



Greetings from the FI Office!

We thank you for your involvement and interest in FI's work to influence key policy makers to promote human rights for marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Here are some of FI's recent activities.

For questions or more information, please contact communication@fiop.org.

New Executive Director and International Board of Directors Appointed

In January 2015, Markus Heinze, OFM was appointed as Executive Director of Franciscans International. His appointment followed a number of years of service within Franciscans International and, in particular, two years of service as Transition Manager while FI was being re-dimensional and restructured in a way that would enable it to operate more effectively and efficiently in achieving its vision and mission. The International Board of Directors along with the Conference of the Franciscan Family is pleased to welcome Markus Heinze as Executive Director.



New Executive Director and IBD

During the first quarter of 2015, the Conference of the Franciscan Family (CFF) also appointed a new slate of members to the Franciscans International Board of Directors. The new Board will serve a three-year term, working to guide and accompany FI in its global advocacy work around business and human rights, extreme poverty, and shaping the sustainable development agenda. As members of the Board, individuals will also serve as a liaison between FI and their respective Orders, fostering reciprocal communication between the two.

On April 17-19, 2015, the International Board of Directors and its newly appointed Executive Director met for the first of their bi-annual meetings. New members of the Board were pleased to hear of FI's activity and the results of the recent audit, and to note FI's achievements throughout the years. The Board will aim to bolster FI's professional partnerships and collaborations, both locally and globally, and to strengthen FI's connections with the Franciscan family.

The newly appointed International Board of Directors is comprised of: Doug Clorey, OFS (President), Benedict Ayodi, OFM Cap (Vice-President), Carla Casadei, SFP (Treasurer), Jude Winkler, OFM Conv (Secretary), Clark Berge, SSF, Joe Nangle, OFM, and Kevin Queally, TOR.

Business and Human Rights: driving dialogue around the legally binding instrument

FI and other members of the Treaty Alliance have been arguing, based on what they have witnessed in the field and experienced from their grassroots partners, that the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights are not enough to prevent corporate abuses nor to ensure effective access to justice for victims, because they are not legally binding. Indeed, they have not translated into concrete positive changes for affected individuals and communities. The Treaty Alliance and other key actors managed to successfully convince the Human Rights Council, who passed a landmark resolution last year to set up an Intergovernmental Working Group to establish a legally binding instrument for business and human rights.



Business & Human Rights Side Event Panel

In preparation for the Intergovernmental Working Group negotiations that will take place in July this year, FI and other members of the Treaty Alliance organised a debate at the UN during the Human Rights Council to explore different European positions and perspectives on the legally binding instrument. The debate exposed a variety of opinions regarding the relationship between the Guiding Principles and the proposed binding Treaty, and led to some important recommendations about how the Intergovernmental Working Group should approach negotiations, namely by involving a large spectrum of voices, especially those of the most affected communities. The debate, that included interventions by Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See, and Jerome Bellion Jourdan, from the Delegation of the European Union to the UN, was attended by over 80 people.

Read the article on the debate and the full report [here](#).

[To top](#)

Amplifying the voices of the grassroots at the Human Rights Council: the concerns of indigenous communities in Bolivia

FI works to ensure that concerns and voices from the grassroots are taken into account by global decision-makers at the UN. Before the outcome of Bolivia's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was formally presented at the March Human Rights Council Session, FI's representative in Bolivia consulted local partners, enquiring about the most important human rights violations they witnessed daily in their communities. Reports and complaints received from several indigenous groups were also taken into account. Three issues repeatedly came up: violence against women, the need to improve the justice system, and participation and consultation of indigenous peoples, especially regarding mining activities.

FI and partners developed a statement to read at the Human Rights Council Session, acknowledging the recommendations accepted by the Bolivian Government around the three key issues FI and partners had highlighted, and challenging the Government further to ensure the implementation of those recommendations. The statement put particular emphasis on the third concern, regarding mining and indigenous people, calling for the respect of these peoples and their organic organisation, as well as drawing attention to the contamination of water resulting from mining.



Birth Registration in Côte d'Ivoire: mobilising civil society actors to connect with UN human rights mechanisms

In a country where one third of all births still remain unregistered, FI is working with partners at the grassroots to engage with different UN human rights mechanisms that will bring systemic change and move the situation forward towards universal birth registration.

By participating in the development of a report for the Human Rights Committee and engaging with other civil society organisations in actions both locally and at the UN in Geneva, FI was able to influence key recommendations on birth registration. The importance of those recommendations was then reiterated at the Human Rights Council during the dialogue with the new Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Côte d'Ivoire.

Following this experience, FI will continue advocating at both national and international levels to help bring lasting change in order for every birth to be registered in the country.

Read more on FI and partners' work for Côte d'Ivoire's review [here](#).



Côte d'Ivoire's review by Human Rights Committee

Climate Change's adverse impact on Human Rights: using the case of Kiribati to advocate at the UN

In the past few years it has become evident that climate change is having drastic consequences on human rights. It represents an immediate and far-reaching threat: populations are facing forced displacement, migration, loss of livelihoods and cultures, and significant challenges to public health.

Through its key partners in the low-lying island State of Kiribati, in the Pacific, FI used the case of Kiribati to illustrate these issues. FI invited partner Ms. Pelenise Alofa, Director of Climate Action Network in Kiribati to give testimonies and deliver statements at the Council. She participated in a debate at the UN in Geneva, co-organised by FI, to raise awareness around the impact of climate change on vulnerable populations' rights. FI and other NGOs also arranged for President Tong from Kiribati to address the Human Rights Council's Panel on Climate and Human Rights on March 6th, 2015.

FI and partners' statements and lobbying included requests for the UN to specifically address the adverse impact of climate change on human rights, and for developed countries to acknowledge their extraterritorial responsibility for climate change and its disastrous effects.

Since the session in March, the Human Rights Council has continued to raise the issue of climate change's impact on human rights, and is promoting a rights-based approach in climate negotiations, so that people's rights are kept at the forefront of discussions on climate change.

See FI's statement on climate change and human rights [here](#).

[To top](#)



The Island of Kiribati, photo by Jopology from flickr (CC BY-NC 2.0)

FI and the Treaty Alliance mobilise actors at World Social Forum in Tunis

FI convened a delegation of social justice activists to participate in the World Social Forum, held in Tunis, on March 24-28, 2015. In collaboration with members of the Treaty Alliance and Franciscan activist groups, FI organised and intervened in four workshops focusing on corporate accountability, mining, and climate justice, highlighting the systemic abuses of human rights provoked by profit-driven businesses, especially transnational corporations.

FI and the Treaty Alliance's workshops aimed at presenting the Treaty process and at encouraging people to mobilise around the UN process for a Treaty on Business and Human Rights in various ways.

Participation in these discussions was an opportunity for all to share experiences, create synergies and ultimately to build strategic alliances. In response to the threats to the lives and wellbeing of populations around the world, activists continue to struggle, asserting people's rights and providing real solutions. Participants pledged to take concrete actions and participate actively in each possible space to promote social justice and end corporate abuses and impunity.

See workshop details [here](#).

[To top](#)



World Social Forum, photo by Amine GHRABI from flickr (CC BY-NC 2.0)

FI Website



Visit the regularly updated Franciscans International website for news, events, photos and reports:
www.franciscansinternational.org

[To top](#)

