

# Holy Wisdom

## *Peace: Showing that Others Matter!*

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Publication of the Syrian Orthodox Church in America on United Nations Affairs. This publication is disseminated to the entire membership of the Church throughout the world on a quarterly 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 UN.

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*EDITOR'S NOTE: It is necessary through the collaboration of NGO's to raise awareness amongst communities as we promote peace. If you will, the need for community consciousness is a way we can connect parties and others. It is important at this time that all parties begin to realize that they are a part of a larger picture, that they are in it together and they have common concerns. If there is a conflict all parties have contributed to the conflict and they have the power to come together; to develop a non-violent intervention to result into a resolution. It is time for us as people to acknowledge that there is something more that exceeds our own individual positions and needs. The United Nations, religious institutions and NGO can be an avenue to promote community consciousness to encourage globally consciousness, clear and realistic decisions as they promote non-violence solutions to conflicts!*

**Relevance of the UN in the Field**, October 23, 2008, the briefing was held in recognition of the United Nations Day, the birthday of the world body, 24 October 1945. This was the day when the UN was formally established after a majority of its founding members ratified a treaty setting up the Organization. In observance of UN Day this

week's briefing focused on the work of the UN in the field. First we looked at the work of communications officers representing various UN agencies and the UN itself in Pakistan and then we moved on a via video-conference to Liberia, where we examined the work of the Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia and members of the UN Country Team as they collaborated in assisting that country in its post-conflict phase of maintaining peace and promoting development.

The briefing was attended by about 120 representatives of NGOs, United Nations and Permanent Mission staff as well as interns from various UN Departments and NGOs.

### **Major United Nations Activities:**

On Oct 23, Dr. Anthony De Luca attended and participated in the informal consultation on the draft resolution entitled "Combating Defamation of Religions." (Under agenda item 64 (b) (Third Committee) convened by the delegation of Uganda in its capacity as chair of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Group.

Dr. De Luca took the position that there were already some precedent for these issues in the UN Charter, Declaration of the elimination of all forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief (resolution 36/55) and Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National and Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (resolution 47/135). Some delegates argued that the protection in Human Rights law is for individuals and not for religions. However, Dr. De Luca felt that you cannot separate religion from the individual. Much more work has to be done on the Draft. Perhaps the draft should have been titled "Combating Defamation of individuals based upon Religion." Dr. De Luca pointed out that international law as far as its efficacy does not depend upon the political/cultural situation etc at the time which motivated its enactment. The law remains in effect perpetually unless changed.

**"Disarmament Fresh Answers to Old Questions"** October 30, 2008, Briefing took place. The topic was particularly timely, given that disarmament is being considered as the potential theme of the 2009 DPI/NGO Annual Conference, because of a suggestion that came out of the June end-of-year Town Hall meeting of NGOs.

**Maria-Luisa Chavez, Chief of the NGO Relations in the Department of Public Information**, opened the briefing by expressing her hope that it would be a good opportunity to explore where things stood on disarmament and what was needed to get a fresh start not only on that issue, but on strengthening the UN system's peace and security agenda as a whole.

The briefing was attended by about 165 representatives of NGO's United Nations and Permanent Mission staff, as well as interns from various UN Department and NGOs.

**World Diabetes Day:** Providing Assistance to Children with Diabetes – November 13, 2008. The World Day Campaign involves increasing awareness that children do get

diabetes and that support is available for them through the Life for a Child Program of the International Diabetes Federation. The briefing examined the situation of children with diabetes both in developing and developed countries. As part of the celebration to mark World Diabetes Day 2008, for the first time the West side of the United Nations building was lit in blue (the color of the diabetes circle, the global symbol for diabetes and the color of the flag of the United Nations).

**Saudi King Promotes “Theological Diplomacy”** November 13, 2008. H.E. Rev. Ambassador Anthony J. DeLuca, Ph.D. was present when the king opened the exhibition “Multi-faith scientists in the Islamic civilization. King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia is calling on world interfaith dialogue and tolerance as the only way terrorism and strife among religions can be settled. King Abdullah an ongoing UN forum that has brought together 70 countries. The effort, criticized by some, is in reaction to religious conflict which extends throughout Middle East and its neighbors.

