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58th ANNUAL DPI/NGO CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 7-9, 2005

The theme of the 58th Annual DPI/NGO Conference was “Our Challenge: Voices for Peace, Partnerships and Renewal”.

The keynote speakers highlighted the role of NGOs in improving public health, nutrition, education, the environment and standards of living worldwide. The realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) depends on the political will of the Member States to pursue them. Civil Society and NGOs in particular must promote at the local and national level democratic processes and good governance, advocate fair trade and labor laws, support and finance development initiatives, and oppose violence against women and children. Civil Society and NGOs must also present alternative models and success stories on multilateral cooperation.

The roundtable discussions focused on three major areas of concern: Envisioning a Secure World; Eradicating Poverty: Timelines and Lifelines; United Nations and Civil Society.

The Secretary General, in his address on Peace and Renewal, stressed the “responsibility to protect” and urged the Member States to take collective action to defend vulnerable populations against genocide, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. He called on governments to lay down criteria for Security Council decisions on the use of force, and proposed the creation of a Peace Building Commission and Support Office to help win peace in post-conflict countries. He asked Member States to adopt the proposed comprehensive conventions against terrorism and organized crime. There is a groundswell of support among NGOs for this emerging security consensus.

Contribution of VIVAT to the 58th Annual DPI/NGO Conference: **Participation** of Gretta Fernandes, Lawrence Correa, Reynaldo Jimenez, Daisuke Narui and John Shevlin; **Volunteered** for Registration; **Co-sponsored** the mid-day interactive workshop on Care with Dignity: Good Practices to HIV/AIDS, and **made a presentation** on this theme.

WORLD SUMMIT 2005, SEPTEMBER 14–16, 2005

The 60th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, dubbed as the 2005 World Summit, attracted the biggest gathering of world leaders ever. The main document, which was signed after extensive discussions, heated debates and numerous amendments, outlined the Millennium Development Goals. It was a follow up and assessment of the Millennium Summit document.

On development, all governments reiterated their commitment to achieve the MDGs by 2015. Concretely, this means an additional investment of \$50 billion a year to eradicate poverty. At the same time, developing countries must put in place national

plans for achieving the MDGs. Member countries approved the cancellation of the entire multilateral and bilateral debt of heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC), and significant debt relief or restructuring for low and middle income developing countries with unsustainable debt burdens. Other proposals included debt equity swap for development projects. In return, lender countries will own shares in said projects. Other commitments were universal primary education, elimination of pervasive gender discrimination, protection of the environment, humanitarian assistance and relief services, commitment to innovative sources of financing for

development, and funds for anti-malarial and HIV/AIDS efforts.

For the first time, all governments condemned terrorism in one voice. There was agreement to create a Peace-building Commission and to strengthen the Secretary General's capability for mediation. The governments accepted their collective international responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. To this end, there was agreement to establish the UN Human Rights Council during the coming year and to create a new Democracy Fund, which has already received pledges of \$32 million from 13 countries.

Kofi Annan, in his address, reminded the Assembly of the importance of UN reform. He acknowledged the shortcomings of the UN, but stressed its

importance and relevance. He cited President Franklin Roosevelt, who called on the world leaders to have "the courage to fulfill our responsibilities in an admittedly imperfect world". Kofi Annan admitted that the UN has not measured up to its responsibilities fully. But because the world is imperfect, the world needs the UN to fulfill its responsibilities.

NGOs and Civil Society representatives were given an opportunity to address the assembly. One of them stressed the need for mobilizing domestic financial resources first before inviting foreign direct investment. But a just international trade order is vital. Another spoke about gender equality and development, echoing the World Social Forum message: "another world is possible".

SUMMER OF PRAYER AND ADVOCACY PROJECT

While the world leaders gathered for the World Summit at the United Nations, New York, September 14-16, 2005, there were several other events taking place outside the UN. One such event was the "Summer of Prayer and Advocacy Project". It was an inter-faith event to pray for the eradication of poverty and to lobby world leaders in eradicating poverty. VIVAT was a member of the planning committee of the Summer of Prayer and the

Advocacy Project. This event included prayers by Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians for peace and an end to poverty. There were press releases and letters to President Bush urging him to support the eradication of poverty. The participants were invited to make a pledge to fight poverty. As all religions are committed to helping the poor, there is much scope for cooperation among the religions in the eradication of poverty.

EXPERT MEETING ON INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Expert Meeting on International Migration and Development was held at the United Nations Headquarters from July 6-8, 2005. This meeting was a forum for the exploration of key aspects of international migration and development.

There were about 15 speakers from different parts of the world, who spoke on topics such as economic and developmental impacts, skilled and unskilled labor, migration, remittances, management of migration flows, recruiters, forced migration, and human rights of migrants. The speakers discussed the dynamic interrelationship among these aspects and highlighted the changing trends in international migration.

VIVAT members are working with migrants in several countries. In Japan, for example, they

work with the migrants from Brazil, Peru and the Philippines. Volunteers are helping them through consultation, creating networks, organizing groups, operating shelters for the victims of domestic violence and human trafficking, advocacy and providing information.

For more information on the work of VIVAT members with migrants in Japan, visit: www.vivatinternational.org→Poverty Eradication→Migration→Mikawa Catholic Center – A Project for Migrants in Japan.

