Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 57th Online Issue of the VIVAT Newsletter!

Every month at the United Nations is always an eventful season of conferences, commemorations, and exciting events. This year was no different, as a clear theme was developed throughout many events: inclusive, sustainable development.

This issue will highlight some of VIVAT’s strongest contributions, both to the U.N. events in New York, and in our grassroots efforts around the globe. As the Millennium Development Goals will reach their end in less than two years, the international community has begun to look ahead to 2015 and beyond, is re-framing the discussion of development to include more holistic, inclusive approaches. This issue shines the spotlight on VIVAT members who have sought creative means to address issues of sustainability, environmental protection, and global hunger. From engaging in performance arts in the Philippines to participating in high-level summits in Algeria, VIVAT members have taken charge in helping to shape the agenda beyond the Millennium Development Goals.

As we look to the future of international development and poverty eradication, we look to these inspiring members’ stories to illustrate the call for the future:

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The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that have shaped the UN’s sustainable development agenda over the last thirteen years will conclude in 2015. While some progress has been made in the areas of poverty eradication, disease treatment and prevention, and education, the MDGs will not all be met by 2015. Anticipating the need for a post-2015 plan for global development, the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, tasked a high-level panel (HLP) with providing a report to assess the world’s most pressing needs beyond 2015 and, using the MDGs as a starting point, to propose the post-2015 priorities for a sustainable development agenda.

The HLP, consisting of 27 panelists, is chaired by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and David Cameron. On May 30, the HLP delivered their report of recommendations to the Secretary General. This report represents the first step in rethinking global development goals for the coming decades. In particular, the HLP identified five key priorities for a post-2015 agenda of sustainable development:

1. **Leave no one behind**
   The HLP’s ambitious goal of eradicating extreme poverty represents an encouraging step forward in helping the world’s most vulnerable people. As one of VIVAT’s core pillars, poverty eradication is a responsibility for those seeking social justice, and the UN has a strong obligation to prioritize this goal. Two other VIVAT pillars-human rights and women’s empowerment—are addressed in this inclusive priority. Any post-2015 plan for global development must, at its heart, seek to provide universal rights inclusively.

2. **Put sustainable development at the core**
   The HLP recognizes that one of the most important lessons we have learned in recent decades is the gravity of the global dangers arising from climate change. Knowing the damage that sustained climate change can cause, humans must take responsibility for the planet. VIVAT works tirelessly to promote sustainable development, and to see that it is being given priority by the HLP is positive. As we continue to work with indigenous communities who are directly effected by the immediate and devastating effects of the exploitation of the earth’s resources, however, we see that climate change is not the only negative effect of unsustainable industrialization, and we hope that future discussions of this priority will be more inclusive in addressing the numerous issues—such as indigenous rights, exploitative mining, and land grabbing—that are in direct relationship with other issues of sustainable development.

3. **Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth**
   The HLP discusses the need for economic growth sparked by “good and decent jobs.” The report also prioritizes equitable access to jobs. Much of VIVAT’s grassroots work also tries to achieve this equitable access, but we have learned that access is only half of the story—individuals must also be afforded the valuable education and training opportunities that will qualify them for good jobs. The HLP report does not adequately address this issue of education growth that must go hand-in-hand with economic growth.

4. **Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all**
   The HLP report shines an important light on the responsibility of states to provide accountable, effective systems to ensure peace for their citizens. This, too, is one elemental goal of the UN. While the priority is indeed essential to continued development, the HLP does not discuss in great detail the role that NGOs and civil society can play in achieving peace. VIVAT’s members all over the world work tirelessly for peace and justice, and our grassroots approaches to peace-building, along with the work of thousands of other NGOs, is an essential component whose role must be recognized beyond 2015.
5. Forge a new global partnership

The culminating idea proposed in the HLP report is the need for a post-2015 global partnership based on a common humanity and a common set of goals for sustainable development. The partnership that the HLP envisions includes all actors in the global space—from states and authorities to international institutions to civil society organizations. Also included are academics, social scientists, and leaders of business. Most important, however, is the inclusion of people. From its foundation, VIVAT has been committed to the idea of inclusive, grassroots approaches, and we hope that this global partnership will keep this idea at its core.

