



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

# NewsNotes

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

**September-October 2015**  
**Vol. 40, No. 5**

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

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## Ecological conversion: Called to hope, spurred to action

*The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) prepared the following response to “Laudato Si’: On the Care of Our Common Home,” Pope Francis’ encyclical released in June.*

*In this Encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home. (3)*

With these words, Pope Francis begins his momentous letter, “*Laudato Si’* – On the Care of Our Common Home.” While a significant teaching for all Catholics on our responsibility to care for God’s creation, the Holy Father addresses the encyclical to “every living person on this planet” and invites all people of good will to act urgently on behalf of Earth, on behalf of future generations, and especially on behalf of justice for poor and marginalized people who are most impacted by the destructive power of climate change and environmental destruction.

*We require a new and universal solidarity. As the bishops of Southern Africa have stated: “Everyone’s talents and involvement are needed to redress the damage caused by human abuse of God’s creation.” I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. (14)*

### **Building a consensus for concrete action**

Maryknoll missionaries have been privileged to serve God’s people in many corners of the earth, most often on the margins with the people who are excluded from tables of power and whose lives are considered expendable in the dominant economic system. This lived experience of our missionaries informs all the statements of the MOGC, such as our 2009 reflection “Global economy imperils Earth, humanity” which parallels the message of Pope Francis: At the heart of the current global social and ecological crises is an economic system that tries to lock interconnected societies into unsustainable patterns of production, overconsumption and waste generation, all driven by the mandate to grow.

In preparation for this encyclical, a survey on the impact of climate change was sent to Maryknollers around the world; more than 100 missionaries, Affiliates and staff responded, sending in their observations on issues ranging from access to water, access to food, air quality, sea levels and migration.

The encyclical acknowledges the “solid consensus” of the scientific community – that without immediate and sustained action, we are headed towards disaster. Pope Francis offers an urgent warning about the current state of our world: “[E]ach year hundreds of millions of tons of

waste are generated, much of it non-biodegradable, highly toxic and radioactive.... The earth, our home, is beginning to look more like an immense pile of filth.” (21) He challenges us to be attuned to “the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us” (208) and to let our actions reflect a sincere care and respect for all of God’s creation.

But all is not lost – Pope Francis clearly conveys his hope that change is possible and his belief in our potential: “Human beings, while capable of the worst, are also capable of rising above themselves, choosing again what is good, and making a new start, despite their mental and social conditioning. We are able to take an honest look at ourselves, to acknowledge our deep dissatisfaction, and to embark on new paths to authentic freedom.” (205) Furthermore, “by developing our individual, God-given capacities, an ecological conversion can inspire us to greater creativity and enthusiasm in resolving the world’s problems...” (220)

### **Abundant living through ecological solidarity**

*Laudato Si’* is a clarion call for a personal conversion within each of us, as building blocks, to shape a world governed by sustainable economic policies and environmental protections. Pope Francis emphasizes that it is not enough for us to go through the motions of change – we are in need of a cultural overhaul and a spiritual revolution. Individualism and rampant consumerism have led to decisions based on short-term gains and private interests rather than sustainability or the common good.

This personal conversion encompasses a reevaluation of our personal priorities and actions, and branches out to a renewal of our commitment to our families, our communities, our faiths and all of God’s creation: “We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it.” (229)

The Holy Father makes concrete suggestions for changing our lifestyle through “little daily actions,” such as using less heating and instead wearing warmer clothes, cooking only enough food to eat without wasting, separating trash from recycling, using public transportation options or carpooling, planting trees, turning off lights that are not being used, each of these things reflecting the “nobility in the duty to care for creation,” (211) Such choices, according to Pope Francis, “reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings.” He notes that we need not be afraid of having less and living a simpler lifestyle because it “is not a lesser life or one lived

with less intensity. On the contrary, it is a way of living life to the full.” (223)

### **Political leadership**

*Laudato Si'* highlights the importance of courageous political leadership at the local, national, and international level to address climate change and other environmental degradation. Pope Francis in particular underscores how our economic policies contribute to poverty and environmental degradation and that we must consider a new vision of the economy that recognizes Earth's limits.

The encyclical emphasizes the often overlooked principle of subsidiarity: as much as possible, political decisions should be made at a local level by the people who are most affected. Around the world, Maryknoll missionaries see how families, communities and the environment suffer due to choices made in faraway places, often by people who have never even visited the affected locations. “There is a need to respect the rights of peoples and cultures” and include “the constant and active involvement of local people from within their proper culture.” (144)

The conventional wisdom of political elites celebrates economic growth as an end in itself and has laid the foundation for the current environmental crisis the world faces. The excesses of unrestrained free markets have exposed the fundamental flaws in an economic system that prioritizes private property over the common good. But, as Pope Francis writes, there is a need for “a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations, while limiting as much as possible the use of nonrenewable resources, moderating their consumption, maximizing their efficient use, reusing and recycling them.” (22)

### **Policy solutions**

The current crisis demands real solutions that put impoverished people and creation at the center. The MOGC, via our Faith Economy Ecology project, works with faith-based, environmental, labor, community groups and other organizations to establish the foundation for comprehensive change covering a number of key issues:

- **International climate policies:** We seek a robust climate agreement that is binding, ambitious, and that can keep the planet below a 2 degrees C increase. Climate financing for least developed countries, island nations, and Sub-Saharan Africa with a 50/50 split between adaptation and mitigation funding is critical to preventing and adapting to climate-related events. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), if fully funded, can be a powerful driver of finance to the most vulnerable countries. It has a strong focus on gender, and af-

ected countries have a powerful seat at the table. We also need strong national level policies in place such as a carbon tax or cap with a 100 percent dividend to favor low-income residents.

- **By expanding the definition of refugees to include climate refugees,** the UN can ensure aid for communities displaced by catastrophic weather events from climate change.
- **Alternative energy:** It is time for heavy investment in alternative energy that does not harm creation or vulnerable communities. We need to move away from subsidizing the exploration, extraction and development of fossil fuels and instead promote alternative energy sources, mass transportation, agro-ecological farming and similar approaches designed to reduce energy use.
- **An economy of right relationship:** We can build an economy of thriving and resilient communities through promotion and protection of local economies. Communities should have a voice in how investments are structured. Greater attention must be given to developing cooperatives, local businesses and food systems, and to ensuring access to a social safety net. We call for an end to excessive financial speculation. A financial transaction tax would both help curb excessive speculation that destabilizes markets and generate much-needed revenue to fund the GCF and related initiatives.
- **Global economic policies need reform to be in right relationship with communities and creation.** Investments need to be at the service of creation and people, not corporations. Trade and investment agreements have contributed to climate change and a degradation of public health and the environment, yet it is corporations that are given legal tools to protect their profit while communities and governments lack the tools to enforce environmental and public health laws.

### **A new path ahead**

It is difficult to read *Laudato Si'* and not be inspired to become an even more active participant in changing the way humanity treats and cares for Earth, God's beautiful creation. The encyclical will be studied for many years to come, and serve as a manual on how to engage our spiritual and material selves in this essential transformation. The MOGC looks forward to engaging in a dialogue over the coming months on critical policy changes as well as individual actions suggested by *Laudato Si'*. We must begin to bring the transformational change needed to protect the sacredness of all life on our common home. As Pope Francis encourages us: “Truly, much can be done!” §

## Road to Paris: EPA offers Clean Power Plan

*The following articles were written by John Martinez, a graduate student at George Mason University and intern with the MOGC's Faith-Economy-Ecology project.*

On August 4, President Obama unveiled the final version of the EPA's Clean Power Plan (CPP), a set of national standards to reduce carbon emissions from U.S. power plants by 32 percent from 2005 levels by the year 2030. The White House touts the plan as a "strong and flexible framework" that will provide public health benefits such as preventing premature deaths from power plant emissions; will create tens of thousands of jobs by updating energy grids and switching to cleaner energy production; will drive investment in green energy resulting in 30 percent more renewable energy generation by 2030; and will lower the cost of energy enough to save U.S. residents \$155 billion between 2020 and 2030.

