

# UFER

International Movement for Fraternal Union  
Among Races and Peoples



## An Idea in Action

UFER News 01/ June 2012

The International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples (UFER) is a federation of organizations and persons involved in the promotion of understanding, dialogue and cooperation between races, peoples, ethnic and cultural groups, in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

[www.ufer-international.org](http://www.ufer-international.org)

### Bruxelles

Headquarters  
President: Elly Koenig  
40/10, rue Washington,  
1050 Bruxelles  
Belgique

### Genève

Representation to the UN  
Berhane Raswork  
145, rue de Lausanne  
1202 Genève-  
Suisse

### New York

Representation to the UN  
Sharon Joslyn  
P.O.Box 540082, Bronx  
New-York 10454,  
USA

### Montréal

Secretary General  
Raymonde Martineau  
812 Outremont  
Outremont PQ H2V3N6  
Canada

## TABLE OF CONTENT

Editorial	page 3
News from the international scene	
▪ Human Rights Council	pages 4 - 6
▪ Women's Rights	pages 6 - 7
▪ Indigenous Peoples' Rights	pages 7 - 9
Right to food	
▪ Mass destruction: a geopolitics of hunger	pages 9 - 11
▪ Right to food in Canada	pages 11-12
UFER Chronicle	
▪ Testimony	pages 13 - 14
▪ Recent Developments	page 15
▪ News from members & associates	pages 16 - 18
▪ Communications	page 18 - 19

### EDITORIAL BOARD:

Gaëtane Gascon	<a href="mailto:gaetane.gascon@videotron.ca">gaetane.gascon@videotron.ca</a>
Lise Gagné-Iattoni	<a href="mailto:lise.iattoni@yahoo.ca">lise.iattoni@yahoo.ca</a>
Raymonde Martineau:	<a href="mailto:raymonde.martineau@sympatico.ca">raymonde.martineau@sympatico.ca</a>
Colette-Pasquis-Audant	<a href="mailto:cpasquis@videotron.ca">cpasquis@videotron.ca</a>

# EDITORIAL

*By Elly Koenig, President*

This year the Board of Directors of UFER held its annual meeting in Cornwall, N.Y. USA, in one of the Centres of the Grail in the USA. We decided to hold our meeting in the New York region to enable our Board members from New York to be present at the meeting. It is always difficult to decide where our meeting will take place, because in any case not all of us can take part in it. We regretted that Marielle Peltier and Alfred Sawadogo could not be with us.

It was also an opportunity to learn more about the work of the US Grail members in this region, especially of their activities around the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Every year, they invite young girls (between 14 and 18 years-old), together with their mothers or other chaperones, to be present during the time of the CSW. They organize a side-event with the girls and provide them with some training on how the mechanisms of the UN function. If UFER members wish to send girls to the CSW, they are invited to contact our representative in New York, Sharon Joslyn ([bronxgrail@juno.com](mailto:bronxgrail@juno.com)).

During our meeting, Lee Kum Yeon proposed to us a project of a seminar on migration and human trafficking to be held in Nepal, in the spring of 2014. We decided to support this project and consider the possibility of holding our next General Assembly in Nepal in conjunction with this seminar. These issues, which we discussed at our last Assembly in 2010, are crucial in our societies of today. We invite UFER members to send their suggestions and share their thoughts with us in preparation of the GA 2014. Lee Keum Yeon, who will be part of the organization team together with national NGOs, will send a detailed proposal in the next months. As a first step, UFER is planning to organize a side-event at the next meeting of CSW, in 2013, which will focus on violence against women and girls, with the participation of two young women from Nepal who have been victims of trafficking as young girls.

From 7-18 May 2012, the 11th Session of the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was held in New York. Joy Garland, Raymonde Martineau and I were able to attend some of the meetings as observers. It was a great pleasure for me to see that there were a lot of young indigenous women; they pleaded for their cause during the two minutes speaking time allocated to them and were reporting on their laptops during the meeting.

The theme of the Permanent Forum this year was *The Doctrine of Discovery: its enduring impact on indigenous peoples and the right to redress for past conquests*. As Joy Garland demonstrates in her article in this Newsletter, we cannot be proud of the role played by the European countries and the Christian churches during the period of colonialism. The problem is that what was done to the Indigenous People cannot be undone. What we can do, I think, is to recognize the injustice and listen carefully to their voices, give them a voice and support them in their struggle for recognition and learn from them. Their relation to "mother earth" has been a relation of deep connection with their environment and their original way of life was and still is inspired by the wholeness of life. I hope that the governments will really listen to them at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20),<sup>1</sup> in Rio de Janeiro. I think that listening to and learning from each other can slowly turn the world into a better place for us all.

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information on the Conference, see their Website: <http://www.uncsd2012.org/>

# HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (HRC)

The 19<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council was held in Geneva, from 27 February to 23 March, 2012.<sup>2</sup> UFER was represented by C.M. Eya Nchama and Paul Beersmans.

## POLITICIZATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

*By C.M. Eya Nchama, Vice-president of UFER*

For the first time since the Human Rights Council took over from the Human Rights Commission on Human Rights, the debate has become much politicized reflecting the present situation in the community of nations. Up till now, States which violate human rights argued that the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review was the only time when they could be criticized, but this year we witnessed a meeting which reminded us of the good old time of the Commission.

We have noticed, in recent years, confusion within the United Nations bodies in relation to regional groups. Traditionally, there are five groups within this system: the African Group (the whole continent), the Asia-Pacific Group (from Cyprus to Japan, Indonesia, Fiji), the Latin-American and Caribbean Group (from Argentina to Mexico including Central America) the Eastern European Group (former communist Europe) and the Group of Western European and other States (former and present capitalist Europe + Canada, USA, Australia and New Zealand).

