

Holy Wisdom Reporting



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United Nations Affairs- Syrian Orthodox Church

Holy Wisdom
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This publication is disseminated to the entire membership of the Church throughout the world on a monthly basis. Please bring this information to the attention of your parishioners and all those under your care. The Earth is holy and a manifestation of God. Pray for peace and the United Nations.

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INVESTING IN THE UNITED NATIONS- For a Stronger Organization Worldwide

Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented to Member States his proposals for a fundamental overhaul of the United Nations Secretariat in March 2006. He states that the organization's rules, systems and culture need significant retooling and investment if the UN is to fulfill growing expectations and demands placed on it by the international community.

These new measures, an important number of which will require Member State approval, seek to modernize the UN's management practices which, while having been subject to incremental change over the years, have not been subject to a comprehensive review.

The Secretary-General presented his report in response to a first-time request from Member States for such proposals, as outlined in the 2005 September Summit's [Outcome Document](#). It builds on reforms implemented in 2005 to strengthen management, oversight and accountability.

He states:

"Only by an effort this scale - a management reform as broad as it is deep - can we create a United Nations Secretariat fully equipped to implement all mandates, using its Member States' resources wisely and accounting for them fully, and winning the trust of the broader world community."

More specifically, the report confirms the need for far-reaching reforms and targeted investments to realign staff skills to meet current and emerging organizational objectives; elevate management accountability and performance; upgrade information technology; streamline budget and finance; explore new, more cost-effective ways of doing business; and suggests improvements to the ongoing interaction with its Member States.

What are the Millennium Development Goals?

The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015 – form a blueprint agreed to by all the world's countries and all the world's leading development institutions. They have galvanized unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest.

"We will have time to reach the Millennium Development Goals – worldwide and in most, or even all, individual countries – but only if we break with business as usual.

We cannot win overnight. Success will require sustained action across the entire decade between now and the deadline. It takes time to train the teachers, nurses and engineers; to build the roads, schools and hospitals; to grow the small and large businesses able to create the jobs and income needed. So we must start now. And we must more than double global development assistance over the next few years. Nothing less will help to achieve the Goals."

ANNAN CALLS FOR 'DECISIVE ACTION' TO PROTECT PLANET AGAINST ECOLOGICAL DEGRADATION New York, May 22 2006 11:00AM With some 2,300 species endangered or facing extinction, significant losses in agricultural output, and an economic cost estimated at more than \$42 billion a year, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan today <"<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2006/sqsm10468.doc.htm>">marked the International Day for Biological Diversity with a call for "decisive action to protect our planet."

"The degradation of drylands - which constitute 40 per cent of the planet's land surface - is having dramatic effects," he said in a message referring to the theme of this year's Day. "These consequences are especially troubling because they are borne disproportionately by the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

"Drylands host eight of the 10 least developed countries in the world, and developing nations are home to the overwhelming majority of the 2 billion people who rely on dryland ecosystems. As a result, their decline has far-reaching implications for our efforts to fight poverty, hunger and disease.

"Indeed, significant steps to preserve drylands will help determine whether we will achieve the Millennium Development Goals," he added of the targets set by the UN Millennium Summit of 2000 to slash a host of the world's ills, such as extreme hunger and poverty, high infant and maternal mortality and lack of access to education and health care, all by 2015.

Mr. Annan stressed the need to reverse desertification, a process not only exacerbating poverty but also partly caused by it.

"This year's biodiversity commemoration coincides with the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. These two complementary observances illustrate the strong links between environmental issues, and highlight the need for a comprehensive and global approach to address these concerns," he said.

"On this International Day for Biological Diversity, let us resolve to do more to protect the biodiversity on which our planet depends. Let us commit ourselves to safeguarding our drylands, and let us work together to achieve the goal of a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by the year 2010.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL ABOLISHES HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Also Adopts Decision on Operational Activities Segment of Substantive Session

The Economic and Social Council this afternoon decided to abolish the Commission on Human Rights with effect from 16 June 2006.

Adopting a resolution without a vote, the Council requested the Commission to conclude its work at its sixty-second session, which should be short and procedural, and transmit its final report to the Council.

In another action, the Council adopted, by a roll-call vote of 51 in favour to 1 against (United States), with no abstentions, a decision on operational activities segment of its 2006 substantive session (document E/2006/L.3).

The representative of the United States, speaking in explanation of vote, said that the General Assembly and other United Nations entities were currently engaged in the reform process laid out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome. The Economic and

Social Council had once again demonstrated its fecklessness by failing to include any reference in the text to the 2005 World Summit Outcome. The United States had, therefore, voted against the text.

And in other business this afternoon, the Council elected, by acclamation, Dalius Čekuolis, the new Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations, as a vice-president on its Bureau to fill the unexpired term of his predecessor, Gedeminas Šerkšnys.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AGREES ON THEME FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS SEGMENT OF SUBSTANTIVE SESSION

During a brief organizational meeting this afternoon, the Economic and Social Council agreed on the theme of the humanitarian affairs segment and the topics for two panels that would take place during that part of its substantive session this year.