An affirmed CPP certainly will help the U.S. delegation at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) meeting to be held in Paris in December; it would show that the U.S. is serious and committed to fighting climate change, and would allow the U.S. to play a true leadership role in the talks.

The White House claims that the CPP keeps the nation on track to reduce emissions consistent with its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC), the U.S. commitment to emissions reduction made as part of the UNFCCC process. Each country must pledge an INDC that is fair, equitable, and ambitious with an overall goal of keeping Earth's temperature below 2 degrees Celsius as established at the UNFCCC meeting in Lima in December 2014.

However, the projected effects of the CPP alone will fall short of meeting the U.S. INDC commitment of 28 percent emissions reduction by 2025. The New Climate Institute notes that the revised CPP still leaves a gap of about one billion tons of emissions between the CPP reduction goals and the U.S. INDC. In order to meet the INDC goal, President Obama and the subsequent administration will have to find other ways to reduce emissions, or hope that emission reduction as part of the CPP will drop faster than planned.

The plan proposes to achieve these emissions reductions by allowing the states to develop their own

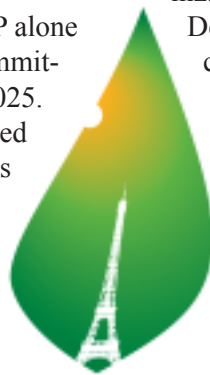
plans based on three "building blocks." The first building block is to increase the efficiency of coal fired power plants, the second is to reduce emissions from coal plants by increasingly switching to gas fired plants, and the third is to increase the amount of energy generated by renewable sources.

The CPP gives states significant flexibility in implementing emissions reduction, allowing them to either set their own emissions performance standards to meet their goals or to create state or regional emissions plans that could include mechanisms such as emissions trading, carbon taxes, renewable energy, nuclear energy, and improving energy efficiency. State compliance plans are due September 2016 with the option of an extension to 2018. The new standards are due to kick-in by 2022.

The response to the finalized plan has been mixed and has fallen along partisan lines. Coal companies and states that rely upon coal extraction oppose the plan, arguing that the regulations will result in increased energy costs for consumers as well as job reductions. The extent to which these claims may be true is debatable. An Analysis Group review of the CPP proposal predicts that the impacts on electricity rates will be modest in the near-term and result in lower electricity bills in the long-term. Even the energy industry-funded Center for Climate and Energy Solutions predict in their analysis that consumer costs will be minimal. In terms of jobs, the green energy sector has grown to such an extent that, according to Politifact, today there are more U.S. citizens working in green energy than in the petroleum industry, and even more employed in the solar industry specifically than there are in the coal industry.

The response from many environmental organizations has been positive. The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) hails the CPP as a "game changer," and credits the plan's flexible implementation framework that allows states the freedom to make their own choices. The NRDC echoes other organizations in the belief that the key to implementing a plan that works is to give the states as many tools as possible with which to meet their goals.

Other environmental organizations, however, have a more grim reaction to the plan. Greenpeace recognizes that the CPP is an important step forward, but describes it as "depressingly insufficient and unambitious." Greenpeace notes the degree to which coal, oil, and



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gas development has expanded under the Obama administration, and concludes that the administration has been “playing with numbers” in order to make the plan appear more ambitious than it actually is. They note that the choice of the year 2005 as the benchmark from which emission reductions will be measured is convenient, as 2005 marked the absolute peak of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. As of 2015, emissions have already fallen 15.4 percent compared to 2005 levels, which means that under the CPP the rate of national emissions reduction will actually slow down in the coming 15 years compared to the previous 10.

Even if the CPP contains a degree of number massaging and hype, it is still considered unacceptable to

congressional Republicans. The implementation of the plan has been fought in Congress and in the courts, and will continue to be fought for years to come. For example, Republican Senator Shelly Moore Capito from West Virginia, a state heavily influenced by the coal industry, responded to the announcement of the final CPP by submitting a bill to allow states to opt-out if it is found to impact such broadly defined areas such as economic growth and electricity rates.

Legal and political hurdles such as these will have to be addressed and overcome if the U.S. wants to make a good-faith argument to the world that it is serious and committed to fighting climate change. §

## Road to Paris: Issues unresolved in Bonn

In December, the UN conference on climate change in Paris will be the center of the world’s attention as 190 participating nations attempt to agree to what hopefully will be a robust agreement. From August 31-September 7, negotiators from these governments met in Bonn, Germany to lay the groundwork for a successful Paris conference.

While in Bonn, the negotiators worked to finalize the language of the agreement from an 83-page draft released at the end of July. One of the most difficult problems faced by the negotiators was choosing the agreement’s legal framework. An agreement that lacks a legally binding commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions would be a disappointment, but many of the wealthier countries – the biggest producers of emissions – usually resist such language.

“Undecided issues,” such as climate finance and the responsibilities of both the wealthier and less developed nations, are often contentious and difficult to negotiate. Poorer, developing countries face some of the most immediate effects of climate change but lack the resources with which to address them. The financial obligation of rich, “developed” countries to help poorer countries cover economic damage and permanent ecological losses as results of increasing climate change is a very divisive issue. Known as “Loss and Damage,” it possibly won’t make it into the final deal. Other questions of financing must also be resolved, such as how much public versus private money each signatory will choose to commit, and what the best ways are to ensure sustained financial support in both developed and developing nations into the future.

Negotiators must also decide the mechanism to hold signatories accountable for ratcheting up emissions reduction over time so that countries do not continue the same “business as usual” practices for the next 10-15 years.

Nobody can be sure how ambitious the final agreement will be. The 2009 Copenhagen conference was a disappointment, but there are indicators that Paris will be different. President Obama’s recently finalized Clean Power Plan, which commits to reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions 32 percent by 2030, is considered a sign that the U.S. is ready to make a real commitment and play a leadership role in creating an international agreement, although some advocates had hoped it would have gone further to reduce emissions.

As of August 28, 56 countries had released their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) to reducing emissions, with more expected to announce in the last months before Paris. But the INDCs pledged so far are not enough to meet the international goal of keeping the earth from warming more than 2 degrees Celsius.

Noting that Paris is just the beginning, social movements from the Global South defined the conference’s possible success in “The People’s Climate Test” ([peoplestestonclimate.org](http://peoplestestonclimate.org)). To pass the test, governments must catalyze immediate, urgent, and drastic emissions reductions, provide adequate support for transformation, deliver justice for impacted people, and focus on transformational action. If Paris can create a framework and a movement to meet the test, it could be a successful start. §

## Guatemala: Pérez Molina resigns

*The arrest of Guatemala's President Otto Pérez Molina on charges of corruption on September 3 was a surprising turn of events that brings a ray of hope to a long-suffering country where Maryknoll missionaries have served for decades. With the indigenous peoples whom Maryknoll has accompanied in their struggle for justice, we celebrate this historic moment brought on by months of popular protests and courageous public prosecutors. These notable events offer hope that the government-sanctioned violence, the impunity and corruption that have reigned in this beautiful country for so many years will finally give way to the rule of law and a true democracy where all Guatemalans can live in peace.*

*The following article is taken from the blog of NIS-GUA (Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala.)*

[On the evening of September 2] Guatemalan President Otto Pérez Molina (right) was forced to resign after more than four months of massive popular protests throughout the country. On [September 1], Congress unanimously voted to strip Pérez Molina of his presidential immunity, after evidence provided by the public prosecutor and International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) directly implicated him in the customs fraud network, "La Línea." An arrest warrant was issued for the president [on September 2] and he resigned just hours later. Pérez Molina and former Vice President Roxana Baldetti are accused of heading the criminal network that defrauded the state of at least \$3.7 million.



