

ABOLISH NUKES



YES. BUT HOW?

ASIEN: Senioren im Netz – Ältere Menschen entdecken das Internet

RSS SHARE

Von Lynette Lee Corporal

Bangkok, 15. September (IPS) – Die Philippin Tessie Moreno ist 67 Jahre alt und nach eigenen Angaben viel zu jung, um sich technologischen Neuerungen zu verschließen. Bekannt ist die 16-fache Großmutter vor allem als 'Lola Tachie', die älteren Menschen virtuell das Internet erklärt. Inzwischen hat sie 96.000 Fans.

"Mir gefällt es zu chatten, zu surfen, zu bloggen und auf YouTube zu gehen", erzählt Moreno in ihrem Facebook. Vom Internetfieber infiziert wurde sie, als sie in Rente ging und sich 21 Prozent der 92 Millionen Philippiner im weltweiten Netz tummelten. Seitdem ist sie mit den modernen Kommunikationsformen wie Twitter, Skype, Plurk und YouTube bestens vertraut und bietet im Auftrag einer privaten Firma auf der Website www.teachlola.com Internetkurse an.

In Indien hat auch Arunachalam Kumar mit seiner ixedoc-Internet-Identität und einer Website bei Suleha.com in den USA einen gewissen Bekanntheitsgrad erreicht. Der 60-jährige College-Dekan und Anatomieprofessor, der in der indischen Stadt Mangalore lebt, ist seit zehn Jahren 'angeschlossen'. Jeden Tag sitzt Kumar, der mehr als 1.500 Online-Einträge und 900 Blogs vorweisen kann, zweieinhalb Stunden vor dem Computer.

"Das Internet hat meine Welt verändert", versichert der Selfmade-Cyber-Surfer. "Viele Menschen wundern sich, warum ich so viel Zeit im Netz bin. Sie sind sich über das Potenzial, das das Internet als Informationsquelle zu bieten hat, gar nicht im Klaren."

Berichten zufolge gehören ältere Menschen in den Industrieländern zu der besonders schnell wachsenden Gruppe der Internetuser. In Asien ist ein solcher Trend bislang nicht erkennbar. Bisher haben sich nach Angaben von 'Internet World Stats', einer Website, die Zahlen über das weltweite Internetverhalten dokumentiert, 24,7 Prozent der Weltbevölkerung Zugang zum Cyberspace erschlossen. In Asien sind es 18,5 Prozent. Seit Juni 2009 waren dort 704,2 Millionen User online. Das entspricht 42,2 Prozent der weltweiten Internetuser.

Suchmaschinen für Senioren

Einige Internetfirmen reagieren bereits auf die Zunahme ihres älteren Klientels. Im März 2009 ging 'Baidu', eine führende Suchmaschine in China, mit einer neuen Suchmaschine an den Start. Sie ist übersichtlicher und stellt Verbindungen zu Informationen etwa über klassische Lyrik her, die für die dritte Generation interessant sein könnten.

Baidu erhofft sich von dem Vorstoß, die Zahl der Internetsenioren zu erhöhen. Bis Ende vergangenen Jahres hatten nach Angaben des 'China Internet Network Information Centre' (CNNIC) nur fünf Millionen von 300 Millionen Chinesen über 50 Gebrauch von Suchmaschinen gemacht.

Inzwischen sind in China 338 Millionen Menschen im Netz. In Japan sind es 94 Millionen und in Indien 81 Millionen. Der Anteil der Internetuser an der Gesamtbevölkerung liegt in Japan bei 74 Prozent, in China bei 25 Prozent und in Indien bei sieben Prozent.

Nicht alle Senioren sind so beherzt wie Lola Tachie, wenn es darum geht, die neuen Medien zu nutzen. "Ich habe Angst vor Computern", meint die 67-jährige Thailänderin Aunt Tui. "Ich könnte auf den falschen Knopf drücken und etwas kaputtmachen." Ihre Kinder hätten versucht, ihr den Umgang mit dem weltweiten Web beizubringen. Doch sie habe sich geschämt, weil sie sich die Befehle nicht merken konnte.

In Thailand gibt es nicht viele Online-Nutzungsanleitungen für ältere Menschen. Dabei sind sie besonders effektiv. In Singapur werden Computerschulungen für Senioren häufig auf Gemeindeebene durchgeführt.

Vor allem ältere Städter online

"Die Vermittlung von Computerkenntnissen ist vor allem ein städtisches Phänomen, das nur in geringem Umfang auf die ländlichen Gebiete übergreift", meint die indische Journalistin und Bloggerin, Smita Deodhar. "Die Senioren, die in diesem Bereich aufholen, gehören in der Regel der städtischen Mittel- und Oberschicht an."

Die Filipina Moreno ist jedoch fest entschlossen, über ihre Website 'Teach Lola-Website' (www.teachlola.com) mehr Altersgenossen an das Medium Internet heranzuführen. Die Telekommunikationsfirma 'BayanTel', die das 'Teach Lola'-Projekt durchführt, geht davon aus, dass bestenfalls elf Prozent der Senioren auf die internationale Datenbahn aufgefahren sind.

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"Ich bin überzeugt, dass ich nicht einmal halb soviel erreicht hätte von dem, was der IPS-Preis für internationale Errungenschaften (IPS International Achievement Award) mir zuschreibt, wenn nicht die Macht der Presse dahinter gestanden hätte und speziell die von Organisationen wie IPS, die nicht nur über das erschöpfend dokumentierte Manko bei den UN berichten, sondern auch über deren nicht hoch genug einzuschätzendes und zu Veränderungen führendes Wirken." – Kofi Annan, der frühere UN Generalsekretär bei der Entgegennahme des IPS Preises im Dezember 2006.



IPS Europa gehört zu IPS-Inter Press Service International Association, dem Eigner der internationalen Agentur IPS. Die 1964 gegründete Nachrichtenagentur zählt zu den weltweit führenden Anbietern von Informationen zu globalen Themen und Belangen der Länder des Südens.

"IPS hat größeren Pluralismus und größere Vielfalt in die internationale Medien gebracht. IPS hat denen ohne Stimme eine Stimme gegeben. IPS ist nötiger denn je beim Hervorbringen eines Süd-Süd Dialogs und dem Entstehen von Alternativen zu den bestehenden Allianzen." – So der Brasilianische Präsident, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva anlässlich der Verleihung des IPS International Achievement Award 2008 im September.



"Ich habe die IPS-Berichterstattung während drei Jahrzehnten verfolgt und habe während meiner medienorientierten Aufgaben bei den UN mit dieser Agentur eng verbunden gearbeitet... Ich fand IPS eine ausgezeichnete Quelle für Nachrichten und Einblicke hinsichtlich der Entwicklungs-länder, wo Themen behandelt wurden, die zu oft von den dominanten Medienorganisationen in der Welt ignoriert werden. ... IPS-Journalisten verbinden die höchsten professionellen Standards mit einer institutionellen Verpflichtung Berichte mit besonderer Wichtigkeit für den Süden zu erstellen. Sie sind unverzichtbar für jeden Leser der auf dem Laufenden zu sein wünscht über das, was überall auf der Welt in den



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- 15.09.2009 14:50:35

UN: Grünes Licht für Weltfrauenorganisation

Von Thalif Deen New York, 15. September (IPS) – Die Vollversammlung der Vereinten Nationen hat in einer historischen Resolution die Gründung einer internationalen Frauenorganisation unter Leitung einer Untergeneralsekretärin empfohlen, die alle bisherigen Frauenstellen der Weltorganisation unter einem Dach vereint.
- 15.09.2009 11:16:49

BOLIVIEN: Wahlkampf geht in heiße Phase – Präsident Morales führt in Umfragen

Von Franz Chávez La Paz, 15. September (IPS) – Knapp ein Vierteljahr vor den vorgezogenen Neuwahlen steigt in Bolivien das Wahlfieber. Staatspräsident Evo Morales und sein Stellvertreter Alvaro Garcia können dem Umengang am 6. Dezember allerdings relativ gelassen entgegensehen. Nach jüngsten Umfragen haben sie gute Aussichten, im Amt bestätigt zu werden. Die zersplitterte Opposition versucht nun, ein strategisches Bündnis gegen die Regierung zu schließen.
- 15.09.2009 11:07:23

LIBERIA: Lynchjustiz auf dem Vormarsch – Polizei gilt als ineffizient und korrupt

Von Rebecca Murray Monrovia, 15. September (IPS) – Wütendes Geschrei riss Carroll Johnson eines Nachts aus dem Schlaf. Nahe seiner Wohnung in einem Vorort der liberianischen Hauptstadt Monrovia ging eine aufgebrauchte Menschenmenge auf einen Einbrecher los. "Sie schlugen etwa eine Stunde auf ihn ein, bis er schließlich tot war", berichtete der Augenzeuge. Die Angreifer schlepten die Leiche dann von der Straße und ließen sie an einem Seitenweg liegen.
- 15.09.2009 09:00:00

KENIA: Kliniken dramatisch unterversorgt – 'Mama Kits' für schwangere Frauen

Von Joyce Mulama Kisumu, Kenia, 15. September (IPS) – Im Unterbezirkskrankenhaus im westkenianischen Yala fehlt es an allem: sowohl an Fachkräften als auch an einer soliden Grundausstattung. Selbst Operationshandschuhe und Injektionsnadeln sind Mangelware. Nicht besser ist es im 180 Kilometer entfernten Distrikthospital in Kitale bestellt. Frauen, die in diesen Kliniken ihr Kind zur Welt bringen wollen, sollten auf jeden Fall einen Satz OP-Handschuhe mitbringen.
- 14.09.2009 16:33:45

CHILE: Nationales Menschenrechtsinstitut gegen das Vergessen

Vor Pamela Sepúlveda Santiago, 14. September (IPS) – In Chile hat das Parlament anlässlich des 36. Jahrestags des Staatsstreichs gegen den demokratisch gewählten sozialistischen Staatspräsidenten Salvador Allende ein Gesetz zur Einrichtung eines Nationalen Menschenrechtsinstituts verabschiedet. Die Einrichtung soll Verbrechen gegen die Menschlichkeit vorbeugen.



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EDITORIAL

Mainstreaming Land Degradation 4

MIND THE GAP

Africa's So Many Foreign-Fuelled Conflicts 5
By BABUKAR KASHKA

CONSIDER THIS

The Kennedy Who Would Not Be President 6
By ERNEST COREA

PERSPECTIVES

Struggling To Make A Right Out of Health Care 8
By ERNEST COREA
 'Wanted A New Paradigm For Palestine' 10
By FATEMA AL-ATHAMNAH

NEWS ANALYSIS

Israel Assails Goldstone Report on 'War Crimes' 12
By ERNEST COREA
 Highhandedness Radicalising Kyrgyz Women 13
By BERNHARD SCHELL

GLOBAL ECONOMY

Good and Bad News 14
By SANTO DASGUPTA
 Financial Exclusion Widens Rich-Poor Debate 15
By NIRODE MASSON

COVER STORY

Obama Seeks UN Backing for Nuke-Free World 16
By THALIF DEEN
 Building Global Solidarity Toward Nuclear Abolition 18
By DAISAKU IKEDA
 Why Should We Abolish Nuclear Weapons? 20
By HIROMICHI UMEBAYASHI
 Nuclear Weapons Free World By 2020? 21
IDN-INDEPTHNEWS SPECIAL

COUNTDOWN TO COPENHAGEN

Integrating 'Adaptation' into Development Co-operation 24
By ANGEL GURRIA
 Rich Nations Owe Two-Fold 'Climate Debt' 26
By JAYA RAMACHANDRAN
 'Biodiversity is Critical' 27
By RAMESH JAURA

DIE WELT ANDERS SEHEN

Einen Dollar fürs Klima, neun fürs US-Militär 28
 'Daewo' scharf auf's Agrarland Madagaskars 28
 Ruanda als Vorbild bei Gleichstellung von Frauen 29
 Mexikos Regierung lässt Böden biologisch reinigen 29

STRAY THOUGHTS

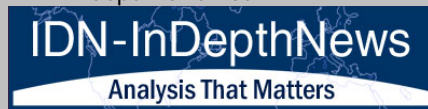
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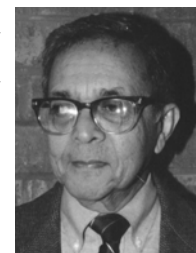
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Israel Assails Goldstone Report on 'War Crimes'

The public relations offensive mounted by the government of Israel against the conclusions of the Goldstone Report on war crimes in Gaza contrasts sharply with the even-handedness of the report and the judicial tone of its authors. The report is named after Richard Goldstone, a former Justice of South Africa's Supreme Court, and the chief prosecutor for war-crime tribunals on Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, who headed the 'UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict' (Dec. 27, 2008-Jan. 3, 2009), writes Ernest Corea. More on page 12.



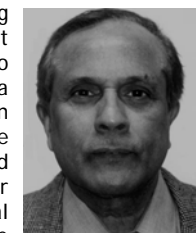
Building Global Solidarity Toward Nuclear Abolition

Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Buddhist association, issued a proposal Sept. 8 outlining concrete steps toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. A vocal opponent of these inhumane weapons for more than 50 years, he stresses that we now have a unique opportunity to build grassroots solidarity, propel political processes and break out of the stagnation which has dogged nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation efforts. More on page 18.



Obama Seeks UN Backing for Nuke-Free World

When Barack Obama chaired a summit meeting of the Security Council Sept. 24 - a historic first for a U.S. president - his primary motive was to push for his ambitious, long-term agenda for "a world without nuclear weapons". A resolution adopted unanimously by the 15 members of the UN's most powerful political body expressed grave concern about the threat of nuclear proliferation and the need for international action to prevent it. Providing specific time frames, he said, the next 12 months "will be absolutely critical in determining whether this resolution and our overall efforts to stop the spread and use of nuclear weapons are successful", writes Thalif Deen. More on page 16.



Rich Nations Owe Two-Fold 'Climate Debt'

Rich industrialised countries owe a 'climate debt' for causing global warming that is mostly impacting the poor and vulnerable of the world. This view is gaining ground as the international community heads for the United Nations climate change conference Dec. 7-18 in Copenhagen. The concept of a debt related to climate change has been advanced by Bolivia and other countries in several rounds of United Nations climate negotiations. It is finding support of an increasing number of heads of state, government ministers, officials, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social movements -- representing indigenous peoples, development and gender activists, organised labour - as well as environmental and social justice groups in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America, writes Jaya Ramachandran. More on page 26.

Redaktion IPS Inter Press Service Europa



Karina Böckmann



Dr. Heike Nasdala



Grit Moskau-Porsch

Mainstreaming Land Degradation



Almost unnoticed by the media, a group of experts is drawing the international community's attention to land degradation, stressing that this is a problem of global dimensions, originating from a variety of causes, including unsustainable production and consumption practices taking place beyond drylands.

As a supporter of the Dryland Science for Development Consortium (DSD), the Global Mechanism (GM) pointed to the recent publication of a discussion paper on policy options to respond to the global challenge of land degradation. The paper, entitled *Revitalizing the UNCCD*, is the result of a collaborative effort by a group of experts with extensive experience in the field including Zafar Adeel, David Dent, Philip Dobie, Christian Mersmann, Maryam Niamir-Fuller, Simone Quatrini, and Youba Sokona.

UNCCD is an acronym for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification that belongs together with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) to the family of Rio Conventions.

While not necessarily reflecting the official positions of their respective agencies, the authors suggest innovative concepts for consideration at the ninth session of the Conference of Parties (COP9) of the UNCCD from Sept. 21 to Oct. 2 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The policy oriented discussion paper emphasizes five key points:

- Land degradation is a problem of global dimensions, and originates from a variety of causes, including unsustainable production and consumption practices taking place beyond drylands;
- More rigorous biophysical and socio-economic scientific arguments are needed to better appreciate the issues and options at stake and substantiate decision-making;
- The value of land, in particular, and its role in securing local and global common goods and services should be properly assessed in light of increasing demographic and economic pressures on this finite resource;
- Specific measures can be put in place to generate adequate incentives for sustainable use of natural resources and open up innovative financial opportunities for sustainable land management investments, such as market-based mechanisms to compensate for ecosystem goods and services; and
- Development aid should support the creation of a conducive environment for responsible private investment, for example by facilitating the transfer of technologies and strengthening relevant policy, institutional and regulatory frameworks.

In this context, the Ten-Year Strategic Plan and Framework of the UNCCD and the elaboration of integrated financing strategies (IFSs) to facilitate the development of comprehensive investment frameworks are identified in the paper as instruments with the potential to effectively enhance implementation of the Convention at country level.

The paper to be discussed during the second Round Table of the COP9 High Level Segment on Sep. 29 will go a long way to address the issue of the potential of land in the context of the ongoing negotiations for a new climate regime at Copenhagen.

Ramesh Jaura

Ramesh Jaura
Chief Editor

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Africa's So Many Foreign-Fuelled Conflicts

BY BABUKAR KASHKA

Africa, the world's richest continent in natural resources, has been the scene of the highest number of armed conflicts, mostly triggered and fuelled by foreign powers and corporations. How to resolve these conflicts has been the key issue on the agenda of African leaders during their summit in Libya.

