

Representing the Gospel in Global Advocacy

Where: Seoul, Korea

When: Wednesday, 29 October 2025

1. Executive Summary / Abstract

This report summarises the plenary session by the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) Global Advocacy Department and integrates the subsequent feedback and insights from attendees. The session profoundly redefined Christian advocacy, pivoting it from confrontation to a Christ-centred model of patient, relational engagement within international institutions, notably the United Nations (UN).

A primary revelation for many attendees was the strategic depth and breadth of the WEA's presence, including its formal consultative status at the UN in both Geneva and New York. The work was effectively termed an "exercise in translation," converting the language of the church, such as religious persecution, into diplomatic language, like "religious freedom violations," to ensure its voice is heard in the halls of power. The core message of the speakers was that advocacy must be an expression of the gospel, rooted in humble servanthood, intrinsic hope, and unconditional love.

The feedback revealed a significant appetite for this type of strategic engagement, with many expressing surprise at the WEA's strong role and the practical avenues for local churches to contribute. The most disturbing statistic shared, that less than one per cent of the estimated 27 million trafficking victims are identified each year, galvanised a clear call for increased church involvement. Attendees particularly commended the positive, non-complaining approach to advocacy and requested more practical stories and resources to connect this global work to local ministry contexts, particularly in rural and under-resourced areas. The report concludes with a clear outline of attendee interests for specialised follow-up, confirming a unified desire to collaborate with the WEA in championing religious freedom, human rights, and social justice globally.

2. Detailed and Clear Summary of the Key Content Delivered

The plenary provided a robust explanation of the WEA's advocacy mission, blending strategic engagement with a deep theological foundation.

The Foundational Model: Advocacy as Faithful Presence

Janet Epp Buckingham, Director of the WEA's UN Office in Geneva, initiated the session by challenging the perception of advocacy as purely protest. She presented the biblical account of **Queen Esther** as the department's preferred model: an approach defined by wisdom, patience, and relationship-building. Esther, despite her lack of formal power, created the opportunity to make her request by first establishing trust and goodwill with the king. This model of patient engagement, described by attendees as "**faithful presence**", guides the WEA's work in potentially hostile international settings.

The goal is not criticism, but dialogue, seeking opportunities to "have dinner with those who oppose us" to build relationships and establish trust for future conversations. This is particularly vital in multilateral settings like the Human Rights Council. An important mechanism discussed was the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** process, where every UN member state is reviewed every four and a half years. The WEA uses its consultative status to make **written submissions** into this process, amplifying the concerns of its national and regional alliances. This function of the WEA

was hailed by attendees as a profound new awareness—a strategic opportunity for the global church.

The Strategy: Translation, Access, and Scope

Kyle Wisdom, the Director of Global Advocacy, elaborated on the strategic dimension, describing the core work as an "**exercise in translation.**" This involves converting the language of the church (e.g., persecution) into the policy language of the UN (e.g., religious freedom violations) to effectively communicate the faith community's concerns.

He highlighted the department's dual presence, with offices in Geneva and New York, a fact which surprised and impressed many attendees.

- **Geneva** focuses primarily on human rights, most notably through the Human Rights Council and the UPR process.
- **New York** focuses on broader areas, including **security, sustainable development, and women's issues**, utilising its space to convene events on displaced people and refugees, often in collaboration with partner organisations. The WEA's formal consultative status provides them with the **specialised access** needed to bring messages from the "household of faith into the halls of power."

The scope of the WEA's advocacy is comprehensive, addressing issues that align with God's heart as seen in Psalm 146:

- Religious freedom for the persecuted.
- Modern slavery and human trafficking.
- The rights of children and women.
- Peace and reconciliation.
- Creation care and the health of the planet. (Attendees specifically noted the welcome presence of a unit dedicated to **climate change**).

