

UFER

International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples

An idea in action

Bruxelles

Registered Office
Président, Marielle Peltier
40/10, rue Washington,
1050 Bruxelles
Belgique

Genève

Représentation U.N.
Berhane Ras-Work
145, rue de Lausanne
1202 Genève-
Suisse

New York

Représentation U.N.
Sharon Joslyn
P.O.Box 540082, Bronx
New-York 10454,
USA

Montréal

Secretary General
Raymonde Martineau
812 Outremont
Outremont PQ H2V3N6
Canada



UFER News

2007-03

info@ufer-international.org

www.ufer-international.org

EDITORIAL

Par Marielle Peltier, president

Many of you reacted positively to the last issue of **UFER News**. You appreciated its content but also its style and format. It gives us the courage to carry on in the same way. We will thus continue to send you shorter and more frequent newsletters, interesting links, short articles under three chapters: news from the United Nations, basic articles and news from the members. We thank you indeed for the interest you showed in our work and we urge you to participate in it by communicating news, reactions and testimonies.

At the last General Assembly, we decided to apply for an official **legal status** in Belgium.¹ This is done: we are now a Non-Profit-Making International Association according to the Belgian Law. We took the opportunity of the last meeting of the Board of Directors in Geneva to bring all our archives to Brussels, where we have from now on our Headquarters. I take the opportunity to thank Berhane Ras-Work and the Inter-African Committee, who have been accommodating us for the past 7 years in their offices in Geneva. This new situation provides us with a better administrative and legal coherence, but does not alter in any way our determination to participate in UN events and NGO's activities related to human rights, in Geneva as well as in New York.

At the last General Assembly, we also considered the possibility of organizing a new **Training program on prevention and management of conflicts** in Addis-Ababa, in 2008 (after those held in Geneva in 2000 and in Seoul in 2004). Since then, our reflection has evolved. As our means, financial and human, are limited, it seems to us that it is more important to ensure the following up of the two previous training programs, rather than to organize a new one. In this context, two projects have been submitted to us:

- *A project of reinforcement of the capacities of indigenous organizations in peaceful management and transformation of conflicts in the Great Lakes region of Africa, presented by Vital Bambanze, who had participated in the training program in Geneva.*
- *A project of a Centre for training and reinforcement of capacities of local organizations in the sub-region of the Great Lakes region of Africa (Burundi, D.R. Congo, Rwanda) (FRECOL), presented by Blondine Eya-Nchama. The project originated from Marie-Thérèse Mukantabana, who participated in the training program in Seoul.*

Because of the geographical proximity of those two projects, we can foresee some synergies as well as the possibility of early collaborations between them. Even if UFER does not have the means of financing them, we could accompany the initiators, at each stage of realization, putting at their disposal our expertise in training and management of projects. We will, of course, keep you informed of the evolution of these local projects.

In closing, I wish that for all of you the year 2008 be an opportunity to add a small stone to the construction of the more fraternal world which we dream of.

¹ This is linked to the transfer of our headquarters from Geneva to Brussels. In Switzerland, there is no official legal Statute.

NEWS FROM THE UNITED NATIONS

❖ THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

by Paul Beersmans & Raymonde Martineau

- *The North-South divide*

Progress in the promotion and protection of human rights in the United Nations is increasingly hampered by the North-South divide – which replaces the East-West confrontation of the Cold War. African and Asian countries, especially, join together in resisting any attempt to talk about violations of human rights on their continents.

This attitude is found in the new Human Rights Council, among others. Representatives of Asian and African governments are on the defensive. They even express doubts about the impartiality of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In the June 2007 session, the African Group presented a draft Code of Conduct for independent experts spelling out the professional and ethical qualifications which these experts should have, as if those already in function lacked such qualifications. Even representatives of NGOs from Asia and Africa hesitate to criticize their own governments – even when they have complaints against them - because they feel that their countries are always targeted while violations of human rights in Western countries go unmentioned. Even NGOs from the North rarely criticize their governments, according to them. There is an atmosphere of mistrust which is not favourable to the adoption of positive measures for the protection of human rights.

