IPRA 2016 Conference plans in High Gear

As Sec. Gen recently visits Sierra Leone

By Munda Rogers, USL PRO - Freetown

IPRA Secretary General Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw recently paid an official visit to his home country Sierra Leone to hold meetings with stakeholders, including the local IPRA 2016 conference organising committee and senior officials of the co-host University of Sierra Leone, as part of efforts to put in place plans for hosting IPRA’s 26 General Conference in Freetown, Sierra Leone between 28th November and 1st December, 2016.

During this visit, Dr Shaw held two meetings with the local organising committee, the first on the 29th July, and the second on the 10th August, and in both frank discussions were held to make the conference a memorable event. The chairman of the first meeting held at Fourah Bay College, Professor Allyson Sesay, Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Sierra Leone (USL) and principal of the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM), noted the very daunting task assigned to the committee and thanked Dr Shaw for doing the University of Sierra Leone proud by bringing such an important conference to it, and assured him that his confidence in the university is not misplaced and hoped that other alumni would copy his example.

In his statement, the Acting Vice Chancellor and Principal of USL, Professor Sahr Gbamanja welcomed all present on behalf of the current Vice Chancellor and Principal, Professor Ekundayo Thompson who was on leave. He reported that Professor Thompson had embraced the idea of co-hosting the conference because of the spin-offs that would be derived from the venture for both the country

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and the university. He commended Dr Seaga Shaw for bringing the conference to his country and reiterated the university’s willingness to co-host the conference in Freetown.

In his remarks, Dr Shaw said that when he campaigned to head IPRA at its 2012 conference in Tsu city, Japan, it was on the basis of bringing the conference to Africa in general, and in Sierra Leone, in particular. He said he made a strong case for Sierra Leone to host the 2016 conference on the theme of ‘AGENDA FOR PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT’ since Sierra Leone is a post conflict country that has been making the transition to one of the fastest growing economies in West Africa and that there is a lot participants will learn from the conference beyond the presentation of papers.

However, the IPRA Secretary General said that since Ebola was ravaging Sierra Leone in August last year it was not easy to convince members who attended the last IPRA conference in Istanbul Turkey during that month that Ebola would have been a thing of the past by the time of the next conference in November next year but noted that rapid improvements on the ground in controlling this epidemic has come as a sigh of relief.

Dr Shaw gave a brief historical sketch of IPRA since its founding in London in 1964 by eminent peace researchers, including the founder of peace studies, Professor Johann Galtung, and provided a context on the organisational structure and aims of IPRA as the largest and only global network of peace researchers that promotes transdisciplinary collaboration on peace research. He thanked Mrs Bernadette Cole, head of the USL Alumni and International affairs, for the spade work in selling the idea of the conference to the university and thanked the Vice Chancellor and University Senate for readily accepting to co-host the conference. He also thanked the University for helping to set up the local chapter of the conference organising committee which will work closely with the global organising committee to ensure a very memorable conference.

Mrs Cole, who is also the head of the local organising committee, reported that the university has provided an office space in the Law School Building in the city centre to be used by the IPRA local organising committee during the preparations for the conference.

Speaking at the second local organising committee meeting, Mrs Memunatu Pratt, who is the head of the Peace and Conflict unit at Fourah Bay College, said the task to hold a conference of this nature puts a heavy burden on the shoulders of the host country but added that since “we have accepted to face the challenge, we should show-case Sierra Leone by looking at the Post-Conflict situation and link that to the Ebola epidemic experience.”

Mr. Gbanabom Hallowell, the Managing Director of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation, said in his statement said there are two profiles of the conference for Sierra Leone: one for the University and the other for Sierra Leone. He added that he was happy to note the involvement of the Office of National Security (ONS) since it is the national agency that is involved in state security, conflict prevention and development, and that, it has a role to play in such a large gathering of people.

In her contribution to the discussion, the head of department of law, Dr Fatima Taqi stated that it is a good idea to have committees dedicated to organize and prepare for a successful outcome of the conference. She also said these committees should be assigned roles to play and given timelines.

The Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Mr. Samuel Weekes suggested the establishment of a Task Force that would deliver a paper on the committees to be established and the work they have to do. This suggestion was unanimously supported and the Task Force itself set up with Mr Weekes as its head. This Task Force was supposed to meet early in September and report back to the local organising committee.

www.iprapeace.org
Email: secretaries-general@iprapeace.org
EUPRA holds 9th conference on future of peace in Europe

By Unto Vesa, Emeritus research fellow, TAPRI, Finland

The theme of this conference was “The Framing of Europe: Peace Perspectives on Europe’s Future”, very topical indeed, as the President of EuPRA, Professor Itir Toksöz, emphasized in her opening speech. The importance of the issues discussed was also underlined by the number of participants attending the conference, 135 in total, being the largest number in this millennium. Participants did not come only from Europe, but also from Australia, Canada, Nepal, Pakistan and the United States as well as from a number of international organizations.

