



# **GOOD NEWS SERVICE #**

## **34: EARLY FALL 2014**

**Editorial:** The discovery of yet another initiative centering on good news, rather than the usual bad stuff, is our focus for this issue. “Positive News” is a not-for-profit positive media source. It reports “news from around the world and right next door in the areas of sustainability, social equality, education, happiness, and much more”. Its mission is to envision a world in which people treat each other with respect and kindness, where we consider the Earth to be our home to care for and enjoy. We see this world is in the process of emerging. “Positive News” is a reflection of this widespread movement and tells its powerful stories.”

### **1. THE PULL OF HISTORY IS TOWARDS PEACE**

August 13, 2014. Ottawa. EMBASSY article by Douglas Roche, OC.

“Forget the ugly, violent summer of 2014, The world as a whole now has the most hopeful prospect for peace in the last several centuries. The violence-torn summer of 2014 has dismayed people around the world who had thought that – just maybe – the world was beginning to move away from war as a means of resolving conflict. The killings in Gaza, Ukraine, Syria and Iraq, to name but the top of the list of centres of atrocities, have depressed those who are working every day to build the structures of peace. We find it hard to have our voices heard against the relentless

**barrage of bombings, mayhem and maimed children that fill the TV screens. Stopping the carnage seems overwhelming.**

**It doesn't seem to be a good time for me to bring out my book, *Peacemakers: How People Around the World Are Building a World Free of War*. The central message of the book is that people in many parts of the world have discovered that war is futile and great numbers of civil society activists are working to build the conditions for an enduring peace. Does the summer of 2014 shatter that conviction? It does not.**

**After the 20<sup>th</sup> century in which two world wars, plus the Korea and Vietnam wars and numerous conflicts, killed upwards of 100 million people, did we think that it would suddenly be easy to turn the corner and enjoy peace gardens everywhere? Did we forget that the political structures are still mired in a culture of war in which the economic interests of the military-industrial complex outweigh the peace proposals of visionaries? Did we suppose that institutions to guarantee peace through the rule of law would just blossom in a desert? We are living in a transformative moment in history and movement forward is uneven.**

**The ugliness of war has become etched in people's minds, but the force of humanitarian law is not yet engraved in public policies, We now realize that in modern warfare there are no victors, but we have not yet gained sufficient confidence to reinforce the structures of peace. We must probe further to comprehend Dag Hammarskjöld's message that peace is not just a passive state of affairs in a world without war but a state of living devoted to action... And if you examine new UN mechanisms to improve peacekeeping, peacebuilding and international justice now**

**laboriously being built, if you look at the countries, ranging from Rwanda to Cambodia, that suffered indescribable atrocities but are now at peace, if you meet the new leaders in a myriad of civil society organizations in the development, human rights, disarmament and environment fields – you will experience the pull of history towards peace.”**

## **2. THE IMPORT OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS NUCLEAR LAWSUIT**

- **5 June 2014. Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, by Avner Cohen & Lily Vaccaro. The tiny Republic of the Marshall Islands recently filed an extraordinary lawsuit at the International Court of Justice in the Hague, suing all nine nuclear weapons possessors for failing to eliminate their nuclear arsenals. The legal base of the case is derived from Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which obligates the five nuclear weapons states under the Treaty “to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament.**
- **The lawsuit also charges the four nuclear weapons states outside of the NPT – including one, Israel, which has never even acknowledged possessing nuclear weapons – with violating international customary law. But is this lawsuit more than a publicity gimmick? How seriously should it be taken? It is easy to dismiss it as an exercise in futility, or at best as an act of moral inspiration that will have almost no political impact on the real world. After all, only three of the nine nuclear states actually abide to the rulings of the International Court of Justice... And, of course, all of this court’s rulings lack a means of enforcement.**

**Nevertheless, the lawsuit reflects a growing belief among the international legal and policy experts, and 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. 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 would elevate the discourse on nuclear disarmament from vague declarations of intentions to stark statements of legally binding commitment....

