

To: General Chapter Members
From: General Council
Re: The School Sisters of Notre Dame seeking association with
the United Nations as a Non-governmental Organization (NGO)
Date: September 28, 1992

BACKGROUND

Considering the possibility of the School Sisters of Notre Dame seeking Non-governmental Organization (NGO) status at the United Nations, the general council, in 1989, asked Sister M. Henrita Frost to research information about this status. This project included a study of the history of the proposal about NGO status at the United Nations which was presented to the 1997 General Chapter, visits to the United Nations Headquarters in New York and dialogue with groups, particularly the North American Interprovincial Committee in Mission for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

In April 1992 the general council established an International Committee of four sisters, one from each of the major areas. These four sisters, Sisters Helena Arns (PA), Kordia Puskely (MG) Karin Kuttner (ÖR) and Mary Beth Reissen (SL), were asked to research information about NGO status at the United Nations in their respective major area. The group did not meet together, but conducted all communications by FAX, telephone and mail.

The committee's research was studied by Sister M. Henrita. Based on the findings of their research, the sisters of the International Committee supported that the School Sisters of Notre Dame seek association with the United Nations as a Non-governmental Organization. A proposal considering this matter was then written, reviewed by the committee and revised. After study and review of the proposal by the general council the final draft was prepared.

RATIONALE

As women religious "our mission is to proclaim the good news as School Sisters of Notre Dame, directing our entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent" (YAS C 4). At this time in our salvation history, striving to fulfill this mission, we have come to a kairos moment -a moment of conversion, a moment of truth, a moment of decision – as we call and challenge ourselves to RISK IN FAITH FOR A MORE JUST AND TRULY HUMAN WORLD.

The WORLD, the tangible situation in which we carry out Christ's mission, was described the delegates to the 18th General Chapter, in the Directional Statement, as a place where there were "...many opportunities for building a more human world..." One of these opportunities is collaboration with international organizations.

To RISK IN FAITH FOR A MORE JUST AND TRULY HUMAN WORLD is an expression of our desire to transform our WORLD from a place of despair and desperation which flows from its many life threatening problems into a place of hope and joy, which characterizes the reign of God. The theme of the 19th General Chapter impels us to be a collaborative congregation. We know that we cannot transform the WORLD alone. No congregation, no group, no one can

do this alone; therefore, we need to collaborate and we need to act!

We believe that one way of participating in transforming the world is association with the United Nations. The United Nations has many responsibilities for the earth and her peoples. Essentially, their mission is to promote harmonious and just relationships among nations. We, too, have global responsibilities, and we believe that dialogue, mutuality and collaboration with the United Nations is an opportunity to enhance our potential for JUSTICE, PEACE and the INTEGRITY OF CREATION which announces the reign of God and denounces injustice. This is a kairos moment - a moment of grace. Therefore,

PROPOSAL

THE GENERAL COUNCIL PROPOSES THAT THE CONGREGATION OF THE SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME SEEK ASSOCIATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS AS A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION.

ACTIONS REQUESTED

1. We request that the members of the 19th General Chapter empower the general council to apply to the United Nations for the School Sisters of Notre Dame to become associated with them as a Non-governmental Organization (NGO) at the Office of Public Information at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.
2. We also request that the general council seek the necessary personnel to minister at the United Nations Headquarters in New York and to network within our congregation. (Cf: YAS C 113e)
- 3.* We further request that the general council initiate an evaluation of this status and present the results of it with recommendations to the 1997 General Chapter.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. We believe that our presence, as an international congregation, at the United Nations would assure us an opportunity to collaborate ecumenically on global concerns and an opportunity to have a Christian influence on issues being considered by the United Nations.
2. We also believe that this association with the United Nations and networking with the NGO community would open up for us possibilities to animate ethical and sustainable models of development through our ministry of education.
3. We further believe that our congregational presence at the United Nations could enable us as women to have a role in global transformation – in the creation of a “NEW WORLD ORDER”.
4. Finally we believe that our participation in the humanitarian endeavors of the United Nations community could be a RISK IN FAITH FOR A MORE JUST AND TRULY HUMAN WORLD.

FINAL REMARKS

The United Nations as a human institution has its gifts and limitations. Some say that as an instrument of peace it is a fragile organization; it is dominated by the powerful nations; it is hindered by too much bureaucracy and requires restructuring. However, we trust that the United Nations is an organization of hope for the future of humankind. We recognize that this world organization is in need of religious women who believe and act as citizens of the WORLD, who hope they can further Christ's mission, and who love enough to respond to a kairos moment in their salvation history and RISK IN FAITH FOR A MORE JUST AND TRULY HUMAN WORLD.

- * Action requested, number 3, was amended by the General Chapter to read:
- 3. We further recommend that during the next five years, the general council:
 - give a report to the EGC: (Extended General Chapter of SSND)
[typist note : this bracketed information was hand written in this document]
 - evaluate our association with the United Nations at an appropriate time;
 - give a report to the 1997 General Chapter.