



# ADVENTIST WORLD AFFAIRS

NEWS AND ANALYSIS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY OF THE  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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## From the Director . . .

### Potential Alliance

Before the meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) held in Warsaw in 6-17 October 2003, Ambassador Pamela Hyde-Smith invited me to a round table discussion. Ambassador Hyde Smith was the head of the U.S. delegation. Leaders of six non-governmental organizations attended the meeting at the State Department, and I represented the International Religious Liberty Association (IRLA). The meeting was not about religious freedom but about the implementation of human rights in the 55 countries of the OSCE. It was an honor to represent the religious freedom field.

There is a potential alliance between the leaders of secular Europe, orthodox Europe, Muslim countries in favor of a 'restrictive religious freedom!' It would be a natural alliance between those who are fighting sects and cults; those who are teaching against foreign missionaries; and those who believe that religious freedom means "wild competition" among confessions and proselytism. I should also add, those who believe that religious freedom represents a threat to security. That is a potential coalition. We should be aware of that. Can we

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## Serbian Ambassador Visits General Conference

"We are very grateful for the assistance from the Adventist church and from ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) when we were shut off by sanctions and war, when we really needed it. This helped people survive in those terrible times," said Dr. Ivan Vujacic, Ambassador of Serbia and Montenegro to the United States of America during a visit to the Seventh-day Adventist Church world headquarters September 30, 2003.

Dr. Vujacic was welcomed by the Adventist Church President, Dr. Jan Paulsen, who said that the Adventist Church's "engagement with society is very deliberate, since we believe to be a Christian you have to take a direct interest in the well-being of others and to be

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From left: Jan Paulsen, Adventist Church president; Ivan Vujacic, Ambassador of Serbia and Montenegro; and John Graz, Secretary-General of the International Religious Liberty Association.

## SDA Representatives Meet Cyprus President

Two Seventh-day Adventist Church world representatives, Dr. John Graz and Dr. Bert Beach, were among a delegation of 22 members of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions (CSCWC), who met with the president of Cyprus, Tassos Papadopoulos, on Oct. 21. The Cypriot leader received a plaque from Graz and told the church leaders of the urgent need for cooperation and reconciliation in Cyprus, which has been divided by ethnic conflict since 1975.

During the CWC session, Dr. Beach, who served as secretary of the organization for 32 years, was also honored with an award commemorating

his service to the group, which represents some 2 billion Christian believers around the world.

Additionally taking place at the Cyprus conference, the CSCWC is seeking to expand its role in the search for Christian unity. Among new actions, they will monitor their own interactions more closely, seek to expand participation in their meeting to include groups not formally represented, and share some of the discussion that is normally held privately. These results came from a strategic planning session that followed three years of preparatory discussions.

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## United Nations Religious Committee Hears Adventist Religious Freedom Concerns

Attorney Mitch Tyner, representing the Adventist Church, spoke to the UN Religious Committee and highlighted concerns addressing religious freedom and international law.

“Religious liberty is an individual right which needs greater protection,” said Tyner, adding, “courts and judges should not be allowed to mandate what religion is and to define religious activities.”

Tyner also commented that international documents that appear to protect religious liberty are weak and rarely protect religious minority observances because of the lack of protection against unintentional burdens to practice religion. The requirement for governments to either show the burden is really necessary or make accommodation for religious practice.

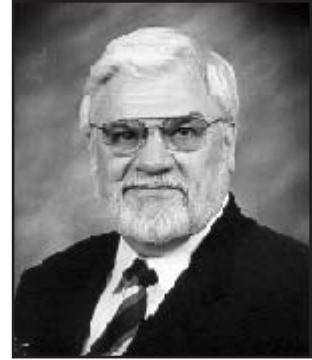
Tyner spoke to the Non-governmental Organizations Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief held at the United Nations Church Center on September 25. In attendance were representatives of many

religious-based and other civil organizations

Dr. Don Shriver, President Emeritus of Union Theological Seminary, spoke on the theme of the development of religious freedom throughout history. “Religions out of power demand liberty, religions in power demand uniformity,” stated Shriver. “Our challenge is to keep our variety of religious beliefs in some kind of unity.”

Dr. Jonathan Gallagher, United Nations Liaison Director for the Adventist Church, who was also in attendance commented, “Religious liberty concerns are important to both the Adventist church and the wider society. Through our presence at the United Nations we are able to share our convictions regarding religious freedom and to support such fundamental human rights.”

The UN/NGO Committee on Religion or Belief was recognized by the UN Economic and Social Council in 1991. One of its goals is to support the UN special rapporteur's initiatives against intolerance and discrimination based on



Mitchell Tyner addressed the UN Religious Committee.

religion or belief; and appeal to the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention and Protection of Minorities and the UN Commission on Human Rights to take appropriate actions against intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief. This Committee also helps in the development of an annual report on the worldwide situation of freedom of religion or belief.

by Viola Hughes and Kelly Razouk

## Senators Briefed on Workplace Religious Freedom Act

Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton commended the religious communities for addressing social and humanitarian issues



Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, Democrat of New York, co-sponsored a forum highlighting religious issues. James Standish, director of legislative affairs for the Seventh-day Adventist Church attended the event.

after an event that brought representatives of 14 various religious faiths to meet with six senators at the U.S. Capitol Sept. 25. The

meeting focused on proposed legislation that would require employers to, within reason, accommodate religious practices of their employees.

