

UNPO | NEWSLETTER

June 2017 EDITION

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European Parliament
Conference on Human
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In the spotlight

UNPO XIII. General Assembly
26-28 July 2017 | Edinburgh

UNPO XIII General Assembly Convened in Edinburgh

2 July 2017

Over the last two years, countless global events have afflicted the world and peoples across borders, oceans, and disputed territories. In many parts of the world, minority and indigenous rights are under siege. As a result of authoritarianism, governmental neglect, marginalisation, state-sponsored repression or outright violence, many minority and indigenous groups do not even have the right to be physically safe, let alone to participate politically, thrive and achieve their full potential. Civil unrest and violent conflict driven by economic and geopolitical interests put an additional strain on minorities and are devastating communities in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. A general lack of stability, growing radical populism, and epochal migrations, adding up to millions of displaced peoples and refugees, are undermining public support for minority rights, peace and democratic growth.

These times of uncertainty make UNPO's work all the more important. Since the organisation's XII General Assembly in 2015, the organisation and its members have continued to work assiduously to promote the protection of the rights of the unrepresented worldwide. Assisting our members in achieving their self-defined goals through work with international human rights mechanisms, organisational capacity development and dissemination of credible information continued to be an integral element of UNPO's mission. Together, we performed an impressive number of initiatives, international campaigns, fact-finding missions, trainings, workshops, and very effective political lobbying and advocacy work in several Parliaments.

Yet, there is plenty to learn and even more to gain in future endeavours. On the occasion of UNPO's XIII General Assembly which took place in Edinburgh, Scotland, on 26-28 June, representatives of 25 unrepresented nations and peoples gathered to discuss the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. The opening conference, entitled "Sharing Perspectives on the Rights of the Unrepresented", hosted by Willie Rennie MSP (Scottish Liberals) gave representatives of indigenous groups and minorities, as well as academics, activists and politicians a platform for constructive debates around questions of identity and intersectionality, focusing, for instance, on how women, LGBT groups and refugees coming from an unrepresented background face a double discrimination.

The official part of UNPO's General Assembly gave room for representatives of UNPO members to assess the organisation's performance in the last two years and to discuss its future. An evening reception at the Scottish Parliament reception hosted by Joan McAlpine MSP (Scottish National Party) then focused on the theme of self-determination in the globalised age. The event took a closer look at the increasing challenges that unrepresented nations and peoples face amidst abovementioned worrying developments on a global scale, and allowed for a fruitful discussion on how to overcome these challenges.

A cross-cutting theme throughout the three-day General Assembly was the important question of gender equality. In a milestone decision, members not only committed to continue promoting gender equality in all aspects of their works, but to attempt to advance gender balance within their own representative body. UNPO and its members reiterated their unwavering commitment to their core principles: non-violence, democracy, self-determination, tolerance, environmental protection, and human rights. These may be challenging times, but the difficulties we face will make us more determined to achieve our objectives.

UYGHUR AND TIBETAN PROTEST, BRUSSELS

2 June 2017

UNPO representatives joined a protest organised by International Campaign for Tibet, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Amnesty International. The demonstration took place on the occasion of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's meetings with high-ranking EU officials in Brussels. To read more about UNPO's call on the EU to cancel its upcoming human rights dialogue with China, click [here](#).

ANNUAL KKF CEREMONY, CHAMPS-SUR-MARNE

4 June 2017

The Khmer Kampuchea-Krom Federation hosted a commemorative ceremony on the occasion of the anniversary of the colonisation of Kampuchea Krom by Viet Nam, which took place 68 years ago. The ceremony was attended by a UNPO representative and was an occasion to honour the people, monks and activists, who stand up and advocate for the rights of Kampuchea-Krom communities. Read more [here](#).

EP CONFERENCE ON IRAQI MINORITIES, BRUSSELS

6 & 7 June 2017

Hosted by MEPs Ana Gomes and Elmar Brok, a conference on Iraqi minorities entitled "Post-ISIS Ninewa: European Response" brought together representatives of the country's various minorities, policy-makers, as well as research experts. Made possible by the financial support of Konrad-Adenauer Stiftung and organised together with No Peace Without Justice and the Institute for International Law and Human Rights, the event raised awareness of the precarious situation of Iraq's minorities and discussed ways forward for a post-ISIS era. The following day, UNPO and its partner organisations released their third [report on the alarming situation of Iraq's minorities](#), based on a fact-finding mission which had been conducted earlier this year. Read more [here](#).

