



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

A bi-monthly newsletter of information on international justice and peace issues

March/April 2011
Vol. 36, No. 2

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Published by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns: Peace, Social Justice & Integrity of Creation

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Centenary: Maryknoll continues commitment to justice

As the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers (in 2011) and the Maryknoll Sisters (in 2012) celebrate 100 years of life in mission, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is reflecting on some of the specific expressions of Maryknoll's long term commitment to work for social justice and peace, for human promotion and liberation – and ultimately for the integrity of creation.

Because it is deeply rooted in the specific contexts where Maryknoll missionaries live and work, this social justice ministry has often been focused on a particular country or part of the world:

In southern Africa, for example, Maryknoll Sister Janice McLaughlin, now president of the Maryknoll Sisters, served as press secretary to the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in the late 1970s. Documenting the atrocities of Ian Smith's government before its collapse led to her arrest, imprisonment and deportation from Rhodesia, later to become independent Zimbabwe. After her deportation Sister Janice worked with the Washington Office on Africa to educate U.S. policy makers and advocate for U.S. policy toward Africa that would promote respect for human rights and self-determination.

Thirty years later, Maryknoll missionaries, including Sister Janice, who had returned to Zimbabwe following independence, again brought the story of the Zimbabwean people's struggle for justice and basic human rights to the attention of international decision-makers. In the face of increasingly brutal actions by the government of Robert Mugabe, Maryknoll lay missionary Merwyn DeMello travelled more than once to Washington and New York. Working with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns he met with U.S. government and United Nations officials to encourage an appropriate U.S. response.

On the other side of the world, in El Salvador, following the brutal killings there of Maryknoll Sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clarke and their two companions, Maryknoll played an active role in educating the U.S. public about the U.S. role in El Salvador's war and ending U.S. military aid to the Salvadoran government. Maryknoll worked with others to hold to account the perpetrators of the crime against the four U.S. churchwomen and of vicious human rights violations against the people of El Salvador.

Arriving in Cambodia in 1989, Maryknollers encountered the physical devastation of war. At that time, Cambodia had the world's highest percentage of mine amputees. One out of every 236 Cambodians had lost one or more limbs after stepping on a landmine. In addition to establishing the Wat Than Skills Training Program for Polio and Landmine Disabled People, Maryknoll brought its experience to global efforts for a treaty to ban landmines. Joining with Cambodians and the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines, Maryknoll lay missionary Patty Curran participated in international meetings of nongovernmental organizations as they developed and implemented the campaign that resulted in the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. On March 1, 1999 the treaty entered into force, but 39 countries including the U.S. have not yet ratified the treaty and many non-state armed groups still use landmines. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns continues to work particularly for U.S. ratification of the treaty.

Maryknoll missionaries have accompanied the people of Sudan, primarily South Sudan, in many different communities and ministries since 1976. Their presence through the many years of war (1983-2005) between the North and the South gave the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns strong reason to support possible paths to peace. Through education in the U.S. and advocacy, especially with the U.S. Congress and with the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations, Maryknoll promoted international support for the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and its full implementation.

Through a commitment to inculturation and an option for the poor, Maryknoll missionaries continually search for new ways to be the Church in service of God's reign (from the Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers' reflection, "A New Springtime for Mission").

This search keeps them deeply immersed in struggles for human dignity, peace and ecological integrity at the margins of our world and propels them to advocate for social justice in places of power and to create spaces at decision-making tables for people from the margins to speak for themselves.

Egypt: Revolt in the land of the Pharaohs

The following article was written by Maryknoll Fr. Doug May, who, from 1999-2007, was the only U.S.-born priest assigned in Egypt.

I lived and worked with Egyptians, both Christians and Muslims, both working and upper class. However, for about six to 12 hours per week, I catered to three Catholic communities of people from over 20 countries who spoke English as a first, second or third language. They were embassy, multi-national, university and NGO employees and dependants. From both exposure and experience, I learned a great deal about Egypt from various perspectives. Even though I am currently assigned to Kenya, I still manage to spend time in Egypt twice a year to visit “family” and friends there.

While I don’t consider myself an academic expert, I can claim to have a “sense” of Egypt that can hold its own among experts. An Egyptian Jesuit stated almost 30 years ago that “Egyptians would revolt tomorrow except that they are too tired trying to stay alive today.” For most of my 18 years there, many of us referred to Egypt as “the gas bottle waiting for the match” to explode.

My first observation is that Egyptians have been formed and educated to be “followers” rather than leaders. This came from the home, the school, the work place AND the church or mosque. However, a new generation of Egyptians has enkindled the spark of liberty and courage that finally ignited the “gas bottle” made up of many of their countrymen: young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, Muslim and Christian.

In April 1987, I visited a Bethlehem University student in his home at a nearby Palestinian refugee camp. Later, he asked me if I had noticed the picture of Gamal Abdel Nasr (Egypt’s president from 1956-70) on the wall. I answered that I had. He then said: “My father is still waiting for Nasr to liberate us and he’s been dead for [more than] 15 years. My generation will not wait for others to liberate us. We must liberate ourselves.” The first “intifada” in Palestine began just a few months later. In much the same

way, the new generation of Egyptians, after 30 years of Hosni Mubarak, was not willing to wait only to have his son, Gamal, and the National Democratic Party (NDP) continue to run Egypt like a personal fiefdom. The time had come for Egyptians to have their own “intifada” and liberate themselves.

Egyptian Christians struggle to be active in socio-political affairs as most feel they are a tolerated minority “protected” by the government. There is a sense that “the devil you know is better than the devil you don’t know.”

As Egypt evolved more and more from a secular state during Nasr’s adminis-

tration into a quasi Islamic state under Anwar Sadat and Mubarak, their military dictatorships still seemed preferable to rule by the Muslim Brotherhood. Christians feel impotent as citizens due to religious discrimination by many Muslims and for the fact that they are not always sure who they are among “Arab” Egyptians. More than once I found Christian Egyptians rooting for Israel because “Israel could kick Arab-Muslim butts.” They loved the Egypt of their ancestors without loving the country which often treated them like unwanted foreigners.

In the eyes of many Muslims, Christians are often seen as disloyal idol worshipers and polytheists. In the eyes of many Orthodox Christians, Catholics are often seen as heretics and “the illegitimate children of Rome.” Catholic leadership normally keeps its head down and seldom is prophetic as “light, salt or yeast” in Egyptian society even though many leading Egyptians (mostly Muslim and Orthodox) went to Catholic schools. While Islamic extremism is on the increase in Egypt, much of it is the result of government oppression and economic frustration. If freedom becomes a reality and economic opportunities improve, extremism may decrease. Building a “crescent-and-cross” society that is religious in culture but NOT in government is the dream of many Egyptians, young and old. I have friends who grew up during the Nasr period. It is difficult to distinguish who is Muslim and who is Christian except around the time of religious feasts. Many Egyptians yearn for those days when there was mutual appreciation and respect.

Like most Egyptians, I am extremely proud of



Photo of Egyptian father and son by Eric Wheeler

the peaceful revolution. I am confident that one form of dictatorship will not take over for the last one now that Egyptians have rediscovered their spirit. However, I can still remember those disenchanted with the new life of freedom in the old USSR after one or two years. They started marching with the old Soviet flag representing their former safe but sorry lives under communism. During the years of transition ahead, some Egyptians will most likely do the same, including some Christians, who had “safe” but sorry lives under the old military government.

It was only three years ago that I wrote that the people of the Arab world didn't value democracy. I stated that they preferred a strong leader who would offer them enough food to eat and enough money to buy the little things that make life seem better. Freedom referred more to freedom FROM fear and hunger rather than freedom TO live and develop as individuals and as a people. It seems that I was grossly mistaken then. Now, I pray that the dream of true freedom that was born in January becomes a reality for all Egyptian citizens.

Tanzania: Proposed road stirs controversy

Rich in natural resources yet consistently ranked as one of the world's poorest nations, Tanzania must wrestle with the lure of financial promises made by large developers and mining companies which would lead to projects most likely to destroy its raw beauty and would severely compromise its environmental health. Sr. Veronica Schweyen, who spent over 35 years as a missionary in Tanzania, recently joined the staff of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and contributed to the following article.

Despite persistent resistance from environmentalists and others, President Jakwya Kikwete, who has led the country since 2005 (and who won re-election in November 2010), supports a government plan to pave a road through the Serengeti National Park. The highway would link two of Tanzania's major cities, Arusha in the east and Musoma in the west on the shore of Lake Victoria. The funding source for this project is not clear, though it is likely that mining companies and countries such as China would consider this plan highly beneficial.

