



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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Time to act on climate change

Activists, scientists and concerned citizens around the world are calling on their governments to act decisively to prevent disastrous climate change. On November 2 the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its final report, indicating that the global situation is now even more acute as more countries burn larger amounts of fossil fuels. The IPCC scientists warned that failure to reduce emissions will cause climate change so drastic that it will threaten society with food shortages, refugee crises, flooding of major cities and entire island nations, and mass extinction of plants and animals.

On September 21, staff members of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and many Maryknoll missionaries and affiliates joined 400,000 people at the historic Peoples' Climate March in New York. Among the events preceding the march was a gathering of world religious leaders, the Interfaith Summit on Climate Change, which was sponsored by the World Council of Churches and Religions for Peace. The leaders made the following urgent appeal:

"As representatives from different faith and religious traditions, we stand together to express deep concern for the consequences of climate change on the earth and its people, all entrusted, as our faiths reveal, to our common care. Climate change is indeed a threat to life, a precious gift we have received and that we need to care for.

"We acknowledge the overwhelming scientific evidence that climate change is human-induced and that, without global and inclusive action towards mitigation and unless fully addressing its fundamental causes, its impacts will continue to grow in intensity and frequency. At the same time, we are ready to dialogue with those who remain skeptical.

"In our communities and thanks to the media, we see the manifestations of climate change everywhere. From our brothers and sisters around the world, we hear about its effects on people and nature. We recognize that these effects disproportionately affect the lives, livelihoods and rights of poorer, marginalized and therefore most vulnerable populations, including indigenous peoples. When those who have done the least to cause climate change are the ones hardest hit, it becomes an issue of injustice. Equitable solutions are urgently needed.

"We recognize that climate change stands today as a major obstacle to the eradication of poverty. Severe weather events exacerbate hunger, cause economic insecurity, force displacement and prevent sustainable de-

velopment. The climate crisis is about the survival of humanity on planet earth, and action must reflect these facts with urgency.

"Therefore, as faith leaders, we commit ourselves to the promotion of disaster risk reduction, adaptation, low carbon development, climate change education, curbing our own consumption patterns and reducing our use of fossil fuels. Based on our spiritual beliefs and our hope for the future, we commit to stimulating consciences and encouraging our peers and communities to consider such measures with urgency.

"We share the conviction that the threats of climate change cannot be curbed effectively by a single State alone but only by the enhanced co-operation of the community of States, based on principles of mutual trust, fairness and equity, precaution, intergenerational justice and common but differentiated responsibilities and capabilities. We urge the rich to support the poor and the vulnerable significantly and everywhere, especially in Least Developed Countries, Small Island States and Sub-Saharan Africa. Significant support would include generous financial resources, capacity building, technology transfer and other forms of co-operation.

"We encourage Heads of State and Ministers attending the Climate Summit to announce pledges for the Green Climate Fund, including commitments to increase them thereafter, to establish new partnerships for climate resilience and low carbon development, and to assure access to renewable energies for all people.

"As people of faith, we call on all governments to express their commitment to limit global warming well below 2° Celsius. We emphasize that all States share the responsibility to formulate and implement Low Carbon Development Strategies leading to de-carbonization and the complete phase-out of fossil fuels by mid-century.

"Consequently we encourage world political and economic leaders to exercise their leadership during the Climate Summit by announcing joint actions such as important short-term emission cuts, phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, coal caps or coal divestment, forest protection, increased energy efficiency in construction and transportation, and other concrete steps. We further call on all governments to identify medium and long-term adaptation needs and to develop strategies to address them based on country-driven, gender-sensitive and participatory approaches to better manage residual loss and damage due to adverse climate impacts.

"Ultimately we request all States to work constructively towards a far-reaching global climate agreement

in Paris in 2015, building on transparency, adequacy and accountability. The new agreement must be:

- ambitious enough to keep temperature from rising well below 2° Celsius;
- fair enough to distribute the burden in an equitable way; and
- legally binding enough to guarantee that effective national climate policies to curb emissions are well funded and fully implemented.

“As religious representatives and citizens in your countries, we hereby commit ourselves to address the climate change threat. We continue to count on your leadership, and we encourage and expect you to make the right decisions. When difficult decisions need to be taken for the sustainability of the earth and its people, we are ready to stand with you. We pray for you and for all humanity in caring for the earth.”

U.S. walks fine line in climate talks

As the effects of climate change become more pronounced, the eyes of the world are on international negotiators as they prepare for the 20th Conference of Parties (COP20) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to be held in Lima, Peru in early December. At the meeting they plan to draft an agreement on how the world will diminish the release of greenhouse gases and help poorer countries adapt to the changing climate. The agreement should be signed in Paris in December 2015 at a UN summit meeting of world leaders.

Many are focusing on the U.S. as a country that has been one of the principal stumbling blocks to achieving a legally binding treaty. Due to the fact that the U.S. Senate will not ratify such a treaty, as many of its members still deny that climate change is a reality, the Obama administration is proposing an agreement in Lima that would entail voluntary commitments from countries so as to avoid the required ratification by national legislatures. The proposal is derided by many developing countries that will experience the largest climate effects even though they contributed least to the problem.

The negotiating process has divided countries into two groups: “developed” and “developing” with the first group carrying heavy responsibilities to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the latter with minimal or no requirements. But large differences exist among those considered developing countries. It is difficult to equate “emerging” countries like China, India and Brazil with developing countries like Bangladesh, Liberia or Haiti. The emerging countries are currently large producers of GHGs, which is why many developed countries like the U.S. demand that these countries also be required to reduce GHG emissions. Yet this demand ignores the fact that a large percentage of the emissions from emerging economies are created in order to satisfy high levels of consumption in developed countries. The

UN has estimated that approximately one-third of China’s emissions are from factories producing for export to the U.S. and Europe.

Approximately 15 to 20 countries, mostly in the bloc of developed countries, dominate the negotiations. The close to 200 smaller developing countries – the ones most vulnerable to the heaviest effects of climate change, though having emitted minimal amounts of GHGs – have little to no influence on the outcome of the negotiations. They have issued strong, though mostly ignored, demands for a legally binding treaty that requires dramatic reductions in GHG emissions from developed countries and large amounts of assistance to help them adapt to the changing climate.

“Without an international agreement that binds us, it’s impossible for us to address the threats of climate change,” said Richard Muyungi, a climate negotiator for Tanzania. “We are not as capable as the U.S. of facing this problem, and historically we don’t have as much responsibility. What we need is just one thing: Let the U.S. ratify the agreement. If they ratify the agreement, it will trigger action across the world.”

It is understandable that these countries, especially the small island countries that may actually disappear due to rising sea levels, want a legally binding treaty. It is debatable, however, if that would be effective as there is no way, in the present political climate, that the required two-thirds of the U.S. Senate would be able to ratify it, leaving one of the principal emitters of GHGs out of the agreement.

“To sidestep that requirement [for ratification by the Senate],” writes *New York Times*’ Coral Davenport, “President Obama’s climate negotiators are devising what they call a ‘politically binding’ deal that would ‘name and shame’ countries into cutting their emissions. The deal is likely to face strong objections from Republicans on Capitol Hill and from poor countries around the world, but negotiators say it may be the only realistic path.”

With this proposal, countries “would be legally required to enact domestic climate change policies — but would voluntarily pledge to specific levels of emissions cuts and to channel money to poor countries to help them adapt to climate change,” according to Davenport. “Countries might then be legally obligated to report their progress toward meeting those pledges at meetings held to identify those nations that did not meet their cuts.”