Vice President Alejandro Maldonado, who was named to the position after Roxana Baldetti was forced to resign, assumed the presidency [on September 3]. Maldonado is the founder of a political party known for promoting organized violence and death squadrons during the 1960s and 1970s. He was also one of the Constitutional Court judges who voted to overturn the historic 2013 ruling that sentenced former de facto dictator Efraín Ríos Montt to 80 years in prison for genocide and crimes against humanity.

[On the morning of September 3], Pérez Molina appeared before Judge Miguel Gálvez to give his first declaration and hear the charges against him, which include illicit association, bribery and customs fraud. The prosecution played hours of wiretap recordings throughout the day, laying out the hierarchy of the criminal structure before revealing recordings directly implicating the president. Deemed a flight risk, Judge Gálvez ordered Pérez Molina to spend the night in custody at the Matamoros military prison. ...

Today Guatemalans celebrate this incredible victory, born of months of resistance in the streets and decades of resilience in the face of structural corruption, racism and violence. However, we know the struggle is far from over. Calls for electoral reform were recently struck down in Congress, and all signs point to elections taking place as scheduled [on September 6]. Many Guatemalans have refused to accept this decision and have continued to protest outside the elections office demanding, "In these conditions, we do not want elections!"

If the impressive show of Guatemalan people power so far is any indication, the charges officially lodged for corruption are just the beginning in the search for justice for Pérez Molina's crimes. The former general is also implicated in the genocide against the Ixil people and his administration is responsible for the criminalization and imprisonment of hundreds of human rights defenders and repression and violence against thousands of Guatemalans defending life and dignity at La Puya encampment, in Totonicapán, San Rafael las Flores, Santa Cruz Barillas and many more.

The past four months have seen people from all walks of life take to the streets in protest in Guatemala - some for the first time and some for the hundredth. Meeting spaces have given birth to new proposals for movement building and structural change that will have impacts reaching far beyond Pérez Molina's resignation. The value of memory has been strong over the past four months, with many references being made to the 1944 revolution and the ten years of spring. As one sign read: "WE ARE HERE...for those who dreamed and struggle for a better country."

*Update on elections: Comedian Jimmy Morales won the first round on September 6 but did not take 50 percent of the votes; it is not clear whether businessman Manuel Baldizon (previously the front runner) or former first lady Sandra Torres will face Morales in a run-off vote on October 25. §*

## Honduras: Proposal for impunity commission fails

*While protesters in Guatemala City celebrated the resignation of their country's president and vice president, their compadres in Honduras have been less successful in their efforts to bring reform and justice. The following piece was written by Sustainable Pathways to Peace and Security intern Nicholas Alexandrou.*

During a recent National Assembly vote, the idea of providing a plebiscite on the creation of a Honduran version of the International Commission Against Impunity fell on deaf ears, despite assurances by President Juan Orlando Hernandez to negotiate with the representatives of the *movimiento indignado*. The proposal was defeated 66-58, with all members of the president's National Party and dissenting members of the Liberal Party voting against it.

Presidential and legislative elections for Honduras are not scheduled until 2017, providing the current president plenty of time to prevent the potential collapse of his own administration. Those in support of the plebiscite came from a coalition of deposed former president Manuel Zelaya's Liberal Party (*Partido Libre*) and the center-right Anti-Corruption Party (*Partido Anti-Corrupcion*). Whether opportunistic or altruistic, the Honduran opposition's platform against corruption demonstrates an ongoing desire to adopt the message of the *movimiento indignado*.

Overall, the challenges for civil society in both countries will remain great in the coming years. Long-term and consistent advocacy by an empowered citizenry can provide a check to institutional corruption. §

## El Salvador: Gangs defined as "terrorists"

*In an unsurprising decision, El Salvador's Supreme Court has decreed that gangs and their "apologists" are now legally defined as terrorists under El Salvador's Special Law Against Acts of Terrorism (LECAT). The ruling comes amid skyrocketing violence in recent weeks, especially as security personnel suffer higher than usual casualties. The following piece was written by Sustainable Pathways to Peace and Security intern Nicholas Alexandrou.*

Excessive use of the law against protesters and gangs alike has raised concern since it entered into force in 2006. In 2007, Human Rights Watch (HRW) identified needlessly draconian sentencing for protesters fighting against decentralization measures for water distribution, noting that the "provision [of the law used against the protesters] covers a wide variety of acts that do not fall within any reasonable definition of terrorism." However, in the 2007 case, the court intervened and ruled that the protesters' actions did not merit terrorism charges.

What has made the ruling in August particularly potent is that it deems illegal any negotiation with gangs. The Gang Prohibition Act of 2010 made the act of being a gang member "illegal," although implementation remained half-hearted, especially after the 2012 truce. The 2010 act was noted in the court's decision, validating an otherwise dubious law. The court established four criteria to define an apologist: S/he directly incites someone to commit a crime, publicly; refers to specific crimes and

not vague suggestions; and is motivated to incite public unrest.

Why now? The skyrocketing violence explains only part of the problem. The larger underlying problem stems from a combination of indecision under President Salvador Sanchez Ceren and resistance from the ARENA-dominated legislature and judicial institutions. For the president, his stance on the violence wavers between the carrot and the stick, much of which is driven by political necessity. The National Council on Citizen Security and Coexistence (CNSCC) which he created as part of a security initiative provides no space for gang negotiation.

Political influence over institutions, primarily the Supreme Court, prevented the CNSCC from being fully realized; in June, the court froze US\$900 million in government bonds intended to be used for the security plan, yet on April 18, it allowed the president to form a special army unit of 1,200 troops to combat gang violence. The court has ultimately shepherded the administration away from the social programs and instead towards the old ARENA policy of *mano dura* or "heavy handed" policing tactics.

The overall measures by the court appear to be political and the decision open to abuse. NGOs and other organizations working with at-risk youth and gang members could potentially face the brunt of this ruling. The emphasis on militarization and degradation of policing safeguards will only augment the violence, ignoring the underlining social causes in the process. §



## El Salvador: Instability foments violence

*In recent months, violence in El Salvador has spiraled, with the daily death rate now higher than during the peak of the civil war. After the church-sponsored truce between the MS13 and Barrio 18 gangs in 2012, violent crime declined briefly while it grew in neighboring Guatemala and Honduras. Now, as murder rates consistently rise, El Salvador will replace Honduras as the most violent country in Latin America. The following piece was written by Sustainable Pathways to Peace and Security intern Nicholas Alexandrou.*

The government's inability to respond remains an ongoing challenge as the left-leaning FMLN (*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional*) and the right-leaning ARENA (*Alianza Republicana Nacionalista*), which emerged from the 1992 ceasefire as the most powerful political parties in El Salvador, blame each other for the violence.



The victory of current President Salvador Sanchez Ceren (FMLN), who won the March 2014 election by only a few thousand votes, continues to leave the country bitterly divided. Recent rhetoric has been anything but conciliatory, as the FMLN Secretary General Medardo Gonzalez expressed a desire for “open dialogue” with the ARENA while simultaneously accusing ARENA of being “behind destabilizing actions” during a radio broadcast.

