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- 'We are parts of the earth's ecology'

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

We reported on the World Economic Forum in the last Bulletin. Now for its polar opposite.

The first World Social Forum (WSF) held in a country outside the global South took place in Montreal, Canada, August 9 - 14. It was organised mainly by young people who showed a great deal of commitment. They came not only to learn and exchange but to strategise together for future mobilisations, to dream of a better world and construct new solutions. Their message was one of urgency: to act at both the individual and political level, to recognise that poor people are the most affected by climate change, to stop over-consumption. In a conclusive moment, participants committed themselves to move towards a more sustainable way of living and symbolically signed a statement:

We refuse to be a generation that lives selfishly but rather one that transforms our cultures to prioritize sustainable ways of living..... We demand a future where nations are stewards of our natural resources and practise equitable distribution for all peoples.

Attendees left convinced that in order to strengthen efforts to mobilise for justice, we need to continue creating spaces to

share experiences and learn from one another. This empowers and connects people who are the drivers of change. The program of the WSF included sharing, learning and reflecting on how initiatives can be replicated in different parts of the world. This could happen even more in the future. Most specifically we need a North-South dialogue around such initiatives in order to further build a global movement for change 19from the base As well, we reflected extensively on global threats and collective mobilisations at the international level.

Trade deals were a recurring issue. These were largely addressed during the 'grande conference' with Naomi Klein, Tadzio Muller (Rosa Luxembourg Foundation), Maite (Latin American Union activists and member of Trade Unions for Energy Democracy), Anne Celine Guyon (Stop Oleoducs, a Quebec grassroots group opposing the energy east pipeline), and Clayton Thomas-Muller (campaigner for 350.org). For Tadzio Muller, 'The TTIP, CETA and TISA¹...are just obscene new bills of rights for capitalism'. Clayton Thomas-Muller included the Paris agreement on climate as a trade threat also, because he saw it leading to a further commodification of nature and to the expan-

¹ Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership; Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement; Trade in Services Agreement

sion of market mechanisms to deal with climate change.

Extractivism describes the massive and accelerating global exploitation of the natural resources of the earth. The extractive industries can be found on land and in the seas, mining profitable resources, ignorant or careless of the ecological consequences. The International People's Conference on Mining (IPCM) organised a workshop in which Leon Dulce accused governments and mining corporations of pursuing a dangerous strategy of dividing communities through cooption and criminalisation, while falsely claiming that they were benefitting them with increased employment opportunities. In another workshop dedicated to corporate strategies of control, Fr. Dario (Church and Mining Network) explained how mining industries implement war strategies to access resources, e.g., establishing a permanent state of dispossession, privatising territory, plundering and rape. In the inspiring workshop on *Gendered Impacts: Indigenous Women and Resource Extraction*, women from all parts of the world told how they are particularly affected by min-

ing operations that prevent all sorts of activities that are usually the work of women, from agriculture to traditional medicine. Further, as conventional mining operations often take place in militarised contexts, sexual abuse by armed forces too often goes unpunished.

It is clear from the World Social Forum that the interlinked struggles against gender, social and economic inequality are systemic and call for systemic change. This entails a tireless commitment to resist and reverse the current practice of valuing everything only in terms of its financial product, which is occurring in every aspect of our lives, even in relation to Nature. And linked with this is the current extractivist assault on the Earth for financial profit. 'The earth and its resources are the final forms of wealth we have' (Lidy Nacpil, Jubilee North). Struggles to achieve, for example, a decent wage or a shorter working week are important, but these incremental struggles are only part of the longer struggle for systemic change.

Source: Notes from International Catholic Development Agencies (CIDSE), edited by Mary Boyd

TINY SEA CREATURES ARE SAVING US FROM HELL ON EARTH: SO WHY ARE WE ENDANGERING THEM?

Deep in the ocean, fissures in the earth's crust spew geothermal water and gases super-heated to up to 400 degrees Celsius. Sounds like hell? Not quite.

Hydrothermal vents discovered just 40 years ago by scientists, teem with a surprising abundance of life. And these hotbeds of biodiversity are crucial for underwater ecosystems and the global climate, according to a recent report in *Frontiers In Marine Science*.

The vents dot the sea floor at depths of 5,000 - 13,000 feet, gushing sulfides,

methane, iron and hydrogen into the ocean. Like moths to a (very hot) flame, micro-organisms around the vents convert these elements into food. They are, in turn, eaten by other organisms, transporting that geothermal energy up a food chain that includes mussels, clams, giant crabs and scarlet tube worm colonies.

Importantly, researchers found that vent-dwelling creatures gobble up as much as 90% of the released methane — which, if it were to be released into the atmosphere, would act as a greenhouse gas 86 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a 20-

year period. ‘There is more methane on the ocean floor than there are other forms of fossil fuels left in the oceans’, said Andrew Thurber, co-author of the report, ‘and if it were all released it would be a doomsday climatic event. Through methane consumption, these life forms are literally saving the planet.’

