



Newsletter No. 46

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Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 46th online issue of the VIVAT Newsletter.

In this issue we highlight some of the major initiatives of VIVAT, such as addressing the widespread issue of mining and protecting the indigenous populations of the Riberia Valley, Brazil.

In light of the recent tragic disasters in Southeast Asia, many VIVAT members have responded and continue to actively respond to the needs of the many victims.

As always, we welcome feedback, ideas, stories, and updates from all of our members. We celebrate the unique insight, experience, and talent that VIVAT members possess and are encouraged by all the work that you are doing. Please send us your comments and feedback to viny@vivatinternational.org

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*“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is,
‘What are you doing for others?’”*

-Martin Luther King Jr.

VIVAT Members Address Alarming Issues in Mining

For centuries, mining has been a source of economic revenue for those exploiting areas abundant in valuable natural resources. In our modern world, some mining of resources is essential for our lifestyles: cell phones, automobiles, computer technologies, and modern construction of buildings would not be possible without exploiting natural resources. But while the positive effects of mining and the use of the mined resources can easily be seen worldwide, often the most pressing and concerning negative effects including grave health risks to local populations and alarming environmental degradation are the effects that go unnoticed and unmentioned.

VIVAT and its members, along with the United Nations Division for Sustainable Development - NGO Major Group, NGO Committee on the United Nations International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples Issues and the Mining Working Group, have been working to raise awareness of the negative impacts of mining and

to persuade governments and other actors to discourage over-exploitation of lands and protect the rights of indigenous peoples affected by mining. Negative effects include, but by no means are limited to, violations of the basic human rights of indigenous communities; corruption within local governments and mining corporations leading to unfair distribution of profits, often

"Members have been working to combat these injustices... promote human rights of indigenous communities and maintenance of a sustainable environment."

completely bypassing indigenous communities' rights to the profits; and grave environmental and health concerns regarding mining and its effects on the surrounding community and environment. These negative effects are largely ignored by local governments and mining companies, and the voices of harmed communities are

shunted aside and disregarded.

VIVAT members have been working on a number of fronts to combat these injustices and bring to light many of the egregious actions of corrupt governments and

mining companies in an effort to promote human rights of indigenous communities and maintenance of a sustainable environment. The UN Division for Sustainable Development has organized a Review Session to discuss global issues in five thematic issues: transport, chemicals, waste management, mining, and sustainable consumption and production. VIVAT and its members have taken an active role in participating in the Review Session through the CSD Major Groups Programme. Within the program, participating NGOs may contribute to a focus paper discussing the five thematic issues, as well as help compile information and research on the discussed topics for the Secretary General's report for CSD-18.

FORCAM SIKKA (Forum Cendekia-wan Asal Manggarai), a partner of VIVAT in Maumere, Indonesia, has been an especially active member in dealing with mining issues. As part of the input



This mining facility on Flores Island, Indonesia, is one of many that threaten the rights, health, & safety of local indigenous populations, depletes the environment around it, and engenders much crime and mistrust through greed for exploitation.

to the Secretary General's report for CSD-18, FORCAM put together an anti-mining letter and petition highlighting several negative effects of mining specifically on Flores Island, Indonesia. The letter was widely circulated to the local government in Flores, and copies were also sent to the offices of Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, the President of Indonesia, Pope Benedict XVI, several prominent cabinet members of the Indonesian government, and many others. FORCAM also contributed a case study to the CSD-18 Major Groups Program, which specifically discussed three districts

of Manggarai, Flores Island, which have been severely impacted by local mining exploitation and excavation projects.