“I applaud the religious community for helping to facilitate many key social and humanitarian programs at home and around the world,” said Clinton.

James Standish, Adventist Church congressional liaison, presented at the meeting urging support for the Act, calling for a vote on the senate floor. The Workplace Religious Freedom Act (S. 893) currently has 21 bipartisan senate sponsors.

“This builds on the strong relationships we’ve been building on both sides of the aisle,” said

Standish, who met with Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist of Tennessee the week before the meeting.

“This gives us a forum right in the heart of the decision making that we just haven’t had before,” said Standish. This is the first time the Adventist Church has been invited to such a meeting instead of requesting to meet with legislators individually. Senator Clinton invited Standish and the other representatives to a regular weekly meeting.

Standish said the Workplace Religious Freedom Act would help to ensure that American foreign policy is guided by the goal of expanding religious freedom. He focused particularly on the abuse of religious freedom by nations that are closely allied to the United States.

More than 1,000 Adventists are fired

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## Reception Held for Senate Chaplain

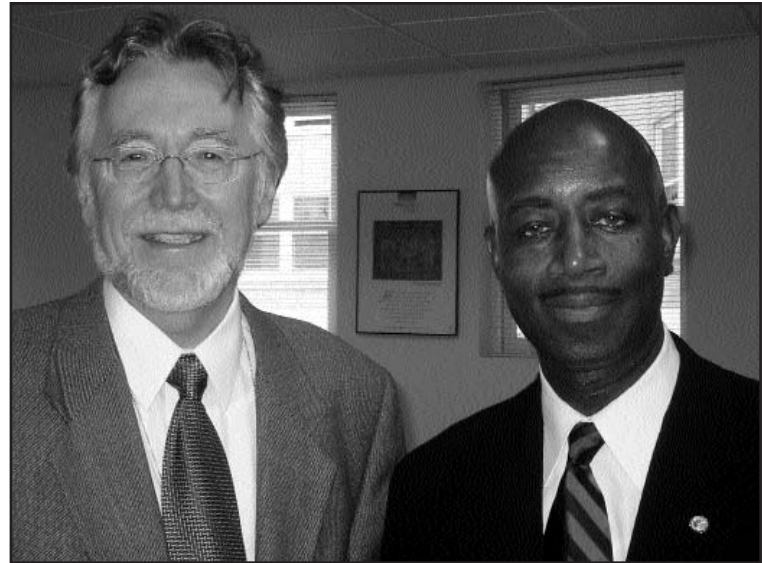
Dr. Barry Black, United States Senate Chaplain, was honored by the General Conference Office of Legislative Affairs at a reception on Thursday, October 9, 2003. This reception, held across the street from the Senate office buildings, gave Capitol Hill representatives from a variety of religious organizations a chance to meet the 62nd Senate Chaplain, who also happens to be the first Seventh-day Adventist to hold that position.

A number of representatives attended the event, including individuals from the Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian churches; the National Council of Churches; the American Jewish Committee; the Orthodox Union; Reform Jews; and the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights. Also in attendance was a government class from Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Maryland. Additionally, the ambassador of Papua New Guinea, a Seventh-day Adventist, and Rabbi Saperstein, the first chair of the United States Committee for International Religious Freedom, took the opportunity to meet Chaplain Black.

Chaplain Black addressed the group of approximately 50 people at the reception with information on what a Senate chaplain does and then took questions from the audience.

The chaplain noted that the best biblical knowledge in the Capitol is found in the ordinary people who often do mundane jobs, such as office clerks, security guards, tour guides, and maintenance workers. He noted it is encouraging to know that people of God can be found in the "house of Pharaoh."

Since assuming the post on July 7, 2003, Dr. Black, who retired as a rear admiral from the United States Navy,



Dr. Barry Black (right), chaplain of the the United States Senate, takes a moment to pose with Dr. John Graz, director of the General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department, at the reception held in Dr. Black's honor.

has conducted weekly prayer breakfasts and Bible studies for Senators and Senate staff and has actively reached out to the Senate community.

*by Michael Weismeyer*

### Senators briefed . . .

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each year in the United States by employers who refuse to accommodate their religious practices. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reports that cases involving mistreatment due to religion have risen 85 percent in the last decade.

"My colleagues and I are particularly grateful for your critical deliberation on the present misuse of religious language in public policy."

Also attending the meeting were Senators Tom Daschle of South Dakota, Patrick Leahy of Vermont, Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas, Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico and Daniel Akaka of Hawaii.

For more information, visit <http://ola.adventist.org>.

*Source: Adventist News Network*

### Serbian ambassador . . .

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committed to providing the best for people," he said.

"We hope that the various services we provide are seen by nations as demonstrating our commitment to be good partners in society," Paulsen stated.

