



Partnership for Global Justice

December 2015

Partnership For Global Justice Monthly Newsletter

Welcome to the Partnership for Global Justice Monthly – a newsletter about PGJ programs, news from the United Nations and its briefings, and information about the activities of our participating membership. With this Monthly, we invite our members to provide updates of their social justice initiatives and share their related experiences. Please respond to this posting with a comment on our blog or send your thoughts to partnershipforglobaljustice@gmail.com.

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LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Dear Partners for Global Justice,

It is fitting that Pope Francis has proclaimed this next year as the “Year of Mercy.” The world is truly in need of mercy and peace. Many are suffering today from wars, hunger and disease. Others are victims of human greed and thirst for power and money.

The United Nations has “Peace on Earth” as its mission, seeking to stop war wherever it is happening and alleviating the suffering of people everywhere it can. This year alone, the UN is offering assistance to 2.5 million Syrian children in their war-torn country and to the displaced 3 million children wherever their families have sought refuge from the violence.

The Millennium Development Goals end this year, 2015. The major target of those goals, to cut by half the number of people living in extreme poverty, was achieved by 2012, but many other of the goals remain incomplete. Encouraged by that success, the world nations accepted the Sustainable Development Goals with the target date in 2030, with the aim of completely eradicating extreme poverty by that date. Since world poverty is connected to the warming global climate, The UN brought representatives of 195 nations together in Paris for the UN Summit on Climate Change, where they agreed, for the first time, to commit nearly every country to lowering planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions.

Poverty is one root cause of many other world problems, one of which is human trafficking. Research has shown that of the estimated 30 million people in slavery today, most victims are from the countries where the majority of the people face extreme poverty. Half come from India, and only ten countries account for 76% of the total 30 million victims. More than 85 million children worldwide are subjected to the worst forms of slave labor, the sexual trade and hazardous physical labor. (Statistics from Human Child Trafficking research, *2013 Global Slavery Index* and *World Vision*)

We know that there is a connecting link to the suffering that the peoples of the world experience. Some problems are root causes of others, some are symptomatic problems and some are both. Sometimes, they can seem overwhelming and we know that we cannot solve all the problems by ourselves. We can do it through partnership.

This Christmas, you give hope to these children and to all who are subjected to human greed and violence. You are bringing peace and unity to the world through your support of the Partnership for Global Justice. You are living witness to the reason Christ came into the world. May you have a blessed Christmas and a peaceful and happy New Year.

Mary Ellen Loch, CSJ
Board Chair



THE PARIS CLIMATE CHANGE AGREEMENT

The biggest news from the UN in December was the signing of the Climate Change Agreement on December 12.

This was an historic event, signaling international recognition that addressing climate change is an urgent and immediate need for the world, as well as – for the first time – serious commitment on the part of 195 nations to take action to prevent further damage and to mitigate damage already occurring.

Of those who attended, 188 countries had submitted Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) plans for action before the conference, making a final agreement possible at that time. (See the United States INDC here.) Individual agreements, like that between the United States and China, also aided in reaching agreement. Each nation also agreed to submit to a Five-Year Review, to monitor progress, share strategies, and commit to more aggressive action.

The final version of the Agreement can be found at [this link](#). Go to the “Full Version” line and Click on EN for English or the appropriate one for your language.

The [United States INDC](#) can be found here. Click on LINK there and scroll through to March submissions.

Major Points of the Paris Agreement:

– For the first time, nations agreed to make a coordinated global effort to reverse the effects of our impact on Earth’s climate. (We NGOs must continue to pressure our leaders – local and national– to take serious action, in policies, subsidies, and planning.)

– Countries agreed to reduce their carbon emissions so that global temperatures will not increase more than 1.5 degrees Celsius. (However, the commitments to action will yield greater heat, increasing by 2 or even more than 3 degrees C, so we need to continue to press for greater reductions in carbon use.)

– The effect on poor peoples and nations was for the first time acknowledged, as well as the need for wealthier nations to assist them, reaffirming a goal of \$100 billion for this purpose. (Unfortunately, this money is not in a binding statement. We must continue to pressure our government to invest in these nations’ future.)

The environmental group 350.org has an excellent [summary and critique](#) of major points of the agreement.



THE ROLE OF NGOS IN THE PARIS AGREEMENT

At the December 17 briefing for NGOs, **The Outcomes of the 21st Session of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP21)** [UNFCCC = UN Framework Convention on Climate Change], the dominant message was that NGOs like the Partnership were a major influence in convincing government leaders to commit their nations to action.