But – there’s more. These extreme ecosystems are threatened by offshore oil and gas extraction — particularly the peripheral impacts from anchors, noise pollution and leakage. Worse still – plans are well advanced to mine the vents for copper, gold and silver, with the first deep sea mining machines set for a test drive in the near future. (*See Bulletins Nov. 2011 and Sept. 2014*)

Since the vents are dispersed around the ocean floor world-wide, any coordinated plan to protect them requires international cooperation. There’s no better reason for working together.

Source: *Samantha Lee, in ‘Grist’ June 2016, ‘Grist’ is a journal based in Seattle, USA, www.grist.org Slightly edited by A. Healey.*

Update on Nautilus Mining

As already reported in the Bulletin, Nautilus Inc. is pushing forward towards deep sea

mining 30 kilometres offshore from the New Ireland Province of Papua New Guinea. Solwara 1 is the name of the project.

However, Reuters reported in June of this year that Nautilus requires significant additional funding to complete the building and deployment of its seafloor production system. If the company fails to secure adequate finance, it may suspend or terminate development of the project, or engage in joint ventures, capital restructuring or asset sales. Nautilus is unable to determine the extent of delay at this time.

In July this year National Geographic ran a report on deep sea mining, concluding with this challenge to the world community:

‘The rationale for exploiting minerals in the deep sea is based on their perceived current monetary value. The living systems that will be destroyed are perceived to have no monetary value. Will decisions about use of the natural world continue to be based on the financial advantage for a small number of people despite risks to systems that underpin planetary stability – and support human survival?’

Compiled by A Healey.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Human trafficking has been on the agenda of several international organisations during 2016. Would that this were so for governments throughout the world!

Human Rights Council

One of the agenda items of the Council’s meeting, June 2016, was a discussion of the report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in which there was a particular focus on protecting victims and potential victims of trafficking in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The work of the Special Rapporteur, Ms. Maria Grazia Giammarinaro started in August 2014. Her report covered a wide range of topics – preventing trafficking in persons, promoting the global fight against trafficking

in persons and upholding the human rights of victims of trafficking. Ms. Giammarinaro concluded from her work of the last year that human trafficking in situations of conflict is under-reported and a systemic consequence of conflict, often not addressed and thus not prevented or punished. The breakdown of the rule of law and of the functioning of public institutions as a consequence of conflict creates significant vulnerabilities for the people, allowing traffickers and other criminals to profit from these situations. Internally displaced populations, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are highly vulnerable to traffickers.

The final resolution of the Human Rights Council requests that governments fully cooperate with the Special Rapporteur in

training all stakeholders, including humanitarian personnel working in conflict zones, to identify potential cases of trafficking. The resolution also called on States, as a matter of urgency, to criminalise all forms of trafficking in persons and bring perpetrators, both offenders and intermediaries, to justice. As well, it advised States to establish or strengthen national programs and engage cooperatively with one another in plans of action to address trafficking with a victim-centred approach.

United Nations (UN)

On 30 June -1 July 2016, the UN University and the Permanent Missions to the UN of the United Kingdom and Liechtenstein organised a workshop, with the support of Thomson Reuters and Grace Farms Foundation. Titled *Fighting Human Trafficking in Conflict*, it brought together 100 expert participants from Permanent Missions to the UN, UN entities, national law enforcement agencies, financial intelligence units, the technology sector, the financial sector, media and civil society. The final document focuses on conflict situations which include not only the conflict areas, but also the emerging movement of populations to neighbouring countries and other continents.

It is intended that this workshop report be sent to the UN as a contribution to a review by the General Assembly in 2017 of the Global Plan of Action to combat trafficking in persons.

The UN has produced its own documents dealing with a global strategy against human

trafficking. States that have not yet ratified or acceded to the *UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime* with its supplementary *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children*, are urged to make this a priority, and all parties to these instruments are called on to implement them fully and effectively. The UN reminds States that a victim-centred approach requires them to take all possible measures to ensure that victims of trafficking are protected from prosecution or punishment for acts that they have been compelled to commit as a direct consequence of having been trafficked.

Finally, a young Yazidi woman who survived trafficking and gang-rape by Islamic State militants, Nadia Murad, is to be appointed a UN Goodwill Ambassador for the Dignity of Survivors of Human Trafficking. Nadia Murad was captured in Iraq in 2014 and subjected to physical, including sexual, abuse. Six of her brothers were murdered. The 23-year-old woman said in an interview with the BBC, 'Under their rule, a captured woman becomes a spoil of war. If she is caught trying to escape she is put in a cell and raped by all the men in that compound. I was gang-raped'. She was also bought and sold several times by the militant group.

I hope this news interests you. Please send me information that you would like me to disseminate via email to pcamisao@gmail.com

Source: Patrícia Foito e Camisão

We live in the immense mystery of God's self-giving, 'in God we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). We humans are harvesters of grace; we live in a state of grace. In a world sacred with God's presence, 'being human needs to be defined by communion rather than consumption' (Rowan Williams). Life is about relationship with one another, with our Source and with the whole of creation. We are made for community, we are part of the earth's ecology.

Janet O'Sullivan. Economist and meditator (Australia)

**Contributions to Bulletin and responses to its content welcomed.
Deadline: 14th of each month. Publication office in Sydney.**

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Design: Thanks to Marian Kelly for her donation of time and talent.