

## **“MEDIA FOR A CULTURE OF PEACE: CHILDREN’S RIGHTS, TOMORROW’S PROMISE”**

*UNESCO and UNICEF have together proclaimed a "Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World". All must work to make this aspiration a reality. The Family of Nations must work to make it a reality precisely for the good of all the children of today's world, many of whom have known nothing but war. We must make it a reality in order to give those children and all the children of the new century a new hope and a new future. In reality, it is the children of the world who will make the choice for peace. This generation must put them in a position to do so, through the creation of a true culture of peace. (Holy See Delegation to the United Nations General Assembly Thursday, 2 November 2000)*

RATIONALE – SIGNIS World Congress 2009 (Chiangmai, Thailand 17-21 October 2009)

SIGNIS, the World Catholic Association for Communication came into being in November 2001, with the merger of Unda (the International Catholic Association for Radio and Television) and OCIC (International Catholic Organization for Cinema and Audiovisual). SIGNIS inherited the best of the traditions of Unda and OCIC, both of which were founded in 1928. As such SIGNIS turns 80 in November 2008!

As a worldwide association of Catholics communication professionals, SIGNIS (and its Unda/OCIC predecessors) has been committed to using the media as instruments for peace building, development and the promotion of human dignity. SIGNIS also has had a special concern for the rights and interests of children. OCIC, for example, was one of the founders of CIFEJ (International Centre of Films for Children and Young People) and Unda was a pioneer of media education.

SIGNIS was founded in 2001, the opening year of the United Nations International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010). Not surprisingly SIGNIS has been a strong supporter of the Decade. “Media for a Culture of Peace” was the theme of its first World Congress in 2005. The Congress concluded with the Declaration of Lyon committing SIGNIS to promote peace through and in the media.

Children are most vulnerable members of society; without respect for their dignity and rights we cannot build a culture of peace. Numerous efforts, including those of SIGNIS members, are underway, at international, inter-governmental and local levels, to

secure a better future for our children -- tomorrow's promise. That is why SIGNIS decided to choose 'Media for a Culture of Peace – Children's Rights, Tomorrow's Promise' as the theme for its next World Congress to be held in Chiangmai, Thailand (17-21 October 2009).

The Congress will highlight how the media can contribute to the building of a culture of peace, especially through the creative efforts of children themselves. It will also encourage professional communicators to make children's rights a priority in their work.

The objectives of the Congress are to:

- Promote a culture of peace and the rights of the child;
- Inspire and give a new impetus to Catholic media professionals to make a culture of peace and children's right priorities in their work;
- Celebrate the creativity and take stock of the rich achievements of Catholic communicators;
- Reflect on the issue, sharing ideas, experiences, insights and strategies among communicators from across the world;
- Update communicators with knowledge and skills;
- Offer solidarity and mutual support to communicators, some of whom are working in very difficult situations.

The programme is built around three strands; (1) Children's Rights - Human Rights (2) Transforming Media, Transforming Society and (3) Growing up in a Digital World. Linked to each of these strands up to 16 workshops will deepen the reflection, further elaborate and discuss practical perspectives of how participants can engage in the creative use of media to bring about a culture of peace which enhances children's rights.

#### Congress Keynotes

In order to highlight the issues raised in the different strands, there will be three major keynote addresses. These keynote presentations will set the context and background for the discussions and activities in the working sessions. Some keynote speakers have been identified but as negotiations are still ongoing names and backgrounds will be furnished at a later date.

#### 1. Congress Strand: Children's Rights-Human Rights

The first keynote will present the major issues and trends in the area of human rights and children. This session will also touch on the moral issues raised in the use of media to promote human rights and the dangers of media used to instigate hatred and violence. Keynote speaker not yet confirmed.

#### 2. Congress Strand: Transforming Media, Transforming Society

The second keynote will highlight innovating means of using 'new' and 'old' media to effect social transformation. The keynote address will be given by Prof Jan Servaes, one of the world's leading experts in media for development.

### 3. Congress strand: Growing up in a Digital World

The third keynote will focus on the challenges (and opportunities) offered to new generations by the advance of digital technologies. It will look at how the potential inherent in the media can be harnessed so that the lives and rights of children and young people can be enhanced. The main speaker will be new media expert Michael Hertl from the German public broadcaster, ZDF.

#### Congress Working Sessions

There is the possibility of 16 working sessions linked to the strands. The sessions will elaborate more deeply the keynote issues within the various fields of activity.

#### Special Activities

In addition to the working sessions there will also be a number of other events and activities within the Congress framework