UNPO FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT, THE HAGUE

17 June 2017

UNPO, in collaboration with the municipality of The Hague and a number of other entities organised a football tournament for unrepresented nations. Twelve teams participated in the competition, which was won by a team from Chameria. Read more [here](#).

UNPO XIII GENERAL ASSEMBLY, EDINBURGH

26-28 June 2017

At UNPO's XIII General Assembly, around 25 of the organisation's members from across the globe met in Edinburgh, Scotland, to take a look back, while also discussing the direction UNPO should take in the following few years. Before the opening of the General Assembly, UNPO, in collaboration with the Third Generation Project (TGP) and MSP Willie Rennie (Scottish Liberal Democrats), convened a [conference](#) entitled 'Sharing Perspectives on the Rights of the Unrepresented on the Eve of UNPO's XIII General Assembly'. Representatives of indigenous groups and minorities, as well as academics, activists and politicians addressed some of the major issues they face as regards questions of identity, pointing out how women, LGBTQ groups and refugees, for instance, often face double discrimination according to the principle of intersectionality. At the end of the first day, an evening reception organised by TGP gave UNPO members, academics, and the members of Scotland's development and human rights community the opportunity to network and continue the fruitful exchange of views. On the second day of the General Assembly, UNPO held a [reception at the Scottish Parliament, hosted by MSP Joan McAlpine](#). It focused on the theme of self-determination in the globalised age, looking at how the unrepresented can collaborate and unite their efforts. On 28 June, the representatives voted on member-specific resolutions, as well as a general one, all of which were adopted by the assembly. Mr Marino Busdachin, Mr Nasser Boladaï and Mr Abdirahman Mahdi were re-elected as Secretary General, President and Vice-President, while Mr Dolkun Isa was elected as second Vice-President. To read more about UNPO's XIII General Assembly, click [here](#).

CS UBUNTU SYMPOSIUM, UTRECHT

6 June 2017

A UNPO representative participated in a symposium organised by CS Ubuntu, entitled "Forgotten Conflicts". In his statement, UNPO Project Officer Lukas van Diermen addressed the struggles of the Hmong in Laos, the Batwa in Rwanda and the Guarani-Kaiowá in Brazil.

ITI ADVOCACY MEETINGS, BRUSSELS

6-9 June 2017

Representatives of the [Ilham Tohti Initiative](#) (ITI), [ChinaChange.org](#) and UNPO conducted a round of advocacy meetings as a follow-up to the candidacy of imprisoned human rights activist Ilham Tohti who had been nominated for the Sakharov Prize after effective advocacy work by UNPO and its partners. Other issues discussed were the European Union's involvement in the One Belt One Road project and follow-up on the launch of a Uyghur friendship group at the European Parliament.

ROUNDTABLE INTERVIEW ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

7 June 2017

During an interview at the TV studios of the European Parliament, a UNPO representative and Uyghur activists discussed the case of imprisoned activist Ilham Tohti and the overall human rights situation in China in light of the latest geopolitical developments. To watch the discussion with interviewees Ms Marie Holzman ([Ilham Tohti Initiative](#)), Mr Enver Can (World Uyghur Congress), Ms Yaxue Cao ([ChinaChange.org](#)) and UNPO's Advocacy Officer Lucia Parrucci, click [here](#).

PARTICIPATION IN DEBATE ON THE EU AND HUMAN RIGHTS

28 June 2017

UNPO participated in a panel discussion organised by Stand Up for Europe Bruxelles, entitled 'The EU and Human Rights: External Leadership, Internal Inaction?'. UNPO Project Officer Lukas van Diermen used the examples of the Guarani-Kaiowá in Brazil and the Oromo and Ogaden in Ethiopia to illustrate the divergences within the EU external policy regarding human rights issues, and in what ways UNPO continues to push European Institutions for a more consistent and active approach.

LEZGHIN ADVOCACY MEETINGS, BRUSSELS

28-29 June 2017

Representatives of UNPO and Mr Gusen Shakhpazov, member of the Federal Lezghin National and Cultural Autonomy Advocacy (FLNCA), conducted a round of advocacy meetings with Members of the European Parliament to discuss the dire social and economic situation of national minorities in Azerbaijan and to address in particular the numerous human rights abuses faced by the Lezghin community in the country.

