



GOOD NEWS SERVICE #41: JANUARY '16

Editorial Happy New Year, indeed, a new year of renewal for peace, of moving away from the spectre of human catastrophe, whether from climate collapse or nuclear war. The warnings are clear and increasingly obvious: no more room in a crowded world for deadly conflicts and war and the instruments that provoke it. But the headlines in the current issue of *Cineplex*, inserted in my copy of the *Globe & Mail*, see it differently. The cover of this year's *Movie Preview* has obviously armed-and-ready Batman against Superman. The sub-heads offer the subplots: *Captain America and Civil War*; *Suicide Squad*... *Star Trek Beyond*... *X-Men and Apocalypse*... *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*.... Only stories, of course. Just harmless fun, really. So why should the UN feel it is imperative (below) to involve youth in peacebuilding and overcoming violence?

This issue marks a departure from presenting stories and events solely on good news. Into this unending paean of praise of our better selves has crept the last item, #10, a story of impending doom unless we can end the nuclear arms race and reverse the warming of our planet. So which path will we take in 2016?

1. UN Security Council adopts resolution on youth, peace and overcoming violence

On 9 December 2015, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2250, which for the first time in the history of the UN focuses entirely on the role of youth in peace and security. The resolution, sponsored by Jordan, highlights the need to engage young men and women in peace-building, conflict resolution, disarmament, overcoming violence, and preventing terrorism and extremism. The resolution builds on the work of a number of youth programs and events including the Guiding Principles on Young People's Participation in Peacebuilding, the Amman Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security, and the September 2015 Global Youth Summit against Violent Extremism.

The resolution also establishes a study, to be undertaken by the UN Secretary-General, on the positive contributions of youth to peace processes and conflict resolution.

An Indepth News report on Security Council resolution 2250 noted the important role of youth in nuclear disarmament. It highlighted the International Youth Summit on Nuclear Abolition held in Hiroshima in August 2015. The Summit released a Youth Pledge for Nuclear Abolition, and has invited youth around the world to endorse it, committing them to educate and engage other young people, parliamentarians and governments in nuclear abolition.

2. EU signs program worth €3.6 billion with Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States

Brussels, 26 November 2015. European Commission Press Release:

The European Union has signed a program to provide support in the areas of human and social development, environment and climate change, private sector development and peace and security across African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

Today, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, and the President of the Committee of Ambassadors of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states, Mrs. Mpeo Mahase-Moiloa, signed off on €3.6 billion to finance the intra-ACP program, under the [11th European Development Fund \(EDF\)](#) (the EU's financial instrument for ACP countries). The money will provide support in the areas of human and social development, environment and climate change, private sector development and peace and security across African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

The money announced today will be channeled to four key sectors:

- . Human and social development to contribute to ensuring healthy lives and inclusive and equitable quality education;**
- . Environment, climate change and resilience building, providing significant means to reach the targets that are expected to be set during the 2015 Paris Climate Conference to face the challenge of global warming;**
- . Private sector development, with the aim of contributing to achieving sustainable and inclusive growth, creating decent jobs and reducing poverty;**
- . Peace and security, providing substantial and predictable funding to the African Union's and African Regional Economic Communities' efforts in the area of peace and security. The Intra-ACP programme is the cornerstone of broader cooperation between the European Union and the ACP group of States. The programme aims to address the shared challenges facing ACP States.**

3. President creates a Ministry of Indigenous People in Chile

Jan. 12, 2016, Santiago. Prensa Latina. from the Good News Agency: Today, Chilean President Michelle Bachelet signed the laws at La Moneda Palace, Santiago, that create the Ministry of Indigenous People, the National Council and the Indigenous People's Councils. She said the idea was to generate more spaces in which the cultural richness of our identities can be expressed, and to guarantee respect for, and equal treatment to, all men and women...According to an official press release, in creating these authorities representatives of the Aymara, Quechua, Atacamenos, Diaguitas, Kollas, Rapa Nui, Kawesqar, Yaganes and Mapuche ethnic groups were consulted.

The president explained that the new Ministry would collaborate with the presidency of the Republic to design, coordinate, and assess policies, plans and programs aimed at encouraging and strengthening the rights of the original peoples.

4. *Corporate Knights* editorial wins Amnesty International Canada's human rights reporting award

Winter 2016. *Corporate Knights* has announced that Roberta Staley was the recipient of an Amnesty International Canada reporting award in December for her piece about the effect of Coke and Pepsi on the health of El Salvadoran children, titled "Cola Kids need a Fix". The article, featured in the Spring edition of *Corporate Knights*, was the winner in the local alternative newspapers and special audience category.

“Roberta Staley took a visit to the dentist – something most regard as routine if unpleasant – and deftly used it to illustrate the broader question of corporate social responsibility in the developing world,” says Madelaine Drohane, a member of the awards jury. “Marketing sugary drinks to children may not seem like a pressing social issue until you see that it loads yet more problems – malnutrition and diabetes – on a society struggling to cope.”

Now in their 19th year, these awards recognize the media’s efforts to bring awareness to international human rights issues that fall within the mission of Amnesty International.

5. The UN’s International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) helps develop rural employment and income in Nepal

Dec.22/15, Rome via the Good News Agency. IFAD signed a financial agreement recently with the government of Nepal aiming to reduce poverty and improve incomes and employment opportunities to over 87,000 rural households. IFAD will provide a US\$38.6 million loan to finance the Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project in Nepal. The project will diversify the range of economic activities available to poor rural households and unemployed young women and men. It will also promote self-employment and the development of small businesses.

Further, the project will provide access to vocational training and apprenticeships for better job placement. It will target 179,000 poor rural people. An additional 244,800 people will have access to financial education.

<http://www.ifad.org/media/press/2015/89.htm>

6. Solar powered airports in India inspire officials in Liberia, Malaysia and Vietnam to do likewise

January-February 2016. *CCPA Monitor* via Elaine Hughes. Faced with a huge increase in electricity that would choke its profits, Cochin international airport, India's seventh busiest, decided to install more than 50,000 solar panels from which 100% of its power is now drawn. The company has spent \$10.5 million on the renovation; this cost will be recoverable in less than six years while taking 300,000 metric tonnes of carbon out of the atmosphere – the equivalent of planting three million trees. All India's airports have since been instructed to install solar panels, beginning with Bangalore and Hyderabad. Airport officials from Liberia, Malaysia and Vietnam are showing interest in the Cochin model.

7. Most researchers on creating clean water at the University of Florida are not just pissing around

Jan-Feb 2016: The Good News Page, via Elaine Hughes:

Most toilet water starts off drinkable, but the urine that is eventually flushed is responsible for 80% of the nitrogen, 50% of the phosphates and 50% of the pharmaceuticals that end up in our waste water.

University of Florida researcher Treavor Boyer and his team of students have developed a technique that separates these elements at the source so they can be recycled as fertilizer. The project won the American Society of Civil Engineers' 2015 Sustainable Development Award because of its potential application in developing countries. In other good news for clean water, the Blue Planet project and its allies were successful in their campaign to

include universal access to water and sanitation in the UN's Sustainable Goals (SDG) blueprint for the next 15 years. But the true test of commitment to the new global goals will be their implementation", said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

8. Less poaching in South Africa, more spawning in Maine

From the Good News Page, *CCPA Monitor*, Jan-Feb 2015: South Africa's Black Mamba anti-poaching group has just won the United Nations' Champions of the Earth prize. The 23 women and three men who make up the group walk up to 20 kms a day checking fences and looking for poacher trails and camps. Operating in the Balule Reserve from which 1,215 rhinos were poached in 2014, Black Mamba has helped arrest six poachers and removed more than 1,000 snares from the area, while working with communities near the reserve, to discourage people from being recruited to work for poacher networks. And endangered sturgeon have returned to part of a Maine river that has been accessible only since late 2013 when the former Veazie Dam was removed. The Penobscot River Restoration Project hopes it is a sign there will be new spawning this spring.

Associated Press

9. Putting Climate on the ballot box

Winter 2016, *Corporate Knights*: Frustrated by a perceived lack of action at the state level, more Americans are planning to take their climate change arguments directly to the people through the state

referendum process. In Oregon, campaigners are gathering signatures to place several measures on the ballot for 2016. The first proposal would target Oregon's coal-fired power plants, which currently constitute around a third of the state's electricity portfolio. It would require a complete phase-out by 2030. It would also involve increasing renewable electricity output (excluding hydro) up to 50% of the generating mix by 2040...

Washington State has two competing ballot initiatives pushing for different kinds of carbon taxation.... Down South, an unorthodox coalition of Tea Party members, environmental activists, libertarians and others have gathered under the flag of Floridians for Solar Choice, a group pushing for regulatory changes in Florida's promising solar market that would open up opportunities for rooftop solar.

Whether or not these initiatives ultimately succeed in 2016, reformers interested in taking action are finding that clean energy is broadly popular across the political spectrum. In a March 2015 Gallup Poll, 79 per cent of Americans said they believe the Government should focus more on solar power, followed closely by 70 per cent supporting an expansion of wind power.

10. Three Minutes to Midnight: Is it the final warning?

From Dr. Robert Dodge MD, *The Hill*, Jan 28/15. The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* announced its latest Doomsday Clock position, moving the symbolic minute hand ahead to three minutes to midnight. The clock represents the countdown to zero in minutes to nuclear apocalypse. In taking this symbolic action last year, Dr. Kennette Benedict, the recent executive director of the *Bulletin*, commented: “Today, unchecked climate change and a nuclear arms race resulting from the modernization of huge arsenals pose extraordinary and undeniable threats to the continued existence of humanity. And world leaders have failed to act with speed or on the scale required to protect citizens from potential catastrophe. These failures of leadership endanger every person on Earth. The choice is ours and the clock is ticking...We feel the need to warn the world, as the decision was based on a very strong feeling of urgency....This is about doomsday, about the end of civilization as we know it.”

#

#

#

The Good News Service is a periodic newsletter produced by Murray Thomson of Ottawa, in cooperation with Randy Weekes of Lanark, ON. Responses are welcome. Murray can be reached at 43 Aylmer Ave. Ottawa K1S 5R4, mothom@rogers.com 613.224.8155 .
Randy is at RAW@superaje.com 613.259.2072

