



# Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

# NewsNotes

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

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## The budget as a moral document

The U.S. national budget is heavily skewed in favor of the Pentagon, leaving our foreign policy toolkit bristling with weapons rather than more peaceful means of negotiation, reconciliation – even relief and development. The U.S. response to the horrific disaster in Haiti reflects this reality: Thanks to years of military dominance of federal budget priorities, the most readily – or perhaps only – available U.S. government “tools” for Haiti relief work were military tools, so the prompt U.S. mobilization following the earthquake on January 12 looked more like an invasion and occupation than the generous expression of global solidarity intended.

For FY2011, the Obama administration has requested a total of \$733 billion in defense spending, including \$159 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and \$11.2 billion for the National Nuclear Security Administration, including \$2 billion for the safety of the nuclear weapons stockpile. This funding would enable the agency to reach full production of the refurbished Navy W-76 Trident submarine warhead, to refurbish the B-61 bomb, and to study options for maintaining the W-78 warhead in the Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missile. The FY2011 budget request also provides for a new plutonium facility for the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico and a uranium manufacturing plant at Oak Ridge, TN.

President Obama’s April 2009 speech in Prague raised hopes worldwide that the new administration would play a leadership role in nuclear disarmament. But the administration’s recent FY2011 federal budget request raises crucial questions about U.S. priorities and the depth of U.S. commitment to nuclear disarmament.

In Prague, President Obama said, “Just as we stood for freedom in the 20th century, we must stand together for the right of people everywhere to live free from fear in the 21st century. And ... as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act.... So today, I state clearly and with conviction America’s commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.”

The U.S., he said, would reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy (while maintaining a “safe, secure and effective arsenal to deter any adversary”); negotiate a new

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with the Russians; reduce our warheads and stockpiles; immediately and aggressively pursue U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; seek a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials; strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; and promote a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation, including an international fuel bank, so that countries can access peaceful power without increasing the risks of proliferation.

The 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will meet in May in New York. The NPT contains the only **binding commitment** to nuclear disarmament in a multilateral treaty. By it, countries with nuclear weapons will move towards disarmament; countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them; and all countries can access peaceful nuclear energy. This critical conference meets against a backdrop of an evolving U.S. nuclear policy. (See related story on page 17.)

President Obama was clear: “I’m not naive,” he said. The goal of nuclear disarmament “will not be reached quickly ... But now we, too, must ignore the voices who tell us that the world cannot change. We have to insist, ‘Yes, we can.’” While the FY2011 funds requested would not be used to build new nuclear weapons, the money would expand the U.S. capacity to build new nuclear weapons in the future. “Yes, we can?”

The Obama administration has publicly committed to a multilateral and cooperative approach to international engagement, but U.S. national security, rather than real and inclusive global security, still dominates foreign policy considerations. And many of us are beginning to wonder if the “change” we seek, beginning with definitive nuclear disarmament, will ever come.

Enormous annual expenditures on war and preparations for war rob people locally and globally of genuine security and a dignified life. It is ironic that heated, artificial, often intentionally obfuscated debates about the cost of climate change legislation or health care reform or financial regulation or immigration reform prevent serious movement forward in response to these critical concerns, while massive amounts of money flow into a vast array of U.S. military programs without question.

## Sudan: Post-referendum challenges

*A recent U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) report on Sudan (Negotiating Sudan's Post-Referendum Arrangements) raises challenging questions about essential preparations for the critical period of time following the referendum scheduled for January 2011. "Sudan is less than one year away from a landmark event: the referendum on whether Southern Sudan will remain part of a united Sudan or secede. As many have acknowledged, including some leaders in the North, Southerners are likely to vote to secede, leading to the first new, internationally recognized state created in Africa since Eritrea. Managing this probable divorce thus takes center stage, but who will orchestrate this process? Who will mediate between Khartoum and Juba? How can the international community help, rather than hinder, the possible division of Africa's largest country into two?"*

The USIP report calls for encouragement and support from the international community for negotiations on post-referendum arrangements, including "issues ranging from wealth sharing to citizenship rights to security arrangements." USIP also recommends that a single mediator "with a clear and strong mandate" be identified and supported by a contact group or group of friends that can insert targeted pressures and incentives into the process.

In its January 2010 paper "Decisions and Deadlines: A Critical Year for Sudan," the British think tank [Chatham House](#) also focused on the post-referendum period, listing some of the essential agreements that will have to be negotiated, given different referendum outcomes:

- If Southern Sudan chooses unity in January 2011, its army needs to be integrated with that of the central government within 90 days – a daunting task, given that the two armies now confront each other along the length of the border.
- If it chooses secession, an independent state will be born as soon as the vote is announced. Assets, including oil revenues, water and national infrastructure, will have to be divided. Nationality will need to be defined. Any new currency will need to come into circulation at a price that is sensitive to the interests of many different economic groups.

But, the Chatham House report continues, these

issues are not being discussed, "as the two elites turn their backs on their constituencies and the wider regional history in order to engage in brinkmanship over procedural questions. This poses challenges for the many international actors who sponsored the CPA and who still have an important role in supporting Sudanese elites to bring it to a peaceful conclusion."

In fact, while the engagement of the U.S. and other international players is important, the fact that "so much of Sudan's future will be decided at the highest level may perpetuate the politics of exclusion into the post-referendum period. U.S. mediation may mean that Sudan is not seeking to redefine itself through engagement with its peoples or its neighbors, but is looking to the superpower to set out a solution."

According to the Chatham House report:

- Sudan's powerful elites need to reach agreement on a wide range of complex processes in the coming year. They also need to start an engagement with the country's diverse populations if they are to avoid perpetuating the politics of exclusion and conflict and help citizens participate in the big decisions facing the country.
- The CPA's international and regional supporters need to work together to support the final act of the CPA, paying attention to local as well as national and international dimensions of the peace process.
- Breakdowns in security in Darfur, Kordofan and most states of Southern Sudan undermine popular engagement in elections, referendums and other processes. Both parties must address the urgent need for local peace in the coming year, and the UN and other international actors should support them.
- International actors need to provide adequate support for elections, popular consultations and the referendums while recognizing that these processes will complicate politics in regions of Sudan that are not at peace.

### **Faith in action:**

Write to your members of Congress to express your concern for the future of Sudan. Urge U.S. vigilance and full support for peace.

## Zimbabwe: One year on, reform a failure

*According to a new report from Human Rights Watch (HRW), Zimbabwe's power-sharing government has made no real progress in implementing political reforms and ending human rights abuses after a year in office. The government has demonstrated little political will or capacity to enact meaningful changes to improve the lives of Zimbabweans.*

The Global Political Agreement, which took effect on February 11, 2009, was approved in September 2008 by the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). It was designed to resolve Zimbabwe's political and economic crisis and chart a new political direction for the country.

Recent research by HRW in Zimbabwe suggests that there has been no meaningful political transition, and that ZANU-PF continues to engage in political violence against perceived opponents. Groups of war veterans and ZANU-PF youth, who have been deployed in the past to target the opposition, remain intact. ZANU-PF still uses elements in the security forces as instruments of repression. Military-led violent invasions of commercial farms continue. In the first week of February 2010, police disrupted MDC-organized constitutional reform meetings, beat up participants, and arbitrarily arrested 43 people in Binga, 48 in Masvingo, and 52 in Mt. Darwin.

Although the Global Political Agreement recognized the importance of the rights to freedom of expression and communication, the media in Zimbabwe remain muzzled. There are no private daily newspapers or privately owned radio stations. Public information remains under the firm control of ZANU-PF. Not one license for independent media outlets has been issued since the power-sharing government was formed.

Journalists in Zimbabwe face intimidation and arrest for appearing to oppose ZANU-PF. On January 16, a freelance journalist, Stanley Kwenda, fled to South Africa, saying he had received death threats from a senior police officer. Two days later, another freelance journalist, Andrison Manyere, was arrested while filming a public demonstration organized by Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA). Police detained him for over six hours before releasing him without charge. ZANU-PF continues to use

its control of state-owned print and electronic media to manipulate public opinion in its favor while using hate speech and other offensive language against MDC. Without an open media environment, Zimbabweans will be unable to participate fully in the ongoing constitutional reform process or in future elections, HRW said.

In these and other areas, ZANU-PF has resisted complying with the rule of law. It even declared at its December 2009 party congress that it would not allow security forces to be subjected to reform. The security sector is deeply embedded in the political affairs of the country. Diamond revenue, particularly from the Marange diamond fields in eastern Zimbabwe, is providing a parallel source of revenue for ZANU-PF and its repressive machinery, HRW said. Companies with connections to ZANU-PF are mining diamonds in Marange, where military control and abuses continue.

