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TOWARD COPENHAGEN: 'A Deal is Possible'



←Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon greets US President Barack Obama as he arrives for the Climate Change Summit, Sep. 21, 2009.

IDN-InDepthNews Service

(IDN) – UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon hosted a dinner Sep. 22 for leaders to discuss how to translate the political momentum from that day's historic summit into concrete progress that will lead to success at Copenhagen in December.

The group was composed of leaders of the world's largest economies – both industrialized and emerging – as well as leaders of the most affected and vulnerable countries.

The conversation focused on five principal areas: 1) financing; 2) adaptation; 3) mitigation; 4) governance; and 5) possible ways to keep the process moving forward.

Following is the readout of Ban's Climate Change Dinner:

FINANCING

Financing drew extensive attention at the dinner. Indeed it is clear that at long last leaders are focusing on the centrality of the financing issue. Financing is the key to make an agreement work. Leaders discussed the overall needs for financing mitigation and adaptation. Multiple leaders welcomed the proposal made earlier today, to pursue an initial target of at least \$100 billion per year, from both public and private sources, for both adaptation and mitigation during the next decade. Leaders agreed that both public and private financing will be needed. Many noted that the public financing will need to be new and additional to existing ODA commitments.

The role of private sector finance is of central importance, and must be driven by expanding the global carbon market, including through linking trading schemes. In this regard many leaders welcomed the Japanese Prime Minister's proposal to create a national carbon market and to link it into a global market. Leaders also discussed the need for mechanisms to deliver the requisite financing, and that such mechanisms need to include equitable representation of both developed and developing countries.

ADAPTATION

The need for increased attention to adaptation was recognized by all at the dinner as essential for a successful outcome in Copenhagen. The proposal for a "fast track funding" mechanism for adaptation to address the period 2010-2012 were discussed and many welcomed the European Union's concrete proposals to contribute 5-7 billion Euros to such a fund. The importance of disaster risk reduction was highlighted.

MITIGATION

A number of participants in the dinner confirmed that they are prepared to go for ambitious domestic emissions reduction targets.

All agreed that developed countries must take the lead on mitigation. Today, and again tonight, many developing countries expressed their willingness to do more than what they are currently doing on mitigation.

Some are prepared to agree to binding targets, provided that sufficient financial and technology support is provided by developed countries.

GOVERNANCE

Various important ideas were tabled about improving governance through better using existing institutions and/or creating new ones.

We now need to focus on specific governance issues required for a successful Copenhagen deal – such as ensuring balanced, equitable representation for countries in the institutions that provide resources for climate change.

The importance of agreeing on a system of monitoring, reporting and verifying was highlighted by multiple leaders. There were calls for a UN institution to ensure comparability and integrity of the figures and data from all countries.

It was also proposed that the UN establish a registry of national appropriate mitigation actions by countries not included in Annex I to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

WAY FORWARD

We gained some important clarity during the day and tonight at the dinner on the way forward. Leaders agreed that they are pursuing an agreement in Copenhagen. As some said pointedly, "There is no Plan B."

Many leaders recognized that we are talking about a political deal that will require leaders' direct involvement.

Today Prime Minister Rasmussen said he was prepared to invite Heads of State and government to Copenhagen. Tonight many HOSG expressed their willingness to attend if invited.

PM Rasmussen also offered to be in touch with HOSG on the major political elements discussed in the course of the day.

In addition, the proposal for an intermediate meeting at the political level was tabled and supported by various leaders. The Secretary-General will consult on this proposal and would be prepared to convene such a meeting in cooperation with the Danish Prime Minister before Copenhagen if desired.

Lastly, the Secretary-General expressed his intent to accept the proposal of the Commission on Climate Change and Development, supported by many leaders today, to appoint a high level task force following Copenhagen to help us concretely develop a way forward on climate change and development after the framework is established in Copenhagen.

In conclusion, as multiple leaders noted tonight, there is a political consensus among the leaders. We know what must be done, and all leaders expressed their intent to get it done in Copenhagen. Leaders expressed their willingness to break the deadlock of trust among them, and noted that this would allow them to break the deadlock over specific issues. It was noted that many have been willing to do more than they have been willing to agree to. This means a deal is possible that could be implemented, to the benefit of all the peoples of the world. (IDN-InDepthNews/23.09.09) 2009 IDN-InDepthNews Service

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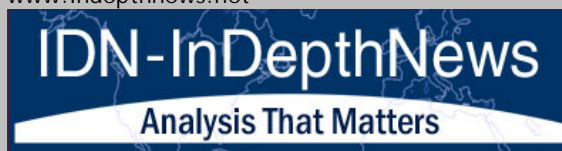
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'Agriculture Key To Food Security And Climate Change'

"Agriculture is the vital link between the two burning issues of feeding a growing population and preserving the planet we live on." says IFAD president Kanayo F Nwanze. It is crucial, therefore, that the deal expected to emerge from the landmark climate change conference in Copenhagen recognises that connect, Nwanze says in an e-mail **interview with IDN-InDepthNews Service and Global Perspectives.** More on page 16.



'Let Us Make Nuclear Abolition A Reality'

A world free of nuclear weapons is no longer a utopia. There is more than one reason to believe that it is a concrete possibility, says Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Buddhist association, Soka Gokkai International (SGI), in a **joint interview with Inter Press Service and IDN-InDepthNews Service.** More on page 11.



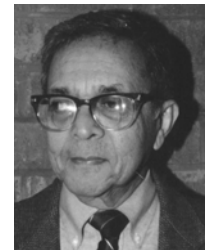
'Japan Has The Potential To Be A Constructive Global Player'

Japan should play an active role in supporting efforts toward a nuclear weapons free world, without jeopardizing its close and trusted relations with the United States, says **Natsuo Yamaguchi, president of the New Komei Party,** the country's third largest political party that has promoted and pursued initiatives to enhance peace and protect the vulnerable in Japanese society since 1964. More on page 8.



'Say Af-Pak And Face A Fine'

The contrived label "Af-Pak" should be banned, and anybody who uses it should be fined, says U.S. Congressman Adam Smith who chairs the House of Representatives Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats, and Capabilities. His comment was made to a group of academics, diplomats, journalists and others whom he addressed recently on the topic 'Committing to a Strategy for Success in Uncertain Times', writes **Ernest Corea.** More on page 29.



Parliamentarians Urge Greater Efforts On Land Degradation

The fight against poverty and climate change cannot be tackled without addressing food security and desertification issues. This was one of the important outcomes of a Round Table for Parliamentarians in Buenos Aires in parallel with the ninth Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), writes **Uwe Holtz.** More on page 19.



Redaktion IPS Inter Press Service Europa



Karina Böckmann



Dr. Heike Nasdala



Grit Moskau-Porsch

Nuclear Weapons Free Germany?



The new conservative-liberal coalition government has committed itself to work toward the withdrawal of remaining 20 nuclear weapons stationed in Germany. Both Chancellor Angela Merkel and Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle say they would do so in talks with the U.S. administration and within the framework of a new NATO strategy.

This is good news and a reason to rejoice - not only for the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) which bagged the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985, but also for all those committed to peace and security. In Germany IPPNW comprises 50 peace organisations and groups.

Welcoming the new government's intention, IPPNW Germany said in a statement Oct. 26: "This means that the national campaign 'our future - nuclear weapon-free' has reached an important milestone." Xanthe Hall, the organisation's nuclear disarmament expert said: "We had set ourselves the goal of persuading the government, within three years, to advocate the withdrawal of these remain-

ing nuclear weapons."

She rightly pointed out that "what some people in the media are calling a 'marginal issue' is in fact a very important contribution towards a nuclear weapon-free world". IPPNW believes that a step like this can help negotiations with Iran or North Korea. "Only if we disarm can we demonstrate to others that nuclear weapons are not necessary for our security and persuade other countries to renounce them," Hall said.

The IPPNW campaigners have been putting pressure on parliamentarians since 2007 to position themselves in regard to disarmament. The campaign to win their support was intensified in run up to the September election. The liberal FDP, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (the Green Party) and Die Linke (the Left Party) have all taken strong positions in recent years on the question of the withdrawal of the 20 nuclear weapons based in the Eifel region, and have repeatedly tabled motions in the Parliament.

However, the CDU/CSU-SPD grand coalition always voted these down. Even though the SPD had pledged to work for withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Germany in its policy programme, they could not vote for it because of their coalition agreement with the Conservative Union. "It was clear from the start that a future coalition agreement would be our greatest obstacle," continued Hall. "That's why lobbied with candidates already during the election to commit themselves to saying they would stand up for withdrawal of nuclear weapons during the coalition negotiations."

After the election, the campaign council wrote again to all the negotiators. Ten Conservative 'Mayors for Peace' wrote to Chancellor Merkel and asked her to make the issue of disarmament 'Chefsache' (top priority) and end nuclear sharing. The German affiliate of Mayors for Peace supports the campaign "our future - nuclear weapon-free".

The Mayors for Peace NGO is composed of cities around the world that have formally expressed support for the programme announced by Takeshi Araki, the Mayor of Hiroshima, in 1982. The cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were assaulted by U.S. atomic bombs in August 1945, reducing the two cities within minutes to rubble and killing hundreds of thousands.

Araki proposed on June 24, 1982 at the 2nd UN Special Session on Disarmament a 'Programme to Promote the Solidarity of Cities toward the Total Abolition of Nuclear Weapons'. This proposal offered cities a way to transcend national borders and work together to press for the abolition of all nuclear weapons. Subsequently, the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki called on mayors around the world to support this programme. The organisation is now supported by 554 cities in 107 countries and regions. Mayors for Peace is recognised by the UN as an official NGO.

Mayors for Peace aims to build solidarity and facilitate coordination among cities around the world that support the Programme to Promote the Solidarity of Cities toward the Total Abolition of Nuclear Weapons. Its primary goal is to work world wide to raise consciousness regarding nuclear weapons abolition. It is also formally committed to pursuing lasting world peace by addressing starvation, poverty, refugee welfare, human rights abuses and environmental destruction.

Ramesh Jaura

Ramesh Jaura
Chief Editor

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES KOMMUNIKATION GLOBAL

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The World According To The West

BY **BAHER KAMAL** *

Before, the Taliban were good because they were fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, with the backing and the weapons of the West.

After, the Taliban were bad because they wanted to rule their own country by their own selves.

Now the Taliban are very bad because they do not let the West have full control over the Afghanistan they managed to free from the Soviets.

Before, Pakistan was good because it was supporting the Taliban and the Taliban were fighting the Soviets.

After, Pakistan was bad because it was not fighting the Taliban after they chased the Soviets.

Now Pakistan is good again, because it fights them and lets the U.S. use its territory, as a field camp against the Taliban -- be they the Taliban of Pakistan or the Taliban of Afghanistan.

Before, Afghan appointed president Hamid Karazi was good because he was always getting along with Western plans.

Now he is bad because he sealed alliances with 'warlords', many of them allied with the Taliban, thus not facilitating the Western game.

Before, Iran was good because the Shah was an ally and would buy many weapons from the West and transforme his country in a huge arms warehouse full of Western weaponry.

After, Ayatollah Khomeini was also good because he would counter-balance the Arabs' growing weigh based on oil.

Later on, Iran was bad because it neither threatens the Arabs, at least not enough, nor does it buy weapons from the West. Mind you, present Iran is the same Islamic Republic that Khomeini founded with Western blessing, but it was no longer good.

Now Iran is about to be very good, as it allows foreign inspectors, a high number of them coming from the West, to check its 'secret' nuclear facility in Qom. Iran has also offered that the uranium it needs could be enriched abroad.

Tomorrow Iran might be very bad for Western powers if its trusts the uranium enrichment to Russia.

Before, Iraq's Saddam Hussein was good, because he was buying weapons to fight Khomeini's Islamic Republic of Iran that the West had previously blessed.

After, Iraq was bad because Saddam Hussein was not serving the Western power game any longer.

Now Iraq is neither good nor bad -- it is just there, to do with it whatever the West may deem convenient, free oil exploitation included.

Before, Libya was bad, because its leader Moammar Ghaddafi was not easy to handle and wanted to have his own nuclear programme.

Now Ghaddafi is good because he decided to enrich his uranium abroad and opened the doors to substantive Western investments.

Lately Ghaddafi was very good -- enough indeed to be invited to a G8 dinner.

Before, the Palestinian Authority was bad because its late president Yasser Arafat was insisting too much on his people rights.

Now the Palestinian Authority is good because its chief Mahmoud Abbas does all what the West tells him to do.

Before, Yemen was good because it would chase the Soviet military and be considered as an ally of the West in its so-called war on terrorism, and would buy Western weapons.

Now Yemen is bad because of untold reasons--it wants to become more and more autonomous.

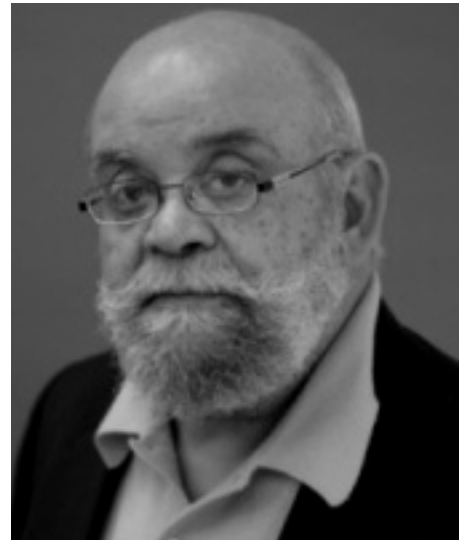
Before, Somalia was good because it was extremely open to exploitation by Western corporations.

Later on, Somalia was bad because it was escaping the full control of the West, whose military interventions have failed. It was also bad because the Islamic Tribunals were ruling it.

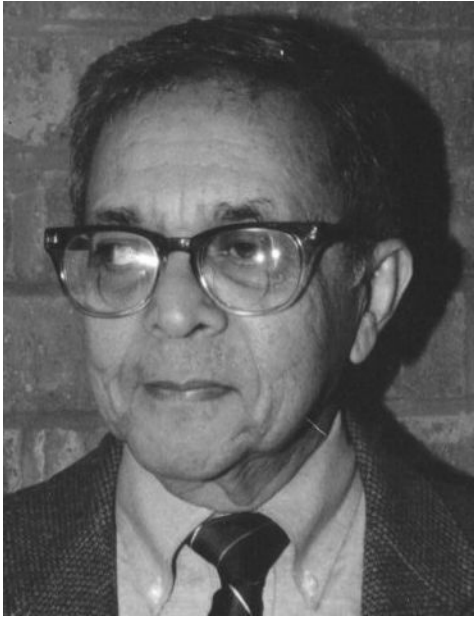
Now Somalia is good because of the same reason as above -- the head of Islamic Tribunals is its current president.

If you are not Western, would you know where does you country stand now? And tomorrow?

- GLOBALPERSPECTIVES ■



* Baher Kamal is an Egyptian-born Spanish national, veteran journalist and writer, with long professional experience in the Middle East, North of Africa and Europe. Baher is on the editorial board of IDN-InDepthNews.



U.S. Right-Wing And Taliban Denounce Nobel For Obama

BY ERNEST COREA

The Norwegian Nobel Committee created a dramatic "October Surprise" when it announced on Friday, Oct. 9 that "the Nobel Peace Prize for 2009 is to be awarded to President Barack Obama for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples." The announcement was made with Obama barely nine months in office.

