

# SPC News

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## Transforming our world: the Sustainable Development Goals

Bruce Duncan

Every other week, major research reports warn of the growing impact on our planet of climate change. This week, President Obama has been in Alaska warning about the warming of the Arctic regions and the likely consequences.

Global authorities are taking concerted action. More than 150 leaders will attend the UN Sustainable Development Summit 25-27 September in New York to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to eradicate the worst poverty, increase the sharing of prosperity, and tackle climate change.

UN member states agreed on 2 August on an outcome document for the summit, with the title *Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, said this heralded “an historic turning point for the world”, aiming to end poverty everywhere, and leaving no one behind.

We heard this rhetoric fifteen years ago in relation to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were somewhat oversold at the time. The Goals aimed high, intending to galvanise global efforts on lifting human wellbeing for poor and developing countries.



Though many countries fell short of various goals and targets, others made significant advances. Globally, the extent of severe poverty was halved, and the campaign to inoculate children against the major childhood diseases achieved significant results, cutting the number of deaths among children under five from 12.7 million a year in 1990 to nearly 6 million in 2015. Some countries have cut the child mortality rate by more than the target of two-thirds, but most are still on the way.

Targets were reached for providing access to clean drinking water and gender equity in primary and secondary schooling. But although significant improvements were made in these areas globally, we did not reach targets set for gender equity and empowerment of women, sanitation, reducing severe hunger, and maternal mortality.

Bear in mind that the MDG campaign was undermined by the Global Financial Crisis, which limited the financial support from international funding agencies and sources.

### Lecture series

## Emeritus Professor Joseph Camilleri OAM

**A world in ferment, risks, & opportunities**

**Tuesdays September 8, 15, 22, 29 2015, 6-8pm**

**St Michael's Hall 120 Collins Street Melbourne**

\$15 per lecture, \$50 for the series. See our website for details.

Civil wars and conflicts in a number of countries also hampered efforts to implement the Goals, particularly in parts of Africa and the Middle East.

The SDGs intend to marshal renewed efforts to extend international cooperation to eradicate hunger and the grossest poverty, lift living standards, and at the same time to introduce urgent measures to sustain the environment. They have been designed after looking closely at the MDGs, to see what worked and what did not, to learn from them and extend them.

The number of Goals has increased from the eight of the MDGs to 17 in the SDGs. These now elevate attention on the consequences of climate change and how to alleviate its impact, as well as on renewed efforts in peacemaking, justice, and capacity building. The SDGs also include measures in developed countries, not just in sustainability issues, but concerning social equity.

Encouraged by the economist, Joseph Stiglitz, the SDGs include a new goal to ensure that the proportion of income growth of the bottom 40% of a population increases more strongly than the national average in each country. Goal 10 to “Reduce inequality within and between countries” is aimed at reversing the further concentration of wealth in the hands of the top percents.

According to a recent report by Oxfam, 80 billionaires control as much wealth as the poorest 3.5 billion people on the planet. This is simply an astonishing affront to common sense, as well as to our instinctive convictions that the earth belongs to everyone and should be shared reasonably equitably.

The Sustainable Development Goals, with 17 goals and 169 specific targets, highlight that we are all in this together, and include measures to modify unsustainable production and consumption, attend to inadequate infrastructure, moderate the growth of cities, and increase worthwhile employment. They stress the need for increased international collaboration among everyone involved in all the related areas.

If we are to save our planet and our peoples from unprecedented cascading disasters, the Sustainable Development Goals are pointing the way forward, as well as providing a detailed roadmap. We all have work to do.



And they reminisce over better days..., Alex Proimos, flickr cc.

## A super time for all?

Melbourne lawyer **Tony French** points out the major problems with our current superannuation and pension schemes, particularly from the point of view of social and inter-generational equity. He writes that superannuation was not meant to be a means to

transfer wealth to one's offspring, but to ensure a reasonable standard of living after being in the paid workforce. He suggests how we can improve superannuation and other retirement measures.