The divisions are further complicated by ARENA's stranglehold on the Supreme Court, according to Hilary Goodfriend in an August 8 post on *The Nation's* website. The legacy of ARENA's approximately 20 years in power after 1992 remains deeply entrenched under the current court, whose rulings have consistently antagonized the FMLN's policy implementation. This included the freezing of US\$900 million in government bonds approved by the Legislative Assembly to fund social and security programs.

The president's own security proposal since taking office has emphasized a coordinated multilateral response between governmental and non-governmental agencies. In September 2014, the government created a forum, known as the “National Council on Citizen Security and Coexistence” (*Consejo Nacional de Seguridad Ciudadana y Convivencia*, CNSCC) which in January 2015 announced a security plan called “Secured El Salvador” (*El Salvador Seguro*). However, the plan provides

no space or mechanism for negotiating with the gangs, which Sanchez Ceren emphasized during the legislative and municipal elections in March. He did note that there are churches, members of the CNSCC, that “negotiate with the gangs” but not with the gang leaders.

The CNSCC-sponsored plan calls for greater inter-institutional cooperation between security agencies, civil society (including church organizations), and all branches of the government. Implementing the plan would cost an estimated eight percent of total GDP; the financing ideally would derive from a combination of state, private, and foreign entities, including the Organization of American States, the U.S Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations, and the European Union. The upswing in violence, however, has displayed the limitations of the underfunded CNSCC plan. In a recent statement by the CNSCC on the

latest violence and the bus strikes enforced by Barrio 18, the CNSCC expressed solidarity with the victims and only proposed a “deepening” of the plan. Mauricio Navas, one of the authors of the proposal and coordinator of the working groups that formed the CNSCC, has said that if the plan is not fully funded, it might have good intentions but will have no results.

Without the political capital to effectively respond to the violence, the government has recently reverted to mass arrests as casualties rise among security personnel. On August 12, the attorney general issued 300 arrest warrants for gang members suspected of “terrorist acts.” August 17 has now been registered as the most violent day of the year, with 42 officially registered murders; August 16 was the second most violent day, with 40 killed. On August 24, the Supreme Court legally designated all gangs as “terrorists,” allowing for the implementation of counter-terrorism law and providing no ground for any negotiation. (See related article on page 8.)

The reversal to a form of the draconian policing tactics of *mano dura* (heavy hand), a policy legacy of ARENA, represents a major setback from the truce negotiations a few years ago. While the current administration faces grave challenges, reverting to mass arrests will only further antagonize tensions and produce additional violence. However, the political dimensions threaten to destabilize the country more so than the gang violence, especially as judicial and legislative institutions disrupt the basic functions of the state. §

## Africa: Obama offers critique during third visit

*In the past two years Africa has become a high-profile concern for the United States. The Obama administration has broadened its engagement with African nations to include not only security and humanitarian concerns but also economic partnerships with several governments through the continent. In addition to three official visits, President Obama also hosted the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit in Washington in August 2014.*

President Obama visited Kenya and Ethiopia, probably for the last time as head of state, from July 24-28. Both Washington and Nairobi held many expectations about the trip's purpose and possible outcomes. In recent years, the Obama administration has tried to carry out a set of policies aimed at promoting democracy and human rights in Africa, as well as various programs focused on food security, health assistance, energy development and investment in Africa's steadily growing economies. These political, humanitarian and economic policies have sometimes played second fiddle to security and anti-terrorism concerns.

Commentators in the U.S. suggested that the journey could be an opportunity to rebuild frayed relationships with two important allies in East Africa that had been neglected during Obama's first six years in office due to Ethiopia's human rights violations and, in Kenya's case, concerns over the International Criminal Court's (ICC) indictment of President Uhuru Kenyatta and Vice President William Ruto for crimes against humanity. In March 2015, when the ICC withdrew charges against Kenyatta, little reason remained not to visit Kenya.

Some analysts suggested that Obama's visit would serve to build on the commitments of last year's Leaders' Summit and would take advantage of growing business possibilities, especially in the rapidly expanding Kenyan economy. Others suggested that the visit would emphasize the importance of developing improved security and anti-terrorism programs by promoting the Kenyan government's attempts to reform its corrupt security establishment. One commentator even went so far as to suggest that the president should look for opportunities to send U.S. troops with combat experience to help build

up African military capability.

Upon arrival in Nairobi, the first Kenyan-American president (who is also the first sitting U.S. president to visit) received a warm welcome. A primary reason for visiting was to participate in the sixth annual Global Entrepreneurship Summit, a gathering of entrepreneurs at all stages of business development. President Obama's remarks highlighted a theme often evoked during his short stay – that by leapfrogging old technologies, Africa could enter into a new time of prosperity. But he also spoke bluntly to his hosts, openly criticizing Kenya for its corruption (noting that it is believed that 250,000 jobs have been lost in Kenya due to bribery), tribalism, and lack of adequate educational programs for women and girls. He didn't lecture his hosts but pointed out that corruption, once rampant in his adopted home town of Chicago, was driven out once ordinary people stood up against it.

During his time in Addis Ababa, Obama gave a major speech to the Africa Union, the first U.S. president to do so. In a lengthy address to dignitaries he summarized what it would take to bolster the progress Africa has made in recent years: "New thinking. Unleashing growth that creates opportunity. Promoting development that lifts all people out of poverty. Supporting democracy that gives citizens their say. Advancing the security and justice that delivers peace. Respecting the human rights of all people. These are the keys to progress."

In commenting on what Africa should look for from President Obama's visit, a prominent Nairobi think tank had suggested that the Kenyan government should lobby the U.S. about finding more pragmatic solutions to conflicts in the neighboring countries of South Sudan and Somalia. In his Addis Ababa address, President Obama stated that he had just met with South Sudan's President Salva Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar; on August 26, in the presence of Kenya's President Kenyatta and other East African leaders, both men signed the much-delayed Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)-Plus peace accord that establishes a transitional government for the fragile young nation. §



## Tanzania: Greater access to electricity

*In June, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns staff member Fr. Dave Schwinghamer visited Tanzania, where he had served as a missionary for many years. Following are some observations from his trip.*

In January, Tanzania published its Draft National Energy Policy 2015, which, despite its length, devoted little attention to the challenge of bringing electricity to the country's roughly 11 million residents who live in poverty in rural areas. That task is left up to the Rural Energy Agency (REA), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, which is tasked with promoting and facilitating improved access to modern energy services in rural areas. When the REA became operational in October 2007, only two percent of the rural population was connected to electrical energy sources. The REA aims for a connectivity rate of 50 percent by 2025.

During my visit in June, as I rode in a pickup truck through parts of the Shinyanga and Kagera regions in northwest Tanzania, I saw workmen stringing new electricity lines to many rural villages. These lines are part of the REA's Phase II project which began in July 2014. According to the *Sunday News* (June 7, 2015), by April 2014, 241,401 people had been connected to the nation's rapidly expanding electricity grid, an increase of 68 percent from 2013.

Tanzania is one of the many countries taking part in the U.S.-sponsored Power Africa program. One of the program's aims is to "meet new demand through low-cost solutions, e.g. new gas resources and off-grid renewable opportunities." Tanzania wants to make use of each and every possible energy source, from uranium for nuclear power to solar panels.

In a recent speech to Parliament, Minister for Energy and Minerals George Simbachawene said that the country had now completed a natural gas pipeline from the southern city of Mtwara to Dar es Salaam and had overhauled its laws and regulations that govern the natural gas and oil sector of the economy. He noted that between 2013 and 2014 Tanzania had increased the amount of electricity it produced from 5,997 gigawatt hours (GWH) to 6,285 GWH, an increase of 4.8 percent. Simbachawene has asked for an increase his depart-

ment's annual budget from \$173,809 to \$315,714.

