

## CTAUN CONFERENCE:

“**Teaching and Learning in an Interdependent World**”, the tenth annual conference of the Committee for Teaching About the United Nations, was held on Friday, February 1, at United Nations Headquarters in New York City. 473 people from as far away as Texas came to hear speakers on climate change, learn about multicultural efforts, and discover innovative educational approaches.

We were welcomed by **Radhika Coomaraswamy**, Under-Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict. She spoke about the problems of child soldiers and sexual abuse, and **UN efforts to act against genocide and mass abuses**. She quoted Sylvia Gordon describing the classroom as “a sheltered environment for children”.

A panel on “Climate Change: Rethinking the World We Share”, was moderated by **AAUW’s Carolyn Donovan**, who will be our Sunday speaker at the NY State Convention in April. **Dr. Alan Robock** Professor of Climatology at Rutgers University and a member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore, gave a lucid and compelling presentation. He addressed three questions: **How will climate change in the future?** (considerable warming, glacier retreat, greater and more extreme precipitation, extinctions, stronger hurricanes, sea level rise); **How will it affect us?** (water availability, tropical agriculture, national security); and **What should we do?** It’s cheaper to mitigate right now (reduce emissions, increase efficiency).

**Rebecca Pearl** of the Women’s Environment and Development Organization spoke on **the interaction of climate and gender**. When men and women have equal rights, equal numbers die in natural disasters. Where rights are unequal, more women die. 55%-85% of the dead in the tsunami were women.

**Dr. Steven Frantz**, Sustainability Education Coordinator for the Scarsdale School District, showed how his district is trying to “**meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs**” in facilities, grounds, and transportation; curriculum and staff development; and attitudes and behavior. He concluded that “It’s good to change your light bulbs, but it’s more important to change our leaders.”

The final speaker of the day, **Dr. Spencer Wells**, Genographic Project Director of the national Geographic Society, gave a cogent explanation of how DNA mutations, the Y chromosome, and mitochondrial DNA can be used to trace the origins and migration of human populations from sub-Saharan Africa. **Climate change** in the Sahara 50,000 years ago and at later periods **was the main determinant of ancient migration routes**. He is currently testing indigenous populations around the world as well as any volunteers to refine this knowledge.