In fact, on the eve of the 40th anniversary of Libyan "Great Revolution", 53 African leaders -- of which 30 were heads of state and government -- met on Aug. 31 in a special session devoted to the "Consideration and Resolution of Conflicts in Africa".

No wonder. There have been armed conflicts in at least 44 African countries in less than half-a-century, while it is estimated that 38 percent of high intensity conflicts in the world have been taking place in Africa. A clear testimony to the gravity of this situation is that African conflicts have occupied over 60 per cent of the agenda of the UN Security Council.

In his address to the summit, Libyan leader and current president of the African Union (AU), Mouammar El Ghaddafi, could not summarise the real causes behind African conflicts, in a smarter and sharper way. "There have been two kinds of conflicts", he said, "those between African states, caused by the artificial borders created by the colonial powers, and the internal conflicts, such as civil wars, armed groups and coups d'etat". But even in those considered as internal conflicts, there have been foreign interventions, Ghaddafi emphasised. For example: "Darfur is an internal conflict which could be solved internally by the Sudanese themselves. Darfur is part of Sudan, and its rebellion is due to causes that it considered legitimate to defend."

"Nevertheless, it has been the world powers who fuelled this conflict," the AU president affirmed. "We all know that there are world powers that have international strategies and plans for 100 years or more on how to exploit the world and its richness and how to colonise it. Those who have enormous power never rest -- they do not ambition peace; they look for ways how to use their power. This is 'normal'." Ghaddafi continued, "Those who have brutal power will use it. So did Hitler, Napoleon, Qambiz, Genghis Khan and Alexander the Macedonian; so did the Ottomans and the Muslim Caliphates; so did Britain and so does the United States now."

The AU president reminded that the big powers are still present in Africa. "Darfur's problem is not far away from the ambitions of the big powers. There is oil in Sudan and the big powers want to get hold of it and for their corporations to get the lion's share of it." He continued: "There are other rich sources such as uranium, gold, natural gas in the African countries -- they want to seize them all. We in Libya have suffered much of that. They want to do the same in the oil rich Gulf of Guinea." Ghaddafi stressed: "We do not absolve the big powers from fuelling divisions and internal wars. The Africa Union should by no means remain cross-armed."

The Libyan leader accused Israel of being the root cause of Africa's conflicts. He called on African countries "to expel all the Israeli embassies, as they try to create conflicts under the claim of protecting African minorities. . . . But they (the Israelis) have ambitions; they take and do

not give; they are a 'gang' behind all African problems." Then he underlined that Africa must try to solve its conflicts by itself. "Africa can tackle them and solve them with its own means," he said.

He recalled that the continent has been establishing key AU institutions such the African Defence Council, the African Agency for the Protection of Borders, and the African Force. "We are heading toward a United States of Africa as a means to challenge the impact of colonisation, which has been manifested through artificial borders and division. All borders created by colonialism will disappear to create a common space, a common market, a common identity," he predicted.

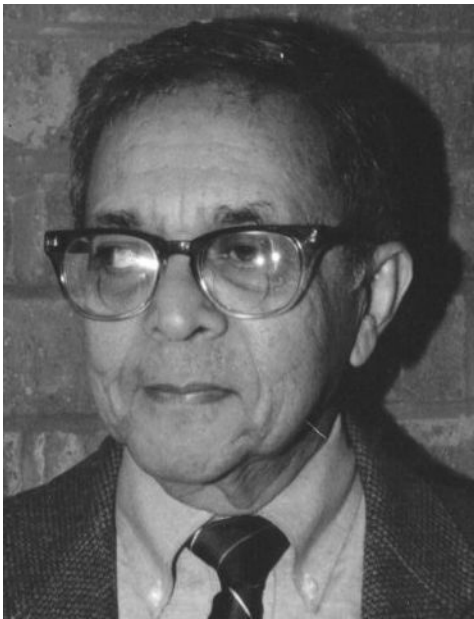
In this context, he said that it is not in the interest of Africa to have conflicts. "We must work to build up Africa and benefit from its resources, which are exploited and stolen by foreign powers." Here some facts:

- Africa has about 11.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 19 countries, out of the global estimate of 26 million. It is the worst affected continent in term of IDPs.
- Africa has the largest number of victims of forced displacement in the world, with around three million refugees, or 20 percent of the global estimate of 10.5 million.
- African economic loss is estimated at about \$300 billion since 1990.
- With an average annual loss of around \$18 billion as a result of wars, civil wars, and insurgencies, armed conflict shrinks a nation's economy on average by 15 percent, according to a conservative estimate, based solely on costs of armed conflict and periods of actual combat.
- These include *direct costs* (medical/rehabilitation costs due to casualties, injuries, disability, military expenditure, care for refugees and displaced people, physical destruction leading to loss/depletion of infrastructure and livelihood assets), which are usually undertaken at the expense of essential services.
- The *indirect costs* from lost opportunities tend to be even higher: reduced economic activity due to insecurity, reduced mobility and workforce; capital flight and macro-economic impacts; loss of developmental aid; ecological degradation with its impact on food security; reduced capacity for structural stability; and wealth transferred to the illicit economy.
- The disruption of trade and loss of investor confidence as a result of war tend to result in loss of business potential not only for the country in question, but also its neighbours and indeed the entire continent.
- The spillover effects of armed conflict and the perceived or real fear of violence spreading may also result in increased military spending by neighbours.
- The *intangible costs* (health-related, livelihoods and quality of life, loss of social capital).
- The illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and the scourge of drug trafficking, which poses an ever increasing threat to peace and security in Africa.

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Mouammar El Ghaddafi | Wikimedia Commons



The Kennedy Who Would Not Be President

BY ERNEST COREA

The death of Senator Kennedy has removed a towering figure from American politics at a time of diminishing capacity in the US Houses of Congress.

Kennedy succumbed to a malignant brain tumor on August 25, and was buried at the Arlington National Cemetery, a short distance from the American capital. His grave is close to those of his older brothers, President John F. Kennedy (JFK) and Robert (Bobby), both felled by assassins. At 77, Ted Kennedy used to say he was the only one of four brothers who "lived to comb gray hairs." He was also the only brother to leave behind a formidable legacy of legislative accomplishment.

The goal of Joseph P. Kennedy, the head of the family, was to install his eldest son, Joe Jr., as the country's first Catholic president. Fate differed. Joe Jr. was killed in action during World War II. JFK who took his place was assassinated at age 46. Bobby was also felled by an assassin, at 42.

The conventional wisdom was that Ted Kennedy would get in line for the presidency, and be easily elected. He chose instead to be "the best possible Senator," partly because his own frailties - which he eventually overcame -

placed the presidency almost beyond his grasp, but also because he grew to love the Senate and to understand more than many others did how effectively a legislator could shape the destinies of his country and its peoples.

Kennedy had great talent for "closing a deal" and was willing to back down on process and detail when necessary. He cheerfully removed his name from a Bill he had sponsored because President Nixon would not otherwise sign it into law. He was emphatic, however, and often said so, that he would "never compromise on core principles."

Those principles, which he nurtured and which he espoused with booming oratory, are manifest in the array of legislation that he initiated or supported during his 47 years as a Senator. They sustained society's "small people."

GIVE A VOICE TO THOSE WHO WERE NOT HEARD

"Ted Kennedy's life work," President Obama said in an eulogy at the funeral mass for Kennedy, "was not to champion the causes of those with wealth or power or special connections. It was to give a voice to those who were not heard; to add a rung to the ladder of opportunity; to make real the dream of our founding. He was given the gift of time that his brothers were not, and he used that gift to touch as many lives and right as many wrongs as the years would allow."

Kennedy's "ideas and ideals are stamped on scores of laws and reflected in millions of lives -- in seniors who know new dignity; in families that know new opportunity; in children who know education's promise; and in all who can pursue their dream in an America that is more equal and more just, including me," says Obama.

Those laws covered a variety of subjects including but not limited to the airline industry, apartheid, bilingualism, civil rights, community health care, education, equal funding for women's and men's college athletics, freedom of information, health care insurance, national community service, national military child care, occupational safety and health, and voting rights.

Health care was a life long passion with him and it was his expectation and hope that, in his own words, "we will break the old gridlock and finally make health care what it should be in America - a fundamental right for all, not just an expensive privilege for the few."

Kennedy's primary focus was on domestic priorities but he never lost sight of the good he assumed America could do abroad, if it crafted the right policies. One of his most courageous acts was to hold an unauthorized protest rally outside South Africa's Pollsmoor Prison where Mandela was being held. Kennedy's action, Mandela later said, "gave us a lot of strength and hope."

Kennedy sponsored the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act, mandating sanctions against white-ruled South Africa. The Reagan Administration was shell shocked when Kennedy persuaded a Republican-controlled Senate to reject President Reagan's veto of that legislation.

He secured the freedom of Defence Minister Orlando Letelier in Chile, and sponsored the legislation that banned arms sales to Pinochet's government. He contributed to the peace process in Northern Ireland, and developed into a strong opponent of the Vietnam War after visiting there. The Vietnam War, he said, was outrageous.

He was proudest, however, of his uncompromising opposition to the war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, a position that he shared with a fellow Senator, Barack Obama. He considered his vote against authorizing military force in Iraq, "the best vote I've cast in my 44 years in the United States."

These were some of his great moments, but there were "worst ones" as well. The death of his brothers and his own frailties presented him with multiple challenges. There was a time when he failed to meet some of them, and developed a reputation for loose living and irresponsibility.

The writer has served as Sri Lanka's ambassador to Canada, Cuba, Mexico, and the USA. He was Chairman of the Commonwealth's Select Committee on the media and development, Editor of the Ceylon 'Daily News' and the Ceylon 'Observer', and was for a time Features Editor and Foreign Affairs columnist of the Singapore 'Straits Times'.

Numerous questions remain unanswered about his conduct after the death of Mary Jo Kopechne in 1969. She drowned when a car which he was driving and in which she was travelling with him plunged into the waters around Chappaquiddick Island near Martha's Vineyard.

On the eve of the one occasion when he actually sought the presidency, attempting unsuccessfully to wrest the Democratic Party's candidature from President Carter, television correspondent Roger Mudd asked him: "Why do you want to be president?" His response was a startled and befuddled look like that of a deer caught in the glare of a car's headlights.

Unlike many others who are beset by problems he did not surrender to his inner demons but fought back, accepting full responsibility for his mistakes, not ignoring them.

"I recognize my own shortcomings. I realize that I alone am responsible for them, and I am the one who must confront them," he said in a speech delivered at Harvard. He returned to that theme in a letter to Pope Benedict XVI which was personally delivered by President Obama in Rome. Kennedy wrote: "I have been an imperfect human being, but with the help of my faith, I have tried to right my path."

He was supported above and beyond normal expectations by his wife Victoria (Vicki) Reggie, an attorney who belonged to a prominent political family in Louisiana. They married in 1990, after his first marriage ended in divorce eight years before. Vicki saved him, Kennedy often said. She gave him "strength and purpose; joy and friendship; and stood by him always, especially in those last, hardest days" of his sickness.

At all times, there were flashes, some slight, some almost blinding, of the inward strength that Kennedy could summon as he struggled for redemption. As a family counsellor and consoler he was without peer, while simultaneously grappling with his own overwhelming grief. His role and effectiveness were beautifully stated by Jacqueline Kennedy who wrote: "On you the carefree youngest brother fell a burden a hero would have begged to have been spared. We are all going to make it because you were always there with your love."

He was always the loving father. When his daughter Kara was diagnosed with lung cancer, he prayed every day by himself at Boston's Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help where, eventually, his funeral mass was held, and she was among those who mourned.

CARE AND COMPASSION

When his older son Ted Jr., who lost a leg to cancer at the age of 12, was weeping in frustration because he could not climb a hill with his "new" leg, Ted supported and strengthened him. They climbed together so that the boy could come back down the slope on a sled. To all those in distress, he was care and compassion personified. He contacted every family in Massachusetts who lost a loved one in the massacres of September 11, 2001, consoling and helping them. He continued to contact them on every anniversary of that event.

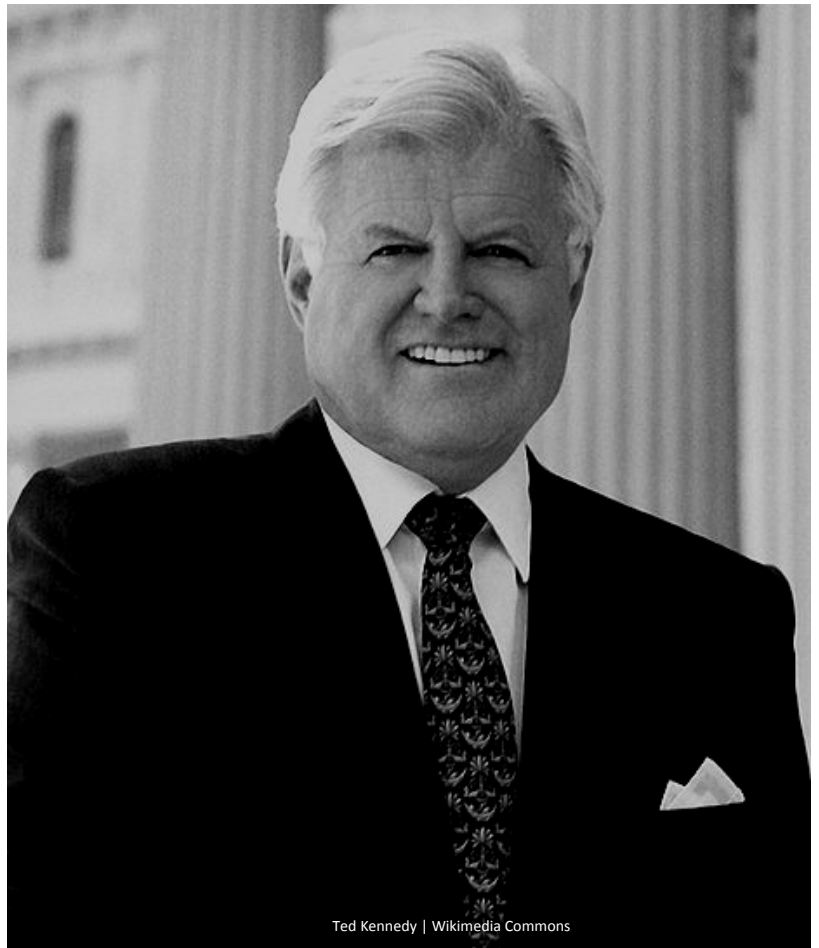
He shared his love for the written and spoken word with children by visiting a Washington school every Tuesday and reading to youngsters waiting for him in the library. He also wrote a children's book, supposedly by his dog, Splash, about his work as a Senator. And he never shied away from a political fight when his principles were imperilled. He lost the battle for presidential candidature to Carter, but responded with the most rousing speech of his life which is even today listed as being among the "100 Greatest American Speeches."

Applause reverberated throughout the Democratic Party convention while he spoke, and he received a standing ovation which seemed to go on for ever. Grown men and women wept copiously at the meeting and in distant places where they saw and heard him on television as he concluded with the moving words: "For all those whose cares have been our concern, the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die."

And now, consider this: Darkness has fallen over Ted Kennedy. Who will fulfil his dream? Who will build on the foundation of his legacy? The Kennedys? The Democratic Party? The general public?

Or Barack Obama, of whom Kennedy said at the Democratic Party Convention in 2008: "And this November the torch will be passed again to a new generation of Americans, so with Barack Obama, and for you and for me, our country will be committed to his cause. The work begins anew. The hope rises again. And the dream lives on." Time will tell.

- GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■



Ted Kennedy | Wikimedia Commons

Struggling To Make a Right Out of Health Care

BY ERNEST COREA

President Obama pressed the case for countrywide health care reform when he delivered a passionate and powerful address at a joint session of the U.S. Houses of Congress on the night of September 9.

A joint session is convened only when truly serious concerns appear on the national agenda, such as declarations of war and announcements of peace. That Obama should have felt the need to use this device to bring sanity back into the health care debate shows how effective opponents of reform have been.

Obama's address was interrupted by applause 49 times, and that's not counting the standing ovations he received before and after he spoke. From his point of view, that was the good side of the congressional event.

OFFENDING DELINQUENT

From anybody's point of view, the bad side was that contrary to the traditions of both Houses of Congress, the protocol observed at events involving the president, and the norms of civilized behaviour, a section of his Republican critics attempted to boo and hiss him into silence when he spoke, and one of them, red in the face, actually screamed, "you lie".

The offending delinquent was Congressman Joe Wilson of South Carolina, the state once known for its strong addiction to racial segregation. His misconduct validated the late George Carlin's assessment of modern society: "the paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers, wider Freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often."

Wilson clearly underestimated public reaction to his churlishness. Before the night was out, he had received so many emails of outraged protest that his Web site crashed. Simultaneously, he was verbally assaulted on his Twitter by livid viewers and listeners. The next morning's media coverage gave him an A+ for boorishness. There is some decency left in political life after all. But back to health care.

"HORROR STORIES"

Some 47 million (and counting) Americans are without any health care insurance. Others are under-insured, or have had insurance but lost it when they were laid off. The number of uninsured rose by 6 million over the past 12 months -- that's 17,000 a day.

