



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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Women: Essential agents of sustainable peace

The booty remaining from the spoil that the troops had taken totaled 675,000 sheep, 72,000 oxen, 61,000 donkeys and 32,000 persons in all, women who had not known a man by sleeping with him. (Numbers 31:32)

Thirty years ago, on December 2, 1980, four U.S. women, Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and lay missionary Jean Donovan, were abducted by members of the Salvadoran National Guard, raped, and killed. Their brutal deaths sparked a nationwide movement in the United States in solidarity with the people of El Salvador, who were the primary victims of a repression that continued for another decade.

Violence against women and girls was an intrinsic element in that vicious war against the poor waged by officials of the Salvadoran government. In fact, rape and sexual violence were rampant in Latin America during the dictatorships and military governments, during the revolutions and counterrevolutions, although not all sides in these conflicts used rape as a weapon of war. In Peru, during the years of violence, rape was systematic, but perpetrated primarily by official forces. Since formal peace agreements were signed and dictatorships gave way to democracy, rape and sexual violence have continued as a weapon of choice in gang wars and drug wars and street level violence.

In Africa the experience of women is the same. The world was horrified three months ago when rebels from the Mai Mai militia and Rwandan Hutu FLDR raped hundreds – some say up to 300 – women in North Kivu province of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). (See related article on page 8.) On October 1 the UN issued a long-awaited report documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in the DRC between March 1993 and June 2003. High on the list were rape and sexual assault allegedly by all combatant forces.

During the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the mid-1990s, the sexual abuse of Muslim women by Bosnian Serb forces was systematic and widespread. Young girls and old women were kept in pens ringed with barbed wire, in animal stalls, in concrete cells. Some of their abuse was videotaped for the viewing of soldiers.*

The epidemic of sexual violence in conflict

zones is neither new nor confined to a particular corner of the world. The passage above from the book of Numbers makes that clear. In the last century alone Russian women, Chinese women, Vietnamese women, Korean women, Filipina women and so many more have suffered the agony of rape and sexual abuse in the midst of conflict.

Yet, according to Elisabeth Jean Wood, Yale professor of political science who has studied the use of rape as a weapon of war, its use is not inevitable. That, she asserts, “should strengthen the efforts of those government, military, and insurgent leaders, UN officials, and members of nongovernmental organizations who seek to end sexual violence and other violations of the laws of war, and to put the stigma of sexual violence on the perpetrators rather than the victims of sexual violence.”

This year marks the tenth anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 that addresses the unique experience of women in the context of war and the need to involve women at every level in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security. The companion resolutions to 1325, Security Council Resolutions 1820, 1888 and 1889, adopted in 2008 and 2009, make clear that “rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity or a “constitutive act with respect to genocide.” (CSR 1820)

Dee Akers, director of the Womens’ Peacemaking Program at the Institute for Peace and Justice at the University of San Diego, writes that women are key to reconstituting civility and community that allow human society to recover -- battle after battle, century after century, culture after culture. In order to achieve sustainable peace, women’s experiences in and after conflict must be recognized and, as is directed by Security Council Resolution 1325, women must be involved in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peacemaking, transitional justice, accountability and reconciliation processes.

Responding to the physical and psychological needs of women who have suffered sexual violations in the context of war is crucially important, but only when women and their perspective are at the heart of reshaping societies will the root causes of this violence finally be rooted out.

* Joyce Hollyday, *Clothed with the Sun*, Westminster John Knox Press, 1994.

South Africa: Protection of Information Bill

South Africa finds itself wrestling with some of the same questions that have plagued the United States for many years and increasingly since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Transparency and citizen participation are necessary hallmarks of democracy. Restrictions on public access to government-held information should be rare, carefully defined and clearly necessary for legitimate national security reasons. Outrage and intense debate followed the introduction in the South African Parliament of the Protection of Information Bill. The following article is based on the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference Parliamentary Liaison Office Briefing Paper 244 (September 2010) and on the submission of Bishops' Conference to the Parliamentary Ad-hoc Committee on the legislation. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns intern Rosine Bogoto contributed to this article.

In a constitutionally democratic and open society such as South Africa any attempt to curb the free flow of information should be treated as the exception, not the norm. Access to information is not only important for transparency and accountability but for the realization of all fundamental human rights. Because of this, the Protection of Information Bill has been a hot topic for discussion since it was introduced in Parliament in March this year.

The main area of concern is that the definitions of "national interest" and "information" in the bill are too wide and vague. Clause 11 of the bill states that the "national interest of the Republic includes but is not limited to all matters relating to the public good and all matters relating to the protection and preservation of all things owned or maintained for the public by the state." This does not make clear what is included and what is excluded. The same can be said of the definition of information.

Another problem is that the bill is not consistent with whistleblower legislation (the Protected Disclosures Act of 2000) or with the public interest overrides in the Promotion of Access to Information Act of 2000. The latter acts recognize that sensitive or "secret" information can be exposed if there is legitimate reason to believe that it benefits the public to do so, for instance where the intention is to expose corruption, human rights violations or environmental threats. This has the advantage of placing the onus on the government to justify why

certain information must be kept secret. In this bill, however, there is no "public interest override" as it is known, and the onus is on the public to prove why classified information should be made public. This is flawed, because in a democracy government holds information on behalf of the people, and the default position must be that it should be withheld only where it is demonstrably in the public interest to do so.

One of the positive aspects of this bill is that it has caused civil society to rally together for a common purpose. A coalition of over 180 organizations and 400 individuals have placed significant pressure on the government to back down. The main demands of the coalition include that the bill be substantially redrafted in an inclusive and transparent manner and that it reflect the ideals of the Constitution which emphasize the importance of access to information.

Particular concerns were identified in the submission of the Parliamentary Liaison Office to the Parliamentary Ad-hoc Committee. One is the bill's tendency to lean towards excessive secrecy. It is important to remember, they wrote, that excessive secrecy actually harms security, and that the flow of information is necessary to promote security, confidence and trust between the State and the citizenry. A piece of legislation such as the current one requires the legislature to strike a balance between the competing interests of openness and access to information on the one hand, and safeguarding the genuine national interest and security on the other.

Apart from the over-broad nature of this definition, the notion of national interest is also tied to certain contestable and ideologically-loaded values such as economic growth, free trade and a stable monetary system.

There is a grave danger that this over-broad definition will lead to state information being classified too readily, denying the public access to state information and thereby considerably reducing the space available for public participation.

Secrecy must be seen not as an ordinary, everyday means to protect the national interest, but as something extraordinary and unusual.

For further information, contact the Southern African Bishops' Conference Parliamentary Liaison Office: info@eplo.org.za and www.eplo.org.za.

Zimbabwe: Cancel the debt

Zimbabwe's external debt amounts to 163 percent of the country's gross domestic product. The IMF considers levels above 30 percent to be unsustainable for countries like Zimbabwe with weak policies and institutions. In 2009 Zimbabwe spent 48 percent of its revenues servicing debt, according to the IMF Debt Sustainability Analysis from July 2010. External debt is projected to grow to US\$7.6 billion by the end of 2010, while domestic debt will increase to US\$1 billion in the same period.

The Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) recently organized "Debtweek" on the theme "Responsible Lending and Borrowing to Guarantee Peoples' Social and Economic Rights." Debtweek took place in Zimbabwe's distinct context, marked by a decade of organized civil society's struggle against the challenges of a political, economic and social crisis of immense proportions now underscored by the country's growing indebtedness.

ZIMCODD notes a lack of transparency, accountability and inclusiveness in Zimbabwe's process of contracting and managing public debt, suggesting that internal mechanisms may have a significant impact on the debt crisis, both domestic and foreign. But the power structures and policies of the international financial institutions continue to exacerbate the problem as well. ZIMCODD calls for a democratic or rights-based framework for resolution of the current debt crisis. Their analysis and recommendations demonstrate well how far the debate about debt cancellation has come in the past 15 years. They wrote:

"To the creditors of Zimbabwe's external debt crisis: We call on creditors to take into account their own multilateral development commitments, such as the MDGs and international protocols that guarantee the social and economic rights of the people in dealing with the Zimbabwe debt. They must immediately introduce a moratorium on debt service to arrest the growth of interest payments and penalties on the debt which is unpayable because of the current state of the Zimbabwean economy. This should be followed by a Parliamentary audit of current debts. We also reiterate that debt relief programs such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC) are no substitute for total debt cancellation.

