

WELCOME

Our world is starved for hope. Whether we look back at 2010 or ahead to 2011, many of us do not look forward to reading the newspaper or watching television, with so much turmoil on all levels.

The UN is a place where hope finds a home in the persistent articulation of agreements and promises that must be translated into on-the-ground action. This was abundantly clear at the MDG Summit which took stock of what has been achieved so far, while struggling with what remains to be done by 2015.

This Newsletter invites us to consider the reality of complex, interwoven issues. Once again we welcome the voice of students. We wish you renewed hope, and a new year marked by deeds that match our words!

Society of the Sacred Heart

at the UN



DECEMBER 2010 | Number 3

Keeping the Promise

by Judith Garson, rscj



Photo by Cecile Meijer, rscj

From 20-22 September 2010 the UN General Assembly (GA) convened a [Summit on the Millennium Development Goals](#) (MDGs). It was a powerful reminder of the UN's uniqueness in the world – not a parliament, not a government, but the only multilateral forum where the voices of all 192 countries can be heard. As one listened, it became increasingly clear that the MDGs are deeply interconnected, and that we have a single future as a planet.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon set the tone in his opening address: "The transformative impact of the MDGs is undeniable...an achievement we can be proud of. But we must protect these advances, many of which are still fragile.... Being true [to commitments] means addressing inequality, both among and within countries... it means reconsidering

conventional wisdom. Recovery from the economic crisis should not mean a return to the flawed and unjust path that got us into trouble in the first place."

The theme was compelling: "*Keeping the Promise: United to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals.*" Only five years remain to reach the ambitious goals set in 2000. Donor states reported on how they have honored their commitments; others reported on progress toward the goals. The whole world spoke, in the GA and also in panels and round tables organized throughout the meeting. Some were followed by the international media; most went unnoticed by the world press, but this does not mean that they were unimportant. The Small Island Developing States figured prominently, both those on the verge of disappearing because of

rscjinternational
women of compassion, communion, and reconciliation

Have you looked at our [webpage lately](#)? We have posted the following articles since July.

- [EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010](#)
- [Indigenous People and the UN](#)
- [DPI/NGO Conference 2010 announcement](#)
- [STAND UP and TAKE ACTION 2010](#)
- [International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures](#)
- [Prayer for the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty](#)
- [International Day for Tolerance](#)
- [Report of the DPI/NGO Conference 2010](#)
- [Temple of Understanding honors Joan Kirby rscj](#)
- [Violence against Women](#)
- [World AIDS Day](#)

rising sea levels, others more secure but still exposed to the long-term effects of climate change.

It is a challenge to follow events on the world stage, not to depend on "sound bites" and quotations taken out of context, distorted and politicized. How will we introduce youth to the reality of the world that they will inherit in a very short time?

Calendar of ECOSOC Commission Meetings

Commission for Social Development
9-18 February 2011

Commission on the Status of Women
22 February – 4 March 2011

Commission on Sustainable Development
2-13 May 2011

UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
16-27 May 2011

A Reflection

by Maria Willhoit

Prior to my internship in June 2010, I thought of the United Nations as “the policeman of the world.” Now I know it as the forum where issues of peace and security, development and human rights are the framework for its main agenda. It seeks to create an environment of protection for the most abused and forgotten, based on a profound respect for the dignity of every human being.

The UN walks a fine line between international agreements that apply universally and respect for the sovereignty of member states. It must work closely with all member states, but fortunately it also has a special relationship with many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) who assure that voices ‘from the ground’ are heard.

I asked myself how all of this relates to us as believers. We often recognize evil easily and we are swayed toward penalizing wrong-doers. Too often we forget the astonishing goodness that exists within others and ourselves, the most remarkable ability to forgive and to love. At its deepest, the UN calls us to this realization of inherent goodness, whatever our religious belief.

Maria Willhoit is a student from Louisiana



New UN Champion for Women and Girls

by Carolina Cordon-Bouzan

On July 2, 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created a new entity called **UN Women - UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women**. Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro welcomed the new entity saying that “*UN Women* will give women and girls the strong, unified voice they deserve on the world stage” so that all of us, women and men “can move forward together in our endeavour to achieve the goals of equality, development and peace for all women and girls, everywhere.”

A part of the UN Reform agenda, *UN Women* will merge four existing parts that deal with gender equality and women’s empowerment (including the United Nations

Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) into one super-entity. The mandate of *UN Women* includes supporting inter-governmental bodies with creating policies and global standards; helping member states to implement these standards; making partnerships with civil society; and helping the UN system itself to be accountable for its own commitments to gender equality. *UN Women* will begin operations in January 2011.

In September 2010, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon appointed former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet as the head of *UN Women*. Ms. Bachelet will become Under-Secretary-General. For more information, visit www.unwomen.org.

Society of the Sacred Heart at the UN



406 East 80th Street
New York, NY 10075
Phone (212) 737-7231
Fax (212) 737 7235

Cecile Meijer, rscj
cmeijer@rscj.org
Judith Garson, rscj
jgarson@rscj.org

Sacred Heart interns and volunteers:
Noraida Colón
Carolina Cordon-Bouzan
Fiona Hogan
Molly Mattesky
Kasia Rymar
Maria Willhoit

Layout & Design
Isidoro S. Baradi, IV
SHIFT Foundation,
Philippines

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Safe Drinking Water for All

by Cecile Meijer, rscj

With approximately one billion people without access to clean drinking water and about 2.6 billion who lack basic sanitation, water and sanitation are major sources of disease and death among people living in poverty. The United Nations has adopted two critical resolutions in the past few months that address water and sanitation as human rights.

In late July 2010 the General Assembly “recognized the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights” (A/RES/64/292). Following this resolution by the General Assembly, the issue was brought to the Human Rights Council in Geneva. The Council, in a landmark decision

of October 2, 2010, affirmed that the right to water and sanitation is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living, which itself is a legally binding treaty obligation in existing human rights law. For more information, visit the website of the [UN Independent Expert for Water](http://www.unhcr.org/refugees/4d4d4d4d).