



## **UN declares 20 February as World Day of Social Justice**

At its sixty-second session, in November 2007, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed February 20, as World Day of Social Justice. The day was observed for the first time in 2009. Member states were invited to devote this special day to the promotion of concrete national activities in accordance with the objectives and goals of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly, entitled “World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globaliz-



ing world”. As recognized by the World Summit, social development aims at social justice, solidarity, harmony and equality within and among countries and social justice, equality and equity made a commitment to the creation of a framework for action to promote social justice at national,

regional and international levels. They also pledged to promote the equitable distribution of income and greater access to resources through equity and equality and equity and social justice and that “a society for all” must be based on social justice and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms. The observance of the day should contribute to the further consolidation of the efforts of the international community in poverty eradication, promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity and access to social well-being and justice for all.

## **Sustainable Peace through Reconciliation**

**2009 – International Year of Reconciliation**

The history of the human race has been fraught with conflicts waged over economic, social, ethnic and political differences. Over thousands of years civilizations in many parts of the world have had to combat some sort of large-scale conflict, which has divided their nations and caused their populations a great deal of suffering. Recognizing that reconciliation processes “are particularly necessary and urgent in countries and regions of the world which have suffered, or are suffering, situations of conflict that have affected and divided societies in their various internal, national and international facets,” The General Assembly has proclaimed 2009 the International Year of Reconciliation. (A/61/L.22). Reconciliation



is a complex process that begins with the individual and extends itself into all levels of society and community, reaching out even to the international level. The process of reconciliation improves our understanding of our differences and allows us to move past them to a more harmonious world. The resolution establishing the Year of Reconciliation invites international and

non-government organizations as well as governments to support reconciliation processes among divided societies. It also asks them to plan and implement adequate cultural, educational and social programmes to promote the concept of reconciliation including holding seminars and conferences in order to disseminate information on this issue.

## **Interreligious and Intercultural dialogue for Peace**

*Message from H.E. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann*

### **Dear Sisters and Brothers,**

I would have liked to join you all at my second home at Maryknoll as you meet to prepare for the formal NGO meeting on Wednesday at UN Headquarters. I very much support your initiative to promote a (GA) General Assembly proclamation of the “UN Decade of Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation for Peace” from 2011-2020. As I received more information in your proposal from Stein Villumstad and Gerard Gonzales, I see how developed and compelling your vision for the Decade is. I believe the proposal will receive a warm welcome among Member States and I will do what I can to facilitate its adoption.

As You know, I have dedicated my presidency of the sixty-third session of the GA to the poor and oppressed of the world. During my inaugural address, when I spoke of the bankruptcy and injustice of the dominant neo-liberal economic system and the need for the democratization of the United Nations and, indeed, the entire international financial monetary and trade institutions, there was a great deal of eye-rolling. My calls for a new spirit of solidarity and a powerful injection of moral and ethical values into our business and political lives were called quaint and naïve—and worse. My appeals for social justice, non-violence and fair trade were dismissed by some as pious sermons and a throwback to times long gone.

As it turns out, the confluence of crises that now dominate our world and our lives have unfolded even more rapidly during the early months of my presidency. Suddenly, the notions of economic and social reforms, the rejection of neo-liberal excesses, the need for sustained financing for development and a critique of hyper-consumerism have become part of mainstream discourse. The celebrated titans of the universe and the guardians of the Washington Consensus are now the objects of wrath and public ridicule.

For the sake of the poor and those most vulnerable to the economic meltdown, the food crisis, the catastrophes of global warming, I sincerely hope that the current downturn is short-lived. However many experts tell us that this could be the beginning of a prolonged recession, even a world depression, that would transform the current catastrophe into a prolonged tragedy for millions, perhaps billions of people.

A quick recovery would provide the opportunity for the powers to be to declare that all is well proceed to pump up the false promises of yet another economic bubble. This is now unlikely. We must be prepared to approach this period of crisis as an opportunity of long-term transformation-of our economies, of our communities, of our priorities and our commitment to values that all of us, despite our many differences, share at the end of the day.

