

The U.S. government is unofficially accusing Russia of violating the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, by flight testing two-stage ground-based cruise missile RS-26. Although the U.S. government has not officially commented on the alleged Russian violation of the INF . . . P33

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 Director of
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No-Nuke Australia Thwarts Nuclear Free World

Nuclear Abolition News | IDN

By NEENA BHANDARI*

SYDNEY (IDN) - Australia has been expressing support for a nuclear weapons-free world, but documents obtained by disarmament advocacy group, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), reveal that the Australian Government sees the increasing international focus on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons as "rubbing up against" its reliance on the United States nuclear weapons. [P] [JAPANESE TEXT VERSION PDF](#) | [NORWEGIAN](#)



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Daughter Takes Kennedy's Peace Torch To Japan

Nuclear Abolition News | IDN

By TARO ICHIKAWA



TOKYO (IDN) - Caroline Kennedy was just 20 years old when she accompanied her uncle, the late Senator Edward Kennedy, to Hiroshima, site of the first U.S. bomb attack that killed 140,000 people on August 6, 1945. In a Senate hearing in September, confirming her appointment as U.S. Ambassador to Japan, she said she was deeply moved by her visit in 1978 that included a tour of the [Hiroshima Peace](#)

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India's Nuclear Ambitions Unabated



Nuclear Abolition NewsViewpoint | [Eurasia Review](#)

By USMAN ALI KHAN*

KARACHI - As the world seeks to shrink global stockpiles of nuclear weapons, India continues to modernise its arsenal which increases Pakistan's security dilemmas, compelling it to respond appropriately. Much alarm has been raised in the West about Pakistan's enhancement of its nuclear capability and depicted this as a mindless, irrational drive motivated by the unbridled ambitions of the nuclear scientific-military lobby, which is far from reality. This has been in play against Pakistan but no one cares what India does. The links between nuclear power and nuclear weapons go back to the very beginning of the development of atomic energy. Over time the nature and strength of these links have varied.

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In order to strengthen public awareness of the urgent need for nuclear abolition, the Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a Buddhist association, and the Inter Press Service global news agency have initiated a media project which aims to help to shed light on the issue of nuclear abolition from the perspectives of civil society through the global media network of IPS and beyond. As part of this project, IDN InDepthNews, the news analysis service of the Globalom Media group, in partnership with the Global Cooperation Council, has launched this special website.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
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WORLD ECONOMY

Growth Remains Interdependent

By J C Suresh

TORONTO - A new report has underlined the interdependence of the world economy, which is expected to strengthen in 2014 with growth picking up in developing countries and high-income economies appearing to be finally turning the corner five years after the global financial crisis.

According to the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects (GEP) report, the firming of growth in developing countries is being boosted by an acceleration in high-income countries and continued strong growth in China. However, growth prospects remain vulnerable to headwinds from rising global interest rates and potential volatility in capital flows, as the United States Federal Reserve Bank begins withdrawing its massive monetary stimulus.

"Growth appears to be strengthening in both high-income and developing countries, but downside risks continue to threaten the global economic recovery," said World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim as the GEP report was released on January 14 in Washington.

"The performance of advanced economies is gaining momentum, and this should support stronger growth in developing countries in the months ahead. Still, to accelerate poverty reduction, developing nations will need to adopt structural reforms that promote job creation, strengthen financial systems, and shore up social safety nets," said Kim.

Global GDP growth is projected to rise from 2.4 percent in 2013 to 3.2 percent in 2014, stabilizing at 3.4 percent and 3.5 percent in 2015 and 2016, respectively, with much of the initial acceleration reflecting stronger growth in high-income economies, says the report.

It expects growth in developing countries to pick up from 4.8 percent in 2013 to a slower than previously expected 5.3 percent this year, 5.5 percent in 2015 and 5.7 percent in 2016. "While the pace is about 2.2 percentage points lower than during the boom period of 2003-07, the slower growth is not a cause for concern," argues the World Bank in a press release.

"Almost all of the difference reflects a cooling off of the unsustainable turbo-charged pre-crisis growth, with very little due to an easing of growth potential in developing countries. Moreover, even this slower growth represents a substantial (60 percent) improvement compared with growth in the 1980s and early 1990s," it adds.