The programme was very tight and well structured, consisting of six plenary sessions with eleven keynote speeches and parallel working group sessions with 59 papers, and in addition nine papers in absentia. Plus a wonderful social program. The first keynote was presented by the grand old man of peace research, Professor Johan Galtung, who discussed the peace studies epistemology from three perspectives: Descartes, Vico and Daoism, applying these perspectives to Europe.

In the second plenary on peace theories and politics, Professor Oliver Richmond asked, if in this century the world is moving from liberal to neoliberal, or post-liberal peace, while Willem van Eekelen, former Dutch Minister of Defence, in his presentation focussed on practical issues of EU-NATO cooperation and the new meaning of hybrid security.

The third plenary focussed on Europe’s North-South dimension. In her keynote, Itir Toksöz – who noted that in the past Turkey’s position was discussed as a bridge between East and West – analyzed the turmoil on Europe’s Southern borders, asking whether bridges are now being built or burned, and Helge Luraas’s keynote on the same issues analyzed how geopolitical miscalculations and the spread of chaos in the borderlands will affect Europe.

In the fourth plenary the focus was on the new East-West confrontation in Europe, especially in the aftermath of the Ukraine crisis. Professor Andreas Heinemann-Grüder offered four different explanations to Russia’s behaviour in the crisis (offensive realism, defensive realism, situational, domestic sources) and offered three potential alternatives ways to deal with the situation: détente, confrontation and regime change. Professor Pavel Baev asked in his keynote, how to manage the new confrontation and how to deal now with Russia. It is noteworthy and perhaps deplorable that the whole East-West panel focussed mainly on Russia.

The fifth plenary session dealt with the political economy of conflict and peace, with Aude Fleurant from SIPRI analyzing the trends in military spending, arms production and arms transfers, and Professor Bjorn Moller, former Secretary-General of IPRA, analyzing the political economy of civil wars.

Finally, the sixth plenary dealt with the most urgent humanitarian issue facing Europe these days, the forged migration and the refugee crisis. Peter Nobel in his presentation emphasized the importance of respecting universal human rights in discussing the national and international security issues in the context of the migration crisis. Mohammed Abdiker’s speech was about the conflict and migration: the moving frontlines and in his presentation he told about the work of the International Organization for Migration.

As this conference was organized in the north of Europe, one might have expected a still wider participation from the old strongholds of Scandinavian peace research. PRIO, SIPRI, Uppsala and TAPRI all had some researchers at the conference, but more would have been desirable. It was also unfortunate, from the perspective of the theme, that although there were participants from several Russian universities, none from Moscow or St.Petersburg.

Anyway, this was a show of strength in European peace research, and now that the previous conferences have been convened in the South (Sakarya, Tirana and Famagusta) and in the North (Tampere and Tromso) it is appropriate that the next one be organized in the middle, Germany in 2017. The successful Tromso conference forebodes well for the next one!
Charhar Institute, an independent nongovernmental and nonpartisan Chinese think tank held its 3rd Annual Charhar Peace Dialogue on 21 August in Zhang Jiakou City, Hebei Province, China.

This time the theme of the dialog was “Image and Internationalization of Olympic Host Cities”, and attendees included peace lovers, peace practitioners, researchers and media personnel.

Speaking at the event, the Chairman of the Charhar Institute, Dr. Han Fangming said peace should be cherished at all time.

Huang Youyi, Secretary-general of the International Advisory Board of the Charhar Institute and former Vice President of the China International Publishing Group (CIPG) also attended the event.

In his address, he highlighted the role of local government for creating good public opinion of 'Zhangjiakou' (2022 Winter Olympics City) within international context, so that Zhangjiakou can have a better image in the international media.

Charhar Peace Dialogue also organized a sub-forum on Peace in East Asia, and it was hosted by Ms. Bang Hyunju from MBC in Korea, Mr. Kato Yoshikazu, senior fellow of the Charhar Institute and Mr. Wang Chong, senior fellow joined the discussion. The discussions focussed on the peace factors in East Asia, the roles of China and Japan in peace development in the East Asian region.
India and Pakistan have had frosty relations right from the time that Pakistan was created by division of the former undivided India in 1947. These relations have often become violent with several wars fought by Pakistan with India in 1965, 1971 and later mainly over the issue of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). In addition there have been several incursions into Indian territory by terrorists and militants. Of course Pakistan accuses India for similar incursions and cross border violations against itself.