Two previous American presidents received the award while in office: Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. President Carter received it some 20 years after he had left the White House.

In a brief familial reference, Obama said in his first public comment on the award that when his daughters came into his room on Friday morning they talked about his winning the Nobel Prize and reminded him that it was the family dog Bo's birthday. They pointed out, too -- probably the big deal, really -- that a "three-day weekend was coming up," Monday, October 12 being Columbus Day, a holiday.

Obama was low-keyed in his preliminary response. No doubt his rhetoric will soar at the formal ceremony on December 10 in Oslo. He will donate the \$1.4 million "purse" to charity. (On December 10, 1964 Martin Luther King Jr. became the youngest honoree to receive the award.)

Eighty-nine laureates received the award between 1901 and 2008 -- 96 were individuals and 23 were organizations. The award places Obama in a galaxy of laureates including Aung San Sui Kyi, Willy Brandt, Mikhail Gorbachev, Nelson Mandela, Wangarai Maathai, Mother Teresa, Albert Schweitzer, Desmond Tutu, and Muhammad Yunus, causing what appeared to be a combination of misery, anger, envy, and angst among his domestic critics.

REACTIONS DIFFER

Comments by Nobel laureate Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, were typical of international reaction. Saying that "Obama has already provided outstanding leadership in the effort to prevent nuclear proliferation," he added: Obama "sees the world as one human family, regardless of religion, race or ethnicity."

In a moving personal letter, President Sarkozy of France said the award "sets the seal on America's return to the heart of all the world's peoples".

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Anan commented: "In an increasingly challenging and volatile world, President Obama has given a sense of hope and optimism to millions around the world."

At home, responses were good, bad, or ugly. Rightwing radio talkers ranged from being vacuous to virulent. Said one of them: "There are only two reasons for the award -- his name and his colour." Ironically, their condemnation of the award was shared by the Taliban who suggested that Obama should be awarded a Nobel Prize for Violence.

Divided views among politicians demonstrated the state of polarization here.

Republican National Committee Chairman Michael Steele said: "It is unfortunate that the president's star power has outshined tireless advocates who have made real achievements working towards peace and human rights."

Democratic National Committee president, Tim Kaine, governor of the state of Virginia, retorted: "The Nobel Committee's decision to award this year's Peace Prize to President Obama is an affirmation of the fact that the United States has returned to its long-standing role as a world leader."

Two American Nobel laureates, as reported by the Associated Press, welcomed the award:

Said Jimmy Carter: "It is a bold statement of international support for his vision and commitment to peace and harmony in international relations. It shows the hope his administration represents not only to our nation but to people around the world."

And Vice President Al Gore explained: "I think it's extremely well deserved. ... I think it will take some time before people put together all the different moves that linked his speech at the UN on the abolishing of nuclear weapons, his shift on the missile defense program in Eastern Europe and the movement of Russia to joining the international consensus that confronted Iran to abide by the nonproliferation treaty."

Nevertheless, the announcement was considered something of a stunner because it was made before Obama could point to a single outstanding act or event as having had a direct impact on international peace and security.

Confronted with this view, committee chair Thorbjorn Jagland, a former Prime Minister of Norway, reminded reporters that Willy Brandt of Germany received the award for inaugurating a process of political accommodation (Ostpolitik) which ended with the demolition of the Berlin Wall.

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'.

Mikhail Gorbachev, Jagland said, received the award for launching "perestroika" and "glasnost," which eventually changed the map of Europe. "One can say that Barack Obama is trying to change the world just as these two personalities changed Europe."

FREE OF NUKES

The Nobel Committee's official announcement of the award said that the committee "attached special importance to Obama's vision of and work for a world without nuclear weapons."

Only a few weeks ago, Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Buddhist association, Soka Gokkai International (SGI), said in an interview to IDN-InDepthNews: "a world free of nuclear weapons is no longer a utopia. There is more than one reason to believe that it is a concrete possibility."

Clearly, the Nobel Committee shares this assessment, believes that the human family should seek freedom from the threat of nuclear annihilation, and is convinced that because Obama can lead this quest, he deserves continuing and full support.

Obama made clear his commitment to nuclear disarmament as the foundation of global peace and security when he said in Prague on April 5:

"Just as we stood for freedom in the 20th century, we must stand together for the right of people everywhere to live free from fear in the 21st century.So today, I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. I'm not naive.

This goal will not be reached quickly -- perhaps not in my lifetime. It will take patience and persistence. But now we, too, must ignore the voices who tell us that the world cannot change. We have to insist, 'Yes, we can.'"

He described several markers that would need to be passed as the world moved towards nuclear disarmament. These would include:

- Reducing the role of nuclear weapons in the national security strategy of the U.S. while others do the same.
- Negotiating a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with the Russians.
- Ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Obama Administration will "immediately and aggressively" pursue US ratification of the CTBT.
- Negotiating a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials intended for use in nuclear weapons.
- Strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a basis for cooperation.
- Building a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation, including an international fuel bank, so that every nation that renounces nuclear weapons, especially developing countries embarking on peaceful programs, can access peaceful power without increasing the risks of proliferation.

Some moves in the direction of the markers have already been made. Obama has met Russia's President Medvedev for discussions on resuming START negotiations. Technical discussions will follow the guidelines they discussed.

As for the CTBT, Obama has designated Vice President Biden as the "point person" for persuading Congress to support ratification. Secretary of State Clinton attended

the "Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT" in New York (September 24-25). This was the first U.S. participation in 10 years.

Also in September, Obama presided over a Security Council Summit which was attended by 14 heads

of state or government. Although President Gaddafi was in town, Libya, the fifteenth member, was represented by a diplomat.

The summit unanimously agreed to work toward a world without nuclear weapons, endorsing a broad framework of actions to reduce global nuclear dangers. The session was the fifth summit meeting of the Council in its 63 years of existence and marked the first time that a U.S. president chaired a Security Council Summit.

Next up will be a Global Nuclear Security Summit which Obama plans to convene in March 2010. The Security Summit will seek to develop and agree on collective measures that will "secure vulnerable materials, combat nuclear smuggling and deter, detect, and disrupt attempts at nuclear terrorism." This will be followed in May by the periodic NPT Review Conference.

BUSH'S LEGACY

Well, if one swallow does not make a summer, one Nobel Peace Prize, however prestigious, will not end the world's disorders, or resolve the problems that President George Bush and Vice President Cheney left behind them.

Much as his vision for the U.S. and the world has been recognized and reaffirmed by the Nobel Peace Committee, Obama confronts monumental challenges. That is why, he explained in a letter to supporters shortly after learning of the Nobel Peace Prize, he seeks common action in support of a common cause:

"This award -- and the call to action that comes with it -- does not belong simply to me or my administration; it belongs to all people around the world who have fought for justice and for peace. And most of all, it belongs to you, the men and women of America, who have dared to hope and have worked so hard to make our world a little better."

Now, Consider This: Anywhere else in the world a young president who received a Nobel Prize so early into his presidency would have been festooned with public accolades.

Instead, a section of the radio talkocracy has bombarded him with crude and vicious insults. Can anybody identify the 1000 pound gorilla, seated quietly in the corner of the radio studio, wearing a smirk of approval?

- GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■



'Japan Has The Potential To Be A Constructive Global Player'

BY TARO ICHIKAWA TALKS TO NEW KOMEI PARTY CHIEF NATSUO YAMAGUCHI

TOKYO - Japan should play an active role in supporting efforts toward a nuclear weapons free world, without jeopardizing its close and trusted relations with the United States, says Natsuo Yamaguchi, president of the New Komei Party, the country's third largest political party that has promoted and pursued initiatives to enhance peace and protect the vulnerable in Japanese society since 1964.

Against the backdrop of its close and "vital" relations with the U.S. and growing understanding with China, dating back to more than three decades, Japan has the potential to act as a bridge between the United States and China as the two countries move towards confidence-building, avers the 57-year old Yamaguchi.

He was appointed chief representative -- acronym for president -- of the New Komei Party (New Komeito in Japanese) this September. The New Komeito was junior partner in the coalition government led by the Liberal Democratic Party for ten long years until it was ousted from power by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in the general election this August.

Yamaguchi served as Parliamentary Vice-Minister of the Defense Agency and chaired New Komeito's Policy Research Council, the party's top policymaking organ, since 2008.

Considered by his peers both within the party and in parliament as an authority on a wide range of policy issues, Yamaguchi led the Japanese government's effort to support demining programs worldwide and ban cluster bombs. Among his domestic successes have been initiatives to earthquake-proof public schools and to settle a long-standing air pollution lawsuit against the government in favour of the plaintiffs.

In an extensive interview with IDN special correspondent Taro Ichikawa, the New Komeito party leader discussed a wide range of international and national issues. The sum and substance of the points Natsuo Yamaguchi underscored was: "Japan has the potential to be a constructive global player." Here some excerpts:

QUESTION: Apart from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) that has been ousted in the August general election, the New Komei Party headed by you is the only political party in Japan which has real experience of running government as a coalition partner for ten years from 1999 to 2009. How do you view the prospects of a nuclear weapons free world?

NATSUO YAMAGUCHI: I am happy that we are witnessing a groundswell of efforts toward nuclear abolition among nuclear weapons states led by the United States. The New Komei Party has constantly advocated nuclear abolition but during and right after the cold war period, no common consensus could be formed especially among nuclear weapon states.

Now that this groundswell of movement has arisen toward doing away with nuclear weapons, Japan, as the only country which experienced nuclear holocaust, must seize



this opportunity to play an active role through concrete steps in (1) advancing nuclear disarmament bringing the number of nuclear weapons possessed by nuclear holding states to zero, (2) preventing nuclear proliferation, and (3) promoting peaceful use of nuclear energy by providing Japan's technology. I trust that such efforts are most appropriate for Japan which has both the right and a responsibility to play a constructive role. We, the New Komei Party, would like to be a front runner in this effort.

NUCLEAR UMBRELLA

Q: Speaking of nuclear abolition: President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt has during U.S. visit this August politely rejected U.S. nuclear umbrella and strongly pleaded for the Middle East becoming a nuclear weapons free zone without any weapons of mass destruction. The Middle East is a rather hot spot in comparison to North-east Asia. Isn't Egypt's stance perhaps worth emulating by Japan that appears to be caught in some kind of a dilemma between its national security concern and wish for a nuclear free world? What do you think?

NY: I would say Egypt's stance is indeed thought-provoking. So far the concept of Japan's national security is based on the U.S.-Japan Treaty (of mutual cooperation and security) that entails the perception of nuclear deterrence. A re-appraisal of that perception would require careful consideration -- consideration also of implications for our relations with other countries. At the same time, I think it is important to very carefully ponder over whether the theory of nuclear deterrence will hold ground in the future.

In my view, instead of nuclear deterrence and national security measures influencing the relationships among nations, a series of bilateral relationships based on a wide range of cooperation entailing cultural and economic aspects, would gradually build a mass of multilateral relations. Only such trusted and solidly based multilateral relations would enable us review the concept of national security and in turn even influence the existing rigid way of thinking on security concerns.

I believe that a nuclear free zone such as the one proposed by Mr. Mubarak cannot be established on the basis of a one-country initiative. Confidence-building among nations in the region is vital -- it must be based on a holistic approach to the ultimate goal; besides, it cannot be achieved in a short period of time. If we succeed in creating adequate regional environs, it would lay the groundwork for not only a nuclear weapons free zone but also for a platform for collective security in the region.

In this context, let me point out that I myself have attended several international conferences convened by policy makers from NATO member countries right after the end of cold war. I still remember the remarks made by a policy maker from Iceland at one of those conferences. A representative of Iceland said that his country does not have an army of its own but has nevertheless played an important role within the collective security framework of NATO.

What he meant was that Iceland can provide a un-freeze port and a 24-hour available airbase for NATO thus serving as a cornerstone to bridging both sides of the Atlantic. This contains a lesson that national security in relations with allied nations does not necessarily have to be accompanied by substantial military capability.

In other words, a country could assume an important role for the stability of a region or regions by contributing in a way that reflects its own national setting. Iceland could do so only because there already existed a solid trusted base with countries in the region which have pledged not to invade but protect the small island of Iceland by all means. Without such a trusted relationship, the Iceland approach is not possible.

I am convinced that it is important for Japan to build up such trusted relationships with neighbouring Asian countries. If we look only at military aspects, we will never be able to attain the goal of fostering trust. In fact, it is crucial to have a wide spectrum of channels including economic, cultural and people-to-people exchanges leading to trusted relationships with Asian neighbouring countries.

I believe that through such sincere approaches we can help evolve conditions for mutual security in the region. These in turn would help us take necessary steps toward the establishment of a nuclear free zone in Asia. I am aware that such a zone will not be achieved within a short span of time but it is very important that we strive towards that goal.

JAPAN, U.S. AND NORTH-EAST ASIA

Q: What role do you envisage in this context for Japan's relations with North-east Asia and the United States?

NY: Let me start with U.S.-Japan relations: The bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Japan is the most basic and vital diplomatic capital for Japan -- and I believe that this will not change in the future. Casting doubts on this trusted relationship would bring in unstable elements not only to bilateral relations but also to international relations, including the Asian region. Therefore, I believe that maintaining and furthering the trusted relationship with the U.S. is vital.

Further, I believe that when we think of Japan's road to the future, it should be anchored in our constitution, our country's activities within the framework of the UN, and the U.S.-Japan relationship based on a treaty of mutual cooperation and security. Based on these three vital norms, and while maintaining cooperation with emerging neighbouring powers in Asia such as China and South Korea, Japan should strive to contribute toward stability and prosperity in the region.

This will surely have positive impact on international relations. Let us consider as an example Japan's concerns with neighbouring North Korea -- about nuclear development, missile tests and the abduction of Japanese nationals. We have six-party talks aimed at solving these issues

through peaceful negotiations and U.S.-Japan relations play a vital role. Any uncertainty in U.S.-Japan relationship would make it impossible to advance on resolving tensions.

Q: And China?

NY: Even before Japan established diplomatic relations with China in 1972, the Komei Party -- predecessor of the New Komei Party -- played a significant role in the normalization of relationship between the two countries. Since our effort originates from the proposal by Daisaku Ikeda, the founder of Komei Party, we have high regard for his contribution in this context. We have cultivated a trusted relationship with China to this day. We very much cherish our relations with China. I am of the view that we should make additional efforts toward building up the Japan-China bilateral relationship in such a way that a closer and stable relationship emerges between the two countries. This would have a positive impact on the region and on international relations.

As things stand, we cannot hide the fact that there exist differences between Japan and China which should be taken into consideration, differences deriving from a huge gap in population between the two countries, differences in development paths each country took in history, and sensitive issues of historical perceptions. It is important for leaders in both countries to remain coolheaded while tackling these issues one by one. As to the New Komei Party, we intend to continue to play our role for the sake of those efforts irrespective of whether we are in government or in opposition.

As we all know, relations between the U.S. and China have become rather important. I think these would become still more important, not only because of the economic, but also for political and security reasons. In due course, the two countries would have to boost their efforts aimed at confidence-building. Here Japan could play a significant role acting as a bridge in relations between the U.S. and China. I am convinced that fostering close relations based on trust, which encompass economic, political, cultural and security aspects will be a critical item on the political agenda -- and the New Komei Party would like to take a leadership role in this regard.

AFGHANISTAN

Q: How do you perceive Japan's role in Afghanistan?

NY: I think that it is important for the international community to assist Afghans to put an end to civil war, establish a stable government, and evolve policies that would be welcomed by the Afghan people. At this moment, there still exist many unstable elements in Afghanistan so that we need to act step-by-step to handle the situation.