"To the Ministry of Finance: We welcome the

recent signing into law of the Public Finance Management Act Chapter 22:19, which enhances effective and responsible economic and financial management by the government on a broad range of issues. However, our analysis shows that the Act has very little advantage over its predecessor where loan contraction and debt management are concerned. We therefore recommend the introduction of amendments which strengthen this specific area to ensure transparency, accountability and inclusiveness.

"The proposed amendments must ensure that Parliament is guaranteed meaningful participation in the loan contraction and debt management process. ... Parliamentary power must ... be improved by ensuring that it approves loan guarantees before they are given. Loans and their terms and conditions must be publicized in the Gazette and national newspapers before the contract is signed. Projects that are funded by debt must be subjected to constitutionally guaranteed citizen input and prior financial, social, environmental and poverty reduction analysis. Loans for projects that violate economic, social and cultural rights must be barred. The functions of the newly created Debt Management Office (DMO) must also be explicitly captured in the Act.

"Ultimately, we urge the government of Zimbabwe to convene a conference with its creditors to discuss a realistic assessment of the country's debt sustainability under the prerogative of a fresh start for Zimbabwe's economy.

"To the Parliament of Zimbabwe: We encourage Parliament to establish a Public Debt Commission and conduct an Official Debt Audit. There is need for an audit of all Zimbabwe debt to inform the future debt strategy. This commission should utilize the doctrine of odious debt, and recommend the repudiation of any past loans which fall in this category. Any contracts and agreements that involve such debts and liabilities should therefore be amended or cancelled. Relevant, contextually appropriate changes to debt management policies will be informed by a debt audit. We also encourage Parliament to build its capacities in issues of public finance management so that it avoids rubber stamping loan proposals with carrying out due diligence, in preparation of its enhanced oversight role in this area."

For more information see ZIMCODD's website, www.zimcodd.org.zw.

Sudan: Peace progresses

In October 2010 the Government of South Sudan held an All-Southern Sudanese Political Parties Conference (ASSPPC) under the title “Southern Sudanese united for a free, fair, transparent and peaceful referendum” as South Sudan prepares for the January 9, 2011 referendum to decide its likely future status as an independent nation. The current president of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, has been effectively promoting peace dialogue and reconciliation to heal the wounds of past internal conflicts between former opposing militia groups in the South. The following article was written by Jennifer Schutzman, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

In the opening address of the meeting that brought together 23 political parties in the South, Pres. Kiir reminded the parties that “we are members of one family, Southern Sudanese irrespective of political affiliation, creed, ethnicity, or geographical location. Our destiny is one as a people and we must together work to achieve our common goals.”

The Government of South Sudan invited every organized party in the South, regardless of past alliance, even reaching out to Southern Sudanese who are currently involved with political parties in the North. Kiir stated that the meeting was “about the future of Southern Sudan, which is greater than the interest of each and every one of us as individuals and as political parties.”

He further confirmed that the conference was not to mesh the opposing parties into one stronger power but instead to “share difficulties and seek counsel from your friends in order to avoid unnecessary conflict ...” He insisted that the only way is to manage individual conflicts of interest through “dialogue and openness.”

A unique and inspiring emphasis was placed on reconciliation. Kiir stated, “In the spirit of reconciliation I appeal to all of us to forget the past ... let us seize this moment to take the collective responsibility to guarantee the future of our people ... let us forgive one another and pursue common goals and interest to better the livelihood of our people ... life is precious and sacred and it should not be sacrificed for the selfish aims of political leaders ... [I] appeal to the gallant armies of the Sudan and all able bodied persons to shun war and value [lives] of their children, women and the old in society.”

He issued an executive order granting all offi-

cers amnesty who rebelled against the current Government of South Sudan. Major Gen. Gabriel Tanginye, Lt. Gen. George Athor Deng and Col. Gatlak Gai were promised official pardons contingent on all three rebel leaders laying down their arms.

The final communiqué of the conference included the following agreements: 1. The parties affirmed their commitment to peace, reconciliation and adherence to the principles of democracy, rule of law, protection of human rights and respect of multiparty system. State-owned media and private media both in the north and south should give equal opportunities to proponents of unity and to those of secession; 2. The vote should be free, fair and transparent. Campaigning must be orderly and responsible and desist from provocative actions or utterances; 3. In the event that the decision is unity, the south should be prepared to participate in the constitutional review process that will follow, in order to safeguard the gains of the south in the new dispensation in the country. In the event that separation is the choice, the Southern Sudan government shall establish a National Constitutional Review Commission; it will convene an all party constitutional conference to adopt a constitutional system and an interim broad based transitional government; and 4. A leadership forum with the chairpersons or representatives of all Southern Sudan political parties should be formed, tasked with the follow-up and implementation of resolutions of this conference. The forum shall meet at least twice during the remaining period to the referendum.

Leaders of the non-dominant political parties were equally excited about the conference. Sule of the United Democratic Party confessed he “never thought he would one day be granted the honor to address an all southern political parties’ conference.” Akol of the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement for Democratic Change said, “If there are people who still doubt that I will work against the interest of the people of southern Sudan, they must know now that our differences have been resolved by this conference.” This proactive approach to conflict resolution brings communities in the Sudan hope.

After decades of war, the people of Southern Sudan are determined to achieve peace. They are enthusiastically working together through regular dialogue.

Uganda: Religious leaders advise U.S. foreign policy

Last May President Obama signed into law the Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009 (S.1067/HR 2478). The bill states that the United States will intervene to bring an end to the war caused by the conflict between the LRA and the Ugandan government that has caused horrific violence across the region for decades. The LRA conflict is spread over Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic. Currently, the administration is shaping the bill's implementation. The following article was written by Jennifer Schutzman, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

In September 2010 the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, in collaboration with the Africa Human Security Working Group, hosted bishops from the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) to discuss how this bill should be implemented. The ARLPI consists of Muslim, Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox leaders working collaboratively for peace and development by promoting dialogue and reconciliation in northern Uganda. The ARLPI met with the State Department, National Security Council, relevant House and Senate members, Department of Defense, and other non-governmental organizations in the D.C. area. In these meetings, they offered prescriptions to chart a way forward that prioritizes peaceful means and creatively explores nonviolent actions to resolving the conflict, based on their experiences on the ground.

From their decades of first-hand exposure to the LRA conflict, the ARLPI emphasizes that this bill must prioritize civilian protection, promote peaceful dialogue, address the root of the conflict to ensure lasting peace, and reintegration for all victims. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns has long advocated that sustainable peace arises from genuinely listening to the affected communities. The potential to neglect root factors of the conflict is great when the civil society is not included in plans for foreign



Archbishop John Baptist Odama of Uganda's Gulu archdiocese, one of the members of the ARLPI who traveled to Washington, D.C. in September 2010

intervention. If neglected, these overlooked variables could later give reason for a return to war.

A statement from the ARLPI visitors noted the two main points conveyed during their meetings in D.C.:

“A negotiated solution is the most likely option for reaching sustainable peace. The Juba Peace talks were both far less expensive and came far closer to success than all three military offensives against the LRA. The Juba Peace talks were crucial in bringing about the peace that Northern Uganda currently enjoys. Due to the complexity of the conflict, even if a military option were successful in apprehending the LRA leadership, the conflict would most likely continue. Additionally, most of those in the LRA ranks have been abducted from their homes and families. Therefore, any military solution is bound to result in the killing of abducted children. Peace talks are the most likely to address the root causes of the LRA conflict and to reach sustainable solutions.

“Civilian protection should be carefully considered. In the past, military operations have severely increased the numbers of displaced people and revenge attacks on the civilian population by the LRA. Any plan that is put in place needs to carefully consider the safety of the civilian population. Finally, military operations and reconstruction do not go hand in hand. It is our hope that if talks resume, reconstruction can begin immediately in LRA affected areas as it did in Northern Uganda during the Juba Peace talks.”

Since the visit to D.C. in September, the ARLPI has continued to advise the administration members with whom they met on how the U.S. bill should be implemented in their country. On September 25 an LRA leader sent out a press release asking for peace talks and referring to the religious leaders' work. Another press statement by the Justine Labeja Nyeko, who claims to be on the LRA Peace Team, once again asserts the LRA's will for peace talks. The ARLPI is currently awaiting confirmation that the leader Joseph Kony himself supports these press releases before moving forward.