One of the most promising-and challenging - declarations of the HLP report is the goal that “no person - regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status - is denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities.” For over a decade, the MDGs sought to address the various development needs of the globe to raise individuals from extreme poverty. Looking ahead to a post - 2015, post - MDG development agenda, we must strive to do more. While, certainly, the high-level panel represents only the first step of the coming years, we must ensure that this step serves only as a foundation to build upon. NGOs, states, and of course people, must also be included in this agenda making process, to ensure that all will be committed to the promotion of sustainable, inclusive development beyond 2015.

VIVAT will continue to urge the UN and its member states for the policies and direction needed for social justice and to build The World We Need.

Working to Build the World We Need

Mga Anak ni Inang Daigdig (Children of Mother Earth) is an environmental performing arts group featuring young people and children who were born and grew up in Smokey Mountain, Manila – which was once the third largest untreated garbage dump in the world. This rigorous and disciplined group of performing artists would like to issue a collective call to commitment through the dances and rituals of indigenous peoples from the Philippines to protect God’s creation and to inspire people to treat each other as brothers and sisters. The group is registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of the Republic of the Philippines as a non-profit organization.

Their vision: All children of Mother Earth, inspired by the values of integrity, solidarity and creativity, work together for a clean and green planet, with peace and justice for all. Through songs and dances of the indigenous tribes in the Philippines, their mission is to call on everyone to join the race to save Mother Earth – it is the only planet we have. They would like to remind each one of us that if we deny our spiritual legacy, we contribute to the extinction of indigenous peoples and add to our own impoverishment as we seek for purpose and direction in our journey towards the future. God created the world, and other beings also have rights, not only humans. These young people would like to help unite other young people throughout the world in a new understanding of the fragility of life systems and their interconnectedness. They would like to dedicate their performances to all beings who have suffered pitifully and needlessly because of human injustice and stupidity. Through their performances they hope that all of us may remember the pain of all the victims of environmental ills, change our ways and rediscover the sacredness of Mother Earth as we remind ourselves that the Earth does not belong to us; we belong to the Earth.

The dancers also want to raise awareness about environmental sustainability and social justice for the poor and vulnerable. They assert this responsibility in the public sphere through the performance of the songs, dances and rituals of the indigenous tribes in the Philippines. They dream of utilizing the collective energies of large numbers of people to promote greater respect and protection for the environment and the revival of a system of participatory democracy practiced by indigenous tribes in the mountains and rainforests even now. They call attention to the climate change impacts making life harder for poor people and indigenous tribes - more severe droughts, superthyphoons, constant floodings, and rising sea levels. We would do well to look very closely at the worldview and lifestyles of indigenous peoples to discover new and powerful insights into how we should relate with the world and living out our concerns for the well-being of Mother Earth.

The Children of Mother Earth seek, through the performing arts, to accomplish the following aims and help build the world we need:
1. To view the relationship of Mother Earth and human beings in the light of the wisdom of our forefathers so that we can adopt their ethic of living sustainably in harmony with the universe and thus assure the future of the coming generations.
2. To develop visions of common life and interdependence on this only planet we have, Mother Earth, marked by ecological integrity and justice, and help enable communities, especially the poorer ones, to care for their own ecosystem.
This year the World Day of the Environment reinforced the theme of the campaign Think, Eat, Conserve – Say No to waste, which envisages diminishing the waste of the enormous quantity of food suitable for consumption. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, in partnership with the United Nations Program for the Environment for the campaign, tells us that 1.3 billion tons of food are thrown away each year. That is equivalent to what is produced in Sub-Saharan Africa in the same period. One in seven persons in the world is hungry and more than twenty thousand children under 5 years die from malnutrition. As well as this, approximately 925 million people in the world do not eat sufficient food to be considered healthy. (FAO 2012) and more than half those in the world who are starving – around 578 million people – live in Asia and in the Pacific Region. Africa has more than one quarter of the population in the world that is hungry. (FAO. The State of Food Insecurity in the World. 2010)

