



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

# NewsNotes

*A bi-monthly newsletter of information on international justice and peace issues*

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# Global Catholic Climate Movement

*The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns endorses the newly formed Global Catholic Climate Movement, a coalition of laity, religious, and clergy, theologians, scientists, and activists from around the world. The movement's founding statement is published here; versions in additional languages are found at <http://catholicclimatemovement.global/our-statement/>.*

... Our collaboration echoes the global dimensions of the Catholic Church and a shared sense of responsibility to care for God's beautiful, life-giving creation. We are inspired by Church teachings and guided by the virtue of prudence—understood by St. Thomas Aquinas as “right reason applied to action.” We accept the findings of scientific leaders, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), that humanity's greenhouse gas emissions are contributing to widespread and mostly harmful changes to planetary systems. We are certain that anthropogenic [human-made] climate change endangers God's creation and us all, particularly the poor, whose voices have already spoken of the impacts of an altered climate.

## **What we believe—and why**

The basis of our concerns is scriptural and founded on the tradition of the Church. From Genesis through Revelation, Catholics accept as a revealed truth that creation and its order is a good that we must embrace and steward. This has been echoed and championed by Church leaders for two millennia. In response to what God has given the human race—clean air, life-sustaining water, fruits of the earth's harvests, and the bounty of the sea—we are called to honor God our Creator for these many blessings. We are obliged to respect these gifts, which are for all people. For this reason climate change is for Catholics a profoundly spiritual, ethical, and moral

issue. While discussions of climate change often involve debate about economic theory and political platforms, and while it can involve issues of partisan politics as well lobbying by special interest groups, our focus is on the moral and spiritual issues involved. Climate change is about our responsibility as God's children and people of faith to care for human life, especially future generations, by caring for all of God's wondrous creation.

The interdependency of creation and humanity is being underscored in Pope Francis's visit to Philippines. The impacts of extreme weather on the vulnerable and marginalized become clear as we join the Holy Father in praying for all the families that were impacted by super Typhoon Haiyan—for the many thousands dead or missing and the countless more who remain homeless.

## **A call for prayer, a call for action**

“We are people of hope,” the bishops of the Philippines once wrote. Like them we believe that together and with the grace of God “we can change the course of events.”

First, we recognize that conversations about the climate crisis have historically been more about intellectual arguments than about the profound spiritual and moral implications of our failure to care for God's creation. Catholic leaders are thus called to speak with a prophetic voice and in a spiritual dialogue with all people, especially those political and business leaders and consumers who engage in climatically destructive policies and practices. And we recognize our own need for ongoing conversion to live more in keeping with the Creator's intentions for life in abundance for all people. Until the moral implications of anthropogenic climate change are clearly established and accepted, it is unlikely that societies can or will transition in an appropriate timeframe to sustainable technologies, economies, and lifestyles.



And so in light of growing scientific evidence and real-world experiences, we offer our prayers for God's healing grace as we work in the world to care and advocate for the needy and all creation.

We do so by calling on our brothers and sisters in Christ to defend the common good by acknowledging those least able to defend themselves—the world's people living in poverty, our children, born and unborn, future generations, and all forms of life that populate God's creation.

Knowing that there are abundant positive solutions available, we offer to assist those voices that demand strong international climate agreements, as well as call for and encourage the conversion of hardened hearts.

We invite all Catholics to explore the issues of climate change and to join future actions—both to raise awareness about this important issue and to act within the public sphere.

And finally we entrust all our efforts to Jesus Christ, who makes all things new.

### **Conclusion: A continuation of Catholic teachings**

Pope Francis will be issuing an encyclical about caring for the environment. This document will carry on the teachings of the Church given to us by Saint John Paul II and Benedict XVI, as well as many bishops across the globe. We have already heard this continuity in the words to date of Pope Francis. With this statement, we the undersigned now seek to help bring these teachings of the Church to the world.

Thus we conclude with these words of hope, offered at the opening of the Holy Father's papacy:

"Today too, amid so much darkness, we need to see the light of hope and to be men and women who bring hope to others. To protect creation, to protect every man and every woman, to look upon them with tenderness and love, is to open up a horizon of hope; it is to let a shaft of light break through the heavy clouds; it is to bring the warmth of hope! For believers, for us Christians, like Abraham, like Saint Joseph, the hope that we bring is set against the horizon of God, which has opened up before us in Christ. It is a hope built on the rock which is God."

+ Pope Francis, *Inaugural Mass, March 19, 2013* §

## **Africa: Illicit financial flows challenge development**

*The 4th Joint African Union Commission/United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (AUC/ECA) Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development was held in 2011. In order to ensure Africa's sustained development, which would rely as much as possible on its own resources, the ECA established a High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa. Below is an excerpt from the Panel's report, titled "Track it! Stop it! Get it!" Find the entire report at <http://www.uneca.org/>.*

Over the last 50 years, Africa is estimated to have lost in excess of \$1 trillion in illicit financial flows (IFFs) (Kar and Cartwright-Smith 2010; Kar and Leblanc 2013). This sum is roughly equivalent to all of the official development assistance received by Africa during the same timeframe. Currently, Africa is estimated to be losing more than \$50 billion annually in IFFs. But these estimates may well fall short of reality because accurate data do not exist for all African countries, and these estimates often exclude some forms of IFFs that by nature are secret and cannot be properly estimated, such as proceeds of bribery and trafficking of drugs, people and firearms. The amount lost annually by Africa

through IFFs is therefore likely to exceed \$50 billion by a significant amount.

These outflows are of serious concern, given inadequate growth, high levels of poverty, resource needs and the changing global landscape of official development assistance. Although African economies have been growing at an average of about five percent a year since the turn of the century, this rate is considered encouraging but inadequate. It is, for example, below the double-digit growth that has propelled transformation in parts of Asia. Further, the benefits of this growth have mostly been confined to those at the top of the income distribution and it has not been accompanied by an increase in jobs. Aside from the equity issues that this raises, it also means that this growth may not be sustainable due to possible social unrest. The global commodity super-cycle that has contributed to Africa's growth is coming to an end, while macroeconomic factors such as debt reduction might be a once-off effect.

Poverty remains of serious concern in Africa in absolute and relative terms. The number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day in Africa is estimated to have increased from 290 million in 1990 to 414 million in 2010 (United Nations, 2013). This is because popula-