Since the end of the Cold War, new groups of States have appeared and superimposed themselves on the traditional groups without being so far “legally” recognized by the United Nations. These are: the Group of Arab States, The Group of the European Union, the Group of States of the Islamic Conference, etc. For example, within the European Union, you find Poland (member of the Group of Eastern European States of the UN); within the Group of Arab States, there are members of the African Group and of the Asian Group of the UN. This situation creates confusion with regard to the positions taken by the traditional regional groups of the UN and introduces a political opportunism among Member States (today I am African, tomorrow I am Arab).

There is now a strong alliance between the Arab and Western Groups; the promoters of this alliance are the USA, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Morocco. This alliance weakens the position of the States which oppose the Western States such as Iran, Syria, Belarus, Zimbabwe, Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador among others. This alliance played an important role during the war against the Kaddafi regime and also now in relation to Syria. This alliance existed already at the economic and financial level, but never in the field of human rights. For example, in the resolution on assistance to Libya<sup>3</sup>, the Russian Federation and Uganda proposed amendments concerning the situation of Black people who are still tortured in the Libyan prisons; these amendments were rejected thanks to this alliance. Strangely enough, the African Union dropped the Black prisoners under the pressure of this alliance.

Despite all what the republicans can say in USA as well as the international right, I think that Barack Obama serves the interest of the American Power better than Georges Bush. The result is this perfect alliance with the Arabs on human rights.

---

<sup>2</sup> See final Press Release of 23 March, 2012:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=12011&LangID=E>

<sup>3</sup> See [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/19/L.39/Rev.1](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/19/L.39/Rev.1)

## **IN THE WINGS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUCL: PARALLEL EVENTS**

*By Paul Beersmans, member of the Board of Directors of UFER*

As usual, I participated in one of the four weeks of the spring session of the Human Rights Council (HRC). This period coincided with the "car show" which attracts each year a large number of visitors. All hotels in and around Geneva were fully booked except very expensive ones. After surfing on internet and with a lot of chance, I found a hotel in France, just across the Swiss-French border. As the public transportation in Geneva is well organised, I had no problem to reach the Palais des Nations although it took me at least one hour.

At each session of the HRC, besides the official session, many informal, parallel meetings and side events are organised by NGOs, Permanent Missions to the UN, intergovernmental organisations and UN entities. The number of these activities is increasing resulting in the full booking of all available conference rooms. Some of the activities even take place in various hotels in Geneva.

The role played by NGOs in the Human Rights Council, through their written and oral statements and the lobbying they do with governments, is well known and quite visible. Their actions in the wings of the Council, though less visible, is also significant, in particular through the parallel activities which they organize on various situations of violations of human rights.

I want to highlight some of them which I attended.

### **➤ Arbitrary Detention and Democracies**

This event was organised by the Kashmir Centre-European Union (based in Brussels) and focused on the situation in Kashmir under Indian administration. In that area, militancy started in 1989, and since then thousands and thousands of people have been killed: militants, members of security forces, but most of all innocent civilians sandwiched between them. Human rights violations are committed by militants and security forces as well. Only when violence stops will the situation normalise and a way towards a peaceful solution can be found.

### **➤ State duty to protect human rights defenders: national policies and protection programs.**

This event was organised by Freedom House, a very important NGO dealing with the human rights situation all over the world. This conference focused on the improving situation in Latin America regarding the protection of human rights defenders. In several countries of this region programmes are set up in this regard. On the other hand, some speakers focused on the bad situation in Pakistan: in Sindh province, in Baluchistan and in the border area with Afghanistan where the situation is dramatic. The human rights situation of women is a big challenge for state and non-state actors: every year there are thousands of honour killing of women, there is a culture of violence against women. Although there are some good laws and a National Commission on Protection of Women, the problem is the implementation of these "good laws".

### **➤ Freedom of Religion and Belief and Culture of Impunity**

This event was organised by Dominicans for Justice and Peace and focused on the religious minorities in India and Sri Lanka and on the situation of the Dalits and indigenous people in these countries. During the discussion, the same questions came up: what can be done to protect religious minorities? What can the authorities do? How can mutual respect and tolerance be promoted? None of the panellists had a clear answer but some sentences kept

coming back: there must be pressure on the governments, people must be educated, tolerance must be promoted, human rights and the different conventions must be respected and implemented.

### ➤ **Human Rights Situation in Pakistan**

This event organised by United Town Agency for Cooperation North South focused on the human rights situation in Pakistan. According to the speakers the human rights situation in Pakistan in general and in Baluchistan and Gilgit-Baltistan in particular is dramatic: summary executions, disappearances and assassinations are escalating. Only a ceasefire and a peaceful solution is the way out. A referendum should be organised under UN supervision.

These are only a few of the numerous parallel events that were organised. There are so many human rights issues and human rights violations all over the world! Thanks to committed people and NGO's they can be brought to the attention of the international community so that the perpetrators of these violations don't have a complete free hand. It gives also moral support to those who are victims of all these crimes.

## **WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

### **Girls Participation in the Commission on the Status of Women, 56<sup>th</sup> Session - (27/02-9/03/2012)**

The Priority theme for CSW 56 was: ***The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges.***

Twenty-one girls and young women resided at The Grail house in The Bronx and the near by St. Luke's convent. Among them were 5 girls, 7 young women and 9 adults. In addition, Bronx high schools sent girls to join the group at the United Nations.

