a coalition of twenty-two Congregations of Catholic Sisters. As members, SNDdeN, residents and ministers in four of the above countries participated in a seven-month training program about the UN, Sustainable Development Goals, and advocacy skills to prepare them for the High-Level Political Forum.





(From L to R): Sr. Isabelle Izika, SNDdeN NGO Representative at the United Nations with Sr. Lucyane R. Diniz and Sr. Elizabeth Chinamo Boroma preparing for a work session.

Sr. Lucyane R. Diniz, SNDdeN (Brazil) and Sr. Elizabeth Chinamo Boroma, SNDdeN (Zimbabwe), who followed the training, were invited to attend the HLPF Forum in person at the UN headquarters. They added their voices to that of **Megan Novak**, a student from Emmanuel College in Boston, Massachusetts and an intern with us at the UN. The Sisters and Megan participated in many events and listened to country reports. The other Sisters, like **Sr. Brigid Rose Tiernan, SNDdeN (South Africa)** who attended the Voluntary Review training, but were not able to be present at the UN Headquarters, were able to follow the HLPF on Web TV.

Goals of the Voluntary Review and Forum

In general, citizen participation in the Voluntary Review allows for valuable feedback. Citizens listening to government presentations, are able to express opinions and concerns, helping them to unite with other members of their society in shaping future policies and initiatives. This feedback ensures government actions in alignment with the needs and aspirations of the people, leading to better governance.

Involvement by the citizens and Sisters in voluntary reviews at the United Nations is necessary for enhancing transparency, accountability, and civic participation. Being informed and involved strengthens their communities and contributes to a more responsive and responsible government. **The process fosters a sense of shared responsibility, empowering individuals to advocate for the change they wish to see in their societies.**

Reflections on the Experience

Sister Lucyane R. Diniz, SNDdeN (Brazil)



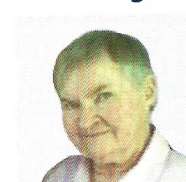
Leave no one alone is a concept I heard regularly. In fact, countries have a voice and can share their visions for the world in this space. The day Brazilian Foreign Minister, Marcio Macedo presented our country's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) assessment, I had the opportunity to speak with him about what the government is doing to develop the SDGs in Brazil. We also talked about the Amazon, Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN and COP 30, which will take place in my city of Belem do Para and which he will also be attending.

Sister Elizabeth Chinamo Boroma, SNDdeN (Zimbabwe)



The High-Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals, which I attended in July 2024, opened my eyes and gave me valuable experience. I am grateful to the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur for continuing to equip us for action in service to others in so many different ways. I am also grateful to our SNDdeN office at the United Nations for inviting us to take part in the voluntary national assessment of our countries' progress toward the sustainable development goal of eradicating poverty.

Sister Brigid Rose Tiernan, SNDdeN (South Africa)



When I was invited earlier this year to take part in the JCoR 2024 training sessions in preparation for South Africa's Voluntary Review, I wasn't quite sure what it was all about. What I discovered by participating in the monthly training sessions, so expertly led, was a whole new way of looking at our Congregation's mission statement. From the outset, the United Nations SDGs were described as the secular path to the City of God. I found myself on a journey using different terminology but talking essentially about the Kingdom of God.

Megan Novak, Intern (United States)



As an intern at the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Office at the United Nations, I had the honor of attending the 2024 High-Level Political Forum. This experience was a valuable opportunity to deepen my understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals. The discussions were rich and varied, offering important perspectives on the current global challenges.