While this proposal is concerning to many, one positive aspect of the negotiations is the increasing participation of civil society. In Peru it will be the first time in the history of these meetings that there will be a real and effective presence of indigenous peoples. They are becoming increasingly organized on an international level as could be seen in their preparatory meeting for

Lima in mid-October. They will focus heavily on preserving forests as an important way to mitigate the effects of climate change. International social movements will host a parallel event to the COP20, the Peoples’ Summit on Climate Change, which hopes to bring the voice of millions of people around the world that want strong measures to be taken in Lima.

Unfortunately, with such vast differences between countries any agreement will be difficult to achieve. While the U.S. proposal for a non-binding treaty may be the only politically possible result, this may not be enough to avoid the devastating effects of climate change, especially in those countries with almost no voice in the process.

Time for a new sanctuary movement

That there is an immigration crisis in this country with great humanitarian concerns is widely acknowledged; the question remains how to address this complicated legal, political and community issue.

Congress has failed to pass immigration reform this year and President Obama’s promise to take executive action has thus far gone unfulfilled – meanwhile the situation for those without legal status in this country worsens. With 1,000 people being deported daily, faith communities around the country increasingly feel compelled to action and are looking for ways to alleviate the suffering of their neighbors and protect the human rights of men, women, and children fleeing their home countries in search of economic opportunities, to reunite with family members, and/or fleeing violence in their communities. Many church communities and congregations are getting involved in reviving the Sanctuary movement (now known as Sanctuary 2014) to declare their religious spaces a safe haven for migrants facing imminent deportation.

The Sanctuary movement to protect Central American migrants was born in response to an enormous wave of people who fled the wars in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. Faith communities along the U.S./ Mexico border began publicly allowing immigrants facing imminent deportation to live in their churches until authorities reversed the deportation orders, a strategy that grew to a nationwide movement which at its peak included over 500 religious communities across the country. The Sanctuary movement successfully brought attention to the plight of migrants at that time and resulted in many being granted asylum in the U.S. With

the 2014 revival, currently there are six active cases of individuals facing imminent deportation who are living within church walls, two dozen congregations who are prepared to offer Sanctuary when the need arises, and dozens of other congregations and religious groups who are publicly endorsing the Sanctuary 2014 movement. Supporters of the movement can help protect those in Sanctuary by raising public awareness of their situations as well as advocating on their behalf to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Congress and the Obama administration to take action to stop the deportation of people who are deeply integral to the U.S. community.

Southside Presbyterian Church in Tucson, AZ, first to implement the strategy in 1982, is back at the forefront of the movement providing sanctuary for Daniel Neyoy Ruiz earlier this year for one month until he received a one year stay on his deportation. Ruiz has lived, worked and supported his wife and son in the U.S. for 14 years. Rosa Robles Loreto, who has lived in the U.S. for 15 years with her husband and two children, is Southside’s latest Sanctuary resident. Loreto was arrested and detained for 53 days after a minor traffic violation when police discovered her immigration status. Subsequently, Loreto was asked by the U.S. government to voluntarily deport or face indefinite threat of deportation should ICE decide to pursue her case – which is when she turned to the church for refuge.

Legal recourse for migrants who do not have authorized status in the U.S. is a complicated matter. Sanctuary 2014 is currently focused on cases of individuals like Ruiz and Loreto, who are considered low-priority cases due to their longstanding relationships in the U.S. but are facing imminent deportation. According to

a 2011 internal ICE document known as the “Morton Memo,” immigration officials are instructed to use their discretion in pursuing cases in an effort to make best use of available funds and resources – something known as “prosecutorial discretion.” The memo says clearly that ICE officers should take into account how deeply integrated into the community a person is – whether or not they have attended school in the U.S, if they are caring for sick relatives, forming families, even serving in the U.S. military.

These are very different circumstances for bringing migrants into Sanctuary than the first time around. In the early 1980s faith communities recognized that people crossing the U.S./Mexico border were mainly fleeing civil wars, political repression and violence perpetrated by state governments and military – circumstances which warranted protection by the U.S. government under international law. Migrants who are arriving today for economic reasons, to be reunited with family members already in the U.S., or who are fleeing drug and gang violence in their home countries may have a case but do not necessarily qualify as refugees. Under the 1951 Convention Related to the Status of Refugees and the subsequent 1967 Protocol, a person must satisfy two conditions: 1) Must be unwilling or unable to return to their country of origin “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted”; and 2) that persecution must be for one of the following reasons: “Race, religion, national-

ity, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.” Non-state actors (such as gangs) can be considered persecutors, provided that “they are knowingly tolerated by the authorities, or if the authorities refuse, or prove unable, to offer effective protection,” according to UNHCR guidelines on interpreting the law. But someone who has been a victim of gang violence in their home country must also prove that they are part of a targeted group. Decisions to grant refugee status are made on a case by case basis, and interpretation of the law is subject to court precedents and at the discretion of immigration judges. At this point, Sanctuary cases are a different group of migrants – those who would benefit from an expansion of the use of prosecutorial discretion by ICE officials, and/or through executive action, should Obama decide to unilaterally act to provide a path to citizenship for those who are integral to our communities.

A growing number of resources are available for faith communities considering becoming involved in the new Sanctuary movement: The Sanctuary 2014 website, www.sanctuary2014.org; Southside Presbyterian Church’s toolkit, www.southsidepresbyterian.org/sanctuary-2014.html; and Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)’s legal guidance document, available in mid-November, www.cliniclegal.org. An informational webinar will be held on November 18; see www.maryknollogc.org for details.

Breaking the Chains: Mass Incarceration & Systems of Exploitation Ecumenical Advocacy Days, April 17-20, 2015

At the 13th annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days (EAD), held **April 17-20, 2015**, near Washington, D.C., join 1,000 Christian advocates in building a movement to shake the foundations of systems of human exploitation, including a prison-industrial system that incarcerates millions of people in the U.S. and abroad.

As people of faith, we denounce the elements in our world that justify such systems of exploitation and mass incarceration. At EAD, we will confess our personal and corporate failure to break the chains of poverty, racism, and greed institutionalized in our laws, economy, and social behaviors that collude to perpetuate such human exploitation and strip civil and human rights.

As people of hope, we are reminded that Jesus’ radical message was one of liberation for all and restoration of right relationships. Through prayer, worship, advocacy training, networking and mobilization with others, we will face the reality of mass incarceration and corporate exploitation, and call for national policies that bring liberation both to the prisoner and to a world in need of restoration – all culminating with EAD’s Congressional Lobby Day on Capitol Hill.

Learn more at www.advocacydays.org or call 202-543-1126. If you plan to attend, please let us know; we would love to coordinate with Maryknoll supporters who will be there.

Bolivia: At the crossroads

The following piece was prepared by Fr. Stephen P. Judd, MM.

Recent Bolivian presidential and legislative elections showed the consolidation of the political power of the charismatic indigenous leader Evo Morales and his *Movimiento a socialismo* (Movement to Socialism, MAS) party in electing him to serve an unprecedented third term with a resounding 61 percent of the popular vote. With this percentage he almost matched the 62 percent he won in 2009. The populist leader Morales was elected to his first term in 2005 with a 54 percent total.

Unofficial early tabulations from the October 12 elections indicate that Morales captured the vote in eight of Bolivia's nine departments. In the three largest populated departments – Santa Cruz, La Paz and Cochabamba – his totals surpassed predictions against a very weak opposition with well-known candidates like Samuel Doria Medina and former president Jorge Quiroga.

According to close observers of the Bolivian political process, the landslide victory can be attributed to a number of factors, chief among them the power of the popular indigenous social movements and, to a lesser extent, the robust economic growth in recent years. Bolivia is one of Latin America's success stories with a rising average of six percent growth in gross national product. While mineral prices remain high on the world markets, this growth is expected to rise. On the economic front, the country's reserves have surged to new heights.

