

Holy Wisdom

Peace: Showing that Others Matter!

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Publication of the Syrian Orthodox Church in America on United Nations Affairs. In fulfilling the UN Mission of SOCA, both Orthodoxy and Ecumenism are involved. SOCA is an NGO associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information. 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.

Anne Riccitelli, Litt, D.

United Nations Representative

Jin Chacko

Alternative UN Representative

Joseph Cannizzo

Alternative UN Representative

Dominic Zmarlicki

UN Youth Representative

Jonathan Dong, Holy Wisdom, Editor

Antoinette A. DeLuca, Psy.D., L.H.D., President

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

2295 Victory Boulevard, Staten Island, New York 10314

(718) 698-0700 IgnatiusU@aol.com <http://IgnatiusU.org>

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!

Inside This Issue

Our Work at the United Nations.....	4
Celebrating sport as a powerful tool for at-risk youth development.....	4
Six global challenges the ICC can tackle.....	4
ICC Elections 2017 All about our campaign for a fair, efficient and independent ICC bench.....	5
Your guide to the ICC's agenda for 2017.	5
Indigenous Voices, Indigenous Rights – The Role of Community Media, United Nations Headquarters, New York, April 27, 20017	5
World Press Freedom Day, “Critical Minds for Critical Times: Media’s Role in Advancing Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies,” United Nations Headquarters, New York, May 4, 2017	6
INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUES ON THE SDGs.....	7
Six Youth Speakers Selected for UN PGA's High-level SDG Action Event on Education - 28 June 2017 at UNHQ	7
DPI launches new animated video on the dramatic story of Yusra Mardini, a young refugee and Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR.....	8
Department of public information youth programs: Engaging a Generation of Leaders.....	9
Season Wrap Up Briefing, June 24, 2017, ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters, New York, June 22 ...	10
Our SOCA NGO and sustainable development (Dr. Anne Riccitelli)	10
Work of our NGO SOCA, Alternate Representative Joseph Cannizzo, in extending our outreach.....	14
The following pictures are from the SOCA Mission under Father Martinez in Guatemala.	16
Sustainable Developmental Goals Action Event Innovation Meeting	18
Monthly CRNGO UN Thematic Business Meeting	19
Annual CRNGO UN Luncheon	20
DPI/NGO Orientation at the United Nations Headquarters	24
SI Council of Churches Annual Awards Dinner	26
UNAI member information	27
Death of Father Anthony's Mother.....	29
Inside Look at Major UN Actions & Events	33
Fighting in Syria Remains Devastating for Civilians, Even after Declaration of Ceasefire, Under-Secretary-General Tells Security Council	33
Unprecedented Meeting of World Faith Leaders to take on Global Deforestation Monday, June 19, 2017 at the Nobel Peace Center, Oslo, Norway	36
Announcing the new Envoy on Youth – Jayathma Wickramanayake.....	38
At the UN, a New Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Is Adopted by 122 Nations.....	40
Religious News from Around the World	45

Other Related News	45
Oriental Orthodox Clergy Meet in New Jersey	45
Pope Visits Egypt for Interfaith Dialogue	45
Korea Rejects Trump's Call for \$1 Billion Payment	46
Two U.S. Servicemen Killed in Afghanistan	47
U.S. Visas for Iranians Drop by Half	47
Court Upholds Chadian Ex-Ruler's Conviction	47
Montenegro to Ratify NATO Entry	47
Argentina's Macri Meets Trump at White House	47
Carter Asked Not to Pursue North Korean Diplomacy	48
Pope Francis arrives in Cairo, bearing message of peace	48
In Egypt, Francis exhorts religions to condemn 'violence masquerading as sanctity'	48
Religions and peace by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I	49
Indian Catholics frustrated over clergy sex abuse cases	50
Spiritual Ecology: 10 Practices to Reawaken the Sacred in Everyday Life	50
Franklin Graham calls persecution of Christians 'genocide'	52
Departamento de Totonicapan, Guatemala	54
Indonesia's Illiberal Turn	55
Seeking a "Path to Peace"	55
On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew	58
'Mary, Jesus' Mother' is new name for UAE mosque	58
Secrecy over clergy abuse standards causes confusion in India	60

Our Work at the United Nations

Celebrating sport as a powerful tool for at-risk youth development

6 April 2017 - Four years ago, the United Nations General Assembly declared 6 April the [International Day of Sport for Development and Peace](#) (IDSDP). This annual celebration recognizes the power of sport to drive social development and promote tolerance, respect and social inclusion - areas reflected in UNODC's own work under the Doha Declaration Global Programme.

As the lead United Nations organization to combat and prevent crime and drug use, UNODC recently launched a unique initiative, making the link between sport, life-skills development and prevention. Through building on the wide reach, positive values and popularity among youth that sport has, the organization uses this as a vehicle for transferring life-skills to young people that live in crime-prone neighbourhoods.

This work recognizes that sport can provide positive experiences for youth and promote a sense of belonging, fair play and respect. Indeed, under the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), the contribution that sport can make to the empowerment of communities as a whole, including the particular contribution it makes towards the empowerment of youth, is implicitly underlined. This recognition of the role of sport for social progress offers the United Nations an opportunity to continue joint action to promote sport as a powerful enabler of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The design of UNODC's sports-based life-skills training programme - Line Up Live Up - is based on strong existing evidence that life-skills training, delivered by [trained trainers](#), can offer an important opportunity for allowing youth to increase their social and emotional competencies and move away from involvement in violence, crime or drug use. Although sport as such is not necessarily a prevention tool, by incorporating life skills, such as increasing self-awareness and coping with emotions, in physical training, it has the potential to become a powerful vehicle to address important risk factors for crime and violence, especially among youth.

The initiative addresses multiple risk factors within a broader range of activities, starting from the individual through life-skills transfer in sport settings, non-formal education and youth empowerment, and expanding to the social domains through sport-inspired awareness-raising and community mobilization actions.

On this International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, UNODC renews its commitment to working with partners and countries to empower youth and prevent them from becoming involved in crime and drugs by building on sport as a powerful tool for social good.

Source: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2017/April/celebrating-sport-as-a-powerful-tool-for-at-risk-youth-development.html>

Six global challenges the ICC can tackle

The world is facing unprecedented problems that must be met with increased international cooperation and solidarity.

That's why we've put together this list of global challenges that the International Criminal Court system can tackle.

Source: http://www.coalitionfortheicc.org/explore/global-challenges-ICC?utm_source=CICC+Newsletters&utm_campaign=2b63b89559-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_10_05&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_68df9c5182-2b63b89559-356528801

ICC Elections 2017 All about our campaign for a fair, efficient and independent ICC bench.

Source: <http://coalitionfortheicc.us2.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=8758bcde31bc78a5c32ceee50&id=09b80d1649&e=64c8873a30>

Your guide to the ICC's agenda for 2017.

Source: <http://coalitionfortheicc.us2.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=8758bcde31bc78a5c32ceee50&id=e686677b32&e=64c8873a30>

Indigenous Voices, Indigenous Rights – The Role of Community Media, United Nations Headquarters, New York, April 27, 2017

Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, this briefing was organized in partnership with the Strategic Communications Division of the Department of Public Information. Welcoming remarks from Jeffrey Brez, Chief, NGO Relations, Advocacy and Special Events, Department of Public Information reminded all that indigenous peoples make up 5% of the world's population, but 15% of the world's poorest. He said that special measures are required to protect the rights of indigenous peoples and help them maintain their distinct cultures and way of life. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted in 2007. He urged people to use Social media, suggesting: #UNDRIP, #DPINGO and #We Are Indigenous. Suzanne Benally, Executive Director of Cultural Survival, a non-profit dedicated to protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, moderated and spoke on the need to partner with indigenous peoples in defending their land, languages and culture. She believes in the importance of "increasing the number of indigenous youth trained in journalism and media as a way to portray accurately who we are as indigenous people and to reclaim our lives. How we portray ourselves and reclaim our lives is the most important thing we do." Shaldon Ferris of South Africa, who identifies with the KhoiSan South African tribe, grew up in an impoverished neighborhood to become an award winning filmmaker. He now hosts a live community radio show, "Cleaning Up the House," which reaches around 11,000 people in rural areas. As he said, "It is in rural areas where tradition is still to be found and community radio, such as his program, is trying to preserve those traditions and indigenous identity." The next speaker, Dev Kumar Sunuwar, a rural villager from Nepal, whose journey to Kathmandu led him to an education as a journalist and founder of the Indigenous Media Foundation which runs Indigenous Television, Nepal's first and only national indigenous television network owned by indigenous peoples and featuring shows in indigenous languages. Avexnim Cojti, a Mayan woman from Guatemala spoke of the need for indigenous community radio for those who cannot read or write, this medium "instills pride in who we are, and educates people about their rights. Commercial media exists to sell products and does not know about the struggles of indigenous peoples." Attended and reported by Dr. A. M. Riccitelli, SOCA representative to UN/DPI

World Press Freedom Day, “Critical Minds for Critical Times: Media’s Role in Advancing Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies,” United Nations Headquarters, New York, May 4, 2017

The opening session of the day was moderated by Margaret Novicki, Officer-in-Charge, Department of Public Information, who introduced a video message from United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres who said: “Journalists go to the most dangerous places to give voices to the voiceless. Media workers suffer character assassination, sexual assault, detention, injuries and even death. We need leaders to defend a free media. This is crucial to counter prevailing misinformation. And we need everyone to stand for our right to truth. On World Press Freedom Day, I call for an end to all crackdowns against journalists – because a free press advances peace and justice for all. When we protect journalists, their words and pictures can change our world.” H.E. Mr. Jan Kickert, Permanent Representative of Austria, Chairperson, UNGA Committee on Information said, “People want boom-boom stories, not those of human suffering. In a world of fake news and alternative facts, FACTS are what save us.” Marie Paule Roudil, UNESCO Representative to the UN, Director of UNESCO’s New York Office said, “UNESCO has the capacity to inform and educate. The UN has the unique capacity to denounce crimes against media workers.” Today, media workers are often citizen journalists reporting from conflict zones. Sherwin Bryce-Pease, President, United Nations Correspondents Association said, “Journalism is facing existential threats from forces that undermine us.”

The panel discussion was moderated by Ramu Damodaran, Deputy Director for Partnership in the UN Department of Public Information’s Outreach Division, had a radio career in India. Saying “I have a face for radio”, he opened the discussion with the observation that, “In a country where people are free, the press will also be free.” David Scharia, Director and chief of branch at the UN Security Council Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) said, “The importance of the role of media and civil society is to avoid the inducement to incitement and to create counter narratives to terrorist messages.” Jay Rosen, PhD., a professor of Journalism at NYU since 1986 and Journalism Dept. Chair from 1999-2004, urged the media to fight back against a President trying to discredit them. He touted the benefits of member funded journalism, free from ads and clickbait, saying “Here’s how much it costs to bring this reporting to you, because the truth is not free.” Sara Ryley, an investigative reporter at The Trace, a non-profit newsroom devoted to covering gun issues in America, explained the importance of the role of local news in promoting a peaceful and democratic society. While she felt that non-profit journalism “cannot fill the void,” it can use facts to explore the larger forces at work in society. Bob Garfield, host of “On the Media,” spoke about how the “press is a guardian of a stable democracy, it is the 4th pillar, the 4th estate, a core value of political freedom. The practice of reporting has become a death defying feat, especially in the countries of Turkey, Venezuela, Russia and Mexico where journalists are routinely murdered.” Emma Daly, Communications Director at Human Rights Watch stated, “In many parts of the world, merely being a journalist means that you are a human rights activist.” Yoshita Singh, Senior UN and NY Correspondent for India’s largest newswire, Press Trust of India, spoke of the courage, confidence and pride in being a journalist. She also said India is one of the most dangerous countries in the world to be a journalist, citing the murders of so many. She added that Reporters Without Borders and the Committee to Protect Journalists have demanded that those who initiate attacks against the press must be brought to justice. The final panelist, Laurence Goldbetter President of the National Writers Union, a member organization which represents around 600,000 journalists in 140 countries

said the “first casualty of war is the truth.” Attended and reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA representative to UN/DPI.

INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUES ON THE SDGs



Co-hosted by the Department of Public Information (DPI) and NGO/DPI Executive Committee, will take place on August 1, 2017 from 10 am – 6 pm, United Nations Headquarters, New York.

Dr. A. M. Riccitelli, SOCA Representative to UN/DPI serves on the Dialogues planning committee. She is co-chair of the media subcommittee for the event. Serving this post, she will seek NGO, mainstream and social media support for the event and its co-chairs. Dr. Riccitelli has previously served as media subcommittee co-chair for five global UN/DPI conferences: New York 2007, Climate Change; Paris 2008, 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Mexico 2009, Disarmament; Australia 2010, Global Health; South Korea 2015, Education for Global Citizenship. The intergenerational dialogues will raise awareness of the high value that youth and older persons can bring to the implementation of the SDGs.

Six Youth Speakers Selected for UN PGA's High-level SDG Action Event on Education - 28 June 2017 at UNHQ

At the request of the Office of the President of the General Assembly (OPGA), UN-NGLS conducted a process to identify civil society and social entrepreneur youth speakers for the High-level SDG Action Event on Education, taking place 28 June at UN Headquarters. UN-NGLS facilitated a Stakeholder Selection Committee to review applications for the speaking roles and create a regionally and gender balanced short-list of candidates for the President of the General Assembly to consider.

The President of the General Assembly has now selected the following six speakers through this process:

1) High-level Opening Segment

Saul Mwame

[Dct Mvumi Secondary School](#) - United Republic of Tanzania

2) Panel Discussion on Tackling SDG 4: What will it take?

Musarrat Maisha Reza

[Be the Peace - Be the Hope](#) - Singapore

3) Ministerial Dialogue on Education in Vulnerable and Humanitarian Emergency Situations

Dor Akech Achiek (respondent)

[Settlement Services International](#) - Australia

4) Panel Discussion on Innovation in Education

Muhammad Usman

[Centre for Renewable Energy and Action on Climate Change](#) - Nigeria

5) Panel Discussion on Education for Sustainable Development

Sanaya Bharucha

[Teach For India](#) - India

6) Lunch Dialogue organized by the Office of the President of the General Assembly and the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP)

Muhamad Iman Usman

[Ruangguru](#) - Indonesia

More information about this process is available [here](#).

More information about the High-level SDG Action Event on Education is available [here](#).

[DPI launches new animated video on the dramatic story of Yusra Mardini, a young refugee and Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR](#)

The United Nations Department of Public Information has launched a new animated video on the dramatic story of Yusra Mardini, a young refugee from conflict-torn Syria who achieved her dream to compete in the 2016 Olympics.

Yusra was appointed as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), on 27 April 2017. The video was produced by the Education Outreach Section in support of the Together Initiative to mark World Refugee Day on 20 June and highlight the advent of the International Day of Peace on 21 September. It will be released in all official UN languages. You may read more about her journey at <http://www.unhcr.org/yusra-mardini.html>

YouTube: <https://youtu.be/OS5WQCef8GA>

Department of public information youth programs: Engaging a Generation of Leaders
Working Together: Making a Difference



(attached photo from 2008 above of UN/DPI/NGO Media sub-committee co-chair, Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, during panel discussion at Dag Hammarskjold Library, UN Headquarters, New York)

Youth bring ideas, passion, innovation, along with unique perspectives and experiences to the United Nations. In turn, DPI acknowledges young people as an asset and creative change makers. In 2009, SOCA Representative to UN/DPI, Dr. A. M. Riccitelli served as Media sub-committee co-chair for “Disarm Now! For peace and development,” the 62nd DPI/NGO Conference in Mexico City. Following this 2009 conference the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) launched the DPI/NGO Youth Representative Program, aimed at building the capacity, knowledge and skills of young people working in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) associated with the department and those leading youth organizations. NGOs associated with DPI are allocated two UN grounds passes for youth. Over 500 young people representing 550 NGOs from 100 countries across the globe are benefiting from the program, giving them a voice on thematic issues of concern to youth. Building on the increased participation of youth at the 66th DPI/NGO Conference, held last year in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea for which Dr. A. M. Riccitelli, also served as Media sub-committee co-chair, DPI established a Youth Steering Committee. Comprised of youth from NGOs associated with DPI, who are selected for one year of service, their activities range from the annual Youth-led Briefing held yearly in the fall, to the design

and implementation of social media campaigns on United Nations global initiatives. Reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA Representative to UN/DPI

Season Wrap Up Briefing, June 24, 2017, ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters, New York, June 22

For photos of season wrap-up go to: <https://www.facebook.com/pg/UNDPINGO/photos/>

To ID any photos, please call me [212-414-8728](tel:212-414-8728)

Moderated by Jeff Brez, Chief, NGO Relations, UN Department of Public Information, who said this season there were 17 briefings, 2 orientation programs, 533 Youth Reps and 1451 NGOs associated with Department of Public Information. He offered commentary on the importance to the UN of NGOs with strong communications programs. He said these NGOs had the potential to share the UN messages with much larger audiences, magnifying the UN reach. He stressed the importance of NGOs filling out the UN/DPI annual report, as it gives data to the UN about the effectiveness of the NGO communications platforms. Now, with NGO e-newsletters and social media use, UN/NGO partnerships have a reach in the tens of millions. This is a focus of SDG # 17: access to technology and knowledge. Internet use in Africa doubled in the last four years. Thirty percent of the world's youth are digital natives, active online for at least five years. Of the world's people, four billion do not have access to the internet and ninety percent are in the developing world. See UN/SDG#17: Partnerships for the Goals. Attended and reported by Dr. A.M. Riccitelli, SOCA representative to UN/DPI.

Our SOCA NGO and sustainable development (Dr. Anne Riccitelli)

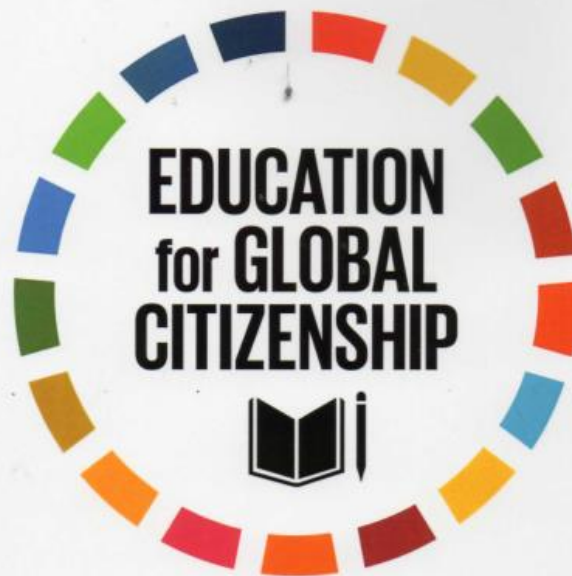
Dear All:

UN/DPI recently published a beautiful 133 page report on the results of the 2016 UN/DPI/NGO Conference in Korea.

Attached for you is the report cover and pages 89 and 111, which mention SOCA (highlighted).

It is always gratifying to be acknowledged by UN/DPI for our contribution to their efforts in educating the world about the work of the UN.

Best,



Achieving the Sustainable
Development Goals Together

GYEONGJU, REPUBLIC OF KOREA
30 MAY-01 JUNE 2016



— THE 66TH —
UN DPI / NGO
CONFERENCE

FINAL REPORT

Content / Multimedia

Short promotional videos, interviews with key partners, blogs for a Huffington post series and graphic assets were created. Mr. Scott Carlin (PhD) was interviewed by FOX-WWOR-TV's "New Jersey Now" programme, the NGO Reporter, the American Association of Geographers, as well Long Island University's *The Pioneer*.

Additional stories about the Conference were published in *Asia Today*, *The Diplomatic Courier*, the *Korean Herald*, *The Sag Harbor Express*, *The Southampton Patch*, *The Southampton Press* and *Long Island Herald Newspaper*. Several NGO/Academia partners published stories on their websites or newsletters including Felician University – The Franciscan University of NJ (featuring Ms. Mary Norton (EdD), the Syrian Orthodox Church in America, The Pennsylvania Council for International Education, the Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative.

The opening ceremony of the Conference was covered by Ariang TV News, an English language network based in Seoul.

Social Media

The United Nations Facebook, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Tumblr, Twitter and YouTube accounts were used to promote the Conference. In addition, several "Google Hangouts" were used to engage with youth. The Secretariat of the National Organizing Committee also managed a Naver, Facebook and Instagram account to promote the Conference regionally.

A Facebook Live featuring the Secretary-General and NGO reps was produced and reached 210,000 people and was viewed 12,000 times. Particularly popular on Facebook were the "People of the #UNNGO2016 conference" photo album, the video of the youth flash mob and the image of attendees holding hands at the closing ceremony. Link <https://www.facebook.com/unitednations>. In addition, the Conference Facebook page received 4,068 likes. Link: www.facebook.com/66undpingoconference.

On UN Google+, which has over 3.6 million followers, posts about the conference were viewed over 30,000 times. Link: <https://plus.google.com/+unitednations/videos>

On UN Instagram, photos from the conference generated nearly 40,000 likes, while the video of the youth flash mob was viewed over 22,000 times. All conference-related posts on UN Instagram were well above average in popularity. <https://www.instagram.com/unitednations/>. The Conference Instagram account posted casual informative photos and videos of the Conference, including pictures of the SDGs, Conference venue, landscape, weather and events taking place in Gyeongju. Link: https://www.instagram.com/66th_unngoconference/

Content about the conference on UN LinkedIn was seen over 216,000 times by LinkedIn users. Link: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/united-nations>

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Outreach Sub-committee Co-chair,
Enda Tiers Monde United States

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Outreach Sub-committee Co-chair,
Deutsche Model United Nations e.V.

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Ms. Pham Nhat Nga, Mileage



Work of our NGO SOCA, Alternate Representative Joseph Cannizzo, in extending our outreach.

April 25, 2017,

This past April, Joseph Cannizzo provided support to Autism Awareness month by partnering with The Autism Site to provide therapy for children with autism.

The Autism Site provides access to incredible play therapy sessions which promote long-term and short-term memory, stimulate language, negotiation and communication skills. It also nourishes the family by relieving stress and forging important emotional bonds. Each check in at Joseph's martial art school contributed additional funding and resources to provide autism therapy for children in need.

Proud member of **Causely**

Thanks

We helped provide

198,381

minutes of autism therapy for children

#autismawareness

APRIL RECAP:
FEATURED NON-PROFIT // AUTISM SITE

May 4, 2017,

Joseph Cannizzo partnered with Watsi. Watsi provides crowdsourced healthcare for people in developing countries that cannot afford it.

Watsi enables anyone to directly fund life-changing healthcare for people around the world by connecting patients who can't afford the procedures they need with donors via the web. 100% of donations made to Watsi fund life-changing healthcare.

Every check-in helps provide a life-changing surgery to someone in need.



Proud member of **Causely**

Thanks

We helped provide

263

life-changing surgeries
to someone in need

#changealife

MAY RECAP:
FEATURED NON-PROFIT // WATSI

June 16, 2017,

In June Joseph Cannizzo partnered with Soles4Souls to help provide shoes to people who need them. Soles4Souls provides relief through the distribution of shoes and clothing around the world, while also creating sustainable jobs. Every 10 check-in helps provide a pair of shoes to someone in need.

Proud member of **Causely**

Thanks

We helped provide

40,039

pairs of shoes to
someone in need.

#shoes4kids

JUNE RECAP:
FEATURED NON-PROFIT // SOLES4SOULS



The following pictures are from the SOCA Mission under Father Martinez in Guatemala.

Catedral San Juan Bautista

Comalapa, Chimaltenango, Guatemala.



