

DOMINICANS AT THE UN

"Cry out as if you have a million voices, for it is silence which kills the world."
– Catherine of Siena

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ROAD TO PARIS

As you know, President Obama has decided to move forward with what is considered one of the most decisive actions ever taken by the US government in the effort to deal with global climate change. He has proposed an Environmental Protections Agency regulation that would significantly cut carbon pollution from the over 600 coal-fired power plants in this country. This move will be noted as a significant contribution to the ongoing UN climate talks, which culminate in November 2015



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at the Paris Climate Conference. At the conclusion of this meeting, for the first time in over 20 years of UN negotiations, all the nations of the world, including the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, will be bound by a universal agreement on climate. This agreement would come into force in 2020, which would mark the end of the second commitment period of the **Kyoto Protocol**.

UNFCCC & Kyoto Protocol

Paris will mark the 21st meeting of the Conference of Parties to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**, a treaty which came into existence after the Earth Summit of 1992. The nations which have

signed on to the UNFCCC are known as the **Conference of Parties (COP)**. The treaty calls for the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, so as to prevent irreversible damage to people as well as Earth and her ecosystems. However, the treaty as such sets no mandatory limits on greenhouse gas emissions, nor does it contain any provisions for enforcement. Rather, it provides provision for updates, known as "protocols," which set limits on emissions. The principle update is the **Kyoto Protocol**. The Kyoto Protocol recognizes the fact that the developed countries of the world are primarily responsible for the build-up of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere. Therefore, it is these countries who bear the greater burden under the principle of "*common but differentiated responsibilities*."

Can the U.S. Turn the Tide?

Which brings us back to President Obama's proposal to cut emissions from coal-burning plants. Historically, the United States has been the largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Today, however, China is the top emitter, with India running a close second. Both these countries have been resistant to US pressure to curb their pollution, because they have seen no evidence of the US making efforts to do the same. But this may, indeed, be changing. Besides the decision to curb coal pollution, there have been two other significant announcements coming out of the US over the past month. The **Third National Climate Assessment** was

released, stating that "climate change, once considered an issue for a distant future, has moved firmly into the present." And, Stanford University has announced that it's \$18.7 billion endowment will no longer make direct investments in coal-mining companies.



Love for our Common Home

At a recent gathering at St. Paul's Institute in London, entitled "Climate Change: Building the Will for Action," Christiana Figueres, the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC ended her remarks with these words: "I often make a strong argument about the myriad components of change that must come together in order to accelerate us down the path toward low carbon. But today I would like to invoke one element that is missing. Quite simply, it is love. Love for ourselves, our children and their children, love for our neighbors across the globe, love for our common home, Earth. I am not talking about feeble

love. I am referring to tough love, the love that is strong enough to make decisions because we know that it is the right thing to do. Because we understand that ultimately we are all inter-related, interwoven with one another, and with this planet which we cannot replace."

THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

From MDGs to SDGs

Development post-MDGs, in the midst of changing global climate patterns, on a planet whose ecosystems are becoming increasingly compromised and fragile, will require the wisdom of Solomon and every ounce of ingenuity and creativity that we humans have to offer. At the 2010 UN Millennium Development Goals Summit, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon called on Member States to initiate the process of creating a post-MDG agenda. As a follow-up to the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as RIO + 20, significant work has been done on what will be called the "Sustainable Development Goals" (SDGs), which are meant to build upon the MDGs and converge with the post-2015 development agenda. The aim is to promote convergence towards one universal post-2015 agenda with *sustainable development at its core*.

In his report entitled "**A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress toward the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the UN development agenda**"

World Refugee Day - June 20th

- More than 50 million people are currently displaced by war and violence, some 33.3 million in their own country and some 16.7 million as refugees, mostly in neighboring countries.
- Last year alone, more than 10 million people were newly displaced; every 15 minutes, one family was forced into flight.
- The conflict in Syria was one of the main reasons behind this massive increase. Large numbers of people were also uprooted in Mali as a result of fresh eruptions of fighting in the Central African Republic and South Sudan.
- The United States resettles more refugees than all other countries combined. Nearly 70,000 refugees from 65 nations found a new home in the U.S. last year.
- As of this writing, in Iraq more than 300,000 people have fled from the violence of Mosul.
- As ocean waters warm and sea levels rise, the people of the South Pacific Islands are in great risk of losing their island homes. Where will they go?



beyond 2015,” the UN Secretary General called for a **“new vision and a responsive framework.”** “Sustainable development,” he says, “enabled by the integration of economic growth, social justice and environmental stewardship, must become our global guiding principle . This is a universal agenda that requires profound economic transformations and a new global partnership.”