DR Congo: Violence against women in war

According to UN estimates, between July 30 and August 4, 2010 over 300 men, women and children were sexually assaulted in 13 villages in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). AllAfrica.com reports that the attacks, “which took place mostly after dark in the Walikale region, were carried out ... by a ‘coalition’ of around 200 members of three armed groups – the Mai Mai Cheka, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), and elements close to Col. Emmanuel Nsengiyumva, an army deserter who has also in the past been involved with the rebel National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) group.”

Margot Wallström, UN special representative on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, on September 27, repeated a call for the prosecution of leaders of the rebel groups. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay acknowledged the failure of the Congolese army and the UN peacekeeping force operating in the DRC to prevent the attacks, and announced on September 24 that a panel of experts would hold hearings in the DRC in the coming weeks with survivors of sexual violence.

In late September, Justine Masika Bihamba, the 2009 Pax Christi International Peace Prize laureate and founder of the Synergy of Women for the Victims of Sexual Violence, a coalition in the DRC of 35 women’s organizations, visited Washington, D.C. and New York to address the root causes of sexual violence in conflict. She was accompanied by Donatella Rostagno from the European Network for Central Africa (EurAc), 50 European non-governmental organizations focusing on peace, democracy and development in the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda.

The Synergy of Women for the Victims of Sexual Violence in Conflict has supported women victims of violence by offering medical assistance, psychosocial support, support in the socio-economic reinsertion, legal assistance and the sensitization of the communities. The Synergy also educates women about international and national human rights legal standards to promote awareness of their own rights.

In their meetings with decision-makers and

others in Washington, D.C. and New York, Justine and Donatella described the context in the eastern part of the DRC and especially in the North Kivu as a very dark one. They said that the presence of foreign and Congolese rebel groups has a devastating impact on the population – that these groups are responsible for unrelenting attacks against the population, massacres, kidnapping and rape. Members of the Congolese army (FARDC) also commit these acts, representing an enormous threat for the population.

The Congolese army, into which have been integrated successive waves of rebel groups, is neither unified nor disciplined. Many armed groups (whether or not they have been integrated into the national army) only survive because they have taken possession of a mine and are reluctant to relinquish their trophy. Furthermore, the less well organized is the army, the greater the opportunities that exist for high ranking officers in the army to embezzle large sums of money.

Solutions thus far tried by the DRC government have been mainly military and have never had as a main objective the protection of the population. Military operations such as Umoja Wetu, Kimia I and II, Amani Leo and Rwenzori have all had devastating consequences, including many displaced people, rapes, killings and the pillaging of many villages.

Justine and Donatella noted in addition a disturbing lack of involvement of women in the peace process, mediation and negotiations, or refugee returns; the total impunity for acts of sexual violence committed by the armed militias and by high ranking members of the Congolese army; the complete failure to protect civilian populations during military operations; and the profitability of ongoing instability and insecurity in the Kivus for many major actors involved in the region, including multinationals, the governments of DRC and of Rwanda, the U.S. and EU member states.

They made several clear recommendations for an effective response to the horrific violence against women. First, they said, restore peace in the eastern DRC and in the whole region. Give attention to political developments in Kinshasa and in the other provinces as well as in eastern DRC. The DRC will remain fragile until the state is strengthened so that it has the power to reinforce constitutionalism and



Justine Masika Bihamba

good governance. Promote dialogue, based on mutual respect and partnership, between the international community and the government of the DRC toward genuine development and a resolution of the conflict. Help the government of the DRC to create a truly unified, effective and disciplined army which is the backbone of lasting security in eastern Congo. Put pressure on the government of Rwanda to open its democratic space and to allow for negotiations to find a political solution to the FDLR problem. Build a coherent, coordinated multilateral response to the

challenge of the DRC. In spite of the huge budget spent on the Congo peace process the results are still well below expectations. End impunity. Support the creation of an international tribunal based in the DRC with a system of mixed chambers where international and Congolese judges work side by side on cases of past violations of human rights, sharing expertise and diminishing the danger of corruption. The presence of the international tribunal in DRC would ensure that it would be close to the victims and less open to the corruption of evidence.

U.S.: Mountaintop removal mining

Mountaintop removal is one most destructive forms of mining. It is a radical procedure to excise coal in which entire mountains literally are blown up. The explosives destroy ecological balance, spreading coal ash and dust for miles, endangering natural habits and human communities. The following article was written by Nina Bosken, who is working for a year with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns through the Discipleship Year program.

The next time you turn on a light, consider that the electricity you use may be the result of mountaintop removal.

Before the top of the mountain can be blasted for coal, miners must clear it off, thereby destroying all ecosystems that existed in that space. According to Appalachian Voices, a nonprofit environmental group focused on the south and central Appalachian mountains, the organic waste from the clearing process is then burned or illegally dumped. Then explosives are used blow up the mountain and extract the coal underneath and are followed by machines that survey the land to pick up the coal. Excess coal ash is dumped into valleys. This practice has buried more than 2,000 miles of streams. Before the coal can be used, it must be washed and treated. This creates coal slurry, a combination of coal dust, water and clay.

What happens to the mountain? Several golf courses have been constructed on the flat land created after the destruction of the mountain. Coal supporters claim that the land is left in a better form for building developments. Others try to use the mined surfaces for planting.

According to Appalachian Voices, 293 mountains in Kentucky have been destroyed as a result

of mountaintop removal mining. West Virginia is a close second with 135 mountains. All together, 501 mountains have been mined as a result of mountaintop removal in the United States.

In late September, over 100 activists visited Washington, D.C. for "Appalachia Rising," a two-day event to lobby and demonstrate against the continued use of mountaintop removal coal mining. In addition to holding a public witness at the White House, Appalachia Rising participants met with members of Congress to urge them to co-sponsor the Appalachia Restoration Act, which would amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to include a definition of what fill material is. One of the harms from mountaintop removal is that the waste that gets dumped into waterways, which includes vegetation and coal waste. If the legislation is passed, the new banned fill material would be defined as any material that could dry up waterways or modify the elevation level of a waterway.

Faith in action:

Contact your senator and urge them to co-sponsor the S. 696, the Appalachia Restoration Act. If they already signed on, write them a thank you note.

For more information on mountain top removal go to the following websites:

- <http://www.plunderingappalachia.org>
- <http://appvoices.org/> (Appalachian Voices)
- <http://www.ilovemountains.org/>
- <http://mountainjustice.org/facts/steps.php>
- <http://www.appalachian-center.org/>
- <http://www.ccappal.org> (Catholic Committee of Appalachia)

Honduras: Members of Congress urge action

In October, 30 members of the U.S. Congress wrote to Secretary of State Clinton, reiterating their alarm about ongoing human rights abuses since the June 2009 coup d'état. The letter is reprinted here; see the letter with its signatures on the website of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns:

We are encouraged to see that the U.S. government has acknowledged the gravity of the political and human rights situation in Honduras. ... We believe U.S. assistance, particularly military and police aid, should be suspended until the government of Porfirio Lobo distances itself from individuals involved in the June 28, 2009 military coup d'état and adequately addresses the ongoing human and political rights violations.

We have received credible reports ... that abuses continue with near impunity. Members of the human rights community, journalists and activists continue to be attacked and intimidated. The Honduran Committee of the Families of the Detained and Disappeared (COFADEH), a highly esteemed human rights organization, reports assassinations, arbitrary arrests, beatings and death threats targeting political activists and the human rights workers who attempt to protect them. COFADEH described August as a "black" month for human rights and has documented a disturbing number of incidents that have taken place in recent weeks.

Since August 2010, at least six individuals identified with the opposition movement against the Lobo administration have been murdered, including several rural activists, a teacher union leader and a journalist. Several journalists known for their criticism of the coup d'état have been arbitrarily detained or suffered physical attacks.

An opposition radio station - Radio Uno of San Pedro Sula - was forced off the air and its transmission cables were cut; police fired tear gas and a water cannon at demonstrators outside the radio station. The Honduran authorities have failed to investigate and prosecute dozens of other murders and violent attacks against pro-democratic political activists since the [coup]. The victims and their families have been left vulnerable with no access to justice. There is serious concern that the rule of law is directly threatened by members of the Honduran police and armed forces.

