SPECIAL REPORT . JULY 2026

PEACE BOAT US



UNITED NATIONS
HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

PEACE BOAT US

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Peace Boat US Participation in the UN High-Level Political Forum and FIFA Event



Peace Boat US volunteers alongside UN Youth Office staff, with Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, Felipe Paullier

> “Advancing the SDGs on board and on shore.

Peace Boat US is excited to announce its participation in the United Nations (UN) High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development. First established in 2012, the HLPF is a key summit where leaders in sustainable development across the United Nations, NGOs, civil society, and the private sector convene to assess progress on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Peace Boat US (PBUS) was pleased to contribute to the HLPF as an NGO with Special Consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated to advocating for the SDGs both off and on board the Peace Boat, which carries the SDGs logo on its hull.

Peace Boat US' participation in the HLPF kicked off on July 7, when Peace Boat US Director, Emilie McGlone, delivered remarks at a side event focused on Small Island Developing States (SIDS). PBUS also organized its own side event on July 10 focused on multi-stakeholder engagement for the SDGs, bringing together student speakers, private-sector leaders, artists, and more. Read more about each of these events and other highlights from the HLPF in this report.





Investment & Partnerships for SIDS:

The SIDS Global Business Network as a Practical Platform for Delivery



At the 2026 UN HLPF, governments, civil society, and international partners gathered to assess global progress toward the SDGs and highlight pathways to accelerating implementation. One of the key sessions on July 7, Investment & Partnerships for SIDS: The SIDS Global Business Network as a Practical Platform for Delivery, focused on strengthening economic resilience and development for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). This event convened policymakers, private-sector leaders, youth advocates, and diplomats to discuss initiatives such as the Island Investment Forum (IIF) and connect SIDS priorities.

Emilie McGlone, Director of Peace Boat US, highlighted the organization's work with youth leaders from SIDS, particularly through education on the BBNJ Agreement (also known as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement or the High Seas Treaty) and capacity-building programs focused on ocean governance. She emphasized how Peace Boat US' Youth for SDGs Scholarship program can serve as a pathway for deeper youth engagement within the Global Business Network, ensuring that young people from SIDS are meaningfully included in decision-making spaces and partnership initiatives. Together, these contributions expressed the importance of inclusive, cross-sector collaboration in advancing sustainable development for SIDS.















SAILING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT FOR THE SDGS

Peace Boat US was honored to host its own side event at the UN HLPF on Sustainable Development on July 10th. The event, titled Sailing for a Sustainable Future: Multi-Stakeholder Engagement for the SDGs, featured artists, sustainability leaders, UN affiliates, and youth voices in a presentation celebrating Peace Boat's SDG advocacy.

The event placed a special focus on Peace Boat's signature **"Youth for the SDGs" program,** a one-of-a-kind educational program aboard the Peace Boat. This year, the Youth for the SDGs scholars travelled to Panama, Guatemala, and Mexico, where they conducted field research, supported sustainability efforts, and learned from local leaders.



Youth for the SDGs presentation at Peace Boat US' HLPF Side Event

Attendees heard from four Youth for the SDGs scholars who elaborated on their trip, providing a look at SDG advocacy in action. Looking ahead, Peace Boat US Director Emilie McGlone presented the Ecoship, Peace Boat's decarbonized future vessel that will sail for the UN SDGs.



YOUTH FOR THE SDGs

FROM LOCAL IMPACT TO UN-LEVEL ENGAGEMENT

Similarly to the Youth for the SDGs Program Scholars, Peace Boat US interns also were given the opportunity to speak about the SDGs and how they relate to the Peace Boat US internship program, which spans local impact in New York City and exposure to UN-Level diplomatic engagement.

Peace Boat US Intern Spotlight





Grace Lyford, Tufts University presenting on SDG 17 at the HLPF Side Event

David McNamara, Tufts University presenting at the HLPF Side Event







Tess McGarvey, Tufts University presenting on SDG 9 at the HLPF Side Event



Henk Rogers, Founder of Blue Planet Alliance presenting at Peace Boat US side event for the UN HLPF

BLUE PLANET ALLIANCE

This side event was also held in coordination with Blue Planet Alliance (BPA) founder, Henk Rogers, who presented BPA's work for youth engagement with SDG 7 for Renewable Energy, including partnerships with island nations to reach a 100% renewable energy future by 2045. (BPA) Global Ambassador Suman Shah spoke about her organization, the Youth Climate Action Alliance, that engages New York City high schools in renewable energy development.

