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SVD/SSpS EURO ZONE JPIC COORDINATORS' CONFERENCE, MAYNOOTH, IRELAND

As reported in the previous issue of VIVAT International newsletter (number 16) VI members, specifically the SVD and SSpS Euro Zone JPIC Coordinators had their Conference on "Poverty Reduction through Insolvency Right for Impoverished States, Spiritual Renewal as a Key to a Needed Change, and Debt Crises and Debt Relief" from September 7 – 14, 2003 in Maynooth, Ireland. There were 24 participants in all, 9 SSpS and 15 SVDs.

On the first day of the Conference, Congregational and Euro Zone Coordinators, the Provincial JPIC Coordinators, and the Chairperson of the VI Executive Team, New York reported on the progress made in JPIC work during the past years at different levels.

The second part of the Conference concentrated on input from the invited speakers, each followed by discussions and plenary sessions. Dr. Edy Korthals-Altes, former Dutch Ambassador, introduced the theme "Spiritual Renewal – The key for a positive change for our world – humankind at crossroads". The participants were impressed by his personal commitment to the cause. He underlined the need for ongoing personal conversion.

Mr. Peter Sutherland, former director of the World Trade Organization (WTO) explained the functioning of the WTO. His presentation induced a lively discussion about Power Structures and the Profit Interests of the International Creditors. A

close relationship between trade and debt restructuring of nations was also discussed.

Karl-Heinz Peschke, SVD, Professor of Moral Theology at St. Gabriel and St. Agustin, made a comprehensive and systematic presentation of the history and development of various "Debt Crises" and "Debt Relief" programs as examples of different ways of poverty reduction. He also highlighted the importance of good governance, the termination of corruption, and involvement of civil society in working towards solutions to debt problems.

Ms. Martina Neuwirth, advisor for the Green Party in Austria, presented a paper on "Insolvency Rights for Impoverished States: A way out of over-indebtedness." Her paper opened the eyes of the participants to the complexities of the debt crisis and the difficulties and obstacles encountered in the process of finding effective solutions. She also stressed the need for the application of a "Fair and Transparent Arbitration Procedure" (FTAP).

Lawrence Correa, SVD, the present chairperson of VI, enlightened the participants about the activities and programs of VI from its inception on November 18, 2000. Besides explaining how VI is involved in advocating for concrete solutions to debt problems at the UN and its agencies at different forums, he highlighted new ways to solve the debt problem of poor, low- and middle- income countries through FTAP using the model of Chapter 9 of US legal code.

Action Program Visualized

Becoming more keenly aware of the disastrous effects of debt burden on nations and the deficiencies of the programs undertaken so far to solve the debt problem, and becoming more conscious of the need for greater

participation of indebted nations and civil society, the participants proposed the following action program for the years ahead:

1. With the support of Provincial Leadership teams, intensify awareness-raising in relation to Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). This work can be continued through information, basic and ongoing formation and invitations to participate in action programs.
2. As regards practical actions, progress can be made through the membership in collaboration with existing grassroots organizations, and through campaigns on the national and/or international level/s, which promote the cause of JPIC.
3. Active cooperation with VI through passing on its information to SVD and SSpS (VI membership) and participation in its proposed actions at national and international levels. To provide VI with information from local and national levels.

Source:

**Unpublished Report and Action Program
of European SSpS/SVD Meeting,
Maynooth/Ireland, September 7 – 14, 2003,
dated September 13, 2003**

VIVAT INTERNATIONAL JOINS ACTION FOR PEACE

In 2001, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution (A/RES/55/282) designating September 21st of each year as an *International Day of Peace*.

At the beginning of September, VIVAT International, New York (VINY) sent an appeal to all members through the Provincial-Regional JPIC Coordinators to join the worldwide vigil for peace. VINY acknowledges with gratitude the prayers and actions for peace undertaken by VI members in the grassroots. Excerpts of the reports sent to VINY through e-mail and newsletters are posted below.