[In September, union leader] Juana Bustillo was assassinated while riding in a car with the union's president Hector Escoto, who was hospitalized. Earlier [that month], four peasants were murdered in the Aguan region - home to a land conflict where landless peasants are attempting to secure plots to build homes. In the first incident, three people were killed, allegedly by private security guards of Miguel Facusse Barjom, one of Honduras' largest landowners. In the second incident, Francisco Miranda, a leader among landless peasants, was shot several times by unknown men ... The newspaper *La Tribuna*, owned by Facusse's nephew, reported that the killing was part of an internal dispute in the landless peasants' organization.

On many occasions, Honduran authorities have summarily dismissed the attacks against political activists, human rights defenders and journalists as a symptom of criminality linked to drug trafficking and organized crime. Crime is a problem; however, since the coup, there has been a distinct pattern of political violence that merits a strong U.S. response.

[We expect] that the Obama administration will advance justice by urging the Lobo administration to ... investigate and prosecute threats and attacks against activists and journalists, and to suspend any members of the police or military credibly alleged to be involved in such crimes while investigations take place. In addition, the State Department should urge the Lobo administration to recognize the ... political character of many of the attacks against activists and journalists. A strong democracy provides security to those who participate peacefully in political process. Lack of security demonstrates deficiencies in Honduran democracy. ... Until the government of Honduras makes sustained progress in improving its deplorable human rights record, we believe it is inappropriate to provide direct assistance to Honduran authorities, particularly to the police or military.

We also urge the Obama administration to refrain from supporting the immediate reentry of Honduras in the Organization of American States. The Obama administration does a great disservice to democracy and human rights across the Western Hemisphere by making an exception for Honduras, while the Lobo administration continues to include perpetrators of the June 28, 2009 coup d'état and fails to prosecute politically motivated crimes.

U.S.-Mexico border: Migrants face grave dangers

Approximately 20 nongovernmental organizations, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, signed the following recent letter to President Obama, urging him to work with Mexican officials to take stronger steps to ensure the human rights and protection of migrants who face grave dangers from violent forces along the border.

... [In August], the bodies of 72 migrants from Central and South America were found on a ranch in northern Mexico ... A survivor recounted an alarming story: a group of migrants were kidnapped by one of several criminal organizations in Mexico that has extended their activities beyond drug trafficking and into kidnapping and extortion of migrants. When the abducted migrants, 58 men and 14 women, including teens and a pregnant woman, resisted their kidnappers' demands and extortion attempts, they were brutally executed, one of the deadliest mass-killings in Mexico in many years.

While this massacre is appalling in its scale and barbarity, it is far from an isolated incident. In recent years, reports of unchecked violence and brutality against migrants by criminal gangs and corrupt officials have grown. According to a report released last year ..., an estimated 18,000 migrants are kidnapped in Mexico every year.

However, kidnappings make up only a fraction of the crime and violence affecting migrants passing through Mexico. Migrants suffer a range of abuses including torture, extortion, sexual abuse, and murder, committed by both organized crime, as well as police, soldiers, and other officials. Amnesty International estimates that 60 percent of migrant women traveling through Mexico fall victim to sexual abuse. As groups that work to protect and promote the dignity and inherent rights of all humans, especially the most vulnerable among us, we urge you to take action to stop such egregious and routine abuses against migrants.

To bring an end to this crisis, we respectfully call on you to demonstrate leadership needed to:

- Reform our broken immigration system to create safe, humane, and efficient ways to reunite family members and provide orderly channels of entry for migrant workers and their families.
- Implement border security programs that reflect humanitarian values and strive to promote and protect the safety and human rights of border

communities and migrants.

- Jointly address root causes of migration to reduce the necessity for people to migrate. Despite the brutal passage through Mexico, many migrants choose to make the journey northward because they see few, if any, alternatives in their home communities that will allow them to support their families. We urge your administration to work with our neighbors to the south to address economic disparity and political instability in migrants' home countries which are exacerbated by U.S. policies and trade agreements.
- Ensure that migrants are not victimized by officials in the United States by working to prevent, and if necessary, prosecute migrant-related abuse, excessive use of force, and corruption by the Border Patrol and other U.S. officials.
- Focus limited government resources on prosecuting criminals who engage in human trafficking rather than programs like Operation Streamline, which wastes money prosecuting non-dangerous migrants for immigration offenses.

Additionally, we encourage your administration to elevate the issue of pervasive violence against migrants in Mexico in bilateral dialogue with Mexico, as well as work with Mexican counterparts to:

- Ensure that authorities on both sides of the border focus on the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of violence and crimes against migrants. While we have seen steps in the right direction ... enhanced political will, resources, and cross-border cooperation will be necessary to ensure robust and meaningful implementation of any new measures intended to strengthen migrant safety and well-being.
- Protect migrants' rights defenders. [Many] who provide humanitarian assistance and protect the rights of migrants have been the repeated target of threats, intimidation, and arrest by both drug gangs and local authorities. We urge authorities to denounce and end the impunity for violence and harassment of these brave defenders.

We respectfully urge you to take action to address the major human rights crisis facing migrants to ensure that the most vulnerable among us receive the basic rights inherently afforded to all humanity.

Asia: Himalayan glaciers may melt away

According to the Climate Change Vulnerability Index, South Asia is the world's most climate-vulnerable region, with increasing floods, droughts, storms and sea-level rise. Farther north in Asia, the Himalayan mountain region is also showing the effects of climate change. The following article was written by Nina Bosken, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns through the Discipleship Year.

The Himalayas provide an array of beauty to the north-east region of Asia. The glaciers that sit atop the peaks provide a huge water source to farmers, residents and creatures in the region. They are the world's third largest natural reservoir of water. Yet within the past decade, climate change has brought new fears to the people of the Himalayas.



The Himalayan mountains, one of the most weather-diverse areas in the world, can serve as an early warning for climate change in the region. The mountains' glaciers retain water in the winter which is released as rainfall in spring and summer. According to chimalaya.org, a website tracking Himalayan climate change, scientists observed in July of this year that quantum rainfall increased 8.45 percent. Also, due to climate change, clouds over the Bay of Bengal are picking up more moisture which is then dispersed over the mountains in rainfall.

Scientist Yao Tandong predicts that many Chinese glaciers will disappear by 2050 as a result of a warmer planet. According to the *Christian Science Monitor*, the snowline has moved 1,500 feet up the mountains. Seasonal snow cover is also decreasing and snow melt is increasing.

Floods, droughts, unpredictable rainfall and other climate change patterns are also affecting agriculture. According to an article in the *Himalayan Times*, if the same weather trends continue, by 2050 crop yields could drop significantly. Maize is projected to drop 17 percent, wheat 12 percent and rice 10 percent, increasing scarcity and driving up food prices. By 2080, under a more extreme climate change scenario, 1.3 billion people could be at risk of hunger.

A warmer planet endangers many Asian cities.

At the foot of the Himalayas, Kathmandu, Nepal experiences an earthquake every 75 years. With pressure decreasing due to melting glaciers, strain within the earth's crust will grow and earthquakes are more likely to happen. In 1948, when Kathmandu last experienced an earthquake, almost 20,000 people were killed. The next earthquake, scientists predict, would hit number eight on the Richter scale, killing around 50,000 people and leaving around 900,000 people homeless.

In October, NASA installed the web-based system SERVIR to track climate change. This system will provide scientists, governments and aid agencies access to satellite images of the Himalayan mountains, thus giving them an early warning of a climate-related disaster. Basanta Shrestha, with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Kathmandu, said, "The whole of the Himalayan region is something of a black hole for scientists and we hope to use this system to bridge the data gap. We can use this to monitor the dynamics of the cryosphere (ice systems) in the light of climate change, which is very important in terms of both disaster management and future water availability."

In our statement "Global climate change: The most critical challenge in the 21st century," the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns reflects on Catholic social teaching (CST) through an ecological lens. In considering the common good, communities of people and earth itself must experience positive benefits from our actions. CST also makes clear that people should have the right to participate in the decisions affecting their lives. All too often people living in poverty -- such as those living in Kathmandu and other Asian cities -- are excluded from participating and yet are most affected by climate change. Perhaps the principle of CST that would be most beneficial to the natural world and to communities of people who are often forgotten is the principle of sufficiency. "Live simply so that others may simply live" -- a restatement of this tenet -- takes on increased urgency in the context of climate change.

Read our statement on climate change at <http://www.maryknollogc.org/ecology/index.htm>.

Asia: Progress of Millennium Development Goals

In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals were set, eight targets to end extreme poverty and inequality by 2015. In Asia progress has been made in some areas but not in others. Overall, the region is off track to meet all eight goals by 2015. Nina Bosken, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns through the Discipleship Year program, contributed to this article.

