

Participation – March 2017

March 8—International Women’s Day



International Women’s Day

The theme for 2017 International Women’s Day (IWD) is “Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030”. Women’s Day celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. This day also challenges us to continue working

vigorously for the equality of women throughout the world. While much progress has been made, the rate of this progress has slowed in recent years. The United Nations (UN) Sustainability Goals specifically recognize that global sustainable development requires equal participation by women, placing gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Measures that are key to ensuring women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work must include equal pay for equal work; recognizing women’s unpaid care and domestic work and addressing the gender deficit in care work; addressing the gender gaps in

leadership, entrepreneurship and access to social protection; and ensuring gender-responsive economic policies for job creation, poverty reduction and sustainable, inclusive growth:

It also includes protecting women from violence in the workplace which creates a more productive workplace for everyone.

Oh Holy One, our hearts are strengthened and opened in new ways when we encounter your love and dedication revealed in women around the world. As we work for a future of justice and caring, may we respect and empower women and girls to live fully, without fear, filled with hope and determination. May each of us live up to our full potential, embracing all of creation as a revelation of your divine love.



March 21—Week of Solidarity Against Racism and Racial Discrimination

March 21st begins the UN week of solidarity against racism and racial discrimination. On March 21, 1960, police opened fire and killed 69

people at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid "pass laws" in Sharpeville, South Africa. Proclaiming the Day in 1966, the General Assembly called on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. Ethnic and racial discrimination occur around the world, hindering the development of millions of people. Racism fractures communities and has fueled personal violence and instances of genocide. Racism often unpins anti-indigenous and anti-immigrant sentiments. In 2001, the World Conference against Racism produced the most authoritative and comprehensive program for combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance: the [Durban Declaration and Programme of Action](#). In April 2009, the [Durban Review Conference](#) examined global progress made in overcoming racism and concluded that much remained to be achieved. The greatest

accomplishment of the conference was the renewed international commitment to the anti-racism agenda.

This week we pray in a special way for a change of heart for all people of the world. May we come to know deep within ourselves that we are all one, brothers and sisters to each other and children of a loving creator. May we come to appreciate the blessing of the diversity of our human family, with each race, culture and ethnicity revealing the divine in a unique way. May God help us all to respect, treasure and nurture our common humanity.



March 22—World Water Day

This Day was established in 1993 by the UN to raise awareness among all people of the need to protect and conserve the precious gift of water. Due to global climate change, the world's underground water reservoirs are running low. Surface fresh water supplies are also dwindling, with lakes and rivers in many parts of the world at all time low levels. These decreases are easily seen and alarming to everyone. But the depletion of below the surface aquifers is not visible. These sources of fresh water are being used at alarming rates, far beyond what nature is able to replenish. Both protection from pollution and

conservation in utilization are needed.

God, we praise you for sister Water. She sustains life on our planet, quenching our thirst, watering our crops and soothing our weary bodies and spirits. Help us to be grateful for this precious gift. Help us to realize that access to water is a human right shared by all of us. May we care lovingly for the sources of water on which we depend and may we use water wisely.



Shackles used to bind slaves displayed at the Transatlantic Slave Trade multimedia exhibit at UN Headquarters. UN Photo/Mark Garten

March 25—International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The 2017 theme is: "Remember Slavery: Recognizing the Legacy and Contributions of People of African Descent." This UN day of remembrance has been held annually since 2008. Over 17 million Africans were transported to the Americas during 16th to the mid-19th centuries, with many millions more dying in route. This day is a special day for remembering—remembering all those who were sold into slavery; those who died during the treacherous Atlantic crossing; those who

lived, sometimes for generations, as slaves; and those who suffer today because of the racism that still exists in many parts of the world as an inheritance of the slave trade. This day is also a time to remind ourselves of the dangers of racism and prejudice that make enslavement of other human beings possible. This year's theme calls us to remember how enslaved people and their ancestors helped shape our countries, cultures and customs. We honor their contributions to science, medicine, government, music, food, dance, architecture and literally every aspect of life.

God, we ask forgiveness for the great sin of racism and seeing "the other" as "less than". Help each of us to love and cherish one another as members of one human family. Give us the courage to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters whenever anyone is threatened, attacked or coerced. Make us peacemakers. Even when our own lives could be at risk, give us the grace to step forward and protect one another in love. May we all work to end all forms of human slavery.