

MERCY INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION



MERCY GLOBAL ACTION

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NEWS FROM THE MIA MERCY GLOBAL ACTION OFFICE UN

Easter Greetings to all. As we celebrate this Easter season of hope, we are mindful of what has filled our agenda much of this past month; the negotiations toward a global compact on migration and the importance of recognizing the wonderful contribution that migrants make to our world; the Commission on the Status of Women and the great strides that continue to be made in terms of the empowerment and recognition of women; and also the launch of the UN Decade on Water and the emerging recognition that Water is a Universal Human Right. All of these events remind us that hope is still indeed alive. Our Easter call is one of standing in solidarity with those who continue to be oppressed and marginalized and to work to change violent systems of oppression that render the earth and its people poor.

One of our colleagues from UNANIMA shared a beautiful poem from John O'Donohue "Easter Blessing" from *Walking on the Pastures of Wonder*; it captures this message of hope and rising in the face of adversity.



Photos: Public Domain

"On this Easter morning, let us look again at the lives we have been so generously given and let us let fall away the useless baggage that we carry -- old pains, old habits, old ways of seeing and feeling -- and let us have the courage to begin again... We don't realize all the good we can do. A kind, encouraging word or helping hand can bring many a person through dark valleys in their lives... We were sent here to search for the light of Easter in our hearts, and when we find it we are meant to give it away generously. The dawn that is rising this Easter morning is a gift to our hearts and we are meant to celebrate it and to carry away from this holy, ancient place the gifts of healing and light and the courage of a new beginning."

*The Sisters of Mercy have held special consultative status within the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 1998

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THROUGH OUR ECOSOC* EYES...

A Snapshot Inside the Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-Two (CSW 62), the United Nation's largest attended Commission, launched on March 12th and continued until March 23rd. The priority theme for this year's Commission was "challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls" with a review theme of "participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women".



H.E. Ms. Geraldine Byrne Nason, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ireland to the UN, served as the Chair of the Bureau of the 62nd Commission; she will hold this position for two years as she works to facilitate and ensure a successful outcome for the annual sessions. The outcome from the 193 Member States of the United Nations, called the "Agreed Conclusions" was negotiated during the second week of the Commission and works to ensure the rights and development of rural women and girls. During negotiations, a **press release** from UN Women highlighted how "Member States expressed deep concern about the increasing challenges that are exacerbating the disadvantages and inequalities that rural women and girls face – from humanitarian emergencies and armed conflicts

to the adverse impacts of climate change. In its final agreement, the Commission emphasized that rural women and girls are essential to sustainable development, and their rights and empowerment needs to be prioritized." To review the broad range of concrete steps and recommendations within the "Agreed Conclusions" click **here**.

Complementing the Member State negotiations towards the CSW "Agreed Conclusions" was NGO CSW's Consultation Day, preceding the Commission on March 11th, as well as 500+ side-events and parallel events sponsored by both Member States, Civil Society and other stakeholders. The MIA: Mercy Global Action at the UN delegation engaged in the numerous outlets and activities provided, while also co-sponsoring, endorsing, and presenting at a diverse range of events from themes of rural women and water, climate induced displacement, structural change, fracking, human trafficking and more.



Most notable was Mercy International Association: Mercy Global Action at the UN's co-sponsored event with the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See, "Preventing Human Trafficking among Rural Women and Girls: Integrating Inherent Dignity into a Human Rights Model." With nearly 600 people in attendance, two sisters of Mercy, Sr. Lynda Dearlove and Sr. Angela Reed, presented alongside survivor advocate Mely Lenario from the Philippines who described how her experience of being trafficked has encouraged her to study social work and continue as an outreach worker to assist other women who are being trafficked. Angela Reed rsm shared her extensive research on preventative measures to combating human trafficking for sexual exploitation. She described

how "Formerly trafficked women challenge the view that being trafficked for sexual exploitation is a single isolated event in their lives. Instead they draw attention to human rights violations and systemic oppression that occur throughout their entire lives." Congratulations on such a successful and insightful event! Read a summary of the event from the Holy See Mission **here**.