Three girls were from East Africa: Tanzania (15 years), Uganda (18 years), Mozambique (18 years) and one from South Africa (17 years). One girl (17 years) was from New York. Two young women were from Portugal with one originally from Capo Verde, one was from Mexico (a rural worker) and the rest from the USA. Two high school age girls from Orissa, India, sponsored through efforts of Bijay Singh were unable to attend due to visa denial

The girls gave presentations on panels, contributed to the girls statement for the outcome document, spoke with delegates, joined in the CSW/NGO march on International Women's' Day and organized their own parallel event . The events especially offered for girls included:

- **Voices of Rural Girls:** *Empowerment through Leadership and Entrepreneurship* (Girl Scouts)
- **Bringing it Home:** *Youth Delegates Share the Impact of the CSW* (Loretto Community, See video on [www.girlsrights.org](http://www.girlsrights.org)).
- **Rural Women's Concerns:** *What do Gender Race and Class have to do with it?* (United Methodist Women) Use of drama to give the message. The girls from Africa helped with the drama.
- **Rural Girls and Women, Agents of Change in Climate Justice;** Living Testimonies of Dr. Wangari Maathai's Legacy (Working Group on Girls)
- **Rural Women of the Americas** (International Federation of University Women)

- **Girl-Boy Dialogue:** *Financing for Gender Equality from a Youth Perspective* (Girls Learn International)
- **Girls Voices:** *Challenges of Age and Gender in a Rural Environment* (The Grail, UFER)

At an evaluation meeting at the end of the CSW the girls spent a day at the Cornwall Grail Centre where they shared some of their thoughts on their experience. Some of them are briefly phrased below to give an idea of what they were thinking:

- ✓ *Together we can do amazing things*
- ✓ *I want to help rural girls build confidence and esteem*
- ✓ *I was able to express my experience as a rural girl*
- ✓ *Youth wants change*
- ✓ *Thanks to CSW 56 to touch my soul*
- ✓ *My young generation is responsible for the future.*
- ✓ *There is hope for us as girls*
- ✓ *My advice to girls in rural areas is to let them use the opportunities given to fight for our rights, let us seek goals so that we can have our dreams achieved for a better life, and to study very hard for a better future.*



During CSW, **Berhane Raswork** attended some of the NGO parallel events on **human trafficking and sexual violence** in which participants shared their experience. It was shocking to hear the treatment of women who are forced to work as sex slaves or as domestic servants. For example, in Ethiopia, thousands are sent out with the approval of the government to the Arab countries. The treatment they receive from the employees is inhuman and degrading. Berhane also attended the government sessions focusing on **rural women and sustainable development**. All the representatives presented the work of their governments in this area which includes microcredit facilities, skill development for rural women, etc. The most important question of land tenure in favour of women was not clearly defined by most governments, especially those from African and Asian countries. She also recommends to us a publication from WHO *Addressing violence against women and achieving the Millennium Development Goals*:

[http://www.who.int/gender/documents/violence/who\\_fch\\_gwh\\_05\\_1/en/index.html#](http://www.who.int/gender/documents/violence/who_fch_gwh_05_1/en/index.html#)



## INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

### The Doctrine of Discovery – Major Theme of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues May 7-18, 2012

*By Joy Garland, member of the Board of Directors & representative at the UN in New York*

Can you imagine what it would be like to have a space ship land in your neighborhood and be greeted by the inhabitants of a distant planet who plant their flag in the earth and claim your land, the land of your ancestors, in the name of their distant sovereign? They further dictate that you and your neighbors must accept their belief system or suffer the consequences. This is an example of what happened to indigenous peoples around the world as a result of what is now called "The Doctrine of Discovery".

If you search on Google, you will find a great deal of information about how this Doctrine is still affecting indigenous people with its concepts that Christians have a moral and legal right to seize land and dominate non-Christian indigenous peoples. The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches in a statement issued after its meeting from 14 to 17 February, 2012, in Switzerland, says: *"Following the above patterns of thought and behavior, Christopher Columbus was instructed, for example, to "discover and conquer," "subdue" and "acquire" distant lands, and in 1493 Pope Alexander VI called for non-Christian "barbarous nations" to be subjugated and proselytized for the "propagation of the Christian empire." Three years later, England's King Henry VII followed the pattern of domination by instructing John Cabot and his sons to locate, subdue and take possession of the "islands, countries, regions, of the heathens and infidels . . . unknown to Christian people." There after, for example, English, Portuguese and Spanish colonization in Australia, the Americas and New Zealand proceeded under the Doctrine of Discovery as Europeans attempted to conquer and convert Indigenous Peoples. In 1513, Spain drafted a legal document that was required to be read to Indigenous Peoples before "just war" could commence. The Requerimiento informed Indigenous Peoples that their lands had been donated to Spain and that they had to submit to the Crown and Christianity or they would be attacked and enslaved."*<sup>4</sup>

The Indigenous people worldwide are still being affected by the Doctrine of Discovery, by the dominant country's national laws in which the Doctrine is reflected and codified. Scholars such as Steven T. Newcomb (Shawnee/Lenape), Tonya Gonnella Frichner (Onondaga Nation) and Professor Robert J. Miller have labored to bring to public view the lingering negative and harmful effects of this doctrine. Activists within and without the churches are pushing their churches and governments to publicly apologize for the continued oppression of Indigenous Peoples and to seek to make amends. At the 2010 UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues, I approached the Vatican's representative at the UN and expressed my concern about papal bulls written by Pope Alexander VI in 1493 and asked the representative to bring the message back to the papacy that the bulls be rescinded. I was informed that the Papacy no longer considered the bulls to be relevant or applicable. I asked the representative if he might be willing to speak with Steven Newcomb, the Indian lawyer who spoke at the Forum, about his book *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery*. He graciously agreed, and after introducing Steve to him, I left them both as they engaged in dialogue.

