

# 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 NGOs to raise awareness among 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 exceed our own individual positions and needs. The United Nations, religious institutions and NGO can be an avenue to promote community consciousness to encourage global consciousness, clear and realistic decisions as they promote non-violent solutions to conflicts!*

## **BAN URGES G20 LEADERS TO INVEST IN 'GREEN' ECONOMY ON SECOND DAY OF TORONTO SUMMIT**

New York, Jun 27 2010

In a continued push to keep the poorest and most vulnerable at the forefront of international discussions, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today urged leaders of the Group of 20 (G20) to scale up investment in clean energy and green economy as part of the effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

"The risks -- and costs -- of inaction on climate change grow each year. The more we delay, the more we will pay," the Secretary-General told leaders of the G20 industrialized and developing economies at a working luncheon today in Toronto, Canada.

Mr. Ban has been participating in the two-day meeting to try to keep the world leaders' focus on promotion of development in poor countries, despite the global economic slowdown.

In today's speech, he urged the G20 members to publicly recognize the progress made last December at the UN climate change talks in Copenhagen, Denmark, and to move forward within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) "to achieve a meaningful, realistic result" at the summit to be hosted later this year in Cancun by Mexican President Felipe Calderon.

He also urged Governments to make concrete progress towards realizing the pledge made in Copenhagen for industrialized countries to deliver \$100 billion per year in aid to developing countries for mitigating climate change.

Mr. Ban selected members of a High-Level Advisory Group on Climate Change Finance in February to mobilize the promised finance.

Today, he urged progress on funds to be matched by credible action on mitigation, along with accountability and transparency.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Ban met with President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, and with the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, on the margins of the G20 discussions.

He said he was encouraged by the commitment of support for the MDGs, including the role of overseas development aid, but stressed that greater investment must be made if the eight goals for reducing extreme poverty and hunger, improving health and education, empowering women and ensuring environmental sustainability, are to be achieved by 2015.

In addition to the MDGs, the leaders discussed Afghanistan, Iran, Kyrgyzstan and Gaza.

During a working dinner yesterday, Mr. Ban urged the participating world leaders to help the poor and vulnerable make ends meet, despite rising budget deficits and severe fiscal problems in some of their countries.

"Under any circumstances we must not balance budgets on the backs of the world's poorest people," Mr. Ban said.

He urged Governments to not depend on consumption alone to recover from the global downturn, but to invest instead in three areas of high return, which he identified as agriculture, green recovery and health systems.

"Let us be determined to turn these three areas of high-return investments into a reality," Mr. Ban said, calling on the G-20 leaders to make clear their intentions today in the final communiqué of the summit.

The discussions this weekend have been building on the three previous G20 summits held in Washington, London and Pittsburg since the global economy downturned in 2008.

Mr. Ban has been pushing world leaders to keep the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable around the world on their agendas, as national economic priorities have become the focus.

To that end, Mr. Ban is convening a high-level summit at the UN Headquarters in New York in September to press countries to accelerate efforts to try to achieve the MDGs.

A Millennium Development Goals Advocacy Group was established last week to build political will and mobilize global action ahead of the MDG summit.

Mr. Ban met today with Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero who has agreed to co-chair the group along with Rwandan President Paul Kagame.

The meeting today focused on plans for the summit, in particular the importance of women and children's health and the fight on climate change.

## BAN URGES FOCUS ON DEVELOPMENT AND GREEN GROWTH AHEAD OF G20 SUMMIT

New York, Jun 21, 2010

Noting the continued fragility of the global economic system, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has urged leaders of the biggest industrialized and developing nations to focus on development, green growth and the needs of the most vulnerable, in devising recovery strategies.

"I encourage support for initiatives that will sustain recovery efforts while enhancing global economic stability, environmental sustainability and achievement of the <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>MDGs," Mr. Ban wrote in a letter to leaders of the Group of 20 (G20) nations, referring to the Millennium Development Goals.

In his letter, made public today, the Secretary-General noted that high unemployment, rising food and commodity prices, and persistent inequalities have contributed to a substantial rise in hunger, poverty and associated social tensions.

"Now, more than ever, investments for the world's poorest are necessary to recover lost

ground in pursuit of development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals,” he stated.

## IN WAKE OF CRISIS IN KYRGYZSTAN, UN AGENCIES BOOST AID EFFORTS

New York, Jun 21 2010

United Nations aid agencies and partners are stepping up humanitarian efforts in Kyrgyzstan, where a planeload of emergency supplies arrived today to help some of the 300,000 people displaced by ethnic conflict, and in neighboring Uzbekistan where thousands of refugees have fled the violence.

The UN World Food Programme (<http://www.wfp.org/stories/kyrgyzstan-op-gathers-speed>) WFP) said the emergency cargo, which arrived in the southern Kyrgyz city of Osh, includes food rations for 30,000 people, as well as communications equipment to support the aid response, an armored car and body armor.

## CYPRUS IN THE SPOTLIGHT DURING TALKS BETWEEN BAN AND GREEK PREMIER

New York, Jun 22, 2010

The United Nations-backed efforts to reunify the island of Cyprus and the ongoing dispute over the name of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have topped the agenda during talks between Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou.

Mr. Ban and Mr. Papandreou met yesterday at UN Headquarters in New York and also discussed recent developments in the Middle East, the global financial crisis and efforts to achieve the anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>) MDGs), according to information released by the Secretary-General’s office.

During the discussions Mr. Ban stressed to Mr. Papandreou that the leaders of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, Demetris Christofias and Dervis Eroglu, need to grasp the current political window of opportunity to take the process of the reunification talks forward.

## BAN URGES END TO ‘SCANDAL’ OF PREGNANCY-RELATED DEATHS

New York, Jun 7, 2010

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called for concerted efforts to end what he described as the “scandal” of women dying in childbirth, saying even simple clinical procedures such as clean delivery rooms and the presence of a trained midwife could greatly reduce pregnancy-related deaths.

“Some simple blood tests, consultation with a doctor and qualified help at the birth itself can make a huge difference,” Mr. Ban (<http://www.un.org/apps/sg/sgstats.asp?nid=4597>) said in an address to an international conference in Washington aimed at finding solutions to problems affecting women and girls worldwide.

“Add some basic antibiotics, blood transfusions and a safe operating room, and the risk of death can almost be eliminated,” he told delegates attending the gathering known as the “Women Deliver” conference.

Mr. Ban said women’s health in the developed world had come a long way in his lifetime,

noting that he was himself born at home in the Korean countryside and not in a hospital. “There was nothing strange or special about that fact,” Mr. Ban said. “I remember as a child asking my mother why women who were about to give birth would gaze at their simple rubber shoes, which they left at the back door as labor drew near. “My mother explained that the women wondered if they would ever step into those shoes again. Giving birth was so risky. They feared for their lives,” he said.

“Her answer started me on the journey that has brought me here today. A journey to help every woman step back into her shoes after giving birth,” he added.

The Secretary-General said women were the “glue that holds our societies and our nations together.” They make “the world work,” hence the need to ensure that they did not face undue health and social challenges.

While noting that the world had too often let mothers down, he acknowledged that there was currently a global movement for an end to the “silent scandal” of women dying in childbirth. “No woman should have to pay with her life, for giving life,” Mr. Ban stressed. Stressing the importance of global partnerships to improve the lives of women and girls, he said the United Nations was committed to helping governments deliver for mothers and children.

The new UN Joint Action Plan aims to accelerate progress on women’s and children’s health to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the global anti-poverty targets world leaders have pledged to achieve by 2015.

“This plan calls for every part of the world’s health infrastructure to work together, towards one goal. Governments and health services in developed and developing countries alike, international organizations, businesses and private foundations, non-governmental organizations and civil society,” Mr. Ban said.

“Invest in women – it pays. This is one of the best investments we can make for this and future generations. Working together, we aim to make 2010 a turning point for women’s health,” he added.

The Secretary-General said that efforts to alleviate health problems that bedeviled women couldn’t succeed if they are not accompanied by work to end gender discrimination of all kinds, a priority of the UN.

“First, we are working to combat the worldwide epidemic of violence against women. Women can never fulfill their potential or participate fully in society when they live in fear... Fear of rape as a weapon of war... Fear of domestic violence... Fear of being trafficked for sex.

“I have launched a global campaign aimed at raising awareness. Wherever I travel, I tell leaders that this is a matter of moral leadership... a matter of political will. All of us must see it as our business to put an end to these practices,” Mr. Ban said.

He noted that UN Member States had last year agreed to unite the functions and mandates of multiple UN bodies that deal with women’s issues into one. “Women and girls will have a powerful new champion, both on the world stage and within the UN,” he added.

“Since I became Secretary-General, the number of women in the top posts at the UN has increased dramatically. Many of these are the first women appointees to positions that have been held by men for the past six decades. And let me tell you, it does make a difference.

“Women more than hold up their half of the sky the world over. The United Nations should be no exception. Indeed we must lead,” the Secretary-General said.

The three-day conference in the United States capital is the largest-ever gathering on maternal health, drawing 3,500 participants from 140 countries, according to organizers.

## KYRGYZSTAN: BAN DISCUSSES CRISIS WITH LEADERS AS UN MOBILIZES AID FOR CIVILIANS

New York, Jun 15, 2010

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke with the head of Kyrgyzstan’s interim Government today regarding the crisis in the south, as United Nations agencies launched operations to assist the thousands of civilians affected by the violence.

Mr. Ban told Roza Otunbaeva that the UN is closely coordinating with other organizations and players to respond to the crisis, in which over 100 people have reportedly been killed, at least 1,300 injured and some 75,000 displaced as a result of the clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks that erupted last week.

The Secretary-General voiced deep concern about the violence, especially given the inter-ethnic character of the unrest, in a separate phone call with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. He also thanked Russia for its efforts to address the humanitarian situation. The World Food Programme (<http://www.wfp.org/>WFP) has launched an emergency operation to provide logistics and feed civilians caught in the crisis, while calling on all sides to allow the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian supplies, particularly in the southern city of Osh.

“This crisis is unfolding rapidly and WFP is mobilizing its global expertise to ensure that the vulnerable – particularly women and children – do not suffer,”

<http://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/wfp-mobilizes-meet-emergency-needs-kyrgyzstan-clashes>” said Executive Director Josette Sheeran. “We implore all sides to ensure humanitarian access to the vulnerable, trapped by the crisis.”