I know that you, as Sister and Brothers in the Spirit, recognize that this is a life-long commitment of our time and resources. This is so difficult to sustain in the era of short attention spans and political expediency. But for all its shortcomings, the United Nations has demonstrated its staying power in the face of these challenges. The coalition has chosen to approach a good partner to advance the vision of the Decade. Member States need this vision and encouragement and the very concrete capacity you possess to mobilize civil society in support of human rights, the millennium Development Goals and a culture of peace.

As we rush to prevent the immediate social devastation that is already being seen around the world, we must keep calm and keep our eye on the prize-long term peace and justice for all citizens of this beleaguered planet. In this lies the strength of your Coalition. Again, I regret that I cannot join you this week, but you can count on my support in the months and years ahead. This is a long road but it is well worth travelling. I wish you all success.

## Commission for Social Development

### Priority Theme: "Promoting Full Employment and Decent Work For All"

At its forty-sixth session, held on February 16, 2007 and from February 6 to 15 and on February 22nd 2008, the Commission for Social Development considered the priority theme "Promoting full employment and decent work for all", and the review of relevant United Nations plans and programs of action pertaining to the situation of social groups during the policy year of its biennial cycle.

On the priority theme, the Commission heard a keynote address by Carlos Tomada, Minister of Labor, Employment and Social Protection of Argentina, and held a panel discussion. The Commission adopted a policy-oriented resolution on the priority theme, which was recommended to the Economic and Social Council for adoption. The Council would decide to keep full and productive employment and decent work for all under review and would request the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the resolution to the Commission at its forty-seventh session and to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, as part of the report on the outcome of the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the Assembly.

The Commission also adopted a resolution entitled "Social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development", in which the Council would recommend that the Commission continue to give prominence to and raise awareness of the social dimensions of the New Partnership and would request the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser for Africa, to submit a report on the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's

Development to the Commission at its forty-seventh session.

In connection with its review of plans and programs of action pertaining to the situation of social groups, the Commission held a panel discussion, with the participation of the executive secretaries of the regional commissions, on the regional review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002. The Commission adopted a resolution on the first review and appraisal of the Plan of Action.

The Commission heard the statement of the Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development and adopted a resolution, in which the Economic and Social Council would renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur through 31 December 2011.

The Commission held a panel discussion on the theme "Mainstreaming disability in the development agenda" as an emerging issue. It adopted a resolution in which the Economic and Social Council would encourage Member

States, the United Nations system and other entities of the international community to ensure that issues that affected persons with disabilities, including the perspective of persons with disabilities, were incorporated into the formulation of policies aiming at the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in development.

The Commission held a discussion on the theme "Full employment and decent work: intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women"; the summary of the discussion was transmitted to the Secretary-General for his annual report to the General Assembly, as requested by the Assembly in its resolution 61/143. The Commission also addressed the subject of its future organization and methods of work and recommended to the Council that "Social Integration" be the priority theme for the 2009-2010 review and policy cycle, taking into account the relationship with poverty eradication and full employment and decent work for all.



*Priority Theme Promoting full Employment and decent work For All.*

## **GIRLS' Rights are Human Rights** **CSW53 futhers the Rights of the Girl Child**



The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Global Framework, #39 states, “Now is the time to recognize the human dignity and worth of the girl child and to ensure the full enjoyment of her human rights and fundamental freedoms.” Section L pledges to eliminate all forms of discrimination against girls, specifically addressing violence, education, economic exploitation, and harmful cultural attitudes and practices. It also promises to strengthen families and to promote girls’ awareness and participation in their own lives and in their societies. Furthermore, it calls attention to the need to overcome the gender stereotypes that exist in many societies and create enabling environments in which girls can develop their full potential. Finally, it recognizes that the advancement of women is not sustainable without attention to the rights of girls. Girls, however, are still repeatedly denied their political, economic, social, and cultural

rights and are subjected to cultural and legally sanctioned behaviors that present a grave risk to their physical, psychological, spiritual, and social and emotional development.

The 53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women offers a unique opportunity for Member States to accelerate programs designed to fulfill previous promises and to ensure all girls their full human rights. CSW 53 will focus on “The Equal Sharing of Responsibilities between Women and Men, Including Caregiving in the Context of HIV/AIDS.”