The Indian Parliament was also made a target of militants from across the border on 13 Dec. 2001. Another vicious attack by LeT militants occurred in Mumbai in November 2008 killing about 160 people. Ajmal Kasab, the only attacker who was captured alive, was later hanged for his role in this attack.

As a result of these incidents a state of suspicion and resentment hang over the political relations of the two countries. There is absence of harmony and peace despite several meetings between the leaders including the Prime Ministers. This despite the fact that there are many common elements between the peoples of the two nations language, religion, culture, cuisine, sports and not least, the attraction in Pakistan for Indian films popularly called Bollywood films.

One of the latest films called Bajrangi Bhaijaan (BB) which is currently showing has broken all box office records in India and is a huge success in Pakistan. The story of BB is about a 7 year old dumb Pakistani girl who accidently strays into India and is helped by the hero of the film Salman Khan who plays the role of a God-loving simpleton and a devotee of the Hindu God Hanuman.

The hero decides to help this young child to return to her parents in Pakistan. But first he must find out where the parents live; the fact that the girl is dumb makes it more of a challenge for the hero named Bajrangi after whom the film gets its title.

How Bajrangi (without a visa) crosses over the border with the child, how he is chased by the Pakistani police on suspicion that he is an Indian agent, and the many escapades and hilarious scenes that follow makes the film not only enjoyable and humane, but also reflects the peaceful relations that still exist between the two peoples despite the political suspicion and lack of peace.

Although it is almost an impossible task, Bajrangi eventually succeeds in his mission to restore the child to her parents. The film is enjoyable and reflects the friendship, peace and humanity that still exist between the two peoples overriding the political and religious differences.

Many people are now admitting that the film has done more to bring peace and harmony than the regular political and trade meetings. One wishes that the politicians and militants of both countries take a lesson from this film.
All set for APPRA 2015 Conference in Nepal


The theme of the conference is “Pathways towards Just Peace, Reinventing security, justice and democracy in Asia-Pacific”. The conference will be an intensive forum focusing on addressing the issues around this theme.

Prime Minister of Nepal, Rt. Hon’ble Sushil Koirala is set to attend the conference and address the inaugural day of the conference. This conference will bring together more than 150 peace scholars, researchers, Human Rights activists and practitioners from various countries, and will provide a space for discussion, engagement, networking, exploring ideas, innovations, good practices and strategies in creating peace, justice and security in the Asia-Pacific Region.

All presenters and participants have been asked to register for the conference online at http://appra.net/appra-conference-2015/appra-conference-2015-registration-form/

The registration fee for students and Non-OECD Participants is $150, and $250 for OECD Participants.


Latina America Peace Research Association (CLAIP) with the endorsement by the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) is delighted to announce their next conference which will be held in Guatemala City, Guatemala on October 26-28 2015.

Conference theme: “Latin America seeking the path towards a Sustainable Peace. Tools and Contributions”.

The deadline for application ended on May 1st 2015.

For any clarification or details contact:
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IPRA members join the International Eminent Citizens’ call for International independent judicial process in Sri Lanka

By Senthon Selvarajah (Co-convenor of Media, Conflicts, & Human Rights Commission of IPRA)

A group of eminent persons from various countries including senior IPRA members have called upon the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to establish an international independent judicial process under UN auspices to go into alleged war crimes in Sri Lanka.

In an open letter to the members of the United Nations Human Rights Council, released on 14 September 2015, the group comprised of more than 60 eminent citizens from around the world said that “The HRC must be clear that the only way those conditions can be guaranteed is by the establishment of an independent international judicial process. In 2009, the world failed to protect Sri Lankan civilians. In 2015, we urge you to rectify that failure by mounting a credible judicial process. The creation of such a process is essential to prevent future atrocities and promote long-term reconciliation.”

Appreciating the Sri Lankan government for making “commendable progress” confronting corruption and instituting democratic reforms, the group, however, said: “these reforms, however, while welcome, should not be confused with justice for victims.” It argued that democracy was being restored in Sri Lanka’s south “while the largely Tamil lands of the North [and] East remain under military occupation.”

