DEAR READERS,

Welcome to the 49th Online Issue of the VIVAT Newsletter!

This year, 2010 marks VIVAT International’s ten-year anniversary! To commemorate this milestone, the 49th and 50th Issues of the VIVAT Newsletter are special editions featuring stories from all of our congregations. In this edition, we feature articles from the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Comboni Missionaries, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ, and the Little Sisters of the Assumption.

As always, work both at the United Nations and at the grassroots is ongoing, so this issue will also feature a brief section, in which we cover VIVAT’s summer activities in New York and around the globe.

In our next issue, we will continue the commemoration of our 10 Years of VIVAT with articles from the Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit, the Society of the Divine Word, the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, and the Comboni Missionary Sisters.

You inspire us! We always welcome feedback, ideas, stories, and updates from our members! Please send us your comments and feedback to:

viny@vivatinternational.org

CONTENTS:

The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate 2
The Adorers of the Blood of Christ 4
The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary 7
VIVAT News Update 8
Upcoming Events 9

Comboni Missionaries 3
The Little Sisters of the Assumption 5
The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI)

Present in over 70 countries, the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), have a preferential option for the poor, journeying with them to full consciousness of our dignity as human beings and as sons and daughters of God.

At first evangelizing the neglected faithful in Aix-en-Provence in 1825, the OMI soon set out to bring the Good News in foreign lands, establishing missions, doing social work and building educational facilities. After Vatican II, witnessing increasing disparity between the rich and the poor, new forms of injustice in a global world and responding to the Social Teaching of the Church, the Oblates set out on a new course of action by addressing the root causes of suffering and injustice in the world. Our Constitutions and Rules declare that action on behalf of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation is an integral part of evangelization and is at the heart of our mission to hear and announce the Good News. In response, General Chapters invited OMI leadership to appoint personnel to establish a resource centre and begin networking with a pool of Oblates in the field. Fr. Camille Piche assisted by members of the General Council and a representative from each of the regions was asked to coordinate and promote the general service of OMI JPIC in 2008.

Seeing the need to join forces, the Oblates became Associate Members of VIVAT International, and appointed OMI VIVAT representatives Daniel LeBlanc to the UN in New York and recently, Tomas Vyhnalek at the UN in Vienna working at the international level “where decisions are made that affect the lives of the poor”. Along with the 150 or so religious congregations that are part of JPIC Promoters based in Rome, we now form a vast network of religious and faith-based NGO’s.

The biggest challenge we face today is to live in right relationship among ourselves, with all peoples and with the whole of creation in a sustainable and reverent manner. The above statement as well as the reaffirmation of all JPIC ministries that Oblates are involved in at many different levels has guided us in setting the following priorities:

1. Ecological and economic sustainability--Committed to the cause of the poor in an unequal, unjust and devastating world we promote a just and respectful relationship between humanity and creation which safeguards the earth, all its inhabitants and resources for present and future generations. We recognize that the actual social, economic, political and cultural structures have caused a break in the integral relations that must exist between all elements of nature, including us human beings. Furthermore, we recognize that the actual economic system is creating an ever-growing and unacceptable division between rich and poor. We work in the field of corporate responsibility at the inter-faith and international levels, as well as in the whole area of ethical investments.

2. A commitment to promote the rights of all--with special emphasis on indigenous peoples and Migrants.

3. Commitment to Peace and Reconciliation--we seek to identify the nature of historical divisions and animosity which exists between regions, countries, ethnic and racial groups and to explore opportunities and learning tools that can make a positive contribution to the peacemaking process.

4. An emphasis on Education and Formation--to include Catholic Social Teaching and JPIC training in all stages of formation.

Training programs are planned at different levels of the congregation, with other congregations and with VIVAT International.