As I pointed out earlier, Japan should act on the basis of three principal norms: Japan's constitution, within the framework of the UN such as UN resolutions, and U.S.-Japan alliance. If any of the proposed actions in Afghanistan were based only on one of these norms, it would never be supported by the Japanese people or neighboring countries in the region. As things stand, based on careful consideration of three principal norms, Japan has been taking part in an international effort by providing water, fuel and supplies to vessels operating in the Indian Ocean.

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Since Japan does not deploy any force, which is prohibited by Japan's constitution, this cooperation can still play an important role in maintaining the international mission to bring order to the Indian Ocean and halt trafficking of terrorists, weapons and drugs, I think it is a good thing for Japan to continue to make this international contribution in the future. Though, the new government led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) is considering putting an end to this contribution by not renewing the law authorizing Japan's maritime defence forces' fuel mission in the Indian Ocean when it expires next January.

I believe we should not stop our contribution at that level. The security situation in Afghanistan remains unstable but dispatching personnel, not to mention personnel from of Japan's self-defense forces to maintain public order in Afghanistan would not obtain national consensus in Japan. Instead of making efforts with a view to constructing a supporting base to dispatch personnel for security measures, I trust that there are other areas in which Japan could extend its contribution to Afghanistan.

RECONSTRUCTION

For example, there are areas in Afghanistan where security situation is rather stable. Japan could provide in those areas personnel, economic and technological assistance. In my view, Japan should be cautious about dispatching self-defense forces to ISAF (International Security Assistance Force).

I myself visited Afghanistan in 2004 at an early stage of Japan's support for Afghanistan. I think it was appropriate for Japan to undertake those projects. For example, there is a high mortality rate caused by tuberculosis (TB) in Afghanistan. Japan had constructed a TB research centre in Afghanistan in the past (in 1979). But due to Soviet invasion the same year Japan's assistance had to be halted; and the research facility was plundered in 1992.

When I was there in 2004 the Japanese government had just revived the facility to make it a strategic point to provide TB treatment -- in the way recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) -- to local Afghan patients in Kabul. At that time I thought that more Afghan patients could be saved if we could expand such TB treatment bases in other cities like Herat and Mazāri Sharīf but in order to do so security situation would have to be improved first.

In fact, the main purpose of my visit to Afghanistan at that time was to monitor the test phase of a demining machine which had been developed by Japanese companies with encouragement from the New Komei Party. The New Komei Party helped develop such a machine so as to assist de-mining in countries in the post-conflict-period. In fact, it was only our party which supported this initiative. No other party showed any interest at that time.

We secured funding and had several Japanese companies compete with each other with their test machines. We had them develop prototype machines that could be operational in dry lands like desert areas. After testing the prototype in Japan, we chose several locations for testing abroad including Afghanistan.

The experiment proved successful to a great extent and now those demining machines are recognized fully operational and the numbers of prototypes recognized by the UN for practical operations have been increasing. The significance of these machines lies in the fact mine clearance activity is prerequisite for reconstruction and socio-economic development by enabling refugees return home.

I believe that Japan is good at extending humanitarian assistance to post-conflict countries, which starts by demining, followed by assisting refugees to come back to their country/region, then assisting them settle down by constructing houses, arranging agricultural fields and irrigation so that they can restart economic and social activities and from there development could lead to industrialization.

Japan is good at that, and the New Komei Party has opened an innovative way to apply Japanese technology to demining activities that comes first in the series of post-conflict assistance. Japan has meanwhile developed another prototype of demining machines in Cambodia where they have to be operational in wetland areas where there are many trees. I also visited Cambodia to inspect the test phase. This Cambodia prototype is now certified as operational and has been put into operation in Africa and Latin America.

In Cambodia, demining operations in major mine fields have made good advances and houses and agricultural fields have been reconstructed. We sent three demining machines to Nicaragua and planted banana and orange trees. As a result, farmers can now earn income by exporting these cash crops. Previously poverty drove them to get involved in civil war and they had to flee from their fields but demining activities opened a path for their resettlement and means of income from the field.

These Japanese contributions have been highly appreciated. Japanese government is now planning the next assistance to Sri Lanka where civil war has come to an end and assistances for demining and refugee resettlement are needed.

Japan is also extending support to Angola and Mozambique where huge amount of mines remain buried obstructing resettlement and reconstruction of people's lives and economic activities. In summary,

I have no doubt that Japan can provide diverse kinds of post-conflict humanitarian assistance from initial stage, to mid-stage all the way through to finishing stage with an aim to create "human security" through making "peace" take root. This role is appropriate for Japan.

GENERAL ELECTION

Q: How do you feel about the outcome of August 30 general election? None of the eight candidates of your party was elected in single-seat constituencies, and in proportional representation blocs, your party lost two seats, bagging a total of 21 seats.

NY: This was the first time under the current electoral system -- envisaging a single-seat constituency combined with proportional representation blocs -- that voters had the opportunity to elect a new government.

In principle, an election is supposed to be an occasion for parties to compete with each other in respect of their policies and for voters to choose a party whose policy they consider the best. But in this election, the focus did not reach that point and "changing the government" itself became an objective. We from the New Komei party appealed to voters highlighting our achievements as a partner in the ruling coalition throughout the past ten years, especially the achievements based on our founding spirit as "the party for ordinary people". However, those appeals seem not to have reached voters; they turned out to be buried by the groundswell of the slogan for "the change of government".

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'Let Us Make Nuclear Abolition A Reality'

INTERVIEW WITH SGI PRESIDENT DAISAKU IKEDA

A world free of nuclear weapons is no longer a utopia. There is more than one reason to believe that it is a concrete possibility, says Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Buddhist association, Soka Gokkai International (SGI).

"In recent years, we have seen important, groundbreaking examples of humanitarian ideals surmounting military logic and narrowly defined national interests to bring new disarmament accords into existence," says Ikeda explaining the rationale behind his optimism.

"Rather than asking ourselves whether nuclear abolition is possible, we need to ask ourselves what we can do to make this a reality in our time," asserts Ikeda who tabled a five-point plan toward nuclear abolition early September.

"Through my proposal, I want to encourage the leaders not only of the nuclear-weapon states but also of those countries that rely on the nuclear weapons of others for their security to consider the present and future danger presented by nuclear weapons," the SGI president says in a joint interview with IPS and IDN-InDepthNews.

Following are excerpts from the interview conducted by E-Mail in the aftermath of the Security Council special session Sep. 24 on nuclear abolition, chaired by U.S. President Barack Obama



Dr. Daisaku Ikeda
President Soka Gokkai International (SGI)

Q: President Obama spelt out his vision of a world free of nuclear weapons last April in Prague. However, the U.S. president expressed doubts in his speech in Prague that a nuke-free world would be ushered in "our lifetime". Would you share that view? In your proposal you ask "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)".

Daisaku Ikeda: We stand today at a critical juncture, one that will determine whether or not humankind can make genuine progress toward a world free of nuclear weapons. Rather than asking ourselves whether nuclear abolition is possible, we need to ask ourselves what we can do to make this a reality in our time.

Through my proposal, I want to encourage the leaders not only of the nuclear-weapon states but also those countries that rely on the nuclear weapons of others for their security to consider the present and future danger presented by nuclear weapons. At the same time, I urge that we all understand that the real "enemy" is not nuclear weapons, nor the states that possess or would develop them.

The real enemy is the way of thinking that justifies nuclear weapons. It is our readiness to see others eliminated when they stand in the way of the fulfilment of our desires and ambitions. This was the underlying message of the declaration, issued some 52 years ago by my predecessor and mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

As you note, President Obama has expressed his determination to work for a world without nuclear weapons. At the same time, he has questioned whether this goal will be realized in our lifetime. If the leaders of the nuclear-weapon states and of all countries take concrete action on the basis of a shared sense of responsibility and -- most importantly -- if there is consistent pressure from the world's people acting in solidarity, what might seem impossible now can certainly be made possible.

The five-year period to 2015, and in particular the eight-month period to next year's NPT Review Conference, will be decisive. To establish a solid beachhead for a world without nuclear weapons, we need to expand global popular commitment toward this goal.

Q: The document released Sep. 8 -- 'Building Global Solidarity Toward Nuclear Abolition' -- points out that the path to the adoption of an NWC is likely to be a difficult one, not the least because the entrenched perceptions of military security stand in the way. Do you see any realistic possibility of "humanitarian" ideals taking an upper hand over military and money-making ideologies?

Daisaku Ikeda: In recent years, we have seen important, groundbreaking examples of humanitarian ideals surmounting military logic and narrowly defined national interests to bring new disarmament accords into existence. I am referring of course to the treaties banning landmines and cluster weapons. Both were realized through international campaigns based on the collaborative efforts of NGOs working together with governments seriously committed to disarmament.

I am calling for the establishment of a clear international norm condemning nuclear weapons. This will provide the basis for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) prohibiting these most inhumane of all weapons. It is clear that the way forward to an NWC will not be easy. But there are signs of new awareness among the world's political leaders that are cause for hope. The first is that we now hear more voices calling for nuclear abolition from a realistic assessment of the dangers they pose. These include former high-level officials of the nuclear-weapon states. I think the confluence of this "realist" approach with more traditional peace and humanitarian antinuclear perspectives presents an important opportunity to make progress toward a world free of nuclear weapons. > > > Page 12

The second is the fact that, in the 64 years since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear weapons have never been used. This points to the steadily solidifying awareness that nuclear weapons are essentially unusable for military purposes, even if we include the implicit threat underlying deterrence as a form of "use."

I think this understanding is shared to a greater or lesser degree by the political leaders of the nuclear-weapon states. In order to outlaw nuclear weapons, we will need to raise the visibility of the issue internationally to a far higher degree than was the case even for the movements to ban landmines and cluster weapons. Civil society needs to come together to create a popular groundswell for nuclear abolition.

Q: The document calls upon the five declared nuclear-weapon states to announce their commitment to "a shared vision of a world without nuclear weapons". What would you expect such a shared vision to look like? And what distinct outcome would you expect from the NPT Review Conference next May?

Daisaku Ikeda: Vision gives birth to action. This is why it is epoch-making that the United States has offered a vision of nuclear abolition. What is important now is for all the nuclear-weapon states to earnestly debate the significance of this vision and to find ways of sharing it. A shared vision provides the common foundation for taking the next concrete steps forward.

In this regard, there are signs of progress. A few days ago, on Sep.24, the Security Council meeting on non-proliferation and disarmament adopted a resolution expressing the resolve to realize a world without nuclear weapons. In light of the fact that all five of the nuclear-weapon states participated as permanent members of the Security Council and that Security Council resolutions are legally binding, this is extremely important.

If this resolution can serve as an impetus to the nuclear-weapon states to start taking concrete and concerted action, they will be taking the lead toward the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. Exercising this kind of leadership is their solemn obligation under the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty). At the same time, it is clearly the only way to encourage the countries presently outside the NPT regime to move toward nuclear arms reduction and elimination. The solidarity that arises from this kind of responsible action will also accelerate efforts to respond to such global challenges as poverty and climate change.

Perhaps the greatest single reason to expect the nuclear-weapon states to play this kind of role is the emergence in recent years of the realistic possibility of terrorism using nuclear weapons. Needless to say, deterrence is not possible -- meaningless in fact -- against this type of threat. The greatest and indeed only defence against the threat of nuclear terror is the strictly verified abolition of nuclear weapons. Only this will obviate the danger that nuclear weapons will be stolen or nuclear weapons technologies leaked.

In my proposal, I urge the five nuclear-weapon states to undertake the following three commitments at next year's NPT Review Conference: 1) a nuclear weapons moratorium; 2) substantively enhanced transparency regarding

their nuclear capabilities; and 3) deliberations on the absolute minimum number of nuclear weapons on the path to abolition. Of course, there is no need to wait until next year to commit to this path.

A moratorium on further development or modernization of their nuclear arsenals in particular would be a critical step toward nuclear abolition. From the perspective of the world's citizens, there is no possible justification for maintaining the capacity to destroy the world dozens of times over, much less for further refining of this capability through technological development. Agreement to this would certainly have an important positive impact on the discourse surrounding the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT).

Q: How would you evaluate UN's present relations with the civil society in the field of nuclear disarmament? What role do you envisage for the civil society in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons?

Daisaku Ikeda: The world has changed greatly since the United Nations was established in 1945. In recent years, there has been an increased appreciation of the need to heed the voices of the world's citizens.

Disarmament involves issues that are of central concern to states. If the specialized knowledge and communicative capacities of civil society can be fully utilized in this field, it would greatly advance the cause of disarmament. I think the fact that the Annual Conference of NGOs affiliated with the UN's Department of Public Information, convened earlier this month in Mexico City, for the first time ever took up disarmament as its theme symbolizes this trend.

Nor can we overlook the increasing importance that has been accorded to the concept of "human security" in recent years.

As civil society has been clearly pointing out, there are critical gaps in traditional conceptualizations of national security--namely, adequate consideration of the impact of political decisions in the lives of people. There are signs that governments are starting to look to civil society as partners in developing and implementing new modalities of security. The same can be said for the United Nations.

In my proposal, I stressed the importance of establishing a clear international norm for nuclear abolition, and bringing together the power of ordinary citizens to this end. I think civil society has a special role to play in resolving issues that involve the complex interplay of national interests and are therefore not amenable to solution solely through state or government initiatives.

It is crucial that civil society provide opportunities for people to become more aware and awakened to their capacity to be agents of change. People who share the common aspiration for a world free of nuclear weapons need to come together and coordinate their efforts based on a deepened sense of solidarity.

Drawing from a tradition of antinuclear activism reaching back more than five decades, the SGI will continue to work to promote this kind of empowerment within and through civil society. We will collaborate with other NGOs to facilitate the development of a broad-based network for nuclear abolition.

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This interview jointly with IPS is part of a media project initiated by the Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a Buddhist association, and the Inter Press Service global news agency to strengthen public awareness of the urgent need for nuclear abolition.

The World(s) Beyond The Wall

IDN-INDEPTHNEWS SPECIAL

TURIN - Some fifty knowledgeable persons from around the world are seated around a large horizontal table reflecting on Soviet, Chinese and European experiences in the twenty years after the historic Fall of the Berlin Wall, when Andrei Grachev announces that the Nobel Prize Committee has decided to bestow the Nobel Peace Prize 2009 on President Barack Obama who has been barely nine months in office.

Grachev is the Chairman of the Scientific Committee of The World Political Forum (WPF) founded in May 2003 by Nobel Peace Laureate Mikhail Gorbachev. The Forum is purported to foster contacts between politicians, scientists and high level personalities in the cultural and religious life of different continents, faiths, languages and cultures.

The objective is to analyse the issue of interdependence, but above all to suggest solutions for the problems of the governance of globalization and the crucial problems that affect humankind today.

The Nobel Peace Prize announcement comes as a surprise to participants in the conference convened by WPF presided by Gorbachev. Though Obama has undertaken "extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples", he has yet to accomplish all that he has put on his plate.



STARK CONTRAST

This is in stark contrast to circumstances under which Gorbachev was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1990.

Gorbachev took over as the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party in 1985 and became the head of the state three years later. As de facto ruler of the Soviet Union, he tried to reform the stagnating Party and the state economy by introducing glasnost ("openness"), perestroika ("restructuring"), demokratizatsiya ("democratization"), and uskoreniye ("acceleration" of economic development), which were launched at the 27th Congress of the Party in February 1985.