Every June, hundreds of thousands of wildebeest, gazelles and zebra move north in the great migration through the Serengeti, which was designated a World Heritage site by UNESCO in 1981. The chance to see and experience the park's wildlife and landscape brings over 100,000 tourists a year to the country, a significant contribution to Tanzania's economy. One of the world's leading experts on the Serengeti, Prof. Tony Sinclair, believes that if the road is built, eventually the Serengeti as we know it will no longer exist. The planned highway would prevent traditional migration routes and would expose the thousands of animals who live in the area to greater danger and environmental degradation.

It is possible to build a different route, one which would bypass the Serengeti. The alternative plan would be more costly but would preserve the natural beauty of the park. Kikwete has rejected the alternative plan, despite an offer of funding from the World Bank.

On a related note, immense tracts of land have been given in trust for 99 years to wealthy rulers from countries such as the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. In the Loliondo area of northern Tanzania, 1,000,000 hectares have been leased (in two different agreements); the Maasai tribal people are now evicted from grazing lands which they have used for centuries. A Maryknoll sister working in the Maasai area in Tanzania said that students reported that their families' homes were burned when they refused to move. These lands now sprout hotels, hunting areas and provide airport access. (When asked about the evicted people, Tanzanian authorities have insisted that they were Maasai from Kenya.)

While leases of this kind have been reported by the international press, they are not publicized to the Tanzanian people, very few of whom will benefit from such transactions. **The proposed Serengeti road will cost \$470 million; the advocacy group Serengeti Watch notes, “What number of schools, dispensaries, hospitals, training centers ... could be built? Are there really altruistic motives operating here? Or will a few people, a few large enterprises, ultimately benefit?”** [corrected from original]

Learn more about this issue and the campaign to stop the road through Serengeti Watch; its website is www.savetheserengeti.org. More links on this issue, detailing the environmental destruction that will be wrought by this plan, are available on the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns' website.

Uganda: Faith leaders renew call for negotiations

On May 24, 2010 President Obama signed the Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament (LRA) and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009 "to support stabilization and lasting peace in northern Uganda and areas affected by the [LRA]." As required by the law, in November 2010 the administration issued a strategic plan for its implementation.

As the world was celebrating the achievement of a peaceful and well-run referendum that declared the independence of South Sudan, religious leaders in areas vulnerable to the LRA called again for international efforts to bring the LRA back to the negotiating table.

Bishop Barani Eduardo Hiiboro Kussala of the diocese of Tombura-Yambio, South Sudan, wrote in an open letter: "The situation of the LRA has not improved since before, during and after the referendum. [In January,] we lost a religious nun into the hands of LRA in northern Congo [and] from 22nd to 25th December over 17 people [were] ... abducted in Maridi and Ibba counties, as well as around Yambio county ... with nine dead and seven wounded in

the same counties. From 13th to 18th January to 7th February there [have]... been sporadic appearance[s] and killings, abduction[s], wounding and displacement of the people in Western Equatoria [Sudan] by the LRA. Our worries continue to increase as the rain season is getting closer and people are preparing to cultivate their fields this year. ...

"After a long history of suffering, finally the people of South Sudan are in the process of achieving their self-determination ... We hope, as we have opted for independence, that we will ... choose democracy over repression, embrace diversity over division, defend human rights and justice over abuses, empower transparency and accountability over corruption and nepotism, and promote equality between men and women over discrimination. Above all choose peace over war.

"Already, the LRA has brutally killed more than 2,700 of our family members and abducted over 3,500 others since they began their latest wave of killings in September 2008. Many of our children are still in the hands of the LRA. We do not know if they are alive or dead. Those who have managed

to escape the LRA bear the physical and mental scars of what they have suffered and will never be the same again. We have few means to help them re-adjust and integrate back into our communities, but we are trying to do what we can.

"With over 500,000 people displaced from their homes, our lives are not easy. We no longer have access to our fields, our schools are not functioning, and we struggle to fight off diseases and to find enough food to



Members of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) which has worked for a solution to Uganda's violent conflict with the Lord's Resistance Army

feed our families.”

The bishop called for the urgent implementation of the new strategy the U.S. government released for dealing with the LRA, stating that he fully agreed with the plan’s four objectives to: a) increase protection of civilians; b) apprehend or remove from the battlefield LRA leader Joseph Kony and senior commanders; c) promote the defection, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of remaining LRA fighters; and d) increase humanitarian access and provide continued relief to affected communities. “But,” he said, “I also add the strategy of peace negotiation initiative as a genuine option.”

According to Sudan analyst John Ashworth, the bishop asks for Kony’s removal “by putting pressure on him; it is not military operation but really pressure which can make him come to [the] negotiation table and also give up this endless war.” The bishop stresses “professional law enforcement” and “pressure to make [Kony] come to the negotiation table,” along with protection and assistance for affected communities.

According to the BBC’s Mike Wooldridge, Archbishop John Baptist Odama from the Acholi Religious Leaders Network, who “played a key role

in efforts to bring an end to the conflict involving the LRA, has said military strategies are not the answer” and that “efforts were needed to ‘touch the humanity’ of ... Kony.”

Wooldridge continues, “The archbishop is also involved in a regional and more broad-based task force working for an alternative to military strategies for ending the conflict now that it affects four countries.

“His message is that the track record of military offensives against the LRA demonstrates that force is not the answer - and that even though a negotiated peace settlement ultimately failed in 2008, it is still worth striving for.”

Faith in action:

The Enough! Project will issue periodic report cards on the Obama administration’s efforts to implement its strategy. The first report card is available on its website, <http://www.enoughproject.org/publications/president-obamas-lra-strategy-report-card>. Urge President Obama to follow the repeated recommendations of regional religious leaders, implementing critical non-military strategies to protect civilians and promote a negotiated end to the violence.

Sudan: Post-referendum steps

When the results of the recent referendum in South Sudan were officially made public (98.83 percent voted for secession), John Ashworth, a well known and highly respected Sudan analyst, in explaining the somewhat muted reception of the news, wrote, “Perhaps yesterday’s official announcement of the results was a bit of an anti-climax, as it has been clear for weeks that the result was overwhelmingly for secession. Perhaps also people have already digested the joyful reality of secession and are now beginning to come to terms with some of the immediate challenges of nation-building, including the constitutional review, making the government more inclusive, good governance in general, and the outstanding issues remaining to be negotiated with the north (Abyei, oil, borders, citizenship, national debt, etc). Practical problems such as the influx of returnees, the dire position of southerners in the north, and the fighting that broke out in Upper Nile when [Sudanese Armed Forces] units were ordered to relocate to the north might also be on people’s minds.”

By all accounts, the referendum was successful – an important event about which all South Sudanese should be proud. Independence is scheduled for July 9, 2011, but much work needs to be done between now and then.

In its Feb. 8 issue, IRIN News identifies several crucial challenges that must be addressed by the North and the South in the coming months:

- Abyei - The contested border region was due to hold a separate referendum at the same time as the south, when its residents would decide whether to become part of the north or south. But progress on that vote remains in deadlock, with the largely northern-supported Misseriya community – who travel through the region annually to graze their cattle – demanding a right to vote. The largely southern-supported Dinka Ngok people reject that demand, and southerners say only permanent residents should be allowed to vote. The area’s future is expected to be wrapped into the huge negotiations ahead, with

the south demanding it be ceded directly to join the new nation.