By the terms of an oral decision adopted today, the overall theme of the humanitarian affairs segment would be "Strengthening of the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance: implementing improved humanitarian response at all

levels, including strengthening capacity, with particular attention to recent humanitarian emergencies, including severe natural disasters”.

The two expert panel discussions would be devoted to the issues of gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies; and chronically under-funded emergencies.

Following the introduction of the draft by the Council’s President, Ali Hachani (Tunisia), the representative of the United States expressed concern over the fact that the meeting had been scheduled without sufficient prior notice to Member States. Capitals needed time to consider the proposals and give guidance to delegations, he said.

The date of the Economic and Social Council’s next meeting will be announced.

Latest Newsletter for the UN Economic and Social Council

<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/news/NewsletterVol5No2.pdf>

Publications- Must Read-

Achieving the Internationally Agreed Development Goals - Dialogues at the Economic and Social Council: This book gives an overview of the key debates that took place during the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) meetings on the theme of the High-Level Segment of 2005, “Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities”. This publication also includes the Secretary-General’s report as well as the President of ECOSOC’s Summary on the theme of the ECOSOC High-Level Segment for 2005.

An Integrated Approach to Rural Development - Dialogues at the Economic and Social Council

This book presents the key debates that took place during the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) meetings on the theme of the High-Level Segment of 2003, “Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development”. This publication also includes the Secretary-General’s report as well as the Ministerial Declaration on the theme of the ECOSOC High-Level Segment of 2003

Pick them up: <http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/publications/01.html>

Vancouver, 23 June 2006 – Drawing some 10,000 participants from over 100 countries, the Third Session of the World Urban Forum closed on Friday paving the way for a new drive forward on the international urban agenda in a world of rapidly growing cities.

Just as the Habitat I Conference in Vancouver in 1976 placed local community concerns on the international agenda and highlighted the critical importance of inclusiveness, the Forum in Vancouver, 30 years later, lived up to its promise of moving ideas to action. The meeting and its glittering closing ceremony symbolized inclusiveness, with balanced participation from public, private and civil society sectors. Compared to previous sessions of the Forum, there was a notable increase in private sector participation.

This time, it was from Vancouver that a new message resonated: the urban population of developing countries is set to double from 2 to 4 billion in the next 30 years. In the same time span, the developed world’s urban population is projected to rise by only 11 percent.

This means, said Ms. Katherine Sierra, Vice-President and Network Head, Infrastructure, World Bank, and Enrique Peñalosa, the former Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, now serving as Visiting Scholar at New York University, that the magnitude of urban population growth confronting developing countries is about ten times that of the developed world.

" In short, these 2 billion new urban inhabitants will require the equivalent of planning, financing, and servicing facilities for a new city of 1 million people, every week for the next 30 years ," Ms. Sierra said.

"Imagine," said Mr. Peñalosa, "that means a new city each week the size of Vancouver."

Vancouver 2006 also brought governments and municipalities closer to grassroots women's organizations, youth groups, the representatives of slum dwellers and other non-governmental organizations than ever before at such an international meeting, building on the precedent set by UN-HABITAT for more inclusive international meetings.

"In this interdependent world, opportunity and deprivation are interlinked," Mr. Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General of the United Nations said in his message to the conference.

The quest for innovative ideas and practical solutions was underscored in the six Dialogues, 13 Roundtables and more than 160 Networking Events. Ministers, mayors, academics, community-based organizations, federations of non-governmental organizations, and the private sector shared their insights and experiences on what would

improve the quality of life in the world's growing cities. The inclusive approach followed at the Forum is a model for cities. Some are already following this model while others would benefit from doing so.

Professor H. Peter Oberlander, the Senior Advisor to Canada's Commissioner General for the conference said: "With the next session in Nanjing in 2008, we have to ensure that the wonderful momentum built up during this week in Vancouver is maintained, that we keep the connectivity."

Key points of agreement to emerge from the Third Session of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver 2006 were:

- The need for all urban players – citizens, local governments, state and provincial governments, national governments, the private sector and civil society organizations – to work harder to solve urban problems and challenges. There was widespread agreement that they all must do their part, rather than simply transfer responsibility to others.
- That risk-taking and the pursuit of innovation must characterise municipal leadership if cities are to achieve sustainable development. Vancouver's example in taking the lead in such areas as air and water quality, public transit and planning was mentioned often in this context.
- Agreement that appropriate engagements, partnerships and relationships need to be built in an inclusive manner to better understand challenges and develop practical solutions. Participants from many parts of the world presented examples that can serve as guideposts for these strategies.
- The importance of transparency and accountability. Citizens need to be informed of challenges and steps taken by governments to address them. Transparency goes hand-in-hand with accountability, which speeds up the process of enhancing actions that work and curtailing those that do not work.