This issue is particularly relevant to the girl child since she is often called upon to increase caregiving resources in households affected by HIV/AIDS. In many cases, older daughters assume the full responsibility for the household and do so at the expense of their own developmentally appropriate needs and pursuits. Social science research

on the “parentified child” indicates that these girls are at increased risk for educational deprivation and adverse health and developmental outcomes. Research also shows that children who lose their parents to AIDS suffer greater psychological distress than children who are orphaned by other causes. In some cases, girl caregivers also suffer from HIV/ AIDS. Girls are disproportionately affected by the failure of the international community to meet health care commitments; the social stigma of HIV/AIDS further magnifies the low status for girl caregivers. The State has a major role to play in protecting everyone’s human rights. The human rights of the girl child cannot and should not be overlooked in the development of a healthy society.

**VIVAT International executive team and the WGG task force wish to thank VIVAT members that have responded to the activity suggested on the tool kits: Indicator Cards Set I (Education & Financing for Girls and Indicator Cards Set II (Health and Poverty). Members working to promote the rights of girls in all areas and stages of their lives, advancing the rights and status of girls and assisting them to develop their full potential as women are invited to be part of the project. The tool kit Indicator Cards Set II is available in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese, you can access download, from [www.girlsrights.org](http://www.girlsrights.org). Should you need help please let us know and we will walk you through.**

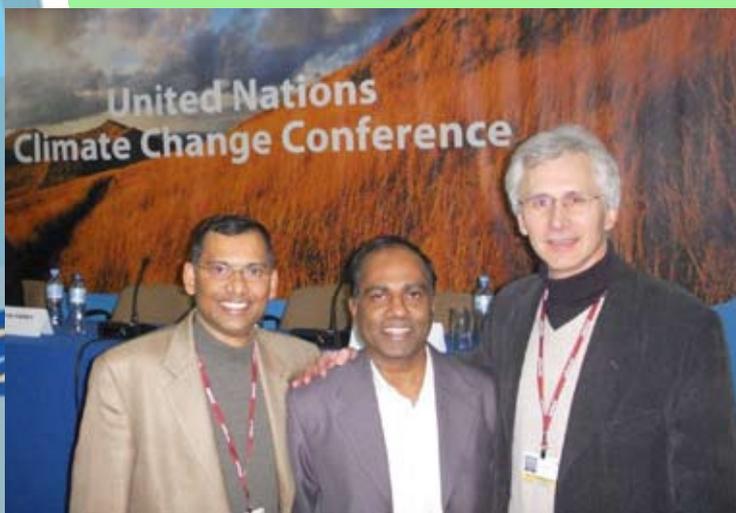


**The Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF recommends:**

- Launch a global campaign to transform attitudes, norms, and gender stereotypes;
- Promote the competence and resilience of girls through education and training;
- Promote the participation, visibility, and empowerment of girls
- Provide resources and funding for gender equality and empowerment of girls;
- Partner with families and communities to address the needs of girls heading households and children without parental care, including in the context of HIV/AIDS;
- Collect, analyze, and disseminate data on girls, disaggregated by sex, age, socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity;
- Strengthen the role of civil society and of organizations for girls’ participation and empowerment.

**U.N Climate Change Conference, Poznan, Poland**

*By Sunny Francis, SVD*



*U.N Climate Change Conference, Poznan, Poland.*

**Insights & Learning;**

1. The issue of Climate Change is real: although I am a firm believer in caring for the environment and working on environmental projects, I was able to comprehend the seriousness of the matter only after attending the UN Conference. It is real and we need to put our acts together.
2. Climate change is everybody’s problem: no one is exempted from this problem. From the richest person to the poorest person and the richest country to the poorest country.
3. Everybody needs to share the burden: since the problem affects every person on the planet, every person will need to contribute their unique share in caring for the environment and in the process contributing to improving climate world over.

**What can we do?**

1. Dissemination of information: VIVAT is in a strategic position to spread the word about climate change as part of its mission. Ideally it could be done through the various JPIC coordinators (from the zone to the provinces). But I am also aware of the non-cooperation one experiences from these entities. So, how else can we go about it? I would think about the various people we are already in contact with and the various people who believe in it and want to contribute. I also feel that most people do not even know that they can benefit so much from collaborating through the VIVAT structure. I would start with influencing one person at a time.