As a result, average Bolivians have seen a marked improvement in the quality of life with increased buying power. Government social programs have contributed to the MAS government's popularity enabling once excluded sectors of the populace to slowly but steadily acquire more economic security and recognition in a country that has always been among the most impoverished in the hemisphere. But, these valid explanations only tell part of the Bolivian success story, according to local political analysts like María Teresa Zegada and Jorge Komadina in a recent much acclaimed book, *El espejo de la sociedad: poder y representación en Bolivia*.

At an August book presentation here in Cochabamba at the Maryknoll Mission Center, both authors point to other factors that demonstrate the strengths but also the potential weaknesses of the Morales and MAS political power and its sustaining transformative potential for the future. On the one hand, the emergence of new social and political actors is symbolically visible in the makeup of the country's Parliament. This is a body

that truly reflects the ethnic diversity of the country. Yet, as Zegada and Komadina question, how representative of the country's diversity are these elected officials of where true power resides? Many who presently occupy elected posts are veterans of the social movements and beneficiaries of the cultural capital promoted in official government circles. Lines of distinctions between the social and the political spheres have become blurred in Bolivian society making the country a test case for a new kind of democracy in Latin America.

Their analysis attempts to trace the vast changes in the country to the long term development of democratic institutions and conclude, rightly or wrongly, that over the past several years powerful corporate forces in the mining and transportation sectors wield an oversized influence on the political process able to press their claims and interests. Similarly, with many new laws generated by power concentrated in the executive branch, they raise questions of long range democratic sustainability when "corporativist" means of governance predominate.

Underpinning the analysis of friends and foes alike of the MAS government is its capacity to work toward unity in diversity, to recognize the pluralistic nature of society to reach a consensus and work toward the value of the common good. Certainly, some in the Catholic Church leadership and progressive pastoral agents continually stress the principles of Catholic Social Thought in terms of the pursuit of the common good, solidarity and subsidiarity quick to present a posture of constructive criticism to the changes in Bolivia. However, instead of playing the role of friendly critic, church leaders often adopt an adversarial stance *vis à vis* the government and the significant transformations underway in Bolivia.

At the same time more extremist radicalized sectors in the government fail to regard the Church's historic role in the struggle for human dignity and the defense of human rights, intercultural dialogue and the outreach of the Church's social programs in education and health. Such was the message of a book written in 2011 by Filemón Escobar, one of the founders of the MAS party and now a dissident, *El Evangelio es la encarnación de los derechos humanos*, which argues for the Church's frequently ignored contribution to the recovery of democracy. The book proposes what many committed to societal transformations from a faith-based position consider a crucial question: How might there be a meeting of minds in a hoped-for national dialogue during the next few years to seek ways to become partners co-responsible in the process to create a new Bolivia?

U.S. funds create “21st century border”

The following report was written by Marek Cabre-ra, who is working for a year with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns on Central America issues.

According to a report crafted by the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and the Jesuit Conference of the United States, the recent drop in the number of migrants from Central America trying to enter the U.S. through the southern border can be attributed to the policies being implemented by the Mexican and Central American governments at the behest of, and with funding from, the U.S. government. The surge of unaccompanied minors crossing the border observed since the beginning of 2014 had been significantly reduced. Detentions of minors by the U.S. Border Patrol went from 10,000 per month to about 5,000 by August of this year. And the reason behind it, it is argued, is the expanded roles of these governments in “interceptions and turn-backs of persons seeking to leave their country of origin and interdictions of people in Mexico.”

The joint WOLA-Jesuit report, “U.S. support and assistance for interdictions, interceptions and border security measures in Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala undermine access to international protection,” was prepared as a chapter in a much longer document presented at a hearing entitled “Human Rights Situation of Migrant and Refugee Children and Families in the United States,” held on October 27 at the headquarters of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, D.C.

According to the report, the United States’ support for those policies “takes the form of training, equipping, and funding law enforcement and military units in Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico that are instrumental in the confinement or deportation of people, often children, families, and asylum seekers, who are pursuing access to international protection.” This international cooperation constitutes a serious violation of human rights that must be reversed, and be replaced with a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of the migrant crisis: widespread violence, poverty, inequality, gang and other criminal activities.

This multi-layered set of barriers, the so called “21st century border,” is being erected between Central Americans fleeing the violence, and the United States. In the construction of this new “border” the Honduran government is a major actor. It has deployed three U.S.-trained and funded special forces units to seal the border and prevent people from crossing into Guatemala.

It has even sent units to prevent people from crossing into Nicaragua, according to news reports. In Guatemala too the government launched an interception program called “Paso Seguro” with support, training, equipment and funding from the U.S. Southern Command. In both countries the task was to prevent people from leaving their countries.

And in Mexico the U.S.-funded, equipped and trained Federal Police have been deployed to the southern states to patrol, intercept and repatriate Central Americans. Mexico receives millions of dollars from the U.S. through several security cooperation agreements such as CARSÍ and Plan Mérida. With the aid of new checkpoints and increased surveillance of the common migratory routes, including the La Bestia freight train (which traverses the Mexican territory to the U.S. border), Mexican authorities have been able to detain and deport 63,092 Central American migrants (including 12,038 minors) in the first eight months of 2014, up from 49,201 during the same period in 2013. This development is a major concern as it prevents people from accessing international protection in the face of widespread violence.

The combined actions of these governments to stop Central Americans from reaching U.S. soil violate the international corpus of human rights law in several ways, particularly in the lack of a coherent system to screen people with “cognizable claims for asylum or other forms of humanitarian relief.” As noted above, the Honduran and Guatemalan governments use their coercive power to prevent their citizens from leaving their country, indeed forcing them “back to the situations they are attempting to flee,” which is a serious violation of the human rights of those people.

Mexico, similarly, has been violating the rights of these migrants. In spite of the country’s own legal framework for the protection of migrants in its territory, which on paper neatly reflects international conventions, hardly any Central American migrant is afforded those rights. According to the WOLA-Jesuit report, “[Out] of 700 interviews with children deported to El Salvador and 300 Salvadoran adults, only one child reported having been referred ... for screening and evaluation.” Several human rights organizations have documented cases of people who have been threatened, and even murdered, upon their deportation.

Given those governments’ records on human rights, corruption, collusion with organized crime and institutional weakness, the United States’ decisive support of

those practices is deeply disturbing. The disappearance of 43 indigenous student teachers in Iguala, Mexico, in September of this year, along with the revealed links between authorities and death squads in that region, the many mass graves being discovered while searching for the students, and the inability of the national authorities to find them, all highlight how wrongheaded it is for the U.S. government to basically outsource the protection of its southern border.

Furthermore, the actions of all the governments involved, according to the report, “are well outside the bounds of international law” because they violate the important principle of non-refoulement enshrined in article XXVII of the American Declaration of Human Rights. Under this principle, “States are bound not to return or expel a person - asylum seeker or refugee - to a State where her or his life or liberty may be threatened...due to generalized violence...nor to a third State from which

she or he may later be returned to the State where she or he suffered the risk.” This is an important principle of international law for the protection of human rights, and must be upheld.

The U.S. government, instead of channeling those abundant funds to erect a “21st century border” that not only violates human rights but also human decency, should focus on a major effort to draft, fund and support participatory, democratic development in the “sending countries” so that the true causes of the migration crisis are addressed. The widespread violence, destitution, corruption, state repression, forced gang recruitment and extortion must be confronted if a minimum level of what Johan Galtung termed “positive peace” is to be achieved. Working with the governments of Mexico and Central America to prevent people from fleeing for their lives does not even rise to the level of Galtung’s negative peace.

