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## THE 59<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL DPI/NGO CONFERENCE, SEPTEMBER 6- 8, 2006

The 59<sup>th</sup> Annual DPI/NGO Conference had the theme: Unfinished Business: Effective Partnerships for Human Security and Sustainable Development. Close to 2,000 participants from Civil Society, Private Organization, NGOs and Academia gathered to discuss, propose, network and share good practices to move forward the unfinished business still pending before the world body.

A unique requirement for all participating organizations was to include at least one youth delegate. This also translated into incorporating a youth panelist in all the round tables and midday workshops. The rationale behind this was to promote the participation of the young and enable their voices to be heard at the conference.

The conference focused on two burning issues: human security and sustainable development. In his opening address, Katsutoshi Kaneda, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, proposed that human security could be people-centered, empowering them to take charge of their own lives. Hans Blix, chairman of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, sounded the alarm over arms build up and said, “the process of arms control and disarmament has stagnated and must be revived”.

Sustainable development was addressed by first acknowledging the real situation of unequal distribution. Thus, development needs of the

least developed, landlocked and small island developing countries’ must be first addressed. Vice-President Álvaro García Linera of Bolivia addressed the participants, on behalf of the Bolivian President, through live video cast stressing that sustainable development means acceptance of diverse economic models, there is no one size fits all economic model.

Kofi Annan noted in his closing address that: “Non-governmental organizations continue to be essential allies of the United Nations, not only in mobilizing public opinion, but also in the process of policy formulation and in making them work on the ground; at the country and community levels.” The growing ties among the NGOs, UN and member states reflect a changing world, though full of uncertainties and dangers, bodes for more opportunities for true human security and realized sustainable development.

The round table discussions and midday workshops gave examples on how these partnerships can work. NGOs and Civil Society do play a major role. Kofi Annan puts it this way: “I see a United Nations that celebrates the non-governmental revolution the power of the global citizen as the best thing that has happened to our Organization in a long time”. VIVAT participated in the Conference and was also a member of the Planning Committee on Midday Workshops.

## **UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE ON MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT, SEPTEMBER 14 – 15, 2006**

The UN General Assembly held the high-level dialogue on Migration and Development on September 14 & 15, 2006, to discuss the multidimensional aspects of international migration and development and to identify appropriate ways and means to maximize its benefits and minimize its negative impacts. It had a strong focus on policy issues, including linking these issues with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The main documents referred to and discussed were the Secretary General's Report on Migration and Development, Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, Compendium of Recommendations on International Migration and Development, Summary of the Informal Hearings with NGOs, Civil Society and the Private Sector and some others.

In his welcome address, Kofi Annan urged the member states to view the migration phenomenon positively and to link migration with development. First, to acknowledge that all countries face similar migration challenges. Second, the benefits of migration far outweigh the negative impact and lastly, to build partnerships instead of creating division is far more beneficial in the long run. He also proposed the establishment of a Global Forum on Migration and Development to continue the dialogue, which Belgium has generously offered

to host. Interventions from member states welcomed this development. Some member states even went further and proposed regional consultations and invited the "Special Rapporteur" on migration and development, Peter Sutherland, to visit their countries in preparation for the Global Forum.

Some other concerns expressed by member states were on "brain drain", "labor contract migration", "portable" social security and retirement contributions, disaggregated data on migration, refugees, quota system, return migration or reintegration, ravages of HIV/AIDS, high cost of sending remittances, persistence of human trafficking and of course, "illegal" or irregular migration. Some solutions were also presented. On brain drain and illegal migration, some member states proposed investing in the educational system and in the creation of more "decent work" opportunities in countries of origin. Remittances should not be seen as a replacement for Official Development Assistance (ODA), but as a potent tool for delivering social services. Some member states acknowledge the "new" face of migration wherein distinctions like sending and receiving, north and south are blurring.

VIVAT Executive Team had the opportunity to participate in the high level dialogue as observers.

## **COMPREHENSIVE GLOBAL REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE DECADE 2001-2010**

The High-level meeting on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) was held on September 18-19, 2006 intended for a midterm global review on the agreed Program of Action (PoA). There are seven key agreements: (a) Fostering a people-centered policy framework; (b) Good governance at national and international levels; (c) Building human and institutional capacities;

(d) Building productive capacities to make globalization work for the least developed countries; (e) Enhancing the role of trade in development; (f) Reducing vulnerability and protecting the environment; (g) Mobilizing financial resources. These key agreements constitute "a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy tailored to the special needs of the least

developed countries that is to be implemented through cooperation between the least developed countries and their development partners”, Kofi Annan said (A/RES/61/1).

