

Update from UNANIMA International

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## Update: September 2016

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### **WELCOME OUR NEW EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT!**



Meet Teresa Blumenstein, UNANIMA's new Executive Assistant. Teresa is a New Jersey native and a 2013 alumna of the University of Notre Dame. While completing a bachelor's degree in chemical and biomolecular engineering, she engaged in youth mentorship at a Catholic Worker in Hartford, Connecticut, environmental activism in the Appalachian Mountains, and development research focused on drinking water in Nnindy, Uganda. Then she embarked on 3 years of full-time volunteer service with the Loretto Volunteer Program and Lutheran Volunteer Corps.

Her first two volunteer years consisted of nutrition education and preventive medicine promotion at a community health center in St. Louis, Missouri, coordination of communications and membership for a coalition of over 100 women's foundations based in San Francisco, California, and brief service trips to Honduras and the US-Mexico border. Teresa joins us following a year of human rights advocacy as an assistant UN representative for the Sisters and Co-members of Loretto. As a member of the UNANIMA team, Teresa looks forward to applying her array of experiences and passion for the justice work of women religious to service on the Executive Committee of the NGO Committee on Migration and leadership team of the RUN grant project (see article below).

## **UN AGREEMENT ON REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS**

According to the UN, in 2015, 24 million people left their home countries because of war or persecution. More than 10 times that number — 244 million — were considered migrants, living somewhere other than the country of their birth. But the situation of these people is so politically sensitive that after days of intense negotiations over every word of an international agreement, the 193 nations of the world recently adopted a 22-page draft that contained virtually no concrete commitments to make their journeys better or safer. Nor does it have any force of law.

The document will serve as the basis for a meeting at the annual gathering of world leaders at the September UN General Assembly. Refugees and migrants will be the biggest issue there, but decisions on specific commitments on what countries should do to protect refugees and migrants were deferred until 2018. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon also plans to hold a meeting on the problems of refugees and migrants.

The Center for Migration Studies said that the draft “falls short of creating a new framework for the protection of refugees and migrants around the world. Instead, it reaffirms the status quo, and, in some areas, weakens current protections for these vulnerable populations.” The document does assert that migration can be good for the world, which is wording that migrant-sending countries wanted. It also calls for countries to take back their citizens if they travel illegally and fail to get asylum, which is what migrant-receiving countries wanted. But it says nothing about the rights of the 40 million people who are displaced in their own countries, or about those who are leaving their homes because of climate change.

“This is a document very much about the present,” said T. Alexander Aleinikoff, a senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, D.C. and a former official at the United Nations refugee agency. “This is not a document that prepares us for the future.”

--Excerpts from Somini Sengupta of *Palacios* / AP

## **IS HLPF WORKING?**

In mid-July the UN held the first meeting of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) since the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were approved in September 2015. We were very excited to see how the process would work. This is the really practical side of sustainable development governance on the country level—how the 2030 agenda is actually going to be implemented. The meeting was divided into five days of preliminary dialog on related issues, and two-three days of Voluntary National Reviews from the 22 countries who volunteered to give them this first year. During those three days, high-level ministers from each country were supposed to share “best practices” and constructive criticisms with each other, regarding how they are implementing the SDGs and mainstreaming them into their country plans and strategies. Here is a fairly objective summary of the meeting (also in French):<http://www.iisd.ca/vol33/enb3322e.html>

On the plus side, this meeting of the HLPF had more direction and focus. Many countries have begun to put implementation mechanisms in place and are beginning to collect national data. Developing countries were encouraged to hear developed countries confessing that they have problems too! On the negative side, there are presently no follow-up mechanisms in place, and there was no time for real interactions—even by other member states—and even less time for civil society input. A report from the Women’s Major Group said that only 2 of the 22 countries reviewed had seriously engaged civil society in the review process, especially women’s organizations.

## CELEBRATE! AND MOVE ON



Do you want to hear about a real success at the UN? The UN Montreal Protocol, the landmark 1989 environmental treaty designed to close the hole in the ozone layer by banning chloro-fluorocarbons (CFCs)...is actually working! CFC chemicals used as coolants for refrigerators and air conditioning caused serious depletion of a layer of ozone gas high in the atmosphere; which protects living things from much of the high-energy ultraviolet radiation that causes cell damage like skin cancer. As the chemicals were replaced by less harmful chemicals (HFCs), the hole in the ozone layer actually did get smaller.

Unfortunately, the substitute chemicals (HFCs) are also powerful “greenhouse gases” that trap the earth’s heat and contribute to climate change. At a UN meeting in Vienna in late July, there was a historic chance to help mitigate climate change by amending the Montreal Protocol on the subject of HFCs. Advantage? The Montreal Protocol has the force of law in almost every country; this would make it more effective than the Paris Climate Change Agreement, which lacks the force of a treaty.

Now we are afraid that changes of leadership in some countries may make them back out of the Paris commitments (e.g. the new president of the Philippines and the USA candidate Donald Trump have both said they would not honor the Paris agreement, and Brazil is uncertain). Most countries support some form of a “deal” to phase out HFCs, but some of the developing economies, led by India, are pushing for a slow timeline.

The meeting in Vienna did not manage to reach an agreement on wording for the amendment, but the UN is hoping for something to come out of the 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Parties to the Montreal Protocol in October in Kigali, Rwanda.

## RACE FOR SECRETARY GENERAL

After the first and second “straw polls” by the Security Council, **Antonio Guterres**, former Portuguese prime minister and a past head of the UN’s refugee organization was the clear leader both times. In the second straw vote round, in second place was **Vuk Jeremic**, a dynamic former Serbian



foreign minister and a former president of the UN General Assembly. Third was **Susana Malcorra**, the foreign minister of Argentina, until recently the chief of staff for Ban Ki-moon —and the only woman to make the second ballot “short list,” despite a strong preference voiced by a majority of U.N. member states that the next secretary general be a woman.