The report predicts that for high-income countries, the drag on growth from fiscal consolidation and policy uncertainty will ease, helping to boost economic growth from 1.3 percent in 2013 to 2.2 percent this year, stabilizing at 2.4 percent for each of 2015 and 2016.

Recovery most advanced in the U.S.

Amongst high-income economies, says the GEP report, the recovery is most advanced in the U.S., with GDP expanding for 10 quarters now. The US economy is projected to grow by

2.8 percent this year (from 1.8 percent in 2013), firming to 2.9 and 3.0 percent in 2015 and 2016, respectively. Growth in the Euro Area, after two years of contraction, is projected to be 1.1 percent this year, and 1.4 and 1.5 percent in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

This is how Kaushik Basu, Senior Vice President and Chief Economist at the World Bank, characterizes the situation inimically: "Global economic indicators show improvement. But one does not have to be especially astute to see there are dangers that lurk beneath the surface. The Euro Area is out of recession but per capita incomes are still declining in several countries. We expect developing country growth to rise above 5 percent in 2014, with some countries doing considerably better, with Angola at 8 percent, China 7.7 percent, and India at 6.2 percent. But it is important to avoid policy stasis so that the green shoots don't turn into brown stubble."

Stressing the oft-ignored interdependence of the world economy, the report says: Developing countries face counterbalancing forces from high-income countries. The strengthening in high-income countries will boost demand for developing country exports, on the one hand, while rising interest rates will dampen capital flows, on the other. The report projects global trade to grow from an estimated 3.1 percent in 2013 to 4.6 percent this year and 5.1 percent in each of 2015 and 2016.

However, weaker commodity prices will continue to temper trade revenues. Between their early-2011 peaks and recent lows in November 2013, the real prices of energy and food have declined by 9 and 13 percent, respectively, while those of metals and minerals have fallen by 30 percent. These downward pressures on commodity prices are expected to persist, in part reflecting additional supply.

Risks of disruption

"The strengthening recovery in high-income countries is very welcome, but it brings with it risks of disruption as monetary policy tightens. To date, the gradual withdrawal of quantitative easing has gone smoothly. However, if interest rates rise too rapidly, capital flows to developing countries could fall by 50 percent or more for several months – potentially provoking a crisis in some of the more vulnerable economies," said Andrew Burns, Acting Director of the Development Prospects Group and lead author of the report.

The GEP study adds: Private capital inflows to developing countries remain sensitive to global financial conditions. As high-income monetary policy normalizes in response to stronger growth, global interest rates are projected to slowly rise. The impact of an orderly tightening of financial condi-

tions on developing-country investment and growth is expected to be modest, with capital flows to developing countries projected to ease from about 4.6 percent of developing country GDP in 2013 to 4.1 percent in 2016.

However, should the adjustment be disorderly, as it was in response to speculation about when a taper might begin during the spring and summer of 2013, interest rates could rise much more quickly. Depending on the severity of the market reaction, capital flows to developing countries could be cut by 50 percent or more for several months.

In such a scenario, countries that have large current account deficits, large proportions of external debt and those that have had big credit expansions in recent years would be among the most vulnerable.

The report points out that, although the main tail risks that have preoccupied the global economy over the past five years have subsided, the underlying challenges remain.

Moreover, while developing countries responded to the global financial crisis by deploying fiscal and monetary stimuli, the scope for such actions has declined, with government budgets and current account balances in the red in most countries.

The report calls upon policy makers to give thought to how they would respond to a significant tightening of global financing conditions.

It argues: “Countries with adequate policy buffers and investor confidence may be able to rely on market mechanisms, counter-cyclical macroeconomic and prudential policies to deal with a decline in flows.

“In other cases, where the scope for maneuvering is more limited, countries may be forced to tighten fiscal policy to reduce financing needs or raise interest rates to incite additional inflows.

“Where adequate foreign reserves exist, these can be used to moderate the pace of exchange rate adjustments, while a loosening of capital inflow regulation and incentives for foreign direct investment might help smooth adjustment.

Finally, by improving the longer-term outlook, credible reform agendas can go a long way towards boosting investor and market confidence. This could set in motion a virtuous cycle of stronger investment, including foreign investment, and output growth over the medium term.”