Referring to an April attack on Josip Tikvicki, an Adventist pastor in the town of Zrenjanin, the ambassador expressed regrets about the incident. "I am so sorry for that incident. Sadly some are still infested with hatred and intolerance, and there remain groups that have not given up their extreme policies," he said to a group of Adventist Church leaders at the luncheon hosted by the church's office of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty.

Vujacic also said that "in our struggle for democracy, human rights and

freedom were our highest goals, and we remain very committed to live up to these standards. We have moved a long way in a short time, but this is an area that takes time to change attitudes, to work for religious tolerance both in law and for the local population."

Pastor Radivoj Vladislavljevic, president of the church's South-East European region with headquarters in Belgrade, commented that the Serbian government recognized the Josip Tikvicki "incident as an attack on religious liberty and condemned it. The situation is now improving," Vladislavljevic added.

*Source: Adventist News Network*

## Forum Held on Religion and Terrorism

Freedom Forum and the Washington Coalition on Religious Freedom, of Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty is a member, sponsored a symposium on November 6, 2003. The keynote speaker was Jeremy Gunn and his topic was "Religion in the Mind of the Terrorist." The speech was an in-depth look at religious terrorism and what makes them go from being religious fanatics to religious terrorists.

In his speech, Gunn touched on many interesting points, including why and how people turn into terrorists and what separates religious terrorism from religious fanaticism. He emphasized how religious terrorism has grown in the past ten years. In 1980, only 2 out of 64 terrorist groups were religious, while in 1995, 26 of 56 terrorist groups were based in

religion. This causes concern throughout much of the world. Yet in order to prevent terrorism of any kind, we first need to understand it. As Gunn said, "we need to understand before we can remedy."

Several factors play into making a religious terrorist a terrorist. Their religious history, their sacred texts, and those they have to interpret those texts. Usually, terrorists believe they are freeing their society and bringing the rest of their followers a better life by destroying the enemy. They feel that they have tried every other measure and the only thing the enemy will respond to is violence. Usually the terrorist believes that they are on the defensive, and the enemy started the conflict.

What is dangerous about this is the terrorists' lack of concern for the innocent victims

of their violence. In fact, many do not believe there are any innocent victims among the enemy. Not only do they have no regard for those innocent people who have been injured or killed, they take pleasure in the enemy's destruction.

What can we do, as a society, to stop religious terrorism? We can try our best to understand why terrorists choose violence over peaceful methods. We must remember then many factors play into the decisions that the terrorists make. We have to make sure we do not judge or lash out at people of the same faith because of the terrorist actions. Remember: Without understanding we can never remedy.

*by Jennifer Stymiest*

### Cyprus president . . .

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The CSCWC is an annual meeting, in different places in the world, taking place every year for more than 40 years. Its primary feature has been its informal and confidential nature, a feature that has resulted in friendships and deep relationships among the secretaries, which in turn has led to reduction of hostility and the establishment of dialogues. Christian World Communions are international bodies organized along the lines of one Christian tradition. Besides councils of denominations such as the Reformed Ecumenical Council, there are also world churches, such as the Catholic Church or the Adventist Church.

The CSCWC has been a place where some deep discussion of divisive issues has taken place. In the late 1990s, the secretaries spent several years on the issue of proselytism and evangelism. For such matters, the CSCWC hopes to share their findings in a wider audience.

Inviting communion heads to join a meeting will increase the role and influence of the CSCWC. The secretaries hope to share the positive benefits of their work style with a wider group. Widening the group itself is also important, and the group decided to pursue greater participation, especially from evangelical and Pentecostal groups.

The interaction of the CWCs with other ecumenical streams, in particular the World Council of Churches, has been frequently on the agenda of the CSCWC. This year's meeting appointed a group to monitor other developments and realignments closely.

Interaction among the communions represented at the meeting has always been reported and discussed. Another committee will investigate such interactions more closely and encourage positive cooperation.

This year, the meeting was hosted by Bishop Nikiforos, Abbot of the Monastery of Kykkos, of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus. The hosts educated all participants about the

complexities of the Cyprus situation, and arranged a reception with President Tassos Papadopolous of Cyprus. Eighteen churches and international communions were represented at this year's meeting.

*by Richard L. van Houten, General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council and Adventist News Network*

### From the director . . .

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avoid such a coalition? I believe we can do a lot to support those who believe in religious freedom; in promoting the principle, of religious freedom according to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I like the statement of Ellen White: "We are not doing the will of God, if we sit in quietude, doing nothing to preserve liberty of conscience."

*by John Graz*



Dr. John Graz (third from left, front row), the director of the GC Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty; Dr. Bert Beach (third from left, second row back), director of interchurch relations for the Seventh-day Adventist church; and Dr. Eugene Hsu (fifth from left, second row back), GC Vice President, attended the Christian World Communions conference in Cyprus, along with delegates from other faith traditions.

*Editor: John Graz*

*Managing Editor: Michael Weismeyer*

ADVENTIST WORLD AFFAIRS is a publication of the Seventh-day Adventist Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty.