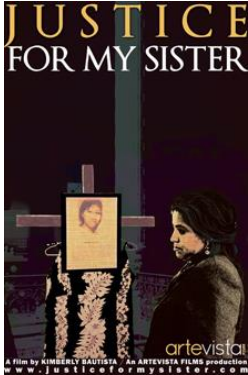


UN Update - Sister Helen Martinez - Journal for December 8 - 12, 2014
Shortened version

Jancy and Mary Margaret and I prayed for the second week of advent and shared our reflections.



In the afternoon, we went to the American Mission to attend a one hour documentary **Justice for my Sister** that chronicles one woman's journey through the Guatemalan notoriously corrupt justice system as she struggles to hold her sister's killer accountable. Her story is all too familiar in Guatemala, where 6,000 women have been murdered in the last decade and only 2% of the killers were sentenced. In the end, it was one of the few cases of domestic-violence murder that has resulted in a conviction in the past decade.



Tuesday was a day of heavy rain in the city. I attended the meeting on human trafficking. It was held at The Salvation Army International Social Justice Commission on 221 East 52nd Street – between 2nd and 3rd Avenue.

Sister Eileen Reilly, SSND, gave a report about the meeting she attended in Geneva. She focused on gender based abortion which is increasing in Central Asia, Armenia and other countries. There are new issues which were not known in Beijing 1995 such as cyberbullying and organ trafficking.

In the afternoon, I attended the NGO Mining Meeting at the Franciscan International office. Among the items discussed was the list of issues in relations to the sixth periodic review of Canada. Canada is required to inform the Human Rights Committee on any measures taken or envisaged to monitor the human rights conduct of Canadian oil, mining and gas companies operating abroad. Canada is also to inform what the available legal venues are in the state party for victims of human rights abuses arising from overseas operations of Canadian extractive firms. .

On Wednesday morning, International Human Rights Day, I attended a session about Human Rights Dimensions in Trafficking in Persons. The ambassador from Romania presented the efforts of the Romanian authorities in combating trafficking in persons, with an emphasis on respecting and promoting human rights. The ambassador underlined that “Trafficking in human beings for forced labor has become a growing concern around the world. Trafficking of men, women and children occurs in almost every country for almost every type of labor imaginable. Girls and women are trafficked into forced prostitution, domestic servitude or sweat-shops. Trafficked children are forced to beg. Men are trafficked for construction work, begging and

agricultural labor. Trafficking in human beings can be seen as both a violation of human rights and a form of gender-based discrimination and violence against women and girls.” From this perspective, she underlined the nationwide efforts undertaken by the National Agency, Against Trafficking in Persons, in order to combat and prevent this unfortunate phenomenon, while emphasizing the importance of raising public awareness within this process.

Kevin Cassidy of the International Labour Office [ILO] said with near global consensus that trafficking in persons was a gross and unacceptable violation of fundamental human rights, “we have the momentum to end this crime against humanity.” ILO estimates there are at least 21 million men, women and children in forced labour conditions around the world, including in the fields of agriculture, construction, manufacturing, domestic work and the sex industry. They add about \$150 billion to the economy each year. Many governments are “worried about cracking down on coercive work practices for fear of losing important investment”

Historically, the primary emphasis of international efforts to stop this kind of forced labour has been on sex trafficking. “The ILO has just approved a new protocol that emphasizes the need to integrate efforts against forced labour to include all forced labour, not just prostitution.”

In the afternoon, I attended informal meetings of the plenary as part of the preparatory process for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in the Economic and Social Council Chamber. The meetings focused on “Trade and investment”. The focus for the third panel was “Trade regimes for sustainable development.”

William Milberg said the notion of international trade has been transformed, with increased linkages between trade and investments, “as never seen before in history.”

Guillermo Valles, UNCTAD, stated the report of the Open Working Group on SDGs had captured trade in an “isolated way,” mainly in connection with the conclusion of the Doha round and market access. He called for adopting the right legal frameworks and domestic policies to enable financing for development.

Discussing global value chains (GVCs), Jennifer Bair highlighted the unevenness of GVCs and the need to increase participation. She called for the FfD Conference to renew commitments to the multilateral system so as to ‘reinvigorate the conversation about a broader set of commitments.’

Joaquim Tres, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), outlined the need to, *inter alia*: facilitate trade and improve the trade architecture; increase public-private partnerships; invest in infrastructure (such as cross-border infrastructure); and strengthen the links between trade and inequality.