2. Using the connections we made from the conference: Networking is key to accomplishing our goals. For example we met Fatihiya A. Majid at the conference. Remember her talking about “water as the biggest problem in most of Africa and building small dams key to progress”? Can we get our confreres in Kenya, Tanzania (Mailady etc) network with her and look at options? The second group that comes to mind is INFORSE-South-Asia. Can we get our folks in India network with them and look at possibilities? What about other countries and regions?
3. Children are the best ambassadors to promote climate change: Can we come up with a network of our schools and work out a strategy for action? I am absolutely sure that this will have the maximum impact.
4. Developing a database of people who are already involved in and using various new technology, environmental projects etc. For example Bro. Dennis Newton is using geo-thermal for heating and cooling. Can this technology be duplicated in other areas and at the same time be cost effective?

## “Another World is Possible” - World Social Forum 2009

By Philip Gibbs, SVD

While economists and politicians try to deal with the world economic crisis, participants in the World Social Forum in Belém, Brazil urged that the market cannot solve all the world’s problems and that a change in the social and economic order is not just “possible” but urgent and necessary. More than 100,000 people from 150 countries attended the 2009 week-long gathering that opened on 27th January with a march through the city of Belém. Belém – at the mouth of the Amazon -- was chosen as the location for this year’s Social Forum to emphasize the importance of climate and environmental issues, as well as the rights of minority cultures.

The World Social Forum (WSF) defines itself as an opened space for critical reflection on the future of society. Those attending tend to belong to organisations promoting solidarity, justice, peace and human rights. This was the ninth meeting – the fifth to be held in Brazil. Other Forums have been held in Mumbai, India (2004) and Nairobi, Kenya (2007). The Forum usually takes place at the same time as the World Economic Forum (WEF) held in the mountain resort



of Davos, Switzerland. The WSF is an attempt to offer an alternative to the economic, social and political agenda of the WEF.

VIVAT members participated at the Forum and particularly in a meeting on human rights organised with the commission on Justice Peace and Integrity of Creation (JUPIC) of the Divine Word Missionaries (SVD). Associate VIVAT mem-

bers included the Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary, Comboni Sisters, Spiritans, Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus and Adorers of the Blood of Jesus. Jose Boeing informed participants about initiatives for Justice and Peace in the Amazon following a pre-forum meeting at Santarem in the Amazon basin. Zelia Cordeiro from the

VIVAT secretariat in New York briefed participants on the principal objectives of VIVAT that support human rights (poverty eradication, women, sustainable development, and a culture of peace). A follow-up meeting provided an opportunity for participants to share together on what they had learned from the World Social Forum and how they could co-operate together to strengthen the mission of VIVAT with the United Nations.

What can we expect from such a Social Forum? The Forum is a space for meeting people and organizations that want to see transformation towards a more just and peaceful society, and hopefully we can learn from them. We in turn, as

church, with on-the-ground contacts throughout the world have much to offer. However, there is a lot of work to do. Catholic Social Teaching offers valuable insights and values, but requires creativity and courage apply to present-day human needs and conditions. How are we to link Gospel values and the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations? How are we to interpret human rights in particular situations? What development models are appropriate? Is it enough to refer simply to integral human development? Perhaps we need to deconstruct concepts such as development, democracy, capitalism and globalization.

Moves to developing alternative

futures are often ignored by the mass media. However, meetings such as the 2009 WSF allow us to recognize and realize that many things are happening, in different places, which are in line with the values we believe in and different from current development models. To be anti-something is not very helpful. We need to have a vision of credible alternatives, not just utopian dreams. Affirming that another world is possible is also closely linked to what Jesus offers us through his word and life. People of faith invite others to build a world where people may sit at the table of creation and be recognized for what they are and not for what they have.

## JPIC ZONAL – PANAM

*By Brian McLaughlin, SVD*

The PANAM JPIC meetings took place in Santarem, Brazil from January 18-23; participants included SSpS, lay people from various SVD parishes in the Santarem area, and SVDs. We talked about the various JPIC issues we work on in our various provinces, with a particular focus on sustainable development. A few of our primary concerns were the destruction of

the Amazon rainforest and the effects this destruction has on indigenous peoples. For me one of the highlights of the JPIC gathering was visiting with one of the indigenous communities on the Tapajos River called Vila Franca. JPIC coordinators spent the day with the community, hearing about some of their history and struggles. What is very important to the Vila Fran-

ca community is the issue of standing in solidarity with them as their way of life and culture becomes more threatened by the destruction of the Amazon. The community asked us, the JPIC coordinators, to bring their stories and struggles to those we meet. This helps put a human face to this issue, especially for those who do not realize the struggles of the Amazon region.

