

E-JusticePeaceIntegrityofCreationLetter

E-letter of the Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation Office of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate



Mission Statement

The Service of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation of the Oblate Congregation is an integral part of our missionary charism as it seeks to foster in and through its members, associates, partners, and institutional structures a vital and active presence where decisions are made affecting the poor (Rule9a). Through its animation programs the Service seeks to encourage and collaborate with Oblate ministries and institutions across the world to be in solidarity with the poor and marginalized.

GS-JPIC Team:

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Thank You!

Thanks to all who responded to our first E-JPIC Letter.

We welcome your feedback, comments and suggestions

Oblates at the United Nations-NY

The Oblates are involved in a number of Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Committees at the United Nations (UN). This allows us to participate as actively as NGOs are permitted in this world body. We do this in through our own UN affiliation and also as associate members of VIVAT Int'l. www.vivatinternational.org.

Our work in different

Social Development

The annual Social Development Commission Conference was held this year from February 6th to 15th. This year the central theme was "Promoting Full Employment and Decent Work for All". Much of the information around the Conference, including Civil Society participation, can be viewed by clicking on: www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/csocd2008.htm and following the links, in any of the 6 official languages of the UN. In preparation for the Conference this year, we worked with three major groups: NGO's, Indigenous Peoples and with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

Indigenous Issues

The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) was held this year from April 21st to May 2nd. The central theme: "Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods: the stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges".

Committees and Sub-Committees over the past year (Social Development, Sustainable Development, Financing for Development, Indigenous Issues, Eradication of Poverty, HIV/AIDS, etc.) has allowed us to participate in a series of Conferences where we have had the opportunity to make our voice heard. On this occasion we will focus on a few.



From left to right: Joseph Gomes OMI (Bangladesh); Walter Butor OMI (US); Mr. Jhumlai Amla (Bangladesh); Daniel LeBlanc OMI (GS-JPIC); Ms. Flora Bably Talang (Bangladesh); Seamus Finn OMI (US); Mr. Sanjeeb Drong (Bangladesh).

Several Oblates participated this year, including: Daniel LeBlanc, Joseph Gomes, Nicanor Sarmiento, Walter Butor.

A few lay collaborators from Bangladesh accompanied us as well – Sanjeeb Drong, Shakil Ahmed and Flora Bably Talang. Both Seamus Finn (interim JPIC director) and Rohan Silva (Sri Lanka) were able to spend some time at the Forum. This was an opportunity for us to organize and present what is called a side-event around the theme, "Indigenous Peoples' Spirituality and the Earth". For further information see www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/. You will find not only information on the Forum but also on the "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples", and much more.

Sustainable Development

From May 5th to 16th the first of a two-year cycle of conferences on Sustainable

Development was held at the UN around the themes of "Agriculture, Rural Development, Land, Drought, Desertification and Africa". This was a review year, as compared to next's year session, which will look to formulating policy. The Chairman's Summary, which can be found at: www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/review.htm gives a fairly good account of what went on at the meeting. Many important issues were discussed. I mention just two as examples: the need to do much more in the way of assuring water and sanitation, and good practices in agriculture, including not losing sight of traditional knowledge. The following organization's web-site does an excellent job of daily summaries: www.iisd.ca/csd/csd16/ (English, French, Spanish).

Eradication of Poverty

On the question of Eradication of Poverty, members of the NGO community, Oblates included, are beginning a consultation with people living in poverty. Through this consultation we hope to be able to highlight a specific aspect of this challenge, not necessarily well taken into account by major institutions, agencies or country representatives as the mandate for a second decade on the Eradication of Poverty is being prepared – ***the perspective of the people living in poverty.***

For this **we need your help within the next month.** We know that your work keeps you busy, but we need your help in order to have the voice of the poor people that you work with included. We have three questions we would like you to ask one or more poor person, and then send us the responses you received.

The questions are *(please feel free to ask the questions in the way that will be best understood by the respondent):*

1. What specific opportunities would you like for yourself and/or your children in the areas of --health?, --education?, --employment? Which of these opportunities would make the most difference?
2. Which public programs or processes have helped in your community?
3. What would you like global policy makers at the UN and others to know about your life and experience?

Please send us the responses you hear with the following information:

1. The place (area, town, city) and country where you are;
2. Your name and e-mail;
3. The input of the person(s) living in poverty (answers to questions 1 through 3)

This is a very practical way to ensure that poor people have a say in decisions made as the UN prepares a Second Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

Please send your responses to:
omiipic.generalservice@yahoo.com



Front row left to right: Kevin Dance (Passionists), Walter Butor OMI (US)

Debt Relief and Protection for low and middle income countries in 2008

In what has been a great start to 2008 legislation and hearings on issues with direct impact on more than 80 of the world's poorest countries have been taking place in the US Congress where the Oblate JPIC team has also been active. The Jubilee Act which promises debt relief to 37 countries, the Haiti relief act and the current draft of the Stop Vulture Funds Act would offer protections against vulture fund profiteering to more than 80 countries.

Vulture Funds: The premise of the Vulture Funds Act is that these countries should enjoy protection against vulture fund profiteering, on the basis that these countries are either already in the HIPC program, or would become eligible for debt relief under the Jubilee Act. Protection for these countries is essential to preserve the gains of existing debt relief commitments and to ensure vultures don't undermine future relief.

The Haiti Act: As the food crisis explodes across Haiti, a campaign to cancel all of Haiti's nearly \$1 billion multilateral debt has been intensified as the G8 prepares to meet in Japan in July 2008. Alongside resolutions and legislation in the US House of Representatives this effort is intended to put an end to the \$1 million in interest payments that the government of Haiti has to pay each week.

Jubilee Act: In addition to authorizing broader debt cancellation, the bill seeks to reform current IMF/World Bank policies and other global lending practices by:

- Urging that more resources be devoted to grants for the world's poorest countries;
- Requiring greater transparency at the IFIs, including a policy of maximum disclosure in project and loan documents;
- Limiting the conditions that may be required of countries going through the debt relief process to those ensuring that money released by debt relief is used transparently and accountably to address poverty;

A majority of the world's 66 poorest countries remain mired in debt crisis. A January 2007 study of 41 poor countries that had not yet completed the HIPC Initiative found that the majority of these countries were actually paying more today on debt service than they were in 1996. Lesotho is an example of one of these countries: it does not qualify for current debt cancellation initiatives despite its high level of need. Lesotho spent \$54.2 million in debt repayments in 2005, only slightly less than what it receives annually from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC).



From left to right: Daniel LeBlanc, OMI (GS-JPIC); Nicanor Sarmiento OMI (Lacombe); Roban Silva OMI (Sri Lanka); Joseph Gomes OMI (Bangladesh).