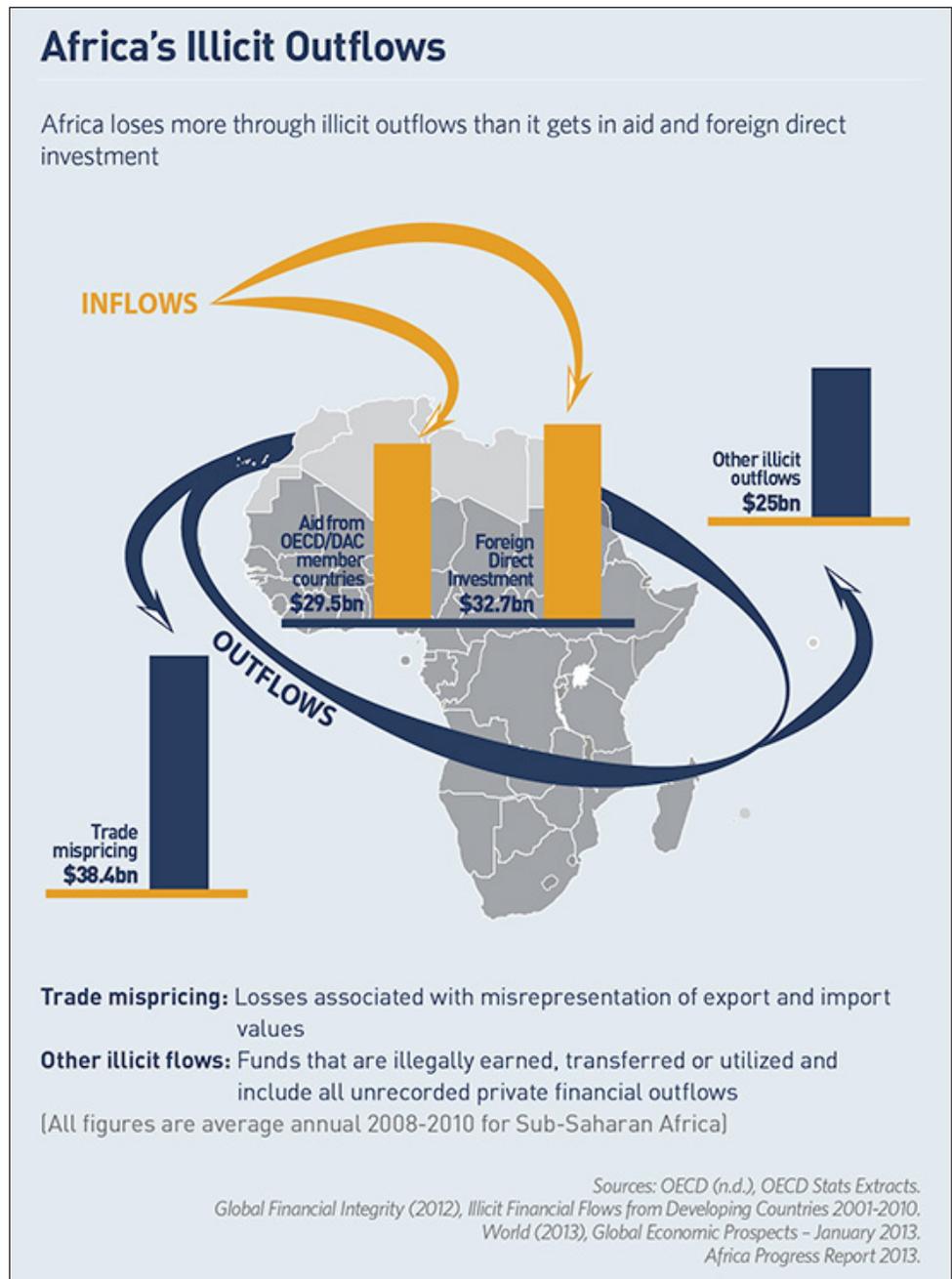
tion growth outweighs the number of people rising out of poverty. Moreover, GDP per African was around \$2,000 in 2013, which is around one-fifth of the level worldwide (IMF, 2014). Poverty in Africa is also multi-dimensional, in the sense of limited access to education, healthcare, housing, potable water and sanitation. This situation puts the loss of more than \$50 billion a year in IFFs in better perspective.

The resource needs of African countries for social services, infrastructure and investment also underscore the importance of stemming IFFs from the continent. At current population trends, Africa is set to have the largest youth population in the world. By 2050 the median age for Africa will be 25 years, while the average for the world as whole will be about 36 years (United Nations Population Division, 2012). Infrastructure constraints also act as a brake on growth, just as do the low savings and investment rates of the continent. In 2012 gross capital formation rates in Nigeria and South Africa were 13 percent and 19 percent, respectively, as compared to a rate of 49 percent in China and 35 percent in India (United Nations Statistics Division, 2014; World Bank, 2014). Yet Africa is estimated to need an additional \$30–\$50 billion annually to fund infrastructure projects (Foster and Briceño-Garmendia, 2010; African Development Bank, 2014).

The Panel considered that when these needs are coupled with the changing landscape of official development assistance, Africa cannot afford to remain sanguine about the problem posed by IFFs. Current developments in the global arena in fact make the challenge posed by IFFs more acute. The resources that Africa receives from external partners in the

form of official development assistance are stagnating due to the domestic fiscal challenges of partners, who in response are seeking to reduce such expenditures. Africa will therefore need to look within the continent to fund its development agenda and reduce reliance on official development assistance.

IFFs are also of concern because of their impact on governance. Successfully taking out these resources usually involves suborning of state officials and can contribute to undermining state structures, since concerned actors may have the resources to prevent the proper functioning of regulatory institutions. §



## Peru: Trade policies fuel violence

*The following article was prepared by Alfonso Buzzo, who is an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns' Faith-Economy-Ecology project.*

On February 5, some 200 employees of the Yanacocha Mining Company invaded the property of Peruvian land rights defender Maxima Acuña de Chaupe. She has lived in an area known as Tragadero Grande, Cajamarca for more than 20 years. In 2011 Yanacocha attempted to buy her land. When she refused to sell it, the company initiated a campaign of intimidation and violence, and legal battles ensued. This last forced eviction attempt was the straw that broke the camel's back.

Peru is home to one of the most geographically and biologically diverse landscapes in South America. Coastal beaches, desert, mountains, and rainforest can all be found within this country's borders. Due to this rich diversity, however, Peru's regions are slightly isolated from one another. These divisions have led to various problems in the past, and continue to be an issue today, particularly from a human rights perspective. Government corruption, bribes by corporations, and the lack of infrastructure counteract many advocacy efforts from civil society, and reinforce Peru's resource curse: While it is rich in natural resources, most of Peru's people do not benefit from the wealth generated from the extractive industries which destroy not only the habitat of many different species but also the homes of the native people.

In the Peruvian Amazon, for instance, the country's politically and geographically fragmented nature makes regulation of the logging industry difficult, and it increases adversity for the communities living there, especially in marginalized indigenous villages. In September 2014 the growing issue of illegal logging manifested itself in the violent murder of four indigenous Ashanika community leaders. Edwin Chota, an environmental protection activist from the Alto Tamaya-Saweto community in the Ucayali region, was killed along with three other men from his community. The community members who witnessed the murder reported that loggers had shot the four victims in an open field in front of the other villagers. The murder appeared to be preventable, since Chota and his partners had reported receiving death threats and had previously asked the government for protection.

Photo of Yanacocha mine used courtesy of the Creative Commons License (CC BY-SA 3.0)

The tragic violence currently unleashed in the Peruvian Amazon is directly linked to the U.S.-Peru Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The FTA opened indigenous land up to private investment by oil, mining and logging companies and to agribusiness, including biofuels plantations. In the words of indigenous leader and protestor Luis Huansi, "We will not give up until they reverse the laws that damage us. They want to take away our lands and forests and make our traditions disappear (...) we are peacefully fighting for control of the land we have lived forever."

Paradoxically, at the same time that these abuses are taking place in Peru and many other areas, the World Bank is weakening its standards on environmental and social safeguards. In early February, advocates from South America attended the World Bank consultation on the new proposed safeguards. Several participants of this gathering expressed disappointment with the Bank's inability to explain how, when, or what criteria they will allow countries to use in the implementation of the proposed Environmental and Social Framework. For instance, polemic clauses like one allowing countries to opt-out of a new safeguard on Free Prior and Informed Consent for indigenous communities specifically undermine the rights of people like Acuña or Chota's family over their lands, territories and resources.