James Pasztor, Assistant Secretary-General on Climate Change, called the engagement of NGOs “essential” to the “monumental achievement” of the conference, citing the many marches around the world, the display of shoes in Paris, talking to the delegates as they gathered, and “bringing the on-the-ground work into the negotiating room.”

The continuing work of NGOs is needed to hold governments and businesses, like oil companies, accountable for making the changes agreed to.

Nick Nuttal, the Coordinator of Communications and Outreach of the UNFCCC echoed Mr. Pasztor’s remarks via video from Bonn. He cited the years of work NGOs have put into research and persuading delegates. He emphasized that our work now is to get businesses, universities and local authorities to support the Paris pledge, and to urge them to make local efforts which, in turn, can spur national governments to action. Our immediate action is vital, as the agreement does not come into full force until 2020.

Francois Gave, of the Permanent Mission of France to the UN, also credited NGOs with much of the Paris success and noted the change in understanding of the urgency of dealing with climate change and the atmosphere of trust among delegates, which had been lacking in previous conferences. Like the others, he noted that the agreement far exceeded expectations, but far more remains to be done – and NGOs are essential to doing it.

Cassie Flynn, Climate Change and Sustainability Advisor for the UN Development Programme, applied Nelson Mandela’s saying to the conference: “It seems impossible till it is done.” She cited as astonishing the new willingness of even developing countries, like Indonesia, to commit their nations to substantial reductions in carbon emissions. Indonesia, sixth largest producer of carbon emissions, pledged to reduce emissions 26% by 2020, and 29% by 2030. (The United States plan calls for a reduction of 26-28% reduction by 2025.) She also emphasized the role of NGOs now is to “make the words into action.”

Iain Keith, Campaign Director of the NGO AVAAZ, spoke by phone from Paris, describing the mood there as “victory for hope and for collegiality.” The major achievement was universal recognition that “fossil fuels are no longer viable.” He noted the steep drop in the market for such fuels the day after the conference ended. Paris is a “turning point, not the destination,” he reminded us, and urged NGOs to work on local levels, in cities, for instance, to accomplish the agreed-upon goals.

Bridget Burns, Advocacy Director of the NGO Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO), emphasized the role of NGOs as “reality check,” urging us to see how important it is to “tell the truth about what is lacking,” both in the agreement and in implementing its terms.” She urged us to keep the “aspirational goal” in mind and work also for those whose interests are not fully represented by the Paris agreement, especially the human rights of women, and indigenous groups, and compensation for those already suffering the effects of climate change.

So, **thank you, PGJ members**, for your prayers and actions (see next article), and keep up the prayers and let us know the ways you are acting to save our environment and pressuring government and business leaders to live up to the promises our country made in Paris!



OUR MEMBERS PRAY AND MARCH FOR THE PARIS CONFERENCE



Partnership member community Adorers of the Blood of Christ offer an example of support for the Paris Conference. Sister Mary Alan Wurth, ASC, reports:

Sisters at the Ruma Center, near Ruma, Illinois, held their own **World Climate March** in support of

efforts at the climate conference in Paris. They marched from the chapel after Mass, around the second floor and back to the chapel. While marching, they sang, "The Earth is our mother; we will take care of her!" and prayed silently for the success of the COP21 conference.



Continuing to Do Our Part

One opportunity for supporting the Paris agreement is the official High-level Signature Ceremony for the CoP21 Agreement called for in the document. This will be held on April 22, 2016, and will open the year during which the nations will officially sign on the Agreement.

How might you celebrate this event and call attention to the urgency of accomplishing its goals.

Please let us know about actions your community is taking and send pictures!

Rest in Peace



We sadly note that Fr. Bruno, of the New Camaldoli Hermitage in Big Sur, California, passed away on Sunday, November 29. Fr. Bruno was the Camaldoli contact to PGJ. May he be enjoying the face-to-face presence of God. (See Formal [announcement and link](#) to his reflection series)



PGJ FOCUS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS



NGO Working Group on Girls

As part of our work for women and girls, Sr. JoAnn has begun attending meetings of the Working Group On Girls, an “NGO committee working for girls, with girls, at the United Nations,” as their [web-site](#) states. Here is Sr. JoAnn’s report:

On Thursday, December 3, I attended my first meeting of the Working Group on Girls (WGG). This is a group organized by NGO representatives but conducted by the girls. Present at the meeting were eight high school girls called Advocates. They are young women who, I understand, are knowledgeable on many issues. They will be having a luncheon with eight ambassadors; this is a rare opportunity for high school students.