According to “Paths to 2015 MDG Priorities in Asia and the Pacific,” a report by the UN Development Program, the Asian Development Bank and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the region is an early-achiever for goal three, promoting gender equality and empowering women, and goal six, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. The region is on track to achieve goal one, to cut in half, between the years 1990 and 2015, the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day. The region is slow or off-track for other goals, such as goal two, to achieve universal primary education, and goal four, to reduce child mortality.

According to the report, the most successful MDG goal for the region has been poverty reduction. Between 1990 and 2008, the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day decreased from 1.5 billion to 947 million, while the population increased by 800 million. Work must still be done on all fronts. For instance, while significant progress has been made with female equality, around 100 million Asian women are estimated to be “missing” because of discriminatory treatment in regards to health, nutrition, neglect or pre-birth sex selection.

The report suggested seven “drivers” to achieve the goals by 2015:

- 1) **Strengthen growth by stimulating domestic demand and intra-regional trade:** Greater intra-regional trade would require integrated markets, lower tariff and non-tariff barriers, concerted investment in physical infrastructure, more robust transportation networks and information platforms, and better regulatory structures. Products from poorest countries should have duty- and quota-free market access on a lasting basis.
- 2) **Make economic growth more inclusive and sustainable:** Governments will need to progressively set their sights on a more environmentally sustainable development that can decouple economic growth from environmental pressures

– for example, by enhancing the efficiency of natural resource use, reducing energy intensity, preserving biodiversity, cutting waste generation and adapting to the effects of climate change.

- 3) **Strengthen social protection:** Countries will be in a better position to achieve the MDGs with a minimum social floor that addresses extreme poverty, hunger and income insecurity. Social protection programs will lessen the impact of economic crises and natural calamities while also acting as a “circuit breaker” for vicious inter-generational cycles of poverty and hunger.
- 4) **Reduce persistent gender gaps:** Gender inequality is neither just and sustainable, nor morally defensible. Investing in women and girls is in itself a breakthrough strategy for achieving the MDGs and almost any outlay made in women and girls will have effects across all the goals.
- 5) **Ensure financial inclusion:** Most of the billion or so poor people in Asia and the Pacific have little access to financial services. Instead they rely largely on cash or the informal economy, and for credit look to friends, family or moneylenders. ... Governments can widen financial inclusion by improving infrastructure and the regulatory environment, and by encouraging service provision by NGOs, community-based groups and the private sector.
- 6) **Support least developed and structurally disadvantaged countries:** Measures for faster MDG achievement should be financed as much as possible from domestic resources. However, poorer countries ... will need to be assisted through external resources such as official development assistance (ODA). ODA, whether bilateral and multilateral, has played a key role in supporting the economic development and social progress of many developing countries in the region and it continues to make a significant contribution to achieving the MDGs.
- 7) **Exploit the potential of regional economic integration:** This offers many other opportunities – particularly for smaller economies – by enabling them to extend their markets and reap efficiency gains from specialization and economies of scale and scope. This could make the region more resilient to future crises and bolster the capacity of many of the poorest countries to achieve the MDGs.

Global Environmental Governance and New Narrative

Dr. Maria Ivanova leads the Global Environmental Governance Project and is a consultant for the UN Environment Program. The following article is taken from Dr. Ivanova's recent speech to the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development at the United Nations and from an interview conducted with her for the blog "The New Security Beat: Seeking a sustainable future for a lasting peace," which is maintained by the staff of the Environmental Change and Security Program (ECSP) at the Woodrow Wilson Center.

The concept of Global Environmental Governance (GEG) was first put forth in 1972 at the United Nations Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. This Conference followed the publication of the first photos from space causing the image and sense of one Earth atmosphere to become indelibly etched in human consciousness.

The Stockholm Conference created the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and gave it the mandate to centrally coordinate organizations and information pertinent to the environment. By 1987, a central focus related to GEG was put forth: sustainable development. Sustainable development links economic development with environmental and social well-being. It recognizes that Earth's resources are limited and emphasizes the obligation to keep in mind the needs of future generations of people while providing for the needs of today. At the time, it was hoped that sustainable development would be a driver for ending poverty and improving the quality of life for those in need.

In 1992, the United Nations held a Conference on Development and the Environment in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This Conference is commonly known as the Earth Summit. Among other documents, it produced the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, a basic document for guiding humanity through the 21st century from a sustainable development perspective. The Summit had two other major achievements: it established the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and it recognized that governments could not achieve sustainable development without the collaboration of civil society. It, therefore, formally established the nine major groups of civil society for collaboration with United Nations entities and member states. This was a breakthrough potentially

bringing the whole of humanity into conversation about the environment and sustainable development.

Nevertheless, as Dr. Ivanova pointed out, since the Earth Summit, global environmental problems have multiplied and economic and social well-being has deteriorated. More of humanity lives in poverty now than ever before. While the causes for this are multiple and complex, the basic difficulty rests with governments that are competitive and protective of national sovereignty."

On the other hand, "Civil society groups and even individuals around the world have come together in new coalitions and formed new alliances." It is heartening to witness this "unprecedented mobilization and collaboration." Also, around the world the Global Environmental Governance Project is sponsoring discussions that are "generating genuine engagement in thought and action on governance." New initiatives are emerging and new leadership is springing up. Speaking to this point, Ivanova said, "We need to encourage behavior that is bold, visionary and entrepreneurial rather than conformist."

Finally and most important, a new and dramatic shift in narrative for GEG is arising; the narrative is captured in one word: sustainability. "Sustainability builds on sustainable development but goes further than that. As a concept it allows for new thinking, new actors, and new politics. It avoids the North-South polarization of sustainable development, which is so often equated with development and is therefore understood as what the North has already attained and what the South is aspiring to. By contrast, no one society has reached sustainability, and learning by all is necessary. Moreover, much of the innovative thinking about sustainability is happening in developing countries, which are trying to improve quality of life without jeopardizing the carrying capacity of the environment. Progressive thinking is also taking place on campuses in industrialized countries, which are creating a new sense of community and collaboration. In deed, young people around the world are engaging in finding new ways of living within the planetary limits in a responsible and fulfilling manner."

What lies ahead? In 2012 there will be another Earth Summit: Rio + 20. It is predicted that it will come to be known as the Sustainability Summit.

Climate change: Taking steps to move forward

As the member states of the United Nations make final preparations for the 16th session of the Climate Change Conference in December in Cancun, Mexico, the following news came by way of email from Sister Margarita Jamias assigned to the Maryknoll Sisters Mission in Baguio, Philippines.

Sr. Jamias writes, “Typhoon Juan was the most devastating storm I’ve experienced since I came to the Philippines ten years ago. The noise was terrific; I was petrified and decided not to go downstairs to my bedroom at night and stayed upstairs. This was a lucky decision as a huge tree was uprooted and crashed directly into the house by my room. The roof caved in and everything was flooded; in the morning I saw tree limbs everywhere, inside and outside of the house. This is only a fraction of the damage we sustained here at Maryknoll. As you can imagine, all around us there is destruction; the most significant is to agriculture and infrastructure, particularly in Isabela and Cagayan.”

Typhoons are not new to the Philippines. However, there is a fury to the typhoons now that is aligned with the fury of devastating storms and other weather events all around the world. Last summer one-eighth of Russia was on fire. In Moscow the usual summer temperature would be 85°; this year, day after day saw the thermometer registering 115°. One-third of Pakistan was under water and tornados destroyed entire communities in the U.S. Recently, author and public speaker Van Jones said, “To watch the weather channel now is the same as watching scenarios in Al Gore’s ‘An Inconvenient Truth’ a few years ago.”

It is true that natural disasters have always occurred. There is, however, a difference at the present time. There is good reason to believe that the continuous and ferocious nature of the events happening all over the planet are causing the planet itself to change with the unintended consequence that life as it is now known may not be possible for future generations of people. This is a situation that cannot be ignored. Particularly, it cannot be ignored by the United Nations, the global organization charged with articulating the needs and rights of humanity.



If the changes to the planet are being caused by people, people can change their behavior and begin to modify the changes taking place in Earth’s atmosphere. It is important to recall that this has happened successfully in the reduction of substances that deplete the ozone layer through worldwide collaboration with the UN Montreal Protocol starting in 1987. Due to its widespread adoption and implementation this agreement has been hailed as an example of exceptional international cooperation. It has been ratified by 196 states.