- Oil and water - A new deal must be agreed to renegotiate the current equal sharing of oil pumped in the south. The economies on both sides depend hugely on oil – forming 98 percent of the southern government budget. Oil reserves lie mainly in the south but all pipelines run north. For once, observers hope oil can provide a factor for peace, as for either to benefit, the future two states will be forced to cooperate post-secession. In addition, negotiations will have to be agreed on the future sharing of Nile river water, an issue that neighboring Egypt will be watching keenly, reluctant to see its share of the river cut.
- Debt - Sudan's crippling debt, estimated at US\$38 billion, remains a major concern. It is an emotional issue: the southerners say Khartoum spent the cash on arms during the 1983-2005 civil war. The north wants to obtain international debt cancellation to allow fresh loans, but that would still take many years. Persuading the south to take on some of the debt will be hard, but the north hopes that the south could then expect to have it written off more easily.
- Borders - Sudan's giant north-south border remains un-demarcated, with progress slow on fixing the boundaries. Negotiations are based on colonial era maps as the border stood at Sudan's independence in 1956, but with the frontier crossing oil and mineral rich areas, the issue is contentious.
- Returnees - More than 180,000 southerners have returned from the north in the past three months, adding pressure to communities already struggling to cope. Major humanitarian and development problems remain. According to Refugees International, 22,000 southerners are stranded in and around Khartoum still waiting for transportation to the south.
- Conflict -The south proved the critics warning of war wrong: the voting period was peaceful. Acceptance of the result by the north's dominant National Congress Party has allayed fears of north-south conflict. However, tensions remain in the volatile south. Clashes in early February between armed factions in the south's oil rich Upper Nile state left over 50 dead, and showed the potential for violence. Southern Sudan has been accused of hosting Darfuri rebel leaders fighting Khartoum, while the north is accused of backing militias battling the southern army. Both deny the charges.
- Economy - Sudan's economy is struggling, with high demands for foreign currency, rising inflation and a recent slide in the value of the Sudanese pound. Price hikes on basic goods are hitting the poorest the hardest, while Khartoum remains concerned about political unrest, following popular uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia. The two sides must also fix their currency, and decide whether a replacement for the Sudanese pound will be introduced. Rumors in early February that the north plans to scrap the pound saw its value plummet.
- Corruption - Southern Sudan will rely on international donors to rebuild a land left in ruins by years of war. But it will have to strengthen its efforts to curb corruption to avoid losing wider support.
- Darfur - The war-torn western region remains a major concern with conflict continuing. Khartoum has pulled out of peace talks and returned to fighting against the only rebels they signed an agreement with, the Sudan Liberation Army faction of Minni Minnawi. Some fear that the south's preparations to break away will embolden rebels to increase their demands from Khartoum.
- Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile State - Key battlegrounds in the civil war, these transitional areas are in the north, but have strong support for the south's ruling Sudanese People's Liberation Movement. Ongoing "popular consultations" set up as part of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement are intended to allow the people to shape their future. However, unlike the south and Abyei, they do not have a referendum that could allow them to join an independent south. Many of those there who fought with the south during the civil war could be bitterly disappointed if they feel abandoned in the north.

Faith in action:

Read a new report from IKV Pax Christi (Netherlands) on Sudan, "The Nuba Mountains: Central to Sudan's stability." Find a link on the MOGC website, or, if you do not have access to the internet, contact our office for a hard copy.

Africa: Economics of agriculture, food security

Though most African nations have been independent for over 50 years, the legacy of colonial power in many countries creates an environment where some eat extremely well while others starve. Economic strains and rising food prices led to food riots in 2008 and partially were responsible for some of the recent unrest mounted in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and other countries. This article is the first of a series of six articles exploring the many underlying causes of food insecurity in Africa. In future articles we will look at African agriculture and food security vis-à-vis technology, land use, labor, livelihoods, climate change and the impact of war, examining U.S. policies and responses to these challenges.

Prior to the African independence movement following World War II, the purpose of many African economies was to enrich the colonizing country and its citizens. In agriculture, the focus was on export crops like tea,



Photo of women farming in Sudan by Sean Sprague

coffee, sugar, cocoa, cotton, rubber and tropical fruits. On plantations African people were either enslaved or put to work for extremely low wages.

In the 1950s, as the economies of Asia, Europe and North America expanded, the demand for natural resources inflated the price of raw materials extracted from Africa. By the end of the colonial era in the 1960s, there was great hope that Africa would be self-sufficient and prosperous. But in many of Africa's newly independent countries, development was patchy at best. Often, African leaders were more closely aligned with the interests of foreign corporations and governments than they were with their own citizens.

By the 1970s, rising oil prices and volatile prices for raw materials strangled fragile African economies. The glut of petro-dollars in northern financial institutions and the consequent marketing of loans to African countries by a variety of creditors initiated a cycle of unsustainable official debt. Much of this debt was illegitimate – loaned, for example, to brutal dictators, to apartheid governments, or for mega-projects that destroyed human communities and the

environment. Yet the debt burden fell on following generations, constricting spending on health care, education, environmental protection, infrastructure and other local needs.

Macro-economic conditionalities (initially called structural adjustment programs) attached to new loans and, eventually, to refinancing and ultimately to debt cancellation agreements went way beyond the stabilization of fragile economies, restructuring one after the other to fit an increasingly dominant pattern of neoliberal, free market globalization.

In recent decades many Sub-Saharan African countries became poorer compared to the rest of the world. By 2000, 50 percent of the world's poor people were African. Despite the success of Jubilee campaigns around the world and of other civil society movements that accomplished the cancellation of significant debt to the benefit of many African countries and some re-thinking of attached conditionalities, the imposition of neoliberal macro-economic reforms leading to open markets and free trade was unrelenting.

During this period, four countries led the charge toward increased global market access and expanding international trade. The agenda of the “Quad” (U.S., European Union, Canada and Japan) was to extend the trading system to include trade in services and intellectual property and to reform trade in the sensitive sectors of agriculture and textiles. They pushed their agenda through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade which eventually gave rise to the World Trade Organization (WTO) that came into being on January 1, 1995.

The United States had launched a massive trade expansion project in the Americas through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that was signed in 1992 and entered into force in 1994, but U.S. trade in Africa was limited. To compete with the European Union's much more substantial trade with Africa, the U.S. extended trade preferences to a number of countries (that met the same set of macro-economic conditions as those tied to new loans and debt cancellation) through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). While AGOA initially focused much more on African textiles and cotton, in subsequent years it included other agricultural prod-

ucts. African farmers complained that some of the items Africa could easily trade, like peanuts, were not included because the U.S. wanted to protect its own peanut farmers from competition.

Through AGOA and WTO rules, African countries opened their economies to U.S. agricultural products mostly to the detriment of their own farmers. In 2005, the WTO found the U.S. responsible for illegally “dumping” cotton in world markets (selling well below the cost of production). Though the U.S. was fined and told to change its cotton subsidy policies, agriculture in African cotton producing countries – vital for food security, rural livelihoods, poverty reduction and generating foreign exchange – had been crippled.

In the late 1990s another movement was percolating among farm groups and others in Africa. Calling for a review of TRIPS (trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights) article 27.3 (b) relating to the patenting of life and plant varieties, the Africa group wanted to clarify “that plants and animals as well as the microorganisms and all other living organisms and their parts cannot be patented. And that natural processes that produce plants, animals and other living organisms should also not be patentable.” They wanted an option for a national *sui generis* law to protect innovations of indigenous and local communities so that traditional farming practices (including the right to save and exchange seeds and sell their harvests) could continue.

In 1999 at the WTO ministerial meeting in Seattle, African trade ministers were prepared to advocate for this review of TRIPS article 27.3 (b) to prevent the appropriation of traditional knowledge and maintain African control over plants critical for food security. Their effort was thwarted when the meeting was brought to an abrupt end by popular protests in Seattle’s streets and a rebellion by African and other delegates from the global South who denounced the non-transparent “green room” negotiation processes from which their delegations had been excluded.

Also in the 1980s and 1990s, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) shifted its focus from political liberation to economic “development,” but a series of pan-African strategies for “development” never got off the ground. In light of these failures, a new breed of African leaders devised plans to move Africa forward. NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa’s Development), a merger of two African plans

for economic regeneration, was launched “to create Africa anew in the 21st century.” NEPAD’s objectives were to reduce poverty, put Africa on a “sustainable development” path, halt the marginalization of Africa, and empower women. It was adopted by African Heads of State and the OAU in 2001; ratified by the African Union (AU) in 2002 and remains in force today.

NEPAD’s market access focus promotes a model of export-oriented growth which has been criticized heavily by African civil society, including church leaders, for being too closely aligned with the neoliberal, free market “Washington Consensus.” NEPAD’s program for agricultural development, called the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), aims to help African countries reach a higher path of economic growth through agriculture-led development.

The United States and other northern countries look favorably on NEPAD and CAADP, since they lock countries into an economic model that favors U.S. companies who want to invest in Africa. For years, the U.S. has worked diligently to shape global trade rules (at the WTO and through bilateral or multilateral agreements) to ensure that the U.S. always has the advantage. The U.S. insists that African countries go through the CAADP process, which is laden with macroeconomic conditions, before receiving U.S. agricultural assistance, including assistance given through the Obama administration’s Feed the Future or the World Bank’s Global Agriculture and Food Security Program.

In colonial times, the African continent enriched colonizing countries and their citizens through the production of export crops like tea, coffee, sugar, cocoa, cotton, rubber and tropical fruits. In today’s global economy, when all the rules weigh heavily in favor of northern countries like the United States, what Africa has to offer, once again, is raw materials and cheap labor. It is hard to believe that (as many in the Obama administration claim) the U.S. is looking out for Africa’s best interests when at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, USAID announced a newly-forged partnership to reduce hunger with 17 of the most anti-competitive, exploitative global corporations (Archer Daniels Midland, B&E, Bunge, Cargill, Coca-Cola, DuPont, General Mills, Kraft Foods, Metro, Monsanto Company, Nestlé, PepsiCo, SABMiller, Syngenta, Unilever, Wal-Mart Stores and Yara International.)

