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WORKING TOWARDS A BRIGHTER FUTURE

NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE SIKH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP
NGO WITH SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE STATUS AT THE UNITED NATIONS

WHAT'S INSIDE?

PROJECT: NEURODIVERSITY NETWORK

1

SIKH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS PROPOSAL
TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE NEED
FOR A DECLARATION ON DIVERSITY

2

THE UNITED NATIONS 65TH ANNUAL
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

4

GET INVOLVED

5

PROJECT: NEURODIVERSITY NETWORK

BY CARLOS ARBUTHNOTT

The Sikh Human Rights Group is currently working towards establishing a **network of support** from Sikh community institutions, particularly Gurdwaras, for children with **lifelong neurological characteristics** such as Autism. We have called this longitudinal project our '**Neurodiversity Network**'.

The primary objectives of this project are to:

- **Increase** Gurdwaras and other Sikh community institutions **understanding of neurodiversity**.
- **Enhance the skills** of key members of Gurdwaras and other Sikh community institutions. Particularly, when it comes **recognising** and **supporting** those with lifelong neurological characteristics.
- Establish a **nationwide network of support** for Sikh families with neurodiverse children.
- Increase general society **understanding, engagement and support** for those with lifelong neurological characteristics.

How will we achieve our objectives?

We are currently in the process of setting up a **network of parents and children** with lifelong neurological characteristics. We then wish to **listen to their experiences**. Specifically, regarding the problems that they **may** have encountered when it comes to accessing Sikh religious and community institutions.

We then wish to establish a **network of experts** within Gurdwaras and other Sikh community institutions who will be willing to **increase understanding, engagement and support** for those with lifelong neurological characteristics such as Autism.



We hope that these individuals can then then go on to **advise the community** and **Gurdwara volunteers** about the different forms of emotional and related communications that work better with neurodiverse adults and children.

What do we believe?

According to GurSikhi: Every life is an expression of Waheguru, in a diversity of forms, abilities, temperaments and characters.

Therefore, we believe that **neurodiversity is simply another manifestation of mental pluralism in human life**. In other words, we firmly believe that not all children are the same, not all children behave in the same way and that not all children have the same mental approach to life, to their education, to obtaining and retaining life skills and towards social interactions.

However, society often seeks uniformity and in some instances demands conformity. Nevertheless, with so much neurodiversity within our general society this inevitably results in a misunderstanding, tensions and sometimes sadness when those who want conformity seek to change those who may be perceived as 'different'. This in turn further marginalises those who may not be perceived as 'neurotypical'. Nevertheless, with a **little bit of understanding these tensions can easily be overcome** and society, groups and people can function extremely well as supportive and cohesive communities.

Gurdwaras and Sikh Community Institutions

Sikh community and religious leaders have **consistently** demonstrated vast amounts of **empathy** and **sympathy** towards those with lifelong neurological characteristics such as Autism. However, Gurdwaras and other Sikh community institutions often lack the specialist knowledge and awareness regarding how best to support them. In other words, they **often lack the formal infrastructures (systems & policies)** that are necessary to support neurodiverse people. However, it is extremely important to note that this issue is prevalent across society and/or is by no means solely applicable to Gurdwaras and other Sikh institutions.

Nevertheless, this problem has become further compounded or agitated by the COVID-19 pandemic and especially for those from BAME families. Predominantly, owing to the fact that there is currently very little general society awareness of the issues surrounding lifelong neurological characteristics such as Autism. Let alone support from community-based projects and organisations. **We aim to change this!**

We will also bring in an affiliate of ours - **Caudwell Children**. Who are a leading world charity with considerable expertise in working with neurodiverse children.

www.caudwellchildren.com

If you would like to get involved, please email us at admin@shrg.net

SIKH HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS PROPOSAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE NEED FOR A DECLARATION ON DIVERSITY

BY BETHAN WALTERS

This is a brief summary regarding our proposal on the need for a Declaration on Diversity. Following our **written** and **oral statements** at the **UN Human Rights Councils 46th Regular Session** in March 2021.

Since gaining UN ECOSOC Status in 2015, SHRG has pushed for their proposal for a UN Declaration on Diversity and an Annual UN Diversity Day.

The **United Nations and our global community have made great strides in reducing discrimination of various kinds**, such as race, gender, disability rights, sexual orientation, belief, biodiversity, lifestyle choices etc...

These have been achieved through the formulation and enactment of various Conventions, such as the ICCPR, the ICERD, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and through many more primary instruments of international humanitarian law. Furthermore, various UN institutions such as OHCHR, UNICEF, UNESCO, UN Women and so on work hard to reduce discrimination, **yet discrimination has persisted.**

Existing UN Declarations for Diversity

Definition: A Declaration is a document stating agreed-upon standards, but which is not legally binding. UN Conferences, like the 1993 UN Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the 1995 World Conference for Women in Beijing, usually produce two sets of Declarations: **one written by Government representatives** and **one by Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs)**. The **UN General Assembly** often issues influential but legally non-binding Declarations.



There are two UN Declarations on types of diversity:

(1) UNESCO Declaration on Cultural Diversity: 'Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity' (UDCD) to help preserve and promote cultural diversity worldwide. The UDCD aspires to enhance the recognition of cultural diversity, the awareness of the unity of humankind, and the development of intercultural exchanges.