These contributions were especially important because SDG 7 for Renewable Energy was one of five SDGs under review at the High-Level Political Forum. The event continued with remarks from the staff and intern team at Temple of Understanding, an NGO with ECOSOC status, during which they presented on critical global issues and their relation to sustainable development.



Additionally, attendees heard from several private-sector and impact-investment leaders, including Investors for Climate founder Helena Wasserman and Roosevelt Alliance Chief Development Officer, Dylan Welch. Wasserman and Welch discussed the importance of cross-sectoral SDG engagement and raising capital for decarbonization and sustainability efforts.

The final section of the presentation was dedicated to UN affiliates in academia and the arts, kicking off with Keshia D. Lawrence, a constituent of the Major Group for Children and Youth and inaugural recipient of the Peace Boat Ocean Stewardship Award for Local and Community Impact. Lawrence spoke about her research into the relationship between indigenous family history and climate science.



Canadian artist and activist Benjamin von Wong also presented his climate awareness exhibitions, which he has shared at many key UN sustainability conventions. The conversation turned to how art and creative expression can help facilitate policy change, and fashion designers Mari Amari, Patrick Duffy, and Brendan Cannon closed the presentation discussing the importance of ethical, creative fashion exchange and design. Peace Boat US, along with Blue Planet Alliance and other contributors, were pleased to organize this side event bringing together dozens of SDG stakeholders to support the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.



Benjamin Von Wong, artist and activist

PEACE BOAT US YOUTH LEADERS JOIN THE UN YOUTH OFFICE FOR ONE WORLD, ONE GAME, ONE GOAL

MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH SPORTS



Two days before the FIFA 2026 Men's World Cup Final, the UN Youth Office, in partnership with the Member States Friends of Football Coalition, hosted the "One World, One Game, One Goal" event. It brought together more than 100 speakers and youth leaders, over 40 partner organizations, and upwards of 3,000 participants to celebrate football as a catalyst for youth mental health and well-being.

The morning sessions featured a series of spotlight discussions with grassroots organizations who work directly with young athletes in their communities, hands-on mental health and well-being workshops, and a variety of football-related activities on the North Lawn led by social impact non-profits Laureus USA and Movember. In the afternoon, a transition to the General Assembly Hall allowed for a concluding panel discussion that focused on the personal stories and real-life experiences of various ex-professional footballers, youth leaders, and mental health advocates.

Peace Boat US youth representatives contributed to the success of this program in a variety of ways. On the day of the event, representatives were spread out across the UN grounds, helping visitors with any questions and assisting with activities taking place on the North Lawn before moving indoors to the General Assembly Hall for the closing panel.

Throughout the day, one message resonated across nearly every discussion: young people are currently facing an extremely challenging world to navigate and grow up in.



Ex-professional athletes Gilberto Silva, Maca Sánchez, and Pops Mensah-Bonsu kick the ball around with youth on the North Lawn.



Emilie McGlone, Peace Boat US Director & UN Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs Felipe Paullier

The climate crisis, armed conflicts, inequality, and the rapid technological transformation have left many feeling isolated, stressed, and uncertain about the future. Despite the fact that globally, 1 in 7 adolescents has a mental disorder, we are fortunate that in many parts of the world, youth mental health is finally being acknowledged as a serious issue, one that has profound implications for individuals, families, and our global communities.



Peace Boat has a history of supporting youth through sports with its Peace Ball project, which uses the power of football to build bridges of communication and solidarity. Through the global voyages and partnerships around the world, the Peace Ball initiative not only allows Peace Boat participants to deliver footballs and other sports equipment to children in disadvantaged communities, but also leads to the organization of friendly football matches in ports of call. Since 1999, Peace Boat has donated over 12,397 soccer balls to 43 countries.

Football is a universal language. It connects people regardless of age, creed, or background. Nowhere has this been more evident than here in New York, where for 39 days, fans from every corner of the world gathered to celebrate the game they love. Shared moments of joy, heartbreak, and excitement created memories that will last far beyond this tournament, and served as a reminder that at its core, football is about human connection. Peace Boat US was proud to support this special event at the United Nations, which marked another important step in a much broader journey to break stigma and ensure young people can speak openly about their mental health and well-being.



