



NGO NEWS

BY TERESA KOTTURAN SCN

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HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2017 took place at the United Nations from July 10 -19, 2017 with a focus theme: “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world.” The need for poverty eradication is considered as a vital step to guarantee a sustainable future for all. Though extreme poverty had fallen globally, progress has been uneven – 1.6 billion people still in live in multidimensional poverty.

44 countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews on SDGs 1 – end poverty, 2 – end hunger, 3 – ensure healthy lives, 5 – achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, 9 – build resilient infrastructure, and 14 – conserve and sustainably use the oceans. These thematic reviews are crucial to the successful implementation of the SDGs and the commitment to *leave no one behind*.

Lack of ambition and political will is a concern among many countries. Some countries have established high level governmental committees or parliamentary groups to implement the 2030 Agenda. Implementing the 2030 Agenda is a complex process and it is important for countries to keep in focus the inter-linkages and synergies between the SDGs. The implementation process is slow and the pace of change is inadequate in the face of rising inequalities. It is important to have peaceful, just and inclusive societies with good governance to engage all segments of society in decision making.

In the 2030 Agenda, governments committed to a revitalized Global Partnership between States and declared that Public Finance will play a vital role in achieving the SDGs. But it is to be noted that neoliberal ideology, corporate lobbying, business-friendly fiscal policies, tax avoidance and tax

evasion have led to the weakening the ability of the public sector to provide for essential services. In the face of resource crunch, public-private-partnerships are promoted; it can greatly decrease equitable access to basic services.

Apart from the Member States, 2500 civil society representatives from around world participated in the forum. Civil society groups in many countries are very active and have prepared country reports to ensure all voices are heard at the national level. At the UN, there was no space for the Civil Society Reports. Opportunities for Civil Society are shrinking in many countries; the success of the 2030 Agenda requires their increased participation in implementation and monitoring.

The SDGs are a roadmap for social, economic and environmental transformation. Let us all join hands to make them a reality.

A summary of the Ministerial Segment on July 17 can be accessed here:

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/ecosoc6860.doc.htm> (It contains a Key Note by Jeffery Sachs.)

You can view the proceedings in the link below. Dr. Jeffery Sachs Key Note is at 34 minutes into the video.

<http://webtv.un.org/search/43rd-meeting-high-level-segment-economic-and-social-council-2017-session/5510504566001?term=sachs#full-text>

My Internship with the Sisters of Charity Federation NGO

Written by Giovanna Ortega Pinto



Giovanna Ortega Pinto

Interning at the UN had a significant impact in my college career as well as in my personal life. I was able to learn and better understand how the United Nations operates and how NGOs, like the Sisters of Charity Federation, impacts the world. Every week I was fortunate enough to attend different meetings and explore different topics/issues that affect not only the United States but also countries around the world. It was interesting to observe how NGOs and member states both attempt to work together in order to achieve goals and come up with solutions. Through my internship what I learned that most fascinated me was the SDGs. Without my internship I would not have been familiar with all the SDGs and now I am able to always keep in mind how I can advocate and execute these goals. I was also given the opportunity to do further research on a topic that has been one of my interests, sex trafficking. With the resources available to me through my internship I was able to research and write my own paper on the Economics of Sex Trafficking. Overall, I was able to learn much more than I had expected by interning for the Sisters of Charity at the UN.

NGO-Liaisons Meeting

The Annual Federation NGO-Liaison Meeting took place in Tarrytown, NY on May 31 – June 1. Liaisons from all Federation members, except Sister Mary Thomas OLM were present. The participants shared happenings in their respective congregations on events/actions/processes in working towards justice for immigration/migration/refugees and on Sustainable Development Goals. All were asked to listen for common actions, themes, challenges. In Depth sharing on Racism – Joetta Venneman, Human Trafficking – Debbie Weber and Earth – Rev. Terry Moran enriched the participants. Prayer and quiet reflection time was interwoven into the sharing.

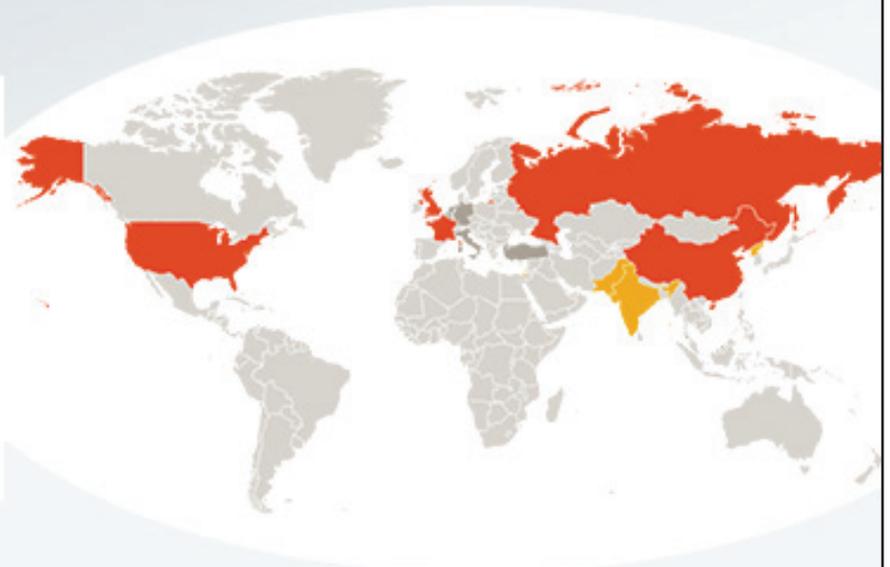
ON the first day of the Federation Annual meeting, Sister Teresa Kotturan, SCN, NGO representative to the United Nations, spoke about plight of migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons, with a focus on women and children. During the NGO liaison panel, Sister Helene Allain, NDSC spoke about the ministry initiatives among refugees by Federation members in Canada and their advocacy to urge the Canadian government to suspend or revise the Safe Third Country Agreement and increase the refugee resettlement targets. Sister Eileen Haynes, SCL and Sister Carol De Angelo, SCNY outlined strategies to aid migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons in the United States.