Una gran celebración giro entorno a la fiesta del nacimiento de Juan Bautista. Miles de creyentes Kakchikeles- pueblos mayas; que conforman el pueblo de Dios se acercaron a la Divina Liturgia presidida por El Arzobispo de Centro América, Su

Eminencia Mor Santiago Eduardo Aguirre, y los venerables párrocos Rigoberto y Francisco.



Por muchos años la Catedral y los fieles allí congregados. Habían estado en una persecución religiosa de parte de las instituciones religiosas oficiales. Mediante diversos diálogos y con el auxilio de Dios Todopoderoso. Tales acechanzas han cesado, dando espacio a una convivencia ecuménica y espiritual.



Esa armonía y esa paz se reflejan en la festividad espiritual, la cual, es para todos los cristianos. Pero, especialmente, para los siro-ortodoxos de Centro América.

Sustainable Developmental Goals Action Event Innovation Meeting



By Jin Chacko

Associate of SOCA and connected with the UN

On May 23rd, I attended an SDG meeting of Public Private Partnerships. A welcome speech and introductory was given by His Eminence Peter Thomson, President of the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly and Her Eminence Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. Many people were in attendance and the sessions were divided into five with different panelists and speakers.

The first sessions was discussed on the topic; From Linear to Exponential Innovation. The first Keynote was given by Dr. Peter Diamandis, chairman of XPrize Foundation and Singularity University. The second keynote speaker for the sessions was Dr. Astro Teller, Chief Executive Officer of Google X. The second sessions was discussed on the topic of A New Era of Connected Problem-Solvers. Mr. Marcus Shingles moderated the panel. The panelists were His Eminence Jean Philbert Nsengimana, Minister of Youth and Information and Communications Technology of Rwanda. The second panelist was Mrs. Lara Stein, Founder of TEDx and Director at MIT ReACT. The third panelist was Mr. Kevin Lo, Senior Director for Infrastructure Connectivity at Facebook. The fourth panelist was Mr. Chiyoko Osborne, Serial Entrepreneur and Chief Strategy Officer of Empact Collaboration Platform.

The third session topic was discussed on; Action of Innovation and Breakthrough Technology it was moderated by Mr. David Wallerstein, Chief Exploration Officer of Tencent. The panelists were Mrs. Anousheh Ansari, Co-founder and Chairwomen of Prodea Systems. Mr. Feng Mu was the second panelist and is the Co-Founder and CEO of Planet labs. Mr. Uma Valeti was the fourth panelist and Co-founder and CEO of Memphis Meats. Session four was discussed on; Interactive Discussion on Opportunities and Risks. The keynote address was given by Dr. Justine Cassell, Associate Dean of Technology Strategy and Impact at Carnegie Mellon University. The moderator was led by His Eminence Macharia Kamau, Co-Chair of the UN Science, Technology and other Stakeholders. Session five was the conclusion of the meeting the panelists were Mr. Salim Ismail, Technology Strategist and author of Exponential Organizations. At the end of all the speakers for the day a final reflection was given by His Eminence Peter Thomson.

Monthly CRNGO UN Thematic Business Meeting



By Jin Chacko

Associate of SOCA and connected with the UN

On May 16th, I attended a monthly thematic business meeting of the CRNGO. The meeting was moderated by Mrs. Kusumita Pedersen, Representative of the Interfaith Center of NY Parliament of the World's Religions. The meeting was discussed on the topic of Religion, Ecology and Environmental Justice. There were a total of five panelists who gave a brief discussion which was later addressed with a Q&A by those in attendance.

The first panelist was Dr. Laurel Kearns, Associate Professor at Drew Theological School, Green Seminary. He mentioned that religious reverence for nature is sacred and is imminent in nature. It was viewed that nature is fallen and is a trapped matter versus a spirit. There is a lot of fundamentalism in Christianity against environmentalists. We are called to be caretakers and that God cares for all creations. The second panelist was the Venerable Bhikku Bodhi, Representative of the Buddhist Global Relief. Bhikku stated that Buddhism is a non-theistic religion and the universe is a multiplicity of a world system. Humans are integral part of the cosmic process.

The third panelist was Imam Saffet Abod Catovic, representing the Green Muslims of New Jersey. He mentioned that the prophet Mohammed gets a command to read but he was unable to read but reads in the name of the Lord who created him. The creation story is a myth of origins that myth is not a lie. The fourth panelist was Baba Antonio Mondesire, IFA priest representing the Interfaith Center of New York Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye. His religion believes in one God and gives reverence to mother earth. He mentions that we must love mother earth as much as our own mother. Humanity applies to mother earth that has intricate relationships with plants and we are integral part of nature.

The fifth and final panelist is Mrs. Sunita Viswanath, representing Sadhana a coalition of Progressive Hindus. Sadhana is almost 6 years old and it means to practice of religion. Few Hindus had started Sadhana for social justice work. Chris Fici is a representative of Sadhana; he mentions the work of dhamma is a work of justice. Savva they call it is a selfless service. They seek to pursue a vision of equality.

Annual CRNGO UN Luncheon

By Jin Chacko

Associate of SOCA and connected with the UN

On June 20th, I attended the annual luncheon of CRNGO at the United Nations Church Center. Rev. Dionne Boissiere, Chaplain of the Church Center of the UN led the invocation and Rev. Liberato Bautista, President of the CRNGO gave his welcome remarks and review of the annual report. This was

also the last meeting and luncheon for Rev. Bautista as he has finished serving his two year term as President of the CRNGO. The new president of the CRNGO is Swami Parameshananda, representative of the Bharat Sevashram Sangha. The Swami has given his closing statements at the end of the luncheon and accepted the terms of the position of the President of the CRNGO for the next two years.

Rev. Bautista stated that the role of religion is very important. Our meeting includes the well being of our prayer, war and famine. Mr. Johannes Morsink, Emeritus Professor of Political Philosophy at Drew University was one of the speakers and wrote the book on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Mr. Morsink has mentioned that everyone has a right to religious freedom. Secularists do not have a divine model of love and it does not motivate them to do human rights work. The second guest speaker was Dr. Sathianthan Clarke, Bishop of the Sundo Kim Chair in World Christianity and Professor of Theology, Culture and Mission at Wesley College Seminary. Mr. Clarke had mentioned that competing fundamentalists in any religion seek violence rather than peace has become the face of religion today. An important reminder for the people out there in the streets is hesitancy towards Christian priests and theologians. After September 11th, Islam was targeted as the mother of all religions promoting violence.

Religion has not anything to do with violence people say that you sit in your temple not accepting the blame. Concept of this violence has nothing to do religion all of us have to start saying we are the cause of the problems and we have to find the solution. Religious fundamentalism is a collective ethical modality that claims to be the embodiment of supposedly closed and seemingly straight forward world views. Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon had stated that he who knows only one religion only knows none. It seems that the three Abrahamic faiths Judaism, Christianity and Islam can't get their act together if they did there would be so much less problems in the world. The same goes for the three Asianic faiths Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism if there was cooperation between these faiths there would be less conflict.





Jin Chacko, Alternate Representative, SOCA

DPI/NGO Orientation at the United Nations Headquarters



By Jin Chacko

Associate of SOCA and connected with the UN

On April 11, I attended the annual DPI/NGO orientation at the UN Headquarters. The meeting was led by a welcome speech by Mr. Jeff Brez, Chief of NGO relations and Advocacy and Special Events and Mrs. Maha El-Bahrawi, Officer in charge of Outreach Division at the Department of Public Information. The orientation was split into six different panels with a different moderator for each one. The first panel was moderated by Mr. Jeff Brez included in the panel was Mr. Jon Greenway, representing Peace and Security Section and Strategic Communications Division of DPI. The second panelist was Mr. Mitchell Toomey, representing the United Nations Development Programme. The third panelist was Mr. Dorian Lacombe, representing United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Mr. Brez discussed the different goals of the Sustainable Developmental Goals such as eradicating poverty and hunger looking to advance gender equality. Mr. Greenway discussed an aim to create a coalition for activities together promoting global action and working with various agencies. The

second panel was moderated by Mrs. Corann Okorodudu, representing society for the psychological study of social issues. The panelists were Ms. Lucio Prosapio from Airline Ambassadors, Ms. Amanda Goodson, AIESEC International and Mr. Bruce Knotts, NGO/DPI Executive Committee member.

The third panel was moderated by Mr. Felipe Quiapo, representing the Associate of Public Information Officer, NGO Relations Outreach Division. The panelists were Mr. Karim Saba Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Mr. John Ennis, Office for Disarmament Affairs and Mr. Azrah Karim Rajput, International Organization for Migration. The fourth panel was moderated by Ms. Michelle Tong, representing Visitor Services DPI. The panelists were Mr. Ari Gaitanis, representing News and Media Division DPI, Ms. Charlotte Scadan, Strategic Communications Division DPI and Ms. Malgorzata Juszczak, representing Information Centers Service for Strategic Communications Division.

The fifth panel was moderated by Ms. Hawa Diallo, NGO relations on Advocacy and Special Events. The panelists were Ms. Madison Ross, Ms. Earlene Cruz, representing the James Beard Scholar, Mr. Alpha Diallo ENDA and Ms. Jadayah Spencer, representing NY Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Non Violence Chair. The sixth and final panel was moderated and led by Mr. Felipe Quiapo of the NGO Relations Outreach Division.

SI Council of Churches Annual Awards Dinner



By Jin Chacko

Associate of SOCA and connected with the UN

On Thursday April 27th the SI Council of Churches hosted its annual awards church dinner at the Old Bermuda Inn on Staten Island. Many people attended from various churches on the Island. They had representatives from various different denominations. The event was hosted by Deacon Paul Kosinski, President of the SI Council of Churches. Rev. Wolfgang Laudert from Christ Lutheran Church gave the invocation. The event started with a word of prayer and we heard speeches from the different awards recipient.

Twenty four recipients received awards from the various member churches that night. The award nominees listed were Mrs. Lori Catricola Lambertson, Bethel United Methodist Church, Mrs. Mary Magnuski and Mrs. Jeanna Pace, Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church, Mr. Bob Prather, Brighton Heights Reformed Church, Mr. Kaluj Odege, Calvary Presbyterian Church, Mr. Hal Reirsen, Christ

Episcopal Church, Mr. Bill Bommer and Mrs. Beth Hunt, Christ Lutheran Church, Mr. Dominick Derubbio, Christ United Methodist Church, Mrs. Everete Linton, Faith United Methodist Church, Mrs. Jane Costagliola, Holy Family Roman Catholic Church, Mrs. Jan Wiggin, Immanuel Union Church, Mrs. Laura Parisi, Lamb of GOD Prayer Group, Mrs. Justina Sais, Olivet Presbyterian Church, Archdeacon John Demeis, Our Lady of Grace Mission, Deacon Thomas Finnerty and Mr. and Mrs. Peter and Barbara Orleman, Our Lady Queen of Peace, Rev. E.J. Emerson, Project Hospitality, Mr. Merle Knowlton, Reformed Church of Huguenot Park, Mrs. Ada Hollomon, Rossville AME Zion Church. Mrs. Lolita Peralta, The Staten Island Conference of Catholic Charismatic Prayer Groups, Mr. Anthony Esposito, Woodrow United Methodist Church and Mrs. Carole Larsen, Zion Lutheran Church.

At the end of awards presentation a closing prayer was led by Rev. Pancrose Kalist, Our Lady Queen of Peace Church. There are currently forty eight churches that are members of the SI Council of Churches for the year 2017. It was an overall good atmosphere the food was good and it was a great time to socialize and meet other Christians from the various denominations.

UNAI member information

Dear UNAI member institution,

United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) appreciates that your institution is part of our worldwide network working with the United Nations to promote global priorities, including peace, human rights and sustainable development.

To ensure that your institution remains featured as a member of the UNAI network, as well as to facilitate future contact, we would like to request that you confirm the current contact information, including names, job titles and e-mail addresses, of two focal points and the current Chief Executive Officer of your institution. To that end, we require your response by 30 June 2017.

