



Update

July 2017

UN Spotlight on the Oceans



The month of June got off to an energetic start with the first UN Oceans Conference. The presence of an unusually large number of scientists, science educators, and island peoples donning bright, tropical flowers provided a welcome and marked change in the rhetoric and aesthetic filling the conference rooms of UN Headquarters. Every hallway was lined with exhibitions of gorgeous seascapes and breathtaking marine life as well as colorful displays explaining scientific findings and environmental

innovations from various waters of the world. While many meetings on environmental sustainability have been convened at the UN over the past two years and beyond, this was the first to focus solely on marine environments: the challenges they face and the solutions they offer in an age of the warming planet, insatiable consumerism, and growing social inequality.

The conference offered a tremendous opportunity for even those among us who are already dedicated to earth justice to understand more deeply the status of our oceans' health and its implications on human health and survival. A few of the key pieces of information we took away from the conference:

Eutrophication is the process by which fertilizer runoff from industrial agricultural operations poisons marine ecosystems. It does so by fueling the rapid, unnatural growth of marine plants that float on the surface of the oceans. This plant growth at the surface obstructs sunlight from feeding plant life on the ocean floor, which in turn boosts the population of "decomposer" organisms who feed on dead plants. These organisms consume oxygen in the water, causing other marine life to asphyxiate and die. In this way, "dead zones" where no marine life can survive are formed in the ocean. The phenomenon also endangers human



life, because half of the oxygen in our atmosphere comes from the oceans.

At the current rate at which humans produce and deposit plastic in the ocean, the total weight of plastic in the ocean will outweigh the fish population in the ocean!!! Many events were focused on the plastic/disposable economy as a major threat to the future of the oceans and of humans (see point #1 above)



The ocean has borne the brunt of climate change. It has absorbed 90% of the heat we humans add to the atmosphere with the pollution from our transportation, agricultural, and industrial activities. The ocean has also protected us from even more extreme temperatures than we are already experiencing, because its currents redistribute heat from the hottest regions to the coldest ones.

Despite the broadcasting of all this information that demonstrates the critical importance of protecting oceans, small island nations are entertaining the relatively new phenomenon of seabed mining. The industry Private sector proponents of this growing industry claim, as many extractive industries have before, that it will bring great profit to these low-income countries with virtually no disruption to their ecosystems. As in these past cases, however, the industry leaders do not know what the long-term impact seabed mining will have on the ocean environment on which their economies currently depend. We were highly disconcerted by the presentation of this topic, as it closely resembled the story we have heard too many times: a powerful industry based in a monetarily wealthy country that is eager to exploit the natural wealth of a cash-poor nation eager for an influx of jobs. UNANIMA has raised, and will continue to follow, this issue with our partners on the NGO Mining Working Group.



Overall, the Oceans Conference imbued us with a sense of urgency and passion that is best summed up by Dr. Sylvia Earle, famed American oceanographer, diver, and conservationist, who spoke at the World Ocean Day celebration event in the General Assembly: "If we fail to protect the ocean, nothing else will matter." (For further inspiration on the topic of ocean conservation, we highly recommend [Dr. Earle's TED Talk](http://bit.ly/VYN1AZ): <http://bit.ly/VYN1AZ>.)

Call for Student Art for Display at the UN



As part of a team planning the annual UN celebration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP), UNANIMA has taken up a search for student art depicting young people's visions of "a world without poverty." The team is seeking art submissions for display in a hallway exhibit at UN Headquarters on the IDEP, which is celebrated 17 October. If you are an educator or in contact with students under the age of 20, we need your help! Please engage your student group in our search for artistic representations of a world without poverty. Submissions may come in any medium, including visual arts, music, video, or poetry, and must include the name and age of the artist. Any written submissions should be written in, or come with a translation into, one of the six official UN languages (English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, or Russian). They must be received before 10 September 2017 and may be e-mailed to us at info@unanima-international.org or sent by mail to UNANIMA International, 845 Third Avenue, Sixth Floor, New York, NY 10022, USA. If you anticipate sending us a student submission, please let us know as soon as possible by writing to the e-mail address above. This invitation is open to all youth, so please share it widely with all the young people in your network! (Photo credit: Beaconhouse Schools)

Discussions Continue in Preparation for an International Agreement on Migration



A third dialogue of the six to be convened in preparation for negotiations of a Global Compact on Migration was held last month on the topic of cooperation between nations on safe management of migration. Given the inherently international nature of cross-border migration, States were, unsurprisingly, in agreement on the need for cooperation and collaboration among their governments in governing their

borders. Many of them highlighted the ways that existing agreements between two or more neighboring countries have helped improve the safety and order of migration across their borders. They also agreed that border governance policies should respect human rights and international law.