An example of this was also given in an article published recently in the newspaper *The Hindu* of India,² sent to us by one of our members there. The author of the article says that in February 2007, officials of the Indian government, appearing before the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), denied flatly the existence of caste discrimination, while their own Primer Minister, Manmohan Singh, had, a few months earlier, publicly compared discrimination against Dalits to the system of Apartheid. Mr. Rajagopal points out that “it was India that suggested the definition in the CERD be expanded for ‘descent-based discrimination’ to include caste when the treaty was being drafted.” He concludes that “having taken a principled stand in foreign policy against racial discrimination and apartheid, India should not hide behind a false sense of Third World sovereignty” to try to hide to the world a real problem in its society.

² *The caste system – India's apartheid?* By Balakrishnan Rajagopal, *The Hindu*, Saturday, August 18, 2007. The writer is Ford International Associate Professor of Law and Development and Director of the Program on Human Rights and Justice at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

- *Developments at the sixth session of the Council*

The first part of this session, which was held from 10 to 28 September, was largely dedicated to issues related to the **functioning of the new Council**. The process of reviewing the situation of human rights in all Member States of the United Nations (Universal Periodic Review - UPR) will begin in 2008. The first group of countries to be examined (16) has been selected.

This Review gives an opportunity for NGO's to have their voice heard. The UN General Assembly had decided that the Council should "undertake a universal periodic review, based on objective and reliable information, of the fulfillment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments".³ The review will be based on the following documents:

- Information prepared by the State concerned which can take the form of a national report;
- A compilation prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights;
- Additional, credible and reliable information provided by other relevant stakeholders, including NGO's.

Several **reports** were also discussed at the sixth session, among which those presented by the Group of Experts on Darfur, the Special Rapporteurs on freedom of religion and belief and on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, as well as the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Council took some important **decisions**. With regard to indigenous peoples, it extended for another three years the mandate of the Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous People; it also requested that an informal meeting open to the participation of states, indigenous peoples and other stakeholders be convened to exchange views on the most appropriate mechanisms to continue the work of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations. The Council further decided to appoint a Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, to replace the Working Group created in 1974 on the same issue, and to establish a Forum on Minority Issues – to succeed the Working Group on the same subject - to provide a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on these issues.

The Council also held a **Special Session on Human Rights in Myanmar (Burma)**, on 2 October, at the end of which it urged the government, among others, to release the people detained following the recent peaceful protests as well as all political detainees including Aung San Suu Kyi.

The **second part of the sixth session** will take place from 10 to 14 December 2007, to receive and discuss reports of several experts.

³ Resolution A/RES/60/251, par. 5 (e), adopted on 15 March 2006, <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/502/66/pdf/N0550266.pdf?OpenElement>

- *The role of NGOs in the Council*

During UFER General Assembly in September 2005, Prof. Dr. Marc Bossuyt, expert on human rights, gave a very interesting and appreciated exposé on the planned change of the Human Rights Commission into a Human Rights Council. He expressed his fear and concern that the change would not be for the better and that the role of the NGOs would become more difficult and complex.

The fear of Prof. Dr. Marc Bossuyt has proved, so far, not to be without a reason. At the sixth session, the NGOs had only 3 minutes for an oral statement, be it an individual or a joint statement. If the chairman of the Council was of the opinion that enough interventions of NGOs had taken place, he just dropped those who remained on the list of the speakers. In this regard, the procedure of a written statement by NGO's has been promoted by the NGO Liaison Office in order to reduce the number of oral statements.

It is consequently very difficult for smaller NGO's (like UFER) to have the same influence and possibilities as was the case in the Human Rights Commission. We can only hope that the procedures will be adapted and improved so that the influence of the NGO's can be as important as it was under the Commission. For the time being, we should rather use the procedure for written statements, instead of making oral interventions, and prepare input for the Universal Periodic Review of countries who are of interest to us.

- *Durban Review Conference*

The Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was held in Durban in 2001. UFER attended the Conference. A Declaration and Programme of Action were adopted. Time has come to assess the implementation of these two documents. In 2006, the General Assembly in its resolution 61/149, decided "to convene a review Conference on the Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action" and to request "the Human Rights Council to undertake preparations for this event".⁴ A Preparatory Committee met for the first time from 27 to 31 August in an organizational session which elected Ms. Najat Al-Hajjaji from Libya as president and adopted its programme of work as well as the provisional rules of procedure of the Conference, which will take place in 2009 in a place still to be determined.