Acuña has become the representative of the opposition to the open-pit gold and copper mine, and has supported people who have been forcibly evicted as a result of the mining development. The dispute is not only over more than 2,000 hectares, including four mountain-top lakes, which are the sources of five rivers that provide water for agriculture, livestock and human consumption by the population. It is also over an effort to accomplish a paradigm shift toward significantly greater sustainability and social justice for local communities. §



## U.S.-Mexico border: Refugee families

*Jane O'Sullivan is a Maryknoll Affiliate and member of St. Michael parish in Olympia, WA. Following is the article she wrote for the March-April 2015 issue of Maryknoll magazine.*

Fifteen years ago as a Maryknoll volunteer in Bangkok, Thailand, I visited the immigration detention center there with two Maryknollers, Father Thomas Dunleavy and Brother John Beeching. I was shocked and heartbroken to see young Burmese children and their mothers detained in crowded cells. The Burmese government's assault on ethnic minorities was well known at that time, yet these families were locked up and denied refugee protection. I couldn't have imagined that one day I would see a similar situation here in the United States.

The Bangkok experience motivated me to become an immigration and asylum attorney. Recently volunteering with the American Immigration Lawyers Association's Pro Bono Project, I came to know some of the 1,400 mothers and children detained in Artesia, NM, between June and December 2014 by the U.S. government. Arriving at our southern border, they had expressed fear of returning to their home countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. However, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's current policy is to detain such refugees without bond for the duration of their asylum proceedings, which can take many months.

The average age of children detained in Artesia was six years old. The youngest child I saw was six months old, while many more were toddlers, preschoolers and school-aged kids.

As in Bangkok, these refugee children were suffering many ill effects of their detention. Again and again mothers told me their children were not eating or playing as they did before. They spoke about their children's weight loss, lethargy, hair loss and persistent fevers. Some mothers were worried about their children's deep sadness and frequent tears, while others mentioned the self-harming behaviors their children had developed during detention.

One four-year-old boy, Juan Carlos (not his real name), had arrived in detention three months earlier. His mother fled with him from El Salvador after gang members had tried to kidnap him. Since arriving at the detention center, Juan Carlos had lost eight pounds. He often refused to eat the unfamiliar food at mealtimes, and his mother was not permitted to bring any food back to her room to feed him later. While I asked his mother ques-

tions to prepare a request for bond, Juan Carlos stayed at her side and gave her a hug and kisses when she broke down in tears.

I spent each of my days in Artesia working in a windowless metal trailer alongside Julisa Aguilar, a social worker from Seattle who translated for me. Eight other legal volunteers, both attorneys and law students, worked with us. Court also took place in a trailer, the immigration judge at a bench hundreds of miles away in Denver. More windowless metal trailers housed the women and children, and others contained the bathrooms that families had to ask permission to use. This large cluster of metal trailers in the desert, surrounded by barbed wire fences, made a strange sort of village. It was filled with women and children and presided over by mostly male guards. It was a village where the passage of time was punctuated by mandatory head counts.

As attorneys, we had meetings with 60 or more mothers each day. We also attended court hearings and asylum interviews with these courageous women. For some, despair turned into hope when asylum was given or a reasonable bond was granted. For others, there was no good news yet, and the only option for the mothers was to carry on caring for their children as best they could within the barbed wire fences.

On Dec. 15, the U.S. government closed the Artesia facility and transferred the remaining families to a family prison in Karnes, TX. They joined hundreds of other Central American mothers and children detained at the Karnes prison since August. It grieved me to think of the many babies, toddlers, children and teenagers at Karnes who woke up on Christmas day behind bars.

I struggle to find words to explain to my own young children what is happening. Our government's rationale that family detention is necessary to discourage other would-be refugees can never justify the harm to the detained children that I witnessed firsthand. Fear that these families are economic migrants instead of bona fide refugees has been proven groundless as asylum has been granted to each detained mother whose case has reached the final hearing stage.

In the words of martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero, "There are many things that can only be seen through eyes that have cried." These refugee women and children have known great pain and shed many tears, both in their home countries and during their detentions after arrival. Let us walk with them, cry with them, and show them the hospitality that Scripture requires of us. §

## Central America: Biden Plan is more of the same

*The following article was written by Marek Cabre-ra, the Central America intern for the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

In late January, the administration announced that \$1 billion in assistance to Central America would be included in its budget request for fiscal year 2016. In an op-ed in *The New York Times*, Vice President Joe Biden said the aid package, explicitly modeled on Plan Colombia, would help El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras “change the climate of endemic violence and poverty” that has led to a “dangerous surge in migration.”

These funds, however, have the potential to worsen the situation that gave rise to the crisis in the region in the first place. It is an improvement in relation to previous aid packages like Plan Colombia: Whereas the latter was about 90 percent military aid to combat drug trafficking and the leftist insurgency and only the rest was allocated to economic aid, the Biden Plan, as it is called, is only about 30 percent military aid; the rest is mostly slated for economic aid and funding for institution-building. Despite its attempt to move away from trying to solve world crises exclusively through militarism and force, major aspects of the plan, especially its economic aspects, will make the situation worse if implemented as proposed.

Through the proposed plan, nearly \$300 million in military aid will be provided to countries whose armed forces and police bodies are implicated in major violations of human rights, especially in Guatemala and Honduras. The Guatemalan army, which has not reformed or

been tried after its campaigns of genocide in the 1980s against indigenous peoples, will only be propped up in its capacity for repression and violence. Its role in forcing rural populations off their land with violence and death for large development projects is well documented by human rights organizations like the Guatemala Human Rights Commission (GHRC). The Honduran security apparatus, especially after the military coup in 2009 - a coup the Obama administration allowed and helped survive - is not only corrupt with links to drug trafficking, but its repression of political dissent has included targeted assassinations and the formation of death squads that target, among others, violent gang members indiscriminately. El Salvador’s security forces underwent a reform process in the 1990s as part of the peace agreement that ended the civil war in that country, but are also far from being perfect. Its record in dealing with the gang crisis, most directly during the application of harsh iron fist policies since the early 2000s, still represents a violation of human rights. Throwing \$300 million at such violent institutions without a serious overhaul can only make the situation worse.

The economic aid part of the package also has its potential counterproductive consequences. Most of it seems designed to promote what the U.S. government bills as economic development aid, which, the administration hopes, will lessen the migration problem and its root causes. But free trade and economic restructuring is what every serious analyst attributes as one of the main causes of the crisis. With calls for even more free trade concessions and domestic economic reforms that

benefit multinational corporations, the economic aid part of the plan is more of the same neoliberal approach to the economy that is always required of these countries. For example, El Salvador’s government is being forced to open its contracts to international business as a precondition to receive Millennium Development Goal funds, which negatively affects local businesses and the capacity of the government to hire locally. In Honduras,

Photo of Guatemalan women by Jim Stipe



thousands of public sector jobs have been eliminated recently in order to privatize services and lower government spending, which in reality only weakens workers' ability to secure a decent livelihood.

Lastly, this economic aid calls for more of the traditional export-led form of development. It calls for rural reform, for instance, which so far has displaced thousands of people off their lands and concentrated ownership of those lands in the hands of few wealthy national and international agricultural and mining investors. Industrial agriculture and mining are destructive of the livelihoods of local communities. They rob people of their ability to make a living within their own communities, and create few jobs. Similarly, when major infrastructure projects are carried out within a free market system without taking into account the many communities who live close to them, the market value of the land increases. When the inhabitants of those lands are not able to pay the higher taxes of their newly valuable land,

they are then forced to abandon their source of livelihood, and are, in effect, forced to migrate to the cities or the United States. These are a few examples of the links between free market economics and migration, and so to do more of the same under the guise of economic aid will only worsen the situation.