In Dar es Salaam, a gas-burning plant called the Kinyerezi I is almost operational; it will have the capacity to generate 150 megawatts of electricity. Tanzania's current total capacity is 1,500 megawatts; about 45 percent comes from hydro sources, 35 percent from natural gas, and 19 percent from thermal and other sources.

Power Africa favors large gas-powered plants but some rural Tanzanians are beginning to install their own affordable solar systems. While visiting the capital of Shinyanga region, I was able to investigate the availability of solar panels. On just one street in the city's busy market area, three

shops were selling several different sizes of panels along with the wires, converters and batteries needed to set up a solar system for a home. A 40-watt solar panel sells for 90,000/TZ shillings (about \$45) in the small shops. Small solar lanterns made by D.light were also available for prices that are lower than in the U.S. Local merchants claimed the solar panels are in good demand. While travelling overland through the eastern part of the region I noticed many villages had a few homes with solar panels on their tin roofs.

In Kagera region, new REA electricity lines were evident along the main road leading to the Uganda border. Local villagers told me that they were not sure how these new electric lines would be connected to individual homes and doubted whether subsistence farmers could afford to pay the initial hook up charge and to purchase electricity on a consistent basis. Tanzania has elected to install pay-as-you-go meters on homes using electricity. In one home that I visited, the cost of electricity was around 364/TZ shillings (17 cents) per kilowatt hour.

Local environmental activists expressed the view that small solar units large enough to light 3-4 bulbs and charge a cell phone for individual homes would be a better solution at the present time as once the unit is installed, there is little overhead and no monthly payments. A factor that could drive interest in installing solar panels in villages is that the most used electrical utility in rural Tanzania is the cell phone. Local shop keepers in the Mabatini area of Mwanza charge around 300/TZ shillings (about 13 cents) to charge a cell phone. §



## Human trafficking: U.S. upgrades Malaysia

*The following article was prepared by Sr. Mary Ann Smith, MM and Sr. Veronica Schweyen, MM who monitor the issue of human trafficking on behalf of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

The U.S. Department of State's 2015 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report has received more than the usual scrutiny due to ongoing negotiations around the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) involving the U.S. and 11 Pacific Rim nations, and Malaysia's changing rank on the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) compliance list, compiled by the State Department. Previously listed as Tier 3 – a country whose government does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the TVPA and is not making significant efforts to do so – Malaysia has been upgraded to the Tier 2 watch list – not in full compliance yet making efforts to do AND a) the number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is significant or is significantly increasing; b) there is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year; or c) the determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with minimum standards was based on commitments to take additional

future steps over the next year.

Malaysia's Tier 3 status became a problem after Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ), bolstered by support from faith, trade, and anti-trafficking advocates, added the "No Fast Track for Human Traffickers" amendment into the final "Fast Track" Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) bill that passed Congress in June. Once the administration and members of Congress understood that this would upset the TPP negotiations, they attempted to remove this text from the final version of the bill.

When that effort failed, advocates believe that they then used political influence to upgrade Malaysia in the TIP report. In a Huffington Post piece ("Key Democrat rails against 'political interference' in Obama's human rights report," updated July 23), John Sifton, Asia advocacy director at Human Rights Watch, said, "If Malaysia is moved to the Tier 2 watch list, we will view that decision as so extraordinarily unwarranted that political interference can be presumed. ... We would urge Congress to investigate. We would urge the inspector general of the State Department to investigate."

It is possible that the strong stance against human trafficking in the TPA bill will be weakened if and when Congress goes to conference on the trade customs and

### **Deception, fraud in trafficking**

One example of the trafficking in persons crisis is the recent case of hundreds of Filipina teachers cheated out of thousands of dollars by Isidro Rodriguez and his cohorts. With the false promise of a legitimate teaching job in the U.S., each applicant paid more than \$12,000 over a period of two years for various fees including, visas, passport and travel.

This type of deceptive entrapment is "labor trafficking" and "debt bondage," and is defined as "the illegal recruitment with a promise of employment in another country." Upon their arrival in the U.S. Rodriguez confiscated the teachers' papers, rendering them "undocumented," forced into positions as day care aides and domestic servants.

Economic conditions in the Philippines are so dire that thousands of educated Filipinos accept such conditions in an effort to improve living conditions for their families and to provide education for their children.

Clearly Rodriguez had contacts in the Philippines and the U.S., including government offices, embassies, the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency and counterpart employment agencies in the U.S. who helped him generate fake contracts and approve visa applications – these documents were approved by the Philippine Embassy.

According to a February 2015 post on the Migrante International website, "Rodriguez remains at large [and is believed to be in Spain] after having been convicted by a Manila regional trial court sentencing him to 11 years in prison for victimizing a Filipino teacher. He has two existing warrants of arrest against him for illegal recruitment and *estafa* [fraud]. Aside from the warrants, he has numerous pending cases of syndicated *estafa* and large-scale illegal recruitment and trafficking in persons filed in different courts by at least 300 Filipino teachers that he had victimized from 2009-2014. He also has pending complaints against him in U.S. courts by Filipino teachers he has victimized there." §

enforcement bill, but with this recent upgrade, it will no longer affect the TPP negotiations.

The TIP report has well-deserved respect for its efforts to put the crime of human trafficking on the global agenda. But while questions were raised in the past about designations of certain countries, the recent re-ranking of Malaysia is beyond redemption. Faith leaders and human rights advocates in the U.S. have responded with disbelief and outrage over this upgrade, as recent reports from Malaysia have confirmed 139 mass graves in "trafficking camps," forced labor at sea, and trafficking of Rohingya Muslims through its southern jungles.

In his introduction to the TIP report, Secretary of State John Kerry listed many 21st century challenges: extreme poverty; discrimination against women and minorities; corruption and other failures of governance;

abuse of social media; and the power and reach of transnational organized crime. He also named those who are complicit in one way or another: the private sector, academic institutions, civil society, the legal community and consumers. But in the end, he said, "governments have a special responsibility to enforce the rule of law, share information, invest in judicial resources and espouse policies that urge respect for the rights and dignity of every human being. Human trafficking is not a problem to be managed; it is a crime to be stopped." Therefore, upgrading Malaysia to the Tier 2 Watch List at this time calls into question the integrity of this TIP report and reinforces the perception of many religious and human rights organizations in the U.S. that this decision is a political one related to the TPP trade negotiations. §

## Trade: Bangladesh's suspension remains

*The following article was written by Chris Smith, a Maryknoll Affiliate and volunteer with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

On August 11, the U.S. announced that it would not reinstate Bangladesh to a list of developing countries that receive trade preferences for lower or zero-duty tariffs due to labor rights and workplace safety issues. This so-called "generalized system of preferences" (GSP) that enables countries to qualify for advantageous trade terms with the U.S. was suspended by President Obama in June 2013 following the Rana Plaza tragedy, where 1,134 people died and over 3,000 were injured in a factory building collapse.

Bangladesh's garment sector totals \$25 billion annually, second only to China. The apparel industry accounts for 90 percent of the country's exports. Competition among developing countries to gain shares of the U.S. market is intense, and 122 nations now receive GSP status. But the Rana Plaza accident, coupled with the Tazreen Fashions factory fire in November 2012 that claimed 112 lives, dealt a major setback to the Bangladesh apparel industry.