Before the final decision, there will be several rounds of straw polls in the Security Council. The final pick from the remaining candidates will probably be in October, and the new secretary general will succeed Ban Ki-moon on January 1 for a term of five years. **The other candidates are**, in order of votes received, **Danilo Turk** (Slovenia); **Irina Bokova**, the director of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), **Sergjan Kerim**, (Macedonia); and **Helen Clark**, the former New Zealand prime minister and head of the UN Development Program; **Cristiana Figueres** of Costa Rica, who championed the UN climate change operation; **Natalie Gherman**. (Moldova); **Miroslav Lajčák**, (Slovakia); and **Igor Lukšić**, (Montenegro). **Vesna Pusić**, a professor and former foreign minister of Croatia, withdrew her candidacy in early August.

--Ces Martin **NDS**

## UNITED NATIONS COMMEMORATION DAYS:

The UN commemorates *something* most days of the year, from soil to civil aviation, from toilets to tsunamis, from road traffic victims to diabetes! For a complete list you can check this

link: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/observances/international-days/>

Here are a few coming up the rest of the year (the code at the end is the reference to the resolution that enacted it):

**21 September-** [International Day of Peace](#) ([A/RES/36/67](#)) ([A/RES/55/282](#))  
**11 October-** [International Day of the Girl Child](#) ([A/RES/66/170](#))  
**16 October-** [World Food Day](#) [FAO] ([A/RES/35/70](#))  
**17 October-** [International Day for the Eradication of Poverty](#) ([A/RES/47/196](#))  
**24 October-** [United Nations Day](#) ([A/RES/168 \(II\)](#)); [A/RES/2782 \(XXVI\)](#))  
**25 November-** [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#) ([A/RES/54/134](#))  
**10 December-** [Human Rights Day](#) ([A/RES/423 \(V\)](#))

## **“RUN” LAUNCHES PLANNING EFFORT**

The informal group of sisters, brother, priests and others who represent their respective Catholic religious congregations at the United Nations is called RUN – Religious at the UN. Today there are about 60 RUN members, representing over 200 congregations with around 100,000 members serving in 177 countries.

Members of RUN have always wanted to do more effective joint advocacy at the UN, and to collaboratively communicate with / educate their members on the ground. To study how to do this, RUN received funding from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation for a one-year facilitated planning process. *Please pray for our success in this grant; UNANIMA has been very involved in its writing.*

*Conrad N. Hilton (founder of Hilton Hotels) left his fortune to help the world's disadvantaged and vulnerable people. The Foundation currently funds projects in six priority areas: providing safe water, ending chronic homelessness, preventing substance use, helping children affected by HIV and AIDS, supporting youth in foster care, and supporting the work of Catholic Sisters.*

## **WORLD SEASON OF CREATION**

Dating back to 1989, this celebration has been embraced by Catholics and many other major Christian churches. It runs from September 1 to October 4 (feast of St. Francis). Pope Francis invites us to pray for creation on September 1<sup>st</sup> and to promote the [Season of Creation website](#) (it will soon be translated into multiple languages).

## DANGEROUS JOURNEYS

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has recorded 23% more migrant deaths during the first half of 2016, especially women and girls. This is an extraordinary article from IOM. The first link has a Spanish translation. <https://www.iom.int/news/dangerous-journeys-international-migration-increasingly-unsafe-2016-iom>

Direct Link to Full 10-Page 2016 IOM Publication:

[https://publications.iom.int/system/files/gmdac\\_data\\_briefing\\_series\\_issue\\_4.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/gmdac_data_briefing_series_issue_4.pdf)

## FLASHPOINTS



- Covadonga (Cova) Orejas **CCV** is one of our “regional contacts” for UNANIMA. Here she is featured in an article about her work against trafficking in Togo and Gabon. It has a translation option, though not very good!



- The Daughters of Wisdom (**DW**) JPIC (Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation) committee met in Rome this summer: Left to right: Martha (Haiti), Lois (Canada), Rani (India), Ann (USA), Violeta (Ecuador)



- More than 500 men, women and students gathered for a celebration of World Indigenous Day at Pimpri, India. Several organizations (Divya Chhaya Subir, Jeevandhara Pimpri, Jivan

Jyot Pimpri and Adivasi Mahasang) networked with the CCV sisters and guest speakers to share topics like the rights of forest land in Gujarat, and tribal culture. Sr. Rekha **CCV** shared on “Human Rights

and the Rights of Indigenous People.” An action plan was developed, and the participants left determined to work for the unity and betterment of their people.

- Sr. Rekha M. **CCV**



- Some **Sisters of Providence (SP)** and their co-workers in the Providence Peace Community volunteer with [Advocates for Immigrants in Detention Northwest, or AID NW](#) , a nonprofit welcome center. AIDNW is a motor home that sits right

outside the gates of one of the largest immigration prisons in the United States (capacity of 1575). Located in Tacoma Washington, every month it receives up to 200 people, mostly women seeking asylum, from the US-Mexico border. Many held there have lived in the US for years, some for the majority of their lives. When residents are released they often lack adequate clothing, food, or shelter; many have no nearby family or friends, and some do not speak English. But the tiny welcome center offers a temporary safe haven and provides released detainees resources like telephone access, food and beverages, toiletries, bus cards, area maps, and a backpack. Volunteers help locate housing, confirm transportation, or contact government agencies and help with official forms, such as an application for a work permit. They also provide help for families who come to visit, and even go into the Detention Center to show support for individuals who go before the court for their hearing. The picture shows several SP sisters and their co-workers.

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