The Biden Plan can be a force for good, but only if the resources are clearly allocated to more local efforts to create sustainable livelihoods. Unfortunately, the funds seem destined to force more free trade and free market neoliberal economics on these countries, which, as most analysts agree, have contributed to the crisis in the first place. It is important that we stay vigilant and keep working so that our government does not embark on more international aid projects that contradict our values of living in harmony with our neighbors. Central America needs help, but the Biden Plan does not meet the basic requirement of being genuinely in the interest of common Central Americans. §

## Haiti: Challenges of reconstruction

*The following article was prepared by Chris Smith, a Maryknoll Affiliate who is volunteering with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

The phenomenon of “land grabbing” has developed into a major trend that has uprooted and destabilized rural agrarian communities around the world. Powerful foreign private and public investors have negotiated agreements with countries to take over large areas of land to further a flawed development model that maximizes private profit at the expense of these communities. The rising demand for agrofuels, high food prices and the pursuit of attractive investment opportunities has stimulated the growth of land grabbing in developing countries.

The story of Haiti's post-earthquake reconstruction illustrates the problems with this approach to economic growth in poor countries. The January 2010 earthquake resulted in 230,000-316,000 deaths and left 1.5 million people homeless. The total economic loss was estimated at \$7.8 billion, a figure representing 120 percent of Haiti's GDP.

In response, international donors committed over \$9 billion in aid. One of the “flagship” projects of the post-earthquake reconstruction effort was the Caracol Industrial Park (CIP). Action Aid, an international NGO working in 45 countries, just released a study on the CIP project's impact on the local population: “Build Back

Better? The Caracol Industrial Park and post-earthquake aid to Haiti” (January 2015). The report details the negative consequences of the CIP on 720 agricultural workers and thousands of other community members due to the “seizure of the land and livelihoods of communities” located 200 miles from the epicenter of the earthquake.

Over 60 percent of Haiti's population relies on agriculture for food and economic security. When the U.S. government designed the initial aid package for Haiti, the promise was to “build back better” – to provide immediate disaster relief and fund economic development projects that improved the lives of poor Haitians. But the assessment of the results so far is disappointing – just 10 percent of the promised housing construction has occurred in areas most affected by the earthquake, and the displacement of farmers and families from their land has produced anything but a “better” outcome for the local population near the CIP.

The Caracol Industrial Park was “built on food-producing land in the midst of a complex and fragile ecosystem that included endangered species [and] a critical watershed in the Bay of Caracol.” Alternate sites that minimized environmental damage and did not trample on the rights of poor communities were not considered. A June 2013 report issued by the Government Accountability Office characterized CIP as having “mixed results.”

The original goal of 150,000 new houses by 2013

(via USAID money) was reduced by 80 percent, with most of reduction focused on the CIP area. One hundred thousand people still live in camps and many who received housing vouchers still lack permanent housing. The original plan called for 65,000 new jobs linked to the project, but just 4,500 new jobs have been created in the two years since the Park opened. A report by the Worker Rights Consortium examining wage theft found “widespread violations of human rights” in Haiti. S&H Global, one of the CIP tenants, pays its employees \$3.75 a day, with no wage increases since the new national \$5 a day minimum wage went into effect.

The Haitian government’s development strategy seeks to expand tourism and manufacturing, anchored by foreign investment. But this model neglects the fact that 75 percent of the rural population lives below the poverty line, with just 10 percent of the rural residents having access to electricity and only eight percent with access to clean drinking water. Of 129 countries ranked by food security, Haiti ranks tenth from the bottom, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute. The conventional disaster aid model in Haiti fails to account for the critical role that farm land in the economic, social and cultural lives of the country’s rural population. The Haitian people call land *ko’d lonbrik*, or umbilical cord. Land ownership is not merely a means to an economic end, but the focal point of an entire way of life going back generations, often on the same land.

The UN Environment Programme underlined why the economic case for rural development should always consider the needs of the agrarian sector:

*“Economic data has shown that a one percent rise in agricultural per-capita GDP reduces poverty five times more than a one percent increase in GDP in other sectors, especially amongst the poorest people. Ensuring that women and men smallholder farmers, pastoralists and fisher folk have secure rights over*



*land and natural resources is therefore essential to combatting poverty and hunger, to upholding people’s social, economic and cultural rights, and to ensuring they can live with dignity.”*

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations provides for states to “respect and protect the legitimate rights of communities to guarantee their food security,” and both the U.S. and Haitian governments have endorsed the guidelines. The Action Aid report summarizes the flaws in the CIP project, citing “the lack of transparency, the lack of consent by the communities and the violation of human rights to food and livelihood.”

As the Haitian disaster recovery model demonstrates, until protections against land grabbing are put in place, the needs and rights of poor agrarian populations will remain secondary to powerful state and private economic interests. The flawed development path taken in so many countries must give way to a new model that protects and respects the rights, dignity and way of life of rural communities that are so integral to developing economies around the globe. §

The story of Marie Marthe Rocksaint illustrates the dramatic disruption the new Park imposed on long-term residents of the community. She is a mother of two and small farmer who was forced off her land when construction began:

“I had farmed my land for 22 years, but was made to leave without any compensation. Afterwards, the government sent investigators who were asking for all kinds of information from us but they never told us how much compensation they were going to give us. There were no negotiations, we were told to accept the compensation that was offered. We thought the park was going to benefit us. First they promised land, then housing, then all we got was a small amount of compensation.”

-- Action Aid  
Photo by Marilla Leti

## Philippines: Mamasapano clash threatens peace

*The following update was prepared by Fred Goddard, a former Maryknoll lay missionary who served for several years as the executive coordinator of the Maryknoll Affiliates. Fred has returned to the Philippines and now works with the Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation, Inc.*

Prior to January 25, 2015, few people in the Philippines had heard of Mamasapano, a small municipality on the southern island of Mindanao. That all changed when the Philippine National Police Special Action Force (SAF) clashed with members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). In the early morning hours, the SAF was on a mission, called Operation Exodus, to deliver an “arrest warrant” to Zulkifli Abdhir (alias Marwan), a Malaysian bomb making expert associated with Jemaah Islamiyah, and Basit Usman, a Filipino allegedly trained by Marwan. Both men have been wanted by the U.S. for their activities.

Members of the SAF entered Tukanalipao, Mamasapano, an area known to be controlled by the MILF and the BIFF. While circumstances are still under investigation, some of the forces of the SAF, who were split into separate groups, entered into an encounter with the MILF and BIFF. In the ensuing battle, 44 members of the SAF were killed. It was said to be one of the greatest single-day combat losses in recent history for the government of the Philippines. Reports are still conflicting as to the other deaths, with some putting the number of MILF killed at 18 and at five for the BIFF. No one is sure how many civilians were killed, but at a February 4 Walk for Peace organized by the Jesuit-run Ateneo de Davao University, 70 candles were lit for the victims of what some are calling a “misencounter.”

It was a tragic and regrettable incident for all sides. In addition to the lives lost, as former Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Eduardo Oban said, the “greatest casualty” as a result of the incident is the peace talks between the government and the MILF. The Government of the Philippines (GPH) and the MILF have been in a long and serious process of trying to end the conflict in the Muslim areas of Mindanao, working toward the formation of what will be called the Bangsamoro. The intent is to give the people of the predominantly Muslim regions of Mindanao greater self-determination while remaining part of the Republic of the Philippines.