Wikileaks and Latin America, part 2

In the last edition of NewsNotes, we looked at Wikileaks cables about some of the countries where Maryknoll works in Latin America. This edition, we look at Nicaragua, Panama, and Venezuela.

Nicaragua

The few documents released so far include three cables containing a long list of accusations against the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) government and President Daniel Ortega. The accusations, which date from the 1980s to the present, include corruption, mismanagement, human rights abuses, media censorship, drug trafficking, anti-Semitism and even promoting terrorism and destabilization in neighboring countries. One oft-repeated charge describes Nicaraguan officials returning from Venezuela with suitcases of money used to bankroll political campaigns.

Another cable indicates the difficulty that opposition parties may have in confronting FSLN candidates in elections on November 6, 2011. “We often come away bemused from meetings with rural mayoral candidates who appear oblivious of the need to develop platforms and campaigns,” Paul Trivelli, former U.S. ambassador to Nicaragua, wrote in May 2008. “Many such candidates, several of whom could be described as ‘charisma-challenged,’ seem to believe that simply being non-FSLN will be enough to get them elected.”

What surprised many commentators was that the information listed contained nothing that had not already been alleged and reported in public news sources. As Ortega’s former vice president Sergio Ramirez stated, the cables are “just a collection of information that people already talk about on the street. But there’s nothing new here... This isn’t intelligence, it’s gossip.”

The lack of new information has prompted some to say that the leak may play into Ortega’s hand, showing that the U.S. has such limited intelligence sources.

Panama

The Latin American country where Wikileaks documents have uncovered the most controversial and damaging information is Panama. The cables reveal high-level corruption surrounding a July 2009 contract to add a third set of locks to the Panama

Canal, as well as an alleged illegal wiretapping operation by President Ricardo Martinelli.

On December 16, 2010 Panama’s ambassador to the U.S., Jaime Aleman, resigned after cables were released showing that the decision to award a \$3.2 million Panama Canal contract to Spanish firm Sacyr was mired by corruption on many levels.

The Panama Canal Authority (ACP) administrator, Alberto Aleman Zubieta, allegedly gave preference to Sacyr in order to enrich himself and family members. Before becoming the ACP administrator, Alberto Aleman was the general manager of CUSA, a Panamanian construction company and member of the Sacyr consortium. His cousin Rogelio Aleman replaced him as general manager while another cousin, now resigned ambassador Jaime Aleman, provided legal representation for the consortium. Alberto Aleman’s sister Vicky is a founding partner of Jaime’s law firm. So by rewarding the contract to Sacyr, Alberto Aleman also provided well for his family.

The deal also affected U.S.-Spain relations; in one cable, U.S. Ambassador to Panama Barbara Stephenson wrote, “We strongly suspect that the financially troubled Sacyr was able to offer a surprisingly low price due to backing from the Spanish government ... Sacyr’s win over consortia led by Bechtel and ACS [also from Spain] complicates our bilateral relationship on both political and economic levels.”

Another scandal revealed by the Wikileaks cables involved President Martinelli allegedly pressuring and even blackmailing the U.S. embassy to help him spy on political opponents and unions. One cable paints an interesting picture of a meeting between Martinelli and Ambassador Stephenson during which he allegedly pressures for wiretapping assistance. Stephenson wrote, “[Martinelli] made reference to various groups and individuals whom he believes should be wiretapped, and he clearly made no distinction between legitimate security targets and political enemies. Martinelli suggested that the USG [U.S. government] should give the GOP [government of Panama] its own independent wiretap capability as ‘rent’ in exchange for the use of GOP facilities.”

According to the cable, when Martinelli “made an implicit threat to reduce counter-narcotics cooperation if the USG did not help him on wiretaps”

the U.S. ambassador replied that she “would readily inform Washington and we would all see Panama’s reputation as a reliable partner plummet dramatically ... Martinelli immediately backed off, and said he did not want to endanger cooperation.”

Martinelli has denied any request for assistance in illegal wiretapping saying that “any such interpretation of that request is completely mistaken.” Another government official commented that it was “a mistaken interpretation by U.S. authorities of the request made for assistance in combating drug trafficking, crime and organized crime.”

Venezuela

A key learning from Wikileaks cables regarding Venezuela is the extent of the campaign by a number of regional government leaders to undermine Hugo Chavez and diminish Venezuelan influence in the area. The cables also show that, rhetoric aside, the U.S. government is not actually concerned about Venezuela providing uranium to Iran or Russia.

From U.S. embassies in a number of countries around the region, released cables refer to government leaders plotting with U.S. officials to weaken Venezuelan influence. Perhaps the boldest is a cable from the U.S. embassy in Santiago, Chile in June 2007 written by Craig Kelly, who was then ambassador to Chile and is currently Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs. In the memo, Kelly delineates a six-point strategy for “the U.S. government to limit Chavez’s influence” and “reassert U.S. leadership in the region.” The six points include “Know thy Enemy” (increase information sharing among U.S. embassies regarding Venezuelan initiatives), “Change the Political Landscape” (enhance the influence of Argentina and Brazil in the region to counteract Chavez), “Play to Our Mil-Mil Advantage” (augment trainings and peacekeeping missions with regional militaries), and “Stress Our Winning Formula” (tout benefits from free trade as a way to diminish Chavez’s popularity among the region’s poor).

It is not only the U.S. that is interested in weakening the Chavez government. In January 2008, the president of neighboring Colombia, Alvaro Uribe, reportedly asked the U.S. to initiate a “public campaign against Chavez” in order to counter Chavez’s “Bolivarian expansionist dreams.” Mimicking some of the populist rhetoric heard in the U.S., Uribe is reported in one cable to have “likened the threat

Chavez poses to Latin America to that posed by Hitler in Europe.” Released cables also show that Uribe authorized Colombian military incursions into Venezuelan territory during operations against the FARC rebel group.

A cable from October 2009 describes a meeting between Mexico’s President Felipe Calderon and U.S. National Intelligence director Dennis Blair during which Calderon reportedly said that Mexico was working to isolate Venezuela through the Rio Group, an international organization of Latin American and Caribbean countries.

From within Venezuela, political opponents also have asked for the U.S. to work to undermine Chavez. Many opposition groups receive funding from the National Endowment for Democracy. Venezuelan Archbishop Baltazar Porras asked the U.S. government to “contain the regional aspirations” of Chavez, according to a January 2005 cable. Porras reportedly offered to organize a joint effort by the U.S. and Venezuela’s Catholic hierarchy and private business sector to try to win over poor communities that had benefitted from the Chavez regime. Porras, the vice president of the Venezuelan bishops’ conference, has denied saying any such thing, classifying the leaked cable as “a science fiction movie script.”

Cables from 2005, 2006 and 2008 show that the U.S. has repeatedly approached Brazil to take a leading role in isolating Chavez in the region, with little effect. Brazil foreign minister Celso Amorim’s response in 2005, “We do not see Chavez as a threat,” indicates the success of those requests.

Finally, a number of released cables show that, despite publicly announced concerns of Venezuela aiding Iran and Russia (referred to as VIRUS in U.S. diplomatic circles) by providing them uranium for their nuclear projects, there are no substantial uranium deposits in Venezuela. One candid nuclear scientist quoted in a cable said -- of those spreading rumors about Venezuela helping countries develop atomic bombs -- they are “full of (expletive).”

A June 2009 cable also finds that “there is no indication of any interest on the part of the government to resume uranium exploration or exploitation.” A cable from January of the same year quotes a Venezuelan nuclear scientist saying, “Even if the government of ... Venezuela were serious, it would take 10 to 15 years to make substantial progress towards developing a nuclear energy program using domestic resources.”

Brazil: Church's reflection on economy, ecology

The National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) has a 47-year history of using the Lenten season as a time to help Catholics reflect on important social issues of the day in light of Scripture and Church tradition. Described by the bishops as "an evangelical itinerary strongly aimed at personal and community conversion," the Fraternity Campaign is an impressive display of how the Church can play a positive and proactive role in society.

Throughout the 40 days of Lent, churches all over the country hold reflections, conferences, vigils, study groups, community activities and mobilizations around the theme which changes each year. New songs are created with lyrics based on the theme; homilies and bishops' statements on the theme are read at Masses; radio and television ads are produced. Through a variety of means, tens of millions of Brazilian Catholics are immersed in what Scripture and Church teachings have to say about important social and environmental issues of the day.

Historically, many of these campaigns have had important influence on society and government, helping create the political will for necessary reforms. Interestingly, the first national-level Fraternity Campaign took place in 1964, a few weeks before the civilian-military coup that established a dictatorship that would last for 20 years.