We can’t ignore that the waste of food and the enormous consumption of natural resources contribute to negative impacts on the environment. Nevertheless a cursory and superficial reading of the above facts could establish a relationship between the cause and effect of hunger and the waste of food in the world. It is necessary to take a more critical look at this problem, since the actual production of food is more than sufficient to feed the world population. According to FAO in 2010, food production increased by 0.8% (FAO 2011, State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011. Rome, FAO) There is no doubt that contemporary society, with its technological and economical advances, has conditions to resolve this drama of hunger. The impediment comes from problems of a political order and the economic interests of governments orientating public policy on the prospect of private profit and not giving attention to the needs of the majority of the population. Meanwhile, on a global scale the general commercialization and the increasing interest in profits of all activities can in part explain this behavior. The development of agricultural and cattle farming activities – the basis for feeding humans – sees itself as one more item on the extensive menu of options offered by the capitalistic world. Being treated simply as merchandise, items such as rice, wheat, meat, soya corn, among many other items, lose their essential and primary characteristic: to satisfy one of the most essential needs of individuals and societies – to feed oneself.

Among other Principles, Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that every person “has a right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of oneself and ones family, including, food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services”. The idea of making such basic social necessities dependent on the generation of profits and the accumulation of capital is to completely and gravely distort things, since the reason to produce or not to produce a certain food, to invest or not invest in farming and cattle raising in a certain region - no longer belongs to the sphere of public politics which should consider collective interests and passes to the realm of private enterprise. Or, yet if even supported by some state mechanism (as is in the case of substantial subsidies conceded in underdeveloped countries), it is still restricted to the interests of that country and does not take into consideration the need for food of the world population. That way, the dynamics that preserve the levels of misery and inequality maintain themselves as much in the unjust and exclusive political systems, local and national, as in the unequal model of the distribution of riches between countries. The false excuses that a condition for the production of farming and cattle, on a global scale is insufficient to attend to the growing population is not sustainable.

As disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ, we are called to go beyond emergency assistance, because the dignity of the poor is only redeemed through the transformation of society and the economy through a new order of society that is geared to the common good. It is urgent and necessary to spend time and resources organizing the poor, because that way, supported and protected, they can raise their voices, mobilize their forces and fight for the sacred right to live with dignity and hope. As spoken by the Bishop of Rome at the audience on the World Day of the Environment: “We cannot permit that men and women are sacrificed to the idols that benefit consumption”. He finished affirming “Beware the one who allows himself/ herself be corrupted”.

By Heloisa Silva de Carvalho, Redes SS&SS
Another World is Possible: World Social Forum

Thirty-one Comboni Missionaries, including two lay missionaries, took part in the World Social Forum (WSF) held from 26 to 30 March in Tunis, Tunisia, the cradle of the “Arab Spring”. The theme of the WSF was dignity for all.

For Clara Torres Acevedo, CMS who serves in South Africa, taking part in the WSF was like being immersed in a sea of hope where the beauty of being human floats to the surface; as Frei Beto says, “To be human is to fight for the fullness of life” (Cf. John 10:10). This is the taste that lingers in the mind and heart when one has experienced being surrounded by so many people who dream of creating a different world in which there is abundant life for all: representatives of social movements, people of different religious and spiritual traditions, NGOs, caring intellectuals, students and citizens of the world.

The WSF is where those who struggle for Human Dignity in countless ways come together in a meeting of minds and hearts searching for a better and more inclusive world in solidarity, disdaining the logic of predatory and voracious neo-liberal capitalism that destroys the environment and creates ever greater inequality. “Dreamers” come together to overcome the night and welcome the dawn. They also come together to help each other understand the social, economic and political mechanisms that affect local realities, so that they can network and join forces to collaboratively address them. In an “ecumenism” for dignity and justice individual and organizations of different ethnic, social and faith traditions come together to learn from each other in a spirit of dialogue; they search together to achieve God’s “dream” that all may have abundant life. A new world requires new people who mutually help each other to deepen their perceptions, dreams and strategies. In the previous WSFs the Comboni Missionary Family was present to meet people and to learn from the many conferences and seminars on topics such as the right to education, self-determination, freedom of expression and the rights of ethnic and religious minorities; land-grabbing, human trafficking, gender and ecological issues, migration, etc.