The years of negotiations included discussions of cooperation and coordination even in terms of security

forces, which is why many questions linger as to the unilateral action of the SAF in Mamasapano. When the encounter occurred, the MILF and GPH were already at the stage of reviewing the Bangsamoro Basic Law which will determine many of the laws and policies in the Bangsamoro. Not surprisingly, this process has been put on hold during the ongoing investigations.

The aftereffects have gone far beyond Mindanao, though. Many politicians in Manila and elsewhere have called for an end to the peace process with the MILF and seized on this opportunity to call for the resignation of President Benigno Aquino. Much of this has revolved around who knew what and when, and who exactly was in charge. At the extreme end, there have been threats of a coup, as well as other destabilizing actions.

Throughout all of this, many question the involvement of the United States. Immediately after the encounter, U.S. military personnel in civilian clothes were on the ground assisting in the evacuation of the wounded. According to one news source, Evergreen helicopters -- used by U.S. service members serving in the Joint Special Operations Task Force-Philippines (JSOTF-P) -- were utilized. According to the independent news source Mindanews, Zamboanga-based journalist Frenchie Carreon said the Evergreen helicopters “belong to an Alaska-based U.S. private contractor subcontracted by the U.S. military and deployed in the Philippines to help the U.S. soldiers or their partners or beneficiaries, sometimes for medical evacuation, especially when there are persons in medically critical situations.”

Many believe, though, that this was not the extent of the U.S. involvement in the Mamasapano tragedy, even though Kurt Hoyer, press attaché and spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy in Manila, said that U.S. troops were not involved at any other level in the operation to get Marwan and Usman. But the U.S. had a clear interest in seeing these men captured or killed: The U.S. had offered a \$5 million reward for anyone who could provide information leading to the arrest of Marwan, who was killed in the operation. Usman, who escaped, carries a \$1 million reward.

It is also public knowledge that the Philippine government turned to the FBI to assist in the positive identification of Marwan. When members of the SAF knew they would not be able to bring the body of Marwan out of the area, they cut off one of his fingers; it then was sent to the FBI who “would match the sample with the DNA sample from Marwan’s brother, Rahmat Abhir, who is presently detained at the U.S. facility in Guan-

tanamo in Cuba.” (Mindanews) This process, alone, raised suspicion that the U.S. was at least advising the SAF prior to Operation Exodus, since it has never been reported before that Philippine police or military would gather evidence in such a manner.

On February 16, *The Philippine Daily Inquirer* quoted an anonymous source from within the SAF that claimed that the U.S. was extensively involved in the planning and execution of Operation Exodus.

According to the *Inquirer*, the source said a U.S. American named Allan Konz was in fact in command. “He (Konz) was the immediate supervisor of the 84th [SAC (Seaborne)] for Marwan’s intelligence packet.”

On February 25, one month after the encounter in Mamasapano, *The Philippine Star* reported that SAF director Getulio Napeñas testified to the Philippine Senate that U.S. assistance came in the form of gathering intelligence information against their target and the use of equipment during operations.

Other sources, including groups from fact-finding missions, have accused the U.S. of greater involvement

than what Napeñas claimed in his testimony or that the U.S. has admitted, including the possibility that some U.S. military actually accompanied the SAF in the operation. Witnesses in the area claim to have seen white men with blue eyes alongside the members of SAF, even being protected by the SAF during the firefight, some going as far as saying that some of the foreigners were killed during the encounter. None of these claims or accusations has been substantiated, and the U.S. mission here in the Philippines continues to deny any involvement beyond the rescue operation.

Whether or not the U.S. was directly involved in the operation is not the most critical issue, though the U.S. should be transparent and forthcoming in all aspects of its relationship to the events in Mamasapano. Of greatest concern is that the interests of the United States -- in pursuing one or two people they consider a threat to their security, either through pressure or direct involvement -- overrode the greater good of the Philippines’ peace process and has even threatened to destabilize the entire nation. §

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## Human trafficking: New Senate bill introduced

On February 24, Senators Bob Corker (R-TN) and Bob Menendez (D-NJ) introduced the End Modern Slavery Initiative Act of 2015.

The End Modern Slavery Initiative Act of 2015 would create a focused, sustained effort in concert with the private sector and foreign governments to eliminate sexual and labor human slavery worldwide. It is designed to leverage limited foreign aid dollars and galvanize support and investment from the public sector, philanthropic organizations and the private sector to focus resources responsibly where this crime is most prevalent. This effort will complement other legislation focused on improving enforcement within the United States.

The legislation will authorize a 501(c)(3) nonprofit grant-making foundation to be known as “The End Modern Slavery Initiative Foundation” that will fund programs and projects outside the United States that must:

- Contribute to the freeing and sustainable recovery of victims of modern slavery, prevent individuals from being enslaved, and enforce laws to punish individual and corporate perpetrators of modern slavery.
- Set clear, defined goals and outcomes that can be empirically measured; and
- Achieve a measurable 50 percent reduction of modern slavery in targeted populations.

The initiative will seek to raise \$1.5 billion, more

than 80 percent of which will come through matching funds from the private sector and foreign governments. Sources of funding are as follows:

- \$251 million is authorized funds from the U.S. over eight years: \$1 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2015, followed by authorizations of \$35.7 million in FY 2016-2022.
- \$500 million from other foreign governments. (Double the investment of U.S. funds.)
- \$750 million in private funding. (Triple the investment of U.S. funds.)

The remaining \$500 million will be raised by The End Modern Slavery Initiative Foundation from additional private sector contributions. The U.S. will channel diplomatic support and additional resources for law enforcement, rule of law, economic development and training assistance in support of The End Modern Slavery Initiative.

Progress will be tracked against baseline data to achieve a 50 percent reduction in slavery. Projects that fail to meet goals will be suspended or terminated. The bill requires the Foundation to remain focused on achieving a significant reduction in modern slavery within a period of seven years. The Foundation is required to comply with the Government Accountability Office’s mandate to conduct financial audits and program evaluations. §

## Holy See advances nuclear disarmament

*In December 2014, Pope Francis wrote to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, “I am convinced that the desire for peace and fraternity planted deep in the human heart will bear fruit in concrete ways to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all, to the benefit of our common home.”*

During the same conference, the Holy See contributed a paper entitled *Nuclear Disarmament: Time for Abolition*, which presents a compelling argument to move beyond limits set by political realism. “Now is the time to affirm not only the immorality of the use of nuclear weapons, but the immorality of their possession, thereby clearing the road to nuclear abolition. ... The fear that drives the reluctance to disarm must be replaced by a spirit of solidarity that binds humanity to achieve the global common good of which peace is the fullest expression.”

2015 presents an important opportunity to advance the nuclear disarmament agenda. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the first use of nuclear weapons in war, when the U.S. bombed Japan. Also, from April 27-May 22, the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will be held in New York to assess whether treaty obligations are being met. The Marshall Islands, in lawsuits against the nations that possess nuclear weapons, claims they have failed to honor their NPT obligations to disarm. Non-nuclear weapons states are making clear their deep concern about the global humanitarian and ecological impact of an intentional or accidental nuclear exchange, as well as their impatience with the slow pace of bilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

Over 16,000 nuclear weapons exist in the world today. A single nuclear bomb detonated over a large city could kill millions of people. Nuclear weapons are unique in their destructive power and the threat they pose to the environment and human survival. They release such vast amounts of energy in the form of blast, heat and radiation that no adequate humanitarian response is possible. Even if a nuclear weapon were never again exploded over a city, there are intolerable effects from the production, testing and deployment of nuclear arsenals.