Paulo Correa believes ‘a world with less trade is worse than a world with more trade.’ He called for attention to the access and impact of trade regimes, and said complementary policies can mitigate short-term impacts and maximize long-term impacts on growth.

Deborah James urged putting development first to ensure that trade policies enable development. She called for: more policy space for technology transfer; increased innovation to

respond to the needs of developing countries; public oversight; and ensuring that global trade rules do not prevent countries from investing in their own development.

Delegates highlighted that trade should not be considered "in a vacuum" but as part of a broader macroeconomic structure. One called for promoting growth with social inclusion, and another one proposed to establish a free trade zone in Africa. Others asked for clarification about the integration of social and environmental standards in trade agreements, and about the consideration of social and environmental sustainability concerns in GVCs.

On Thursday morning, I attended another session Closing Data Gaps and Strengthening Statistical Capabilities.

Ms. Haishan Fu stated that data are an important "liquid asset" as they represent soft infrastructure for sustainable development. She emphasized the need to: continue supporting the growth and transformation of national statistics institutions so that new resources could be leveraged and risks be better managed; continue investing in building countries' capacities to gather relevant data in real time and spur innovation; invest more and smarter in development data and integrate development data in accounting.

Ranjit Tinaikar named four areas in which Big Data can address barriers to development: building confidence in fiscal and monetary management; finding new sources of capital for SDGs; local debt markets; transparency on governance and institutions to attract private investment.

Yesim Sisik explained the importance of timely, accurate, comprehensive and comparable data in the external sector statistics.

Ronald Jansen stated public-private partnerships (PPPs) are extremely important for developing data. He emphasized the need for financing for statistics, and the importance of independence for national statistics offices.

Ethan Weisman saw international institutions as a facilitator in setting standards, within collaboration between public and private partners. He emphasized the need for data to be comparable, integrated, standardized and transparent, and stated the International Monetary Fund uses data for evidence-based policy-making. .

Papa Seck pointed out increasing demand for gender statistics at both national and intergovernmental levels in recent years, showing an understanding of their importance for development. He indicated that data on violence against women, unpaid care work, asset ownership, and women's entrepreneurship are not adequate, and described a three-year project to generate data in such missing areas.

Juan Manuel Valle Perena spoke on challenges for south-south cooperation, including estimating the value of cooperation provided by public sector servants, developing information platforms to communicate cooperation data, and collecting information from a wide range of actors. On gender data, Perena spoke about Mexico's "very aggressive policy approach," and stated that in general, countries with development challenges and high poverty levels must put statistics high on their domestic agendas.

On Thursday afternoon, I attended the Preparatory Process for the third International Conference on Financing for Development Substantive informal session on "Enabling and conducive governance, including global economic governance"

Barney Frank noted two major problems: the disparity between economic growth and the degree to which the regular citizen enjoys that; and the inconsistency of the US military's level of participation in the world with the US' participation in development.

Simone Monasebian stated addressing corruption is one of the key elements for making the post-2015 development agenda successful and emphasized the importance of the implementation of UN's Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC).

Alexia Latortue said that conversation around fair representation in global governance usually focuses on voice, vote, and resources, when greater numbers and diversity of actors engaged in the conversation contribute also to the quality and the substance of the conversation.

Roberto Bissio emphasized that public-private partnerships (PPPs) were at the heart of the financial crisis in OECD countries, as they had been used intensively to address infrastructure gaps.

Aleksei Mozhin said quota and governance reform is stalled due to refusal by the US Congress to ratify the 2010 reform package.

Eduardo Galves stated the need for good domestic governance is “a given,” but emphasized the importance of the right global environment for trade and other goals.

On Friday morning I awoke with a strong cough. Thanks to modern technology, I was able to follow the Panel discussion on “Gender equality and women’s rights in the Financing for Development framework”.

There is strong and consistent support from member states from all areas for placing gender equality at the centre of the new Global Sustainable Development framework . The Open Working Group proposed a standalone sustainable development goal on gender equality, as well as gender-sensitive targets in 11 out of 17 goals. This has to be equally matched by implementation. The Third International Conference on Financing for Development in July 2015 will provide a critical opportunity to ensure that financing strategies are capable of delivering on gender equality and women’s rights commitments. The rights of women can be integrated into the Financing for Development process by focussing on advancing gender equality through public expenditure, revenue raising, accountability of private sector investments, monitoring and evaluation, and direct financing.