

Letter from Gary Sealey June 14, 2009

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Servas International, which is affiliated with UN DPI, is pleased to provide its 4-year report on activities.

We wanted to preface the report with some background on Servas. Much additional information is available on our website at: <http://www.servas.org> and also on our Servas volunteer website at <http://www.siexco.org>

This is the 60th anniversary of Servas. We are celebrating the values of Peace and non-violence globally. UN officials are very welcome to join us.

Gary Sealey

Preface: Notes on Servas

Servas is recognized as Roster NGO.

Servas is distributed all over the world, like the UN. Many of our member groups are in the Global South, as well as in the North.

Servas is organized on a local level. National Member Groups are qualified when they have more than ten members and meet certain other conditions identified in the Servas International Statutes. Some national member groups include over 1000 households each; some link several hundred households.

Together, a total of about 15,000 Servas households receive about 10,000 Servas travelers annually. Inter-personal and international communication between travelers and hosts is a direct contribution to global peace, through intercultural understanding and friendship.

Servas participates in the activities of DPI and makes use of DPI information, briefings and conferences.

Servas disseminates information about UN issues among its UN Observer teams and at the Servas International General Assemblies (the next one of which will be held near Buenos Aires, Argentina). We also assist CONGO. Our Servas Observer team at New York is particularly active in this regard, in helping with the briefing activities of NGO's at New York.

In addition, Servas includes reference to the UN on its Website (which has over 200,000 “hits” per year). And as well, we occasionally publish highlights of UN activities in the widely distributed Servas News. The SI Editor of Servas News personally attended the NGO meetings at the DPI briefings in Paris, in 2008.

Through Servas USA, Servas has been in contact with UN Department of Public to request very specific activities that local people can do to support UN efforts especially Millenium Development Goals and International Declaration of Human Rights.

Of course, Servas wants to continue to educate and involve our members locally.

We could advance our goals considerably, if the UN DPI could develop more specific ideas to engage local advocates and learners.

For instance, UN USA is very Active in Berkeley California. They have speakers, films, UN publications for purchase.

To engage more Servas members, there could be more practical educational (adult learning and adult conferencing documents) placed by UN on line and a resource directory about each website/product. For instance, a catalogue of resource materials, with brief description of them, like a book review listing.

Feedback from our Peace Secretaries (Servas has Peace Secretaries established in several countries) welcomes the information already placed on sponsored UN workshops/presentations.

However, there is a strong feeling UN materials are not sufficiently designed to help NGO’s cultivate the engagement of local people, particularly in developed countries.

Reports on workshops are presented do not stress sufficiently the actions needed, and local support required for workshop findings. There seems to be a disconnect between concept and action.

Servas has been asking for opportunities to promote the UN to its many Youth Members. We see education and practical experience in the work of the UN as potentially life-changing and career building.

Servas National Groups -- UN/Peace Practices

Servas reached out to Indigenous peoples in Colombia at its recent meetings in Latin America. This is a low cost and informative way of extending the Servas approach. We would be pleased to do more of this outreach, and we would be gratified by more information on local activities of the UN to which we could draw attention of our membership.

Some Servas National member groups are revising their Host Directories (to make more UN points and justice-seeking non-government affiliates Day Hosts). We may ask Servas interviewers and Servas Travelers to perform and report as Peace Observers - in everyday life and at schools

and other sites of learning (universities, museums, libraries) and visiting neighbourhoods of poverty, dislocation, immigration; and when traveling, including through zones of tension as well as places of over-development.

We are considering how could some or even many Travelers become Peace Reporters. The activities and observations of some Servas Travelers would likely be of interest to the UN and we and the UN could display some of them on our websites.

Servas is developing a Peace Education course. We have other Peace training and exploration activities, and some of them have been established for years. We have been invited to cooperate at the university level in developing Servas Peace learning activities suitable for learners at universities and schools, charitable groups and in cooperation with UNESCO. [e.g. Parts of Servas USA are already reaching out, vigorously this way, to international student bodies and others, and as a result, Servas, activities, friendships and contacts are growing.]

On the side of “needs”

Some Peace Secretaries and UN Observers feel a need for more direction and input – but no National Secretary supported nor felt this need so strongly that he or she requested an addition to the formal agenda of the Servas General Assembly.

However, there is a strong focus on Peace at that General Assembly, and the Servas International Agenda Working Group siga2009awg@googlegroups.com has been given a copy of this report, complete with the following two recommendations:

That:

- 1) The GA should be asked to approve a set plan for Servas UN work.
- 2) The Servas UN Plan should link, clarify roles, and commit the Servas UN Observing Teams.[1]

National secretaries can also follow up the UN Observer Reports going to the GA. And we can act on this following Servas report to the UN. Servas Statutes do specifically recognize the role of UN Observers and Peace Secretaries as areas requiring active leadership.

Servas does not have a focus on one or two areas for global attention by Servas; our scope is general and broad.

All of Servas have access to thousands of UN points of presence, all over the world, and access to a vast community of justice-seeking groups.

National Secretaries may use their status in the Servas UN/Peace network to make more friendships and peace understandings for their Servas team.