The basic outcome of the High-level meeting was the recommitment of the member states to the PoA. Member states acknowledged their crucial role in uplifting the LDCs though primary responsibility lies with the LDCs

themselves. They are development partners along with UN bodies, multilateral/international organizations, NGOs, Private Sector Organizations and Civil Society continue to play an important role in not only highlighting the issue but also instituting programs that work to alleviate poverty on the ground. VIVAT Executive Team participated as observers in the high-level dialogue.

## **REPORTS FROM THE FIELD**

### **Meeting of VIVAT Members in Cochabamba, Bolivia**

On August 10, Sister Gretta Fernandes, SSpS, the chairperson of VIVAT International gave a conference to some thirty five members. It just so happened, at that particular time, a large group of SVDs were attending a week of spiritual retreat in Cochabamba and Sister Gretta was finishing her course work in Spanish there. So it was an ideal time for all to come together.

Sister Gretta gave a very informative and instructive Power Point presentation in Spanish, concerning the work and recent developments of VIVAT at the United Nations. All the members were strongly encouraged to collaborate with the United Nations, especially in the following, areas, namely: Poverty Eradication, Empowerment of Women, HIV/AIDS, Sustainable Development and the Promotion of Peace.

During the interactive session, the members wanted to know the answers to the following, namely: What do we have to do in order to

respond to the JPIC issues that arise, where we live and work? And how does one use the influence of VIVAT to help people who do not know how to defend their own rights?

Gretta Fernandes emphasized the importance and function of "networking" both at the grassroots and systemic level. We were encouraged to take advantage of our consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, by networking with UN programs at the specific country level. She also encouraged the members to form/join networks with like-minded NGOs/individuals in the local/regional areas.

The immediate task set before us now is to team together as VIVAT members in Bolivia and to look for, or create possibilities to answer the challenges of eradicating poverty, promoting sustainable development, and empowering women. (As reported by Rosa Damai, SSpS e-mail dated September 29, 2006).

### **Center for Middle Education for Adults (CEMA), Batallas, Bolivia**

CEMA is located in Batallas, near the shores of Lake Titicaca, was founded in 1985 by the initiative of VIVAT International members working among the people. CEMA is a response to the concerns of many young people and parents who, for a variety of reasons, have not finished their studies, or, in some cases, have

not had any opportunity for formal education. VIVAT members are responsible for the administration of two such educational centers that are types of Alternative Education. Since 2003 CEMA has incorporated various levels of Primary Education of Adults (EPA), beginning with the basics of learning the

alphabet and finishing with a certificate of Secondary Education for Adults (ESA).

Due to continuing population growth, and the scarce demand for unskilled labor and the extreme marginalization of the youth who go to the cities in search of better opportunities, there is growing frustration. They see little hope of studying since they cannot afford to pay for their studies nor find dignified and stable work. Because of this, in 1999 the Bolivian Institute of Learning (IBA) was begun: IBA Espiritu Santo is located in the area of Batallas. This Institute belongs to the modality of Technical Education for Adults (ETA). It is based in the teaching areas of commercial and manual technical arts, thus giving the students the opportunity for a level of accreditation from Qualified Operator to Auxiliary Technicians.

Among many other activities there is formation/education of women in technical

areas as well as in general knowledge from literacy to the baccalaureate degree. This work is carried out in the communities that belong to Batallas (Kanapata, Igachi, Catacora, Huancane, Karwiz, Suriquina, Puerto Perez, Carcoma distrito Laja). The courses and workshops that are provided are: Basics in computers, office-secretary, typing, computer, accounting, poultry raising, macramé, hand weaving, machine weaving, painting on cloth, hair styling and cosmetology, and web page design. Depending on the duration of the courses, they will receive certification in one to two years.

Finally, there is a base infrastructure in the area of Batallas having four classrooms and four rooms for workshops. The Center has 15 facilitators. The immediate priority is to expand the educational programs so as to reach even more communities in the neighborhood. (Report submitted by Alicia Estela, SSpS)

### **Hearty welcome to Bernard Espiritu, SVD to VIVAT Executive Team, New York**

We extend a warm welcome to Fr. Bernard Espiritu, SVD to VIVAT Central office, New York. Bernard has been working in Australia for the past 15 years and previously worked in Brazil for 7 years. He is from the Philippines. We wish him good luck in this very important ministry of VIVAT International at the Central Office, in New York.

### **Upcoming Events at the United Nations**

Poverty Forum, November 15 –16, 2006

### **Important Dates to Remember**

November 25: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Dec 1: World AIDS Day

Dec 3: International Day of Disabled Persons

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