**Bangalore (ENI).** Churches in India have joined in widespread denunciation of a series of bomb blasts that killed at least 76 people and left more than 400 injured in Assam state, in north-east India, and that also damaged a Baptist centre. “We strongly condemn such heartless violence unleashed to common people,” said the council Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNE), which was also hit by one of the 11 almost simultaneous bomb blasts in three major cities of Assam on 30 October. One of the six bombs that rocked Guwahati, the capital of Assam state, exploded at a gate in front of the offices of the church council that groups Baptist churches in north-east India.

Indian church leaders hail nun for speaking out about rape ordeal.

**Bangalore, India (ENI).** Church leaders and activists have hailed a “courageous” the decision by a young Roman Catholic nun to publicly recount how she was raped by Hindu extremists in India’s eastern Orissa state, and who has reiterated her demand for federal police to investigate the case. More than 20 television crews and many more photographers had flocked to the Jesuit-run Indian Social institute in New Delhi on 25 October to cover the news conference by the 29 year old nun, Sister Meena Barwa. With most of her face covered with August. Her address was punctuated by sobs and tears.

Christians salute “courageous” priest who died after Orissa attack.

**Bangalore, India (ENI).** Thousands of Roman Catholics thronged to the funeral of priest Bernard Digal, treasurer of the archdiocese of Bhubaneswar, following his death two months after an attack during communal violence in the troubled Kandhamal region of India’s eastern Orissa state. Forty-seven year old Digal was buried in Orissa’s capital, Bhubaneswar, on 31 October, three days after his death in a Chennai hospital, where he had been sent to after first getting treatment in another hospital in Mumbai which he was airlifted at the end of August, with serious injuries.

**Oxford, Ohio (ENI).** American and European human rights groups have challenged lawmakers in Kyrgyzstan for passing a law designed to restrict non-Muslim religions from establishing themselves in the country, which was once part of the Soviet Union. The law is seen as increasing religious restrictions throughout Central Asia and includes bans on

children involvement in religious organizations, “aggressive action aimed at proselytizing”, the distribution of religious literature, print and audio-video religious material and the compulsory re-registration of all religious organizations.

Mumbai Christian leader speaks of “real panic’ after attacks.

**Bangalore, India (ENI).** The National Council of Churches in India plus global church leaders has condemned the coordinated attacks in Mumbai, which have left more than 140 people dead. The Indian council on November 27, urged action to defeat “all forces and all forms of terrorism in India”. Indian officials blamed an Islamic extremist group for the attack. The National Council of Churches in India groups 30 Orthodox and Protestant churches. It issued its statement after gunmen armed with automatic weapons and grenades targeted at least seven sites in Mumbai late on 26 November, and stormed two luxury hotels. “There is real panic here at and the people have been stunned by the viciousness of the attack, “said Metropolitan Geevarghese.

Faith sign Uppsala Manifesto to demand action on climate change.

**Uppsala (ENI).** Global faith leaders at a meeting in Uppsala, Sweden, have signed a document calling for an extensive and rapid reduction of carbon dioxide emissions in the wealthy parts of the world. “What we think and believe is different in many contexts. Still, when it comes to responsibility for the stewardship of the Earth, which is on loan from God, we are all in agreement, “said (Lutheran) Church of Sweden Archbishop Anders Wejryd in a statement that coincided with the opening in Poznan, Poland, of a United Nations’ global meeting on climate change.

Religious Leaders say they must do more to tackle AIDS

**Geneva/Nairobi (ENI).** Some Christians and Muslim leaders in Africa have admitted that their actions to combat HIV and AIDS have not in all cases been sufficient to match the scale of the challenge. “We have not always risen to the occasion to encourage our congregations to go for testing. We have not acted as God would have us do,” the Christian and Muslim leaders from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Sudan said in a statement to mark World Aids Day.

Churches cheer poll wins by Christians in India’s Hindu heartland

**Bangalore, India (ENI).** India’s Bharatiya Janata Party, accused by opponents of pursuing a Hindu nationalist agenda, has swept to victory in Madhya Pradesh state, but leaders of the minuscule Christian community they say they have reason to rejoice. The BJP retained power, winning 143 of the 230 seats in the state legislature when the results were published in Mid-December. However, three Christians were among those elected on the ticket of the Congress party to the legislature of the state, where Christians account for less than one percent of the state’s 80 million people.

