

Global Peace Services USA

...an idea whose time has come

Vol. 19, No.3

December 2018

Greetings from John Eriksson, President, GPS USA.

This issue encompasses several dimensions of the activities of our members in support of peace through conflict prevention and resolution. We begin with a note of sadness for the death on August 24, 2018, of a consummate practitioner of diplomacy in the service of peace: Ambassador Princeton Lyman. But as made clear by the sensitive Memoriam composed by GPS Vice President, Dr. Mindy Reiser, the career of Ambassador Lyman gifted us with a number of examples of the impact that skilled diplomacy can have on conflict resolution and peace.

It is fitting that following this Memoriam is an article by Dr. Marisa Ensor, “Young People and Climate Change in the World’s Newest Nation.” Dr. Ensor is currently based at Georgetown University and her research has emphasized the link between threats to peace and security and the politics of forced displacement, peacebuilding and reconciliation with a focus on youth and gender dynamics. Her work has included field research in 19 fragile, conflict-affected, and transitional countries of Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Latin America. A particular focus of her work, and the subject of Dr. Ensor’s article for the Newsletter, has been almost 15 years of ongoing fieldwork in the still relatively new country of South Sudan. The challenges faced by, and the potential for positive change of the youth of South Sudan, emerges as a common thread of Dr. Ensor’s analysis. It is in connection with South Sudan that Dr. Ensor became acquainted with Ambassador Princeton Lyman, and continues to hold his work and his memory in the highest regard.

The author of our second article, “Addressing Climate Change: A Washington, DC Metropolitan Area Response,” is Dr. Ronald Ridker. Dr. Ridker is an economist by training and has been a GPS Board Member since 2012. Since retiring from the World Bank and USAID (US Agency for International Development), where he worked on the challenges of developing countries, he has focused on environmental issues and development in developing countries as well as in the U.S., a concern which has led to the publication of two volumes on environmental issues in public policy. Over the last four years, Dr. Ridker has concentrated on Climate Change issues, including leading an Osher Lifelong Learning Institute group on economic and political aspects of climate change. In the spring of 2016, he designed and moderated an expert panel at American University in Washington, DC on the implications of the December 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Paris. This event provided an inspiration for a subsequent recent session held at AU on November 15, 2018. Dr. Ridker also designed and moderated this event, which focused on local initiatives in the Washington region to address climate change challenges. Both of these GPS events, co-sponsored with the Center for Environmental Policy at AU, provide very timely

benchmarks for the United Nations Climate Change Conference taking place in Katowice, Poland from December 3-14, 2018. Dr. Ridker's summary of the November 15 event reveals some encouraging progress as well as remaining challenges at the local regional level.

The third article shares our GPS tribute at an impressive September 23 ceremony and celebration in honor of an illustrious GPS Board Member, Dr. Sovan Tun. The occasion marked Dr. Tun's retirement from the U.S. Government as a Labor Economist in the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and his stepping down as President of the Cambodian Buddhist Society of Washington, DC. We have had the privilege of having Dr. Tun as a GPS Board Member since 2008 – much to our benefit, directly and indirectly, as he opened a new window to us on Buddhism as one of the world's great religions and the commitment of its teachings to nonviolence and peace. Dr. Tun communicated this perspective through several GPS Newsletter articles on Buddhism and peace. Our understanding of Buddhist wisdom was also enhanced through making the acquaintance of several of the monks who reside at the Cambodian Buddhist Temple in Silver Spring, MD, and learning from them some of the Buddhist precepts. On a personal note, when I was in the hospital in Baltimore the last week of April this year, the monks chanted prayers for my recovery every day. Something to be cherished and always remembered. While I deeply regret that my being out of the country prevented me from attending the ceremony, GPS was nonetheless well-represented by Board Members AnnaAmato and Mindy Reiser. We are pleased to share Dr. Reiser's tribute to Dr. Tun, on behalf of GPS, which she made at the Temple's celebration.