In order to better consolidate all research and information regarding mining between VIVAT members, an online list-serve group has been set up for VIVAT members to share files, photos, videos, and other information regarding their work on the subject. While the group is still in the growing stages, it will hopefully become a great mechanism for linking together VIVAT members who are all working for the same goal.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF MINING

Violations of basic human rights:

- **Lack of informed consent and consultation of Indigenous communities involved and, therefore: violation of ILO 169, which many of the host countries have signed; violation of UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Articles 10, 19, 28, 29, 32;**
- **Buying Indigenous lands that are traditionally held communally; and violation of land rights.**

Environmental and health issues:

- **Destruction of natural resources, trees and forests; water sources, rivers and wells dried up, re-directed and/or contaminated;**
- **Skin diseases and mysterious deaths; contamination and death of livestock;**
- **Food shortages resulting from contamination and environmental degradation;**
- **Destruction and waste of land once mining activities have ceased; refusal of mining companies to work towards reclamation of land; large amounts of waste, including toxic waste, generated;**
- **Fissures/damage in walls of homes.**

Resolution 1888: A Victory for Women and Girls Worldwide

On September 30, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton presided over the U.N. Security Council meeting where a unanimous decision was made to pass Resolution 1888 of 2009. This document is extremely significant to advancing both women and girl's rights around the world. It is a resolution that, as a statement released by the U.S. Department of State's Office of the Spokesman declares, "builds on two previous Security Council resolutions, 1820 and 1325, which were instrumental in raising the issue of sexual violence in conflict-related situations onto the Security Council's agenda."



The resolution condemns the sexual violence that takes place against women during times of war, and acknowledges the importance of creating spaces for reconciliation and justice initiatives for victims. It calls upon member states to bear the responsibility for ensuring human rights in their country through taking proactive measures, such as including women in peace building efforts. The resolution also asks for a U.N. Special Representative, who will "lead, coordinate, and advocate efforts to end conflict-related sexual violence against women and children."

20 YEARS OF RESISTANCE

Protecting the Ribeira Valley

It is one of VIVAT's strongest priorities and values to advocate for the rights of indigenous people as upheld by the United Nations. Thus, VIVAT has been actively working on supporting the indigenous Quilombo population of Brazil in their efforts to claim their human rights.

Since 1989, communities in the Ribeira Valley of the Sao Paulo state of Brazil have been actively demanding their rights. The Brazilian Aluminum Company (CBA), of the Votorantim Group, has been attempting to construct dams along the Ribeira de Iguape River to generate hydroelectric power for its operations. The Tijuco Alto Dam, one of four proposed dams, would create massive amounts of energy for the production of aluminum mainly for export. The benefits of this, however, would be enjoyed by this corporation while the brunt of the negative effects would fall on the local population and environment. Current VIVAT members ministering to the Quilombo communities in the Ribeira

Valley are from the Divine Word Society (SVD) and the Holy Rosary Sisters (MHRS). In the recent past, Spiritans (CSSp) and Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) also worked there.

The Ribeira Valley Quilombos are Afro-Brazilian rural communities, which group together descendents of runaway slaves living today from subsistent farming and whose cultural expressions have a strong link with the past. Having escaped from slavery, their ancestors formed independent settlements in the region and current Quilombo communities actively work for recognition and titles to their land. The Quilombo population has been historically oppressed and marginalized and the dam construction would only further complicate life for

them. Many of the Quilombo families have not been granted adequate documentation for their land and are threatened with losing their homes and livelihoods without any compensation for their displacement. Already over 230 families have been evicted from their land without any compensation as a result of the proposed dam construction. The displacement of

these communities presents many crucial problems and violations of human rights, as the livelihood of people is completely disrupted and they are often subjected to a lowered standard of living.

The dam construction presents a major threat to the region of the Ribeira Valley, to its rich cultural heritage, to the economy, and to the communities who live there. The dams would result in massive flooding of fertile land, altering all aspects of life in the region and disrupting farming and fishing (and thus the communities' source of income). Much of the sediment in the river have already been contaminated with lead and other metals,

which have been dumped from mining activity into the river for years. Dam construction would provoke water contamination by releasing the sediment and would pose a serious threat to the surrounding communities and environment. Deforestation and erosion as a result of dam development would reduce the rich environment of the Ribeira Valley and its potential for ecotourism and sustainable development. There are many opportunities in the region for the latter that would improve the quality of life for inhabitants that the dam construction jeopardizes.