Congress must address factors driving migration

The following is an excerpt from a letter sent in October to Congressional leaders as they work on the Fiscal Year 2015 State and Foreign Operations bills; it was signed by 52 faith-based, humanitarian, labor, and human rights organizations including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC). The letter in its entirety can be found on the MOGC website.

... We are greatly troubled by the humanitarian crisis in the Northern Triangle of Central America that has compelled the migration of families and children, often unaccompanied, to the U.S. ... [We] urge you to retain provisions of the FY15 [budget] that seek to address some of the factors driving children, families, women, and men to abandon their homes. ...

[We] urge [you] to adopt specific Senate measures that strengthen human rights in these countries, including:

- Human rights conditions on security assistance for Honduras and Guatemala, and for Mexico and Colombia as well, along with \$5 million in funding for implementing Leahy Law human rights vetting worldwide. These indispensable human rights conditions, when tied to security assistance and strictly implemented, provide leverage for the U.S. government to encourage aid-receiving governments to investigate and sanction gross human rights abuses and prevent U.S. tax dollars from being misspent on crime, abuse and corruption.
- The provisions that require international financial

institutions to include rigorous human rights due diligence in connection with loans, grants, and policies, and that call for reparations for communities affected by Guatemala’s Chixoy Dam.

We strongly support funding for specific international institutions to strengthen the rule of law and respect for human rights in Central America, including:

- funding for the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), which has made vital contributions towards the struggle against organized crime, corruption and impunity in Guatemala (we recommend the higher \$5 million total in the House bill);
- no less than \$7 million for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to expand its activities in Central America and Mexico and build emergency shelters and regional protection systems;
- funding (in the Senate version) to open an office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras, urgently needed to address the deterioration of human rights and rights-protecting institutions in that country, along with continued funding for these offices in Colombia and Mexico; and
- \$2 million (in the Senate report) for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a strong voice encouraging Central American and other regional governments to strengthen the rule of law and often the most important recourse for human rights defenders at risk.

Darfur: Women, genocide in 21st century

The Darfur Women Action Group held its third annual symposium in Washington, D.C. on October 25-26. Brenda Soka, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, attended and wrote the following summary of highlights.

The two day symposium included panels with prominent figures and activists who shared insights into the numerous human rights violations, and raised awareness of the lack of tangible action by the international community and the need to emphasize the protection of women.

Niemat Ahmadi, president of Darfur Women Action Group, identified the situation in Darfur as the longest genocide in history with 11 years of consistent human rights abuses and proxy violence which President Omar al Bashir's regime in Khartoum has used to destroy the Darfuri people.

In the 21st century, sexual violence – a systemized and targeted weapon of war which not only destroys the woman but also cripples the community as women are the backbones of society – is now understood as a component of genocide. According to Eric Reeves, prominent journalist and Sudan expert, refugee women are vulnerable to rape as soon as they step out of the internationally displaced persons (IDP) camps; rape survivors often have suicidal thoughts and an increased deterioration of their mental health. Furthermore, as confirmed by Ikklas Abdelmageed, a research fellow with the Institute for Peace's Sudanese & South Sudanese Young Leaders Program, nonprofit organizations in Darfur have been unable to respond to sexual violence problems as attempts to address the issue have been hindered by the Sudanese government. It has been reported that UNAMID (the joint African Union and United Nations peacekeeping mission) turns away rape cases, simply because their mandate does not include sexual violence. According to Reeves, "what the international community allows to continue is genocide by attrition."

Participants and speakers alike at the symposium often questioned the role and progress of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the prevention and containment of genocide. Currently al Bashir faces arrest warrants for 10 counts of crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide, on the basis of his individual criminal responsibility under Article 25 (3) (a) of the Rome Statute. He has managed to evade arrest, and continues to trade with various Middle Eastern states and to travel to sympathetic countries. Critics question whether the

warrants for al Bashir will be effective enough to stop the human rights violations committed by his regime. ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda reiterated that her office will do all in its power to prosecute crimes of genocide and particularly crimes of sexual violence and gender-based violence. She assured the participants that al Bashir will face justice, the ICC will ensure accountability, and justice will be served to the people of Darfur.

Tom Andrews, president of United to End Genocide, noted that all countries – especially those which thus far have welcomed al Bashir and ignored the ICC's warrant for his arrest – must have political will to stop al Bashir and end genocide. According to Andrews, the U.S. should have put political pressure on Egypt to prevent al Bashir from visiting that country, given that Egypt is one of the largest recipients of U.S. foreign aid. Impunity allowed by sympathetic states is the main reason that perpetrators of genocide are not prosecuted early enough.

The primary message of the symposium was that the empowerment of women in Darfur is highly imperative in order to stop the genocide. Rwandan Ambassador Mathilde Mukantabana gave insight into the successful role of women during the 1994 genocide, when many men were killed, and women stepped in to become the breadwinners and worked together to rebuild the fabric of the country.

The Sudanese diaspora members and activists who attended the symposium discussed many ideas for inclusive reforms that would help the situation in Darfur, halt gender-based violence and assist in removing al Bashir's regime from power in Sudan. One suggestion was that the Sudanese diaspora throughout the U.S. should unite to advocate for the Darfuri people, since they have the power afforded to those who are removed from immediate danger but have special influence as they are indigent to Darfur and have a deep understanding of the conflict. Participants and panelists also agreed that there should be a movement in the U.S. for a campaign to seize al Bashir's assets in order to weaken his monetary capital. This campaign could include the Rewards for Justice Bill, developed by the State Department's Office of Global Criminal Justice to pay whistleblowers who have information as to the whereabouts of al Bashir's personal bank accounts. Additionally, it was suggested that the U.S. government should act to curb the Sudanese military's power by sanctioning countries that conduct trade with al Bashir.

Pan-African network releases Ebola statement

In recent weeks a flood of reports about the Ebola outbreak have inundated print and electronic media. Many of these reports have relied on information from well-known government and health institutions like the State Department and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Commentary on this major global issue from the grassroots in Africa has been less available. Below is a statement from the Pan African Network on Nonviolence and Peacebuilding. A key point of their report, based on their extensive grassroots contacts, is the connection between the spread of this disease and the potential for increased violence and conflict in countries most affected. The list of 27 signatories and their organizations can be found on the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns' website.

We are a Pan-African network of peacemakers from over 30 countries across the African continent and represent more than 20 organizations. Our 20-member steering committee has representatives from West, East, Central Africa, southern Africa and the islands. Some of our members are also from the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, with strong African connections. We work at the grassroots level, training in nonviolence and mobilizing communities for peacebuilding.

We are disturbed by the ongoing and alarmingly vicious spread of the preventable and controllable Ebola virus that is not only killing people but is spreading fear and further destabilizing West African communities. While the Ebola crisis has become a global emergency, we are concerned that there does not seem to be a concerted political will at the global level to launch sufficient, well-planned and immediate actions to put an end to the epidemic and save precious lives. As stated by the World Health Organization (WHO), it can take six to nine months to bring this devastation to an end. We are deeply disturbed that grossly unequal treatment is meted out by the world in its response towards this preventable crisis in West Africa. While those from more developed countries have received swift medical treatment and have positively responded to the trial drugs, those in African nations are succumbing to the virus unnecessarily. As observed by Peter Piot, the researcher who discovered the virus, "It took the death of a thousand African(s) and the repatriation of two Americans before a public emergency was declared." Our failure to act now can only lead to more catastrophes in Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone and West Africa at large.

