

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

organized by the Republic of Kazakhstan with the support of the CICA
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Best Practices in Volunteerism in CICA Member States

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Your Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear colleagues,

Let me begin with a number: 2.1 billion.

According to UNV's 2026 State of the World's Volunteerism Report (the SWVR), 2.1 billion people volunteer every month worldwide. **That is one third of working age population.**

Imagine if this population was **invisible in our data systems**. That is essentially the challenge we face with volunteerism today. The contribution exists. Communities see it. But too often our measurement systems do not.

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the **Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteers, Mr. Toily Kurbanov**, who sends his greetings and regrets not being able to join.

Let me thank the Republic of Kazakhstan and the CICA Secretariat for convening this discussion and for their cooperation with UNV throughout the International Volunteer Year 2026 and beyond. I also congratulate everyone who contributed to the *Review of Best Volunteerism Practices in CICA Member States*.

As the UNV Executive Coordinator's preface to this publication notes, **across Asia, people are stepping forward every day to support one another, organize, and act.**

For years, much of that **effort stayed invisible**. Outside policy. Outside budgets. Outside data.

That is starting to change. And CICA Member States are leading that change.

This Review is a very important step in this change.

I am also happy to share that the **2026 SWVR**, is dedicated entirely to measurement. **It introduces a new Global Index of Volunteer Engagement (GIVE)**. Yet still, fewer than a third of the world's countries measure volunteer work through national statistics.

Kazakhstan shows what is possible. Legislation. A national platform. Regional volunteer centres. Annual reporting. A National Volunteer Network that registers volunteers by age, activity, form and scale. The result: volunteer numbers have grown from 50,000 in 2020 to over 300,000 today.

Measurement matters most exactly where the stakes are highest. After the 2023 Türkiye earthquake, a civil-society platform mapped volunteers by skill and location in real time, turning goodwill into coordinated rescue within hours.

So what is the lesson ?

We must move from saying volunteerism matters, to **demonstrating how it delivers**, for the Sustainable Development Goals, for resilience, for peace.

This is why one of the **key priorities of the International Volunteer Year is not only to celebrate volunteers, but also to strengthen how volunteerism is recognized, measured, and integrated** into sustainable development efforts.

CICA has added its own answer, naming volunteerism a confidence-building measure. Because what gets measured gets recognized. What gets recognized gets resourced. And what gets resourced, gets lasting results.

The experiences highlighted in this review demonstrate that volunteerism is not a peripheral activity. **It is a strategic asset** that translates shared aspirations into tangible local results.



UNV looks forward to continuing its cooperation with the Republic of Kazakhstan, the CICA Secretariat and CICA Member States to advance volunteerism and build a lasting legacy from IVY 2026.

Because lasting change begins when people choose to act, connect, and care – one community at a time.

Thank you.