### **3. JOINT STATEMENT FROM CONFERENCE ON URANIUM MINING AND ITS IMPACT ON HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

5 October 2013 Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, via Dr. Dale Dewar. “We, representatives of civil society organizations gathered here in a multi-stakeholder conference...have prepared a statement highlighting our concerns on the uranium industry:

We stress that uranium is a toxic heavy metal and together with its decay products emits radioactivity;

We recognize that uranium may do harm to the health of people living close to its presence even if it is left in the ground;

We further recognize that whenever and however it is brought to the surface to be used it poses a great danger to human beings, the land and future generations;

We note that uranium has to be left in the ground; once on the surface it is spread in the soil, water, air and the human body;

We are further concerned that the whole destructive nuclear fuel chain damages human health, affects communities and contaminates the environment.....

Therefore we recommend that Governments reject uranium mining and instead insist on the need for fair trading conditions with fair prices and technological support for renewable energies and sustainable production. The issue of energy is important in most

**African countries; even in those where uranium is exported, solar energy is a much better option than uranium...**

**The Government of Tanzania should critically review the issuing of licenses, stop the extraction of uranium in the country, and lay down sustainable development strategies relying on renewable energy sources for a better ecological and economic future.**

#### **4. MOMENTUM ON THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

**August 18, 2014 marked 500 days until the target date to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, eight goals established by world leaders gathered at the United Nations in 2000 to alleviate poverty and improve lives. Throughout the day, advocates, experts and people from more than 70 countries highlighted the progress we have made and what we can do to keep the momentum going. Already, extreme poverty has been cut in half, child mortality has been reduced by nearly 50%, and access to primary education has increased.**

**“Global progress doesn’t happen by accident; it happens because of action,” said UN Foundation President and CEO Kathy Calvin. “The Millennium Development Goals have inspired the world to act, and because of what countries and sectors have done together, fewer people live in poverty and millions more live with the opportunity to build a better life for their children.”**

***<http://www.unfoundation.org/news-and-media/press-releases/2014/united-nations-foundation:mobilizes-critical-support-millennium-development-goals.htm>***

## **5. SIERRA CLUB CELEBRATES VICTORY OVER FRACKING IN NOVA SCOTIA**

**Media Release, Sept.3, 2014 Nova Scotia's Energy Minister Andrew Younger has announced that his government will introduce legislation for a moratorium on fracking in the upcoming legislative session. "This is a huge victory for citizens. The government has heard our call for real evidence of safety before proceeding with dangerous activities, like fracking," said Gretchen Fitzgerald, Campaigns Director for Sierra Club Canada Foundations Atlantic Canada Chapter.**

**In his announcement, Minister Younger stated that "Nova Scotians have overwhelmingly expressed concern about high volume hydraulic fracturing." He also noted that he had spoken with Mi'kmaq Chiefs Terrance Paul, Paul Persper and Sidney Peters, who also oppose fracking.**

**"We await wording on the details of the legislation, and will be following up to make sure it truly protects our air, water and communities," continued Ms. Fitzgerald, "but this is truly a wonderful day." "I want to thank Sierra Club members and supporters and the thousands of citizens who heard our action alert, educated themselves on this issue and made this decision happen," stated John Bennett, National Programs Director of the Sierra Club Canada Foundation. "I hope other jurisdictions in this country will learn from Nova Scotia's experience, and take measures to protect their citizens from fracking."**

## **6. NEW YORK CITY INVESTS IN WORKER CO-OPERATIVES, INSPIRED BY COOPERATIVE HOME CARE ASSOCIATES**

**Fall 2014 Yes! Magazine. By Laura Flanders: New York City is going in a big way for worker-owned cooperatives. Inspired by the model of Cooperative Home Care Associates, Mayor Bill de Blasio and the New York City Council has allocated \$1.2 million to support worker cooperatives in 2015's budget. According to the Democracy at Work Institute, New York's investment in co-ops is the largest by any US city government to date. Cooperatives are businesses owned and controlled by their members on the basis of one member one vote. Given enough time, worker-owned cooperatives tend to increase wages and improve working conditions, and advocates say a local co-op generally stays where it's founded and acts as a leadership-building force.**