Since 2010 the catastrophic humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has featured prominently in discussions among governments and civil society organizations on ways to advance nuclear disarmament. This discourse on the harm that nuclear weapons cause to

people, societies and the environment underscores the urgency of concerted action for the complete prohibition and elimination of such weapons. Three intergovernmental conferences have been held to elaborate on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, in Norway, Mexico and Austria. At the third conference, the Austrian government pledged “to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.” Other countries have joined the Austrian pledge.

Nuclear weapons are the only weapons of mass destruction not yet prohibited by an international convention, even though they have the greatest destructive capacity of all weapons. A global ban on nuclear weapons is long overdue and can be achieved in the near future with enough public pressure and political leadership.

In the last several years, a growing body of literature has emerged detailing accidents and incidents where nuclear weapons were almost used. Despite this growing recognition and understanding of the risk of a nuclear weapons detonation, nuclear-armed states and those in military alliances with them continue to rely upon nuclear weapons.

International law obliges all nations to pursue in good faith and conclude negotiations for nuclear disarmament. However, the nuclear-armed nations have so far failed to present a clear road map to a nuclear-weapons-free world; they spend in excess of US\$105 billion each year maintaining and modernizing their arsenals, diverting funds from health care, education, disaster relief and other services, with the apparent intention of retaining these weapons for many decades to come.

A nuclear weapons ban would globalize what nuclear-weapons-free zone treaties have done in Latin America, Africa, the Pacific, central and southeast Asia. It would allow all nations to formalize their rejection of nuclear weapons and help create international legal norms against the possession, use, stockpiling, deployment and assistance with all aspects of nuclear weapons.

### **Faith in action:**

Send a copy of *Nuclear Disarmament: Time for Abolition* to your elected officials. Urge them to insist that the U.S. honor its NPT treaty obligations regarding nuclear disarmament and to support the start of negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

For information visit Pax Christi International (<http://www.paxchristi.net>) and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (<http://www.icanw.org>). §

## Recommendations from drones conference

*The Coalition for Peace Action (CfPA) hosted an Interfaith Conference on Drone Warfare at Princeton Theological Seminary from January 23-25, 2015. Fr. Jim Noonan, MM and Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns staff member Anna Engelmann were two of the more than 150 attendees. The following statement are the policy recommendations released by CfPA at the conclusion of the conference.*



The Hebrew Bible states, and the New Testament affirms, “Depart from evil and do good; Seek peace and pursue it.” (Psalm 34:15, I Peter 3:11)

The Quran teaches, “Act justly for that is what piety demands.” (49:9)

The Sikh tradition teaches that all of humanity is one family. “The sword may only be used for self-defense or to protect life when all peaceful means have failed.” (Guru Gobind Singh, Tenth Guru of the Sikhs)

Unitarian Universalists covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person and justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.

Pope Francis has said that, “War is madness” and warns that perhaps World War III has already begun, “one fought piecemeal, with crimes, massacres, destruction.”

We, the more than 150 religious leaders who attended the Interfaith Conference on Drone Warfare at Princeton Theological Seminary, January 23-25, 2015, represent many of the world’s religions, and the Just War, Pacifist and Just Peace traditions. We are compelled to address our growing concern about the use of lethal drones by the United States and other countries.

Our concerns center on the nature of lethal drones as a weapon, namely their use in targeted killings of specific individuals most of whom are Muslims, their impact upon targeted communities, their operation by remote control, and the consequences that drones increase hostilities. After two and half days of presentations and conversation and in full awareness of the differences in our faith traditions and our beliefs about war, we have come together to issue this statement of recommendations.

1. We call on the administration to immediately halt targeted lethal drone strikes.

2. We call on the administration to be transparent and accountable on the past use of such strikes by public disclosures including but not limited to:

- Acknowledging strikes conducted
- Accounting for victims

- Explaining official criteria for the “kill list”
- Disclose all legal justification for authorization of strikes
- Detailing the methods of investigating deaths
- Disclosing the standards and mechanisms for compensating victims

3. We call on Congress to repeal the 2001 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) that has been used as a legal justification for the lethal drone program.

4. We call on the president to rescind the authority of the Central Intelligence Agency, Joint Special Operations Command, or any other government agency or contractor to use weaponized or lethal drones.

5. We call on the president and Congress to commission an independent study on the impact of lethal drones on drone operators, targeted persons and affected communities to determine the full extent of costs and consequences (including political, economic, social, psychological, racial, and religious) of the use of drones from 2001-present.

6. We call on the U.S. government to pursue a negotiated global ban on semi-autonomous and autonomous weapons systems.

7. We call on the U.S. government to press the international community to abide by and especially hold our allies accountable to the same recommendations as stated here, beginning with an immediate halt to targeted lethal drone strikes.

We call on our leaders to take us off the path of unending war by implementing these recommendations. As people of faith, we advocate the rigorous pursuit of Just Peace, based on upholding dignity and human rights for all, with resources dedicated to this alternative at a level matching that spent on the current drone warfare program.

*Learn more about CfPA and find links to the January 2015 presentations and sessions at <http://www.peacecoalition.org>. §*

## Trade: Pacts undermine financial reforms

*Leaks from three major trade negotiations show that the U.S. and the European Union are pushing for rules that would undermine the ability of governments to create laws to protect public safety, health and the environment. The following article will focus on how the treaties will also undermine the important advances made in financial regulations since the 2008 crisis.*

Together, these current trade negotiations affect more than 80 percent of the world's formal economy. The World Trade Organization's Trade in Services Agreement (TISA) involves 50 countries; the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is between 12 countries bordering on the Pacific Ocean; and finally, the Trans-Atlantic Trade Investment Partnership (TTIP) is between the U.S. and European Union. The agreements share many of the more worrisome provisions that would make financial crises like that of 2008, with its drastic effects on the lives of workers around the world, more likely to recur.

Despite the fact that these agreements will have massive effects on governments' ability to regulate the economy, all three negotiations are being conducted in secrecy; in the case of TISA, negotiating countries have agreed to maintain the content of the accord secret for five years after passing into law, or, if they fail to achieve agreement, for five years after the end of the negotiations. Not even members of Congress are able to see the full texts of the negotiations. Sen. Ron Wyden [D-OR] stated, "The majority of Congress is being kept in the dark as to the substance of the TPP negotiations, while representatives of U.S. corporations—like Halliburton, Chevron, PHRMA, Comcast, and the Motion Picture Association of America—are being consulted and made privy to details of the agreement. [...] More than two months after receiving the proper security credentials, my staff is still barred from viewing the details of the proposals that USTR is advancing." The general public only knows some details of the negotiations from documents that were leaked by Wikileaks and others.

Jane Kelsey, law professor at the University of Auckland, New Zealand listed important reforms that would be illegal if TISA becomes law:

- Limits on the size of financial institutions (too big to fail);
- Restrictions on activities (e.g. deposit taking banks that also trade on their own account);
- Requiring foreign investment through subsidiaries (regulated by the host) rather than branches (regulated from their parent state);

- Requiring that financial data is held onshore;
- Limits on funds transfers for cross-border transactions (e-finance);
- Authorization of cross-border providers;
- State monopolies on pension funds or disaster insurance;
- Disclosure requirements on offshore operations in tax havens;
- Requiring that certain transactions must be conducted through public exchanges, rather than invisible over-the counter (OTC) operations;
- Requiring approval for sale of "innovative" (often potentially toxic) financial products;
- Regulation of credit rating agencies or financial advisers;
- Controls on hot money inflows and outflows of capital;
- Requirements that a majority of directors are locally domiciled;
- Authorization and regulation of hedge funds; etc.

These are many of the very reforms that were implemented in various countries in order to avoid future financial crises.