Thank you very much for your cooperation. We are very much looking forward to our continued collaboration.

Please let us know should you have any questions.

Best regards,

Your UNAI team

--

Dear Anthony DeLuca,

Thank you very much for your email and for providing us with the requested information.

We are very much looking forward to our continued collaboration.

Best regards,

Your UNAI team

Death of Father Anthony's Mother

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our family thanks all of you for coming to the Funeral Mass and for the clergy participating in this Liturgy.

My mother was born in Jamaica, Queens; there were 3 half-siblings and she was first in the following eight. Her father was into real estate and bought a 500 acre farm from a physician and there she lived in New Jersey and Jamaica where she married my father.

I imagine it was on and off with Mom and Dad as we ended up in the woods of Basking Ridge where at age 3, I was dying of pneumonia and she nursed me day and night; the cure that winter was blackberries from the pharmacy which she fed me. She liked to tell me later that fearing my death, she called a priest who could not come because it was too far but a local Protestant Minister came and prayed, "Jesus have pity on this suffering mother, " and then I got better.

She took me to be enrolled in a Catholic school, St. Monica's where she was married. (Remember St. Monica, mother of St. Augustine, we will say something about her later). The school stayed in one place like a north star while we moved many times. So my sister and I treasured that school and church as did Mario Cuomo who was a few grades ahead of me and later as governor saved the church from demolition -its facade now preserved as York College. How could he let St. Monica, his alma mater- nourishing and kind mother- holy mother the church who gave him there all the sacraments- how could he let her die. Mom knew Mario's family well as they ran the neighborhood fruit store. Mom had an egg-route driving to customers- few women drove in those days.

Mom was not that much into regular church attendance but at times of being aggravated she would desperately burst into singing off key, "O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee"; if she began singing "Mother dearest, Mother fairest," we ran for our lives. Apparently she must have attended the Miraculous Medal Novenas.

For me a change took place in 3B with Sister Gonzaga, age 89, who said she did not see me at the 9 o'clock Mass. I said, I went to the 10. She beat my hands with the leg of a chair and I got religion ever since which is a testimony to the efficacy of shock treatment. I didn't tell mom about this.

We got through grammar school with mom's daily support and encouragement. I remember my mom and dad driving me to my first day in high school and them looking at me going up the long flight of

stone stairs and I hope I did them proud. As Freud told us, no career is launched without the mother's gaze.

Mom took on extra work as a waitress to pay for my college bills where ever I took courses to make the pre-requisites for seminary, the money was always there. Then I entered the Seminary- all the time away, she supported me emotionally in some very hard times, by her letters.

One day when I came home from the Seminary, my room upstairs was missing. Mom had converted the one family house into a legal two family . The first two family house in a one family neighborhood. She was never without enterprise.

My sister, Angela, took care of our mother for half a century and it was due to her wonderful care that mom lived to 104. While at my sister's mom made great sales at the Rug Store-a self-proclaimed interior decorator at the same time making artistic wreathes which sold in local stores- she was high up in the Garden Club. After passing her new driver's test, she voluntarily gave up her driver's license at 96, stating that if an accident happened, they would blame the old lady.

When i got the title Ambassador at the UN, I called mom right away talking on the cell phone as I crossed the street. She said- "what is all that noise;" I said "mom, I've just been made ambassador" and she asked, "whether I was going to be on a boat and please be careful crossing the street. "

And so her last words were to my sister, " Angela please take care of me," and to the nurse "you SOB, you hurt my arm." The two sides of mom, the tender and the feisty.

If you know anything about St. Augustine and his mother St. Monica, you know she prayed day and night for his conversion; he became the greatest theologian and philosopher of the Christian Church.

Augustine writes in *The Confessions* (4th century) as Monica is dying: She said to both of us: "Put this body away anywhere. Don't let care about it disturb you. I ask only this of you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you may be."

They were amazed at this woman's strength.

I closed her eyes, and a mighty sorrow welled up from the depths of my heart and overflowed in tears.

I took joy indeed from her testimony, when in the last illness she mingled her endearments with my dutiful deeds and called me a good son. What comparison was there between the honor she had from me and the services she rendered to me?

When her body was carried away, we went out and we returned without tears. Nor during the prayers of the sacrifice of the Mass that was offered up in her behalf did we cry- nor at her burial.

[a note: this funeral mass was in 387 just the same as this morning here]

At night I gave way to tears, for at my heart were placed your ears, Lord. Lord, let him read it who wants to. If he finds a sin in it, that I wept for my mother for a small part of an hour, for that mother now dead to my eyes who for so many years had wept for me so that I might live in your eyes, let him not laugh me to scorn. But rather, if he is a man of great love, let him weep over my sins before you, the Father of all brothers of Your Christ.

End of *The Confessions*.

Augustine was baptized by Bishop Ambrose of Milan in 387; ordained in 391; consecrated Bishop of Hippo, Egypt in 395 and died August 28, 430 during the siege of Hippo by the Vandals. Times have not changed bishops, priests, religious and the faithful are being killed everyday throughout the world as civilizations clash.

When a priest is ordained, after his hands are anointed, they are tied with a linen cloth, usually made by your first grade nun, and at your mother's death placed in her hands in the coffin. O that it would be sparkling white as 56 years ago; but son's of Augustine did not travel only in the fourth century- so there is regret- not necessarily for actions but more for all that we have seen, heard and said.

The last time I was at this pulpit was over a half century ago speaking at the graduating mass of Notre Dame College; the college has closed, the faculty for the most part are dead and at this altar some of my students were buried

If the passing of your mother does not bring you to realize your mortality, then you are in deep denial. Let us all use the time well.

In the presence of God and the Church and my mother's mortal remains, I ask my children and grandchildren to continue the institutions I founded in her memory and mine.

Finally, my friends and family, we will not disturb your faith or leave you without hope. If you feel confused, despondent, disinterested, depressed, know that the leaders of religions are experiencing the same thing. Benedict said the church is crumbling.

This is supposed to happen naturally; history unfolds and nothing can stand in its way. The world is in a monumental transition- we are just too close to the happening to understand. The raging global addictions are a response to the overwhelming anxiety as institutions collapse in the transition, The new emerging reality and our place in the universe will transcend the past. "Now we see through a glass darkly: but then face to face."

During the transition, just hold on to one thing - the gospels of Jesus. But in a new way- being there emotionally, feeling with great intensity, experiencing Jesus in a way - like you experience someone you are deeply in love with and nothing less will do. "Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

Transitional anxiety, tranquilizers, antidepressants, endless addictions, clash of civilizations, natural law, unnatural law, all these will not conquer love: " Now there remain these three, faith, hope and love; but the greatest of these is love."

Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon her.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

[Homily at Funeral Mass of Anna DeLuca at Our Lady of Good Counsel, July 6, 2017]

Very Rev. Anthony DeLuca



Dr. Angela DeLuca and brother, Chorbishop DeLuca at the Mercy Dinner for mother Anna DeLuca.



The manuterge is placed in the hands of the a priest's deceased mother at burial; the manuterge is the linen cloth binding the priest's hands at the time of his ordination anointing

WAKE - WEDNESDAY: 2-4; 7-9 PM

Harmon Funeral Home, 571 Forest Avenue

FUNERAL- THURSDAY : 10 AM

Our Lady of Good Counsel, 10 Austin Place (off Victory Blvd) 10304

Inside Look at Major UN Actions & Events

Fighting in Syria Remains Devastating for Civilians, Even after Declaration of Ceasefire, Under-Secretary-General Tells Security Council

Notwithstanding the ceasefire declared in 2016, fighting in several areas of Syria continued to devastate civilians, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator told the Security Council today, citing casualties caused by terrorist attacks and by air strikes designed to counter them.

Delivering a briefing, Stephen O'Brien, who is also Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said 30 women and children had been injured in Deir ez-Zor just last week, in an attack by Islamic State

in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh). Presenting the Secretary-General's latest report (document [S/2017/445](#)), he said more than 100 civilians had fallen victim to recent counter-ISIL air strikes, in both Deir ez-Zor and Al-Raqqa. "We need to see a step-change in access to the increasingly dire situation in north-eastern Syria, he said, calling for access through every possible modality, the easing of restrictions, and greater cross-border access for aid, including land access from Aleppo.

According to the Astana memorandum agreed by Iran, the Russian Federation and Turkey on the creation of four de-escalation areas, he said, fighting must decrease significantly and humanitarian access must be unhindered. "This agreement must succeed," he emphasized, while pointing out that delays by the Government of Syria in approving facilitation letters and convoy plans continued to hamper efforts. "We are essentially down to one cross-line convoy per week," he said, noting also that the Government's removal of life-saving medicine and medical supplies from convoy continued unabated. Attacks against hospitals and health facilities had continued at a rate of 20 per month between January and April. The Council must ensure that the delivery of humanitarian assistance was outside political and military calculations.

In the ensuing discussion, delegates renewed calls for all parties to ease restrictions on aid, with some stressing that the drop in violence should have already prompted greater humanitarian access. Egypt's representative called upon the guarantors of the Astana de-escalation memorandum to facilitate its humanitarian provisions.

On that point, France's representative urged the guarantors to impose the cessation of hostilities on the Syrian regime, saying the latter continued to block aid convoys. He added that the local evacuation agreements concluded by the regime, after having starved people for years, had resulted in large-scale displacements, cautioning that such forced movements could constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity.

The representative of the United States described the crematorium built in Syria's Sednaya prison to dispose of victims' bodies as the most persuasive indicator of the "hell" in Syria. The Russian Federation and Iran had either helped as the Syrian Government committed some of history's worst war crimes, or looked away, she said.

Meanwhile, the Russian Federation's representative blamed clashes between rival groups for delays in the delivery of aid, asking how long it would be before those who had trained the armed Syrian opposition "knocked some sense into them". He added that it was "borderline insulting" for Western partners to turn Council meetings into a platform from which to launch accusations against his country, emphasizing that they would do better to explain the steps they were taking to advance a political solution.

Syria's representative said that the Secretary-General's latest report on the situation in his country reflected the positions of certain parties and States that sought deliberately to deform reality. They accused Syria of laying siege on its own territory, when in fact, the besieged areas were occupied by armed terrorist groups that used civilians as human shields and resold humanitarian assistance at exorbitant prices.

"Our efforts have made it possible for peace to return to many cities and villages," he emphasized. Syria had offered options for disarming, settling the situation without judicial process, and leaving, he said,

noting that civilians had gone on to resume their normal lives. Syria had always been the victim of lies told by countries that did not wish to end the suffering. They preferred direct terrorism, investing in terrorist groups and imposing an economic blockade, he added.

Also speaking today were representatives of Sweden, Japan, United Kingdom, China, Italy, Ethiopia, Senegal, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Bolivia and Uruguay.

The meeting began at 3:07 p.m. and ended at 5:04 p.m.

Briefing

STEPHEN O'BRIEN, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said that, counter-weighing reports of a significant drop in violence in some parts of Syria was a conflict that continued to devastate civilians, noting that 30 women and children had been injured just last week in an attack by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) in Deir ez-Zor. More than 100 civilians had fallen victim to counter-ISIL air strikes, notably in Al-Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor, while children had been forcibly detained, tortured, subjected to sexual violence, forcibly recruited and, in some cases, executed. Nearly 7 million children lived in poverty and 1.75 million were out of school, he said, noting that one in three schools, 7,400 in total, had been damaged or destroyed. Outside Syria, meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of Syrian children had become stateless, abandoned but for the generosity of Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt.

He said the Astana memorandum reached by the three guarantors — Iran, Russian Federation and Turkey — on the creation of four de-escalation areas stipulated that fighting must decrease significantly and that there must be unhindered humanitarian access in those areas, including all besieged locations except those in Damascus and Deir ez-Zor, he said, emphasizing: "This agreement must succeed." The United Nations was ready to work with all involved to ensure the delivery of life-saving assistance, based on its own needs assessment, but without constant interference, reduced beneficiary numbers, removal of medical items "out of spite", bureaucratic restrictions and procedural roadblocks, he stressed.