HRW called on the government to allow newspapers and electronic media to operate freely and to carry out other confidence-building reforms. It should repeal all repressive legislation such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), which severely limits rights to demonstrate and criminalizes "insulting" the president of Zimbabwe and publishing "inaccurate" information. These provisions have been used to harass, arrest, and prosecute journalists.

Even on issues where there is consensus between ZANU-PF and MDC, such as the appointment of new provincial governors, implementation has been stalled, and the parties continue to bicker about the delay. To divert scrutiny of the continuing political instability and the failure to carry out the agreement, parties in the power-sharing government instead overemphasize the significance of efforts made to stabilize the economy, HRW said.

HRW called for parties to the government to begin preparations for holding internationally supervised free, fair, and credible elections that will lead to a legitimate and democratic government with the political will to bring about change. "The power-sharing government experiment is not working," said Georgette Gagnon, HRW's Africa director. "Without political stability and rights reforms, any progress on economic recovery won't last."

## Africa: Illicit small arms market thrives

*The challenge to control the flood of small arms and light weapons into and through Africa is an enormous one. In mid-February, the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) reported that a new cache of 30,000 bullets was seized by police in Narok, a town on the outskirts of Nairobi. The ammunition was found on the premises of a man already facing charges for a separate arms seizure. The following piece is based on articles on the IANSA website and the Afrik.com website.*

The bullets were manufactured by the government-owned Kenya Ordnance Factory Corporation, which produces ammunition for Kenyan security forces or government agencies. Police have traced the source of the bullets to a government armory in Nairobi. A local businessman, his wife and the administration police chief were charged with illegal possession of arms and are currently facing trial.

Camlus Omogo from IKV Pax Christi, an IANSA member in Nairobi, said, "This revelation brings to the fore questions as to how secure is the factory, including how the bullets are distributed to the armed forces. It seems there is weakness in the control of the production and distribution or there might be cases of corruption within the factory."

Over the past months, other allegations have surfaced about state ammunition finding its way into civilian hands. A study by the Small Arms Survey provides strong evidence of a systematic unofficial initiative to supply government ammunition to the Turkana pastoralists in northern Kenya. The police supply almost 50 percent of the ammunition that circulates illegally in Turkana, ostensibly to allow the pastoralists to defend against rival groups in Sudan and Uganda. This practice not only fuels the armed violence in Turkana but also makes ammunition available for use in crimes ranging from roadside banditry to targeted assassinations.

The Turkana North District lies in one of the most conflict-prone regions of East Africa and the Horn of Africa. The use of guns is connected to cattle rustling, roadside ambushes, crime and commercial vendettas. The competition for land and natural resources, inter-ethnic rivalry, poor governance, criminal activity and a steady supply of guns and ammunition exacerbate local insecurity.

At almost the same time, the Russian news-

paper *Vremya Novostei* reported that a Ukrainian weapons company has been shipping arms to rebels fighting in Darfur.

According to the data that appeared in Kiev, the Ukrainian company Ukrspetsexport supplied artillery systems and small arms with the assistance of intermediaries through the territory of Eritrea. If true, this would be a violation of UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions 1556 and 1591, adopted in 2004 and 2005 respectively, which prohibited the sale or supply of arms and military equipment to all warring parties in Darfur.

The report claims that Ukrainian small arms and ammunition, including anti-personnel mines and antitank mines, were also delivered to the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) through a private company registered in an offshore zone.

Ukraine is a silent perpetrator of African conflict through its policy of arms proliferation. In 2008 Somali pirates hijacked a Ukrainian ship carrying 33 Soviet-era T-72 tanks and other weapons. Its seizure drew international attention.

In 2009, a Ukrainian plane, loaded with ammunition, allegedly heading for the militants in the Niger Delta, was detained in Nigeria.

According to Konye Obaji Ori, last year's report on small arms in the Kanwa Defense Review monthly magazine claimed that militaries in north and south Sudan were engaged in an arms race that risks plunging the nation back into civil war ahead of elections and the referendum.

The report also incriminated China and Iran, accusing them of being the main sources of weapons that were adding to turmoil in the country. According to the magazine, last year China sold Sudan an unknown number of WS-2 multi-launch rocket systems. This is the first time this system has been exported by China to any country.

### **Faith in action:**

In October 2009, Secretary of State Clinton said that the United States "is committed to actively pursuing a strong and robust treaty that contains the highest possible, legally-binding standards for the international transfer of conventional weapons." Write to Secretary of State Clinton, thank her and indicate your strong support for this commitment. Send a copy to your senators.

## Kenya: Landmark ruling on indigenous land rights

*The following is an excerpt from an article written by Maryknoll Fr. Frank Breen who spent many years working in East Africa. Read the entire article on our website in the Africa section. If you would like to read the entire piece and do not have access to the internet, send us a note requesting a copy.*

On February 4, the African Union (AU) ratified the ruling previously issued by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights condemning the expulsion of the Endorois people from their ancestral land in the Lake Bogoria area of Kenya's Rift Valley. In the 1970s the post-independence Kenyan government evicted the Endorois in order to convert their land into a national reserve and tourist destination. The Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) reported that Human Rights Watch (HRW), WITNESS, and the Endorois' lawyers consider the ruling and its ratification a major victory for indigenous peoples across Africa.

The Endorois are a traditional pastoralist community of 60,000 who have lived in the Lake Bogoria area for millennia. Prior to the colonial era they freely roamed with their cattle from the fertile grazing lands near the lake to the lush highlands 30 or more miles away. After expulsion from their homeland they were forced to graze cattle in a small, arid lowland area, where many cattle died. Richard Yegon, an Endorois elder, said constant grazing in this area means the "grass cannot rejuvenate quickly enough to allow for large herds, as in the old days." With few cattle they cannot survive according to their traditional culture.

The ruling found that their eviction, with minimal compensation, was a violation of the right to development and that it violated their rights as an indigenous people to property, health, culture, religion, and natural resources. The nearest hospital to where the Endorois now live is almost 40 miles away, with only one maternity clinic containing four beds providing medical service to the whole community. The Commission ordered Kenya to resettle the Endorois in their ancestral land and to compensate them. It is the first ruling to determine who indigenous peoples in Africa are and what their rights to land are.

"The Endorois decision, the first of its kind, can help many others across Africa who have been

forced from their homes," said Clive Baldwin, the senior legal adviser at HRW, who was co-counsel for the Endorois. He was employed by Minority Rights Group International, which brought the case on behalf of the Endorois along with the Centre for Minority Rights Development (CEMIRIDE). ...

The African Commission accepted Endorois' evidence that they have lived there since "time immemorial" and that the lake was the center of their religion and culture, with their ancestors buried nearby. The Endorois tried unsuccessfully to persuade the Kenyan government, local authorities, and the Kenyan Wildlife Service to reverse their policy of evicting everyone, including traditional inhabitants from areas the government designates for national parks and reserves. They were also rebuffed when they sought an adequate share of the tourism revenues generated by the reserve. After Kenyan courts refused to address their case, they brought their case to the African Commission in 2003. ...

CISA, which is based in Nairobi, Kenya, says that violations of land rights are one of the key unresolved issues in Kenya, which former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan acknowledged in the aftermath of Kenya's post-election violence in 2007-2008. The African Commission found that the Kenyan government has continued to rely on a colonial law that prevented certain communities from holding land outright, and allowed others, such as local authorities, to effectively own their traditional land on "trust" for these communities. The local authority in Lake Bogoria was able to end the Endorois trust at will and to seize the land.

In the last decade there have been several attempts at comprehensive land reform that would allow for final and fair determination of land ownership, and create a system to restore land to those unlawfully evicted, or to compensate them. None of these reforms has been completed. While the adoption by the government of a new land policy in August 2009, marks a significant step forward, it still needs to be translated into effective protection on the ground for Kenya's most marginalized.

"The ruling is good for every Kenyan," said Korir Singo'ei, who represented the Endorois while director of CEMIRIDE. "The law that treats some communities as children, unable to own their own land, is a colonial relic that needs to be changed."

## Bolivia: Climate change conference in April

*Concerned with the lack of results from the UN's global summit on climate change held in Copenhagen last December (see article on climate debt on page 20), Bolivian president Evo Morales has called for a "People's World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth's Rights" to take place in April. The conference aims to unite social movements with scientists, academics, lawyers and governments to "analyze the structural and systemic causes that drive climate change and to propose radical measures to ensure the well-being of all humanity in harmony with nature."*

Organizers hope that the conference can serve as a catalyst for a stronger global climate change movement capable not only of pushing governments to implement more ambitious actions to diminish, and adapt to climate change, but also able to build the structures and institutions at the grassroots level that are needed for a sustainable future. The conference will be organized around 16 working groups on themes related to climate change such as structural causes, adaptation, Mother Earth rights, climate debt, financing and technology transfer.