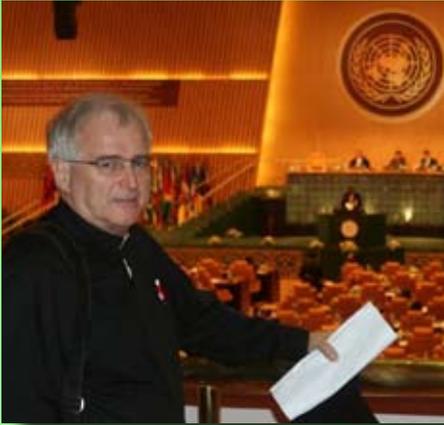
VIVAT was also a part of our JPIC discussion. How do we take the issues we work with as JPIC coordinators and bring these to the UN? By working together with VIVAT, we can take what we do in the field and bring it to the attention of various governments. When a government has hard evidence on the destruction of the Amazon and the effect this has on indigenous peoples, for example, then that government is faced with an irrefutable reality. This hard evidence—surfaced by JPIC coordinators—and brought to the attention of the UN through Vivat is how change can take place.



*Rachael Peralta and a community leader from Vila Franca.*

## The impact of the global economic crisis

By Séamus P. Finn, OMI



*Séamus P. Finn, during the Financing For Development Conference, Doha Qatar, 2008*

Halfway to the target for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals which includes the identification of resources to finance development we find ourselves in the midst of a global financial meltdown, a once in a century event we are told. Governments across the world are struggling to respond to the crisis through ‘bail-outs’, large infusion of capital in different sectors primarily the financial sector, nationalization or semi nationalization of private banks and last but not least “stimulus packages” that are intended to get economic activity going again.

All this is taking place while millions of individuals and families are tightening their belts in order to be able to survive on fewer resources and meet basic needs. The expected average growth rate for emerging economies has dropped from 7% to 4% and this will result in serious pain especially for the most vulnerable. While this short term impact is to be expected many are also pessimistic about long term growth. The boom before the collapse was driven by exports to American consumers, easy access to cheap capital and high commodity prices. All three have now collapsed.

Estimates for 2009 suggest that lower economic growth rates will trap 46 million more people on less than \$1.25 a day than was expected prior to the crisis, while an extra 53 million will stay trapped on less than \$2 a day, the group said, adding that these new figures are over and above the 130-155 million people pushed into poverty in 2008 because of soaring food and fuel prices.

The World Bank Group said these new forecasts highlight the serious

threat to the achievement of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Preliminary estimates for 2009 to 2015 forecast that an average 200,000 to 400,000 more children a year, a total of 1.4 to 2.8 million, may die if the crisis persists. Experts suggest that almost 40 percent of 107 developing countries were highly exposed to the poverty effects of the crisis and the remainder was moderately exposed, with less than 10 percent facing little risk.

It strikes me that two activities rooted in the gospel could focus the church’s missionary response; (1) bringing people together in solidarity as they face the continuing consequences of the crisis, (2) a commitment to a rethinking the assumptions of our economic life that have encouraged, a rampant materialism, a “looking out for number one” consciousness that has become so deeply ingrained in many around the world, a way of thinking that has led to policies that are quite literally destroying the life-support systems of the planet.

## Promoting the Millennium Goals: Access to Water

By Therese Osborne

Access to water has been the focus of our work during the past year in the parish of Santa Rosa de Lima. Our Programme of Human Promotion and Sustainable Development, seeks to contribute in a small way to the fulfilment of one of the millennium goals – “to reduce by 50 per cent, by the year 2015, the number of persons in the world without safe water”. This is quite a complicated task. On a practical level, we have developed a model of ferro-cement rainwater catch-



ment tanks to allow poor families to collect rainwater during the six-month rainy season. Since late 2005 we have built 19 tanks in the village of Quebrada Honda, San

Sebastian. Each family-sized tank holds 20,000 litres, enough to provide five gallons of water per person per day for drinking and cooking during the long dry season. By careful, sparing use of the water, the families have been able to use some of it for bathing, laundry and washing plates as well. It is a new experience for them to have water near their houses instead of having to walk half an hour or more to a polluted river to fetch each bucket of water they need and carry it

home. I was delighted to hear from some of the women that they actually get more rest now – a luxury in their hard-working lives!