Ambassador Princeton Lyman 1935 — 2018

Ambassador Princeton Lyman, one of the most esteemed U.S. diplomats of his generation, who served as a deeply valued adviser to his State Department colleagues and non-governmental organizations active in international issues, as well as mentor to younger diplomats, died on August 24, 2018. He held posts as U.S. Agency for International Development director in Ethiopia, (1976-1978), deputy assistant secretary of state for African affairs (1981-1986), U.S. ambassador to Nigeria (1986-1989) and South Africa (1992-95), director of refugee programs (1989-1992), and assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs (1996-1998). As U.S. ambassador to South Africa, his steady hand helped keep negotiations going between the principal leaders of South Africa during a volatile moment in the country's transition.

Ambassador Lyman served as the US Special Representative for Sudan and South Sudan from March 2011-March 2013, tasked with the implementation of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Global Peace Services, at a special program on June 24, 2012, heard Ambassador Lyman discuss in detail the challenges he faced in this work. He served as a senior advisor at the US Institute of Peace from 2013 to July 2018 and helped expand USIP's programs, especially in Sudan, South Sudan, Nigeria and China. A prolific scholar and author, he published books and articles on foreign policy, African affairs, economic development, HIV/AIDS, UN reform and peacekeeping. Ambassador Lyman held a B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Ph.D. from Harvard University.

May his memory be for a blessing.

Youth's Role in South Sudan's Perfect Storm: Climate Change, Conflict, and the Prospects for Peacebuilding in the World's Newest Nation

Background

The region of Africa that became the Republic of South Sudan has been a central focus of my work as a social scientist, peacebuilder and human rights advocate for the last 15 years. On July 9th, 2011, I joined my South Sudanese friends as their newly independent nation entered the international stage after a decades-long struggle for independence from the north.

The initial euphoria gave way to the sobering recognition that reaping the hoped-for peace dividends would not be an easy process; after decades of devastating war, rapidly rising temperatures, and rampant deforestation and soil degradation, South Sudan is one of the most fragile and environmentally vulnerable countries globally. It is also one of the youngest nations in the world, with 72% of its 12 million inhabitants under the age of 30.

South Sudan's civil war erupted on December 15th, 2013, less than three years after its hard-won independence. A power struggle between President Salva Kiir, a member of the Dinka ethnic group, and his former Vice President, Riek Machar, a Nuer, divided the national army along Dinka-Nuer ethnic lines; soldiers from each faction turned against each other in Juba, the nation's capital. The fighting soon spread across the country giving way to a deadly pattern of revenge and counter-revenge attacks along Dinka-Nuer ethnic lines. The failure of several attempts to secure an effective peace agreement among the various parties within the government resulted in renewed fighting in mid-July 2017. Multiple subsequent peace deals and ceasefires were almost immediately violated.

Ravaged by continued violence and persistent insecurity, South Sudan is also grappling with the devastating effects of climate change. As temperatures rise and rains become more erratic, crop failures and livestock deaths become more common. So does conflict over dwindling water sources and grazing areas among nomadic

pastoralists – cattle-keepers who follow their herds in their seasonal migrations – and between farmers and pastoralists. These conflicts involve primarily youth and often revolve around cattle. Young cattle-keepers who accompany their cows as they migrate to find pasture during the December to May dry season must also protect their animals from cattle raiders. After years of on-and-off integration into armed forces, heavily armed young cattle raiders mount military-style attacks that may claim dozens or even hundreds of lives at a time. Whether engaging in cattle rustling and banditry, or taking up arms to defend their homes and communities, South Sudanese youth – young males, in particular – are often perceived as highly violence-prone. Poverty, unemployment, poor governance, family disintegration, and the structural exclusion and lack of opportunities faced by youth effectively block or prolong their transition to adulthood, increasing their disenfranchisement.