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THEMATIC AREAS

DISPLACED PERSONS



- **Highlighting Climate Induced Displacement at CSW 62**



Among the many drivers of migration forcibly displacing millions of people each year are climate change and natural disasters. During the Commission on the Status of Women, the NGO Committee on Migration along with the government of Bangladesh, co-sponsored a panel discussion on climate induced displacement and how it specifically impacts women and girls entitled "Shouldering the Burden: Rural Women and Climate Induced Displacement". This event highlighted the challenges such as high water salinity leading to disease, inability to access medical resources, food scarcity, desertification, lack of access to technology, sea level rise and more. However, it also emphasized the resilience of women and girls in the face of adversity, using these as a catalyst for change. View this event [here!](#)

- **Intergovernmental Negotiations Towards a Global Compact on Migration**

Since our last newsletter in March, there have been two rounds of intergovernmental negotiations towards a Global Compact on Migration. Within the second round, the Co-Facilitators of the process, Ambassadors of Mexico and Switzerland, took a step back from proceeding through negotiations objective by objective to ensure that some main areas of contention between Member States were discussed. Speaking openly in this round of negotiations, key points debated considered Member States' opinions on the differentiation of regular and irregular migrants, differentiation between migrants and refugees, implementation and capacity building, and follow up and review. In depth discussion arose regarding the human rights of migrants, which should be upheld regardless of status. Click [here](#) to read the Zero Draft Plus which was negotiated during this round.



The **Draft Revision of the Global Compact on Migration** which was released on March 26 and discussed within the third round of negotiations (April 3-6) included the differentiations as discussed within the second round; however, no changes were made to a capacity building mechanism. Negotiations proceeded objective by objective and encompassed both technical and content changes. Consensus on the changes made to the Compact was varied as some Member States do not want the Compact to be too prescriptive and others that urge to make the Global Compact as strong as it can be.

To continue following the negotiations and read statements submitted by Member States go to <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/intergovernmental-negotiations> . Here you can view the programme of work for each round, statements, side-events, and more! The next round of negotiations will be from May 14-18th. As we head into a stretch with no Global Compact Negotiations to attend, MIA: Mercy Global Action at the UN, along with the NGO Committee on Migration, will be visiting with delegates of UN Member States to assist in optimizing the Global Compact on Migration.

For further reading: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2018%20BRI%20Compacts%2BIssue%2BBrief%2BFINAL.pdf>

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THEMATIC AREAS

Continued



DEGRADATION OF THE EARTH

- **MIA: MGA at the UN Attends Launch of International Decade on Action for Water**



Photo: UNWebTV

The United Nations launched an 'International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028' on World Water Day, March 22nd recognizing both the critical value of water to the well-being of humans and our ecosystems, as well as the challenges that must

be overcome. With an esteemed panel and plenary dialogue, one voice resounded louder than the rest, that of 13-year old Autumn Peltier. Autumn Peltier, an Anishinaabe water advocate from Wikwemikong First Nation in Canada, spoke on behalf of water as a sacred and living thing. Autumn described how the fight for clean drinking water must encompass a human rights based approach but also address the privatization of water; “water should not be for sale, [and] no one should have to worry about [whether] its safe [or not] to drink”. In her address to the General Assembly, she later challenged Member States and stakeholders to “warrior up” and truly take a stand for protecting our planet. View Autumn’s encouraging testimony [here](#).

- **MIA: Mercy Global Action Co-Sponsors Events on Fracking, Water, and Sanitation**

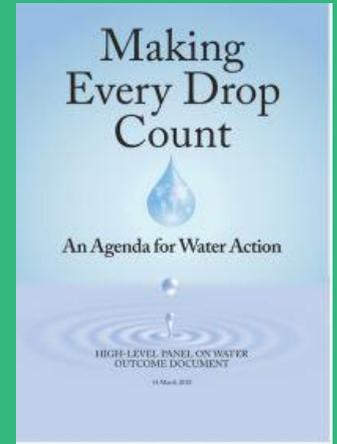
"Frontline Leadership: Rural Women in the Anti-Fracking Movement" was co-sponsored by the NGO Mining Working Group, among other faith-based organizations at the UN. This event highlighted the major roles that rural women have played in the various “theaters” of the anti fracking movement. They discussed obstacles they’ve faced and which strategies were most effective in overcoming these various challenges. View event [here](#)!

Co-sponsored by MIA: Mercy Global Action, this event “Wisdom, Water, and Rural Women: Unmuting Women's Voices for Integrated Water Policy” featured esteemed panelists such as Ambassador Meza-Cuadra of the Permanent Mission of Perú, Meera Karananathun of Blue Planet Project, Dr. Meghan Clark of St. John’s University, Chris Schimmoeller a rural Kentucky activist and Matteo Cinquemani of Malteser International. Panelists addressed water as a human right and explored ways in which water is valued. They celebrated the wisdom of rural women and provided evidence of policy failures while offering constructive solutions. Additionally they explored ways to include the voices of rural women and girls in decision making and policy processes along the way. Click [here](#) to watch this event!