IMPASSIONED PLEAS FOR SAFER, GREENER CITIES

Vancouver, 22 June 2006 – Mr. Enrique Peñalosa, the former Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, drew a standing ovation at the plenary of the Third Session of the World Urban Forum on Thursday when said cities would save a lot of money if the use of cars was restricted or even banned during peak hours.

Mr. Peñalosa, now serving as Visiting Scholar at New York University, was joined at the podium by Ms. Evelyn Herfkens, Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Millennium Campaign, in what was one of the most lively sessions of debate on problems facing a rapidly urbanising world.

Mr. Peñalosa warned a packed convention hall: "Be under no illusion," he said. Projections show that the world's urban populations would grow by more than 2 billion people in the next 30 years – the equivalent of one city the size of Vancouver, Canada, every week.

In 200 years' time, he added, the world would look back to the dawn of this millennium and regard our cities of today as dangerous places, as London is sometimes conceived. "They would look back on this period as a time, for example, when tens of thousands of children were killed by cars, and shudder with fear."

The world, he said, had to create an urban environment conducive to human happiness, even though said the developing world would not catch up with the wealthier nations for the next three to four hundred years. Wealthier people always enjoy leaving their cities to go on holiday, enjoy nature and a change of environment – something generally unattainable by poor people who had to stay put in their towns and cities. This was why it was important for cities keep close to nature with parks, cycle ways, better public transport to minimise car use. In short, cities had to be places where the public good prevailed over private interests. If cars were banned in peak hours, he said referring to restrictions introduced in Bogotá, most people would be better off. He explained how Bogotá had voted in a referendum to restrict car use in peak hours, and how new cycle lanes had been built throughout the city, along with a rapid bus transit system. All of this had freed up considerable resources for the city, all of them small steps leading to big change and a greener, healthier lifestyle.

As the moderator told him that his speaking time was due to end, the audience rose and cheered when he asked for a few more minutes. He said he wanted Vancouver 2006 to know that in Vancouver 1976 he had accompanied his father, Enrique Peñalosa, who served as Secretary General of the Habitat I conference. Vancouver 1976 had inspired him to take home to Bogotá years later many of the ideas he had picked up during that conference.

The moderator, Mr. Chris Leach, President of the Canadian Institute of Planners, said the World Planners Congress meeting in Vancouver earlier in the week had produced a declaration signed by 17 associations from both developed and developing countries. It laid the groundwork for a new Global Planners Network to confront the problems of rapid urbanization, the urbanization of poverty, and the hazards of climate change and natural disasters.

He added that the Canadian Institute of Planners was committed to combining its expertise with the excellent work already being undertaken by its global partners. He pledged that the global planning community would take action to address the sustainability of human settlements.

Handing the floor to Ms. Herfkens, he said the world planning community had a renewed energy, commitment and dedication to help the world's population enjoy a better standard of living and provide hope and opportunities for future generations.

Ms. Herfkens said she agreed with Klaus Toepfer, the former Executive Director of the United Nations Environment

Programme (UNEP), whom, she said, always maintained that poverty itself was the biggest polluter. This necessitated pro-poor sustainable growth; it meant the poor should join in urban planning, and that they had to be acknowledged and respected. It was a mistake to regard the poor as "client targets" – a view she said was now enshrined in the eight Millennium Development Goals forged in the consensus of world leaders signatory to the Millennium Declaration.

She waved a copy of a new brochure on the goals published with UN-HABITAT for the forum showing how rich and poor countries, at government and municipal level can apply the goals to their urban planning strategies. Use them, she pleaded. She was delighted to learn at the forum that the Mayor of Montréal, Gérald Tremblay, for example, had personally undertaken a campaign to publicise the goals. "Investment in the goals is an investment in your own future. We are the first generation with the resources and the knowledge to end poverty," said. To resounding applause, she added: "Don't let our leaders off the hook."

GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT TO CONFER WITH POPE BENEDICT XVI ON HUMAN RIGHTS New York, Jun 16 2006 4:00PM United Nations General Assembly President Jan Eliasson will meet tomorrow with Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican where they are expected to discuss human rights issues.

The meeting, at the Pope's invitation, comes just two days before the inauguration of the new, strengthened UN Human Rights Council, which replaces the much-criticized UN Human Rights Commission, seen by many as ineffective.

Mr. Eliasson will make a keynote address to the Council on Monday, as will Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Ahead of the meeting Mr. Eliasson noted that the Council's creation showed that Member States can overcome differences and deliver outcomes relevant to the people of the world. "I expect the members of the Council to address the challenges before them with the same constructive spirit and commitment. We must show the world that the Council means a fresh start in the United Nations' work for human rights," he said.