UFER will follow closely the preparatory process of the Review Conference, which is taking place at a time when manifestations of racial discrimination and xenophobia are increasing in various parts of the world. This is an issue which should be high on the agenda of all human rights defenders.

⁴ A/RES/61/149, adopted on 19/12/2006, par. 33, <http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/503/37/pdf/N0650337.pdf?OpenElement> , consulted on 21/10/2007.

❖ WOMEN'S ISSUES

- *Commission on the Status of Women*

*by Sharon Joslyn
representative at the UN in New York*

The theme of the next session, from 25 February to 7 March 2008, will be “Financing for Gender Equity and the Empowerment of Women”. This is very important for girls, which was the theme of last session. There is not enough money for education of girls. In some countries there is a lack of good water, toilets and sanitary supplies which are impediments for girls' school attendance. On the other hand, industrialized countries are focusing on education for girls in the areas especially of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). There is a wide gap between these two realities.

We will thus continue to work for involvement of girls at all levels and stages of planning and participation. To maintain a momentum on girls, the Working Group on Girls will be sending letters to NGOs who sponsored girls last year as well as to the girls who did participate to encourage them to attend, if at all possible. At a later date, we will write to Member States asking them to include girls in their delegations.

We will be planning an orientation for those girls who will attend and prepare a training session and a youth friendly “tool kit” to help them decipher the content of the meetings and enable them to participate intelligently. The girls will be enlisted to help prepare these materials.

- *Miscellaneous*

by Berhane Raswork & Raymonde Martineau

- The Security Council held a day-long debate on women, peace and security, on 23 October. The Council adopted a statement in which it deplored that **violence against women in armed conflicts** had reached “appalling levels of atrocity”. It called for an end to impunity for such crimes.⁵ Even the peacekeepers of the United Nations have been involved in rapes and sexual abuses in countries such as Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Kosovo. Enquiries have been undertaken within the United Nations, following which some military personnel have been repatriated. The Secretary General has adopted a zero-tolerance policy in this regard.
- The theme of this year's Tourism Day (27 September) was “**Tourism Opens Doors for Women**”. A think thank was held on this theme in Sri Lanka. Some of the issues raised during the discussion were:

⁵ United Nations Press Release, *Security Council deeply concerned about 'pervasive' gender-based violence*, SC/9151, 23/10/2007, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/sc9151.doc.htm>, consulted on 1/12/2007.

- ✓ “The requirement not only to open doors, but to make it possible for women to go through them, including good training, development programmes, targeted information, decent and equal pay, good career development, family support structures and frameworks for ensuring self-respect.”
 - ✓ “The danger of self-delusion in considering primarily the beneficial aspects of tourism and women while ignoring the darker side of exploitation, harassment, abuse and marginalization.”
 - ✓ “The significance of increased access to credit facilities to encourage women entrepreneurs, and the proven reliability of women in meeting the conditions. “⁶
- The World Summit of the UN General Assembly in 2005 called for more coherence and stronger linkages between the UN work of setting norms and field operation. Following this summit, a High Level Panel on a System-wide Coherence was established as proposed by the Secretary General. One of the outcomes of the work of this panel is the proposal for the creation of a **UN organization for women** through consolidating some of the women’s mechanisms that already exists within the UN. The new organization is expected to have both a normative and operational mandate and to work at the national, regional and international levels. It would enable high-level representation for women’s rights at policy and program levels.
 - **Gender mainstreaming**⁷ is gaining growing attention and momentum in the Human Rights Council. It requests the examination of all the Councils procedures including membership, agenda working groups, mandate holders from a gender perspective. Such a holistic approach within the Council and within the entire UN system will demonstrate commitment and drive for gender equality. The Universal Periodic Review is a procedure which should be framed to include gender perspectives.
 - The **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** is moving from New York to Geneva. The 40th session will be held from 14 January to 1st February 2008. It will examine the reports of Saudi Arabia, Bolivia, Burundi, France, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Morocco and Sweden. This is yet another opportunity for NGOs to follow up and contribute by providing information and by taking part in the discussion.