Patients complain of doctors spending inadequate time on them because of time limits tacitly imposed by insurance companies. Doctors and patients are bedevilled by insurance companies refusing to pay for treatment, entirely at their discretion, with no opportunities for appeals against such arbitrary decisions.

Obama was deeply moved by the real life "horror stories" he heard on the stump during last year's election campaign. One such story, as reported by journalist Richard Wolffe in 'Renegade', the best selling account of the campaign, recounts the experience of Ashley Baia from Florence, South Carolina.

"Ashley's story," writes Wolffe, "is that when she was nine, her mother got cancer and lost her job. To save money to pay for medical bills, Ashley ate mustard and relish sandwiches" -- nothing else - "for a year."

Obama heard similar stories over and over again, including that of the woman in Green Bay, Wisconsin, who had undergone two mastectomies and told him how she feared that her only legacy to her family would be a debt of \$100,000 in unpaid medical bills.

He reads in letters he receives at the White House of more such instances of shameless injustice. One of these letters was from a woman who was changing jobs, and was due to sign up for a new insurance policy. But shortly before she took her new job she had felt a lump in her breast and was referred to have a mammogram which showed, sadly, that she had breast cancer. "Well," says Obama, "the insurance company just said, this is a pre-existing condition; won't cover it. She now owes \$250,000."

". . . THE ONLY DEMOCRACY . . ."

"We are the only democracy -- the only advanced democracy on Earth -- the only wealthy nation that allows such hardship for millions of its people," Obama said in his formal address. Not surprisingly, polling conducted by the Pew Research Center has determined that some 60 percent of the population consider health care in the country to be either "average" or "below average."

And all the while, health care soaks up funds from families, businesses and governments. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that if health costs continue to grow without restraint, one out of every four dollars in the national economy will be tied up in health care by 2025, limiting investment in other sectors.

So an effort by the Obama Administration to turn this situation around, and bring affordable, effective, and benignly managed health care within the reach of all Americans would have been greeted with great joy across this country, right? Wrong.

From the time in February that Obama announced his intention to treat health care reform as a priority, spelled out the core principles that he felt should guide a reform package, and left it to the legislative bodies to craft the required legislation through negotiation and compromise, the very idea of health care reform and Obama himself, personally, have been targets of vicious, ill-conceived and misleading propaganda.

The arena of public debate has been monopolized by partisans of the status quo "whose only agenda is to kill reform at any cost." Demagoguery and deception have run wild. The most horrendous possibilities -- such as enforced euthanasia -- have been propagated as fact, in an obvious attempt to scare the public, especially seniors.

GROTESQUE DISARRAY

The public debate has been reduced to grotesque disarray. And why? Because of fears that the introduction of full accountability in the health care sector, and the encouragement of competition in that sector by the inclusion of new providers, would erode the profits and influence of the existing insurance establishment.

Research and fact checking by independent groups including 'Newsweek' magazine and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) have established that so many of the claims made at anti-reform meetings are, simply put, lies.

'Newsweek' has, in fact, published a compelling report on the five "biggest lies" that have dominated the health care debate: There will be no choice of health care benefits, older patients will be denied chemotherapy, illegal immigrants will get free health insurance, "death panels" will decide who lives, and the state will set doctors' wages.

Where do these vicious and, to many, frightening lies come from? AARP has dug deep to identify and name the consultants, politicians, and others whose statements directly or indirectly led to and sustained the lies of the debate. The connection all lead back to the status quo.

In addition to the propagation of lies, opponents of reform have sponsored fascist-like tactics. Meetings at which reform proposals were discussed have been disrupted, and the threat of violence against supporters of reform has been in the air. The resulting confusion has made serious, informed discussion all but impossible.

Obama's address was meant to clear away the confusion, reset the terms of discussion, and create momentum for reform. He provided as much detail as is possible before a final draft of legislation is ready, pointing out that the three central objectives of reform would be: first, to provide greater security and stability to those who have health insurance; second, to provide insurance to those who do not have insurance; and third, to slow the growth of health care costs for families, businesses and governments.

His address "played well" with the public. A morning-after poll conducted by CNN/Opinion Research Corporation found that support for health care reform rose from 53 percent before the address to 67 percent. Obama's aides profess satisfaction with the impact of his address, and are confident that he can regain control of the debate.

But the situation is much bigger than Obama. It concerns human lives, societal values, and the nation's economic prospects.

At this point, therefore, the last word rests with the late Senator Edward Kennedy, in a letter written to Obama in May, with instructions that it be delivered and read after his death. Describing health care as the cause of his life, and expressing confidence that soon health care in the US would be a right and not a privilege, Kennedy emphasized their shared belief that health care "concerns more than material things...what we face is above all a moral issue....at stake are not just the details of policy, but fundamental principles of social justice and the character of our country." - IDN-InDepthNews Service ■

What's Wrong with America's Health Care

POSTED ON AFL-CIO WEBSITE

Some 47 million U.S. residents have no health insurance, and the numbers keep growing. Because employers increasingly are moving in the direction of providing Wal-Mart-style health coverage by shifting health care costs to employees, America's workers struggle to pay higher premiums, deductibles and co-payments—if they can afford such coverage at all.

Of the 47 million Americans without health insurance, 8.7 million are children.

Working families are experiencing double-digit increases in the costs of health insurance, more out-of-pocket costs for doctor visits and skyrocketing prices for prescriptions, forcing many to delay getting needed medical care or worse—to decline coverage for themselves or their families because of cost. Health care costs are rising at five times the rate of inflation. According to the Center for Studying Health System Change, health care spending rose 10 percent in 2002 and that followed a slightly more than 10 percent increase in 2001—the largest jump in more than a decade. In the first six months of 2003, health spending rose another 8.5 percent. Premiums for employer-sponsored coverage increased nearly 13 percent in 2002. As employers refuse to pay their fair share, this trend may result in millions of workers losing their employer-based coverage (PDF).

Employers are responding to growing cost pressures by shifting more and more health care costs onto workers, especially through larger co-pays and deductibles that must be paid at the time treatment is sought.



Employer's demands to slash health care coverage for workers was the major issue in the recent Southern California grocery workers' strike and lockout in which nearly 60,000 workers saved health care benefits and beat back employer demands to freeze pension funds after holding strong on the picket line for five months. Under grocery management's original proposals, a worker making slightly less than \$20,000 a year would have had to pay nearly \$5,000 to maintain the same level of benefits they had in the previous contract.

Other cost increases hitting workers include larger hikes in the cost of family coverage, less access to needed prescription drugs through stricter HMO formularies and higher prices for more comprehensive coverage. See the Consumers Unions' Health Care Plans and Managed Care (PDF).

Consumers are using more prescriptions, at younger ages and for more conditions, and substituting newer, more expensive medications for established products. As a result, pharmaceutical spending increased by 17.4 percent annually between 1999 and 2000 and another 16 percent from 2000 to 2001 (PDF).

The lack of quality health care in the United States also stems from our system's lack of comprehensive quality measure and assurance programs, which unions now are establishing with community partners.

Our most successful public health insurance program, Medicare, is increasingly under attack at a time when the lack of access to health care is already a crisis in America. Most Americans ages 65 and older rely on Medicare, which serves more than 40 million beneficiaries in the United States. Instead of strengthening and modernizing Medicare to include a comprehensive, affordable prescription drug benefit for all seniors, the Bush administration in late 2003 strong-armed through Congress a Medicare prescription drug bill that moves Medicare toward privatization. The Medicare bill also:

- Forced 32.5 million seniors and people with disabilities to pay higher premiums and other Medicare costs.

- Dropped coverage for out-of-pocket expenses between \$2,250 and \$5,100.

- Prevented the federal government from negotiating lower drug costs and does nothing to rein in soaring prescription drug prices.

- Threatened the employer-provided drug benefits of millions of retirees.

Our health care system lacks safety controls that endanger front-line workers and patients. Staffing levels are dangerously low in hospitals, nursing homes and other health care facilities. As a result, medical errors are rising—and account for an estimated 44,000 to 98,000 needless death each year. See Medical Errors and Patient Safety and 20 Steps to Prevent Medical Errors from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

'Wanted a New Paradigm for Palestine'

BY FATEMA AL-ATHAMNAH



The Holy Land, or Palestine, showing not only the Ancient Kingdoms of Judah and Israel in which the 12 Tribes have been distinguished, but also their placement in different periods as indicated in the Holy Scriptures.
Tobias Conrad Lotter, Geographer. Augsburg, Germany, 1759

In the unending and under-reported story of the economy of the occupied Palestinian territory and the policy environment affecting it, 2009 represents an all-time low. A new UN report explains what this state of affairs essentially means and calls for a shift in the dynamics of Palestinian economic policy -- from that driven by the demands of occupation to one based on the developmental priorities and aspirations of the Palestinian people.

As a result, the Palestinian economy today faces a real challenge to its integrity, solvency and indeed the very viability that it must enjoy for the two-state solution to become a reality. In particular, the devastation visited upon the occupied Gaza Strip and its economy has plunged its 1.5 million inhabitants into depths of poverty and disintegration unknown for generations. The Israeli blockade it has endured has isolated it from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory and the world.

In its report released Sep. 8, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates the economic cost of the massive Israeli military cam-

paign in Gaza at US\$4 billion -- almost three times of the size of its economy. Per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has fallen by 34 percent in the last nine years.

The erosion of the economy's productive and natural resources base is evidenced by the fact that in 2008 the Palestinian economy lost ground for the ninth year in a row, the UNCTAD report says. The 2 percent economic growth for the year implied a one-third drop in per capita GDP between 1999 and 2008, despite extensive reforms implemented by the Palestinian Authority (PA) and substantial donor support of US\$1.9 billion in 2008.

The economic decline is rooted in Israel's closure policy, the erosion of the Palestinian productive base, the loss of some of the territory's most fertile land and natural resources to the Israeli 'Separation Barrier', and expanding settlement activities, the report contends.

Because of the systematic constraints imposed by the occupation policy, unemployment increased by more than 10 percent between 1999 and 2008 to reach 32 percent. Poverty continued to widen and deepen, with 57 percent of occupied Palestinian territory households living in poverty in 2007, up from 20 percent in 1998.

The trade deficit as a ratio of GDP reached an unprecedented 79 percent. The trade deficit with Israel alone was equivalent to more than 140 percent of total international donor support to the PA in 2008 and accounted for more than 70 percent of the overall trade deficit, the report says.

DEVASTATION OF GAZA

Gaza has been disproportionately affected by the occupation policy due to the tight Israeli blockade since mid-2007 and the Israeli military campaign launched on Dec. 27, 2008, the UNCTAD report says. The economic losses caused by the campaign are estimated to be US\$4 billion - almost three times the size of Gaza's economy. Living conditions and access to sources of livelihood in Gaza are currently at their worst since 1967, with poverty affecting 90 percent of the population.

Subsequent to the UN Security Council resolution 1860 of Jan. 8 this year, a fragile ceasefire was established on Jan. 18. But the tight blockade on Gaza was not lifted. "Despite US\$4.5 billion in donor pledges at the Sharm El-Sheikh conference (Egypt, March 2009) to support the Palestinian recovery and reconstruction plan, disbursements have yet to begin, and Gaza's local economy is still under blockade and waiting for reconstruction to commence," the report notes.

It calls for an increased allocation of aid to revitalise the eroded productive base. It also says immediate and urgent measures are needed to end the siege of Gaza. These measures, while necessary, remain insufficient for steering Gaza out of its current destitution, the report emphasizes, noting that empowering Palestinian policymakers with a full range of economic policy tools is indispensable for achieving sustainable recovery.

The report points out that while the attention of UNCTAD and the international community is now focused on "creating the conditions conducive to building a sovereign and viable Palestinian State," the conditions for the emergence of such a state have been diminished by the dynamics of the conflict and the effects of the prolonged Israeli occupation.

Successive Israeli governments' strategies towards the Palestinian economy have been the main determinant of Palestinian economic development. The pre-Oslo (1993) Israeli policy featured an integrationist strategy to extract Palestinian labour, land and other resources from the territory. "This policy has deprived the Palestinian economy of independent development and has increased its vulnerability to Israeli economic, political and security policies," the report says.

In a frank analysis the authors of the report says: "The Oslo Accords, far from promoting Palestinian economic and territorial integrity, entrenched an unequal integration of the Palestinian economy with the more advanced Israeli economy."

Physical separation measures meanwhile gained pace as the Israeli settlement and closure policies expanded. As a result, the hoped-for convergence of the two economies remains illusive.

In fact, divergence between the two economies was such that Israeli income per capita increased from 7 to 14 times larger than that of the occupied Palestinian territory in the past three decades. "The net result of four decades of occupation are expanded Israeli settlements and controls, combined with diminishing Palestinian economic policy space, reduced physical territory, and reduced access to natural and economic resources," notes the report.

A review of 25 years of reporting by UNCTAD on the subject reveals the need for a bold departure from the conventional and dominant approach, which leaves unchallenged the context, constraints, and policies of the occupation, the report says. An alternative approach which recognizes the realities of the Palestinian economy and the evident incompatibility between occupation and development has become imperative.

The report calls for an initiative to devise a Palestinian economic strategy for sovereignty and peace predicated on the need for Palestinian economic and political self-determination, in line with relevant UN resolutions.

This in turn requires a shift in the dynamics of Palestinian economic policy from those driven by the demands of occupation to one based on the developmental priorities and aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Such a strategic repositioning should aim at restoring territorial integrity, addressing the specific needs of the war-torn economy, and laying the grounds for a future viable state in line with UN resolutions, the report says.

One multilateral forum where these goals can be approached is the World Trade Organisation (WTO). A new Palestinian economic strategy should entail, among other things, early consideration of Palestine as a separate customs territory administered by the PA, and hence as an observer at the WTO to re-anchor the economy's nominal autonomy in a cooperative, multilateral framework rather than in the existing dysfunctional bilateral framework.

- IDN-InDepthNews Service ■

UNCTAD Report 2009

The Trade and Development Report 2009 presents a gloomy global economic outlook in the context of the ongoing global financial and economic crisis. It looks at the channels through which this deep crisis, which originated in developed countries, is spreading to developing and transition economies: through financial flows, international trade and commodity prices, migrants' remittances and external debt.

The Trade and Development Report 2009 examines in some detail the short-term policy responses taken to tackle the immediate effects of this crisis. These include fiscal stimulus packages, monetary policy easing, and support for ailing financial institutions.

Monetary easing and large bailout operations may have prevented a meltdown of the financial system, but they have been insufficient to revive global demand and halt rising unemployment. Countercyclical fiscal policy measures that have a direct effect on aggregate demand should be reinforced, in a coordinated global manner.

In analysing the causes of the crisis, the Trade and Development Report 2009 focuses on the role of excessive risk-taking made possible by financial deregulation and innovation in obscure financial instruments. It highlights the problem of the predominance of financial markets over the fundamentals of the real economy.

The experience with this crisis proves that free financial markets do not lead to optimal social and macroeconomic outcomes, and suggests that the relationship between the State and market forces needs to be fundamentally reviewed. The Trade and Development Report 2009 discusses why and how the overall effectiveness of strengthened financial regulation will depend on the way in which measures for financial reform at the national level are combined with a reform of the international monetary and financial system.

Given the prevailing major shortcomings in the international financial and monetary system, UNCTAD draws attention to some elements of reform of the international financial architecture, which is long overdue. These include effective capital account management, strengthening the role of special drawing rights, and a multilaterally agreed framework for exchange rate management.

These reforms imply a fundamental rethinking of global financial governance to stabilize trade and financial relations by reducing the potential for gains from speculative capital flows. This will reduce the likelihood of similar crises in the future and help create a stable macroeconomic environment conducive to growth and smooth structural change in developing countries.

Another pressing preoccupation for peoples and governments around the world continues to be the threat of global warming, which implies considerable risks for living conditions and developmental progress. Against this background, the Trade and Development Report 2009 is addressing the question of how increased efforts aimed at climate change mitigation can be combined with forward-looking development strategies and rapid growth in developing countries. Climate change mitigation should be associated with a process of global structural change, in which demand will shift from greenhouse gas-intensive modes of production and consumption to more climate-friendly modes. The challenge for developing countries will be to seize the growth opportunities created by the new and fast-growing markets in "environmental goods".

Israel Assails Goldstone Report On 'War Crimes'

BY ERNEST COREA

The public relations offensive mounted by the government of Israel against the conclusions of the Goldstone Report on war crimes in Gaza contrasts sharply with the even-handedness of the report and the judicial tone of its authors.

The report is named after Richard Goldstone, a former Justice of South Africa's Supreme Court, and the chief prosecutor for war-crime tribunals on Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, who headed the 'UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict' (Dec. 27, 2008-Jan. 3, 2009). Goldstone is Jewish.

Other members of the mission were Christine Chinkin, professor of international law at the London School of Economics and Political Science; Hina Jilani, a Pakistani attorney and a member of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur; and Desmond Travers, a former officer in Ireland's Defence Forces.

The 574-page report, released on Sept. 15 at the UN, is meticulously constructed on the basis of evidence provided by Palestinians, and by international non-governmental organizations. The government of Israel rejected the mission's invitation for cooperation, and did not submit its version of events.