We consider the promotion of basic literacy and educational processes to be fundamental in involving people in their search for greater dignity and opportunities. Our members are present in conflict situations in Sri Lanka, Congo, Sudan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Mindanao, Columbia, Mexico; involved in ecological concerns, conflicts and poverty caused by climate change and extractive industries in the Peruvian Amazon, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Guatemala and land grabs in Africa; lobby against nuclear and small arms; work in prison reform; minister with faith-based and social responsibility & economic crisis; work in Haiti and Pakistan devastated by the earthquake and flooding, write articles on human trafficking, violence against women, HIV aids, truth & reconciliation (Sri Lanka, Canada, DR Congo); and make reports on human rights and extreme poverty.

We are filled with hope as we struggle to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, boldly proclaiming the liberating presence of Jesus Christ and the new world born in His Resurrection.
Saint Daniel Comboni and his missionaries were engaged in the reality of JPIC from the very beginning. From his first trip to Sudan in 1857 Comboni struggled against the Eastern slave trade in every way possible, supporting all efforts to stop the slave raids, to close the slave markets in Cairo, Khartoum and Zanzibar and to outlaw the trade all together. He wrote countless articles against slavery for European newspapers and magazines. The Catholic missions were asylums for escaped or mistreated slaves, and the missionaries defended the right of escaped slaves to freedom. Occasionally the missionaries purchased slaves in order to free them and they were able to offer a higher education to some of these freed slaves. For example, Daniel Sorur, studied at Propaganda Fide in Rome and eventually served as a parish priest in the Vicariate. Comboni also set up a free and secure village for freed slaves at Malbes in the Kordofan area of Sudan that was modeled on the Jesuit Reductiones.

Much of what Comboni did corresponds to the Millennium Development Goals of today. Comboni established schools and trade schools to share with the Africans the best European education and technology of his day. His Plan for the Regeneration of Africa called for the establishment of four great universities along the coasts of Africa to educate and empower both African clergy and laity to establish the Church and a renewed civil society in Africa.

In many different circumstances and in the face of many different justice issues over more than 150 years the Comboni Missionaries faithfully followed the course set by Comboni. Everywhere they addressed justice issues and established schools, trade schools and medical clinics. They sometimes paid a steep price for their dedication. Some Comboni Missionaries became slaves during the Mahdi revolt in the Sudan in the 1880s. All the Comboni Missionaries in the Southern Sudan were expelled from the country in 1964 for supporting the just aspirations of the Southern Sudanese. Comboni Missionaries in Mozambique were also expelled en masse by the Portuguese, and in Burundi the missionaries were expelled for protesting against a systematic massacre of all educated Hutus, including priests and religious. In South Africa many missionaries who opposed Apartheid lost their work permits. Many missionaries lost their lives in Sudan, Northern Uganda, the DR Congo, Mozambique and Brazil when they defended the rights of the people or remained with their people in times of violence.

Since the Comboni Missionaries are present in thirty-five countries, it is only possible to give a few examples of how they are engaged in contemporary justice issues. They work in cooperation with many established JPIC organizations and movements, whether of Catholic or other faith-based inspiration, or secular groups of good will. In Europe Fr. Anton Maier helped to found the Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network [AEFJN]. In the North American Province Cindy Browne directs the Justice and Peace Resource Center that disseminates topical information and works with the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center and other groups to organize symposiums and discussions. The New Jersey JPIC Office cooperates with VIVAT International at the UN and with the African Faith and Justice Network [AFJN] in Washington. Comboni Missionaries in USA parishes are involved in defense of the rights of immigrants and calling for comprehensive immigration reform. In South Africa Comboni Missionaries cooperate with refugee centers to assist some of the many African refugees who seek to escape violence in their own countries. There and elsewhere they help to train and encourage local JPIC teams to empower local people to work for justice in a variety of ways. In Sudan they monitor and foster the process of preparing for next year’s referendum on the independence of the South. Sudan captured Comboni’s heart and remains in the heart of his followers. In Brazil today some Comboni Missionaries are engaged in defending the rights of indigenous peoples. They raise the issue of the informed consent of the local people faced with mining operations that pollute water and land.

