



Building Inclusive and Sustainable Cities and Communities



The SSND delegation to the 68th UN Civil Society Conference: left to right, Laura Peterson, Sister M. Heather McKinnon, Sister Pamela Jablon, Elizabeth Mueller, Sister Beatriz Martinez

By Sister Beatriz Martinez-Garcia, Director of SSND UN-NGO Office

“Building Inclusive and Sustainable Cities and Communities” was the theme of the 68th United Nations Civil Society Conference held August 2019 in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. The conference members shared pressing challenges that 3.5 billion people in cities face daily. The challenges include inadequate health care, poor public transportation, lack of education, access to decent jobs, insufficient sanitation, and slums that perpetuate unsafe neighborhoods for 833 million people. These are issues that need addressing.

Urban experts project that by 2030, the number of people living in cities will expand to 5 billion. We need more concerted efforts to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. Although these statistics may imply a bleak future, the attendees are aware of the situation and want to act collaboratively.

The SSND delegation was inspired by the information and shared their hopes and commitments:

Sister M. Heather McKinnon: *“I plan to share my experience of the SDGs and the outcome documents with all among whom I minister and with our sisters in Waterdown.”*

Sister Pamela Jablon: *“I was heartened to learn about how the United Nations can bring people together to address the needs of the World.”*

Laura Peterson: *“I attended some amazing sessions that really raised the question of what communities are doing on a ‘micro’ level to impact macro change.”*

Elizabeth Mueller: *“The Youth Hub at the conference was full of future leaders and engaged young adults who carry a shared mission of ensuring our society becomes more inclusive and cities more sustainable.”*

The conference is over, but we SSNDs continue making inclusive and sustainable communities. We can get some ideas from the conference's documents: [Outcome Statement by Civil Society](#) and [Youth Climate Compact](#).

GirlForce: Unscripted and Unstoppable

By Sister Beatriz Martinez-Garcia, Director of SSND UN-NGO Office



Day of the Girl

As SSNDs, we take every opportunity to educate and recognize the potential of all people; the International Day of the Girl (IDG) is one of them.

The IDG this year was a teachable experience for 42 students and three staff members from the Academy of the Holy Angels (a school sponsored by the Atlantic-Midwest Province) who attended the **Speak Out! Program** at the United Nations. This program was prepared with girls for girls to empower girls around the world to voice their passions and concerns. Additionally, Sister Bridget Waldorf took part in a Twitter Chat to advocate for justice for girls.

Unscripted and Unstoppable was this year's theme. The theme impelled all in attendance to consider what it means to be an empowered young woman in today's society. It helped to focus our thoughts on some possible questions that could open the conversation with young girls: How can you describe an unscripted and unstoppable girl? Are you/were you an unscripted and unstoppable girl?

Let us continue working to reinforce girls' rights. If you want to read more about the IDG, click [International Day of the Girl](#)

Season of Creation

By Sister Kathy Schmittgens, International Shalom Coordinator

For the past three years, we have been encouraged to celebrate the time between September 1 and October 4 as a special time to emphasize care for creation. This year in particular the Vatican put emphasis on this celebration as we looked at the "Web of Life." Often we look at the web of life in places all over the planet. Sister Barbara Brumleve created reflections for each day of the Season of Creation examining the "web of life" that can be found on the campus of Notre Dame Prep. Students did not have to make a field trip to appreciate all that could be experienced each day at their school. What a great idea and a challenge for all of us to see locally that we are connected to an exquisite network of nature by just paying attention.



SEASON OF CREATION: *Laudato Si Mi Signore, for Brother Sun that provides us free and pure energy to light our days and night!*

International Day of Peace

By Sister Kathy Schmittgens, International Shalom Coordinator

This year the theme for the International Day of Peace blended perfectly with the Season of Creation – "Climate Action for Peace". As we learn more about the situations in our world, we see that many conflicts are started or made worse by actions that harm the planet. We see unsustainable mining practices, destruction of the rainforests, plastic waste on land and in the sea destroying habitats for both human and other species.

