



CONCEPT NOTE UNA BELGIUM ONLINE UN75 PANEL DISCUSSION

BELGIAN VOICES ON THE 75th ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER 2020 FROM 11:00 TILL 12:30 CET

In the context of the online SDG-Forum Belgium 2020 (www.sdgforum.be), the United Nations Association Belgium (UNA Belgium), the joint collaboration between Vereniging voor de Verenigde Naties (VVN) and Association pour les Nations Unies (APNU), presents “*Belgian voices on the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations*”, an online panel discussion in English on Thursday 29 October 2020 from 11:00 till 12:30 CET.

The United Nations is marking its 75th anniversary at a time of great disruption for the world, compounded by an unprecedented and global health crisis with severe economic and social impacts. Will we emerge stronger and better equipped to work together? Or will distrust and isolation grow further? 2020 must be a year of dialogue on how we can build a better future for all.

International cooperation is clearly an answer to global problems that require collective actions and the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated how crucial multilateral institutions are to our collective health, prosperity and security. However, the crisis has also highlighted the fragility of the system and some of its weaknesses. While multilateralism should be strengthened, it has weakened: the balance of power has shifted and the challenges are no longer the same, nationalism and competition between states are on the increase. How essential is multilateralism to the well-being and even the survival of humanity and what could and should be done to strengthen it?

To talk about this theme, the panel will include Belgian personalities occupying important positions within the UN system as well as representatives of Belgian institutions having a link with the UN. They will provide concrete examples on the importance of the role played by UN institutions in addressing global crisis and present their views on ways to make the multilateral system more effective, more legitimate and more responsive. With references to the SDGs, our experts will illustrate the extent of UN institutions’ role which goes from producing statistics and analysis to setting up stable norms and standards applicable to all actors through the negotiation of treaties in order to protect global public goods against the risk of pure market-driven approaches or national interests and their role in providing relief to populations affected by man-made or natural disasters and technical assistance to developing countries. The views of youth representatives will also be heard on how young

people see the role of the UN in addressing global challenges. Finally, we shall learn about the Belgian official policy towards the UN and its current relationship with key UN institutions, including during its ongoing mandate within the Security Council.

How important is international collaboration for us , Belgian citizens, and what should be done to revitalize the UN system? This is the theme on which you will be able to debate with our guest speakers. These will include:

Dr. Hans Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe, will address the role of the UN in general and of WHO in particular in fighting against pandemics such as the Covid-19, with emphasis on global access to means such as vaccines and on the needs of developing countries. **(TBC)**

Ms. Isabelle Durant, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), will provide an overview of the expected economic and social impact of the Covid-19 crisis, including on the implementation of SDGs, with emphasis on precarious populations and developing countries.

Prof. Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, will explain the role of the UN in general and of its Special Rapporteurs, in improving compliance to human rights by all countries in accordance with international law and highlight the possible impact of the current weakening of multilateralism on such compliance.

Dominique Burgeon, Director, Office of Emergencies and Resilience at FAO, will present with concrete examples an overview of the role of the UN system in general and of FAO in particular, in addressing the needs of populations affected by natural and man-made disasters, with emphasis on the comparative advantage of the UN system in this context.

Lina Achour, Belgian UN Youth Delegate Flemish Youth Council, will present the views of the youth on the future of the UN and on the ways the UN system should address global challenges, making reference to the results of the global dialogue launched on this theme on the occasion of UN 75.

Bert Vermessen, UN Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Belgium, will provide an overview of Belgian policy towards the UN in general and of the country's relationship with key institutions, including the Security Council, and on how the country sees the future of the UN in addressing the various challenges raised by the previous speakers.

In his/her presentation of maximum 7 minutes, each guest speaker is asked to respond to the following 2 questions:

- 1. Which are, in your personal opinion and based on your personal experiences, the 3 most important added values of the United Nations, of its values and work (as global platform, as operational organisation, as awareness raiser and communicator, as ...) today and through a history of 75 years?**
- 2. Which are, in your opinion and based on your personal experiences, the 3 most important challenges of the UN for the (near) future: where does the UN needs**

(urgent) change, in its key topics, values, fundraising, structure, procedures, operations, ...?

In a second round the guest speakers can give feedback to each other.

In a 3th and last round we will open the (online) floor for questions and remarks of participants.

The presentations by the guest speakers will be **in English** but questions could be raised in French or Dutch.

The panel debate will be introduced and moderated by **Peter Wollaert**, UNITAR Fellow and President UNA Belgium Flanders (VVN).

Full programme of the SDG-Forum Belgium available on www.sdgforum.be.

More information about APNU and VVN on www.una-belgium.be.