

Side Event at the 2026 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)

organized by the Republic of Kazakhstan with the support of the CICA
Secretariat and in cooperation with UNV

Best Practices in Volunteerism in CICA Member States

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Statement by Haoliang Xu
United Nations Under-Secretary-General and UNDP Associate
Administrator

Your Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear colleagues,

As we seek to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda, one lesson is clear: sustainable development cannot be delivered by institutions alone. Progress depends on people, and volunteerism is a powerful expression of that commitment.

Thank you to the Republic of Kazakhstan and the CICA Secretariat for convening this event and inviting UNDP. I am pleased to join the launch of the *Review of Best Volunteerism Practices in CICA Member States*, an important contribution to the International Year of Volunteers for Sustainable Development 2026.

I congratulate all those who helped shape this publication. It demonstrates how volunteerism strengthens communities, empowers young people, promotes social cohesion, and advances sustainable development. From community action to crisis response, it shows what is possible when volunteers are recognized and supported.

CICA has set an important example by including volunteerism in its Catalogue of Confidence-Building Measures, affirming its value in building trust and mutual understanding.

Across the region, volunteers help translate development goals into local results. In 2025, nearly 3,500 UN Volunteers supported UN initiatives in CICA Member States, including 1,364 contributing to UNDP's work.

The United Nations Volunteers programme is part of the UNDP family, and we share the belief that volunteerism is a powerful enabler of sustainable development. By contributing to the 2026 State of the World's Volunteerism

Report, the UNDP Human Development Report Office has joined UNV in advancing evidence on volunteerism and improving how volunteer contributions are recognized and measured.

The International Volunteer Year 2026 is an opportunity not only to celebrate volunteers, but also to strengthen the policies and partnerships that enable volunteerism to thrive.

I encourage CICA Member States to integrate volunteerism into development plans; strengthen data on volunteer contributions; and join us at the closing of the International Year at UN Headquarters this December. UNDP and UNV stand ready to support these efforts.

I commend Kazakhstan, the CICA Secretariat and CICA Member States for advancing this agenda. Let us continue working together to ensure volunteerism is recognized as a strategic asset for achieving the SDGs and building stronger societies.

Thank you.