



GOOD NEWS SERVICE #32: EARLY SPRING '14

Editorial: March 29, 2014: Though Spring arrived earlier this week, it's snowing here in Ottawa, the skies are grey, the air is cold and the wind is up. The news from Europe, too, is darkening: Europe is in turmoil with the two major nuclear powers, the US and Russia, staging "a war without weapons" by bitterly opposing one another's positions on Ukraine and the Crimea. The Canadian prime minister is actively stirring the pot by calling for sanctions and excluding Russia from the G8.

What should we make of all this? Where is the good news? We won't pretend to say we believe that good sense will finally prevail. It may not, but in this Spring issue are several reasons for hope that it will. We welcome and encourage readers to write and share your views with our growing readership.

1. WORLD BODY OF PARLIAMENTS CALLS FOR NEGOTIATIONS TO ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS

March 21, Basel, Switzerland via Alyn Ware: The Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU), a global organization of most of the world's Parliaments, commemorating its 125th anniversary, yesterday adopted a landmark resolution: *"Towards a Nuclear Weapons Free World: the Contribution of Parliaments"*. The resolution, adopted after 12 months of negotiation, calls on parliaments to work with their governments on eliminating the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, and to urge their governments to start negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention, or package of agreements, to achieve a nuclear free world.

Ongoing efforts by a few states to develop nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them threaten regional and global peace and security, said Blaine Calkins, M.P. (Conservative), one of the co-rapporteurs of the IPU Standing Committee on Peace & International Security.

"Parliamentarians can play a key role in moving governments to implement their shared commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons", said Calkins. "Among other things, they can hold governments to account and ensure compliance with commitments and responsibilities under the NPT; convince governments to accept new commitments, mechanisms and responsibilities as required; and mobilize public opinion and civil society to demand faster and deeper action."

2. TO BREAK FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY'S GRIP, FOUNDATIONS ARE DIVESTING NEARLY TWO BILLION DOLLARS & INVESTING IN THE CLEAN ENERGY SECTOR

Published January 30/14. *Common Dreams*. By Jon Queally: Seventeen philanthropic foundations, controlling nearly two billion dollars in assets this week put their money where their ethics are, announcing they will be divesting all their holdings in the fossil fuel industry and re-investing in the clean energy sector. Organized as the Divest-Invest initiative, the Coalition said they could no longer stay invested in the fossil fuel economy when the climate science is clear

that the window to preserve a liveable climate is closing fast. In addition to their own divestment, the foundations used other philanthropic groups to do the same.

“Climate change affects the missions of all foundations, whether focused on environment or not”, said Ellen Dorsey, executive director of the Wallace Global Fund and the originator of the Divest-Invest initiative. “Starting today, we pledge to use all our assets to advance our goals, values and beliefs.”

3. CURBING CITY POLLUTION IN POLAND; “GREEN” FACTORIES IN VIETNAM

March, 2014, London via CCPA and Elaine Hughes: In Krakow, Poland, lawmakers frequently banned the burning of coal to heat homes after activists pressured them with a Facebook campaign that drew 20,000 followers driven by a survey that found the city’s air to be the third dirtiest in Europe. This was only one of many victories over municipal pollution spearheaded by London’s environmental campaigner Simon Birkett. He tirelessly posts smog warnings, health studies and detailed analyses of pollution’s effects on the residents of cities around the world. Together with other social media activists, he has put strong on-line pressure on municipal officials in many countries to initiate air-cleansing efforts.

In Ho Chi Minh City, Intel’s \$1 billion chip factory located about 10 miles from the Vietnam capital embraces environmental and sustainability measures far beyond those required by the country’s lax construction laws. The factory has a huge operating solar array and a water-reclamation system that helps reduce water consumption by as much as 68%. Other multinationals – and often their Asian suppliers – have also started in recent years to build more environmentally- sound factories in developing countries, green-building experts report. One motivation of companies operating in Asia is to provide a positive contrast to events like the appalling collapse last year of a poorly-built garment factory in Bangladesh and dozens of chemical spills and other manufacturing disasters... --- *New York Times*.

4. EMAIL ACTIVISM IN AUSTRALIA OPPOSING CHOKING COAL DUST POLLUTION

March 2014. The Good News Page, CCPA, via Elaine Hughes: In Newcastle, Australia, a grassroots community group generated more than 25,000 emails to the Premier of New South Wales protesting the choking dust spread through residential neighbourhoods by trains ferrying coal for export. Similar social media anti-pollution campaigns have been carried out in Durban, South Africa, Beijing, China, and many other large cities. --- *The (UK) Guardian*.

5. INDIA NOW DECLARED BY WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION TO BE ENTIRELY FREE OF POLIO

March 31/14, by Ian Cuthbert, Executive Director, Canadian Public Health Assn: India's triumph of being officially declared by the World Health Organization as polio-free on March 27 deserves hearty congratulations from the worldwide community. India, once considered to be the most complex in terms of challenges to achieve total polio eradication, has had no new cases in the past three years. This is remarkable given that in 2009, India reported 741 polio cases, more than any other country in the world, according to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative.

India's public health success is due to its government's strong determination to end polio, along with the commitment of millions of dedicated front-line workers – vaccinators, social mobilizers and community health workers. India's approach can serve as a model to the remaining three polio-endemic countries, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan, to show them that the financial investment in polio campaigns is insignificant compared to the burden on national and global economies of coping with outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases.