Three distinct phases can be seen in the development of these themes. In the first phase, 1964-72, the Church used the campaign to focus on internal issues related to the renovation of the Church and its members. Themes like "Church in renovation: Remember, you are the Church," "Parish in renovation: make your parish a community of faith, worship and love," "Donation," and "Participation" were some of the focal points.

In the second phase, 1973-84, the focus was on describing social reality through the denouncing of social sin and the promotion of justice. The Church played an important role in promoting democracy and keeping the dictatorship in check. Themes like "Fraternity and prison," "Fraternity in the world of work: Work and justice for all," "Migrations," "Health" and "Education" helped to focus on areas where the dictatorship was especially weak.

From the end of the dictatorship in 1984 until

today, the bishops have proposed themes related to various situations of Brazilians that they feel require more solidarity. "Hunger: Bread for whomever is hungry," "Land: Land of God, land of brothers," "Negroes: Hear the cry of this people," "Unemployed ... Why?" "Indigenous peoples: For a land without ills" "Public security: Peace is fruit of justice" were themes that have helped Brazilians better understand the realities that others face and what God calls them to do in order to promote human dignity.

Looking at the situation of the world today and reading the signs of the times, the bishops have used the campaigns of 2010 and 2011 to help Brazilian Catholics reflect on the effects of the economy on human dignity and God's creation. The 2010 campaign, "Economy and life: You can't serve money and God" looked especially at people excluded from the benefits of the economy, and sought to "collaborate in the promotion of an economy at the service of life, based on the ideal of a culture of peace ... so that all contribute in the construction of the common good in search of a society without exclusion."

One important result of the 2010 campaign was to help millions of people better understand the growing solidarity economy in Brazil and how they can participate in it. The solidarity economy is based on worker-owned and managed cooperatives, associations and other alternative business models that are more democratic and equitable. The 2010 campaign was also significant in that it was organized not only by the Catholic bishops, but also with other Christian churches, many part of CONIC, the National Council of Christian Churches of Brazil. The Lenten campaigns of 2000 ("Human dignity and peace: A new millennium without exclusions") and 2005 ("Solidarity and peace: Happy are the peace makers") were also carried out ecumenically.

In their presentation of this year's campaign, "Life on the planet: Creation groans in the pain of childbirth," the Brazilian bishops wrote, "In every catastrophe ... we can feel the planet groan, and humanity doing the same. This groan has an immensely sad connotation. We still have time to reverse this situation. We can transform these groans of pain into groans of love and hope. We can begin a gestation period and after that period, organize ourselves with actions that help to preserve the environment.

We will receive in exchange a healthy planet. We can rescue the planet that was given to us by God.” The hope is that after the Lenten campaign, Brazilian Catholics will respond to God’s call to convert to a lifestyle less defined by consumerism and more marked by solidarity and sustainability.

The Lenten campaigns of the Brazilian bish-

ops’ conference are an excellent example of how the Church can better prepare its members to react to their lived reality in ways that are aligned with Church teaching and Scripture. Perhaps other country’s bishops’ conferences could take note and implement similar campaigns to help spread Catholic social teaching about crucial issues of the day.

Philippines: Mining, logging halted

In February, Philippine President Benigno Aquino III made two environmentally-respectable decisions: He announced a halt on mining permits on the island of Palawan, and he outlawed rainforest logging.

Palawan, an island in the southwest region of the archipelago, is losing its rich and historical beauty to mining. The name comes from the Chinese word “pa-lao-yu” meaning “the land of beautiful safe harbor.” The island contains 70 percent of the biodiversity on earth, has 40 percent of the country’s remaining mangrove forests and 30 percent of the country’s coral reefs. It is believed that its first human inhabitants arrived 22,000 years ago.

Forest covered 52 percent of the island in 1992 when Republic Act 7611, or the Strategic Environmental Plan for Palawan, was signed by then-Pres. Corazon Aquino (mother of the current president). Despite the law, forest cover on the island had dropped to 46 percent by 2005.

Like many other nations, the Philippines often has sacrificed natural resources in order to keep up with industrialization. (See related article on Tanzania, page 5.) Palawan rainforests contain metal ores such as nickel and chromite, lucrative products for mining companies. President Aquino has rejected around 600 mining permits; however 19 new mining projects, with a combined potential profit of around \$13 billion, are lined up for review.

On January 24, Gerry Ortega, a radio

broadcaster and active environmentalist, was shot and killed in a market in Palawan. An outspoken opponent of mining on the island and of politicians he considered corrupt, Ortega was believed to have been targeted for his work. Several days after Ortega’s death, murder charges were filed against a former government official (of whom Ortega had been critical) and four other men, but no one has been arrested.

After Ortega’s death, the Save Palawan Movement, a coalition of environmental, legal religious and other civic groups, launched the “No Mining in Palawan” campaign with the hope of gathering 10 million signatures on a petition demanding that mining end on the island. Visit the campaign’s website at <http://www.no2mininginpalawan.com> to learn more.

On February 1 a ban on logging in rainforests took effect. In 1950, 15 million hectares of forests covered about half of the Philippines. That number had dropped to 5.4 million by 1997, but has since risen to 7.2 million due to reforestation programs, according to the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

According to a 2008 report by the U.S. Congressional Research Service, up to 45 percent of Philippine logging is illegal. Some wonder if the ban will keep loggers away from the rainforests. While unlawful logging means 20 years in jail, no big logger has been caught, according to Marilea Muneiz of Code Red Philippines, though smaller loggers get arrested from time to time.

An estimated 650,000 wood industry jobs would disappear because of the logging ban, according to eco-business.com, and the country would have to rely more on timber imports. President Aquino, however, believes that protecting the environment will encourage tourism, and its profits will make up for the timber industry loss.



Gerry Ortega

UN: 2011 International Year of Forests

In the mid-1990s, when the Maryknoll sisters' house was destroyed by a powerful earthquake in northern Philippines, it was initially assumed that eventually the house would be replaced by a simple wooden structure. Alas, this was not to be. At that time, it came to the attention of the sisters that the degraded state of the Philippine forest, morally understood, meant there could be no more tree cutting period. The house would have to be constructed from other materials as the illegal logging industry had practically decimated the once extensive mahogany forest of the northern mountains.

This story holds the essence of the situation of the forests in tropical countries around the globe: grave loss. The reasons vary. In the case cited above, the cause was economic profit, but forest degradation is often caused by poverty. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), "In developing countries, wood-based fuels are the dominant source of energy for more than two billion poor people. In Africa, over 80 percent of harvested wood is used for energy." Other common reasons for loss of forested areas are conversion to agricultural land and the creation of human settlements.

According to the World Bank, between 2000 and 2005, "deforestation affected an estimated 13 million hectares per year."

It is, therefore, no surprise that the UN has named 2011 the International Year of Forests. However, it might be surprising that the subtitle is "Forests for People" and that one of the lead agencies charged with implementation is the FAO. FAO explains itself with the following statement:

"The livelihoods of hundreds of millions of rural people depend on forests and trees. People who benefit from forests are more likely to conserve them if they have a say in how they are managed. FAO promotes participatory forestry and community-based enterprise development to enable communities to balance their economic needs with the conservation of forest resources for the future."

The underlying theme and ethical framework

for this work is sustainability. Both present and future needs and rights of people must be taken into account in the use of natural resources.

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) is also highly involved in the International Year of Forests. On its launch on February 23, it awarded \$200,000 to two projects for outstanding achievement in forest management: The Asociación Forestal Integral San Andrés, Petén (AFISAP) in Guatemala and the Manahari Development Institute in Nepal (MDI-Nepal). Both groups have worked for decades in sustainably managing the forests under their care.



In addition UNEP has announced a new and impressive undertaking: With the collaboration of the European Union, it will be engaged in a major project in the north western part of the Mau forest complex in Kenya. This project supports a visionary plan on the part of the Kenyan government toward transformation of its economy. Renewable energy and improved management of its nature-based assets are at the core of its transformation; its path is sustainable development. The plan contains a step-by-step strategy projected toward completion by the year 2030. It involves not only the rehabilitation and restoration of a large ravaged forest area but also the recovery of the Yala and Nyando rivers. "These rivers flow into Lake Victoria and are important for drinking water; they support 5,000 hectares of rice production important for local food security and the Kenyan economy." In view of the fact that across the globe it is estimated that there are more than a billion hectares of lost and degraded forest land that could be restored, this project could be a prototype for other projects everywhere.

On the margin of the above project, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is financing improvements along the Mau Mara River Catchment. It is important to note this because, along with the other examples cited, it points to a moral shift in which humanity is stepping up to assume responsibility for the well-being of the whole earth community.

Properly managed, the forests will provide food, water and economic opportunities, wood to build houses, shade and beauty in abundance.