In the 2012 UN Permanent Forum, several churches made public apologies for past and present treatment of indigenous peoples. The World Council of Churches called on governments everywhere to "ensure that their policies, regulations and laws that affect Indigenous Peoples comply with international conventions, in particular, conform to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Labour Organization's Convention 169."

Last year when I was visiting my daughter in Portland, Oregon, I saw an ad in the local paper that the Reverend Albert P. Krueger of St. Andrew's Episcopal Church was delivering a sermon on the Doctrine of Discovery and everyone was invited. I went and heard Native American drumming as the procession approached the altar. Before communion, we participated in a ritual smudging or spiritual cleansing when one of the elders burned some sage grass in an abalone shell. The sweet smell of the sage reminded me of the familiar smoke of incense. After the service, Father Krueger told me that many in his congregation were from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

In 1954, this tribal community had been subject to the termination acts of the US House of Representatives which removed Indian identity from legal records and left tribes without federal support and recognition. Treaties made between the tribes and the federal government were judged "void of content". During the years of termination, the cultural heritage of five of the tribes was lost.

---

<sup>4</sup>Statement on the doctrine of discovery and its enduring impact on Indigenous Peoples (17-02/2012)  
<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/executive-committee/bossey-february-2012/statement-on-the-doctrine-of-discovery-and-its-enduring-impact-on-indigenous-peoples.html>

Native artifacts collected by the Episcopal priest Rev. Robert W. Summers between 1873 and 1881 had been sent to the British Museum in London for safe keeping when Rev. Summers was dying. In 1983, after the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde were again restored and regained federally recognized status, they sought the return of these artifacts from the Museum with the help of the Episcopal Church in Western Oregon.

I encouraged Father Krueger and Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde to come to New York to share their experiences and efforts to reclaim lost artifacts with everyone at the UN Permanent Forum. I assisted them to arrange to present their film and panel at the Church Center for the United Nations as a side event which included Bonnie Kahn, Curator of Native American Art; and Greg Archuleta, Grand Ronde tribal member. This event was co-sponsored by UFER, The Grail, and the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. A second panel was comprised of the Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States; Sarah Eagle Heart (Ogala Lakota) Missioner for Indigenous Ministries of the Episcopal Church; Erma Vizenor, Tribal Chairwoman from the White Earth Band of Ojibwe Indians; and Professor Robert J. Miller of Lewis and Clark Law School in Oregon who spoke on the Doctrine of Discovery. This presentation was co-sponsored by UFER, The Grail, and eight other NGO's and church groups.

As we leave the Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues behind and look toward the gathering of the nations at Rio + 20 in Brazil, I reflected on this Ojibwe prayer – “Grandfather, Look at our brokenness. We know that in all creation only the human family has strayed from the Sacred Way. Grandfather, Sacred One, teach us love, compassion, and honor that we may heal the earth and each other.”

## RIGHT TO FOOD

Article 11 of the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, entered into force in 1976 and ratified by 160 States, stipulates that « *States Parties ... recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take the appropriate measures ... to improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food ... and to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need.*” In 2000, the Commission on Human Rights, now the Human Rights Council, decided to appoint a Special Rapporteur on the right to food with the mandate to promote the full realization of this right and to make recommendations for its implementation. The Rapporteur undertakes country visits for this purpose.<sup>5</sup> He meets with governmental authorities as well as with representatives of organizations of civil society. Jean Ziegler of Switzerland was the first person to occupy this function. In 2008, Olivier De Schutter succeeded him

---

<sup>5</sup> To know more about the right to food, consult Factsheet no 34 published by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights : <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet34en.pdf>

## **A powerful book: *Mass Destruction – The Geopolitics of Hunger*, by Jean Ziegler<sup>6</sup>**

Numbers and facts that leave you speechless, struck down, that is the purpose of this book. Our planet can feed 12 billion people, we are six billion. However, at each 5 seconds a child under 10 years of age is dying of hunger on that very same planet. Find the error.

In the first part of his book, Ziegler draws the exact cartography of hunger and malnutrition. While we well know the global phenomenon, there are specifics that deserve to be emphasized. In certain regions of the hunger country, *women*, they again, *only eat what is left by men and male children... If the plate is empty, women and girls won't eat at all.*<sup>7</sup>

Ziegler shows us how in the Western World, after having considered hunger as a sort of Malthus demographic regulation device for so long, we now realize its dramatic side. In fact, after the world wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, hunger has surfaced in the Western hemisphere, all social classes considered. Then Josué de Castro, a Brazilian doctor, appeared and gave a global and realistic dimension to the battle against hunger.

Ziegler shows us how the conception of the United Nations in 1941 was *a light in the night*<sup>8</sup>. From its beginnings, the UN was linked to the battle against hunger (FAO - Food and Agriculture Organization, later WFP - World Food Programme). But the UN was met by the Reasons of the states, Ziegler explains. Maybe nowadays we ought to evoke the Reasons of the People in a world more and more unified by telecommunications.

After this historical summary, Ziegler points at the enemies of the right to food. Here again, the numbers are significant and reveal their logic:

Six companies control 85% of the grain market;  
Eight companies own 60% of the global sales coffee market;  
Three hold more than 80% of the cacao sales;  
Three own 80% of the banana market.  
*These firms control the food of the world.*<sup>9</sup>

These oligopolies use *dumping*: lowering prices to ruin the indigenous productions. Later on, they raise the prices. The Canadian government has started to reduce the monopoly of the Canadian Commission on wheat, which could lead to privatisation and a greater empowerment by these companies controlling that market.