At Tunis the Comboni Missionaries set up their own stand and presented seminars and workshops and also collaborated with others on themes like the situation of the Bedouin People, human trafficking, hoarding land and natural resources, peace and reconciliation, Women for Peace in South Sudan, intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

Fernanda Pellizzer, CMS Director of the John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre (JPIIJPAC) in Kampala, Uganda experienced the warm welcome extended by the people of Tunis and enjoyed the possibility of creating relationships with so many committed people. She and her team presented two workshops at the WSF.

The first workshop, “Living in an Urban Slum: human and environmental injustice”, presented issues of water and sanitation, security and crime, gender-based violence, population and housing and earning a living in the slum areas of Kampala. The goal of the research was to create network of the NGOs and Christian base communities that in partnership would develop an action plan to find solutions to problems and to foster hope for improved conditions.

The second workshop was on “Strengthening Partnership between Police Forces and Civil Society to ensure Security, Justice and Peace in Uganda”. Based on the JPIIJPAC experience in Kampala, the workshop focused on building and strengthening a collaborative partnership between police forces and civil society to ensure justice and peace. Creating a broader and more positive vision of peace and of the mutual relationship of police and civil society will ensure a mutual goal of peace and development in a just society.

The Comboni Missionary Family (CMF), in the spirit of St. Daniel Comboni, tries to integrate evangelization and human promotion. Comboni sought to help “regenerate” Africa by sharing the Gospel, defending human rights, especially against the scourge of slavery, and fostering education and socio-economic progress. For this reason at every WSF since 2007 the CMF also has its own meeting, the Comboni Forum, in which participants seek together to be attentive to the Holy Spirit who is actively present in the history of all peoples to support their struggles for dignity, human rights, justice and a fuller life for all.

As Daniel Comboni was present at Vatican Council I to present a Plan for the Regeneration of Africa, so the Comboni Missionary Sisters (CMS) see the importance of being present at the WSF, as well as in other places where hope is mutually fostered, as an expression of solidarity with all peoples and movements that are searching for a better world with dignity and justice and a “place” for all. A Latin American song says “I only ask God that I may not be indifferent to injustice.” May God help us to work together to make another world possible!

By John Converset, MCCJ
3. To discover an international framework for integrating development and conservation as strategies for a sustainable future for the coming generations of Mother Earth’s children.

4. To conserve Mother Earth’s vitality and biodiversity in the struggle for improving the quality of life for all her children by encouraging values that enhance the environmental ethic and combat the destruction of the ecosystem.

5. To help create a global alliance of Mother Earth’s children which would promote participative strategies in the struggle for sustainability and environmental justice.

Their primary strategy is to use cultural exchange as a means of raising consciousness regarding the fragility of the earth’s ecosystem and foster dialogue between people of different races, religions and ideologies. The group has since toured by invitation throughout the Philippines, Australia, United States, Germany, Sweden and Japan. Since its founding, the child performing artists have given over 350 performances in the Philippines and all over the world to raise environmental awareness and call for peace and justice. They have also engaged in environmental projects like cleaning up Manila Bay and planting trees in the Marikina Watershed. Apart from fostering a sustainable future (MDG 7), the Children of Mother Earth also joins with other young people in a Global Solidarity Movement for the Environment (MDG 8).

The Children of Mother Earth have been designated Ambassadors for Peace and Environment by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines. They have donated used computers given to them after their performances abroad to Muslim youth and young people among the other cultural minorities in a dialogue of peace. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources has given them in a stewardship agreement 135 hectares for reforestation at the Marikina Watershed in Montalban, Rizal. They have gone up the mountain to plant trees to hold the water in the watershed and alleviate global warming. They have established partnerships with young Dumagat people, an indigenous ethnic group in the Sierra Madre mountains to reforest a large part of their ancestral domain. They are raising funds to put up a seedling nursery to plant a million trees in five years.

