

"Cry out as if you
have a million voices,
for it is silence which
kills the world."
-Catherine of Siena



What Is Earth Asking Of Us? Paris 2015 and Counting

Contents

<i>What is Earth Asking of Us?</i>	1
<i>High Hopes for Lima?</i>	2
<i>Disarmament and Sustainability</i>	3
<i>Empowering Women</i>	4
<i>Rethinking Social Development</i>	5
<i>Events and Observances</i>	6

In just one year from now, November 30 – December 11, 2015, the world’s leaders will gather in Paris for the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC), which may prove to be the single most important gathering of its kind. The abiding hope is that reason and a sense of the common good of both people and planet will prevail, and that nations will enter into a binding agreement that will take significant steps to limit global warming. In the words of Dr. R.K. Pachauri, the Chair of the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) (IPCC), “We have the means

to limit climate change. The solutions are many and allow for continued economic and human development. All we need is the will to change.”

Is It Too Much To Ask?

It has been said that we are the first generation to witness such massive global climate shifts, and perhaps the last generation that can do something about it. Is this too much to ask of the world’s leaders? That they act on behalf of not only this generation, but future generations as well? Pope Francis addressed the shift that is needed at this critical

juncture when he said, “This is one of the greatest challenges of our time: to convert ourselves to a type of development that knows how to respect creation.”

China and the US Take the Lead

The recent agreement between China and the United States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions has been a critical boost to UN climate negotiations which are taking place now in Lima, Peru. President Obama has said that “As the world’s two largest economies, energy consumers and emitters of greenhouse gases, we have a

Key findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Synthesis Report

- Human influence on the climate system is clear, and recent man-made emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest in history. Recent climatic changes have had widespread impacts such as retreat of mountain glaciers, ocean acidification, and temperature extremes.
- Continued emissions will further increase the likelihood of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems.
- Climate change is projected to under-

mine food security.

- Climate change impacts are already making poverty reduction more difficult, and creating new poverty traps, the latter particularly in urban areas and emerging in hotspots of hunger.
- Rural areas are expected to experience major impacts on water availability and supply, and on food security, including shifts in the production areas of food and non-food crops around the world.
- Risks are unevenly distributed and are generally greater for disadvantaged people and communities in countries at all levels of development.



What Is Earth Asking Of Us? (continued)



special responsibility to lead the global effort against climate change.” Chinese President Xi Jinping said “We hope to encourage all major economies to be ambitious – all countries, developing and developed – to work across some of the old divides, so we can conclude a strong global agreement next year.”

This is certainly an effort that deserves our enthusiastic and active support. We know full well that President Obama will face tough resistance from the

Republican-led Congress, and even some of his own fellow Democrats in coal-producing states. To counter this resistance, we urge you to contact the following key leaders to express your support of President Obama’s efforts to make the changes necessary to ensure a healthy future for present and future generations, as well as to reverence the integrity of Earth and her ecosystems.

Contact Now:

[President Barack Obama](#)

[John Boehner](#)
Speaker of the House

[Kevin McCarthy](#)
House Majority Leader

[Nancy Pelosi](#)
House Minority Leader

[Steve Scalise](#)
House Majority Whip

[Steny Hoyer](#)
House Minority Whip

High Hopes for Lima?

Representatives from nearly 200 countries are meeting in Peru December 1-12 for UN Climate Talks, which are yet another step toward developing a binding, global agreement to be signed in Paris next year. [Responding To Climate Change](#) has suggested a number of questions that need to guide these deliberations:

- ◆ **What more can leading emitters do NOW to curb their pollution?**

The agreement between China and the US, as well as decisions made by the European Union regarding emissions are targeted to 2025 and beyond.

- ◆ **Where will the money come from?**

Huge sums of money are needed to help developing countries transition to low-carbon economies and to prepare for worst case scenarios regarding the negative impact of global warming.

- ◆ **Will this meeting in Peru encourage Brazil to**

support an ambitious agenda and announce its own carbon cuts in 2015?

South American countries have generally kept low profiles at UN Summits – despite great progress in developing “green economies.”

- ◆ **Which other countries will step up and offer a challenge to the status quo?**

The US-China agreement has set a precedent.

- ◆ **Will the proposed 2015 agreement really be legally binding?**

The US says it is not able to accept an agreement that looks like an international treaty – as it will have to go through Congress, which at this point is unlikely to ratify it. But the position of the European Union and other developing countries is that only a binding, legal agreement will inspire confidence

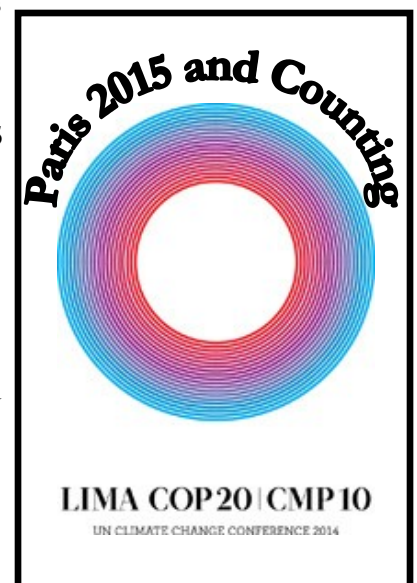
in the system and bring about the much-needed long-term results.