The agency noted that transporting aid from the capital, Bishkek, is difficult, as roads are not safe and commercial trucking companies are reluctant to risk their vehicles.

WFP currently has 3,000 metric tons of food pre-positioned in Kyrgyzstan – enough to feed 87,000 people for two months.

The Uzbek Government estimates that around 75,000 people from Kyrgyzstan have crossed over and are seeking refuge on its territory. WFP is positioning itself to operate in both countries if needed.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees

(<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>UNHCR) offered its assistance to Uzbek authorities that are already dealing with needs of the displaced.

The agency’s spokesperson, Andrej Mahecic, told reporters in Geneva that the first of six planned cargo flights, each carrying 40 tons of UNHCR relief supplies for refugees fleeing the violence is scheduled to leave Dubai tomorrow morning.

The first UNHCR-chartered flight will be loaded with 800 lightweight tents to meet rapidly growing shelter needs, Mr. Mahecic said. The subsequent five flights will be loaded with blankets, sleeping mats, kitchen sets and plastic sheeting for emergency shelters.

“In total, we plan to deliver some 240 tons of humanitarian assistance from our central emergency stockpile in Dubai. Upon arrival in Uzbekistan the supplies will be loaded onto

trucks and taken immediately to various sites hosting refugees in close coordination with the Government,” he said.

Part of the UNHCR emergency team is traveling today in advance of these flights and includes field officers as well as experts on operations, site planning and logistics. The agency is preparing a separate airlift and the deployment of an emergency team to Kyrgyzstan.

UNHCR said it was “alarmed” by the rapid escalation of violence since 10 June, which has led to the displacement of an estimated 200,000 people within the country, in addition to those who fled to Uzbekistan.

“We fear that unless peace and order is restored swiftly more people could be displaced as they flee to the countryside or try to cross the border to Uzbekistan,” Mr. Mahecic stated, appealing for a halt to the violence and efforts to ensure the protection of civilians. Meanwhile, a group of UN human rights experts today voiced their alarm and deep concern about ethnic tensions that have erupted into violence in Kyrgyzstan, including the cities of Osh and Jalalabad.

“Putting a stop to the current violence and preventing its further escalation or spreading to other areas must be the first priority of the provisional Government. The security of those from all ethnic groups, including all minorities in Kyrgyzstan, must be protected,” they stated in a news release.

“The true causes of the tensions should be fully analyzed and addressed to help ensure that this appalling situation cannot happen again,” added the experts – Gay McDougall, Independent Expert on minority issues; Philip Alston, Special Rapporteur on extra judicial, summary or arbitrary executions; and Githu Muigai, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

They noted that the present situation remains “extremely fragile and dangerous” and it must be confronted with swift and appropriate responses to calm the situation, restore order and prevent further outbreaks of violence.

“This must be done in full conformity with human rights obligations,” they stressed.

18 May 2010

Struggle for oil may derail Sudan referendum, warns church leader

Nairobi (ENI). A senior Sudan church official says political parties in the country must agree on the sharing of oil wealth to minimize border tensions between the divided north and south of Africa's biggest country. The Rev. Ramadan Chan Liol, general secretary of the Sudan Council of Churches, a grouping of Orthodox Protestant and Roman Catholic churches, said the south's ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the north's governing National Congress Party must agree on how they will split the oil wealth, before a 2011 referendum on the possible secession of the south. "The central government has depended on the oil from the south for its operations. It will be difficult for it to just let oil go" Chan told ENI news on 15 May in Nairobi. "Our position as the church is for the parties concerned to agree on the share of oil revenue in the post-referendum period. This will minimize the tensions." Sudan is gearing for the 9 January 2011 plebiscite, mandated by the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Children of kidnapped German Christians freed in Yemen

Geneva (ENI). Two children belonging to a German Christian family, who had been kidnapped in North Yemen by Shiite rebels 11 months ago, have been freed. Family

members told the German evangelical news agency idea on 18 May that the two daughters, Lydia, aged 6, and Anna, 4, are free. "Given the very difficult situation, they are reasonably well," said German foreign minister Guido Westerwell. He said Saudi Arabian security forces had freed the two children, and that he had "great concern" about the other family members. The fate of the parents, Johannes and Sabine Hentschel, both 38, is uncertain. Their youngest son Simon, 2, is believed to be dead, idea reported. Bishop Martin Schindehütte, the foreign relations head of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), said in a statement that he had feelings of "joy and hope, and grief and pain at the same time" over the fate of the family. Media reports stated that Saudi Arabian special military forces in the border region with Yemen, had freed the two daughters.

India churches concerned about clerics involvement in alleged crimes  
 Thrissur, India (ENI). Church leaders in south India say the alleged involvement of a number of clerics in criminal activities shows corruption needs urgent attention in the church. "We are making wrong headlines. This is not how our leaders should be known," the Rev. Mohan Labeer, a pastor and former principal of Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, told ENI news. Labeer was reacting to the arrest of Church of South India Bishop Manikiam Dorai of Coimbatore a week earlier in connection with the assault on a priest of the diocese for joining a street protest by church members against alleged corruption by the bishop.

22 May 2010

Church leaders call for restraint after Madagascar pastor shot  
 Nairobi (ENI). A pastor in Madagascar is said to have died after being shot by a stray bullet during a politically charged gun battle in the country's capital Antananarivo. Church sources in Antananarivo said that Pastor Ranaivo Rivoarison who was shot at died in the early hours of 21 May. The London-based Council for World Mission quoted a church member as saying "He and his wife were walking on the road near the army barracks where the gun battle erupted and the bullet caught him from the back." Rivoarison belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM). His wife, Pastor Rasoanaivo Rina, is the head of the FJKM women's group known as Dorkasy. The president of the Geneva-based World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick and the grouping's general secretary, the Rev. Setri Nyomi, said on 21 May "We have read with horror of the new outbreaks of violence in Madagascar and are particularly concerned that Pastor Rivo was shot by the security forces as he was sharing in a prayer service earlier today."

Istanbul-based Patriarch's Moscow visit 'marks improved relations'  
 Moscow (ENI). A visit by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I of Constantinople to Moscow is expected to underscore a thawing in relations after decades of tension during the Soviet era and post-Soviet geopolitical turmoil. Bartholomeos arrives in Russia on 22 May and will take part in a service the following day - Pentecost Sunday - with Patriarch Kirill I of the Russian Orthodox Church at the centuries-old Holy Trinity St Sergius Lavra church near Moscow. They will concelebrate again on 24 May at Christ the Saviour Cathedral opposite the Kremlin in the Russian capital, and then hold talks the next day at Kirill's residence outside Moscow. The Russian Orthodox Church is the world's largest



Orthodox church. The Ecumenical Patriarchate is regarded as being the most important symbolically, but Moscow has chafed when the Istanbul-based Patriarch of Constantinople is described as an Orthodox equivalent of a Roman Catholic pope.

Turkish prime minister takes new initiative on Christian rights

Warsaw (ENI). The head of the Turkish government has ordered local officials to do more to protect the rights of Christian and other non-Muslim religious minorities, such as by returning their confiscated properties and taking action against anti-Christian groups. "Although their legal situation has begun to improve as a result of reforms, there are still problems in practice," Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in a decree published in mid-May. "I therefore urge all state organs to uphold the rights of the Christian and Jewish minorities, to behave with respect towards their clergy and to act decisively against all publications inciting hatred and discrimination," stated Erdogan. The document was published on 13 May in the government's official gazette, five days after a Syriac Catholic church at Iskenderun was handed back for religious use after being used as an erotic cinema for half a century.

New book enables Christians to pray across nations and languages

Munich (ENI). A new book of prayers and liturgical songs in a variety of languages and from many church traditions has been produced to help Christians from different nations and backgrounds pray and sing together. The book was presented for the first time at a 15 May service during the Ecumenical Kirchentag, or church convention, in Munich, Germany. "It is praying together that binds us most closely together," the Rev. Margot Kassmann, the former head of Germany's main Protestant grouping has written in a foreword to the book, "Laudate Omnes Gentes: Praying Together - Resources and songs for ecumenical celebrations." The 264-page book includes 120 texts, 40 liturgical songs and several orders of service. They come from 2000 years of Christian tradition, as well as from ecumenical meetings and gatherings. Texts are printed in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, and in various other languages.

27 May 2010

Christian peace week, European flotilla pull focus to Holy Land

Jerusalem/Geneva (ENI). The World Council of Churches World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel is highlighting the urgent need for a settlement to the impasse between Israelis and Palestinian. The Geneva-based WCC describes this as a "joint action for just peace" and it takes place from 29 May to 4 June, focusing mainly on the issue of Israeli settlements that are encroaching into Israeli-occupied Palestinian areas. "We see the settlements, and the roads [serving them] and all other infrastructure associated with the settlements as the main obstacle for peace," said Yusef Daher, executive secretary of the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre. The week for peace comes as Israel has been preparing to prevent a flotilla of up to nine vessels carrying hundreds of pro-Palestinian and peace activists bearing supplies headed for Gaza, the coastal enclave that is run by Hamas, but blockaded by Israel.

More Catholics staying out of pews in Poland

Warsaw (ENI). Church attendance is dropping in Poland for the first time in decades, according to newly released data, following a sharp fall in priestly and monastic vocations in the predominantly Roman Catholic country. "Looking back over 30 years' research, we must clearly confirm that fewer people are now going to church," said the Rev. Wojciech Sadlon, a priest from Poland's Roman Catholic Pallotine order. "But this isn't a drastic fall - compared to other countries of Europe, we can still be proud and consider ourselves the mainstay of Christianity." The data, collected in the last three months of 2009, showed a slight recovery in Mass attendance in 2009 to 41.5 percent of the population of 38 million, compared to 40.4 percent in 2008. However, they also confirmed a "slow but steady fall" in all 44 Catholic dioceses over the past decade, running as high as 9.2 percent in some parts of the country.

Jews for Jesus founder dies in US aged 78

Washington DC (ENI/RNS). Moishe Rosen, a controversial Baptist minister, writer and founder of the group Jews for Jesus, has died in San Francisco at the age of 78. He had prostate cancer. Rosen was born in Kansas City, Missouri, to a family of Orthodox Jews. At the age of 21, Rosen met his wife Ceil and they both converted to Christianity, Religion News Service reports. He died on 19 May. He founded Jews for Jesus in 1973 as an organization to "make the messiahship of Jesus an unavoidable issue to our Jewish people worldwide," as stated on the group's Web site. "Therefore, I would urge you to think very seriously before you support any 'ministry' that involves Jewish people and doesn't actually bring the gospel to the Jews," Rosen said in a letter posted on the group's Web site after his death. "I hope I can count on you to show love and respect for the Jewish people, but Jewishness never saved anybody."