Participants will strategize on how to advance the concept of Mother Earth rights in international forums. In a proposal to the UN requesting the inclusion of these rights in future UN documents, Pablo Solón-Romero, Bolivia's ambassador to the UN, wrote, "Because we, human beings, didn't recognize that we form part of a major system with which we have to live in harmony and balance, we now suffer severe consequences. Mankind [sic] is only a part of a large community of beings... in order to live in harmony with nature we must recognize that not only human beings have rights, but also the planet, the animals, the plants, the rivers, the forests, the glaciers, and all the components of this system that is our Mother Earth.

"The 20th century has been the century of the human rights. First, with the approval of the civil and political rights in 1948, and second, with the approval of the economical, social and cultural rights in 1966. Now, the 21st century has to become the century of the Rights of Mother Earth and all

natural beings."

Another objective of the conference is to "develop an action plan to advance the establishment of a Climate Justice Tribunal." According to the conference's website, "the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change contains no mechanisms for trying or sanctioning developed countries that fail to comply with their commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions." The working group would explore the possibility of creating an International Climate Justice Tribunal at the United Nations.

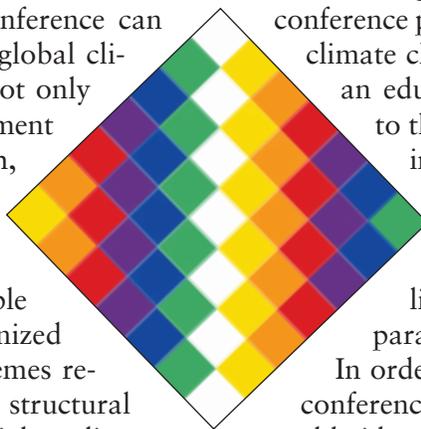
Finally, as a mechanism to help increase public understanding of the problem of climate change, the conference plans to initiate a global referendum on climate change. The referendum could serve as an educational and mobilizing tool, similar to the referendums on debt and trade held in Brazil in the early 2000s (see related article on page 16).

Those who are not able to participate in the conference in Bolivia can register to participate in preparatory discussions through the internet. In order to increase participation, during the conference, parallel events are being organized worldwide with video feeds of the plenary sessions.

The irony that Bolivia, a country heavily dependent on polluting extractive industries for its national income, is, on the international level, advocating for mammoth reductions in fossil fuel use has not been lost by some Bolivian activists who have complained about this apparent hypocrisy. Yet, acknowledging that no government is without internal contradictions, Bolivia is practically alone in calling for the more profound changes in lifestyles and wealth distribution that are needed for a sustainable future; issues that no other country is willing to discuss. Hopefully the conference in April will be able to bring these issues to the fore in the climate policy debates.

### **Faith in action:**

For further information and to register for the conference or preliminary working group discussions, go to <http://pwccc.wordpress.com>. Consider organizing a parallel event in your community to help spread the word.



## El Salvador: Mining conflict deepens

*The conflict over gold mining in Cabañas, El Salvador has become increasingly violent with the murder of three activists in the past few months. Pacific Rim, the Canadian corporation responsible for the mine, has denied any involvement in the killings or the well documented history of threats and violence against those who oppose the mine. The conflict portends to continue as residents near the mine will not accept poisoned water and loss of their livelihoods, while the tremendous financial difficulties facing Pacific Rim make the El Dorado mine essential for it to remain in business.*

In October 2006, Pacific Rim submitted its plan to mine for gold in the El Dorado site. Two years later, when the plan had still not been approved by the government, the company used its U.S. subsidiary Pacific Rim Nevada to sue El Salvador through the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), the first such lawsuit under the agreement.

The company had to use its subsidiary because Canada is not a signatory to CAFTA. The company claimed that it was entitled to approval because it filled out the paperwork completely and within the time frame established by Salvadoran law. The government responded that it was under no obligation to provide approval, pointing out that an application merely “triggers an administrative decision process that may result in the denial of the application at different stages.” The International Center for the Settlement of Investor Disputes (ICSID), an organ of the World Bank, could take up to three years to decide the case.

Meanwhile, opponents of the mine face threats and violence and have suffered the recent assassinations of three leaders, including Dora Alicia Sorto Recino, who was eight months pregnant at the time of her murder. In a full page newspaper ad, Pacific Rim denied any connection to the violence while complaining of a “defamation campaign” run by “radical non-governmental organizations that are designating resources and efforts against the invest-

ment of Pacific Rim in the country.”

An extensive article in the prominent *El Diario* newspaper blamed the violence on long-standing family feuds in the region. Several social organizations responded in a statement, explaining, “Crimes like this did not happen before the arrival of Pacific Rim, rather arose when this transnational corporation began a strategy of buying people off, dividing communities and promoting violent acts against community leaders, environmental activists and religious representatives who rejected their extractive projects.”

Pacific Rim’s current financial difficulties make

it unlikely that it will back down from the ICSID case. The company received a warning from the New York stock exchange that, because the company has stockholders’ equity of less than \$6 million “while sustaining losses from continuing operations and net losses in its five most recent fiscal years,” it



will be delisted from the exchange on May 11, 2011 unless its financial situation improves. Tom Shrake, president and CEO of Pacific Rim, blamed the company’s woes on El Salvador: “Our current Exchange non-compliance is yet another damage the company has suffered due to the failure of the government of El Salvador to follow Salvadoran law and international law.”

Perhaps Pacific Rim would benefit from a recent World Resources Institute [report](#), “Development without conflict: The business case for community consent,” which uses case studies to show that companies that guarantee the free, prior and informed consent of communities affected by their development projects ultimately save money. Clearly, continuing with the El Dorado mine without the consent of the local people will result in further conflicts. Those negatively affected by the mine will continue in their struggle to stop the operation because, as signs in a recent march of over 2,000 people protesting the mine stated, “We can live without gold, but we can’t live without water.”

## Honduras: "Truth commission" challenged

*The Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accord, signed last October between exiled president Manuel Zelaya and the coup regime, called for the creation of a truth commission to investigate the events around the June 28 coup; the commission was scheduled to begin its work on Feb. 25. Members of the truth commission include persons appointed by Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo, who won the presidency in a widely criticized election in November. In protest of the ongoing machinations and as a sign of solidarity with the Honduran people, 57 civil society organizations in the U.S. recently published an open letter, "You are not alone!" in Honduras' most popular newspaper, El Tiempo. Following is the text of that letter. The list of signatories is available on our website.*

The undersigned organizations working in the U.S. declare to the international community and to the Honduran people the following:

- The coup d'etat of June 28, 2009 was unconstitutional and illegal; the human rights violations that it generated, including mass detentions, beatings, imprisonment, rapes, kidnappings, and murders constitute crimes against humanity. Nearly every article of the American Convention on Human Rights has been violated, beginning with the rupture of constitutional order and continuing with the thousands of rights violations
- These crimes and the crime of the coup itself have not been investigated and the perpetrators have not been brought to justice.
- The elections of November 29 were organized by an illegitimate coup regime, using violent repression against public protest and civic dissent, making free and fair elections impossible. These elections were not recognized by most of the Honduran people and by most of the international community.
- Since the illegitimate elections of November 29, and, since the inauguration of the de facto government of Pepe Lobo, the human rights violations continue unabated, involving the military, national police, and increasingly, paramili-



Deposed President Manuel Zelaya

tary death squad forces, targeting anew trade unionists, journalists, indigenous, Garifuna and campesino communities, and other members of the civil resistance to the coup.

In just the first two weeks of February there have been at least six documented murders, kidnappings or other extra-judicial repression against resistance members:

- February 15: Assassination of Julio Funes Benitez, a member of the water and sewage workers union SITRASANAA.
- February 12 and 14: Armed attacks by army, police and paramilitaries on Movimiento Unificado de Campesinos de Aguan-MUCA.
- February 12: Beating and threats by paramilitaries against Hermes Reyes, a cultural worker with the Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice (MADJ)
- February 12: Raid on home and destruction of personal property of Porfirio Ponce, vice president of the union STYBIS and leader of the National Resistance Front.
- February 9: Kidnapping, beating for three days of Edgar Martinez, Carol Rivera, Melissa Rivera and Johan Martinez, all active in the resistance movement. The two women were raped.