Daniel Comboni founded one of the first missionary magazines in Europe, now known as Nigrizia. Today the many magazines published by the Comboni Missionaries and the radio stations in which they are involved sponsor campaigns to expose and oppose the arms trade, and to support the Jubilee movement and the rights of immigrants. They track the Millennium Development Goals such as the right to water and sanitation, and they highlight issues of violence against women and human trafficking. They warn about the causes of climate change, diminishing biodiversity, and expose the pollution caused by mining, petroleum production and other deleterious effects of irrational consumerism.

The legacy of Comboni challenges us today to pursue justice with energy and sagacity.
The Adorers of the Blood of Christ (ASC)

The spirituality of the Adorers is grounded in the belief that each person is worthy the Blood of Christ and, therefore, is worthy of respect, compassion and love. From their origins, the Adorers have always been involved with being among and serving the poor. St. Maria de Mattias often encouraged the Sisters to go where the need was greatest and to love the “dear neighbour.” The current Constitutions include several statements about preferential option for the poor.

In recent times the Acts from each General Assembly have included a focus on JPIC issues and trying to effect systemic change. In 1991, the Adorers said, “We will try to honestly acknowledge and change the ways in which we, personally, and our political, economic, social and ecclesial systems perpetuate discrimination based on race, nationality, gender, class or other distinctions.” We have challenged ourselves to radical initiatives for the planet’s welfare and an ecologically responsible lifestyle. Also, we committed ourselves to respond in concrete ways to the violence that the elderly, women and children endure.

In the most recent Assembly (2005) we reaffirmed support of the UN Millennium Development Goals with special attention to the eradication of poverty and hunger. We also reaffirmed promotion of gender equality and empower women, including a commitment “to address insistently at every level the abuse and sexual exploitation of women and children.” Some Adorers have participated in the UN Commission on the Status of Women meetings.

In Mysore, India, the Adorers sponsor the Navodaya Social Center reaching out to rural women. Over 100 Self-Help Groups have been established in the Mysore District. On International Women’s Day this year, the Center sponsored an observance of the day that brought over 2,000 women together to tell their stories and listen to presentations about the theme, “Atrocities against Women.” The day also included a celebration of cultural traditions including songs, dances and dramas.

St. Maria asked the Sisters “to help bring about that beautiful order of things which the great Son of God came to establish in his blood.” Today Adorers often return to this phrase as an expression of their mission and a motivation for their striving to be in communion and reconciliation with people and creation.

The Adorers were accepted as an Associate member of VIVAT in summer 2007, a fulfillment of a General Assembly mandate to engage in NGO efforts at the U.N. Founded by St. Maria De Mattias in 1834 in Acuto, Italy, the Adorers have always had as a priority to serve the poor. Over time, this service expanded to include advocacy with and on behalf of those who are poor and/or living on the margins. The 1500 Adorers serve in 26 countries around the world.

These are some of the ways the Adorers of the Blood of Christ (ASC) collaborate with and support the goals of VIVAT International.

- ASCs in Brazil join in demonstrations and advocacy efforts to prevent the building of a hydroelectric plant that would destroy homes and means of living for thousands of indigenous people;
- ASCs support indigenous people in Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, and the Philippines in advocating with and for them and their rights;
- ASCs join in efforts to prevent the construction of a shipbuilding yard in Masan, Korea, and are also advocating on behalf of “foreign brides” being abused by Korean husbands;
- ASCs engage in reconciliation efforts and ministry in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia and work with persons to alleviate the painful effects of war via drugs;
- ASCs engage in micro/economic projects that teach poor women self-sustaining vocational skills in India and Guinea Bissau;
- ASCs house victims of human trafficking and provide educational assistance to immigrants;
- ASCs adopted a corporate stance against the death penalty in the US;
- ASCs work publicly against human trafficking in Liechtenstein, Italy and the U.S.;
- ASCs provide daily care to the poor elderly and the children of poor and dysfunctional families in Poland and Croatia;
- ASCs serve persons who are HIV+ or have AIDS in India and Tanzania and they house infected orphans in a family setting in Village of Hope in Tanzania.