The mission found credible evidence that war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity were committed by both sides to the conflict, and urged that action be taken to identify and punish those responsible.

Goldstone, writing in the 'New York Times', argued that "as a service to the hundreds of civilians who needlessly died and for the equal application of international justice, the perpetrators of serious violations must be held to account".

"Failing to pursue justice for serious violations during the fighting will have a deeply corrosive effect on international justice, and reveal an unacceptable hypocrisy," Goldstone said.

'Operation Cast Lead' unleashed by Israeli's military -- army, air force, and navy -- is estimated to have resulted in the deaths of over 1000 Palestinians, most of them civilians, and several of them minors. Ten Israeli soldiers were killed in the fighting, four of them as a result of "friendly fire". Three Israeli

civilians died in southern Israel due to rocket attacks.

Palestinian actions, specifically rocket and mortar attacks into southern Israel, were war crimes, the mission said, because where there is no intended military target and the rockets and mortars are launched into civilian areas, they constitute deliberate attacks against the civilian population.

GRAVE BREACHES

On the other side, the mission found that Israeli forces were responsible for grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention, such as "wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, and extensive destruction of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out wantonly".

Overall, the mission found that the people of Gaza suffered most, as a result of Israel's "intention to inflict collective punishment" on them. Such punishment included a blockade that caused "progressive isolation and deprivation".

Public institutions as well as privately-owned buildings, including homes, schools and hospitals, in the Gaza strip were destroyed. "Families are still living amid the rubble," the mission reported.

Considering the gravity of the actions that had taken place, and the human misery they created, the mission proposed that Israel as well as the Palestinians should each make their own investigations to identify and punish those responsible for war crimes.

The Security Council could appoint a group of experts to monitor those proceedings, if any, and report to the council. If neither party takes the necessary action, the next step would be for the facts as known to be reported to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Goldstone explains: "If justice for civilian victims cannot be obtained through local authorities, then foreign governments must act. There are various mechanisms through which to pursue international justice. The ICC and the exercise of universal jurisdiction by other countries against violators of

the Geneva Conventions are among them."

But they all share one overarching aim: to hold accountable those who violate laws of war. They are built on the premise that abusive commanders and their fighters face justice, even if their government or ruling authority is not willing to take that step."

Faced with the prospect of further international condemnation, Israeli leaders did not refute the facts of the Goldstone Report but resorted, instead, to broad invective against the mission:

"The Goldstone Commission is a mockery of history," said Israel's President Shimon Peres. "...The report in practice grants legitimacy to terrorism." Prime Minister Netanyahu dismissed the mission as "a kangaroo court". Defence Minister Ehud Barak said the report was "a prize for terrorism". Others in high places increased the decibel overload. The response was sustained, defensive, and jittery.

This form of pushback by the Government of Israel appears designed partly to rescue its credibility and, perhaps even more so, to pre-empt any further action by UN bodies, whether it be the UN Human Rights Council which set up the fact-finding mission or a referral to the ICC by the Security Council. It is in this context that Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon's comment makes some kind of tactical sense. He disclosed that Israel would campaign for the support of western powers "to prevent turning international law into a circus".

After their sound and fury, Israeli politicians might find they could actually have taken a deep breath and awaited the possibility that apart from some reactions in the Human Rights Council, little more will follow the Goldstone Report.

Certainly, civil society organizations will press the case against impunity, as they have done in other situations. Many governments are otherwise occupied, what with continuing economic uncertainties, the challenge of climate change, and all. The State Department's official spokesman, for instance, got himself off the hook when asked for a comment on the Goldstone Report by claiming that "we don't read that fast." Slow reading has it uses.

- InDepthNews Service ■

Highhandedness Radicalising Kyrgyz Women

BY BERNHARD SCHELL

The central Asian Kyrgyzstan's increasingly authoritarian government has a progressive legislation on gender equality but its quotas for women representatives in government have little impact on the lives of ordinary women.

In fact, religious women feel unrepresented by a political system that is largely secular, often deeply suspicious of practising Muslims, and constantly ignores their basic economic needs, notes the Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG). "This risks pushing them into the arms of radical Islamist groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT)," says the Crisis Group headed by Louise Arbour, who acted as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2004 to 2008 and as Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda 1996 to 1999.

"Despite their restrictive views of women's roles, HT is offering them compelling incentives, such as after-school programs for children". This is the kind of practical response that Kyrgyz women need and for which they are embracing Islamism, ICG notes.

HT also gives them a sense of identity and belonging, solutions to the day-to-day failings of the society they live in, and an alternative to what they widely view as the Western-style social model that prevails in Kyrgyzstan, a former Soviet republic -- landlocked and mountainous -- bordered by Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the southwest and China to the east.

The Crisis Group points out that in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, where many have responded to 70 years of atheism by embracing religion, HT's uncompromising Islamic message has gained considerable acceptance. Women, especially those living in rural or conservative areas where traditional gender norms prevail, turn to HT to find meaning in their restricted social roles.

"Kyrgyz politicians have to realise that people will look elsewhere if they can no longer rely on the state to provide justice and well-being", says Paul Quinn-Judge, Crisis Group's Central Asia Project Director. "The need for the state to act is all the more important given the abrupt revival of armed Islamic groups in several Central Asia states," he avers.

The Crisis Group advises all states in the region to differentiate between a political struggle against HT and the desire of large segments of their societies to demonstrate renewed religious faith by adopting some traditional attributes of Islam -- beards in the case of men, for example, and headscarves for women.

SYSTEMIC CORRUPTION

The only effective long-term strategy is political, emphasises the report. For this, however, Kyrgyzstan -- and its neighbours in Central Asia, all of whom face similar problems -- needs to take serious steps to eradicate systemic corruption and improve living conditions.

Kyrgyzstan is among the twenty countries in the world with the highest perceived level of corruption: the 2008 Corruption Perception Index for Kyrgyzstan is 1.8 on a scale of 0 (most corrupt) to 10 (least corrupt).

"Economic crisis and rigged elections strengthen HT's appeal to those who feel socially and politically dispossessed and buttress its argument that Western democracy and capitalism are morally and practically flawed," notes the Crisis Group.

In the early 1990s, Kyrgyzstan's democratic credentials were regarded as relatively strong. This reputation was subsequently lost as corruption and nepotism took hold



A traditional Kyrgyz Manaschi performing part of the *Manas* epic poem at a yurt camp in Karakol | Wikimedia Commons

during President Askar Akayev's years in office. Parliamentary and presidential elections were flawed, opposition figures faced harassment and imprisonment while opposition newspapers were closed.

Kyrgyzstan lies at the centre of U.S.-Russian rivalry for control of conflict-prone Central Asia. Both powers have military air bases in the country. The U.S. established an air base at the Manas international airport near Bishkek in late 2001 to support military operations in Afghanistan. However in Jan. 2009, in a major blow for U.S. and NATO operations in Afghanistan, President Kurmanbek Bakiyev announced the closure of the base, after Russia offered Kyrgyzstan more than \$2bn in loans and other financial help.

In June 2009 the authorities reversed their decision, after the U.S. agreed to more than triple the annual rent it pays for using the airbase. Weeks later Kyrgyzstan tentatively agreed to allow Russia to open a second military base on its territory, apparently expanding Moscow's military reach to balance out the U.S. presence.

The ICG points out that HT's activists regard the growth in those who count as sympathisers if not actual members as a critical component of a long-term strategy -- a currently quiescent element of society that would be ready to accept a caliphate that once ruled the Muslim world. Also for this reason, the authorities view HT as a major security threat.

The Crisis Group cautions against confusing "the political struggle against radical Islamism . . . with the genuine desire of large segments of society to improve their living conditions". The report also warns that "major by-product of female radicalisation may be a generation of children, nieces and nephews who grow up immersed in HT discourse and committed to the idea of an Islamic state".

For this reason, Kyrgyzstan needs to address the political roots of its failings towards its female population. "The government must lessen systemic corruption and economic mistakes as of course should its neighbours in Central Asia, who are all facing similar problems", says Robert Templer, Crisis Group's Asia Program Director. "The challenge is enormous, but the solution is in the hands of the Kyrgyz state." Kyrgyzstan's government is, however, adopting a counter-productive approach to the country's growing radicalisation. Instead of tackling the root causes of a phenomenon, it is resorting to heavy-handed police methods that risk pushing yet more Kyrgyz towards radicalism.

- IDN-InDepthNews Service ■



OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría

WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy

UNCTAD Secretary-General Supachai Panitchpakdi

Good and Bad News

BY SANTO DASGUPTA

Three eminent international organisations have come up with one bad and some good news for the global economy as the Group of 20 (G20) girds up its loins for Sep. 24-25 summit in Pittsburgh, USA.

A joint report by the OECD, WTO and UNCTAD predicts a cutback of 10 percent in the volume of world merchandise trade this year. Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows, which fell by 14 per cent in 2008, are projected to plummet even further by 30-40 per cent.

But there is also some good news - though only partly: the G20 has refrained from extensive use of restrictive trade and investment measures in recent months.

"Nevertheless, there has been policy slippage since the global crisis began. In some cases, G20 members have raised tariffs and introduced new non-tariff measures, and most of them have continued to use trade defence mechanisms. Two have re-introduced agricultural export subsidies," says the joint report released Sep. 14.

G20 comprises Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, UK, USA, and the European Union represented by the rotating Council presidency and the European Central Bank.

In the joint report, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría, WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy and UNCTAD Secretary-General Supachai Panitchpakdi call upon G20 leaders to remain vigilant against protectionism.

The increase in tariffs and introduction of new non-tariffs measures, along with reports of additional administrative obstacles being applied to imports, are creating 'sand in the gears' of international trade that may retard the global recovery, the heads of three international organisations warn.

"The fiscal and financial packages introduced to tackle the crisis clearly favour the restoration of trade growth globally, but some of them contain elements that favour domestic goods and services at the expenses of imports. It is urgent that governments start planning a coordinated exit strategy that will eliminate these elements as soon as possible," they point out.

The joint report is in response to the G20 leaders' request made at their last meeting in London on Apr. 2 that the WTO (World Trade Organization) together with the UNCTAD (UN Conference on Trade and Development) and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) monitor and report publicly on G20 adher-

ence to their undertakings on resisting protectionism and promoting global trade and investment.

The G20 undertakings are:

"We reaffirm the commitment made in Washington: to refrain from raising new barriers to investment or to trade in goods and services, imposing new export restrictions, or implementing WTO inconsistent measures to stimulate exports. In addition, we will rectify promptly any such measures. We extend this pledge to the end of 2010.

"We will minimize any negative impact on trade and investment of our domestic policy actions including fiscal policy and action in support of the financial sector. We will not retreat into financial protectionism, particularly measures that constrain worldwide capital flows, especially to developing countries.

"We will notify promptly the WTO of any such measures and we call on the WTO, together with other international bodies, within their respective mandates, to monitor and report publicly on our adherence to these undertakings on a quarterly basis.

"We will take, at the same time, whatever steps we can to promote and facilitate trade and investment."

SAFETY HARNESS

The report notes that WTO and OECD rules have acted as a safety harness preventing the adoption of wide-scale protectionist policies. The heads of the three organisations say they are encouraged by investment policies in the G20 countries as they have, on the whole, increased openness and clarity for foreign investors. At the same time, some governments have established support schemes that can discriminate against foreign-controlled companies or raise barriers to outward investment flows.

The combined report calls on G20 for stronger commitment to more open trade and investment. "The global crisis cannot be deemed to be over yet, despite welcome recent indications of economic recovery in some parts of the world." >>>

Developing countries are expected to grow by only 1.2% this year, after 8.1% growth in 2007 and 5.9% growth in 2008. When China and India are excluded, GDP in the remaining developing countries is projected to fall by 1.6%, causing continued job losses and throwing more people into poverty.

Growing unemployment due to the crisis will continue to fuel protectionist pressures for the years to come," says the report.

"It is the responsibility of all world leaders, in particular those of the G20 members, to take the appropriate policy actions so that trade and international investment can help economies recover from the global crisis on a sustained basis. In this regard, G20 leaders should undertake a stronger commitment to open markets and make concrete their call to conclude the Doha Round in 2010," the heads of three organisations point out.

The report notes with satisfaction that there has been some evidence of improvement in the trade policy environment, with several G20 members introducing trade-liberalizing and facilitating measures.

For example, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia and Saudi Arabia announced cuts in import duties, fees and surcharges and the removal of non-tariff barriers on various products, and China removed some restrictions on trade in certain services sectors.

Although some of these G20 members also raised trade restrictions (mostly import tariffs) between April and August this year, the report sees "a welcome sign that their governments are attentive to the beneficial role that lowering trade restrictions can play in current circumstances, by reducing consumer prices and producer costs, stimulating aggregate demand and helping to reverse the contraction of global trade".

Australia has informed the WTO that, in the period under review it has terminated four anti-dumping measures and three anti-dumping investigations as well as a countervailing investigation.

Some G20 countries are stated to have paid attention to more traditional service industries such as tourism or transport. Saudi Arabia, for example, has introduced several initiatives for tourism development, such as a 30-50 per cent reduction of international air tariffs (by Saudi Arabian Airlines), and additional promotional fares to different markets.

In addition, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities (SCTA) is seeking to promote domestic tourism and to re-settle tourism jobs for Saudis. The United States introduced the Travel Promotion Act of 2009. Through this legislation, a public-private partnership has been created with an annual budget of up to US\$200 million to compete more effectively for international travellers and better communicate U.S. security policies. - IDN-InDepthNews Service ■

Financial Exclusion Widens Rich-Poor Divide

BY NIRODE MASSON

A new study highlights an important yet often ignored aspect of economic divides between the developed and developing countries. While in most developed economies, it is relatively easy for individuals and business to obtain credit or use affordable banking services, for developing economies this is not yet the case.

The people in Guyana, Sierra Leone, Yemen, Sudan and Malawi have the least accessible banking services, credit systems and insurance, according to a financial inclusion index (FII) released by Maplecroft that specialises in the calculation, analysis and visualisation of global risks.

The index rates the lack of financial inclusion in 119 economies, measuring the extent to which households and firms have access to financial services by analysing use of formal financial intermediaries, eligibility for and affordability of financial services.

The performance of financial sectors is found to be considerably lower in many African countries. What is more, low use of formal financial intermediaries, undeveloped credit systems and lack of competition among banks curtails development, avers the London-based group.

Seventeen of the 25 countries rated as 'extreme risk' by the FII are in Africa. However, South Africa (76) and Mauritius (80) rank highest in the Sub-Saharan region and are considered 'medium risk'.

Much of Central and South America achieve good levels of inclusion, but Mexico (57), El Salvador (56) and Peru (50) are all considered 'high risk'.

The study points out that the economies with lack of financial inclusion may experience reduced economic growth, little social mobility and persistent poverty. This is because the lack of access to financial services -- from credit to banking and insurance services -- may prevent the poor from taking advantage of lucrative investment opportunities.

That poverty must be seen as deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of income has been expounded at length by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen.

Antonio Savoia, economic analyst at Maplecroft, explains why it is important to do away with financial exclusion: "Through the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, the UN member states have committed to reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than US\$1 a day. They have also committed to empower women, to combat HIV/AIDS and to develop a global partnership for development. A strategy of developing inclusive financial sectors offers potential on all these fronts."

Against this backdrop, the global risks analysts point out that microfinance -- a long-envisioned solution that relieves poverty by fostering self-sufficiency -- is whetting the appetite of private sector financial institutions. They are starting to compete to provide finance to the less well-off.

According to the index, the world's highest achievers on financial inclusion include four Western economies. Despite their vast territories, the USA (119) and Canada (118) lead the group of most inclusive economies, followed by Austria (117) and United Kingdom (116) from within the 27-nation European Union. Italy (115), Germany (114), Ireland (113), France (111), the Netherlands (110) and Spain (109) are all found to host inclusive financial sectors. Russia (112) is 'low risk' and leads the emerging economies of India (81), Brazil (73) and China (67), countries that are rated 'medium risk'.

The London-based group focuses on yet another critical though often neglected subject: Sub-Saharan African nations' high risk due to external debt. The analysts inform that Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and DR Congo are amongst only six nations, out of 121, to be rated at 'extreme risk' due to the levels of their external debt.

The three countries are part of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and may receive debt relief by creditors. Other Sub-Saharan nations that are considered for HIPC assistance - including Burundi, Central African Republic and Mauritania - are identified as 'high risk' in the external debt index (EDI) created by the global risks analyst group.

Apart from Sub-Saharan Africa, other 'high risk' regions include South America, Central America and the Caribbean. They remain areas of debt risk for some economies, although to a lesser extent than previously. Jamaica (8), Belize (9), Grenada (15), Dominica (16) and Uruguay (17) are all considered 'high risk' countries. - IDN-InDepthNews Service ■

Obama Seeks UN Backing for Nuke-Free World

BY THALIF DEEN



U.S. President Barack Obama stepsaks with British Prime Minister Gordon Brown prior to the Security Council summit on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.
Credit: Bomon Lee | IPS

When Barack Obama chaired a summit meeting of the Security Council Sept. 24 - a historic first for a U.S. president - his primary motive was to push for his ambitious, long-term agenda for "a world without nuclear weapons".