In 2013 the U.S. gave Bangladesh an action plan to implement in order to qualify for reinstatement of GSP, but U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman explained that "[w]e remain concerned about the large number of factories that have yet

to be inspected, the lack of progress on needed labor law reforms, and continuing reports of harassment of and violence against labor activists who are attempting to exercise their rights."

"If Bangladesh can ensure labor rights, and regain the generalized system of preferences, the industry can make even more progress and the workers will benefit greatly," Caritas Dhaka Regional Director Ronjon Roza-rio told the Union of Catholic Asian News. Caritas has been helping the families of the dead and injured, including providing assistance to start small businesses to those too traumatized to go back to factory work. §

*Photo of Bangladeshi women sewing clothes courtesy of USAID Bangladesh. Licensed under Public Domain via Commons.*



## Myanmar: Timber demand fuels illegal logging

*The following article was written by Chris Smith, a Maryknoll Affiliate and volunteer with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

The problem of illegal logging in forests in the developing world represents a microcosm of the phenomenon of exploitation of natural resources by corrupt governing elites that wreak environmental damage while simultaneously diverting government revenue away from public goods. The story of illegal logging in Myanmar illustrates the devastating consequences of this practice.

Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) was a British colony when it won independence in 1948, but was plagued by instability and civil war as the new government contended with communist and ethnic rebels. The military took power through a coup in 1962 and suspended the Constitution. It has continued to rule in Myanmar despite a major uprising in 1988, and the development of the opposition party National League of Democracy, which won a landslide victory in 1990 elections but was prevented from taking power by the military junta. Western countries implemented economic sanctions in response to the government's brutal suppression of human rights, but enough progress towards new elections and other reforms was made so that most of the sanctions were lifted in anticipation of a general election in November 2015.

Myanmar's timber is no longer under sanctions restrictions, but illegal logging of valuable wood is feeding neighboring China's growing demand for timber products. China's timber needs depend on imports, which supplies 30 percent of the total market. Since 2006, China has been the world's largest importer of timber, and is the largest exporter of furniture and other processed wood products. The Myanmar-Chinese border had provided a reliable pathway for smuggling networks to transport jade, timber, rice, weapons and other commodities.

While on paper the government of Myanmar prohibits illegal logging into China, the reality on the ground tells a different story. It is estimated that 48 percent of exported timber (between 2000 and 2013) from Myanmar was cut illegally (without government permission), and 72 percent of the total timber trade – worth \$5.7 billion – was smuggled across Myanmar's border through illicit export deals, according to a report of the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), an international organization that promotes transparent and sus-

tainable global trade and supply chains. The report faults “fundamental governance failures in Myanmar's timber sector,” and concludes that “wide-ranging reform is required to sustain forest resources and enable access to the increasing number of high-value markets sensitive to legality issues, including the EU, U.S., Australia and others.” [*Data Corruption: Exposing the true scale of logging in Myanmar*, March 2014]

China could play a much larger role in deterring illegal logging, and the State Forestry Administration of China (SFA) in 2014 sought comments from NGOs on the Chinese government's proposed policies to address the issue. A principal flaw of the timber guidelines according to EIA is that they are voluntary measures based on self-regulation, rather than mandatory regulations enforced by the Chinese government. Moreover, the guidelines are limited to overseas Chinese timber operations; domestic Chinese importers of timber are not covered. China has sought to address illegal timber imports through voluntary guidelines, the previous version having been released in 2009. Unfortunately, little progress was made in curbing the illegal timber trade and SFA's latest approach offers little hope for concrete improvement.

On the Myanmar side of the border, certain structural issues have served to impede the development of effective mechanisms to staunch the flow of illegal timber into China. One is the ongoing ethnic conflict in northern Myanmar involving the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). The KIA's need for resources to maintain their insurgency provides a motive to fuel their participation in illegal logging and facilitate the movement of timber across the Chinese border. The Myanmar Timber Enterprise is supposed to license all wood exports through Rangoon Port, but EIA found that 72 percent of all exported timber left without their approval. Myanmar's army, known as the Tatmadaw, has maintained that its operations in the northern part of the country against the KIA is designed to disrupt their illegal logging activities, and the Myanmar government initiated a log export ban in April 2014. But recent evidence indicates that these measures are simply inadequate in making a significant mark on reducing smuggling of illegal timber into China.

What can be done to deter and punish those parties who continue to facilitate the export of illegal timber into China (and elsewhere)? The Environmental Investigation Agency recommends a multi-pronged approach:

- Provide more details about Myanmar's log export ban

- and enforce the ban in government-controlled areas.
- Formally request all trade partners—including China, India, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam—to reciprocate the log export ban with corresponding legal measures.
- Enhance transparency by publishing fully accurate information on the management of forest resources
- Investigate and prosecute companies or government officials involved in illegal logging and timber smuggling.
- The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) can provide a mechanism for protecting high-value luxury timber that grows in Myanmar’s forests and serves to meet the demand from China’s wood processing industry. Other countries who participate in CITES can assist Myanmar in upholding its commitment to the Convention.

Efforts to change and reform Myanmar’s illegal logging market will be challenged by a government operated by a small elite steeped in a long history of corruption and ethnic conflicts that have established narrow separatist armies focused on maintaining their viability and power. The economic resources gained from exporting illegal timber represent lucrative options for both parties. Although these dynamics are hardly unique in developing countries with valuable natural resources, a concerted effort by western countries, international actors and NGOs can help lay the groundwork for sustainable solutions that promote environmental protection for Myanmar’s forests and enhance sustainable economic development that benefits the entire population of the country. §

## Extractive industries: Oxfam wins against SEC

*On September 2, a federal district court judge ruled in favor of Oxfam America, Earth Rights International, and a team of pro-bono lawyers who sued the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for dragging its feet on implementation of a critical piece of the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial reforms.*

The intent of Section 1504 of Dodd-Frank, the “Publish What You Pay” law, was to limit corruption in countries that suffer from the “resource curse,” meaning they have an abundance of mineral and other natural resource wealth but also dramatic economic inequality and high rates of poverty. Profits from those countries’ natural resources – which ideally would provide social services, healthcare, and education for their economically marginalized residents – often end up in the pockets of corporate or government officials, while other funds end up funding local and regional conflicts.

According to Oxfam, “Section 1504 requires oil, gas, and mining companies – including U.S., European, Canadian, Chinese and Brazilian companies publicly traded in the U.S. – to disclose the payments they make to governments for the extraction

of natural resources. ... [Congress required] the SEC to issue a final rule [on implementation of Section 1504] by April 17, 2011. When the SEC did issue a rule in 2012, the oil industry – led by the American Petroleum Institute and backed by companies such as Exxon, Chevron, BP and Shell – sued to overturn and the Court sent the rule back to the SEC on narrow procedural grounds. [In 2014], Oxfam America sued the SEC ... to force [it] to finish the rule. Citizens, investors and even some in industry have called for the long-awaited regulations to be finalized in a timely manner.”

The groundbreaking Section 1504 ruling has spurred similar laws in other jurisdictions, including the European Union, Canada and Norway, which now require public, company-by-company disclosure for each oil, gas and mining project. Many U.S. companies must also comply with the rules in these countries.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns follows this issue as a member of the Publish What You Pay Co-

alition, a network of faith, development, environmental, investor, and transparency organizations, which advocates for more financial openness in the oil, gas and mining sectors. §



## Trade: Update on TPP

*On July 31, another Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement deadline passed. Supporters and detractors both thought the pact would have been solidified during negotiations held in Maui the last week of July, but many issues linger, including access to medicines, privacy concerns regarding technology, and intellectual property patents.*

The environment chapter was recently finalized; it addresses wildlife trafficking, illegal logging and illegal fishing but does not require signatory nations to endorse relatively weak standards. Additionally, the chapter says nothing about climate change or incentives for TPP countries to move towards more sustainable, low-emission energy sources or business practices; it's expected that the investment chapter will continue to allow foreign corporations to sue governments when enforcement of domestic environmental laws negatively affect the corporations' profits.