In the neighbouring community of Los Melgares, we are building multi-family tanks each holding 46,000 litres. Three or four families will share these tanks. Of course, this means a delicate process of negotiation so that the water will be distributed fairly. The prevailing spirit in the world is one of privatisation and possessiveness, not group sharing. Once again we are faced with going counter to current trends. An important criterion for participation in the water project is attendance at a long se-

ries of capacity-building sessions. The sessions give us an opportunity to dialogue about the problems encountered in the implementation of the project.

We examine people's living conditions before they obtain water by asking them about distances travelled and time spent in collecting water, the cost of purchasing water during the dry season, and prevalence of parasitic disease in children caused by contaminated water.

We will do follow-up studies after the families obtain a tank, and compare the results. I am shocked by some of the information that has surfaced so far. Poor families

spend 25 to 30 hours collecting water every week from contaminated sources. Some pay up to \$35 per week buying water by the barrel from local vendors. It is a mystery to me how they cope.

So alongside our necessarily limited efforts to find a solution for some families to their problems of water access, we ask the deeper question of why the vast majority of poor people suffer disproportionately from lack of water, while a small percentage of the global family can have water piped into their homes.

*Therese Osborne is an Irish Spiritan associate - extract from JPIC Spiritan Newsletter Nov.2008*

## PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION



Every second week of February had been declared by the then President Fidel Ramos (Proclamation 731 signed 1996) as Awareness Week for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation. The theme of the 13th year celebration is: "Child Sexual Abuse Happens Everywhere: Violence That Must Be Stopped."

On February 12, there was a whole day event at the SM Entertainment Plaza promoting awareness and prevention on the problem of child sexual abuse and exploitation. This observance was organized by several coalitions of NGOs, led by Kaabag sa Sugbo, consisting of the Cebu City Coalition Against Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (CCATC) and War Against Trafficking (WAT) in partnership with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Region 7 and the Dolores Aboitiz Children's Fund of the Ramon Aboitiz Foundation, Inc. The activity was in the form of an Expo with simultaneous activities going on the entire day, namely: Tarpaulin exhibit by the participating organizations showing their programs and services that address child sexual abuse and exploitation; Trivia contest with questions on the forms of child abuse and child protection laws; Launching of a Handbook on Abuse for Children and Youth produced by Bantay Banay Youth, Lihok Pilipina Foundation, Inc. with the assistance from Cong. Raul del Mar and Cebu City Women and Family Affairs Commission; Poster making contest; Film showing throughout the Expo of Daughter (on incest) and Good Boy (on pedophilia) and small group discussions; and others.

*Extract from Kissaw Feb.2009 SSps (Philippines)*



## CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY 2009 – A REAL SUCCESS!

*VIVAT members are actively involved in the Clean up Australian Day 1st March.*

Every year, from Perth to Penrith, hundreds of thousands of Australians get stuck in and clean up their local environment by collecting and removing rubbish on Clean Up Australia Day. Australians generate almost 32 million tones of rubbish each year, making us the second highest producers of waste per person in the world. How much garbage have you been generating? Clean Up Australia Chairman, Ian Kiernan, urged local residents to look carefully at the types of rubbish they are sending to their local landfill, and consider if they could recycle or reuse it instead: Paper, cardboard, metal and most types of plastic can be recycled. While particular disused building materials can also be re-



used! Waste can be easily turned into a valuable resource. Australians are pretty good at recycling but half the rubbish we produce is still heading to landfill, which we are fast running out of space for, or it is being dumped into our natural environment! Clean Up Australia Day is the perfect opportunity for everyone to come together and help clean up our local parks and waterways and think about how we can reduce our impact on the environment!! Clean Up Australia Day is a great excuse to get a

group of mates together and help clean up our environment! If you take care of the environment, It will take care of you!

