

Good News Service #5 for October/08

This is the fifth batch of good news items assembled since the Service began in June. We encourage readers to send us similar stories, from local to world events which help counter the ominous events with which we are all familiar.

1. UN PRESIDENT-ELECT SEEKS ACTION ON DISARMAMENT, WORLD HUNGER, HUMAN RIGHTS & UN REFORM

Sept 16/08. United Nations. Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann of Nicaragua, newly-elected President of the UN General Assembly, spoke passionately of the need to rid the world of nuclear weapons, and to "replace the logic of selfishness with that of love."

In his opening statement to the 63rd session of the General Assembly, he said that "all of us share responsibility for the state of our world". He stressed forgiveness and reconciliation in "rediscovering our role as stewards of the planet Earth".

Among the issues requiring immediate attention by the General Assembly, he said, are world hunger and unequal distribution of purchasing power, scarcity of water, the need to democratize the UN itself, human trafficking, gender inequality and the urgent need for nuclear and conventional disarmament.

Two other eloquent talks were given, one by Costa Rica's President Oscar Arias Sanchez and one by the representative of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, two of the smallest countries in the world.

(www.un.org/ga/president/63/statements/160908opening63.shtml)

2. OBAMA ENDORSES TEST BAN TREATY, MCCAIN NOT SO SURE

The Democratic presidential nominee, Senator Barack Obama, in a July 16 speech, has said he would work with the Senate to ratify the UN Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty “and then seek its earliest possible entry into force”. The Republican presidential nominee, Senator John McCain, who voted against the Treaty in 1999, said only that, if elected, he would “begin a dialogue with our allies, and with the US Senate, to identify ways we can move forward to limit testing in a verifiable manner.”

3. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT VOTES TO REDUCE EMISSIONS FROM GAS GUZZLERS

From Great Climate Campaign News: The European Parliament’s Environment Committee has voted for a strong package to reduce emissions from cars. As the committee went into session, it seemed certain that a compromise packaged riddled with loopholes would be the one to pass.

4. MPs URGE UN TO BACK ARMS TRADE TREATY

Oct. 19. New York, via OXFAM International. The UN has received demands from more than two thousand Members of Parliament, from 124 countries, for urgent progress towards negotiating an effective international arms trade treaty. Knowing that more than 1,000 people are killed every day by armed violence the parliamentarians signed a declaration of support for a treaty that will strengthen resistance to the global trade in conventional arms. Specifically, they want to stop the transfer of weapons likely to be used for violations of international human rights law. For more information: <mgfleming@oxfam.org.uk>

5. TURKISH NUCLEAR PLANS POWERED DOWN

Just two days after the arrest of 37 activists from Greenpeace and the Global Action Group protesting against nuclear energy in Turkey, they appear to have won a victory. For months, the Energy Ministry of Turkey has been intent on selecting a supplier for its first nuclear energy plant. The plant would have been the first of a number the Turkish government says it wants to build. Instead, plans have been stopped dead in their tracks. It turns out

energy companies just aren't that interested taking the risks of building a new nuclear energy plant.

6. GERMANY BANS PESTICIDES KILLING HONEYBEES

from CCPA's Oct/08 Good News Page, via the UK Guardian:

The German government has provisionally banned a family of pesticides conclusively linked to the massive deaths of honeybees.

When government researchers tested the bodies of dead bees, they found that 99% of them had been contaminated with the pesticide *clothianidin*, made by Bayer. The pesticide had been applied to the seeds of oilseed canola in the Rhine River Valley. Bayer blamed the deaths on an improper application of the pesticide, which the US Environmental Protection Agency has classified as highly toxic to honeybees.

7. AUSTRALIA MAPS "HOT ROCKS" ENERGY RESOURCES

Sydney, Australia, from CCPA's Oct/08 Good News Page, via Reuters: Geoscience Australia has mapped the nation's geothermal energy resources, using temperature recordings from decades of drilling by energy and exploration firms, sometimes to a depth of five kilometers. "Just one percent of these reserves would produce 26,000 years of energy supplies, Geoscience's Anthony Budd told Reuters.