Articles 215 and 216 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution state that the government has a duty to protect and support the cultural rights, including the



expression of Afro-Brazilian cultures. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the General Assembly in 2007 with the aim of eliminating human rights violations, discrimination, and marginalization of indigenous peoples. The declaration, which Brazil was strongly in favor of, “promotes the full and effective participation in all matters that concern [indigenous peoples] and their right to remain distinct and to pursue their own visions of economic and social development.” With these commitments, the Brazilian government can be held accountable for the negative impacts that the construction of dams poses for the indigenous people of the Ribeira Valley.

The Movement of People Affected by Dams (MOAB) was founded in 1991 to address the issue facing local communities by the proposed construction of dams along the Rio Iguape River. Maria Sueli Berlanga, attorney and activist, has been a strong advocate for the rights of the Quilombolas and a voice against the major problems that the dam construction would mean for their lives. Berlanga, along with other activists Angela Biaglioni, Ewerton Liborio, and Ivo Fiuza SVD, have joined with the local communities to protest the construction of the dams. Under the slogan “Land yes! Dams No!” MOAB has been actively voicing the need for environmental justice and sustainable development for the communities of the Ribeira Valley. Passing the

20-year benchmark of resistance in March of 2009, their effort and persistence in voicing their rights has created a strong movement of communities ensuring that this struggle will continue strong.

VIVAT International has partnered with Berlanga, the local Diocese of Registro (led by Bishop José Luíz Bertanha, SVD), with its clergy, religious and pastoral agents and the well organized NGO groups throughout Brazil in order to stop dam construction. VIVAT contacted the Mission of Brazil to the United Nations in September of 2008 in order to inform it of plans to present a document to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations addressing the issue of the proposed Ribeira dam construction. VIVAT presented a written statement to the 12th Session of the Human Rights Council in September of 2009 on Human Rights and Indigenous Communities in the Valley of River Ribeira. With help from contacts in the Ribeira Valley and in Geneva, this statement is now part of the official record of the Human Rights Council and has been circulated to all delegations of the United Nations.

It is the aim and hope of VIVAT to call international attention to the case of the Ribeira Valley as a support for those struggling for their human rights there. We will continue to work with and for the Quilombo Communities and advocate for “Dams No” alongside our VIVAT members and other courageous activists in the Ribeira Valley.

“The Ribeira Valley is environmental preservation, and traditional people are accustomed to living in harmony with the environment, not just someone out on behalf of a development to destroy an entire region.”

-Maria Sueli Berlanga

TERRA SIM! BARRAGEM NÃO!



MOAB

**Movimento dos ameaçados por Barragem - Vale do Ribeira
20 Anos de Resistência**

VIVAT Members Celebrate International Day of Peace 2009

The International Day of Peace, officially declared by the United Nations beginning in 1982 is celebrated every year on September 21st. This year, VIVAT members worldwide celebrated and commemorated the International Day of Peace (also called World Peace Day) through several services, prayer weeks, and other celebrations of peace.

In Chile, the Spiritual Forum of Santiago for Peace (CC), held several events and services surrounding World Peace Day. They organized prayer for peace in communities, which promoted community prayer services that brought together people of various religious faiths and spiritualities in united prayer for peace. They also instigated and helped run educational programs in schools through Chile in honor of the Day of Peace by providing guidelines both secular and interfaith activities promoting peace to schoolteachers for students of all ages. Finally, the Spiritual Forum also held a multi-religious ceremony of song and prayer including a loud voice reading of the Declaration for peace in the world (see picture above).

The Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation Commission of the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (JPICC-AMRSP), also organized numerous events around the