VIVAT members are encouraged to send reports on their work with migrants, victims of human trafficking, and refugees, to VIVAT Executive Team.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

JOHN SHEVLIN, SVD AT THE 58th ANNUAL DPI/NGO CONFERENCE AT UN, NEW YORK

Along with the VIVAT New York Team, I attended the 58th Annual DPI/NGO Conference at the UN in New York from Sept 7 – 9, 2005. The theme was: “Our Challenge: Voices of Peace, Partnerships and Renewal”. Right from the start I was struck by three things. The first was the obvious enthusiasm and professionalism of the VIVAT staff. The second was how well established VIVAT seemed to be. The third thing that struck me was the sheer magnitude of the event on hand. I had to stand in a long line for two hours to receive a security badge. At that time we were told that as of August 10th the registration figures were as follows: 2,697 NGO representatives, 1,069 organizations from 121 countries.

Jean Ping (from Gabon), President of the 59th Session of the General Assembly gave the opening address. He and other notables from the UN after him, all made it very clear that the government delegates were busy putting together an agreeable working document for the World Summit due to take place in a few days (Sept 14-16). One country was said to be proposing 700 amendments and the time was running out fast. Another huge obstacle was that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which all countries had agreed upon in 2000, were being threatened to be dropped from the agenda. It was an awesome feeling to be actively present at such a critical and dramatic moment in

UN history, as part of a 3-day chorus of 3,000 people from every corner of the globe, raising up one united voice to the chaos above us, in support of the MDGs. The Conference stressed the need for programs for youth in general, and for quality education for girls in particular. In this context, I was delighted to meet three charming, articulate young ladies, all seniors in a Catholic high school.

I felt proud to see our delegate Greta Fernandes, SSpS, making a clear and powerful presentation at one of the mid day interactive workshops. The topic was “Care with Dignity: Good Practices and Approaches to HIV/AIDS”. Her presentation was well attended and well appreciated. This confirmed my impression that VIVAT is indeed well established, well on its feet and well able to be our voice at this International forum. This forum is now aligning itself with Civil Society Organizations, which are in the words of Kofi Annan “The world’s new Superpower”. He went on to say to the representatives “Partnership between the UN and civil society is not an option but a necessity.... Please keep making your voices heard loud and clear enough to lift the sky”. I came away from this DPI/NGO Conference reflecting and re-energized. (As reported by John Shevlin, SVD, e-mail dated September 22, 2005)

JPIC EURO-CONFERENCE, MOOS, GERMANY, SEPTEMBER 11-16, 2005



Twenty-one SVDs and SSpS, representing eight European countries met together in the pleasant surroundings and care of the SSpS of St. Theresienheim, Moos, to share our JPIC news, particularly in Europe, to learn more about VIVAT and to discern its future direction. We started looking at the situation from our own experience, from the reports of JPIC Coordinators from Rome and VIVAT, and we decided to focus on the “Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” of the United Nations, for our JPIC activities.

Towards this end Lawrence Correa, SVD who kindly joined us, and Greta Fernandes, SSpS, Chairperson of VIVAT Executive Team took pains

to guide us through the way VIVAT works so that we will get to know VIVAT better ourselves, and pass on this knowledge to the members of our Provinces/Regions using the existing infrastructure. In this way we will all operate as members of VIVAT in all our activities, to ensure the best possible help for those we are working with.

Throughout the Conference the topic of interfaith dialogue in relation to migration was seen to be becoming increasingly an issue of urgency in present day Europe, and therefore interfaith dialogue will be the main focus for the meeting in 2007. (As reported by Carmen Lee, SSpS, e-mail dated September 27, 2005)

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY – SERVICE IN MISSISSIPPI

Tutwiler, Mississippi is a small community where Habitat for Humanity makes a big difference in the lives of the people who call this place in Tallahatchie County, home. Helping others to realize the dream, “A Simple, Decent Place to Live,” has been the realization of this international building project.

residence, which was literally falling apart around them.

VIVAT members, namely, Carol Welp, SSpS, Marie Angela Risi, SSpS, and Dolores Marie Kuhl, SSpS, along with volunteers Purita Tongol and Teresa Hoang, Elizabeth Gonc and Carmine DiCicco left Techny, Illinois and headed south to help build homes. Arriving in the late afternoon, we entered the small town of Tutwiler and saw first-hand the homes that Habitat had built within the last two years. The house that the Techny group would be helping with was quite far along but still much work was needed on it before it was ready to be moved into. For the next two weeks in 98 to 100 degree temperatures, the Techny group and another group of volunteers from Barrington, Illinois, worked to complete the house which became a “home” for a family desperately in need to move out of their

After two weeks of hard labor, Mark Sturgis, Director of Habitat for Humanity for Tallahatchie County and his assistant, J.D. Smith, announced that the work on the house was finally complete. What a day for rejoicing for all concerned! The house was blessed and the family moved in. One of the two small boys could not believe his eyes... and jumped up and cried out... “Mommy is this really my own, my very own room?”

This was a very rich experience in which each one had their eyes opened to the reality of poverty here in the USA. Most of the Team members didn’t realize that there is so much poverty in our country, but what struck them most was the people’s resiliency to live a full life of joy in the midst of their poverty.

(As reported by Rose Therese, SSpS, e-mail dated September 18, 2005)

DAYS TO OBSERVE

- *November 16 International Day for Tolerance
- *November 20 Universal Children's Day
- *November 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- *December 01 World AIDS Day
- *December 02 International Day for the Abolition of Slavery
- *December 03 International Day of Disabled Persons
- *December 10 Human Rights Day
- *December 18 International Migrants Day

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