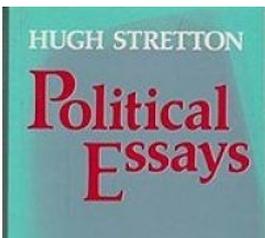


Afghanistan: UNICEF Girls' Education, PROUnited Nations, flickr cc.

## Did Pope Francis fudge the population issue?

The Pope has been criticised for not addressing the issue of rapid population growth. **Bruce Duncan** considers why the Pope is reticent on this for the moment, when he is clearly aware how

important this is, as climate change threatens to damage food production. Moreover, new UN reports indicate that population will likely grow much higher than anticipated a few years ago. He sketches Catholic teaching that, if the common good requires it, couples would have a responsibility to raise families of reduced size.



## A tribute to Hugh Stretton

Hugh Stretton was one of the great social scientists in Australia, with his insightful scholarship arguing for the necessity of moral values in the political and social sciences.

His colleague, **Lionel Orchard**, traces the influence of Stretton in his many publications on politics, housing, economics, and the environment.

## Conference Ecological aspects of war: religious perspectives from Australia Monday 28 September 2015 8:45am-5:30pm

Trinity College Theological School  
Trinity College, Royal Parade, Parkville, Melbourne

Keynote *Planet Earth as a Victim of War*

Dr Jenny Grounds, vice-president of the  
Medical Association for Prevention of War.

Register before Friday 11 September at <http://www.trybooking.com/IDJB>. \$40 full fee, \$30 concession.  
Contact Anne Elvey [aelvey@tpg.com.au](mailto:aelvey@tpg.com.au).



Dorothy Day 1973 (Bob Fitch Photo), Jim Forest, flickr cc.

## Living without weapons

The just-war tradition has long been part of the Christian story, but rejection of violence stems from the Gospel times. Redemptorist theologian, **Brian Johnstone**, traces Christian peace movements through the Middle Ages and into the modern

period, from the Waldensians in the 12th Century to modern peace activists like Dorothy Day, and Franz Jägerstätter, who was executed by the Nazis for refusing military service.

## Book Launch

### *The Intervention: an anthology*

Thursday 24 September 11:30am-1pm

Arena Publications 2 Kerr Street Fitzroy

Speakers Alastair Nicholson AO RFD QC, together with two of the writers, Nicole Watson (of the Birri-Gubba People), and Arnold Zable, who will launch the book.

RSVP by 18 September Pia

[info@concernedaustralians.com.au](mailto:info@concernedaustralians.com.au) | 0419 541 733.

## Conference

### Pope Francis & prophetic voices: reshaping the public sphere

Thursday 17 & Friday 18 September 2015

St Michael's Uniting Church 120 Collins Street Melbourne

Youth Forum Wednesday 16 September 9am-5pm

Public Forum Thursday 17 September 7:30-10pm

Speakers include Fr Frank Brennan sj AO, Dr Rachael Kohn, Professor Patrick Dodson, Fr Jerry Rosario sj (India), and Dr Jenny Te Paa Daniel (New Zealand).

\$125 for the Thursday and Friday conference, including the Public Forum on Thursday evening.

Register at <http://www.iace@acu.edu.au>.

Contact [iace@acu.edu.au](mailto:iace@acu.edu.au) | +61-2-970104176.

## Books at SPC

[admin@socialpolicyconnections.com.au](mailto:admin@socialpolicyconnections.com.au)

- *Working with disaster: clergy & bushfires* Dr Lisa Jacobson \$10+\$5 postage & handling.
- *Social justice & the churches; challenges & responsibilities* Edited by John D'Arcy May \$25+\$5 postage & handling.
- *A world united or a world exploited? Christian perspectives on globalisation* Edited by Peter Price \$20+\$5 p&h.
- *Social justice: fuller life in a fairer world* Bruce Duncan \$25+\$5 p&h.
- *Young people, faith, & social justice* Joan Daw \$20+\$5 p&h.
- *Sufficient for the day: towards a sustainable culture* Geoff Lacey \$15+\$5 p&h.
- *Towards a better world* Arthur Gibbs \$10+\$5 p&h.