Through VIVAT and the collaborative efforts of its members, the Adorers have yet another means to “bring about that beautiful order of things” through the promotion of human rights, especially for women, children and the indigenous; the elimination of poverty; the efforts and advocacy for economic development and ecological sustainability; and the creation of villages, cities, countries and a world society that permits the participation of all persons.
The Little Sisters of the Assumption (LSA)

The founders of the Little Sisters of the Assumption—Etienne Pernet and Antonette Fage—shared a burning passion for the Kingdom of God, an open heart to human suffering, a love for the workers and their families, marked by “the evil of society”: injustice and misery, resulting from industrialization in France in the second half of the XIX century. Etienne Pernet, religious Augustinian of the Assumption, had the insight that to evangelize the working families “a woman, and a religious woman” was necessary to raise awareness of the needs of every day life through simple actions and words that heal. Antoinette, a woman of lively faith, deployed all her qualities of intelligence and heart, to welcoming Etienne Pernet’s intuition. This way she gave body to “the charism” with the first Little Sisters of the Assumption.

In the context of the XXI century, LSA continues to be mobilized by the urgency of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ through simple actions in every day life especially with the workers, their families and people excluded from the society. According to the context of different countries, we want to find the causes of family disintegration, and for those who are not heard to take their place in society. This is in order “to gather together into one the scattered children of God” (Jn 11,52). Together with other people, we try to raise human and faith communities, to create environments where each one is called by name, invited to be creative, and to take part progressively in the transformation of the world. Our action is committed to the pursuit of Peace, Justice and Integrity of the Creation, as an integral dimension of the Gospel and of our mission. Sharing the charism with the lay people and internationally, are strong accents that open us to intercultural and interreligious dimensions.

Gathered in general chapters, we discern gradually and we collectively recognize the difficulties of the local and international situations in which the poor live. In 1975, we decided to move forwards in the commitment of justice and peace, confirmed by the encyclical Evangelii Nuntiandi of Pope Paul VI, a call to promote social justice through a preferential choice for the poor. In 1987, we created the Secretariat for Justice and Peace, prompted by life and the call of the encyclical Solicitudo Rei Socialis of the Pope John Paul II, which reaffirms the right to live in dignity and justice.

In 1999 the general chapter entrusted the Justice and Peace International Secretariat with the responsibility to link the congregation with an accredited NGO at the UN, with the aim that the excluded ones may be heard. In 2006 de Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption, in a general chapter, decided to participate in the Secretariat for Justice, Peace and Integrity of the Creation of the Little Sisters of the Assumption.

The Congregation of the Religious of the Assumption was an inspiration of the Spirit in the time of turmoil following the revolution in France. The Congregation was founded by Marie Eugenie in 1839 during a century of change, industrialisation and urbanisation; from the start, the means would be primarily through education, especially of girls.

With the spread of the Congregation to Latin America, Asia and Africa, the Congregation became aware of vast areas of poverty, injustice and misery. Towards the end of the 20th Century the Church in many places adopted the theme of ‘liberation’ and ‘preferential option for the poor’. By the 1980s as globalisation and neo-liberal economics proceeded, the Congregation was able to respond with a Bureau of Solidarity at a congregational level as a way of sharing between richer and poorer. At the General Chapter of 2000, RA made the decision to embrace the great themes of JPIC, this was to be a work for all communities wherever they are, whether in large school communities or small insertions among the poor.

