

# SHALOM/UN-NGO Newsletter

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## Human Rights Day – December 10, 2007

December 10, [Human Rights Day](#), (English and Spanish) commemorates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. December 10 this year launches the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, and is a wonderful opportunity to reclaim the Declaration and recommit to promoting dignity and justice for all.



Information about the day, including resources and suggested activities, is available at [www.gerhardinger.org](http://www.gerhardinger.org). If you are able to do something to mark the day, please let us know. Send pictures and a brief description of your event to [roxanneschares@yahoo.com](mailto:roxanneschares@yahoo.com).

## 43.7 Million People Stand Up and Speak Up for MDGs, by S. Ann Scholz

New York, October 18, 2007: Over 43 million people in 127 countries, including 105 SSNDs attending the [General Chapter](#) in São Leopoldo, Brazil, participated in the October 17 “Stand Up and Speak Out” event jointly organized by the [United Nations Millennium Campaign](#) and the [Global Call to Action against Poverty](#).

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who led a stand-up action at UN Headquarters in New York, said:



Today tens of millions of people are making their voices heard by standing up and speaking out *against* poverty and *for* the [Millennium Development Goals](#). (English and Spanish) They are sending messages that call on their leaders to keep their promises. They are calling for the actions of citizens to be matched by the actions of Governments in developing and developed countries alike to demonstrate the political will required to end the scourge of poverty once and for all.

At his October 17 papal mass in the Vatican, Pope Benedict XVI sent a message of support urging increased efforts to eliminate poverty.

For 24 hours people around the world from all walks of life came together in their schools, streets, and marketplaces, in front of government buildings and local councils, in workplaces and houses of worship, at sports and cultural events, as well as at public landmarks to demonstrate their frustration that we still live in a world where 50,000 people die daily from preventable causes. The largest numbers of people who took part in this mobilization came from developing countries.

**Shalom Peace Activities in Japan**, by S. Petra Kato

Peace has been the focus of the activities planned by the Shalom committee in the Region of Japan during the past months. The Shalom committee invited journalist Mr. Nishitani, who had traveled through Iraq, to share his experiences with SSNDs and parishioners following a Sunday Mass in July. a talk entitled “*The Undisclosed and Unpublished Side of the Iraq War*,” he spoke the suffering of the people and the devastation towns and cities.



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Sisters in local communities have been urged to read Pope Benedict XVI’s message for the world day of peace, “[The Human Person, the Heart of Peace](#)” ([Español](#)) ([Português](#)) ([Italiano](#)) and to share reflections in small or large groups. Because of the fear among many that the Japanese government will revise Article 9, which deals with the renunciation of war, the committee encouraged each local community in the Region to watch a video on the [Constitution of Japan](#). ([Japanese](#))

A group of [Kyoto Notre Dame University](#) ([Japanese](#)) students have formed a peace circle. In March, six students accompanied by S. Anastasia Kokubo traveled through Okinawa, the site of fierce land battles during World War II. All returned home convinced that they must do something for peace: healing those whose sufferings have been caused by wars, and building and perpetuating peace. The peace circle has agreed to read books related to peace. Then they will meet, share insights, and plan activities related to peace. This is certainly a source of hope for the present and for the future.

**Climate Change: How It Impacts All of Us**, by Sisters Patricia Ferrick (DL), Kathleen Storms (MK), Hanna Mignogno (AM), and Barbara Franks (CA)



Climate change is real, is mostly the result of human activity, and has the potential to devastate the planet. Tackling climate change requires a truly global effort that draws together Governments, the private sector, and civil society in one sustained push for change. This was the message that delegates to the [60th DPI/NGO Conference](#) heard repeated throughout the September 5-8 meeting at United Nations headquarters in New York. The annual conference is organized by the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) in

cooperation with the NGO/DPI Executive Committee.

SSND delegates—Sisters Patricia Ferrick, Kathleen Storms, Hanna Mignogno, Barbara Franks, Ethel Howley (AM), and Ann Scholz—joined nearly 2,000 civil society representatives from 80 countries as they explored the destructive effects of climate change and the potential for change.