The inaugural session, set to last until 30 June, will bring together high-level representatives from over 100 countries and see delegates begin concrete work to allow the Council to flesh out features that make it a stronger and more effective human rights body than its much-criticized predecessor.

These include its higher status as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, its increased number of meetings throughout the year, equitable geographical representation, and an examination of the human rights records of its own members.

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO BE HEADED BY ITS THIRD-EVER WOMAN PRESIDENT New York, Jun 8 2006 5:00PM The Legal Counsel to the Royal Family of Bahrain, pioneering lawyer Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, has been <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2006/ga10478.doc.htm>>elected President of the 61st General Assembly session, becoming only the third woman who will hold that post and the first one elected since 1969.

"What inspires me is a deep feeling of pain caused by the tragedies all over the world, on both the human and environmental levels," Ms. Al-Khalifa told the Assembly after her election by acclamation for the session beginning 12 September.

On the human level, much suffering has been due to political disputes, wars, terrorism, poverty and malnutrition. On the environmental level, it has been due to pollution, global warming, the depletion of natural resources and the extinction of living species, she said.

Welcoming the election, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he was "particularly pleased" that a woman would occupy the post. "I met her yesterday and I found her quite impressive," he <<http://www.un.org/apps/sg/offthecuff.asp?nid=883>>told reporters. "All the Member States are determined to work with her and to support her, and I think she's going to bring a new dimension to the work here."

Ms. Al-Khalifa was one of the first two women admitted to the practice of law in her country. She said she had witnessed several instances where women were harshly treated and their suffering had driven her to find suitable solutions to reduce their pain and uphold the principles of the UN Charter, with its emphasis on respect for human rights.

"The future of coming generations depends on the way we address contemporary problems," she said. "We should work towards preserving humanitarianism and ensuring that our planet is a safer and more suitable place to live in."

In that regard, it was critical to reach a comprehensive and practical strategy to combat terrorism,

one of the greatest contemporary evils. She questioned, however, whether that strategy would be possible without addressing the problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and extremism. Ms. Al-Khalifa called for a focus on the importance of education in nurturing future generations and on fostering educational curricula that promoted openness, critical thinking and creativity.

She thanked the outgoing president, Jan Eliasson of Sweden, for the great effort he had made towards achieving UN reform and improving international peace and security and human rights. She said she would continue on that path.

Mr. Eliasson, who is a senior Swedish diplomat, noted that Ms. Al-Khalifa had held many high-level positions with leading legal organizations, including the International Bar Association.

Her distinguished legal roles had been coupled with a prestigious diplomatic assignment from 2000 to 2004 as Bahrain's ambassador to France and permanent delegate to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), he said.

UN PEACE MESSENGER GOODALL URGES MORE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND ACTION New York, Apr 26 2006 7:00PM Renowned primatologist and United Nations Messenger of Peace Jane Goodall has met at UN Headquarters with Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who voiced strong support for her advocacy of informed, compassionate action to protect the environment for all living beings.

Mr. Annan "has long supported Jane Goodall's work on behalf of environmental affairs, particularly those concerning Africa, and he's been very pleased by her work as a UN peace messenger," a spokesman for the Secretary-General, Farhan Haq, said following Tuesday's meeting.

Among the issues discussed were The Jane Goodall Institute's youth programme "Roots & Shoots" and her new book, Harvest for Hope, which is being distributed through UN Environmental Programme (<<http://www.unep.org>>UNEP) and its Great Apes Survival Project (<http://www.unep.org/grasp/About_GRASP/history.asp>GRASP), an initiative launched in 2001 with the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (<<http://www.unesco.org>>UNESCO) to save those mammals and their habitat.

Ms. Goodall is motivated by her conviction that individual actions, taken collectively, can be a major force for positive change. "People just think, 'I am one person it doesn't matter,'" she told the UN News Service, acknowledging that "if you were one person it wouldn't - but you're not. You're millions, all really wanting to help."

She emphasized that the combined result of this impulse is powerful. "When you take 6 million people all saving water everyday, 6 million all saying 'I will not buy polluted food, I won't buy it! I don't want my children to be made sick,' the impact will be felt. If every individual starts acting that way, then it's going to change the world very fast," she said.

Ms. Goodall, who travels over 300 days a year, spends most of her time developing her Institute, which is dedicated to wildlife research, education and conservation.

Roots & Shoots, a youth community-centered programme with 8,000 affiliated groups in 90 countries, focuses on environmental, human community and wildlife issues. "Roots and Shoots is very much about breaking down the barriers that we erect between people of different nationalities, religions, cultures and ethnic groups, the barriers we erect between us and the natural world," she explained.

The UN's GRASP project "is working with heads of State in Africa where there are chimps and trying to persuade them to enforce the laws which already exist to protect chimpanzees, gorillas and bonobos, they are all endangered," she said.

