

# Keith Suter Comments

## A Tireless Worker For The Environment

*World Peace News, October - November 2005*

With so much doom and gloom on the world scene, it is pleasant to hear some cheering news about an international worker for peace receiving her due recognition.

*The remarkable Dr Agni Vlavianos-Arvanitis has been nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize.* There will be doubtless many other nominations and so there is no guarantee that she will be awarded it. But it is a great honour simply to have been nominated.

*The honour is well deserved. Twenty years ago, in Athens, she created BIO: Biopolitics International Organization.* This was to raise awareness of environmental problems and to accelerate the implementation of new and more effective approaches to safeguarding the earth for the generations to come.

The organization's acronym "BIO" is a nice play on words because "bio" has Greek connotations for "life". For example, biochemistry refers to the chemistry of living organisms.

*It has become a major international non-governmental organization.* It has representatives in 120 countries around the world. It is one of the world's fastest growing environmental organizations. Among its sources of money are the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Commission, and various business enterprises (such as Coca-Cola and the National Bank of Greece).

*One strand of its work is educational reform.* It has produced a comprehensive textbook on how environmental considerations can be inserted into educational curricula in a variety of courses for all years of study.

*Another strand deals with ways of involving the business community in environmental protection.* It is publicizing ways that businesses can do well by doing good in creating sustainable policies.

BIO is also active in international politics and is often represented at international conferences.

*The BIO story contains four points worth noting. First, it is an example of what one person can do.* Dr Vlavianos-Arvanitis wanted to do something to protect the environment and so she set up this organization. BIO is evidence of what one well-organized and dedicated person can achieve in only two decades.

*Second, the messages from BIO are always ones of optimism.* It is very easy to become pessimistic in campaigning for the environment. People can quickly feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the task. But BIO focuses on what ought to be done - it is too busy to give way to despair.

*Third, her enthusiasm is contagious.* Her Nobel nomination (by a member of the Swedish Parliament) refers to her work as a way to "vaccinate society with new thinking". She has been able to draw others into her campaigning.

*Finally, protecting the environment is a way of working for peace.* The current edition of her magazine contains a story of the January 2005 conference in Athens that drew together civic leaders, business executives and academics to discuss ways of furthering co-operation between Greece and Turkey on protecting the environment.

These are two traditional rivals. But protecting the environment is a common task of importance to both countries. When it comes to the environment, you either learn to work together - or you perish separately. The conference went very well.

Working to save the environment is therefore a way of working for peace. Dr Agni Vlavianos-Arvanitis deserves the Nobel Peace Prize.

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