

# Shalom/UN-NGO Newsletter

Volume 11, Issue 2

June 2010

## Called to Solidarity with all Creation by S. Johanna Schröckseis (BY)



The 22<sup>nd</sup> General Chapter called us to solidarity with all creation and reflected that “acting interdependently... is at the heart of solidarity”. The entire congregation is finding ways to live out this common goal.

Many may remember the photo of President Mohamed Nasheed of the Republic of Maldives meeting under water with his government cabinet. He wanted to call attention to the fact that many Pacific islands are suffering from rising sea levels. The 2,700 people living on the Carteret Islands (Papua New Guinea) finally gave up their struggle and left their homes for good. The Carteret Islanders had added next to nothing to global warming and environmental pollution.



If we believe what our call says and if we want to live according to our beliefs, we must consider the result when making decisions that will affect the climate. Reducing the emission of carbon dioxide, in other words, reducing our carbon footprint is a good way to go against global warming and its consequences in all parts of the world.

Motivated by the *Call to Solidarity* and the *New Moment Document*, the Bavarian Province decided to put 136 photovoltaic modules on the roof of the chapel, thus contributing to “clean” electricity. They are expensive even when subsidized, but it is an investment in a better future for us and for the world.

With this action the sisters are reducing their carbon foot print considerably, although it is not the only way. As teachers we share our insights and beliefs with colleagues and students. The biology department started a project to raise awareness about how the “big” footprint of certain fast food items. Interactively, the students put together a meal and then look for the carbon footprint of the meal. This exhibition received a great deal of attention, and we hope there will be a change in choices if necessary.

**SSNDs Participate in Commission for Social Development** by S. Eileen Reilly (AM)  
Sisters Judith Kamada (NI), Ann Scholz and I participated in the [48<sup>th</sup> session of the Commission for Social Development](#) (CSocD) at UN Headquarters in New York. CSocD is a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and has been the key UN body charged with follow-up and implementation of the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration and Program of Action.



The 2010 session focused attention on the importance of social integration in achieving development goals, particularly poverty reduction. *Social Integration* is a goal that few would dispute. However, after attending the opening days of the meeting it became clear that the scope of this goal goes far beyond what one might presume.

Fifteen years ago at the [World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen](#), world leaders reached consensus that poverty reduction, employment, and social integration were key goals. They could not have predicted then how critical these goals would be in 2010 in light of the recent economic crisis, the resulting high level of unemployment, and the increasing polarization of society.

As I listened to the discussions about the need to approach these goals in light of our growing consciousness of the interconnected economic and climate change crises we face, I thought of our *Call to Solidarity*: “We recognize in our internationality new potential for acting interdependently among ourselves and with all Creation.”

Over and over at the commission meeting, we were reminded that *social integration* must include all genders, ages, and classes, as well as migrants, the indigenous, and peoples with disabilities.

*Acting interdependently* took on new meaning as I heard a priest describe the *peoples’ parliaments* he had fostered in small villages in India. There local people had opportunities to voice their concerns and plan steps to address them, rather than to wait for a nation-wide response to a local problem. Seeing the success of this model, a *children’s parliament* was also formed with the same goals in mind.

*Acting interdependently with all Creation* was a backdrop for most of the discussions. In light of the growing world awareness of the interconnected challenges posed by the global recession and climate change, social development and sustainable development have become clearly inseparable in this 21st century.

**Integrity of Creation Group Members Embrace New Mission** by Margaret Swedish, S. Jan Gregorcich (ML), S. Mary Ann Srnka (ML)

Tornado warning sirens sounded and 19 members of the Integrity of Creation group in North America gathered with other sisters in a first-floor corridor of the St. Louis Motherhouse, following a day of reflection on a new ecological paradigm emerging in a time of planetary crisis. It was an apt metaphor for the group’s work that day, reflecting the dynamisms of the creation in which all are embedded.



Through a two-day process, the participants rooted themselves in a theological reflection based on Sallie McFague’s latest book, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World and Global Warming*. She writes: “we are beings-in-communion living in the presence of God...,” a God revealed within the sacred of all that is.

How do School Sisters of Notre Dame live this? Within this new context of ecological threat, how do SSNDs respond out of the *Call to Solidarity*? The question becomes more urgent as environmental crises around the world are teaching us in negative terms about the interconnections between humans and the rest of creation.

Completing the reflection process, the participants embraced a new mission statement for the Integrity of Creation group and identified a path for moving forward. “Recognizing that all creatures are beings-in-communion living in the presence of the Sacred, we commit to

promoting a paradigm shift to this vision through education and formation, advocacy, and choosing ways of living sustainably.”

