

## 2015 NGO Conference

at THE UNITED NATIONS

HONORING THE PAST,  
RECOGNIZING THE PRESENT,  
IMAGINING THE FUTURE

25 – 27 August 2015

**The 2015 NGO Conference** was held to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the United Nations and a few weeks from a historic moment when heads of State or Government will endorse the **2030 Sustainable Development Agenda** - former Post 2015 Agenda - a roadmap to guide the global community in the coming years. The Conference focused on civil society: the achievements, challenges and learnings from the past which have guided us in our present endeavours and likewise our present learnings as we look towards the future.

At the opening ceremony the Canadian Ambassador reminded those present that "The voices of civil society are needed to keep governments honest, to keep governments fresh and to keep governments aware of the voice of the people"



*Elsie Gabriel (India), Marren Awiti (Kenya) Evanne Hunter (Canada) at the Conference.*

Watch 4 short videos. [NGO Conference 2015: Marren Awiti ibvm](#) on the Conference: [Evanne Hunter](#); Each one has a role: Cecilia O'Dwyer ibvm, ["The UN needs you"](#)

## Honoring the Past.

The history of the United Nations was described in three phases:

**First Phase.** From its foundation to the fall of communism the United Nations was marked by a confrontation between two blocks. Although it was very difficult to move on policy, the humanitarian dimension of the UN was extensively developed.

**Second Phase:** After the fall of the Berlin Wall, a new vitality led to the holding of six incredible UN Conferences during the 1990s. These Conferences produced a range of goals and targets to be achieved. The Millennium Declaration echoed the desires and hopes coming out of the learnings from the Conferences. The MDGs responded to these by bringing together 8 goals with the main focus on decreasing poverty.

**Third phase:** Since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we are witnessing a new divided period. At the same time we are identifying a set of global issues that cannot be dealt with by member states but require global collaboration, with new partnerships including business, civil society organizations, academia and scientific organizations.



Ambassador Rischynski, Canada, at the Opening Ceremony.

## Recognizing the Present

Lessons learned, especially since the UN Conferences of the 1990s and the Millennium Development, goals have helped produce a highly participative and inclusive process for the evolution of a new Sustainable Development Agenda. The critical questions of implementation, review and accountability have been addressed in **The 2030 Agenda**.

It is important to remember that extreme poverty has not been eradicated and that no country in the world has achieved gender equity. After difficult negotiations a Human Rights base to the new Agenda has been achieved but all parties must ensure that human rights remain the bottom line of the implementation. While the huge commitment needed to achieve “the desire of humanity” by 2030 was ever present, the focus was on the success stories to date.

Some of the trends of present successes were shared by an intergenerational representation, where values such as networking, partnerships, inclusivity, diversity, sustainability were identified as uppermost in achieving their aims. “Together we go further and faster than if we go it alone”.

## IBVM Success Stories

“In the context of IBVM success”, says Marren Awiti, “I feel we are doing a lot on women’s issues: empowerment, reaching out to the special needs of women with HIV/ AIDS, rehabilitation of commercial sex workers, FGM.

Formal education of youth is our main apostolate. We have special cases like “Rainbow” and involve youth in our schools in issues of sustainable development goals.

In response to human crisis, Loreto has dealt with human trafficking, refugees, internally displaced persons, the tragedy in Nepal and many other situations we can think of. We reach out to people in need.

Spiritual Services prepare people with the spiritual and ethical values aligned with the values of the United Nations in its Founding charter.

In the area of sustainability, we have structures for handing over our apostolate so that the mission is sustained. We are planning for residences for older members. Young sisters are given formation in diverse areas of expertise.

GC 2014 has chartered a way for the Institute for the next 8 years which is hopefully well into the planning and implementation stages”. “



Participants from China, India, Ambassador from Zambia with Evanne, Marren and Cecilia

## Imagining the Future



When addressing the future, we highlighted the following:

The next big challenge to the 169 member states of the United Nations will be the result of the conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP21) to be held in Paris, France, from 30 November to 11 December 2015. The aim of the Conference is to achieve a legally binding and universal agreement on climate from all nations of the world. Civil society organizations are intensifying their advocacy. Prayer, in all forms, is accompanying the process.

Could all members of the IBVM network sign the [Catholic Climate Petition](#) ?

**Implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.** This vision was the result of an extensive consultation, imagining the desired future and ways to make it a reality.

