



## CLC as a Non-Governmental Organization at the United Nations

Dear friends

How can CLC live the MAGIS more profoundly in the opportunities our status as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) at the United Nations (UN) is giving us? Which steps are possible and necessary now? How can we share responsibility for mission and in the social context we face?

This issue of *Projects* has been prepared by the two CLC NGO Working Groups (Geneva and New York) and intends to share with you this common concern of our worldwide community.

### *Why should participation in the United Nations be a concern for CLC?*

Christian Life Community, rooted in Ignatian Spirituality, is a particular vocational call and way of life that is engaged in the building of the reign of God in the world. (GP 2, 4, 12)

Our *Common Mission* document reflects the vast field of mission and a CLC desire for the creation of a more just world:

*"We want to participate in different forums at the national and international levels, bringing to them the voice of the poorest..." (...)* "In different ways all of us are called to active participation in the economic, political and social structures, not only from a critical point of view but also through providing solutions."

The *Nairobi Recommendations* reaffirms the need of CLC to be visible at the international level and our presence at the UN is: "an effective means to promote social justice."

As a worldwide apostolic community at the service of one world, Christian Life Community's involvement at the United Nations allows us to be at the cutting edge as the emerging world community unfolds. In this way, CLC has the opportunity to bring the work of the United Nations before our membership and to encourage them to work at the field level to promote peace and justice. (Cf. GP 4, 6, 7, 8)

### *CLC Status and Possibilities at the UN*

In 1975, the *Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)* of the United Nations Organization granted the **Christian Life Community** consultative status (*Roster*) at the United Nations.

- The *Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)* activities relate to development, world trade, industrialization, natural resources, human rights, status of women, population, social welfare, science and technology, prevention of crime, etc.
- As a *Roster* member, CLC joins other organizations which do not have general or special consultative standing but which the Council, or the Secretary General of the United Nations, considers can make occasional and useful contributions to the work of the Council or its subsidiary bodies.

CLC has the right to send delegates to meetings, to intervene in debates, to propose solutions and to collaborate with Council and United Nations Secretariat personnel in areas in which we have expertise.

**Christian Life Community** was granted official *Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)* status with the *United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)*.

CLC collaborates with others as a member of the *Conference of International Catholic Organizations (ICO)* and as a member of the *Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations* in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (*CONGO*).

- The *Conference of ICO* provides a focal point of information, reflection and co-ordination for its members. The aim is to make present the Christian community in international life.
- In order to improve the consultative process and the coordination of activities in relationship to United Nations activities, *CONGO* was established providing a forum for NGOs with common interests to come together to study, plan, support, and act in relation to the principles and programs of the UN.

### ***CLC History - Important Steps***

The CLC General Assemblies of Augsburg '73, Manila '76, Rome '79 and Providence '82, accepted and developed the strategy of liberation of the whole person and of all persons with a clear option for the poor. As one concrete response, the challenge was for CLC to be visible where necessary in the public forum, especially as a non-governmental organization represented at the United Nations.

In the early 70's, Betty Leone, a CLC USA member initiated the drive to promote CLC becoming an NGO with involvement at the UN. Thomas Ignatius Monahan took up the challenge and in 1978 began to serve the world community as the first "official" representative at the United Nations in New York. At this time, the particular focus was on the prevention of the spread of nuclear arms. When Tom died in 1985, Fr. Daniel Fitzpatrick S.J., aided by various CLC members, took on the responsibility of being the CLC Representative. Concerns addressed over these years included the status of women, children - especially the girl child - and human rights violations. Fr. Dan was an active member on the NGO Committee of Freedom of Religion and Belief and served on its Executive Council for two terms. This capable and effective presence at the UN in New York ended with Fr. Dan's retirement at the end of 2002.

In 1991, Fr. Henry Volken S.J. began his journey as the CLC Representative at the United Nations in Geneva and in 1993 a small CLC support group was established. A comprehensive human rights approach with a preferential option for the poor, involvement with the campaign for the abolition of landmines, the protection of children (child soldiers) and intervention on behalf of refugees are some of the issues dealt with in these years. Fr. Volken also chaired a special NGO Committee on Development. With Fr. Volken's death in early 2000, the World CLC Executive Council proposed that a way of wider utilisation of CLC's status as an NGO at the United Nations be developed.

In close collaboration with the World CLC ExCo, an NGO Working Group in Geneva, Switzerland was established in 2001. The members included Roswitha Cooper (Italy), Françoise Dubosson (Switzerland), Daniela Frank (Germany), Leah Michaud (Canada), Brigitte Minier (France), Anni Rickenbacher (Switzerland), and Fernando Salas S.J. (Chile).

The intention of a CLC NGO Working Group is to create a bridge between the United Nations and the World Christian Life Community. The main purpose of the group is twofold:

- a) to support our UN Representatives and to give them CLC grass-root contact.
- b) to offer the world Christian Life Community a formation
  - towards the personal integration of the dimensions of faith and justice as called for in GP 4 and 8 and the Spiritual Exercises,

- towards an empowerment of CLC: to heighten awareness of the possibilities for CLC to live out this integration and to take a public stand.

After a lengthy time of dialogue and consultation, the focus of the CLC NGO Working Group at the United Nations in Geneva, was discerned to be in the area of refugees / migrants. Identified as a critical issue in today's world, the opportunity for enriching the consciousness of the world community would also serve to enrich our United Nations Representative's access to information from the world community while offering the possibility of collaboration with the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). As well, the European CLC Assembly identified "forced migration" as one of the most critical issues facing Europe at this time.

