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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN – 49TH SESSION

Dorothy Laufmann, SSpS, Lawrence Correa, SVD and Gretta Fernandes, SSpS took part in the Forty-Ninth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women from February 28 to March 11, 2005 at the United Nations Headquarters, New York. Highlights of the meeting were: It was one of the biggest events at the UN as 6000 women and men took part in it. There were almost 1500 Government delegates and 3000 NGO and Civil Society members and many UN staff members.

The main features of the meeting were, plenary sessions by the Government delegates and side events organized by NGOs, different UN agencies and caucuses on issues related to women such as Development, Gender Equality, HIV/AIDS, Peace and Security, Trafficking, Health and so on.

All participants stressed the importance of gender equality and empowerment of women. The discussions and meetings demanded that the Beijing Platform for Action be implemented, as

that is necessary to achieve gender equality. The Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved without implementing the Beijing Platform for Action.

The Governments have once again pledged and have called upon the United Nations, international and regional organizations, all sectors of civil society including NGOs as well as all women and men to fully commit themselves and to intensify their contributions to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

A concrete contribution from VIVAT to the Commission was the participation of Lawrence as a discussant at one of the side events on 'Women in Least Developing Countries and the Right to Development'. For more details on the Session and VIVAT contribution, visit: www.vivatinternational.org → Women → Commission on the Status of Women.

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – 13TH SESSION

The 13th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was held at the United Nations Headquarters, New York from April 11 to 22, 2005. The goal of the Session was to continue the focus on water, sanitation and human settlements, initiated at the 12th Session. It is necessary to draw concrete plans, proposals and measures to fulfill targets set out under the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,

which resulted from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), and to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals. Delegates discussed the importance of finding the necessary funds to achieve these measures, both from within the Nations and from the international community, for example, increased Official Development Assistance (ODA).

A draft of Chair's Text was used as the starting point, which came about from the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting (IPM) for CSD, held from February 28 to March 4, 2005. Many from the Governments and the Major Groups, which include NGOs, feel a sense of urgency to implement now what has been already decided in the earlier Conferences and Summits, rather than setting new targets for the future. Gretta Fernandes, SSpS and Lawrence Correa, SVD actively participated in

this process. VIVAT also submitted a Statement to the Commission, to the European Union and to the Chair of the Bureau of the Commission on Sustainable Development, highlighting mainly the importance of making freshwater available to all, and not to make it a private commodity. Detailed information on this Commission and the Statement of VIVAT can be found in: www.vivatinternational.org→ Sustainable Development.

VIVAT EXECUTIVE TEAM PARTICIPATION AT UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK, February – April 2005. IN BRIEF:

- * Forty-third Session of the Commission for Social Development, February 9-18, 2005. Also made a presentation on Microcredit as part of a side event.
- * Forty-ninth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, February 28-March 11, 2005, and was the discussant in a side event.
- * Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting (IPM) for CSD, February 28 – March 4, 2005.
- * Multistakeholder Consultation on Debt as part of Financing for Development: March 7-8, 2005, and was part of a sub-group that prepared talking points on Debt.
- * ECOSOC NGO Forum, March 10, 2005.
- * Development Conference, March 14-15, 2005.
- * Preparatory Meeting for the High Level

Segment of the Substantive Session of ECOSOC, March 16-17. Made an intervention during roundtable on Trade.

- * Thirteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), April 11-22, 2005. Submitted a Statement to the Commission, mainly highlighting the importance of making freshwater available to all, and not making it a private commodity.
- * Special High-Level Meeting of ECOSOC with the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, April 18, 2005. Made specific contributions during the Roundtable on “ODA, Innovative Sources of Financing and Debt”.

Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005 – 2014

The United Nations General Assembly has established a United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, in which UNESCO is the lead agency to promote the Decade. The Decade aims to promote education as the basis for a sustainable human society and to strengthen international cooperation toward the development of

innovative policies, programs and practices of education for sustainable development (ESD). All VIVAT members are encouraged to network with UN agencies, Government bodies, other NGOs, Educational Institutions and local communities for a better, lasting sustainable future. (For more information, visit: <http://portal.unesco.org/education>)

IMPORTANT DATES TO OBSERVE

***World Telecommunication Day – May 17 *World Environment Day – June 5**

REPORTS FROM THE MEMBERS

Taking Roots in One's Ancestral Lands: Collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