03 June 2010

Criticism of missionaries valid, but hope is key says WCC head

Edinburgh (ENI). Being a witness for Christianity requires both evangelism and a prophetic commitment to the will of Jesus for justice, peace and the care of creation, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Rev. Olav Fyske Tveit, has said. Tveit was speaking on 3 June, the second day of the 2010 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh that commemorates a similar event in the capital of Scotland 100 years earlier at which only one black African and 19 Asians were among more than 1000 delegates present.

"The churches can be witnesses of hope in times of injustice, of financial crises, of violence and tensions between peoples of faith, and of environmental threats," said Tveit, a Norwegian theologian whose Geneva-based WCC traces its roots to the 1910 conference in Edinburgh.

1989 marked turning point for Christianity, global meeting told

Edinburgh (ENI). The events of 1989, when people in Eastern Europe took their faith on to the streets and challenged communist regimes, marked a turning point in seeing the Church as a global community of believers, a world mission conference in Edinburgh has heard. "People took their faith into the public square in Eastern Europe and Russia, and the Berlin Wall came down," Dana L. Robert of Boston University in the United States told the 2010 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, which commemorates a similar

event in the capital of Scotland 100 years ago. She referred to a comment ascribed to an East German leader after the 1989 peaceful demonstrations that led to the collapse of communism: "We were prepared for everything but not for candles and prayers."

#### Leader of Catholic Church in Turkey stabbed dead

Geneva (ENI). The president of the Catholic bishops' conference in Turkey, Italian-born Bishop Luigi Padovese, has been stabbed to death in Iskenderun in southern Turkey.

"This is horrible news that left us deeply shocked," the Vatican spokesperson, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, said after the news of Bishop Padovese's killing on 3 June. Vatican Radio quoted Lombardi as saying that "political motivations" for the killing of Padovese, "or other motivations linked to socio-political tensions are to be excluded".

#### First female bishop for Finnish Lutheran church

Geneva/Helsinki (ENI). The Rev. Irja Askola has become the first woman to be elected as a bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, a step described as a "milestone" by the general secretary of the Lutheran World Federation. "It is an important sign that a woman has been elected to the office of bishop in yet another LWF member church," said the Rev. Ishmael Noko, general secretary of the Geneva-based Lutheran federation, after the 3 June vote. Askola received 591 votes to 567 for her rival Matti Poutiainen, the Finnish church council communications centre said.

#### Pope's visit to Cyprus faces tricky diplomatic and church hurdles

Rome (ENI). Pope Benedict XVI will be the first pontiff to visit Cyprus when he arrives on the Mediterranean island, to which the Apostle Paul once took the Christian gospel, and where today some hold anti-Catholic opinions. Officially, the 4 to 6 June papal visit, which was announced earlier in 2010, has two main aims. The first is to reciprocate a visit to the Vatican in 2007 by Archbishop Chrysostomos II, primate of the (Orthodox) Church of Cyprus. The second is for the Pope to have a separate meeting with Catholic bishops from the Middle East. Still, church sources have now suggested that Pope Benedict might need to give greater attention to the issue of peace in the region following the 31 May action by Israeli forces against ships carrying activists seeking to bring humanitarian aid to the Gaza strip.

11 June 2010

#### Pope concludes 'Year for Priests' with sexual abuse apology

Rome (ENI). Pope Benedict XVI has marked the end of the Roman Catholic Church's Year for Priests by apologizing for the scandal of sexual abuse of children by clergy. "It happened that in this year of joy for the sacrament of the priesthood, the sins of priests came to light, particularly the abuse of the little ones, in which the priesthood, whose task is to manifest God's concern for our good, turns into the opposite," Pope Benedict told 15 000 priests from 90 countries gathered in Rome on 11 June to concelebrate the Eucharist with him.

#### Polish bishops bar IVF supporters from communion

Warsaw (ENI). Poland's bishops have warned Roman Catholic Church members that they cannot receive Holy Communion if they support in vitro fertilization, because it is a

violation of church law comparable to abortion. "The church always defends the weakest, especially the totally defenseless, who include conceived children," the Family Council of the bishops' conference had said on 19 May. "Those who kill them, and those who actively participate in this killing or make laws against conceived life, including the life of a child in embryonic state, which is largely destroyed by in vitro procedure, stand in open conflict with the Catholic Church's teaching." The council's statement was issued amid controversy over plans by the Polish government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk for a new bioethics law that would allow IVF to be funded from the State health budget.

#### Presbyterian church in India to 'discipline' homosexuals

Kochi, India (ENI). The Presbyterian Church in the northeast Indian state of Mizoram has said it will "discipline" homosexuals by preventing them from taking part in important church rituals because their life-style choice is incompatible with Christianity. The executive committee of the synod of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, the largest church in the Christian-majority state, decided at the beginning of June that the church will not condone homosexuality in any way, and may excommunicate some homosexuals. "Our church will discipline such people, and they will not be allowed to take part in sacraments," the Rev. C. Rosiama, a leader of the Mizo church and former moderator of the Presbyterian Church of India, told ENI news on 11 June from Aizwal, the capital of Mizoram.

#### Supreme Court in US state sides with Episcopal Church

Washington DC (ENI/RNS). Virginia's Supreme Court sided with the U.S. Episcopal Church on 10 June in its dispute with breakaways conservatives over historic and valuable parish property, a partial but important victory for the embattled denomination. The ruling overturned a lower court's decision, which had ruled in favor of nine Virginia congregations that broke with the Episcopal Church, which is part of the Anglican Communion, in 2006 and 2007 over disagreements on homosexuality and the Bible, Religion News Service reports.

14 June 2010

#### Church agency warns Kyrgyzstan violence may spread

Geneva/Osh (ENI). The worst conflict in Kyrgyzstan since a revolution in April may currently be confined to an area around the southern city of Osh, but the international ACT Alliance emergency aid and development agency has warned that the fighting could spread. Tatiana Kotova, of the ACT Central Asia Forum, speaking from the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek, told the ACT Alliance in Geneva that fighting between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks could easily escalate in the central Asia region that is often described as a forgotten corner of the world. "It is important that fragile democratic processes are supported not only in Kyrgyzstan but also in neighboring central Asian countries," said Kotova. "The risk of the conflict spreading is high, with potentially global repercussions."

#### Polish legislators ignore Catholic Church with new family law

Warsaw (ENI). Polish parliamentarians have defied the country's predominant Roman Catholic Church and approved a law to prevent violence in families, despite warnings by church groups that it could allow State interference in family life. The legislation, passed in

the Senate on 28 May by 52 votes to 36, tightens rules against, "psychological suffering," as well as banning smacking and, any "corporal punishment of children". Still, intervention by social services will be restricted to cases of direct violence, after claims the legislation would make it too easy for the authorities to remove children from parental care. The president of Poland's bishops' conference, Archbishop Jozef Michalik, cautioned that the law would, "disturb the natural order" by undermining parental control and, "questioning the role of the family as a responsible community".

#### Blasts at Kenyan Christian prayer rally kill seven

Nairobi (ENI). Church leaders in Kenya have said they are holding the government responsible for two explosions at a constitution prayer rally in Nairobi, in which seven people died and nearly 100 were injured on 13 June. The church leaders, who have been campaigning for a "No" vote against a proposed draft constitution, condemned the attack as an affront to the Christian faith, and sent their condolences to the families of those who had died. "Having been informed over and over that the passage of the new constitution is a government project, we are left with no doubt the government, either directly or indirectly, had a hand in this attack. Who else in this country holds explosives?" said the Rev. Peter Karanja, general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Kenya. "We therefore hold the government and the 'Yes' team responsible for the attack and the blood that was shed, unless they prove to Kenyans that someone else planted and detonated the devices," said Karanja on 14 June.

16 June 2010

#### Remembering war, Korean Christians to pray for peace

Tokyo (ENI). South Korea's national church council is to mark the 60th anniversary of the beginning of the 1950 to 1953 Korean War with a week of national reconciliation that will on 17 June include a prayer meeting for peace with North Korea. The Korean War began on 25 June 1950 and an armistice was signed on 27 July 1953, although the two sides have never agreed a peace treaty. Currently, a period of tension exists between North and South Korea following the sinking of a South Korean navy ship in March. The Seoul government says the ship was sunk by a North Korean torpedo attack but Pyongyang denies this. Prayers in Seoul will be said for national reconciliation, the National Council of Churches in Korea said on 16 June. The council added that its president, the Rev. Byung-Ho Jeon, would also preach on the theme of, "just peace", and the council would issue, "The Declaration of South Korean Churches for the Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula" on 17 June.

#### Indian bishops want wider roads in densely populated Kerala

Kochi, India (ENI). Road building may usually be an issue for civic groups but Roman Catholic bishops in Kerala have joined a political debate on how much the state's roads should be widened in order to create better highways on a densely populated strip of land. "The church has always stood for the development of the land, and we will encourage our people to make sacrifices for it [the widening of roads]," the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Conference said after a meeting, attended by bishops from 30 dioceses. Kerala contains India's most concentrated pocket of Christians, who number nearly seven million among the state's 36 million people.

### Churches at global meeting urged to tackle military outlay hikes

Milan/Geneva (ENI). A global churches' peace event scheduled for 2011 in Jamaica must tackle increased military spending by Western countries at a time of economic downturn, a meeting of Italian Christians has said. "This is an affront to ethical values," said a document issued by Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Christians at a meeting in Milan to prepare for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation to take place on the Caribbean island in May 2011. The peace convocation, organized by the Geneva-based World Council of Churches, will mark the culmination of the WCC's Decade to Overcome Violence. Speaking on 13 June at a separate meeting in Karlsruhe in Germany, former WCC general secretary the Rev. Konrad Raiser said the Decade to Overcome Violence had helped, "make visible the dramatic presence of violence and its many forms" in many regions and countries of the world.