[IDN-InDepthNews – January 16, 2014]



A man works on a generator at a Macedonia energy plant | © Tomislav Georgiev/World Bank

WORLD ECONOMY

Austerity Generates Gigantic Costs

By Jutta Wolf

BERLIN - Austerity policies in several countries around the world are denying work to millions of people and leaving vast production opportunities unused, says a new study by the German-based World Future Council (WFC), which places the value of lost production at 2.3 trillion U.S. dollars annually. This corresponds to Britain's gross domestic product. Losses in the 18-nation Eurozone triggered by public austerity alone are estimated at a minimum of 580 billion Euros each year.

"Given the huge challenges we face including stopping climate change and overcoming poverty, it is shocking that such a large economic potential remains untapped because of misguided policies," says WFC and Right Livelihood award founder Jakob von Uexkull.

To address the situation of the global economy realistically, the study uses an evaluation approach that relates unemployed labour to underused productive capital.

"According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), 200 million people are unemployed. If public austerity was ended, many of them could work to produce sustainable products or perform much-needed services. Instead, we lose their productive potential and condemn them to often long-term unemployment," adds von Uexkull.

In the Eurozone, which is particularly affected by public austerity policies, the value of its lost annual production is calculated at 580 billion Euros. This is more than three times the gross domestic product of Portugal.

"Austerity may make sense if all economic resources such as labour and physical capital are used to capacity. However, such a situation is rare. Due to the current under-utilisation of production capacity, we are wasting the potential to invest in protecting the planet from climate change and environmental collapse as well as improving education and medical care," explains Matthias Kroll, economist at the World Future Council and author of the study,

Kroll points out that contrary to the widespread view, austerity policies are not only practiced since the 2008 global financial crisis, but have been implemented for over 30 years.

Many countries are living below their potential because they do not use their existing production capacities, creating idle real capital and large-scale unemployment.

In fact the term austerity has undergone a significant transformation. It was originally used in Britain during the Second World War when the challenge was how to maximise the output of war materials and how to ration popular consumption.

Today the term stands for an economic policy, which from a microeconomic standpoint has become a savings policy for the national economy.

The study explains: "The national economy as a whole can save by cutting public expenditure in a crisis like economies on the micro level (that is, households) can.

However, what is applicable on the micro level is not directly transferable to the macro level.

"On the contrary, spending cuts worsen economic crises. In a recent study the IMF estimates fiscal multipliers to be considerably in excess of one, meaning that reduced public expenditure causes a relatively stronger depression/reduction of economic productivity."

Methodologically, neoclassical economic theory can neither explain mass unemployment nor unused production capacities.

The study takes to a heterodox approach to explain the under-utilisation of productive capacities in a real world market model. It indicates that additional demand frequently results in additional production rather than increased prices.

'Cradle to cradle'

The study adds: "Absurdly, while living below our economic potential we are living above the means of our finite raw materials and produce excessive CO2 emissions.

"The win-win response is to reduce our CO2 emissions and our over-consumption of finite raw materials by utilising our free productive capacities to expand renewable energies and redesign our production, as far as possible, according to the 'Cradle to Cradle' principle of closed loops."

The study finds that there are huge global un-utilised productive resources that – with an income multiplier of two – can generate initial job-creating projects for the sustainable transformation of our energy and production systems at a cost of US \$1.14 trillion per annum.

Excessive demand and inflationary dangers would not occur even if these projects were funded with newly created money as the new production would absorb this.

The study highlights:

Climate protection investments: In the global climate protection debate it is generally accepted that annual investments of three figure billions of dollars are needed to transform our energy production from burning CO2-heavy, fossil raw materials to using renewable energies.

It is also clear that the slow speed of this transformation is not due to limited industrial production capacities – for example, in the photovoltaic branch about half the world's 60 Gigawatts of production capacity stands idle – or a lack of qualified labour. ☺

Investments in a green industrial revolution: The key to an ecological transformation of production lies in the use of raw materials in – as far as possible – closed material circuits as in the ‘Cradle to Cradle’ model. Failure to implement this is not because we do not have enough engineers or scientists but because of ineffective regulation and insufficient financing.

An efficient health sector: Sufficient trained medical personnel, technical equipment and medication are the foundations of an efficient health sector. There are no objective reasons why these cannot be supplied. But health sector resources have been cut in many countries due to self-imposed austerity.