⁶ World Tourism Day 2007 - “Tourism opens doors for women” - Think tank: the role of women in tourism, Bentota, Sri Lanka, 27 September 2007, on the World Tourism web page:

http://www.unwto.org/media/news/en/press_det.php?id=1362, consulted on 16/10/2007

⁷ “Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/ dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.” (UN Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women,

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm> , consulted on 12/11/2007)

❖ IN BRIEF

- *Adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

After more than 20 years of work and debates, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted, on 13 September of this year, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by a vote of 143 in favour, 4 against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States) and 11 abstentions. Although the document is non-binding, it “sends a clear message to the international community that the rights of Indigenous Peoples are not separate from or less than the rights of others, but are an integral and indispensable part of a human rights system dedicated to the rights of all”, stated a group of NGOs, in a joint statement issued on 14 September. They further expressed the “hope that all States will work in good faith to implement in their domestic law and practice this vitally important and long overdue human rights instrument.”⁸

- *The UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing in Canada*

The Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur, Miloon Kothari, visited Canada from 9 to 22 October. He met with representatives of governments and civil society throughout the country. He paid particular attention to homelessness, to adequate housing for women and indigenous people as well as to the effects of mega-events on housing in relation to the upcoming Olympic Games, which will take place in Vancouver in 2010. He made a series of recommendations to the government to deal with the state of homelessness and inadequate housing which the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had characterized as a “national emergency”.⁹ He will present his report to the Human Rights Council in December 2007.

- *The Landmine Treaty is ten years old*

This treaty was adopted in December 1997 and has been ratified so far by 156 countries. Unfortunately such important countries as United States, China, Russia, India and Pakistan continue to refuse to adhere to it. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), a coalition of more than 1400 NGOs in 90 countries, continue its work, because there is much left to do in order to implement this instrument and to eliminate this evil from the face of the earth.¹⁰

⁸ Adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Joint Statement by International Non-Governmental Organizations, on the Website of *Rights and Democracy*, <http://www.dd-rd.ca/site/media/index.php?id=2150&subsection=news>, consulted on 16/10/2007.

⁹ *United Nations expert on adequate housing calls for immediate attention to tackle national housing crisis in Canada*, Press release, Geneva, 1 November 2007, footnote no 1 <http://www.unhcr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/90995D69CE8153C3C1257387004F40B5?opendocument>, consulted on 3/11/2007

¹⁰ International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Site: <http://www.icbl.org/>.

NEWS FROM VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD

❖ COUNCIL OF EUROPE

In its annual report for 2006, the **European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)**, which was established in 1993 by the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the member States of the Council of Europe, expressed its concern about increased manifestations of Islamophobia, antisemitism, discrimination against Roma/Gypsies and racism against Black people.¹¹ The report further states that “on the subject of immigration, the tone of political debate has not only hardened considerably, but has also tended to stigmatise entire communities, notably foreigners. The latter are presented as the persons responsible for the deterioration of security conditions, unemployment and increased public expenditure.”¹²

❖ FRANCE

The **UN Independent Expert on Minority Issues**, Ms. Gay J. McDougall, following a mission in France, declared that “racism is alive, insidious and clearly targeted at those ‘visible’ minorities of immigrant heritage, the majority of whom are French citizens”. Many of them feel, she says, that “to become a citizen of France is not sufficient for full acceptance; that acceptance will be granted only with total assimilation that forces them to reject major facets of their identities.”¹³

❖ SWITZERLAND

At the last **Federal election** in Switzerland, in October 2007, the « *Union démocratique du centre* » (UDC) was the great winner with 29% of the votes. This far-right party had based its campaign on xenophobic and racist themes. At the same election, however, the first black deputy entered the parliament. Mr. Ricardo Lumengo, who came from Angola as a refugee in 1982, was elected in the Canton de Berne. He is a jurist and speaks eight languages. Referring to a UDC poster largely disseminated during the campaign and showing three white sheep throwing out a black sheep,¹⁴ he said “I am the black sheep”. Several other black candidates also received a surprisingly large number of votes.¹⁵

¹¹ Annual Report on ECRI's activities covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2006, on the website of ECRI, p.7, para 3, http://www.coe.int/t/e/human_rights/ecri/1-ecri/1-presentation_of_ecri/4-annual_report_2006/Annual%20report%202006%20logo.pdf, consulted on 20/10/2007.