- ◆ **Who decides what is fair?**

The question of equity is at the heart of these climate negotiations, especially in that it is the world’s poorest and most marginalized populations who stand to suffer the most.

“All human activities, professions, programs, and institutions must henceforth be judged primarily by the extent to which they inhibit, ignore, or foster a mutually enhancing human/Earth relationship.”

-Thomas Berry



Swords into Plowshares and Spears into Pruning Hooks: Disarmament Necessary for a Sustainable Future

Kelly Litt, Dominican Volunteer

On the grounds of the United Nations Headquarters can be found a sculpture titled “Good Defeats Evil.” This sculpture was presented to the UN by the Soviet Union in 1990, and it depicts St. George slaying a dragon composed of U.S. and USSR missile fragments that were destroyed under a [treaty](#) in 1987. This sculpture is a symbol of the dangers of weapons and of the UN’s commitment to disarmament. Yet there is not much sign of disarmament in today’s world when we witness seemingly endless accounts of war and tragedy in places such as Syria, Gaza, Ukraine, Iraq, and Libya.

One of the primary goals of the UN is disarmament, yet countries seem to be hoarding weapons rather than disarming. In 2013 countries around the world contributed to a global military spending of \$1.739 trillion USD. Global security is jeopardized by the idea that “might makes right” and safety is found through armaments. Beyond the threat to security, weapons are hindering development, gender equality, and sustainability.

Development

Concern has been voiced over the increasing global military expenditure which could instead be spent on education, healthcare, clean water, or sustainable agriculture. The World Bank forecasted in 2002 that an annual investment of just \$40–60 billion USD, roughly half the amount currently spent on nuclear weapons, would have

been enough to meet the internationally agreed upon [Millennium Development Goals](#) on poverty alleviation by the target date of 2015. However, the world has fallen short of meeting these goals and is turning now to the [Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals](#).

Gender Equality

There are approximately 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty today, 70% of whom are women. According to the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), “excessive global military spending feeds into a vicious cycle of societal instability, creating an unsuitable environment to pursue gender equality... an overtly strong military presence creates insecurity. Thus demilitarization and disarmament are essential components for achieving gender equality.”

Sustainability and the Environment

According to [Reaching Critical Will](#), 155 states agreed that nuclear weapons should never be used again, regardless of any situation or circumstance. Conversations continue regarding the [Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty](#) (CTBT) which would stop the testing of all nuclear weapons that are being tested in multiple environments, in water, in the air, and underground, releasing large amounts of radioactive material. This is known to cause cancers and pollute the water and soil in the surrounding environment of the test site.

To date, 183 states have signed the CTBT, and 162 have ratified it. However, for the treaty to take full effect, 44 “nuclear-capable states” must ratify it. The treaty is waiting on the ratification of China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, and the United States. Often times treaties get stuck in the toxicity of partisan politics while the safety of individuals and the environment remains at risk. In December, the [Third International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons](#) will convene in Vienna to discuss the humanitarian importance of disarmament and non-proliferation.

It is important to understand that living in a global community challenges us to work toward the conversion of oppressive structures in society. Citizens must take responsibility for the policies of their homeland to ensure they follow international laws and treaties. Good can be done and a sustainable future can be attained by shifting funds from national security to human security. The use of weapons should no longer be the currency of foreign policy around the globe. As we heard in Isaiah 2:4 this Advent season, **“They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.”** We must all work to beat any swords in our lives into plowshares to work for change and peace in our world.



“For the United Nations, there is no goal more overriding, no commitment more compelling, no aspiration more profound than the prevention of armed conflict. Ensuring human security, in the broadest sense, is the United Nations cardinal mission.”

- Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan

Empowering Women and Creating Change: The 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Kelly Litt, Dominican Volunteer



Beijing Declaration 12 Areas of Concern

1. Women and the environment
2. Women in power and decision-making
3. The girl child
4. Women and the economy
5. Women and poverty
6. Violence against women
7. Human rights of women
8. Education and training of women
9. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
10. Women and health
11. Women and the media
12. Women and armed conflict

The fifth-ninth session of the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW59) will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from March 9th through March 20th, 2015. This year CSW59 will bring together representatives of Member States and NGOs from all regions of the world to evaluate the progress in gender equality over the past twenty years and discuss both its successes and challenges moving forward.

Beijing+20

The main theme of CSW59 is the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#). This Declaration acted as a comprehensive plan and roadmap for advancing women's equality and rights worldwide, and was adopted at the [Fourth World Conference on Women](#) in 1995.

The Beijing Declaration advocated for a world where women and girls would be free from violence, have access to health care and education, and be guaranteed their human rights. The Beijing Declaration made comprehensive global commitments under 12 critical areas of concern which aided in setting global standards and policies concerning women's rights and equality.