The United-States have refused to ratify the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the UN in first order, the right not to die from hunger. The WTO (World Trade Organization) and the IMF (International Monetary Fund) go even further, they fight against this Covenant. When we realize that all these people pretend to be human rights champions all over the world, distributing blames and rewards! One could die laughing if the consequences of such duplicity were not so tragic. A friend of Ziegler from the Island of Reunion calls it the *civilisation of lies*. For example, under the pressure of the FMI, Haiti went from an auto-sufficient country in the 80s, to a begging state nowadays. The UN programme called: *Oil for food* is deviated into a sanction against Iraq because the United States want to use the pressure of hunger to raise the people against Saddam Hussein (Madeleine Albright under Clinton). About the agro-carbides, Amnesty International says: *Full tanks and empty stomachs*. Ziegler has his own striking expression for it: *finance wolfs down the economy*.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Ziegler, Jean, *Destruction massive – Géopolitique de la faim*, Ed. Du Seuil, Paris, 2011, 347 pages

<sup>7</sup> Id., p. 47

<sup>8</sup> Idem, p.137.

<sup>9</sup> Id. p157

<sup>10</sup> Id. p299

The right wing, in all its shades, favours charity over justice. Unfortunately, donations here and there will never end the hunger problem. Ziegler quotes Victor Hugo: *You want your poor aided, I want misery abolished.*<sup>11</sup>

Troubling: *In 2010, the possessions of the richest have outgrown the level reached before the financial crisis less than three years ago... At the same time, 2007-2008, this crisis has thrown 69 million more people in the abyss of hunger.*<sup>12</sup> Besides the agro-industrial trusts, there is also the complicity between the governments of the South and the countries of the North.

To conclude, let us remember that hunger is not a fatality, as it has been said before. Some 146 states have asked the UN to list the main tragedies pending over humanity. They have come up with hunger, polluted water, infant mortality, discrimination against women and AID. Heads of states and governments have calculated that 80 billion \$ a year for 15 years would be needed. A 2% yearly income tax for 15 years from the 1210 billionaires of the planet would be enough to cover that amount. However, the political will is not there.

Jean Ziegler is a prolific author on capitalist finance and social injustice. He is a Swiss politician and alter-globalist. He was a Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on the right to food (2000 à 2008). Last April, he undertook a tour in Québec to present his book. He has been seen and heard on many forums and he has lectured at the University of Montreal.

I highly recommend this book (in French for the moment) to those who can afford the leisure. It is easy and enjoyable to read, with a light written style, colourful, close to oral speech, while sustaining a precise knowledge and a logical approach of the hunger problem.<sup>13</sup>



## Right to food in Canada

*By Gaëtane Gascon, member of the Editorial Board*

*Empty stomach has no ears;  
A sated one does not have either.  
(Elizabeth Germain, Coalition Québec without Poverty)*

Last May, I had the chance to take part in a meeting held in Montreal with Mr. Olivier De Schutter, Rapporteur of the United Nations on the right to food. I am pleased to share with you some of the highlights of his visit and what it means for civil societies and international solidarity.

During eleven days, the Rapporteur visited various regions of Canada and met with representatives of community organisations, First Nations and governments. He presented his report on May 16, 2012.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Id. p.333

<sup>12</sup> Id. p.336

<sup>13</sup> See also : *The State of Food Insecurity in the World (2011)* published by FAO :  
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/i2330e/i2330e00.htm>

<sup>14</sup> See UN Press Release of 16 May 2012:  
<http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=12159&LangID=E>

The Rapporteur is an independent expert from the Human Right Council. Mr. De Schutter succeeded Mr. Jean Ziegler in 2008. Canada was the first G8 country to be visited by the Rapporteur who usually makes his enquiries in non industrialised countries.<sup>15</sup>

### Some highlights of the report

a) The results of the consultation show the **obvious links between income and the right to food**. "Today, large numbers of Canadians are too poor to afford adequate diets ... 800,000 households are food insecure in Canada ... One family out of ten with a child below the age of 6 is unable to feed itself properly."

The minimum wage is \$2000 a month. It is below the poverty level. Even if someone has a full-time job, he is not able to support himself. On the other hand, social assistance benefits are not sufficient to cover the costs of basic necessities such as food and housing. One has to call on food banks which are not a solution but a symptom of failing social safety nets and the Government must address this problem

b) Another reason for the food problems is the **poor quality of the food offered by the market**. Sweet drinks and fast food are omnipresent in the publicity and in the stores. Their availability contributes to bad food habits and to such diseases as obesity, diabetes and cardio-vascular diseases.

c) The **food issue among the First Peoples raises specific questions**. The problem is related to the *Indian Act* that leads to assimilation, the extinction of their ancestral rights and the disappearance of the traditional life. These structural problems are combined with the lack of space in the reserves and the absence of sufficient resources for decent food and lodging.

### Reluctance of the Canadian government

Canada is a land of plenty with a stable economy. Relying on the reputation of the country as a champion of human rights, the Rapporteur invites the government to take seriously the problems of access to adequate food and to consider that the right to food is a human rights issue. Unfortunately, the report was not well received by the Federal government. The health Minister, Leona Aglukkaq, a Inuit and a Member of Parliament representing Nunavut, declared that the United Nations expert was "ill informed " and " condescending." The Minister was supported by her conservative colleagues. She insisted to say that the problems of the North were due to the obstacles created by the European Union and certain environmental groups that prevent inhabitants of the North to practice traditional fishing and hunting.

I think that even if the European boycott of seal products is a real problem, the fundamental issue remains the neoliberal political agenda of the Harper government which relies essentially on the law of the market to solve the social problems. Its aim is to reduce the size of the State. It does not accept that the United Nations presents a negative image of Canada and that the difficulties experienced by its population be known to outsiders.