On April 8, 2013, members of the Spiritans, the Little Sisters of the Assumption, and the Religious of the Assumption met in Paris. Together, we hoped to both get to know one another and to plan how we might get members of our congregations involved with VIVAT. Specifically, we wanted to motivate those members of our congregations who are involved in our ministry at the grassroots level – those who are working on the ground, among people – to connect with VIVAT. Thus far, our own involvement with VIVAT has offered us an opportunity to reflect on our work and to discern and constantly remember our work’s importance. Above all, it allows us to see the work we do locally as part of a broader international effort.

Our congregations work in the fields of health, social services, and education, and this work if our way ways of striving to eliminate poverty. Because we work at the grass roots level, we are privileged to hear about the lives of the poor from their own perspectives and to understand the facts of their day-to-day realities. We relay this information to VIVAT, who in turn passes it on to ECOSOC, the United Nations Economic and Social Council, where international agreements are prepared. Through this important aspect of our partnership with VIVAT, we are to stay informed of agreements signed by our governments at ECOSOC.

From there, our position at the local, grassroots level enables us to assist in applying such laws locally, if and when they are ratified at the international level. It is through this process that our congregations can be a part of global political decisions. Reflection on our local-level involvement with the poorest is thus not only a religious undertaking, but is also a way of transforming social and international realities.

Meanwhile, in Paris, we asked ourselves how we might work together cohesively to give better support to our missionary priorities, to motivate our members, and to learn how to best prepare accounts of concrete facts about the lives of the poor so that their stories can reach even further and influence international decision making. We also discussed some of the progress we have already made. For instance, we spoke about the joint initiative of the Little Sisters of the Assumption and the Religious of the Assumption to create a blog called “Don’t Call me a Foreigner Any More,” which would be available with stories in several different languages and aim to provide an opportunity for those communities who live in solidarity with immigrants to share their information with each other and anyone interested in the issue.

It's important for us to meet as members of VIVAT in order to journey together. We want to create a small VIVAT group in Paris.

By Benigno Beltran, SVD

By Franca Sessa, LSA

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VIVAT International, Meeting in Paris
Constitutional Amendment Threatens Native Peoples Rights to Land

The Native Nations Parliamentarian Block of Support functions at the Brazilian Congress with the central aim of blocking voting laws that withdraw native peoples’ rights guaranteed by the 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution.

A most pernicious one is the constitutional amendment number 215 from year 2000, which deprives the Presidential Office prerogative of taking care of native peoples boundaries limits. It transfers to the Legislative this capacity. The proposal is unconstitutional.

The presence of 300 native peoples leadership at Congress last April was decisive to adjourn the Special Committee activities charged with evaluating and voting that 215 project.

The pressure brought results. A working unit was made up of ten native peoples leadership and an equal number of Federal Representatives in order to evaluate all the initiatives regarding laws going against the native peoples rights, especially those related to land where they live.

By Mara Paraguassu

Empowering Women

The social centers – NAVODAYA at Mysore and NAVAJEEVAN SEVA KENDRA administrated by the Congregation of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ – ASC at Tarikere celebrated women’s day with 3000 women in rural villages from 200 Self Help Groups (SHG). It was a moment of wonder and praise. Women who are illiterate have become empowered to come out of their houses to take part in the march in the city demanding their rights and equality. This was an opportunity for women to exhibit their many talents. The invited women guests addressed the themes of women’s legal rights, the problems faced in their society, the need for them to take up leadership in local governments and the various schemes available at a governmental level for the empowerment of women. Apart from these speeches, women performed dances, dramas, skits and songs on social issues. The program lasted the whole day and food was also served to honor them.

Mini Vadakumcherry ASC

“Let us reaffirm our commitment to women’s rights and move forward with courage and determination. Let us defend human rights, the inherent dignity and worth of the human person, and the equal rights of men and women.”

“Constitutional amendment 215 of the 1988 brazilian constitution threatens native peoples’ rights to land” says Fr. Ton – congressman - the coordinator of the Native Nations Parliamentarian Block.
From May 27th to June 1st of this year, 36 religious women and men representing 24 congregations and 12 nationalities, including several of the congregations of VIVAT International, met in Tarata, Cochabamba in Bolivia under the auspices of the “Latin-American Conference of Religious” (CLAR – acronym in Spanish) and the Bolivia Conference of Religious (CBR – acronym in Spanish).

