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**School Sisters of Notre Dame delegation
to participate in U.N. Commission on Status of Women**

A delegation from School Sisters of Notre Dame, including students from SSND-sponsored Mount Mary College in Milwaukee, will be joining the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women this month as the group works to make financing for gender equality and empowerment of women a priority worldwide.

“The School Sisters of Notre Dame are committed to ensuring that all people have the opportunity to develop their full potential as individuals created in God’s image,” said Sister Ann Scholz, SSND, director of the SSND UN-NGO office. “That requires that governments invest in girls and women by providing quality education, addressing discrimination, enforcing existing laws and establishing a safety net for the most vulnerable. As members of an international community, School Sisters of Notre Dame have a special opportunity to remind governments of their obligations to women and girls.”

The annual two-week meeting of the commission, February 25-March 7, will be guided by two reports of the U.N. Secretary General on the priority theme of financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The agenda will include roundtables focusing on experiences, lessons learned and good practices; interactive expert panels to identify key policy initiatives, and parallel events organized by member states.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women. Every year, representatives of member states gather at the United Nations Headquarters to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide.

As educators with a world vision, School Sisters of Notre Dame are especially sensitive to the needs of women, children and those who live in poverty as they strive to create a global community where human dignity is respected, the environment is treasured, spirituality is nourished, and justice is practiced.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame has been a registered NGO (non-governmental organization) with the U.N.’s Department of Public Information since 1993. In 1998, SSND received special consultative status with the ECOSOC. School Sisters of Notre Dame actively participate in the work of the United Nations by presenting

written and oral testimony to ECOSOC and its commissions, particularly on issues related to the welfare and education of girls and women, economic justice, and sustainable development.

“Members of the SSND delegation will join other NGO representatives on the Working Group on Girls in advocating for adequate funding for programs directed toward girls,” Sister Ann said. “Girls matter because they are our sisters entitled to equal dignity, education, and participation in their families and communities. What’s good for girls is good for their communities. Girls are precious assets for our future. Unfortunately, girls are too often undervalued by their communities and shortchanged by their governments.”

The School Sisters of Notre Dame also joined 30 other NGOs in signing a written statement that will be presented to the CSW for consideration. The statement includes recommendations that governments institute effective and transparent measurements of previously set goals related to the girl child, develop comprehensive education strategies that will allocate dependable funding for universal education for all, and develop gender-responsive budgeting that explicitly allocates monies for programs addressing girls’ health, as well as ending trafficking of girls for labor and eliminating violence against the girl child.

In addition to Sister Ann, the SSND delegation includes Sisters Eileen Reilly, SSND, director of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) for the Atlantic-Midwest Province; Ethel Howley, SSND, assistant JPIC director for the Atlantic-Midwest Province; Joan Connelly, SSND; Maureen Fleming, SSND, and Maria Iannuccillo, SSND. Julie Gilberto-Brady, communications coordinator for the SSND North American Major Area, also will be attending.

The Mount Mary delegation includes Professor Dawn Fell and students Christine Behn, Kate Lee Calvano, Bianca Iepure, Cynthia Judds, Myriem Lahmam Bennani, Megan Lann, Mollyrose Mahoney, Jennifer Treptow and Briony Zlomke.

The congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame is an international community of women religious. Impelled by the Spirit and mission of Jesus, the Sisters educate with a world vision believing that the world can be changed through the transformation of persons. The sisters and their colleagues seek to empower women, youth and persons who are poor or marginalized and strive to change systems of poverty and injustice. Nearly 4,000 School Sisters of Notre Dame minister in 35 countries throughout the world.

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Additional information about the Commission on the Status of Women is available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/52sess>.<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/52sess.htm>.

For more information about the School Sisters of Notre Dame, please visit <http://www.gerhardinger.org/english/index.htm> or <http://www.ssnd.org/>.

For a comprehensive archive of SSND involvement in last year’s 51st Session of the CSW, please visit http://www.ssnd.org/External/News&Events/CSW/csw_intro.htm.