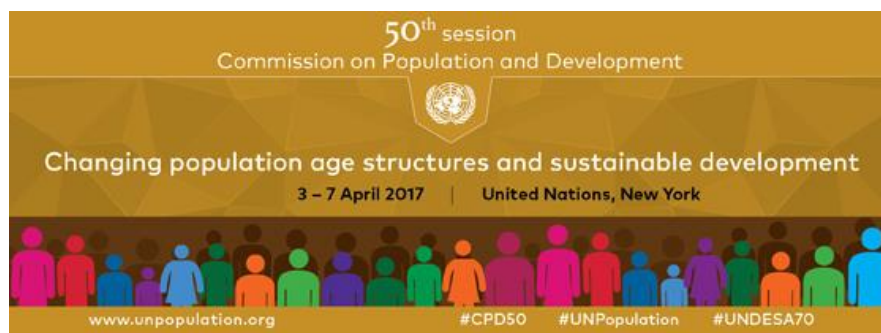




# Update

## May 2017

### UN Commission Discusses how to meet the needs of an ageing global society



In early April, the UN Commission on Population and Development met to discuss the changing age demographics around the globe and how these trends might be harnessed for development in some of

the world's least developed regions. According to the report of the Commission, the major trend in global age demographics is that, overall, the world population is ageing. They project that from 2015 to 2050, the percentage of the world's population that will be over the age of 64 will increase from 8% to 16%. In order to cope with these changes, policies and investments will need to be altered on the global and national levels in order to ensure that the economic and labor output of the working-age population (ages 25-64), will be enough to provide for the needs of the children (ages 0-14), youth (ages 15-24), and older persons (over age 64). While ageing will be experienced by societies across the globe, it is important to note that the responses to this trend will vary greatly by region in accordance with the very different demographics that are currently in place on each continent. The Commission projects the following continental changes in the percentage of people over age 64:

Europe: 18% in 2015 to 28% in 2050

North America: 15% to 23%

Latin America and the Caribbean: 8% to 20%

Oceania: 12% to 18%

Asia: 8% to 18%

Africa: 3% to 6%

Ageing societies whose temporary surge in birth rate occurred several decades ago (e.g. Europe and North America) will likely aim to meet this trend by strengthening social protection systems (such as pension and healthcare), increasing the official retirement age, and investing in innovations in medicine that may extend individuals' years of able-bodied labor. These societies

may increasingly recognize the benefits of immigration to their challenges as an ageing population, because immigration tends to infuse societies with working-age adults, many of whom have children. They may also encourage greater openness of workplaces to women through policies that would reduce work-family tensions that have historically forced women to choose, to some degree, between entering the formal labor market and having children. Such changes would allow women greater capacity to contribute to economic productivity and to bolster the child and youth populations.

The populations of youthful societies (e.g. Africa and Asia) have historically had very high birth rates but been kept from maturing to older age due to high child mortality and limited healthcare. In Africa, these phenomena have created a scenario in which 62% of the population is under the age of 25 and the majority of their societies' resources must be devoted to providing for dependent children rather than on development. Due to improvements in reproductive and maternal health services as well as childhood health interventions, birth rates and child mortality have begun to decrease, and youthful societies may be in a position to reap great benefits as their large child and youth populations come of age to participate in the work force. In order to "harness the demographic dividend," the Commission said these societies will need to ensure universal access to family planning services, keep girls in school to avoid early child bearing, continue improving healthcare, and make economic reforms that ensure that economic growth is inclusive of all marginalized groups and great enough to provide decent work for the growing working-age population.

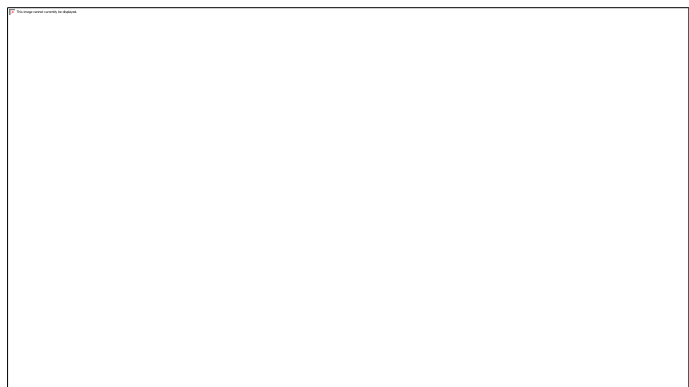
More data from the Commission's report is available here:

[http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/commission/pdf/50/MS\\_Briefing\\_03Mar2017\\_Bravo\\_Presentation.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/commission/pdf/50/MS_Briefing_03Mar2017_Bravo_Presentation.pdf)

## **Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty Negotiations at the UN**

By Stacy Hanrahan, CND

On 16 December 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Landmark Resolution for negotiations of a treaty to ban nuclear weapons, leading to their elimination. The treaty aims not to limit the number of nuclear weapons, nor to prevent new countries from obtaining them, but rather, to declare them illegal and then to eliminate them.



