



Welcome

Transformation seems a fitting theme for our presence at the United Nations (UN) as we begin our 12th year – a year that has been marked already by two important recent changes. That the Society of the Sacred Heart was granted special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN during the summer, might be new to some yet old news for others, but truth is that our presence at the UN will, from now on, need to include participation from our members. So get ready. Our website gives detailed information about what our new status means. The second change has to do with the relocation of the office; please note our new contact information at the end of this Newsletter.

Finally, a heart-felt thank-you from your NGO representative for your patience during my absence. The sabbatical was a blessing in many ways, renewing and re-energizing. May the blessings of peace be with each one of you during this Advent and Christmas season, and throughout the new year.

Calendar

- **February 4-13, 2015**
53rd Session of the *Commission for Social Development* (CSocD)
- **March 9-20, 2015**
59th Session of the *Commission on the Status of Women* (CSW), focusing on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 20 years later.
- **June 26 – July 8, 2015**
High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (replacing the Commission on Sustainable Development, CSD)

Website

Have you looked at our website lately? We have posted the following articles since September 2014:

- Secretary-General's Message for the International Day of Peace 2014
- New status granted
- The Charter of the United Nations
- Consultative status with ECOSOC
- "Now is the time for action"
- World AIDS Day 2014

A transforming development agenda?

by Cecile Meijer, rscj

When the international community gathered for the *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development – Rio +20* – in June 2012, it mandated the formulation of sustainable development goals which should be coherent with and integrated into the UN's post 2015 development agenda. An Open Working Group was tasked to articulate and propose a set of SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals – that would guide the world's development framework for the period 2016-2030.

The Open Working Group has now concluded its final report and has proposed goals that are action oriented, global in nature and universally applicable. The proposed goals build on, and seek to complete, unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),



Photo by Rob Goodier / Engineering for Change

but they also respond to new global challenges. The SDGs are thus much broader and more specific than their predecessor, the MDGs.

The process of formulating the proposed new goals took 17 months, from March 2013 through July 2014. The working methods of the Open Working Group were very inclusive as consultations were held with all relevant stakeholders, including representatives from governments, civil society, NGOs, and the private section (business).

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Photo by Cecile Meijer, rscj

A new human rights leader

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has a new leader. On September 1, 2014, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein of Jordan assumed the position of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, succeeding Ms. Navanethem Pillay from South Africa. The role of High Commissioner is a critical

yet sensitive one, especially today when violent terrorism is increasing, human rights are trampled in conflict situations, and human rights defenders are at widespread risk.

Mr. Al Hussein has been a diplomat for many years, and has served twice as Jordan's Ambassador to the United Nations, spanning more than ten years. He has special expertise in international criminal justice, international law, UN peacekeeping, post-conflict peacebuilding, and international development.

Mr. Al Hussein is the first Muslim and Arab to hold this important post. In addition to Ms. Pillay, predecessors included Louise Arbour (Canada), Sergio Vieira de Mello (Brazil), Mary Robinson (Ireland), and José Ayala-Lasso (Ecuador).

Resources: The right to water and sanitation

Just four years ago, the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council recognized the human right to water and sanitation. But what does such recognition mean when approximately 748 million people still have no access to clean drinking water (43% of them live in sub-Saharan Africa), while 2.5 billion people, that is almost 1/3 of the world population, lack basic sanitation? How does this critical right become a reality for people on the ground, with meaningful legislation, policies, and regulations in every country?

Ms. Catarina de Albuquerque, Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, took one more step toward the realization of this right in October 2014, with the publication of *Realizing the human rights to water and sanitation: A Handbook*. This Handbook, actually a collection of nine booklets, is fully downloadable from the internet. You can find it on the website of the Special Rapporteur, or by [clicking here](#). The Handbook is currently available



Photo by Cecile Meijer, rscj

only in English, but full translations into Arabic, French, Portuguese and Spanish are underway, so keep checking the website regularly.

All of this has resulted in a proposal for 17 concrete goals with a total of 169 targets. These goals address a host of environmental, social and economic concerns, including climate change; access to sustainable energy; deforestation, desertification, oceans, land degradation, and loss of biodiversity; as well as sustainable consumption and production patterns. Of a more economic and social nature are the proposed goals calling for sustained, inclusive and sustainable growth; building resilient infrastructure; and the need to reduce inequality within and among nations. The proposed SDGs also continue MDGs that will not fully be achieved. Thus, poverty eradication, ending hunger and the need for inclusive, equitable, quality education have a necessary place among the proposed goals.

The Open Working Group's proposal is called the "Zero-Draft" and is the basis from which the 193 Member States of the UN will negotiate their final text. These negotiations are scheduled to begin in early 2015, under the leadership of the Ambassadors of Kenya and Ireland who will serve as co-facilitators. The negotiations will ultimately lead to a set of final Sustainable Development Goals which are meant to be adopted by the General Assembly in September 2015.

Stay tuned!

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