Ms. Goodall voiced confidence that attitudes have changed. "Breaking down the barriers between us and the animal kingdom used to be seen as a sharp line," adding that now, major scientific thinkers admit "that it's a blurry line."

Jane Goodall was appointed Messenger of Peace by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2002, joining a distinguished group that includes former champion boxer Muhammad Ali, actor Michael Douglas of the United States, former international tennis star Vijay Amritraj of India, and Italian-born opera star Luciano Pavarotti.

ORTHODOX NEWS

[Letter of condolence from WCC general secretary Samuel Kobia to the catholicos of the East and metropolitan of the](#)

Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church on the death of H.H. Baselios Marthoma Mathews II the church's former catholicos...

Your Holiness,

It is with great sorrow that we received the news of the sad demise of His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Mathews II, former Catholicos of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, yesterday afternoon. On behalf of the World Council of Churches, I would like to express our deep sorrow and extend our condolences.

H.H. Baselios Marthoma Mathews II, who was ordained as a Bishop in 1953, was one of the oldest serving ecclesiastical leaders in the world.

Division in Russian Orthodox Church senseless - patriarch

<http://www.interfax-religion.com/?act=news&div=1312>

Interfax-Religion - Moscow, Russia

Moscow, April 17, Interfax - Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia Alexy II said on Monday that he prays for the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church inside and outside Russia in every service he ministers.

Today there are no reasons for schism between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Russian people who found themselves abroad during the Revolution. It is our duty to resolve problems that remain in our relations, he said....

Christians in Kerala celebrate Easter

<http://www.newkerala.com/news2.php?action=fullnews&id=42919>

NewKerala.com - Ernakulam, Kerala, India

Thiruvananthapuram: Christians in Kerala began celebrating Easter Sunday morning after observing a 50-day lent.

For many Christians, the day began with a visit to a church as early as 2 a.m. Sunday morning, while in some churches the Easter mass began along with the sunrise....

In our time, most of my family members used to strictly observe the lent by turning pure vegetarians. Not even milk or eggs were consumed. But does that happen these days? asked Chinnama Abraham, an 83-year-old devout Orthodox Christian from Kottayam as she sat down to have her Easter breakfast...

Muslims and Coptic Christians Clash in Egypt

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/17/world/middleeast/17egypt.ready.html>

New York Times - United States

CAIRO, April 16 - Clashes between Muslims and Coptic Christians continued for a third day on Sunday in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, Egypt. Bands of Muslims and Christians rioted in the streets, burning cars, pillaging shops and attacking one another with stones and Molotov cocktails, while other Coptic Christians observed their Palm Sunday inside the churches...

4th-century homily best exemplifies Pascha

<http://www.charleston.net/stories/?newsID=81539§ion=faihvvalues>

Charleston Post Courier (subscription) - Charleston, SC, USA

Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom (circa 400):

Is there anyone who is a devout lover of God? Let them enjoy this beautiful bright festival! Is there anyone who is a grateful servant? Let them rejoice and enter into the joy of their Lord! Are there any weary with fasting? Let them now receive their wages!...

ICON Digest

Ecumenical News International Highlights

13 June 2006

US religious coalition calls for ban on use of torture

New York (ENI). A group of Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders in the United States has called on their government to forswear the use of torture "without exceptions" and in all cases.

"Torture violates the basic dignity of the human person that all religions, in their highest ideals, hold dear," the leaders say in a statement published as a paid advertisement in the New York Times. The paid advertisement is part of a new initiative, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, which says it is working "for the immediate cessation of torture by the United States, whether direct or by

proxy, within our territory or abroad". [305 words, ENI-06-0469]

Church groups urge closure of Guantanamo camp

New York (ENI). The US National Council of Churches has reiterated a demand for the closure of the US detention centre at Guantanamo Bay, following the suicides of three prisoners there.

"Americans who love their country and its historic ideals are mortified by this continuing blot on our honour, on our steadfast defence of freedom, and on our commitment to democracy and the rule of law," said the Rev. Robert Edgar, the council's general secretary. The inmates, two Saudis and a Yemeni, hanged themselves in their cells in the detention centre at the Guantanamo Bay naval base in Cuba, which houses prisoners the US has said may have been involved in terrorist activities. Most detainees have been held without charge for up to four and a half years. [358 words, ENI-06-0468]

Christians face hostility in central Indian state, says church group

New Delhi (ENI). Church groups in India have accused the government of the state of Madhya Pradesh of fomenting a climate of hostility against minorities, after two women said they had been raped as retribution for converting to Christianity. "It is shameful that the state's law and order machinery has been blind to the violence," said John Dayal, spokesperson of the All India Christian Council in a statement. The two women from Nadia village said they had been raped by a gang of Hindus as punishment for having become Christians. Madhya Pradesh was the first state in India to enact a law hampering religious conversions, and Christian activists have accused the government of using the issue of conversions to stir up hostility against them. [320 words, ENI-06-0470]

Church hails repeal of anti-conversion law in India

New Delhi (ENI). Christian leaders in India have hailed the repeal of a law in the southern state of Tamil Nadu that banned religious conversions by "fraud, force or inducement", a type of legislation recently condemned by Pope Benedict XVI. The Tamil Nadu legislature formally lifted the ban on conversions after recent elections brought a new government to power pledged to reverse the measure introduced in 2002.