¹² Idem, p. 8, par. 6

¹³ United Nations Office at Geneva, News and Media, Human Rights Press Release, *UN independent expert on minority issues calls for clear and committed leadership to promote non-discrimination, equality and diversity in France*, 1 October 2007, [http://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news_media.nsf/\(httpNewsByYear_en\)/BBC3915658DC6486C125736700546A2E?OpenDocument](http://www.unog.ch/unog/website/news_media.nsf/(httpNewsByYear_en)/BBC3915658DC6486C125736700546A2E?OpenDocument), consulted on 21/10/2007.

¹⁴ See the poster on the Website of the UDC : <http://www.typo3start.ch/sites/ausschaffung/>

¹⁵ Press release of the *Carrefour de Réflexion et d'Action contre le Racisme Anti-Noir (CRAN)*, Berne, 31/10/2007, www.CRAN.ch

❖ KOREA

Marie-Hélène Brasseur, member of UFER Committee, sends us some reflections on the recent encounter between the Presidents of North and South Korea. She said that this second Summit Meeting (the first one took place in June 2000) did not raise so much expectation as the first one. Many of the commitments made at the first one were not implemented. For example, Kim Jong IL never came to Seoul.

This encounter contributed however to the warming-up of the relations between the two countries. There is more hope for a reunification. Both leaders agreed to move toward a peace treaty to replace the armistice signed at Panmunjom in 1953. They also accepted to increase the reunification of families. Several projects of economic cooperation are, in fact, the main outcome of these bilateral talks. The idea is to improve the economic situation of the North in the hope that this will contribute to a change of mentality and make the reunification less costly for the South Korea.

HUMAN MIGRATIONS

by Cruz Melchor Eya Nchama

At its last meeting, the Executive Committee of UFER decided to pay particular attention to the phenomenon of migration and most particularly to the discriminations and human rights violations affecting migrants throughout the world. The purpose of this introductory article is to launch the debate. We hope that it will stimulate reactions and testimonies on the situation in your countries.

INTRODUCTION

The human migrations exist since antiquity; this phenomenon played a crucial role in the populating of our planet. In this context, we must be conscious that we all come from Africa, which is the cradle of humanity. The archaeological sites of Tungs, Makopansgat, Swartrans, Sterkfontein and Kromdraai, in Southern Africa; the sites of Laetolil; Oldoway, Peninj, For Terman, Baringo, Kanapoi, Kobi Fora, Lothagam and Omo, in East Africa; the site of lake Tchad in central Africa; those of Casablanca, Rabat, Temra and Ternifine, in North Africa; all these archaeological sites show that human life started in Africa. The Homo Sapiens and his descendants migrated in the whole world.

During antiquity, many migratory movements took place: those of the Hebrews, the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Ethiopians, and the Malayans; at the beginning of the middle-age, we had the migratory movement of the Barbarians (the inhabitants of Central, North and Eastern Europe), at the beginning of the 8th century, those of the Arabs, from the XI to XIII centuries, we had the crusades, from XII to XVI centuries, the Chinese and the Mongols; from the XVI century, the European crossed the Atlantic towards the “New World” and the slave trade started. At the same period the refugees from the religious wars in Europe arrive in South Africa. Then the industrial revolution forced more that 50 millions Europeans to leave Europe, between 1815 and 1930, to go to the Americas, to South Africa, to Australia and to New Zealand. After the Second World War, the countries of Central-North of Europe, North America and Japan receive foreign workers. In Europe, the Spaniards, Italians and Portuguese go to work in France, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, etc. The migrants from Turkey, the Balkans and Africa will follow.

I. The root causes of human migrations

1. Persecutions for political reasons

During the cold war, the notion of political persecutions was very clear: “the enemy of my enemy is persecuted and the friend of my enemy violates human rights and fundamental freedoms”; this means that the anti-capitalists of the West were considered as persecuted for political reasons in Moscow, while the anticommunists of the Eastern countries were considered as persecuted for political reasons in Washington. The refugees produced by this East-West confrontation were well received in both camps. Today, the refugees produced by the wars for the control of energy and raw materials (Congo Kinshasa, Sierra Leone, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Sudan, etc.) are not political refugees. In many countries of the North, they are not accepted. The signatories of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951, which entered into force on 22 April 1954, do not agree anymore with the definition of the word “refugee”, which they had themselves elaborated 56 years ago. International Law is violated everyday by the most developed States of our time.

