



Psychology Coalition
at the United Nations



Society for the Psychological
Study of Social Issues



Permanent Mission of the
Republic of Zambia to the UN

19TH ANNUAL

Psychology Day

at the United Nations

2026 THEME

*Psychological Contributions to Fostering
Collective Action in Uncertain Times:
Advancing Human Rights in a World in Conflict*

Thursday, 23 April 2026

11:00 AM – 1:30 PM EDT

VIRTUAL EVENT · ZOOM

Co-Chairs: Harleen Kaur, PhD | Gurusewak S. Khalsa, PhD

Programme Booklet · Psychology Day at the United Nations 2026

THURSDAY, 23 APRIL 2026 · 11:00 AM – 1:30 PM EDT

Programme at a Glance

OPENING SESSION

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 11:00 – 11:05 | Welcome & Opening Remarks
<i>Co-Chairs: Harleen Kaur, PhD & Gurusewak S. Khalsa, PhD</i> |
| 11:05 – 11:09 | Message from the PCUN (Psychology Coalition at the United Nations) President
<i>Kalyani Gopal, PhD, PCUN President</i> |
| 11:09 – 11:13 | Message from Co-Sponsor
<i>His Excellency Dr. Chola Milambo, UN Ambassador, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zambia to the United Nations</i> |
| 11:13 – 11:17 | Message from the SPSSI (Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues) President
<i>Kimberly Kahn, PhD, SPSSI President</i> |
| 11:17 – 11:26 | Introduction of Speakers & Session Overview
<i>Co-Chairs</i> |

FEATURED PRESENTATIONS

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 11:26 – 11:46 | Peacebuilding & Collective Healing in a World in Conflict
<i>Klaus Boehnke, PhD · Constructor University, Bremen, Germany</i>
<i>SDG 16: Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions</i> |
| 11:48 AM – 12:08 PM | From Climate Anxiety to Climate Action: Mobilizing for Environmental Justice
<i>Linda Steg, PhD · University of Groningen, Netherlands</i>
<i>SDG 13: Climate Action</i> |
| 12:10 – 12:30 | Advancing Gender Equality through Intersectional Allyship & Shared Power
<i>Hani Henry, PhD · American University in Cairo, Egypt</i>
<i>SDG 5: Gender Equality</i> |
| 12:32 – 12:52 | Global Migration & the Protection of Human Rights: Fostering Belonging Across Borders
<i>Moshood Olanrewaju, PhD · Adler University, Chicago, USA</i>
<i>SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities</i> |

ROUNDTABLE & CLOSING

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| 12:54 – 1:19 | Roundtable Discussion & Q&A
<i>All Speakers · Moderated by Gurusewak S. Khalsa, PhD</i> |
| 1:19 – 1:24 | Vote of Thanks
<i>Acknowledgement of speakers, SPSSI, PCUN, Program Committee</i> |
| 1:24 – 1:25 | SPSSI Evaluation Form Reminder |
| 1:25 – 1:30 | PCUN Book Series Announcement
<i>Elaine Congress, PhD</i> |

FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Welcome to Psychology Day 2026

The current state of the world is marked by conflict and uncertainty. With more than 120 armed conflicts affecting people all over the world, the UN Charter represents a significant effort to address this uncertainty through multilateral international collaboration and cooperation. The very formation of the UN in 1945 was itself a recognition that conflict and uncertainty in the modern world is a collective experience: what affects one of us, affects all of us.

Addressing regional and global conflict and uncertainty therefore becomes an inherently collaborative process. The UN's 5 pillars of global sustainable development—People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships—highlight the importance of focusing global collaboration on issues of human rights by creating action to collectively move from experiences of inequality to experiences of justice.

Along those lines, psychological science offers many resources to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the UN. The theme for this year's annual Psychology Day at the United Nations, *Psychological Contributions to Fostering Collective Action in Uncertain Times: Advancing Human Rights in a World in Conflict*, reflects the call for action outlined by the President of the UN General Assembly in her inaugural speech, summarized succinctly by the phrase, "Better together."

The 2026 Psychology Day program will feature distinguished speakers discussing their work in developing psychological science to support action towards human rights and empowerment in the modern world, as outlined by four significant subthemes.

— *Harleen Kaur, PhD* | *Gurusewak S. Khalsa, PhD*

Co-Chairs, 19th Annual Psychology Day at the United Nations

THIS YEAR'S PROGRAMME

Subthemes

THIS YEAR'S SUBTHEMES

Peacebuilding & Collective Healing in a World in Conflict**SDG 16 · PEACE, JUSTICE & STRONG INSTITUTIONS**

This subtheme explores the psychological foundations of reconciliation, dialogue, recovery, and resilience amid ongoing global and local conflicts. It invites discussion on how individuals and communities recover trust, process trauma, and rebuild social cohesion after violence or division.