Clearly, young people face enormous challenges in war-torn and environmentally vulnerable countries like South Sudan. At the same time, my years of fieldwork among youth living in these contexts supports the growing international recognition that they also have particular strengths that must be recognized and nurtured. Young people's roles in peacebuilding have indeed been gaining momentum as a result of the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS), which was unanimously adopted in 2015. A 2018 Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security, titled *The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security* (<https://www.youth4peace.info/ProgressStudy>) provides a blueprint for implementing UNSCR 2250, and notes the importance of “a safe planet” and an awareness of the risks of climate change as a progenitor of conflict.

Inspired by these developments, a growing constellation of youth networks is being established in Juba and other locations throughout South Sudan, as well as in the diaspora. With support from various

United Nations agencies, several non-governmental organizations, and private benefactors, these youth networks are collectives of loosely organized youngsters who seek to foster peace, reconciliation, and prosperity in their communities. My most recent field research during September 2018 in South Sudan and Uganda – home to over a million refugees from South Sudan – confirms that these youth-led initiatives often prioritize the acquisition of peacebuilding tools such as conflict analysis and resolution and mediation, together with vocational education, livelihood training, and environmental awareness-raising. The youth networks activities include peace awareness campaigns, open forum workshops, panel discussions, and other methods of community advocacy.

(Un)natural Disasters: Environmental Vulnerability, Famine and Climate Change

The *Climate Change Vulnerability Index 2017*, released by the global risks advisory firm Maplecroft, ranks South Sudan among the five most vulnerable countries in the world alongside the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Haiti and Liberia. The country is among the most rapidly warming locations on the globe, with temperatures increasing as much as 0.4 degrees per decade over the past 30 years – 2.5 times faster than the global average. Environmental conditions are becoming increasingly arid, with intensified and prolonged periods of drought punctuated by erratic and brief but torrential rains.

These environmental trends constitute a serious threat to the survival of a vast proportion of the population. Up to 95% of the people in South Sudan – more than 11 million – are dependent on climate-sensitive activities for their livelihoods, including agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry resources, gathering of wild foods, and fishing. Only 4% of the land is currently actively cultivated, even though more than 95% of the country's total area is considered to be suitable for agriculture. Pastoralist groups have traditionally perceived farming as undignified – a livelihood derogatorily referred to as “digging” among young people. Furthermore, the prolonged conflict and resulting breakdown in agricultural support services, institutions, and

infrastructure has led to the near collapse of the country's agricultural production systems.

A further, inter-related threat to peace and human security in South Sudan is rapid deforestation, compounded by an increase in illegal exports of wood and charcoal by foreign companies. Tree-cutting is especially lucrative because there is no central power grid to supply electricity in the country. Charcoal is the cheapest source of energy; the large majority of the population also uses charcoal for cooking. Charcoal is thus likely to remain the primary energy source unless radical steps are taken to introduce viable alternatives. The country is rich in mahogany and teak, both of which are in high demand especially in Arab nations. Tree-cutters are hired by companies from countries such as Sudan, Libya and Lebanon that smuggle the coal and wood out through neighboring Uganda. These operations take advantage of the current insecurity. South Sudan has banned the export of charcoal, but there is hardly any supervision at the country's borders due to the conflict.

No reliable data exist on the extent of forests in South Sudan, since a detailed forest survey has never been carried out. Current estimates suggest that approximately 11% of the country's land is covered with trees – down from a previous 35% estimation. If current trends of deforestation continue, the loss of tree cover will be complete in 50 to 60 years. The dwindling number of trees is directly contributing to the rise in temperatures and further environmental degradation in South Sudan. Appeals by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to set up an early warning system for weather extremes, and to train government officials on climate change are not being heeded. Following the United States' recent withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, the U.S. Embassy in South Sudan does not currently support climate change efforts in the country.