Since 2008, the International Secretariat of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation has an inter-congregational face, Little Sisters of the Assumption and Religious of the Assumption, in order to:

1. bring together our charism and spirituality and the search for ways of justice and peace in the different continents where our communities are present;
2. experience the challenge of working in networks in globalized societies: participation in the UN and in different local networks;
3. support the reflection and action in our communities about the causes of injustice, so as to work with others to transform unjust structures. Be aware that the local realities and the global system are interdependent;
4. contribute to the voiceless ones so they take their own place and impact on the decision makers to look at reality through the eyes of the poor.
The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary (MSHR)

The Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of The Holy Rosary, is a Congregation of women religious dedicated to apostolic works, founded in 1924 by Bishop Joseph Shanahan CSSp, the then Prefect Apostolic of the vast area of Southern Nigeria. His main thrust in evangelisation was education and he realised that women as well as men needed to be educated. He also wanted to address other concerns of women such as health. To answer these needs he founded a Congregation of women religious.

Holy Rosary Sisters are involved in a variety of ministries in different countries of Africa, the Americas, Ireland and England.

Underpinning all our work is a desire for equality, justice and peace. However there are situations of blatant exploitation, inequality and injustice that call for a more direct and focused intervention.

In Cameroon, child trafficking is a serious problem. The Nation Conference of Bishops sought ways of addressing this evil in their country and a pilot project, funded by the Catholic Relief Services, was inaugurated in the dioceses of Buea, Bamenda and Kumbo.

Sr. Mercy Wanguna, MSHR, works in Kumbo Diocese; North Western Province of Cameroon where trafficking of children is a very serious problem. Children between the ages of 7 – 15 are the usual victims; it effects both boys and girls but mostly girls. Poor families are lured into giving away their children under the promise of education and other false benefits. Mercy works with the Diocesan Commission for Justice and Peace. She organises workshops for different groups in communities all over the diocese, to raise awareness of this problem – understanding how and why it happens, tracing of missing children, rehabilitating them into the community, net-working with others groups combating child trafficking in Cameroon. Participants in the seminars come from a variety of influential groups: District officers and their staff, police officers, army personnel, chiefs and their staff, women’s groups parents, teachers and other groups who work with children. There is a desire for equality, justice, and peace. However there are situations of blatant exploitation, inequality and injustice that call for a more direct and focused intervention.

In Nigeria, Sr. Rose Uchem MSHR, who works in Enugu State, realised that while very many Nigerian women are educated, some very highly, society’s attitude to women still keeps them in subordination to men. Rose’s response to this was to establish the NGO, IFENDU, to raise consciousness and empower women, men and youth to dismantle oppressive cultural and religious systems that undermine women’s full human status and to promote their full participation in all spheres of life on a basis of co-equality with men. The vision of IFENDU is: A world in which men and women are valued equally and work together harmoniously as equal partners, and women’s full human identity is affirmed both in theory and in practice.

Major issues that undermine women are addressed through the Gender, Religion and Culture Programme (GRAC) which seeks to empower people with knowledge, dispels false myths about women’s status and suggests more life-giving interpretation of misogynist cultural and biblical texts. Awareness raising, questioning and challenging, is done through lectures, publications, advocacy outreach to communities, conference papers, presentations and discussions, and training workshops. Beneficiaries of this program are: men, women, youth including seminarians, clergy and religious, men and women leaders, urban and rural men and women. IFENDU addresses many other issues that impinge on women such as HIV/AIDS, Trafficking of Women, Environmental Issues and Care of the Earth. Through this programme millions of men, women and children have been sensitized towards gender inclusion and gender balance.
VIVAT News Updates

While we pause to commemorate and appreciate the ten year celebration of VIVAT International, we cannot neglect to continue our ongoing work efforts. Within our work with the United Nations over the past three months, there have been significant, promising advancement in our causes to promote human rights.

VIVAT Members Organize Meeting in Brazil

On the 23rd and 24th of July 2010, 13 representatives of the 8 religious congregations which form VIVAT International Brazil, met in the SVD Seminary in São Paulo. This was the second meeting of the group.

The schedule for the meeting was as follows:
1. To consider what we have achieved in our mission, and compare our priorities with those of VIVAT International;
2. To define our priorities as members of VIVAT in accordance with our specific reality;
3. To reflect on the organization and dynamics of VIVAT in Brazil.