Despite the talk of reconciliation, the administration have not “acted on an essential confidence-building measure: releasing the names and details of prisoners it holds or who surrendered at the end of the war,” added the group which included Dr. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, Secretary General of the International Peace Research Association. Senior Lecturer in Media and Politics at Northumbria University, UK), Professor Jake Lynch (Director of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney, Australia. Former Secretary General of International Peace Research Association), Dr. Vidya Jain, Director, Centre for Gandhian Studies, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, India. Ex Co Secretary General of Asia Pacific Peace Research Association) and Dr. Pradeep Dhakal, Co-Secretary General, Asia Pacific Peace Research Association. Director, Chetanalaya Institute for Humanity, Peace and Spirituality, Nepal, Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann (President UN General Assembly (2008-2009) and Ex Foreign Minister of Nicaragua), Miloon Kothari (former Special UN Rapporteur on the Right to Housing), Hon. John Dowd AO QC (Former Attorney General of New South Wales. President, International Commission of Jurists, Australia. President of Action Aid Australia), Yudith Rolón (Director General, Office de Verdad Justicia y Reparacion- Truth and Justice Commission on the Arrested & Disappeared, 1954-1989, Paraguay), Norita Cortiñas (Cofounder, Madres de Plaza de Mayo- Mothers of the Disappeared, Argentina), David Deng, Legislative (Director, South Sudan Law Society), Maude Barlow (Chair, Council of Canadians. Alternative Nobel Prize 2009, Canada).

Commenting on the open letter signatory to the open letter, IPRA Secretary General Dr Ibrahim Seaga Shaw, said:

“This letter raises awareness in a post war context of Sri Lanka to subject human rights transgressors to war crimes trials and it calls for bringing former war criminals to justice, through international independent, impartial & credible judicial mechanisms.

A case in point is Sierra Leone, where the period following the end of the war coincided with the resurgence of war crimes jurisprudence through the establishment of the special Court for Sierra Leone pursuant to the UN Security Council’s Resolution of 15th August 2000 (Resolution 1315), as a solid international response to violators of International Humanitarian Law eventually leading to a sustainable peace, reconciliation and stability in the country”.

Please click on the below link to read the full text of the open letter and list of all signatories.

http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/open-letter-sri-lanka
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IPRA Members’ Publications

Journal of Resistance Studies

By Stellan Vinthagen,
Editor (Endowed Chair in the Study of Nonviolent Direct Action and Civil Resistance, and Professor of Sociology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst)

A new branch on the tree of peace research activities sprouted in June when the first issue of Journal of Peace Studies (JRS) was published.

JRS is an international, interdisciplinary and peer-reviewed scientific journal that explores unarmed resistance. The focus is on critical understandings of resistance strategies, discourses, tactics, effects, causes, contexts and experiences. Our aim is to advance an understanding of how resistance might undermine repression, injustices and domination of any kind, as well as how resistance might nurture autonomous subjectivity, as e.g. constructive work, alternative communities, oppositional ways of thinking.

The Journal of Resistance Studies welcomes critical reflections, evaluations, theoretical developments or more empirical based analysis. We encourage a broad and critical discussion on the possibilities, forms, and conditions, as well as problems and realities of ‘resistance’. We avoid dogmatic agendas and do not favor any particular framework, and encourage a debate on definitions of ‘resistance’.

Under the editorial leadership of Stellan Vinthagen at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and published through Irene Publishing in Sweden the journal aims to expand the understanding of conflicts through focus on how resistance with unarmed means impacts power relations. We are striving to cover a wide spectrum of topics that can help to deepen the theoretical and practical understanding of how resistance functions in different contexts.

The first issue includes an article by John Holloway on the role of Resistance Studies. Richard Jackson invites to a critical discussion of the need to change focus for Peace Studies in his article: “How Resistance Can Save Peace Studies”.

Christopher Kullenberg writes on how “Citizen Science” can function as a form of Resistance. And Jason MacLeod has a text on practical advices for how to build resilience to repression in nonviolent resistance struggles.

Daniel Møller Ølgaard has an article on the role of humor in resistance movements; “Play, Politics & the Practice of Resistance”.

The international Editorial Board of JRS includes many of the well-known researchers with relevance for resistance studies. A first regional editorial group is established in Latin America and JRS want to develop into a truly global journal.

We hope to see more contributions from members of IPRA in the years ahead. Submissions up to 12000 words are accepted continuously throughout the year and we do our best to give feedback to authors relatively soon. See more details: www.resistance-journal.org

Humor & Nonviolent Struggle in SERBIA

Author: Janjira Sombatpoonsiri
Publisher: Syracuse University Press (October 15, 2015)

“If I had no sense of humor, I should long ago have committed suicide,” wrote the late Mahatma Gandhi, expressing the potent power of humor to sustain and uplift. Less obvious is humor’s ability to operate as a cunning weapon in nonviolent protest movements.

Over the last few decades, activists are increasingly incorporating subversive laughter in their protest repertoires, realizing the ways in which it challenges the ruling elite’s propaganda, defuses antagonism, and inspires both participants and the greater population.