Francisco O’Conaire OFM led the workshop and the main objective of the workshop was to help the animators of communities, provinces and regions learn to incorporate the values of JPIC in the life and missionary activities of their members.

A wide range of themes were covered, including such as a history of the universe from the perspective of the human person within the process of creation, the three basic rules of the universe, reading the signs of the times, the national reality, the ecological situation of the world today, analysis of the reality from a pastoral perspective, as well as the basic theological tenets of JPIC, etc.

Considered from another perspective, it could be said that the workshop was an experience of searching for a common vision allowing that JPIC become ever more spirituality rooted in an integral and universal cosmic vision open to all created beings, including the responsibility of humans for all life.

Maria Cristina Ramos, SSpS says that the emphasis of the workshop was on attitudes of interiority, an ecology from within, which means a new lifestyle, a call to religious life to move beyond social assistance to embrace the works of justice, with a special focus on systemic change aiming to address the root causes of social, environmental challenges of today.

Some of the challenges we set for ourselves were to re-read our experiences from the perspective of the Latin American reality in which we find ourselves, with a special regard to the indigenous cultures; to deepen our understanding of the spirituality and charism of our congregations to enrich and strengthen our commitment to JPIC, and to work at strengthening our networking with others who also accompany JPIC processes such as to achieve greater impact through our activities.

According to Josimar Ferreira, svd one of the results of the workshop was the creation of a commission from those present whose task to promote policy dialogue with the leadership of the Bolivian Conference of Religious with the hope that soon the Conference will accept to form a JPIC Commission.

Another significant outcome of the workshop is the proposal to form, within three years a team of Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation with lay men and women in each of the areas where we are working.

It was also decided that a workshop such as this one should be held next year for others, as well as another workshop to further what was started this year.

Furthermore, the participants agreed that the best outcome would be to form JPIC teams with the laity in all of the places where participants work.

Finally, a document “Let us listen to God where life is crying out” was written and co-signed by the participants.
The National Pre-Audience of the Permanent Tribunal of the Peoples

The Tribunal of the Peoples had its Pre-Hearing session on April 26 and 27 in San Luis Beltran, Oaxaca, Mexico. Its main theme was: Violence Against Corn, Food Sovereignty and Autonomy.

Participation included: Civil authorities of different municipalities and police agencies, authorities of the commissaries of property and communities and civil organizations.

Camila Montesinos, Joel Aquino and Gustavo Esteva were the adjudicators of the session. They received and studied the different cases, and subsequently gave their legal opinion.

Having participated in this hearing Permanent Tribunal session gave me a global vision of the very threatening situation lived by our ancestral peoples. During the pre-hearing session, cases were presented and testimonies solidly substantiated. These showed that the territory the original inhabitants have cared for and protected for thousands of years, through traditions of responsibility, have been given over to private interest and foreign entities, violating their right to free decision and autonomy. The Pre-Hearing focused on the theme of CORN and presenting its significance for our communities:

- The people of Qaxaca would not understand life without corn; it is our main nourishment and the basis of our culture.
- Corn takes care of the community; it has permitted life and survival during thousand of years.
- We the agricultural farmers do not have any other option than to continue sowing in order to continue our way of life.
- Corn re-creates our spirituality as indigenous people.
- Corn is our meat and our bones, our health, our history and autonomy.

In allowing these phrases charged with identity into my mind and heart, with respect, with a sense of belonging and commitment to all that has been entrusted to our care and respected (like mother earth, water, forests, mountains, the peoples with their differences and similarities), my whole being is moved to say once again: "I CHOOSE LIFE," and I give my solidarity to my agricultural brother and sisters. Keeping in mind the words of Jesus: "I have come that you may have life, and have life in abundance." Jn 10:10

Esperanza Pilar Chagoya Mingüer SSpS

Upcoming Events

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<td><strong>July 8,</strong> GA Thematic debate on Inequality, New York</td>
<td><strong>September 26</strong> High-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament, New York</td>
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<td><strong>July 15,</strong> Informal Interactive Hearing on Migration and Development, New York</td>
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