The impacts of climate change are putting pressure on limited resources, compromising agricultural yields and food availability. Extreme food insecurity persists across South Sudan as conflict disrupts normal livelihoods, and macroeconomic conditions remain very poor. The Famine Early Warning

Systems Network reports that vulnerable populations across the country have continued to experience severe levels of acute food insecurity in 2018. This year's limited food availability follows the record low agricultural production obtained in 2017. Compounded by a multiplicity of inter-related factors – e.g. persistent conflict, large scale displacements, limited access to markets, high food prices, and severe constraints to humanitarian access and assistance – lower yields have contributed to a sharp deterioration of an already alarming food insecurity situation. In July, at the peak of the lean season, the food insecure caseload was estimated at six million people (about 60% of the total population), approximately 20% higher than one year earlier. Also known as “hunger gap,” the lean season refers to the period between the depletion of stored food and the new harvest when hunger is most severe. It normally lasts from March till July, but this year's lean season began in January, three months earlier than usual.

In turn, food shortages have led to higher levels of malnutrition and increasing mortality rates in already distressed communities. The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) estimated that 1.1 million children younger than five years of age were acutely malnourished in South Sudan as of late December 2017. Given their subordinated position in South Sudanese society, women and youngsters also face greater burdens from the impacts of climate change and higher risks of food insecurity. According to the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), war-torn South Sudan is at risk of relapsing into famine in early 2019.

Conclusions: A Glimmer of Hope

Africa remains one of the most vulnerable continents to climate variability and change because of multiple stresses and low adaptive capacity. As the previous discussion has illustrated, the young heirs of Africa's 54th nation must contend with the interrelated effects of climatic change, stunted socioeconomic development, and protracted insecurity.

I was doing fieldwork in South Sudan on September 12th, 2018, when a new peace agreement was signed by Salva Kiir, the president of South Sudan, and his

major adversary, the former vice-president and rebel leader Riek Machar. The signing of this so-called Revitalized Peace Agreement in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, followed 15 months of negotiations brokered by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, IGAD.

Established in 1996, IGAD is an East African organization aimed at enhancing regional cooperation in three priority areas: 1) food security and environmental protection; 2) economic cooperation, regional integration, and social development; and, 3) peace and security among its eight country members – Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. A key element of the peace process, the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS), was signed in Addis Ababa in August 2015 under IGAD's auspices. It called for the establishment of a Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (JMEC) which is now responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. JMEC has also been tasked with reporting on implementation progress every three months to various entities including the African Union Peace and Security Council, the United Nations Security Council, and South Sudan's Transitional Government, in addition to IGAD.

As rival sides vow to end almost five years of brutal conflict, they face a slew of socio-economic, political and environmental challenges that, if not adequately addressed, have the potential to lead to renewed or intensified conflict. While a return to peace – even if only in the sense of a tenuous cessation of hostilities – is a step in the right direction, much remains to be done in all areas both to seek sustainable lasting political and environmental solutions and to address the immediate food and human security needs of the very young population.

The case of South Sudan can be seen as representative of a broader pattern of the convergence of climate change, resource scarcity, and insecurity. Current projections of climate change suggest that the region will become more arid, experience longer dry seasons, and become more prone to drought, exacerbating the factors that

drive conflicts over access to resources. On a more positive note, South Sudan is also illustrative of the ways in which peacebuilding efforts can include attention to issues of climate change adaptation and environmental sustainability. This is especially the case when these peacebuilding initiatives benefit from the meaningful participation of the country's largest demographic sector – the youth of South Sudan. Youth have traditionally been at the

forefront in articulating local concerns and aspirations; if provided with the right opportunities, they have an important contribution to make as indispensable stakeholders in South Sudan's climate change and security nexus.