There is a real opportunity for Servas Youth and others to build skills, careers and get recognition and encouragement for their personal and professional development, through these connections -- and to strengthen Servas.

Servas International UN Quadrennial Report

Who/what is Servas International?

Servas International is an international, non-profit, non-governmental federation of national Servas groups, encompassing an international network of hosts and travellers. The purpose of the network is to help build world peace, goodwill and understanding by providing opportunities for personal contacts among people of different cultures, backgrounds and nationalities.

What does Servas International do vis-a-vis the work of the United Nations?

Servas International promotes the principles of global ethics by its commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect life, tolerance and a life of truthfulness and equal rights and partnerships between men and women.

Servas International participates in the work of the United Nations with the help of Representatives working at UN Offices in New York, Vienna, Geneva and Paris. Servas International has made valuable contributions to the international community by drawing attention to issues, suggesting ideas and programs, disseminating information and mobilizing public opinion in support of the UN system. Servas International is expected to devote a portion of information programs to promoting knowledge of the United Nations principles and activities. Below is a summary of the activities Servas International participated and contributed in during the period 2005-2008.

2005

a. New York

- 22 June: Interfaith Cooperation for Peace
- 7-9 September: 58th Annual DPI/NGO conference: “Our Challenge: Voices for Peace, Partnerships and Renewal”. Servas International served as member of the Planning Committee;
- 21 September: “ International Day of Peace” (Michael Douglas)
- 6 October: “International Day of Older Persons”
- 27 October: “The Spirit of the United Nations: Markings for the Future” – event 60th Anniversary of the UN and the 100th Anniversary of the birth of Dag Hammarskjold (Second Secretary-General of the UN)
- Art project: “Open your HEARTS”

2006

a. New York

- 7 February: “Civil Society Forum” : “A Decade of Poverty: Ways Forward”
- 16 February: Communication Workshop on how to make relevant UN-related information more easily accessible to NGOs around the World
- 22-23 February: Annual DPI/NGO Orientation Program for newly accredited NGO representatives to provide an overview of services and procedures relating to NGO activities at United Nations Headquarters
- 3 March: Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)
- 6-8 September: 59th DPI/NGO Conference, “Unfinished Business: Effective Partnership”

2007

a. New York

- 12 April: The NGO Committee on Mental Health; CCC/UN; “The Role of the Media: Promoting Psychological Well-Being Globally”
- 4 June: 19th Annual Information Security Conference
- 5-7 September: 60th Annual DPI/NGO Conference at United Nations Headquarters in New York. More than 2,000 representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) from over 80 countries attended roundtables, panels and workshops during the 3-day event. The Conference aims to facilitate individual action plans that address the threat of catastrophe posed by climate change and inspire participants to take action of this environmental crisis. Gary Sealey, Noema Chaplin, Kim Jong-soo, Hector Peralta N.S., Marian Voetberg, Fred Seiden, Jan Conley, Laura Davidson, Dr. Ramesh Sharma were delegates for this conference. Grant Barnes, Mary Jane Mikuriya, Judy Sears, Rolande Hodel, Helga Smith, Carole Wagner, and Edgar Oscar Atadero were active participants during this conference. Servas members promote partnership for freedom of speech, of association; freedom to travel connected the world.
- 23 October: General Assembly 62 Session: Third High Level Dialogue on Financing for Development
- 25 November: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

b. Vienna

- 30 April – 11 May: As member of the NGO Committee on Peace, Servas International attended the Preparatory Committee Meeting for the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Servas International members nearby were invited to participate. A Servas International member was one of the speakers at the Conference and other members became hosts to some conference participants.
- 26-29 June: 7th Global Forum on Reinventing Government—Building Trust in Government (Conference)
- 17-18 September: Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (also called Article XIV Conference) at the Hofburg in Vienna. A Servas International point-person was involved in the overall NGO-work and discussions on the topics of the Conference.

2008

a. New York

- 25 February – 7 March: 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): “Financing for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women”
- 1 April: “Recognizing the achievements addressing the challenges and getting back on track to achieve the MDG’s by 2015” Thematic Debates
- 9 June: “Global private investments and climate change” informal meeting of the General Assembly
- 2 July: The Human Dimension of Global Climate change: addressing the Social, Economic And Human Rights Dimensions
- 8 July: Thematic Debate on General Assembly: Climate change and the most vulnerable countries
- 10 July: Update on the work of the General Assembly: NGO Briefing