From Climate Anxiety to Climate Action: Mobilizing for Environmental Justice**SDG 13 · CLIMATE ACTION**

With climate distress rising worldwide, psychology offers critical insights into transforming fear and helplessness into sustainable, prosocial action. This subtheme centers the psychological dimensions of climate change—how empathy, moral reasoning, and collective efficacy can drive environmental movements.

Global Migration & the Protection of Human Rights: Fostering Belonging Across Borders**SDG 10 · REDUCED INEQUALITIES**

This subtheme focuses on the psychology of displacement, belonging, and societal integration—examining how evidence-based interventions, inclusive narratives, and intercultural understanding can support both migrants and host communities in advancing shared human rights.

Advancing Gender Equality through Intersectional Allyship & Shared Power**SDG 5 · GENDER EQUALITY**

This subtheme highlights psychological research and advocacy for empowered collaboration across gender identities and cultures, emphasizing shared leadership, allyship, and systemic change aligned with the broader program's call for collective action.

DISTINGUISHED PRESENTERS

Featured Speakers

**Klaus Boehnke, PhD**

*Senior Professor of Social Science Methodology
Constructor University · Bremen, Germany*

Klaus Boehnke holds a Dr. sc. (Habilitation) degree in Psychology from Freie Universität Berlin and a PhD in Psychology from Technische Universität Berlin. His research focuses on processes of political socialization and the intergenerational transmission of value preferences. He is the recipient of the Ralph K. White Lifetime Achievement Peace Psychology Award from the American Psychological Association.

PEACEBUILDING**PRESENTATION*****"A Life for Peacebuilding and Collective Healing in a World in Conflict: Evidence from a 40-year Longitudinal Study"***

Findings from a longitudinal study of 242 German adolescents (now in their 50s) are reported, with data collected in 1985 and then 11 times at 3½-year intervals through 2023/4. The study followed life trajectories from the Cold War arms race through the war in Ukraine. Participants' first-mentioned fears of war oscillated between 52% in 1985 and 3% in 2006, before rising to 21% after the war in Ukraine. Self-reported happiness is lower when fear of war is higher, whereas political activism is higher when fear of war is also high.

**Linda Steg, PhD**

*Professor of Environmental Psychology
University of Groningen · Netherlands*

Linda Steg studies factors influencing sustainable behaviour, the effects and acceptability of strategies aimed at promoting sustainable behaviour, and public perceptions of technology and system changes. She is a member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, and the Netherlands Scientific Climate Council. She is lead author of the IPCC special report on 1.5°C, AR6 and AR7.

CLIMATE ACTION**PRESENTATION*****"Encouraging Collective Climate Action"***

Human behavior causes environmental problems, which can be reduced when people act more sustainably. This presentation discusses the factors that motivate sustainable behaviour, explains why people may not always act sustainably, and explores how consistent sustainable actions can be promoted across individuals and communities.



Hani Henry, PhD

*Clinical Psychologist & Professor of Psychology
American University in Cairo · Egypt*

Hani Henry earned his PhD in clinical psychology from Miami University of Ohio in 2006. He is a member of the American Psychological Association (APA) and APA Division 45. His research examines the role of culture and its influence on psychological processes, particularly among marginalized and underprivileged populations, including immigrants, refugees, Egyptian women, gay men and transgender women. He is a well-known public figure who has appeared on Egyptian TV channels and international news outlets.

GENDER EQUALITY

PRESENTATION

"Empowerment in Action: Bridging Critical Pedagogy and Relational Resources to Combat Sexual Harassment"

This study examined the resistance of selected Egyptian women against sexual harassment in public places using an integrated conceptual framework of empowerment. The study revealed that these women resist harassment using mobile cameras, social media, and collective exposure, while navigating structural, cultural, and institutional limits. Findings suggest that psychologists can support women by validating diverse forms of resistance and designing empowerment-based interventions that enhance agency and promote collective support.



Moshood Olanrewaju, PhD

*Community Psychologist & Professor
Adler University · Chicago, Illinois, USA*

Dr. Olanrewaju has extensive experience in research, administrative advocacy, and grassroots organizing. A passionate human rights activist, he advocates for the rights of migrants, displaced communities, and marginalized groups, with a focus on alternative refugee resettlement systems and community-led solutions. His work is grounded in critical and decolonial approaches emphasizing empowerment, social justice, and African knowledge systems. He is President-elect of the Society for Community Research and Action (SCRA), APA Division 27, and convener of the 11th International Conference of Community Psychology in Lagos, Nigeria.