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“USEFUL RESOURCES

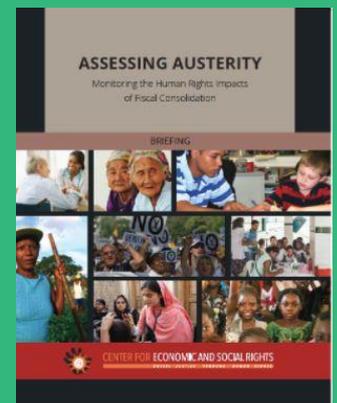
UN DESA and the World Bank Release 'Making Every Drop Count'



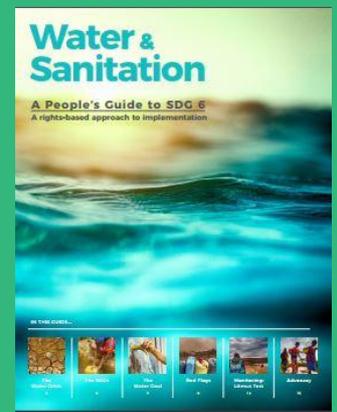
UNICEF's Progress for Every Child in the SDG Era



Center for Economic and Social Rights "Assessing Austerity: Monitoring the Impacts of Fiscal Consolidation"



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



- **Taking a Closer Look at SDG 6 "Water and Sanitation for All"**

The section on monitoring includes a four step litmus test which is designed to help policy makers and advocates assess water related policy in light of international human rights obligations. This test is an adaptation of the NGO Mining Working Groups 'Rights Based Litmus Test'. Key questions in relation to monitoring include:

- Does the option undermine the conditions necessary to guarantee the human right to water or other rights?
- Does the policy effectively advance the enjoyment of the human rights to water and sanitation by all?
- Can affected communities and concerned civil society participate effectively in decision-making and access justice/remedies for harms?
- Does this option further or hinder the ability of future generations to enjoy their rights to water or any other human right?

You can view a comprehensive breakdown of these inquiry questions on pages 12-14 of the SDG 6 Guide.

Furthermore, there are several channels for advocacy at the UN outlined in this section of the guide. It includes a brief overview of Special Procedures along with providing key advocacy steps and actions. Reference is also made to the UN Treaty Bodies as well as the Universal Periodic Review, in which countries review each other's human rights situation with participation by civil society.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Cardinal Ribat of Papua New Guinea gave two presentations while traveling in New York City in March. Taking into account Pope Francis's call to make concrete commitments to find solutions to climate change, he spoke passionately about the damages to small island states from deep sea bed mining companies such as Nautilus Minerals. These concerns were also detailed within recent articles in the *Business and Human Rights Resource Centre* in which they have invited Nautilus Minerals to respond to concerns raised. Follow this story here!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Some events MIA at the UN will be attending

- **3rd April- 6th April- Intergovernmental Negotiations for the Global Compact Migration**
- **9th-13th April Commission on Population Development**
- **15th April- 27th April -Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**
- **10th April- 23rd April Sr. Angela Field in Country Visit to Guyana**
- **22nd April - International Mother Earth Day**

NEWS UPDATE

March flew by for the Global Action Team in the Mercy International Centre. Our focus was on developing resources for the mini campaign against plastic pollution. This complements the global campaign to highlight the danger of plastic pollution and the urgency of finding alternatives to plastic. We also prepared the next pamphlet in the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda series, SDG number 15. Both initiatives are part of the lead up to Earth Day 2018; see 'related articles'.

Significant justice issues relating to all victims of rape were highlighted this past month, in a high profile rape case as outlined in article: 'Justice for Victims of Rape or Sexual Assault'.

Wishing you Easter-tide greetings of hope and peace

Denise Boyle fmdm

Leader Global Action Team

UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda series, SDG number 15

The aim of this SDG is to: "Protect and restore sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss." Central to this is preventing the loss of biodiversity, which refers to the variety of life on Earth in all its forms and interactions. Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry sum this up in a phrase from 'The Universe Story' – "To tell the story of a single particle we must tell the full story of the Universe". **Look for the SDG 15 Pamphlet on the Mercy World website in the coming days!**



Justice for Victims of Rape or Sexual Assault

In the past month following a high profile rape trial in Belfast, Northern Ireland (they follow the British legal system) the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland is facing water shed moment, related to criminal trials for rape and sexual assault. The 'Belfast Trial' as it became known, was headline news nationally and internationally for the nine weeks the accused were on trial, which was in an open court with a packed public gallery.

In the republic of Ireland such trials are held 'in camera' i.e. no reporters or members of the public are permitted in the courtroom. Importantly the names of the victim and the accused would not be released until the judge or magistrate had passed sentence. The victim in the Belfast trial was guaranteed anonymity, but her name was leaked! Most likely because the public attending the trial heard it, as she was cross examined by the barristers representing the four, high profile sports men.