2. Persecutions for ethnical reasons

The UN General Assembly, in its resolution 47/135 of 18 December 1992, adopted the *Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities*. The implementation of this declaration by the States creates the conditions for peace inside the States and prevents migratory flux caused by persecution for ethnic reasons.

3. Persecutions for reasons of religious conviction

The UN General Assembly, in its resolution 36/55 of 25 November 1981, adopted the *Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance or Discrimination based on Religion or Conviction*. This declaration is crucial not only for religious peace inside the States but also for universal religious peace. Since the religious wars of the past years and centuries, the community of Nations endeavoured to preserve this peace; for the past six years, however, tensions between the various religions have unfortunately increased. The issue of Islamic faith is again of topicality, as if Islam had just been founded. There is no religion in the world without fundamentalism.

4. Poverty, unemployment

The fight against poverty is in fashion today within the international community; we had the UN Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995; the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), adopted by a summit of the Heads of States and Governments, held from 6 to 8 September 2000, in New York, at the initiative of the UN. UNESCO, the World Bank and other international organizations are working to eliminate poverty. But it still continues, there is no doubt about it. As long as there is no change in politics, as long as there is no change of conception in international relations, the fight against poverty runs the risk of going unheeded. A massive capital investment in poor regions is a way to fight against poverty and migratory flux. For a poor or an unemployed, to die of hunger in his or her country or the move to find a better life comes to the same thing.

This poverty, which was forcing Europeans to flee their countries in the past years and centuries, is now forcing other people to leave South America, Africa and Asia for Europe, North America and Japan.

5. International managers

Since the creation of the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization in 1919, of the United Nations in 1945 and later of the United Nations System, an international civil service came into being. The professionals who are working for these multilateral organizations travel throughout the world. They are legally protected by headquarters agreements between the host countries and these organizations. Multinational corporations also have their international managers. When these corporations establish themselves in a country from the North, they are normally obliged to recruit people locally, except for some top managers. On the other hand, the same corporations provide less employment to the local market in countries from the South; this means that in southern countries, with or without multinational corporations, the conditions of the local population do not improve. For example, the multinational corporations absorb 25% of the gross domestic product of the world, while they provide employment to less than 1% of the economically active population of the South. In addition, the workers in the countries of the South do not even receive 10% of the salary of their colleagues working in London, Geneva or New York.

II. The myths of human migrations

The myths such as “the Garden of the Delights” were the root cause attracting Greek, Roman, Arab sailors to travel to India and Sri Lanka, as well as to various islands of the Indian Ocean, in order to find spices. Later, the Portuguese, the Dutch followed the same routes for the spice trade. Timbuktu, Zimbabwe and naturally Egypt formed part of the mythical sites of the African continent. The legend of the Eldorado, this story of the king covered with gold (Eldorado), was one of the main reasons for several expeditions of conquistadores looking for the sacred lake full of gold. They never found this lake, but the myth remained in the popular imagination till the XVIII century. For a long time everything related to mythical happiness is situated in the South of the planet, whether in Asia, Africa or America.

From the second part of the XX century, more precisely after the Second World War, the Eldorado moves to the North of our planet: to Japan, to Europe of the European Union

and to North America. The Eldorado might have been imaginary before, but today it has become very concrete. The image of contempt and miserabilism, which the Medias of the North give to Africa in particular and to the countries of the South in general, discourage their young people to remain in their countries. On the other hand, the permanent campaign for success made by Europe, Japan and North America, transmitted by television channels such as CNN, BBC, TV5 Europe, attracts young people from Africa and from the South to this Europe, this North America and this Japan. Such films as Dallas, Top Model and others give the impression, to people from the South, that the whole Western world live in affluence. Even the United Nations, which was founded to preserve peace, to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in the world, disseminate this representation of western life.

In conclusion, nothing new under the sky of human migrations, but always the same logic, the search for the right to live, the right to life and the aspiration to a better fortune.