We concluded that through our pastoral action and in partnership with various non-governmental organizations, we are covering the principal areas of involvement of VIVAT which are Women, elimination of poverty, sustainable development and a culture of peace.

Motivated, the group committed itself to Human Rights in all areas: infancy, questions of gender, prison system, working class people, street people, people living in areas of risk; as well as working for a culture of peace using programs, debates and education in schools and reinforcing disarmament campaigns.

Other decisions that were concluded made at the meeting were to:
1. involve all the members of each respective congregation, keeping them informed;
2. reinforce local, national and international networking;
3. constitute VIVAT International Brazil, through continuing organization and commitment (this does not demand institutionalization);
4. realize annual meetings for discussions, evaluation and planning.

In addition to the annual meeting, the group hopes to have other encounters and extra events when opportune, as in the case of the meeting scheduled for November of this year, in order to give continuity to the work. The meeting was very animated and in spite of limited experience in the ways of VIVAT, it was a great success.

On July 2, 2010, the General Assembly of the UN voted unanimously to create a new UN body devoted to promoting, monitoring, and providing for the rights of girls and women. This vote is widely viewed as an historic success to further the cause of women, for, after 65 years of the UN’s existence, there has finally been a creation of an agency specifically devoted to the cause of women.

This entity, called UN Women, will be the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, and will, in the words of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, “significantly boost UN efforts to promote gender equality, expand opportunity, and tackle discrimination around the globe.” (www.unwomen.org).

UN Women will be divided into four sectors of work, like those as already established in the UN System: the Division for the Advancement of Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, and the UN Development Fund for Women.

VIVAT International looks forward to working closely with UN Women, specifically with our strong work with the NGO Committee Working Group on Girls, to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Back, from left: Adriano Zerbini (MCCJ), Helio Inforsato, Margaret Gaffney (MSHR), Antonio Carlos Sampaio (CSSp), Jose de Jesus Filho (OMI) Ivo Fiuza (SVD), Jose Boeing (SVD), Edni Gugelmin (SSpS), Marcia Ferreiras (LSA), Caterina Ingelido (CMS), Petronella

VIVAT Members
Organize Meeting in Brazil

New UN Entity Promotes the Advancement of Women

While we pause to commemorate and appreciate the ten year celebration of VIVAT International, we cannot neglect to continue our ongoing work efforts. Within our work with the United Nations over the past three months, there have been significant, promising advancement in our causes to promote human rights.
VIVAT News Updates

Free, Safe, and Accessible Water Finally Recognized as a “Right”

VIVAT International has long-since been advocating and lobbying for change in the field of water and sanitation. We believe one’s right to adequate water sources and sanitation to be a primary right, without which a life free of poverty and struggle would not be possible.

The UN General Assembly made great progress on this subject in late July, adopting a resolution that recognizes access to clean water and adequate sanitation as a human right. 122 countries voted in favor of the resolution, while 41 countries abstained from voting. Not one country voted against the passing of the resolution. The General Assembly “expressed deep concern that some 884 million people were without access to safe drinking water and more than 2.6 billion lacked access to basic sanitation.” (www.unwater.org)

The General Assembly calls on member states to uphold the words of the resolution by providing sources of funding and technology to less fortunate states so that they will be able to provide their citizens with clean, accessible, and affordable drinking water and sanitation.

This issue is one on which that VIVAT has worked for several months, lobbying States to pass the resolution. While this is a great success in the way of our goals, VIVAT must now redirect its efforts to pressuring states to uphold their obligations to provide these most basic of human rights. For the full version of the resolution, please see: www.unwater.org

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has opened an international probe into the Gaza flotilla raid that occurred in May. The raid by Israeli military on a humanitarian flotilla bringing food and supplies to Gaza ended in the death of nine aboard the ship.