Sister Kathleen captured the excitement and common concern at the opening session of the conference when she said: “I felt overwhelmed, humbled, and proud to be an SSND with a global agenda. Responding to the devastation of climate change is not an option. We are committed to respond to the cries of Earth and its people.”

Speakers, including the Deputy Secretary-General Ms. Asha Rose Migirom (Tanzania), General Assembly President Sheikha Haya Rased Al Khalifa (Bahrain), and Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) Achim Steiner (Germany), assured delegates that climate change has taken center stage at the UN and reminded them that only if individuals make significant changes in their lifestyles and citizens challenge governments to work collaboratively will the suffering of the whole Earth be lessened.

Participants also had the opportunity to attend daily workshops organized by NGOs. Many sessions explored the consequences of unlimited economic development. Sister Barbara commented that she heard the call to action most clearly in a session titled *Sustainable Development, Accountability, and Ethical Standards*. “The most meaningful challenge for me,” she said, “remains the need to give up our provincialism and see the world as one interconnected community where all have responsibility for all. As SSNDs, we are impelled by the spirit of Jesus Christ ...to educate with a world vision and a sense of global responsibility for Earth and its people.”

Time and again during the conference participants were reminded that climate change affects those who live in poverty most directly and that among those most impacted are the indigenous peoples of the world.

Sister Patricia found a panel presentation by indigenous people from Samoa, Brazil, and Russia, particularly poignant. Indigenous peoples, because of their traditional reverence and knowledge of the land, contribute least to climate change, and yet they are often the most seriously affected. They depend on Earth and its resources for their economic, social, and cultural well-being. Their very existence is severely threatened by environmental degradation. The result is famine, displacement, loss of culture, and loss of lives. Sister Patricia quoted the Brazilian panelist Marcos Terena, who stated: “The indigenous peoples are the voice of Earth. Their cry is: Stop killing Earth.”

For the first time ever, conference participants produced an outcome document that makes recommendations for individual action as well as a collaborative work to combat climate change. This [\*Final Declaration\*](#), which includes a platform for action, was approved by delegates during the closing session of the conference. Sister Hanna echoed the sentiments of many: “While participation in the effort to stop global warming and to help the earth heal itself is increasing, it is still not enough. More needs to be done; we must act now in partnership with others across the globe.”

**Walk the World: Steps for Hope and Life**, by Connie Guerrero, Shalom Contact, Guam

The Guam Island community stepped up to the challenge to eradicate world hunger on May 26, 2007. The success of this year’s [\*Fight Hunger Walk\*](#) can be attributed to the generosity and hospitality of the Island people.

The committee, Notre Dame High School theology teachers and SSND Barbara Lambor-Hagel and Vincent Marie Balajadia, organized this year's Fight Hunger Walk. The 5K walk began with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving in the early morning about 6:00 a.m. at the Skinner Plaza in Agana.

Based on the registration numbers, 456 children, women, and men ran or walked for the cause. Donations from the Guam Island community consisted of fruits, water, time, energy, monetary donation, and free ad space. In addition, Notre Dame students were involved in designing the logo for this year.

The success of this endeavor can be attributed to the most spirited people in the committee and supporters, especially the SSND sisters, associates, Notre Dame High School's administration, faculty, staff, students, their parents, SSND families and friends.

The event ended with fellowship and a Fight Hunger T-Shirt for all participants and supporters. The event netted more than \$6,000.00. The committee decided to support the following: The Gambia, Chuuk to help the outer islands after the flooding of the taro patches (the main staple) for the islanders, Father Florin's Outreach Programs in Chuuk, the SSND mission in Yap, and the World Food Program.

The Guam Island community may be small in number but each year the number of people stepping up to make a difference has grown. Mother Teresa of Calcutta best summarized the importance of making a difference in this manner, "What we are doing is nothing but a drop in the ocean. But if we didn't do it, the ocean would be less because of that missing drop."



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