UN Rio+20: Global Environmental Governance

For a decade Maryknoll Sisters Mary Ann Duffy and Rae Ann O'Neill have worked in San Marcos, Guatemala among marginalized women. Among other projects, they work continuously to help women acquire cooking stoves that are fuel efficient, long lasting and environmentally friendly. Once the woman has her stove, she is free to engage in other activities that may contribute to improving her economic status. Each stove bears a price tag of US\$100, a fortune for the women. Therefore, a major part of the work of the sisters is raising money to subsidize the cost of the stoves, a surprisingly difficult task.

This mission work demonstrates a broadening of moral understanding to include environmental sustainability as a vital consideration in all projects and programs. It is also emblematic of the difficulties encountered on a global scale in grasping the fundamental importance of being serious about changing development patterns in order to be in alignment with 21st century knowledge about the fragility of Earth's environment, including its natural resources.

In 1945, when the United Nations was created, uppermost in the minds of its architects was avoiding world war. The initial structures established were for promoting international peace and cooperation for social and economic development and for resolving humanitarian problems. By the mid 1960s it was apparent that economic and social development could not go forward in a way that guarantees future peace and prosperity without safeguarding the environment. Until then, the environment was taken for granted both in economic enterprises in the industrialized countries and development programs in the unindustrialized countries.

Therefore, in 1972 the United Nations created the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). This was the first formal step toward creating a system of global environmental governance. Since its inception, UNEP has had success in raising international awareness about the environment through excellent materials and events for information sharing. Over the years knowledge of the earth's limited carrying capacity has grown and the consequences of failure to observe limits have become apparent.

However, it has proved very difficult for na-

tions to align their economic growth with information about the limited nature of the environment's carrying capacity. The concept of sustainability has barely achieved a toe hold in national policies and the environment is more degraded today than ever before. Furthermore, funds allocated for sustainable economic projects are entirely insufficient.

Dr. Maria Ivanova, a leader in Global Environmental Governance, holds that what is required is a moral and ethical shift away from the right to personal well-being through quick profit through resource use to personal responsibility for the well-being of the planet and future generations of people. The former model is outmoded and ultimately cannot sustain life into the future. Following from this, it is no longer possible to deplete natural resources without accounting for them and adequately paying for their use. To do so is to fail in social justice.

In 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, the United Nations will hold an Earth Summit, commonly dubbed Rio+20, recalling the first Earth Summit in 1992. Basically, this summit will be about sustainability. It will deal with defining sustainable global economy and will move forward in the work of creating a global system of environmental governance. It is hoped that there will be broad public interest and participation in this summit. To this effect UNEP and an organization entitled the Stakeholder Forum are engaged in preliminary work soliciting wide interest from all branches of civil society.

The Stakeholder Forum provides a channel for anyone who is interested to become engaged in the preparation process (<http://www.stakeholderforum.org>) and has made available two excellent background papers as "think pieces": Global Governance in the 21st Century: Rethinking the Environmental Pillar, by Dr. Maria Ivanova, and Sustainable Development Governance toward Rio+20: Framing the Debate, by Jan-Gustav Strandenaes.

The faith journey invites everyone to move step by step into the future where knowledge broadens and understanding deepens. A step in today's journey could be taking up the concept of sustainability and learning more about it. What kind of a world could be created if, as in San Marcos, Guatemala, sustainability were embraced as part of the mandate to care for the neighbor?

Environment: Small wins to curb mining's damages

A city ordinance in Pittsburgh and a moratorium bill passed by the New York state assembly are two local efforts to protect citizens from the negative consequences of gas drilling in their communities. These efforts represent a first step in challenging the mining industry's minimally regulated practice of hydraulic fracturing (also known as "hydrofracking," or simply "fracking.")

States from New York to Tennessee lie atop the Marcellus Shale rock formation, which geologists estimate contains enough shale gas to power the United States for two decades. Fracking was developed in the 1990s to get at the shale gas, which is caught in millions of tiny pores in the rocky mountainous terrain. Millions of gallons of water, sand and toxic chemicals are blasted deep underground to create fissures that open the pores and free gas to rise to the surface. A number of technology and industry exemptions from provisions in core environmental laws like the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Superfund Act and the Resource Conservation Recovery Act make fracking economically viable.

As North America wakes up to the reality that carbon-intensive fossil fuels like oil and coal will not drive this economy forever, natural gas is embraced by many energy analysts and government officials as a possible "bridge fuel" that could assist in transitioning the country to renewable energy sources. Former Vice President Dick Cheney was instrumental in attaching an amendment to the 2005 energy bill that stripped the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) authority to regulate fracking through the Safe Drinking Water Act. This essentially gave natural gas extraction companies a free hand to drill how and where they see fit, and to use and dispose of toxic fracking fluids without disclosure or safety requirements.

Communities with active drills are reporting negative consequences including fatalities from exploding wells, 30-mile stretches of streams without any living organisms, exploding tap water, sick children and adults, and destroyed farmland. Last year when 8,000 gallons of hazardous drilling fluids spilled into fields and creeks in Dimock, PA, 15 families suffering from contamination related health problems filed suit against Cabot Oil and Gas, the primary leaseholder in the area.

Since federal laws include so many exemptions, oversight and regulation of the drilling is left entirely to states, which simply do not have enough inspectors to cover all the wells. For example, in 2009 24 inspectors oversaw more than 64,000 wells in Ohio.

Pittsburgh's city ordinance to ban fracking is inspired by the fact that the city sits atop the Marcellus Shale and that extractive corporations have already purchased leases to drill there, including under area parks and cemeteries. By passing the ordinance the city is taking a stand to elevate the rights of people, the community, and nature over corporate "rights." By adopting the ordinance, Pittsburgh became the first city in the U.S. to recognize legally binding rights of nature. Drafted by the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (CELDF), the ordinance includes provisions that eliminate corporate "personhood" rights within the city for corporations seeking to drill; it also suspends corporations' ability to wield the Commerce and Contracts Clauses of the U.S. Constitution to override community decision-making. Representatives from drilling companies have indicated that they may challenge the ban in court. Pittsburgh expects little help from Pennsylvania to defend its stand since the state continues to issue permits to corporations in spite of growing community opposition.

Meanwhile, in New York, the state assembly voted 94 to 44 in favor of the "Sweeney" Moratorium bill (A11443-B), identical to the bill passed by the State Senate. Signed by then-Gov. David Paterson, the law makes New York the first state in the U.S. to impose a state-wide moratorium on new permits for fracking gas drilling until May 15, 2011.

Public concern over fracking's impact on the state's water resources is growing. More than 52,000 New Yorkers had signed a petition urging the assembly to pass the bill. On a national level any progress on the issue of fracking is complicated by Congressional attempts to defund the EPA, limiting its ability to regulate water and air pollution through the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act.

Faith in action:

Read the National Council of Churches' natural gas fact sheet found at <http://ncccojustice.org/energy/>; click on "Natural gas in your backyard."

UN: Women's organization launched

A March 6 Washington Post article reported that when the U.S. Agency for International Development sought bids for a \$140 million land reform program in Afghanistan last year, it had specific goals to promote women's rights, including land ownership, media coverage and educational material. However, before the contract was awarded, USAID overhauled the initiative and eliminated those targets. This shift is considered more realistic and more likely to help build reconciliation with the Taliban. Advocates for Afghan women, however, are disheartened by this step backwards from women's rights. In light of this development in one of the world's most complicated and brutal conflicts, the UN's latest organization can be seen as a necessary counterbalance.

February 24 was the start date for UN Women, formally known as the United Nations Entity for

Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; it combines four previous UN bodies and represents the United Nations' most ambitious effort ever to accelerate actions to achieve gender equality.

Former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet, the first executive director of UN Women, called the launch the first of many important milestones in the global pursuit of gender equality. She emphasized that the decision to establish UN Women reflects ongoing frustration with the slow pace of change.

UN Women will support individual countries in moving towards gender equality in economics and politics, and ending the worldwide phenomenon of violence against women. It will assist in setting international standards for progress, and lead coordinated UN efforts to make new opportunities for women and girls central to all UN programs for development and peace.

Nuclear policy in 2011

On February 2, President Obama officially ratified the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) which focuses on nuclear arms reductions by the U.S. and Russia and was approved in Congress with wide bipartisan support. [See previous articles on the "New START" in the May-June 2010 and January-February 2011 issues of NewsNotes.]

New START mandates that Russia and the U.S. reduce their nuclear warheads to 1,550 each, and limits the number of deployed warheads 700 allowed in delivery systems and 100 in reserve. The treaty lasts 10 years with the option of extending it five more years at the most. (The first START took effect in 1991 and expired in December 2009.)