### Ways forward

We need to recognize the **urgency of the food problem in Canada** and that this problem is a question of **fundamental human rights**. Civil society organisations and First Nations have set up a number of creative initiatives aiming at rebuilding the local food systems. They try to convince the political decision-makers, at the provincial and federal levels, to elaborate a global food policy that would include the various areas such as agriculture, health, trade, lodging and income support.

---

<sup>15</sup> The next visit will take place in Cameroun, from 16 to 23 July, 2012

## Appeal to international solidarity

The Special Rapporteur will present his final report to the Human Rights Council in March 2013. I wonder how the other G8 countries fare with regard to right to food. Do they have dynamic policies that promote the right to food? And how far are civil societies of the G8 member countries able to influence their governments when these meet to deal with their common areas of concern? Will UFER join other NGOs present at the Human Rights Council to do a follow up on the fundamental issue of right to food in Canada and in the other G8 countries?

# UFER CHRONICLE

## TESTIMONY

### HOW MANY THINGS I HAVE DISCOVERED WITHIN UFER!

*By Fina Bijnens, member of UFER and of the Board of Directors of AFI-ICA*

While thinking of UFER, the refrain of a well-known song in French comes to my mind: "I've loved you so long, I will never forget you". I owe a lot to UFER in terms of opening, friendship, inspiration and strength for commitment and also for what I was able to give through my intense work during all these years.

My first contact with UFER goes back to the 70s during my first stay in Cameroun, when Jacqueline Dejaiffe, the then Acting Secretary-General of UFER, asked me to fill in a questionnaire related to the human rights situation in this country ... In a report of the Board of Directors meeting the question was raised, in reference to this questionnaire, if UFER could take a political stand. Although UFER was not a political organization, said the report, it became more and more obvious that any activity undertaken by human beings had per se a political dimension. I must honestly say that I did not reply to Jacqueline's request because the political situation in Cameroun at this time was tensed and not clear and I ran the risk of being expelled from the country if my writings were discovered.

But I really discovered UFER starting in 1975 when I took up an assignment at the International Secretariat of AFI-ICA in Geneva. I had the opportunity to work there at different periods, till 2000, when the International Secretariat was transferred to Bruxelles. Working part-time for UFER was part of our responsibilities.

How many things I discovered in this international environment of Geneva! The UN, WHO, ILO, the Red Cross and others provide a lot of valuable resources, which can be shared with UFER members and friends. We can take part in meetings which help us understand and deepen what is important for UFER, to see what struggles should be undertaken, or with whom. It was and still is today very important for me to work concretely to promote understanding, dialogue and cooperation among peoples, cultural groups in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To give the possibility to the "voiceless" to be heard on the international scene, within the Human Rights Commission, for example, (now the Human Rights Council) and its subsidiary bodies.

How many encounters which opened my eyes and where I felt a deep pain with these oppressed peoples; I even shed tears while listening to the Congolese women, the grand-mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, a human rights defender who had been in prison in Ethiopia, a militant from South Africa, the tireless Berhane (Raswork) speaking about the consequences of traditional practices on the health of women and children, etc ...

I could write a book on what I have experienced together with other UFER members. Our organization has a very rich and incredible history and a lot of interesting information can be found at the Secretariat in Bruxelles.

The work that we were doing in Geneva, the Grail was doing the equivalent in New York.

I would like to talk about some individuals or aspects which have been particularly significant for me. At the beginning of my work in Geneva, when I was still rather young, during one of the meetings of the Board of Directors, I was very impressed by Maria Groothuizen and Eileen Schaeffler (both from the Grail), by their determination and their kindness, by the endurance of Magda Van Malder, the clarity of her reports. I enjoyed working with Monique Costermans and Raymonde Martineau, who was then working at the UN. She was our recourse day and night.

It was also a pleasure for me to work within the Board of Directors, where each one had his/her role and place, where we worked seriously and even if some sharp words sometimes came out bursts of laughter were never very far. While working together, Eya (Nchama) and Berhane (Raswork) became, with the time, my brother and my sister. When Paul Beersmans made his first intervention at the UN, the three of us together revised his text. It was one of our responsibilities to accompany new representatives to ensure that, while making known the real human rights situation in their countries, which they knew very well, their interventions would have an impact on the delegates and the decisions to be taken.

It was not always easy to deliver statements on the situation in a particular country, in a room where both representatives of the government and opponents of the country concerned were present. I remember having delivered a statement, written by an Iranian woman, on the situation of women in that country who were subjected to certain forms of slavery and servitude. She was describing the way in which women were humiliated, despised, tortured and deprived of the most basic human rights. UFER asked for an inquiry into the situation of women in Iran. I had only just ended my intervention, when a man, who had come to sit near me, addressed me sharply: "Mrs, all what you have said is not true, in my country such things do not exist." Eya came to my rescue and we had a discussion with the delegate.

We also supported, within UFER, the cause of the "Grand-mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" of Argentina. This was a great joy to me. Their courage and perseverance are still an example to me. I remember an evening at Berhane's place with the Board of Directors and "our two grand-mothers", as we called them with affection. One of them, Anna, had just found her grand-son after more than 20 years of search. What a joy, what a tragedy and what an emotion! UFER could not afford to pay for their travel fee, but we welcomed them and offered them the possibility, year after year, to speak at the Commission on Human Rights.

At the UFER General Assembly in 1997, a new Board of Directors was elected, a Board full of enthusiasm and creativity and especially concerned with training. They organized training seminars of a great quality. The first one took place in 2000, in Geneva. It brought together participants from different continents and dealt with racism and ethnicism. But we did not have the funds for such training. What to do? Where to find it? Berhane and I knocked on numerous doors, without success. Eya invited then each member of the Committee to contribute a certain amount for us to be able to start. This is what we did. The Grail and the AFI also supported generously this activity. UFER was thus able to contribute to this encounter between cultures, races and peoples at a world level. This solidarity which enabled us to fulfill a dream had a great impact on me.

