

## 2015 AND BEYOND: OUR ACTION AGENDA

“We know the power of people to be agents of change, to change themselves and change their communities”. The inspiring opening session of the **65<sup>th</sup> Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference held at UN Headquarters, New York from 27 – 29 august 2014** opened the way for thematic round tables on Poverty Eradication and Fighting Inequalities, Sustainable Development, Human Rights and Climate Change, numerous workshops and side events. The three day event ended with an equally encouraging Closing Ceremony in which the NGO community present ratified the Conference Declaration.

Doryne Kirby ibvm, Ann McGowan (Director, Mary Ward Center, Toronto), Mary-Eileen Donovan (Board Member Mary Ward Center), Gerry Graham (IBVM Associate), Evanne Hunter ibvm, all from Canada, along with more than two thousand participants gathered in New York for the 65<sup>th</sup> Annual UN DPI/NGO Conference. On the final day we met to share our thoughts and hopes arising from the Conference.

The DPI Conference was a great opportunity to become more aware of people from other parts of the world and their issues. The voices, the stories, the diversity of people from civil society organizations all reminded us of our globalized world. There has been an extraordinary growth in knowledge.. Knowledge and information are being exchanged in ways that are transforming, not only for civil societies, but for international institutions as well. After the experience of the MDGs as a Development Agenda we are looking towards the future with a new vision as we prepare for the Post 2015 Development Agenda.



Listening to the diverse voices and experiences provided opportunities for rejoicing that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were a point of cohesion for the many efforts of Governments, civil society, institutions and the private sector to address serious development issues in our world. Applying the learnings from the MDGs enables an engagement in the elaboration of the development agenda for the coming years, the Post 2015 Sustainable development Agenda (SDGs). In reflecting on the MDGs it can be noted:

- the MDGs were mainly social, whereas the post 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda includes the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development and their interrelatedness;
- the MDGs targeted the developing world, whereas these new goals are Universal. The new goals must be relevant to all countries as all our destinies are interwoven.
- As we move from MDGs to the SDGs climate change is an overarching concern.

The focus of the Conference was on the Post 2015 Development Agenda and the role of civil society. The interconnection between the various dimensions was constantly stressed, along with the complexity of goals, targets and indicators that are both universal and local. It obliges us to embrace the almost paradoxical realities of being focused and clear about what we can do and at the same time being open to the huge complexity of it all. There is no one solution.



The hope is for a person-centered development agenda. Given the limits of our planet, access to food, water, sanitation and energy, along with sustainable production and consumption of these resources, are basic challenges for our survival. The crucial question is: what can be done to go beyond a definition of human beings as merely consumers. A youth representative reminded the participants that “a moral and spiritual slumber has blinded us from seeing that

we are travelling on the same journey”. “Our organizations, he said,” must go beyond the material journey and heal the soul as well”.

The implementation of the post 2015 agenda will be crucial. Questions as to how the post 2015 Agenda will be financed and how, and by whom, the outcomes will be measured require further elaboration.

The financial dimension is enormous. While a sustainable economy is central to sustainable development the ever-present question is how the whole development agenda is to be financed. A key message is the fact that governments cannot do this alone but need to collaborate with the private sector. This surprises many members of civil society who believe that big business controls everything and that governments need to move in and take charge again. It requires an effort to look at the business and private sector as partners with governments and the United Nations. Yet we are aware that companies are becoming more sensitive when shareholders are driven by ethical values. A process for the financing the goals is in progress and will conclude in a Conference to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July 2015. The NGOs in New York have contributed to the process through the NGO Committee for Financing for Development in which IBVM Representatives have participated since its commencement.

Good governance was presented as essential and critical for the implementation of the Post 2015 Goals. Failed states, where structures have ceased to exist or have become ineffective, make development impossible. Good governance and accountability are essential and, in this respect, governance requires evaluation. Civil society must hold governments accountable.



A number of events focused on global citizenship. The underlying values needed were stressed, as was the importance of lifelong learning as well as formal and non- formal education. Such a concept of citizenship assumes the inclusion of all sectors and ages. All are global citizens -it is about everybody, not just a particular group.

**Our Civil Society Action Agenda:** During the coming year raising awareness of the content of the Post 2015 Development Agenda will be a continuing theme throughout our network. The [Final Declaration](#) or outcome document of the DPI Conference is a valuable source of information as we try to come to grips with the new development agenda in the making.

**As you read it ask yourself:**

1. How is the content different from that of the MDGs?
2. What surprises you in the document?



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Climate Change – Climate March (21 September 2014)

The news on climate change is not good. Governments have not met the challenge to take action.. Unfortunately, the very harmful impacts of climate change are often perceived as so far into the future that the immediate sense of urgency is diminished. Climate change has been described as, “one of those wicked problems that will be extremely bad eventually but does not affect me tonight”. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) will issue a new report in November, however a leaked early draft suggest that little progress has been made.

**A United Nations Climate Summit** will take place this month in New York at the 69<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the General Assembly. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon called this one-day event, on 23 September, to try to energize the member states to take action before it is too late. Further climate change negotiations are scheduled for Lima, Peru in December 2014 within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) where global experts and government negotiators will attempt to draft language for a climate treaty to be signed in Paris in 2015.



Meanwhile, around the globe civil society has been organizing responses to coincide with the September Summit and engage the public will for real decisions. In cities around the world a **Peoples Climate March will take place on September 21, 2014, United Nations International Day for Peace**, Information about the events can be found at <http://peoplesclimate.org/>. An “Armchair March” is suggested for those who cannot attend but will participate with their prayer. Attached is an Arm Chair March/Prayer Service developed for retired sisters and friends who are unable to participate in the Peoples Climate March on Sept 21. Please feel

free to use or adapt.

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace, the theme of this year's International Day of Peace, can be marked by adding our efforts to the struggle to combat climate change, a concern which may make an already vulnerable world peace even more fragile. [www.un.org/peaceday](http://www.un.org/peaceday)

Avaaz, a large activist group, is gearing up for the largest climate mobilization in history on September 21. Already hundreds of events are organized and hundreds of thousands of people signed up. But the events are designed to deliver civil society petitions to decision makers. Let's make it the largest call to action ever. Join now and tell everyone - sign the petition with one click below:

[http://avaaz.org/en/100\\_clean\\_melbourne/?bZPkmab&signup=1&cl=5799685279&v=45299](http://avaaz.org/en/100_clean_melbourne/?bZPkmab&signup=1&cl=5799685279&v=45299)

## The International Day of the Girl

Since 2012 the United Nations has celebrated the "International Day of the Girl Child" on 11 October. The object of this day is to increase awareness of a girl's human rights, of the gender inequalities that remain between girls and boys and of other forms of discrimination and abuse suffered by girls around the world. It is a day of opportunities:

- to raise our own and the public's awareness of the many types of discrimination and abuse that girls suffer around the world;
- to showcase the work being done to empower girls through active support and engagement with parents, families and the wider community;
- to consider the ways boys and men are involved in ending all kinds of discrimination against girls



IBVM schools and non-formal education centers around the world work tirelessly for and with some 60,000 girls. The UN NGO Office is most interested to hear about your initiatives.

Further information: The Canadian and Peruvian Governments have been instrumental in establishing the United Nations Day of the Girl. A Canadian local Government website has prepared samples of ideas on ways to celebrate the day and more specifically samples of resolutions to introduce to your local civil authorities. [Access the website here.](#)

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**Learn+assess+pray+act+advocate**

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