A resolution adopted unanimously by the 15 members of the UN's most powerful political body expressed grave concern about the threat of nuclear proliferation and the need for international action to prevent it.

Providing specific time frames, he said, the next 12 months "will be absolutely critical in determining whether this resolution and our overall efforts to stop the spread and use of nuclear weapons are successful".

"Today, the Security Council endorsed a global effort to lock down all vulnerable nuclear materials within four years," Obama told the heads of state participating in the meeting. The United States, he affirmed, will host a summit meeting next April to advance this goal further and help all nations achieve it. Obama singled out Iran and North Korea, urging "full compliance" on existing Security Council resolutions that call on both countries to cease their nuclear weapons programmes.

Still, he said, "this is not about singling out individual nations. It's about standing up for the rights of all nations who do live up to their (nuclear) responsibilities."

The resolution adopted Sept 24, however, did not mention either Iran or North Korea by name, although most statements in the Council did. "That was perhaps the price paid for getting the support of China and Russia for the adoption of the resolution," an Asian diplomat told IPS.

Both veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council have continued to be protective of Iran and North Korea primarily because of their political, economic and military interests with both would-be nuclear powers.

"If Iran and North Korea were singled out in the resolution," the diplomat said, "it was very unlikely the United States would have had a unanimous resolution."

But several speakers continued to condemn North Korea and Iran in their statements - perhaps to compensate for the shortcoming in the resolution.

A FALSE CONTROVERSY

French President Nicolas Sarkozy pointedly said: "We are facing two major proliferation crises, in Iran and North Korea." Year after year, he said, they have been worsening. "How, before the eyes of the world, could we justify meeting without tackling them?"

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown proposed that countries should form a global bargain on nuclear weapons, including tougher sanctions on countries such as Iran and North Korea, while offering civil nuclear power to non-nuclear states ready to renounce plans for nuclear weapons. He also called for a commitment from countries with nuclear weapons to reduce their arsenals.

The five declared nuclear powers - all permanent members of the Security Council - are the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia. The undeclared nuclear powers include Pakistan, India, Israel and North Korea (with Iran knocking at the door).

John Burroughs, executive director of the New York-based Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy, told IPS that U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice, who piloted the resolution, was clear that the resolution would not be about particular countries. But this could have been worked out with Russia and China ahead of time, he said.

"From my perspective, whether the countries are named is a false controversy. The resolution is about norms applicable to all countries, and it's supposed to be also a resolution about disarmament as well as non-proliferation, and it is to some degree," Burroughs said. So it is not intended to be a resolution about particular proliferation situations.

The resolution also makes perfectly clear, without naming the countries that they should comply with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

"Why not have a controversy about why countries that have not complied with disarmament commitments are not named, to go along with the controversy about naming Iran and North Korea?" Burroughs asked.

Dr. Ian Anthony, research coordinator at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), one of the world's best known arms control and disarmament think tanks, said the resolution establishes a framework for international cooperation to tackle a complicated set of problems over an extended period. The willingness of the Security Council to remain engaged in implementing this programme of work will be seen by the wider UN membership as a key indicator of whether they should play an active role in relevant projects, he said.

"The main challenge for the Security Council will be to sustain their engagement and to implement the package of measures listed in the resolution in the face of competing priorities and urgent challenges in the economic and financial sphere, climate change and in relation to other urgent issues," Anthony told IPS.

Burroughs said that while the resolution did not name Iran or North Korea, it makes quite clear that the Security Council will retain its role in policing compliance with non-proliferation obligations. But he pointed out that the resolution still lacks a call for a halt to production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons by all states possessing nuclear arsenals, pending negotiation of a treaty. "It appears that China prevented its inclusion," Burroughs said.

A halt to production of fissile materials in South Asia would be significant because it would essentially end the serious quantitative nuclear arms race there, he added. "India and Pakistan are the only states known to be currently producing materials for weapons (Israel might be), but China may want to preserve the option," he added.

SIPRI's Anthony argued that the discovery that not all states entered into agreements in good faith was a serious blow to the basic principle on which arms control rests, namely that agreed rules of self-restraint would be respected by all parties under their own responsibility.

In addition, he said, the threats posed by non-state actors planning acts of mass impact terrorism were not historically a part of arms control discussions.

"Arms control has tried to adapt to changes in the security environment by increasing confidence in compliance with existing agreements and by denying groups planning mass impact terrorist attacks access to the most dangerous capabilities," he added. Sept. 24 Security Council meeting indicates that the United States wants to exercise responsible leadership within a multilateral framework.

"This is the best way to try and establish a fair, inclusive and effective implementation of the multitude of new legal, political and operational tools created in recent years, many of which are noted in the preamble to the Security Council Resolution," Anthony added.

In a historic speech he made in Prague last April, Obama spoke of a world without nuclear weapons.

Burroughs said one point found in the Prague speech is notably lacking in the resolution: reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in security strategies. Nor are there innovations regarding arms control/disarmament or the role of the Security Council in that regard.

For example, he said, there is no initiation of a disarmament process involving states possessing nuclear arsenals; no establishment of a subsidiary body on non-proliferation and disarmament, or support for reform of the Council to make it more effective in responding to violations of non-proliferation and disarmament obligations.

Additionally, there are no steps to fulfil the Council's responsibility under the UN Charter to propose plans for disarmament. In contrast, there is detailed elaboration and development of non-proliferation and anti-terrorism measures.

In sum, while the resolution robustly asserts and develops the Security Council's role in preventing the acquisition of nuclear weapons by additional states and by terrorists, its current significance lies mostly in the signal that the Obama administration intends to pursue the existing arms control agenda.

To live up to Obama's Prague commitment, the resolution will need to pave the way for a more ambitious effort, not only to contain the spread of nuclear weapons, but to end reliance on them by existing nuclear powers and set in motion the process of their elimination, Burroughs declared.

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Security Council Calls for World Free Of Nuclear Weapons - Abridged version of UN News -

24 September 2009 -The Security Council today affirmed its commitment to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and established a broad framework for reducing global nuclear dangers, in an historic summit-level meeting chaired by United States President Barack Obama.

Today's meeting - only the fifth in the Council's history to be held at the level of heads of State and government - began with the unanimous adoption of a resolution by which the 15-member body voiced grave concern about the threat of nuclear proliferation and the need for global action to combat it.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the resolution, adding that the summit was "an historic event that has opened a new chapter in the Council's efforts to address nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation." Stressing that "nuclear disarmament is the only sane path to a safer world," Mr. Ban said in his opening remarks that "nothing would work better in eliminating the risk of use than eliminating the weapons themselves."

In resolution 1887, the Council called on countries to sign and ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and created additional deterrence for withdrawal from the treaty. In addition, the Council called on all States to refrain from conducting a nuclear test explosion and to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), thereby bringing it into force as soon as possible.

"Although we averted a nuclear nightmare during the Cold War, we now face proliferation of a scope and complexity that demands new strategies and new approaches," said Mr. Obama, the first US President to preside over a Security Council meeting. "Just one nuclear weapon exploded in a city - be it New York or Moscow, Tokyo or Beijing, London or Paris - could kill hundreds of thousands of people. And it would badly destabilize our security, our economies, and our very way of life."

Russia's President said his country continues to reduce nuclear arms "way ahead of schedule," adding that all of its nuclear weapons are "located on its national territory and under reliable protection." Dmitry Medvedev also highlighted the "unprecedented" reductions of strategic nuclear arsenals by Russia and the US.

Removing the threat of nuclear war is vital to realizing a safer world for all, China's President Hu Jintao, told the Council, while acknowledging that nuclear disarmament remains a "long and arduous" task. He put forward a series of measures, including abandoning the nuclear deterrence policy based on first use and taking credible steps to reduce the threat of nuclear weapons.

Director General Mohamed ElBaradei spoke of the need to strengthen and empower the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) if it is to play a role in nuclear disarmament. "Our verification mandate is centred on nuclear material. If the Agency is to be expected to pursue possible weaponization activities, it must be empowered with the corresponding legal authority," he said.

During the meeting several delegates voiced concern about the challenges to the non-proliferation regime posed by the nuclear activities of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The world cannot stand by when Iran and DPRK reject the opportunities of peaceful civil nuclear power and instead take steps to develop nuclear weapons in a way that threatens regional peace and security, stated Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom.

"Today, I believe we have to draw a line in the sand. Iran must not allow its actions to prevent the international community from moving forward to a more peaceful era," he said, adding that as evidence of Iran's breach of international agreements grows, tougher sanctions must be considered.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy said that DPRK shows what happens when too much time is allowed to pass. After years of diplomatic efforts, the country is now at the point of conducting nuclear tests and long-range missile tests, and it exports sensitive technologies to unstable regions, he stated. "I call on those with the means to put pressure and exert influence on Pyongyang to use them so that it puts a halt to these schemes."

Today's meeting comes ahead of the nuclear security summit to be convened by Mr. Obama next April and the NPT Review Conference set for next May. It also coincided with a two-day conference that began at UN Headquarters today to try to promote the CTBT and its entry into force.

Building Global Solidarity Toward Nuclear Abolition

BY DAISAKU IKEDA



Dr. Daisaku Ikeda is President of Soka Gokkai International (SGI)

Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Buddhist association, issued a proposal Sept. 8 outlining concrete steps toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. A vocal opponent of these inhumane weapons for more than 50 years, he stresses that we now have a unique opportunity to build grassroots solidarity, propel political processes and break out of the stagnation which has dogged nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation efforts. Below the summary of the 40-page document available at:

http://www.nuclearabolition.net/documents/sgi-ikeda_five-point_plan_full_text.pdf

If nuclear weapons epitomize the forces that would divide and destroy the world, they can only be overcome by the solidarity of ordinary citizens, which transforms hope into the energy to create a new era.

Even though the threat of global nuclear war has diminished since the end of the Cold War, the number of states with nuclear arms has nearly doubled since the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) entered into force in 1970.

There are still some 25,000 nuclear warheads in existence in the world. At the same time, there is rising fear that the spread of nuclear weapons technologies and materials through the black market will unleash the nightmare of nuclear terrorism.

I would like to urge the leaders of all states that either possess nuclear weapons themselves or whose national security is reliant on the nuclear weapons of other states to ask themselves these questions:

- Are nuclear weapons really necessary? Why do we need to keep them?
- What justifies our own stockpiles of nuclear weapons when we make an issue out of *other states' possession of them*?
- Does humanity really have no choice but

to live under the threat of nuclear weapons?

In considering these questions, the concept of "self-education" is key. This has been evidenced throughout the history of nuclear weapons, both in the deep concerns and misgivings of many of the scientists involved in their creation and in the actions of statesmen who have faced nuclear crises and participated in disarmament talks.

Although it ended without agreement to abolish nuclear weapons, the Reykjavik summit between Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and U.S. President Ronald Reagan in October 1986 demonstrated the importance of a number of factors: a shared vision based on a clear awareness of crisis; unflagging determination to take the initiative; and a sense of mutual trust sustained to the end.

I urge the world's leaders to take these lessons to heart as they struggle to free humankind from the dire threat of nuclear weapons.

In 1957, my mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, issued a historic call for the abolition of nuclear weapons. His speech, which denounced nuclear weapons as an absolute evil, contains three themes of particular relevance for today: the need for a transformation in the consciousness of political leaders; the need for a clearly shared vision toward the outlawing of nuclear weapons; and the need to establish "human security" on a global scale.

I believe it is possible to lay the foundations for a world without nuclear weapons during the next five years, and to this end would suggest a five-part plan. I call on:

1. The five declared nuclear-weapon states to announce their commitment to a shared vision of a world without nuclear weapons at next year's NPT Review Conference and to promptly initiate concrete steps toward its achievement.
2. The United Nations to establish a panel of experts on nuclear abolition, strengthening collaborative relations with civil society regarding the disarmament process.
3. The states parties to the NPT to strengthen nonproliferation mechanisms and remove obstacles to the elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2015.
4. All states to actively cooperate to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in national security and to advance on a global scale toward the establishment of security arrangements that are not dependent on nuclear weapons by the year 2015.
5. The world's people to clearly manifest their will for the outlawing of nuclear weapons and to establish, by the year 2015, the international norm that will serve as the foundation for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC).

The path to the adoption of an NWC is likely to be a difficult one. But, rather than be paralyzed by this difficulty, we should take action now to generate overwhelming popular support for the prohibition of nuclear weapons, such that calls for the adoption of an NWC become impossible to ignore.

I would like to suggest that the real significance of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons is by no means limited to their physical elimination. Rather, it involves transforming the very nature of states and interstate relations.

Just over 100 years ago, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founding president of the Soka Gakkai, proposed a new mode of competition, "humanitarian competition" -- in which "by benefiting others we benefit ourselves"--as a

means of overcoming conflict among nations. He called on each state to engage in a positive rivalry to contribute to the world through humane action, in order to spread the spirit of peaceful coexistence and build a truly global society.

If we are to put the era of nuclear terror behind us, we must struggle against the real "enemy." That enemy is not nuclear weapons *per se*, nor is it the states that possess or develop them. The real enemy that we must confront is the ways of thinking that justify nuclear weapons; the readiness to annihilate others when they are seen as a threat or as a hindrance to the realization of our objectives.

This was the enemy that Josei Toda referred to when he spoke of declawing the threat hidden in the very depths of nuclear weapons. He was convinced that a shared determination to combat this evil could serve as the basis for a transnational solidarity among the world's people.

Let us abandon the habit of studiously ignoring the menace posed to Earth by nuclear weapons and instead demonstrate that a world without nuclear weapons can indeed be realized in our lifetimes.

Raising one's voice or taking action is something we all can do. All that is required are the natural feelings shared by people everywhere: the desire to live in peace, the wish to protect those we love, the determination to spare the world's children needless suffering.

It is the passion of youth that spreads the flames of courage throughout society. This courage, transmitted from one person to the next, can melt the daunting walls of difficulty and open the horizons on a new era in human history.

Based on the proud determination to make the struggle for nuclear abolition the foundation for a world without war, and convinced that participation in this unprecedented undertaking is the greatest gift we can offer the future, I call on people of goodwill everywhere to work together toward the realization of a world finally free from the menace of nuclear weapons.

- SGI | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

www.un.org/disarmament/index.shtml

The screenshot shows the UNODA website interface. At the top, there is a search bar and language options (Arabic, Chinese, English, Français, Русский, Español). The main header includes the UN logo and the text "UNODA United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs" with the tagline "...strengthening peace and security through disarmament".

Home
About Us
All Issues
Institutions
 > General Assembly
 > Security Council
 > UN Disarmament Commission
 > Conference on Disarmament
 > Secretary-General's Advisory Board
 > UNIDIR
Databases
 > GA Resolutions and Decisions
 > Status and Text of Treaties
 > UN Register of Conventional Arms
 > UNODA Documents Library
Resources

MAIN ISSUES

Weapons of Mass Destruction
 Nuclear, Biological, Chemical, Missiles, Resolution 1540, Counter-Terrorism Strategy, CBW Use Investigations, NPT PrepCom 2009, Report of the Secretary-General: Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction

Conventional Arms
 Small Arms / Armed Violence, Arms Trade Treaty, Transparency Registers, Ammunition, Landmines, Certain Conventional Weapons & Cluster Munitions

Regional Disarmament
 Regional Approach to Disarmament, Cooperation with Regional Partners, UN Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa
UN Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament:
 Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean

MEETINGS/EVENTS
 * Provisional speakers list (Conference on Facilitating the Entry Into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty)
 * Conference on Facilitating the Entry

NEWS
 * Secretary-General welcomes Resolution adopted at 'Historic' Security Council Summit, says new chapter opened in Council efforts to address Nuclear Disarmament
 * Disarmament, Non-Proliferation

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Why Should We Abolish Nuclear Weapons?

BY HIROMICHI UMEBAYASHI *



Why should we abolish nuclear weapons? This apparently naive question seems to have become a matter of hot debate. In Japan, which suffered nuclear holocaust in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there is a profound desire for nuclear abolition that derives from its first-hand experience of the appalling damage caused by nuclear weapons. Yet this does not seem to be enough to constitute a successful argument for "a world free of nuclear weapons". The effort to bring about a nuclear abolition must be indivisibly and essentially integrated with the challenge of creating a more equitable, just, and humane global society.

When the idea of "a world free of nuclear weapons" resurfaced as practical goal after new anti-nuke initiatives emerged in the United States, I found myself confronting once again the question, Why? The need for a global solution to problems like poverty and climate change is a given, as if tacitly mandated by the standards that guide civilised human society. Nuclear abolition, in contrast, tends to be confined within the category of weapons linked to national security. It is not seen as a moral and global human issue. To succeed, the nuclear abolition movement must be brought into a wider sphere of people's thinking.

Ten years ago I translated into Japanese a book titled, "Fast Track to Zero Nuclear Weapons" by Robert D. Green, a former British Navy Commander. A statement in the book has continued to intrigue me. The author, explaining the analogy between the campaign to abolish slavery two hundred years ago and the nuclear abolition movement, wrote that the campaign to abolish slavery succeeded because "it focused on the illegality of slavery, not just its cruelty."

The lesson of Green's study is that in history the agonies and bitter struggles that human society undergoes can generate the political will to enact important laws, national and international. Even when compromises are necessary to get such laws passed, such legislation will contain legal norms, language, and a conceptual framework that can be applied in the effort to usher in a new era.