### Southern Baptists in US meet, trying to combat falling numbers

Washington DC (ENI/RNS). Southern Baptist Convention President Johnny Hunt has urged members of the largest Protestant denomination in the United States to move beyond comfort zones as it seeks new ways to evangelize and combat declining baptism rates. "I'm tired of having my membership in a convention that's declining," he said in a presidential address on the opening day of the Southern Baptists' annual meeting in Orlando, Florida, on 15 June, Religion News Service reports. "I'm tired of not putting the priority in reaching teenagers for Jesus Christ. I'm tired of being hammered over and over again about money instead of the mission in Jesus' name. Let's get a compelling vision that people would want to give more money to."

SOCM News Bureau

June 14, 2010

The Deracination of the Oriental Christians from Iraq Heralds the end of Western Christianity.

Dr. Muhammad Shamsaddin Megalommatis

No one among the hundreds of millions of Western Christians seems ready to show a genuine interest for the ongoing Aramaean Christian Genocide in Iraq. Yet, they should disregard all other subjects of focus and consider the incredible slaughter as their own personal affair.

The US-led invasion of Iraq proved to be a development worse than WWI for the millennia long Oriental Christianity which was embraced by the indigenous Aramaeans to be later diffused by them up to Central Asia and China.

Syriac Aramaic, not Greek, is the historically preponderant language for the Christians in Asia. Orthodox Christianity (pejoratively called Monophysitic by the Constantinopolitans) and Nestorian Christianity were diffused throughout Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Arabia, Yemen, Persia and India before the explosion of Islam.

The fact that both denominations were rejected by the official doctrines of the Eastern Roman Empire and the Sassanid Empire of Iran prepared the Aramaean Christians for persecutions of minor climax, namely those occurred in the Islamic Caliphates. But when in the mid 8th century, Islam was the official doctrine of most of the territories between Afghanistan and the Atlantic, Nestorian Christianity was one of the three religions

practiced in the vast region of Central Asia, northeast of the Islamic Caliphate and west of China. Nestorians were still numerous there and in China at the time of Marco Polo, which shows the deep roots of Nestorian Christianity in the most confined parts of the then known world.

To read more: - <http://www.americanchronicle.com/articles/view/162789>

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York  
Unprecedented Number of Non-Governmental Organizations from Asia-Pacific Region  
Join United Nations Department of Public Information

On 30 June, at the first biannual meeting of the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee, 62 non-governmental organizations were associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information. This brings to 1,588 the number of non-governmental organizations that work with the Department in the area of communications and information.

United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Kiyo Akasaka, welcomed the large and diverse group: “I am delighted to see the increase in geographical diversity of non-governmental organizations associated with the Department of Public Information with applications from all the different regions of the world.” The organizations presented for review their work on a wide range of issues, including on global health; improvement of the quality of life for indigenous, underprivileged and marginalized peoples; substance abuse; ensuring safe birthing environments; non-violence and human rights; poverty alleviation; and more.

Among the non-governmental organizations newly associated, 32 were from Australia, 5 were from the Philippines and 3 were from Pacific islands. For the first time, the Committee associated organizations from Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu, recognized as small island developing States — low-lying island nations that share similar physical and structural challenges to their development, which have been a priority on the United Nations agenda.

The new additions contribute to solidifying the trend of increasing geographic diversity among the non-governmental organizations affiliated with the Department of Public Information, a result of the Department’s recently revised policy, whereby priority is given to associating organizations based in the region hosting the Annual United Nations DPI/NGO Conference.

The 2010 Conference is taking place in Melbourne, Australia from 30 August to 1 September, resulting in a surge of interest from non-governmental organizations from the Pacific region. The United Nations Information Centers have played a key role in the process, in particular the Information Centers in Canberra and Manila, in encouraging participation in the sixty-third Annual Conference and partnership with the Department of Public Information.

In building new relationships with various regional non-governmental organizations, particularly in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe, the Department is hoping to see participation and involvement in the work of the United Nations thrive and grow. Following are the newly associated non-governmental organizations listed alphabetically and by regional groups:

African States: Action Aides aux Families Demunies (Mali); African Youth Movement

(Nigeria); Interfaith Peace building Initiative (IPI) (Ethiopia); Widows Development Organization (WiDO) (Nigeria).

Asia and the Pacific States: Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation (Australia); Asian NGO Coalition (Philippines); Association of Prevention and Harm Reduction Programs (Australia); Australian Association of Yoga in Daily Life (Australia); Australian Breastfeeding Association (Australia); Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) (Australia); Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (Australia); Australian Volunteers International (Australia); Birthing Kit Foundation Australia (Australia); Burnet Institute (Australia); Cancer Council of Australia (Australia); Caring and Living as Neighbors (CLAN) (Australia); Caritas Australia (Australia); Child Fund Australia (Australia); Child hope Asia Philippines (Philippines); Civil Society Forum of Tonga (Tonga); Diabetes Australia (Australia); Fred Hollows Foundation (Australia); Gusenghwe Inc. (Republic of Korea); High Resolves (Australia); and Human Rights Law Resource Centre (Australia).

Also: International Brain Education Association (Republic of Korea); International Women's Development Agency (Australia); Medical Action Group (MAG) (Philippines); National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organization (NACCHO) (Australia); National Children's and Youth Law Centre (Australia); National Heart Foundation of Australia (Australia); National Stroke Foundation (Australia); Oaktree Foundation (Australia); One Health Organization (Australia); Oxfam Australia (Australia); Pacific Institute of Public Policy (Vanuatu); Pacific Islands Association of NGOs (PIANGO) (Fiji); Philippine Legislators Committee on Population and Development Inc. (PLCPD) (Philippines); Philippines NGO Council on Population Health and Welfare (PNGOC) (Philippines); Plan International Australia (Australia); Results Australia (Australia); Save the Children Australia (Australia); Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (Australia); Vision 2020 Australia (Australia); World Vision Australia (Australia); Youth Empowerment Against HIV/AIDS (YEAH) (Australia).

Latin American and Caribbean States: Corporación Agua para la Gente (Honduras); FOCO-INPADE (Argentina); Fundación ProEmpleo Productivo A.C. (Mexico); Western European and Other States: Close the Gap (Belgium); Council for Responsible Genetics (United States); Crisis Action (United Kingdom); Food for the Poor (United States); International Center for Transitional Justice (United States); Intersections International (United States); KROC Institute for International Peace, University of Notre Dame (United States); Memorial De la Shoah (France); Railroad Street Youth Project (United States); U Thant Institute (United States); World Corrosion Organization (United States);

Middle East: AMEL Association (Lebanon); International Islamic Relief Organization (Saudi Arabia);

For further information, please contact DPI/NGO Relations at tel.: +1 212 963 6842; e-mail: [dpingo@un.org](mailto:dpingo@un.org). The Directory of non-governmental organizations associated with the Department of Information is also available at <http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/index.asp>.

23 June 2010

Native American tells churches, 'It's time for a truth commission'

Grand Rapids, Michigan (ENI). A Native American leader has challenged a global



Protestant body to create a truth and reconciliation commission to redress the injustice of Church involvement in cultural assimilation against indigenous peoples. Richard Twiss, a member of the Rosebud Lakota/Sioux Tribe, said the Church had been, "a willing partner", in the oppression of Native Americans. He spoke at the founding meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Native Americans had numbered 50 million in 1400 but by 1895 accounted for barely 230 000, as a results of war and disease, Twiss said on 22 June. "It was one of the worst examples of genocide and ethnic cleansing, right here in America, which says, 'in God we trust'," said Twiss.

#### Bomb blast near Russian synagogue worries religious leaders

Moscow (ENI). Russian religious leaders are concerned following an explosion on 21 June in front of a synagogue in Tver, a historic city 150 kilometers (90 miles) north of Moscow, the second major incident targeting the Jewish community there in as many years. "The attempt to blow up the building of the Tver synagogue has shocked the entire Jewish community of Russia," the Federation of Jewish Communities of Russia said in a statement. The explosive device was the equivalent of 100 grams of the explosive TNT, police said according to the RIA Novosti news agency. No one was injured in the explosion. The Tver synagogue, built in the early 20th century, is known for its distinct eclectic architecture.

#### Kenyan church leaders worried about serial killers 'religious' link

Nairobi (ENI). Church leaders in Kenya are warning of an increase in human sacrifice, after two men confessed they had killed serially on the instructions of religious groups. The confessions have shocked Kenyans and triggered a debate over the extent of devil worship in the east African country. "It appears this has gone down deep in our society. We are deeply concerned," the Rev. Samuel Kibicho of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa, who is chairperson of National Council of Churches of Kenya, told ENI news on 21 June. Families of victims who disappeared said they drew comfort from knowing what befell their relatives when on 15 June police charged 32-year-old Philip Onyancha with the murder of 17 people.

#### Thai church leader thankful for support during 'tumultuous time'

Tokyo (ENI). A Thai church leader has expressed his gratitude to Christians around the world for supporting his country during recent violent clashes between pro- and anti-government forces. "We are thankful for your concern and prayers at this time when our nation is struggling through a seminally tumultuous time in its history," said the Rev. Sayam Muangsak, the general secretary of the Church of Christ in Thailand. He made his comments in a letter released on a Web site of the Christian Conference of Asia, a Chiang Mai-based regional ecumenical body.

#### US faith groups give G20 nations failing grade on poverty

Washington DC (ENI/RNS). An alliance of religious denominations has given the world's richest nations a near-failing grade for their progress on eradicating world poverty. Jubilee USA Network, an alliance of more than 75 religious groups that advocates debt forgiveness for poor nations, gave the Group of 20 a "D" grade in a report released on 22 June ahead of the 26-27 June G20 summit in Toronto, Religion News Service reports.

Melinda St. Louis, the deputy director of Jubilee USA, said the G20 has made "shockingly little progress" since its last meeting in September. In the last nine months, the G20 has delivered only US\$1.2 billion in new resources to low-income countries; the Canadian government will spend the same amount on security alone for the three-day summit.

1 July 2010

Zimbabwe exile group pleads after police block Anglicans

Harare (ENI). Police barricaded routes to a shrine east of Zimbabwe's capital to block an annual pilgrimage by thousands of Anglicans to honor the Mozambique-born martyr Bernard Mizeki, who was killed during an 1896 rebellion against colonial rule. "The police mounted a roadblock at the turn-off and told us we were not allowed to conduct commemorations at the shrine," one of the affected parishioners told local media after the 25 June march. Anglican Bishop Chad Gandiya said in an email statement, "Just as people from all over the country and beyond started converging at the Bernard Mizeki shrine, the police have turned up in full force and are driving the pilgrims away." A week earlier Zimbabwe police allowed a similar pilgrimage to the same shrine by a breakaway Anglican faction led by expelled bishop Nolbert Kunonga and some of his followers.

