



Update: September/October 2017

72nd General Assembly Rings in a New Year for Diplomats and NGOs



Each September brings with it a rush of activity in and around UN Headquarters in New York City. Security is significantly elevated throughout the city as presidents and prime ministers convene for the annual "General Debate" of the General Assembly. The General Assembly is one of the principal "organs" of the UN system. Every recognized nation on earth is represented

within this body and each has equal voting power on the matters they may discuss. This relatively flat power structure differs from the UN Security Council which privileges its five permanent members with a permanent seat on the Council and veto power on any resolution they discuss as a group. The General Debate for which Heads of State gather each September is an opportunity for a representative of each nation to speak before the entire body on the opinions and issues of greatest concern to their nation. This year, the recurring themes of this debate included tension over nuclear arms proliferation and testing and the plight of the Rohingya refugees being expelled from Myanmar by activities that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights called a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing.”



Many nations also spoke passionately about the imperative of decisive climate action, especially in light of the devastation and havoc a series of hurricanes were wreaking or threatening to wreak on North America and the Caribbean Islands at the time of the meeting. French President Emmanuel Macron used his time at the podium to reaffirm that the Paris Climate Agreement would not be re-negotiated despite the U.S. President’s claims that only renegotiation would keep the U.S. in the accord. Many other French leaders in environmental protection assumed stages at various high-level gatherings around New York during the weeks of the General Assembly to promote their newest climate action initiative: the Global Pact for the Environment. A group of

parliamentarians and environmentalist leaders from Civil Society hatched the idea for such a document in June of 2016. They now have a first draft and executive summary (<http://pactenvironment.org/white-paper/>) in circulation, which was drafted by a group of over 100 environmental experts under the coordination of the French Think Tank Le Club de Juristes. It aims to serve as an “umbrella text” that unites all international environmental law and establishes a legally-binding obligation on the part of governments to guard and ensure its citizens’ right to a healthy environment.



(Pictures above: UN General Assembly Hall during 2017 General Debate; *Wikimedia Commons*; French President Emmanuel Macron, Former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, and Former President of the Paris Climate Conference Laurent Fabius present the Pact in June 2017. *Michel Richard*)

Meet Our New Interns

[Jacquelyn GUSDANE, SND:](#)



The congregation to

which I belong serves in 18 countries and consists of approximately 2,000 members. Our current area of growth, as with many international congregations, is in East Africa and the Pacific-Asia region. Our four provinces in the United States are in process of becoming one province, SND-USA, by 2020.

Most of us possess a felt sense of God's goodness and provident care directing our lives in ways that we never imagined. As a Sister of Notre Dame, I count myself among those graced women who possess this gift and am filled with gratitude for God's gentle care of me. Serving most of my life in the greater Cleveland area, my decades of service have involved teaching, school administration, community leadership, and spiritual direction/retreat giving. This past July, I completed ten years as president of Notre Dame Schools (co-ed, Pre-K - 12th grade) in Chardon, Ohio. Sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame, the schools educate 1250 students.

I have also been blessed with many opportunities for international travel in developing and developed countries. My abiding interest, genuine concern, and ever-present affection for the people of God have heightened my awareness and expanded my experiences of the beauty and breadth of our global community and of its pressing needs and urgent problems. My internship with

UNANIMA is a gift that has brought me into close contact and conversation with people from all corners of the world who are committed to action and advocacy so that justice and peace become lived realities in our world that are patterned after the life of Jesus. (Photo above: Jacquelyn waiting for a meeting to begin in one of the conference rooms of UN Headquarters)

Carmen Soto, CCV:

I was born in Puerto Rico and, due to the economic situation on the Island, the family moved to New York City where I was raised. I entered the Carmelite Sisters of Charity-Vedruna 31 years ago. I worked in special education for various years, and, through the experience of translating for both parents and teachers, I realized the need to work more directly with families. I focused my studies on Human Relations and have worked in Social Services ever since.

I am missioned in Riverdale, MD and continue in social services out of St. Bernard Catholic Church a multicultural parish and neighborhood. My ministry has been predominately among the immigrant community from Latin America and, most recently, refugees from Africa and the Middle East. Services are offered through the Vedruna Project and include an educational and social service component. We have beginner's English classes and citizenship classes for those who wish to become citizens of the United States. Social services involve compassionate listening and networking with other community agencies to provide the best possible referrals for the community. We have a partnership with the House of Ruth, a domestic violence (DV) organization that provides individual counseling for survivors of DV and co-leads a support group for women. There is also a support group for mothers, which is co-lead by the Prince George County Latino Liaison.