SSPS NETHERLANDS A Stroll for Peace

In union with peoples in the world, the parishes of De Bron, De Vlaspit, De Schans and De Montfort in Tilburg, Netherlands organized “A Stroll for Peace”. This year’s theme is: “Believing in and Working for Peace”. As a climax of a whole week dedicated to peace, a prayer rally was held on September 16, 2003. It began with a para-liturgy in the four parishes, after which each group moved towards Juliana Park, carrying torches, placards and Pax Christi flags. The invited speaker, a member of the Inter-Church Peace Council, reiterated the deep longing for peace of peoples everywhere. **(E-mailed by Melina Polo, SSpS, October 10, 2003)**

SSPS PHILIPPINES NORTH Prayer for Peace

The JPIC Office of SSpS, Philippines North, joined a commission of different Religious Groups and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) in organizing the celebration of the International Day of Peace. They came up with a nine-day prayer booklet. The over-all theme was “*Concerted Action Towards Lasting Peace*”. A prayer and walk for

peace joined by a big gathering of people from different faiths culminated the celebration.

A Forum for Peace

In celebration of the contribution of our two saints Arnold Janssen and Joseph Freinademetz in promoting dialogue and life-giving relationships among peoples of different cultures and religions, the SSpS Sisters of Philippines North sponsored a forum with a Muslim lady, Ms. Baicon Macaraya, a peace advocate, as speaker. Ms. Baicon Macaraya spoke on the topic: “Roots of the Mindanao Conflict and Efforts of Peace Advocates.” **(ECHOES, September 2003)**

“I would like to thank the Holy Spirit Sisters for initiating this forum. This will not only pave the way for understanding the Mindanao problem but most importantly, it shall foster opening of hearts and minds – the two essential elements of realizing genuine peace in Mindanao”. (Baicon Macaraya).

ACTIONS ON THE VI ISSUES OF FOCUS ON THE GROUND

HOUSING FOR THE LEPERS AT BARGARH, INDIA SVD India East

September 7, 2003 was a day of joy for the community of Jamuda Krushna Leper Colony as 30 homeless lepers were awarded new homes. Rev. Fr. Lucas Kerketta, SVD, Rev. Fr. John Banwa, SVD, Provincial of India East and Shri Prasanna Kumar Archarya, Honorable Member of the Parliament, graced this special occasion. Special thanks and appreciation were given to Rev. Fr. Maliekal, SVD who was the main instrument in the accomplishment of the project. **(EASTERN TIDINGS, September 2003)**

HOPE FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS SSpS India Central

The SSpS of Central India Province are involved in the VISHWAS project devoted to the cause of HIV/AIDS. VISHWAS means trust and confidence and it wishes to bring hope to people living with HIV/AIDS. To foster consciousness about HIV/AIDS they started conducting some street shows in the city and slums of Indore, India. These shows were meant to stir more activities in the project for the next three years. **(E-mailed by Jaisa Antony, SSpS, August 25, 2003)**

MINISTRY AMONG WOMEN SVD Argentina North

This project, initiated and coordinated by teachers and students of "St. Joseph," an SVD College in Esperanza, Argentina, started as a response to the discrimination and exploitation of women. Addressed to women, men, children, families, students and teachers, the project seeks to conduct research and discernment on the role of women in our global society, to set forums for debates and interchange of ideas on the issue, to uplift the social and cultural capacities of women and maximize their contribution in this time of crisis. Among others, the following have been accomplished: increased awareness and appreciation of women's role in society, elimination of wrong perceptions, and the development of a mentality that promotes a

more humane and just society. Moreover, the Sub-Secretary of Social Promotion in Esperanza has also approved the project for implementation in the municipality. **(E-mailed by Arnaldo Ederle, SVD, August 18, 2003)**