Left votes 'halt' East German dissident pastor in presidential poll

Trier, Germany (ENI). Joachim Gauck, a former East German Lutheran pastor and dissident, failed in a bid to be elected as Germany's president but is also seen to have embarrassed Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition government. Although Christian Wulff, the candidate of Merkel's coalition, was finally chosen for the largely ceremonial post of president, it took place after the third round of voting in the 30 June election. Merkel's coalition of conservative and liberal parties appeared to have a 22-vote majority in the special electoral college of 1244 lawmakers and representatives of the country's 16 regional states. Gauck, who does not belong to any political party but was nominated by the opposition Social Democratic Party and the Green party, received 499 votes in the first round.

South African church takes on rival vuvuzela makers

Johannesburg (ENI). South Africa's "Shembe church" says that a deal between it and a manufacturer is about to be finalized over the trademark rights to the vuvuzela, a horn whose trumpeting sound has grabbed headlines through its use during the soccer World Cup. The Nazareth Baptist Church of KwaZulu-Natal - known locally as the Shembe church - said it is the confirmed originator of the plastic instrument originally made of animal horn. It is threatening to take other manufacturers to court to stop them making the horn. The church claims its founder Isaiah Shembe was the inventor in 1910 of the trumpet that a plastics factory worker, Neil van Schalkwyk, saw in stands in the 1990s while playing soccer for the Cape Town's Santos club. In 2001, Van Schalkwyk set up Masinedane Sport, which has since made about 800 000 vuvuzelas - and most recently an earplug kit for soccer fans irritated by the jackhammer-like drone created by the World Cup crowds at the matches in South Africa.

Basel Bishop Koch now officially Vatican's church unity head  
 Rome (ENI). The Vatican has officially confirmed the appointment of Swiss Bishop Kurt Koch to replace Cardinal Walter Kasper as head of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, after widespread speculation that such a move was to take place. A Vatican announcement on 1 July said that Pope Benedict XVI had accepted the resignation of 77-year-old-Kasper and had named in his place Bishop Kurt Koch of Basel, aged 60. German-born Kasper became president of the pontifical council in 2001, having served two years as its secretary. He took part in the 1999 signing of a joint declaration on the doctrine of justification, a major agreement between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church.

02 July 2010

British church to boycott goods from Israeli settlements

London (ENI). The Methodist Church in Britain has launched a boycott of all products from Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territories, prompting protests at the decision. "The goal of the boycott is to put an end to the existing injustice. It reflects the challenge that settlements present to a lasting peace in the region," said Christine Elliott, the church's secretary for external relationships, after vote on the issue at the denomination's highest decision-making body, the Methodist Conference.

Churches hail conviction after India's anti-Christian violence

Bangalore (ENI). Church groups in India have hailed the murder conviction of a key leader accused of leading mob attacks on Christian targets in the Kandhamal jungles of eastern Orissa state two years ago. The court, set up to try cases relating to the widespread anti-Christian violence, declared on 29 June that Manoj Pradhan was guilty and sentenced him to seven years imprisonment for the murder of a Christian, Porikit Digal.

African faith leaders must not 'fuel conflicts' says Eritrean theologian

Geneva (ENI). Faith leaders in Africa have a responsibility to act as peacemakers rather than fuel strife, says a Lutheran theologian from Eritrea. "There are some situations in sub-Saharan Africa where religion-based politics has unleashed violence on a grand scale," author Yacob Tesfai said when presenting his new book, "Holy Warriors, Infidels, and Peacemakers in Africa", at the Geneva headquarters of the World Council of Churches. Still, said Tesfai, "Generally speaking, Africans have not been fighting on the basis of religion. The question is now: 'How long will that last?'"

British churches call for permanent strike against 'vultures'

London (ENI). Churches are pressing Britain's new coalition government to make permanent a law designed to stop "vulture funds" scavenging large profits from the debts of the world's poorest countries. The law, which was agreed shortly before the previous Labour Party government was defeated in May's general election, will lapse within a year if not renewed by the British parliament. The law is designed to prevent private companies, many based in tax havens, from buying defaulted debt from creditor companies and countries at knockdown prices and then using Britain's courts to sue debtor nations for full reimbursement.

5 July 2010

Kenya church leaders slam lawmakers voting selves big pay hike

Nairobi (ENI). Church leaders in Kenya are criticizing a hefty pay rise that lawmakers have awarded themselves, terming it a betrayal of the East African country's citizens. The reaction follows the passing on 30 June of a bill aimed to increase the salaries of those in parliament to levels where the prime minister could earn one third more than Britain's prime minister and 10 percent more than the president of the United States. "It obvious this is the wrong direction. How can we pay them more than those of the developed countries?" said Roman Catholic Archbishop Boniface Lele of Mombasa in an interview with ENI news on 5 July. "There's a lot of poverty in this country. Many people are dying of hunger and disease." If implemented, the change would make the Kenyan members of parliament among the world's highest paid lawmakers.

Kyrgyzstan priest speaks of problem in restoring order

Warsaw (ENI). A Roman Catholic priest who ministers in Kyrgyzstan has criticized the country's interim government and army for failing to maintain order during recent inter-ethnic violence. "While the new government seems powerless and unready, the army hasn't been trained to put down unrest and defend civilians," said the Rev. Krzysztof Korolczuk, a Jesuit who administers newly formed Catholic parishes in the western towns of Jalalabad and Talas. "It's also dominated by Kyrgyz soldiers and feared and distrusted by all sides," said Korolczuk in an interview with ENI news. "The lack of neutral institutions poses severe problems here." The Polish-born priest was speaking as the government of acting president Roza Otunbayeva sought to establish its authority in the Central Asian republic, following violence between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbek inhabitants.

Church leaders, politicians welcome Irish Bloody Sunday report

Dublin (ENI). Irish churches have welcomed a report into violence in the Northern Ireland city of Derry on 30 January 1972 when 13 people who participated in a march were shot and killed by British paratroopers. The Saville Report, released on 15 June, found that the actions of the Parachute Regiment in Derry on Bloody Sunday were unjustified and unjustifiable, and that all 13 people killed were innocent of any wrongdoing. The then head of the British judiciary John Widgery chaired a previous inquiry, set up immediately after the killings. It exonerated the actions of the British Army in Derry on Bloody Sunday, but was later discredited. The Saville Report was then set up in 1998 by Lord Saville of Newdigate at the behest of British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Can Sikhs, Hindus get elected in US without converting?

Washington DC (ENI/RNS). What does it mean when the two best-known Indian-American politicians in American politics are converts to Christianity? In South Carolina, Nikki Haley won the Republican nomination for governor despite a whisper campaign that criticized her name and religion. Along with rumors of alleged sexual misconduct, many questioned the validity of Haley's Christian faith, Religion News Service reports. Some, including Republican state Senator Jake Knotts, called her Christian conversion into question. Born Nimrata Nikki Randhawa, Haley grew up as a Sikh in Bamberg, South Carolina, and converted to Methodism. She occasionally attends Sikh services with her extended family, which has raised eyebrows in some circles.

7 July 2010

After referendum, Sudan church leaders want protection

Nairobi (ENI). Southern Sudan Christians say separation from the north of Africa's biggest country will be "beautiful". But Christian leaders in the country are warning of a backlash if the 2011 referendums result in independence from the north and are urging protection for Christians in the country. "It is possible that the government will adopt strict Islamic rule in the north under which the Church will suffer severely," said the Rev. Ramadan Chan Liol, general secretary of the Sudan Council of Churches. In the plebiscite set for 9 January, the oil rich south, where most people are Christians or follow local traditional religions, will determine whether to secede from the Arab and Islamic dominated north. The referendum was a key requirement of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the government of Sudan signed in 2005 to end a 21-year civil war.

Sarajevo Catholics face Muslim hostility over statue of pope

Warsaw (ENI). The Roman Catholic Church in Bosnia-Herzegovina has accused a group of Muslims of stirring up inter-faith tensions after a group of city councilors threatened to tear down a planned statue of the late Pope John Paul II. "The majority of Muslim citizens here accept this monument, as do most of the people in power, and we've received all the necessary permits," said the Rev. Ivo Tomasevic, the Sarajevo archdiocese spokesperson. "Unfortunately, it seems a few extremists have exerted an influence and forgotten that the rights of minorities should be respected in a democracy." The Catholic priest was reacting to threats at a stormy mid-June session of Sarajevo city council. At the meeting, Islamic representatives voiced "absolute opposition" to the erection of a life-size statue outside Sarajevo's 19th century Sacred Heart of Jesus cathedral.

Indian women theologians lament 'unemployed' female pastors

Bangalore, India (ENI). A gathering of women theologians in India has expressed concern over discrimination against women pastors and those with theological training. "Ordination is often denied [to us] on flimsy grounds. Even if we succeed in getting ordained, we are not assigned duties as pastor but are posted as Bible [studies] women and hostel wardens," decried the women in a statement issued following their 22-26 June seminar. More than 40 women theologians and officials from theological colleges from across India took part in the seminar entitled "Feminist Theologies: Stocktaking and moving beyond". It was organized by the women's studies department of Bangalore's United Theological College to mark its centenary.

9 July 2010

Presbyterians take step towards ordaining homosexual clergy

New York (ENI). The general assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) has approved a measure that would allow those in committed same-sex relationships to be ordained as clergy. The proposed change to the denomination's polices must still be approved by the U.S. church's 173 presbyteries. The denomination, meeting for its 219th assembly in Minneapolis, Minnesota, also debated whether to broaden its definition of marriage to include people in same-sex relationships. The assembly, however, voted to maintain the

current definition of marriage - between a man and a woman - in its constitution.

Pentecostal pastor is new Nigeria Christian Association president  
Lagos, Nigeria (ENI). For the first time in 34 years, the Christian Association of Nigeria has elected a Pentecostal pastor as its president and he has vowed to fight corruption and religious intolerance. The Rev. Ayo Oritsejafor, national president of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, defeated the incumbent CAN president, the Rev. John Onaiyekan of the Roman Catholic Church, by 66 votes to 38 at the national executive committee elections in Abuja on 5 July. The 302-member national assembly of the Christian association on 6 July in Abuja, the capital city, ratified the election of Oritsejafor. The new CAN president is a founder and general overseer of the Word of Life Bible Church located in Warri, in the southern Niger Delta region of the country.