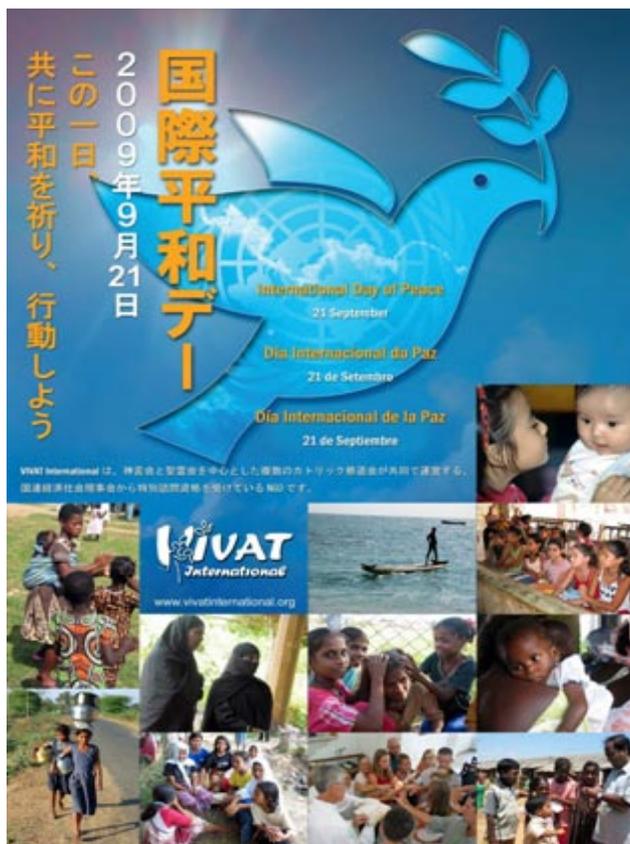


National Conference of Catholic Religious Congregations (CONFERRE) in Chile held a multi-religious ceremony of song and prayer on September 21st in celebration of the International Day of Peace.

International Day of Peace this year. They held a prayer week around the theme of “disarmament”, focusing each day on prayers directed at a specific form of disarming violence, culminating in a day of prayer on

Memphis, Tennessee, held by the St. Louis Parish in commemoration of World Peace Day. SSpS in Techny, Illinois, held a “Drum Roll for Peace,” which used music as a means of promoting peace. Finally, in Waukegan, Illinois, the Academy of Our Lady held a service for peace for students and teachers on the International Day of Peace.

This year VIVAT members showed true commitment to spreading the word of peace through prayer by finding many creative ways of observing and celebrating the International Day of Peace. Members used prayer in such events as prayer and service weeks, music and song celebrations, and educational programs all towards the same ultimate goal: to promote a peaceful world. Next year’s Day of Peace is sure to hold even more inspiring events promoting world peace and love by our VIVAT members.



Poster by: SVD and SSpS JPIC Committee JPN

HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE UN IN GENEVA

The work of protecting and promoting Human Rights has been a part of the UN agenda from its inception in the 1940's. It has developed a large number of instruments and mechanisms for this work over the past sixty years and continues to do so today. Yet, despite the complex nature of its structure and the extensive reach of its engagements it still remains an accessible and relatively open organization. This is particularly so with regard to the Human Rights Council and other units that are concerned with rights issues. Civil society is a necessary and strong participant in all these developments.

A clear example of how the UN is continuing to develop its work in relation to Human Rights is the recent addition of a Human Rights section within the UNHCR. The aim here is to ensure that all activities within the scope of the UNHCR is approached from a Human RIGHTS perspective. There are lawyers working within the UNHCR to ensure that this approach is implemented.

The Human Rights Council is one of the bodies in the UN system that encourages and welcomes the involvement of non State participants. The HRC meets three times a year and each of these meetings has the active participation of NGOs from around the world. While some of these have offices in Geneva, many come here just for the duration of the meetings or for particular segments of it. NGOs can make statements at these meetings, although the time allowed is limited. For some issues, such as country reviews they can ask questions. But with contacts within the State delegations this lack can be overcome. Recently VIVAT has made a statement about the situation in Vale do Ribeira in Brazil. This statement has now become part of the official record of the Human Rights Council and as such it has been circulated to all the delegations. So it has got publicity and the Brazilian delegation will be aware that it is part of the record.

Geneva is where 192 nations gather and participate in the debate about Hu-

man Rights. The conversation about country situations or particular abuses of Human Rights that takes place here can influence UN policies. Sometimes the discussion result in resolutions that demand further investigation or action. To have any influence on these discussions it is necessary to have a presence here in Geneva. But our involvement doesn't stop there. Our relationship with the HRC of the UN is two ways. As well as having access to the instruments and mechanisms of the Council, we can also be actively engaged with the various committees that are the monitoring bodies of the various treaties. For instance the Committee on various forms of Racial Discrimination monitors the International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination.

