

Berne, 14 October 2003

Walter Fust visits *Justice and Peace*

No Social Justice without a Civil Society!

„Social Justice in a Globalised World“ is the title of this year's Annual Assembly of the *Conference of European Justice and Peace Commission* on 24 to 28 October 2003 in Geneva. About 90 personalities from more than 30 countries have signed up for the Annual Assembly and the following Study Days. Prominent guest from Switzerland will be Ambassador Walter Fust, Director of SDC, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The Geneva Study Days are focussing on the issue, how justice and peace can be maintained, respectively created in an increasingly globalised world. This question is especially burning not only with regard to the North-South problem, but increasingly to Mid- and East-Europe. As there are many great international organisations and a lot of important international negotiations hosted here, Geneva is an excellent location to host the seminary. Especially participants from Mid- and East-Europe expect to get a deepened insight into the functioning of international cooperation. To make this opportunity happen, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) supported the event with substantial financial means. Additionally to the DFA representative Philippe Béguin, on Saturday afternoon, we expect to welcome in Geneva Ambassador Walter Fust, Director of the SDC. As the director of a State institution, Walter Fust will speak about the role actors from the civil society, such as Justice and Peace, can take on in the efforts towards social justice in the context of a globalised world.

On Sunday evening, we expect to welcome **Archbishop Stanislav Hocevar from Belgrade** in Geneva. Even though, at current time, no Justice and Peace Commission exists in Serbia-Montenegro, Mgr. Hocevar is interested in a closer cooperation with the *Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions*, especially regarding the stabilisation of the social conditions in his country focussed on more justice and peace. Certainly, this is the main reason for Mgr. Hocevar to take part at the Geneva Assembly. Within the context of globalisation, the issue East-Europe's role in the North-South dialogue is getting more and more important.

A partner from the South, **Padre Alejandro Angulo, Director of the Colombian NGO CINEP, engaged in the development cooperation**, will participate in a panel discussion on the issues of social justice in Colombia. Other participants of the panel are **representatives of Nestlé, the Novartis Foundation, the Coalition of Development Organizations and the Bern Declaration**.

Swiss Presidency

Currently, the Presidency of the *Conference of European Justice and Peace Commission*, the advisory bodies of the national bishops' conferences on issues of peace and justice, is held by Switzerland. Therefore, the Swiss National Justice and Peace Commission invites to the Annual Assembly and the Study Days in Geneva. Delegates from 27 countries, as well as innumerable guests of partner organisations from Switzerland and foreign countries will participate at the event.

A Heritage of the Second Vatican Council

The Justice and Peace Commissions were founded subsequently the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The Commissions substantiate the will of the Vatican Council and Pope Pius VI to open the Catholic Church to the issues of the world and to encourage the Christians to get themselves, together with „all people of good will“, involved in the fight for justice and peace. The Commissions are institutionally connected to the bishops' conferences of their respective country and address Human Rights, development, peace and social issues. The last few years, environmental concerns gained more and more space. Some Commissions concentrate on the practical fight against injustice and strife, others are dedicated to theoretical reflections, but all have one objective: Peace, justice and perpetuation of the Creation.

At the end of the sixties, the Justice and Peace Commissions met on a European level for the first time. As a result from this meeting, the *Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions* emerged. It is a coordination platform for the activities of the national Commissions and enjoys a constant growth. Currently, the *Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions* has 27 member Commissions.

*For interviews with Ambassador Walter Fust, Archbishop Hocevar and Padre Angulo, please contact **Sonja Kaufmann, General Secretary**, phone +41 76 347 46 55 before 24 October,*

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