Therefore, the installation today, February 25, 2010 of the so-called Truth Commission, organized by the criminals themselves, is a travesty of justice. There can be no "truth" and no "reconciliation" without the end of impunity and the restoration of the Honduran people's democratic sovereignty

As organizations in the United States of America we pledge:

- To continue working in solidarity with the Honduran people.
- To publicly and actively oppose the continuing U.S. government policy and actions, both overt or covert, that support as legitimate the de facto government, that continue to give aid or training to the Honduran military, police forces, or paramilitary forces and that are in contradiction with the rights and needs of the Honduran people.

We also pledge to advocate for justice for the Honduran people in the international courts and international organizations charged with defense of human rights.

No truth is possible while impunity reigns!

## Haiti: Earthquake's aftermath

In response to the disastrous earthquake that struck his native country on January 12, Haiti-born Maryknoller Fr. Romane St. Vil travelled to Haiti Feb. 15-23 along with Maryknoll Fr. Dennis Moorman and a delegation of doctors, nurses and therapists. Fr. St. Vil wrote, "... the Haitians are a resilient people. They never give up. Just as they had decided to fight slavery with every bit of their beings, they continue to be resolute in fighting poverty and hopelessness. With tooth and nail, they are determined to rebuild their country..."

"Maryknoll missionaries stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Haiti. We will work with the Haitian community in the Diaspora and all people of good will to offer a helping hand to our brothers and sisters in Haiti. We will bring the love and compassion of God and the hope of the resurrection in a very concrete way to their lives."

In response to the earthquake, Maryknoll Affiliate Renate Schneider co-founded *Kay Pou Fanm Ayisyen* as a project of the NGO Haitian Connection. Working with Asosyasyon Peyizan Fondwa (APF) and the Trou Kofi Women's Organization of Fondwa, *Kay Pou Fanm Ayisyen* will help build inexpensive homes for women, especially single parents and heads of households, in Fondwa and Jeremie. Fondwa, a rural community about an hour's drive from Port au Prince, suffered 90 percent devastation of its schools, homes, and infrastructure.

Claudette Werleigh, secretary general of Pax Christi International, is a Haitian who has served her country in many capacities and at different levels, including as Haiti's Minister of Social Affairs, Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister. In a letter to President Obama, she wrote: "Allow me, first, to thank you Mr. President, also the First Lady and the American people, for providing us with much needed help at such a crucial moment. It is a fact that without external assistance, we are in no position to handle the magnitude of problems that we are now facing."

In addition to the need to demilitarize aid delivery, Claudette went on to emphasize the importance of "inclusion and participation of the Haitian people in every step toward recovery," with particular concern for "those traditionally excluded (the victims and the poor)" and for "women because they are the backbone of our economy and also because they have traditionally been in charge of the family

needs: nutrition, health, education, care of the sick, the infants and the elderly."

As the initial rescue operation ends, the next steps toward reconstruction are crucial; present an opportunity to end once and for all the centuries of injustice and racism suffered by the people of Haiti; and make possible the building of right relationships between Haiti and the rest of the world.

To that end, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is advocating:

- for the immediate demilitarization of aid. Much effort and good will in response to the great suffering of the Haitian people has been accompanied by an unnecessary display of weapons. Despite Haiti's insecurity, its critical issues of hunger, thirst and survival must be relieved by tools other than military ones.
- that the U.S. follow the lead of the Haitian government, civil society, religious organizations and businesses. Do not supplant, but strengthen the Haitian government's capacity to respond well to this extremely difficult situation.
- for cooperation with other countries and organizations with deep experience in Haiti, including Cuba and Venezuela. Use this tragedy as an opportunity to work toward the common good in Haiti and greater understanding in the world, not for political gain.
- that donors reach out to and empower women and marginalized communities and create good jobs for Haitians;
- that all donors provide help for Haiti through grants not loans, cancel all of Haiti's external debt, provide financial support without controlling Haiti's future; and support community-led and sustainable development projects; and
- for just and sustained international support for recovery that is without ulterior motives; deeply respectful of Haiti's rich culture; and genuinely beneficial for the long term and sustainable improvement in quality of life for all Haitians, especially the most vulnerable and excluded.

### **Faith in action:**

Write to your Congressional representative and senators in support of generous aid to Haiti; advocate for the points mentioned above.

## China: Size of Catholic population varies

*The following article is reprinted from the U.S. Catholic China Bureau's Fall 2009 China Church Quarterly, found online at [www.usccb.net](http://www.usccb.net).*

The size of the Catholic population in China depends on whom you ask.

The Faith Institute for Cultural Studies in Shijiazhuang (Hebei), has released updated statistics on the Church in China. According to the Institute, there are nearly six million Catholics, 3,397 clergy, 5,451 women religious, 628 major seminarians, and 630 minor seminarians. The Catholic community on the mainland manages 381 charitable structures. These include 220 clinics, 11 hospitals, 81 homes for the elderly, 44 kindergartens, a higher-learning center, two vocational training institutes, 22 orphanages and centers for disabled children, three rehabilitation centers, 34 centers for social services. Some 80 religious sisters are working in 20 government structures for lepers.

While the statistics appear to ignore the unofficial Church community, the International Religions Freedom Report 2009 from the U.S. State Department, notes that the "Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association (CCPA) reports that 5.3 million people worship in its churches and it is estimated that there are an additional 12 million or more who worship in unregistered Catholic churches that do not affiliate with the CCPA. According to official sources, the government-sanctioned CCPA has more than 70 bishops, nearly 3,000 priests and religious sisters, 6,000 churches and meeting places, and 12 semi-

naries. There are thought to be approximately 40 bishops operating underground, some of whom are in prison or under house arrest. Of the 97 dioceses in the country, 40 reportedly did not have an acting bishop in 2007 and more than 30 bishops were over 80 years of age."

However, statistics compiled in 2008 by the [Holy Spirit Study Centre, Hong Kong](#) [which has close ties to Maryknoll] show a marked difference from the Chinese Institute's figures. It puts the number of Catholics at about 12 million, more than double what was quoted by the Shijiazhuang-based Institute.

UCA News reported on December 23 that Anthony Lam, Sui-ki senior researcher at the Holy Spirit Centre, said staff began collecting data from mainland dioceses in 1988 and there has always been a marked difference between the figures compiled from this information and the official figures from the mainland Church. Lam says that according to research done at his center, there are 80 Vatican-approved bishops, about half of whom are not recognized by the Chinese government. However, he added that there are fewer than 10 bishops in the government-approved Church community who do not have a papal mandate. The Holy Spirit Study Centre spent three months gathering information through emails, telephone calls, faxes and personal interviews. The center's survey lists more than 400 church-run organizations, including schools, research institutes, publishing houses, medical facilities, and homes for the aged and orphans.

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## Myanmar: Refugees still on the run

*The following article is a section from a larger piece originally published in February by the International News Service; the longer article is found on the MOGC website.*

A year ago, the world was shocked [when] boatloads of ethnic Rohingya refugees from Myanmar being pushed out to open sea off the Thailand coast to fend for themselves with little food or water.

The plight of the Muslim Rohingya boat people from Myanmar's northern Rakhine State galvanized

international attention, and highlighted a refugee crisis that seemingly has become part of the region's geopolitical make-up.

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Myanmar is the largest source of refugees in Southeast Asia; globally, it ranked 13th behind Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia at end-2008.

In what is described by the UN and specialists as one of the world's most intractable refugee situations, people have been fleeing Myanmar for more than a quarter of a century.

### **Ethnic conflicts**

Analysts say the root causes of Myanmar's refugee exodus lie in the ethnic and political conflicts since independence in 1948 from the British.

Myanmar, with an estimated population of 57.6 million, is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Southeast Asia.

About two-thirds of the population are ethnic Burmese, while the remainder are Shan, Karen, Rakhine, Chinese, Mon and Indian, as well as the Akha, Chin, Danu, Kachin, Kokang, Lahu, Naga, Palaung, Pao, Rohingya, Tavoyan and Wa peoples. There are about 135 ethnic sub-groups, according to the government.

The minorities live mostly in the hills and mountains bordering Bangladesh, China, India, Laos and Thailand, while the Burmese are found in the central alluvial plains and major towns and cities.

The military, which has ruled Myanmar since 1962, has sought a centralized, unitary state, while ethnic groups want a federal structure and greater independence and autonomy, as well as greater recognition of their cultures.

"The root problem is that the government does not recognize ethnic aspirations and appears to want total military victory. Nothing will improve if that's what they want to do," said Jack Dunford, executive director of the Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC), which provides food and shelter in nine refugee camps in Thailand, one of 18 NGOs working in the camps.

While several armed ethnic groups have signed ceasefire agreements with the government, there are long-running insurgencies in the country's border regions by groups such as the Karen National Union (KNU).

The insurgencies, the government's counter-insurgency strategies and growing militarization have seen civilian populations increasingly bearing the brunt of the conflict and fleeing.

Forced labor by the military, the forced relocation of villages, enforced disappearances, rape and other forms of sexual violence, torture, arbitrary detentions, and discrimination against ethnic minorities are all cited as concerns in Myanmar by the UN and international rights groups.

## **India: Christians march for peace**

*On February 13, a bomb exploded in the western Indian city of Pune, killing 15 people and wounding 56. A peace rally, attended by 3,000 people, was held on February 22. The following article was published by UCAN, the Union of Catholic Asia News.*

... Students and teachers joined the crowd which gathered at a church center in the city to pray for peace and for those who died. Later they marched to a bakery where the bomb blast occurred ....

Catholic Bishop Thomas Dabre and Protestant Bishop Vijay Sathe ... joined the prayers and the one kilometer march.

The procession saw Catholic priests and nuns carrying placards condemning terrorism and highlighting the promotion of peace, harmony and the protection of lives.

Suspected Islamic terrorists planted the bomb allegedly to force India and Pakistan to resolve issues over the disputed Indian Kashmir region, India's only Muslim majority territory.

Bishop Dabre told the marchers religion was

getting a bad name as such attacks have been carried out in the name of faith. True religion speaks of love and therefore should inspire all to protect lives, he stressed.

The prelate said terrorism "doesn't distinguish between the guilty and the innocent" because it has "no morality or ethical values." People of good will should come together and oppose terrorism, he said.

The peace marchers also lit candles and prayed in front of the destroyed German bakery, a shop often frequented by foreign tourists.

Joseph D'Souza, a teacher, said some 500 students from various faiths joined the rally.

Lalrin Sailo, a student, said she and friends also prayed for "a change of heart by terrorists." Just condemning terrorism was not enough, the 24-year-old college student said.

Joshua Ratnam, secretary of the Protestant diocese, said "it was a moving experience" that both Catholic and Protestant bishops joined in the prayers.

## Philippines: Death squads and democracy

*The following article was written by Fr. Shay Cullen of the PREDA Foundation and published in the January 2010 issue of World Mission magazine.*

Why would Philippine judges hamper a human rights investigation into a killing field where many human remains are found in Davao, victims allegedly of the infamous death squad? Why would the members of the Commission on Human Rights be charged themselves? Human Rights Watch says local authorities are obstructing the course of justice and investigation into almost a thousand assassinations in the past decade. How can this be in an Asian democracy?

Most people in northern democracies presume that there is a democratically elected government in the Philippines and that human rights will be generally respected and upheld. It also presumes that the rule of law prevails most of the time and that the democratically-elected government will respect the provision of treaties, conventions and protocols it has signed. In the Philippines that is not so.

Corruption is widespread and election fraud, cheating, vote-buying and intimidation are common, so democracy is far from real. The same powerful wealthy family dynasties continue to dominate the so-called election process and it's not so much rule by the people or for the people, but the rule of the elite for their own interests. In the Philippines, traditionally, an oligarchy of a few very powerful families rules the country and control the economy. They place their family members into government positions to advance their own economic interests

They thus control the Congress and other branches of government. Many are incompetent to govern and they form a military and police force that is built around their own relatives, friends and beneficiaries. Therefore, the forces are loyal to the patriarch or family head, not to the people. They are selected not on the basis of their professional merit and competence but on their loyalty to the head of the dynasty. Promotion in the ranks -- military or police -- depends on the power of their patron.

Thus, history of street protest shows police and military shooting dozens of protesters that challenge the ruling elite. The military will stand against the farmers and protect the interests of the powerful land owner. Human rights are cast aside in favor of

protecting the politicians and the ruling families.

The "democratic" Philippines is a myth and the enduring "death squad" and cover up is proof of that. The death squad existing in many cities is to create a culture of fear and control and suppress the people's protest of injustice and unendurable poverty.

Davao City and the surrounding province is rife with inequality and land exploitation, injustice and widespread poverty and a few vastly wealthy families control the land and the banana industry. The military and police protect their interests against impoverished peasants or militant social and human rights activists demanding land reform, just wages and health care.

Davao is the most prominent example of murdering death squads that kill even street children, although the situation is similar in other Philippine provinces. It arose, they say, in the 1970s and 1980s when a swell of protests by organized impoverished farmers and their supporters frightened the ruling families and they set up the assassination squad to eliminate them. The insurgents counter with their own assassination squads.

There was much killing and violence. The government-backed assassination squads triumphed and a permanent well-paid "assassination squad" was established.

Men dressed in black clothes, equipped with radios, guns and knives and riding motorcycles calmly ride up to suspects and shoot them dead. Until the present, the squad operates with impunity. National and international human rights organizations have continually called for an investigation and for the victims to be given justice. When Human Rights Commission Chair Leila De Lima did so this year, she was met with uncooperative justices, officials and citizens. The politicians and police commanders say that rival gangs are killing each other.

Politicians deny its existence but the discovery of many corpses makes that untenable. The authorities are desperate to prevent the truth from being revealed. The challenge and International pressure on the government to end the killings and disband the assassination squad is growing. If they do, the suffering poverty and injustice may again surface to challenge the "democratically" elected elite. Some strange democracy this is.

## Philippines: Address the “structure of sin”

The following piece on a recent pastoral letter from Filipino church leaders was published in the February 2010 issue of *World Mission magazine* as a sidebar to a longer piece entitled “A society living in sin?” The larger context of the letter was the country’s response to typhoon Ondoy, which slammed the Philippines in September 2009.

In a pastoral letter, released in November, Manila Archbishop Gaudencio B. Cardinal Rosales and his auxiliaries, Bishops Bernardino Cortez and Broderick Pabillo, call on the government [of the Philippines] to address the “structure of sin” that lies at the root of the housing problems of the poor in the metropolis. The “structure of sin,” they explain, involves land values that are far beyond the reach of the poor and many in the middle-class; low taxes on unused land; and the use of vast amount of land for shopping malls, upscale residential subdivisions and golf courses.

The letter reminds that, to start the rehabilitation and rebuilding that follow the destruction wrought by typhoon Ondoy [which hit in late September 2009], a deep restructuring of society is necessary, beginning with the government’s urban land policy. To this end, the three prelates call for the following actions:

- Undertake urban land reform so that the poor may have the possibility to have security of tenure in our cities where their livelihood is found.
- Issue a moratorium on demolition of the dwellings of the poor if there is no humane relocation for them as our present laws require. Humane relocation would include accessible places of work for them.
- Follow through on the processes to allot public lands to the poor in areas that have been given to them by presidential declarations. Let the public lands declared by the president be developed and effectively be made available to the poor.
- Enact legislation to raise taxes on properties that are idle, or to altogether expropriate them. The



Typhoon Ondoy, September 2009, brought the worst recorded rainfall to Metro Manila. Hundreds died; tens of thousands lost their homes.

right to private property should not be given priority but be for the common good.

- Implement swiftly the Clean Air Act and other environmental laws by disallowing heavy and highly pollutive industries within our cities which are densely residential and commercial. The zoning ordinances of the cities should be reviewed. Heavy industries, and not the poor, should be relocated outside of our cities. If this is done, more people will move out of our cities to work in these industries.
- In resettling the poor and rehabilitating our cities, priority should be given to the employment of people. Informal settlers have grown in number because of lack of employment possibilities in places outside the metropolis. The “squating” problem is not primarily a problem of housing; it is a problem of employment.

“Let us not blame the poor in the waterways for the flooding of our cities,” the letter states. “Let us look beyond: the unabated logging in Sierra Madre and Mt. Banahaw, mining ventures in our mountains, haphazard collection and unplanned disposal of our garbage, irresponsible city planning and development of subdivisions, just to name a few. Together, let us take a hard look at our present practices and have the political will to reform them. In truth, we can say that the government officials and the rich have more to do with the destruction of our environment that aggravated the recent flood, than the poor!”

The cardinal and the bishops said that the spirit of *bayanihan* (voluntary sharing of labor) and *damay-an* (sharing of self) that was remarkably shown by the people in the aftermath of the devastating typhoons points to the people’s capability to work together up to the point of sacrifice. The many cries for reform, they said, should be heeded but only deeper reforms can address and improve the situation in the cities. “Only when the needs of the least in our society are addressed will our society achieve true and lasting development,” they underlined.

