



The Vincentian  
Partnership for  
Social Justice

Working for social  
and economic  
change tackling  
poverty and  
exclusion

Members:  
The Society of  
Saint Vincent de  
Paul,  
The Vincentian  
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The Daughters of  
Charity  
and  
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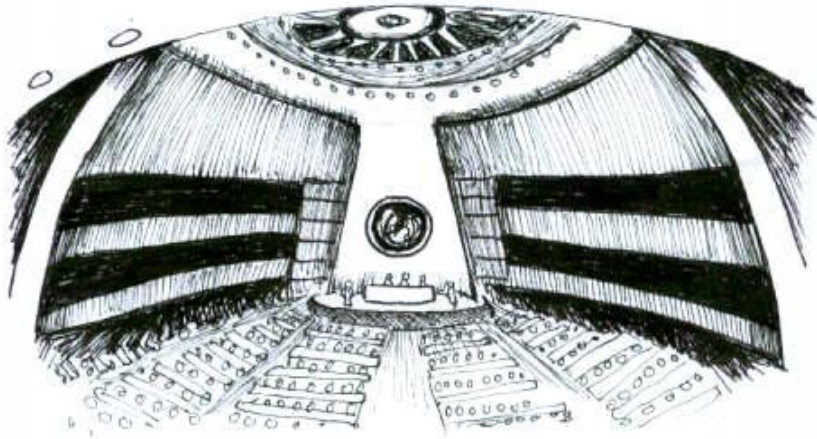
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# JUST.NOW

October 2007 Justice Briefing

The United Nations  
The World -Ireland - Us



We, the peoples of the U.N. determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our life has brought untold sorrow to humankind and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity of men and women and of nations large and small .....  
Do hereby establish ..... The U.N.

During the past weeks the U.N. has received considerable attention in the world media. Dafur, Burma and Climate Change are major challenges for world leaders. As the world faces one of the greatest challenges in its history - Climate Change - and witnesses untold repression in Dafur and Burma there is a renewed awareness that the U.N. must help the nations of the world to work together to solve human problems. To be effective the U.N needs to be kept informed of what is happening on the ground in member countries. Community and Voluntary Organisations and other N.G.O.s (*non-governmental organisations*) can use the U.N. to achieve their goals, in particular those concerned with human rights, social and economic development, the eradication of poverty, peace and security. Systems have been designed to promote the necessary two-way communication.

This issue of Just.Now gives a brief account on some aspects of the U.N. and seeks to make connections between the United Nations - The World and Irish Citizens  
For further information please contact The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice

# United Nations

## The Beginning and Mission of the U.N.

In 1945, the world was coming to the end of a second world war. Many countries were devastated by bombs, many people were homeless and millions were dead. Fifty countries came together in the hope of forming a new organisation in which nations would work together for peace and development. In 1945 these countries signed the U.N. Charter

From its beginning the U.N. has been a forum for international discussion on issues that concern the wellbeing of all the citizens of the world. In 2007, 192 countries are members of the U.N.

## The Aims of the U.N.

- To keep peace throughout the world.
- To develop friendly relations between nations.
- To work together to help people live better lives, to eliminate poverty, disease and illiteracy in the world, to stop environmental destruction and to encourage respect for each other's rights and freedom.
- To be a centre for helping nations achieve these aims.

## 3 Main Priorities of the U.N.

Peace and Security, Development and the Promotion of Human Rights,

As Koffi Anan pointed out

*"The World will not enjoy development without security*

*The World will not enjoy security without development*

*The World will not enjoy either without respect for human rights"*

## The U.N. System

The U.N. is an international organisation not a world government. For the most part it depends on the goodwill and co-operation of its members to be effective. The U.N. has 5 main organs through which it works: The General Assembly, The Security Council, The Economic and Social Council and The International Court of Justice.

General Assembly - meets regularly to consider pressing problems

Security Council 15 members - 5 of which have veto power (U.S. U.K. China, Russia and France). Main function - maintain international peace.

Economic and Social Council - 54 members - works for higher standards of living, eradication of poverty, full employment etc.

International Court of Justice - settles legal disputes between nations.

Secretariat - international staff providing administrative support.

## Ireland's Representatives at the U.N.

U.N. New York - Paul Kavanagh

U.N. Geneva - Daithi O Ceallaigh

## N.G.O.s At The U.N.

N.G.O.s are called the 'conscience of the U.N.' A large number of N.G.O.s have representation at the U.N. They participate in the work of the U.N. by raising issues (e.g women's rights) which may then get placed on the U.N. Agenda, shaping decisions - especially in social and humanitarian matters - collaborating with the U.N. in projects e.g. refugees and by providing constructive criticism.

## Vincenian Voice at the U.N.

Fr. Joe Foley C. M. is the Vincenian Congregation N.G.O. representative at the U.N. and Sr. Germaine Price is the newly appointed Daughter of Charity N.G.O. representative.



# United Nations

## What has the United Nations Done?

### Human Rights and International Standards

- Strengthened and expanded the body of international law through over 300 treaties
- Set standards for human rights based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Supported democracy by assisting elections in over 90 countries
- Provided international protection and assistance to more than 50 million refugees since 1951 (currently UNHCR helps 20 million refugees, mostly women and children)
- Promoted a greater recognition of women's rights through INSTRAW and UNIFEM
- Promoted children's rights through the Convention on the Rights of The Child
- Established standards for water quality, pharmaceuticals, food safety and chemicals through WHO.