Nuclear weapons - 70 years with the bomb

States where nuclear weapons are kept

- States which have nuclear weapons under the Non-Proliferation Treaty: China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, USA
- Other states known or believed to have nuclear weapons: India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan
- States which host U.S. nuclear weapons as part of NATO's nuclear sharing policy: Belgium, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Turkey



United Nations negotiated Legally Binding Treaty Banning all Nuclear Weapons

On July 7, 2017, 122 Member States of the United Nations voted to adopt a **Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons**. It is the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons which may eventually lead to their total elimination. All the nine nuclear armed countries and their allies – NATO, Japan, Australia and South Korea did not participate in the negotiations.

The Treaty does emphasize the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the use of nuclear weapons. By the terms of the treaty, each State party would never, under any circumstances, develop, test, produce, manufacture, otherwise acquire, possess or stockpile nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. In addition, States parties would never transfer such weapons or devices; use or threaten to use them; or allow them to be stationed, installed or deployed on their territory. While it prohibits nuclear weapons, it provides a pathway for states with nuclear weapons to join and destroy their nuclear arsenals. The Treaty would open for signature at UN Headquarters on September 20, and enter into force 90 days after the fiftieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession had been deposited with the Secretary-General.

As conflicts and wars continue to be waged in different parts of the world without any resolution in sight, it is the duty of all peace loving citizens and world leaders to focus on developing a new concept on international security and eliminate nuclear weapons. It's not just about peace. It's about the survival of all life on earth. You can ready the Treaty here: http://www.icanw.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Rev2.pdf?mc_cid=247252a834&mc_eid=f05e8292e3%C2





Paris Climate Change Agreement and the U.S.A.

In December 2015, at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP 21), 197 countries agreed to undertake ambitious steps to combat global warming. As of August 11, 2017, 159 countries have ratified the agreement which came into force on November 4, 2016. The United States officially announced its decision to withdraw from the Paris Climate Agreement on Climate Change on June 1, 2017. The UN Environment Executive Director Erik Solheim reacted to the decision in this manner – “in no way brings and end to the unstoppable effort” of climate action. The Secretary-General António Guterres described the US’ decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement as “a major disappointment for global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and promote global security.”

On August 4, 2017, the US notified the United Nations its intent to withdraw from the Paris Agreement as soon as it is eligible to do so. The US is willing to reengage in the Agreement, if the country can “identify terms that are more favorable to it.” The United States will continue participate in the ongoing international climate negotiations, including the 23rd Conference of Parties (COP 23) and UNFCCC in order to protect its interests.

According to the terms of the Agreement, a Party may withdraw at any time after three years from the date on

which the Agreement has entered into force for that Party. The US accepted the Paris Agreement on 3 September 2016, and the Agreement entered into force for the US on 4 November 2016. Thus, the US must remain Party to the Agreement at least until late 2019. This move would certainly weaken the efforts of the global community to combat global warming.

Yet the overwhelming response from the non-state actors in the United States will certainly strengthen the global efforts to reduce global warming. Michael Bloomberg, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change has stepped in fill the funding gap by a commitment of up to \$15 million for UNFCCC Secretariat for its operations. A large number of mayors, governors, college and university leaders, businesses, and investors have come together under the banner “We Are Still In” to declare their support climate action and the Paris Agreement. 211 US “Climate Mayors” announced to “adopt, honor and uphold the commitments to the goals enshrined in the Paris Agreement.” You can find details here: <http://www.wearestillin.com/>

The next UN Climate Change Conference will take place in Bonn, Germany from November 6 – 17, 2017.

Intergenerational Dialogues on the SDGs

Intergenerational Dialogues on the Sustainable Development Goals took place on August 1, 2017 at the UN. The focus of the Dialogue was “to foster a shift in the perception of youth and older persons from beneficiaries of social policy to agents of social change.” It is also an attempt to engage civil society with the objective of leaving no one behind. In his opening message (via video message) the Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated the wisdom, experience, energy and ideals of the young and old are important to realize the SDGs. He also stressed that together they can help break cycles of poverty that have lasted for generations, and trigger transformational change that endures for generations to come.

The President of the General Assembly, Peter Thomson, urged the young and old to recognize themselves “as the owners, drivers and beneficiaries” of the SDGs to build a world of peace, prosperity and sustainability for all. The newly appointed Envoy on Youth, Jayathma Wickramanayake, called for “building bridges for different generations to work together in a mutually empowering relationship” to implement the SDGs. The breakout sessions provided opportunities for interaction among the participants and resource persons and make personal commitments to implement the SDGs.



Want to visit the United Nations? Contact Sr. Teresa Kotturan to set up an orientation.

- UPCOMING - EVENTS & NEWS

UN General Assembly 72nd Session: September 12 – 25, 2017

Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty: September 20

International Day of Peace: September 21

World Tourism Day: September 27

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty: October 17

United Nations Day: October 24

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women: November 25

Commission on Social Development: January 31 – February 9, 2018

Commission on the Status of Women: March 12 – 23, 2018



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