Unfortunately, there was also considerable lack of ideas and proposed strategies for how to incorporate these principles into the universally agreed upon right of States to protect their borders as they see fit. One group of States did, however, propose a checklist of sorts for good migration cooperation between countries. According to this group, all international agreements on migration should (a) ensure the protection of migrants, (b) empower migrants to fulfill their goals and aspirations, and (c) afford migrants the opportunity to benefit equitably from the outcomes of migration.



One especially positive notion that emerged from the dialogue was wide agreement that migration policy design should involve consultation of people outside the national government. States expressed that government officials at the provincial and local levels should be consulted to ensure that national policies consider all their concerns and perspectives. Some States also proposed that individuals from non-government roles in society should be included in national policy design.

Video of the three main parts of this dialogue is available in English on UN Web TV:



Panel 1: International cooperation and governance of migration in all its dimensions
<http://bit.ly/2vxhuJd>

Panel 2: International cooperation and governance of migration in transit, on entry and at borders
<http://bit.ly/2uoPtTG>

Panel 3: International cooperation and governance of migration on return, re-admission, integration and reintegration

<http://bit.ly/2vxJr3i>

The fourth dialogue in preparation for the Global Compact will be held in late July in New York.

NGO Committee on Migration Seeks Best Practices in Combatting Xenophobia

The NGO Committee on Migration (CoM) has formed a subcommittee to focus on the issue of xenophobia and social inclusion of migrants and refugees. They seek to cooperate with the UN's Together Campaign, which we highlighted in the May issue of the UNANIMA Update, to build a database of projects being used on the local level to eliminate xenophobia. In order to do so, the group is calling on the member organizations of the CoM who work directly with migrants to share their success stories and insights. If you work to combat discrimination against migrants or promote their social inclusion, please take twenty minutes to complete our survey by the end of August:

<http://bit.ly/2vN6FBM>. (Image source: UN NGLS)



NGO Committee to Stop Trafficking in Persons Writes to UN Secretary General



Between 2004 and 2016, a total of nearly 2,000 allegations of abuse and exploitation by U.N. peacekeepers and other personnel were reported globally, 150 cases coming from Haiti alone. The UN recently undertook two new measures to scale up their efforts to put an end to sexual exploitation and violence committed by UN Peacekeepers. Through a new resolution from the UN Security Council

[https://undocs.org/S/RES/2272\(2016\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2272(2016))

and a report from the UN Secretary General (<https://undocs.org/A/71/818>), the UN is seeking to improve its process for holding all its employees and associates accountable for sexual misconduct. Their new strategy to this end includes four priorities for action: putting victims first, ending impunity, engaging civil society and other non-UN partners, and improving their communications to educate and increase transparency about UN efforts to prevent sexual exploitation within its system. The NGO Committee to Stop Trafficking in Persons (CSTIP) wrote to Secretary General Antonio Guterres last month to commend him for his leadership in this effort. The letter also offered a list of concerns and recommendations the Committee has for improvement of existing practices. UNANIMA endorsed this letter and will continue to collaborate with Committee partners to monitor UN progress on this issue. The CSTIP letter is available here: <http://bit.ly/2uV38oQ>.

Flashpoints:

- The mission of the **Society of the Holy Child Jesus** is to help others to believe that God lives and acts in them and to rejoice in God's presence. In the spirit of their most recent general chapter meeting, they remind us all to "be open to new possibilities" in life, prayer, and ministry. In light of current events, this sentiment has encouraged the SHCJ Sisters to show special concern for refugees, migrants, and women and children living in poverty. They continue to uphold their dignity by reuniting migrant children with their families and providing shelter for them.

- Colleen Jackson, **RSC**, was recently interviewed by Global Sisters Report about her work with detained asylum seekers in Australia and her experience as a Catherine Ferguson Scholar (intern) at UNANIMA earlier this year. Read the full interview here: <http://bit.ly/2uMbHle>. (Photo source: Global Sisters Report)



- In France, the **Daughters of Wisdom** have several EHPADs (Establishment Hospitals for Dependent Elderly). Near one of these EHPADs in Auray, Brittany, they have set up a botanical garden and mini-farm for hospital residents, visitors, and other residents from the local community. The open gardens offer a wide variety of flowers, vegetables, and livestock, including a dozen ponies, a few donkeys, a peacock, turtledoves, pigs, rabbits, poultry, goats, and even a cat. It has become a local attraction that brings the Sisters, lay volunteers, and the young and older people of the community together.

- Non-government organization partners of UNANIMA have started a petition to express their opposition to the UN's endorsement of nuclear energy as a renewable form of energy. This form of energy poses a great threat to the environment and human life, particularly in the regions where its starting materials are mined and where the energy itself is generated and tested. For more information and to sign the petition to stop nuclear energy lobbying at the UN, visit this page: <http://bit.ly/2uMxrh8>. (Photo source: Green and Growing)