Christians in India stage three-day march in schools protest

New Delhi (ENI). More than 600 members of the Church of South India (CSI) have staged a three-day protest march to Chennai, the capital of the state of Tamil Nadu, in a campaign to return control of four Christian colleges to the church. "The missionaries started these colleges for the benefit of the entire community," said Chennai's CSI bishop Vedanayagam Devasahayam.

"Unfortunately, the administration of these colleges have gone into the hands of individuals who treat these as their private property."

THE AVIAN FLU IN PERSPECTIVE

United Nations, New York, February 9, 2006 --- National and international meetings around the world have been taking place for over a year to organize public health efforts to contain any outbreaks of avian flu. Governments are working together with civil society groups to educate publics at a grass roots level on what they can do to prevent the disease.

It was stressed that efforts to cull infected bird populations have resulted in huge losses for small subsistence farmers whose livelihood and ability to eat is directly dependent on the chickens they live with. The disease has had a devastating effect on poor communities. Farmers fear reporting sick birds because their flocks will be destroyed and they may not be compensated for their losses. Instead, they hide the sick birds or sell them, and that contributes to the transmission of avian flu to new areas. Many developing countries do not have the financial resources or systems for speedy disbursement for

developing countries do not have the financial resources or systems for speedy disbursement for adequately compensating farmers for their culled flocks.

Among the many groups working to educate people about the disease is CARE International. In Viet Nam, Care is fighting the flu at the source by providing poor communities with simple instructions on basic hygiene, such as the proper way to wash hands. Of course in poor communities without soap and water, even this becomes difficult. As a poverty fighting organization with a long term presence in over 70 countries, they are well positioned to address avian flu on many levels.

The organization has developed three television public service announcements promoting avian flu education. These are currently airing in Vietnam. CARE is focused on teaching farmers safe ways to raise their poultry, including improved bird handling techniques. The organization has also provided safety equipment to farmers.

INNOVATIVE INITIATES FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACISM

United Nations, New York, March 16, 2006 – The activities of civil societies all over the world have contributed to the growing level of understanding and tolerance for diversity. NGOs play an important role in eliminating racism and intolerance for minorities and no progress can be made without their active participation.

The United Nations Commission of Human Rights established a new mandate, focusing on minority rights. Legislation is an important tool to eliminate racism, but it is only of value if it can be enforced and put into practice. Poverty is a key issue among minorities, one which contributes greatly to racism.

Extreme poverty can fuel discrimination. The best weapon in this case is education. In fighting racial discrimination, education is an effective tool, because it empowers people. Knowledge is power. The United Nations is actively teaching tolerance globally through the activities of the UN Chronicle, the Special Projects Unit, the UN Cyberschoolbus and the UN Works Program.

ON THE OCCASION OF THE FOURTH WORLD WATER FORUM IN OBSERVANCE OF WORLD WATER DAY

United Nations, New York, March 30, 2006 – One billion people do not have access to water at all. Another one billion people only have access to contaminated water. Responding to emergencies has been a major part of the work of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund – UNICEF. In sub-Saharan Africa, 58% of the populations lack basic water, while 36% lack basic sanitation. UNICEF's response builds on existing regional programs. The emphasis is always on a balanced application: water uses including sanitation and hygiene. This approach has greatly added to the coordinated efforts of UNICEF in this region.

COMBATING CORRUPTION

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

holds panel discussion

In recognition of the

Entry into force of the United Nations Convention

Against Corruption

Keynote Speaker: Ambassador John R. Bolton,
United States Permanent Representative to the U.N.

United Nations, New York, December 15, 2005 - Participants in today's panel discussion on the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which entered into force yesterday, hailed the instrument as a comprehensive set of rules to avert, punish, control and remedy corruption.

Adopted by the General Assembly in 2003, the Convention has been signed by 140 countries and ratified by 38. Its entry into force came 90 days after Ecuador's ratification on September 15. The treaty's main pillars include prevention, criminalization, international cooperation and asset recovery.

Not one person in the room raised a hand when UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa asked if anyone had never encountered corruption in their personal and professional lives. Mr. Costa said he was not surprised, "...since corruption was as old as our species and as wide as our planet. According to the Old Testament, it started in the Garden of Eden, when the snake bribed Adam and Eve with an apple."