Excommunicated Zimbabwe Anglican bishops ordains own clergy

**Harare (ENI).** Renegade Zimbabwean Anglican bishop Nolbert Kunonga, who broke ties with his church earlier in 2008, has ordained 33 deacons and priests to serve in his self-styled Anglican Province of Zimbabwe. Kunonga was in May excommunicated from the Anglican church after he decided to break away from the denominations central African Region over what he said was its sympathy to homosexuals.

## **President of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly**

### **H.E. Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brokmann is President of the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly since 16 September 2008.**

A veteran statesman, politician, community leader and priest, Father d'Escoto served for over a decade as the Republic of Nicaragua's Minister for Foreign Affairs, a post he held from July 1979 until April 1990. During his tenure, he played a key role in the Contadora and Esquipulas peace processes to end internal armed conflicts in Central America in the 1980's. Also at that time, he spearheaded his Government's decision, in 1984, to bring to the International Court of Justice a claim against the United States for supporting military and paramilitary actions against his country, with the Court subsequently ruling in favor of Nicaragua.

Father d'Escoto is currently Senior Adviser on Foreign Affairs, with the rank of Minister, to President Daniel Ortega Saavedra, a post which he has held since 2007. He also chairs Nicaragua's National Committee on Water, in which capacity he plays a leading role in efforts to conserve Lake Cocibolca, the largest source of water in Mesoamerica. He is a member of the Sandinista National Council and the Political Commission, the highest governing body of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN).

Ordained a priest of the Maryknoll Missionaries in the early 1960's, Father Escoto has traveled extensively, visiting most of the world's capitals, as well as many remote and less accessible areas of the globe, and has dedicated much of his life to helping the poor.

In 1963 **Father d' Escoto** founded the National Institute of Research and Population Action (INAP) in Chile, aimed at empowering the disadvantaged populations of the callampas or slum neighborhoods on the periphery of Santiago and other cities, through community action in defense of labor rights. Following the earthquake that devastated the capital city of Managua (Nicaragua) in December 1972, Father d' Escoto mobilized assistance for quake victims and, in 1973, established the Nicaraguan Foundation for Integral Community Development (FUNDECI), now one of the oldest and most prestigious non-governmental organizations.

## **Kenyan church leaders fear press gag is sign of coalition cracks**

**Nairobi (ENI).** Some church leaders in Kenya fear cracks within the coalition could

worsen. If the parties fail to mend their differences say that laws seen as seeking to stifle free speech and muzzle the tensions. Roman Catholic Bishop Martin Kivuva Musonde of Maci a proposed media law as unfortunate, and urged an amendment of clauses. The State should not do what the majority of the population against, "Bishop Kivuva, a former journalist, told the Daly National.

### **European church body criticizes Turkey over Christian monastery**

**Brussels, 23, December (ENI)** – The Conference of European Churches has criticized what it says is Turkey's lack of legal protection for churches, and called on European institutions to protect the country's Syriac Orthodox Mor Gabriel monastery. One of the oldest active Christian monasteries in the world. The conference of European Churches is deeply concerned about the threat to the survival of the monastery, "said the Rev. Rudiger Noll, director of the church and Society Commission and associated general secretary of CEC. "CEC invites political leaders to do everything in their power to protect the continued existence of the monastery."

### **Winter-Spring 2009 NGO Briefing and Events Calendar**

15 January

"May I ask a Question Mr. President 20 February (Friday)

H.E. Mr. Miquel d'Escoto Brockmann

President of the 63 rd Sessions of the United Nations General Assembly

22 January

Issue of the Moment: The Changing Face of Race Communication Workshop

29 January

The Sephardic Jews in Greece: The Untold Story (In Observance of the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust -27 January

5 February

Sustainable Peace through Reconciliation (International Year of Reconciliation 2009

