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WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2005, PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL

The fifth World Social Forum (WSF) was held from January 26 to 31, 2005 in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Continuing the theme of the Mumbai WSF, 2004 “Another World is Possible”, the participants, who were more than 150,000 in number once again demonstrated that path to sustainable development and social and economic justice lies in alternative models of people-centered and self-reliant progress, rather than in neo-liberal globalization.

VIVAT International (VIVAT), which believes that people’s movements, can bring about change in society and structures, participated actively in this process. There were 60 VIVAT members from Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Argentina, Paraguay, Togo, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, India, Rome, and VIVAT Central Office, New York.

Some of the issues discussed at WSF were:

1. **Poverty Eradication:** A global call to action against poverty was launched. It is a worldwide alliance of hundreds of organizations, which are calling on world leaders to fulfill their promises to end poverty. 2. **Reform of UN and the role of Civil Society** –UN to become more democratic; the need to restructure the Security Council; active participation of the Civil Society at the UN headquarters level and at regional and national levels. 3. The issue of **conflict resolution and peace building**. The negative effects of Globalization. 4. The **UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** and what needs to be done by the Governments and NGOs to achieve them. 5. **The issue of Tsunami:** how the

NGOs are trying to help the affected in relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. 6. The need for the **cancellation of debt** of the poor countries. 7. **Land distribution to the landless poor**. 8. **Indigenous Issues**. 9. The value and importance of **inter-religious prayer and action**.

WSF came up with a manifesto of 12 proposals for another world: Here is a summary of those proposals;

1. Cancel the debt of the poor Southern Countries.
2. Apply International Transaction Taxes to financial transactions.
3. Unmask progressively all forms of financial, juridical and banking paradises.
4. Right of every habitant of this planet to employment, social protection and old age pension, respecting men and women equally.
5. Promote all forms of just commerce.
6. Guarantee the right to sovereignty and security of every country. Abolish subsidies to the farmers in developed world.
7. Stop all kinds of patenting of knowledge and of living beings, and stop private claim of common goods, particularly water.
8. Take action against all forms of discrimination. Recognize the political, cultural and environmental rights of indigenous people.
9. Take urgent measures in order to stop environmental destruction and threat to serious climatic changes.
10. Demand the unmasking of military bases and troops in all countries, except those under the command of UN.
11. Guarantee the right to information to all and bring in legislation that takes away the concentration of communication with media giants.
12. Reform and democratize the

international organizations, such as the UN. UN to take more control of World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

VIVAT Participants decided to strengthen JPIC activities, to put into action some of the

initiatives learnt during WSF, and to network with other NGOs. It was felt that VIVAT would need to organize events at these Forums either alone or together with other like-minded NGOs.

SVD-SSpS JPIC MEETING, PORTO ALEGRE, BRAZIL

VIVAT International (VIVAT) members, SVDs and SSpS, sixty in number met in Porto Alegre, Brazil from January 24 to 26, and on 31, 2005 to discuss about Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) issues they are involved in Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Argentina, Paraguay, and Papua New Guinea, and to plan the activities for the next two years. JPIC Coordinators from Rome and a VIVAT Executive Team Member were also present. The January 31 meeting concentrated mainly on the outcome of the World Social Forum, 2005.

Reports from countries:

The issues reported by JPIC Coordinators in their countries were:

Ecuador: Work with refugees, mainly from Colombia; **Paraguay:** Courses on soil and water, displacement of farmers, and indigenous peoples; **Brazil:** Supporting the prisoners and their families, land rights, protection of Atlantic

rain forest area, culture of peace, support to street children, and courses and workshops on JPIC issues; **Argentina:** promoting JPIC issues in schools, and JPIC courses in formation. **Papua New Guinea:** HIV/AIDS, and orphans; **Mexico:** Domestic violence against women; **Togo:** Working with disabled, and research in violence against women; **Chile:** working with Indigenous People – Mapuche.

Michael Heinz, SVD and Mary John, SSpS from Rome presented their plan and process of coordinating JPIC issues as part of the larger Mission of our Congregations – SVD and SSpS. **Lawrence Correa, SVD from VIVAT** executive team made a power point presentation of the history and development of VIVAT International and explained to the participants the benefits and responsibilities arising out of VIVAT's accreditation to ECOSOC and association with DPI of UN.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

The forty-ninth Session of CSW is scheduled to take place from 28th February to 11th March 2005 in New York. It will focus on review of the implementation of Beijing Women's Conference and the outcome documents of the Special Session of the General Assembly "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first Century".

As 2005 is the year of Review of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Commission aims to bridge the implementation gap between Beijing Conference and MDGs to gender

equality in every field of human development and growth.