"Geothermal energy, sometimes called hot rocks, has a huge potential in Australia, both as a solution to climate change and in terms of national energy security."

8. CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH WAR LAUNCHED IN JAPAN

June 2/08, published by CommonDreams.org. By Alice Slater:

This May, more than 22,000 people attended three day meetings in Tokyo, and 8,000 more gathered in Hiroshima, Osaka and Sendai to organize for peace. More than 40 countries were represented with over 200 international visitors. Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution was promoted, not only as a disarmament measure for all nations, but also as a means for distributing the world's treasure, now wasted at the rate of more than one trillion dollars per year. These funds should be used to restore the health of the planet and end poverty on earth. Today, the US-Japanese joint Theatre Missile Defense undermines the spirit of Article 9.

9. NORTH KOREA TAKEN OFF BUSH'S "TERROR LIST"

Oct. 13/08. New York Times. By Helen Cooper, via Robin Collins:
The Bush Administration has announced it has removed North Korea from a list of state-identified sponsors of terrorism in a bid to salvage a fragile nuclear deal that seemed on the verge of collapse.
While presidential-aspirant Barack Obama voiced his approval, Senator John McCain expressed concern, complaining that North Korea had yet to demonstrate it was serious about de-nuclearizing.

10. SACKVILLE COUNCIL REJECTS URANIUM MINING

June 12/08. Sackville, NB via Council of Canadians:
As reported in today's Sackville Times and Transcript, "Under the guidance of Mayor Pat Estabrooks, Sackville Council took a strong stance this week against uranium exploration and mining. The motion noted how the procedures cause permanent harm to quality of life, can release radiation and radioactive chemical toxins to contaminate both air and water, and create numerous other health hazards. It received unanimous approval and will be delivered quickly to all appropriate officials in government."

11. PEACE EDUCATION EXPANDING IN AFRICA

Sept/08, from Global Campaign for Peace Education Newsletter:
Peace Education has been introduced as a compulsory subject in both primary and secondary schools in **Kenya**. The Ministry of Education says the subject is a response to post-election violence witnessed earlier this year. Learners will go through a set of peace manuals prepared by the United Nations Children's Fund and curriculum developers at the Kenya Institute of Education.

The UNESCO prize for peace education was awarded to the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in **South Africa**. The Institute was established in 2000 to foster reconciliation in post Apartheid South Africa, and to advocate peace through rigorous socio-political analysis.

In **Tanzania**, the Dar es Salaam Institute on Peace Education 2008 was held on the International Day of Peace and attracted 40 educators, social and community workers and peace activists. As described by one participant:

“Our first action was to implement the Hyena Square Project. Hyena Square is one of the most economically disadvantaged and notoriously violent neighbourhoods of Dar es Salaam. A safe house was opened for transactional sex workers and injecting drug users seeking a break from running the streets, youth unemployment, gang violence and the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The safe house, known as the Elizabeth Youth Centre, provides inpatient and outpatient counselling, life skills and self improvement training; also limited shelter and food. I have been working as a peer educator and youth counselor there since 2006”.

12. PEACE EDUCATORS HAILED AS HEROES IN THE PHILIPPINES

Sept/08. from Global Campaign for Peace Education Newsletter:
The five members of the government panel who negotiated with the secessionist rebels to expand the Bangsamoro territory have been honoured and hailed as heroes by peace advocates in the Philippines.

Meanwhile, the Peace Education Network has appealed to both government forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to stop fighting and heed the call by many civil society groups for the resumption of dialogues and negotiations. For more information:
<[opinion.inquirer.net/inquireropinion/lettersto the editor/view 20080906-159012/An-appeal-to-end-the-violence-in-Mindanao](http://opinion.inquirer.net/inquireropinion/letterstotheeditor/view/20080906-159012/An-appeal-to-end-the-violence-in-Mindanao)>

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