Initial negotiations of the Treaty took place March 27-30. Events surrounding negotiations were not auspicious. The USA along with the other nuclear powers, boycotted the meeting. Then, when the Syrian government used gas on its own people,

the US responded militarily. It later dropped a mega-bomb in Afghanistan. These actions highlight the urgent need for the Ban.

A partial listing of the motivations, principles, and desired outcomes of such a treaty leave little doubt as to its imperative:

- Nine Nuclear nations together possess an estimated 14,900 weapons
- 90%+ are in the arsenals of the United States and Russia
- Over 120 nations believe that weapons intended to inflict catastrophic humanitarian harm, are participating actively in the treaty negotiations.
- Representatives of scientific, medical, military, humanitarian, ecological and environmental, religious, NGO associations are demanding such an agreement.
- Nuclear weapons would be prohibited under international law, placing them on the same legal footing as chemical and biological weapons.
- The Ban Treaty is not contingent upon the support or participation of nuclear nations. No nation will have the power to veto the treaty's adoption.

For further information see: [ICAN.org](http://ICAN.org)

## **Changed for Good: a Final Reflection on my UNANIMA Internship**

By Colleen Jackson, RSC



I am rapidly coming to the conclusion of my 3-month internship at UNANIMA and the UN. It is difficult in a few short sentences to describe the impact of this time, but suffice to say ... 'I have been changed ... for good' (from the musical "Wicked"). Having spent my life engaged at the grassroots – most recently working with asylum seekers who have experienced torture and trauma – this UN experience has broadened and expanded my understandings of the complex nature of poverty, human suffering, and sustainable development, and the global efforts required to create equity, justice and human rights for all. Despite its shortcomings and limitations, the UN is a powerful source of global research, planning and action. This has been exemplified for me, particularly, in the UN's extraordinary, united global action plan of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Together with Pope Francis' call through 'Laudato Si', this is an epochal time. We are called to end extreme poverty, fight

inequality & injustice, and halt the rate of climate change. In particular, a few issues have occupied my imagination and consciousness:

1. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. SDG 5 calls for the end to all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, and for the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation. The Commission on the Status of Women highlighted evidence that the legalisation of prostitution (including in my home country, Australia, and our neighbour New Zealand), rather than protecting women, is perpetuating human trafficking and sexual exploitation. The 'Nordic Model', where victims are decriminalised, and the purchase or arranging of prostitution becomes a criminal offence, is seen as the only way to protect the human rights and dignity of women. Ireland is the latest country to enact such legislation.

2. The impact of the 'informal economy' (about half of the world's workforce). In particular, domestic workers, more than 80% of whom are women, have few protections in terms of pay, conditions, hours of work, sick leave and maternity leave. How are the cooks, cleaners, gardeners and aides in our employ paid and protected? Are we contributing to the perpetuation of this injustice? What will it take for all people in the world, regardless of gender and age, to enjoy social protections that ensure equal access to health care, education, meaningful employment and economic security and dignity? (SDG's 1, 3, 5, 8, 10)

3. Water and sanitation. At "Rio+20" all States recommitted to the "human right to safe drinking water and sanitation" and recognized that "water is at the core of sustainable development" (SDG 6). It has shocked and mobilized me to discover that the commodification and privatization of water (including the packaging and sale of bottled water!) is contributing to water poverty across the globe. The inter-linkages between the various SDG's are ever so transparent where water is concerned. Care of the earth, mitigation of climate change, and protection of water sources are all integral to world peace, the eradication of poverty, and arresting the current mass movements of refugees around the globe.

4. Climate change and care of the earth. I understand irrevocably, after these months at the UN, that climate action is linked to almost every effort to create global justice and sustainable development. I can no longer "leave it to the greenies". Human rights, world peace, the eradication of poverty, gender equality are all inextricably tied to how we care for our earth's resources. To leave no one behind, implies we all take responsibility for the care of our earth.

