

June 15-17, 2017

Sackville, NB

COMMON CONCERN

Standing Together as Global Citizens

There is no denying the seismic shift in recent times of the global political landscape. The election of a demagogue to the most important political position in the world, volatile referenda and electoral results in Europe, and racist, war-mongering, misogynist and anti-planet discourse, also heard in Canada, are cause for common concern. ***What role can we as Atlantic Canadians engaged in promoting social justice locally and globally play in countering these forces that threaten the values of global citizenship - human rights, democratic participation, rule of law, public deliberation based on dialogue and access to accurate information, and environmental sustainability?***

If we are to embrace hope over despair, we can be inspired by the millions who joined the Women's Marches in January 2017 highlighting women's rights as human rights. We can be encouraged by Canada's ambitions to increase its presence on the world stage, the ratification of the Paris Agreement to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and international aid priorities that point to a stronger focus on the rights of women and girls. We can be reassured by our government's commitment to international peacekeeping initiatives and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. And closer to home, we can be heartened by the outpouring of support to welcome Syrian and other refugees into our Atlantic Canadian communities. But is it enough?

Though we may not be able to change the events of the recent past, we can take action to keep them from changing us. We will be more effective if we are able to stand together as individuals, organizations, and communities who share progressive internationalist and humanist values. The symposium will bring together international cooperation practitioners, environmentalists, youth, indigenous leaders, human-rights activists, immigrant associations, feminists, local governments, civil society leaders, issue-specific experts, advocates and academics to encourage dialogue across sectors. The symposium will create a learning environment through a combination of keynote speakers, panel discussions, and workshops that will strengthen individual and collective capacity to engage Atlantic Canadians and provide them with the tools to confront climate change denial and counter misogynist, racist, and xenophobic narratives. Most importantly, in bringing diverse voices together, we hope the symposium will lay the groundwork for further concerted action and collaboration based on a spirit of global solidarity that will contribute to the "bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path." [UN, Transforming our World, 2015]

We hope you will join us.

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