✿ Marisa O. Ensor

Addressing Climate Change: A Washington, DC Metropolitan Area Response

This is a report on a panel discussion held on November 15, 2018, that was organized by GPS-USA in collaboration with American University's Center for Environmental Policy. It was titled "Regional Initiatives to Address Climate Change in the Trump Era" and focused on what the District of Columbia and its surrounding counties are doing and planning to do to achieve their portion of the goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions¹ that were unanimously agreed to at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change held in Paris in 2015. The three panelists speaking for their jurisdictions were Mary Cheh, DC City Councilmember, Ward 3, Eric Coffman, Chief, Office of Energy and Sustainability, Montgomery County and John Morrell, Energy Manager, Office of Sustainability and Environmental Management, Arlington County. The discussion was well attended despite the fact it took place the evening of November 15, a particularly cold and rainy day. After opening statements by the panelists, a lively and informative discussion with the audience ensued. While the conversation covered a wide range of topics – too many to report in this article – we note here several of the more interesting and pertinent points considered.

Before reviewing the highlights, it may be helpful to explain why GPS is interested in this topic. The goal of GPS is to study and reduce conflict through peaceful means. The Pentagon has defined climate change as a conflict multiplier, seldom the proximate cause but often the underlying cause of conflict. An all-too common scenario is one in which droughts lead to food shortages and wild-fires that lead to increased migratory pressures that are resisted by populations fearing that their way of life will be eroded, and exacerbated by politicians taking advantage of these fears. Another scenario starts with rising sea levels that inundate coastal cities. Our goal in sponsoring this panel was to learn and highlight what local jurisdictions in the DC metropolitan area are doing to anticipate these problems and to discuss whether the measures taken are sufficient.

All three jurisdictions started work on energy policy and climate change years before the Paris conference. For the most part, these early initiatives focused on specifying targets for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions without much detail on how these targets were to be achieved. Subsequent revisions and updates included much more ambitious targets and implementation detail. A case in point is the Clean Energy DC Omnibus Amendment Act of 2018, the most elaborate and well-worked out of the updates made by the three jurisdictions. It would implement several of the proposals in the Department of Energy and Environment's (DOEE) Clean Energy DC Plan, which is the District's blueprint for meeting its carbon emissions reduction commitments. Those commitments include a 50% reduction in

¹ Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are emissions of gases into the earth's atmosphere that constrain heat from the earth being dissipated into outer space. The most common GHG is carbon dioxide that results largely from the burning of fossil fuels and from agricultural activities.

greenhouse gas emissions by 2032 and 100% reduction by 2050. Briefly, the bill would:

- Increase DC's renewable portfolio standard for electricity to 100% by 2032 and in the meantime shift from an opt-in provision to an opt-out provision for consumer participation in use of renewable energy sources.
- Establish a first-in-the nation building energy performance standard requiring all private as well as public buildings of 10,000 square feet or more to meet specified energy efficiency standards. A phase-in schedule is specified that would result in larger buildings meeting the standard earlier and smaller buildings later with all buildings in the program meeting the standard by 2031. DOEE is mandated to implement and manage the program.
- Increase the Sustainable Energy Trust Fund Fee to fully fund the Green Bank, the implementing agency for assisting building owners to achieve the efficiency targets.
- Require the Department of Motor Vehicles to tie the vehicle excise tax to fuel efficiency.
- Authorize the Mayor to enter into any forthcoming regional transportation sector GHG reduction initiative forthcoming from the surrounding counties.

The DOEE estimates that full adoption of these policies would reduce the District's carbon emissions by nearly 50% by 2032. The intent is to add other initiatives to achieve an even greater reduction before that date.

A city-wide carbon tax was considered but rejected in favor of the approach outlined above because the results were thought to be more certain, less likely to cause cross-border leakages if the other jurisdictions did not use a carbon tax, and possibly also easier to accept politically. These contentions are debatable, and it is worth noting that California has opted to use both regulations and the equivalent of a carbon tax because of the belief that they support each other.