*“Nature gives us a positive energy, a peaceful mind and a spiritual soul”*

**Fr. Dom Cremasco, SVD,  
Brisbane**

*Extracted from a report produced by  
JPIC SVD Australia*

## Walking together as VIVAT

**By Daisuke Narui, SVD**

I thank the VIVAT Executive Team for their invitation to introduce our JPIC Committee activities in SVD Japan Province. It might be better to introduce us as “VIVAT” since we work together with the SSpS JPIC committee most of the time. I would like to write not about the direct social activities done by the SVD and SSpS members, but the coordinating activities done by the SVD and SSpS JPIC Committees. The characteristic feature of the SVD, JPIC committee of Japan Province is “to work with the SSpS”. As JPIC committees, we work together to promote JPIC issues among the members of both

societies as a tool for their activities in their working places such as parishes, schools, hospitals, formation houses and others. We hold a joint committee meeting every two months, in which we visit our members and parishioners at SVD parishes, SSpS convents and the SVD seminary. At this time we share our activities which the individual committee members are involved in: helping homeless, supporting migrants, environmental issues, human development, etc. It is important to introduce social issues, but it is also important to show our VIVAT presence. We publish a quarterly newsletter titled “VIVAT

in Japan” introducing the activities done by our members in the Japan Province. In addition, we translate the VIVAT Newsletter into Japanese and distribute it to all the SVD and SSpS members in Japan Province. One of our major activities as VIVAT is the event on September 21, the International Day of Peace. We encourage members to join this event through prayer services, ecological activities, lecture meetings or anything they can do related to peace. Though our activities are small and limited, I believe we are a sign of unity in a diverse world through our presence as VIVAT.

## VIVAT International: A New Beginning



*VIVAT Board and Associate representatives - meeting Jan. 2009*

**Dear Sisters and Confreres,**

*The last meeting of the Board of Directors of VIVAT International held in Rome on January 7, 2009 marked a new beginning for our NGO at the United Nations.*

*First, a revision of the VIVAT Charter and Statutes was approved. Two of the significant changes in the Charter are:*

- (1) The membership of the Board has been expanded from five to seven. This is to allow for the inclusion of representatives from other religious congregations who would be admitted as full members of VIVAT.*
- (2) The term of office of the president of VIVAT and the chairperson of the executive team in NY has been changed from two years to three years.*

*Secondly, the Spiritans or the Congregation of the Holy Spirit (CSSp) has been accepted as full members of VIVAT. They are the first among the associate members to apply for and be admitted to full membership. Consequently, their representative in Rome, Gervase Taratara, will have a seat on the VIVAT Board effective July 1, 2009.*

*Thirdly, the Board approved the setting up of VIVAT regional office in Geneva. This will begin with having a contact person in Geneva in the person of Spiritan Edward Flynn who will be residing in a parish that the Spiritans have accepted in Geneva. It is hoped that after a first exploratory year, a regional office can begin functioning in Geneva.*

*Fourthly, the Board appointed Zélia Cordeiro, SSpS as chairperson and Felix Jones, SVD as vice-chairperson of the executive team in NY for a term of three years as provided for in the revised Charter. Also according to the revised Charter, and for the same term of three years, Antonio Pernia, SVD superior general, continues to be president of VIVAT and Maria Theresia Hörnemann, SSpS congregational leader, assumes the newly-created position of vice-president.*

*At the same meeting, the Board expressed its gratitude to the congregation of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ (ASC) for its generous financial donation to VIVAT.*

*All of these decisions of the Board were reviewed and confirmed/approved by the Joint SVD-SSpS General Councils meeting held on January 20, 2009. This date, then, marks the new beginning of VIVAT International. In the name of the VIVAT Board, I wish to welcome the Spiritans as full members of VIVAT and look forward to a fruitful collaboration with them. I also wish to congratulate Zélia Cordeiro and Felix Jones for their new appointments. I know they will serve VIVAT with the same dedication and commitment that have always characterized them. And I end by asking everyone to give them their full support and cooperation.*

*Through VIVAT International may all women and men in the world, especially those who in any way are suffering or deprived, have life and have it to the full.*

***Fraternally in the Word and the Spirit,  
Antonio M. Pernia, SVD  
President VIVAT International***