The present climate change crisis is more complex by far than the ozone depletion crisis. The work before the UN now is to guide the nations in an agreement to diminish the carbon in the planet’s atmosphere; a huge undertaking with complex economic and social ramifications. Unfortunately, there is less good will manifest for resolving this crisis than for resolving the ozone crisis. Some progress is being made, but not on the scale that the crisis warrants.

The United States and China, the planet’s two biggest polluters, find themselves in completely opposing camps over the form an agreement for reducing carbon emissions should take.

“The United States wants to move forward from the Copenhagen accord agreement made last December by coordinating national commitments to reduce emissions and instituting a rigorous regime to ensure compliance.

In an October 8 article for the *Guardian’s* online version (“China and the U.S. blamed as climate talks stall”), Jonathan Watts writes, “China is keen to protect a two-track approach in which richer countries make the first and biggest moves to reflect their greater responsibility for climate change. It wants the U.S. and signatories to the existing Kyoto Protocol to lock in their commitments to reduce emissions and resists demands that China’s own actions are simultaneously incorporated in the framework of an international treaty.”

Meanwhile, the planet and particularly poorer nations and small island states are already feeling the brunt of the impact of climate change. For the upcoming Cancun Conference Dessima Williams, chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, said, “We call on major powers to come to the table in a more urgent and efficient manner.”

Congressional letter for Global Climate Fund

On October 5, five of the seven chairs of subcommittees of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs wrote to Secretary of State Clinton and her climate negotiations team to encourage the administration to promote establishing a new global climate fund at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change meeting in Cancun this December. In particular, the subcommittee chairs requested the fund be transparent, equitable, effective and accountable while pointing to several models for successful international funds that work under these principles. The text of their letter follows below.

We are writing to show our strong support for the establishment of a new global climate fund under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the international climate negotiations in Cancun.

Around the world the impacts of climate change are occurring. The U.S. can demonstrate global leadership and ensure critical forward movement in the climate negotiations by supporting the establishment of an equitable, effective, and accountable global climate fund that is embraced by the international community. We strongly urge the administration to pursue the establishment of the fund as an essential step in its own right, one that should be taken now even as other parts of the negotiations mature separately.

A new global climate fund designed within the UNFCCC with the expertise, independence, and mandate to support developing countries in their efforts to build resilience to climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions is a crucial component of addressing the global problem. Such a fund is also in the national security, economic, and moral interests of the U.S. Left unaddressed, climate impacts will fuel greater poverty and conflict over ever-scarcer resources - increasing global instability and exacerbating security risks. Such a fund will also be instrumental in protecting our investments in poverty alleviation and will re-assert U.S. credibility on climate change in the absence of comprehensive climate legislation.

To ensure the effective use of U.S. taxpayer dollars and positive climate outcomes, the fund should embody principles of: transparency and accountability, direct access to funding based on agreed

fiduciary standards and social safeguards, and full participation of affected communities, particularly women, and civil society. It is also essential that the fund is independent in management and governance from existing financial intuitions. Such principles are fundamental to the fund's integrity and will help ensure that effective, efficient and sustainable work on the ground is achieved.

We encourage the administration to look at three funds in particular as effective models: (1) The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria as a model that includes voting power for both civil society and affected community members, a fundamental commitment to country ownership, and strong oversight of funding; (2) the Adaptation Fund, as one that includes designated seats for countries most vulnerable to climate change and direct access to funding; and (3) the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol as one established under the authority of Parties to an international treaty, and based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

As we head toward Cancun, we urge you and your negotiating team to do all you can to advance the establishment of a new global climate fund that is based on widely held principles of efficacy and equity, and proven models of success.

In addition to Secretary Clinton, the letter was also sent to the climate negotiations team:

- Todd Stern, U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change
- Jonathan Pershing, U.S. Deputy Special Envoy for Climate Change
- Lael Brainard, Under Secretary for International Affairs, U.S. Treasury
- William Pizer, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Environment and Energy, U.S. Treasury

Signed by Rep. Eni F.H. Faleomavaega - Chairman, Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment; Rep. Donald M. Payne - Chairman, Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health; Rep. Eliot L. Engel - Chairman, Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere; Rep. Brad Sherman - Chairman, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade and Rep. Gary L. Ackerman - Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia

Climate: 10/10/10 Global Work Party

On Sunday, October 10, thousands of communities around the world celebrated climate solutions by holding “work days” to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) through community efforts and to tell their politicians to “get to work” for climate and clean energy solutions. While the international climate change negotiations have not yet resulted in comprehensive global solutions, citizens around the world publicly celebrated their willingness to be part of the solution by showcasing alternative energy, food security and transportation projects (to name a few) that they are already implementing.

Thanks to the partnership of several organizations and coalitions, like 350.org, 1Sky and TckTckTck, the “10/10/10 Global Work Party” included over 7,500 events held in 88 countries spotlighting citizen action in response to the climate crisis.

The success of this year’s October 10 collective actions was built upon several years of organizing beginning in April 2007 with the “Step it Up” campaign where U.S. citizens in all 50 states came together in over 2,000 organized rallies and other public actions. These actions carried a unified message calling on upon political leaders to take action to cut carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050.

In 2009 the “Stir It Up” campaign went global. Using the same model of creative activism 350.org was formed to help mobilize over 5,200 actions in 181 countries on October 24, 2009, 45 days before the opening of the International Climate Conference held in Copenhagen. The intent was to convince decision makers attending the Copenhagen meeting that the best target as a cap for a global total of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions is 350 parts per million (350ppm).

This is the level that many scientists, climate experts, and progressive national governments have determined as the safest upper limit for carbon in earth’s atmosphere. Accelerating arctic warming and other early climate change effects have led scientists to conclude that we are already well above the safe zone at a current level of 392ppm. These experts agree that unless we are able to rapidly return to below 350 ppm this century, we risk reaching a tipping point where the planet begins to experience irreversible effects such as the melting of the Greenland ice sheet.

Unfortunately, the Copenhagen conference in

2009 did not yield the results that the world had hoped for. Many analysts say that a number of nations are still not ready to start making serious cuts in their GHG emissions. The United States ranks high on the list of countries with the most work to do. This year the U.S. Congress failed to pass critical climate legislation leaving U.S. negotiators unclear in terms of what the U.S. can actually deliver as the rounds of climate negotiations continue – culminating in an international climate conference in Cancun Mexico (November 29-December 10, 2010; see related story on page 15).

The most recent round of negotiations in preparation for Cancun was held in Tianjin, China the first week of October. Civil society observers reported that deep divisions among nations remain on key issues, like mitigation of GHG emissions and funding to allow less industrialized countries to adapt to climate change. Many of these countries have a high percentage of communities extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

In light of the slow pace of the negotiations, the global workday provided a platform for citizens throughout the world to show that there is a growing movement of people committed to solving the climate crisis from bottom up. Their global actions also send a critical message to political leaders and climate negotiators – “we’re willing to do our part – now do yours!”

In Tiajin, Christina Figueres, this year’s Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and chair of the upcoming negotiations expressed her personal support to the 10/10/10 Global Work Party highlighting the importance of civil society saying that “when citizens are inspired to take action, it is easier for governments to initiate climate action.”

The 350.org, 1Sky and TckTckTck websites feature videos and photos uploaded from people around the world documenting their workday efforts. These include installing solar panels, breaking ground for community gardens, planting trees, constructing wind turbines, setting up and contributing to community recycling efforts and laying out bike paths to name just a few of the workday projects.

Go to www.350.org, www.1sky.org or www.tcktcktck.org to see images and videos of Oct. 10 actions and events and to find out how to get involved as the climate negotiations continue.

Food security: Global agriculture pledge drive

The 2008 food crisis inspired action from world leaders on hunger and food security. In 2009 the G20 gathered in L'Aquila, Italy and in typical fashion, generously pledged to eradicate hunger by improving agriculture around the globe. Just over a year later, their \$20 billion in pledges have not yet materialized, but the demand for funding has.

Soon after the L'Aquila meeting, the United States, Canada, Spain and the Gates Foundation requested that the World Bank set up a Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) as a fund to channel the pledged resources. Within months South Korea joined the effort. But as the November 3, 2010 steering committee approaches, these four countries are on a massive fund raising drive, asking other nations to make good on their pledges in light of the fact that the GAFSP steering committee will consider grant proposals from 22 countries totaling almost \$1 billion and there is only \$130 million in the fund.