We encourage VIVAT members who promote and work for the empowerment of women and their full participation in decision-making process and access to power, to consciously integrate the themes of the Commission in their work and to send us your success stories and best practices. We also encourage you to participate in the UN regional level events in your country/region. For more information on CSW, visit:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/>

Commission on Social Development (CSocD)

The 43rd Session of the Commission for Social Development concluded on 18th February 2005, at the United Nations, New York. The Civil Society Forum representatives reaffirmed their commitment to the four core areas of the world Summit, namely, poverty eradication, full employment, social integration and environment that enables social development for all. They also urged the governments to implement the agreements already agreed upon, and to go beyond the Millennium Declaration to the full realization of the promises of the Copenhagen to the world's impoverished people. VIVAT International participated in the Commission and specifically contributed by organizing a Side Event on Participatory Works. **Gretta Fernandes, SSpS** made a presentation, on

“Poverty eradication by empowering the women through self-help groups and Microcredit.” She stressed the point that poor are not the problem but are the solution. If empowered, poor are the best partners in achieving MDGs. Presentation paper is available on:

www.vivatinternational.org → Poverty Eradication → Microcredit

We congratulate all VIVAT members in 62 countries, who work relentlessly for the eradication of poverty and hunger, and for social development. As you continue to work in this area, we encourage you to send us your “best practices” in eradicating poverty.

VIVAT International joined the organizations supporting the 'Global Call to Action against Poverty' popularly known as 'White Band Movement'. More details for countrywide participation of VIVAT members will be sent soon. Visit: www.whiteband.org

REPORTS FROM VIVAT MEMBERS

MeriPath – Papua New Guinea (PNG)

Zelia, SSpS reports about how women in PNG suffer from cervical cancer and its impact on their families and on the wider community. Faced by this grim reality, St. Mary's Hospital in Vunapope with the help of Dr. Birgitta Bauer and Judy Coates a pathologist decided to address this problem. In 2001 they formed an organization called MeriPath with the help of Caritas Australia. The MeriPath strategy had two focus areas: an awareness and education campaign about cervical cancer aimed at the whole community as well as training of health workers in conducting pap smears. Once the smears have been taken and batched, they are

sent to Sydney for analysis. Once the results are sent back to health center and, if necessary, follow-up treatment is arranged. Today MeriPath has 20 health facilities across PNG and many women are assisted in diagnosis and follow-up. MeriPath works in collaboration with a range of health and community professionals including the Director of the National Catholic Health Secretariat, Sr. Tarcisia Hunhoff, SSpS. It includes health facilities under the Catholic, Lutheran, Seventh Day Adventist and government systems. (For More information: zelia.ssps@softhome.net)

UN's Kyoto treaty against global warming came into force on February 16, 2005. For more information: www.vivatinternational.org

Bethany Center – Papua New Guinea (PNG)

The Bethany Center is situated in Madang, on the east coast of the mainland of Papua New Guinea. It is a haven for tourists and locals alike who want a rest from the daily stress of life. Madang like all other parts of PNG is increasingly affected by HIV/AIDS. The SSpS initiated the work for a small group of sex workers, as they realized the magnitude of the seriousness of HIV/AIDS, they made a commitment to work towards prevention of HIV/AIDS in PNG. With the help of Caritas Australia and National AIDS Council, they

opened Bethany Center in June 2004. In its first six months over 100 people visited the center and of these, 10 percent were positive. Anne Viezens, SSpS explains that pre-test counseling is a compulsory requirement for the test. She further says, “We try to encourage people to come in early to be tested. If we can do that, we can get people to turn their lives around through good nutrition, treatment of opportunistic illnesses and behavioral change”. (Report sent by Zelia, SSpS through e-mail dated February 5, 2005.)

Create a Friendly Belu: Peace Parade, Atambua, Timor, Indonesia

On January 1, 2005 about 300 people from various organizations took part in a Peace Parade around Atambua. The participants included handicapped children from Hadinan Haklaran, refugee groups, Sto. Egida community, Legion of Mary and government representatives. The following religious denominations took part in the parade: Buddhist, Hindus and Christians. The message

of the handicapped children read: ‘Create a Friendly Belu’. During the parade, some money was collected to help the victims of natural disaster in various parts of Indonesia. It is hoped that the peace parade may enable to create a caring and friendly community. (As reported by Irmgardis, SSpS, JPIC Coordinator, Timor, Indonesia, for more information: ssps_timor@yahoo.com)

March 8: International Women’s Day

DPI/NGO Annual Orientation Program for Newly Associated NGOs

The United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) organized a two-day orientation program for the newly associated NGOs, in which Lawrence Correa, SVD and Gretta Fernandes, SSpS participated. The purpose of the Orientation was to give to the NGOs an overall view of UN and how the

NGOs can gain access to and disseminate information about the range of issues in which the UN is involved, and to enable the public to understand better the aims and objectives of the world Organization. (More information will be sent later through a letter to the Provincials/Regionals).

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