Failure to act now could also lead to intensified

conditions for violence and conflict, as people scramble for food, medicines and other basic necessities. While recognizing the responsibility that the African Union has already taken, the swift intervention of Cuba and the work of grassroots commitments already underway, we appeal (to both governmental and nongovernmental leaders from within and outside the continent) OR (the United Nations and leaders of countries with efficient resources) for urgent medical and humanitarian interventions which will ensure that a maximum number of lives are saved.

We call upon the AU to strengthen its response by appointing a special envoy on Ebola with immediate effect. The special envoy must have a mandate to take all necessary measures, and with both the budget and the authority to take short-term action so as to respond effectively to the rapidly changing circumstances. We also call for the special fund to address immediate and long term medical and socio-economic needs of those nations and communities affected by the crisis.

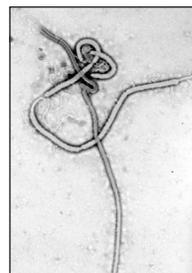
At the same time, we strongly caution against any militarization of humanitarian assistance to the affected areas. Utmost care must be taken to ensure that the deployment of military health personnel is strictly subjected to civilian authority. We are concerned that this medical and human crisis not be exploited for continued military, political or economic advantages by any country or party.

The Ebola crisis is a manifestation of under-development and the deplorable healthcare delivery systems in most parts of Africa, often emerging from war and violent conflicts. Liberia has been hit hard by this crisis because it is a fragile state, recovering from decades of turmoil and civil war. We call for immediate steps to improve the health and medical infrastructure for all countries on the African continent to ensure better healthcare now and for the future.

We can only defeat the Ebola epidemic if we acknowledge that this is not a local problem, but a global threat with common responsibilities for which there should be coordinated international actions utilizing

without bias the latest medical and health care technologies available in our world. With coordinated international people centered action, we can heal the sick and build healthy, peaceful societies as well.

Image of Ebola virus by Dr. Frederick Murphy, Centers for Disease Control



Hong Kong: Pro-democracy movement persists

Over a month after they started their pro-democracy street occupations on September 28, the most surprising thing about the “umbrella movement” campaigners in Hong Kong is that they are still there. Using their umbrellas as frail shields against the pepper spray of the police confrontations, the activists have weathered not only attacks from police but also merchants and residents angry at the obstruction of traffic and commerce. Moreover, they have remained in the streets in spite of predictions that the students would lose interest and notwithstanding divisions within the pro-democracy movement over how to respond to the Hong Kong government’s refusal to negotiate on the protesters’ core demands.

When these street protests, originally known as Occupy Central, began, many politicians and business leaders predicted chaos and a violent crackdown by Chinese authorities. Neither has happened. A largely polite and even festive protest has endured, even with the numbers of pro-democracy protesters ebbing from the high of over 10,000 camped out in the streets to only several hundred in three encampments blocking the central business and government district of Hong Kong. Hundreds of multicolored tents fill the highway in front of Hong Kong’s government buildings. In the evenings students work on their homework at specially built desks while pro-democracy leaders give speeches.

Even smooth-jazz icon Kenny G stopped by to lend support to the crowds. Hugely popular in China, his 1989 tune “Going Home” has for decades blared at closing time in public spaces. His visit to Occupy Central quickly turned controversial, however, when Chinese authorities denounced “foreign interference” and Kenny G reversed himself, apologizing to Beijing and using Twitter to send messages that he did not support the demonstrations. He played four concerts in China in September, and apparently did not want to jeopardize future business opportunities.

In contrast to their harsh crackdowns at home, China’s Communist Party leaders seem to be following a strategy of ignoring the pro-democracy demonstrators, while nonetheless watching them closely. The day the massive demonstrations began, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with Hong Kong’s business elite in Beijing and advised them to refrain from public statements

about the pro-democracy movement. Consequently, while some of them are supportive of the demonstrators, the tycoons have been silent over the last month. Some are afraid of the undercurrent of economic discontent in the Occupy movement, with students complaining about the high cost of housing, scarcity of jobs and lack of economic opportunity.

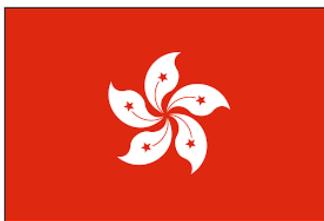
Authorities are also closely monitoring the internet, as evidenced by the arrest by the Technology Crime Division of the Hong Kong Police of a student who posted a “call to action” on a popular online forum. While they seem to be waiting for the demonstrations to peter out, the Beijing authorities are clearly not about to back down from their pronouncement in August setting strict guidelines for the 2017 election of Hong Kong’s next

leader – which set off these mass demonstrations to begin with. The main demand of the pro-democracy activists, civic nomination – that the public be able to nominate the candidates for Hong Kong’s chief executive – seems no more likely to be granted after weeks of mass protests. And Leung Chun-ying, Hong Kong’s unpopular

chief executive, still retains the support of Beijing, in spite of his clumsy handling of the protests and a public scandal over millions in secret payoffs from an Australian engineering firm.

On October 23 the United Nations Human Rights Committee in Geneva called on China to allow free elections in Hong Kong, rejecting Beijing’s establishment of a 1,200 person nominating committee as “not satisfactory” and undemocratic. It gave the Hong Kong government two months to comply. Before it was returned to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, Hong Kong became a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a UN treaty that commits signatories to respect civil rights such as freedom of speech, right of free assembly and of free elections. While China never ratified the treaty, it did agree that the treaty would apply to Hong Kong after it assumed control of the territory. The Human Rights Committee reviews signatory states’ compliance with the treaty.

While it is unclear how the pro-democracy movement will achieve its goals in Hong Kong, it has emphatically shaken up the political status quo in this city of 6.9 million, and has presented China’s Communist Party leadership with its greatest political challenge since it crushed the pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square in 1989.



Two campaigns unite labor, environment

Chuck Collins, senior scholar at the Institute for Policy Studies, recently wrote an excellent article (“Can we earn a living on a living planet? The need for jobs and the ecological limits to growth,” The American Prospect, Fall 2014) that summarizes well the long-running conflicts between labor activists and environmentalists that make the struggle for a “New Economy” (one that fits within the physical limits of Earth while providing adequate livelihoods) so difficult. Labor organizers often accuse environmentalists of ignoring the real concerns of workers in their struggles for environmental sustainability while environmentalists accuse labor of being unrealistic in demanding ever-increasing economic growth on a finite planet. These and other differences often result in these two groups that should be united, ending up on opposite sides of important struggles.

The economic growth issue is a key area of conflict. Former AFL-CIO leader Ron Blackwell has said, “For most trade unionists, growth means jobs. For many environmentalists, growth means destruction. Given that difference, it is mighty tough to build solidarity.” But it is essential that these two movements find a way to work together. Joe Uehlein, a long time organizer on both sides of this divide, says, “We will fail if we can’t bring these movements together. There is so much at stake. We have to blend our interests if we are going to reduce economic inequality and address the climate crisis.”

Collins sees “an approaching political and cultural clash. As the ecological crisis worsens, environmentalists become bolder, opposing any new fossil fuel extraction and working to put a price on carbon. But as economic inequality accelerates, we demand that our politicians create jobs, raising pressure to weaken environmental standards.”

Uehlein reinforces, “[T]he ‘enviros’ need to understand that we won’t build a movement to reduce carbon emissions without addressing the economic security concerns facing a majority of workers.”

Two policy proposals offer an excellent opportunity to overcome these differences and unite labor and environment to achieve important changes that will be essential to both worker security and environmental sustainability in the future.

One is the pitch for a shorter workweek. As we confront limits to growth such as diminishing resources and climate change, one likely result will be increasing unemployment, which can be partially offset by everyone working fewer hours and sharing the remaining

jobs. A variety of methods could shorten the workweek while maintaining salaries at adequate levels. The New Economics Foundation recently released a study, “21 hours: Why a shorter working week can help us all to flourish in the 21st century,” that shows the labor and environmental benefits of this policy and various ways to implement it.