Grachev, who was Gorbachev's spokesman when the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991, explains in his latest book 'Gorbachev's Gamble' that the radically transformed Soviet foreign policy during the Gorbachev years was an integral part of an ambitious project of internal democratic reform and of the historic opening of Soviet society to the outside world.

This was recognized by the West in general, though the prevalent view was that all this did not suffice.

Speaking to the people of West Berlin at the base of the Brandenburg Gate, near the Berlin wall, Reagan said: "We welcome change and openness; for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace. There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace."

". . . TEAR DOWN THIS WALL"

He added: "General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" Those words could also be heard on the eastern, communist-controlled side of the wall.

Whether the wall fell or was torn down by the people of Berlin on Nov. 9, 1989 is more than a semantic issue. The fact is that it did not fall by itself. Nor was it torn down in response to U.S. President Ronald Reagan's landmark speech on June 12, 1987.

But the address Reagan delivered that day on the 750th anniversary of the founding of the city of Berlin is considered by many to have affirmed the beginning of the end of the Cold War and the fall of communism. How Gorbachev looks back at those policies -- that resulted in the dissolution of the Soviet Union -- and the past twenty years, cannot be ascertained at the international conference because he is not attending for "personal reasons".

But in several newspaper interviews, he has said he had no regrets about what he did -- for world peace and for the welfare of the people in Russia. Participants in the WPF conference on 'Twenty Years after: The World(s) beyond the Wall' agreed that the issue was rather complicated. The conference was held in the Italian town of Bosco Marengo, seat of the WPF. The participants included academics, diplomats, former heads of government and senior officials, and civil society representatives from Europe, USA, Latin America, Asia and Africa. >>> Page 14



Ronald Reagan speaking in front of the Brandenburg Gate and the Berlin Wall on June 12, 1987 | Wikimedia Commons

Bosco Marengo is a town and comune (municipality) in the Province of Alessandria in the Italian region Piedmont, located about 80 km southeast of Turin and about 12 km southeast of Alessandria.

An important issue the conference discussed was: What led to the coming down of the Berlin wall erected in 1961? There was a general agreement among participants that it was a mix of popular movement in East Germany - the first since the Protestant Reformation that was triggered by Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses in 1517, as the then Italian ambassador to the now defunct East Germany, Alberto Indelicato, put it -- and the annulment of a standing order to 500,000 Soviet troops in East Germany to crush all opposition to the communist regime in East Berlin.

The Wall included guard towers lining large concrete walls circumscribing a wide area (later known as the "death strip") containing anti-vehicle trenches, "fakir beds" and other defenses. In addition,

AND WHAT NOW THAT THE BERLIN WALL IS NO LONGER THERE?

"It's just one wall that fell. But there are many visible (between USA and Mexico) and invisible walls - ideological, economic and racial," said French writer and peace activist Marek Halter who was born behind the walls of the Warsaw ghetto, the largest of the ghettos in Nazi-occupied Europe, located in the territory of General Government in occupied Poland during World War II (1939-1945).

The walls, he said, are not a restriction. They are something revealing, revealing the narrow-mindedness and perversion of those who erect walls.

Aminata Traoré, a Malian author, politician, and political activist, spoke of "GDP walls" erected on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross Domestic Income (GDI) of countries that serve to isolate a groups of countries on the basis of their economic performance and the market value of all final goods and services made within the borders of a country in a year.

The GDP walls have been accompanied by the mandatory structural modification programmes of budget cuts and privatisation of public works, open market borders, and the removal of agricultural subsidies. All this has benefitted the multinational companies, but resulted in unemployment, illiteracy and numbers of deaths that have never been higher in Africa.

"The World Bank should be called to account," said Traoré who served as the Minister of Culture and Tourism of Mali from 1997 to 2000 and is a former coordinator of the United Nations Development Programme.

Looking at the world beyond the Wall, Eric Hobsbawm who lives in London and this year completes 50 years of writing books on history, is of the view that socialism has failed, capitalism is bankrupt" and wonders what comes next.

"We have lived through two practical attempts to realise these -- capitalism and socialism -- in their pure form: the centrally state-planned economies of the Soviet type and the totally unrestricted and uncontrolled free-market capitalist economy.

While the centrally state-planned economy of the Soviet type broke down in the 1980s, and the European communist political systems with it, the totally unrestricted and uncontrolled free-market capitalist economy is breaking down before our eyes in the greatest

crisis of global capitalism since the 1930s, says Eric Hobsbawm whose most recent publication is 'On Empire: America, War, and Global Supremacy'.

Hobsbawm, a member of the British Academy of Sciences, opines that in some ways it is a greater crisis than in the 1930s, because the globalisation of the economy was not then as far advanced as it is today, and the crisis did not affect the planned economy of the Soviet Union.

"We don't yet know how grave and lasting the consequences of the present world crisis will be, but they certainly mark the end of the sort of free-market capitalism that captured the world and its governments in the years since Margaret Thatcher and President Reagan."

Jianmin Wu, vice chairman of the China Institute of Strategy and Management and chairman of the Shanghai Centre for International Studies, did not share this "rather pessimistic" scenario. Asia in general and China in particular were making considerable economic advances and sharing the fruits of their accomplishments with Europe and USA, said Wu who is also a member of the Foreign Policy Advisory Committee of the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

"Thirty years ago, you couldn't find anything in American supermarkets made in China. Now, when an American friend shops for a gift, he can't find one *not* made in China," Wu recalled his admiration for American supermarkets when he first came to the U.S. in 1971. He had been accustomed to government ration coupons for textiles, rice and most other goods.

Wu does not share the widely held view that 21st century will be the 'Asian century' -- in contrast to 20th century being the American century and the 19th century the European century. He expects it to be a 'century of humankind'.

Looked at from far away Cuba, but marked by its proximity to the U.S, the post-war world looks different. To Aurelio Alonso, an eminent sociologist, the Cuban reality has been marked not only by the permanent hostility of the U.S. administrations "that have hampered the normal development of changes within" but also by the alternatives open to the island by the processes taking place in Latin America. (Ramesh Jaura)

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Schneller auf alternative Energien umsteigen

VON LESTER BROWN, GRÜNDER UND DIREKTOR DES 'EARTH POLICY INSTITUTE' IN WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON - Mehr als 20 Jahre lang hatte Saudi-Arabien dank bewässerter Agrarflächen seinen Eigenbedarf an Weizen decken können. Doch seit 2008 ist Schluss damit, denn nicht erneuerbaren Grundwasservorräte sind weithin abgepumpt. Als Reaktion auf den Wassermangel haben die saudischen Behörden angekündigt, den Weizenanbau jährlich um ein Achtel zu reduzieren und 2016 die Weizenproduktion ganz einzustellen. Der gesamte Weizenbedarf der 30 Millionen Saudis müsste dann importiert werden.

Auch weit größere Getreideerzeuger wie Indien und China müssen mit einem Rückgang ihrer Ernten rechnen, weil durch ihre Bewässerungsanlagen viel Wasser verloren geht. In Indien sind 15 Prozent der Getreideernten von der Bewässerung durch hoch gepumptes Grundwasser abhängig. Das bedeutet für 175 Millionen Inder, dass ihre Getreideversorgung von versiegenden Bewässerungsquellen abhängt. In China droht 130 Millionen Menschen das gleiche Schicksal. Auch in zahlreichen anderen Ländern wie Pakistan, Iran und Jemen werden die Ernteerträge zurückgehen, weil die Grundwasservorräte erschöpft sind.

Die zwischen Mitte 2006 und Mitte 2008 um das Dreifache gestiegenen Weltmarktpreise für Weizen, Reis und Mais haben die wachsende Gefahr einer weltweiten Verknappung der Nahrungsmittel angedeutet. Schon in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten gab es wiederholt einen Anstieg der Getreidepreise, den lokal begrenzte Ereignisse wie der ausbleibende Monsunregen in Indien, eine Dürre in der Sowjetunion oder eine Hitzewelle um US-amerikanischen Maisgürtel verursacht hatten. Doch die Verteuerung, die wir unlängst erlebt haben, ist die Folge unseres Unvermögens, Umweltrends umzukehren, die die Nahrungsmittelproduktion weltweit untergraben. Zu diesen Trends gehören neben dem Absinken des Grundwasserniveaus die Bodenerosion und die durch Treibhausgasemissionen verursachte Erderwärmung. Die steigenden Temperaturen lösen zerstörerische Hitzewellen aus, lassen Eisschichten und Gletscher abschmelzen und den Meeresspiegel ansteigen.

Wenn sowohl in Grönland wie in der westlichen Antarktis die Eisdecke immer schneller schmilzt, könnte der Meeresspiegel noch in diesem Jahrhundert um bis zu 1,80 Meter ansteigen. Weite Flächen des Mekong-Deltas, aus dem 50 Prozent der Reisernte Vietnams, des zweitgrößten Reisexporteurs, stammt, würden vom eindringenden Salzwasser überschwemmt. In Bangladesch, einem Land mit 160 Millionen Einwohnern, würde selbst ein Anstieg des Meeresspiegels um nur 90 Zentimeter die Hälfte der Reisfelder im Ganges-Delta überschwemmen.

Die seit 18 Jahren andauernde weltweite Gletscherschmelze hat dazu geführt, dass kleinere Eisfelder bereits verschwunden sind. Besonders bedrohlich ist die Situation im Himalaja und auf der tibetanischen Hochebene. Deren Gletscher versorgen mit ihrem Schmelzwasser während der Trockenzeit nicht nur Indus, Ganges, Jangtse und den Gelben Fluss, sondern auch die landwirtschaftlichen Bewässerungssysteme der Uferregionen. Ohne das Gletscherwasser würden zahlreiche asiatische Flüsse zeitweise austrocknen. China und Indien, die weltweit führenden Erzeuger von Weizen und Reis, bekämen die Folgen unmittelbar zu spüren. Wenn sich ihre Ernteerträge aufgrund der Folgen der prognostizierten Gletscherschmelze verringerten, wäre die

Sicherheit der globalen Nahrungsmittelversorgung stärker gefährdet als je zuvor.

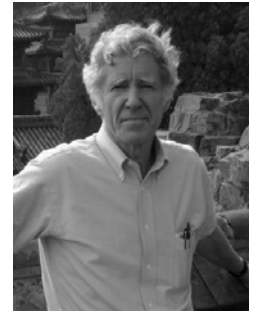
Viele Jahrzehnte lang war die Zahl der weltweit hungernden Menschen stetig zurückgegangen. Mitte der 90er Jahre hatte sie mit 825 Millionen einen Tiefpunkt erreicht, doch 2009 registriert die Welt schon wieder über eine Milliarde Hungernde. Es werden noch mehr werden, denn Prognosen lassen einen weiteren Anstieg der Nahrungsmittelpreise erwarten. Aus Untersuchungen früher Kulturen wie die der Sumerer und Maya ist bekannt, dass Nahrungsmittelmangel mehr als einmal der Grund war, der zu ihrem Untergang geführt hat. Angesichts dieser Erkenntnisse könnte sich auch für die Zivilisation des 21. Jahrhunderts die Nahrungsmittelversorgung als schwaches Glied erweisen. Werden wir rechtzeitig den Kurswechsel schaffen, bevor es uns so ergeht wie den Sumerern und den Maya? Können wir die Wirtschaft auf einen ökologisch nachhaltigen Weg bringen? Der 'Plan B 4.0' zeichnet eine solche Möglichkeit auf.

Mit Plan B soll versucht werden, Klima und Bevölkerung zu stabilisieren, die Armut auszurotten und in der Wirtschaft die natürlichen Hilffsysteme zu reaktivieren. Dazu gehört, die CO₂-Emissionen bis 2020 um 80 Prozent zu senken und zu erreichen, dass die CO₂-Konzentration in der Atmosphäre nicht über 400 ppm ansteigt. Um dieses Ziel zu erreichen, braucht es einen Wechsel von den fossilen Brennstoffen Öl, Gas und Kohle auf Wind, Sonne und Erdwärme als Energiequellen sowie ein weltweit geradezu revolutionäres Umdenken in Sachen Energieeffizienz.

Der Wechsel zu erneuerbaren Energien vollzieht sich derzeit in einem Tempo, das noch vor zwei Jahren undenkbar war. In Texas beispielsweise sind bereits Windanlagen in Betrieb oder im Bau, deren Kapazität 9.000 Megawatt beträgt. Nach der Fertigstellung einer großen Zahl geplanter Windkraftprojekte wird der US-amerikanische Bundesstaat einmal mehr als 50.000 Megawatt Elektrizität produzieren, das entspricht der Leistung von 50 Kohlekraftwerken - mehr als genug, um die Stromversorgung der 24 Millionen Texaner zu sichern.

In den USA wurden 2008 neue Windparks mit einer Gesamtkapazität von 8.400 Megawatt in Betrieb genommen. Die im gleichen Jahr neu gebauten Kohlekraftwerke bringen es nur auf 1.400 Megawatt. Auch die jährlich wachsende Kapazität neuer Solaranlagen dürfte demnächst die aus Kohle gewonnene Energie überflügeln. Der Wandel in der Energieproduktion ist also in vollem Gang.

In den vergangenen vier Jahren haben sich die USA in Sachen Windenergie zum weltweiten Vorreiter entwickelt und seit 2005 Deutschland hinter sich gelassen. Doch lange werden sie diese Spitzenposition nicht behalten. China arbeitet an sechs Mega-Windkraft-Projekten mit Kapazitäten von 10.000 bis 30.000 Megawatt, die es zusammen auf eine Kapazität von 105.000 Megawatt bringen sollen. Daneben werden im Land der Mitte hunderte kleinerer Windparks geplant oder sind bereit in Betrieb. - **Deutsche Bearbeitung: Grit Moskau-Porsch | Copyright © IPS EUROPA ■**



'Agriculture Key To Food Security And Climate Change'

IDN AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES INTERVIEW IFAD PRESIDENT KANAYO F NWANZE*



"Agriculture is the vital link between the two burning issues of feeding a growing population and preserving the planet we live on," says IFAD president Kanayo F Nwanze.

It is crucial, therefore, that the deal expected to emerge from the landmark climate change conference in Copenhagen recognises that connect, Nwanze says in an e-mail interview with IDN-InDepthNews Service and Global Perspectives - a journal for international cooperation.

Keen to drive home the point, Nwanze adds: "Agriculture is the key to food security and a fundamental engine of economic growth and wealth generation. It should always be at the heart of the international agenda and requires consistent investment and commitment."

"I can affirm that finally, after decades of neglect, world leaders have stepped in and made firm commitments to ensure food security for all," Nwanze notes with obvious satisfaction -- some six months after taking over as president of the International Fund for Agriculture (IFAD) for the next four years.

Since starting operations in 1978, IFAD has invested some US\$ 11 billion in grants and low-interest loans to developing countries for 805 projects and programmes, empowering 340 million people to break out of poverty.

IFAD is considered a unique partnership of 165 members from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), other developing countries and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

It was established as an international financial institution in 1977 as one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference, organized in response to the food crises of the early 1970s that primarily affected the Sahelian countries of Africa.

Following is the full text of the interview by Ramesh Jaura ahead of the World Food Day on Oct. 16 and in run-up to the UN climate change conference December 7-18 in Copenhagen.

Question: Agricultural and rural sectors suffered from neglect and underinvestment for 20 long years until the World Development Report 2008 advocated a new 'agriculture for development' agenda. How far do you see this new agenda in action?

