



GOOD NEWS SERVICE #35: LATE FALL, 2014

Editorial: November 20, 2014. The question is sometimes asked, is there enough good news to write about this month? Really important events, that is. Well, yes, there is, plenty of it, and this month is no exception. It is good news that Malala Yousafzay from Pakistan and Kailash Satyarthi from India, now share the Nobel Peace Prize for 2014... It is good news that the United Nations, and all the countries that support it, are seriously determined to increase its ability to bring peacekeeping forces into war zones... It is good news that China and the US have achieved a breakthrough on climate change. It is certainly good news that the tiny Republic of the Marshall Islands dares to challenge in court the massive might of the nuclear weapon states. And it is always good news to hear of the hundreds of local initiatives by citizens who care about this planet and the animals, birds and bees which co-habit with us. For more good news read on...

1. UN TO INCREASE CAPACITY TO DEPLOY PEACEKEEPING FORCES IN CONFLICT ZONES

10 October 2014. Via IPI Research & Publications, by Peter Langille.

Too many conflicts over the past 20 years – from Rwanda to the Central African Republic – have demonstrated that the costs of intervening in a crisis increase dramatically when deployments of peace operations are delayed. With slow responses, violent conflicts tend to escalate and spread, increasing destruction and suffering, as well as the need for later, larger and longer operations at higher costs.

This report assesses the UN's capacity to rapidly deploy large peace operations by evaluating eight initiatives designed to reach this goal. It proposes the establishment of a UN early mission headquarters tool to expedite mission start-up. And it explores potentially promising partnerships for rapid deployment underway in Africa, Europe and Latin America.

The author finds that attempts to develop better arrangements for rapid deployment have been repeatedly frustrated by financial austerity and an approach that encourages incremental, fragmented reforms, which have proven insufficient. Despite previously recommended response times of 30 to 90 days, UN deployments now tend to require six to twelve months.

As such, the report makes 14 suggestions for improvement in specific areas, including the standby arrangements with troop-contributing countries, the UN standing police capacity, and financial premiums that encourage states to respond more quickly.

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2. US-CHINA BREAKTHROUGH ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Nov. 15: Toronto Star: an edited version of a New York Times editorial: The deal jointly announced in Beijing by President Barack Obama and China's President Xi Jinping to limit greenhouse gases well beyond their earlier pledges is both a major diplomatic breakthrough and – assuming both sides can carry out their promises – an enormously promising step in the uncertain battle against climate change.

The climate accord represents a startling turnaround after years of futile efforts to cooperate in a meaningful way on global warming. It sends two critically important messages, one to the world and the other to the US Congress. China and the United States together account for about 45 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions. Their new commitments are thus almost certain to energize other countries to set more ambitious targets of their own. The Agreement cuts the ground from under people like Mitch McConnell, the next Senate majority leader, and others who have long argued that there is no point in taking aggressive steps against greenhouse gases as long as major developing countries refused to do likewise.

The most striking aspect of China's commitment is its agreement to a hard cap on emissions. It pledged for the first time to have its emissions "peak" by 2030 and sooner if possible. Until now, China has spoken only about reducing "carbon intensity," which really means allowing emissions to rise but at a slower rate. In the race to head off the unacceptable consequences of climate change, the name of the game is to stop emissions from rising at some point and then bend the curve downward. China has now committed itself to that path.

The task Obama has set for the US is also formidable. At the Copenhagen climate summit meeting in 2009, Obama pledged to reduce emissions in the United States by 17% below 2005 levels by 2020. He now pledges an ambitious 25 per cent cut below 2005 levels by 2025.

3. IMPORTANT NEW INITIATIVES TAKEN BY PNND TOWARDS THE ABOLITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Nov. 22. Basel, by Alyn Ware: Members of Parliamentarians for Nuclear NonProliferation & Disarmament (PNND) have elevated the nuclear disarmament issue at the United Nations, the European Union and the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) in several ways. They include:

1) The PNND Council Member, Frederica Mogherini, former Foreign Minister of Italy, has been named to be the Foreign Minister of the European Union. As a member of the Italian parliament she endorsed the [Parliamentarians Declaration Supporting a Nuclear Weapons Convention](#). In addition, she submitted a resolution to the Italian parliament, adopted by consensus, supporting the UNSG's Five Point Plan, the first point of which calls for negotiations on a NWC or package of agreements. As the EU Foreign Minister, she is a little more constrained by EU policy (which does not support a NWC), but having her private (and former public) support is a big plus.

2) On October 16, PNND Co-President Saber Chowdhury was elected to be the new President of the IPU, the international organization of Parliaments. Chowdhury, a former Amnesty “Prisoner of Conscience”, has been active internationally on nuclear disarmament, climate change, human rights and sustainable development issues. He was instrumental in adopting and implementing legislation in Bangladesh on the integration of lepers into society, criminalizing custodial torture and preventing violence against women and children. He was also instrumental in the adoption of a bill to protect the environment and biodiversity for current and future generations.

3) Parliamentarians around the world have taken action to support September 26 as the first International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. In the European Parliament, members from six of the seven political groups in Parliament signed a joint statement welcoming the day.

Parliamentarians in Japan and Korea from both government and opposition parties signed a joint statement to commemorate the day. In Costa Rica, Parliament adopted by consensus a resolution also welcoming the day.

In Bangladesh Parliament used the occasion to establish PNND Bangladesh. Resolutions were also adopted by the Parliaments in Cuba and Nicaragua. The Inter Parliamentary Union released a Press Statement on September 26 renewing its call on parliaments and MPs around the world to promote nuclear disarmament as a matter of urgency.

4. REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS CHALLENGES NUCLEAR WEAPON STATES; AWAITS WORLD COURT RULING

June 5, 2014. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, by Lily Vaccaro:

... This unprecedented lawsuit highlights attitudes, perceptions and strategies that are related to the politics of nuclear disarmament and are well worth noting. The lawsuit reflects a growing belief among international legal and policy experts, as well as some diplomats, that the time has come for the NPT to be treated – due to its near-universal adherence – as part of customary international law by which all states must abide, regardless of whether or not they actually signed the treaty.

Based on this reasoning, the Marshall Islands asks the International Court of Justice to rule that all nine nuclear states are in material breach of their legal obligations to disarm under international law, regardless of their status under

the NPT. Currently the international community does not consider the NPT to be part of international customary law; if it were, the treaty would have a legal status similar to that of the international bans on slavery or torture. Should the International Court of Justice make such a ruling, it could elevate the discourse on nuclear disarmament from vague declarations to stark statements of legally binding commitment. The lawsuit accentuates the rise of a new kind of politics of nuclear disarmament, a politics that ties nuclear disarmament to humanitarian issues. In 2013, the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Oslo, Norway, started a series of international meetings on this theme. These conferences press the issue of nuclear disarmament through the lens of the unique characteristics of nuclear weapons – their capability for unleashing destruction – not just on vast numbers of humans, but also on the environment, the economy and the well-being of future generations.

5. PAKISTAN'S MALALA YOUSAFZAY AND INDIA'S KAILASH SATYARTI JOINTLY RECEIVE 2014 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

October 2014, Oslo. The Norwegian Nobel Committee has added the Nobel Peace Prize for 2014 to Kailash Satyarti and Malala Yousafzay for their struggles against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education. Children must be able to go to school and not be financially exploited. In the poor countries of the world, 60% of the present population is under 25 years of age. In conflict-ridden areas in particular, the violation of children leads to the continuation of violence from generation to generation.

Showing great courage, Kailash Satyarti, maintaining Gandhi's tradition, has headed various forms of protests and demonstrations, all peaceful, focusing on the grave exploitation of children for financial gain. He has also contributed to the development of important international conventions on children's rights.

Despite her youth, Malala Yousafzay has already fought for several years for the right of girls to education and has shown by example that children and young people, too, can contribute to improving their own situations. This she has done under the most dangerous circumstances. Through her heroic struggle she has become a leading spokesperson for girls' rights to education.

The Nobel Committee regards it an important step that a Hindu and a Muslim, an Indian and a Pakistani, have joined in a common struggle for education and against extremism. The struggle against suppression and for the rights of

children and adolescents contributes to the realization of the “fraternity between nations” that Alfred Nobel mentions in his Will as one of the criteria for winning the Nobel Peace Prize.

6. A SECOND GREEN REVOLUTION IS STIRRING IN ASIA

May 10-16, 2014. *The Economist*. A second green revolution is stirring in the fields of Asia. It will not be the same as the first one, since it will depend not on a few miracle varieties but on tailoring existing seeds to different environments. And it promises to bring similar benefits – this time to the poor lands and poorer farmers that the first version passed by.

Such lands are poor because they are prone to floods, drought and salinity. New seeds have been developed which can survive flooding, and soon there will be varieties that tolerate drought, extreme heat and saltiness too, making the poorest lands fertile. So the second revolution could do even more to cut poverty than the first.

This second revolution has been made possible by the sequencing of the rice genome in 2005. It enabled the breeders to discover the genes for flood resistance in one obscure variety from eastern India, and transfer them to varieties all round the world. Breeders will soon do the same for genes that provide other valuable traits. Governments could do all sorts of things to push this revolution forward... It is hard to think of a way to improve more people’s lives for less money.

7. MONARCH BUTTERFLIES REBOUNDED IN MINNESOTA; HONEYBEES BENEFIT FROM CIVIC ACTION IN COLORADO

Oct/14. The Good News Page, CCPA monitor via Elaine Hughes: For butterfly fans this year brings good news after last year’s plunge in the number of monarchs. “We’re actually seeing a bounce back”, said Karen Oberhauser, director of the University of Minnesota’s Monarch Lab. “I can say we are cautiously optimistic that we are seeing a rebound in the population.”
– Minneapolis Star-Tribune

Boulder, Colorado is now home to half the neighbourhoods which are certified as safe for honeybees – where homeowners have taken the pledge to reduce or eliminate pesticides from their yards. Following the lead of the Melody-Catalpa neighborhood earlier this year, the Kendall-Endicott neighborhood has earned the bee-safe designation by the non-profit Living Systems Institute in Golden, with 91 contiguous homeowners there taking the pledge to reduce or eliminate pesticides from their yards. *- Boulder Daily Camera*

8. “NUMBER 2” BECOMES NUMBER 1 ENERGY SOURCE! BIKE SHARING GOES VIRAL IN CHINA

The Davyhulme facility that handles the sewage of 1.2 million people in Manchester, England today can export surplus power to the U.K. grid. It uses waste formerly dumped in the Irish Sea, generating renewable power on a scale no utility has done to date, using that method. – *Bloomberg News*

By putting millions of cyclists on the road, bike sharing is reshaping the design of cities by connecting mass transit, removing cars from centres and creating new infrastructure. Hangzhou and Wuhan in China are the global leaders; India’s megacities are struggling to take off; the US is playing catch-up; Africa is a no-show. *- Bloomberg News*

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