At Notre Dame Prep in Townsend, Maryland, USA, students listed their concerns on a special bulletin board. Some of those included saving the turtles, saving the bees, using multiple-use water bottles and plastic bags. Action, both great and small are efforts toward peace.

Students and sisters in Poland used the day to educate themselves and to pray for peace.

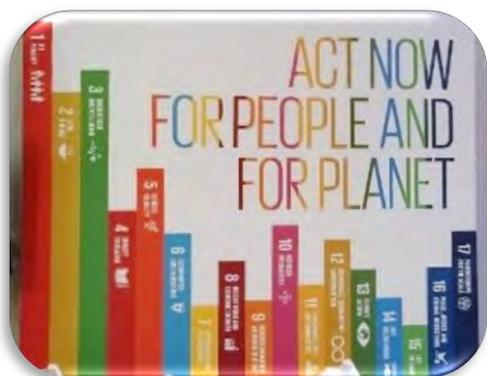


At Colégio Nossa Senhora da Glória, pastoral coordinator and teacher Claudineia Nunes, highlighted the school's commitment to human formation and the importance of activities that stimulate students to be advocates. "Our actions go beyond Peace Day, they happen all year long in small acts, from caring for sustainability, respect for each other, and the integral formation of the human being as a whole." (Photos below)



Gearing Up for a Decade of Action

By Sister Beatriz Martinez-Garcia, Director of SSND UN-NGO Office



Act now for people and for planet.

Since its foundation, the United Nations (UN) has committed to promoting international cooperation and the social progress of the world's peoples, in particular, the poor and vulnerable. We witnessed this commitment last September when the UN Member States met in New York for their annual General Assembly, summits, and other high-level meetings to address the urgent needs in our world. The content and focus of these meetings were informative.

September 21, Youth Climate Summit. For the first time in UN history, young people had a prominent place to highlight their commitment to reverse climate change.

September 23, **Climate Action Summit**: Leaders agreed that the “clock is ticking” and bold actions are needed to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.

September 23, **High-level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage**: Leaders implemented the most comprehensive set of health commitments ever adopted at this level.

September 24-25, **Sustainable Development Goals Summit**: UN Member States pledged to mobilize financing, enhance national implementation, and strengthen institutions to achieve the SDGs and leave no one behind.

September 26, **High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development**: The UN Member States, private and financial sectors met to encourage public and private investment to align goals with the 2030 Agenda.

September 27, **Midterm Review of the Samoa Pathway**: The UN Member States discussed progress on combating the devastating impacts of climate change among the most vulnerable countries in the world.

For more detailed information of each of these events, click on [UN 2019 Summits Week](#)



Amazonia: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology

By Sister Kathy Schmittgens, International Shalom Coordinator

A pivotal event for the Church this October was the Synod on the Amazon. Concern for the Church, for the people, and for the land in the Pan-Amazonian region prompted the call for this important Synod.

The Amazon rain forest is home to several tribes of indigenous peoples whose very existence is threatened by governments and corporations who only see the region as a source of revenue. Rivers are being dammed, forests being decimated and illicit and unsustainable mining is threatening the whole ecosystem. All of this endangers the whole planet but it is especially dangerous to the people of the area who have been the ones to protect the forest.

During the Synod, there was a “Tienda de la Amazonia”, Tent of the Amazon, where passersby could learn more about the region, ask questions, and pray for the Spirit at work there. It was based at Santa Maria Traspontina, which is just down from St. Peter’s Square and some nearby Generalates. Especially poignant were the stories of people who have been killed in their defense of the land and the people, such as Sister Dorothy Stang, Sister of Notre Dame de Namur.

What can be the response of the Church to the suffering of the people and the obliteration of the land? What does the Good News of Jesus have to say to this? And how can the Church answer the spiritual needs of the people with so few ministers? If the people are abandoned what happens to their faith? All these questions and more were on the agenda of the Synod.

In the coming months we will hear more about the results of the discernment.

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