The devastating effects of corruption were described by keynote speaker John R. Bolton, Permanent Representative of the United States. Mr. Bolton discussed some of corruption's harmful effects, including bribery, drug trade, human trafficking,

United States. Mr. Bolton discussed some of corruption's harmful effects, including bribery, drug trade, human trafficking, and criminal support for clandestine terrorist activities. The World Bank estimates that \$1 trillion in bribes are paid annually – money that should be used to improve infrastructure and government services. “Bad money drives out good money,” he said, pointing out that investors fled corrupt countries.

Around the world, people are increasingly frustrated with the injustice and deprivation that corruption brings. Corrupt leaders amass immense fortunes which are protected abroad by banking secrecy laws, while ordinary people toil to scrape a living. The UN Convention has established a framework for dealing with corruption on a worldwide basis – the first document of its kind to do so.

**His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson
President of the Sixtieth Session of the General Assembly
Holds an Informal Briefing for NGO Community**

United Nations, New York, December 16, 2005 - In an unprecedented show of support for the NGO community, H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, President of the Sixtieth Session of the General Assembly held an informal briefing for the NGO community today. He spoke of his gratitude for the NGO support he received while in the field in Somalia and Sudan. He discussed the need for NGO space for meeting and community as the UN prepares to implement its Capital Master Plan. He spoke of NGOs doing their own work within their own borders by showing their engagement in a global community without borders. He spoke of the work being done by field NGOs for the 1.2 billion people for whom clean water is a luxury, while holding up his glass of clean water to demonstrate what most of the world takes for granted.

He concluded his remarks saying that in the global community, “Good international cooperation is in the national interest.”

Press Release:

Archdeacon Taimalelagi Fagamalama Tuatagaloa-Leota Awarded an Honorary Doctor of Divinity.

On the 8th of June 2006, Archdeacon Taimalelagi Fagamalama Tuatagaloa-Leota was honored with a Doctor of Divinity honoris causa. The ceremony took place just before the passing of the sign of Peace at the Noon Eucharist in the Episcopal Church Center.

Archdeacon Taimalelagi Fagamalama Tuatagaloa-Leota is the Anglican Observer at the United Nations. Originally from the Anglican Province of Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia she was the Archdeacon for Samoa Archdeaconry for eight years before taking up the post of Anglican Observer at the United Nations in August 2001.

At the ceremony the Testimonial was read, followed by H.E. the Revd Dr. Anthony J. De Luca, Rector of Ignatius University presenting the Degree.

The Testimonial read at the Ceremony paid a tribute to Archdeacon Leota and her long-standing service for the worldwide Anglican Communion, which was recognized, valued and affirmed at the Ceremony.

A tribute to the Archdeacon Leota and her achievements

§ Archdeacon Leota worked for the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for 25 years. First as a Program Officer, handling development issues in Fiji and Samoa and then later as an Operations Manager of the Samoa Field Office until early 2001 before assuming the position of the Anglican Observer a few days before September 11th.

§ For eight years she was the Archdeacon for Samoa Archdeaconry in the Anglican Province of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

§ For six years a member of the Anglican Consultative Council from 1987 to 1993

§ Archdeacon Leota was elected as President of the National Council of Churches Women of Samoa after being Treasurer for the same organization for five years.

§ For nine years until June 2001, Archdeacon Leota was a member of the Board of Oversight for Saint John's Theological College (Auckland, New Zealand)

§ She also served as a trustee of the Anglican Investment Agency and the Archbishop of Canterbury's Anglican Communion Fund.

§ For the last five years Archdeacon Leota has served her country and church through the Office of the Anglican Observer at the United Nations, for which the Archdeacon was awarded the Order of Samoa by her Nation and awarded the Saint Augustine's Cross by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Archdeacon Leota will be retiring from her post as Anglican Observer at the end of this month.

As an Anglican Observer Archdeacon Leota helped motivate women of the Episcopal Church to organize Anglican Women's Empowerment which raised funds to bring Anglican Women from around the Communion to New York to attend the United Nations Commission on the status of Women.

Also as an Anglican Observer Archdeacon Leota spoke out for the Church against taking up arms when nations wanted a war. She also spoke up for indigenous people by helping to keep the Inter Anglican Indigenous Network alive and spoke up for sustainable development through the publication of the book 'Healing God's Creation.'

Therefore gender issues and issues concerning the rights of children and others were some of the priorities that Archdeacon Leota saw as important and hence pursued them in response to what the Communion required of the Anglican Observer at the United Nations.

The Testimonial ended with; "You have met the image of the divine in all you have served, and so your life has been molded by things pleasing to divinity but you have come closest to the divinity, who creates with a lavish hand, by being mother to 9 and grandmother to 29. Accordingly, Archdeacon Leota, for all these achievements, Ignatius University confers upon you the degree of Doctor of Divinity honoris causa. Congratulations Doctor Leota."

After the Ceremony Archdeacon Leota was congratulated by colleagues from the Episcopal Church Center, the NGO Community, the Country Missions to the UN and by students of Ignatius University.