The trans-Atlantic negotiations contain two especially worrisome provisions. One, called the "stand still" provision, limits countries to the regulations that they currently have and makes any new financial regulations illegal. There is even the surreal possibility that any regulations made after 1994, when the WTO Services agreement was first established, to be considered "new," therefore making all post-2008 reforms de facto illegal.

The second provision, as described by Public Citizen's Lori Wallach, "is language that basically guarantees that there is freedom of movement in financial data. And the problem there is, of course, there are lots of consumer privacy protections where you're not supposed to be able to have your confidential information. For instance, banks can't send in one package your Social Security number, your name, your address and information about your bank account. And these rules about the movement of data, for countries, for instance, in Europe, where there are really strong consumer privacy rules, would be a rollback of those basic rights and a real risk for consumers."

Another concern for many regarding the negotiations between the U.S. and EU, is that the TTIP is considered to be a "living document" with many key decisions to be made at a later date by a regulatory council that would play a key role in molding future regulations. Techdirt writer Glyn Moody writes that the council would

“provide early access to all new regulations proposed by the U.S. and EU, allowing corporations to voice their objections to any measures that they felt would impede transatlantic trade... The end-result is likely to be an impoverishment not just of public policy-making, but of democracy itself.”

Due to concerns over provisions like these and a host of others, a diverse opposition to these agreements is growing in the participating countries. In the U.S., the president needs permission from Congress to be able to negotiate (a Congressional responsibility in the Constitution). With this permission, commonly referred to as Fast Track, the administration negotiates the content of

trade agreements and then sends the agreements to be voted on by Congress without the ability to amend or modify in anyway. The president’s Fast Track authority expired in 2007. Legislation will be introduced any day to re-authorize Fast Track.

### **Faith in action:**

Contact your representative and senators and urge them to vote against any form of Fast Track trade promotion authority for the Obama administration. To send an email directly, use <http://www.maryknollogc.org/alerts/tell-congress-no-fast-track-tpa>. §

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## **Trade: TPP threatens access to medicines**

*The Maryknoll Office for Global Concern’s statement, “Trading in justice: The local impact of global economic decisions” says, “Catholic tradition supports the right to private property, but conditions that right on the common good. We believe there is a social mortgage on intellectual property as there is on physical property... The right of the private sector to benefit from patented products or business investments must be subordinated to the right of all people to access the basic necessities of life, including food, health care and essential medicine.”*

In 1994, the World Trade Organization (WTO) developed the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreements (TRIPS) and marked the greatest expansion of intellectual property protections in history. Previously governments had more freedom to determine intellectual property rights (IPR) regimes that worked for their reality such as whether a field of technology could be excluded from protections, the patent term, and other rules for IPR. The TRIPS agreement was meant to clarify and set standards for patents, but ultimately created more confusion and opened the door for legal battles between states and pharmaceutical companies.

Some of these legal battles led developing countries to bring a proposal to the 2001 WTO meeting in Doha. The proposal reinforced the safeguards, or “flexibilities,” for public health in TRIPS. The final document became known as the Doha Declaration. The declaration affirmed many of the flexibilities including that each country had the right to grant compulsory licenses on medicine patents, and that countries can exclude therapeutic, diagnostic, and surgical methods from patents,

but are not required to do so. (Read more in the UN Development Program’s paper, “The Doha Declaration Ten Years on and Its Impact on Access to Medicines and the Right to Health.”)

These flexibilities allowed for countries to produce and grow a local pharmaceutical industry to market in country and to export drugs to other countries that do not have manufacturing capacity. But in 2005, the WTO decided exportation could only be approved with a two thirds vote by WTO members. Still, many countries face pressure from the U.S. and Europe to not use generic versions of patented medicines at all, even if they pay royalties.

With almost every U.S. trade agreement, the pharmaceutical industry tries to further strengthen IP protections and close the flexibilities provided under TRIPS. And the constraints on the TRIPS flexibilities are leading to legal battles even today. In 2011 Eli Lilly sued Canada for \$500 million when the Canadian courts overturned their exclusive right to produce two drugs and they are now in legal proceedings under the World Bank’s Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) court.

The ISDS proceedings are held in non-transparent trade tribunals outside of ordinary and publicly accountable judicial systems that allow multinational companies to sue governments for enforcing their own domestic laws on public health and the environment for alleged lost profits. In February 2014, Rep. Jared Polis (D-CO) introduced a bill that would prevent ISDS inclusion in future trade agreements. The language mirrors a similar bill in Australia’s parliament right now.

On May 10, 2007 Congress struck a deal with then President George W. Bush to ensure access to medicines

for low and middle income trading partners. This put a stop to efforts undermining TRIPS flexibilities, but civil society groups criticized the deal because it used World Bank definitions to determine country income categories. [The World Bank defines a high income country at a Gross National Income (GNI) above \$12,746. This means that Chile, a country with a GNI of roughly \$14,000, would be subject to the same patent laws as the United States.]



With the current Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations, the U.S. is again looking to close the gap on TRIPS flexibilities by renegotiating trade deals with old partners. These changes are referred to as “TRIPS+.”

While the negotiations for the TPP are not open to the public, some information on the intellectual property rights chapter has been shared through Wikileaks, most recently in October 2014. One concern is the proposal to extend patents for 20 years and then allow pharmaceutical companies the ability to make small tweaks that might change the application or drug form (think capsule vs. tablet) and then extend the patent for another 20 years. This practice, called “evergreening,” can continue for decades if the company finds new uses for that formula, thereby preventing the manufacture of generics.

Another concern is the length of patents for developing countries. The October 2014 proposal creates a tiered system with countries phasing into the TPP patent scheme and accessing generic medications at different times. As of October 2014, not all countries have been categorized into a tier yet. What is known is that the U.S., Japan and Singapore would have to phase in the new regime soonest and have the longest wait for generics (Tier A). Peru and Vietnam would have the longest implementation period and the least amount of time for implementation (Tier C). Mexico and Brunei would have some transition period in between (Tier B); the other countries have yet to be categorized.

Some of the more harmful and extreme proposals were removed from the latest text such as patents on surgeries and other medical procedures and adherence to patents on pharmaceuticals in hospital settings. But another piece attacks India’s patent scheme, which is not even a party to the negotiations but supplies most of the world’s generic drugs because of its lax patent law.

Public Citizen’s Access to Medicines program, a consumer advocacy project that monitors how trade impacts access to medicines, criticizes this new proposal as eventually making all countries comply with the same

standards and ultimately limiting access to medicines to people who need it the most, even in developed countries. It found that an earlier proposal, referred to as “Addendum I,” would create more flexibility for countries by not using a temporal model, but rather basing access to medicines on whether they attained a certain level of development. Addendum II, or the October 2014 plan, also goes further in weakening the flexibilities in TRIPS.

Oxfam and Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF, Doctors Without Borders) did a study that applied the income limits for qualifying for Medicaid benefits in the U.S. to the incomes of people living in the TPP countries. They chose this standard since people on Medicaid qualify for generic access. They found that 70 percent of Chileans, residents of what is considered a high income country that likely could be placed in Tier A with the United States, would qualify for the income eligibility for Medicaid benefits and generic access if they lived in the United States.

AARP, Oxfam, MSF, and the generics lobby sent a letter to President Obama expressing concern about the TPP proposals on access to medicines saying it would impact production of and access to affordable medications, including for U.S. programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, the Veterans Health Administration, the TRICARE program, and the 340B Drug Pricing Program.

