

CLC at the United Nations: Raising our Voices for Justice

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Our NGO representatives: Mars Custodio, Joan Woods, Sylvia Schmitt and Jose Lim (at a session)

WHY IS CLC AT THE U.N.?

As an apostolic community, CLC is committed to working for justice in every aspect of life. As our General Principles state: “We propose to commit ourselves as Christians in bearing witness to those human and Gospel values within the church and society which affect the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation” (GP 4). We work locally, in soup kitchens and homeless shelters, with undocumented immigrants and AIDS patients and in many other venues. We work globally in our prayerful support and solidarity with our sisters and brothers around the world as they struggle for justice. As an NGO (non-governmental organization) at the United Nations, we also work globally in our struggle to

address the root causes of suffering and injustice around the world. That’s not a task that is relegated to a few CLCers who concern themselves with the U.N.. It is an obligation for each and every member of the apostolic body that we are as CLC.

WHAT IS THE CLC NY U.N. WORKING GROUP FOCUS?

In order to be an effective presence in the NGO community at the UN, we are currently focusing on poverty and suffering as they are impacted by the problem of safe and secure access to water. All of us face a looming water crisis, but the world’s poorest suffer the most. Access to safe drinking water is one focus of the Millennium Development Campaign, the joint pledge of one hundred eighty nine countries to address poverty and suffering in this new millennium. Water is part of a complex of issues being addressed as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (see Jose Lim’s article in the previous Winter issue of *Harvest*).

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Be aware of the Millennium Development Goals and Our Country’s Commitment to Them. Currently, numerous groups across the United States and the world are working to raise people’s awareness of the Millennium Development Goals and the financial support that countries have committed to this effort to reduced worldwide poverty. The U.S., for example, made a commitment in the year 2000 to contribute seven tenths of one percent of our GNP to support the MDGs; *however, at this time we are woefully behind in fulfilling this commitment, having contributed only fifteen hundredth of one percent.*¹


Be Aware of the ONE Campaign. In order to bring pressure on those governments that have not fulfilled their pledges to support the MDGs, organizations like Bread for the World, Oxfam America, Save the Children and many more are joining together to raise voices calling on the U.S. Government to increase its contribution. This campaign to raise public awareness about the global fight against poverty and suffering is being called the ONE Campaign. Each ONE of us must act, but we can accomplish even more when we raise our voices as ONE to reduce poverty and suffering around the world. In addition, the campaign calls on the U.S. Government to contribute an additional ONE percent of its annual budget to development assistance. Many public events are being organized around the ONE Campaign. The ONE Campaign website offers each of us an opportunity to sign

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the ONE Declaration, a statement of our commitment to making a better, safer world for all. Sponsor organizations are also offering white wristbands to be worn as a sign of solidarity and commitment (see the ONE Campaign website).

Hold Our Country Accountable to Its Commitment to the Poor. As CLC, we can join our voices to this cry for justice. Our government should know that we care about eradicating poverty and that we hold the government accountable for its commitment to the MDGs. More information and resources for individuals, groups or parishes are available through the websites listed below. Many voices raised as ONE can make a difference. Each ONE of us can participate in this global effort to “affect the dignity of the person, the welfare of the family and the integrity of creation” (GP4).

For further information:
www.onecampaign.org
www.undp.org/water
www.waterstewards.org
www.waterconserve.info
www.un.org/millenniumgoals

See also, *Harvest*, Winter '04, "Civil Society Takes Action," by Jose Lim; and Harvest, Summer '04, "The Global Impact of Bottled Water Consumption," by Sylvia Picard Schmitt. 

¹ Overseas development assistance as recorded by the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development



It must be acknowledged, however, that the United Nations Organization, even with limitations and delays due in great part to the failures of its members, has made a notable contribution to the promotion of respect for human dignity, the freedom of peoples and the requirements of development, thus preparing the cultural and institutional soil for the building of peace.

The activity of national Governments will be greatly encouraged by the realization that the ideals of the United Nations have become widely diffused, particularly through the practical gestures of solidarity and peace made by the many individuals also involved in *Non-Governmental Organizations* and in *Movements* for human rights.

This represents a significant incentive for a reform which would enable the United Nations Organization to function effectively for the pursuit of its own stated ends, which remain valid: “humanity today is in a new and more difficult phase of its genuine development. It needs a *greater degree of international ordering*”. States must consider this objective as a clear moral and political obligation which calls for prudence and determination. Here I would repeat the words of encouragement which I spoke in 1995: “The United Nations Organization needs to rise more and more above the cold status of an administrative institution and to become a moral centre where all the nations of the world feel at home and develop a shared awareness of being, as it were, a *family of nations*”.

— Pope John Paul II, World Day of Peace, January 1, 2004

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