**“There is no greater medicine for apathy and feelings of living on the edges of society than to see your own work and your voice make a difference,” says a report on co-ops by the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies in New York.**

## **7 . SYRIAN REFUGEES GET CHANCE AT EDUCATION IN JORDAN**

**September 1, 2014. The latest back-to-school campaign aims at sending 300,000 Syrian refugee children into the classroom this autumn, helping them work towards a positive future. Jordan's Ministry of Education, with support from UNICEF, has launched the second annual end-of-summer campaign to get displaced children back into school. It is being implemented by Save the**

**Children Jordan and will provide learning support with the supply of more than 150,000 school bags and stationery.**

**The campaign also promotes the importance of education across the country, including in Syrian refugee camps. To ensure that the children are enrolled in school do not drop out, UNICEF and Save the Children Jordan have implemented monitoring mechanisms in coordination with the Education Ministry to follow-up on their attendance.**

**[http://www.el.ie.org/en/news/news\\_details/3190](http://www.el.ie.org/en/news/news_details/3190)**

## **8. PLANS AFOOT TO CONVERT THE IRON CURTAIN INTO A SYMBOL OF PEACE**

**September 2014<CCPA Monitor, from The Good News Page, compiled by Elaine Hughes: Passing through 20 countries and stretching 6,800 kilometers, from the Barents Sea on the Norwegian-Russian border to the Black Sea at the border between Bulgaria and Turkey, plans are afoot to change the Iron Curtain into a 2.4 million bicycle path called the “Iron Curtain Trail”.**

**Trail users will pass monuments and other symbols of the Cold War, and in this time of rising East-West tensions, it is hoped that the trail will increase tourism and promote the idea of a reunified Europe. –*Inhabitat.com***

## **9. UK, GERMANY BREAK SOLAR POWER RECORDS & RENEWABLE ENERGY GROWING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

**July/Aug, 2014. CCPA Monitor, from *The Good News Page*, compiled by Elaine Hughes: Britain and Germany have broken records for generating solar electricity in June, according to new industry figures. Germany has generated half its electricity demand from solar for the first time ever on June 9, and the UK, basking in the sunniest weather of summer during the longest days of the year, nearly doubled its 2013 peak solar power output at the solstice weekend. France, Italy, Denmark and other countries are also believed to have generated record amounts in June. Germany generated an amount equivalent to 51% of its total electricity need... *The Guardian***

**The number of developing countries with policies in place to support renewable energy has increased six-fold in just eight years, resulting in one-fifth of the world's power production now coming from renewable sources, according to a United Nations-backed report produced ahead of the UN Sustainable Energy for All Forum. In the beginning of this year, 95 developing countries had renewable support policies in place, up from just 15 in 2005, reported the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (REN21), whose secretariat is supported by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). – *UN News Centre***

## **10. JOINT AFRICAN UNION– UN MEDIATOR CONTINUES EFFORTS TOWARDS LASTING PEACE**

**March 8, 2014. Darfur. From the *Good News Agency*. The Joint African Union-United Nations 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 the wider Sudan. According to a news release from the Mission, Mr. Chambass facilitated a meeting yesterday in the capital, Addis Ababa, between the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, and leaders of the Sudan Liberation Army, Minni Minawi, and the Justice and Equality Movement, Gibril Ibrahim (JEM-GI).

The Sudanese 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 which have 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&&Cr1=#.UxxIM-OwbmU>

#

#

#

**The Good News Service** is published periodically by Murray Thomson, OC, at 43 Aylmer Ave. Ste. 358, Ottawa, ON K1S 5R4, in cooperation with **Randy Weekes** of Lanark, ON (613.259.2072). We welcome your comments and articles for future issues.