Monks join demonstrators against UN probe into Sri Lanka war  
Bangalore, India (ENI). -Buddhist monks took part in pro-government demonstrations during the week to protest a United Nations decision to investigate alleged war crimes committed against Sri Lanka's Tamil ethnic minority. On 7 July U.N. officials advised employees to stay home to avoid the pro-government protests outside their offices. "We are disappointed with this government response," Jehan Perera, director of the National Peace Council, which includes the larger churches, told ENI news from Colombo.

UNESCO CHIEF VOICES CONCERN AT DEATH OF INDIAN JOURNALIST  
New York, Jul 15, 2010 The head of the United Nations agency tasked with defending press freedom today voiced concern over the death of Indian journalist Hem Chandra Pandey, who was killed earlier this month along with a Maoist leader in an encounter with police in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

"I am concerned about the circumstances in which Hem Chandra Pandey was killed and I urge the authorities to shed full light on the conditions under which it occurred," said Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (<"http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/">UNESCO).

Mr. Pandey, 30, was a freelance journalist who worked for several Hindi-language dailies, according to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), which noted that he also wrote under the name Hemant Pandey.

He was killed in an incident that reportedly took place on 2 July along with Cherukuri Rajkumar, alias Azad, a leader of the Maoists who have been involved in confrontations with Indian security forces, said the IFJ.

UN VOICES CONCERN OVER DEMOLITIONS, SETTLEMENT APPROVAL IN  
EAST JERUSALEM

New York, Jul 13, 2010

The United Nations today expressed concern over the demolition by Israeli authorities of buildings, including homes, and the approval of the construction of a new settlement in East Jerusalem, urging all parties to respect international law and avoid provocative actions.

"I continue to follow with concern developments in East Jerusalem and continuing tensions in the city. The approval of new units in the settlement of Pisgat Zeev, in violation of

Israel's Roadmap commitments, is wrong," said Robert Serry, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

## BAN WARNS OF COSTS OF INACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

New York, Jul 13, 2010

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today warned of the risks posed by inaction on climate change, as the high-level group he set up earlier this year to mobilize financing to help developing countries combat global warming reported that they have made progress on the issue.

"The more we delay, the more we will pay – in lost opportunities, resources and lives," Mr. Ban told reporters today.

13 July 2010

S. African churches in drive to help prevent xenophobic attacks

Cape Town (ENI). The South African Council of Churches says it is taking measures in the country's nine provinces to assist possible victims of xenophobia following some attacks in the Western Cape province. "We will set up the hotline where we will be collating complaints from any person that is threatened," said Eddie Makue, general secretary of the 27-member SACC, which includes Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant traditions as well as the Roman Catholic bishops. Human rights organizations estimate that around three million Zimbabweans have fled hard times and political oppression in their own country to work in neighboring South Africa, which itself has high unemployment.

European theology faculties warn of shift to religious studies

Geneva (ENI). Representatives of European theological faculties and church theological institutes have warned against universities dropping the teaching of theology in favor of religious studies that are seen as a more general approach. "Theology has a major role to play within the university by countering stereotypes, demonstrating ways of dealing with religious conflict, and working out its own unique specificity in dialogue with other disciplines," said Orthodox Metropolitan Emmanuel of France, the president of the Conference of European Churches.

Congo church leader warns of more killings by militias

Nairobi (ENI). A Congolese pastor, who works for peace in the midst of his country's deadly mineral war, says churches want the United Nations to complete its mission there. At the same time, the Rev. Josue' Bulambo Lembelembe, the vice president of the Church of Christ in Congo, South Kivu, said his church members want the government to protect civilians and their property as he cites growing insecurity in the mineral rich nation. "The safety of the population is not possible because of the violation of human rights, including assassinations and killings, rape and many other tolls on humans," Bulambo said in a letter dated 7 July, sent to the Rafto Foundation, a Norwegian human rights organization. The United Nations says it is reducing a peacekeeping force, known as MONUC, which it has stationed in the DRC since 1999. Some members of the force have been accused of sexual abuse and of smuggling of minerals.

FOUR YEARS AFTER END OF ISRAEL-HIZBOLLAH WAR, MORE PROGRESS

## NEEDED – UN ENVOY

New York, Jul 14, 2010

The Security Council resolution that ended the war that broke out between Israel and the Lebanese group Hizbollah four years ago this week has helped to ensure stability, but the parties must do more to meet their commitments, a senior United Nations official said today.

“Stated commitment is good, implementation in practice is better,” UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams told reporters following his closed-door briefing to the Council.

15 July 2010

Malawi leader blasts churches that stop members getting medicine

Blantyre (ENI). Malawi's President Bingu wa Mutharika has lambasted churches barring members from seeking medication, after 19 people from the Zion Church succumbed to a measles outbreak in one week, as church leaders prevented them from getting medical treatment. "What kind of doctrine is this that stops people from taking medicine? I have read the Bible and nowhere have I seen God commanding us not to go to hospitals," said Mutharika in Mulanje district, near Blantyre. "There is nowhere in the Bible where seeking medical help is prohibited. I am not happy because these people are stopping their children from accessing measles' vaccine," said the president. Malawi has experienced a measles outbreak that left about 17 500 people ill and killed 82 people between January and June, most of them children. Most of those who died are said to have been members of the Zion Church and the Seventh Day Apostolic Church, two traditions that have stopped their members from receiving medicine following the measles outbreak.

Church of England faces 'war within' on female bishops

Canterbury/Rome (ENI). Some commentators are saying that the Church of England will be unable to stop a war over the issue of ordaining women as bishops after a recent vote by its ruling general synod. Earlier this week the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, the spiritual head of the church and the leader of the worldwide Anglican Communion, said his church has still not "cracked" all the problems associated with ordaining women as bishops. A proposal put forward by Williams and the second highest-ranking Church of England cleric, Archbishop John Sentamu, had sought to appease both opponents and supporters of the measure, but was defeated on 10 July.

Crucifix ban in Italian school comes under fire from churches

Warsaw (ENI). Roman Catholic and Orthodox bishops have urged the European Court of Human Rights to revoke a judgment against school crucifixes in Italy as the institution prepared to consider an appeal on the issue. "We hope people's religious feelings will be taken into account," the Italian (Catholic) Bishops' Conference had written in a statement on 16 June. "A decision not to penalise the presence of the Cross and religious symbols in the public sphere would reflect the principle of subsidiarity which regulates relations between States and European institutions." The Strasbourg-based court ruled in November that the display of crucifixes in Italian schools breached the rights of non-Catholics. Italy, supported by other European nations, began an appeal against the ruling on 30 June.



YMCA in the US rebrands itself as 'the Y'

Washington DC (ENI/RNS). The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) will now call itself by the shortened "the Y" as part of its newest brand strategy, but officially will still identify itself as the YMCA. As Mamie Moore, national spokeswoman for YMCA of the USA, said in an interview, "What we're doing is calling ourselves 'the Y' because that's what everybody calls us. (However) YMCA is still our legal name", Religion News Service reports.

## UN OFFICIALS LAUD CONTRIBUTION OF ECOSOC SESSION TO FURTHERING DEVELOPMENT

New York, Jul 23, 2010

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) today wrapped up its annual gathering with senior officials hailing the contributions of the month-long session towards advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as in the areas of peace and development.

Women's empowerment and gender equality was the focus of the 2010 substantive session, which began on 28 June and coincided with the creation by the General Assembly of a single UN body tasked with accelerating progress in this vital area.

16 July 2010

Current financial crisis is a moral one, says Tutu

Cape Town (ENI). The end of the Cold War led to the false hope that all humans would be treated equally, says Archbishop Desmond Tutu. But the world's inability to avoid crises such as the recent recession, climate change and volcanic ash illustrates the risk of not working together, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town said. "The countries most responsible for devastating changes are the least vulnerable to the consequences, of which the price is being paid by the poor and the weak," he said. Solutions to the ongoing economic crisis will only be found in the faith communities, Tutu said while noting, "More than political will, the moral imperative is lacking; we realize more and more [the global financial crisis] is a moral and ethical matter."

Reports of sex scandals will 'purify' clergy, says Filipino Catholic

Baguio City, Philippines (ENI). While some Roman Catholics see reports of church sex scandals as part of a "sinister plot" against the church, others say the reports are having "purifying effects". "These often played up reports are maybe part of a sinister plot to discredit and thus weaken the Church. On the other hand, the reports may also help purify the clergy as we continue to become vigilant over how we conduct ourselves," the Rev. Andres Cosalan, vicar-general of the Baguio diocese in northern Philippines, told ENI news.

Hindu governor hails Christian contribution to India

Bangalore, India (ENI). The governor of southern India's Karnataka state, where most of the recent atrocities on Christians have been committed, has paid tribute to the Christian contribution to national life. "We are privileged to have so many Christian institutions to

bring dignity of life and knowledge to the poor," said Hansraj Bhardwaj in an 8 July address at the concluding celebration of the centenary of the United Theological College in Bangalore, Karnataka's state capital. Despite accounting for only 2.3 percent of India's 1.2 billion people, he noted that Christians run nearly 20 percent of the educational, primary healthcare and social welfare centers in the country.

20 July 2010

German minister tells global Lutheran assembly to oppose injustice  
Stuttgart, Germany (ENI). Whilst German Lutherans have traditionally been closely aligned to their country's political system, they have also raised critical voices for justice and peace, Germany's finance minister, Wolfgang Schuble, has told a global Lutheran gathering. "It has been observed that the Lutheran heritage in Germany has tended to encourage individuals to be obedient subjects rather than active citizens," said Schuble on 20 July at the opening worship of the Lutheran World Federation's 11th assembly in Stuttgart, in southern Germany. The German finance minister spoke on the 66th anniversary of a failed attempt to overthrow Nazi rule in Germany by assassinating dictator Adolf Hitler in 1944. German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was linked to the plotters. The Nazis executed him three weeks before the end of the Second World War in Europe.