12 February

Impact of the Global Economic Crisis on NGOs

20 February (Friday)

Social Development and Social Justice

26 February

## Communication Workshop

5 March

In Celebration of  
International Women's Day

12 March

Sports for Development

19 March/20 March

Annual Orientation for Newly  
Associated NGOs

26 March

Marking the International Day  
Victims of Slavery and the  
Transatlantic Slave Trade (25 March)

2 April

In Observance of World Autism Awareness Day (2 April)

9 April

Creating Wealth and Tackling Poverty:  
Looking at UNIDO (United Nations  
Industrial Development Organization)

16 April

Communication Workshop

23 April

Towards the End of the Decade to Roll  
Back Malaria in Developing Countries,  
Particularly in Africa (World Malaria  
Day – 25 April)

30 April

In observance of World Press Freedom  
Day (3May) with a focus on a specific country)

7 May

The Ozone Layer and Climate Change  
(International Day for the Preservation of  
The Ozone Layer – 16 September)

14 May

“May I ask a Question, Special  
Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy,

Representative of the Secretary General  
For Children and Armed Conflict?"

21 May

International Year of Biodiversity  
2010 (In International day for Bio-logical Diversity-  
22 May National day for Biological Diversity-22May)

28 May

DPKO-Peacekeeping Challenges in  
Africa-the Situation in the Congo  
And the Sudan in Perspective (In  
Observance of the International  
Day for Peacekeepers-29 May)

4 June

Faith Series: Understanding Islam

11 June

Disability – implementing the New  
Convention, Challenges ahead

18 June

Disarmament

25 June

“May I ask a Question, Mrs. Deputy  
Secretary-General?” – Mrs. Asha-Rose  
Migiro (United Nations Charter Day-  
26 June)

#### UNITED NATIONS NEWS:

Maria-Luisa Chavez and Chuck Hitchcock are Co-Chairs for the 62nd Annual DPI/NGO Conference Planning Committee on Disarmament which will take place in Mexico City from September 9-11 2009.

Anne Riccitelli accepted the position as the Media Co-chair post for the 2009 DPI/NGO Conference in Mexico on Disarmament.

The Planning Committee will meet every other week fro February through June to organize the affairs of the Conference. It is the Committee’s hope to have everything in place by the end of June.

The Committee will be partnering with the Mexican Government and the NGO Community in Mexico, The Committee in New York will review suggestions made by the

Mexican NGO Focal Group and the Host Country Logistics Committee before making any decisions that will then go to the Conference Board, composed of two members of the Department of Public Information of the UN Michael Cassandra, UN Office of Disarmament Affairs, the Coordinator of the Mexican NGO Focal Group, two members of the Mexican Government, Jeffrey Huffines, and myself.

Briefing Sponsored By: DPI/NGO Relations On: “Issues of the Moment: The Changing Face of Race”, Thursday, 22 January 2009, 10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. In The Dag Hammarskjold Library Auditorium.

This inaugural briefing in our new series, Issues of the Moment will focus on one of the deepest concerns in our rapidly changing multicultural and multi-ethnic world: the question of learning to accept, value and befriend the “other” and, in effect, to transform a potential source of tension into an invaluable asset. And to ask whether, and in what way, the face of the race has changed.

The briefing was attended by about 150 representatives of NGOs that were accredited by the department of Public Information.

The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme:  
2009 Holocaust Remembrance Calendar of Events:

Monday 26 January

Videoconference with 6 francophone UN information Centres (Antananarivo, Brazzaville, Bujumbura, Dakar, Lome, Yaounde), The international Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Kigali.

Tuesday 27, January

Memorial Ceremony: “An Authentic Basis for Hope: Holocaust Remembrance and Education” with Keynote Speaker Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, Chairman of Yad Vashem Council, Kyo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information opened the event.

Wednesday 28 January:

Holocaust Survivors’ Memoirs Project Book Signing. Mrs. Frances Irwin will present and sign copies of her memoir included in the volume titled “Stolen Youth: Five Women’s Survival in the Holocaust” at the UN Book Shop.

UNITED NATIONS BRIEFINGS:

Thursday 29 January:

Weekly DPI/NGO briefing on” Sephardic Jews in Greece: The Untold Story”.

February 12 2009: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime presents “Exposing Denial and Benign Neglect” – Panel discussion on Trafficking in Persons & Goodwill Ambassador appointment ceremony.