Apart from these last three countries racing to the finish line to eradicate polio, there are still outbreaks in countries, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, where conflict and political instability contribute to occasional occurrences in countries already declared polio-free. *editor@embassynews.ca*

6. GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION ON MILITARY SPENDING, APRIL 14, 2014: DISARMAMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT: A CALL TO FAITH-BASED NGOS

March 7/14, Pax Christi Intl, via the *Good News Agency*: Faith-based organizations are invited to join the Disarmament for Development Campaign. The main aim of this initiative is to press for an end to the over-funding of military establishments and for the creation of new funds to tackle human insecurity and common threats to the planet. Fr. Paul Lansu has written a background document which can be used for further action within the religious communities. Pax Christi International supports the Global Day of Action on the Military Spending (GDAMS) initiative. The 4th edition of GDAMS is scheduled for 14th April 2014 and it will feature different themes and activities in accordance with domestic political circumstances. .. Further GDAMS 2014 resources produced by Pax Christi UK and other representatives of the UK NGO community can be found via www.paxchristi.net

7. INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS EXPANDS ITS PRESENCE IN KACHIN STATE, MYANMAR (BURMA)

March 3/14, Yangon (Rangoon) via the *Good News Agency*: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been conducting humanitarian activities in both government and non-government controlled areas for the last 12 months, but has not had a permanent presence there until now. The ICRC is finalizing plans to expand its support to Myanmar's civil physical rehabilitation centre network by establishing a centre adjacent to the Myitkyina hospital.

Thousands of disabled people, more than 40% of them land mine victims, benefit from physical rehabilitation services at the ICRC-supported centres each year. With the agreement of the office of Myanmar's president, the organization has already started a 15-month health facility renovation and training programme in non-government-controlled areas of Kachin state.

<http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2014/03-05-myanmar-yangon-kachin-myitkyina-new-office.htm>

8. DARFUR: JOINT AFRICAN UNION-UN MEDIATOR CONTINUES EFFORTS TO FACILITATE LASTING PEACE

March 8/14, via the *Good News Agency*: The African Union-United Nations Joint Mediator for Darfur, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, has wrapped up talks between the top African Union (AU) official and leaders of two of the region's main rebel movements, encouraging the parties to overcome their misgivings and press ahead towards a comprehensive political accord, for the benefit of not only strife-ridden Darfur, but also for wider Sudan. According to a news release from the mission, Mr. Chambas facilitated a meeting yesterday in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, between the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Nkosaza Dlamini Zuma, and leaders of the Sudan Liberation Army, Mini Minawi, and the Justice and Equality Movement, Gibril Ibrahim (JEM-GI).

The Sudanese Government and two major rebel groups have so far committed to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD), named after the Qatari capital where talks were held to end the conflicts between the Government and various armed groups. Those conflicts led to the deaths of tens if not hundreds of thousands and displaced nearly two million since they first erupted in early 2003.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47309&&Cr=Darfur&&CRedit1=#.UxxIM-OwbmU>

9. EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT VOTES TO RECOGNIZE PROSTITUTION AS A VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS & DIGNITY OF WOMEN

Feb. 26, 2014, Brussels, via the *Good News Agency*. The European Women's Lobby (EWL) warmly welcomes the vote of the European Parliament today which recognizes that prostitution violates human dignity and human rights, and is an obstacle to equality between women and men. The resolution has been adopted with a strong majority (343 for, 139 against, 105 abstentions). Together with the 200 NGOs from all over Europe, which have signed the Brussels' Call: "Together for a Europe free from prostitution", the EWL sees this

European development as a sign that mentalities are evolving towards shared values of equality and dignity. The resolution acknowledges the violence inherent in the system of prostitution, saying that prostitution is a breach of women`s fundamental rights and contradictory to the EU Charter for Fundamental Rights. ``Prostitution and trafficking in women cannot be separated`` says Pierrette Pape, currently Acting Coordinator of the EWL.

10. UNBURNABLE CARBON: ARE THE WORLD'S FINANCIAL MARKETS CARRYING A CARBON BUBBLE? THREE REPORTS

Lanark, ON. Marchv31/14 by Steve Graham, *SGA Energy Ltd*: For those concerned about climate change, Canada has not been a source of good news in recent years. We have withdrawn from the Kyoto Protocol, routinely muzzled scientific opinion, removed safeguards to the environment for the transport and extraction of fossil fuels and widely promoted the exploitation of the most carbon-intensive source of oil on the planet. There is good news, however, largely from other parts of the world and it's coming from an unlikely source – the financial community. Recently released reports raise concerns about a “Carbon bubble” in the fossil fuel commodity market. World scientific opinion is united in endorsing urgent action to mitigate man-made carbon emissions into the atmosphere. As the impacts of climate change are felt globally markets are raising concerns if we are to stay within a 2 degree C increase in global temperature, first: that only a portion of the proven fossil fuel reserves can be safely exploited; and second: that the estimated \$1 trillion in global investment in the fossil fuel sector is at risk if policy makers decide to cut carbon emissions.

See <http://cleantechfinance.net/impact-investing/the-carbon-bubble-continues-to-grow-as-multiple-reports-warn-of-risks-to-financial-markets/>

The first report, *Green Finance*, published by the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC), of United Kingdom MPs has warned that markets are inflating a carbon bubble. They do this by overvaluing fossil fuel companies and now pose a serious threat to the economy.

The second report from Brussels by the Greens/EFA Group of the European Parliament, warns of the high exposure that European pensions have to a

carbon bubble. If policy makers agree to limit global warming below 2 degrees C and therefore avoid harmful climate change , the majority of current fossil fuel reserves would become stranded assets.

The third report from a leading Australian think tank, the Australian Institute, published *Climate proofing your investments: moving funds out of fossil fuels*, urges investors to sell holdings in companies that produce fossil fuels to avoid the financial risks of stranded assets. In the US, the carbon bubble is on the minds of more and more investors. HSBC assumes that, with policies to hit 2 degrees in place, any projects at a cost of more than \$50/barrel for oil, or \$9mm BTU for natural gas would be abandoned. <graham@sgaenergy.com>

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