Big questions remain on the final outcomes for intellectual property (IP) standards, including access to medicines. Some countries, such as Vietnam, currently have little to no barriers on medicine access, especially on "biologics." The proposals leaked from the last few rounds include data exclusivity terms of up to 12 years, which would mean a generic alternative would not be ready for roughly 20 years.

On August 5, Knowledge Ecology International leaked a draft of the access to medicines chapter that they believe reflects the discussion in Maui. Much of the analysis below is provided by Australian public health professor Deborah Gleeson.

Fortunately, both the leak and the outcomes in Maui suggest that the United States is backing down from 12 years to eight of data exclusivity on biologics, which is closer to what the Obama administration is pushing for domestically. This is the first time that a provision specifically on biologics – used in some of the new drugs for cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, and other auto-immune disease – is included in a trade agreement.

Some TPP countries currently have no laws on biologics patents. Chile, Australia and New Zealand are pushing to allow countries to define biologics domestically, potentially easing the burden of some of these

patents. The chapter will still promote "evergreening" of patents which would allow drug companies to make small changes to a drug that would renew a patent for another 20 years, thereby barring a generic version. Other troublesome pieces include low standards for obtaining patents and little opportunity for countries to tighten patents in the future. There will also be mandatory patents on medicines from plants or plant varieties which could impact food security in some countries.

Another controversial issue is the five years of protection for small-molecule drugs, pushed hard by the U.S., and additional three years of data protection for new clinical information or evidence of prior approval in another territory, promoted only by the U.S. and Japan. Some flexibility in implementation is possible.

Overall, the chapter will protect and expand the pharmaceutical industry and make it much harder for generic drugs manufacturers, domestic drug industries in other countries, and countries such as New Zealand and Australia that offer affordable medications through their state insurance plans to provide access to affordable, life-saving medications. The IP chapter will make access to medicines particularly challenging for lower-income countries such as Vietnam and Peru.

Besides medicine access, other issues still being negotiated include access to dairy, sugar, and auto markets and whether currency manipulation will be included or dealt with separately.

Meanwhile, it is unclear whether negotiations will wrap up in 2015 or after the U.S. elections in 2016. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper is in a close race, so Canada is unlikely to make any deals until after its October 19 election. With new Fast Track rules in place, the Obama administration must publicize the text 30 days before introducing an implementation bill; it must notify Congress 90 days before Obama intends to sign the agreement. Now that the July 31 deadline has passed, TPP cannot be voted on and signed into law before the end of 2015; the administration's best hope is for Congress to vote on the agreement during the first three months of 2016 before the U.S. elections really ramp up. But as of yet, no additional ministerial-level meetings have been scheduled. §



Demonstrators outside U.S. Trade Representative's office, December 2014



## Catholics active in support of Iran nuclear deal

*The following update was written by Marie Dennis, co-president of Pax Christi International and former director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

On July 14, an agreement on the Iranian nuclear program was reached in Vienna, Austria. This important diplomatic accomplishment was achieved through protracted high level political negotiations involving the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, China, the Russian Federation and the European Union, as well as Iran. It aims to curb Iran's development of nuclear weapons while allowing the country to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. More importantly, it serves as an important example of successful diplomacy in extremely difficult circumstances.

As negotiations approached a conclusion, the U.S. Congress passed the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015 that gave the House and Senate a limited time to pass a bill of disapproval. On July 19, President Obama submitted the Iran agreement to Congress, giving the legislators until September 17 to pass such a bill.

At publication time, 42 senators publicly have expressed support of the Iran deal, ensuring a filibuster of the disapproval resolution. The agreement made in July will go through with the U.S.'s commitment intact.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC), along with many collegial organizations and communities of faith, has energetically supported the Iran agreement as a critical step toward nuclear non-proliferation and, ultimately, nuclear abolition.

Pax Christi International noted other potentially positive results: "The deal will enable Iran to play a more active role in regional politics, increasing the possibility of a diplomatic solution to the war in Syria and leveraging political concessions in Baghdad and Damascus that could more effectively curtail the power of ISIS and avert a wider Shia-Sunni conflict....The agreement with Iran has the potential to reshape much of the Middle East. Hopefully it will strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and stimulate development of a Nuclear Weapons-Free Zone in the Middle East, a goal repeatedly supported by the nations of the world at the UN since 1974."

That a diplomatic agreement has become a reality after years of painstaking negotiations is a great accomplishment. Its details have been scrutinized and the



deal is supported by scientists, diplomats, political and religious leaders and countless others around the world, including the Vatican and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

The Catholic community across the country has been fully engaged in support of the Iran agreement. The USCCB has written to Congress, visited many members of Congress, sent action alerts and activated diocesan level leaders. At the same time, MOGC, Pax Christi, and a coalition of national Catholic organizations and religious communities have been working with other faith communities to encourage Congress to back the agreement. With significant collective grassroots presence across the U.S., they have encouraged thousands of constituents to communicate (in writing, orally and in person) with their elected officials and to write letters to the editor or op-eds in both the secular press and diocesan Catholic newspapers.

A letter to Congress supporting the agreement from Catholic women religious across the U.S. was initiated by the Adrian Dominican Sisters in Michigan and gathered well over 4,000 signatures. A pro-deal statement from Catholic theologians and scholars reflected the opinions of academics from Massachusetts to California, Pennsylvania to Minnesota, Missouri to Washington, D.C.

Catholic groups have placed ads in the electronic versions of *America* magazine and the *National Catholic Reporter* encouraging readers to contact their members of Congress to support the Iran deal.

They also met in D.C. with senior staff in offices of key senators, coordinating with local Catholics in each state and encouraging as much August recess work with elected officials as possible. §

# Climate change: New report on CEO pay

The following article was written by Chuck Collins, a senior scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) and co-author of the report, *Money to Burn*. He is founding co-chair of *DivestInvest.org*.

Excessive CEO pay at the 30 largest U.S. public fossil fuel corporations rewards short-term actions, with disastrous results for the world's climate, a new report finds. Pay trends are documented in *Money to Burn: How CEO Pay is Accelerating Climate Change*, a report published by the Institute for Policy Studies.

In 2014, the average CEO pay package at the 30 biggest oil, gas and coal companies was \$14.7 million, nine percent higher than average CEO pay on the S&P 500.

The highest-paid fossil fuel CEO is ExxonMobil's Rex Tillerson, who raked in in \$33 million in 2014, boosting his total compensation over the last five years to \$165 million. ConocoPhillips paid CEO Ryan Lance over \$27 million in 2014, an 18 percent pay increase over 2013. Chevron CEO John Watson is third highest with a \$26 million paycheck in 2014.

Over the last five years, the 30 largest U.S. publicly held fossil fuel companies doled out compensation worth nearly \$6 billion to 163 CEOs and top managers.

Allocating \$6 billion differently would double the current \$3 billion U.S. pledge to the Global Climate Fund, to offset climate change in the most vulnerable nations. In the U.S., \$6 billion could cover the cost of weatherizing the homes of 3.3 million low-income families or install 269,342 residential solar panels.

CEOs at the biggest oil, gas and coal corporations are rewarded for a short-term mindset in their actions. They receive pay increases for expanding carbon reserves and building unnecessary fossil fuel infrastructure.

