



## Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary

NGO with special consultative status in the **Economic and Social Council** of the United Nations since 2013 and with the **Department of Public Information** since 2006.

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RSHM at the UN

June 2018

### Peace and Security



Small arms and light weapons are a growing problem throughout the world, killing more than 500,000 people each year. Their regulation remains a unique challenge since three quarters of the 900 million small arms are in

the hands of civilians and most of them are unlicensed. For 10 days in June, Government representatives from around the world gathered at UN HQ to review implementation of the **2001 Global Plan of Action** which commits member states to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. The UN Chef de Cabinet, Ms.

Maria Viotti, highlighted the fact that small arms and light weapons are a factor in large-scale human rights abuses and the forced displacement of civilians and that the control of small arms is a prerequisite for stability and conflict prevention. *“Only through sustainable development will we be able to build just, peaceful and inclusive societies and achieve lasting peace,”* she noted.

At the end of June the Secretary General convened the first ever **UN High-level Conference on Counter-terrorism**. The conference aimed to build a new partnership for multilateral cooperation in order to strengthen the international community’s common commitment to fight the scourge of terrorism.

➔ [Watch the short video](#)

### Paper Lanterns

The documentary film **Paper Lanterns** tells the moving story of Shigeaki Mori, an 8 year old boy who survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in August 1945 when tens of thousands were killed instantly. Mr. Mori, now 81, spoke at the recent screening of the film at a special event held at the UN. Over the years he had transformed his grief into a 43-year quest to investigate the fates of twelve American Prisoners of War who, unbeknownst to the United States, were being held close to the blast site in Hiroshima at the time of the bombing. The film shows how he devoted himself to tracking down the identities of the prisoners, finding and notifying their loved ones, who knew only that they were officially Missing in Action. His kindness extended to inviting their families to visit Hiroshima to come to closure and to honor their memory. Paper Lanterns is a powerful story of courage, determination and reconciliation.



➔ [Read more....](#)

➔ [Watch the short video](#)

### Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons Treaty



The first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons, with the goal of leading towards their total elimination was passed by the **UN General Assembly in July 2017**.

Although little noted in the press, this made history at the UN when 122 states voted in favor of the text of the **Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons treaty**. For the first time ever, a treaty passed without the support of any of the 5 permanent members of the Security Council. The **Holy See** played a key role in the negotiations and the **International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)** was awarded the The Nobel Peace Prize 2017 *“for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons”*. The treaty will come into effect 90 days after the 50<sup>th</sup> country has ratified it.

➔ [Endorse Pax Christi’s Non-violence initiative](#)

### Artificial Intelligence and Weapons

Speaking to the member of **RUN (Religious at the UN)** in early June, **Veronique Chistory**, Weapons expert for the **International Committee of the Red Cross**, spoke of the new and disturbing challenges posed by the application of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** to weapons, and the growing threat that provides to humanity. There are currently 130 types of weapon systems that use AI. These **“robot weapons”** have the capability to identify, select and target victims and to decide who will live and who will die. Much of existing humanitarian law is ill prepared to deal with this challenge. She noted that 3,000 scientists have recently signed a letter to Member States to ask them to ensure that companies will not develop killer robots. She also highlighted the crucial importance of posing ethical questions, a role of vital importance that faith leaders need to play in their advocacy.



➔ [Watch the short video](#)

## The Sustainable Development Goal Report 2018

On 20<sup>th</sup> June the UN launched the “**The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018**”. The report highlights some positive signs of progress in meeting specific targets of the **17 SDGs**. Among these are a significant reduction over the last two decades from 26.9% to 9.2% of people living on less than \$1.90 a day, a 47% drop in under-five mortality rates and doubling the access to electricity in least developed countries.



However, significant challenges threaten the attainment of improved well-being for all. Among the factors most seriously affecting the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups are conflict, climate change and inequality which often deprives women and youth of basic opportunities and rights. The report shows how access to basic services is an important “**stepping stone**” to sustainable development. Societies that are resilient are able to deflect the threat of conflict by investing in improved living conditions, practicing good governance and reducing inequality. Success depends on increased political commitment to the SDGs, implementing good policies and responsibly managing finite resources. ➔ [Watch the short video...](#)



## RSHM News Briefs



❖ The **Model UN** is a popular feature of the programme offered by several of our RSHM Global Network of Schools. “**Rosário MUN**” has been open to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students at Nossa Senhora do Rosário School in Porto for the last few years. Since 2016 it has been open to students from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> Grade and 160 students participated in the 2017 Conference. On the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> June 2018 a second major **Rosário MUN Conference** was held, and 10 students from the RSHM school in Lisbon were invited to participate. The themes debated in the Human Rights Council and the Economic and Social Council included the theme of **Artificial Intelligence**.



❖ During the **RSHM Enlarged General Council (EGC) meeting held in Sag Harbor** in mid June, our **JPIC NGO** had the opportunity to share a report and update on their work over the last year in addressing the commitments made at the last RSHM General Chapter. **Mary Jo McElroy RSHM** prepared a power-point presentation and joined the group by Skype to present it while **Veronica Brand RSHM** presented in person, sharing the work of the RSHM NGO with the aid of power-point. Members of the EGC were engaged in the discussion and in action.



On World Refugee day, members of the EGC registered and did a “**Share the Journey**” walk in solidarity with refugees and migrants around the world, thereby adding a few more miles to the “round the world” CARITAS pilgrimage. We remembered our RSHM “ancestors” who first walked the same streets of Sag Harbor near St. Andrews in the 1877. *We all have migrant DNA!*

❖ During the months of May and June, Veronica RSHM was part of a team of NGO representatives from the **NGO Committee on Migration** who visited many **Permanent Missions to the UN** to advocate for specific issues relating to human rights of migrants to be included in the Global Compact on Migration. The Permanent Missions she visited included those of **Tuvalu, Mali and Fiji** where meetings were held with the Ambassador or his representative.



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