He went on to say that so-called "surrender" or "evacuation" agreements had followed years of intense air strikes, shelling and sniping aimed at making life intolerable and death likely. There must be accountability for applying "starve-and-surrender" tactics, a monstrous form of cruelty, he said. Evacuations were only the beginning of a new set of challenges for those forced to leave and for host communities. The displaced, traveling mainly to Idlib and northern rural Aleppo, found themselves in a precarious environment, in which the capacity to support displacement was reaching its limit.

In fact, he continued, protection space was shrinking in many areas and humanitarian conditions were worsening due to increasingly strict limitations imposed by local authorities, non-State armed groups, terrorist organizations, and the actions of some neighbouring countries. Pressing the Council to use its influence to ensure that such actors respected humanitarian principles, he expressed great concern over cross-border restrictions and regulatory impediments imposed on non-governmental groups in northern Syria, as well as signs that internally displaced persons fleeing Raqqa Governorate were subjected to movement restrictions by the self-proclaimed Democratic Self-Administration. "We need to see a step-change in access to the increasingly dire situation in north-eastern Syria, he said, calling for access through every possible modality, the easing of restrictions, and greater cross-border access for aid, including land access from Aleppo.

For cross-line inter-agency convoys, he continued, the Government's administrative delays in approving facilitation letters and convoy plans continued to hamper efforts. The United Nations had secured the letters for only seven convoys under the April/May access plan, which would allow the Organization to reach 266,750 of the 1 million people requested. "We are essentially down to one cross-line convoy per week," he said, pointing out that the removal of life-saving medicine and medical supplies continued unabated. Attacks against hospitals and other health facilities continued at a rate of 20 per month between January and April, averaging one attack every 36 hours.

He went on to describe the denial and delay of access as a political calculation and military tactic, stressing that where there was political will, the humanitarian imperative to deliver on assessed needs was possible. As such, the Council should ensure that the will to place humanitarian aid delivery in its rightful position — outside political and military calculations — was restored. "The delivery of aid is not an ask," he emphasized. "The bottom line is that we have been wasting too much of our time literally begging for facilitation letters", arguing at roadblocks, pleading for trucks to be allowed to pass and that medical items not be removed.

Source: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/sc12848.doc.htm>

Unprecedented Meeting of World Faith Leaders to take on Global Deforestation Monday, June 19, 2017 at the Nobel Peace Center, Oslo, Norway

- Norway to host leaders from world's spiritual and religious traditions, engaging faith communities to protect rainforests
- Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Daoist, Jewish leaders to join with indigenous forest guardians to express moral commitment, explore faith-based mobilization to end deforestation

For the first time, leaders from many of the world's religions will meet to discuss the spiritual and ethical responsibility they share to protect rainforests, one of the planet's most vital life-support systems. Besieged by growing global demand for commodities, tropical rainforests are being cleared at a perilous rate, with an area the size of Austria chopped down each year.

The meeting, which will take place in the presence of His Majesty King Harald V of Norway, will discuss how to activate the collective moral influence of religious communities across the planet. Based on sheer numbers, they could prove decisive in protecting the world's last standing rainforests.

There is growing consensus among the world's religions that environmental concerns are closely linked to social justice, a position reinforced by Pope Francis' *Laudato si* and high-level declarations from many other faiths about the spiritual imperative of protecting the planet and its most vulnerable people.

The multi-faith summit marks the first significant engagement by the world's religions with an issue that climate scientists and development experts argue is a lynchpin for global efforts to address climate change, poverty, food insecurity and violations of human rights. It also heralds the first time that religious leaders from a broad spectrum of faiths will work hand-in-hand with indigenous peoples, the historical guardians of rainforests, on an action agenda to end deforestation.

Host: His Excellency Vidar Helgesen, Minister of Climate and Environment (Norway)

Partners: The meeting is being convened by Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in cooperation with the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University, GreenFaith, Parliament of the World's Religions, Religions for Peace, REIL Network, and the World Council of Churches.

Where: Nobel Peace Center, Oslo, Norway

When: Monday, 19 June 2017

Who:

Indigenous Peoples Leaders

- Sônia Guajajara, National Coordinator, Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil – APIB (Brazil)
- Joseph Itongwa, executive Committee Member, Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee – IPACC (Democratic Republic of Congo)
- Abdon Nababan, Vice Chairperson, National Council, Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago, AMAN (Indonesia)
- Vicky Tauli-Corpuz, U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Religious Leaders

- H.E. Metropolitan Emmanuel, Exarch, Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (Christian)
- Dr. Nanditha Krishna, Founder, The C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation (Hinduism)
- Abbot Phra Paisal Vongvoravisit, Co-Founder, Sekiya Dhamma (Buddhism)
- Sir Rabbi David Rosen, International Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee and Director, Heilbrunn Institute for International Interreligious Understanding (Judaism)
- H.E. Monsignor Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Chancellor, Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (Catholic)
- Bishop Emeritus Gunnar Stålsett, Honorary President, Religions for Peace (Lutheran)
- Dr. Din Syamsuddin, Chairman, Center for Dialogue and Cooperation Among Civilizations (Islam)
- The Right Reverend Bishop Pierre W. Whalon, Bishop-In-Charge, Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe (Episcopal)

Interfaith Leaders

- Reverend Henrik Grape, Coordinator, Working Group on Climate Change, World Council of Churches
- Reverend Fletcher Harper: Executive Director, GreenFaith
- Dr. Kusumita Pedersen, Vice Chair, Parliament of the World's Religions
- Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker: Director, Forum on Religion and Ecology, Yale University
- Dr. William F. Vendley: Secretary General, Religions for Peace

Academics and Experts

- Lars Løvold, Director, Rainforest Foundation Norway
- Dr. Antonio Donato Nobre, Visiting Scientist at the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) and

Senior Researcher at the National Institute of Amazonian Research (INPA)

- Frances Seymour, Distinguished Senior Fellow, World Resources Institute

Among the questions to be addressed at the event:

- How do religious and spiritual teachings support the care and protection of rainforests, and how do they relate to environmental, socio-cultural and economic justifications for ending deforestation?
- How can religious and spiritual communities contribute to the battle to protect rainforests and stop deforestation? What are the specific actions on the ground undertaken by spiritual groups and mainstream religions to protect forests?
- Where are forests most under threat and what do spiritual and religious leaders, and their communities and constituencies, propose to do to protect them?
- What can indigenous forest communities teach that can help influence a world that judges the value of forests through the lens of price, utility, or efficiency?
- How does this initiative complement and add to other interfaith efforts?
- Why are the Norwegian government and civil society convening this event? Why now?
- What are the planned next steps for this initiative?

About Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI)

Since its launch in 2007, the Government of Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) has cooperated with international partners, governments in forest and donor countries and a broad range of non-governmental organizations to reduce tropical deforestation and forest degradation.

About [Rainforest Foundation Norway](#)

Rainforest Foundation Norway (RFN) is one of the world's leading organizations in the field of rights-based rainforest protection. We support Indigenous Peoples and traditional populations in the three main rainforest regions of the world: the Amazon, the Congo basin and Southeast Asia. We work to counter drivers of deforestation, influence political, legal and economic framework conditions for rainforest management, and support rights-based sustainable forest management by forest-dependent local communities.

To attend, or request interviews and press materials, please contact:

Ellen Wilson at ewilson@burness.com or [+1 301 466 3205](tel:+13014663205), or
Coimbra Sirica at csirica@burness.com or [+1 301 943 3287](tel:+13019433287), or
Susan Tonassi at stonassi@burness.com or [+49 160 9327 9327](tel:+4916093279327)

Learn more about the [Interfaith Rainforest Initiative](#).

View the [provisional agenda for the High-Level Segment on June 19, 2017](#).

[Announcing the new Envoy on Youth – Jayathma Wickramanayake](#)

New York, 20 June 2017

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has appointed Jayathma Wickramanayake of Sri Lanka as his next Envoy on Youth. She will succeed Ahmad Alhendawi of Jordan to whom the Secretary-

General is grateful for his dedicated service in addressing the needs and rights of young people, bringing the work of the United Nations closer to them. The success of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development depends on empowering young people as rights-holders, agents of change and torchbearers.

Having represented and motivated global youth development on an international level since the age of 21, notably during high-level United Nations initiatives including the declaration of World Youth Skills Day, Ms. Wickramanayake has also played a key role in transforming the youth development sector at the national level, notably through the creation of a large movement for civic and political engagement of young people named “Hashtag Generation.”

Presently working as an officer of the Sri Lanka Administrative Service, Ms. Wickramanayake has previously served as Secretary to the Secretary General of the Parliament of Sri Lanka (2016-2017), Project Officer-Youth, One-Text Initiative in Sri Lanka (2015-2016), Member and Youth Lead Negotiator, International Youth Task Force of the World Conference on Youth 2014 (2013-2014) and Official Youth Delegate to the United Nations, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development (2012-2013). She was furthermore a Senator in the Sri Lankan Youth Parliament (2013-2015).

In this role, the Envoy on Youth is expected to expand the UN’s youth engagement and advocacy efforts across all four pillars of work – sustainable development, human rights, peace and security and humanitarian action.

The Envoy on Youth will play a lead role in realising the Secretary-General’s vision on youth, which places young people as a cross-cutting priority of the UN; ensures that young people’s perspectives are reflected across all pillars of the UN’s work; and places young people’s interests at the centre of the Secretary-General’s agenda for crisis prevention and sustaining peace by leveraging their talents, energy and innovation in addressing youth challenges and fostering opportunities.

Born in 1990, Ms. Wickramanayake is undertaking a Master of Development Studies, at the University of Colombo and holds a Bachelor degree in Science, from the same university.

Statement here: <https://goo.gl/UvGoEL>

Source: <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2017/06/announcing-the-new-envoy-on-youth-jayathma-wickramanayake/>

At the UN, a New Treaty Banning Nuclear Weapons Is Adopted by 122 Nations

By Maria Luisa Gambale on Jul 07, 2017 04:14 pm



Elayne Whyte Gómez, who led the negotiations of the new nuclear weapons ban treaty, with a fellow Costa Rican diplomat, Juan Carlos Mendoza Garcia, congratulating her on July 7, 2017, on the convention's adoption.

Nuclear buildup and threat of nuclear war became a front-page item this past week, after Kim Jong Un's declaration of a successful intercontinental ballistic missile test, confirmed on July 4 by United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

Such headlines — proclaimed on America's Independence Day — remind the public of the ever-present specter of nuclear destruction. But the public also remains largely unaware that a new legally binding [treaty](#) prohibiting and eliminating nuclear weapons was adopted by more than half of United Nations member countries on July 7, days after the North Korea launching.

The treaty was approved in a UN chamber in New York by 122 yes votes; 1 no, from Netherlands; and one abstention, Singapore. At first, the treaty's adoption was announced by consensus, but the Netherlands, an accredited member of the conference to negotiate the treaty, asked for a formal poll so that it could declare its no vote.

"The world has been waiting for this legal norm for 70 years," since the use of the first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 at the end of World War II, said Elayne Whyte Gómez, a Costa

Rican diplomat who lead the treaty discussions. She called it “the first multilateral nuclear disarmament treaty to be concluded in more than 20 years.”

The world’s nine nuclear-weapons possessing countries boycotted negotiations on the treaty, even though the treaty enables them to join at any point.

A July 7 statement from Britain, France and the United States released after the treaty’s adoption clarified their position, saying: “We do not intend to sign, ratify or ever become party to it. Therefore, there will be no change in the legal obligations on our countries with respect to nuclear weapons.”

Whyte, when asked by reporters about the statement, said: “Of course, if we only consider the current international situation whether to act or not to act, you can always choose not to act but then you have to take responsibility for your action and your inaction.”