The probe initiated by Secretary-General Ban, will consist of a four-person group whose work began on August 10, with their first report of progress expected to be delivered in mid-September. The controversial raid in May drew international attention, with questions arising as to need for violence aboard the ship, with Israel claiming that their raid of the ship was met with violence, while the humanitarian mission insisting they were a peaceful flotilla.

Gaza has been under an internationally contested military blockade, in which little or no international aid has been let in, with dire circumstances on the ground for millions of Palestinians within Gaza.

As of the end of August 2010, the UN General Assembly has also agreed to launch a Global Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons. The plan calls on states to take action to combat human trafficking within and across their borders. The UN itself will also aid in the plan, coordinating work between States and setting up a voluntary fund for victims of trafficking. Currently, the UN estimates that “more than 2.4 million people are currently being exploited as victims of human trafficking.” As Secretary-General Ban reminded the international community, “No country is immune [from human trafficking]. Almost all play a part, either as a source of trafficked people, transit point or destination”. (www.unodc.org)

VIVAT considers the situation in Gaza.

Human trafficking is a highly charged topic, and one that JPIC programs of many of our members focus on heavily. Thus, this recent launching of the Global Plan is a welcome news to many ears, but must be seen a first step in the long, arduous task of putting an end to human trafficking worldwide.

New York and Geneva are currently exploring means through which to follow up on the issue, as well as ways that VIVAT can become more active in this area.

UN Takes on Human Trafficking in New Global Plan
**VIVAT News Updates**

**UN’s DPI Holds 2010 Conference in Australia**

The UN’s Department of Public Information (DPI) annually hosts a conference to bring together hundreds of NGOs to collaborate civil society work with the work of the UN. This year, the DPI Conference was held in Melbourne, Australia, in September 2010.

The topic of focus for this year’s conference was global health, as it relates to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The conference—though only a brief one, lasting two full days—still encompassed an opening session, roundtable discussions and workshops, and a closing session, along with various side-events held in conjunction with the conference.

Following the closing session of the conference, a final declaration was released by the NGO participants which pressured governments to take strong measures to improve global health by ensuring the health and well-being of their citizens.

As in every year of the conference, VIVAT and its members were present at the conference. Whereas the VIVAT Executive Team in New York usually participates in the conference, this year four VIVAT local members attended in their stead.

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**Upcoming VIVAT/UN Events**

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<th>September</th>
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<td>November 6</td>
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<td>International Day of Non-Violence</td>
<td>International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict</td>
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<td>September 10</td>
<td>October 16</td>
<td>November 8-11</td>
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<td>World Suicide Prevention Day</td>
<td>World Food Day</td>
<td>4th Meeting of the Global Forum on Migration and Human Development</td>
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<td>September 13</td>
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<td>Puerto Vallarta, Mexico</td>
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<td>3rd Anniversary of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</td>
<td>International Day for Eradication of Poverty</td>
<td>November 16</td>
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<td>September 13</td>
<td>October 17-22</td>
<td>International Day for Tolerance</td>
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<td>International Day of Democracy</td>
<td>VIVAT JPIC Euro Zone Meeting</td>
<td>November 16</td>
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<td>Vienna, Austria</td>
<td>International Day for Eradication of Poverty</td>
<td>World Day for the Prevention of Child Abuse</td>
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<td>September 14-23</td>
<td>October 18-29</td>
<td>November 25</td>
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<td>UN General Assembly, 65th Session</td>
<td>COP-10 on Biological Diversity</td>
<td>International Day for Elimination of Violence Against Women</td>
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<td>UN Headquarters, New York</td>
<td>Nagoya, Japan</td>
<td>November 29-December 10</td>
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<td>September 21</td>
<td>October 24</td>
<td>UNFCC COP-16 &amp; CMP 6</td>
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<td>International Day of Peace</td>
<td>UN Day</td>
<td>Mexico City, Mexico</td>
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<td>September 20-22</td>
<td>October 25-29</td>
<td>November 29-December 10</td>
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<td>Millennium Development Goals Summit</td>
<td>VIVAT Workshop</td>
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