For workers, a shorter workweek would provide more job security and allow more free time to spend with family and friends, care for sick loved ones, volunteer in the community, etc. For environmentalists, a shorter workweek is an important part of reaching a steady state economy that respects Earth’s limits. If humans are to diminish their impact/ecological footprint on Earth, they will need to produce and consume less. A shorter workweek would be a good step in that direction.

The second policy proposal that could unite labor and environment is a guaranteed minimum income. Uehlein points out that in most European countries the labor movement has already embraced the need to move to decentralized renewable energy. But it is easier for them because “German workers have less to fear. They already have a just transition in the form of a social safety net. These German workers are not afraid of losing their health care, pension, paid vacations, and affordable educations for kids.” A guaranteed minimum income or universal basic income would provide that needed security as the economy goes through major changes in coming years and decades. Without a stronger safety net, the labor-environment conflict will likely grow into the political and cultural clash that Collins describes above. Yet, while expanding most aspects of the social safety net is not supported by conservative or libertarian forces, a universal basic income has been supported by thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, William Buckley and the Cato Institute. So while some policies could unite labor and environmentalists, the universal basic income has the potential to unite an even more diverse spectrum of society.

Collins offers other areas that labor and environmental organizations see as important and could serve to unite these historically divided groups, such as increasing energy conservation through retrofitting houses, raising emissions standards and new technologies; putting a price on the release of carbon through a tax or cap; shifting investments away from fossil fuels toward renewable sources of energy; increasing taxes on excessive consumption and very high incomes; and working to re-localize economies, especially food and energy systems.

Food security: Report on CFS Session 41

The following article was written by Fr. Ken Thesising, MM, who lives and works in Rome. A version of this article will also appear in the VIVAT International newsletter.

“Those who suffer food insecurity and malnutrition are persons, not numbers.” So spoke Pope Francis in his Message for World Food Day, delivered at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)’s headquarters in Rome during the 41st session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), held from October 13-18. CFS is considered the overarching UN committee with responsibility to articulate the issue of food and nutrition security and develop policies and programs so that not just the reduction, but the “elimination of hunger” as UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon has stated might be achieved.

CFS holds its annual meeting at the FAO headquarters with the coordination and participation of the other two UN agencies in Rome, the World Food Program (WFP) and the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD). Jose Graziano da Silva, FAO director general, said in his opening remarks, “Food security is everyone’s business,” and, in a passionate delivery, WFP executive director Ertharin Cousins remarked that the State of Food Insecurity (SOFI-2014) Report tells us the number of chronically hungry in the world declined from 842 million in 2013 to 805 million in 2014, but there are two billion malnourished people if we count the silent hungry (those with various nutrient deficiencies in their diet and the half billion obese now in our world). And 3.1 million children died last year of hunger while millions more were stunted for lack of adequate nutrition, while in sub-Saharan Africa the food losses from spoilage after harvest and destruction by pests of stored foods in one year equals 10 years of food assistance that comes to Africa from around the world.

The above comments on opening day set the tone for most of the major issues discussed at this year’s CFS meeting. Including the Holy See, 127 of the world’s countries have delegations to participate each year. In 2009 a thorough reform broadened the stakeholders (participation) to include civil society organizations and movements organized through the Civil Society Mechanism. Also the Private Sector Mechanism was formed, and NGOs and other international organizations like the World Bank, the International Labor Organization, the World Health Organization, etc. participate, lending credibility to the claim that this is the most wide-ranging and comprehensive body developing policies and pro-

grams to reduce, to eliminate hunger and malnutrition.

Nutrition was central to discussions. No policy document was presented to be endorsed but the word was constantly mentioned. The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) had met under the leadership of FAO and WHO just before the CFS Session 41. On the floor questions were even raised whether a new “UN Nutrition” body might soon be established.

“Food insecurity in areas of protracted crisis” was a prominent agenda item with a goal of an Agenda for Action to provide guidance for governments and donors as well as NGOs, civil society organizations and private sector groups on how to best operate in places of crisis (for instance, the conflicts in Iraq-Syria and the displaced millions, and refugees and on-going conflicts in Palestine, South Sudan and others). These situations demand not just humanitarian assistance but designing and implementing resilience-focused policies and actions, integrated with peace-building activities, etc.

The major agenda point at this year’s CFS Session 41 was “Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems” (RAI), a policy document endorsed by the voting government delegations. All CFS documents are endorsed by consensus, which requires and has required lengthy debates over the past two years to find language all could live with (even if not entirely satisfied). In the document under Principle number 9, there was not full agreement on the phrase “free, prior and informed consent” in consultation with indigenous peoples. The entire section of Principle 9, (iv) is in brackets [...] indicating that this is still a disputed part of the document.

So the work continues; the development of policies is a year-round process. Here I believe is where our religious congregations have a vital role to play. We have many men and women “on the ground” at the village level, and can observe what is happening at that level. CFS spoke of the importance of a “Framework for monitoring CFS decisions;” all 127 member governments endorse the documents. But then the important step is implementation. We can play a vital role here, holding all to accountability.

To conclude let me again quote Pope Francis’ message: “Beyond the data, there is an important aspect of the problem: [T]hose who suffer food insecurity and malnutrition are persons not numbers, and precisely because of their dignity as persons, they are above any calculation or economic plan.”

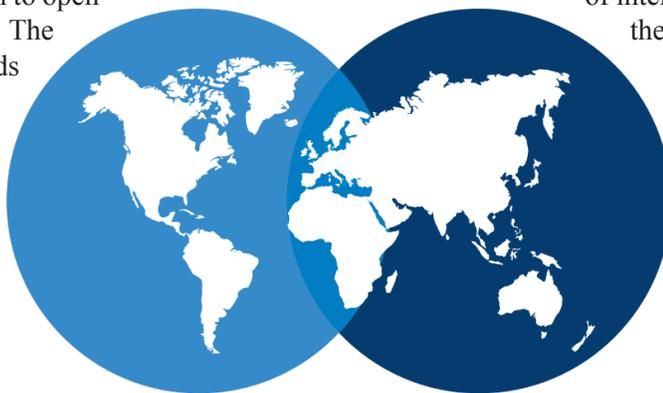
Ending anonymous ownership

The European Parliament is close to passing a law that will require all European companies to disclose their ultimate owners in a public registry. What may seem to be a fairly simple and obvious rule could have far-reaching effects in tackling international corruption, trafficking, tax evasion, money laundering, organized crime and terrorism. Currently, many investigations into these types of crimes are thwarted due to the fact that the identity of the “beneficial owner” -- the actual person who benefits from a company’s profits – is not known.

The eight leading industrialized economies, known collectively as the G8, also are moving forward with similar initiatives in response to growing pressure from civil society organizations around the world that see the issue of owner transparency as key in combatting world poverty. The Global Financial Integrity organization (GFI) estimated that for every dollar of aid that developing countries received in 2010, six dollars was siphoned out of those same countries through illicit flows of money facilitated by anonymously owned companies. In just one decade (2001-2010), nearly \$6 trillion were stolen from developing countries. As GFI economist Sarah Freitas explains, those are funds “that could have been used to invest in healthcare, education, and infrastructure. [This money] could have been used to pull people out of poverty and save lives.”

In many countries, it is easy to open a company without revealing the name of the actual owner. The United States tops the list of most favored countries to register these “anonymous shell companies” or “phantom firms.” Delaware, which registers far more new companies than any other state, requires more information for a person to get a driver’s license than to open a corporation. The

World Bank finds the fact that the U.S. leads the list to be “especially concerning given the huge number of legal entities



formed each year – around 10 times more than in all 41 tax haven jurisdictions combined.”