Acknowledging the need to support this shift with a deep spirituality, the members plan to promote faith reflections, workshops, inter-community dialogue, and other consciousness-raising initiatives aimed at articulating such a spirituality. They also commit to advocacy in defense of the integrity of creation, rooted in this new understanding of the ecological community in which all participate. They will encourage further reflection as a congregation on how to live more sustainably as witness to this necessary paradigm shift.

As one participant said, “we are all doing something, but what is ‘the more’ that we can do together?”

### **Students Join SSND Delegation** by S. Ann Scholz, SSND UN/NGO Director

[The 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW 54) provided the opportunity for government and NGO delegates to celebrate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [Beijing Platform for Action](#) (BPfA), adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and to evaluate both what has been accomplished and what has not.

Sisters Ethel Howley (AM), Eileen Reilly (AM), Roxanne Schares, Ann Scholz, and Shawnee Daniels Sykes (ML) were joined by Megan Burke from the Chicago area and Professor Julie Tatlock and students Cheryl von Asten, Leah Davis, Alyssa Olson, and Ivy Padula at Mount Mary College in Milwaukee to make up the SSND delegation to the commission meeting. Julie Gilberto-Brady (NAMA) served as communications specialist for the delegation. She documented the work of the SSND delegation on the [NAMA website](#) and on the [NAMA Facebook page](#).



The Beijing Platform for Action continues to be the most comprehensive framework for achieving gender equality, including Section L which calls attention to “the persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child.”

As in past years, SSND delegates focused their advocacy on the rights and concerns of the girl child. Ms. Burke met with the executive director of Womankind Kenya and the founder of Foundation for Kenya Pastoralist Women and explained to them the goals of the Working Group on Girls (WGG) and the SSND commitment to girls’ education. “They were incredibly excited,” Burke said. “They really want to work with the WGG and were so glad to see a coalition of so many organizations, working towards goals they’re passionate about.”

It became very clear very quickly that the promises made to girls fifteen years ago in Beijing have not been met. Perhaps it is because girls occupy an ambiguous place in international, national, and local norms and policy discussions. They have not necessarily benefited from the rights and protections guaranteed to women and children. In fact, girls have been faced with the double victimization of sex and age discrimination. Marginalized in discussions about gender equality, girls are ignored when children’s rights and needs are considered by policy makers.

## Announcements

### [Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network](#) (AEFJN), a faith-based international network,



promotes economic justice between the European Union and Sub-Saharan Africa. The School Sisters of Notre Dame is one of the 50 religious congregation members. Visit the AEFJN website to learn more about African concerns and advocacy efforts at the EU in Brussels. A link to their website is on [www.gerhardinger.org](http://www.gerhardinger.org).

### **Stand Up and Speak Out against Poverty and for the MDGs—September 17-19, 2010**



This year as world leaders gather at UN headquarters in New York City for the MDG Summit, the voices of their citizens will follow them, telling them, loudly and clearly: *We will no longer stay seated or silent in the face of poverty and the broken promises to end it!*

The SSND family is once again invited to join the global [Stand Up](#) event in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Information and resources will be available at [www.gerhardinger.org](http://www.gerhardinger.org), [www.endpoverty2015](http://www.endpoverty2015) ([Deutsch](#), [English](#), [Español](#), [Italiano](#), [Português](#)), and [www.standagainstopoverty.org](http://www.standagainstopoverty.org) ([Deutsch](#), [English](#), [Español](#), [Italiano](#), [Português](#)).

### **MDG Review Summit Scheduled for September 20-22, 2010**

The UN General Assembly is convening a [Millennium Development Goals Review Summit](#) with the aim of accelerating progress towards achievement of the [Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs) by 2015.



The Summit process is an important opportunity to take stock of which development strategies are working and which ones are not, and what strategic decisions and actions at national and international levels are urgently needed to make decisive progress in the next five years

### **International Day of Peace**

September 21 marks the International Day of Peace. Established by the United Nations to



“commemorate and strengthen the ideals of peace within and among all nations and people,” the day is a global call for ceasefire and non-violence.

It is one of four days throughout the year that the international congregation joins millions around the world as they embrace peace and challenge world leaders to lay down their weapons. Resources and suggestions about how to commemorate the day will be available at [www.gerhardinger.org](http://www.gerhardinger.org) and at [www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/2010](http://www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/2010).