I could share many more things but I will leave it for another time ... May UFER keeps its dreams! Yes, I can sign: "I've loved you so long, I will never forget you ..."

## FOLLOW-UP TO THE LAST NEWSLETTER

### ● The contribution of Paulo Freire

- **From Ghislaine Duqué, Campina Grande, Brazil:** I read in the last issue of the Newsletter – Editorial – some words on Paulo Freire. One should add that Paulo Freire was a great literacy teacher, using this learning as an opportunity for “conscientization” which is for him the basis of education.

I have known Paulo Freire quite well. I was his French teacher in Geneva for almost two years. I must say that he was my dearest pupil ... and the worst! He had a psychological “aversion” to French, because of his situation as a refugee, consequence of the dictatorship in Brazil. I went to his place twice a week. He tried first to say in French what he was writing about. We had agreed that after ten minutes of talk I would point out the mistakes he had made. But, usually, after a few sentences, he said to me: “Listen, I am so tired today, let’s continue in Portuguese!” After that I had dinner with the family. So for two years I received private lessons from Paulo Freire!

- **From Gaëtane Gascon, Gatineau, QC. Canada:** I got to know Paolo Freire through his friends and the men and women that his writings inspired. In India, he had an extraordinary impact on the Indian students that congregated at the *Indian Social Institute* of Bangalore while they were creating their own 'Open University' in 1971. I also met him in Canada; he was close to *Development and Peace*. Our numerous African partners were translating his philosophy into education tools used by communities to increase awareness on their reality and on their capacity for transformation.

- Many have asked for some news about **Rafah Nached**, Syrian psychoanalyst arrested on 10 September 2011 and released under bail on 16 November the same year, after a broad mobilization of public opinion in which UFER took part. (See Newsletter 2011/02) Since then, she has received an amnesty, together with other persons, and is not threatened by a trial anymore. This is a great relief. The news that we receive, through members of her family living outside Syria, indicate that she is well, under the circumstances, but suffers very much, naturally, of the dramatic situation in her country. She thanks all those who have worked for her release. The “Association de Psychanalyse Jacques Lacan & les Éditions érès” published a book under the title *Psychanalyse en Syria*, with testimonies and texts from Rafah Nached.

- **Brett Hartmann** has been transferred in another prison, in Chillicothe, Ohio. He is getting used to his new environment. He is much further away from his family and has fewer possibilities to do art work. But there is one positive point: “For the first time in 15 years, I have a window that I can open!” There are still recourses for DNA testing pending. Opposition to death penalty is increasing in Ohio, thus there is hope that in one or two years it could be abolished. Unfortunately, it would be too late for Brett, who is due to be executed on 13 November, 2012. But who knows? He could still get a stay of execution if the competent juridical instances have not yet taken a decision of the recourses. We must continue to intervene in his favour by signing the petition which can be found on his website: <http://www.enddeathpenaltyforbretthartmann.com/index.html>

Visit our Website: [www.ufer-international.org](http://www.ufer-international.org)

## NEWS FROM MEMBERS & PARTNERS



- **The Union for the Development of Humanity**, with Headquarters in Kinshasa (DRC), organized, from 6 to 8 February 2012, a training seminar aiming at reinforcing the capacities of the members of the participating civil society associations with regard to human rights and HIV/AIDS. About 90 persons took part in it. The following subjects were discussed: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the struggle against impunity: acts of sexual violence, human rights and HIV/AIDS, the study of the strategic document on development and reduction of poverty in DRC. The report of the seminar (in French) can be consulted on the UFER Website, under “publications”: [www.ufer-international.org](http://www.ufer-international.org)
- **Gaëtane Gascon** speaks about the one-month trip which she has undertaken in the South of India at the beginning of 2012: “I had worked there between 1962 and 1972. Despite the forty-year absence, I was not completely lost, thanks to my work in the international organisations which has allowed me to maintain close relationships with Indian colleagues and realities. I was aware, however, of the enormous challenge to attempt to understand forty years in the life of individuals and organisations.

On the Trivandrum coast, in Marianad, I visited the fishing families that have welcomed me on my first professional steps in India. I also visited the *Indian Social Institute* of Bangalore set up by the Jesuits where I worked between 1966 and 1972. With a very creative team, I was responsible for the elaboration and management of the first residential training programme for community leaders coming from various parts of India and neighbouring countries. The present Director of the Institute was happy to welcome me and hear about the beginning of the Centre as he found very little material in the archives. He is now in the process of collecting elements of the history of the Institute. He is interested in my collaboration since I am myself writing about my Indian experience.

Invited to speak to the staff of the Institute, I reminded them of the essential role played by the late James Berna as the planner of the Marianad project in Trivandrum and founder of the Institute in Bangalore. I spoke about his expertise as economist and his long-term vision. His planning strategies centered on human values have resulted in recruiting, training and supporting a network of competent people able to support rural and urban communities.

I paid tribute to James Berna in Bangalore, without knowing that, on this same day, he passed away at the other end of the world, in the USA, his native land. He is gone but his work continues.

To my great satisfaction, I realized that the activities in which I have been involved in India, on the Trivandrum coast as well as in Bangalore, have been innovative and this pioneering work continues to bear fruits.