GREENHOUSE GASES REACH HIGHEST LEVEL EVER RECORDED, UN AGENCY REPORTS New York, Mar 14 2006 5:00PM Globally averaged concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO₂), the most abundant greenhouse gas in the planet's atmosphere, as well as of methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O), reached their highest ever-recorded levels in 2004, mainly due to human activity, the United Nations meteorological agency announced today.

CO₂ increased by 1.8 parts per million (ppm) to 377.1 ppm, or 0.47 per cent compared with 2003, the World Meteorological Organization (<"<http://www.wmo.ch/index-en.html>">WMO) reported in its first annual Greenhouse Gas Bulletin. The 35 per cent rise in CO₂ since the dawn of the industrial age in the late 1700s has largely been generated by emissions from the combustion of fossil fuels.

"Global observations coordinated by WMO show that levels of carbon dioxide, the most abundant greenhouse gas in the atmosphere, continue to increase steadily and show no signs of levelling off," said Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General of the Geneva-based agency.

In contrast, atmospheric levels of methane, at 1783 parts per billion (ppb), have shown signs of reaching a plateau with virtually no rise in 2004 and changing by less than 5 ppb per year since 1999.

Human activity such as fossil fuel exploitation, rice agriculture, biomass burning, landfills and ruminant farm animals account for some 60 per cent of atmospheric CH₄, with natural processes including those produced by wetlands and termites responsible for the remaining 40 per cent.

Nitrous oxide, at 318.6 ppb, has been steadily rising by about 0.8 ppb per year since 1988. Around one third of N₂O discharged into the air is a result of human activities such as fuel combustion, biomass burning, fertilizer use and some industrial processes.

The rates supersede those of pre-industrial times by 35 per cent for CO₂, 155 per cent for CH₄ and 18 per cent for N₂O, and increased over the previous decade by 19 ppm, 37 ppb and 8 ppb respectively in absolute amounts.

H.E. Rev. Ambassador Anthony J. DeLuca, Ph.D.,

United Nations Representative and Holy Wisdom Advisor and Holy Wisdom Reporter

Ambassador Anthony J. DeLuca, PH.D. and the NGO representative of the Greek Orthodox Archdioceses of New York Lila Prounis had a luncheon discussion in the UNICEF dining room. Then at Fordham University- Dr. Anderson, Ambassador Anthony J. DeLuca, PH.D. Dr. Florence Denmark, Past President of APA Fordham University, APA International Division, President-elect (2007), APA Society for General Psychology,

AMBASSADOR'S PRINCIPAL SCHEDULE:

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October 6, Meeting at United Nations with Dr. Veccio, School of Practical Philosophy

October 11, Vespers for United Nations(SCOOCH/SCOPA), Greek Orthodox Cathedral

October 14, Honoring Sister Charlotte, St. Joseph Hill Academy, Excelsior Grand, Staten Is.

October 18, Meeting Barry Steingard, School of Practical Philosophy

October 15, Wedding Reception

October 22, Wedding Reception

November 10, Informal Informals, Second Committee of the General Assembly
November 15, EvenSong and Reception, Anglican Observer to the United Nations, NYC.
December 1, Informal Informals, Second Committee of the General Assembly, United Nations
December 8, Protection and Promotion of Human Rights of People with Mental Disorders, United Nations.
December 22, United Nations, General Assembly passes resolution for debt relief for Poor Mountain Countries (DeLuca worked with Second Committee '04 & '05 on this issue)
December 24, Christmas Midnight Mass, Ignatius University Chapel, Staten Island, NY
December 31, Wedding Reception
January 5, Meeting, Counselor, Malaysia Mission to United Nations
January 13, Staten Island Community in Crisis Forum.
January 18, 8th Annual Staten Island Church Unity Service, Zion Lutheran Church.
JANUARY 18 Special Meeting, Rev. Sayarayne, Liberia, Pastor, Christ Assembly Lutheran Church on parish education satellite.
Special Meeting, Canon Andrews, Rector Emeritus, St. Thomas Episcopal church, NYC
January 19 Meeting, Mr. Manuel Eduardo, Counselor Angola Mission to UN
 Meeting, Mr. Cyril Thomas, St. Vincent & Grenadines Mission to UN
 Meeting, Dr. Vera Mehta, UN Secretariat
 Fra Angelico Exhibit, Metropolitan Museum of Art
 Colloquium, Dr. Peter Gay, New Perspectives in Psychoanalysis
march 30-meeting with Ambassador Kazykhanov, Kazakastan Ambassador to UN; survey presentation of economic and social commission for Asia and Pacific.
march 23 - Serbs in Kosovo; delegation for Serbian Orthodox church -press confer at UN; Bishop Jovan; Bishop Teodosije.
mar 9 meeting with Mr. Kinga, Bhutan mission to un