To assist the process of involving non government groups to engage with the HRC the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has produced "The Civil Society Handbook". This book is available on the UN website and can be downloaded in a few languages. It is clear and detailed in its information. It covers the important UN bodies dealing with human rights and provides practical information for those who wish to get involved directly.

For instance one of the more recent developments is the establishment of the Universal Periodic Review, the UPR for short. Each country undergoes a review by the Council during a four year period. Ethiopia, Cambodia and Norway were reviewed earlier this year and the report was presented at the HRC meeting in September/October 2009. These reviews Reports are prepared at a national level and by the UN. NGOs are welcomed to contribute to these reports and these can be important occasions for highlighting issues that concern our membership. A calendar of all the countries and when they will be reviewed is also available on the OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) website. Knowing the time of the review well in advance is es-



Broken Chair on the Place des Nations, Geneva

sential if groups wish to take part. The Universal Periodic Review of Brazil took place last year, and will not re-occur for another three years. A note about the OHCHR website: it can be difficult to find what you are looking for, but there is lots of good and helpful information on it.

The network of regional offices directly connected to the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights includes “Addis Ababa (East Africa), Bangkok, Beirut (Middle East), Bishkek (Central Asia), Dakar (West Africa), Panama (Latin America, with a small liaison office in Santiago, Chile, where the former Regional Office was located), Pretoria (Southern Africa),

and Suva (Pacific), and plans to open additional offices covering Southwest Asia and North Africa in the near future. In addition, country offices include Angola, Bolivia, Cambodia, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Nepal, Togo, and Uganda. There is one office in the occupied Palestinian territories and one in Kosovo (Serbia). These are some of the places where people can go for experience, provide support and advice, as well as, engage with other people and organizations with similar Human Rights concerns. Support can be given through technical cooperation and advice to the authorities and other national stakeholders for developing effective national human rights protection systems.

VIVAT Responds to Disasters in Southeast Asia

Many of VIVAT’s members in Southeast Asia have actively responded and continue in their efforts to help the victims of the natural disasters in Southeast Asia that occurred in late September.

On September 26th, Typhoon Ketsana (locally known as Ondoy) hit the Philippines with more rainfall in six hours than in an average month. Nearly 860 people were killed in flooding and in the landslides that resulted, while the Red Cross estimates that more than 300,000 people were displaced from their homes. Currently, the damage from the flooding is still a severe threat to the communities in and around the city of Manila. Stagnant floodwater, prone to contamination, is now a source of a potentially deadly rat-born bacteria disease that has already killed over 150 victims since the typhoon first hit.

VIVAT members Ben Beltran (JPIC PHC), Tony Salas (JPIC PHS), and Rosalinda Argosino are among many others in Manila actively working to help flood victims. Food, clothes, medicine, and other necessities were collected for the victims. JPIC PHC, along with San Carlos University and SVD, helped to mobilize donors and volunteers in the project “Power of Love” to address these immediate needs of the victims. With the donations given by some of the SSPS Provinces abroad, the Rosary Province (Philippines North) are now in the second phase of financial help victims to regain their livelihoods, to repair their houses and to buy other ne-

cessities.

The earthquakes and subsequent tsunamis that struck Samoa and Indonesia on the 29th of September and claimed the lives of over 1,000 people have made lasting impacts on the communities of these nations. The damage to infrastructure is a significant concern as many water networks have been affected, threatening many communities with lack of access to water.

Paul Rahmat, JPIC Coordinator of SVD Java Province Indonesia, worked alongside Caritas in Padang, Indonesia for six days in emergency response to the disaster. Thousands were trapped under the rubble that resulted and medical supplies, food, water, and shelter for those who lost their homes were urgent needs. With over 200,000 affected by the damage, many are still

in need of financial and material support; infrastructure rebuilding is crucial, along with water tanks to assure the water security for communities.