The Netherlands’ position was explained after the vote, noting among other qualifications, that the country could not sign “any instrument that is incompatible with our NATO obligations, that contains inadequate verification provisions or that undermines the Non-Proliferation Treaty.”

The new treaty will be open for signature on Sept. 20 at the UN and will enter into force 90 days after 50 nations have formally ratified or acceded to it.

The disconnect between support of the treaty by 122 countries and lack of support by the five permanent members of the UN Security Council — Britain, China, France, Russia and the US — couldn’t have been more jarring in a week of active nuclear threats coming from Asia.

None of the permanent-five members mentioned the new treaty in their remarks to the media on July 5, as they reacted to North Korea’s latest move. Nor did UN Secretary-General António Guterres publicly remark on the relevance of the new nuclear weapons treaty amid the North Korean menace early in the week.

The most he said, through a statement, was “we want to acknowledge the overwhelming support” of the nuclear ban treaty. The [UN Office for Disarmament Affairs](#) representative, Izumi Nakamitsu, attended talks leading to the treaty’s adoption. (On July 7, he said he “welcomes” the treaty’s approval.)

“The strenuous and repeated objections of nuclear armed states is an admission that this treaty will have a real and lasting impact,” said Beatrice Fihn, executive director of the [International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons \(ICAN\)](#).

The [UN Conference to Negotiate Ban on Nuclear Weapons](#) began discussions in March and continued on and off through July 7, a total of four weeks of meetings in New York. Without the participation of the nine open nuclear powers in the conference as well as Japan and most NATO member countries, negotiations have been led by non-nuclear countries. Perhaps because of this fact, writing the treaty went smoothly and consensus was achieved in relatively short time.

The core group of nations behind the treaty includes Austria, Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa and Thailand. All 54 nations of Africa, all 33 nations of Latin America and the Caribbean and 10 nations of Southeast Asia were also behind it.

Janet Fenton of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom ([WILPF](#)), and vice chairwoman of Scottish Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, emphasized, “in some ways it’s a good

thing that the nine nuclear power states are not participating, it's allowed for a non-adversarial style of conversation."

The US led the boycott of 40 countries, which included most NATO members and parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty ([NPT](#)). Nikki Haley, the American ambassador to the UN, told the press at the UN in March, "(we) would love to have a ban on nuclear weapons, but in this day and time we can't honestly say we can protect our people by allowing bad actors to have them and those of us that are good trying to keep peace and safety not to have them."

Haley, with ambassadors from France and Britain flanked by her side, went on to say that North Korea would be enjoying a last laugh if the rest of the world got rid of their nuclear weapons first.

How countries participating in the UN conference on the treaty to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons voted on July 7, 2017.

The new treaty is a paradigm shift that emphasizes humanitarian concerns, with a strong focus on gender and indigenous rights. It is also focused on human rights, through such examples as victims' assistance provisions. The treaty interacts with, and specifically mentions, the NPT, which entered into force in 1970 but has been decidedly ineffective in reducing nuclear stockpiles; and the [Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty \(CTBT\)](#), which remains in limbo because it has not been ratified by the nine recognized nuclear powers.

Indeed, new categories of nuclear weapons is the latest alarming trend, say advocates of the nuclear ban treaty, and Russia and the US are both modernizing cold war arsenals as they reduce the number of their weapons overall, some experts note.

Among the nuclear-armed nations, Pakistan and India have never signed the NPT or CTBT, so they are not obliged to meet those treaties' rules and inspections, which is also the case for Israel and North Korea. (The US signed and ratified the NPT and signed but never ratified the CTBT.)

The new treaty is designed to provide stronger legal basis for acceptance and enforcement of those treaties, as well as to generally expand the potential for a nuclear weapons free world in the public mind.

As Whyte, the lead negotiator, described the mandate of the resolution, it is "to achieve, as soon as possible, a legally binding instrument, which would serve to strengthen the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons." The treaty text itself articulates "the right of parties to an armed conflict to choose methods or means of warfare is not unlimited."

It is meant to have immediate effect on the activities and abilities of nuclear power states, specifically on their ability to move weapons systems around the world and to obtain uranium. Concern about impact of the treaty caused the US to circulate a [letter](#) to its NATO allies in October 2016, two months before the UN General Assembly authorized the treaty negotiations.

The letter encouraged US allies to "vote 'no' on any vote at the UN First Committee on starting negotiations for a nuclear ban treaty." (The committee is part of the General Assembly.)

The letter argued that nuclear deterrence is a critical component of NATO's defense strategy, and that "(t)he effects of a nuclear weapons ban treaty could be wide-ranging and degrade enduring security relationships," and complains that a ban would "stigmatize" nuclear weapons — doing exactly what the new treaty intends, its advocates emphasized.

The letter confirms the treaty's intent to limit "nuclear-related transit through territorial airspace or seas." Also at stake was the ability to threaten other countries with the possibility of nuclear attack.

The countries boycotting the treaty is a "classic sign of someone who has lost the argument," said Rob Green, an ex-Royal British Navy commander, at a press briefing. Green added that nuclear deterrence "has nothing to do with security" and is "unprovable that it has prevented war."

In paragraphs of the treaty detailing the "catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons," a strong emphasis was put on "disproportionate impact" on women and girls, as well as on indigenous people. Fenton of WILPF explained that the effect on females extends to development of nuclear weapons, with early studies on harms of nuclear radiation using healthy young men as test subjects. Later [studies](#) have shown these tests do not adequately reflect the health risks for women, young children and reproductive systems.

An [Indigenous Statement](#) to the treaty negotiations signed by numerous organizations outlines the stance of the world's native people: "Indigenous communities have borne the brunt of these deadly experiments (test explosions). Our land, our sea, our communities, and our physical bodies carry this legacy with us now, and for unknown generations to come."

Given the massive push to adopt the treaty by July 7, compromises were reached that some supporters found unacceptable but did not prevent their endorsement. [Reaching Critical Will](#), the disarmament program of WILPF, detailed dissatisfactions in a bulletin recently.

Of particular concern was the continuation of the "inalienable right" of states parties to "peaceful uses" of nuclear energy, given that prevention of environmental catastrophe is a core element of international law relied on in the treaty.

"Nuclear weapons, whether through production, use, or testing, have a far greater potential to harm the environment than other forms of banned weapons," said Ray Acheson, the director of Reaching Critical Will. "Unfortunately, the paragraph reaffirming the Non-Proliferation Treaty's 'inalienable right' to nuclear energy for 'peaceful purposes' is still there. It's an unnecessary, legally unsound, and frankly offensive paragraph, but at least it does not detract from the categorical banning of nuclear weapons that this treaty provides."

Delegates reacting to the vote by 122 countries approving the treaty, which will be open for signature on Sept. 20 at the UN.

In [Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists](#), Acheson expounded on the relationship between nuclear energy and proliferation opportunities.

"All nine nuclear-armed states have used nuclear reactors to create plutonium for their nuclear weapons," Acheson wrote, listing overlap explored by Britain, France, North Korea and Iran. "The new

ban treaty is borne from the urgent need to prevent the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences that would result from a nuclear detonation. It must not, then, reflect a 'right' to a technology that can also have devastating radioactive impacts."

Yet eliminating this provision was difficult, as the NPT entices non-nuclear powers away from nuclear armament by offering development of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. [Nuclear weapon free zones](#) also explicitly allow for "the use of nuclear science and technology for peaceful purposes."

The new treaty, invariably compared to the NPT, bans use of nuclear weapons, whereas the NPT does not. And the new treaty bans assisting and encouraging others countries to use them, unlike the NPT. Advocates of the new treaty repeatedly noted the failure of the NPT to lead to full global denuclearization as the impetus to creating a new treaty.

Challenges implementing the new ban include a willingness for legislatures to ratify the treaty and for the public to pressure leaders, said Jonathan Granoff, president of the [Global Security Institute](#).

However, in Spain — which opted out with other NATO countries — a public petition protesting its decision to abstain from the talks has resulted in a Parliament committee passing a proposal of nonbinding law asking the government to get involved in the process to ban nuclear weapons. Australia's government has been one of the strongest opponents to the ban, but a recent poll indicated that 81 percent of the population disagrees.

As Fenton of WILPF said: "If you look at the world in terms of democratic decision-making, we're on the right side. Citizens around the world are pressuring their governments to engage in negotiations for a total nuclear ban, marking a line ever more clearly between governments who believe in nuclear strategy and a public who doesn't."

Religious News from Around the World

Other Related News

Oriental Orthodox Clergy Meet in New Jersey



The Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches (SCOCH) held its spring meeting on Friday, April 21, at the Coptic Orthodox Archdiocese of North America in Cedar Grove, NJ.

Bishop Karas of the Coptic Church opened the meeting with words of welcome. Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church, chaired the meeting. Other hierarchs in attendance included Archbishop Mor Dionysius Jean Kawak of the Syriac Church, Archbishop Mor Titus Yeldho of the Malankara Church, and Bishop Makarios of the Eritrean Church.

Clergy discussed the resuming of the annual prayer service organized for the United Nations community by Oriental Orthodox and Eastern Orthodox churches. They also made plans for the next Oriental Orthodox concelebrated Divine Liturgy slated for the fall, the annual Oriental Orthodox Youth Conference scheduled for June 24, and a gathering of all Oriental Orthodox clergy and families planned for August 28. The clergy also stressed the need to foster local gatherings of Oriental Orthodox clergy and lay people for prayer and educational collaboration.

In addition to Archbishop Barsamian, the Very Rev. Fr. Daniel Findikyan, Very Rev. Fr. Simeon Odabashian, and Rev. Fr. Tateos Abdalian represented the Eastern Diocese at last week's meeting.

Pope Visits Egypt for Interfaith Dialogue

Pope Francis began a two-day visit to Egypt on Friday, some three weeks after Palm Sunday attacks on two Egyptian churches killed forty-seven people. Francis will meet President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi and visit Al-Azhar University and Mosque. He will also meet his Coptic counterpart, Pope Tawadros II (AP), who will hold a prayer service with Francis at a church targeted in a December suicide bombing. Francis said his visit is meant to offer encouragement to all Christians in the Middle East as well as a message of "fraternity and reconciliation" to Muslims (FT).

ANALYSIS

"Francis arrives at a tumultuous time for Egypt's minority Christians, marked by fear and uncertainty of the future. Over the past five months, they have been targeted in several church bombings, drive-by shootings and assassinations carried out by Islamic State militants determined to sow religious divisions and destabilize Egypt," Sudarsan Raghavan writes for the Washington Post.

"Egypt, where 90 percent of the Copts reside, has changed too. Islamism has weakened the notion of an Egyptian national identity, to which Coptic thinkers contributed heavily. The Copts are targets of both extremists and political opportunists," writes Maged Atiya.

"Sisi has attempted to justify his harsh rule by presenting himself as a visionary strongman uniquely capable of bringing stability and prosperity back to Egypt following the turmoil of the Arab Spring. But the Palm Sunday attacks reveal both how hollow these promises are, as well the limits of Sisi as a U.S. ally," Meir Walters writes for Foreign Affairs.

Korea Rejects Trump's Call for \$1 Billion Payment

South Korea's defense ministry issued a statement rejecting comments from U.S. President Donald J. Trump requesting the country pay \$1 billion (Korea Times) for the implementation of a missile defense system there. The ministry stated South Korea was to provide land and facilities (VOA) while the United States was to deploy and operate the defense shield. Trump also vowed to terminate or renegotiate the existing U.S.-South Korea free trade deal (Reuters).

CFR's Scott A. Snyder and Sungtae "Jacky" Park discuss the strategic options facing South Korea for the East Asia Forum.

INDONESIA: Female Muslim clerics issued a fatwa against child marriage (BBC) during a congress that is being regarded as the first major gathering of its kind. The clerics also called on the government to raise the legal marriage age from sixteen to eighteen.

Two U.S. Servicemen Killed in Afghanistan

The Pentagon said that two U.S. servicemen were killed and a third wounded in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province during a raid on an affiliate of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (BBC).