The advocates each spoke about what WGG has meant for them. All emphasized that WGG has helped them grow in self-assurance and has given them opportunities to engage at the UN. The girls are an impressive group. Sister Mary Jo Toll, SND, had been very active with this group and with all of WGG. Since she had to leave NY earlier than expected, individuals expressed their deep gratitude via a Skype call.

WGG is trying to “clean up” its membership list. Partnership for Global Justice was listed as a member of the group, and I have registered PGJ as a current member. One of their activities is an orientation before the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meeting. I will keep you informed as I learn more about this orientation, as it may be an opportunity for some of your students in the future.



NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

We invite you to share your experiences of working for justice, particularly in the three PGJ Sustainable Development Goals focus areas of ending poverty in all its forms everywhere; achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls; and taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Thanks to **Sr. Bernadine Wessel, ASC**, for this article:

Adorers of the Blood of Christ: Monday Evening Circles out of Poverty

Each Monday from 5:30 to 7:30 a group of from 20-30 men, women and children gather at a church in Wichita, Kansas. These are Circle Leaders and their families and allies gathering for sharing food and friendship, with the ultimate goal of getting out of situations of poverty. But there are many other benefits for everyone there.

Like three other Adorers, Miriam Therese Rau, Tarcisia Roths, and Joann Stuever, I am an ally. The Circles' development of intentional friendships lets me meet people I would never have a chance to meet otherwise. Through them I have another pair of eyes with which to learn about the situations of the poor that I cannot get from the news or a book. These are real people whom I learn to care about. I now have a chance to share in their steps toward financial security and also to see them grow in self-assurance and trust of others.

After sharing the evening meal, each Circle meeting begins with participants standing in a circle and sharing "New and Good." Each one shares her/his name and tells one thing from the past week which was both new and good. We all have a chance to rejoice with and encourage each other.

Every other week we then meet in our Circles and talk about goals, steps taken, to challenge, encourage and rejoice together. The weeks in between are Education Nights, on which we study together facts of budgeting and situations which impact finances.

On one recent evening, one Circle Leader brought her budget instructor, with whom she meets each month to check her budget. When this Circle Leader began about six months ago, she was hardly able to participate in the beginning "New and Good." She would barely whisper her name and that she had nothing to say. But, here she was confidently introducing her budget instructor. In the middle of the presentation, the instructor needed to get some papers and told the Circle Leader to go ahead. And this Circle Leader, who just a short time before could hardly say her name aloud, continued with the lesson telling us how to keep track of expenses. We were all proud of her self-confidence.

Sometimes Circles meetings can be frustrating. People living in poverty live in the immediate situation, often unable to plan ahead. As they go from crisis to crisis, they often miss meetings. A challenge is to want to fix things for them or to change them to my way, but they need to grow at their own pace. They are not in control of so many aspects of their lives. As an ally, my job is to be an encouraging friend, to give support and to challenge.

Each meeting ends with another large circle giving appreciations to the person beside us. We do not usually express appreciation for momentous events. Mostly we appreciate the time we have had together and the trust that has developed among us.



PARTICIPATE IN UN ACTIVITIES

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls



The sixteen-day **Orange the World** campaign to end violence against women and girls proved to be a great success. See [pictures of events](#) around the world – from the pyramids bathed in orange light, to less visible events.

Remember to wear Orange on the 25th of each month, to spread the word about ending violence against women and girls! Please let us know of any events you do related to ending violence against women and girls (and include a picture or two, if you have them). Let's share our expertise with each other.

Also, please note that the United States is one of the few nations – and the only democracy – which has **not** ratified the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women ([CEDAW](#)).

President Carter presented the document to the Senate for ratification in 1980; it remains in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. Some members of the Senate refuse to ratify this, or any other human rights treaty, calling it a violation of US sovereignty. Ironically, the treaty was first promoted at the UN by a Republican woman, Patricia Hutar, appointed by President Nixon. Others claim it imposes "radical feminist" views, such as equal pay for equal work.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Don't forget that the Sixtieth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women will be held in New York from March 14 to 24, 2016. The Priority theme for CSW60 is: "Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development."

You are invited to attend this and the parallel CSW60 Forum.

Please contact Sr. JoAnn if you are interested at partnershipforglobaljustice@gmail.com

Watch UN Events Live

As always, you can **watch live coverage** (and often stored videos) of major UN events at the UN WebTV channel. Click the language button to hear them in English). A list of daily events are listed in the UN Journal at 11pm the day before. Webcasts are indicated by a small red icon of a camera.

Participate in Partnership Activity

Save the Date

The 2016 **PGJ Annual Meeting** will be held in at the Maryknoll Sisters in Ossining, New York on October 15, 2016 More details will follow soon.