SODEC PROMOTES BIO-ORGANIC FARMING SSpS Philippines North

The organic farming promoted by the Social Development Center (SODEC) of the Diocese of Bangued, Abra, Philippines is gaining support from the different farmers groups. Presently there are 48 farmer-cooperators who are now producing their own bio-organic fertilizer and ABREX (Abra Extract Nature's Effective Micro-Organisms). Many farmers use ABREX to hasten decomposition of organic matters, enhance digestion for livestock and remove odor from the poultry and pigpens. The Galicia Farm and the St. Martin's Farmers Training Center serve as show windows for promoting sustainable agriculture. **(ECHOES, September 2003)**

BUILDING SELF-HELP GROUPS SVD India East

The Government of Orissa has identified Self-Help Group (SHG) as one of the prime methods for development. The Government, in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations is trying to organize women and men in urban and rural areas into Self-Help Groups, a group of 10-19 people, who have faith and trust in each other and share a "WE-FEELING". Organized SHGs are granted loans for sustainable development projects by the government after a period of at least 6 months of effective functioning as a group.

To participate in this government program, the SVDs of India East conduct trainings for leaders of Women Organizations on a monthly basis. The monthly trainings have so far facilitated the formation of 78 Self-Help Groups in their work area of 32 slums. To respond to the increasing number of invitations to form SHGs, the SVDs formed a Team of Trainers and designed a Training Program for SHG. **(EASTERN TIDINGS, September 2003)**

VIVAT INTERNATIONAL RECOGNIZED AS FEDERAL TAX EXEMPT ORGANIZATION

On August 27, 2003, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) of USA recognized VIVAT International as a Federal Tax-exempt public charity as of the date of its incorporation, December 19, 2000. The application was successful on all counts.

DPI / NGO 56th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

On September 8-10, 2003 the Department of Public Information (DPI) held its 56th Annual Conference at the UN, New York Headquarters, participated in by around 2000 representatives from over 600 UN - related Non-Governmental Organizations in different countries. The theme "Human Security and Dignity: Fulfilling the Promise of the United Nations," was chosen to reflect the common commitment of the UN and NGOs to the Principles

expressed in the Preamble of the UN Charter: "To save future generations from the scourge of war, to reaffirm faith in the fundamental rights, dignity and worth of the human person; equal rights of women and men; and to establish conditions for the maintenance of International law." VI attended this conference. **(For more information, please visit: <http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/>)**

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2004

World Social Forum 2004 will be held in Mumbai, India, January 16-21, 2004. The VI Board of Directors has written to Provincials of SSpS and SVDs of India and of a few countries in Asia encouraging VI members to participate actively in this Forum. Some of the broad themes of the Forum are: Militarism, War and Peace; Democracy, Ecological and Economic Security, Debt, Finance and Trade; Sustainable and Democratic Development; Social Sectors – Food, Health, Education and Social Security; Exclusions, Discrimination, Dignity, Rights and Equality; Caste,

Race and Other Forms of Descent and Work-Based Exclusions; Religion, Culture and Identities; and Patriarchy and Gender. In the words of Sr. Agada Brand, SSpS, the President of VI Board of directors "This is a good opportunity for them (VI members), not only to listen to the experiences of others in the field, but also to share their own experiences and to contribute to the thinking and development of proposals based on the themes of the Forum..." **(For details of the Forum, please visit: www.wsfindia.org)**

WATER OF LIFE

On October 16, 2003, the UN headquarters in New York spent a day in observance of the International Year of Freshwater. The morning briefing on the theme 'Water of Life: Stewardship and Sustainability' organized by the Department of Information, and the afternoon Panels and Presentations on the theme 'Water for Life: Fresh Perspectives on the World's Water Crisis' were very

informative and thought provoking. While highlighting the declining availability of freshwater and the causes for it, the speakers came up with inspiring examples of new approaches and solutions to global water management crises. VI participated in these events. **(Brief report on VI website, under 'Sustainable Development')**

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