The UN and the governments need the NGOs to publicize these goals, to explain what they are, how they will benefit us and why they are crucial to the future of humanity. Action 2030, just like our GC. 14 Calls, must be moved from aspirations to plans for lasting change.

After September the focus will shift to the national level and civil society should be involved. This implies an NGO presence in the preparation of the national development plans. NGOs have a responsibility as members of civil society and must hold themselves equally accountable.

**NGO sustainability and succession.** The future is now. How do we maintain our own sustainability?

At this point the challenges to change and adapt to the reality facing us apply not only to the United Nations and to national governments but also to civil society organizations. Issues of advocacy and efficiency have to be addressed in every organization. The fact that civil society must transform itself was highlighted on several occasions. NGOs have an important role to make sure they are sustainable and this is possible only if they embrace change. "Involve youth". "The future is theirs". "Keep engaging people" they say. It is a challenge when NGOs are so involved in what they are doing that they don't reach out.

## Voices from our Network

In preparation for the new **Sustainable Development Goals** numerous people from our network have been interviewed on issues that concern them. These concerns lived out at grass- roots level are also global issues which the United Nations addresses in the new Sustainable Development Agenda. **Betty Whyte IBVM Kenya** sends the responses from African Women when asked what might promote or what might be a hindrance to a more dignified way of living our lives.

**Ugandan woman:** Local fishing people require assistance with suitable fishing nets to be able to compete with fishing companies using high tech methods in lake waters & so depriving local low earners of living income

**Ghanaian woman** uttered pleas to rid their country of Chinese companies who pollute homestead water resources as they claim to be finding suitable materials for road building.

**Tanzanian woman** says: "improve education opportunities to be better able to compete with Kenyan business people"

**Ethiopian woman** feels that the system of land use they have leads to endless legal battles over land ownership

**Kenyan woman** claims promotion of formation of women's group has uplifted herself and others

Loreto Darjeeling, India



Awareness raising on  
Human Trafficking

## Refugees and Migrant People

"I am horrified and heartbroken at the latest loss of lives of **refugees and migrants** in the Mediterranean and Europe" states Ban Ki-moon in a [Statement](#) issued on 1 September on the situation of refugees and migrants - the terrible situation where more than 60 million persons globally are displaced. The Catholic Church raises its voice and begs us not to become indifferent.

The IBVM has a long tradition of supporting refugees and migrants in different ways. It would be helpful to share our present efforts and experience. Could you do so to [ibvmunngo@gmail.com](mailto:ibvmunngo@gmail.com). Our efforts are part of the groundswell from people who care about our fellow humans.

**Pope Francis will address the General Assembly of the United Nations** at 10 a.m. (EST) on Friday 25 September. It can be watched live at [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) Media/TV.

A week before the adoption of the 2030 Development Agenda (SDGs) by world leaders, a **Symposium on Sustainable Development** will bring representatives of world Religions alongside diplomats and development experts to explore the moral case for sustainable development. It will affirm a coherence between the values underpinning the SDGs and the values of the world's major religions. Religious leaders will endorse a common declaration in support of the SDGs.

### October 11, 2015. International Day of the Girl.

Since the first celebration of the International Day of the Child Loreto has been part of this celebration in a number of countries. Some girls have already submitted contributions to The Working Group on Girls. This is an excellent opportunity to empower girls to speak out and to become mentors for other girls. We will be delighted to hear about your activities.

### October 24, 2015 United Nations Day

United Nations Day highlights, celebrates and reflects on the work of the United Nations (UN) and its family of specialized agencies. This year we also commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. On and around October 24, many activities will be organized. Let your UN Province Representative know if you are preparing an event. At the beginning of October you will receive a reflection to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. It may be helpful for one of those days.

Around that time we will also celebrate educational webinars on the new 2030 Development Agenda. It will be an opportunity to hear about the different aspects of the Agenda as well as the Sustainable Goals

### Action on 2013 Development Agenda

1. Make sure that your heads of State/Government are aware that you know they are going to endorse the **2030 Sustainable Development Agenda**. Let them know that you expect them to keep the promises they are making and that you will follow closely.
2. Ask you governments what they are going to do to implement the 2030 Agenda.
3. Help support the dialogues held at national level. Every State has to create national structures which includes national budget for the implementation. There has to be collaboration, transparency and accountability at all levels.
4. Follow up on: Who is being left behind? Who are the most vulnerable? Why?

Cecilia O'Dwyer IBVM

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