These 30 fossil fuel corporations are leaders in an industry that is spending over \$600 billion per year to locate additional fossil fuel reserves. Climate scientists have warned that we should cap carbon emissions to prevent Earth's temperature from rising more than 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Taking this step would limit emissions to roughly 565 gigatons of carbon. At our current levels of consumption, we'll surpass this marker by 2040.

The 200 largest fossil fuel companies, however, already have an estimated 2,795 gigatons of oil, gas and coal reserves. That's five times the amount of carbon than can be burned without triggering irreversible and catastrophic climate change.

So deploying resources to identify new carbon reserves is reckless—except in the perverse world of CEO incentives. The 13 biggest oil companies tie executive bonuses to achieving positive “reserves replacement,” ensuring new carbon reserves replace those burned.

Most of that dirty energy needs to stay in the ground. The global energy industry must

shift its investment away from efforts to drill and mine its untapped reserves of oil, gas, and coal, and move as swiftly as possible toward a new reliance on renewable energy options like wind and solar.

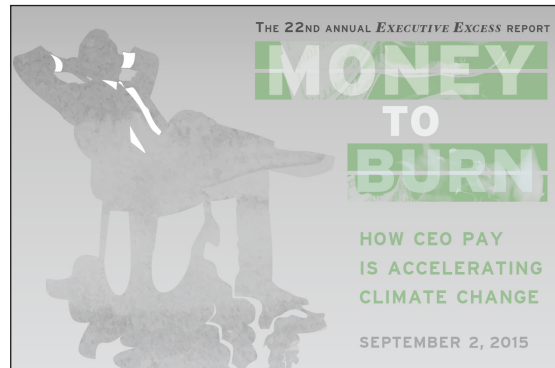
Perverse pay incentives also encourage big oil, gas and coal companies to build billions of dollars of unnecessary fossil fuel infrastructure in order to boost short-term profit horizons. These CEOs are rewarded for new pipelines and drilling platforms that lock us into fossil fuels at a time when our nation should be shifting investment into conservation and renewable energy.

Big fossil fuel uses its considerable lobbying clout and campaign cash to protect their subsidies and block alternatives. This includes lobbying Congress to protect an estimated \$37.5 billion in annual subsidies for the fossil fuel sector. In 2014, the top 30 fossil fuel corporations contributed \$4.4 million to congressional candidates who had either denied climate change science or expressed skepticism about it.

Corporate boards and shareholders could shift the incentives to reward long-term viability. CEOs could be rewarded not for finding new reserves, but for reducing carbon emissions. They could be encouraged to diversify energy sources toward renewables. Their deferred compensation could be tied to business health over a longer time horizon than two or three years.

Today's chronic short-termism isn't only bad for their shareholders, it's lethal for the planet and all of us. Remaining hooked on fossil fuels will only increase the severity and frequency of summertime hailstorms, devastating droughts, and wildfires of biblical proportions.

Learn more at [www.ips-dc.org](http://www.ips-dc.org). §

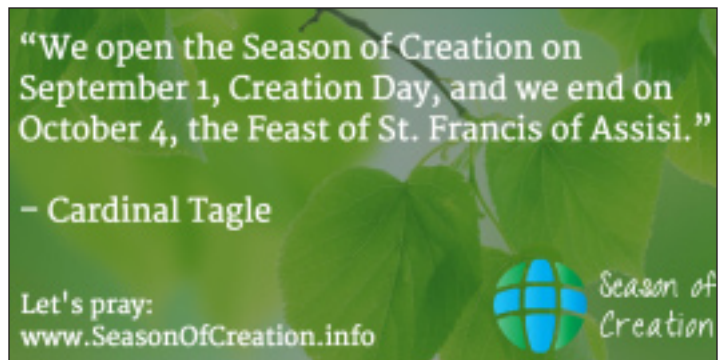


## Resources

1) **Season of Creation:** Inspired by the *Laudato Si'* encyclical, the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM) invites Catholics to celebrate the “Season of Creation” worldwide, from **September 1 through October 4**, following the example of other Christian denominations and the Catholic bishops of the Philippines. All are invited to pray, reflect, and reduce, both in community and as an individual; and advocate for greater care of creation. Consider signing and promoting the Catholic Climate Petition in preparation of the UN COP21 Climate Summit to be held in Paris starting at the end of November. Learn more at the GCCM website: <http://seasonofcreation.info/>

2) **Creation Care Kids:** This curriculum for teaching Pope Francis’ encyclical “On Care for Our Common Home (*Laudato Si'*)” has been designed to be flexible – formatted in short segments – so that they can be added to an existing catechetical program or combined into longer sessions. Includes resources to teach the lessons of *Laudato Si'* in an engaging and age-appropriate way. Each session comes with a two-page child handout and a leader handout with talking points. Available as eResources, with an option for full-color child handouts in print. Editions for two age groups: ages 5-8 and ages 9-12. Eight 20-45 minute sessions, which can be added to an existing program or combined into longer sessions. Designed for classrooms with one leader or as a whole family process. Uses stories, activities, and scripture to bring these topics alive. \$24. Learn more at <http://www.catholiccreationcare.com/creation-care-kids.html>.

3) **A Challenging Moment for the Protection of Migrant Rights and Human Rights in the Northern Triangle of Central America & Across the Migrant Route:** Published by the Latin America Working Group Education Fund. The guide is a resource for Central American, Mexican, regional and U.S. civil society organizations and interested individuals to understand the rapidly shifting U.S. immigration and foreign policy towards Central America and Mexico. It suggests ways in which we, as civil society advocates, can work together to maximize the opportunities and to minimize the risks in this moment for human rights and migrant rights. Find the 28-page report in PDF format here: [http://www.lawg.org/storage/documents/LAWG\\_Advocacy\\_Guide-Protection\\_of\\_Migrant\\_Rights\\_Human\\_Rights.pdf](http://www.lawg.org/storage/documents/LAWG_Advocacy_Guide-Protection_of_Migrant_Rights_Human_Rights.pdf). Spanish language version: [http://www.lawg.org/storage/documents/LAWG\\_Guia\\_de\\_Incidencia-Proteccion\\_de\\_los\\_Derechos\\_de\\_los\\_Migrantes\\_y\\_los\\_Derechos\\_Humanos\\_Final.pdf](http://www.lawg.org/storage/documents/LAWG_Guia_de_Incidencia-Proteccion_de_los_Derechos_de_los_Migrantes_y_los_Derechos_Humanos_Final.pdf)



4) **Extreme Weather and Resilience of the Global Food System:** This synthesis report by Global Food Security (UK) examines the present state of the global food system and the real risks that extreme weather can create. There is credible evidence that extreme weather events, from intense storms to droughts and heatwaves, are increasing in frequency and severity at a considerable rate. How well prepared is the world for a full-scale food system meltdown? The 20-page PDF is available here: <http://www.foodsecurity.ac.uk/assets/pdfs/extreme-weather-resilience-of-global-food-system.pdf>

5) **Annual vigil to close the School of the Americas (WHINSEC): November 20-22** thousands will return to the gates of Ft. Benning, GA to take a stand for justice and accountability at the annual vigil organized by School of the Americas Watch (SOA Watch). Torture survivors, union workers, religious communities, musicians, puppetistas, students, migrants, veterans and others from across the country will speak out against violence and militarization. Those who attend will commemorate the martyrs, march to the Stewart Detention Center, teach and learn from each other in the Columbus Convention Center, and celebrate resistance at the gates of Ft. Benning, home to the notorious School of the Americas (SOA/WHINSEC) and a focal point of the people power resistance to empire and militarization. Learn more about participating in this year’s vigil at [www.soaw.org](http://www.soaw.org).