CFR's Micah Zenko discusses U.S. military strategy in Afghanistan.

INDIA: The International Monetary Fund predicted that India will surpass Germany (Bloomberg) to become the world's fifth largest economy by 2022, pushing Britain out of the global top five.

U.S. Visas for Iranians Drop by Half

The United States granted 393 immigrant visas to Iranians in March compared to a monthly average of 644 during 2016, according to the State Department (RFE/RL).

Court Upholds Chadian Ex-Ruler's Conviction

A Senegalese court upheld a war crimes conviction (NYT) against former Chadian leader Hissene Habre. Habre received a life sentence last year in Senegal, where he has been living in exile, for overseeing wrongful arrest, torture, and murder (Guardian) of Chadian citizens during the 1980s.

SOMALIA: Somalia's U.S. ambassador said U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) informed him that it would no longer arrest undocumented Somali immigrants (VOA) in their homes and workplaces after the embassy expressed concern over the recent arrests of eleven Somalis. ICE did not confirm the policy change.

Montenegro to Ratify NATO Entry

Montenegrin lawmakers are expected on Friday to formally approve the country's accession (BBC) to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization despite opposition from Russia.

This CFR Backgrounder explores the history of NATO.

MACEDONIA: Some two hundred protesters stormed parliament and attacked lawmakers (EUobserver) after an alliance of the Social Democratic Union and ethnic Albanian parties elected a new speaker. Seventy-seven people were injured in the violence (RFE/RL).

Argentina's Macri Meets Trump at White House

President Trump said during a visit from Argentine President Mauricio Macri that he will consider lifting a U.S. ban on Argentine lemon imports (LAHT).

BRAZIL: A prosecutor from the team leading a massive anticorruption probe said his team would "basically ignore" a bill (WSJ) that is expected to pass Brazil's lower house and would limit the investigative practices they have used, such as detaining and questioning suspects without making prior requests.

CFR's Matthew Taylor discusses Brazil's recent gains in fighting graft.

Carter Asked Not to Pursue North Korean Diplomacy

A State Department official visited former President Jimmy Carter, who has served as an envoy between Washington and Pyongyang, to request he not pursue rapprochement efforts (FT) that could undermine the Trump administration's efforts to pressure the regime.

Pope Francis arrives in Cairo, bearing message of peace

He will lend his support to Coptic Christians who have endured persecution and violence, reach out to Muslim leaders and meet with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who came to power after a 2013 coup.

More from www.nytimes.com -> <http://religionnews.us12.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=ffb6ac9b876259770f600943e&id=f4aaefea2a&e=9612e0120f>

In Egypt, Francis exhorts religions to condemn 'violence masquerading as sanctity'



At a peace conference hosted at the world's oldest center of Muslim learning Friday, Pope Francis called on global religious leaders to condemn violent extremism and "unmask violence that masquerades as purported sanctity."

Source: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/egypt-francis-exhorts-religions-condemn-violence-masquerading-sanctity>

Religions and peace by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I



With the Permission of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we print an Address of His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Al-Azhar and Muslim Council of Elders' Global Peace Conference.

Your Beatitudes, Eminences, Excellencies,

Distinguished participants,

Dear friends,

It is an honor to be invited to address this Conference on Global Peace organized by Al-Azhar and the Muslim Council of Elders. We wholeheartedly congratulate His Eminence Mr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, for having the courage and vision to organize this crucial initiative in the promotion of peace by religions.

During the last two decades, humanity has experienced continuous terrorist attacks, which are the cause of death and hurt of thousands of people, and which are becoming the greatest threat and source of fear for contemporary societies. Since then, religions have been often suspected or openly accused for inspiring terrorism and violence. Our everyday life has become filled with horrible news about terrorist attacks in the name of religion.

Source: <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2017/04/30/religions-and-peace/>

Indian Catholics frustrated over clergy sex abuse cases



A rash of recent alleged sex abuse cases involving Catholic priests in Southern India have left Christians distraught and frustrated over the local church's lack of response. More than 100 theologians, women religious, priests and feminists have written to India's bishops to demand they react quickly in accordance with the pope's call to end such transgressions.

Source: <https://www.ncronline.org/news/accountability/indian-catholics-frustrated-over-clergy-sex-abuse-cases>

Spiritual Ecology: 10 Practices to Reawaken the Sacred in Everyday Life

POINT REYES STATION, Calif. – [*Spiritual Ecology: 10 Practices to Reawaken the Sacred in Everyday Life*](#) offers a response to the current environmental crisis and the growing awareness of climate change — and the worldwide urgent question of our time: “What can we do?”

Faced with this question, Vaughan-Lee answers here with practical and inspiring guidance for connecting to the sacred and responding to the ecological challenges of our age with wisdom, love, and spiritual responsibility. Simple daily activities such as Walking, Breathing, Gardening, Cooking with Love, and Prayer, are explored as the ground for inner and outer transformation, empowering readers to know the sacred in their lives and in relation to our Earth.

This small book, exquisite in its luminous simplicity, brings me home to my life. Even in a dark time, its practices center me in a sense of the sacred, our birthright. —**Joanna Macy**, Environmental Activist, Buddhist, teacher, and author

The third book in groundbreaking *Spiritual Ecology* series by Sufi teacher Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, which have sold over 16,000 copies since first released in 2013, [*Spiritual Ecology: 10 Practices to Reawaken the Sacred in Everyday Life*](#) unites activism and contemplation through Vaughan-Lee's evocative narrative and step-by-step practices drawn from numerous spiritual traditions.

Accessible to readers of all walks of life, *Spiritual Ecology: 10 Practices to Reawaken to the Sacred in Everyday Life*, supports profound changes in how we think about and respond to the ecological crisis of our times.

Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee's book on practices for Spiritual Ecology in everyday life awakens us to the potential to take small steps towards big transformation. It overcomes the artificial divide between nature and humans, and spirituality and action. No matter who we are, where we live, these are steps each of us can take. —Vandana Shiva, activist and author

I used to think that top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse, and climate change...I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy, and to deal with these we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. —James Gustave Speth, former U.S. Advisor on climate change

About the Book

TITLE: [*Spiritual Ecology: 10 Practices to Reawaken the Sacred in Everyday Life*](#)

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WEBSITE: www.goldensufi.org/press

About the Authors: Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee, Ph.D., is a Sufi teacher and author of over twenty books on Sufism, mysticism, and spiritual ecology. In recent years, the focus of his writing and teaching has been on spiritual responsibility at this time of global ecological crisis (www.spiritualecology.org), and the emerging global consciousness of oneness (www.workingwithoneness.org). Founder of The Golden Sufi Center (www.goldensufi.org), he lives in California. Hilary Hart lives in Taos, New Mexico, and is the author of four books on mysticism.

Source: <http://religionnews.com/2017/05/10/spiritual-ecology-10-practices-to-reawaken-the-sacred-in-everyday-life/>

Franklin Graham calls persecution of Christians 'genocide'



WASHINGTON (RNS) Franklin Graham, son of the famed evangelical preacher Billy Graham, urged fellow Christians to struggle against a “Christian genocide” that he says has killed in greater numbers than most believers can fathom.

Graham, who has been criticized by some evangelicals for calling Islam “evil” and for portraying President Trump as aligned with the Christian church, spoke Wednesday (May 10) at a conference aimed at highlighting an issue many feel is ignored by politicians and the media.

“It is safe to say that over 100,000 a year are killed because of their faith in Christ. In the last 10 years that would be close to a million people. It’s the equivalent of a Christian genocide,” Graham told the World Summit in Defense of Christians.

“I am sure the number of Christians who are in prison or martyred each year would stagger our mind if we really knew what the total number really was. And it would send us to our knees in sorrow and in prayer.”

It’s not clear what Graham’s numbers are based on.

The nonprofit Christian organization Open Doors — which [tracks Christian persecution globally](#), and the increasing number of Middle Eastern Christians who seek safety outside their homelands — estimates that every year around 4,000 Christians are killed because of their faith worldwide.

[Genocide](#) is both a moral and legal term, used only a handful of times in U.S. history. Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry applied the label in 2016 to the killings of Christians, Shiite Muslims and Yazidis by the group known as the Islamic State.

But some political leaders and bodies hesitate with the term, because of the specificity of the definition and because its use obligates intervention.

Graham described violence against Christians in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere as part of a larger, global antagonism toward the faith.

“Far more widespread, however, is the discrimination and open hostility that millions of believers encounter every day because of their loyalty to Jesus,” Graham, 64, told an audience of about 600 Christians from a variety of denominations and countries.

“In the name of tolerance, Christians are often treated with intolerance because they stand for moral purity and they stand for God’s truth. In the name of patriotism, Christians are often treated as unpatriotic because they follow a higher authority, almighty God.”

Ahead of his planned rallies in Vancouver and San Juan in recent months, Baptist and other evangelical pastors in Canada and Puerto Rico have publicly [denounced Graham](#) for fanning Islamophobia.

The four-day World Summit in Defense of Christians, being held for the first time, features panels and speakers including Vice President Mike Pence, who will address participants on Thursday. Graham’s own Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, named for his 98-year-old father, is sponsoring the gathering at a historic, downtown Washington hotel.

To get to their seats for Graham’s address, attendees passed between two electronic billboards, each 10 feet tall, scrolling the names of “Martyrs for Christ.” Graham and other speakers noted the diversity of Christians assembled, with contingents of Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox.

Preceding Graham at the podium, Pope Francis’ representative in the U.S. expressed the pontiff’s hopes for the conference. Christians have their differences, said Apostolic Nuncio (ambassador) Christophe Pierre, but they must unite to defend the persecuted among them because “peace triumphs through solidarity.”

Also speaking at the opening of the summit: Metropolitan Tikhon, primate of the Orthodox Church in America, and the Rev. Mouneer Hanna Anis, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Egypt, who stressed that Christians have shown love to the killers of their relatives.

“The forgiveness that has been expressed by families of martyrs is the most powerful witness in the face of terrorism,” he said.

Forgiveness and Christ’s call to love one’s enemies were invoked during the evening far more than Islamic militants were blamed for the sufferings of Christians. But Graham, at one point in his 25-minute speech, presented Islamists as threats to Christians globally.

He said the Islamic State fighters who beheaded Coptic Christians on a Libyan beach in 2015 had then promised to conquer Rome.

“This threat to Rome was not just a threat to the Roman Catholic Church but to all Christians everywhere,” Graham said.

Source: <http://religionnews.com/2017/05/10/franklin-graham-calls-persecution-of-christians-genocide/>

Departamento de Totonicapán, Guatemala



Vicente Buena Baj, es una Aldea, en el área de Totonicapán, en Guatemala. Al igual que muchas otras aldeas, es originaria de la identidad Quiche. Su dialecto y sus vestimentas, lo dejan ver. Vive en una situación social, marcada, con extrema pobreza, y su fuente de trabajo es el cultivo de maíz, aba, y la crianza de animales domésticos. Otra fuente, son las remesas, que envían los que se han radicado en Estados Unidos de América.

Su situación religiosa por muchos años, se ha visto marcada, por discriminación y abandono, de parte de las autoridades religiosas. Ahora, ellos gozan de una atención y de una motivación espiritual de parte de la Iglesia Siro-Ortodoxa de Antioquia. Arquidiócesis de Centro América. Su testimonio nos ayuda a reflexionar: ¿Cuánto mal o daño podemos hacerle a las personas humildes, desde nuestro mal pastoreo?

Oramos por la unidad y la paz en el cristianismo, y para que nuestros pastores mayores, puedan mostrar, en su vida y ministerio, lo específico del ser cristiano.

Rev. Pbro. Pedro Martínez Pérez

Iglesia Cristiana Renovación Carismática.

Sector Alto Zona 7.

Huehuetenango, Guatemala, C.A.