Many of VIVAT’s members are stressing the power of the human spirit to overcome and help one another that has come alongside tragic disaster. There is still much work to be done in aiding the victims, repairing the communities, and addressing the deeper issues of human abuse of nature that can further amplify the severity of such disasters. Our support and prayers go out to all of the victims and all who are addressing the need in Southeast Asia.

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Governance Fit for the World's Children ***The Convention on the Rights of the Child 20th Anniversary***

“There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace.” –Kofi Annan

November 20, 2009 marks the 20th Anniversary of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, the first legally binding treaty to focus on the universal realization of human rights for all children. To date, 193 countries have ratified the Convention, pronouncing the global commitment to the rights of children and the core human value that the world's children deserve a world in which they are respected and protected.

There has been significant progress in realizing the rights outlined by the Convention, but much more is still to be done in a world where many children are viewed as property and not as rights-bearing individuals. The CRC acts as an important foundation, but keeping governments accountable to their commitments is essential if children's rights are to be realized.

Good governance is vital to the realization and protection of children's rights. This includes accountability,

participation, non-discrimination, transparency, and integrity against corruption. The approach in policymaking needs to be centered on child rights, as these nations have already committed to acting in the best interest of children. For example, transparency empowers participation in the accountability that budgeted money for education actually goes toward education. Without a focus on good governance and accountability placed on governments from civil society, universal rights of the child will remain merely on paper and not in the lives of children worldwide.

Governance needs to be answerable for advancing human rights and human dignity. Only by keeping governments accountable to this are we to ever see a world where children's human rights are valued and fulfilled, and where the full potential of all children can be reached. Through engaging with the systems at hand and the tools at hand, we can make rights a reality.



What can you do?

- Voice the necessity of the realization of children's rights to government leaders, media and others in the community; educate yourself and help to raise public awareness about the CRC
- Has your country ratified the CRC? Put pressure on the government to fulfill commitments to pass laws and advance policies centered on the rights of children, and challenge politicians to make child's rights a priority.
- Contact your local UNICEF field office or national committee to see how you can become more involved in advancing the CRC locally.
- For more information and access to the full text of the CRC, visit <http://www.unicef.org/crc>

Christmas and Climate Change

Dear Friends,

The gospel reading for the Midnight Mass at Christmas (Lk 2:1-14) does not say it explicitly. It only insinuates it – that is, that at the birth on earth of the Son of God, also nature or the physical world rejoiced and exulted. During that night in Bethlehem, the air was cool and the stars were shining brightly in the skies. It was a great time to be out in the open fields. Some shepherds, indeed, brought out their sheep to graze and kept watch the whole night. And then “The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.’” The night of Jesus’ birth was a night of celebration. Everyone was in joyful celebration – the angels, the shepherds, the stars, the earth – indeed, all of nature rejoiced at the coming on earth of the Son of God.

Thus, in fact, had the prophet Isaiah prophesied. In Advent we read and listened to this prophecy:

The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom. They will bloom with abundant flowers, and rejoice with joyful song Streams will burst forth in the desert, and rivers in the steppe. The burning sands will become pools, and the thirsty ground, springs of water; The abode where jackals lurk will be a marsh for the reed and papyrus (Is 35:1-7).

Isaiah’s vision gives us an impression that the birth of the Son of God is not just a human or historical event. It is also a cosmic event. It has consequences not only on the life of human beings or on the history of humankind, but also on the well-being of nature or the physical world. No wonder, indeed, that at the birth of Son of God, nature itself sings and celebrates, rejoices and exults.

Recently, however, a different kind of prophecy has been put forward namely, the predictions arising from the conclusions of the Fourth Assessment Report (AR4) of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC). As is well known already, the report underlines the continuing and increasing warming of the earth due to the unabated emission of greenhouse gases. This global warming will lead to the widespread melting of

glaciers and the rising of the global sea level, causing thereby disastrous flooding on the one hand and severe droughts on the other. All this puts in grave danger the ecological balance of the earth and the health of human beings. Other dire consequences of climate change are, for instance, the loss of biodiversity, the erosion of sea-coasts and shorelines, the extinction of species of flora and fauna, the reduction of the availability of water, the decrease in agricultural productivity, and the increase of natural forest fires.