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COMBATING TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN

by Elly Koenig

*It's not the dreams we share that are important.
But the work we do together.*

The following article about combating trafficking in women internationally, tells how the *Grail* and one of its members, Ton Brouwer, and the *Dutch Foundation of Religious against Trafficking in Women (SRTV)* contribute against this modern form of slavery. May Elly's article encourage UFER members and friends to support similar efforts in their area. More information's are available on: www.srtv.info; www.degraalbeweging.nl; www.thegrail.org For information, one of the priorities of the Canadian Religious Conference since 2004 is to combat trafficking. The Editor

The initiatives of Ton Brouwer

The Grail member Ton Brouwer, who first worked in Burundi (in 1958) and later in the Belgian Congo (now the RDC), went to Tanzania in 1970 where she supported one of the first Grail training centres set up by Tanzanian women, in Kisekibaha, situated at about 70 km from Moshi. Nowadays, the Grail has ninety-five members working as teachers, nurses, library managers, including also a medical doctor and a professor at the Nairobi Catholic University. In 1980, Ton returned to the Netherlands, where she helped with programs in relation to developing countries, at the Grail Centre.

In 1988, during her work for *People in Need*, a Dutch development organisation, Ton was, for the first time, confronted with a victim of traffickers. A Philippine woman was lured to the Netherlands under false promises of a well-paid job in a hotel. Upon her arrival, she was forced into prostitution. She managed, however, to escape to the Philippines. As she wanted to press charges against the man who tricked her into going to the Netherlands, she requested the support of *The Foundation against Women Traffickers (STV)* that, in turn, obtained the assistance of *People in Need* to cover the legal expenses. Ton took part in a demonstration at the Philippine embassy. What had happened to this woman continued to haunt her, the drama of human trafficking would not leave her alone. As a Grail member, she thought that the movement could be used to stop this type of modern slavery.

International Grail network Human Trafficking

In response to this problem the Grail created its own international network called *Human Trafficking* and started to collaborate with SRTV. Combating trafficking in women became high on the Grail agenda and a contact person was appointed in each country where the Grail is present, in order to investigate the situation concerning trafficking. The questions raised are:

- a) Do many victims come from your country?
- b) Is your country a final destination country? Or is it like the Netherlands a final destination and a transit country?
- c) Are there information videos in English on human trafficking that can be helpful?

The Dutch Foundation of Religious against Trafficking in Women (SRTV)

The SRTV is a non-profit organisation which has been set-up in the Netherlands to combat the growing trafficking in women and the corresponding forced prostitution. The organization is supported by congregations, donations, charitable funds and other sources.

Its main objectives are:

- a. Informing and raising awareness of religious organisations and institutions as well as the public, through the publication of videotapes, leaflets, translated in forty-five different languages, as well as a magazine *TransActions*, which is translated into English twice a year. SRTV is also available to speak about women trafficking to interested groups.

- b. Supporting prevention projects, providing practical help to victims in the Netherlands as well as to women who wish to return to their home country in order to build a respectable future.
- c. Forming an international network and lobbying for political support in favour of the victims.

What is important to know about human trafficking

- Buying and selling women is more lucrative for traffickers than drug dealing. Drugs dealers are more likely to be arrested and condemned to lengthy prison sentences.
- Women are afraid to press charges against the traffickers who threaten them and who often know their families.
- The subject of human trade and forced prostitution is connected with the concept of patriarchy. Women and children become consumers' goods. The client claims the right to be served to his own satisfaction. Supply and demand regulate the sex market, which has become a significant form of enterprise.
- A former Dutch woman politician recently suggested that Dutch soldiers could be accompanied by prostitutes, when serving on foreign missions since, if there are no women in the vicinity, soldiers may be inclined to approach local women, which can lead to problems. Clearly, this idea raised many questions. Would the wife at home receive a gigolo wrapped and tied with a red ribbon at Christmas?
- Poverty and the lack of well paid jobs force people to migrate. Many women are deceived by false promises of worthwhile employment, for example as dancer in a smart nightclub, hostess, chambermaid or stewardess.