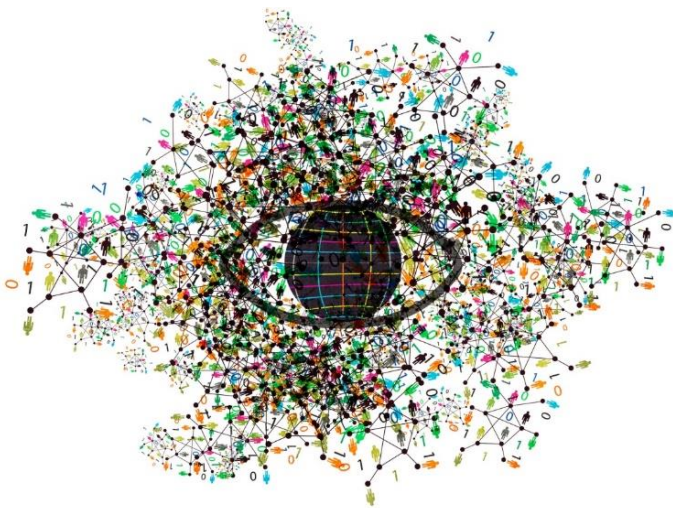
So yes, I have been changed for good.

Give us the conscience it takes  
to comprehend what we're facing,  
to see what we're looking at  
and to say what we see  
so that others, hearing us,  
may also brave the pressure that  
comes  
with being out of public step.  
Give us the courage we need  
to confront those things  
that compromise our consciences  
or threaten our integrity.  
Give us, most of all,  
the courage to follow those before us  
who challenged wrong and changed it,  
whatever the cost to themselves.



(from “Prayer for Conscience and Courage”, Joan Chittister;  
photo source: Woodland Trust)

## **SDG Indicators: Building the Missing Piece of the 2030 Agenda**



When the UN General Assembly adopted the Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015, it handed a monumental task to the UN Statistical Commission: to create a set of indicators (specific ways of measuring) progress toward the 17 goals. This piece of the development agenda is absolutely critical, because we live in a data-driven era; development project leaders and funders are loathe to undertake a project unless they have numerical evidence of the problem it will address and a viable plan for collecting data that will demonstrate

its impact on that problem. We are therefore unlikely to address any issues about which, or needs of any populations on whom, we lack data.

After many months of negotiations with Member States and some input from civil society, the Statistical Commission and a group of experts from various UN agencies (IAEG) were able to reach general agreement on a set of 232 indicators. They then met this March to finalize their recommendation to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the General Assembly.

They recommended that ECOSOC adopt the indicators and plan for collecting data on them that was developed by the IAEG. This “[indicator framework](http://bit.ly/2rmWIwv)” (available only in English at this time: <http://bit.ly/2rmWIwv>) is to be voluntary and country-led, which means no Member State will be legally bound to collect data on the recommended indicators, that national statistics offices will lead the data collection effort, States will be consulted on all models used to estimate data on their status when data is

unavailable, and that State’s will be the owners of the data collected on their own populations and territories. The Statistical Commission also proposed that it would undertake an annual refinement of the chosen indicators and



perform a full review of their effectiveness every five years. Finally, the SC called on States, UN agencies, and international partners to increase their logistical and monetary support for data collection efforts and upon the UN Secretary-General to uphold transparency in the SDG monitoring process by maintaining a public database on the agreed upon SDG indicators whose contents can be included in an annual progress report on the SDGs.

The next step for the SC’s indicator framework is discussion and refinement by the political delegations of the ECOSOC between April and July 2017. It will then move forward for implementation by the GA. Only then will this critical operative piece of the SDG machinery be in place and the 2030 Agenda made whole and fully functional. (Top illustration source: *New York Times*)

## Campaign Against Xenophobia Now in Motion



At the UN High-level Summit on refugees and migrants that took place in September 2016, the UN launched the TOGETHER campaign against xenophobia and for social inclusion of all migrant populations. The campaign seeks to engage all UN agencies and Member States as well as all factions of civil society in a concerted effort to address discrimination against migrants by

promoting “respect, safety and dignity for everyone forced to flee their homes in search of a better life.” The campaign differ greatly from an intergovernmental treaty, agreement, or political declaration, in that it aims to foment social change by sowing seeds of tolerance and

cross-cultural contact and appreciation through community-based projects initiated and executed by schools, religious communities, and other local groups. This approach demonstrates an understanding on the part of the UN system that social change and development are bottom-up processes that may be given a grand stage on the global level but are achieved at the local level through local ownership. One way the UN is attempting to facilitate this wave of unified grassroots activism is by managing an online platform for storytelling. This website allows those working to promote solidarity and eradicate xenophobia in their communities to share their processes and successes and to shed light on the positive contributions of migrants and refugees to their communities. If you are seeking inspiration from everyday triumphs of human solidarity, visit the Join Together online publication page: <https://medium.com/join-together/sharing-small-stories-of-solidarity-87f62c41960d>. If you have any stories to share with others in the global community who may be contemplating joining or starting an initiative of their own, you can submit one to [together@un.org](mailto:together@un.org) or post one on your social media pages using the hashtag #jointogether. If you *do* decide to share a story, be sure to call our attention to it by writing to us at [info@unanima-international.org](mailto:info@unanima-international.org).