In this highly original and engaging work, Sombatpoonsiri explores the nexus between humor and nonviolent protest, aiming to enhance our understanding of the growing popularity of humor in protest movements around the world.

Drawing on insights from the pioneering Otpor activists in Serbia, she provides a detailed account of the protesters’ systematic use of humor to topple Slobodan Milosevic in 2000. Interviews with activists, protest newsletters, and documentaries of the movement combine to illustrate how humor played a pivotal role by reflecting the absurdity of the regime’s propaganda and, in turn, by delegitimizing its authority.

Sombatpoonsiri highlights the Otpor activists’ ability to internationalize their nonviolent crusade, influencing youth movements in the Ukraine, Georgia, Iran, and Egypt. Globally, Otpor’s successful use of humor became an inspiration for a later generation of protest movements.

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International Peace Research Association
Business Journalism: A Critical Political Economy Approach
By Ibrahim Seaga Shaw - ISBN: 9781317646457

Business Journalism: A Critical Political Economy Approach critically explores the failures of business journalism in striking the balance between the bottom line business model and their role in defending the public interest.

Drawing on historical and political economic perspectives and analysing these in relation to critical political economic theory, the book explores failures of business journalism through the dwindling of social responsibility in the business journalist’s role in holding political and corporate power to account.

Business Journalism: A Critical Political Economy Approach is essential reading for students and scholars interested in understanding the historical failings and potential futures for business journalism and those wishing to develop specialist financial, economic and business reporting in today's globalised media landscape.

AUTHOR: Ibrahim Seaga Shaw is Senior Lecturer in Media and Politics at Northumbria University in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. He is author of Human Rights Journalism (2012) and co-editor of Expanding Peace Journalism (2012). He is also co-editor of Communicating Differences (forthcoming 2016) and obtained his PhD from the Sorbonne. He has a background in journalism spanning 20 years, having worked in Sierra Leone, Britain and France.

"There are few areas of greater importance and more need of critical analysis than business journalism. Ibrahim Seaga Shaw has done us all the great service of providing just such a thorough and valuable assessment in Business Journalism: A Critical Political Economy Approach. It is required reading for scholars and students of journalism, media and democracy." - Robert W. McClenchy, Editor of Urbana-Champaign.

"The huge expansion of business journalism in recent years reflects the ever increasing impact of corporate decisions and actions on all our lives. Yet this area of news making is rarely exposed to serious critique and analysis. Ibrahim Shaw has written an invaluable historical and theoretically informed account of business journalism, buttressed by detailed case studies and years of professional experience, that will provide this field with an authoritative and much needed major step forward." – Peter Golding, Professor in Media, University of Newcastle

Conversation in Peace
Authors: Lynda-Ann Blanchard and Hannah Middleton
ISBN: 1742103537, 9781742103532
Published in 2015

In highly creative ways they show how poverty can be eradicated, non-violence embraced, the rich and powerful persuaded that peace with justice is precious and that violence of any kind is not only contrary to any notion of a common humanity but also serves no purpose....

DESMOND TUTU
"War is not good, for children. War is not good, for the environment. War is just awful... and each one of us can make a very significant contribution by being a centre of peace."

XANANA GUSMAO
"Peace doesn’t mean only lack of war. Peace means peace of mind... and a big obstacle to peace is radicalism."

OLARA OTUNNU
"Peace is, of course, about the absence of war, but peace is about more than that. It’s about ensuring that people are not...stuck in a situation of injustice—structural, embedded injustice."

SIR WILLIAM DEANE
"I have no doubt in my mind that the Sydney Peace Prize is the most important peace award in this country."

HANAN ASHRAWI
"Well certainly the Sydney Peace Prize has been a turning point in many ways—it’s a landmark."

HANS BLIX
"I think the Sydney Peace Prize is an encouragement to devote yourself to peace work."

IRENE KHAN
"To people listening to me I would say, you have a contribution to make to peace—each one of us can do something for it and we should never feel that as an individual we have nothing to contribute."

List of other Books Published in 2015
Candice C. Carter, Linda Pickett; Youth Literature for Peace Education. ISBN: 9781137362261; Publisher: Palgrave Macmillan

Candice C. Carter, Linda Pickett; Social Education for Peace; ISBN 978113754273; Publisher: Palgrave Pivot


Betty A. Reardon; Dale Sneauaert (Eds.): Betty A. Reardon: A Pioneer in Education for Peace and Human Rights (Springer-Verlag, 2015).


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Please contact us if you require further information relating to this newsletter. Your comments and feedback are also greatly appreciated.

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