KANAYO F NWANZE: The World Development Report 2008 made a strong case for making agriculture a higher development priority. The food, fuel and later the financial crisis were a wake up call for the international community to increase investment in the sector in poor countries. Aid to agriculture had dropped from 18 per cent of total assistance in 1979 to 4.6 in 2007.

In the same period in developing countries government investment in agriculture had fallen by one third in Africa and by two thirds in Asia and Latin America. For IFAD, agricultural productivity and increased investment in smallholder agriculture have always been at the core of our work and concerns.

Since the eruption of the crisis, world leaders have met several times to discuss food security and the key role of agriculture in tackling this pressing issue -- most notably at the FAO Conference in June 2008, the Food Security for All meeting in Madrid this January, the G20 meeting in London, the G8 Summit in L'Aquila and the most recent G20 in Pittsburgh - to name but a few. The upcoming World Summit on Food Security in Rome in November will be another important step. These meetings have built momentum, but now more than ever, we all need to work for the pledges and discussion to be transformed into action.

Q: Accepting your election as IFAD President in February this year, you vowed to "make agriculture the central focus of governments, reduce poverty and hunger and achieve the Millennium Development Goals". Are you satisfied with the support that you have received from the international community in the five months since taking office in April?

KN: When I became President in April 2009, the world had already woken up and agriculture was already high on the agenda of the international community. For IFAD, this meant a significant increase in the commitment from its member states through increased membership contributions and this has been the case as we reached a 67% increase for the 2010-2012 period.

I have since taken part in a number of the international meetings on food security earlier this year and I can affirm that finally, after decades of neglect, world leaders have stepped in and made firm commitments to ensure food security for all. We recognize that a lot has already been done, but more action is needed as it is estimated that US\$17-20 billion per year are needed to be invested in agriculture to ensure food security.

* Kanayo F Nwanze, a Nigerian national, is the first African to head IFAD, a specialised agency of the United Nations.

The US\$20 billion G8 L'Aquila Food Security Initiative shows that governments have woken up to the vital importance of investing in agriculture, in particular sustainable smallholder agriculture. This pledge is an important step, and IFAD stands ready to support all such efforts, but even more will need to be done if we are to double food production in developing countries to meet projected demand by 2050 and meet the MDGs targets by 2015.

Agriculture is the key to food security and a fundamental engine of economic growth and wealth generation. It should always be at the heart of the international agenda and requires consistent investment and commitment.

Q: Meanwhile it is not about MDGs alone. Are you satisfied with the outcome of recent summits as far as world food security and the role of agriculture in tackling climate change are concerned?

KN: First, let us recognize that agriculture is both a cause and a victim of environmental problems and climate change. Agriculture is where two of the world's biggest challenges -- climate change and food security -- intersect. Recent Summits have made clear that food security and the growing impact of climate change must be addressed through a comprehensive approach, but so far have failed to clearly state what needs to be done and how.

On the occasion of the New York Summit on Climate Change in September, the UN Secretary-General said "Failure to reach broad agreement in Copenhagen would be morally inexcusable, economically short-sighted and politically unwise". Time is running out. If the fundamental goals on climate change are to be met it is critical that developed and developing countries act together. It is crucial that the Copenhagen deal be credible and it must recognize that agriculture is the vital link between the two burning issues of feeding a growing population and preserving the planet we live on.

Q: You have been calling for a "new global partnership to protect core investments in agriculture" to avoid the combined food and economic crises of the last two years. What does such a partnership entail?

KN: I called for this partnership on the occasion of the G8 Finance Ministers meeting in Lecce last June. We have seen that the global economic downturn had further exacerbated the food crisis as the fiscal pressure on developing countries was putting at risk government investments in their agricultural sectors.

Such a global partnership should help developing countries improve food production by supporting sustainable smallholder agriculture. By saying this I mean that it should give special attention to the sustainable use of scarce natural resources. Extreme water scarcity, climate change, desertification and land degradation are obstacles to reaching the agricultural potential of many countries. This has been reinforced by on-going discussions on the reform of the Committee for Food Security (CFS) at FAO, the call by European partners for a global partnership which should be at the centre of a reformed CFS.

Q: How far has your tenure as Director-General of the Africa Rice Centre (WARDA) been helpful in your mission as IFAD president? As WARDA DG, you introduced and promoted New Rice for Africa (NERICA) -- a high-yield, drought- and pest-resistant rice variety developed specifically for the African landscape.

KN: When I headed the Africa Rice Center, one of the fifteen international agricultural research institutes supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) -- no longer to be referred to as WARDA - I saw for myself the extraordinary changes that can come about when poor farmers are given the means to improve their lives. My experience makes me an even greater persuasive advocate for the 2 billion people in developing countries who depend on smallholder agriculture. This is at the heart of IFAD's mission of enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty.

Q: Last February, you said that you would like to see IFAD "grow to be an ever-stronger ally for poor rural people". Have you already initiated some essential steps to achieve that goal? Are you satisfied with the progress achieved?

KN: When I was elected as IFAD's President, I pledged to do all I could to convince governments to make smallholder agriculture and rural development a high priority. I also promised to be a tireless advocate for poor rural people. In my first months, I have seized opportunities provided by a number of regional and global meetings to begin fulfilling these pledges.

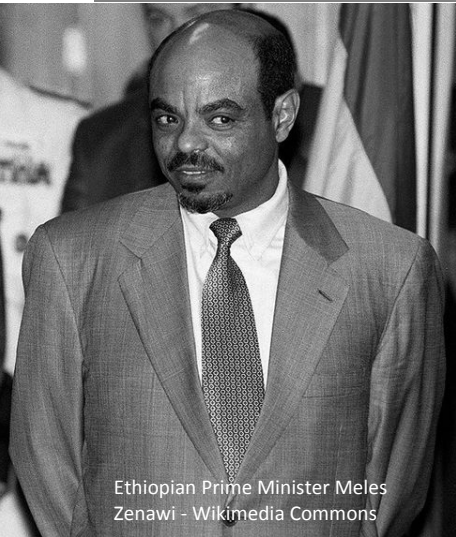
We have begun to re-locate some of our Country Programme Managers to the countries where we work. They are already giving us first-hand feedback on the impact of this in reinforcing our ties with the governments, with local partners and -- most importantly of all -- with the rural poor people themselves. I strongly believe that it is fundamental for IFAD to be able to measure clearly the impact and effectiveness of our work. For this reason I am encouraging the use of monitoring systems that are results-based. We are seeking significantly improved results qualitatively and in scale.

We are in an important window in time, when smallholder farmers are starting to be recognised as those who can make global food security a reality. IFAD can design programmes and projects to catalyze funding from other donors and work through initiatives such as the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis to help coordinate assistance to agriculture and rural development.

IFAD will continue to support the growth of agricultural and farmer organizations and institutional development at the grass roots level and expand its work in natural resource management, land issues and remittances, which are a powerful tool for development. - IDN-InDepthNews | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■



IFAD Photo by Wendy Sue Lamm Gaza and the West Bank-Gaza Strip and Jericho Relief and Development Programme



Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi - Wikimedia Commons

Africa Readies For Crucial Copenhagen Talks

BY THALIF DEEN*

NEW YORK - As African leaders met in Ethiopia to discuss the devastating impacts of climate change, the United Nations released a report warning that the economically-troubled continent will be one of the hardest hit by the ravages of global warming.

"Projected climatic changes for Africa suggest a future of increasingly scarce water, falling agricultural yields, encroaching deserts and damaged coastal infrastructure," says the 29-page report. Titled 'Climate Change and its Possible Security Implications', the study says that Africa is "often seen as a continent where climate change could potentially intensify or trigger conflict."

A weeklong meeting in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, concluded Oct. 23, is billed as the largest African gathering in advance of the upcoming climate change negotiations in Copenhagen in December.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who has been mandated to lead the African delegation to Copenhagen, has threatened to walk out of the negotiations in the Danish capital if the continent's needs are not met. Asked whether such a walkout would undermine negotiations, Hawa Sow, Africa Climate Policy Coordinator at World Wildlife Fund (WWF) International, sounded more sympathetic towards Africa.

"If the (Copenhagen) deal does not respond to the expectation of African nations to adapt to climate change, (and) if it fails to provide the necessary finance, technology and capacity building, then Africa should consider not signing in Copenhagen," Sow said. A really bad deal could be worse than no deal at all, Sow said, while monitoring the meeting in the Ethiopian capital.

The meeting, which is a joint initiative of the African Union (AU), the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (ACMEN), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), was held to update the common African negotiating position at the Copenhagen talks.

Rev. Gabriel Odima, president of the U.S.-based Africa Center for Peace & Democracy, told IPS the African continent "is facing a real challenge in dealing with climate change". Poor governance, lack of democracy, lack of political will and institutional framework are some of the challenges facing Africa.

"But threatening to walk away from the negotiations is not a wise idea," Odima said. He said the Africa Union should put its house in order first and come up with a workable plan to address the problems relating to climate change in Africa. He said African leaders should check their own closets first before rushing to blame the West, he added.

According to ECA and UNEP, Africa has limited capacity to adapt to global warming. "The region's key economic sectors are vulnerable to climate change, and this vulnerability is compounded by existing challenges, including poverty, disasters and conflicts," the two UN bodies said in a statement. Failure to reach an equitable agreement in Copenhagen "will have dire consequences for Africa", it warned.

According to the UN report, Africa is vulnerable to conflicts because of its reliance on climate-dependent sectors, such as rain-fed agriculture, as well as recent ethnic and political conflicts and fragile states.

Sow of WWF told IPS that Africa is one of the most affected regions, and in some ways the least equipped to deal with climate change impacts. "Already now we see a lot of changes in weather patterns that fit to the scientific predictions of climate change impacts," she said. These include drought, extreme precipitation, sea level rise and coastal erosion, and glacier melt.

"We see more migration and refugees because of natural disasters - and climate change drives towards even more disasters," Sow said. Asked whether there should be any special consideration for Africa at the Copenhagen meeting, she said: "We would like the Copenhagen Deal to provide special help and treatment for Africa and other highly vulnerable countries." She added: "But at the current state of the negotiations, we are not very confident that this will happen to a high enough level."

The 2007 Bali Action Plan on climate change defines the group of most vulnerable countries. These include the 49 least developed countries (LDCs), of which the majority are in Africa. Two other highly vulnerable groups are the Small Island Developing States and the countries that are prone to drought and flooding - again, African countries are in both groups.

If this is recognised properly in Copenhagen there should be special provisions for African as well as other vulnerable countries; these should focus in particular on adaptation issues, Sow added. The Copenhagen meeting is expected to negotiate a new treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol which laid down binding targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The treaty ends in 2012.

What is especially problematic is the current trend to marginalise the Kyoto Protocol, said Sow. When developed countries talk about killing Kyoto, they are in breach of the Bali Action Plan, she stressed. The concern is that industrialised countries might weaken their commitments even further, and that could include even less support for Africa, Sow added. "Suggestions that we can do without the Kyoto Protocol and replace it with an entirely new instrument are unproductive at this point." Sow warned: "It will take too long, and we have no way of knowing what we will get. And it is very likely that the process will just lead to a prolonged race to the bottom." - Copyright © IPS-Inter Press Service ■

*Thalif Deen is UN bureau chief and regional director of Inter Press Service (IPS) News Agency, covering the United Nations since the late 1970s. A former deputy news editor of the Sri Lanka Daily News, he was also a senior editorial writer on the Hong Kong Standard.

Parliamentarians Urge Greater Efforts On Land Degradation

BY UWE HOLTZ*

BONN/BUENOS AIRES - Besides the tasks of maintaining peace and avoiding wars between and within countries, our planet is faced with two challenges in this century: the fight against poverty and against climate change through sustainable development paths -- challenges which are sharpened by the current economic crisis and cannot be tackled without addressing food security and desertification issues.

This was one of the important outcomes of a Round Table for Parliamentarians in Buenos Aires in parallel with the ninth Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Some 40 parliamentarians representing about 20 parliaments from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America participated in the Round Table Sept. 24-25 at the invitation of the secretariat of the UNCCD with support of the Parliament's Chamber of Deputies of Argentine and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. They reaffirmed their commitment to do the utmost in strengthening the political will, which is essential for the successful implementation of the UNCCD and for the achievement of sustainable human development at local, national, regional and global levels.

After intensive debates and fruitful information sharing the parliamentarians adopted the "Declaration of Buenos Aires" entitled: 'The role of Members of Parliament in the efforts to combat desertification: parliamentary contributions to achieving food security and addressing climate change in the drylands under the current economic crisis'.

The declaration states that there is no human security without food security. Parliamentary activities related to food security in the drylands start from three baselines:

- (a) affected States have the primary role in combating food insecurity;
- (b) the participation of affected populations and local communities, particularly women and youth, must be ensured; and
- (c) developed States must actively support, individually or jointly, suitable efforts of affected developing countries.

FOOD SECURITY

The enactment of enabling legislation is a key tool for combating desertification, the protection of human rights including the right to food, and environmental governance at the national level. Parliaments should look for the establishment or strengthening of food security systems, including storage and marketing facilities.

Parliaments have a responsibility to work for a food security enabling environment. Policies that improve the security of land use rights are a prerequisite for sustainable land management (SLM). There is high need to maintain the productivity of arable land and top soil fertility.

The UNCCD is forward-looking in that it promotes the enhancement of local ownership and the empowerment of farmers in SLM. Governments or regional and local communities backed or driven by parliamentarians should put issues relevant to SLM on their agendas and approve corresponding ordinances, laws and rules of use. Parliaments and parliamentarians should mainstream SLM into long-term policies and national development strategies.

Because of its relevance to food security, poverty reduction and political stability, as well as to sustainable development and the environment, agriculture needs a re-evaluation in the political arena; parliamentarians in developed and developing countries have to play their roles. At least 10 % of the national budgets should be allocated to agriculture.

Development assistance must be effective, strengthening rather than undermining country efforts to improve governance in agriculture. Agricultural protection in donor countries and subsidized agricultural exports often undermine the assistance available to agriculture and efforts in developing countries, creating a governance challenge for donor countries and for policy coherence.

Parliaments should strive to ensure that food, agricultural trade and overall trade policies are conducive to fostering food security for all through a fair market-oriented non-speculative world trade system embedded in a sustainable, socially balanced and fair globalization.

Global problems such as the recent economic turbulences require coordinated, global solutions. Financial institutions must be accountable, transparent, and subject to strong oversight. The most vulnerable people and countries must not be forgotten. Parliaments have a particular responsibility to ensure transparency and accountability in the economic and financial reform process; they have a duty to question ministers and hold them to the strictest possible account for implementing what has been agreed at international meetings.

Desertification and climate change must be addressed in a synergetic fashion, as part of an integrated approach to achieving sustainable development for all. Combating desertification needs to be recognized as an entry point to address poverty reduction and ecosystem protection. The interlinkages between land/soil and climate change are significant and should be better reflected in policymaking processes, including parliamentary activities. >>> Page 20



* Prof. Dr. Uwe Holtz, a former German MP and professor of Political Sciences at Bonn University, is member of the UNCCD Panel of Eminent Personalities to consider the poverty-environment nexus. He was Facilitator to the UNCCD Round Table for Parliamentarians in Buenos Aires



UNCCD Executive Secretary Luc Gnacadja

Institutions have a crucial role to play everywhere. Climate change actions, development planning and disaster risk reduction must come together. This requires that they are led from the highest political and organizational level. Participatory democracy, functioning institutions and transparency are needed at all levels for effective adaptation and mitigation.

Land and soil can make a difference in the fight against climate change. Sustainable land management has significant potential to mitigate climate change -- not only by afforestation and reducing deforestation.

Soil carbon sequestration, through restoring organic soils and improving degraded lands, conservation agriculture and grassland as well as water management can contribute significantly to reducing emissions.

One concrete way forward could be to expand the coverage of the Clean Development Mechanism to agricultural land use, to include projects focusing on carbon sequestration in soil. SLM offers a cost-efficient contribution to climate protection and is essential to achieving the MDGs and global food security.

The UN is invited to consider seriously setting up an international instrument, in accordance with international law, such as an international judiciary body specially for handling environmental pollution cases and their consequences.

The MPs recommend to promote ways avoiding royalties and other levies for the transfer of clean technologies.

Desertification and land degradation issues deserve global policy attention and the needs of drylands must be fully integrated into the

Copenhagen Protocol, expected to emerge from the UN climate change conference this December.

The initiative for a Global Green New Deal in Copenhagen should be supported on the condition that SLM becomes an integral part of it and of future climate protection strategies. A Special International Environment Fund should be created for this purpose.

POLITICAL WILL

The Parliamentarians are convinced that the relationships between desertification, SLM and food security, and between soil and climate change are important. They have transboundary impacts and should be better reflected in policymaking processes. In Buenos Aires they committed themselves to helping win over Parliaments and parliamentarians to become ambassadors for this relationship and agents of change. Parliaments and parliamentarians should work to ensure good developmental governance.

In their opinion: The UNCCD deserves more success for the sake of the people living under desertification stress and greater visibility -- by sharpening UNCCD's profile and institutions, making desertification a cornerstone in the general architecture of global environmental governance, making a priority on the agenda of decision-makers, giving more weight to desertification, land degradation and water policies in government and parliaments, involving more actively the stakeholders at all levels, improving land management and regional cooperation, enhancing institutional and people's capacities, raising much greater awareness, and pursuing an advocacy and mediating role in other international processes of relevance to UNCCD concerns, and -- last but not least -- by providing to affected country parties which adopted national action plans the necessary financial means.

The parliaments of the developed countries must work for the increase of official development assistance, particularly in those countries which did not reach the 0.7 per cent target so far; until 2015 this target should be reached.

The Parliamentary Network of the UNCCD, created in 2003, must be better used by parliament and parliamentarians. Its Steering Committee should give better inputs and monitor the work of parliamentarians under the UNCCD.

Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, welcomed the Declaration of Buenos Aires and congratulated the parliamentarians for the excellent conclusion of the Round Table hoping and trusting that the MPs and the newly elected Steering Committee will fully engage in materializing the various recommendations and self-commitments.

- GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

'The Energy Pathway To Green Growth'

BY RAMESH JAURA

As the international community girds up its loins for the landmark climate change conference this December in Copenhagen, the International Energy Agency (IEA) has issued a stern warning against persisting in business-as-usual attitude. At the same time, it shows "the energy pathway to Green Growth".

"If the world continues on the basis of today's energy and climate policies, the consequences of climate change will be severe," said Nobuo Tanaka, executive director of Paris-based IEA, releasing part of a World Energy Outlook (WEO) on Oct. 6 in advance of the full report. "Energy, which accounts for two-thirds of today's greenhouse gas emissions, is at the heart of the problem -- and so must form the core of the solution," Tanaka said.

This is the first time that an excerpt of WEO has been released ahead of the full report. The entire WEO 2009 will be launched in London on Nov. 10 this year and contains substantially more climate analysis than that presented in the excerpt.

Presenting extract of the report at the Bangkok climate change talks that conclude Oct. 9, Tanaka said there was an opportunity now "to make real progress towards a clean-energy future, but only if the right policies are put in place promptly". The success of the UNFCCC (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) process is crucial in this regard.

WEO 2009 points out that the financial and economic crisis has had a considerable impact on the energy sector worldwide. Investment in polluting technologies has been postponed. As a result, CO2 emissions could fall in 2009 by as much as three percent -- steeper than at any time in the last 40 years.

This would lead to emissions in 2020 being five percent lower -- even in the absence of additional policies -- than the IEA estimated just twelve months ago.

The economic downturn has thereby created an opportunity to put the global energy system on a trajectory to stabilise greenhouse gas emissions at 450 parts per million (ppm) of CO2-equivalent, in line with an increase in global temperature of around 2 degrees Celsius.

WEO 2009 is the first comprehensive analysis that includes the impact of the financial and economic crisis on the energy sector and the related CO2 emissions. Yvo de Boer, UNFCCC executive secretary said: "It represents a significant contribution by the energy sector to a positive outcome in Copenhagen."

De Boer said, the significance of the report lies in the fact that the messages of WEO 2009 are "clear and compelling". One of these messages is that continuing current energy policies would have catastrophic consequences for the climate.

Another important message, he said, is that by reducing emissions, the financial and economic crisis has created a window of opportunity to transition of the global energy system to a 450 ppm trajectory. "This is a unique opportunity but we need to act now, delay increases the cost and drastically reduces the likelihood of stabilisation at 450 ppm ever being achieved, let alone anything below this concentration level."

De Boer said the transition is challenging and requires action in all countries, but it is doable. Besides, the cost of moving the global energy system to a 450 trajectory is manageable. Further: "Restructuring the energy system

also yields economic development, energy security, human health and other environmental benefits."

UNFCCC availed of the occasion to plead for "an ambitious result" in Copenhagen to launch this transition and to advance it through a new level of international cooperation.

The IEA 450 ppm scenario sees the use of fossil fuels peak before 2020, and energy-related CO2 emissions just 6 percent higher in 2020 than in 2007. Relative to a reference scenario of current policies, emissions in 2020 would need to be reduced by 3.8 gigatonnes (Gt) worldwide to achieve the 450 scenario.

1.6 Gt of this reduction occurs in rich OECD countries, while policies and measures in China -- already being considered by the Chinese government -- account for 1 Gt of emissions reductions, more than anywhere else. "This underlines the leading role China will play in the global combat against climate change," says the report.

"ENERGY REVOLUTION"

To achieve this "energy revolution", additional investment of USD 10 trillion will be necessary between 2010 and 2030 in the energy sector -- equivalent to 0.5% of global GDP (gross domestic product) in 2020, rising to 1.1% of GDP in 2030. Yet fuel savings across industry, transport and buildings total USD 8.6 trillion between today and 2030, similar to the additional investment in these sectors, the report avers. "The biggest challenge will be to ensure there is funding to back this energy transformation, with substantial support for developing countries," said IEA executive director Tanaka.

"In 2020, the energy sector in non OECD countries would need to make USD 200 billion of extra investments in clean power, energy-efficiency measures in industry and buildings and next-generation hybrid and electric vehicles. For this, developing countries will need some financial support from OECD countries. OECD domestic investment needs amount to a further USD 215 billion in 2020. But the benefits, in terms of energy savings, reduced fuel imports and air quality improvements offset much of this extra cost, not to mention the fact that this will help to avoid extreme climate change."

Concluding, Tanaka stressed: "The IEA 450 scenario is the energy pathway to Green Growth. Yet we need to act urgently and now. Every year of delay adds an extra USD 500 billion to the investment needed between 2010 and 2030 in the energy sector."

The WEO-2009 excerpt sets out, for key countries and regions (including the United States, Japan, the European Union, Russia, China and India), the energy transformation that each might undertake, sector by sector, if the world were to adopt a 450ppm trajectory. It also describes the current trends in energy use and emissions in a fully updated reference scenario, detailing the implications of current policies and taking into account the global financial and economic crisis. - IDN | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

Land Grab No 'Win-Win' For The Poor

BY J. CHANDLER

TORONTO - They are not just grabbing their farmlands but also snatching away their livelihoods and extinguishing the flicker of hope for a future better than the present and the past. They are multilateral corporations that have lined up with wealthier nations to purchase or lease vast tracts of land in small and big developing countries.

They have grabbed between 14 and 20 million hectares in the last three years, corresponding to the land areas of Bangladesh and Kyrgyzstan. Approximately 180 instances of land transactions have been reported since mid-2008, as rich nations attempt to extend their control over food-producing lands and investors attempt to turn a profit in biofuels and soft commodities markets, says a new report by the Oakland Institute.

'The Great Land Grab' points out that Qatar, with only 1 percent of its land suitable for farming, has purchased 40,000 hectares in Kenya for crop production and recently acquired holdings in Vietnam and Cambodia for rice production, and in Sudan for oils, wheat, and corn production.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), which imports 85 percent of its food, purchased 324,000 hectares of farmland in the Punjab and Sindh provinces of Pakistan in June 2008.

Other countries such as China, Japan, and South Korea are also seeking to acquire land as part of a long-term strategy for food security.

China, which aims to increase its rice production from 100,000 tons to 500,000 tons in the next five years, has looked abroad to other Asian and African states, purchasing 101,171 hectares in Zimbabwe in June 2008 and investing 800 million dollars in Mozambique to modernize agriculture for export rice production.

Japan and South Korea, two rich countries whose governments have opted to rely on imports rather than self-sufficiency to feed their people, both source around 60 percent of their food from abroad (over 90 percent in Korea's case if you exclude rice).

However, in response to the food crisis, in early 2008 the South Korean government announced that it was formulating a national plan to facilitate land acquisitions abroad for Korean food production, with the private sector leading the effort.

The Daewoo Logistics Corporation proposed a land lease in Madagascar

of 1.3 million hectares for 6 billion dollars, but the plan fell through in January 2009 due to civil backlash, informs the U.S.-based Oakland Institute.

Daewoo had planned to grow half of South Korea's corn on land acquired in the Madagascar deal, reducing their dependence (as the world's third-largest corn buyer) on U.S. and South American imports. Through other deals, however, South Korea has acquired over one million hectares in Sudan, Mongolia, Indonesia, and Argentina.

AGROFUELS

A surging demand for agrofuels (biofuel produced from ethanol and sugarcane, as well as biodiesel) and access to new sources of raw materials for manufacturing goods is also driving land purchases, notes the report.

The demand for agrofuels has increased rapidly over the past several years as oil-dependent countries establish ambitious targets for agrofuel production and for incorporating biodiesel and bioethanol with traditional transport fuels.

For example, the U.S. Renewable Fuel Standard aims to increase ethanol use by 3.5 billion gallons between 2005 and 2012, and the 27-nation bloc European Union aims to increase the proportion of biofuels used in land transport to 10 percent by 2020.

With these and other impetuses, the use and production of biofuels has skyrocketed over the past several years, such that the quantity of U.S. corn used to produce ethanol increased by 53 million metric tons between 2002 and 2007. It now accounts for 30 percent of the total global growth in wheat and feed grains use.

The widespread phenomenon of land grab backed by the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank and Foreign Investment Advisory Service (FIAS) as well as rich nations is posing a threat to rural

economies and livelihoods, land reform agendas, and other efforts aimed at making access to food more equitable and ensuring the human right to food for all., avers the Oakland Institute.

THREAT

The Oakland Institute is an independent policy think tank whose mission is to increase public participation and promote fair debate on critical social, economic, and environmental issues.

'The Great Land Grab' report points out that the current debate surrounding the land grab phenomenon fails to adequately and rigorously examine the consequences of this trend, and exposes how the huge sell-offs of resources is undermining food security and land reform efforts. The authors implore that we question the assumption that increased investment in agriculture is beneficial for all parties involved.

Shepard Daniel, fellow at the Oakland Institute and lead author of the report, warns: "The history of foreign direct investment in agriculture reveals the plethora of social and economic problems that have plagued local citizens and belies the claims that the current land acquisitions will positively impact the development of poor nations."

"Throughout history, corporate agribusiness has been known to establish itself in developing countries with the effect of either driving independent farmers off their land or turning farmers into plantation workers.

"No matter how convincing the claim that these massive international acquisitions will bring much-needed agricultural investment to poor countries, evidence shows there is simply no place for the small farmer in the vast majority of these land grab situations that will only increase monoculture-based, export-oriented agriculture, further jeopardizing international food security," she adds.



Says Anuradha Mittal (left photo), Executive Director of the Oakland Institute and co-author of the report: "Our report dismantles the myth of the 'win-win' argument

that has been offered to quell concerns around this trend. A myopic focus on potential benefits, such as increased investment in agriculture in poor countries, is sidelining the issue of food security for the world's poor and land reform from the forefront of the debate."

"Food security and the implementation of land reform policies are inextricably linked. There are 1.5 billion small-scale farmers in the world who live on less than two hectares of land; secure and equitable access to and control over land allows these farmers to produce food, which is vital for their own food security as well as that

of rural populations throughout the developing world," she points out.

The Great Land Grab critically examines the role of the private sector in agricultural development and exposes implications of private sector control over food resources. The report concludes that those who promote the benefits of private sector growth in agriculture fail to recognize that acquisition of crucial food-producing lands by foreign private entities poses a threat to rural economies and livelihoods, land reform agendas, and other efforts aimed at making access to food more equitable.

CHRONIC HUNGER

"Much press coverage and research has focused on the food security motivations of food import-dependent countries," notes Daniel. "We forget, however, that the main thrust of investment is coming from the private sector, whose interests do not lie in establishing food security, but rather in making a profit in international food markets."

An estimated 1.02 billion people -- one sixth of humanity -- suffer from

chronic hunger, and, in one of the world's cruelest ironies, 70 percent of this starving population live and work on small-scale farms and in rural areas. To tackle the growing crisis of world hunger, policy makers and agriculture experts will gather at the World Food Summit in November 2009; preparation for the summit is revolving around increased investment in agriculture.

However, as The Great Land Grab points out, there is a dangerous disconnect between increasing agricultural investment through rich countries amassing land in poor countries and the goal of secure and adequate food supplies for poor and vulnerable populations.

While investment in the agricultural sector is vital, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, has wisely cautioned in his submission to the Commission on Sustainable Development that the issue is not one of merely increasing budget allocations to agriculture, but rather, "that of choosing from different models of agricultural development which may have different impacts and benefit various groups differently."

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Oakland Institute: www.oaklandinstitute.org

Landgrab resource page

(*¡Se adueñan de la tierra! / L'accaparement des terres*)

In October 2008, GRAIN released a report on the new trend in landgrabbing spurred on by the food and financial crises. A large number of governments and corporations are out scouring the globe right now in search of productive farmland to buy or to lease for offshore food production. For governments, like those of the Gulf States or China, such "farming abroad" schemes are meant to provide for their own country's food security, over a longterm period. Corporations, on the other hand, are looking for shorter term payoffs after the recent meltdown of financial markets. In all cases, control over land is being handed over to foreign investors who will produce food for export. Most of this new landgrabbing is taking place in Africa and Asia, but also in fertile regions of Eastern Europe and Latin America.

This page pulls together some additional resource material. If you would like to post information about your initiative here, contact us at [landgrab \(at\) grain.org](mailto:landgrab@grain.org).

Daily updates

Food crisis and the global land grab blog: Daily news clippings in (mostly) English, French and Spanish. GRAIN initiated this blog, but anyone is welcome to get involved. You can subscribe to the RSS feed to follow the latest posts. You can also comment freely on any news report.

<http://farmlandgrab.org>

GRAIN materials

"CGIAR joins global farmland grab", *Against the grain*, September 2009

[English](#) | [français](#) | [Español](#)

"Mauritius leads land grabs for rice in Mozambique", *Hybrid rice blog*, September 2009, <http://www.grain.org/hybridrice/?lid=221>

"Rice land grabs undermine food sovereignty in Africa", *Against the grain*, January 2009. (Libya is getting hold of riceland in Mali through its sovereign wealth fund)

[English](#) | [français](#)

"Grabbing land for food", *Seedling*, January 2009. (A summary of the October 2008 report)

GRAIN, "Korean women farmers on the Daewoo/Madagascar land deal", interview with Han Young Me, Chief of Policy, Korean Women Peasants Association, Dae-gu, South Korea, 4 December 2008. (Video and transcript, English and French subtitles)

[English](#) | [français](#)

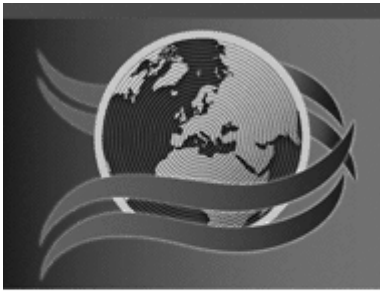
"Seized: The 2008 land grab for food and financial security", briefing, October 2008 (GRAIN's original 10-page report, available in English, French and Spanish, Arabic and Bahasa Indonesia). The Annex to this briefing is a table with over 100 cases of land grabbing for offshore food production as presented in this report.



Courtesy: Seedmagazine.com

Who Is Afraid Of 'Hunger Reports'?

IDN-INDEPTHNEWS SPECIAL



World Summit
on Food Security

16–18 November 2009

Hunger is far from 'sexy' -- and yet it is the central theme of two new reports published two days ahead of the World Food Day Oct. 16 when conforming to the "same procedure as every year" the well-fed of planet earth juggle statistics as if these were crystal balls predicting ways toward a hunger-free world.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has been seeking ways out of a hungry world -- comprising 1002 million this year -- at what has been described as a High Level Expert Forum Oct. 12-13. The Forum is part of its 'How to Feed the World in 2050' exercise done about four weeks in advance of the World Summit on Food Security Nov. 16-18 in Rome.

FAO has in fact published its "annual hunger report" -- an expression that conveys the impression that hunger is after all as normal as a road accident in a civilized and globalized world. The report states what sounds like a 'sensational revelation' that economic crisis is devastating for the world's hungry. "The combination of food and economic crises has pushed the number of hungry people worldwide to historic levels -- more than one billion people are undernourished," according to FAO estimates.

The report then springs another surprise when it points out that nearly all the world's undernourished live in developing countries. In Asia and the Pacific, an estimated 642 million people are suffering from chronic hunger; in Sub-Saharan Africa 265 million; in Latin America and the Caribbean 53 million; in the Near East and North Africa 42 million -- and in developed countries 15 million, according to FAO's "annual hunger report" published in conjunction with the World Food Programme (WFP).

The report goes on to say that even before the recent crises, the number of undernourished people in the world had been increasing slowly but steadily for the past decade. "Good progress had been made in the 1980s and early 1990s in reducing chronic hunger, largely due to increased investment in agriculture following the global food crisis of the early 1970s," maintains the report.

But between 1995-1997 and 2004-2006, when the world's rich and well-fed sharply curtailed official development assistance (ODA) devoted to agriculture, the number of hungry people increased in all regions except Latin America and the Caribbean. Gains in hunger reduction were later reversed in this region as well, as a result of the food and economic crises, notes the report.

"The rise in the number of hungry people during both periods of low prices and economic prosperity and the very sharp rises in periods of price spikes and economic downturns shows the weakness of the global food security governance system," FAO notes in yet another revelation.

A second report also published Oct. 14, but far more in-depth than FAO's, points out that twenty-nine countries around the world have alarming or extremely alarming levels of hunger, and thirteen countries have actually seen increases in their hunger levels since 1990.

The 2009 Global Hunger Index report by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) finds out that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) scored the worst, followed by Burundi, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Chad, and Ethiopia.

GENDER INEQUALITIES

New this year in IFPRI report is that it also points out that high rates of hunger are strongly linked to gender inequalities, especially in terms of literacy and access to education. It also highlights which countries are most vulnerable to the global economic downturn.

"Low-income countries are being hurt by the food and financial crises," explains Klaus von Grebmer, lead author of the report and communications director at IFPRI. "The crises have significantly reduced purchasing power and income-earning opportunities for poor people, who spend up to 70 percent of their income on food, while food prices in many countries are still higher than several years ago."

The Global Hunger Index has been released in advance of World Food Day for the fourth year by IFPRI, Germany's Welthungerhilfe, and Concern Worldwide. The Index ranks countries on three leading indicators -- prevalence of child malnutrition, rates of child mortality, and the proportion of people who are calorie deficient -- and combines them into one score.

"Data used in the Index come from 2007 and earlier years (the most recent available), and thus rankings only partially account for the impact of the food crisis, and do not reflect the effects of the financial crisis," says the report. However, the report does compare Index rankings with International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicators of vulnerability to the crises.

Countries that suffer from alarming levels of hunger are also very vulnerable to the global recession -- Burundi and DRC being prime examples. The areas of vulnerability are trade, foreign direct investment, international aid, and remittances.

Overall, the 2009 Index candidly illustrates that despite regional differences, progress in reducing hunger remains slow. Since 1990, the global score has declined by less than 25 percent. Most of this progress has been made in Southeast Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, which have lowered their Index scores by more than 40 percent over the past two decades.

Global Hunger Index scores, however, remain "distressingly high" throughout much of Sub-Saharan Africa, which has made the least progress in combating hunger, with only a 13 percent decline in its score since 1990.

Of the ten countries that have seen the largest increase in their Index scores, nine are in Sub-Saharan Africa, and DRC's score has increased by an appalling 53 percent. Africa is also home to the highest proportion of undernourished people (76 and 68 percent of the population, respectively, in the DRC and Eritrea) and the world's highest child mortality rate, which stands at 26 percent in Sierra Leone.



Despite some progress over the past 20 years, the situation is also alarming in South Asia, which actually scored worse than Sub-Saharan Africa on the 2009 Global Hunger Index, largely because of widespread child malnutrition. In Bangladesh and India, more than 40 percent of children are underweight. Sri Lanka, which has been committed to universal education and reproductive health care, has been successful at reducing hunger, and stands out as an important exception in the region.

"Women's educational level and status or power relative to men's in households and communities significantly affect children's nutrition," says Agnes Quisumbing, report co-author and IFPRI senior research fellow. "In South Asia, women's low social status and limited access to schooling have dire consequences for the nutrition, health, and wellbeing of both mothers and their children."

To better assess the links between hunger and gender inequality, IFPRI compared the 2009 Global Hunger Index rankings to the World Economic Forum's 2008 Global Gender Gap Index, which measures the wellbeing of women relative to men.

Countries with the most severe hunger problems also had high levels of gender inequality. The situation is especially serious in Chad, which ranks fifth worst on the Global Hunger Index, second in terms of gender inequality, and has a shockingly low female literacy rate of 13 percent, compared to 41 percent for men.

This negative trend, however, can be reversed. IFPRI research shows that equalizing men's and women's status would reduce the number of malnourished children by 13.4 million in South Asia and by 1.7 million in Sub-Saharan Africa.

"Knowing that hunger and gender inequality go hand-in-hand, an important step to ending world hunger is empowering women and eradicating gender disparities in education, health, economic participation, and political opportunities," says Joachim von Braun, IFPRI director general.

"After decades of slow progress in the fight against hunger," he adds, "child malnourishment is now on the rise due to recent economic developments. It is imperative that commitments made at the G20 and other global policy meetings are swiftly transformed into real action in cooperation with developing countries."

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Response to the FAO: How to Feed the World in 2050

If the FAO is to Seriously Engage in this Effort it Must Get Rid of the Distraction of GM Crops

by Aruna Rodrigues / October 24th, 2009

In 1943 Sir Albert Howard, (Formerly Director of the Institute of Plant Industry Indore, and Agricultural Adviser to States in Central India and Rajputana), considered to be the grandfather of the modern organic farming movement, published 'An Agricultural Testament', which was based on his years of patient observations of traditional farming in India. "Instead of breaking up the subject into fragments, and studying agriculture in piece meal fashion by the analytical method of science, appropriate only to the discovery of new facts, we must adopt a synthetic approach and look at the wheel of life as one great subject and not as if it were a patchwork of unrelated things."

Almost 70 years later, with the advent and adoption of GM crops succeeding the mislabelled 'Green Revolution', these words have returned to haunt us. "Today, as a consequence of technologies introduced by the green revolution, India loses six billion tons of topsoil every year. Ten million hectares of India's irrigated land is now waterlogged and saline. Pesticide poisoning has caused epidemics of cancers. Water tables are falling by twenty feet every year. The soil fertility and water resources that had been carefully managed for generations in the Punjab were wasted in a few short years of industrial abuses. If India's masses have avoided starvation, they have endured chronic and debilitating hunger and poverty".¹ India exports food, but 200 million of mainly rural, women and children go to bed hungry (Global Hunger Index). The ongoing commercialisation of agriculture in India continues, with the US extracting many pounds of flesh through trade agreements like the [Indo-US Knowledge Initiative in Agriculture](#) and US AID and USDA investments in agricultural universities to bring Indian agriculture under the full sway of genetically modified crops controlled by Monsanto the 90% market leader. Monsanto is also on the Board of this 'Initiative' representing US interests, along with other agri giants.

Global hunger already at an unprecedented level is growing. Those who are the most hungry are the farmers who produce our food. The causes are mainly man-made attributable squarely to the free trade policies championed by the WTO, and manoeuvred through the chicanery of these processes to the detriment of the developing nations and backed by the IMF and the World Bank. The FAO contributes to this through its ambivalent stance, refusing to provide the kind of clarity that would encourage real solutions to the crises. Developing Countries have been forced to open up their markets to western agri-business giants and face a price war on cotton for example in India, because of huge US subsidies provided to American farmers exporting mainly GM cotton to India. We have the astonishing spectacle of poor Indian farmers not being able to compete with US farmers and they are committing suicide. It is called 'competitive advantage', which essentially means the Indian government *is* not able to protect our markets under the WTO policies, doesn't feel obliged to provide the right level of support prices and/or just can't compete with the magnitude of US government handouts to their farmers. Indian farmers are also GM cotton farmers facing higher input costs and of course, without the competitive advantage of their American counterparts. They also seem to have lost or have been deprived of the "more *sophisticated* agricultural wisdom that has served Indian farmers for centuries."¹ (emphasis mine) **READ MORE:** <http://dissentvoice.org/2009/10/response-to-the-fao-how-to-feed-the-world-in-2050/>

Turkey Playing Smart EU And Middle East Games

BY FAREED MAHDY *

ISTANBUL - There seems to be no doubt: Turkish diplomacy has decided to play, simultaneously and equally smartly, two complex games -- one with the European Union and the other with the Middle East. And by the way, it is playing fairly well, so far.

The EU game consists in Turkey's demand to join the European bloc as a full member.

In this game, Turkish pieces would be well positioned -- in fact, it is a big country with over 72 million people, this implying a huge market for European goods.



But not only goods -- in fact, Turkish services sector represents a great portion of its economy, with up to 63 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which makes it highly attractive for European lucrative investments.

Turkey also has a young, cheap labour force of nearly 24 million people, with less than eight per cent unemployment rate.

Its GDP exceeds the trillion U.S. dollars, and its economy has been growing at the annual rate of 4.5 per cent, according to 2008 figures.

EU PLAYING CRABS

Nevertheless, the EU has been playing divisions, reluctance and crab movements in what appears as a means to cover a deep-rooted unwillingness to admit Turkey in its exclusive club.

In fact, different Turkish diplomatic circles believe that Europe does not wish to have so

many Muslims on its lands (Turkey is officially a secular country), nor does it want to push its borders, physically, to the heart of the most conflictive area on Earth -- the Middle East.

They also realize that, above all, big European powers, such as Germany and France, are not ready to cede to Turkey any portion of their power based on the number of their population in a new EU voting system to come.

In fact, there have been insisting voices about replacing the current system of unanimity and one country-one vote, to a system of qualified majority where the demographic factor would be decisive to assign the new number of votes to each EU country.

'OUTSIDERS' U.S., UK, BETTING ON TURKEY

Meanwhile, two 'external' superpowers have been strongly backing the Turkish candidacy to the EU and actively lobbying for it.

These are the U.S., which is not European, and the UK, which is not really a full EU. In fact, London did not want to join the Euro zone nor the Schengen agreement that allows free circulation of European citizens within the EU countries.

Their arguments are that Turkey is a loyal Western ally; it has NATO military bases on its lands and in its seas, and it hosts U.S. nuclear weapons under the aegis of the North Atlantic alliance.

Moreover, it has good relations with Israel, a must in U.S. and UK views, let alone the whole West in general.

TURKEY DISMANTLING EUROPEAN ARGUMENTS

In exchange, continental Europe has been using a wide range of arguments and allegations, seemingly to hide its deep refusal to Turkey.

Europe has been saying that The Ottoman Empire killed one million Armenians, a century ago.

Turkey explained over and over again that this number has been inflated and that many Armenians had fled or been displaced.

Meanwhile, Turkey displayed a huge diplomatic effort to settle the dispute with the first party directly interested -- Armenia.

ARMENIA, CYPRUS, STANDARDS

The Turkish efforts were crowned with the signature on Oct. 10 of an agreement with Armenia to normalise relations between the two countries after a century of conflicts.

Europe has also been talking about the Turkish invasion of Cyprus Northern area in July 1974, in response to a Greek military junta backed coup in Cyprus.

Now, Turkish diplomacy has managed to bring soon to Ankara Georges Papandreou, the recently elected primer minister of Greece, major supporter of Greek Cypriots claims against Turkey and historical 'enemy' of the Turks since the Ottoman Empire occupied it for four centuries.

Europe has also been saying that Turkey is not applying EU standards. Nevertheless, Turkey has been working slowly but steadily to meet the EU requirements in the fields of education, freedom of expression and human rights, among other sectors.

All the above seems to be useless in the eyes of Europe, which still insists, especially by means of French president Nicolas Sarkozy, that Turkey could have a 'privileged partnership' with the EU but never a full membership.

- IDN-InDepthNews | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

* Fareed Mahdy is IDN Middle East Special Correspondent

THE MIDDLE EAST GAME

Simultaneously, Turkey has been playing smartly the Middle East's chess game as well.

Last year, Ankara took charge of mediating between Syria and Israel, who held indirect talks aimed at fixing an appropriate frame for direct negotiations on Syrian Golan Heights, occupied by Israeli army since 1967.

This year, Turkey has been holding a firm condemnation position toward Israel because of its last war on Gaza.

This position was openly manifested since last January during the World Economic Forum in Davos, and continued in all international fora including the recent UN General Assembly special session.

In September this year, Turkey allowed Syria and Iraq to have the same provision of Turkish waters, along the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, in spite of its own growing needs due to draught.

Now on Oct. 11, Turkey decided to ban Israeli air force from participating in its joint military drills -- after 15 uninterrupted years of Israeli active participation.

The Turkish explanation is that it could not allow the same Israeli war crafts that bombed Gaza fly in its skies and on its lands.

These political stands have granted Turkey a wide popular sympathy among Arab people, frustrated as they are with the inaction of their own leaders.

Consequently, Turkey has now a strong leverage in the Middle East.

The popularity of its Prime Minister Recep Erdogan is so high that if he were presented as a candidate to rule any of the 22 Arab countries, he would most likely win by an overwhelming majority.

A TURKEY-IRAN-IRAQ-SYRIA STRATEGIC AXIS?

Last but not least, the Turkish growing influence in the region has taken Damascus to reiterate over and over again an exceptionally innovative proposal -- Turkey seal with Iran, Iraq and Syria, a strategic alliance in the Middle East.

As a first specific step, Ankara and Damascus have set up a 'Strategic High Level Council', which will meet on Oct. 13, gathering up to 10 ministers from each side, including those in charge of Defence, Interior and Economy.

The meeting will coincide with the entry into force of an agreement between the two countries to suppress the entry visa requirement for Turkish and Syrian citizens.

Now Prime Minister Ergodan is preparing his suitcase to travel to Teheran.

Just give time to time.

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Requiem For Palestine

BY FAREED MAHDY

ISTANBUL - Apart from demonstrating a new failure of President Barack Obama's policies, the U.S.-Israeli-Palestinian summit held in New York on Sept. 22 was not indeed necessary. In fact, a reasonable dose of good memory and a quick look at the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian-Arab conflict would be enough to conclude that it had already been solved 112 years.

This is story behind the story.

In August 1897, Basel, Switzerland, hosted the First Zionist Congress. It was the first congress of the Zionist Organization, which in 1960 became the World Zionist Organization.

Under the guidance and chairmanship of Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, and as a symbolic Parliament for those in agreement with the implementation of Zionist goals, the Congress gathered around 200 delegates from 17 countries.

Ten non-Jews delegates attended but they were expected to abstain from voting. That was maybe the first concrete indication that the Congress was a strict Jewish gathering, for Jewish participants, with an exclusive Jewish agenda.

The Congress formulated the Zionist Platform, and founded the World Zionist Organization.

But it also adopted Hatikvah as its anthem, which later became the national anthem of the State of Israel, created 50 years after the Congress.

That was a second but not less important indicator of such an exclusive Jewish agenda, which started to be steadily implemented since 1897.

ISRAEL, CREATED IN 1897

The key issues on the 1897 Zionist Congress agenda were the presentation of Herzl's plans, the establishment of the Zionist Organization and the declaration of Zionism's goals.

More specifically, the version of the programme that was submitted to the Congress stated: "Zionism seeks to establish a home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law."

The political programme, known as the Basel Programme, laid out Zionism's goals:

"Zionism aims at establishing for the Jewish people a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine. For the attainment of this purpose, the Congress considers the following means serviceable:

1. The promotion of the settlement of Jewish agriculturists, artisans, and tradesmen in Palestine,
2. The federation of all Jews into local or general groups, according to the laws of the various countries,
3. The strengthening of the Jewish feeling and consciousness, and
4. Preparatory steps for the attainment of those governmental grants, which are necessary to the achievement of the Zionist purpose."

Theodor Herzl (photo above) wrote in his diary (Sept. 1, 1897): "Were I to sum up the Basle Congress in a word -- which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly -- it would be this: At Basle I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today I would be greeted by universal laughter. In five years perhaps, and certainly in fifty years, everyone will perceive it."

This is exactly what happened -- fifty years after, the Jewish State was indeed founded. >>> Page 28



A BANK CALLED "THE JEWISH COLONIAL TRUST"

Subsequent Congresses founded various institutions for the promotion of this programme, notably a people's bank known as the Jewish Colonial Trust, which was the financial instrument of political Zionism.

Its establishment was suggested at the First Zionist Congress in 1897 and the first definite steps toward its institution were taken at the Second Zionist Congress in Cologne, Germany, in May 1898, that's only nine months after the First Zionist Congress in Basel.

For the Fifth Zionist Congress, the Jewish National Fund was founded for the purchase of land in the Land of Israel and later the Zionist Commission was founded with subsidiary societies for the study and improvement of the social and economic condition of the Jews within the Land of Israel.

The Zionist Congress met every year between 1897 and 1901, then except for war years, every second year (1903-1913, 1921-1939).

THE ULTIMATE AIM

In 1942, an "Extraordinary Zionist Conference" was convened and announced a fundamental departure from traditional Zionist policy with its demand "that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth".

It became the official Zionist stand on the ultimate aim of the movement. Since World War II, meetings have been organised approximately every four years and since the creation of the State of Israel, the Congress has been held in Jerusalem.

And that was the concrete indication that the Zionist programme has already decided to establish Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish State of Israel.

JEWISH LOBBIES

Further on, the World Jewish Congress (WJC) was founded in Geneva in 1936 as an international federation of Jewish communities and organizations.

According to its mission statement, the World Jewish Congress' main purpose is to act as "the diplomatic arm of the Jewish people".

Membership in the WJC was declared open to all representative Jewish groups or communities, irrespective of the social, political or economic ideology of the community's host country.

The World Jewish Congress is supported by those communities and individual members who as concerned Jewish citizens want their voices to be heard on matters of concern to the Jewish people.

The WJC has special credentials and recognition at the United Nations and many of its institutions, commissions and sub-bodies. Its headquarters are in New York, and the organization maintains international offices in Brussels; Jerusalem; Paris; Moscow; Buenos Aires, and Geneva.

This is an indication of the formal promotion of what is known as Israeli or Jewish lobbies, mainly in Western countries.

The WJC is made up of five regional branches: WJC North America, the Latin American Jewish Congress, the European Jewish Congress, the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress, and the WJC Israel.

Besides, Jewish communities in 92 countries are directly affiliated to the World Jewish Congress. The last meeting of the WJC Plenary Assembly, attended by over 400 delegates from 62 countries, was held in Jerusalem in January 2009.

MIDDLE EAST: A CONFLICT BORN WITH A SOLUTION

From all the above, it is evident that what happened on the Middle East stage, had been planned by the 1897 Zionist Congress. It would be the exclusive mission of the successive Israeli governments to find ways how to ensure its strict implementation.

In fact, the Jewish State of Israel has been created; all Palestinian territories have been occupied; Jewish settlements have been established on all of the them; Jerusalem has been unilaterally declared as the capital of Israel, and the Jewish lobbies have been active everywhere to help further implement the Zionist Programme.

This programme has no room for a fully independent, sovereign, viable Palestine State as agreed by the international community since 1948.

In short, nothing else should have ever been expected but the present situation.

WHAT IS PRESIDENT OBAMA DOING?

The current Israeli government led by Benjamin Netanyahu, in a correct fulfilment of its role in the Zionist Programme, has repeatedly heralded the real state of affairs - that is, no return to the 1967 borders; Israel for Jewish people only; Jerusalem is the capital of Israel only; full security for Israel only; no sovereignty to a Palestinian state; no return of Palestinian refugees, and no stop to Israeli settlements.

Why then did President Obama decide to state on Sept. 23 before the United Nations General Assembly that "the time has come to re-launch negotiations -- without preconditions -- that address the permanent-status issues: security for Israelis and Palestinians; borders, refugees, and Jerusalem"?

Why did he emphasise that "the goal is clear: two states living side by side in peace and security -- a Jewish State of Israel, with true security for all Israelis; and a viable, independent Palestinian state with contiguous territory that ends the occupation that began in 1967, and realises the potential of the Palestinian people"?

Why did the U.S. president say that he "does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements"?

Why is Obama still insisting in giving the impression that another solution is possible?

Is it part of a new game of securing U.S. full control over what his predecessor called the Great Middle East project?

Is it, subsequently, an effort to save the face of Arab regimes, those who are close allies to the U.S. and key part of its agenda, and who based the justification of their totalitarian rule on the 'fight for the Palestinian cause'?

Or it is just that the U.S. establishment has not informed the "most powerful man on earth", that's the U.S. formal president, that the solution to the so-called Middle East conflict had already been set 112 years ago and so far successfully implemented?

‘Say Af-Pak And Face A Fine’

BY ERNEST COREA

WASHINGTON DC - The contrived label “Af-Pak” should be banned, and anybody who uses it should be fined, says U.S. Congressman Adam Smith who chairs the House of Representatives Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats, and Capabilities. His comment was made to a group of academics, diplomats, journalists and others whom he addressed recently on the topic ‘Committing to a Strategy for Success in Uncertain Times’.

Smith’s somewhat startling admonition drew much-needed attention to the non-military realities – cultural, political, social – that need to be respected as the U.S. and NATO seek strategic re-orientation in Afghanistan.

Several weeks of “agonizing reappraisal” here have not yet resulted in a consensus view, as President Barack Obama receives a range of suggestions from his senior aides, and probes the consequences of proposed actions. Among the options that have received public attention are:

The ‘Chaosistan’ approach, a name and strategy attributed to intelligence experts, which will have the U.S. withdraw its forces, whatever state of chaos might ensue, and strike Al Qaeda bases with air power if they appear to be developing strength.

Status Quo plus, under which troop strengths will remain at present levels, Drones will be used to kill specific Al Qaeda targets, as they have done successfully up to now, and civilian development activity will increase.

Wholesale reorganization of the U.S./NATO enterprise as suggested by General Stanley A. McChrystal (photo above), the American commander of ISAF (the International Security Assistance Force).

The first two of these have some bearing on the goal set by Obama in March this year, which was to “disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its safe havens”. The third takes a much broader approach, and requires attention to a variety of local concerns.

POORLY UNDERSTOOD

A delegation of Pakistani ex-officials, civilian and military, who are visiting here “to inform American policymakers on the Pakistani perspective on a range of issues prominent in the U.S.-Pakistan relationship” echoed Smith’s view on the use of “Af-Pak”. They said that “the Af-Pak terminology is disliked and has received strong criticism across Pakistan”.

So would any two countries react that found themselves yoked together by a hyphen without any prior consultation. Canadians, certainly, would suffer fits of outrage if they woke up one morning and discovered that they had turned into a segment of Am-Can.

Gen. McChrystal has himself pointed out the need for ISAF to understand non-military realities. In an on-the-spot assessment that was “scooped” by the ‘Washington Post’ before the commander-in-chief received it, he wrote: “Afghan social, political, economic, and cultural affairs are complex and poorly understood.

“ISAF does not sufficiently appreciate the dynamics in local communities, nor how the insurgency, corruption, incompetent officials, power-brokers and criminality all combine to affect the Afghan population.” McChrystal’s antidote is that ISAF operations should be broadly reoriented.



In the revamped military operation, ISAF forces will devote their energies to protecting the Afghan population – not themselves – and to reintegrating insurgents within society. The reorientation will ensure that ISAF forces are “seen as guests of the Afghan people and their government, not an occupying army”. He wants key personnel in ISAF to receive language training.

Other aspects of reorientation involve rapid training and expansion of the Afghan army and police as well as reform of the penal system which is now considered a Taliban franchise.

NATO Defence Ministers meeting in Bratislava, Slovakia are said to have reacted “positively” to the broad outlines of Gen. McChrystal’s proposed strategic reorientation but did not commit themselves to additional troops or funds, although they realized that both would be needed.

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen was quoted by the ‘New York Times’ as saying: “What we need is a much broader strategy, which stabilizes the whole of Afghan society, and this is the essence in the recommendations presented by Gen. McChrystal. This won’t happen just because of a good plan. It will also need resources – people and money.”

A figure of 40,000 troops within the next 12 months is widely noted as Gen. McChrystal’s minimum need, with 85,000 as a likely maximum. Sceptics react to the numbers by pointing to the experience in Vietnam where small beginnings led to an ever-expanding American military presence. >>> Page 30



PUBLIC OPINION

The request for additional troop strength and a complex reorganization of ISAF operations comes at a time when American public opinion is closely divided in its attitude to the war in Afghanistan. A recent 'Washington Post' poll showed 49 percent opposing military escalation in Afghanistan and 47 percent supporting it.

This is a great turnaround from eight years ago when the need for a punitive response to the murderous events of September 11 was widely accepted and, among some sections of opinion, demanded. That was when President George W. Bush said he "wanted Osama bin Laden, dead or alive".

The state of current public opinion at home combined with the nature of the challenges in Afghanistan and the complexities of the response proposed by Obama's chosen general explain why high-level consultations continue at the White House where the president does not want a rushed decision now, with second thoughts and recrimination later.

Dick Cheney, vice president of a government that plunged the country into two continuing wars, has emerged from early hibernation to condemn the time being taken by the Obama Administration to make up its mind on a major military push and, presumably, to hell with everything else. He has accused President Obama of "dithering".

In a withering response, Lawrence O'Donnell, who has worked in Congress before and now is a television commentator said: "The dithering thing is great because Cheney, of course, did not dither, did not dither for a minute, when the time came to make a wild guess, an outright crazy wild guess, about are

there weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

"And Cheney sat there in the White House and said, you know what, I've got everything I need to make my wild guess. On the basis of my wild guess I'm going to tell the country it's an actual fact, and then I'm gonna help send American soldiers there to die over a lie. No dithering when it came time to do that."

The U.S. experience in Iraq must weigh heavily on Obama as he weighs his options. He has been provided something of a breathing space by President Hamid Karzai's agreement to a run-off election against runner-up former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah.

The runoff election will give the electoral process a measure of credibility, because the earlier election was manifestly fraudulent. Electoral fraud was initially brought into the open by Ambassador Peter Galbraith, the UN's deputy representative in Kabul. Galbraith, an American with a reputation as an outstanding and outspoken public servant, was "recalled" by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

Afghanistan's Electoral Complaints Commission and Independent Election Commission subsequently confirmed the existence of electoral fraud. The votes which had to be rejected because they were fraudulently cast for Karzai pushed his tally below 50 percent of votes polled, thus necessitating a run-off election, as mandated by the constitution.

Karzai was known to oppose a run-off, and persistent refusal by him to abide by the constitution would have brought the electoral process, the Karzai Government, and its partners into disrepute.

DISASTER EVADED

This impending political disaster was forestalled by Senator John Kerry, chair of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who happened to be in the region and was able to persuade Karzai after several hours of face-to-face negotiation in Kabul to accept the required run-off election.

Hardly any election in the world is completely free of taint, so there will be allegations of fraud even after the new election next month. Moreover, the 54:20 voting spread in the initial count at the first election suggests that it may be difficult for Abdullah to catch up at the second, and Karzai will re-emerge as president, a result that will not please his critics and opponents.

There is a slim possibility, though, that Karzai and Abdullah could "kiss and make up" to set up a coalition.

Meanwhile, Obama who inherited a war that Bush launched and then neglected as he went for Iraq finds time catching up with him as the need for binding decisions approaches. Hovering over him and his advisers is the knowledge that throughout history Afghanistan has not been hospitable to uninvited visitors. [Image above: theway2k's blog]

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United Nations honors Gandhi' ideals declaring Gandhi's birthday: 02 October as "International Day of Non-Violence"

BY J CHANDLER (IDN)

"If you could have dinner with anyone, dead or alive, who would it be", a student named Lilly asked U.S. President Barack Obama. "I think that it might be Gandhi, who is a real hero of mine... he's somebody who I find a lot of inspiration in... it would probably be a really small meal because he didn't eat a lot," replied Obama during discussion with ninth graders in Wakefield High School in Arlington (Virginia, USA) on Sept. 8

"The America of today has its roots in the India of Mahatma Gandhi and the nonviolent social action movement for Indian independence which he led," Obama added, according to reports.



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Also known as the 'Father of the Nation', Mahatma Gandhi led a non-violent freedom struggle against the British Empire that led to India's independence in August 1947 and inspired movements for civil rights and freedom around the globe.

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