In addition, we have a partnership with the Mexican Consulate, who comes to the parish 2-3 times a year to provide consulate services and once a month to provide basic health screening. Both components have been successful thanks to our dedicated volunteers.

I am also a member of MACAMS (Mid-Atlantic Coalition Against Modern Slavery) a coalition formed by religious sisters that is based in Silver Spring, MD. The group meets monthly for prayer vigil or an organizational meeting against human trafficking on alternating months.

During my internship experience with UNANIMA, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of some of the complexity of the function of the UN and how UNANIMA advocates on behalf of our sisters and brothers worldwide so that hope, justice and peace can always be a reality in their lives. (Photo above: Carmen, far left, with fellow intern Jacquelyn, center, and UI Executive Assistant Teresa Blumenstein).

UNANIMA and 17 NGO Partners Receive Major Grant to Embark on a Capacity-Building Mission



Over the course of the past two years, the UNANIMA Staff has been deeply engaged with other Religious NGO representatives at the UN in the formation of JCoR (Justice Coalition of Religious). The vision of this coalition, is to facilitate inter-congregational collaboration that increases the capacity of their member--grassroots service-providers, leadership, and UN representatives alike--to advance a just, rights-based implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. With the support of a grant from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation in 2016, the founding members of JCoR explored the feasibility of their vision by engaging a strategy consultant and research consultant to help them shape a potential governance model and to solicit the input of their members working at the grassroots and that would suit them all. After receiving an affirmation from their respective Religious community members, the UN representatives for 18 Religious NGOs, who collectively represent over 230 congregations at the UN, pursued funding for the implementation of their coalition vision. In late August 2017, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation awarded the group USD \$1.5 million to support three years of work toward their four key objectives:

1. Strengthen systemic change promotion skills of coalition members working at each geographic level of ministry (local, national, regional, global);
2. Enhance systemic-change communication among congregations and among levels of ministry;
3. Establish labor-and resource-sharing mechanisms among congregations on each level of ministry; and
4. Execute coordinated, inter-congregational systemic-change campaigns aimed at policy-makers on multiple levels.

The JCoR Members' Board, which is comprised of the main UN representatives for each member NGO, has now established work plans for the achievement of each of the objectives above. In the next several months, the group will select one or two regions on which to focus in their first years. They will also begin reaching out to their contacts across the globe to weave together their communication networks for the distribution of updates on JCoR and its areas of social concern. More information on JCoR's progress will be featured in future UNANIMA Updates as it becomes available!

(Pictured above: Many of the UN representatives and consultants who were instrumental in advancing JCoR from idea toward reality, including Stacy Hanrahan, CND, second from left; UI Executive Assistant Teresa Blumenstein, fifth from left; and Celia Martin, NDS, second from right)

An Opportunity for one of UNANIMA's newest members to meet with its Director

By Anne McCabe, SM

An expression we Marist Sisters are using frequently is "holding the whole." I do it an injustice to call it simply an expression, for it is an invitation, challenge to a new way of seeing and acting.



Feedback by our thirteen Unit Leaders throughout Wednesday 20 th September emphasised each unit's joy at our membership of UNANIMA, the sense of connection, communion even, with something greater, something that touches into our daily realities and our hopes for the future. How wonderful- in the light of this – for the opportunity of meeting up with Jean Quinn, Executive Director of UNANIMA International, at our Plenary General Council Meeting at the Emmaus Centre, Dublin.

We shared Eucharist, lunch and a time of sharing as Jean spoke of the vision of UNANIMA, her own struggles with obtaining a visa and the challenge of building on the work of the two former directors, Catherine and Michele, whilst recognising the need to bring new direction and perhaps different ideas as we face the cries, injustices and problems of a rapidly changing world. Our symbol for our PGC Gathering was a spider's web bearing the place names of our 13 Units around the world... thank you, UNANIMA, for enlarging our web of connection by linking us with all your other member congregations and with all those you network with at the United Nations.

(Pictured above: UNANIMA International Executive Director Jean Quinn, third from left, with Marist UNANIMA International Board Representative Anne

McCabe, second from left, and other members of the Marists' General Council.)