Internationally, public health groups also oppose the TPP proposal. Nearly 30 public health associations and health practitioners from seven countries negotiating the TPP signed a letter in the *Lancet* highlighting their opposition to the TPP and to the Trans-Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (TAFTA). The statement quoted, “Although USA-based industry advisors have been granted privileged access to negotiating documents, health agencies have been forced to rely on leaks for information.”

The letter concludes with, “As health practitioners in seven of the involved Pacific-Rim countries, we call on our governments to publicly release the full draft TPP text, and to secure independent and comprehensive assessments of the health and human rights consequences of the proposed agreement for each nation. The assessments should evaluate the direct and indirect—and short-term and long-term—effects of the TPPA on public health policy and regulation, publicly funded health systems, the cost of medicines, and health equity; they should also be openly released to allow full public and legislative discussion before any political tradeoffs are made and the agreement is signed.” §

## UN: CSD holds 53rd session

*The Commission for Social Development held its 53rd session (CSocD53), "Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world," from February 4-13 at United Nations headquarters in New York. In preparation, a civil society forum took place on February 3 with the theme "Civil Society Perspectives: Re-Centering Social Development in a Sustainable World." Sr. Claris Zwareva sends the following report.*

Civil society panelists including Simona Mirela Miculescu, ambassador of Romania, who was chair of the 53rd session, and Daniela Bas, director of the UN Division for Social Policy and Development, participated in the discussion focusing on social issues that affect sustainable development.

Margaret Mayce, chair of the non-governmental (NGO) Committee on Social Development, stressed the need to place people at the center of the development agenda. Poverty is an affront on human dignity therefore it is necessary to address inequalities, human rights, and ensure accountability in the process of implementing poverty eradication measures. As in previous years the chair of the NGO Committee for Social Development presented the results of the forum to the delegates during the session of the Commission. Civil society was there representing not only their respective organizations but the people deeply affected by poverty who have a voice but their voice is not heard. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the first World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen. At that time governments agreed to give social development goals the highest priority, committing themselves to eradicating poverty, promoting full employment and fostering social integration based on the enhancement and protection of human rights.

Ambassador Miculescu said, "Our task today is to carry on the vision, principles and commitments adopted at the Social Development Summit into the post-2015 development agenda. This will achieve a truly transformative, inclusive and socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development." UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, in addressing the Commission, said, "The year 2015 must be a year of global action. We are the first generation that can wipe out extreme poverty. We are the last generation that can address the worst impact of climate change. Let us reaffirm our commitment to promoting social development and social justice and building a better world for all." The discussions that followed highlighted the importance of placing people

at the center of the sustainable development agenda as they shared achievements while also looking at what still needed to be done.

It is undeniable that there has been progress in poverty reduction but current development models do not meet today's need for employment that ensures a living wage. Lack of employment jeopardizes the health and wellbeing of people and planet endangering families and communities with disintegration while depriving them of their right to development. The United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights clearly states that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." (Article 25)

Therefore, in order to reach a truly transformative social development agenda, it is necessary to place human rights at the center of development otherwise economic development will not truly address the underlying causes of poverty and deprivation. As new challenges arise, there ought to be a paradigm shift in the way these rights will be addressed. Among the emerging challenges is that of climate change. It calls for serious action so that the development agenda can be truly transformative. As some delegates stated, the lack of people-centered policies and poor governance could lead to regression for those countries that are on the road to successful development. True democracy and policies that give people a voice are assets to a successful development agenda. During the interactive dialogue speakers stressed the importance of transparency as a tool that will promote successful development while highlighting that words and actions must go hand in hand.

In an exemplary manner the UN Department of Social Policy and the Department of Social Affairs will soon launch a yearlong campaign titled "For Inclusion. For Equality. For People." The aim of the campaign is to highlight the importance of social development and to emphasize the role of social progress post-2015.

As people of faith living the Pascal mystery, we must work to promote human rights so that all may have enough. Guided by the example of Jesus who fed the multitude from five loaves and two fishes (John 6:11), we must work to promote a post-2015 development agenda that will address the needs of those who are poor by placing human rights at the heart of development. §

## Resources

- 1) **20 years after Beijing: Where do women's rights stand?** In September 1995, 17,000 participants and 30,000 activists streamed into Beijing for the opening of the Fourth World Conference on Women. They gathered with a common purpose: gender equality and the empowerment of all women. After two weeks, representatives of 189 governments forged commitments that were historic in scope. By the end, the Conference had produced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, “the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women’s rights.” As a defining framework for change, the Platform committed to 12 critical areas of concern, and now, 20 years later, remains “a powerful source of guidance and inspiration.” Celebrate **Women’s Day on March 8**, and learn more at the Beijing+20: Inspiration Then and Now website. Additional resources: (1) The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, World Women’s Health and Development Forum: Post-2015 Desired Outcomes, here, and (2) World Women’s Health and Development Forum, here.
- 2) **World Water Day:** Designated by the UN to be celebrated on **March 22** every year, World Water Day is a day to make a difference for the members of the global population who suffer from water related issues. It’s a day to prepare for how we manage water in the future. In 2015, the theme for World Water Day is “Water and Sustainable Development.” Learn more and find resources here: <http://www.unwater.org/worldwaterday/home/en/>
- 3) **“Have you anything here to eat?” Sustainable food in a changing climate:** Creation Justice Ministries offers this free downloadable resource to use for reflection on **Earth Day Sunday, April 22**. The resource invites us to reflect in particular on how climate and food concerns impact us. How does food production and consumption impact the climate? How does climate change affect growing and accessing food? Find it here: <http://www.creation-justice.org/earth-day-2015---sustainable-food-in-a-changing-climate.html>.
- 4) **On the front lines: Border security, migration, and humanitarian concerns in South Texas:** With Congress debating a Department of Homeland Security funding bill, the issue of border security is in the spotlight. But while some in Washington quarrel over a nebulous “crisis” at the border, a lesser-known—but in many ways more grim—situation is playing out in Texas’s Rio Grande Valley region. Read more in this new report from the Washington Office on Latin America. Downloadable and printable versions are found here: [http://www.wola.org/publications/the\\_humanitarian\\_crisis\\_continues\\_in\\_south\\_texas](http://www.wola.org/publications/the_humanitarian_crisis_continues_in_south_texas).
- 5) **Trade, violence and migration: The broken promises to Honduran workers:** In October 2014, a delegation arrived in Honduras to meet with workers, labor, faith and community partners as well as government officials and learn about the impact of U.S. trade and immigration policies on Honduran workers and their families. The delegation spoke with union leaders representing sectors affected by the Central America Free Trade Agreement-Dominican Republic (CAFTA-DR, or CAFTA) including port workers, and workers from agriculture, manufacturing and apparel industries. They met with returned migrants, who faced dangerous journeys and militarized border enforcement and detention. They heard from local community and political leaders who explained the endemic political corruption in the country, and their struggle for a more just Honduras. Download the report about their visit here: <http://www.aflcio.org/Blog/Global-Action/Trade-Violence-and-Migration-The-Broken-Promises-to-Honduran-Workers>.
- 6) **The voice of the voiceless: The role of the church in the Sudanese civil war, 1983-2005:** This book, written by John Ashworth, is an informative and readable human interest story, based on the actual experiences of Ashworth and others, and materials gathered from key informants. It attempts to tell the story of church involvement, through the eyes of people who were there, and demonstrates the ecumenical nature of the Church in Sudan. 304 pages. Order from Paulines Africa, <http://e.paulinesafrica.org>; search for ISBN 9966-08-836-9; \$10 hard copy, \$7 e-book.

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