The surrounding counties also have energy bills that are in the process of being upgraded. They contain similar goals but are not as specific and concrete as the 2018 DC bill. Nevertheless, according to the panelists, past initiatives, as well as other factors, have led to a 20-25% reduction in GHG emissions in these counties over the period 2007 to 2017, despite sizeable increases in population and economic activity. One reason for this is that both report sizeable increases in the number of square feet of buildings meeting LEED (a green building rating system) energy standards.

The focus of all three jurisdictions on energy efficiency in buildings is interesting. It results from the fact that these jurisdictions are much more densely populated than the rest of Maryland and Virginia. More than 60% of the energy consumed in this metropolitan area is consumed by buildings, most of the remainder by transport.

This difference in the degree of urbanization and the cultural differences that accompany it have resulted in some differences in political agendas at the state and county levels, where rural counties collectively have more political force. In Virginia, where counties have limited authority to act independently without agreement at the state level, a number of desired initiatives have been blocked, or at least have taken many more years of persuasion before being agreed upon. Dominion Electric, which has a monopoly on power production in Virginia, is another force that Arlington County must contend with to implement its independent agenda. Without Dominion's support, a carbon tax has virtually no chance of being seriously considered and the state has not joined REGGI,² even though Maryland has done so.³

² REGGI stands for Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. It introduced an emission limit for electricity generation within a nine state region. Maryland is a member; Virginia is not; DC cannot join because it has no generating facilities within its border.

³ An insightful review of issues and differences of opinion can be found at <http://powerforthepeopleva.com/tag/grid-modernization/>

These factors also explain why it takes so long to get anything new done in almost any field. But there are a few signs of change so far as climate is concerned. The recent spate of hurricanes, especially Harvey, have had a sobering effect on many state officials; and contrary to expectations, Trump's stonewalling and threatened withdrawal from the Paris accord, evisceration of EPA and sensible environmental regulations has created a backlash in some quarters, according to the panelists. Without his interventions, cities, counties and states might have been slower to act, waiting for the federal government to act first. Overall, most people came away from the evening discussion in an upbeat mood. More is going on at the local level than most of us thought. If what is true in our region is also true in many other parts of the country, the US might even meet the targets it agreed to in Paris.

But several cautionary notes are in order. First, the updated legislation discussed in this meeting has not been voted on by legislative bodies. When it reaches these bodies, some features may be dropped, others watered down or delayed. Second, planning for adaptation and improved resilience has barely been mentioned even though policies on these topics may be more important to local communities than what they can accomplish by mitigation. Suppose, for example, as scientists have projected, that sea level is going to rise by several feet in the next 50 years whatever we do on the mitigation front, and that this results in sea water backing up into the Chesapeake Bay and the Potomac and other rivers running through our metropolitan area. We are not immune to flooding, let alone to droughts and hurricanes. Is infrastructure being put in place to guard against such possibilities? If not, why not? There was no time in this meeting to answer these questions.

Third, there was a tendency for jurisdictions to praise each other for moving faster on these items; but that enhanced pace still looks slow from a global perspective. A case in point is panelists pointing to plans to put dozens of electric busses on the road in the coming decade. According to a story in the November 19th edition of the Washington Post, the city of Shenzhen in China has electrified its entire fleet of 16,359 public buses and put charging stations in place for them in the past eight years. Examples of much more rapid progress using cutting-edge charging technologies can be found throughout Europe. Fourth, local bodies such as ours need to call on other parts of the country for help with resources and expertise; we cannot do it all ourselves even if there were no political constraints. That means that at some point the federal government must become involved.

As an aside, when the topic of trees came up in our meeting, Mary Cheh noted that scientists are finding that trees cluster together so they can exchange nutrients and chemicals through their intertwined root systems and that humans have to do the same. This is a good note on which to end this review. No matter how much we would like to solve our climate change problems on our own, we cannot. We must join forces with our neighboring communities, and better yet, the surrounding states. In fact, the bigger the collaborative unit the better. Ultimately the federal government must get involved; and it must join forces with other countries if this problem is going to be solved. On this topic, our roots are all intertwined.

