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A wide view shows participants of a high-level forum on building a culture of peace Sept. 2, 2

A wide view shows participants of a high-level forum on building a culture of peace Sept. 2, 2026, at the United Nations in New York City. (OSV News/United Nations/Manuel Elías)

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Women must be able to "exercise their leadership" and become "artisans of peace and guardians of life," as the global community fractures and conflicts increase, the Vatican told the United Nations.

The Holy See's Permanent Observer Mission to the U.N. shared its thoughts in a Sept. 2 statement during the global body's high-level forum on implementing the Program of Action on a Culture of Peace.

The annual forum — which has been held since 2012, and which took place at the U.N.'s New York headquarters — furthers the aims of the U.N. General Assembly's 1999 resolution to foster worldwide peace and nonviolence.

This year's forum focused on the importance of women's leadership in attaining that goal.

In its advance summary of the gathering, the office of U.N General Assembly President Annalena Baerbock stressed that a culture of peace "means not only the absence of conflict and violence, but the presence of justice, gender equality, and inclusive decision-making."

The summary, known as a concept note, also highlighted the need for "expanding the full, equal, meaningful and safe participation of the women in (the) political and peace process" while also "ensuring women’s access to justice."

"In these fragmented times, the need for a sustainable culture of peace has never been more urgent," said the concept note.

The U.N. Holy See mission affirmed that need in its statement, warning that "in the current international context, a culture of power is taking hold, normalizing war and changing behavior and relationships."

With this dynamic overtaking "diplomacy based on respectful dialogue," said the Holy See U.N. mission, "it is crucial to foster a culture of peace that challenges the current 'culture of power.'"

"Women can and should play a much greater role in all these processes which are intended to heal societies fractured by violence and chaos," the mission said in its statement.

The mission pointed to both the U.N.'s 1999 resolution on peace and to Pope Leo XIV's encyclical *Magnifica Humanitas*, quoting the pope's assertion that it is "not enough to state simply that men and women have equal dignity and rights; it is necessary that this be reflected in concrete decisions, such as in laws, access to employment, education, social and political responsibilities, and the way society listens to and values women’s contributions."

And, said the Holy See's U.N. mission, "It is only by closing this gap that women will have the possibility to become artisans of peace and guardians of life, thereby enabling a 'culture of peace' to restore trust among nations."

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