Upcoming Events:

10 July: Batwa Documentary Screening "Fog of Bwindi"

12 July: EP Documentary Screening "Martirio"

18 July: Seminar on CPEC and Human Rights in Balochistan

18 July: Summer School on Cooperation and Development

19 July: Global Minority Rights Summer School

19 July: House of Lords Conference on Human Rights in Balochistan

BATWA DOCUMENTARY SCREENING "FOG OF BWINDI", BRUSSELS

10 July 2017

Made possible by the generous support of the Nando and Elsa Peretti Foundation, UNPO will organise and host a screening of the documentary "Fog of Bwindi" at Cinema Adventure in Brussels. The documentary tells the story of the Batwa, who for thousands of years lived peacefully as hunter-gatherers in the Bwindi forest within the southwestern region of Uganda and their human rights situation ever since the Bwindi forest has been designated a world heritage site by UNESCO. The screening will be followed by Q&A session with filmmaker Anna Bohlmark, who will offer additional insights into her experiences in Uganda. Read more [here](#).



DOCUMENTARY SCREENING, "MARTIRIO", BRUSSELS

12 July 2017

Following a first successful documentary screening in March 2017, UNPO together with the office of Marisa Matias MEP (GUE/NGL) and the Blue Book Trainees' Solidarity Subcommittee will organise a second screening of "Martirio", this time at the European Parliament. The event will raise awareness for the situation of the Guarani-Kaiowá in Mato Grosso do Sul (Brazil), who are struggling for the demarcation of their ancestral lands and for the respect of their human and minority rights. For more information and to register for the event, click [here](#).



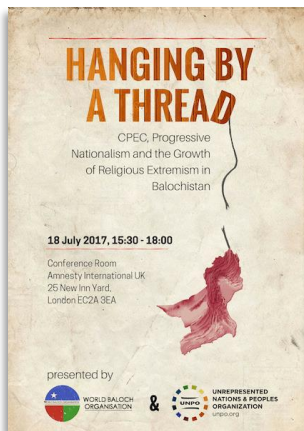
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Avenue Louise 52
Brussels B-1050, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)25 13 14 59
E-mail: unpo.brussels@unpo.org

CCBI SUMMER SCHOOL, BRUSSELS

18 July 2017

A UNPO representative will take part in a Summer School on Cooperation and Development, organized by the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Brussels. UNPO Advocacy Officer Ms Lucia Parrucci and Programme Director Tommaso Nodari will give a lecture about advocacy and campaigning strategies, focusing in particular on the role of civil society in policy making. Read more about the event [here](#) (in Italian).



SEMINAR ON BALOCHISTAN, LONDON

18 July 2017

UNPO and the World Baloch Organization will convene a seminar at Amnesty International UK, focusing on the human rights situation in Balochistan. Entitled "Hanging by a Thread: CPEC, Progressive Nationalism and the Growth of Religious Extremism in Balochistan", the event will focus on the devastating consequences of Islamabad's brutal implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, as well on how the government uses religious extremism as a tool to instate instability. Participants will discuss the challenges and interests at stake, and look at how the international community can support the Baloch people to end atrocities committed against them. Read more [here](#).



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E-mail: unpo@unpo.org

HOUSE OF LORDS CONFERENCE ON BALOCHISTAN, LONDON

19 July 2017

UNPO and the World Baloch Organization will convene a conference at the House of Commons in London, focusing on the human rights situation in Balochistan, entitled "Wall of Silence: Human Right Violations in Balochistan". The event will bring together academic experts and renowned human rights advocates and will contribute to filling the existing information black hole and to draw international attention to human rights violations in Balochistan.

GLOBAL MINORITY RIGHTS SUMMER SCHOOL, BUDAPEST

19 July 2017

A UNPO representative will take part in an event organized by the Tom Lantos Institute, the National University of Public Services and Middlesex University. Their fifth international summer school on minority rights will put a special focus on populism from the perspectives of vulnerable minority communities. To read more about the event, click [here](#).

HARATIN CROWDFUNDING!

We would like to thank all those who contributed to the "Education Spells Freedom" crowdfunding campaign UNPO had launched in collaboration with our Mauritanian partner organization AVOCAN. Thanks to your generous donations, UNPO was able to collect €1355. The donations were used to construct a classroom and a permanent bathroom facility in Tarhil, Nouakchott. Haratin women and children can now attend literacy classes – a first step to escape the bonds of slavery for good.

We rely on financial support from our Members and friends to continue our work each year. Such donations are crucial to ensure the continued full participation and engagement of a great number of unrepresented communities, indigenous peoples, minorities and occupied or unrecognized territories. The [2015-17 Secretary General's Activity Report](#) provides an overview of the activities we have been working on over the past years with the help of our [partners](#). Please do also spread the word about UNPO or invite your friends to like our [Facebook](#) page or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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E-mail: unpo.washington@unpo.org