## Referendum on corporate personhood

*Those concerned about the Supreme Court's recent decision to allow unlimited spending by corporations and unions to influence elections could learn from churches and social movements in Brazil, which have used grassroots plebiscites, or referenda, to educate and mobilize around similar issues. While many in the U.S. may not be aware of the problem of corporate personhood (see our 2009 NewsNotes series), a plebiscite could reach large numbers of people and form the beginnings of a bigger movement to return corporations to their proper place in society. The referendum could also integrate the various groups that have sprung up since the Court's January 21 vote (Don't Get Rolled, Move to Amend, Free Speech for People, etc.) with other movements and churches.*

The Jubilee Brazil coalition was able to connect a large majority of social movements and churches to work together to lower that country's debt burden. An important organizing tool used to gain the adherence of so many groups and individuals was a grassroots plebiscite on the debt issue in 2000.

Debt payments and onerous demands from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) topped the political agenda in Brazil in the 1980s. But during the 1990s, media stopped reporting on the problem, despite the fact that nothing had changed in terms of the debt's effect on the Brazilian economy. In order to revive interest around the issue and to educate Brazilians on the real effects of the debt on their daily life, the Jubilee movement organized a campaign to hold the plebiscite in September 2000.

The campaign began by establishing three questions that focused on the key problem areas of Brazil's debt: external debt payments, internal debt payments, and Brazil's accord with the IMF. These questions helped focus the extensive educational campaign carried out by activists during the first eight months of the year. They spoke to church groups, schools, clubs and anywhere else where groups of people were interested in hearing about and discussing the problem of Brazil's public debt. As every organization in the coalition recognized how debt and trade directly affected their constituents, they dedicated resources and staff time toward the campaign, helping create educational resources, posters, media, going door to door in neighborhoods

and holding events around the theme.

Finally, for one week in September, volunteers put out homemade ballot boxes in front of churches and schools, at bus stops and farmer's markets, to allow people to vote on the three questions. Hoping for at least one million votes, organizers were surprised by the over six million votes that were collected. Over 96 percent of participants voted for Brazil to break its accord with the IMF and suspend debt payments until the realization of an official audit of the debt. In December 2005, Brazil paid off its debt to the IMF ahead of time and in 2009, the Brazilian Congress began an audit of the debt which will likely result in reduced debt payments that will free up public money for things like health and education spending.

In 2002, the Jubilee Brazil campaign organized another plebiscite, this time around the issue of international trade, specifically the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). In the beginning of that year, hardly anyone in Brazil was aware of the negotiations taking place to establish the FTAA. But after another extensive educational campaign around the questions in the plebiscite, over 10 million people voted in the grassroots effort, with over 95 percent saying that Brazil should pull out of the FTAA negotiations. While the vote was not officially recognized, it provided a clear sign that millions of Brazilians wanted nothing to do with the FTAA. The results bolstered president Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva at the 2003 trade summit in Miami, FL where Brazil put a hold on the negotiations and completely stopped them in 2005 in Mar de Plata, Argentina.

A recent *Washington Post/ABC News* poll showed that a vast majority of people in the U.S. opposed removing limits on the amount of money that corporations and unions can use to influence elections. The poll reveals relatively little difference of opinion on the issue among Democrats (85 percent opposed to the ruling), Republicans (76 percent) and independents (81 percent).

This may be the only topic on which such a large majority of U.S. voters agree. A grassroots plebiscite could serve as an important tool to bring those people together, as well as to unite the various corporate-focused movements that have sprung up since the Supreme Court's decision.

## Update on nuclear weapons policy

*This spring holds opportunities for world leaders, especially President Obama, to take important steps toward nuclear disarmament. The following article was written by Tim O'Connell, a former Maryknoll lay missionary.*

At the Global Zero summit in Paris in February, Archbishop Edwin O'Brien of Baltimore said, "The path to zero [nuclear weapons] will be long and treacherous. But humanity must walk this path with both care and courage in order to build a future free of the nuclear threat."

By March 1, the Obama administration must complete a congressionally mandated Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which will detail the administration's nuclear strategy, doctrine, and policies. Disarmament supporters hope the NPR departs from Cold War thinking and embraces Obama's pledge to work for a world free of nuclear weapons. But many are concerned, especially in light of the president's budget for 2011. If approved by Congress, it would significantly increase funding for nuclear weapons.

Some observers believe such increases for "stockpile stewardship" are essential to securing the 67 votes Obama needs in the Senate to ratify a follow-on agreement to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Others believe it demonstrates that nuclear weapons will remain an indispensable component of U.S. national security strategy.

Meanwhile, the U.S. and Russia have agreed in principle to a new agreement to replace START, which expired in December. The timeline has slipped but the commitment remains. A new agreement could lower warhead limits from 2,200 under START and the Strategic Offensive Reduction Treaty to 1,600. Concluding an agreement ahead of the Review Conference (REVCON) for the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in May would be welcomed.

The NPT prohibits non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS) from developing nuclear weapons and commits the declared nuclear weapons states (NWS) to eliminate their nuclear arsenals and share civilian nuclear technology with the NNWS. Every five years parties to the NPT review progress and discuss ways to strengthen the treaty.

Discussions will include progress or lack thereof towards disarmament by the NWS; what to do

about countries outside the Treaty such as Israel, India, and Pakistan; the Additional Protocol and strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency's monitoring and verification powers; non-compliance and withdrawal from the Treaty; and Iran's nuclear program.

The 2005 REVCON had trouble even agreeing to an agenda and produced nothing of note. Prospects are better this year following productive preparatory meetings last spring. Whether this will lead to substantive agreements in May is unclear.

Over a year ago the president pledged to "immediately and aggressively" pursue the Senate's ratification of the CTBT, which would prohibit nuclear tests, hindering countries from improving existing arsenals or developing warheads in the first place.

The Senate refused to ratify the CTBT in 1999, citing two main objections. First, there was limited capacity to detect cheating. Second, lawmakers worried about the reliability of the U.S. arsenal without periodic tests. Neither objection is valid today. Advances in monitoring technology have enhanced detection capabilities so that a militarily significant test anywhere in the world would be detected.

The reliability question has been answered as well. In 2002 the National Academy of Sciences concluded that the improved Stockpile Stewardship Program is capable of maintaining the safety and reliability of the arsenal without nuclear testing. In 2006, independent studies determined that warheads' nuclear cores should remain sound for several decades.

Convincing 67 senators to vote for the CTBT will be challenging but not impossible. In a speech on February 18, Vice President Biden reiterated the administration's commitment to pursuing ratification, prompting some observers to believe the administration will act soon.

Eliminating nuclear weapons isn't an idealistic dream; it is a pragmatic imperative. The coming months will show if words and vision will be translated into action and results along the path to zero.

### **Faith in action:**

All are invited to join the May 2 rally and march for nuclear disarmament, to be held in New York City. For more information go to <http://peaceandjusticenow.org/wordpress/>.

## Corporate accountability: Conflict minerals in DRC

*Over 60 faith-based institutional investors and other socially responsible investors have sent a letter to automotive, aerospace, medical device companies, as well as electronics companies and mining companies with operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), calling on them “to do their part to stop the continuing violence” in that country.*

Signatories to the letter include the Maryknoll Sisters, Adrian Dominican Sisters, Catholic Health East, Catholic Healthcare West, Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Tri-State Coalition for Responsible Investment, As You Sow Foundation, Boston Common Asset Management, Domini Social Investments, Pax World Funds, and the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR).

This conflict, which claims approximately 45,000 lives each month, is fuelled by various militias who reap their profits by controlling the DRC's vast natural resources. Since the conflict began, more than 5.4 million have lost their lives.

The investor letter states: “The DRC is one of the most mineral-rich countries in the world, with sizeable deposits of gold, tantalum, tin and tungsten. According to the United Nations, over 50 percent of the mines in eastern Congo are controlled by warring armed groups, who demand ‘taxes,’ bribes or other payments for the minerals being extracted out of the mines. The majority of the minerals are smuggled to neighboring countries where they are sold to smelters, and ultimately find their way into finished consumer products. This practice directly hinders repatriation and disarmament efforts, as it provides armed groups with a robust funding source.” According to a 2009 report by Global Witness, Rwanda is one of the main conduits for illicit minerals leaving the Congo.

“These DRC minerals enter a complex supply chain and subsequently make their way into products such as cell phones, laptops, and video game systems, as well as components for automobiles, airplane engines, medical devices, and other products.” The investors are “initiating dialogue with companies that use these minerals, seeking efforts to ensure they are not inadvertently supporting one of the world's longest-lasting and deadliest conflicts.

“Since 2001, some electronic companies have taken initial steps to address sourcing minerals from

the DRC, including verbal assurances from their suppliers not to purchase conflict minerals.”

One of these corporate initiatives is the Global E-Sustainability Initiative, a consortium of companies in the information and communications technology sector whose Supply Chain Initiative released a report in June 2008 on minerals extraction that concluded that electronics companies, as well as companies in other industries, could influence socioeconomic conditions relating to their purchased materials by developing a better source of tracking the minerals that enter their supply chains.