### Sustainable Development

- Fought poverty and promoted sustainable development in over 170 countries through UNDP
- In 2000 adopted Millennium Development Goals (mdg) setting out time bound targets.
- Strengthened industrial development in the developing countries through UNIDO
- Acted as an early warning system on the state of the Earth's atmosphere through WMO
- Led the international effort to preserve and protect the environment through UNEP and UNESCO
- Improved women's literacy in the developing world from 36% in 1970 to 70% in 2000

### Health

- Eradicated smallpox in 1980 after a 13 year campaign equal to 3 hours of world arms expenditure (WHO)
- Eradicated poliomyelitis from the Western hemisphere
- Immunised 80% of the world's children against polio, tetanus, measles, whooping cough, diphtheria and TB (UNICEF)
- Cut child death rates in developing countries to 1 in 12 since 1960
- Led the world fight against AIDS through WHO
- Provided aid and prevented starvation by distributing 2 million tons of food each year (WFP)

### Conflict Prevention and Resolution

- Established 61 peace-keeping operations to help find solutions to conflicts through negotiations
- Undertaken peacemaking in troubled areas such as in Afghanistan, El Salvador and Iran-Iraq war
- Pioneered 'children as a zone of peace' to support children in conflict zones.



## Ireland and the U.N. - Some Facts

Ireland has signed a number of charters/conventions e.g. the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights. The implementation in each member country of these legally binding conventions is monitored regularly.

### U.N. Covenant - Civil and Political Rights - Ireland 2007

In Spring 2008 Ireland's implementation of this Covenant will be formally examined in public hearings. The Government has already published its report for the hearing. Community, Voluntary Groups and other N.G.O.s are coming together to produce a Shadow Report which will be sent to the U.N. Committee dealing with Civil and Political Rights. U.N. Committees regard it as very important to receive the views of community and voluntary groups.

The delegation from the Irish government will be questioned on their own report and on the Shadow Report. The evaluation of the U.N. of Ireland's performance regarding Civil and Political Rights will be based on both sources of information. Individuals or groups who are unhappy with the government record on civil and political rights can contact the Irish Council on Civil Liberties and ask the Council to include their concerns in the Shadow Report.

### U.N. Covenant - Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - Ireland 2007

The Government has prepared a draft report on economic, social and cultural rights which will be submitted before Christmas. The public hearing of this report will not take place until late 2008 or early 2009. Community and voluntary groups with other N.G.O.'s have an opportunity to come together to produce a Shadow Report regarding these rights. In this way individuals and groups have an opportunity to have their voice heard at the U.N.

### Other Ways of Having a Voice at the U.N.

- Through communication with the Irish Permanent Representatives on issues being dealt with by the U.N. e.g. Climate Change
- Through N.G.O.'s e.g. those which represent congregations at the U.N. e.g. Daughters of Charity, Vincentians, Sisters of Mercy, Presentation Sisters.

### More Information

In this brief article there is not sufficient space to give further information on the U.N. Such information will be available on the website of the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice [www.vpsj.ie](http://www.vpsj.ie) from the beginning of December.

# Prayer and Reflection

“No organization, however, not even the United Nations, can alone solve the global problems which are constantly brought to its attention, if its concerns are not shared by all the people. It is then the privileged tasks of non-governmental organizations to help bring these concerns into the communities and the homes of the people, and to bring back (to the U.N.) the priorities and aspirations of the people so that all the solutions and projects which are envisaged be truly geared to the needs of the human person.”

John Paul II

Leader: We recall the promises – The Millennium Goals – made by all the nations of the world at the beginning of the new millennium to make our world a better place:

(Alternate)

By eradicating extreme poverty and hunger  
By achieving universal primary education  
By promoting gender equality and empowering women  
By reducing child mortality  
By improving maternal health care  
By combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases  
By ensuring environmental sustainability  
By ensuring a global partnership for development

Leader: The task is daunting gracious God, but we trust you because we believe you when you promise to be with us always. And our God said.

(Alternate)

I myself will dream a dream within you,  
Good dreams come from me you know.  
My dreams seem impossible, not too practical,  
but not for the cautious,  
a little risky sometimes, a trifle brash perhaps.

Some of my friends prefer to rest more comfortably,  
in sounder sleep, with vision-less eyes.  
But for those who share my dreams I ask a little patience,  
a little humour, some small courage and a listening heart.  
I will do the rest.

Then they will risk and wonder at their daring,  
run and marvel at their speed;  
build and stand in awe at the beauty of their building.

You will meet me often as you work; in your companions who share your rise;  
in your friends who believe in you enough to lend their own dreams,  
their own hands, their own hearts, to your building;  
in the people who will find your doorway  
stay awhile and walk away  
knowing they too can find a dream.

There will be sun-filled days and sometimes it will rain.  
A little variety! Both come from me,  
So come now, be content.  
It is my dream, my house you build,  
my caring your witness, my love you share.  
And this is the heart of the matter.

Leader: Guide all who work at the U.N. to assume again the determination of the U.N. in its founding charter.

(Alternate)

- To save succeeding generations from the scourge of war...
- 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
- To establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained
- To promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom
- To practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours
- To employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

Creator of peace and sustainer of justice,  
lead us to this vision we pray:

Bread

Water

A clean sky

A woman's voice singing somewhere

The armies disbanded

The harvest abundant

The wounded healed

The child wanted

The prisoner free

The body's integrity honoured

The beloved returned

Labour equal, fair, and valued

No hand raised in any gesture but greeting

All living free of fear

All living free of want

On this blessed earth

As you would will it.

So be it

Amen.



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