Let us conclude by saying that to ensure a better future for women, men and children and prevent human trafficking, we need to build a world where there is equality, well paid jobs, acceptance, respect and love for every human being.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

❖ REACTIONS TO PREVIOUS ISSUES

- ***Discrimination in India***
 - **Claire Vellut**, who lives in India and has been working as a medical doctor in the South of the country for more than 50 years, has reacted to

the article on the caste system in India, published in the last issue (2007-02). She confirms the persistence of discriminations in India. She also says that the number of abortions and infanticides of girls is not diminishing, despite laws and commissions on the subject. She refers us to the newspaper "*The Hindu*"¹⁶ which publishes interesting articles on various situations of discriminations, on cases of suicides of farmers, on the fate of people living in slums areas.

- In one article published in "*The Hindu*" of 18/08/2007, there is a reference to an interesting book by Gita Aravamudan, "*Disappearing Daughters*" (Oxford Bookstore) which denounces, among others, the medical fraternity which looks for ways to eliminate female foetuses.

- ***Climate change***

- **Wiltrud Ehrlenspiel** from Germany reacted to an article published in the issue 2007-01 in which we suggested to reduce our use of cars, as a mean to combat global warming. She says that we should also have mentioned air travel which is a main source of pollution. Why organize so many conferences? Why not use the new means of communications like Internet for that, she says?

❖ IN BRIEF

- **Onesta Carpene**, a member of UFER, died on 1 September 2007, in Italy, after a long and severe illness. Onesta has worked in Vietnam and Cambodia almost 40 years, during difficult times for these two countries. Her strong commitment to development, human rights and peace has been largely recognized. In an article published in a Cambodian newspaper *The Messenger* (in September 2007), a representative of the Catholic Church of Cambodia wrote: "Even during her sickness that urged her to return back to Italy in 2002, she still continued helping Cambodia as well as other countries like India and Vietnam ... The role model she played will encourage all of us to fulfill our mission".
- **Monica Maher**, a member of UFER Committee from USA, is presently teaching at Harvard University in the Women's Studies in Religion Program of the Divinity School. She gives a course on "Gender, Sexuality and Human Rights". She also does research on responses to violence against women in Latin America. In June 2007, she co-facilitated a seminar for graduate students in Quito, Ecuador, on "New Policies in the Development and Gender Agenda" co-sponsored by two UN agencies (UNIFEM & UNFPA). (monica675@aol.com)

¹⁶ *The Hindu*, www.thehindu.com

- **Anuradha Kandala**, from India, who participated in the UFER Training Program in Korea, is now working on her PhD on the *Role and Participation of Tribals in Naxal Movement: A Situational analysis in South Orissa*. The Naxal Movement is engaged in a struggle to protect land rights for the poor and marginalized groups of society. That is why Tribal people of Orissa have been drawn to the Naxalite. The movement started in 1967 in a village called Naxalbari in Darjeeling district of West Bengal, thus the name. The Movement was inspired by the Chinese communist party and initially led by the communist party of India, Marxist–Leninist (CPI-ML). It has undergone, however, numerous splits due to ideological and personal reasons. Today the Indian government calls the Naxalite “terrorists”. (anuradhaji@yahoo.com)
- **An Myong Ja**, from Korea, is pursuing her involvement in the UFER Pre-Schools for Intercultural Integration in Cambodia, together with another UFER member, **Lieke Coenegrachts** (see issue 2007-01). The purpose of these schools is to facilitate the integration of Vietnamese children and their parents into Khmer society. Myong Ja is one of the resource persons at the annual training session for teachers. She teaches them how to produce didactic material, handicraft, choreography (singing & dancing). (myongja2@hotmail.com)
- **Gaëtane Gascon** draws our attention to a film entitled *NIKANISH Sur la trace de nos ancêtres* on the Innu of Matimekush-Lake John, an Indian community living in Northern Quebec and Labrador. She had spent some time there with Raymonde Martineau in the summer of 2006. The film shows the efforts undertaken by people of this community to modernize traditional knowledge and revive the link to the territory for the benefit of young people. You can see an abstract of the film on www.youtube.com by typing “Nikanish” on the site.

EDITORIAL BOARD:

Gaëtane Gascon gaetane.gascon@videotron.ca

Raymonde Martineau: raymonde.martineau@sympatico.ca

Please send all your communications to them.

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