Such an effort has been undertaken by RESOLVE, a nonprofit whose Supply Chain Mapping Project is investigating the supply chains for tin, tantalum, and cobalt, in order to assess suppliers' codes of conduct addressing social, environmental, health, and labor issues.

However, the investors state, “[w]e believe additional individual company action is urgently needed to achieve concrete change in the DRC.” They call for companies to take the following actions:

- Make a public statement condemning the use of mineral revenue that fuels the ongoing conflict in the DRC and explain the steps the company is taking to address the issue;
- Develop policies and procedures to identify where the raw materials in their products originate and ensure conflict minerals are not entering into their supply chain;
- Work with suppliers throughout their entire supply chain to ensure internal policies on sourcing conflict minerals are being adhered to;
- Work with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), industry associations, investors and other stakeholders to support various diplomatic, political and economic strategies that will help end the root causes of the ongoing conflict.

The letter concludes: “There is a moral imperative for both investors and companies alike to ensure they are not inadvertently complicit in the systemic rape, torture and killing of innocent civilians in the Congo. The disclosure of sourcing policies and practices by companies throughout their entire supply chains is essential to allow investors to evaluate the social, environmental and moral impacts associated with a company and to inform investors' decision-making practices.”

## Thinking on the species level

*On February 9, a column appeared in the New York Times regarding the newspaper's most e-mailed articles. According to researchers from the University of Pennsylvania, the most frequently e-mailed articles are intellectually challenging and involve opening and broadening the mind. While this study applies to e-mailed articles, it may bear some relevance to what participants look for and remember in attending conferences regarding the issues of contemporary concern. Following are some invitations to broad thinking found in recent conferences.*

In January, a conference on Building an Ethical Economy was held at Trinity Church, Wall Street, in New York City. Speakers included Dr. Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, a true renaissance man, able to speak with knowledge and grace on a broad range of subjects. Nevertheless, it was a lesser known person who raised the most difficult and memorable questions. Dr. Daisy Machado, born in Cuba, and currently professor of church history at Union Theological Seminary, New York, was a panelist for the topic of Christian Values and the Market Place. She stated that the manner in which a good is exchanged gives a flavor to the good. To clarify, she gave an example on the individual level; she cited the case of a person giving blood. If one is paid for giving blood something happens. One feels diminished sensing that blood is not a commodity for market exchange. Machado went on to speak of questions that arise from large-scale economics and particularly the "impersonality of markets" as they are currently experienced. "How is it," she asked, "that goods made cheaply in Mexico are allowed across the border into the U.S., but the people who make the goods are barred from entering?" Finally, Machado asked the stinging question, "Are Christian churches complicit in bringing about the economic crisis by preaching a Gospel of Prosperity?"



Another speaker, Dr. Partha DasGupta, originally of Bangladesh and currently professor of economics at Cambridge University, raised questions regarding the general form of economic accounting which is detached from resource accounting. Prior

to the contemporary period, natural resources were understood to be a fixed economic factor; and, therefore, not taken into consideration when determining profits and losses. Now, it is understood that natural resources must be accounted for and care taken not to deplete them leading to impoverishment for future generations of people. This requires a total reorganization of the accepted means of economic measurement; Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will have to be replaced with a comprehensive indicator that includes resource extraction, and human well-being rooted in an intergenerational sense of responsibility for the preservation of the planet. Lastly, he movingly addressed the loss of trust in the market place resulting in chaos and failure. According to him, truth must be the foundation of an ethical economic system. If there is truth, one can trust the word of the other and negotiations can proceed with fairness. A profound aspect of the mission of the churches before the present economic turmoil is insistence on truth: personal and institutional.

In February, a forum was held in Rome for Catholic Inspired Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) at the United Nations. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Stefano Zamagni, professor of economics of the University of Bologna, Italy. The topic addressed by Professor Zamagni was "global authority." To illustrate the need for global authority, Zamagni addressed the change in the relationship in the economic and political realms rendering democracy meaningless before the wealth and power of banks, investment houses and corporations. He referred to the 2007 case of massive hunger caused by the 40 percent price hike in the cost of rice over a two month period, at a time of abundance of rice. This situation was created by speculation on the New York Stock Exchange that placed derivatives over food commodities. Governments were powerless before this human calamity. Zamagni asked, "How can speculation on what is necessary for life be allowed?" He calls for the creation of a global authority, with a moral foundation rooted in the protection of human rights. According to him, the United Nations has the capacity to develop the global authority that corresponds with this vision.

Surely, if we are to go forward as a species, we need to seriously rethink the dimensions of how we want to develop and who we want leading the way.

## Climate debt, principles for adaptation finance

*Although no definitive climate agreement came out of Copenhagen, the U.S. did announce a proposal to provide adaptation funding for affected countries. Before the plans are rolled out, it is important to outline the kinds of principles that should shape adaptation funding in such a way that the U.S. takes responsibility for its climate debt while providing adequate assistance to vulnerable communities to respond to current and future climate risks.*

Maryknoll missionaries report that climate change has already had a severe impact on people who have contributed least to carbon emissions. Future effects of climate change threaten to push even more people into poverty. With the increase of extreme and intense weather events, such as storms, floods and droughts, already fragile sources of income are further eroded by climate change. While women and children are the most seriously impacted, the entire balance of life on Earth is at stake.

Industrialized countries, home to about one fifth the world's people, have grown wealthy while emitting almost three quarters of all historic greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, which is shared with all life on Earth. The use of resources and atmospheric space by northern countries (with the U.S. leading the trend) contributes disproportionately to a global ecological foot print that exceeds the Earth's capacity to regenerate by about 30 percent. If everyone on the planet lived the way that people in the U.S. lived we would require three to five planets to sustain us.

But, as we know, most people in the global south do not live even close to a U.S. lifestyle. People in less industrialized countries are living through the consequences of the amount of resources consumed and waste generated by industrialized countries like the United States. This is why the U.S. leads the long list of northern countries that have a global responsibility for freeing up environmental space and for helping to curb the adverse effects of their historical and continuing high per-person emissions on communities and countries living in poverty.

This is what is known as climate debt: a debt that industrialized countries owe to less industrialized countries. Reparation of that debt means assisting countries both through technology transfer and through funding to put in place adaptation schemes that include risk-reduction activities, sustainable

land-use planning, local risk assessments, effective early warning systems, protection of environmental resources and ecosystems, and raising public awareness of climate risk. Since people living in poverty are the most vulnerable adaptation funding should also be directed towards immediate poverty alleviation in areas most negatively affected by climate.

Principles for an adaptation funding framework being discussed by NGOs and faith communities include:

- Substantial, obligatory and automatic funding from diverse sources to generate the volume of funding needed, established on the UN principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” and respective capabilities
- Representative governance that is democratic, transparent, and accountable to all, with civil society represented in all governance structures
- Participatory planning that ensures the full participation of climate impacted peoples in developing actions and policies for adaptation and the shift to low-carbon economies
- Capacity building for the development, application, transfer and dispersal of sustainable and equitable technologies, practices and processes and development of local expertise
- Direct access for the most vulnerable so that social movements, NGOs and community-based groups and especially women have direct access to funds (in addition to government agencies)
- Protecting rights of all people, particularly recognizing and respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities, to determine their own development path, decision-making processes, and activities related to climate change
- Robust monitoring and evaluation by community stakeholders and relevant experts to ensure the effective use of funding and to track program performance

Climate disasters undo decades of development and reverse gains in poverty reduction. As the Millennium Development Goals languish in spite of pledges of funding, there is concern that industrialized countries will renege on commitments on development aid as well as on adaptation assistance under existing agreements. Pressure must be put on northern governments, and the U.S. in particular, to live up to their responsibility around climate debt.

## PEPFAR and Global Health Initiative

*Following is an excerpt from a letter sent by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns to the House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations as the appropriations debate began in Congress. It was prepared with the help of MOGC intern Stephen Dewitt, OFM.*

In 2008 the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS reported that the global AIDS epidemic had finally shown signs of stabilization. The number of new HIV infections declined from three million in 2001 to 2.7 million in 2007. Furthermore, the overall number of people living with HIV/AIDS has steadily increased due primarily to wider access to anti-retroviral treatments (ARV) and better prevention and education programs. Together, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) have provided the majority of funding for treatment and prevention programs.

Yet, more than half the people who need life-saving drugs are still not able to get them. According to Doctors without Borders, that includes an estimated six million people. For them, it is critically important to build on initial successes through increased funding.

