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 undermine 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.**
special responsibility to lead the
global effort against climate
change.” Chinese President Xi
Jinping said “We hope to en-
courage 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 re-
sistance, we urge you to con-
tact the following key leaders
to express your support of
President Obama’s efforts to
make the changes necessary to
ensure a healthy future for pre-
sent and future generations, as
well as to reverence the integri-
ty of Earth and her ecosys-
tems.

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. Re-
sponding 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 need-
ed to help developing countries
transition to low-carbon econo-
 mies and to prepare for worst
case scenarios regarding the
negative impact of global warm-
ing.

♦ 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 pro-
files at UN Summits – de-
spite great progress in devel-
op ing “green economies.”

♦ Who decides what is
fair?
The question of equity is at the
heart of these climate negotia-
tions, especially in that it is the
world’s poorest and most mar-
ginalized populations who
stand to suffer the most.

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

“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
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 overly 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
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, 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.

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...
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 women, 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

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<tr>
<th>JANUARY</th>
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<tr>
<td>11 January</td>
<td><strong>National Human Trafficking Awareness Day</strong></td>
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<td>27 January</td>
<td><strong>International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust</strong></td>
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<td>9-20 March</td>
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<td><strong>Commission on the Status of Women (Theme Beijing+20)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>International Day of Happiness</strong></td>
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<td><strong>World Water Day</strong></td>
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<td><strong>World Interfaith Harmony Week</strong></td>
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<td>4-13 February</td>
<td><strong>Commission on Social Development</strong></td>
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<td><strong>World Cancer Day</strong></td>
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<td>6 February</td>
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<td><strong>World Day of Social Justice</strong></td>
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<td><strong>International Mother Earth Day</strong></td>
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**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*

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**DOMINICAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**

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

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