- 10 July: 20th Annual ICT for Sustainable Economic, Business and Social Development
- 11 July: Conference: Learn How You Can Release ICT's Hidden Potential, and Innovate at the CIO and CISO Level; Co-sponsors and Partners: ECOSOC, IBM, ISIS, AIT Global, New American Chamber of Commerce, MCC, US Secret Service, ECTF, The Institute of Internal Auditors, Women in technology international, Info World Media Group, etc.
- 18 September: International gathering in New York City, Fordham University: UN report 2008 Paris conference, "Reaffirming human rights for all: The Universal Declaration at 60"; Presentation "Peace, Women". NGO Committee on Human Settlements
- 23 September: "2008 Treaty Event Toward universal participation and implementation - DIGNITY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL OF US" provides a distinct opportunity for States to demonstrate their continuing commitment to the central role of the rule of law in international relations.
- 25 September: High Level Event on the Millennium Development Goals. Governments, foundations, businesses and civil society groups have rallied around the call to slash poverty, hunger and disease by 2015, by announcing new commitments to meet the Millennium Development Goals, at a high-level event at United Nations Headquarters on 25 September 2008.
- 6 October: World Habitat Day forum "Harmonious Cities" in Fordham University and UN Headquarters. Question: How "homeless" problem related with Universal Declaration of Human Rights; PHOTO: Present "Universal Declaration of Human Rights"
- 16 October: United Nations University: UNU Midday Forum: "Millennium Development Goals – Are they fair to women" at Liaison Office of the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union with the UN. Dr. Jean-Marc Coicud- Director, UNU office at the UN; Mr. Ad Melkert – UN Undersecretary General and Associate Administrator, UNDP
- 5 November: United Nations University: "Global Citizenship to action? Civil Society and accountable Global Governance"
- 13 November: UNA/USA Business Council meeting
- 17 November: The Business Council for the United Nations event "A Conversation about Cyber Defense", A Global Forum for Business Leaders;
- 19 November: Conference on "Legislative Reform to Achieve Human Rights" - UNICEF, hosted with funding from the European Union and with the support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Elizabeth Gibbons, Associate Director, Policy and Practice, UNICEF
- 20 November: DPI/NGO briefing: "Violence against Women: 16 days to make a difference"
- 25 November: High Level event on "United Voices say no to violence against women" on the occasion of the Elimination of Violence against Women (organized by UNIFEM), ECOSOC Chamber, UN Headquarters; UN Secretary General H.E. Ban Ki Moon and and Ambassador of Goodwill Nicole Kidman. International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- 10 December: Human Rights Day. 60 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

b. Geneva

- The Servas International delegation attended the meetings of the Human Rights Council (Council)
 - Seventh Session - 3 to 28 March 2008
 - Eighth Session - 2 to 18 June 2008
 - Ninth Session - 8 to 24 September 2008
 - Special Eighth Session on “The situation of Human Rights in the East of the Democratic Republic of the Congo” - 28 November 2008
- The Servas International delegation took part in the meetings of the Working Group on Human Rights Education & Learning and had the opportunity to join the written and oral statements of the working group before the Council.

c. Paris

- 30 August: Servas International participated in the “NGO Village” in Paris. The DPI NGO conference relating to humanitarian and peace issues was due to take place during the week of 2 - 5 August 2008, at UNESCO in Paris. The NGO Village had been devised by the mayor of Paris as a way of introducing Parisians to NGOs that were working on Humanitarian and Peace issues. Servas International’s participation was aimed at talking to people about Servas, educating them about the meaning of Servas, informing them about its activities, discussing the organization’s role in the world, and encouraging people to join Servas as a way of creating a more peaceful world.
- 3-5 September: 61st DPI/NGO conference: “Reaffirming Human Rights for ALL”

d. Vienna

- January: Since January, a Servas International contact person has been a Board Member of the Committee on the Status of Women and is functioning as Secretary of the Committee
 - 13-15 February: The Vienna Forum to Fight Human Trafficking.
 - 14 October: Committee on the Status of Women Special Event entitled “Equal sharing of responsibilities of men and women, including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS”. Elke Schlitz, a long-time Servas member and Director of the HIV-AIDS House in Vienna, was one of the panellists.
 - Servas Representatives at UN-Vienna are also involved in the activities of the NGO Committee on Human Rights as well in setting up as in regularly meetings and events. One of the members of this Committee is Manfred Nowak, UN-special rapporteur on torture, well known from other Human Rights activities in Austria.
 - The newly-founded NGO Committee on Outer Space seems to be very interesting and on a very high technical level. One member of Servas is working on that field and is in contact with this Committee.
 - Servas Representatives in Vienna are partly involved in the activities (i.e. meetings and reports) of CONGO.
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[1] From Evaluation of Servas International's Work with the UN

- a. Servas International's work with the UN in general and work at key UN offices in specific can be maximized given a structure and system, a plan, formulated and agreed upon by the general membership of Servas. Such a structure and system will not only develop Servas as an organization and as an international community but it will enable the network to substantially and concretely contribute to the work of the UN. This plan should include among many other things, ensuring that the UN process and structure be more relevant to the Servas members (hosts and travellers) in all countries, especially in areas where, for example, peace is a critical issue. In building the plan, it would make sense to start by making a general inventory of the involvement and expertise of Servas vis-a-vis the process and structure of UN at key and satellite offices. This plan should also be flexible enough so as to address global as well as national-local issues and to explore emerging issues relevant to Servas members.
- b. Based on the reports of Servas representatives, it is somewhat unclear whether their participation in UN activities is as local-country Servas members or as official representatives of Servas International. In the Servas International plan of participation in the UN, the network should be able to maximize the existing resources and involvement of Servas members at each UN office and to effectively incorporate them in the plan making room for official representation and accountability with Servas International.