Thursday, 12 February 2009: “Impact of the Global Economic Crisis On The Work of

NGO's. This briefing will address the concern as to how NGOs will cope with possible impacts in funding and on their ability to effectively support their causes programmes, projects and constituencies.

Friday, 20 February 2009, DPI/NGO Relations together organized a Briefing on Social Justice for a fair Globalization” to help further efforts of the International community to advocate poverty eradication, promotion of full employment and decent work, gender equity and access to social well-being and justice for all. \*All documents for the briefing were edited by: H. E. Rev. Ambassador Anthony J. DeLuca, PHD.

Thursday February 12, 2009: The Economic and Social Council held a panel discussion on: “The Contribution of Traditional Medicine to the Realization of International Development Objectives related to Global Public Health” The goal of this briefing is to show how traditional medicine can contribute to public health achievements and will demonstrate the importance of a policy framework in this field.

The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) is pleased to announce its suite of e-learning Courses for 2009. These courses are designed for professionals from government ministries, public or private entities involved with finance and trade issues, as well as for academics. Studying these issues, employees of International organizations, NGO-officials and interested individuals.

The United Nations University Office in New York promoted a series of lectures given by first class experts and scholars who have been working with UNU.

Monday, February 23, 2009, The United Nations University Office at the UN in New York (UNU-ONY) is organizing a UNU Midday Forum titled “After the War on Drugs” the event took place in Conference Room 8, UN Headquarters, New York. The event addresses the great need to reform current global drug policy.

Tuesday, February 24th 2009 “Explaining the Financial Crisis and What It Means for the Future of Global Development” presented by Joseph E. Stiglitz, Professor at Columbia University and 2001 Nobel Laureate in Economics. Professor Stiglitz has contributed to work at the UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) in the field of global development.

Thursday, February 26, 2009 The NGO Committee on Spirituality, Values and Global Concerns (NY) held a general meeting held on the last Thursday of the month. The programs and speakers are selected as a way of highlighting the importance of spirituality and values in our daily life and in the work of the UN. Hugh Locke is president of the YeleHati, an NGO he helped create with musician and producer Wyclef Jean.

Future Scholars, Mission Trip to Ghana 2009:

In February a PH.D Candidate named Robbin A. Johnson made a second trip to Ghana to complete a mission in collaboration with an organization called Future Scholars, INC

The mission's goal is to:

- Follow-up and meet with government officials to ensure the building of a twelve room school equipped with a library and a computer center (Oshiyie School).
- To provide school supplies and medical supplies to the students.
- To dedicate the completed well that will provide clean water to the students as well as the village.
- To provide classroom teaching to the older student Math, English and to the younger students Arts and crafts provided by youth from USA.
- To provide Parenting Education and counseling in the village.
- To provide Evangelism to students in Religion classes and also to the villagers.

Future Scholars Mission To Ghana West Africa Continued:

The trip this year was unique because a priest Father Jeffrey Dillon from Christ the King partially sponsored five youth to travel to Africa and to participate in the mission! The youth had an opportunity to share, learn, and experience the Ghanaian culture. The students were able to teach arts and crafts, which was welcomed by the Ghanaian students. The youth marveled at how the Ghanaian's students learned quickly the crafts and were happy of their accomplishments.

The youth took part in the mission through exchanging interviews with the children, sharing their living conditions and experiences in the USA. The youth became as one with the children in Africa. An outsider looking in would not be able to point out the differences amongst the youth. The togetherness and innocence amongst the youth is what is needed to unite people globally; so we can have a better understanding of one another so we can have less conflict and more peace!

We must continue to involve the youth so they can truly be a part of the healing that is needed and the work that needs to be done!

Save The Date: Announcement!

62nd Annual DPI/NGO Conference Mexico City, 9-11 September 2009

United Nations Affairs –Syrian Orthodox Church in America, UN NGO.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

The United Nations is delighted to announce that the Department of Public Information received a confirmation from the Government of Mexico they agreed to host the 62nd Annual DPI/NGO Conference in Mexico City, 9-11 September 2009, on the general theme of Disarmament and International Peace.

For further information on the various programs contact:

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United Nations Affairs – Syrian Orthodox Church In America