But above all, what causes profound concern is the conclusion that the “warming of the climate system is unequivocal” and that its first effects are already being felt now in our time. Moreover, it is said that, if nothing is done now, in 50 to 70 years the effects will be even more disastrous and will begin to be irreversible.

All this paints a picture very much different from that which we saw in the prophecy of Isaiah. I believe Christmas is a good time for us to reflect on what is generally considered as the most serious problem facing humanity in our time because the cosmic dimension is an integral dimension of Christmas. When nature loses its capacity to celebrate the birth of the Son of God, then something essential is lost to Christmas. When nature no longer sings and rejoices at the coming of Lord, our celebration of Christmas is no longer complete. Christmas, indeed, is a reason for us to respect and take care of nature, the environment, or our physical world.

Dear friends, very often we are tempted to think that this “most serious problem of our time” does not concern us or our small communities, and that it concerns only the big and the powerful – heads of state, prime ministers, big industries, multinational corporations. But our lifestyle does have consequences on the environment. We are therefore called to lead lifestyles which are simpler, more sustainable and more friendly to the environment. For instance, “Livesimply” is an organization in England which believes that “God calls us to look hard at our lifestyles and to choose to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with people who are poor”. See www.cafod.org.uk/livesimply.

This coming Christmas, as we adore the Child Jesus lying in the manger in Bethlehem, in the company of Mary and Joseph, we may still hear nature sing and celebrate the birth of the Son of God. The air may still

be cool, the stars may still shine brightly, the shepherds may still come in haste, and the angels may still sing joyfully. But already there are signs that this may no longer be so in the future. What if nature no longer sings at Christmas?

This Christmas let us thank God for this immense gift of His Son born among us and for the great gift of nature which celebrates His coming in the flesh.

“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.” May the New Year 2010 see greater efforts towards the care of the earth, justice for the poor, and peace in the world.

*Fraternally in the Divine Word,
Antonio M. Pernia, SVD
President, VIVAT International*

snapshot:

• Congratulations to Fr. Laurent Desaulniers OMI who received on May 24, 2009 a Silver Medal from the Lieutenant Governor in appreciation for his “Community involvement and for going beyond the call of duty. His answer: “The homage I receive overflows on my human and religious families: the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. What you mention as ‘going beyond the call of duty’ I owe to the Innu (First Nation people on the North Coast) to whom I dedicate all my energy. I hope that my presence among them facilitates a coming together of indigeneous and non indigenous peoples and commits us more to this “new era of conviviality among peoples” according to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples”.

Upcoming Events

January 11-15

VIVAT Workshop East Africa - Nairobi, Kenya

January 27

VIVAT Board Meeting – Rome, Italy

February 03-12

Commission for Social Develop. – New York, USA

February 11-14

Forum of Catholic Inspired NGOs – Rome, Italy

March 1-12

Commission on Status of Women – New York, USA

April 19-30

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues - N.Y

April 16-17,

VIVAT Workshop North America – Washington, USA

April 18-24

JPIC – EURO Zone – Vienna, Austria

April 25 – May 01

JPIC – ASPAC Zone - Bangkok, Thailand

May 3-14

Commission on Sustainable Develop.- New York, USA

• Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon, Lebanon and Nigeria will serve two-year terms on the Security Council starting next January. The five countries were chosen after running uncontested races for the non-permanent seats, and they were duly elected by the General Assembly during a secret ballot at United Nations Headquarters in New York, October 2009.

The five countries will join Austria, Japan, Mexico, Turkey and Uganda, whose terms on the Council end on 31 December 2010. The five permanent members are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

• Samoa announced just now that it endorses the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples during the UN Third Committee in New York, Oct. 19, 2009. Samoa had abstained from voting on the Declaration on September 13, 2007.

• On 3rd December 2009, the United Nations holds a global celebration for the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).



*“I would rather light a candle
than curse the darkness.”*

- eleanor roosevelt