Ukrainian bishop rejects persecution claims by Catholic rector  
Warsaw (ENI). A senior Roman Catholic bishop in Ukraine has criticized the head of his country's Catholic university for claiming he was targeted for intimidation and recruitment by the security service. "There seems to have been a misunderstanding between him and the authorities, which he hyped up to present himself as a martyr of the Catholic Church," said Bishop Marian Buczek, secretary-general of Ukraine's Catholic Bishops Conference. The bishop was speaking after the Rev. Boris Gudziak, rector of the Lviv-based Ukrainian Catholic University, said in a 19 May memorandum that a visiting security service, or SBU, official had attempted to recruit him as a "secret collaborator" and undermine the university's academic and religious freedom.

New global mission head looks to 'peace partnership'  
Hong Kong (ENI). The newly appointed general secretary of the Council for World Mission says that under his leadership the organization's mission priorities will include the promotion of justice and interfaith dialogue. "For justice, we need to be with the underprivileged because God cares for the people with no voice," the Rev. Collin Cowan, currently general secretary of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, told ENI news after the announcement of his appointment on 20 July.

Survey of British Jews finds majority for Israel-Hamas talks  
London (ENI). A survey of British Jews has found that more than half of respondents would support Israeli government negotiations with Hamas, the Islamic resistance movement that controls the Gaza Strip. The survey, conducted by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, found that three-quarters of respondents favor a two-state solution for Israel to live in peace with its neighbors in the Middle East. Two-thirds of those surveyed also favor-swapping land for peace, while opposing expansion of Israeli settlements in the

West Bank.

Indian Christians protest at attack on Catholic professor

Bangalore, India (ENI). Thousands of Christians in India's southern state of Kerala have held a silent protest march in the town of Thodupuzha after attackers severed the arm of a Roman Catholic professor because of an alleged insult to Islam. "We are anguished over the fact there seems to be a deep-rooted conspiracy behind this diabolical act," the Rev. Mathew Kochupurackal, chancellor of the Catholic diocese of Kothamangalam, to which the professor and his college belong, told ENI news. Kochupurackal said that the 17 July silent march represented concern that key suspects are still at large despite the attack having taken place in broad daylight.

LEBANON: UN ENVOY WELCOMES VISIT BY LEADERS OF SAUDI ARABIA AND SYRIA

New York, Jul 30, 2010

With the visit to Lebanon by the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Syria, today could perhaps be a "historic day" for the Middle Eastern country, helping to consolidate stability, a senior United Nations official said today.

King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia and President Bashar Al-Assad of Syria arrived in Beirut today, where they held talks with President Michel Sleiman, according to press reports.

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani of Qatar is also set to touch down in Lebanon today for talks.

"I think the visits of these Arab heads of State will be enormously important and beneficial for Lebanon's stability and future," Michael Williams, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon, told reporters following his talks with politician Michel Aoun.

Mr. Williams' meeting with General Aoun, he said, focused on recent tensions in the country.

"I am hopeful that the engagement of Lebanon's external friends and partners, together with the efforts, internally, of President Sleiman, of General Aoun, of other political leaders, will play a very, very important part in resolving the issues that face Lebanon and bring stability for the coming months," the UN envoy said.

28 July 2010

River where Jesus was baptized 'too polluted' for pilgrims

Jerusalem (ENI). Health concerns relating to water quality have triggered an environmental advocacy group to call for the banning of baptisms in the lower Jordan River, where the Bible says Jesus was baptized. "For reasons of public health as well as religious integrity, baptism should be banned from taking place in the river," said Gidon Bromberg, the Israel director of EcoPeace/Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME), which has offices in Tel Aviv, Bethlehem, and Amman. Israeli authorities said on 27 July that tests done on the water of the lower Jordan River show the popular site for baptismal ceremonies at Qasr el Yahud on the West Bank meets health ministry standards. Bromberg said, however, they should not take place until pollutants are removed from the water.

Moscow Patriarch appeals for Orthodox unity in Ukraine

Moscow (ENI). Patriarch Kirill I of the Russian Orthodox Church, on an official visit to Ukraine, has appealed to Orthodox believers there who have broken with the Moscow Patriarchate to return to its jurisdiction. "There are no barriers preventing the return to ecclesial communion, to return to that place where, as in Heaven, 'there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who need no repentance'," said Kirill, quoting a text from Luke's Gospel in the New Testament of the Bible. The Orthodox Church in Ukraine divided after the fall of the Soviet Union. There are now several different Orthodox churches in Ukraine, including one that comes under the Moscow Patriarchate, and another called the Kiev Patriarchate, not recognized by any of the world's canonical Orthodox churches. The Moscow-linked church accounts for a significant part of the membership of the Russian Orthodox Church. Kirill's appeal followed a 26 July meeting in Kiev of the Russian Orthodox Church's bishops' synod.

#### Japanese Christian leader warns on plight of refugees

Tokyo (ENI). A Japanese Christian leader has warned that many refugee status applicants in Japan are living under a constant threat of detention and deportation, and if detained they risk being split from their relatives. "The greatest problem are detentions that separate family members," Naoko Sato, secretary general of the Tokyo-based Christian Coalition for Refugees and Migrant Workers, told a 25 July gathering with refugees in the Japanese capital. "Fathers and mothers are separated from their children for one or two years," Sato told the gathering organized by the Protestant coalition, which is linked to the National Christian Council in Japan. There were 2332 recognized refugees in Japan as of January 2010, according to the U.N. refugee agency. In 2009, 1388 people applied for refugee status in Japan, of whom 30 were recognized as refugees, the government's immigration bureau announced in February.

27 July 2010

#### Churches share in grief after 'Love Parade' deaths in Duisburg

Stuttgart (ENI). Pope Benedict XVI, Germany's Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, and the Lutheran World Federation, meeting in Germany, have joined in grieving the deaths of 20 people at a music festival in Duisburg. The deaths were triggered by a stampede at the Love Parade dance and music festival on 24 July. More than 300 people were also injured in the tragedy, for which organizers, police and security officials have blamed each other.

#### Kosovo Protestant leader warns of militant Muslim pressure

Warsaw (ENI). The head of Kosovo's largest Protestant church has appealed for help to protect local Christians from pressure from Islamic militants in the Balkan country that declared independence in 2008. "Some people appear to believe this is now their country, so they can turn it into an Islamic state, and that Kosovo's Christian communities are hindering their plans," said the Rev. Artur Krasniqi, chairperson of Kosovo's Protestant Evangelical Church.

#### Chilean Lutheran leader has economic justice high on agenda

Stuttgart (ENI). When the Rev. Martin Junge becomes the first Latin American to head

the Lutheran World Federation on 1 November, the issue of economic justice and illegitimate debt is likely to feature high on his agenda. Junge, a Chilean born in 1961, takes office as general secretary of the Geneva-based LWF upon the retirement of the Rev. Ishmael Noko, a Zimbabwean theologian, who is leaving after 16 years in the post. On 26 July, Junge spoke to the highest governing body of the LWF, its assembly, which has been meeting in Stuttgart, Germany, from 20 to 27 July. "There is an economic order that is absolutely unfair, unjust and a deep expression of sin, depriving millions of human beings from their rights and even their lives," Junge told delegates at the assembly, which takes place every six or seven years.

#### Protestant Reformer to greet Pope in Scotland

Edinburgh (ENI). An actor playing John Knox, one of the 16th century Scottish Protestant reformers, will head a special parade through Edinburgh, when Pope Benedict XVI arrives on a state visit in September, and it is the Pope's own church that is planning the event. "We want the day to be joyous, charitable and inclusive," Peter Kearney, a spokesperson for the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, told ENI news. Still, 2010 marks the 450th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in Scotland, an event that led to a break with the papacy in Rome.

#### UN AGENCIES ISSUE TEN TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL BREASTFEEDING

New York, Aug 1, 2010

To unlock the lifesaving potential of breast milk, two United Nations agencies have unveiled 10 steps to help mothers successfully breast feed, kicking off World Breastfeeding Week today.

According to the UN World Health Organization (WHO), breast milk is the ideal food for newborns and infants because it is safe and gives them the nutrients necessary for healthy development. It also contains antibodies to protect infants from common childhood illnesses.

Although exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life is on the rise in many countries, the agency believes that further improving these rates is crucial to bolster the nutrition and health of infants and children.

Too many mothers, WHO said, stop breastfeeding exclusively a few weeks after delivery for many reasons, such as lack of breastfeeding counseling.

Some 35 per cent of infants between the ages of 0 and 6 months are solely breastfed worldwide, said Elizabeth Mason, Director of WHO's Department of Child and Adolescent Health and Development.

"But if all babies and young children were breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life and then given nutritious complementary food with continued breastfeeding up to two years of age, the lives of an additional 1.5 million under five would be saved every year," she added.

Developed by the UN World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding are aimed at providing the right start for every infant and are currently used in hospitals in more than 150 countries.

They include helping mothers begin breastfeeding within half an hour of birth, allowing

mothers and infants to remain together for 24 hours a day, and giving no artificial teats or pacifiers to breastfeeding infants.

One third of the nearly nine million deaths every year among children under the age of five are due to malnutrition,

which causes disease and deaths. Most of these deaths occur during the first few months of life and are often linked to inappropriate feeding practices such as bottle-feeding.

"Increasing breastfeeding rates is a key component of the plan to improve infant and young children nutrition," said Rand Saadeh, Coordinator of the Nutrition in the Life Course unit at WHO

"A renewed effort to make more hospitals 'baby friendly' has the potential to give millions more babies a healthy start in life."

First observed in 1992, World Breastfeeding Week -- which seeks to encourage exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a child's life -- is now observed in more than 120 countries and is celebrated from 1-7 August annually.

Dr. Mary Norton, Five Time Fulbright Recipient, Named Chair of the 63rd UN DPI/NGO Conference

July 28, 2010 Dr. Mary Norton, five time Fulbright recipient, has been named Chair of the 63rd UN Department of Public Information/Non-Governmental Organizations (UN DPI/NGO) Conference to be held in Melbourne, Australia from August 30 - Sept 1. The conference, which will focus on global health, is titled: Advance Global Health: Achieve the MDGs. "Health is the tie that binds all of the Millennium Development Goals together. If we fail to meet our target on health, we will never overcome poverty, illiteracy, achieve universal education and meet the other MDG challenges," stated UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon and WHO Director General, Margaret Chen. It is with this in mind that the DPI/NGO Conference has chosen to focus on global health. More specifically, we will examine critical issues such as:

- \* bridging the health gaps that still exist and encouraging equity of treatment and access
- \* addressing failed maternal and child health strategies
- \* promoting civic activism around health and wellness
- \* and strengthening an integrated approach to achieving health for all.

