

The United Nations in December

Report by the UNMA Program, Faculty of Political Science, Rutgers University



UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL OBSERVANCE DAYS

Significant International days in December and January:

December 1- World AIDS Day

December 2- International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

December 3- International Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 10- Human Rights Day

December 18- International Migrants Day

January 24- International Day of Education

January 26- International Day of Clean Energy

January 27- International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust

NEWS

General Assembly Approves 2024 Budget

On 22 December 2023, the General Assembly approved a budget of USD 3.59 billion for 2024 based on the Secretary-General's [request](#). In addition, the General Assembly also established a special Peacebuilding Account that will work towards financing the UN's peacebuilding fund, which invests in prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

CLIMATE

COP28: UN Climate Change Conference

The [COP28](#), held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, was a pivot point for international work towards climate change. According to the UN Climate Chief [Simon Stiell](#), important progress was made towards providing a "lifeline" to our climate future. The end of the conference outlined a roadmap

for member states to transition away from fossil fuels while fostering justice and equity. Conference organizers argued that progress included:

- A USD 3.5 billion commitment to the resources of the [Green Climate Fund](#)
- Increase in the funding of the [World Bank](#) to climate-related projects by USD 9 billion
- Sixty-six member states endorsed the [Global Cooling Pledge](#) to reduce cooling emissions by 68 percent.
- Donor boost for the Least Developed Countries Fund ([LDC](#)) and the Special Climate Change Fund ([SCCF](#)) by at least USD 150 million.
- The [Loss and Damage Fund](#) was revived during COP28 with an agreement to operationalize the Fund by assisting developing states confronting the effects of climate change. Member states committed over USD 150 million to the Fund.

But according to the [Global Carbon Project](#), to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, now requires entirely eliminating emissions not long after 2040, because the “carbon budget” for 1.5 degrees Celsius will be exhausted in about five years of current levels of emissions. For 1.7 degrees Celsius, it’s just after 2050, and for 2 degrees Celsius, 2080. As to the claims that COP28 has kept the 1.5 degree goal alive, hardly anyone believes it’s still plausible.

CORRUPTION AND CRIME

UN Global Commitment to Fight Corruption

The [Conference](#) of States Parties to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, took place in mid-December in Atlanta, Georgia, with the aim of improving international cooperation in the fight against corruption. The Conference welcomed over 2,000 participants who worked to review the current progress in the implementation of the UN Convention Against Corruption. Issues discussed included whistle-blower protection, improving public procurement, and the means of measuring corruption in the international community.

Myanmar Becomes World’s Top Opium Producer

The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), recently reported on the 2023 increase in [opium production](#) in Myanmar. Because of tough enforcement action by the Taliban, opium cultivation decreased by 95% in Afghanistan. Current cultivation in Myanmar spans 47,100 acres, a 7,000 acre increase from the past year. The 2021 coup in Myanmar cratered the local economy leaving farmers little choice but to rely on illegal opium production.

MIGRATION

Global Refugee Forum

The [Global Refugee Forum](#), the largest gathering in support of refugees and host communities, occurred in mid-December, where host states, private actors, organizations, and local actors met

to build partnerships and find solutions to persistent refugee issues. Several pledges were made by the participating actors, including an agreement to resettle one million refugees by 2030. The Forum also emphasized the importance of refugee participation in such decisions and partnerships. The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, emphasized that “it is an obligation shared by all of humanity” for refugees to have a better future, protection, and support.

UN Retirees Must Leave the United States

The United States Immigration and Nationality Act has long allowed UN staff members on G-4 visas who have served in New York for 15 years, to apply for Green Cards upon retirement. The UN this month sent an “urgent notice” to staffers that the United States has temporarily suspended accepting these applications under the “Special Immigrant” category (EB-4). Retirees will need to depart for their home countries within 30 days. This formalizes a reality that has been in effect for more than a year. It is unlikely the suspension will be lifted soon, if ever. It is a particular hardship for those retirees having to return to countries under authoritarianism.

HUMAN RIGHTS

75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

On 11-12 December, a [High Level Meeting](#) at the United Nations in Geneva celebrated the [75th anniversary](#) of the UDHR. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, [spoke](#) about the significance of human rights in the international community as a global public good. Türk further noted that global leaders have the responsibility of enhancing and advancing human rights while preserving peace and security. Attendees also discussed human rights in the context of climate change, development, security, and the economy.

PODCASTS

Information about the current issues facing the international community and the United Nations is available through the following podcasts and videos:

Awake at Night: A Painstaking Quest for Justice

Melissa Fleming, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, [interviews](#) former judge Catherine Marchi-Uhel. Fleming and Marchi-Uhel discuss the importance of accountability in the war crimes that were committed during the Syrian civil war and the significance of survivors’ stories.

Awake at Night: Unleashing Hidden Talent

Melissa Fleming [interviews](#) Gordon Brown, the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, about the ability for all children to attend school and the factors that prevent access to education. Brown discusses the power of education among children and shares important statistics on education including that 16 percent of children do not attend school. Other matters discussed that contribute to the lack of access to education are slavery, trafficking, and child marriage.

The Lid is On: Crises and International Division ‘Challenging’ says UN Peacekeeping Chief

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the UN Peacekeeping Chief, discusses in an [interview](#) the challenges that UN peacekeeping operations are facing in Sub-Saharan Africa. Lacroix also discusses the role of Member States and their influence in peacekeeping operations.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

- January 16, 2024: The SDGs and Forced Displacement- The Last One Percent
 - *Location:* Online
 - *Attendance:*
 - More information and registration in this [link](#).
- January 29, 2024: SEPLS Management as Integrated, Inclusive and Localized Actions towards a Nature Positive Society
 - *Theme:* 2023 International Forum for Sustainable Asia and the Pacific (ISAP)
 - *Location:* Online
 - *Attendance:*
 - More information and registration in this [link](#).
- April 5-6, 2024: Fordham University Graduate Conference
 - *Theme:* The Possibility of Progress
 - *Location:* Bronx, NY
 - *Attendance:*
 - In-person registration and more information in this [link](#).
- April 19-20, 2024: 16th Annual Graduate Conference in Political Theory
 - *Location:* Princeton, NJ
 - *Attendance:*
 - More information about the event in this [link](#).
- May 21-24, 2024: World Congress 2024 (International Association for Political Science Students)
 - *Theme:* The Future of Governance in the Digital Era
 - *Location:* Athens, Greece
 - *Attendance:*
 - In-person registration and more information in this [link](#).