These anonymous companies are created and used by tax evaders, drug cartels, corrupt politicians, terrorists, human traffickers and others to keep their stolen assets while avoiding detection. They often create numerous phantom firms in order to make criminal investigations even more difficult. When they do have to give the identity of the company’s owner, they often use names of people who are paid specifically to act as if they were the owner, but who really work for the actual owner. With this secrecy, they are able to hide billions of dollars of illicit gains.

For example, according to GFI, “Mexico’s biggest drug cartel, the Los Zetas cartel, used an anonymous Oklahoma company as part of a scheme to launder millions of dollars of drug money in the United States.” Nigerian oil minister chief Dan Etete sold one of the country’s richest deposits of oil for more than \$1 billion to Malabu Oil and Gas. A criminal investigation later discovered that the owner of the company was Minister Etete himself, meaning he had been able to award the nine-digit contract to himself because of the secretive nature of the firm.

The son of Equatorial Guinea’s president famously went on a \$300 million spending spree with public money that had been funneled into phantom firms registered in California. Swiss banks were to have created anonymous companies in Hong Kong, Panama and Lichtenstein to help U.S. firms avoid paying taxes.

While it is a small number of firms that are anonymous – the UK estimates that only one percent of firms registered there have beneficial owners who are different from their legal shareholders – they are a large part of international crime. The World Bank reviewed the 213 biggest cases of corruption between 1980 and 2010 and found that more than 70 percent of the cases depended on anonymous shell companies.

With such a small change in the law potentially resulting in such massive reductions in crime, one can wonder why it has taken so long to get to this point, but it is good to see that perhaps in a not too distant future, criminals around the world will lose

one of their most effective methods of avoiding detection.

GLOBAL FINANCIAL INTEGRITY

Sustainability and nuclear weapons

From August 27-29, the UN's Department of Public Information held its 65th annual conference. It focused on poverty eradication, sustainability, climate justice, human rights and partnerships among other relevant topics. Along with several other NGOs, Maryknoll cosponsored a side event entitled, "Sustainability and nuclear weapons?" held on August 28. Panelists, including Marie Dennis, Pax Christi International copresident and former director of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC), addressed the incompatibility of sustainability with nuclear weapons which constantly threaten the existence of the entire ecosystem. Sr. Elizabeth (Claris) Zwareva, MOGC staff member, also served as a panelist; an edited version of her talk is reprinted below.

... Sustainability depends upon the equilibrium of entire ecosystems Today this equilibrium is under threat from the existence of nuclear weapons which continue to escalate tensions among nations. The solution is to build peace among nations while eliminating all nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. The [UN Conference on Sustainable Development] Rio+20 outcome document "reaffirmed the importance of freedom, peace and security, respect for all human rights including the right to development and the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to food and water, the rule of law, good governance..."

Nuclear weapons did not just appear from nowhere; they are of human creation, products of scientific research and technological innovation that have created a monster that threatens the survival of life on Earth and cause irreversible damage to the environment. ...

The nuclear bomb that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki originated from the uranium that was mined from indigenous people's lands. After uranium extraction the radioactive material left at the surface seeped into aquifers and also contaminated agricultural lands. "Blighted homeland," a multimedia series by the *Los Angeles Times*, documents how uranium mining has affected the health of the Navajos. According to this documentary, from 1944 to 1986, 3.9 million tons of uranium ore were extracted from Navajo homeland. Navajos inhaled radioactive dust, drank contaminated water and built homes using sand and rock from the mines and mills.



Recently [Maryknoll Sister Rose Marie Cecchini] spoke to us of the continuing adverse and environmental impacts on communities at Crowpoint, NM, and Tuba City, AZ. Decades of uranium mining and abandoned mine sites that were never cleaned up by responsible federal agencies and mining companies continues to affect the health of these communities. Navajo miners working in open pit and underground mines were never warned of health risks from radioactive exposure to the uranium ore. Protective clothing, masks and essential ventilation were never provided by mining company officials, who were well aware of the radiation exposure to workers. [The] miners, with uranium dust-covered clothing, daily returned to their homes and families on the reservation. With no running water in homes, the women washed all the family clothing together using precious water hauled from wells 30 or 40 miles away. In this way, other members of the family were also exposed to radiation from uranium dust. Privately funded health studies continue to identify and document diverse types of cancers, respiratory and kidney diseases, as well as diabetes related to past radioactive exposure to uranium in the mines and currently abandoned mine sites.

The bomb that exploded over Hiroshima consisted of enriched uranium 235 and the one that exploded over Nagasaki consisted of plutonium 239, a by-product of uranium. These bombs had immediate as well as long term effects on the environment as well as on human health. The atomic bombs' sudden, intense and dramatic effects have left indelible memories of death, destruction and horror among the Japanese peoples of the world. People in the affected areas still suffer from the effects of fallout. ...

The results of scientific research that goes unaccompanied by ethical reflection can be disastrous. The God-given ability to reflect upon our actions and how they affect others is the way to curb those actions that cause harm By so doing we are accepting life, respecting it and acting in ways that will promote and not destroy it ... The destructive force of nuclear weapons is incompatible with the principle of bringing about good, avoiding harm and acting justly.

As Jesus said, "I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance." Our duty then is to save ourselves and future generations from perishing from the monster of our own creation through embracing humility and loving life.

IFC standards have subpar outcomes

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private lending arm of the World Bank, is the largest department of the five World Bank entities. In recent years, due to pressure from civil society, and in some cases from private industry, the IFC developed performance standards related to social and environmental sustainability to manage environmental and social risks. The practical performance of these standards falls short.

One enigmatic case that highlights the shortcomings of the performance standards is from the Aguán Valley in Honduras, where a palm oil project developed by Dinant Corporation is linked to the killings of 100 farmers, forced evictions of many more, and kidnappings. (See May-June 2013 *NewsNotes*.) Even before the project began, the area had a long standing conflict over land; the communities never gave free prior or informed consent to the corporation.

The funding from the project came from the IFC as well as German Investment Development Corporation (DEG) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) through a Honduran financial intermediary bank called FICOHSA. DEG and the IDB withdrew their funds in 2011 over allegations of human rights abuses and land disputes, but the IFC continued its funding.

The Compliance Advisory Office (CAO), an independent watchdog for the IFC, received a complaint on behalf of the community. After investigating, the CAO issued a report in January 2014 which stated that the IFC failed compliance at every stage of the investment process: assessment, supervision, and evaluation. The CAO found that the IFC ignored news implicating Dinant in egregious crimes or did not do the proper research. It also found that the IFC continues to be in breach of disclosure and failed to consult the communities. When the IFC saw a draft CAO report, the IFC asked the CAO to re-

“Justice for the boys,” reads a placard at a public demonstration against the Hydro Santa Rita dam in Guatemala; photo from CarbonMarketWatch.org

move and cover up some of its findings related to due diligence.

After site visits, the IFC found inadequate implementation of its social and environmental standards but at no point penalized or compelled Dinant to come into compliance. It also inadequately supervised Dinant’s security force of 300 people.

Lastly, the CAO report found that the IFC culture discouraged staff from acting or speaking up when violations occur. The culture also encouraged lending at the expense of social and environmental risk.

Another case in Cambodia relates to a sugar plantation project in Kampong Speu, just southwest of Phnom Penh. The IFC lent money to the ANZ Royal Bank in December 2010 to expand its investments in the agricultural sector. It turns out that the project led to a massive land grab of 2,000 hectares belonging to approximately 1,100 families in 10 officially recognized villages of Amliang Commune and at least another five unrecognized villages. The company also employed child labor.

