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**THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE (PREP COM) FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE TO REVIEW PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PROGRAM OF ACTION TO PREVENT, COMBAT AND ERADICATE THE ILLICIT
TRADE IN SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS (SALW) IN ALL ITS ASPECTS
JANUARY 9-20, 2006**

This meeting at UN Headquarters in New York was intended to prepare for the review of the Program of Action (POA) on Small Arms and to set the agenda for the Second World Summit on Small Arms in June 2006. The preparatory sessions started with country debates, statements by intergovernmental and other organizations, followed by statements by non-governmental organizations. The sessions continued with interactive thematic debates, recommendations, and finally ended with the adoption of the report of the Preparatory Committee.

The Prep Com faced a lot of questions relating to NGO and Civil Society Participation in thematic debates. The report of the Preparatory Committee included the SALW relational link to development and humanitarian issues, assistance to survivors, gender, women, children and the elderly, engagement of civil society, promotion of dialogue and culture of peace. It

further proposed the synchronization of the Review Conference and Biennial Meetings. The International Arms Network on Small Arms (IANSA), of which VIVAT International is a member, remains hopeful and vigilant, as it monitors the proliferation of small arms.

The Conference in June will be the only opportunity before the year 2012 for governments to make the commitments that will protect people, including: global principles to control the arms trade, to prevent guns being transferred to places where they might be used for human rights abuses, to fuel conflict or to hinder development etc.

For more information visit: <http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/agenda-prep.html> or for more information on IANSA go to: <http://www.iansa.org>

THE CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM, FEBRUARY 7, 2006

In preparation for the Forty-Fourth Session of the Commission for Social Development (CsocD) a Civil Society Forum was held on February 7th at the UN Headquarters, New York. The theme of the Forum was “A Decade of Poverty: Ways Forward...”.

VIVAT, being a member of the NGO Committee on Social Development contributed to the preparation of the NGO draft Declaration and volunteered for the registration.

The participants of the Forum helped in finalizing the NGO draft Declaration that was officially presented at the opening of the Forty-

Fourth Session of CsocD, to demand Governments to fulfill the promises made to eradicate poverty. The NGOs representing both North and South stated in the NGO Declaration that “the language of the economists describing the countries as developed and developing no

longer does justice to a world where peoples’ realities are defined by war, mass migration, social stratification, deep insecurity, inhuman standard of living, an often unpredictable movement of capital and labor, and the militarization of national budgets”.

THE FORTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, FEBRUARY 8 – 17, 2006, UN HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK

The priority theme of the Forty-Fourth Session of the Commission for Social Development was “Review of the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997- 2006)”.

The major challenges faced by all across various regions are: income inequality, gender inequality, an urban-rural poverty gap, HIV/AIDS, and armed conflicts.

Rt. Hon. Claire Short in her keynote address stated “We are at a major turning point in human history. For the first time we are capable of removing abject poverty, illiteracy and the diseases of poverty from human condition. The current intensification of global economic integration has demonstrated that there is enough knowledge, technology and capital to bring development to all the people of the world...”. She further stated that the need to change the present economic model is the call of the hour for all, as the present western economic model is neither desirable nor possible. Currently the inequality of the world with 20% of people living with material plenty in a world in which a billion people remain abjectly poor is also unsustainable.

VIVAT International was well represented by Brian McLaughlin, SVD and Molly Mathew, SSpS both of whom were actively involved in the event and came from the USA Provinces. Also, the VIVAT Central office staff participated in the meetings as well. The following are the contributions from VIVAT that were made:

The various reports/statements made by the member states, clearly admitted that they themselves and the international community have fallen short of the goal to eradicate global poverty. Though to some extent the reduction of poverty has occurred in East and South Asia and the Pacific regions, however the scourge of extreme poverty is visible in Sub-Saharan Africa.

- Submitted a written statement to the Commission on Poverty eradication and employment for women and youth, which was published by UN in six official languages.
- Signed on and endorsed a statement on Poverty eradication prepared by International Movement ATD Fourth World.
- Made an oral intervention to the members of the Commission, on February 9, 2006 stating that poverty can be and must be eradicated.
- Chaired and assisted in the morning briefings for the NGOs.
- Was part of the NGO Committee that prepared the draft declaration.

Poverty is not only seen as material deprivation, but also economic and social exclusion and denial of human rights caused by the devastating effects of poverty on individuals, communities and nations.