Case Study: The Crisis of Human Trafficking

Jennifer Tunehag, Global Director of the World Freedom Network, provided a sharp focus on anti-trafficking efforts. She presented the work as a theological imperative, reminding global structures that "**God does not forget the vulnerable.**" Using the parable of the lost sheep, she powerfully reframed the modern crisis: with an estimated **27 million people** trapped in trafficking, it is as if the **99 are lost**. The most shocking statistic for attendees was that **less than one per cent** of these 27 million are identified each year.

This fact validates the necessity of advocacy, as only nation-states can formally identify victims—a crucial first step towards justice and support. The World Freedom Network partners with the advocacy department to help states refine definitions, increase support services, and create space for faith communities to contribute. The team's active involvement in the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** in New York was specifically noted for its importance in asserting the value of women who choose to nurture their families, a voice which attendees felt is often neglected in secular UN forums.

The Theological Posture: Representing Christ

Gaetan Roy, the Permanent Representative in Geneva, concluded with the spiritual foundations of the work. He revealed that his guiding question in diplomatic engagements is, "**How can I serve you?**" This attitude of humble servanthood is intended to **represent Christ** by making Him visible and stands in direct opposition to the common practice of complaining or demanding.

He outlined three core expressions of this Christ-centred approach:

1. **Humble Servanthood (Philippians 2:5-7):** Serving through meaningful relationship-building to cultivate trust. This requires **patience** and discretion, as publicising diplomatic work can kill the necessary trust. He stressed that the only thing that should become popular is Jesus Christ.
2. **Intrinsic Hope (Philippians 4:6):** Being **ambassadors of hope, not despair**. Advocates should present issues not with anxiety, but with faith, demonstrating hope in Christ against impossible odds, doing their best, and trusting that "God will do the rest."
3. **God's Love (1 John 4:11):** Focusing on the first part of this truth—God loves all whom He has created—to ensure counterparts **feel God's love** through the engagement. This intentional focus avoids the strife, blame, and retribution that focusing on sin or disagreement would engender.

This spiritual framework was highly appreciated by attendees, with one noting that the positive approach of "**not complaining and putting in demands**" but instead using the core values of Christ to effect positive change is the most important element for starting any effort.

3. Main Topic and Core Message

Main Topic: The philosophy, strategic methodology, and theological foundation of the World Evangelical Alliance's engagement in global advocacy within multilateral institutions.

Core Message: Effective and faithful Christian advocacy in global power structures is achieved through **representing the person and character of Jesus Christ**. The WEA provides essential **strategic access** for the global church, translating its concerns into the language of power, and working collaboratively to champion justice, freedom, and the vulnerable through a posture of humble servanthood, intrinsic hope, and unconditional love.

4. Primary Arguments, Key Principles, and Theological Points

- **Strategic Access and Consultative Status:** The WEA's formal, high-level presence at the UN in both Geneva and New York is a highly valued and powerful asset, offering a **strategic opportunity** to bring the evangelical voice to world leaders—a reality previously unknown to many members.
- **The Model of Faithful Presence:** Advocacy is best practised through patient, long-term, and **relational engagement** rather than immediate confrontation or protest, as exemplified by Queen Esther.
- **The Necessity of Translation:** The effectiveness of the work relies on **translating persecution into political language** (e.g., religious freedom violations) to achieve political and diplomatic traction.

- **Holistic Scope for the Kingdom:** The advocacy mandate is broad and holistic, spanning religious freedom, anti-trafficking, peace-building, **creation care (climate change)**, and addressing **poverty and corruption**—reflecting a comprehensive Kingdom commission.
- **The Power of Positive Approach:** The theological posture of **avoiding complaints and demands** and instead demonstrating hope and love is seen as a crucial differentiator for success in political spheres.
- **Patience is a Pre-requisite:** Attendees acknowledged the speaker's insistence on patience, recognising that in complex situations and against resistant nations (e.g., China), change takes a **very long time**.
- **Principle of Partnership:** The WEA's commitment is to advocate *with* the national alliances, providing a link between local issues and global forums, which is a strong advantage for the church.