The preambles of international treaties or conventions banning or limiting weapons invoke basic legal norms and principles. However, there is a striking difference between instruments limiting nuclear weapons and those concerning other classes of armaments. The Biological Weapons Convention, Chemical Weapons Convention, Anti-Personnel Mines Convention, and the recent Cluster Munitions Convention all contain a clear exposition of the human and moral basis of the prohibition, which, they argue, is a prerequisite to a civilised world and subject to the laws dictated by human conscience. Surprisingly, this is not the case with nuclear weapons treaties, such as the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

EUPHEMISMS

I trust that all readers would naturally assume that the principles underlying bans on biological and chemical weapons would also be prescribed as rightful norms in treaties on nuclear arms, but this is not at all the case. Nowhere in the NPT or CTBT is there a similar invocation of human and moral standards. Can we really achieve a world free of nuclear weapons with such weak legal footing?

We know why this is the case. It is because euphemisms are needed in order to persuade nuclear weapon possessors to join such instruments to bind themselves. As long as we accept this practice, I fear we may fail to establish norms that recognise the real nature of nuclear weapons and their implications for future generations of humanity. We would also be failing to envision a nuclear weapons-free world as a better one for human society.

Our first task, therefore, is to explore how to establish an international legal instrument that can be effective even if countries possessing nuclear weapons do not accept it because it formulates coherent moral norms governing the unparalleled horrors of nuclear weapons. A possible step in this direction would be an international instrument to outlaw the use and the threat of use of nuclear weapons, as discussed in a recent article by Rebecca Johnson (Disarmament Diplomacy, Spring 2009). A so-called Ottawa process in which civil society and like-minded nations collaborate would be a feasible approach.

We also need to fully articulate how the world today is distorted by the habit of sabre rattling and gun diplomacy, the most prominent example of which has been the threat to use nuclear weapons. The norms enshrined in the United Nations Charter to pursue "friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples" and "respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without discrimination" will never be attained in a world dominated by the horror of nuclear weapons. The path towards a nuclear weapons-free world should also enable us to envision the new, more humane society embodied in such norms. - COPYRIGHT IPS | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

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Nuclear Weapons Free World By 2020?

IDN-INDEPTHNEWS SPECIAL

If Tadatoshi Akiba, the mayor of Hiroshima, had his way, the special UN Security Council session to be chaired by U.S. President Barack Obama on Sept. 24 would decide to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons by 2020 -- a year that would mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the terrible destruction caused by U.S. atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Along with Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jody Williams, Tadatoshi Akiba, president of Mayors for Peace, was among eminent participants in the annual conference for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) under the banner 'For Peace and Development: Disarm Now!'

The meeting, attended by some 1,200 NGO and civil society representatives from about 70 countries, was organised by the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) in co-operation with the DPI/NGO Executive Committee, the Government of Mexico, and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

The conference was held outside of UN headquarters in New York for the second time in its 62-year history. Mexico City is the seat of the signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which in 1969 established Latin America as the first densely populated region to be a nuclear-weapons-free zone

"The abolition of nuclear weapons is not only the desire of *Hibakusha* (survivors), but also the majority of peoples and nations on this planet," said the Hiroshima mayor in an impassioned plea, urging NGOs and city mayors from around the world to mobilise public opinion for global nuclear disarmament.

Echoing his support, UN General Assembly President Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, in a pre-recorded message, said that in August he had met with the victims and families of the 1945 atomic bombing in Nagasaki, Japan. The gruesome reality for them had lost none of its power to inspire grief and terror, as well as shame and righteous anger.

He said it was crucial to set an early date for achieving disarmament and a clear, realistic timetable -- and strongly supported the 2020 deadline. "Eleven years is not too little to demonstrate real commitment and real

progress, D'Escoto said, adding that: "We can have realistic, time-bound interim benchmarks, against which the world community must hold all -- not just some -- nuclear powers accountable."

Noting that global military spending is now well over \$1 trillion per year and rising every day, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon supported the call for the total eradication of nuclear weapons and exhorted civil society groups in particular to continue to speak out against the scourge.

"The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded," Ban warned in his opening remarks to the conference Sept. 9. He noted that more weapons continue to be produced and are flooding markets around the world. "They are destabilizing societies. They feed the flames of civil wars and terror," he stated. "Here in Latin America, gun violence is the number one cause of civilian casualties."

Ban said the presidents of the Russian Federation and the United States had made a good start to create a nuclear-weapons-free world when they recently joined forces to seek to reduce their respective nuclear arsenals and delivery vehicles in accordance with their obligations under Article VI of the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty).

Three days ahead of the UN Security Council special session, on Sept. 21, the world would celebrate the International Day of Peace dedicated to the "We Must Disarm" Campaign. And next March, President Obama would convene a meeting in Washington on nuclear security. Against this backdrop, now was the time for all stakeholders to build on that momentum.

'STOP THE BOMB'

"I have come here to give you my full encouragement to continue your work in disarmament. I also want to expand the coalition of support for my five-point plan -- first introduced on October 24, 2008 -- to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons based on key principles," Ban said.

That plan "to stop the bomb" requires enhancing security and protecting non-nuclear-weapon states from nuclear weapon threats, as well as having non-NPT states freeze their

weapon capabilities and make their own disarmament commitments.

The plan also envisages that disarmament is reliably verified, thus supporting Britain's proposal for recognized nuclear-weapon states to discuss nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures, including verification. Further, it must be rooted in legal obligations. Universal membership in multilateral treaties is crucial to the plan, as are regional nuclear-weapon-free zones and a new treaty on fissile materials.

Also in September, the United Nations would hold a special meeting to promote the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Ban welcomed President Obama's support for United States ratification of the CTBT, noting that the treaty only needed a few more ratifications to enter into force.

Ban further called on countries with nuclear weapons to publish more information about their efforts to honour their disarmament commitments, stressing that the precise number of nuclear weapons in existence worldwide was unknown. The UN Secretariat could serve as a repository for such data. He proposed that the Council, through an appropriate mechanism, consider how to increase transparency and openness on nuclear weapons programmes of the recognized nuclear-weapons states.

NO 'PEACE DIVIDEND' YET

The UN plan further stipulates that disarmament must also anticipate emerging dangers from other weapons urging progress in eliminating other arsenals of mass destruction and limiting missiles, space weapons and conventional arms.

"There can be no development without peace and no peace without development. Disarmament can provide the means for both," Ban said.

The significance of the conference was also underlined by the fact that the end of the cold war had led the world to expect a massive peace dividend. But more than 20,000 nuclear weapons still exist today, and military spending continues to rise with weapons flooding markets and destabilizing societies. >>>



Weapons are also feeding the flames of civil war and terror. That, coupled with ever-growing ballistic missile proliferation and increasing threats from terrorists, has demonstrated that nuclear weapons are existential threats to humankind.

Presently, more than 110 countries are covered by nuclear-weapons-free zones. Recently, the treaty for a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Central Asia entered into force. Political leaders had negotiated a treaty to outlaw all nuclear explosions, but it still has not entered into force, while the obstacles continue to derail tireless negotiations for a global ban on the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear explosives.

The UN Conference on Disarmament -- a multilateral negotiating forum set up in 1979 in Geneva -- broke the gridlock on its programme of work for the first time in 12 years, yet it has failed to advance because of procedural disagreements.

Moreover, many countries have agreed to ban anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions, but some major players have chosen to remain outside of these commitments. An international Programme of Action has been agreed to stem the illicit trade in small arms, yet it, too, faces many challenges in achieving its goals. No multilateral legal norms exist concerning missiles.

Ban hit the nail on the head, when he said: "We the peoples" have the legitimate right to challenge international leaders by asking what they were doing to eliminate nuclear weapons and fund the fight against poverty and climate change - global goods that every Government and every individual in the world should strive to achieve together in the spirit of renewed multilateralism. No nation could act alone to solve the four "F" crises: food; fuel; flu; and financial.

Mexico's foreign minister Patricia Espinosa Cantellano said nuclear weapons were a threat to international peace and security and an intolerable threat to human survival. The end of the cold war had not resulted in the abandonment of nuclear doctrines. On the contrary, more countries had nuclear weapons than ever before. Mexico was a peace-loving nation that believed in international cooperation and considered it inhumane to misuse fundamental resources on weapons instead of human development.

'GLOBAL ZERO'

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jody Williams, founder of the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines, Chair of the Nobel Women's Initiative and the Conference's keynote speaker, also expressed her outrage over the nuclear attack on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

She said no child anywhere should have to grow up fearing it would happen again. No war planner should be able to sit in remarkable isolation from the desire of most of the planet's population to eliminate nuclear weapon, holding the world's collective fate in their hands and holding on to nuclear deterrence doctrines or worse -- such as the Bush Doctrine.

"The time has more than come for us to stop accepting such nuclear absurdity," Williams said. "It is well beyond time for us to push with single-minded determination for an international convention that completely bans the use production, trade and stockpiling of nuclear weapons for all time."

She regretted that since the United Nations Charter's passage in 1945, which under Article 26 called on the Security Council to create an international arms regulation system to guide member states, little had been accomplished.

China, India, Israel, France, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, United States and the United Kingdom still possessed nuclear weapons. And there were growing concerns about Iran's nuclear intentions and Myanmar's desire to obtain a nuclear arsenal, too.

The world was on the cusp of an historic opportunity to stop nuclear proliferation, Williams said. "Or we can stand by and listen to strong words followed by weak and vague action that by design or ineptitude fritter away this chance and a new nuclear arms race spirals out of control."

"Global zero" -- a plan launched by some of the world's former leading military experts in December 2008 to phase out nuclear weapons -- offered hope for the future, as did the vows of the presidents of the United States and Russia to cut the nuclear stockpiles of their respective nations. But much more must be done to bolster that process and ensure it moved forward.

A coherent strategy and plan to lay the groundwork for genuine disarmament was needed, she said dismissing as "non-sense" the claims of nuclear weapon states that it was premature to negotiate a nuclear weapons convention.

'DON'T RELY ONLY ON THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'

Miguel Marin Bosch, a career Mexican diplomat and leading figure in international disarmament negotiations, agreed, adding that NGOs deserved a place at the negotiating table to rid the world of nuclear weapons, a place they were long denied by government officials.

While many people had argued that small and light weapons had killed or maimed more people than weapons of mass destruction, the latter were still the greatest danger facing the world. The second half of the twentieth century was marked by several disarmament agreements, spurred by a military power, notably the United States, which had deemed certain weapons or weapons systems no longer useful and thus had decided to eliminate them unilaterally, while demanding a universal treaty to ensure no other country could have them. One could conclude that nuclear disarmament could only occur with the blessing of the United States military.

But under the current political climate in Washington, D.C., it was difficult to contemplate such a possibility in the future, he said. Former U.S. President George Bush's 2002 Nuclear Posture Review assigned nuclear weapons an important role; the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), whose membership was expanding, also shielded itself behind its members' position to maintain the option to use nuclear weapons. Marin expressed hope that the Nuclear Posture Review of Bush's successor, Obama, would move in a different direction.

Rather than rely on the U.S. Government to dictate disarmament affairs, the world could in fact take a different tack, he said, suggesting that a world conference be held to draft a treaty, outside the United Nations and the Geneva Conference, to eliminate nuclear arsenals. There were hopeful signs in that regard.

Governments everywhere were also coming to the conclusion that weapons were not the best way to enhance national security, Marin said. Deterrence and mutually assured destruction were outdated concepts in a world more concerned with the threats and challenges of widespread poverty, climate change, a global economic crisis and the new H1N1 virus.

'ZERO WMDs'

To truly achieve complete global disarmament, the process of ridding the world of nuclear weapons must be verifiable, transparent and anchored in international law and the rule of law, Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu, Vice-President of Programmes of the United States-based EastWest Institute, said.

Speaking during a round-table discussion titled "Zero Nuclear Weapons, Zero Weapons of Mass Destruction: Why, How, When?", Sidhu said the UN Secretary-General's five-point plan to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, introduced in October 2008, was an important road map to follow. Stakeholders in disarmament must also decide on what was meant by "zero" nuclear weapons and how to get there.

He stressed, however, that the process would not be easy, given fundamental differences of opinion between the global West or North, represented mainly by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the East or South, comprising Iran, China,

India, North Korea and Israel. Without common consensus, little progress would be made.

Reaching zero could be achieved through such instruments as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), he said. That approach was very strongly reflected in international law but very weak in enforcement, while the multilateral approach -- working through the United Nations Security Council and General Assembly -- had played an important role in actually pushing disarmament treaties forward.

For example, the Government of India had initially blocked the CTBT's adoption, but the treaty had been "resurrected" when the Government of Australia had introduced the matter as a resolution in the Assembly, he said.

The ad hoc non-treaty-based approach -- such as the Six-Party Talks on the nuclear weapons programme of North Korea, the European Union's efforts to reach out to Iran, the proliferation security issue launched by the United States, and the U.S.-India nuclear deal -- were relatively weak in international law but very strong in terms of international implementation.

Alexander Pikayev, Director of the Department of Disarmament and Conflict Resolution at the Moscow-based Institute of World Economy and International Relations, expressed concern over the fate of the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START) I, which is set to expire in December.

U.S. and Russia had agreed in April to jumpstart talks on reducing warheads, but the looming deadline left them little time to devise the outline of a new nuclear treaty. Although Washington's Nuclear Posture Review should be completed by December, experience had shown that it was difficult for any U.S. Administration to translate noble declarations into real negotiations on reducing arms expenditures.

Jacqueline Cabasso, Executive Director of the United States-based Western States Legal Fund, recalled that after the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapons had diminished considerably and the world had expected a peace dividend. However, scientists had lobbied successfully for nuclear weapons development, on the basis of

the notion that they made countries and communities more secure.

But that was not true as human security could not be realized through military means or by the threat or actual use of nuclear weapons. That message was particularly important in the United States, where corporate executives, military leaders and the mainstream media shaped public opinion while allowing very little independent thinking.

Reiterating that nuclear weapons really did not make people more secure, Cabasso said that in the United States, for example, unemployment was rising and people lacked the money to send their children to college. Ordinary citizens felt they had more in common with people in Afghanistan than with their own Government -- which had seized upon the end of the cold war to continue its policy of managing the nuclear threat as the cornerstone of national security.

President Obama had made noble statements about the nation's moral obligation as the last standing super-Power to lead on global disarmament, while speaking at the same time of its need to keep its nuclear weapons in order to manage nuclear deterrence.

The wealthy everywhere were benefiting from nuclear weapons to the detriment of everyone else, when funds and efforts really should be channelled into addressing the global environmental and economic crises, she said, adding that existing nuclear weapons were far more dangerous than those that some nations or groups may seek to acquire.

However, they were no match for the global challenges posed by climate change, worsening poverty and new health concerns such as the H1N1 virus. Non-nuclear-weapon states rightfully expected states parties to the NPT to honour their commitment made 40 years ago to eliminate nuclear weapons.

There was a real opportunity to rally behind the "2020 Vision" proposal to create a nuclear-weapons-free world by 2020, she said, expressing hope that millions of people would petition global leaders during next May's NPT Review Conference to achieve that goal. An important side event was a photo exhibition 'From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace - Nuclear Disarmament organized by the Soka Gakkai International.

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Integrating 'Adaptation' into Development Co-operation

By Angel Gurría



Note: Following is OECD Secretary-General's foreword to 'Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation - Policy Guidance' adopted by the OECD Development Assistance Committee and the Environment Policy Committee at the joint high-level meeting in Paris on May 28-29 and published Aug. 2009. It is available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/0/9/43652123.pdf> - Editor

Tackling climate change is perhaps the greatest environmental challenge we face today. If more ambitious policies are not introduced, the OECD projects world greenhouse gas emissions to increase by about 70% by 2050, with severe consequences: destructive sea level rise and storm surges, more frequent and intense heat waves, and agricultural yields declining in many parts of the world.

And even if we take actions to combat climate change, some degree of global warming from past emissions is already locked in, posing a serious challenge to social and economic development in all countries. Therefore, it is imperative that we adapt to the already changing climate.

Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change because of their high dependence on natural resources and their limited capacity to cope with these impacts. They will have to ensure that their development policies and strategies are resilient to a changing climate. International donors have a critical role to play in supporting such efforts.

It is within this context that the OECD Environment Policy Committee (EPOC) and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have combined their expertise to develop this *Policy Guidance on Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Cooperation*. The product of over two years of close collaboration between these two committees, this policy guidance reflects the state of the art in confronting the challenge of integrating adaptation within core development activities.

Thus, the policy guidance outlines a number of priorities for governments and international donors. It recommends

moving the co-ordination for implementing adaptation activities into powerful central bodies, and integrating consideration of long term climate risks in national planning processes as well as in budgets.

It also highlights the need to boost the capacity of sectoral Ministries, local governments, project planners and donor agencies to better assess the implications of climate change, and to examine existing policies and frameworks as to whether they might be resilient in the face of future climate change.

Implementation of such an integrated approach as outlined by this policy guidance would require close co-ordination across government agencies, across government levels, between governments and donors, and with civil society and the private sector. We hope that this policy guidance will be a fundamental resource for both international donors and developing country partners alike.