Tel. 502-5707-5056

Email: martinez2550@gmail.com

Indonesia's Illiberal Turn

Indonesia is still reeling from a divisive election in April, in which hard-line Islamists forced the indictment on blasphemy charges, and eventual imprisonment, of the sitting governor of Jakarta, a Christian of Chinese descent named Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (better known as “Ahok”). The trial and conviction of Ahok have generated fears that the country’s social fabric is fraying, that sectarianism is on the rise, and that Indonesia’s democratic institutions are too weak to withstand a concerted assault from Islamists. The country once praised by former U.S. President Barack Obama as a model of tolerance, pluralism, and democracy is now facing challenges to all three.

Source: https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/indonesia/2017-05-26/indonesias-illiberal-turn?spJobID=1180005543&spMailingID=54180614&spReportId=MTE4MDAwNTU0MwS2&spUserID=NTIzMzIzOTkwNTcS1&sp_mid=54180614&sp_rid=aWduYXRpdXN1QGFvbC5jb20S1

Seeking a "Path to Peace"



On May 24, the Path to Peace Foundation honored two peacebuilders at the 25th Path to Peace Gala. More than 500 attendees witnessed Cardinal Mario Zenari, Papal Nuncio to Syria, receive the Path to Peace Award for his courageous commitment to the people of the war-torn country. The Path to Peace Foundation also honored Sister Mary Angel Acayo with the Servitor Pacis Award for her work serving women and girls in Uganda.

After Co-chairs Erin von Uffel and Mark Ackermann welcomed the guests, Archbishop Thomas Wenski of the Archdiocese of Miami, delivered the invocation.

Before the awards were presented, Bishop Yousif Habash, Eparch of the Syriac Catholic Eparchy of Our Lady of Deliverance of Newark, chanted the Lord’s Prayer in Aramaic, the language that Jesus spoke and that is still spoken among a number of Christians in the Middle East.

Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and President of the Path to Peace Foundation, described the vital role the Foundation has had in enabling the Holy See's work at the UN since its inception in 1991. Each year at the Gala, he said, the Foundation honors leaders who work as peacemakers who champion people in situations where "tranquility of order, solidarity and social harmony do not reign."

He said in honoring Cardinal Zenari as the 2017 recipient of the Path to Peace Award, the Foundation wanted to keep a focus on the urgent need for peace in the region where Christianity was first born and spread.

As the Pope's representative to Syria since 2008, Cardinal Zenari has served the people of Syria during the now six-year war that has directly affected 25 million people. In his acceptance speech, he compared his role to one as a soldier "using the weapons of charity and truth."

"At times, I feel as if I am dressed like a simple soldier in military fatigues uniform, rather than in clerical attire," he said. "Spiritually, I feel that I take orders from the 'Commander in Chief,' Jesus Christ, and his lieutenant, the Pope, who tells me: 'Go there!' and I go; 'Come here' and I come; 'Stay there!'" and I stay.

Cardinal Zenari said Syria provides daily opportunities to practice what the Church calls "the corporal and spiritual works of mercy," which include feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and consoling the afflicted.

Among the most afflicted the Cardinal described are the six million children who have endured severe suffering due to the conflict, three million of whom have only known war in their short lifetimes.

"Thousands of parents do not know whether or where to place a flower in memory of their beloved," he said.

Cardinal Zenari said that in Syria, where the disciples were first called Christians, and St. Paul had his legendary conversion on the road to Damascus, Christians have dropped to only two to three percent of the population, and are among the most vulnerable.

"In Syria the suffering is universal," he said. "The whole country suffers: every ethnic and religious group had its victims, its "martyrs," its places of worship damaged or destroyed. But in terms of vulnerability, the groups most at risk are the minorities, including Christians."

Despite the shrinking population of Christians, the Cardinal said their presence in the region brings value to the country, both culturally and charitably, noting the 200 million dollars of humanitarian assistance the Holy See and Catholic Church has provided to more than 4.6 million people in the region, and numerous of courageous caregivers who come as religious priests and sisters as well as lay volunteers.

"Amid so many atrocities, in this desert where, all too often, every sense of humanity is lacking, we find unexpected blossoms of rare beauty," he said, calling them 'desert flowers.' "Several hundred people of

all faiths and others, moved by profound feelings of human compassion, have given their lives helping those in need.”

Sister Mary Angel Acayo, a sister of the Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu, is one such sacrificial servant in Uganda, and was awarded the Servitor Pacis Award for her work to defend women and girls during the Ugandan Civil War and, since 2002, to build a culture of peace that respects women in the Karamoja region of Uganda.

“Pope Francis has called the Church in our time to be like a field hospital in battle, to heal the wounds of those who have been injured,” Sister Acayo said, in her acceptance speech. “That is one of the most important works we can do if we wish to restore and build peace.”

Archbishop Auza noted that in addition to the Path to Peace Award, the Foundation occasionally recognizes unsung heroes who build peace on the ground with the Servitor Pacis Award, Latin for “Servant of Peace.” He said Sister Acayo was an obvious choice for the award after he learned of her work to heal the troubled culture in which men often “claim” women and girls as their brides through raping them. The families’ response is typically to force their daughter to marry her attacker, who is often decades older, because in exchange for their daughter they will receive cows.

“I do not serve alone,” Sister Acayo said. “I serve alongside my beloved sisters in religious life. I serve alongside the survivors who, after having been helped, now want to help others.”

She told the story of Grace Achola, whom she and her sisters have served. Achola was kidnapped in third grade in the midst of the Civil War and was held captive as a sex slave for seven years until she was able to escape with the son she bore while in captivity. In addition to helping Achola heal physically and spiritually through counseling, the sisters taught her skills like craft making so she provide for herself and her son. Achola is now happily married to a good man with another child.

“In response to this evil, the Church cannot remain on the sidelines. We must do something,” she said. “It’s going to take a lot of prayer, a lot of work, a lot of healing and a lot of education to change these harmful practices.”

Sister Acayo is now breaking ground on a counseling center called Toto Maria (“Mother Mary”) Counseling Center which will provide a space for women and girls can to receive counseling in privacy. The Center will also provide educational classes for families and tribal leaders to heal the current rape-to-marry mentality. Although the sisters have been conducting many sensitization classes outdoors under trees, the physical building will provide the privacy and prestige needed to reach more in the Karamojong culture.

“These women and girls have experienced so many living nightmares and together we can help them awaken to a new life,” Sister Mary Acayo said. “After the violence that has marked their upbringing, we can help them walk with us on the Path to Peace.”

At the end of the evening, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States of America, delivered the final blessing, and remarked on the privilege of being present to witness two of

his friends being honored, noting he was a former classmate to Cardinal Zenari in the Holy See's diplomatic academy and a friend to Sister Acayo during his time as Nuncio to Uganda. Upon leaving the gala, attendees received an icon of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, giving a blessing, or of Mary, the Mother of God, pointing us to her infant Son. The icons were "written" by a Christian family in Syria, whose father was seriously injured in the war.

To view more photos from the Gala, please click [here](#).

Source: <https://holyseemission.org/contents/events/592c52ef186c4.php>

On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

Edited by John Chryssavgis, Foreword by His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh

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Over the past two decades, the world has witnessed alarming environmental degradation—climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and the pollution of natural resources—together with a failure to implement environmental policies and an ever-widening gap between rich and poor. As this new volume of his writings reveals, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has continually proclaimed the primacy of spiritual values in determining environmental ethics and action. For him, the predicament we face is not primarily ecological but in fact spiritual: The ultimate aim is to see all things in God, and God in all things.

On Earth as in Heaven demonstrates just why His All Holiness has been dubbed the "Green Patriarch" by former Vice President Al Gore (recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for his environmental activism) and the media. This third and final volume of the spiritual leader's selected writings showcases his statements on environmental degradation, global warming, and climate change. It contains numerous speeches and interviews in various circumstances, including ecological symposia, academic seminars, and regional and international events, over the first twenty years of his ministry. This volume also encompasses a selection of pastoral letters and exhortations—ecclesiastical, ecumenical, and academic—by His All Holiness for occasions such as Easter and Christmas, honorary doctorates, and academic awards.

'Mary, Jesus' Mother' is new name for UAE mosque

Abu Dhabi: The Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Mosque in Al Mushrif, a district in the capital Abu Dhabi, was on Wednesday renamed 'Mariam, Umm Eisa' — Arabic for 'Mary, the mother of Jesus'.

The change was ordered by His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, to "consolidate bonds of humanity between followers of different religions".

Shaikha Lubna Al Qasimi, Minister of State for Tolerance, thanked Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed for his "wise directives in carrying out this initiative that set a shining example, and a beautiful image of the tolerance and coexistence enjoyed by the UAE", according to a statement carried by WAM.

Mohammad Mattar Al Kaabi, Chairman of the General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, also thanked Shaikh Mohammad for this initiative.

He added that since the days of Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the UAE has always been keen on tolerance and peaceful coexistence “that is based on justice and brotherliness among all those living in the UAE”.

Al Kaabi added that this was the same approach followed by President His Highness Shaikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Shaikh Mohammad, as people from more than 200 nations are living in comfort and security in the UAE.

Special figure

Just steps away from the newly-renamed mosque is St Andrew’s Church, an Anglican parish.

Its senior chaplain, Reverend Canon Andrew Thompson, said that he was “delighted” with the news.

“We are delighted that we are celebrating something that we have in common between both our faiths,” he told *Gulf News*.

“Mary, as the mother of Jesus, is of course a holy, special figure in our communities. She is a woman who symbolises obedience to God. We look forward to growing in deeper understanding with our neighbours, and we celebrate with them the new name of the mosque.”

Generous gesture

The senior pastor of the Evangelical Community Church in Abu Dhabi also hailed the news.

“His Highness Shaikh Mohammad has made another generous gesture of religious tolerance in renaming the mosque,” said Jeramie Rinne.

“The UAE continues to set the pace in this region for peaceful coexistence and cooperation. We are very encouraged and feel blessed to be a part of this nation.”

Amid sectarian conflicts and regional chaos, the UAE has been seeking to boost its national values of tolerance of other faiths.

The Catholic Bishop Paul Hinder, head of the Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Arabia, whose office is only a few meters from the former Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed mosque is delighted about the new name Mariam, Umm Eisa (Mary, Jesus’ Mother) Mosque.

“As Joseph, her spouse, is the patron of the neighboring cathedral, we have now a corner of the Holy Family,” the bishop said. He Swiss bishop hails the wise decision of Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed as a sign of tolerance towards all those who venerate Mary, the mother of Jesus, in a particular way.

“She is in a prominent way present in the Bible as well as in the Quran, and constitutes an important bond between Christians and Muslims,” said Bishop Hinder, who is based in Abu Dhabi.

“She is ‘full of grace’, a sign of God’s special election of womanhood and His love for all humanity,” he added. “The bishop is convinced that such a strong sign given by His Highness the Crown Prince will contribute to peace and mutual understanding not only in our country, but in the whole region.”

Ministry of Tolerance

In February last year, the government created the Ministry of Tolerance, appointing Shaikha Lubna as its head.

In June, the UAE Cabinet approved a new National Tolerance Programme based on seven key pillars — Islam, Constitution, Zayed’s legacy and ethics of the UAE, international conventions, archaeology and history, humanity and common values.

This week, a church in Al Ain opened its doors for Maghrib prayers.

The event saw church workers lay down carpets on the wooden floor so that more than 200 Asian Muslim workers could perform prayers.

After hearing the news, several senior Emirati officials in Al Ain called up the church to express their appreciation.

“It was the first time, at least in the UAE, that a church opened its doors for Muslim prayers,” said Bobin Skariya, a worker at the St George Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Simhasana Cathedral.

Source: <http://gulfnews.com/news/uae/culture/mary-jesus-mother-is-new-name-for-uae-mosque-1.2043544#.WUREf9uBIUI.facebook>

Secrecy over clergy abuse standards causes confusion in India

by Jose Kavi

New Delhi -- Three months after India's theologians and Catholic religious pressed a congress of bishops to act aggressively against a wave of sex abuse cases involving priests, no official response has come.

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