Catholic AIDS Action in Windhoek, Namibia, led by Maryknoll Fr. Rick Bauer, reports that the organization's 2010 funding from PEPFAR has been flat-lined and then reduced significantly after PEPFAR had already agreed to a certain funding level. This has forced Catholic AIDS Action to limit plans for a community tuberculosis screening program, as well as to let go a staff food and nutrition expert. How the Obama administration's new Global Health Initiative (GHI) is designed and implemented should reflect the experience of community-based

programs like that of Fr. Bauer.

If funded by Congress, the GHI hopes to help partner countries strengthen their health care systems, with a particular focus on improving the health of women, newborns and children through programs addressing infectious diseases, nutrition, maternal and child health, and safe water. The GHI will encourage country ownership and support country-led plans, investing in "sustainable health delivery systems for the future." Maryknoll agrees that countries need to take the responsibility for health care programs, including those serving folks with HIV, but believes that it will be a very long, slow process. Meanwhile, excellent existing programs should continue to receive necessary support.

The administration's request for FY2011 reflects an increase in funding for global health, but no increase or a slight decrease in funding for AIDS relief. This is insufficient to sustain momentum in the fight against the global AIDS pandemic. It is also significantly less than was promised by the Lantos-Hyde Act of 2008, which authorized \$48 billion in total spending by 2013 on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria (39 billion for AIDS) and a maximum of \$2 billion a year for the Global Fund starting in FY2009.

We urge Congressional appropriators to meet the commitment of the Lantos-Hyde Act of 2008 and support a increase in FY2011 appropriations for AIDS relief through PEPFAR to \$7.25 billion and for the Global Fund to \$2 billion.

### **Faith in action:**

Contact your member of Congress and tell him/her to support the full funding of the Lantos-Hyde Act, and an increase in the FY2011 funding for PEPFAR and the Global Fund.

**54th Session of  
the Commission  
on the Status of  
Women**



This year, the UN's Commission on the Status of Women will mark the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which charted a new agenda for women's empowerment and equality. The conference and parallel NGO forum, held in September 1995, were the largest in UN history, attracting over 50,000 participants and observers. Go to [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/) to learn more.

## Catholic reflections on ecological responsibility

*In late February, Marie Dennis presented the following piece as part of a panel on faith-based perspectives on ecological policy.*

At its core, the ecological crisis is a moral challenge. It calls us to examine how we use and share the goods of the earth, what we pass on to future generations, and how we live in harmony with God's creation.

The pressing ethical questions at the heart of this great challenge have been increasingly well articulated in the Roman Catholic tradition. The U.S. Catholic Bishops' Conference, for example, wrote in 1991 a major document entitled "Renewing the Earth," and in 2001, "Global climate change: A plea for dialogue, prudence and the common good."

Pope Benedict XVI furthered this reflection as recently as in his address on the World Day of Peace (January 1) and in his address to the diplomatic corps on January 10.

As scientific discoveries unveiled the 13.7 billion year old and yet-unfolding universe story, a deep religious and ethical reflection by Catholic theologians and practitioners like Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, Thomas Berry, CP and Miriam Therese McGillis, OP has led many in our tradition to embrace a new sense of our own location as part of a larger earth community and cosmic reality with which our own future is inextricably linked – to develop a worldview that is ecological without being eco-centric. As we learn to care for creation, slowly we are realizing that God, through creation, cares for us.

The ethical implications of this insight are extremely important in an era of economic, social and ecological crisis, highlighting the need to design a way forward that ends the false dichotomy between human well-being and ecological integrity.

Key principles of Catholic social thought – now Catholic social and *ecological* thought – describe well our developing perspective. As a Catholic community we hold

- a God-centered and sacramental view of the universe; We affirm the goodness of the natural world. Our sacramental life depends on earthy elements: water, oil, bread, and wine – and the mystical dimensions of our tradition find God dwelling in created things, laboring and loving through them;

- a consistent respect for human life, which extends to respect for all creation; to cultivate peace we must protect creation;
- a worldview affirming the ethical significance of global interdependence and the universal common good. Individual nations must measure their own self-interest against the greater common good and contribute equitably to global solutions;
- an ethics of global and intergenerational solidarity, promoting cooperation and just structures of sharing in the global community;
- an understanding of the universal purpose of created things. Private property carries a social mortgage, to use what we own to serve the common good;
- an option for people who are poor. Action to mitigate global climate change must be built upon a foundation of social and economic justice that does not put the poor at greater risk or place unfair burdens on poor nations.

We are concerned for authentic development, which respects human dignity and the limits of material growth. Pope John Paul II warned that humanity "consumes the resources of the earth, subjecting it without restraint ... as if it did not have its own requisites and God-given purposes." Our tradition calls for sustainable economic policies that reduce current stress on natural systems while including hundreds of millions of poor families who live at the edge of survival.

Our tradition emphasizes the principal of subsidiarity. We believe it is important for everyone to protect the integrity of creation "close to home," making lifestyle changes, especially in wealthy countries, to live with less focus on material gain and consumption; at the same time, we believe stronger and richer nations must have a sense of moral responsibility, so that a real international system can be established to address these great challenges based on the equality of all peoples.

"These are matters of powerful urgency and major consequence," said the U.S. Catholic bishops. "They constitute an exceptional call to conversion. As individuals, as institutions, as a people, we need a change of heart to preserve and protect the planet for our children and for generations yet unborn."

## Resources

- 1) **Explore My Mission video contest:** Sponsored by the Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers, this contest invites young adults 18-35 years old to submit videos, three minutes or shorter in length, that display a passion for living the Gospel by helping others. Two grand prize winners will be awarded a two-week, short-term mission trip to Tanzania where they will work with the Maryknoll East Africa Mission Community in their service among impoverished people in rural and urban settings near Lake Victoria. Video entries may be uploaded to the official contest website, [www.ExploreMyMission.org](http://www.ExploreMyMission.org), **through April 9, 2010**. Contest winners will be notified by May 18. Winners will be in Tanzania for the first two weeks of July 2010. Complete instructions are available at the website.
- 2) ***The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*:** Published by Orbis and written by Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff, this book combines social, political, economic, ecological, emotional, and spiritual approaches of the current crises rooted in global capitalism, which has resulted in rising social inequality, exclusion, a collapse of democracy, deterioration of the environment, and growing poverty. It takes a different approach to sustainability, traditionally seen in terms of limits and restrictions, and offers a new conception of sustainability as liberation both in the personal sense of spiritual realization, and in the collective sense of people seeking their freedom from oppression. Such an approach is conceptualized in the ancient Chinese word *Tao* referring to both an individual spiritual path and the way the universe works. 448 pages, paperback. \$35. For more information contact Orbis Books at (914) 941-7636, ext. 2576 or 2477, [www.orbisbooks.com](http://www.orbisbooks.com).
- 3) ***And You Welcomed Me: Migration and Catholic Social Teaching*:** This new book, published by Woodstock Theological Center, describes the distinctive way in which Catholic social teaching looks at migrants. It analyzes migration from the legal, social science, and cultural perspectives, and gives special consideration to the lived experience of immigrants themselves and their host communities. The book identifies gaps and opportunities to improve government and non-governmental responses to migration on a local, national, and international level. *And You Welcomed Me* aims to reframe perspectives on migration by focusing on the human beings at the heart of this phenomenon. It analyzes trade, immigration, labor, national security, and integration policies in light of the core Catholic commitment to the common good, human dignity, authentic development, and solidarity. 192 pages, paperback. \$26.95. For more information contact Lexington Books, 301-459-3366, [www.lexingtonbooks.com](http://www.lexingtonbooks.com).
- 4) ***Trails of Hope and Terror: Testimonies of Immigration*:** This new book from Orbis Books, written by Miguel de la Torre, is intended to develop a conversation on immigration that is constructive rather than filled with fear and hate. De la Torre analyzes several issues associated with immigration in the U.S. -- borders, economics, myths, family values, and others -- and then includes stories or testimonies by undocumented migrants and those who work with them. Each chapter concludes with a poem or prayer. The combination of analysis, story and artistic expression opens up the complexities of immigration for students and all Christians. 211 pages, paperback, \$20. For more information, contact Orbis Books at (914) 941-7636, ext. 2576 or 2477, [www.orbisbooks.com](http://www.orbisbooks.com).
- 5) **Education for Justice (EfJ):** This invaluable website, a project of the Center of Concern, was created to help teachers, social action directors, parish members, campus ministers, and others in leadership roles to meet the challenge of sharing Catholic social teaching and bring greater awareness to social justice issues. Through all of the materials available on the web site, EfJ seeks not only to introduce Catholic social teaching to a wider audience but to help deepen the knowledge of this essential element of faith and to help develop solidarity with all those in the global community who are suffering and oppressed. Access available by subscription: [www.educationforjustice.org](http://www.educationforjustice.org).