Holy Spirit Center of Tariaac, Inc. has received a small grant from UNDP for the project: "Taking Roots in One's Ancestral Lands". The project entails a process of consulting, enabling, and empowering indigenous communities to manage the natural resources within their ancestral domain. These indigenous communities will be

involved in reforestation and sustainable agriculture as they actualize their Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP). These communities will venture into sustainable livelihood activities that they can adopt as a resource management Strategy. (Echoes, January 2005)

VIVAT Members celebrate new life with Agtas of General Nakar, Quezon, Philippines North

On February 23rd, 2005, Mildred, SSpS, Carolyn, SSpS and Victoria, SSpS, joined the indigenous community of Agtas to celebrate new life and honor their dead who perished in the floods. The people shared their stories of how God has saved their lives and also the tragic stories of how parents and elders lost hold of the smaller children they were carrying as they were struggling to reach higher grounds

while negotiating through the rushing waters. Life would never be the same again for all the families in that village. They have lost all their belongings and all they had to live on. Listening to their stories and experiences, there was a greater sense and solidarity felt with them. (Echoes, February 2005)

Centro de Sao Jose in Porto Alegre, Brazil

The Center is located in the Rua Madrid in the city of Porto Alegre, State of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. It is managed by the SSpS and caters to 96 children between the ages of 7-14 years. These children come from below poverty line families and were also subjected to violence, alcoholism, drugs and malnutrition. The Tutorial Council, or the Judge or Social Assistants sends these children to the center as they are caught in drug trafficking. Various workshops such as manual arts, like designing, painting, making use of scrap iron and delusive material, dancing, reading, writing, and

introduction to computer work are offered to them. Maria Ines Mathias, SSpS, coordinates the program whose main aim is to re-integrate these vulnerable teenagers into society, teaching them the values of life, the consequences of drug use, and protection of the environment. At the same time, possibilities in technical jobs are opened up to them. Many individuals and groups voluntarily help the Center through their service, donations, resource materials, children's books, teaching aids and with food. (As reported by Sr. Sylvia, SSpS)

Messengers of Hope – Tsunami relief work in Banda Ache, Indonesia

Michael Heinz, SVD reports how the VIVAT members are involved in the relief work among the victims of Tsunami in Indonesia. In small and big ways the members are assisting the people in reintegrating, and begin to live their lives anew with respect and dignity. The

women are helped to buy sewing machines to become self-sufficient, young students are assisted to find study materials and travel allowances to go to school, food is provided for the people who are involved in clearing up and rebuilding the village. VIVAT International

greatly appreciates the members in Indonesia for identifying themselves as VIVAT members and gaining greater trust and acceptance from the

Government and the people. (For more information visit **VIVAT Website Home Page: Messengers of Hope**)

Anti-racism work in Chicago, Illinois, USA

As a principal of a school in Chicago from 1975 – 2001, **Mary Miller SSpS** has been working primarily among the people of color and is engaged in the work of dismantling racism for the past 25 years. As a member of an Anti-racism Team, she continues this work in collaboration with Crossroads Ministry. The team educates and trains organizations to analyze racism and to develop and implement strategies to dismantle racism and to build anti-racist multicultural diversity. Many school teachers, administrators and support personnel

have participated in trainings and seminars conducted by the Anti-racism Team. The trainings help people to understand the nature and history of institutional racism, to understand and accept a common analysis of institutional racism, and to become proficient in creating a strategic plan to eliminate racism in the society. VIVAT International wishes that the anti-racism work might bring in unity and oneness among all the people. (For more information contact **Mary Miller, SSpS: mmill51@attglobal.net**)

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FORTH COMING EVENTS AT THE UN

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII) – Fourth Session: The Fourth Session of PFII will be held from May 16 to 27, 2005 at UN Headquarters, New York. The themes for the Session are the first two Millennium Development Goals, “Eradicate extreme Poverty and Hunger”, and “Universal Primary Education.” Lawrence Correa, SVD, Daisuke Narui, SVD and Gretta Fernandes, SSpS will be participating in this Session.

Informal Hearings for the NGOs from June 23 to 24: These are organized to give the NGOs

an opportunity to put forward issues and contributions to the Millennium +5 Summit to be held at the UN in New York in September.

Substantive Session of ECOSOC 2005: High Level Segment, June 29 to July 1; Coordination Segment, July 5-7; Operational Activities Segment, July 8-12; Humanitarian Affairs Segment, July 13-18; General Segment, July 18-25; and Conclusion of ECOSOC, July 26-27. More information is available at:

<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/meetings2005.html>

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