

In Larger Freedom by Kitty Parisi CSJP-A



The 61st session of the General Assembly (GA) began with a new President-elect, Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa. She is only the third woman GA President and the first one since 1969. What inspires her, she said, “is a deep feeling of pain” for sufferings and tragedies all over the world. Throughout this year, I’ve been impressed by many who share her compassion and who are working to make the UN a more efficient and effective organization that is more responsive to the sufferings of the world’s people. Among these are NGOs, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and the previous GA President, Swedish Ambassador Jan Eliassen. Towards this goal, they helped get the GA to pass key UN reforms in June. These included a new Human Rights Council to strengthen protection of fundamental human rights and deal with major human rights offenders, and a Peacebuilding Commission to assist in the reconstruction, institution-building and sustainable development of countries emerging from conflict.

These reforms were among those proposed by Secretary-General Annan in his major report, “**In Larger Freedom**,” and were agreed to by world leaders at their 2005 UN Summit. This report drew upon the urgings of NGOs and the extensive work of hundreds of world experts who said the UN needed major reforms to become a more accountable organization and to deal with current global challenges. The report affirmed the vital importance of the three purposes of the UN outlined in its 1945 Charter: Security, Human Rights and Development.

In Larger Freedom - Part I “Freedom from Want”

Calls upon UN nations to work together to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and sustainable development for all by: ❶ meeting their commitment of 0.7% per cent of gross domestic product; ❷ increasing development aid and debt relief to poor countries; ❸ giving immediate duty-free market access to all exports from least developed countries; ❹ stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions; and ❺ setting up a voluntary \$1 billion fund to enable the UN to respond more rapidly and effectively to victims of sudden natural or man-made disasters.

In Larger Freedom - Part III “Freedom to Live in Dignity”

Urges all UN nations to strengthen the rule of law, human rights, and democracy. As a basis for collective action against genocide, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity, Kofi Annan asked UN nations to adopt the principle of “Responsibility to Protect.” While it is the duty of an individual state to protect its citizens, if national authorities are unable or unwilling to do so, responsibility would then shift to the international community. As a last resort, the UN’s Security Council might take action in accord with the original UN Charter.

In Larger Freedom - Part II “Freedom from Fear”

Calls on all member-nations to work together to: ❶ prevent catastrophic terrorism; ❷ stop the proliferation of deadly weapons; ❸ end civil wars; and ❹ build a lasting peace in war-torn countries.

Now, it is up to the world’s nations to stop the genocide in Darfur and meet the challenges in the Mid-East and elsewhere. It is also up to them to implement Kofi Annan’s other suggested reforms such as ❶ making the Security Council more representative of today’s geopolitical realities; ❷ making the Secretariat more flexible and transparent; ❸ revitalizing the General Assembly; and ❹ strengthening the Economic and Social Council. Many suffering “We the peoples” around the world need a strong, effective, and transparent United Nations!



Women- Crucial for a Healthier Environment by Suzanne Golas CSJP



Increasingly at the United Nations, there is an emphasis on the connection between women and the environment. Especially in the developing world, a degraded environment contributes to the already difficult lives of women. In many countries, it is mainly women who tend the livestock, grow vegetable gardens and cultivate subsistence crops. Women are responsible for between 70 and 80 % of household food production in sub-Saharan Africa, 65 % in Asia and 45 % in Latin America.

Women and girls collect the family's water and firewood. As these resources are depleted or destroyed, the additional time required to procure these items reduces or eliminates time women and girls have for education or working outside the home. Women tend family members who are sick because of contaminated water or inadequate nutrition.

Greater awareness of women's relationship with the environment is emphasizing women's importance in efforts to reach Millennium Development Goals Three and Seven, namely "the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women," and "ensuring environmental sustainability."

It is not surprising that strong, energetic NGOs are playing an increasingly important role in these efforts. The Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), for example, is an international advocacy organization working to achieve a healthy and peaceful planet. It seeks environmental, social, political and economic justice through women's empowerment, and equal participation in decision-making from

local to global arenas. The Water Caucus, a coalition of NGOs which the CSJPs belong to, consists of a high percentage of women representatives. ENERGIA, an international network on gender and sustainable energy, was especially active during the recent session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development which focused on energy, climate and global warming.

NGOs stress the importance of greater involvement of women in developing policies, designing and implementing projects and having central roles in decision-making and management.

"Women and the Environment," a book recently published by the United Nations Environment Programme clearly summarizes the world scene and the role of women:

"The challenges facing the world community are enormous. An increasing number of people are struggling to meet their most basic needs... And the foundation of life itself, the planet Earth, is suffering as its ecosystems and resources are overexploited, degraded and polluted. As daunting as it may seem, these crises still offer opportunities to us all, both as institutions and individuals. Women in particular, as creative and passionate advocates of change in every corner of the globe, have shown that they are more than ready to counter-act and make the world a better place for all."

Q *What does the UN do?*

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- ❶ Brings together 192 countries to prevent wars and resolve conflict.
 - ❷ Provides food, water shelter and medicine to victims of war or disasters.
 - ❸ Develops international agreements to counter terrorism, control drugs and crime, protect the environment and curb weapons.
 - ❹ Deploys peace operations to help countries recover from war.
 - ❺ Supports democracy through free and fair elections and good governance.

More in our next issue...