Canada, the U.S., South Korea and Spain sent letters to the G20 countries, expressing deep concern at the "lack of new pledges and faltering momentum." The four countries stressed that "we need new donors to come forward to ensure that these developing countries are not turned away."

The GAFSP was established to provide financing to help complete agriculture development projects that countries themselves were implementing. It was launched in April 2010 with commitments of \$880 million: \$475 million from the U.S.; Canada, \$230 million; Spain, \$95 million; South Korea, \$50 million; and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, \$30 million. In June, the fund awarded its first grants for a total of \$224 million to five countries: Rwanda, Haiti, Bangladesh, Sierra Leone and Togo.

The original thinking was that the first donations would attract other supporters, and that by October 2010, there would be \$1 billion in the fund to finance all the new applications. But no other donors have come forward. And the U.S. commitment is not on solid ground: the U.S. contributed \$67 million from its 2010 budget, but the \$408 million for fiscal year 2011 requested by the administration was cut back both in the House (\$150 million) and Senate (\$250 million) appropriations committees and prospects for the final appropriations reconciliation are dim.

During the debt crisis many of the same countries now applying for grants were encouraged by the World Bank to cut back on public spending (including extension services and subsidies for farmers). And like past programs, there are a few hoops a country has to jump through to be eligible for GAFSP grants. An African country must be a part of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) - an economic development program of the African Union designed to accelerate economic cooperation and integration among African countries by providing an overarching vision and policy framework. Under NEPAD, the country must have completed the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program [CAADP]).

The CAADP framework process requires broad civil society consultation, but, after the GAFSP was announced as open for business in April, several African countries have rushed through their CAADP processes to make their nations eligible for grants, leaving out the important input and experience of farmers who will be most impacted when programs are implemented.

In spite of the fact that the food crisis was really caused by people's inability to pay high prices for food available in the markets the primary goal of the GAFSP is to increase farmers' productivity. Other goals that follow this goal are like connecting farmers to markets and enhancing sustainability seem to be on the right track. Still, many in civil society are watching the roll out of the GAFSP quite carefully to ensure that it does not become a lightning rod for attracting investments from of huge industrial agricultural operations. Since the Gates Foundations is involved in the GAFSP and in the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) many fear that it is just a matter of time before smaller producers -- especially in Africa -- are locked into buying expensive inputs (like seeds, pesticides and fertilizers) and ultimately forced off their land when they cannot keep up with payments.

After much interaction with the four donor countries involved and with the World Bank GAFSP Steering Committee, civil society has been given three seats on the board (two from southern countries and one from northern countries). At the Nov. 3 meeting of the steering committee civil society representatives will take the concerns of expanding civil society participation, and careful oversight

of the private sector window for donations. They will also have input (no vote) on approving country grant requests and allocating the limited funds; and identifying independent experts to examine and assess the quality of the projects submitted. Two key

UN agencies (the International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD] and the Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO]) also have voice, no vote representation on the steering committee.

Debt: Has the IMF really changed?

In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) increased its lending capacity from \$250 billion to \$750 billion to help meet needs of low-income countries, according to Jubilee USA's recent report "Unmasking the IMF: The Post-Financial Crisis Imperative for Reform." By 2014, the fund's lending capacity will be 10 times higher than it was before the crisis. However a greater lending capacity often leads to further debt for poor countries. The following article was written by Nina Bosken, the Discipleship Year intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

Created by the world's wealthy nations during the Great Depression in the 1930s to stabilize the global economy, in the years since 2000 the IMF had started to downsize and was much less active than in earlier decades. Yet the financial crisis changed this. According to a Eurodad report, an additional 90 million people will be living in extreme poverty by the end of 2010 as a result of the dire situation, and countries have approached the IMF for assistance.

In 1997-98, the IMF's lending practices in the wake of the East Asian crisis, rather than helping countries, drove them further into recession, the Jubilee report said. The Fund claims it has learned from this mistake.

The IMF is setting conditions for countries to get Stand-By Arrangements and Extended Credit Facilities, two of its major loan programs. But, for example, in Maldives, a 14 percent wage cut was a requirement for a Stand-By Arrangement, according to the Jubilee report. In Jamaica, the Stand-By Arrangement requires a public sector salary freeze, a wage bill reduction, consumption taxes and fees for public services.

In January 2009, the Flexible Credit Line (FCL) was created so that countries could quickly access aid when facing a liquidity crisis. However, in reality, only countries that have completed requirements similar to those in Jamaica or Maldives are eligible. According to the Jubilee report, only Colombia,

Mexico and Poland have used the FCL. The less-austere Precautionary Credit Line was also created, with most of the same strict criteria as the FCL but maybe a few areas where the country "needs improvement." Currently, the IMF has not identified any countries that are eligible for the PCL so it remains a concept and not an implemented program.

Jubilee USA questions whether or not the IMF has made substantial changes. The network advocates for practices that keep the interests of those in poverty in mind:

- Ensure that low-income countries using IMF aid can actively use the aid to support public investment, build infrastructure, promote development and fight climate change.
- Encourage better monetary options that allow domestic firms and consumers to access affordable credit to expand production and employment.
- Lower the requirements to allow for more aid and concessional loan money.
- Safeguard public sector wage and subsidies that help the poor.
- Use the IMF gold sales to provide assistance through grants for countries facing shock, such as a natural disaster or a financial crisis.
- Undertake reforms of the Debt Sustainability Framework to help countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals rather than further debt.
- Reform the governance of the IMF so that more low-income countries are represented.
- Improve IMF transparency. Publish minutes and transcripts from board meetings, circulating draft documents in a variety of languages to encourage constituency input and stop the use of "side letters" to stipulate policy conditions.
- Require parliamentary approval of new IMF loans to promote transparency, democratic governance and country-developed strategies to avoid irresponsible borrowing.

HIV/AIDS: New medicines patent pool

On September 30, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) became the first patent-holder to share its intellectual property with the Medicines Patent Pool. This recent initiative was established with the support of UNITAID, an innovative global health financing mechanism (funded by a levy on airline tickets) co-founded by Brazil, Chile, France, Norway and the United Kingdom at the United Nations General Assembly in 2006.

The Medicines Patent Pool works to increase access to affordable and adapted HIV medicines in developing countries. Although patent pools have proven useful in many areas, such as agriculture and information technology, the Medicines Patent Pool is the first for HIV medicines.

As governments pull back from fully funding the Global Fund, the development of affordable, generic versions of newer, safer AIDS medicines and medicines to treat infants and children with HIV and AIDS is critical.

By streamlining licensing processes for the production of generic versions of patented HIV medicines, the Pool serves as a one-stop shop that will speed up the pace at which newer medicines reach patients, and will help bring prices down by encouraging competition among multiple producers.

The patents licensed to the Medicines Patent Pool relate to the protease inhibitor class of HIV medicines, which is primarily used to treat drug-resistant HIV infection. The NIH Office of Technology Transfer has previously granted non-exclusive licenses to these patents, including to Tibotec (a subsidiary of Johnson & Johnson) for darunavir. The patents resulted from research undertaken by the NIH National Cancer Institute and the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Patents on the licensed technology are pending or have been granted in the U.S., Canada, Australia, Japan and 19 high-income member states of the European Patent Office.

The license that NIH has given the Pool stipulates that this technology is to be available for the benefit of all low- and middle-income countries, as defined by the World Bank. The license is royalty-free. On its own, the license will not provide rights to produce or sell any specific existing medicine. Other patent holders would also need to share their patents with the Pool in order to clear the legal path

for production of affordable, generic HIV medicines. The Pool is inviting all leaders of companies and institutions that hold patents on HIV medicines to make their patents available.

The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), Oxfam and Doctors Without Borders are among the organizations that applauded NIH's step into the Patent Pool, and are encouraging pharmaceutical companies to follow suit.

For nearly a decade, ICCR members have engaged global pharmaceutical companies as shareholders to expand access to medicines for poor and underserved communities. Through dialogues with companies including Abbott, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Gilead Sciences, GlaxoSmithKline, Johnson & Johnson, Merck and Pfizer, and through the filing of shareholder resolutions, members challenge companies to address vital issues, including voluntary licensees, public-private partnerships and alternative models for research and development.

The Patent Pool has the potential to move the drug industry to the next stage of addressing HIV, which includes developing new fixed-dose combinations and pediatric formulations. The Pool will be successful if it has a positive impact on patients' lives, and for this the collaboration of pharmaceutical companies is essential.