In response to both these and other cases, the IFC published “Lessons Learned” on environmental and social risks. A civil society analysis found that the lessons highlight important suggested improvements to address legacy issues and incorporate a greater country security and conflict context into their lending practices. However they do not include changing IFC culture, ensuring



consequences for environmental or social risks, reviewing the IFC portfolio for other risky projects, or giving greater attention to human rights risk assessments. The civil society analysis also raised concerns about how the lessons learned would be implemented.

The Hydro Santa Rita dam project in Guatemala's Alta Verapaz province is opposed by the local indigenous people; the communities own their land and never gave free prior and informed consent to the project. In August, approximately 1,600 police descended on the communities near the Delores River, forcing many people to flee to the hills. This followed a series of other events where community members were threatened or killed. (See September-October 2014 *NewsNotes*.)

The project is funded through a financial intermediary, Latin Renewable Investment Fund, by the IFC, the DEG, and the Dutch development bank FMO. Community representatives filed complaints in October 2014 with the three funders. MOGC staff recently accompanied community members to meet with staff at the World Bank and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

It is clear that the IFC does not have the ability to hold accountable financial intermediaries, which it made clear at a panel presentation as part of the World Bank Civil Society Forum in October. One IFC representative commented that they can't reach the small and medium enterprises themselves so they depend on financial intermediaries and sometimes that has negative consequences.

The failure of the IFC to ensure that performance standards are met is also compounded by some of the vagueness of the standards themselves.

Another great concern is that the IFC standards are held up as a guide for other bodies trying to create environmental and social protocols. The new Green Climate Fund, intended to help developing countries to adapt and mitigate the worst impacts of climate change, will include the IFC Performance Standards in the interim until it is able to develop its own standards. This is particularly worrisome because the Dinant and the Hydro Santa Rita projects were approved as clean development mechanism projects under the Kyoto Protocol. If projects meant to assist communities ultimately cause more harm, do financiers actually have the ability to guarantee environmental and social safeguards?

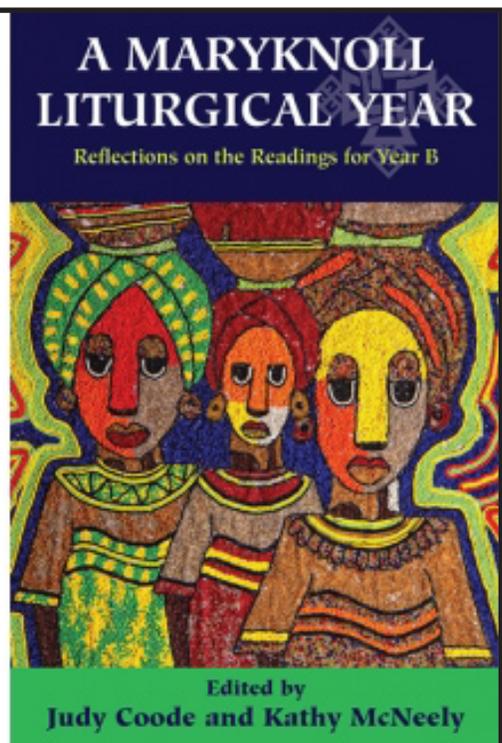
Other proposals that will use the IFC Performance Standards include the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment (though civil society engagement has ensured that the IFC standards will not be the only safeguard benchmarks). The Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance is also proposing the IFC Performance Standards.

In the case of the IFC lending, at least the CAO acts as a watchdog to ensure that the performance standards are met. Without such a watchdog agency, it is not clear that human rights, environmental protections, and other social safeguards such as Free Prior and Informed Consent for indigenous communities are met.

A Maryknoll Liturgical Year: Reflections on the Readings for Year B

Maryknoll missionaries' experiences of crossing into new cultures and sharing life with new communities bring fresh meanings of the sacred scripture to light. In this third volume of reflections that explore the readings of the liturgical calendar, readers find life described in its fullest – the deep pain and struggle that people endure, as well as the hope for a new heaven and a new earth. This collection elevates stories of reconciliation, of inter-religious collaboration; stories of ways in which groups have overcome their differences to take on projects that serve the common good.

Paperback, 224 pages, \$20
Find it at Orbis Books, www.orbisbooks.com
or call 800-258-5838.



Resources

- 1. Advent series for a New Economy:** The Faith Economy Ecology Transformation Working Group developed this four week Advent series to help individuals, parishes, and religious communities to pray, reflect, and take actions to build towards the kin-dom vision of right relationship. Each week features one of the principles from the statement, “A Call to Integrate Faith, Economy, and the Global Economy,” and provides a reflection, an action suggestion and a prayer. Explore the paradigm shift in mindset and values, how to support and build resilient communities through our everyday activities, how to develop policies that put the needs of people and the Earth at the center, and that the possibility to rein in corporate power exists. Available at the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns website, www.maryknollogc.org; if you do not have access to the internet, please contact us for a hard copy.
- 2. Annual vigil to close the School of the Americas/WHINSEC:** This year’s vigil to call for the closing of the U.S. Army’s School of the Americas/Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (SOA/WHINSEC) will be held **Nov. 21-23** in Columbus GA. (This year will mark the 25th anniversary of the November 16, 1989 assassination of the six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter in El Salvador.) Learn more about the weekend’s workshops, events, speakers, musicians and more at the SOA Watch website, www.soaw.org.
- 3. National Migration Week 2015: January 4-10:** Sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration & Refugee Services (MRS). The 2015 theme is “We are One Family Under God,” a particularly important reminder when dealing with the migration phenomenon, as family members are too often separated from one another. Find resources and more at <http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-and-refugee-services/national-migration-week/>.
- 4. Unaccompanied Migrant Children Resource kit:** The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has this 13-page PDF available which includes copies of statements from Pope Francis and several U.S. bishops; analysis of the current crisis; information on how to view the situation the context of Catholic Social Teaching; and an action alert to use to contact Congress. Find it at the USCCB’s website, <http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/unaccompanied-migrant-children-resource-kit.cfm>, or contact the Global Concerns office if you need a hard copy mailed to you.
- 5. The Great Land Heist: How the world is paving the way for corporate land grabs:** Over recent years, a global land rush has resulted in a massive rise in the number of people in developing countries being evicted or denied access to their own land – sometimes in violent confrontation with the authorities – as big business moves in. More than 1,600 large-scale land deals have been documented since the year 2000, targeting over 60 million hectares. Written by Julian Oram for ActionAid International, this 49 page report presents cases from around the world that highlight how land grabs lead to forced evictions, human rights violations, lost livelihoods, divided communities, destruction of culturally significant sites, rising food insecurity, and, ultimately, increased poverty. Find the PDF for download at ActionAid USA’s website, http://www.actionaidusa.org/sites/files/actionaid/the_great_land_heist.pdf.
- 6. “Hit & Stay: A story of faith and resistance”:** On May 17, 1968, nine Catholic activists entered a Selective Service office in Catonsville, MD, dragged stacks of Draft Board records out into the parking lot, and set them on fire with homemade napalm. They then prayed, and waited to be arrested. In doing so, they kindled a wave of similar protests against the Vietnam War across the country. “Hit & Stay,” a new documentary film, tells the story of the Catonsville Nine and those who joined them through interviews with many of the participants as well as observers as the activists went to prison or underground, tangled with the FBI, and ultimately helped change the nation’s mind about the war. 97 minutes. Learn more at www.hitandstay.com or contact the filmmakers at hitandstay@gmail.com; 443-562-1971; Haricot Vert Films 3700 Beech Ave., Baltimore, MD 21211.