Following the verdict of 'not guilty' for the accused, there were spontaneous demonstrations throughout both jurisdictions. Demonstrators were calling for an overhaul of the British judicial system because of the justice issues raised throughout this high profile case. Central to this was the way the 'victim', the principle witness for the State, was subjected to interrogation by four barristers for eight consecutive days, with no barrister to represent her. Other issues extended into a review of societal values which is, as in many countries heavily influenced by a male dominated sporting culture.

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Numerous interviews, chat shows and news reports post the verdict, have highlighted factors that partly explain the significant increase in rape and sexual assault across the Western world; yet on average only one in ten victims actually reports the crime. There are many factors as to why not – not least fear of the trial – that includes confusion around what consent means; lack of respect for oneself and others; alcohol consumption; plus the negative influence of pornography on young minds. This is compounded in many instances by the lessening influence of religion on moral values or norms.

Short term, until there is a radical change in the judicial system for sexual assault trials in most countries, victims will hesitate to come forward in their search for justice.

Mini-Campaign Against Plastic Pollution leading to Earth Day, 22nd April

As a lead up to Earth Day 2018, the Future We Need (FWN) group, which Mercy Global Action is a member of, prepared a 4-part series: 'My Journey Away From Plastic'. The reflections one a week for the four weeks leading to Earth Day may be viewed here. Join us in participating in an 'action' highlighted for the 4th week. See all 4 reflections [here](#) http://www.mercyworld.org/mercy_global_action/view-post.cfm?id=910

Earth Day this year will focus on mobilizing the world to End Plastic Pollution, including creating support for a global effort to eliminate single-use plastics, along with global regulation for the disposal of plastics. See: <https://www.earthday.org/earthday/>

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGNS ON REDUCING PLASTIC USE

Globally, campaigns are being rolled to eliminate or reduce the use of plastic in our lives. This is at a critical juncture, as time¹ is not on our side! Plastic is a substance the earth cannot digest, is the strapline of the Plastic Pollution Coalition campaign and sums up how urgent the plastic pollution problem is.

A million plastic bottles are bought around the world every minute and these bottles cannot biodegrade – they virtually last forever, some estimate more than 500 years. Millions of these bottles end up in our oceans and are wreaking havoc on marine life around the planet. Ellen McArthur campaigns to promote the circular economy in which plastic bottles are re-used, refilled and re-cycled rather than used once and thrown away. The circular economy is one that we can all embrace, so it is good to see that the United Kingdom is now set to join 38 countries in having a recycling scheme in which all containers, whether plastic, glass or metal, will to be covered by a deposit return (DRS) scheme in retail stores. In Germany a DRS was introduced in 2003 and 99 per cent of plastic bottles are now recycled. It is now time that all governments introduced such schemes to curb the millions of plastic bottles a day that go unrecycled.

1. <http://www.plasticpollutioncoalition.org/>



Photo: Kristin McDermott

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CUT DOWN ON PLASTIC USE:

There are many resourceful campaigns being introduced at this crucial moment in time – a very practical and manageable one is #PlasticFreeFriday. Launched by Friends of the Earth, it gives tips on how to eliminate plastic for one day a week. Helpful hints include:



- Bring your lunch in with you and avoid using plastic cutlery, cling film etc.
- Use a reusable bottle and use water from the tap. If the taste of tap water does not appeal to you, apparently the addition of a stick of charcoal will purify the water.
- For this one day of the week, skip the supermarket when shopping for Friday evening dinner. It is more likely that food bought from the local bakery, greengrocer or butcher will be sold loose, so no wrapping involved.

GET BUSINESSES INVOLVED:

This is another initiative which is receiving great attention. Get the business community involved and ask them to make small changes in their practices. This could have a huge impact on our “throw away culture”, especially in the hospitality sector.

- Straws - put them behind the counter. Let people ask for them or better still, change to paper straws which are widely available now.
- Condiment sachets – Ditch the condiment sachets and change back to bottles to cut down on waste.
- Offer a discount for reusing your coffee cup. Charge extra for the use of a disposable one. This could be extended to include ice cream tubs, salads, single use cutlery etc.
- Takeaway boxes. Switch to cardboard or other alternatives.

These small changes could have serious positive impacts on reducing or cutting out our reliance on plastic. As can be seen above, the DRS was introduced in Germany and recycling is now at 99 per cent. Now that’s progress!

Betty Lacey
MIA GA Research

Mercy International Association (MIA) maintains a comprehensive and up to date website and produces an informative weekly e-newsletter (MercyNews).

Visit our website to discover more about MIA and our global activities: www.mercyworld.org

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