Twenty years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration marks 2015 as the review year. Participants of CSW59 will evaluate those areas of concern. According to [UN Women](#), there have been great strides forward for women since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration, and "more women and girls than at any previous point in time serve in political offices, are protected by laws against gender-based violence, and live under constitutions guaranteeing gender equality." Success stories were shared by delegates at the General Assembly displaying optimism with the progress that has been made. The delegate from the Dominican Republic explained that women in the Dominican Republic are making large gains in the political sphere and surpassing men in the election process. This is hopeful news. However, there is quite a bit of progress still to be made as no country has yet finished the agenda or achieved all the goals in the Beijing Declaration.

According to [UN Women](#), "women earn less than men and are more likely to work in poor-quality jobs. A third suffer physical or sexual

violence in their lifetime," and gaps in maternal health care leave 800 women dying in childbirth each day. During the General Assembly Third Committee meeting, a delegate from Zimbabwe explained that "poverty continues to wear a feminine face and women continue to be victims of violence both in... private and public life."

An increase in non-state actors and armed groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Sham (ISIL/ISIS) also hinders achievements outlined in the Beijing Declaration. There is still a great amount of crime, violence, and abuse against women. Similarly, Israel's occupation of Palestine has hindered women's empowerment and ability to be part of national strategic plans and development. This clearly shows that there is still much work to be done this year at CSW59.

Successes, Gaps, and Concerns

According to [UN Women](#), CSW59 will "address opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda." Aligning with the post-2015 development agenda presents an opportunity to

Commission on the Status of Women (continued)

ensure women's equality and rights are put in the forefront of sustainable development and in the center of the global agenda as the world moves past the [Millennium Development Goals](#) to the [Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals](#). Through the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration, those participating and awaiting the outcomes of CSW59 hope it brings recommitment, renewed mobilization, and renewed political will and effort toward achieving a world where women are equal and empowered.

Once again, we will host Sisters from **Dominican Sisters International (DSI)** who will attend the Commission. More to follow!



Rethinking Social Development

Albert Einstein once said that *no problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it*. It would seem that this is noteworthy advice as we consider the Priority Theme for the 53rd Session of the Commission for Social Development: ***Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world***. It is also highly significant that this conversation takes place as we recognize the 20th anniversary of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the 70th anniversary of the United Nations itself. What better time for a clear and transparent consideration of this theme from a perspective that recognizes that the *business-as-usual* approach is woefully inadequate and responsible in large part for the precarious state of our world today.

Our Founding Inspiration

In the post-World War II world, those who crafted the Charter of the United Nations took great pains to “reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and wom-

en and of nations large and small...and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.” In *Article 55*, international economic and social cooperation acknowledges that *conditions of stability and well-being are the foundation of peaceful and friendly relations among nations, as are the principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples*. Seventy years later, the world is more unequal than at any point since World War II, and global security is severely undermined by the resulting conflict within and among nations. In addition to this, the phenomenon of global climate change, and the compromised state of the planet, will continue to have far-reaching negative impact on global food security; the availability of water; and the massive movement of peoples from areas that are no longer sustainable. How can we ***rethink and strengthen social development*** in a world which in many respects seems to be on a trajectory of self-destruction?

Is It Too Much To Ask?

When Member States gather from February 4-13 at UN Headquarters in New York to consider what re-thinking social

development means in our world today, NGO representatives will clear in our own understanding of the importance of this concept. Business-as-usual is no longer acceptable. The long-held “silo mentality” must give way to an integrated, wholistic approach, which places people at the center of development. And, development moving forward must be carried out in such a way that the limits of Earth and her resource base are respected. All we need is the will to change.

It doesn't seem like a lot to ask of world leaders, does it?



2015 UN and National Events and Observances

JANUARY			
11 January	National Human Trafficking Awareness Day	3 March	World Wildlife Day
27 January	International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust	8 March	International Women's Day
FEBRUARY			
1-7 February	World Interfaith Harmony Week	9-20 March	Commission on the Status of Women (Theme Beijing+20)
4-13 February	Commission on Social Development	20 March	International Day of Happiness
4 February	World Cancer Day	22 March	World Water Day
6 February	International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation	APRIL	
20 February	World Day of Social Justice	2 April	World Autism Awareness Day
MARCH			
1 March	Zero Discrimination Day	7 April	Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Rwanda Genocide
		7 April	World Health Day
		22 April	International Mother Earth Day

**The Word of God
is always 'in the beginning.'
And this means
that it is always in the process
of being born.
The Word that is hidden
still sparkles in the darkness
and whispers in the silence.
It entices us to pursue it,
to yearn and sigh after it....
For it wishes to reveal to us
something about God. (Meister Eckhart)**



**In the stillness of these holy winter days, may you touch the revelation which God has in store for you...
for the sake of all of God's good creatures and this one dear Planet which we call our home.**

Merry Christmas!

Margaret and Kelly

DOMINICAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Margaret Mayce, OP, DLC/NGO Representative to the United Nations
Kelly Litt, Dominican Volunteer

246 East 46th Street, #1F
New York, NY 10017
ngo@domlife.org 908-227-2265