Dr. Mary E. Norton is associate dean and professor of global academic initiatives at Felician College in Lodi, New Jersey. She received an MA, Ed.M. and doctor of education from Columbia University, New York and completed a year post doctoral study in Bioethics and the Medical Humanities, College of Physicians and Surgeons Columbia University, New York. For more information about the conference, visit <http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/conference/>.

Media Subcommittee report as of July 30 2010 submitted by Fannie Munlin and Anne Riccitelli

NGO Media

NGO Reporter: published in June issue specially created materials providing guidelines and suggestions for NGO delegate outreach to their local media about their involvement in the 63rd Conference; sent to all NGOs affiliated with UN/DPI

National Council of Negro Women: with 39 affiliated organizations reaching 4 million women worldwide, they will place notice of the conference in their newsletter and on their

website

The following major NGOs received 63rd Conference materials, were pitched and are pending:

Presbyterian United Nations Office: reaches 3 million plus worldwide

Global Action on Aging: reaches 1 million+ via multilingual newsletter and website

Global Alliance for Women's Health: focus on public/private partnerships especially women and AIDS

United Methodist Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries: outreach worldwide

General and Niche Media

The American Nurse: reaches 3 million nurses in USA; article about Dr. Norton and conference in issue out early August

Bergen Record: article pitched to Pat Alex; pending (has second largest circulation of New Jersey newspapers, reaching 170,400 people daily)

Catholic Advocate: story on Dr. Norton and conference by managing editor Ward Miele completed and will run late August; reaches 150,000 Catholics statewide

Fulbright Organization: online story with their new website launch this week on Dr. Norton and conference; expect a global reach of 150,000

Institute for Nursing Newsletter: story on Dr. Norton titled "How Nurses Make a Difference," pegged to conference; reaches 85,000

Sigma Theta Tau International: global nursing honor society will publish interview by editor in chief, James Mattson with Dr. Norton pegged to conference in their newsletter, "Reflections on Nursing Leadership." Reach over 100,000.

Sunday Star Ledger: story titled "Professor to Chair U.N. Conference," appeared March 14 in Sunday edition of paper which reaches over 500,000; has largest circulation of all newspapers in NJ

NJN: pitched Dr. Norton as Conference Chair to local PBS-TV station in New Jersey; pending

02 August 2010

Go green, environmental activist tells India's churches

Bangalore (ENI). Churches in India have been urged to promote "earth citizenship" by Vandana Shiva, an Indian environmentalist honored for placing women and ecology at the heart of development discourse. "We have to protect the earth to uphold our right to food and to ensure our own survival. Then only, can we exercise our fundamental rights and democracy," said Shiva, delivering a lecture in Bangalore in honor of M. A. Thomas, the founder of the city's Ecumenical Christian Centre.

Baptists warn against 'culture of Islamophobia'

New York (ENI). Christians and Muslims need to recognize that they are "spiritual siblings", speakers at a global Baptist congress have stated, while warning against Islamophobia. "The vilification of Christianity by Muslim extremists in order to justify militant jihad and the need to convert an 'immoral' West to Islam is alive and well," Nabil Costa, executive director of the Lebanese Baptist Society in Beirut, Lebanon, said during the Baptist World Congress in Honolulu, Hawaii. "In the same way, political and media voices in the West have used long-standing prejudice against Islam in order to paint a vile picture of a religion that is part of an 'axis of evil' and bent on the destruction of a so-called

'free world'," Costa said in his presentation.

Anger imprisons us, says German Protestant leader after tragedy  
Trier (ENI). Germany's senior Protestant leader has urged understanding for the mayor of Duisburg, who is reported to have received death threats after 21 people died in a mass panic at the city's Love Parade dance and music festival. Despite increasing criticism, the mayor, Adolf Sauerland, has so far refused to resign following the deaths at the 24 July Love Parade, an event that has taken place in different German cities, after the first such festival in Berlin in 1989.

Joy Thanangadan Honored as Chevalier

Aug 6, 2010

By: SOCM Moderators

One of our member Mr. Joy Thanangadan, Thanangattil House, Mulanthuruthy, Ernakulam, was decorated with "Chevalier" title on 6th August 2010, by the Patriarch of Antioch & All the East H.H. Ignatius Zakka I Iwas. H.B Catholicos Baselios Thomas I was presented him on behalf of the Patriarch, at patriarchal centre, Puthencruz. Mr. Joy's home parish is Marthoman Cathedral, Mulanthuruthy. At present Mr. Joy belongs to St. George Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Simhasna Church, Al Ain, United Arab Emirates. Mr. Joy is married to Nisha Joy (Pulayath house, Thiruvankulam, Ernakulam) and having two daughters Riya Sara Joy, Liya Ann Joy, who are studying in Indian School, Al Ain-UAE.

During the function of decoration, H.E Joseph Mor Gregorios (Metropolitan of Cochin Diocese and Secretary of Holy Synod), H.E Mathews Mor Aphrem (Metropolitan of Al Ain & Sharjah), H.E Kuriakose Mor Cleemis, H.E Alias Mor Athanasios, H.E Pathrose Mor Osthathios, H.E Gheevarghese Mor Barnabas and H.E Zacharia Mor Philxenos blessed this auspicious occasion with their Eminences esteemed presence and prayers. Bar E'tho M'hero Mr. Thambu George Thukalan (Sabha Secretary), Very Rev. Ramban, Vicars from the different Parishes, Very Rev. Cor Episcopa's, Nuns, Church Managing and working Committee members, Mr. Babu Paul MLA (Moovattupuzha), Saju Paul MLA (Perumbavoor) also came to the Church and offered their greetings.

WORLD INCHING TOWARDS ELIMINATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, SAY UN OFFICIALS

New York, Aug 6, 2010

Positive developments on the global disarmament agenda, including May's successful review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), are cause for optimism that the goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons will be achieved, United Nations officials say.

As Ban Ki-moon today became the first-ever UN Secretary-General to attend the Peace Memorial Ceremony in Hiroshima, Japan, officials with the world body voiced hope that the recent incremental progress on disarmament will continue.

At the NPT review conference, nations were able to reach a consensus on a final document for the first time in a decade, while in April, the United States and Russia reached the new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), under which they pledged to cut back on their stockpiles by a third.



09 August 2010

Christian group 'wants to stay' in Afghanistan despite killings

Bangalore (ENI). The International Assistance Mission, a Christian development agency, has rejected Taliban claims that 10 of its staff killed in an attack in Afghanistan had been trying to convert Muslims. "Our faith motivates and inspires us, but we do not proselytize. We abide by the laws of Afghanistan," Dirk R. Frans, IAM's executive secretary, said in a statement at a 9 August media conference in Kabul. The 10 workers - six U.S. nationals, a Briton, a German and two local Afghan staff - were killed on 5 August as they returned from a trek through the Hindu Kush mountains, where they had been providing eye care to poor and remote communities, Frans said.

Religious groups press for CIA torture probe

Washington (ENI). Twenty religious organizations are calling for the U.S. Congress and President Barack Obama to ensure a fair and thorough investigation into allegations of forced human experimentation by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency on detainees after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks.

Indian churches to protest at discrimination of Christian Dalits

Bangalore (ENI). Churches throughout India have been urged to hoist black flags on 10 August to protest against continued discrimination faced by Christian Dalits, people from low castes treated as untouchables. The protest marks the 60th anniversary of the introduction of free education and reserved government jobs to improve the social status of Hindu Dalits. Such benefits were extended to Sikh Dalits in 1956 and then to Buddhist Dalits in 1990. However, Christian Dalits, who account for two thirds of some 28 million Christians in India, as well as Muslim Dalits, are denied these rights.

World has forgotten about Somalia says church aid alliance

Geneva (ENI). Somalia is a "prime example" of an emergency the world has forgotten, says the ACT Alliance of churches and humanitarian agencies. "With 1.5 million people - just under 10 percent of its population - forced from their homes by fighting, aid relief inside the country remains critical," the Geneva-headquartered alliance said. It noted that at least another 600 000 Somalis are refugees, living mainly in Kenya, Yemen and Ethiopia.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

The United Nations Annual DPI/NGO Conference is the premier NGO event of the year for the United Nations, attracting about 2,000 NGO representatives from some 70 countries and this year is being organized in partnership with the Government of Australia. The NGO Relations Cluster of the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, is finalizing preparations for the 63rd Annual United Nations DPI/NGO Conference being held at the Melbourne Conference and Exhibition Centre in Melbourne, Australia from 30 August to 1 September 2010. Information about the Conference is available at [www.undpingoconference.org](http://www.undpingoconference.org).

As we look forward to next year, we are delighted to inform you that the Department of Public Information, following consultations with the NGO/DPI Executive Committee, has accepted the offer of the Government of Germany to host the 64th Annual UN DPI/NGO

Conference, in the city of Bonn in 2011.

This will be the fourth UNDPI/NGO Conference that will organized outside UN Headquarters in New York.

A delegation from the city of Bonn will be attending the Conference in Melbourne to observe the proceedings and establish contacts with the NGO community.

All stakeholders will be discussing possible themes for the 2011 Conference. Efforts will be made to agree and finalize a theme in order to make an announcement at the end of Conference in Melbourne.

In order to facilitate the above, the NGO/DPI Executive Committee is soliciting suggestions for possible themes. Please send your suggestions asap to the following email: [Dpingoconference2011theme@gmail.com](mailto:Dpingoconference2011theme@gmail.com)

#### BOOK REVIEW

Ambassador DeLuca has reviewed the following book for the American Psychological Association: *New Global Insecurity- How Terrorism, Environmental Collapse, Economic Inequalities and Resource Shortages are Changing Our World* by Fathali M. Moghaddam. The review may be found on the web; *Bulletin of International Psychology of the American Psychological Association*, Summer 2010.

On Representative: Anne Riccetelli, Litt.D.: Dr. Mary Norton: <http://Felician.edu>

Divine Liturgy Concelebrated by the Standing Conference of the Oriental Orthodox Churches – June 12, 2010

St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Cathedral, Teaneck, N.J.

The Divine Liturgy was celebrated according to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Anaphora of Saint Dioscorus.