Yet, in the FY2011 budget, the Obama administration requested \$18 billion for nuclear weapons activities through the Department of Energy (DOE), according to a report from the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. According to the report, the U.S. spends roughly \$20 billion operating and maintaining nuclear delivery vehicles and \$7 billion stockpiling nuclear warheads.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which the U.S. signed in 1995, remains in effect. Signed by 187 nations, the NPT requires signatories

to work to eliminate nuclear weapons in exchange for the treaty to be extended indefinitely. Article IV of the NPT requires states with nuclear weapons to phase out their reliance on them and finally to phase them out completely.

The five acknowledged nuclear states – France, Russia, the U.S., China and the United Kingdom – plan to meet in Paris, possibly this June, as a follow-up to the nuclear deterrence summit held in Arlington, VA in September 2009. According to Rose Gottemoeller, Assistant Secretary of State, it is possible that a non-governmental conference will be held alongside the discussion amongst the five countries. (It is understood but not officially acknowledged that India, Pakistan and North Korea possess nuclear weapons; it is strongly believed that Israel has nuclear weapons, though its government refuses to confirm or deny this. South Africa is the only country known to have built nuclear weapons and then dismantled them.)

For information on efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, visit Abolition 2000's website, www.abolition2000.org. Also visit Global Zero, www.globalzero.org. The Friends Committee on National Legislation, www.fcnl.org/nuclear, has good data and action suggestions on nuclear disarmament.

Torture: Case builds against Bush

In early February, former President George W. Bush cancelled a trip to Geneva due to his possible detention by Swiss authorities. The Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) and the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights – backed by a 42-page legal document and 2,500 pages of supporting material -- planned to file charges in Switzerland against Bush for authorizing U.S. use of torture.

Under the UN Convention Against Torture (UNCAT), signatory nations are required to investigate and prosecute all parties responsible for torture; article 5 in UNCAT requires a participating nation to establish jurisdiction over torture when those responsible are in that country's jurisdiction even if the acts were committed elsewhere. Switzerland, which signed and ratified UNCAT (as did the U.S.), is obligated to prosecute Bush if he stepped onto Swiss soil.

In Bush's memoir, he admits to answering with "damn right" when officers asked if they could waterboard detainees at the detention center in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In an interview with MSNBC, Bush again admitted to permitting waterboarding and claimed a lawyer advised him it was legal. (Current U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder has declared publicly that waterboarding is a method of torture, however the Obama administration has not taken

action to investigate members of the Bush administration for authorizing the use of torture.)

In 2010, one of the 250,000 cables released by Wikileaks revealed that U.S. diplomats pressured Spain to drop an investigation into the Bush administration's use of torture. In response, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) said, "Instead of pressuring other governments to protect our nation's dark secrets, the president should appoint a non-partisan Commission of Inquiry to fully investigate our nation's use of torture. Without a comprehensive investigation, the United States will fail to live up to its most cherished values."

Since the 1998 arrest of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, detaining and charging a former head of state with war crimes or crimes against humanity is not unimaginable. In 1998, Pinochet, who had left office in 1990 after nearly two decades of repressive rule (which included the death or disappearance of thousands and the torture of tens of thousands), traveled to Britain for medical care. He was arrested by British officials on the request of a Spanish judge who wanted the British to extradite Pinochet to Madrid so he could stand trial on charges of torture, genocide and kidnapping.

The trial lasted 16 months; ultimately Pinochet was allowed to return to Chile due to health issues. He lived in seclusion in Chile until he died in 2006.

NRCAT action request: Stand against bigotry

U.S. Rep. Peter King (R-NY), chair of the House Homeland Security committee, has announced a series of hearings on the "radicalization of the American Muslim community."

Reps. John Dingell (D-MI) and Pete Stark (D-CA) have drafted a letter to Rep. King, requesting that he "reconsider the scope of these hearings and instead examine all forms of violence motivated by extremist beliefs, rather than unfairly focusing on just one religious group."

They write, "We agree that Congress and all levels of government have a duty to protect [the U.S.] from terrorism, whether from abroad or homegrown. We are, however, deeply concerned that the stated narrow scope and underlying premises of these hearings unfairly stigmatizes and alienates Muslim Americans [who] are an integral

part of our larger society and should be treated as such, not viewed with suspicion.

"The choice between our values of inclusiveness and pluralism and our security is a false one.

"If you wish to examine violent extremism, we ask that you do so by examining violence motivated by extremist beliefs in all its forms. Singling out one religious group and blaming the actions of individuals on an entire community is not only unfair, it is unwise-- and it will not make our country any safer."

Faith in action:

Contact your member of Congress and ask him/her to sign the letter written by Reps. Dingell and Stark. Learn more at www.nrcat.org.

Trade: FTAs undermine financial reform efforts

Congress and the Obama administration's efforts to implement strong financial reforms could be undermined by the trade agreement recently renegotiated with South Korea, as well as other pacts such as the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). A recently released study shows that the administration renegotiated key sections of the agreement with South Korea after the financial meltdown, yet did not take advantage of the opportunity to reform the agreement to allow for necessary new financial regulations. Another study shows how the GATS, a part of the World Trade Organization, can also undercut financial reforms in any of its more than 150 member countries.

Since 1994, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns consistently has challenged U.S. trade agreements due to their devastating effects on farmers and rural communities, on access to medicines and public services, and on the ability of other governments to implement policies to protect health and the environment. The agreement with South Korea includes the same problematic aspects, and goes even further by providing additional benefits to transnational corporations.

The office of U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk has called the financial services chapter (chapter 13) of the agreement “a groundbreaking achievement, providing more extensive provisions related to financial services than ever before included in a U.S. FTA (free trade agreement).” According to John Dearie, Executive Vice President for Policy at the Financial Services Forum, a coalition of the 20 largest financial services institutions in the U.S., “The agreement has been referred to as a ‘gold standard agreement,’ meaning that South Korea went far beyond its WTO obligations, permitting market access across virtually all service sectors.”

In its controversial 13th chapter, the U.S.-Korea agreement lists a number of limits that governments are not allowed to place on financial institutions, including the number of such institutions, the value of their assets and number of employees. Todd Tucker, research director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, claims that, if U.S. regulators or Congress were to decide to limit the size of a bank's assets or market share in order to avoid situations where banks become too big to fail, the Korean government

or individual Korean corporations could challenge that law under the FTA. Tucker also claims that the agreement would prohibit any regulatory bans, such as on credit default swaps or flash trading.

In his article on the website Remapping Debate, Mike Alberti writes that if the agreement is signed, “[the] U.S. would not be able to enforce such limitations on Korean companies, and visa versa. But, as a practical matter, the provisions would also effectively discourage the impositions of such limitations on domestic institutions operating in each country as well, since neither country would want to put its own companies at a disadvantage relative to the other country's financial institutions.”

It is not only the new U.S.-Korea FTA that has the potential to interfere with necessary financial reforms. The GATS can result in challenges to laws designed to reduce excessive speculation in commodity markets. As the food and energy bubbles of 2008 showed, deregulation of these markets resulted in a massive increase in financial speculation to the point that investors dominated, rather than assisted, legitimate business users of commodity markets.

According to the Netherlands-based Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations, “If the EU were to introduce limits on speculative trading in food commodity derivative markets through quantitative limits or even bans on speculators and speculative commodity products, this would not be considered to be prudential as defined in the GATS Annex ... because such measures to stabilise food prices are not meant to prevent the instability of the financial system, because trading in food commodity derivatives is relatively small, but rather to avoid food prices from becoming too high or volatile (which resulted in more hunger for the poor as in 2008).” Essentially, any governmental initiatives to rein in excessive speculation would be open to challenge from any WTO member country.

A host of new laws being considered by many countries post-financial crisis, from bans on naked short selling (speculating with other people's money) to new requirements for credit rating agencies and increased capital controls, are all susceptible to challenges through trade agreements based on a logic of market fundamentalism.

Aldo Caliarì, director of the Rethinking Bretton Woods Project at the Center of Concern, a faith-

based organization advocating for economic justice, says the U.S.-Korea FTA reflects “a model that was developed before the financial crisis” that “assumes that deregulation is going to lead to benign results.” He writes, “It does not really take on board what we are learning right now about the problems embedded in that model, [the assumption] that financial actors are going to self-regulate and that they will do it in the best interests of society.”

Clearly, we have learned much from the recent financial crisis, but global trade agreements have not adapted to this new reality and continue to tie governments to failed policies. The U.S.-Korea FTA

makes a bad situation even worse by giving even more rights to the financial institutions that caused the disaster and limiting governments’ ability to rein in their power. Without fixing these major failings, no new trade agreement should be signed into law.

Faith in action:

Call your senators and tell them to vote against the U.S.-Korea trade agreement and the agreements with Colombia and Panama which Congress is expected to consider soon. Explain that these agreements will undermine the good work that Congress did in passing strong financial reforms last year.

