

SCNY Office of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation Update – February 2015



Rep), Carol De Angelo (SCNY), and Min Ah Ahn (SC-Greensburg, South Korea).

The 53rd Session of the United Nations

Commission on Social Development was held February 4 – 13. Priority theme was: Rethinking and Strengthening Social Development in the Contemporary World. LeeAnn Braithwaite, PJIC Office intern, was at the Civil Society Forum on Tuesday, the 3rd. Joan Wood and Sisters Mary Donagher and Regina Murphy were able to attend some CSocD workshops. Also present and shown in picture to the left were: Sisters Joel Urumpil (SC-Nazareth, India), Teresa Kotturan (SC-Nazareth, Sisters of Charity Federation NGO

The Sisters of Charity of New York are collaborating with Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing (IAHH) and other groups to address homelessness and housing problems in New York City. Information below is from IAHH.
Your advocacy helps! Sign two petitions to make a difference!

I ***NY/NY 4 to House New York's Most Vulnerable.*** The nearly 60,000 homeless New Yorkers and the many tens of thousands at risk of homelessness are among our most vulnerable brothers and sisters in New York City. They are often the most difficult to house due to their limited financial resources and social service needs. The Campaign for New York/New York 4 is calling on Governor Cuomo and Mayor de Blasio to create 30,000 supportive housing units over the next ten years to house New York's most vulnerable - 15,000 of these as part of the Mayor's 200,000 unit target and an additional 15,000 from additional resources. Sisters of Charity of New York with about 200 other organizations have endorsed the Campaign. In addition, SCNY with over 100 faith leaders signed a "Faith Leader Letter" to Mayor de Blasio and Governor Cuomo. For more information visit www.nynycampaign.org

II **Stand Strong for a Renewal and Strengthening of Our Rent Laws** – please sign a petition to strengthen Rent Regulations for 2.5 million New Yorkers. If you type the underlined phrase above into the internet search engine, you can reach the online petition. Nearly 2.5 million New Yorkers live in 1 million rent regulated apartments - making rent regulations New York's largest affordable housing program. 750,000 of these renters live at or below the poverty line. Many of these New Yorkers' rents would be raised to unaffordable levels if rent regulations ended today. Our overburdened shelter system would not be able to sustain the massive influx of people. Weakened rent laws have resulted in the loss of more than 250,000 affordable apartments over the past 15 years.

New York's rent laws are scheduled to be renewed again on June 15, 2015. The State Senate is now in the firm control of the Republican Party and tenant advocates have been very concerned that the rent laws will be under attack once again. There is the possibility that renter's rights will be protected and strengthened with the newly elected State Assembly Speaker making a statement in favor of stronger rent laws. **Please add your name to the petition to Speaker Heastie thanking him for his commitment to stronger rent laws.** By typing the above underlined phrase into the search engine, the petition will come up. Without strong leadership

from Speaker Heastie, New York City's rent laws will likely be weakened again resulting in the loss of more affordable housing, weaker enforcement of tenant protections, and more pressures on low income tenants. The IAHH will continue to monitor this issue and advise people of the need for action to ensure that affordable housing is preserved and tenants' rights are protected.

III Establish the Right to Counsel in Eviction proceedings – Protect up to 15,000 households annually from unwarranted evictions. **Please go to www.righttocounselnyc.org (and click on Take Action) to sign your name to the petition to the Mayor.** Urge the Mayor to stand with the City Council Speaker and the Right to Counsel campaign. The most effective way to address homelessness is to help people stay in their homes! In 2013, nearly 30,000 households were evicted despite the fact that as many as half of these could have stayed in their homes if they had been represented by legal counsel. The right to an attorney only exists in criminal court not in civil / housing court despite the fact that one's home is central to one's ability to lead a productive life and care for one's family. Currently in eviction proceedings, less than 10% of tenants are represented by attorney where over 90% of landlords have this representation. Support this effort to provide free legal counsel in the 30,000 eviction actions where legal representation would likely save half these families from being forced into our homeless shelter system.

Trans-Pacific Partnership Treaty. At NETWORK Lobby's request, PJIC Office signed a "Letter to All Members of Congress Opposing Trade Injustice / Fast Track". The letter signed by 35 religious groups was publicized at the February 17 Press Conference where Sister Simone Campbell, Executive Director of NETWORK, said "Catholic sisters in many countries have seen firsthand the devastating effects of trade agreements signed only to increase corporate wealth and power. People and the environment deserve the protection afforded by careful deliberation at the negotiation table, where all voices can be heard. It's a matter of justice." At a February 17 Yonkers meeting, panelists spoke on TPP from a labor, faith, health, and food and water perspective. In response to a question from the audience, Sr. Carol De Angelo spoke to how groups such as the USCCB, Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, the Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach, and NETWORK Lobby are opposed to fast track, and support transparency, respecting the dignity and worth of every person, and community participation to improve the common good. The USCCB highlights participation of people as a key value. "It is critical that people have a voice in decisions that touch their lives. Human dignity demands transparency and the right of people to participate in decisions that impact them." For more information on how the Catholic groups above address TPP, visit their websites. Learn about TPP and how it will impact us and democracy. Visit Food and Water Watch at <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/global/global-trade/tpp-and-tafta-free-trade-with-a-high-price> Tell friends and colleagues. Call your congresspersons. Tell them: no to fast track.



At the pre-Assembly February 7th meeting, the four Task Forces (Creation's Transformative Energy, Global Poverty, Immigration, and Human Trafficking) and the Church Committee shared how Sisters of Charity of New York are engaged today in a PJIC ministry. Thank you, Task Force / Committee chairs and members, for your GREAT WORK – for your prayer, presence, witness, advocacy and systemic

change efforts.

Carol De Angelo, PJIC Director, February 24, 2015, 718-549-9200 ext. 264.