Policy Statement on Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation

I. CONTEXT: CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IS A CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUE

In 2006, OECD Development Co-operation Ministers and Heads of Agencies and OECD Environment Ministers met jointly to identify ways to address common challenges.

They agreed that climate change is a serious and long-term threat that has the potential to affect every part of the globe. Climate change is expected to disproportionately affect developing countries, especially the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States, and poor and vulnerable people within those countries. In some countries and sectors, the impacts of climate change are already being felt and responses are urgently needed.

Climate change will exacerbate impacts such as droughts, floods, extreme weather events and sea level rise, which may contribute to food shortages, infrastructure damage and the degradation of natural resources upon which livelihoods are based. This may also jeopardise development gains achieved through development co-operation and make it more difficult to reach our development objectives including those agreed at the Millennium Summit that are described as the Millennium Development Goals. Adapting to the impacts of climate change is therefore critical. It is not just an environmental issue but also affects the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development.

"Development as usual", without consideration of climate risks and opportunities, will not allow us to face these challenges. Although a range of development activities contribute to reducing vulnerability to many climate change impacts, in some cases, development initiatives may increase vulnerability to climatic changes. For example, coastal zone development plans which fail to take into account sea level rise will put people, industries and basic infrastructure at risk and prove unsustainable in the long term. In addition, climate change considerations may raise the importance of supporting such sectors as agriculture, rural development and water resource management.

Climate change risks will need to be considered systematically in development planning at all levels in order to build in adaptation measures. There is an urgent need to work with Ministries of Planning and Finance in partner countries to integrate climate change considerations into National Development Plans including Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSs), joint assistance strategies as well as associated programmes and projects in order to enhance climate resilience. The focus should be on those communities, sectors or geographical zones identified as most vulnerable to climate change. Particular attention should also be paid to policies and projects with long-term consequences. These include, in particular, large-scale infrastructure projects, transport networks, major land use planning initiatives, urban development master plans and others.

These play a key role in underpinning economic development and poverty reduction. Building in timely climate change adaptation measures will greatly enhance the benefits and sustainability of many development initiatives.

We recognise the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as the political forum to agree international action on climate change. Fully meeting the challenges of climate change will require action at many levels and through many channels. The following commitments are based on those set out in the 2006 *OECD Declaration on Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into Development Co-operation* by laying out specific priorities on how we can support our developing country partners in their efforts to reduce their vulnerability to climate variability and climate change and to identify and prioritise adaptation responses.



II. PRIORITIES AND COMMITMENTS

Our support to developing countries to address the new challenges of climate change adaptation will be guided by the commitments of the Monterrey Consensus, the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* and the Accra Agenda for Action.

Country ownership is key. Consequently our assistance for mainstreaming climate change adaptation into development co-operation will be aligned to partner countries' long-term visions and their development plans and programmes. The majority of Least Developed Country Parties to the UNFCCC have or are developing National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs). These and similar plans and strategies developed by other countries can provide a useful starting point.

To the maximum extent possible we will seek to use our partners' own systems and harmonise our approaches. Our assistance should accordingly be administered by the relevant national authorities in partner countries. It will be accompanied by capacity development support to enable our partners, at various levels, to lead and manage all aspects of climate change adaptation.

We will use a variety of aid modalities, considering each country's situation, and will make the maximum use of programmatic instruments such as programme-based and sector-wide approaches.

We will provide our assistance in an efficient and effective manner in line with the principles of Aid Effectiveness and we will mobilise private sector support.

We will ensure that climate risks are adequately taken into account in the programmes which our agencies support and we will work to harmonise our approaches towards addressing climate risks at this level.

In addressing adaptation issues, we will pay specific attention to those with greater vulnerability across regions and countries:

- between geographical areas: those areas most at risk to the impacts of climate change need special attention;
- between countries: Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States and African states affected by drought, floods and desertification are particularly vulnerable and need special attention;
- within each country: particularly vulnerable communities and groups, including women, children and the elderly, need special attention.

Recognising that there will always be uncertainties regarding long-term climatic trends and their impact, we will seek, whenever possible, to identify and implement win-win adaptation-development solutions.

Similarly, we will explore all the possibilities for synergies between climate change adaptation and mitigation,

notably in sectors such as energy, agriculture and forestry. Improved access to clean energy, for example, can support poverty reduction and adaptation to climate change as well as climate change mitigation. We will also enhance synergies with the other Rio Conventions on Biological Diversity and Desertification to identify areas where multiple benefits can be achieved.

In addition, we will reinforce the links between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction and management, notably in the context of the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

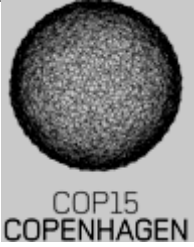
The *Policy Guidance on Integrating Climate Change into Development Co-operation* which we are endorsing today will provide a key reference for our Development Cooperation and Environment Ministries and Agencies in their co-operation with developing country partners in support of adaptation to climate change. This will include maximising synergies and complementarities with the various mechanisms established under the framework of UNFCCC. The policy guidance will provide an important input to the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009.

We will make special efforts to share experience and monitor progress towards implementation of the policy guidance and the results achieved, including through the OECD's Peer Review mechanisms.

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CV OF ANGEL GURRÍA

Born on May 8th, 1950, in Tampico, Mexico, Angel Gurría came to the OECD following a distinguished career in public service, including two ministerial posts. As Mexico's Minister of Foreign Affairs from December 1994 to January 1998, he made dialogue and consensus-building one of the hallmarks of his approach to global issues. From January 1998 to December 2000, he was Mexico's Minister of Finance and Public Credit. For the first time in a generation, he steered Mexico's economy through a change of Administration without a recurrence of the financial crises that had previously dogged such changes. As OECD Secretary-General, since June 2006, he has reinforced the OECD's role as a 'hub' for global dialogue and debate on economic policy issues while pursuing internal modernization and reform. Under his leadership, OECD has agreed to open membership talks with Chile, Estonia, Israel, Russia and Slovenia and to strengthen links with other major emerging economies, including Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa, with a view to possible membership. Mr. Gurría is an active participant in various international not-for-profit bodies, including the Population Council, based in New York, and the Center for Global Development based in Washington. He chaired the International Task Force on Financing Water for All and continues to be deeply involved in water issues. He is a member of the International Advisory Board of Governors of the Centre for International Governance Innovation, based in Canada, and was the first recipient of the Globalist of the Year Award of the Canadian International Council to honour his efforts as a global citizen to promote trans-nationalism, inclusiveness, and a global consciousness. Mr. Gurría holds a B.A. degree in Economics from UNAM (Mexico), and a M.A. degree in Economics from Leeds University (United Kingdom). He speaks: Spanish, French, English, Portuguese, Italian and some German. He is married to Dr. Lulu Quintana, a distinguished ophthalmologist, and they have three adult children.



Rich Nations Owe Two-Fold 'Climate Debt'

BY JAYA RAMACHADRAN

Rich industrialised countries owe a 'climate debt' for causing global warming that is mostly impacting the poor and vulnerable of the world. This view is gaining ground as the international community heads for the United Nations climate change conference Dec. 7-18 in Copenhagen.

The concept of a debt related to climate change has been advanced by Bolivia and other countries in several rounds of United Nations climate negotiations. It is finding support of an increasing number of heads of state, government ministers, officials, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social movements -- representing indigenous peoples, development and gender activists, organised labour - as well as environmental and social justice groups in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America.

The climate debt of developed countries comprises 'emissions debt' and 'adaptation debt'. They have run up an emissions debt to developing countries for over-using and substantially diminishing the Earth's capacity to absorb greenhouse gases (GHGs), denying it to the developing countries that most need it in the course of their development.

The industrialised nations have also accumulated an adaptation debt to developing countries for the adverse effects of excessive GHG emissions contributing to the escalating losses, damages and lost development opportunities confronting developing countries.

The extent of developed countries' emission debt reflects an excessive use of shared environmental space in the past, at present and in the foreseeable future. With less than 20 percent of the population, developed nations have caused more than 70 percent of historical emissions since 1850. This is far more than their fair share of emissions proportionate to their population.

"After diminishing the Earth's environmental space -- denying it to poor countries and communities -- the same rich countries now propose consuming a disproportionate share of the remaining space through until 2050 when compared to an equal per-capita share," notes the eminent Third World Network (TWN) in a paper circulated by Friends of the Earth International at a workshop in Brussels.

TWN says in 'Climate Debt: A Primer': "Developed countries representing a minority of people have appropriated the major part of a shared global resource for their own use -- a resource that belongs to all and should be fairly shared with the majority of people."

The proponents of climate debt say, while freeing up an environmental space, developed countries must accept responsibility for the adverse effects of their historical and continuing high per-person emissions on poor communities and countries. The hardest hit include: farmers and farming communities; indigenous and local communities; women, poor communities; people relying on scarce water resources; and communities susceptible to health impacts.

As a result of global warming, rain-fed agriculture in some countries is expected to drop by up to 50 percent by 2020, leaving millions of people without food.

Indigenous peoples and local communities are harmed by changing eco-systems and threats to traditional livelihoods.

The significance of the impact on women is underlined by the fact that 70 percent of the world's poor are women. Women provide half of the world's food. They are hardest hit by climate change and must be at the centre of any solution, according to the climate debt concept.

The concept takes into account estimates that between 75 and 250 million of people are likely to face increased water stress by 2020 due to climate change. Also, the health of millions of people is expected to be affected through increased malnutrition, mounting disease burden and death and injury as a result of extreme weather events.

The proponents of climate debt point out that it is a component of a larger ecological debt, reflecting the excessive pollution and over-use by the wealthy of the goods and services provided by nature. Over-consumption of food, water, minerals, forests, fisheries and other goods by a minority is contributing to excessive use of scarce resources.

The ecological footprint per person of the United States - measured as the productive land and sea required to provide resources and to absorb wastes -- is more than four times the globally sustainable level. It is more than four times China's and more than nine times India's.

Says the TWN primer: "Globally, our ecological footprint exceeds the Earth's capacity to regenerate by about 30 percent. If present trends continue, by mid-2030s we will require the equivalent of two planets. Of this, our carbon footprint forms a large and growing part."

Subsequently, any effort to advance the cause of climate justice must be rooted in a broader effort to promote ecological and social justice between rich and poor, developed and developing countries.

The climate debt activists say the wealthy industrialised world must take responsibility for repaying the full amount of their climate debt. "Doing so is not merely right; it also provides the basis of an effective climate solution." A fair and effective climate solution should in their view consist of at least the following components:

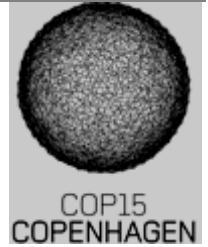
Developed countries repay the full measure of their adaptation debt to the developing countries and communities who did little to cause climate change and are its first victims. They must provide financing and technology to ensure full compensation for losses suffered, and the means to avoid or minimize future impacts where possible. They should commit to fully repay their adaptation debt to developing countries, commencing immediately. There will be no sustainable climate solution if developed countries seek to continue polluting at 70 percent or more of their 1990 levels all the way through until 2020 (consistent with 30 percent cuts).

To avoid deepening their debt, developed countries must seek to become carbon neutral and more. Reflecting their historical responsibility, their assigned amounts of atmospheric space in any future year should be even lower. They must take a lead in cutting emissions through deep domestic reductions, and by accepting assigned amounts that reflect the full extent of their historical emissions debt.

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'Biodiversity is Critical'

By Ramesh Jaura



Biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides are under increasing threat from climate change, warns IUCN, the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,000 government and NGO members and volunteer experts in some 160 countries.

It is vital therefore that 192 countries whose representatives gather this December in Copenhagen "integrate the potential role that biodiversity can play in both mitigation of and adaptation to this urgent threat and optimize investments in nature that will pay dividends for generations", says Sue Mainka, senior coordinator of IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).

"Armed conflict today is particularly prevalent in areas which are important for biodiversity," adds IUCN's senior science advisor Jeff McNeely. "When natural resources like water become scarce, conflict can arise. We need to manage nature, and the services it provides, properly to reduce such conflict."

McNeely and Mainka are authors of the latest analysis of the state of conservation published Sep. 17 by IUCN. The book, *Conservation for a New Era*, outlines the critical issues facing humankind in the 21st century, developed from the results of last year's World Conservation Congress in Barcelona.

Switzerland-based IUCN asks governments to consider that "governance of issues relating to climate change is not simply the purview of the UNFCCC and government parties".

"The linkages between climate change and biodiversity require action in many other relevant international agreements," says the IUCN publication.

The Convention on Biological Diversity, for example, discusses the role of biodiversity for both sequestering carbon and adapting to climate change, while the conventions on wetlands (Ramsar) and desertification (UNCCD) deal with habitats whose effective management will contribute towards adapting to climate change in the coming decades, IUCN analysis affirms.

It continues: The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) relates specifically to marine ecosystems, and recent research is indicating how important marine environments are in addressing issues involving climate change.

The Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) deals with wide-ranging species that are likely to be influenced by climate change and therefore could support the adaptation process.

"Given limited resources and time, a critical issue will be to focus on more effective coordination of action across these instruments as well as providing strong enforcement and implementation measures," the authors of the publication point out.

Climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction are complementary approaches, they note.

Through the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015, agreed four years ago in Japan, countries have committed to integrate climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction through the identification of climate-related disaster risks, the design of specific risk reduction measures, and the improved and routine use of climate risk information by planners, engineers and other decision makers.

It is vital, therefore, that States negotiating at the UNFCCC:

- Incorporate biodiversity concerns into all efforts to mitigate climate change and adapt to inevitable changes, for example through Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries (REDD) and ecosystem based adaptation;
- Mainstream gender and rights-based approaches; and
- Consider the work carried out under the 'Hyogo Framework of Action' when designing and implementing adaptation plans and strategies.

"But the job does not belong to governments alone. In the wake of the financial crisis, initiatives to renew the global economy should also take advantage of the opportunity to de-carbonize that economy including development of innovative incentives, such as carbon markets, that will provide models for broader payments for ecosystem services," asserts *Conservation for a New Era*.

"Prices paid for goods and services must include the 'social cost of carbon' to reflect the impacts on climate change of the entire process of raw material supply, production, distribution and consumption," avers the analysis developed by McNeely and Mainka.

"This needs to apply to all countries including for exported products. Some have suggested that countries should levy a 'carbon tariff' on imports, to reflect any GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions associated with their production. Carbon taxes on imports may be unpalatable to some, but it can be argued with equal conviction that they are essential to the survival of the planet," the authors add. They point out that protected areas have already demonstrated their value for conserving biodiversity that otherwise might well be lost. When properly designed and managed, protected areas can also provide the capacity to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

"Conserving forest cover within protected areas could be a useful contribution towards REDD, provided the challenge of proving 'additionality' can be overcome, while landscape-scale management of ecosystems that include protected areas will be an important aspect of climate adaptation planning," McNeely and Mainka say.

They are of the view that efforts to mitigate climate change must ensure that alternative energy strategies, including the use of biofuels as an energy option, fully account for and guard against any associated negative impacts on climate, biodiversity and livelihoods.

The publication points to the 1972 Stockholm Declaration that stated that people have "the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being".

The impacts of climate change will put at risk many of the basic elements that support those "adequate conditions of life" and therefore can be considered to affect human rights. Therefore, any actions taken in terms of adaptation should include consideration of human rights as an essential element. - GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

Einen Dollar fürs Klima, neun fürs US-Militär

Washington - Die US-Regierung unter Barack Obama hat sich vorgenommen, die vormals gigantische Kluft zwischen Militär- und Klimaausgaben deutlich zu verkleinern und von einem Verhältnis von 88 zu eins auf eines von neun zu eins zu bringen. Nach Ansicht des unabhängigen 'Institute für Policy Studies' in Washington muss aber mehr getan werden, um das Verbreitern der Kluft zwischen klimarelevanten und militärischen Aufwendungen zu verhindern.

In einem neuen Bericht argumentiert die Denkfabrik, dass 68 Milliarden der insgesamt vorgesehenen 79 Milliarden US-Dollar für Klimaaufwendungen aus dem Konjunkturplan unter dem 'American Recovery and Reinvestment Act' stammen. Regelmäßig im Budget festgeschrieben werden sollen nur 10,6 Milliarden Dollar für das Klima.

Das ist eine erneut verschwindend geringe Summe im Vergleich zu den 534 Milliarden Dollar, die das Pentagon 2010 erhalten soll - zumal die Aufwendungen von geschätzten über 150 Milliarden Dollar für die Waffengänge im Irak und in Afghanistan hier nicht eingerechnet sind. Hinzu kommt, dass sich die Ausgaben für Klimabelange auf die Budgets mehrerer US-amerikanischer Ministerien verteilen. Sie finden sich unter anderem im Außenamts- und Transporthaushalt.

"Immerhin sieht Obama im Klimawandel die entscheidende Herausforderung unserer Zeit und beginnt mit Investitionen, die der Rhetorik Substanz verleihen", sagt Miriam Pemberton, die Autorin des am 28. Juli veröffentlichten Berichtes 'Military vs. Climate Security: Mapping the Shift from the Bush Years to the Obama Era'. Der 65 Seiten starke Report ist der jüngste in einer Analyseserie zum US-Haushalt, die Pemberton in den letzten Jahren im Rahmen des Projektes 'Foreign Policy in Focus' vorlegte.