✿ Ronald Ridker

Celebrating Dr. Sovan Tun's Presidency of the Cambodian Buddhist Temple in Silver Spring, MD

We honor today Sovan and his many years of devoted service to the Temple and the Cambodian Buddhist community. I would like to say a few words on how Sovan brought the values of the Temple -- and the teachings of Buddhism focused on the deepest understanding of the human

condition and its profound teachings of compassion -- to the broader community.

I speak on behalf of Global Peace Services USA -- our President, John Eriksson, currently in British Columbia, and who deeply regrets that he could not

be here, Anna Amato, who is here, our other GPS Board members, Robert Muscat and Ronald Ridker, and myself, GPS Vice President.

We first came to know Sovan in 2008, when he spoke at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia about Buddhist teaching regarding Peace Service. His talk was part of a special program organized by Global Peace Services on Peace Service in the Non-Abrahamic Religious Traditions (this program followed an earlier one focusing on Peace Service in the Abrahamic Religious Traditions). We quickly recognized that Sovan had much to contribute to the work of GPS and were delighted when he warmly responded to our call to him to join the GPS Board. So it is now Ten Years that Sovan has been a member of the GPS Board, and a vital part of our GPS community. Another milestone, Sovan!

Through Sovan's engagement with us, he has been able to acquaint the larger world with Buddhist teachings and traditions. Sovan has enriched the work of GPS by his writings in our newsletter -- one highlight was a discussion of his visit to the Vatican and meeting Pope Francis as part of a Buddhist-Catholic delegation exploring Catholic-Buddhist dialogue. This was but one of many contributions by Sovan to interfaith dialogue, not only in the Greater Washington area, but in the larger world!

Through his graciously hosting GPS several times at the Temple, we held memorable summer picnics for GPS members and friends. Highlights of these gatherings were meetings with the monks, a tour of the Temple and the viewing of the exquisite work-in-progress on the stupa. For many of the attendees at our picnics, some of whom came from cultures

and backgrounds with little contact with the teachings of Buddhism or the heritage of Cambodia, the visit to the Temple was an important opening to a rich and profound civilization, earlier little known to them.

Sovan has not only given GPS the opportunity to learn of Buddhist teachings and traditions – he has also demonstrated their workings in practice. Thanks to Sovan and the monks, our GPS newsletters are addressed, stamped and mailed to our members and friends, along with our annual appeal letter. As a small non-profit organization, whose board members all serve without compensation – Pro Bono – For the Public Good – the contributions Sovan and the monks have made to the ongoing operation of Global Peace Services have been both singular and essential.

Sovan, so deeply engaged in interfaith work, has deeply strengthened Global Peace Services, as we focus on issues that deeply impact our planet and all its people – the impact of climate change on conflict, the role of engineers in catalyzing conflict or helping construct peace, the potential of nurses as healers and peacemakers, the contributions that elders can make to building peace.

As we celebrate Sovan's transition from President of the Cambodian Buddhist Temple to the Temple President Emeritus – we continue to look forward to engagement with the Temple and the Cambodian Buddhist community in furthering the work of Global Peace Services USA and enabling GPS, our members and friends, to more deeply encounter the teachings and spirit of Cambodian Buddhism.

✿ Mindy C. Reiser

Global Peace Services USA

The newsletter of Global Peace Services USA is published regularly. GPS USA is incorporated in the State of Maryland and is tax-exempt. Current board members are: Anna Amato, John Eriksson, Robert Muscat, Mindy Reiser, Ronald Ridker, and Sovan Tun. We welcome contributions and comments. To contact us:

Global Peace Services USA
P.O. Box 27922
Washington, DC 20038-7922

Telephone: 301-681-6968
E-mail: globalpeaceservicesusa@gmail.com

Web site: www.GlobalPeaceServices.org

Global Peace Services USA
P.O. Box 27922
Washington, DC 20038-7922
www.GlobalPeaceServices.org