Dominican Sisters International at the United Nations

Commission on the Status of Women
Once again Dominican Sisters International (DSI) was well represented at the UN Commission on the Status of Women which was held from March 13-27 in New York. This Commission is one of the largest annual gatherings of global leaders, non-governmental organizations, United Nations partners and activists from around the world. The entire focus of this Commission is on the status of rights and empowerment of all women and girls, everywhere. This year’s theme was women’s economic empowerment in a changing world of work. The topic was a timely one, given the rapid pace of change in our world which is driven by globalization and the increasing rate of global mobility.

In her opening statement at the Commission, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, acknowledged the progress that has been made in many areas to improve the condition of women and girls worldwide. However, the rate of progress has been slow, calling for a sense of constructive impatience on the part of those among us who advocate for a world free from gender discrimination and inequality; and a world free from violence of all sorts against women and girls.

Women and girls and the SDGs
It is frequently noted that the empowerment of women and girls is key if the UN is to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The rallying cry of the SDG agenda is leave no one behind and reach those furthest behind, first. The Commission attempts to do this by exploring the challenges faced by women and girls worldwide regarding education and vocational training; access to land and credit; freedom from discrimination and harassment in the workplace; and under-representation of women in decision-making at all levels.

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In his address to the Commission, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said “In a male-dominated world, the empowerment of women and girls must be a key priority. Women already have what it takes to succeed. Empowerment is about breaking structural barriers.” He went on to say “Discrimination against women sounds a loud alarm that our common values are under threat. Women’s rights are human rights – and attacks on women are attacks on us all.” Our hope is that each year we move closer towards the goal – a world where both women and men; girls and boys are able to exercise their rights to the fullest extent possible.

Our unique, yet common experience

Our Sisters entered into the Commission and its many events with great enthusiasm. They brought with them their own unique experiences as well as their deep desire to help advance the condition of women and girls where they live. There were many opportunities to share with one another the realities in each of the countries represented: the dangerous situation of Christians and of women and girls in Pakistan; the poverty in many parts of Colombia as well as the hope that the fragile peace accord will move forward; the difficulties faced by our Sisters in Vietnam, living under a Communist government which limits their options for ministry; the deep desire of Native Americans in the United States to retrieve their native languages and a sense of their identity; the fear imposed by Boko Haram in Nigeria, and the excessive interference of the government in schools; the struggle of the indigenous women of Chiapas to receive appropriate recognition and fair payment for their beautiful crafts; and the ongoing struggles of women in Ireland and the United States for greater recognition of their gifts and their call to fuller ministry within our Church. While each Sister’s experience was unique, the common threads were many; and together we wove a beautiful tapestry of Dominican life and mission as lived by our Sisters around the world!

During our days together, we reflected on the women who journeyed to the tomb in the hours before dawn to anoint the body of Jesus as a metaphor for each of us in our efforts to improve the condition of women and girls right where we are. The task is huge, with many obstacles along the way. Nonetheless, we each have an important contribution to make. Perhaps Sister Juliana Idoko’s words can speak for all of us who were graced to be together for this experience:

“Just like the women who, knew that the stone would be too heavy for them to remove to gain access to the body of Jesus, went all the same – the task of changing the mentality of men and even of many women to accept the notion of gender equality and the rights of women, is an enormous one. But all the same, I will do my part to bring about the positive change and the empowerment of women that is inevitable if we are to attain the Sustainable Development Goals. On my part, I cannot do the big jobs involved, but I can begin with myself. I will share the knowledge I have gained from these experiences with my Sisters and with others.”

We are all so much richer for having had this experience together, as Sisters, united in our love for our Dominican life and mission! May the preaching continue in our very lives!!
Dominican Sisters Who Attended the CSW 2017

Clementina Oti, OP  
Congregation of  
St. Catherine of Siena  
Lagos, Nigeria  
Principal

Emmanuel Yen Do, OP  
Congregation of  
St. Catherine of Siena  
Thamh Tan, Vietnam  
Congregational Leadership

Judy Morris, OP  
Dominican Sisters of Peace  
Kentucky, USA  
Former Justice Promoter, Development Director at St. Mary’s Center

Ruhksana Yaqoob, OP  
Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena  
Karachi, Pakistan  
Principal

Helena Im, OP  
Mission San Jose  
Chiapas, Mexico  
Pastoral Care, Women/Indigenous Empowerment

Margaret Hillary, OP  
Grand Rapids Dominicans  
Montana, USA  
Native American Ministry
Helen Mary Harmey, OP
Cabra Dominican
Dublin, Ireland
Currently on Sabbatical

Juliana Idoko, OP
Congregation of St. Catherine of Siena of Gusau
Gusau, Nigeria
Director of Novices

Laura Ines Nino Martinez
Dominican Sisters of the Presentation
Bogota, Colombia
Educator

Dominican Sisters represented at the Commission on the Status of Women 2017
Summer 2017 Events of Interest at the United Nations

UN Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons, Leading Towards their Total Elimination

June 15 - July 7, 2017

The goal of these meetings is to address legal measures, provisions, and norms needed for disarmament and the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. Any legally binding document would be composed of prohibitions and obligations for member states, as well as some sort of political commitments in the goal of achieving a nuclear weapons-free world.

Thematic Sessions for the Global Compact on Migration

May - September 2017

This series of thematic discussions will help to collect information, concrete recommendations, and substantive input from member states, civil society organizations, and private sector partners to prepare for the upcoming Global Compact on Migration, an outcome of the New York Declaration. The thematic sessions will include consultations on human rights, root causes of migration, international cooperation and governance, contributions of migrant and diaspora communities to society at large, smuggling and trafficking of migrants, and remedies for irregular migration based on labor needs. The Dominican Leadership Conference will be involved as part of the NGO Committee on Migration.
The Oceans Conference at the United Nations this year will urge member states to commit to fulfilling Sustainable Development Goal 14: “Conserve and sustainably use oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.” Topics to be discussed will include sustainable fishing, ocean acidification, the futures of Small Island Developing States, marine pollution, and international law relating to bodies of water. The Dominican Leadership Conference will be present for the talks and will follow up in any ways deemed necessary or relevant.

The High Level Political Forum is a voluntary opportunity for member states to report their progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Development Goals 1 (ending poverty), 2 (ending hunger), 3 (ensure healthy lives and wellbeing), 5 (gender equality), 9 (resilient infrastructure) and 14 (care for marine resources) will be discussed and reported on. Forty-four countries have opted to present their progress, including many in which Dominicans are present, including Nigeria, Sweden, Italy, Brazil, and India. The Dominican Leadership Conference will be present at the High Level Political Forum as an observer, and will report on the outcomes.
Upcoming International Days

**May 29**—International Day for UN Peacekeepers

**May 31**—World No-Tobacco Day

**June 1**—Global Day of Parents

**June 4**—International Day for Innocent Children Victims of Aggression

**June 5**—World Environment Day

**June 8**—World Oceans Day

**June 12**—World Day Against Child Labour

**June 15**—Elder Abuse Awareness Day

**June 16**—World Day of Family Remittances

**June 17**—World Desertification and Drought

**June 19**—International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

**June 20**—World Refugee Day

**June 26**—International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

**June 26**—International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

Dominican Leadership Conference

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“Leave No One Behind”