GLOBAL MIGRATION

PRESENTATION

"Bordering Belonging: Critical Community Psychology, Cultural Relativism, and Human Rights in Migration"

This presentation reframes global migration as a human and relational process grounded in dignity, belonging, and human rights rather than solely a political or economic issue. It explores the tension between cultural relativism and universal human rights frameworks, drawing on critical community psychology to examine how psychologists engage culturally grounded understandings of wellbeing while addressing structural inequities shaping migration experiences.

OPENING SESSION SPEAKERS

Organisational Leaders

**PCUN PRESIDENT****Kalyani Gopal, PhD**

The current President of the Psychology Coalition at the United Nations (PCUN), Dr. Kalyani Gopal is a distinguished clinical psychologist with over three decades of experience in addressing complex issues such as child sexual abuse, human trafficking, and labor trafficking. She is the founder of SAFE Coalition for Human Rights (SAFECHR), an initiative dedicated to supporting trauma patients and victims globally. Dr. Gopal has trained a diverse range of professionals, including foster parents, law enforcement agencies, and government representatives from various countries.

Dr. Gopal is the first woman of color and Asian American to serve as President of the Illinois Psychological Association and Division 12 of the American Psychological Association. Her work has garnered international recognition — she has developed clinical treatment manuals for psychologists in Mongolia, treated grieving families in Myanmar, and created tools for identifying trafficking victims in Ukraine. She is currently working on establishing SAFE Village – Unnati Sewa, a unique residential restorative model for victims of human trafficking and sexual assault.

**SPSSI PRESIDENT****Kimberly Kahn, PhD**

Dr. Kimberly Kahn is a Professor of Social Psychology at Portland State University and leads the Gender, Race, and Sexual Prejudice (GRASP) research lab. She received her Ph.D. in Social Psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Lisbon University Institute in Lisbon, Portugal.

As a social psychologist, Dr. Kahn's research addresses contemporary forms of implicit bias, stereotyping, and subtle prejudice from the targets' and perceivers' perspectives. A central focus of her work involves collaborating with police departments and communities as a recognized expert on the psychology of racial bias in policing. She has developed community engagement policing strategies and trainings with police departments to combat bias and improve police-community relations. Her work has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the National Institute for Transportation and Communities.

PROGRAMME LEADERSHIP

Co-Chairs

**CO-CHAIR****Harleen Kaur, MS, PhD**

Harleen Kaur, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the Jindal School of Psychology and Counselling, O. P. Jindal Global University. A recipient of multiple prestigious international fellowships and awards, she brings rich interdisciplinary experience that includes research, teaching, training, policy advocacy, and cross-cultural psychological practice. Her scholarly and professional journey bridges academia, grassroots engagement, and global dialogues in psychology and human rights.

Dr. Kaur holds a Ph.D. in Psychology from Banaras Hindu University, where her research focused on the intersectionality and lived experiences of Indian transgender persons. She was an Indian Council of Social Science Research Doctoral Fellow, supported by the Ministry of Education. With over 7 years of research experience in public health, cross-cultural psychology, and inclusivity and diversity, she continues to advance culturally responsive and rights-affirming approaches to psychological practice and policy.

**CO-CHAIR & MODERATOR****Gurusewak S. Khalsa, MA, PhD**

Gurusewak S. Khalsa is a licensed counseling psychologist and Associate Professor of Practice at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. He has a background in international mental health services, with over six years of experience providing community-based support for internally displaced and refugee groups in Afghanistan, Egypt, South Sudan, and resettled refugee communities in the United States. He has also served as chair for the American Psychological Association's Committee of Global Psychology.

His clinical experience includes integrated mental health care, clinical assessment, counseling supervision, and both individual and group outpatient therapy for support with medical issues, severe and persistent mental illness, and histories of trauma (including EMDR and Comprehensive DBT modalities). His research interests focus on cross-cultural applications of mental health treatments and the influence of culture on psychological resilience.

WITH GRATITUDE

Sponsors

The 19th Annual Psychology Day at the United Nations is made possible through the generous support of our sponsors. We are deeply grateful for their commitment to advancing psychological science in service of human rights.

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Special thanks to Recia Gomez and Judy Kuriansky for their outstanding contributions to the program.

SPSSI (Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues) Representatives

Kimberly Kahn, PhD, President · David Livert, PhD · Sam Abbott



*Psychology in Action.
Human Rights in Focus.
Better Together.*

Thank you for joining us for the 19th Annual Psychology Day at the United Nations. We hope today's presentations and discussions inspire continued action at the intersection of psychological science and global human rights.

LEARN MORE & STAY CONNECTED

psychologycoalitionun.org

To learn more about the Psychology Coalition at the United Nations or future events, visit the link above.

Psychology Day at the United Nations is an annual event organised by the Psychology Coalition at the United Nations (PCUN) in collaboration with co-sponsoring organisations. The event brings together psychologists, policymakers, advocates, and global citizens to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the lens of psychological science.