Within the area of Refugee/Migrants, the decision by the NGO Working Group to focus more specifically on "racism" resulted from a collective brainstorming and assessment of the most critical and concrete option for this time that would be relatable for the whole world community. Racism has many faces and expressions depending on political, social, cultural, religious biases and so touches everyone in the world. The decree to work against racism was expressed in a hopeful and positive statement: **multi-cultural respect, dialogue and advocacy**.

### ***CURRENTLY in Geneva:***

The present members of the WG include: Christoph Albrecht SJ (Switzerland), Roswitha Cooper (Italy), Françoise Dubosson (Switzerland), Daniela Frank (Germany), Goran Kuhner (Croatia) Guy Maginzi (World Secretariat) and Anni Rickenbacher (Switzerland).

Members of the Geneva WG envisage CLC presence at the next CONGO Meeting and at the Human Right Conference in Geneva in the Spring of 2005. Mindful of the years of CLC's fruitful collaboration with the Jesuit Refugee Service, Christine Bloch from JRS continues to represent CLC at the UN in Geneva until such time that CLC will be able to appoint a representative. Christine, married and mother of two, frequently visits JRS camps all over the world and is a fervent lobbyist at the UN for improving conditions for migrants.

A revised version of *Supplement #24* that deals with our CLC NGO history will be a joint undertaking by both Working Groups in the near future.

### ***CURRENTLY in New York:***

In April 2003, the beginnings of a Working Group took shape in New York. Because of the ground-work done by the Geneva WG, the New York WG took shape very quickly. By May 2004, the following CLC members committed to this work include: Sylvia Schmitt, Ann Marie Brennan, Joan Woods, Marie Schimelfening, Jose Lim, Patricia Mwangi, Marcelito Custodio, and Leah Michaud as the ExCo link. Of these Joan, Jose, Marie, Sylvia and Marcelito are designated as CLC Representatives regularly attending NGO meetings at the UN in New York.

Each of the Representatives has made efforts to participate in various committees such as the Commission on the Status of Women, the general planning for the DPI/ NGO (Department of Public Information) Conference in September 2004, the Committee for the selection of the mid-day workshops for the Conference in September, and the Formative Team for the Committee of Spirituality, Values, and Global Concerns.

As with the Geneva WG, the NY WG meets twice yearly and at the last meeting determined that "water" was the most critical issue to focus on at this time. The challenge now is to set up a communication network of national links so as to facilitate the gathering and dissemination of material.

### ***Other International Forums***

In 2003, 3 CLC members from South Africa joined the Society of Jesus at the Sustainable Development Forum in Johannesburg raising their voice in favour of the poor and marginalised. (See Bibliography of *Progressio* articles, available at the WCLC Secretariat.) In January 2004, 3 CLC members sent by the world ExCo to participate in the World Social Forum in Mumbai, India joined 10 members of CLC India in partnership once again with the Society of Jesus.

Built around the slogan "*Another World Is Possible*", the World Social Forum (WSF) is an international forum formed by people in civil society who share a common desire for 'another world' and who oppose "...neo-liberalism and domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society centred on the human person..." (*WSF Charter of Principles*). The basic idea is to create a space for discussing alternatives, for exchanging experiences and strengthening alliances between social movements, unions of workers, NGOs etc. As one outcome, the delegates from CLC India presented the following recommendations to their members:

1. Going beyond the boundaries of the present Church groups to join hands with peoples of all faith in building basic human communities in our dioceses.
2. Joining hands with "alternate" groups (NGOs) to promote alternative medicines, products, etc.
3. Creating awareness among the marginalized groups of why they are poor through social analysis.
4. Giving information about our marginalized groups which need a backing, to the World CLC NGO and getting information from World CLC NGO documentation center to support the struggles of the marginalized.
5. Using Ignatian Spirituality as a powerful tool for social change.
6. Join the march to protest against war on 20<sup>th</sup> March.

### ***Members of One Apostolic Body***

CLCers all over the world are participating in Christ's Mission of establishing the reign of God. In national and local groups' processes of discerning, sending, supporting, and evaluating, personal and communal mission are carried out. The next steps are to co-ordinate our grass-roots experiences and to communicate them to our UN Representatives as well as to pass on information from our UN Representatives to the world body.

### ***A Proposal***

To allow a better information flow to and from our representatives, communicating what is happening at the grass-root reality as well as at the international level, we propose that:

- each national community names a contact person to collect information and stories from its national community related to the actual focuses of our UN NGO Working Groups.
- these contact persons form a network feeding information to our Working Groups whose responsibility would be to communicate with the UN Representatives as well as submitting relevant material for posting on the CLC website.
- the Working Groups communicate relevant information to the national contact persons.
- the national contact persons would be the ones responsible for channelling information received from the Working Groups e.g. on concrete actions to be taken, campaigns to be supported etc. to the national community.

In this way, we slowly establish a network of people focusing on the social-apostolic issues on a world level and thus facilitating respective processes on national and regional levels, in order to help us to act more visibly as an apostolic community. In time, it would be beneficial to have a coordinator of this networking at the world level, allowing us to coordinate CLC with other international NGOs and collaborating with them on urgent issues.

We trust that this *PROJECTS #127* will be widely circulated within your national community so that all CLC members become familiar with this international CLC mission. As well, we invite you to please submit the name and email address of a contact person from your national community by the end of December to Guy Maginzi at the WCLC Secretariat in Rome, Italy: [exsec@cvx-clc.net](mailto:exsec@cvx-clc.net)

You are encouraged to keep current with world happenings by visiting the World CLC website: [www.cvx-clc.net](http://www.cvx-clc.net)

With a disposition of gratitude, let us as CLC continue to co-operate with Jesus in the enterprise of building a world of peace and justice.

*Members of the CLC NGO Working Groups Geneva and New York*