

THE GENERALATE
SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME
VIA DELLA STAZIONE AURELIA, 95
00165 ROMA, ITALIA

March 6, 1992

*Provincial Council
345 Belden Hill Road
Wilton, CT 06897*

Dear Provincial Council,

We greet you from Rome, where there are so many signs of the new life that Spring brings.

We would like to share with you some of our plans. The General Council has decided to present a proposal to the 1992 General Chapter. This proposal will ask the General Chapter delegates to consider whether the congregation should seek Non-governmental Organization (NGO) status with the United Nations.

Some of you will remember that such a proposal was made to the 1977 General Chapter. This chapter entrusted the decision concerning Non-governmental Organization status to the General Council. Following a report of a study group consisting of sisters from West Europe and North America, the General Council announced to the 1980 Extended General Council in Sao Paulo: “. . .We feel that the congregation as a whole cannot give unified support to the issue at this time. Therefore, our decision is that, as a congregation, we will not seek NGO status at the United Nations.”

Twelve years have passed since the decision was made not to seek NGO status. There is no word that adequately describes how and how quickly our world has changed in the years since 1980. Our SSND sense of and desire for internationality has increased vastly in the same time span. The United Nations has also changed. We witness more and more its humanitarian endeavors and its efforts at nonviolent resolutions of conflicts.

We have received requests and a proposal to reconsider the School Sisters of Notre Dame seeking NGO status at the United Nations. It may be helpful for you if we include here a definition of NGOs as stated by the United Nations:

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are non-profit

citizen's voluntary organizations nationally or internationally. NGOs are diverse in structure, membership and financial support. Some are active in information and education; others are operational and are engaged in technical projects, relief, refugee and development programmes.

The General Council intends to propose to the General Chapter that the School Sisters of Notre Dame become affiliated with the UN. With the presentation of this proposal, we want to have adequate and detailed information about NGO status available. Our desire is that the decision regarding NGO status be made by the General Chapter. Therefore, we are asking your collaboration in the preparation of the proposal and in the gathering of information. It is important to us that this information be representative of the four major areas.

We request the provincial and regional leaders of each major area to appoint a contact sister to assist us. The provincial leader who is responsible for the leadership meeting in a major area will communicate with the provincial/regional leaders of her area in order to decide upon the contact sister.

The contact sisters' task will be to gather information about NGO status and the United Nations in her major area. Their research and reflections will be used in writing the proposal and providing appropriate information at the general chapter. Sister Maria da Conceicao della Giustina, general councilor, is the liaison with the general council for this work and Sister M. Henrita Frost, Resource Staff, is the chairperson for it. The generalate and the contact sisters will communicate with each other via FAX, telephone and mail.

In order to facilitate the process of selecting a contact sister we include:

- 1. timeline,*
- 2. list of qualities that it might be helpful for the sister to have,*
- 3. items about which we need information,*
- 4. a question for her reflection and sharing with us.*

Thank you for your collaboration. We ask for your prayers and support as we undertake this project. We welcome any reflections and feedback that you may want to offer. May the days of Lent be a time of blessedness and grace for each of you. Let us unite with each other in prayer.

Gratefully yours

*Sr. MConceicao Della Giustina (signature)
Sister Maria da Conceicao Della Giustina
General Councilor*

M. Henrita Frost (signature)

*Sister M. Henrita Frost
Resource Staff*

TIMELINE

- Week of
03/02/92 Letters are mailed to the provincial/regional councils requesting the
appointment of a contact person.*
- 04/07/92 The names of the contact sisters are received by this date.*
- 04/09/92 Each of the four sisters is called by telephone and sent a letter clarifying
the task she is being asked to do. FAX will also be used.*
- 06/10/92 Each sister is requested to have the information to Rome by this date.*
- 07/01/92 The first draft of the proposal is given to the general council and the
contact sisters for their feedback.*
- 09/01/92 The final draft is reviewed and given to the preparatory commission, so
that it can be prepared for the general chapter.*

SUGGESTED QUALITIES FOR CONTACT SISTER

- 1. Interested in issues of Justice, Peace, Environment, etc.*
- 2. Able to research and synthesize materials*
- 3. Capable of being objective regarding the UN*
- 4. Convinced of the value of doing this task*
- 5. Desirous of gathering this information*
- 6. Able to be in contact with UN's offices in her area*

ITEMS FOR RESEARCH

Some of this information is factual and easily available. However, we ask this research because we desire that the information gathered will reflect the role of the United Nations in the major area from which information comes.

1. *Impressions of the United Nations as a world organization*
2. *Opinion about the UN that is prevalent in your respective major area*
3. *Level of NGO status which is most utilized in your respective major area*
4. *Positive and negative aspects of membership*
5. *Influence NGOs can have on the policies and activities of the UN*
6. *Obligations of membership*
7. *Procedures for communications (giving and receiving of)*
8. *Opportunities for Christian influence*
9. *Collaboration with other religious groups*
10. *Study how NGOs educated their membership regarding the implications of NGO status and about how the members could be involved in the work of the United Nations*
11. *Ways the congregation can be represented as an NGO at the UN (designated person(s), office at UN, proxy, etc.)*

QUESTION FOR REFLECTION

After the contact sister has completed her research, she is asked to reflect on the following question. We invite her to send the reflection with her report.

How could NGO status at the United Nations enable us to

1. *Live out our charism to the poor, women and children,*
2. *Strengthen our global responsibility,*
3. *Expand our world vision?*