Die Studie erkennt hoch an, dass die Obama-Regierung ihre Hilfezahlungen für die Entwicklung sauberer Energien

in den Ländern des Südens im kommenden Jahr verdreifachen und von 212 Millionen auf 717 Millionen Dollar heben will. Noch 2008 gab Washington für Militärhilfe 50-mal mehr aus als für Hilfe in diesem Bereich. Allerdings erhöht das Konjunkturpaket die Militärhilfe um fast zwei Milliarden Dollar und torpediert also auch an dieser Stelle die Bemühungen um ein ausgewogenes Verhältnis zwischen Klima- und Militärausgaben.

Werde der US-amerikanische Haushalt nicht grundsätzlich und unabhängig vom Konjunkturplan umstrukturiert, verbreitere sich die Kluft zwischen klimarelevanten und militärischen Aufwendungen sehr bald erneut, warnt die neue Studie.

Der Bericht ist keineswegs der erste, der für den Klimawandel in den USA mehr Aufmerksamkeit fordert. Vor zwei Jahren veröffentlichte eine Gruppe von Generälen und Admiralen im Ruhestand den Report 'National Security and the Threat of Climate Change'. Zu ihren Erkenntnissen gehört die Einsicht, dass die Erderwärmung zu zwischensstaatlichen Konflikten über wichtige Rohstoffe wie Wasser, politischer Unruhe und Extremismus, knappen Nahrungsmitteln und Massenmigration zu führen droht.

Warnungen wie diese sind im US-amerikanischen Senatsaußenausschuss angekommen. Vor wenigen Tagen fand dort die erste große Diskussion über den Zusammenhang zwischen dem Klimawandel und globalen Sicherheitsfragen statt.

Richard Lugar, der Republikaner in der Ausschussführung, warnte bei dieser Gelegenheit vor steigenden Risiken für Dürre, Hunger, Krankheit und Migration mit hohem Konfliktpotenzial: "Wollen wir, dass unser Militär gut auf die Bedrohungen der Zukunft vorbereitet ist, müssen wir begreifen, dass und wie der Klimawandel zu Krieg und Instabilität führt." Copyright © IPS EUROPA gGmbH ■

'Daewoo' scharf auf's Agrarland Madagaskars

Berlin - Nach dem Scheitern seines Planes, in Madagaskar auf einer Fläche von 1,3 Millionen Hektar Energiepflanzen und Nahrungsmittel für den Export anzubauen, versucht der südkoreanische Konzern 'Daewoo' offenbar über seine neue Tochtergesellschaft 'Madagascar Tasaku SARLU' doch noch einen Fuß in die Tür des südostafrikanischen Inselstaats zu bekommen. Entwicklungsorganisationen warnen angesichts dieser und ähnlicher Bemühungen vor einem gefährlichen Ausverkauf der landeseigenen Agrarflächen, der die Bauern von ihren Parzellen vertreibt und das Land im Indischen Ozean von ausländischen Unternehmen abhängig macht. "Wenn die Nahrungsmittelpreise wieder steigen, nimmt auch der Hunger zu", befürchtet FIAN - eine Organisation, die sich für das Menschenrecht auf Nahrung einsetzt.

Daewoo ist nicht das einzige Unternehmen, das langjährige Pachtverträge in Madagaskar anstrebt. So hat sich der indische Konzern 'Varun Agriculture Sarl' dort bereits für eine Laufzeit von mindestens 50 Jahren den Zugriff auf drei Viertel eines 230.000 Hektar großen Grundstücks gesichert. Der britische Biotreibstoffproduzent 'Gem BioFuels' will sich zusätzlich zu 13.500 Hektar Land für den Jatropha-Anbau weitere 450.000 Hektar einverleiben. FIAN und

Misereor werfen der EU und den USA vor, diese Entwicklung mit ihren Mitspracherechten bei der Weltbank vorangetrieben zu haben. "Kontinuierlich wurde Druck auf die madagassische Regierung ausgeübt, ihre Land-Gesetzgebung zu modernisieren und an die Anforderungen von Investoren anzupassen", moniert Ulrike Bickel von Misereor.

Da der inzwischen aus dem Amt getriebene Präsident Marc Ravalomanana diesem Druck nachgegeben habe, dürften ausländische Investoren madagassisches Agrarland inzwischen für bis zu 99 Jahre pachten. "Solche 'Entwicklungsstrategien' verletzen das Recht auf Nahrung vieler Kleinbauern und gefährden die Ernährungssicherheit", warnt FIAN-Agrarexperte Roman Herre. Sie seien gerade für arme Länder verheerend. Nach Angaben des UN-Entwicklungsprogramms (UNDP) müssen in dem Inselstaat rund 85 Prozent der Bevölkerung mit weniger als zwei US-Dollar am Tag auskommen. 61 Prozent haben noch nicht einmal einen Dollar pro Tag zum Leben. Zusammen mit dem Kleinbauernnetzwerk 'La Vía Campesina' hat FIAN den amtierenden Staatschef Andry Rajoelina in einer Briefaktion aufgefordert, die Verhandlungen mit Daewoo zu stoppen. Copyright © IPS EUROPA gGmbH ■

Ruanda als Vorbild bei Gleichstellung von Frauen

Nairobi – Ruanda, eines der wirtschaftlich schwachen Länder in der Gemeinschaft der ostafrikanischen Staaten (EAC), erlebt seine große Stunde. Es steht Modell für die regionale Gleichstellungskampagne der Frauenrechtsorganisation EASSI und dies mit gutem Grund. Ruanda hat weltweit den höchsten Frauenanteil im Parlament. 56,3 Prozent seiner Abgeordneten sind Frauen.

"Ruanda ist unser Vorbild", sagt Marren Akatsa-Bukachi, die Leiterin der in der ugandischen Hauptstadt Kampala ansässigen Organisation, die in den fünf EAC-Staaten in den nächsten zwei Jahren eine Deklaration zur Gleichstellung der Frau durchsetzen will. Die Arbeit an dem Entwurf soll Ende Juli beginnen. Ziel ist die Umsetzung der schon im EAC-Vertrag von 1999 festgeschriebenen vollen Partizipation der Frau.

Anders als Ruanda, das der EAC zusammen mit Burundi im Jahre 2007 beitrug, hinken die anderen Staaten in der Gemeinschaft dem eigenen Ziel und den Vorgaben internationaler Abkommen hinterher. Besonders schlecht schneidet Kenia ab. Der Frauenanteil im Parlament liegt dort bei mageren 9,8 Prozent. Burundi, Tansania und Uganda kommen immerhin auf über 30 Prozent.

Auch das aber reicht nicht für die Umsetzung internationaler Ziele. Sowohl die Aktionsplattform von Peking, das Ergebnis der Weltfrauenkonferenz vor 14 Jahren in der chinesischen Hauptstadt, als auch die Millenniumsentwicklungsziele (MDGs) der Vereinten Nationen von 2000 verlangen eine Beteiligung der Frau zu 50 Prozent an allen ent-

scheidenden Bereichen. Die MDGs verlangen die Einlösung für nicht später als 2015.

Ruanda ist auch in einem weiteren Punkt Vorbild. Seit diesem Jahr kontrolliert das sogenannte Gender-Observatorium, dass die vorgeschriebene Geschlechterparität in allen Regierungsstellen auch eingelöst wird. Eine solche Instanz wünschen sich Frauenrechtler für die ganze EAC. "Wir brauchen eine Einrichtung, die dafür sorgt, dass unsere Verfassungen und Gesetze auf einer Linie mit internationalen Instrumenten stehen", unterstreicht Beatrice Ngonzi von der ugandischen Sektion des Bundes weiblicher Anwälte (FIDA-U). Das ist zum Beispiel in Uganda nicht der Fall, wiewohl der Frauenanteil im Parlament von knapp über 30 Prozent sehr wohl den Vorschriften des Grundgesetzes entspricht.

Nachholbedarf hat in der Region insbesondere Kenia. Dort gibt es keinerlei Gleichstellungsgesetz, und auch eine Direktive des Staatspräsidenten von 2006, nach der 30 Prozent aller neuen Stellen im öffentlichen Dienst mit Frauen besetzt werden müssen, wird in keiner Weise umgesetzt.

Wie viel ein hoher Frauenanteil im Parlament bewirkt, zeigt das im letzten Jahr in Ruanda verabschiedete Gesetz gegen geschlechtsspezifische Gewalt. "Es hatte eine leichte Passage", sagt Jane Abatoni, die zweite stellvertretende Vorsitzende der ruandischen Organisation 'Profemme Twese Hamwe' – ein Zusammenschluss von 50 Frauenrechtsorganisationen. Copyright © IPS EUROPA gGmbH ■

Mexikos Regierung lässt Böden biologisch reinigen

Mexiko-Stadt – Die Erdölförderung in Mexiko hat giftige Spuren hinterlassen. Auf Betreiben der Regierung werden nun Mikroorganismen eingesetzt, um verseuchte Böden zu reinigen. Die so genannte Bioremediation bewirkt, dass Schadstoffe wie Benzin, Glizerin und Lösungsmittel durch Mikroben in Kohlendioxid und Wasser verwandelt werden.

Bis zum kommenden Jahr will die Regierung in Azapotalco nordwestlich von Mexiko-Stadt eine vor 18 Jahren geschlossene Anlage der staatlichen Erdölfördergesellschaft Pemex in einen 55 Hektar großen Öko-Park umgestalten. In dem Industriekomplex hatte Pemex seit Mitte der siebziger Jahre täglich 105.000 Barrel Öl produziert.

Bevor der Park feierlich zum 200. Unabhängigkeitstag Mexikos eröffnet werden kann, müssen die toxischen Rückstände der Erdölförderung vollständig beseitigt werden.

Eine der angewandten Methoden ist die biologische Reinigung, bei der das kontaminierte Erdreich nach und nach mit Mikroorganismen versetzt wird. Alternativ werden Stickstoff, Phosphor oder Kalium unter die Böden gemischt, um biologische Prozesse auszulösen. In anderen Fällen wird Luft in das Grundwasser gepumpt, um Benzolrückstände zu neutralisieren.

Mit dem Anstieg der Erdöl- und -Gasförderung im Land habe die Verschmutzung der Böden deutlich zugenommen, sagte der Wissenschaftler Patricio Rivera von der staatlichen Autonomen Universität von Tamaulipas im Osten Mexikos. Chemikalien seien bei Bohrungen oder durch Lecks in Ölreservoirs ausgetreten. Rivera arbeitet selbst in einem Projekt zur Beseitigung von Dieselmotorkraftstoff durch Bakterien.

Obwohl diese Techniken mittlerweile weltweit angewendet werden, können sie nicht überall auf die gleiche Weise umgesetzt werden. Nach Erkenntnissen von Forschern muss erst festgestellt werden, welche Mikroorganismen im jeweiligen Fall am wirkungsvollsten sind.

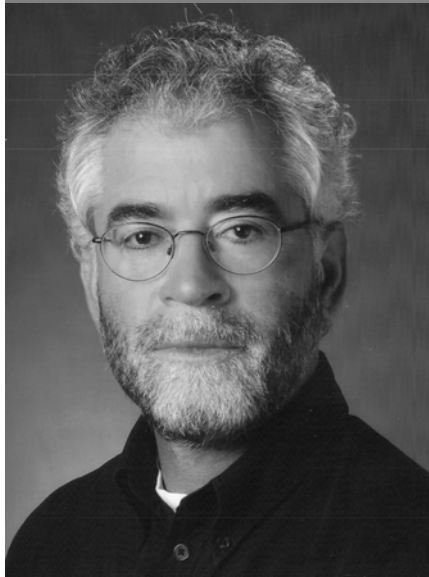
Bislang sind mindestens 22 verschiedene Bakterien und 26 Pilze bekannt, die für die biologische Reinigung verwendet werden können. Die Artenvielfalt biete ein hohes Potenzial, sagte die Wissenschaftlerin Katiushka Arévalo von der Autonomen Universität von Nuevo León im Osten Mexikos.

Nicht nur in Azcapotalco, sondern auch in anderen Teilen Mexikos sind weite Landstriche stark durch Erdöl verschmutzt. Auch die Meeresökosysteme sind durch die Chemikalien geschädigt worden. Besonders gravierend ist die Lage in den südöstlichen Bundesstaaten Tabasco und Veracruz, wo mehr als die Hälfte aller mexikanischen Erdölalagen angesiedelt sind.

Mindestens 15 Unternehmen im Land haben sich mittlerweile auf Bioremediation spezialisiert. Eine dieser Firmen, die 2003 von Wissenschaftler an der Autonomen Universität in Mexiko-Stadt gegründet wurde, hat bislang schon mehr als 200 Aufträge von Pemex erhalten.

Experten sehen voraus, dass die Methoden zur biologischen Reinigung in den kommenden Jahren immer wichtiger werden. Die Biologin Arévalo forscht derzeit über Pilze, die Enzyme zur Neutralisierung von chemischen Verbindungen bilden können.

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'The Society of Spectacle'

By JULIO GODOY

Last June President Nicolas Sarkozy announced that the burqa would be prohibited in France. This he did with his usual pomposity: He gathered both chambers of parliament in the palace of Versailles, the very same building that symbolises Ludwig XIV's absolutist regime -- and held a speech overloaded with all his bad actor's mannerisms, with all his usual fake statesmanship. He spoke of human rights, of woman's dignity, of the urgent necessity to get rid of the burqa. A couple of days later, France discovered only an insignificant number of women with burqa.

On Aug 24, during a debate in the German national public radio Deutschlandfunk, Wilfried Stolze, the spokesperson of the German Federal Armed Forces Association, a politically independent institution that represents more than 210,000 German soldiers, candidly admitted that the German soldiers on mission in Afghanistan barely leave their camps.

With his statement, Stolze confirmed one of the central criticisms of the German military intervention in Afghanistan, that the German soldiers' main mission there is to defend themselves, and not contribute in any substantial form to guarantee security in the country, or to fight the Taliban. Almost in the same breath, though, Stolze described the German mission in Afghanistan as indispensable for the fight against terror and the defence of human rights.

Mid-August, a BBC correspondent covering the U.S. debate on the health reform proposed by President Barack Obama was trying to make sense of the protests. He quoted a spokesman for the conservative group Americans for Tax Reform, which fiercely opposes Obama's plan: "Either this is a genuine grass-roots response, or there's some secret evil conspirator living in a mountain somewhere orchestrating all this that I've never met," the spokesman said. He argued that the protests were spontaneous, yet he also proudly admitted that his group had organised these, using sample letters to newspapers' editor and "a little bit of an ability to put one-pagers together."

SAVIOUR

Early last year, the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown ordered the nationalisation of several banks, insolvent after their own financial transactions had proven to be foolish. Brown styled himself as saviour of the world. But when recently the governments of France and Germany proposed limiting the dividends for bank's leading executives, Brown rejected the measure. Sarkozy -- yes, he again -- had complained that international operating banks were going back to their "bad behaviour".

But Sarkozy also announced that he wants Paris to become an international financial centre, capable to compete with other international financial capitals, such as London and New York. To do this, his government would have to reduce regulations on financial transactions -- and on bonuses for financial institutions' operators.

In the first half of August, delegates from 192 countries came together in Bonn to continue the arduous negotiations towards an international agreement on reducing greenhouse gases emissions and halt global warming. Despite the evidence that global warming is already caus-

ing environmental calamities, and will lead to human catastrophes, and that only 15 days of negotiations remain until the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen next December, industrialized countries downgraded their proposals in comparison to earlier meetings. That is, their proposals for the agreement fell short of the expectations they themselves had earlier helped to raise. At the same time, these governments are trying to greenwash their numerous policies.

IMAGE NOT SUBSTANCE

All these disparate events have something in common: The efforts of their actors to make believe that they are doing something, whatever that might be. These efforts constitute what French philosopher Guy Debord some 40 years ago called "the society of spectacle", in which advertising, the selling of an image, has triumphed over substance.

In his homonymous book, published in 1967, a cryptic, pessimistic tractate written in the Marxist philosophic tradition of capitalism critic as the reign of commodity and fetishism, Debord claims spectacle is "affirmation of all human life, namely social life, as mere appearance".

Spectacle, he added, should not be understood "as an abuse of the world of vision, as a product of the techniques of mass dissemination of images. It is, rather, a *Weltanschauung* ... which has become objectified." In this reign of spectacle, "the liar ... lie(s) to himself."

Debord opens his cogitations with a quote by the 19th century German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach, who once described his epoch as one preferring "the appearance to essence. Illusion only is sacred, truth profane..."

As numerous students of Debord's work have noted, it appears that Feuerbach's lifetime and ours are not quite different from each other. Indeed, one of the most disquieting aspects of Debord's analysis of spectacle is the determination contemporary society and its actors apply to try to confirm it.

It is as if Debord's cryptic aphorisms have been taken as the script to be played as their own parody in all "real" -- or are they illusory? -- realms of life: in the mass media, in advertising, in multinational business, in global politics, to sell appearances as essence, to sanctify delusions and profane the truth.

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 - Albert Einstein 14 March 1879 - 18 April 1955

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