U.S. budget: What are our priorities?

As NewsNotes goes to press, the U.S. Congress is still agonizing over the 2011 budget, with the 2012 budget waiting in the wings. As Congress wrangles over the 2011 continuing resolution, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns sent an urgent appeal to U.S. senators, asking them to prioritize the “well being of the whole earth community.” The letter appears below.

As you negotiate the Continuing Resolution for FY2011 and begin to consider funding priorities for FY2012, we urge you to replace time-worn, discredited policies that emphasize U.S. national security over-against the well being of the whole earth community with a commitment to multilateral cooperation and inclusive security for all.

For 100 years Maryknoll missionaries have lived and worked in different corners of the world. From there we have experienced the increasing interconnectedness of life on this planet and know that the consequences of disease and lack of health care, food insecurity and malnutrition, inadequate education, climate change and extremist ideologies know no borders. The response of the United States to our current deficit must take this interconnectedness into account, welcome it and build on its many positive possibilities by placing greater emphasis on cooperative engagement toward a dignified life for all, just peace and inclusive global security.

The United States cannot balance our budget on the backs of poor people here and around the world or at the expense of the earth and future gen-

erations. Other routes to fiscal health abound, including a significant reduction in excessive military spending and a complete restructuring of our tax system, including the imposition of a small tax on some financial transactions.

We were shocked by the drastic cuts made to the FY2011 budget by the House of Representatives and plead with you to reject the priorities the House Continuing Resolution reflects. In particular, ensure that:

- U.S. commitments to the United Nations, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, are wholly honored;
- critical U.S. regulatory agencies, including the Commodities Futures Trading Commission, the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Environmental Protection Agency are given sufficient budgetary capacity to accomplish the important work entrusted to them
- the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), as one U.S. institution designed to promote sustainable pathways to peace, is fully funded. [The USIP budget is \$42 million, which is spent in three hours in Afghanistan.]
- the State Department and USAID budgets are sustained, including funding to strengthen U.S. diplomatic capacity as well as to honor U.S. commitments to people living with HIV and AIDS through PEPFAR and the Global Fund; for emergency, disaster and refugee assistance and for programs that support rural agriculture and food security.

QDDR, the Global Health Initiative and AIDS

The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), issued by the State Department in December 2010, is the result of a wide-ranging consultation that examined U.S. diplomacy and development policies and practices “to make them more effective and efficient.” The QDDR identifies the Obama administration’s Global Health Initiative (GHI) as one of the six main areas of focus (others are food security, sustainable economic growth, climate change, democracy and governance and humanitarian assistance). It emphasizes structural change; relies on host countries’ systems and organizations; and concentrates in countries where U.S. assistance can make a difference.

Some of the insights and commitments included in the QDDR, if implemented, could enable the United States to play a much more positive role in the world: the QDDR describes a more balanced approach to U.S. foreign policy, emphasizing the importance of diplomacy, development and civilian leadership and possibly taking a small step away from a militarized U.S. foreign policy; it identifies the need for systemic change; and suggests the possibility of multi-year budgeting and procurement reform – “fostering more competition for our contracts and using host-country businesses and NGOs where possible.”

However, the QDDR and GHI’s emphasis on results and efficiency may eliminate or drastically reduce key programs without sufficient transition time or attention to the unique needs of the 33.3 million people worldwide living with HIV or AIDS.

In 2003, President Bush announced the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), a \$15 billion program to fight AIDS over five years in 15 focus countries. Between 2004 and 2008, the U.S. contributed nearly \$19 billion to fight AIDS.

In 2008, Congress passed authorizing legislation that would continue PEPFAR for five years. The commitment, based initially on a campaign pledge of \$50 billion over five years by then-candidate Obama, included \$48 billion over five years to fund AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, microbicides development, health systems strengthening, training and retaining 140,000 new health workers and many other programs.

The GHI is a six-year, \$63 billion compre-

hensive approach to global health problems that, according to the Congressional Research Service, builds on the Bush administration’s focus on global HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, but prioritizes building strong and sustainable health systems through an emphasis on maternal and pediatric programs as well as strategic coordination.

Many AIDS activists have expressed concern about the shift in focus. Since 2009, the U.S. has not increased funding for global AIDS enough even to keep up with inflation. Further, the determination of many Congressional newcomers to reduce the deficit and control government spending will make it more difficult to secure increased global AIDS funding either bilaterally or through the Global Fund. Other nations have followed suit; funding for HIV and AIDS programs has not increased in recent years.

A February 2011 UNAIDS report, “Universal Access to HIV Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support: From Countries to Regions to the High Level Meeting on AIDS and Beyond” writes that AIDS advocates have their biggest challenge yet: “Successes of the past few years have in many places led to complacency, just as our efforts are beginning to pay dividends. The development landscape and global economic crisis have shifted, with funding for AIDS flat-lining or even decreasing, all against a backdrop of already crowded competing global priorities, such as climate change and other Millennium Development Goals. In places where the epidemic had stabilized or decreased infection rates are increasing again, and discrimination, punitive laws and gender violence are increasingly undermining efforts to improve access to services for key populations.”

While in the long term, strengthening national health care capacities may be the right way to go – until people living with HIV or AIDS can rely on local systems for the support they need or have guaranteed access to locally produced, affordable medicines – the moral and ethical imperative to care for human life has to take precedence over efficiency and effectiveness.

Faith in action:

On Feb. 17, Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA), ranking member of the House Ways and Means Committee, re-introduced the “Investing in Our Future Act” (HR 755) for 2011. It would place a .005 percent

levy on currency exchange by large scale investors and big banks, and generate billions of dollars for global health. It would specifically fund the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria as well as other multilateral global health efforts. (See *News-*

Notes September-October 2010 for more information about financial transaction taxes). Contact your Congressional representative and encourage him or her to co-sponsor the Stark bill.

Resources

- 1) **Servant Leadership Models for Your Parish:** Written by Dan Ebener, this book explores the practice of servant leadership in a church context. It presents seven behaviors practiced by leaders and members in high-performing parishes and provides real-life examples of these practices. 288 pages, published by Paulist Press, 800-218-1903.
- 2) **The Story of Citizens United v. FEC:** Created by Annie Leonard, this video looks at the growing power of U.S. corporations. Leonard, director of The Story of Stuff Project, made the film after the disastrous 2010 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (FEC)* that permitted corporations to spend freely to influence U.S. elections. The eight-minute video explores the history of the U.S. corporations and corporate political spending, the appropriate roles of citizens and for-profit corporations in a democracy and the toxic impact the *Citizens United* decision has already had on our political process. It ends with a call to amend the U.S. Constitution to confirm that people—not corporations—make the decisions in a democracy. Available for viewing and download at: <http://storyofstuff.org/citizensunited/>.
- 3) **Why stay Catholic? Unexpected answers to a life-changing question:** In this book published by Loyola Press, Orbis Books publisher emeritus and editor-at-large Michael Leach focuses on, in short and digestible chapters, ideas, people, and places that exemplify Catholicism's best. He ranges from theological-institutional (Catholics have powerful sacramental imaginations that allow them to glimpse God unexpectedly) to just plain fun (Catholics like to party; Jesus did, too). His "places" highlight the infrastructure of institutions that Catholics have built within society: charities, hospitals, schools, relief agencies – all an integral part of the U.S.'s social backbone. 304 pages, \$14.95. www.loyolapress.com, 800-621-1008.
- 4) **Coming to Consciousness: Reflections for Lent 2011:** Angie O'Gorman writes short reflections on the Lent lectionary readings. The reflections ask us to come to consciousness of God, acknowledging the ways in which we see God and also deny God's kingdom in our everyday lives. Also available in Spanish. Order the booklet through Pax Christi USA at http://paxchristiusa.3dcartstores.com/Coming-to-Consciousness-Reflections-for-Lent-2011_p_219.html
- 5) **Jubilee USA campaigns:** This spring, Jubilee USA launches two campaigns, "Voices of Esther" and the 1,000 Faith Leaders Initiative. "Voices of Esther" will inspire and support U.S. citizens who want to use their voices to impact legislators on issues of economic justice. The 1,000 Faith Leaders Initiative will get at least that many heads of denominations, communities and others to sign a letter to President Obama urging him to implement debt relief and financial reform for the world's poorest people. To learn more about either campaign, contact Jubilee USA: www.jubileeusa.org, or call 202-783-3566.
- 6) **There you go:** Published by Survival International, Oren Ginzberg's online book uses cartoon imagery to show the dangerous parallels between past colonialism and modern democratic development. View the book at www.survivalinternational.org/thereyougo. Survival International works to protect the lifestyle of tribal people by helping them protect their lands, lives and futures.