## Indigenous Voices Sing Out for Earth Justice at the UN



At the end of each April, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues brings a wave of color, song, and spirituality to UN Headquarters. The Forum serves as a space in which indigenous peoples from around the world can shed light on the particular development, peace, and security concerns

they feel, challenges they face, and solutions they offer as indigenous peoples. This year, UNANIMA joined members of the NGO Mining Working Group and other religious NGOs sponsored the participation of a delegation of indigenous people representing REPAM, the Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network. REPAM has created a school of human rights that recently distinguished 13 specific cases of human rights abuses related to industrial destruction of the environment from throughout Latin America. Prior to their arrival in New York, the REPAM delegation brought 7 of these cases before the Inter-American Court in the United States capitol. During their week in New York City, they had the opportunity to participate in a number of events in and around the UN, including speaking for civil society in multiple side-events to the Forum and meeting with the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the UN, the Special Rapporteur for Indigenous Issues, and a delegation from the Holy See.





The REPAM delegates spoke with passion, poetry, and conviction about the impact of

environmental degradation on their livelihood, culture, and identity as peoples of the Amazon. Their unique perspective helped those in attendance re-frame “climate change” as a process whereby mother earth is healing herself from an illness from which the land, the water, the air, and the people suffer together. Lyla June Johnsen, an educator from the Diné People of southwest North America who served as a respondent in one of the REPAM panel discussions, made a strong impression on attendees when she pointed out the window at the bustle of New York City and said, “They say this is civilization. There is nothing more primitive than this. Here we are selling our own grandchildren.”

Importantly, they offered their traditional, local wisdom as a means for participation in the healing of our groaning world.

Armando Goés of the Yanomami People of Brazil emphasized empowering people to heal through education. Change of culture, he said, is not about transferring knowledge, but rather, awakening others to the truth that exists within them.

A short video on the work of REPAM is available here in Portuguese with captions in other languages: <http://bit.ly/2roFmzb>.

The group has also produced a series of radio programs on Laudato Si’ which are available in English (<http://bit.ly/2q7i1gJ>) and Spanish (<http://bit.ly/2roPAzV>). (Top and bottom photo source: REPAM)



## UNANIMA Says Goodbye to another Great Intern

Last month, UNANIMA’s New York contingent said a fond farewell to Colleen Jackson, RSC. Colleen had been a great addition to the team in the New York office. We are so grateful for the knowledge and compassion she brought to our work from her experience as a supporter of, and practiced advocate for, detained migrants in Australia. We were also the beneficiaries on many occasions of her skill and tenacity



in overcoming technological obstacles in the office. She will be missed by us all!

### Flashpoints:

- Jean Quinn, **DW** founded Sophia Housing in 1997 as a national organization which cares and supports people with complex mental health and addiction needs who are homeless.

Denis Doherty, Chairperson of Sophia Housing, said "Twenty years after Jean's vision and leadership established an organization that not only sought to respond to people's housing needs, but also sought to create an innovative model of care for those experiencing homelessness, we are fortunate that Jean still continues to serve on the Board of Directors."



On a recent visit to Ireland, Fran Gorsuch, Chairperson of UNANIMA International Board, had the opportunity to visit Sophia and to learn about its collaboration with the Religious of Ireland in tackling the issues of homelessness. She said she was impressed at the level of support Sophia gave to its residents, especially families and men coming out of prison.

- The UNESCO Student Committee at Collège Sainte-Anne in Lachine (Montreal, Quebec, Canada), supervised by the head of the Spiritual and Community Animation Department, held a Model UN on April 6 and 7, 2017. To stage the event during Human Rights Week, the Student Committee had assistance from the



United Nations Delegation from the Université de Montréal, three members of which were alumni of Collège Sainte-Anne. Renaude Grégoire, of the **Sisters of Saint Anne** Social Justice Office, gave a brief presentation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and supported students in their negotiations to gain a better understanding of the two chosen themes: decent work and climate change. The secondary school students who took part in the Model UN became aware of the challenges and opportunities involved in dialogue between different nations.

- Maria Jose Meira (Dede) the provincial sister of the **Carmelite Vedrunas** in the 13 American countries where the sisters are in mission, visited the Vedruna sisters in the United States in April and spent a day in New York at the United Nations and UNANIMA. Maria Jose is from Brazil and has a special



place in her heart for UNANIMA. She remembers our intervention and support of the Brazilian campesinos who lost their land in a dispute over rights with the large landowners (Dandara 2011). Many things about her visit impressed her, but Dede repeated the same thought a few times ' how can they/we do so much, when the space and the staff is so small'. An echo of many who pass through the office...but, Dede is a firm believer in the power of the Ruah. We see Her sacred presence everywhere. Dede and Maureen thank the UNANIMA staff for a gracious welcome.