VIVAT written and oral statements can be accessed at: www.vivatinternational.org → Poverty Eradication → Social Development →

the 44th Session of Commission for Social Development.

At the conclusion of the Commission on Social Development, member countries were urged to implement by 2006 comprehensive national development strategies in order to halve extreme poverty by 2015, as agreed in the 2005 World Summit Outcome, and to ensure that poverty eradication policies include measures to foster

social integration, equal access to opportunities and to adopt full, productive and decent employment as a central objective of national and international macroeconomic policies that is fully integrated into poverty reduction strategies.

From all corners of the conference hall, voices echoed the call that poverty can and must be eradicated.

REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

Efforts to Build a Just and Humane Society in Eastern India

VIVAT members in India East (Orissa) continue the endeavor to build a just and humane society and uphold the dignity of the oppressed and the marginalized (women, children, tribal people, dalits, HIV/AIDS affected) through a process of empowerment. These are some of the activities now being pursued, namely:

Promoting the Education for girls through schools and hostels for girls, conducting extra curricular activities and awareness programs on health and hygiene, HIV/AIDS, and career guidance. 485 girls are supported through these programs in the districts of Sundargarh, Sambalpur and Rourkela districts of Orissa.

Developmental activities are realized by establishing self help groups, where women's groups are formed for savings and to introduce income generation activities like farming, vegetables, goat rearing, etc. These women's groups address women's social issues, settling

family disputes and helping women in crisis. The other activities performed by these groups are: celebrating International Women's Day, lobbying and networking for their rights with other NGOs and government agencies, conducting awareness programs for protection of the environment, forests, and planting fruit and medicinal trees. Vocational Training is given through Sewing Centers by providing sewing machines and assisting them to make incense sticks for sale. These activities are conducted in the districts of Angul, Rourkela and Jajpur of Orissa.

Health Care is organized by providing medical assistance through the dispensaries in the villages. Patients are treated daily and various awareness programs on HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis B, nutrition and hygiene etc, are conducted by the members. (As reported by Selin Joseph SSpS, e-mail dated December 1, 2005)

Associação Rede Rua, Brazil

Associação Rede Rua aims to give social assistance to the street people and other excluded groups in Sao Paulo, Brazil through promotion of networking with NGOs with same goals. The organization provides shelter for the homeless; offers them formation, promoting educative activities, leisure, culture and social life. It is done in cooperation with government entities and other NGOs to help transform

society by cultivating fundamental values of solidarity, fraternity, forgiveness, respect for nature, and promoting justice and peace. It has produced audio-visual materials and articles on street people and other excluded groups.

(Reported by Maria Ruth Christian SSpS on behalf of the SSpS and SVDs, other civil society members, and the religious congregation of the

CONGRATULATIONS TO DOMINIC EMMANUEL SVD!

VIVAT International congratulates Dominic Emmanuel SVD, for producing the movie entitled '*Aisa Kyon Hota Hai*'. The movie was released in India on February 17, 2006. It is about HIV/AIDS and Communalism. We encourage VIVAT members in India to view this movie and to publicize and promote it throughout the districts where they are working and beyond.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT UN, HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK

1. The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) will hold its special high-level meeting with the Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank and International Monetary Fund), World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on April 25, 2006.

2. The Fourteenth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-14) will meet from May 1-12, 2006. This is the first year of the second implementation cycle. It will review progress made in the following areas: Energy for Sustainable Development; Industrial Development; Air pollution/ Atmosphere; and Climate Change. VIVAT is a member of the UN NGO Committee on Sustainable Development. For more information go to: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/review.htm>

3. The Fifth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) will take

place from May 15 – 26, 2006. The theme is “The Millennium Development Goals and Indigenous Peoples: Re-defining the Millennium Development Goals”. VIVAT is closely following this Forum being a member of the NGO Committee on the United Nations International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples. For more information you can log on to:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/5session/index.htm>

4. The 2005 UN General Assembly decided to hold a High-Level Meeting and undertake a Comprehensive Review of the progress achieved in realizing the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. The review will take place from May 31 to June 2, 2006. Informal interactive civil society hearings will be held on the morning of May 31, 2006. For more information go to: <http://www.unaids.org/en/Goals/UNGASS/default.asp>

Important Days to Remember

- * March 8: Women’s International Day
- * March 21: International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- * March 22: World Day for Water
- * March 24: World TB Day
- * April 7: World Health Day

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