

My Experiences in during my first month in New York



It will soon be a month since I arrived in New York. From the 6th to 15th February I had the opportunity to attend the CSocD, the 61st Meeting of the Commission on Social Development (CSocD61), at the United Nations in New York. New York City is a very beautiful city, but the United Nations is the most fascinating place in New York.

Walking through the UN building I remember back in 2019 and seeing the

rooms frequently shown in the news felt incredible. But the location wasn't the only highlight of this event.

The priority theme of the UN CSocD 61st event was "full and productive employment and decent work for all and reduced inequalities."

I believe I learnt a lot more by attending the meetings for the second time. I did not just hear much diplomatic speech, but I had also improved in reading between the lines (Why does the US argue about the absoluteness of the right to life for example? because of Capital Punishment maybe?) Sometimes the speeches of the representatives felt like a sad joke, like Qatar talking about the great social security system for migrant workers, or a great number of member states blaming the pandemic for nearly all their social problems. I quickly learnt to differentiate between the states talking about general policies and values, those enumerating different laws and programs, and those that did not just name these actions, but also mentioned detailed results.



It was also interesting to see how the states dealt with the war in the Ukraine: some calling it "Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine", others simply talking about "geopolitical tensions" or ignoring it completely. But also, in other regards states attacked each other directly, such as Cuba blaming ongoing sanctions for its social problems, and African states calling out on developed states, criticizing promises of financial aid without many consequences.

Especially the last day, when the draft resolutions were adopted and member states gave their statements regarding them, it was obvious that the Commission meetings I attended are mainly meant for public purposes. The real work and more consequential negotiations, like drafting these resolutions, happened where the public and we NGOs cannot watch and listen. Nevertheless, I am glad they did take place at all. Of course, there are things in the resolutions that Civil Society would have preferred differently, but there is a certain influence of Civil Society on the reports. In our call to action, Civil Society shared tangible and cross-cutting recommendations that can make our vision of a world of true prosperity without poverty, inclusion, and justice for all a reality.

One of the best parts of this event, however, was the Monday in the second week, when a good number of youth representatives could read out a statement on behalf of the NGO they represented to the member states. It was a rewarding experience for many of them as they read out their



statements for the first time and without stumbling at such an event in the UN keeping to the 3-minute limit. It was also good to interact with other NGO representatives who I met during the past week and who also delivered statements.

I really made several friends at the Conference, with delegates from other NGOs who represented their various countries. Having the common goal of convincing the member states to act on their promises really connected us, and it felt like a great team. I met many truly inspiring people with great stories. That also made the side events very interesting; they were less political regarding well-articulated promises and more ambitious by showing clear problems, challenges and possible solutions.

But also, apart from CSocD61, I had three great weeks. I did a fair amount of visiting of our sisters and a couple of friends. Nancy Murphy and Helen O'Reagan, our rscj sisters have moved residence from 120th to 64th street in Manhattan NY. It was good to meet them and to hear all their interesting stories.

I spent the last week-end at Bedford NY with our rscj community – Srs. Joan Magnetti and Grace Butler both in their 80s but full of life and energy. I was also happy to meet our sisters Margo and Paula who joined us for lunch on Saturday 18th Feb. Paula, besides her ministry in the US, is also treasurer of the province of Chile and so goes every two weeks to attend to the treasury work out there. I also visited 2 other friends, Nora and Doug and Michlin and Maxim with their two little daughters Isabelle and Brielle. I was happy to meet them and renew my contact with them.



Yesterday, Saturday 26th February, I was invited to dinner by Michael Chang a



teacher from our Sacred Heart School on 91st Street. Michael along with 11 others – 2 staff and 9 students had visited India recently in the month of January 2023. They treated me to a meal in honour of the connection we have made between our Sacred Heart Schools. I was especially happy to hear all about their recent experiences in India that have made a deep impression on their hearts and minds. They never stopped

talking about the hospitality, the rscj sisters they met, the new friends they have made with the girls they met at Sophia College, Haregaon and Bhokar and all the places they visited. Nora, one of the students has written a project on “The caste system in India” as she is interested in this topic and the issues related to it. They are all looking forward to their next visit to India



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