The Open Working Group on SDGs will complete its work on July 18th. In their draft statement, the Members recognize that poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the essential requirements for sustainable development. At present, there are 17 proposed goals to be attained by 2030. These include poverty eradication; ending hunger and achieving food security; secure water and sanitation for all; attain gender equality, empower women and girls; provide equitable and inclusive education; promote actions at all levels to address climate change; protect and restore all ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss. Once the draft is finalized, the member States will continue to negotiate the final text, which will become operational in 2015.

Among the concerns expressed by civil society during the SDG process have been the question of human rights, and how

they are woven into the final document; the importance of a stand-alone goal on water and sanitation; and the growing concern regarding the extent to which the corporate sector will influence the agenda. The fall edition of this newsletter, as well as UN briefings on the DomLife website through the summer will highlight these issues.

RESPONSE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Abby McCrary, Dominican Volunteer



U.S. Dominicans

This spring, an Amnesty International document entitled “Decriminalization of Sex Work: Policy Background Document.” was leaked, causing quite a stir. In it, the prestigious human rights organization advocates for the right to buy and sell sex. Such an aim is clearly in opposition to Amnesty International’s mission, and would seem to ignore the exploitation and

violence endemic in the prostitution industry.

The Dominican Leadership Conference, represented by Abby McCrary on the UN NGO Committee to Stop Trafficking in Persons (CSTIP), composed a statement to encourage Amnesty International to more thoroughly examine their stance in light of how it could potentially create a climate for sex trafficking and exploitation to flourish. In part, this statements reads: "As legal regulations are lessened, prosecution becomes even more difficult in cases of human trafficking. Decriminalization...makes it more difficult for prosecutors to identify and punish traffickers. Full decriminalization of prostitution fuels the growth of modern-day slavery by providing a façade behind which traffickers of sexual exploitation are able to operate more effectively."

Our Sisters Abroad

Meanwhile, our Sisters in Europe and Asia-Pacific are also very involved in this issue through RENATE (Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation - www.renate-europe.net) and TALITHA KUM in the Philippines. Our Dominican Sister Cecilia Espenilla (Philippines) writes, "We, the Dominican Sisters of the Philippines have agreed that our common advocacy is to fight human trafficking. Hence, since last year we have organized talks and seminars on human trafficking and participated in the same seminar organized recently by Bishops

Conference of the Philippines. This school year we will do intensive awareness campaign to both Private and Public Schools students, the most vulnerable targets of traffickers, where the mission of the sisters are situated. We focus on the 3 Ps, **P**revention and **P**artnership and **P**rayer. We have been in partnership with Visayan Forum, one of the most successful NGOs in the Philippines in fighting human trafficking. Another important element that I think we religious should get involved in, if we have the opportunity, is to sit on human trafficking meetings of the government. I am fortunate that I was given an invitation to sit in this kind of meeting of the Department of Justice of the **I**nter-**A**gency **C**ouncil **A**gainst **T**rafficking (IACAT) which is being Chaired by the Vice-President of the Philippines himself, Honorable VP Binay."

A Dominican Network

Sr. Cecilia, along with our Dutch Sister Marjolein Brunein are in the process of starting to organize a global network of Dominicans engaged in advocacy against human trafficking and exploitation. This is a wonderful response to one the greatest tragedies of our time, described by Pope Francis as "an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ. It is a crime against humanity."

TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP



Who Will Bear the Cost?

The Trans-Pacific Partnership is a vast international free trade agreement currently being negotiated between large corporations and 12 nations in the Pacific Rim – the United States, Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. The crafting of this agreement has been done largely behind closed doors, and the US has been at the front-and-center of negotiations. One of the most troubling aspects of the agreement is the **Investor-State-Dispute-Resolution** which gives corporations the power to sue governments if they pass public interest

laws that infringe on the capacity of corporations to profit. Consumer laws, environmental protections and climate policies, public health laws, food labeling laws can then all be regarded as “infringing on investor rights.” But what about Peoples’ rights? And what about the right of Earth and her ecosystems to their God-given integrity?

For an excellent exposé on how transnational corporations use trade and investment treaties as powerful tools in disputes over oil, mining, and gas, see **Mining for Profits in International Tribunals: Lessons for the Trans-Pacific Partnership**. The TPP and mining, report available in English and Spanish: http://www.ips-dc.org/reports/mining_for_profits_update2013

2014 UN Observances

- 5 June - **World Environment Days**
- 20 June - **World Refugee Day**
- 30 July - **World Day Against Trafficking in Persons**
- 19 August - **World Humanitarian Day**
- 5 September - **International Day of Charity**
- 21 September - **International Day of Peace**
- 20 - 21 September - **People’s Climate March NYC**
- 23 September - **UN Climate Summit**

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