Several companies including Gilead, Merck and Johnson & Johnson have expressed their support for the Patent Pool, and it is hoped that they will participate, now that NIH has joined. Other companies, such as Abbott and Bristol-Myers Squibb have not demonstrated interest and will need a greater nudge from their investors and other stakeholders.

Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) writes: "2010 is the year by which world governments promised to provide universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support to all who needed it. As the year draws to a close, we know that this goal will not be achieved despite recent laudable progress in increasing access to treatment. Thus, World AIDS Day 2010 [December 1] provides a timely opportunity to reflect upon the reality of the HIV pandemic today and to pray for renewed passion, wisdom and action to uphold the human dignity and rights of all people living or at risk of being infected with HIV." See the resources page for information about an EAA worship resource for World AIDS Day, December 1.

“What we witness” reflection process

The Faith Economy Ecology Working Group has been developing reflection processes to help prayer and reflection groups wrestle with the tremendous amount of behavior and thought change that is necessary to begin moving toward more sustainable communities of sufficiency. The following reflection exercise developed by the working group looks specifically at the starting point of what we witness. We invite you to share this reflection process in your own community and to send us your thoughts.

Opening prayer (together):

*By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres. For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!” How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?
Psalms 137:1-4*

Leader: At times we feel that we are so far away from home, the home that God created and intended for us to share. We find ourselves in a world where the destructive power of a growth-driven economic model ignores Earth’s limits and its need to rest and regenerate. In our most sacred moments of prayer and connection with our community of faith, we remember that we are all one human family living in a world where all life-forms interconnect. The preamble of the Earth Charter highlights this knowledge: *[W]e must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.*

Go around the circle having each person read one of the points below:

- The valuing of money and material goods more than humans and ecosystems.
- The inherent violence of an economy that grows along with the wealth of a few individuals and corporations while the natural world and human well being – the clearest signs of God’s bounty – suffer and deteriorate.
- The use of international financial institutions, corporate lobbying and marketing, think tanks, major media and military force to secure the wealth and power of a small part of society while a great many others, especially women and people of color are often excluded.
- “Free trade” and economic globalization that increase ecological depletion and leave masses of people vulnerable through deeper poverty and insufficient access to food, water, education and health care.
- The loss of people, cultures, species and traditional knowledge forced aside as our lives are dominated by a world view that seeks economic growth regardless of the consequences;
- Soul-deadening over-consumption, consumerism, and the insatiable desire for “more” that paralyzes and enslaves far too many people in wealthier societies.

Moment of silence

Sharing: Share experiences of feeling disconnected from the natural world.

(over)

- How are those experiences related to our economic system?
- Name the winners and losers in the current global economy (both human and natural community).
- What does community mean to you? What have you done to help members of your community to be more connected with nature?
- How does being part of a community help you to connect with others and with the natural world?
- In what ways are you resisting the demand to “sing the songs” in the current global economic system? In what ways does your faith life help? In what ways does your connection to community help?

Closing prayer (together): We stand firm in our commitment to a new way of life and a different economy, based on the integrity and dignity of all creation, the common good, ecological health and resilience, sufficiency, equality, solidarity, caring for the most vulnerable and impoverished, and decision-making at the most local level possible.

*We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us.
When we see land as a community to which we belong,
we may begin to use it with love and respect.*
Aldo Leopold, conservationist, ecologist and nature writer

Share your thoughts: Please take time to summarize your reflections (during or after the meeting). We would appreciate it if you would share a one-page summary with us. Include a brief summary of the key findings; other experiences (e.g. stories related to the themes of faith, ecology and the global economy) that the group discussed; who participated in the discussion (e.g. prayer group, local parish group, etc.) Also include any evaluative comments participants had about this process. Please send this to kmcneely@maryknoll.org or by mail to the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, P.O. Box 29132, Washington, D.C. 20017 (attention: Kathy McNeely).

Ecumenical Advocacy Days

March 25-28, 2011 Washington, D.C.

“Give her a share in the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the city gates.” - Proverbs 31

Development, security and economic justice: What’s gender got to do with it? Gender's got everything to do with it! Women's roles and contributions are integral to the cultural, spiritual and economic viability of their families, communities and nations.

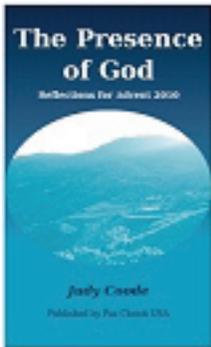
In many settings, women are able to develop to the fullest of their capacity and thus enrich their social, religious and family environments. Tragically, in other settings from the home to the marketplace, to the borders and frontlines, women and girls are frequently kept from attaining their full potential because of violence, poverty and lack of access to healthcare and education, among other social evils.

You can be a formidable force for change! Women and men of faith must come together to speak boldly on behalf of all God's daughters and sons, for their physical and emotional safety, their economic security and their freedom.

Ecumenical Advocacy Days will inspire and equip Christians of all backgrounds to advocate for people-centered sustainable development, safety and security, economic justice and peacemaking, recognizing the vital roles and unique needs of women here in the United States and around the world. The conference is sponsored by over 40 faith-based organizations and faithful partners, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns. After three days filled with worship and dialogue, we will go together to let our voices be heard on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Let us know that you want to join us as we would like to organize a Maryknoll gathering that weekend. Send a message to ogc@maryknoll.org, subject line EAD. Check the EAD website to register to attend and to find more information about the schedule and workshops: www.advocacydays.org

Resources

- 1) **“The Presence of God: Reflections for Advent 2010”:** Published by Pax Christi USA, the Advent booklet is a collection of meditations on the daily lectionary readings during this time of quiet preparation and renewal. \$3.00 each, plus shipping; bulk discounts available. Call (814) 453-4955, ext. 231, e-mail sales@paxchristiusa.org or visit www.paxchristiusa.org for more information. Also available in Spanish: *La Presencia de Dios*.
 
- 2) **December 1 World AIDS Day 2010 prayer service:** Produced by Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, a Swiss-based international network of churches and Christian organizations cooperating in advocacy on food and HIV and AIDS, the prayer service offers information, insights and meditation on the importance of linking efforts to fight hunger with those to comprehensively address HIV. It explores that idea that medicines alone are not enough; a comprehensive and sustainable response to HIV must also involve the protection of human dignity and rights, including the right to food. Hold this service in your church, school or organization in order to pray and stand in solidarity with people of faith and members of wider civil society around the world. Available online in English and Spanish at: <http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/hivaids/world-aids-day/>. Feel free to adapt the service according to your local context. The service can be used on its own or as part of an event supporting the Light for Rights campaign promoted by the World AIDS Campaign. For more information, see <http://www.e-alliance.ch/>.
- 3) **Stand against torture on Human Rights Day, December 10:** On December 10, 1948, the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that all humans are born with freedom, equality and dignity. To aid faith communities in honoring this

day, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) has resources including a bulletin insert that contains an interfaith prayer and information on the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT); worship materials, prayers and suggestions for incorporating the issue into a religious service; and a petition-style form and an information sheet on OPCAT. Additional resources specifically for Christian, Muslim, Jewish and interfaith groups can be found at www.nrcat.org. For more information contact NRCAT at (202) 547-1920 or at campaign@nrcat.org.

- 4) **Justice in a Land of Plenty: A Resource for Worship and Advocacy on Trade Justice:** This resource packet, published by the Mennonite Central Committee, includes facts, policy solutions, worship materials, advocacy and action guides, and additional resources. For more information contact the Mennonite Central Committee at its Washington, D.C. office at (202) 544-6564 or at mccwash@mcc.org or visit www.mcc.org.
- 5) **Workshop: Engaging Impasse on Immigration:** Designed by NETWORK, the national Catholic social justice lobby, this workshop explores the views and emotions involved in immigration through a role-playing dialogue and discussion. The workshop allows space for participants to discuss the fears, feelings and insights around immigration. This resource can be found online at www.networklobby.org.
- 6) **“The Mountain Mourning Collection”:** A film chronicling the devastation of mountaintop removal mining on people, Appalachian culture and creation; a valuable tool portraying the need to care for God’s Appalachian mountains. For more information about the film, visit www.patchworkfilms.com/mm_dvd.htm. The National Council of Churches of Christ Eco-Justice Programs has additional resources including hymns, sermons and ecumenical resources at www.nccecojustice.org.