5. Attendee Insights and Follow-up Interests

The discussion sessions provided valuable qualitative feedback, highlighting key takeaways and specific areas for future collaboration.

Key Learnings and New Awareness for Attendees:

- **The 1% Statistic:** The most surprising and galvanising piece of data was that **less than 1%** of all trafficking victims are identified globally each year.
- **UN Presence:** A strong consensus that the WEA's **robust presence at the UN** and the World Health Organisation (WHO) was a welcome and unexpected discovery.
- **The UPR Mechanism:** The specific mechanism of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the opportunity to make a written submission every four and a half years was new and highly valued information.
- **Holistic Focus:** The inclusion of specialised units for **Creation Care** and **Peace and Reconciliation** was a noted point of appreciation.
- **Theological Posture:** The "**not complaining**" approach, rooted in the core values of Christ, resonated as an important and effective strategy.

Specific Follow-up Interests and Needs:

- **Anti-Trafficking/World Freedom Network:** Several leaders expressed a specific desire to follow up on the anti-trafficking initiative, recognising the gravity of the problem in their contexts (e.g., Botswana).
- **Freedom of Religion/Persecution:** A primary concern was for more communication and active work regarding religious freedom in areas where Christians are a minority, including challenges like the blocking of gospel access in communities in Mexico and arrests in China.
- **Peace-building/Conflict Resolution:** There was a strong interest in the work of the Global Peace and Reconciliation Network.

- **Poverty and Corruption:** Interest was expressed in mobilising advocacy efforts to address issues of **poverty, lack of basic needs, and corruption**.
- **Women's/Pro-Life Issues:** Specific interest was shown in connecting with the work at the CSW, with a call to champion the value of women who choose to nurture their families, a voice perceived as marginalised in UN debates.

Strategic Dialogue and Gaps:

- **Local Awareness Gap:** A critical need was identified to inform **rural churches and smaller discipleship groups** about the existence of the WEA's advocacy avenue. Attendees noted a disparity of information between city churches and rural churches, calling for greater education and awareness of external global situations and how to connect local issues to global platforms.
- **Desire for Practical Stories:** There was a strong request to hear more **practical, real-winning stories** of advocacy in action, as theory alone is insufficient to demonstrate effectiveness.
- **Nationalism as a Divisive Force:** The role of **nationalism and politics** was highlighted as a critical contemporary issue that is polarising the evangelical body in a way that historical traditions no longer do, necessitating a unified advocacy approach.
- **Collaboration with Other NGOs:** A question was raised regarding the relationship between the WEA and other global advocacy groups (e.g., CitizenGo), expressing a desire to ensure **cumulative effort** rather than duplicating efforts or operating in silos.

6. Conclusion with Main Call to Action

The session established that the WEA's global advocacy is an indispensable and strategic ministry for the global church. The work is not simply about politics but is a fundamental expression of the gospel's call to seek justice and champion the cause of the vulnerable.

The ultimate call to action remains one of **active partnership and integration**. Attendees are urged to move beyond passive observation and contribute their local insights and expertise to the global process. The specific follow-up interests recorded confirm a collective desire for deeper engagement on issues ranging from anti-trafficking to peace-building and religious freedom.

Invitation for Further Contribution

Your voice is a vital part of this global conversation. We invite you to add your reflections, insights, and questions to this discussion by visiting the following link: <https://weafeedback.com/wednesday-29/>

1. Scroll down to the Panel session titles,
2. When ready, select 'Start Recording' and provide your input (responding to the questions below.
3. When done, select 'Stop'
4. No need to provide personal details
5. When ready, select 'Send'.

To engage with the report and contextualise the content for your ministry, access Spock.chat (if you have not yet registered, click here - <https://app.spock.chat/conference/wea>) It is highly recommended that you personalise your AI before engaging with the reports. To do so, select the 'Personalise your AI' agent in the Menu Bar and follow the instructions.