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School Sisters of Notre Dame delegation to participate in UN Commission on Status of Women

A delegation from the School Sisters of Notre Dame, including students from SSND-sponsored Mount Mary College in Milwaukee, will attend the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in March as the CSW undertakes a 15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

During the annual two-week meeting of the commission, March 1-12, the CSW also will evaluate the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly. Emphasis will be placed on the sharing of experiences and good practices, with a view to overcoming remaining obstacles and new challenges, including those related to the Millennium Development Goals. Member states, as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations such as the School Sisters of Notre Dame and of U.N. entities, will participate in the session.

“The 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women offers a unique opportunity to review the Beijing Platform for Action’s promises to accelerate progress to end violence and discrimination and empower girls,” said Sister Ann Scholz, SSND, director of the SSND UN-NGO office. “Advancement for women is not sustainable without attention to the rights of girls.”

The agenda will include roundtables focusing on experiences, lessons learned and good practices, interactive expert panels to identify key policy initiatives, and parallel events organized by member states. Sister Ann is chairing the Working Group on Girls’ preparations for this session, and the School Sisters of Notre Dame will be taking a leading role in the Caucus on Girls.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame also has joined 22 other NGOs in submitting a written statement that will be presented to the CSW for consideration. The statement notes that “discrimination and violence against girls will end when Governments and their citizens address gender inequality” and calls for action to end discrimination and protect and empower girls.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women. Every year, representatives of member states gather at the United Nations Headquarters to evaluate progress on gender equality, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide.

As educators with a world vision, School Sisters of Notre Dame are especially sensitive to the needs of women, children and those who live in poverty as they strive to create a global community where human dignity is respected, the environment is treasured, spirituality is nourished, and justice is practiced.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame has been a registered NGO (non-governmental organization) with the U.N.'s Department of Public Information since 1993. In 1998, SSND received special consultative status with the ECOSOC.

In addition to Sister Ann, the SSND delegation includes Sisters Eileen Reilly, SSND, director of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) for the Atlantic-Midwest Province; Ethel Howley, SSND, assistant JPIC director for the Atlantic-Midwest Province; Joan Connelly, SSND, pastoral associate at Holy Trinity, Westfield, N.J.; Maureen Fleming, SSND, pastoral minister at St. Luke, Westport, Conn.; Roxanne Schares, SSND, coordinator of the SSND Shalom Network for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation; and Carolyn Jost, SSND, vocation director for the Atlantic-Midwest Province. Julie Gilberto-Brady, communications coordinator for the SSND North American Major Area, also will be attending.

The Mount Mary College participants include Sister Shawnee Daniels-Sykes, SSND, assistant professor of theology and bioethics; Julie Tatlock, adjunct instructor; and students Leah Davis, Alyssa Olson, Ivy Padula and Cheryl von Asten. Megan Burke, a college student from Chicago, also will be attending.

CSW participation is a requirement for the Mount Mary students' class on the United Nations, Tatlock said. During the fall semester, the class studied the structure and history of the United Nations and studied the Beijing document.

"They learned a lot about women's issues in other parts of the world and how complex these things can get when you consider the cultural aspects of a region," Tatlock said. "They are excited to be part of the actual workings of the United Nations and to meet women from all over the world."

The congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame is an international community of women religious. The Sisters educate with a world vision believing that the world can be changed through the transformation of persons. The sisters and their colleagues seek to empower women, youth and persons who are poor or marginalized and strive to change systems of poverty and injustice. More than 3,500 SSNDs minister in 36 countries.

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Additional information about the CSW is available at:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing15/index.html>

For more information about the School Sisters of Notre Dame, please visit

<http://www.gerhardinger.org/english/index.htm> or <http://www.ssnd.org>

For a comprehensive archive of SSND involvement in last year's 53rd Session of the CSW, please visit

http://www.ssnd.org/External/News&Events/CSW2009/csw_index2009.html