- **Lieke Coenegrachts, from Cambodia**, informs us that the Japanese government has accepted to finance the last two phases of their second project for drinking water – the extension of the network towards two villages. That brings the number of villages connected to the two networks up to 25, with 2500 families, and the number is increasing ... The four kindergartens are functioning very well with more than 200 children (see information on UFER Website under “publications”).
- **Jim Berna** died on 3 February, 2012, in Chestertown, Maryland, at the age of 92. As Gaëtane Gascon mentioned above, Jim worked several years in the South of India developing projects to improve the life and working conditions of fishermen. He founded the *Indian Social Institute* of Bangalore. Back in the USA, he worked for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). After retirement, he worked as a consultant for various organizations such as the World Bank. He was also very committed to the Palestinian cause. Jim always shared the ideal of UFER. With his wife, Dr. Mariuccia Boria, he was a member of AFI-ICA.

#### ● **Interview with Lee Kum Yeon**

After having participated in the UFER Board meeting held in Cornwall-on-the-Hudson, USA, Lee Kum Yeon visited Raymonde Martineau in Montréal who used this opportunity to learn more about her work in Nepal.

### **Background**

*Lee Kum Yeon has a master in social work. She has also been trained as counsellor for NGOs in Graz, Austria. In addition, she has followed training programs on meditation healing in India and on pastoral renewal in the Philippines. She has worked several years in Korea at the Anyang Social Center with young workers and as consultant for NGOs assisting them, among others, in identifying their mission, developing projects and managing their human resources. Her emphasis was on women's organization, social-work organizations and schools run by women religious orders.*

**R.M.** How did you get involved in Nepal?

**L.K.Y.** In the 1990s, in Anyang, I worked with migrant workers from Nepal. Most of them worked as day workers in the field of construction. Since they were very vulnerable, they created an organization to help each other. In 1998, because of the economic crisis in Korea, several of them went back to Nepal. They wanted to work in the social field in their country. They contacted me for assistance. In 2000, I went for the first time to Nepal. I realized that they did not quite know what to do to help their country.

**R.M.** How were you able to assist them?

**L.K.Y.** I started with organizing workshops with them on how to plan for the future. As some of them were involved in teaching, we organized workshops on managements of schools. They realized that these programs were useful and started to organize their own training programs, for teachers and schools directors, for example, and invited me as consultant. I found some sponsors in Korea to support their work. I felt it was my duty to support people who dedicate their life to others.

**R.M.** How did your cooperation with Nepal develop?

**L.K.Y.** When the economic situation in Korea improved, some Nepalese workers went back to Korea. In 2004, the leader of the Nepalese Workers Union was expelled from Korea for having organized a strike. I published a book containing the letters he had written and sold them to get fund for him. He started to work for the General Nepalese Trade Unions of Nepal (GEFONT), in the department for migrants (<http://www.gefont.org/index.php>).<sup>16</sup> They organized a campaign against child labour and invited me to join in it. With funds from ILO (International Labour Organization), they started a program to send these kids to school. In 2005, I left the Anyang Centre and spent the year in Nepal and India. That year, ILO stopped funding the program and I sent a message to all my contacts in Korea to collect funds for this program. The appeal brought enough money to continue the work in 2006.

**R.M.** Were you able to continue beyond 2006?

**L.K.Y.** In 2007, with the help of the Equal Opportunity Scholarship Foundation in Korea, 280 students, in 11 districts, got a scholarship. Since then, the number of schools has increased. We continue each year to provide scholarships. We also opened a small school for children in a leper-house. These children are not accepted in public schools. We now have three teachers for 65 pupils. My role is to be a bridge between Nepal and Korea.

## COMMUNICATION

- **Latest news from Rio+20:** Women's organisations<sup>17</sup> and religious leaders<sup>18</sup> expressed their disappointment and frustration at the results of this conference. See their declarations in the footnotes below.
- The UFER Board of Directors met from 21 to 24 May, 2012, at Cornwall-on-the Hudson, in New York State, at the Grail Centre where we were very well received (see Website: <http://www.thegrailatcornwall.org>). Since it meets only once a year, the Committee had quite a heavy agenda. In addition to reviewing the functioning of the organization and the state of its finances, the Committee dedicated some time to discuss its cooperation with the United Nations bodies in New York and Geneva. It was also an opportunity to get to know better the work of the Grail in the USA, especially in the region of New York, either in Cornwall or in the Bronx where several members of the Committee stayed before and after the meeting.

The Committee decided in principle to support the project of a seminar in Nepal on human trafficking in 2014 (see Editorial).

The organization *Union for the Development of Humanity*, with headquarters in Kinshasa, DRC, with which UFER entertains a communication and exchange of information for more than a year, becomes adherent member (partner). (See above)

---

<sup>16</sup> See also the work they do on Human Trafficking and Forced Labour:

[http://www.gefont.org/activity\\_detail.php?flag=3&id=921](http://www.gefont.org/activity_detail.php?flag=3&id=921)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.wecf.eu/english/press/releases/2012/06/womenstatement-outcomesRio.php>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/overcoming-frustration-at.html>

The Committee thanks Sharon Joslyn and Marielle Peltier for the guidelines on communication and interpretation at multilingual meetings. This document is available in English & French on the UFER Website, under “publications” ([www.ufer-international.org](http://www.ufer-international.org)). It will be useful to plan our meetings in the futur.

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will take place in the Netherlands, from 9 to 13 September, 2013.

On our way back from Cornwall, we stopped in Warwick, at the Pacem in Terris Center, an oasis of solitude, art and natural beauty founded by Frederick Frank, painter, sculptor and writer, born in Maastricht, in the Netherlands. It was a moment of meditation and relaxation.<sup>19</sup>



The annual membership for 2012 is of 35 € or 50US\$. It can be:

- # sent to the following account in Belgium  
Banque Fortis: IBAN: BE50 0013 6970 0018 BIC: GEBABEBB
- # or transmitted to a member of the Board of Directors or the IS of AFI/ICA

<sup>19</sup> Pour plus d’information, voir leur site : <http://www.frederickfranck.org/>