(2) Durban Declaration on Racism, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance: Adopted by consensus at the 2001 World Conference against Racism (WCAR) in Durban, South Africa, the DDPA is a comprehensive, action-oriented document that proposes concrete measures to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerances.

Existing UN Conventions for Diversity

Definition: Conventions are binding agreements between UN Member States; used synonymously with Treaties and Covenants. Conventions are stronger than Declarations because they place directly applicable and enforceable legal obligations upon State Governments that have signed and enacted them.

CONVENTIONS

- **The International Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination - CERD** is an international human rights treaty adopted in 1965. The UK agreed to follow CERD in 1969 to take action on eliminating racial discrimination in all of its forms, including eradicating racial hatred and incitement to hatred.
- **The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women -** is an International Treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. Described as an International Bill of Rights for women, it was brought into force on the 3rd of September 1981 and has been ratified by 189 States.
- **The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights -** is a multilateral treaty adopted by the UNs General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI) on 16 December 1966, and came into force on the 23rd of March 1976 in accordance with Article 49 of the corresponding Covenant.
- **The International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights -** is a multilateral treaty adopted by the UNs General Assembly on 16 December 1966 through GA. Resolution 2200A (XXI) and came into force on 3 January 1976.

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BY BETHAN WALTERS



SHRGs Declaration on Diversity

UN Member States who sign up for SHRGs proposal for the United Nations to adopt a Declaration on Diversity will adopt **positive programs** targeted at bringing **greater awareness of diversity**, **promoting inclusion** within State and non-State institutions, and **encourage society** to be **comfortable** with **diversity** so that people do not feel and are not marginalised and/or discriminated against.

The Declaration will:

- **Promote** many of the sentiments of the **Durban Declaration**; and
- Bring together proposals for positive programs to **strengthen** the **right approach** to **end discrimination**.

SHRGs Proposed Annual UN Diversity Day

Diversity Day will be an annual celebration of diversity in all of its forms and an annual commitment by Member States to showcase the diversity models they have adopted.

SHRGs Declaration and Diversity Day will encourage Member States to draw the United Nations primary institutions attention to programs and policies that they have adopted to make their population comfortable with diversity.

However, our global community must work together to take forward and implement the work of the UNs many institutions and agencies in the field of Diversity.

Call for Action

SHRG believes that such a Declaration will take some years to formulate, however, as a way of gaining momentum, at a time when this is needed more than ever, we invite all members of our global society to reach out to us via email, our social media accounts or via our website:

Email: admin@shrg.net

Twitter: [@shrg_net](https://twitter.com/shrg_net)

Instagram: [shrg_net](https://www.instagram.com/shrg_net)

Website: www.shrg.net

Let us work together to end discrimination through a twin process of law and positive programs!

THE UNITED NATIONS 65TH ANNUAL COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

BY JENNA LANOIL (NEW YORK OFFICE)



The past two weeks have marked the **65th annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**. CSW 2021 began on the 15th of March and concluded on the 26th of March and **included representatives of UN bodies, Member States, Civil Society Organisations and NGOs with ECOSOC-accreditation** like the Sikh Human Rights Group (SHRG). This CSW was themed:

‘Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls’.

In accordance with UN and WHO guidelines this event looked a bit different from years past, as the world continues to cope with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The entire conference took place virtually thanks to streaming on online platforms such as UN Webtv and Zoom. Nevertheless, **despite the logistical challenges, CSW was able to put together over 130 events held by the UN, Member States and Civil Society Organisations.**

On theme, the **events ranged from women engaging in the political sphere to land rights for women in developing nations.** A particular topic of interest was the effects of COVID-19 on the work being done for gender parity around the world. **COVID-19 has had consequences far reaching beyond the illness itself.** The pandemic has seen a **sharp rise in violence against women** around the globe, **lack of access to education for women and girls without digital infrastructure** and **further impacts to the work women are currently doing towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals** set out in the UN's 2030 agenda.

Overall the CSW was a timely reminder that **there is so much more to be done** both for **women's rights** and for a **more inclusive and equitable world.** The work SHRG does to further promote diversity and pluralism is in correlation with the activists and allies championing these causes and **we look forward to a future of collaboration and shared vision of an equal and just future!**





INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITY!!

Sikh Human Rights Group, an NGO with UN ECOSOC status, who aim to promote pluralism, environment, diversity, human rights & responsibilities

Perfect if you study, **Politics, International Relations, Law or Journalism**



You will be representing the Sikh Human Rights Groups at virtual **United Nations** Events. You will be taking notes down and potentially speaking at the United Nations

Write articles for our newsletters and our **newspaper, Lokmarg**



Write **press releases, reports and conduct research** on matters of importance- for instance, the coup in Myanmar, the Uighur crisis in Xinjiang, China, and the Farmer's Protests in India



REACH OUT VIA EMAIL:
SHRG@SHRG.NET

The background of the poster is a satellite image of Earth, showing swirling blue oceans and brownish-yellow landmasses. The text is overlaid on this image.

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WE NEED YOUR HELP TO SAVE THE EARTH

**Interactive Panel Discussion on Pluralistic Views
of the Environment and Diversity**

An opportunity to engage with world renowned experts

28 APRIL 2021 • 17:00 – 18:30

**ONLINE CONFERENCE HOSTED BY THE
UNIVERSITY OF CARDIFF**

Please click on the following link to book your FREE ticket!

www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/adapting-to-climate-change-world-views-of-nature-ingenious-knowledge-tickets-145878094307