Former UI Student Intern Shares Her UN Experience with Her University

During the summer of 2016, UNANIMA had the privilege of being supported by Alex (Jennie) Satterfield, a student at Brescia University in Kentucky, USA. She recently shared her reflection on her UI internship in her university's newsletter. Here are a few excerpts:



My internship with UNANIMA International was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life so far. I learned that I have access to the information and meetings held by the UN every day, which completely changed my approach on my own civic engagement. I learned more than I even thought possible about my personal subject of interest, which is trafficking, but I was also exposed to so many more issues and opportunities that I was unfamiliar with until my internship. The employees at UNANIMA were more than supportive and taught me about the various cultures and backgrounds they come from to form a united front and fight global issues. The mission of this NGO is truly noble and I am honored to have been a part of it for a short time. I learned the language of the UN, which provides a foundation for me to expand upon as I continue working toward my own career. I also met some of

the most inspiring people and learned of many more opportunities for me to eventually take my job in the field of law and apply it to fighting trafficking...

... I highly recommended to UNANIMA that they allow as many interns as possible to relive my experience, and I continue to look for ways to stay connected and involved from Kentucky. My time with UNANIMA showed me just how little the majority of people are truly aware of and now my biggest goal is to be a component in the work toward removing the dark cloud that seems to be cast over the world...The world is becoming a scary place, but UNANIMA's work inspired me to continue to look for the good in everyone and make sure no one is excluded or left behind.

UNANIMA Board of Directors Convenes in New York



Our Board came together for three days in late September to reflect on the accomplishments and lessons of the past six months and to set the course for the months ahead. Although UNANMIMA International Executive Director Jean Quinn was unable to be with the group in person, she participated in all three days of the meeting by video conference.

The biggest news of the meeting was the admission of new members to the UNANIMA family! Until now, only the Stella Maris Province of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (MSC) were members of UNANIMA, but they have expanded their membership to include their full, global congregation. Additionally, we welcomed nine new Ursuline congregations as a “charism group” who will act in concert as a single new member of our coalition. More information about the newest members of our family will be profiled next month’s Update!

(Pictured above from left to right, back row: Judy Curley, SASV; Cathy Sheehan, DW; Janet Peterworth, OSU for Ursuline Charism Group; Margaret Fyfe, CSB; middle row: Mary Akinwale, SHCJ; Margaret Scott, ACI; Susan Seeby, CSA; Lucille Goulet, SSA; Ellen Sinclair, SDS; Fran Gorsuch, CBS; Barbara Jean Head, OSU for Maplemount Ursulines; Suzette Clarck, RSC; Mary Kaye Nealen, SP; Barbara Spears, SNJM; front row: Celia Martin, NDS; Stacy Hanrahan, CND; Nonata Bezerra, SND; Joseé Therrien, RJM)

Flashpoints:



- The Ministry Department at Loyola University, Chicago has published a free, electronic text book entitled *Healing Earth*. The text blends environmental science and the need to protect the planet with spirituality and ethical ideas about just stewardship. It is available online

now in English (<http://healingearth.ijep.net/>) and in Spanish (<http://healingearth.ijep.net/es>).



- If you missed the invitation of the NGO Committee on Migration to answer a survey on work to promote the social inclusion of migrants this past July and August, now is your chance to act! The Committee is now working with the UN's Together Campaign and has resumed collection of survey responses. If you work directly with migrants and/or refugees, please **share your knowledge and experiences of promoting social inclusion and combatting xenophobia by completing this 15-minute survey before Monday, 20 November 2017:**

<http://bit.ly/2xSKEST>



- Irene, a Portuguese **Handmaid of the Sacred Heart of Jesus**, is ministering as a Director of a camp for IDPs in Kurdistan, Iraq. She recently sent the following report on her experience of the referendum on Kurdish secession from Iraq:

I am witnessing an historic moment here in Iraq. I had the privilege of being at one of the polling stations for the referendum requesting independence for Kurdistan. Everyone was eager to show me their papers and insisted that I tell people in my country that they were doing everything in an entirely transparent and correct manner. It was a totally peaceful affair. And we have been able to work as normal and many displaced persons are returning home. Good news indeed. However, following the vote, the Iraqi and Turkish governments are holding joint military exercises and Iraq has demanded that the Kurds give back the Airport at Erbil and its airspace. While Turkey has closed its borders and is threatening to starve the Kurdish people, blocking the canals and cutting off radio transmissions also.

At present it all seems to be only a political game. The Kurds are insisting that the voice of the people has been heard and that now they wish to negotiate with Bagdad. So things are relatively peaceful. Please pray for stability in this country and this region where wars have been fought for over 2,000 years. (Photo: AFP PHOTO/SAFIN HAMED)



Calling all UNANIMA Sisters and associates!

We want to hear about the work you are doing and the people you serve. Share a story from your corner of the world by submitting a "flashpoint" to info@unanima-international.org.

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