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What would a Livable World be like?...

- Homepage - Actions - Gathering for a Livable World -

Publication date: Thursday 14 November 2013

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(Article published on 8 November 2013 in the weekly "Haute Saintonge")

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Haute Saintonge, 2013-11-08

That was the central question discussed in Saintes at the « Gathering for a Livable World » on 25-27 October and illuminated by various well-qualified speakers. Before it opened, on 22 October, the film « *Harvests of the Future* » was screened in the presence of Marie-Monique Robin, a journalist, author, director of some forty documentary films, and recipient of thirty prizes. After the film there was a discussion « *Can agrobiology feed the planet ?* ». 250 people attended in the Théâtre Gallia. Then during the weekend about a hundred people contributed to the discussions, participants from this region and further afield.

The recent Gathering was a sequel to the one held in Saintes in October 2011, initiated by ACDN (Action des Citoyens pour le Désarmement Nucléaire) and six other NGOs: ATTAC, the Farmers Federation, the Teaching League, the League for Human Rights, the « Nuclear Phase-out » network and the Foundation for a Human Earth. Other lesser-known groups joined in. Now two years later the objective is the same: to coordinate the action of civil society movements pursuing the same humanist goal in their particular domains.

Organized with the support of the city of Saintes, the Gathering began on the Friday with a public ceremony that has become a tradition in Saintes since 2001 : the lighting of the Nuclear Disarmament Flame, in the presence of elected officials and well-known personalities - accompanied this time by the choir of Thénac. The flame was lit by Susie Greaves, representing the « Independent Who » organization which for about 350 weeks has held a daily vigil outside the WHO in Geneva opposite the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency). That evening a film was screened, « Agent Orange, delayed-action bomb », followed by a debate on that subject.

Workshops to look at the state the world is in and to imagine how it could be

On the Saturday there were workshops to start reflections on four themes : peace and disarmament ; institutional justice, social justice, economy and solidarity ; food, water and health ; environment, climate, alternatives to nuclear energy. These themes were then brought together on the Sunday so as to identify objectives for common action.

Representations to the candidates for the municipal and European elections.

During the 2011 Gathering, a « *Charter for a Livable World* » had been elaborated and adopted. It was made public and remains open for on-line signatures (mondevivable.over-blog.com). The document was also sent to the candidates for the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections. In the section « Peace and Disarmament », Article 1.2.F, the candidates Eva Joly, Philippe Poutou and Jean-Luc Mélenchon all supported « the opening of a national debate and the consulting of the French people by referendum on the follow question : "Are you in favour of France participating with the other states concerned in the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, under a system of mutual and international monitoring that is strict and effective?" » This question remains a central focus of ACDN's

actions. Numerous personalities, national, international and also regional (like the MPs Catherine Quéré, Geneviève Gaillard, Marie-Line Reynaud, Philippe Plisson, Véronique Massonneau, and the Mayor Patrick Moquay...), wrote to the President of France asking for this referendum, thus confirming the need to consider these matters crucial to the future of humankind.

A Charter to link people together...

Among the signatories was the late-lamented Stéphane Hessel, the author of « *Indignez-vous !* » [Get Angry !], a fervent example of humanist activism over and above political boundaries. Marking his support for the Charter for a Livable World, he had written this commentary: « *I approve the spirit and the detail of the measures advocated in this Charter, and I sign it with both my hands* ». To incite civil society to exercise its power to monitor and decide the options taken by political leaders is one of the missions that ACDN has adopted. Its president, Jean-Marie Matagne, Ph D, expresses general satisfaction about the variety and quality of the discussion that took place during the weekend. He remains firmly determined to carry on the struggle to obtain a referendum on France's participation in the abolition of nuclear weapons.

In order to continue their citizens' action, the participants in the Gathering plan to disseminate the Charter in the cities where they live and to meet before the end of the year to see how they can ensure that the candidates in the coming municipal and European elections take notice of it.

Insert

High-quality speakers

- ▶ André Bouny, President of the International Committee to support the Vietnamese Victims of Agent Orange
- ▶ Leila Aïchi, senator from Paris, secretary of the senate's Commission for Foreign Affairs, Defense and Armed Forces
- ▶ André Grimaldi, Professor of Endocrinology at the Pitié Salpêtrière Hospital
- ▶ Bernard Laponche, nuclear engineer, former member of the Commissariat for Atomic Energy, international energy expert
- ▶ Nasser Zammit, doctorate in international relations and diplomacy
- ▶ Jean-Pierre Boucher, magistrate, former president of the Magistracy Syndicate
- ▶ Davis Cayla, economist...

Insert

As for conviviality...

A team of volunteers led by Jean-Marc Lefranc, a former restaurateur, concocted much-appreciated meals based on local products and bio- products (chosen to match the themes !). The Thénac choir and the group « Melya Culture » (reggae, flamenco) gave a free concert on the Saturday afternoon which was well attended.