



GOOD NEWS SERVICE #48: JANUARY **2017**

Editorial: Every small newsletter, such as this one, should be required to provide reliable sources of information for comments on expected coming developments. This one, with a readership of less than 300, nevertheless feels equally responsible.... This issue uses the Good News Agency, based in Rome and affiliated with the UN, for four of its stories... Now in its 17th year, it is an all-volunteer service, in three languages and available in 54 countries. If you want more than the sampling you find here, the Agency is online at <http://www.goodnewsagency.org/en/home.php?mt=en>.

Two other global networks: AVAAZ (meaning song or voice) with a claimed population of several million, and Greenpeace famous for its bold, nonviolent direct actions, are in our opinion reliably accurate if boldly daring in their multiple actions for nuclear disarmament and a clean environment. AVAAZ can be found at <https://www.avaaz.org/page/en/>.

Yes! Magazine (www.yesmagazine.org/) is another reliable source of inspiration for work that makes a difference in the world. In their own words “YES! Magazine reframes the biggest problems of our time in terms of their solutions. Online and in print, we outline a path forward with in-depth analysis, tools for citizen engagement, and stories about real people working for a better world.” Several of the stories in this issue come from this source.

1. UN votes to outlaw nuclear weapons in 2017

From The Good News Agency, Nov/16. Rome: The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a civil society coalition active in 100 countries, hailed the adoption of the resolution as a major step forward, marking a fundamental shift in the way that the world tackles this paramount threat. “For seven decades, the UN has warned of the dangers of nuclear weapons, and people globally have campaigned for their abolition. Today the majority of states finally resolved to outlaw these weapons,” said Beatrice Fihn, executive director of ICAN. Despite arm-twisting by a number of nuclear-armed states, the resolution was adopted in a landslide. A total of 57 nations were co-sponsors, with Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, Nigeria and South Africa taking the lead in drafting the resolution.

However, the Nuclear Weapon States continued a unified denial of negotiations to take place. Canada, too, was among the states who voted No. The United Nations’ General Assembly will hold a final vote before Christmas. Despite its decision, the majority of states will ensure that negotiations on this vital issue will continue well into the new year.

The UN vote came just hours after the European Parliament adopted its own resolution on this subject – 415 in favour and 124 against, with 74 abstentions – inviting European Union member states to “participate constructively” in next year’s negotiations. Nuclear weapons remain the only weapons of mass destruction not yet outlawed in a comprehensive and universal manner, despite their well-documented catastrophic humanitarian and environmental impacts. Biological weapons, chemical weapons, anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions are all explicitly prohibited under international law.

<http://www.pressenza.com/2016/10/un-votes-outlaw-nuclear-weapons-2017>

2. AVAAZ : Attracts attention for more than 100 actions on climate change, protecting wild-life, supporting refugees and saving the oceans.

The global network called AVAAZ (meaning Song or Voice). Now claims more than 10 million volunteers. “AVAAZ is inspiring and has already made a difference”, said Al Gore, former Vice President of the United States.

“AVAAZ has driven forward the idealism of the world. Do not underestimate your impact on leaders”: echoed Gordon Brown, former UK Prime Minister. Said Martin Schults, President of the European Parliament: “I was most impressed by AVAAZ’ massive 2.8 million person petition. What has this band of youthful practical idealists been doing to earn such praise? A great deal, one discovers, after reading the summary of more than 100 projects. Follow this link to find highlights of some of the campaigns: <https://www.avaaz.org/page/en/highlights/>

3. UN Manual seeks to protect Indigenous People from unwanted interventions on their lands and territories

Good News Agency #251, 24 Nov/16: FAO and NGOs launch a manual for project managers on Free Prior and Informed Consent October 10, Rome - The Manual on Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) outlines essential ways to ensure Indigenous Peoples, can give or withhold their consent to interventions proposed in their lands and territories and do so free of coercion, prior to any decisions being made, and with the necessary information presented to them in a culturally appropriate way. Today, there are about 370 million indigenous individuals living in more than 90 countries and speaking 4,000 out of the 7,000 surviving languages. Over the past decades, they have been facing mounting challenges related to their livelihoods, respect for their rights and spiritual beliefs, and access to lands, natural resources and territories.

The manual — which builds on a year of consultation with various Indigenous Peoples — is the result of one year of collaboration between FAO and partner organizations. The manual outlines essential steps to follow along the lifecycle of a development project, from identifying which communities need to be consulted to sharing achievements after the project has been completed. <https://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/445417/icode/>

4. IFAD supports dairy farmers in Rwanda, and rural employment in conflict areas in Peru

Nov 4/16, Rome– The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Government of Rwanda signed an agreement today that will improve the livelihoods of over 100,000 smallholder farmers and generate opportunities for other actors in the country's dairy sector. The Rwanda Dairy Development project will cover 12 districts and involve an investment of US\$65.1 million,

Oct/16: Lima; IFAD and the Government of Peru will invest US\$74.5 million to create rural employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in the Apurímac, Ene and Mantaro Rivers Valley region (also known as VRAEM), characterized by extreme poverty and conflict. The financing agreement that allows the Sustainable Territorial Development Project to start was signed today in Lima. The project, to be implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, aims to transform rural people living in poverty into service providers, enabling them, through training and financing, to undertake activities for their communities' own benefit.

The project will create job opportunities in the areas of natural resource management and construction, and repair and maintenance of basic rural infrastructure – mainly roads, water harvesting and irrigation schemes. It will also strengthen rural organizations so as to enable them to set up farming and non-farming rural enterprises that generate income and additional employment opportunities for their members and their communities. In that regard, special efforts will be made towards boosting access of farmers' organizations to markets and rural financial services. Of the IFAD \$74.5 million investment, IFAD is contributing \$28.5 million; the Government of Peru, \$38.7 million; and the beneficiaries will invest \$7.2 million themselves, both in cash and kind.

http://www.ifad.org/en/newsroom/press_release/tags/p65/y2016/33667918

5. UN seeks to strengthen international humanitarian law.

Nov.30/16. ICRC Statement: The world desperately needs better protection in armed conflict. Far too many men, women and children are being wounded and killed, and far too many communities ripped apart by armed violence. And these armed conflicts show no signs of abating. The ICRC works around the world to assist and protect people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence. But it also has a mandate to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.

The ICRC is convinced that a clear framework of rules at the international level – accompanied by the corresponding rules, policies and enforcement at the national level – strongly contributes to saving lives and reducing suffering.

<http://www.icrc.org/en/document/universal-meeting-national-committees-and-similar-bodiesinternational-humanitarian-law> .

6. Fix it! (...which begins with a confession from co-editor Randy)

It's all my fault. I just bought a new vacuum cleaner. The switch was broken on the old one and I couldn't figure out how to repair it. So one pile of plastic and metal went to the dump and another pile was brought from China after having started life being extracted from the earth somewhere. I helped feed the destructive growth and endless consumption model and added one more bit of burden to the environment. The Good News is that Sweden is demonstrating another way. The Guardian (another usually reliable source of information, www.theguardian.com) reported on September 19 a story that was picked up by other media throughout the fall. The Government of Sweden will cut the Swedish equivalent of Canadian HST by more than 50% on some repairs and will allow taxpayers to deduct half of the labour cost of fixing appliances from their income before calculating income tax. It is anticipated that this will reduce carbon emissions that are attributed to goods newly made to replace goods that could otherwise be repaired, and contribute to economic health by encouraging growth in a repair industry.

The same impulse appears elsewhere. As reported in Yes! Magazine (Winter, 2017,) folk in Willimantic, Connecticut, hold a once a season "repair cafe" to which everyone brings broken items like bicycles, *vacuums* and clothes. "Knowledgeable neighbors [sic] help fix the broken items and provide their owners with tips on how to take care of problems in the future."

7. A swords into ploughshares story

That particular Yes! Magazine edition reports on 50 stories of creativity, resilience and empowerment from 50 American states, an encouraging counter-point to some other events that are taking place in the US. The first involves an island an hour from the coast of Maui in Hawai'i. Kaho'olawe was a sacred site to Native Hawaiians, used by the US Navy for bombing

practice for 50 years. Activism, occupation and a law suit have now restored access to the island to the first nations who are replanting native species, rebuilding the ecosystem and teaching skills like building fish traps and preparing traditional food.

8. First Nations on the front lines

Many of us are stymied in terms of how to slow the corporate interests that relentlessly excavate, ship and pollute without regard to environmental and climate costs. Picking up on story #3 above, First Nations, around the world, are using promises made when their territories were taken over by settlers and new Governments to stop or slow some of that momentum. Yes! Magazine begins its reports in the recent issue with this statement: “The forces that would extract the last barrel of oil, frack the last rock formation, or put at risk the water supply of millions are powerful forces. Only together can communities overcome that power and create the conditions for the regeneration of life.”

The magazine goes on to report on the resistance of many tribes, led by the Sioux, to the pipeline in Standing Rock, North Dakota; on the successful treaties-based court challenges that have stopped passages of oil and coal through pristine country in the Pacific North West; on community based traditional water management systems making a comeback in New Mexico; on the Ojibwe of Wisconsin stopping open pit mining that would have contaminated important wetlands ... and more. Working as allies with first nations in these efforts is important for all of us.

9. Engaging the corporate world

On 23 November, SCR Wire service (via the Good News Agency) reported that in Marrakech, at the High Level Meeting on Climate Change, more than 100 business leaders met with international governments, UN and civil service leaders “in a show of resounding support and commitment to taking action on the Paris Climate Agreement. ... Business representatives shared proposals on how the private sector can support and reinforce national climate priorities on mitigation and adaptation, and also highlighted the inextricable link between addressing climate change and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.” It was noted that “Climate change will ... [give]rise to conflict situations, [endanger] food security, health

and well being and negatively [impact] gender equality.” If the new American President acts to slow climate change management efforts, the engagement of governments and citizens at all other levels, and of the more visionary corporate world, becomes increasingly important.

10. What about in Canada?

Most of the stories in this issue are about things happening elsewhere to address the threats of nuclear weapons, climate change and more. We know – you the readers know – of great things that are happening in Canada, led by First Nations, by organizations like the Council of Canadians and Project Ploughshares, by service clubs and grassroots community efforts. We would like to put together an issue of the newsletter that focuses on what we are doing across this country. Please send in stories about what you find the most exciting, encouraging, innovative or worth sharing with others for any other reason. Do it now before you forget, and do it often. (smily face). We’ll pass the stories around to inspire others. Thanks from us both!

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