Meeting global educational needs: The education sector requires adequate schooling facilities, sufficient teachers, professors and other education staff. A fundamental lack of productive resources that hinders the expansion of the education sector cannot be identified.

Ensuring food security: To ensure adequate nutrition for all necessitates sufficient food production and a functioning dis-

tribution infrastructure. Insufficient resources to provide this have not been identified.

These examples are not exhaustive, notes Kroll. “They show that solutions to some of the most significant global challenges are not being thwarted by a lack of productive resources but by a lack of financing facilities. However, monetary resources are not per se a scarce resource but a good, which can be produced at will.

“The international banking sector has shown that the provision of monetary resources in large quantities is possible. First it financed unproductive and speculative spending on a massive scale and in doing so created a financial bubble.

Once this bubble burst the central banks tripled their money creation to prevent the financial system from collapsing. It would of course be more effective to use part of this money creation to finance real investments that help solve the acute humanitarian and environmental challenges the world faces.”

[IDN-InDepthNews – January 14, 2013] ❖

The World Future Council (WFC) consists of up to 50 respected personalities from all five continents. They represent governments, parliaments, the arts, civil society, academia and the business world. Together they form a voice for the rights of future generations. You can find the biographies of all Councillors as well as Honorary Councillors below.



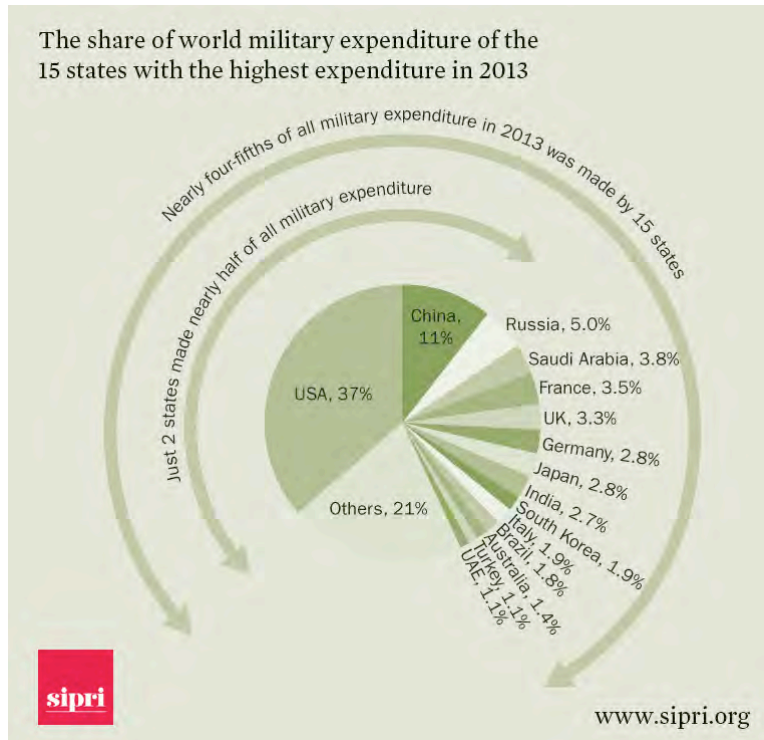
WFC Councillors at AGM 2013 in Bonn © World Future Council

TRADE

Global Arms Sales Up By 29 Percent Since 2003

By Jaya Ramachandran

BERLIN - New data launched by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) shows that sales of arms and military services by the world's largest arms-producing companies, which amounted to \$395 billion in 2012, has increased by 29 per cent in real terms since 2003. But compared to 2011 the 2012 data represent a 4.2 per cent decrease in real terms and follow a 6.6 per cent cut in that year.



The report released at the Munich Security Conference on January 31, 2014 points out at the same time that the decrease in arms sales in 2012 was not uniform: "while sales by companies in the United States, Canada and most West European countries continued to fall, arms sales by Russian companies increased sharply, by 28 per cent in real terms".

Arms sales are defined by SIPRI as sales of military goods and services to military customers, including sales for domestic procurement and sales for export.

SIPRI notes a rise in the share for companies outside North America and Western Europe. Since 2005 it has been increasing at 13.5 per cent, marking its highest point in the history of the Top 100, which does not include China-based companies due to lack of available data.

Russia's growing domestic sales

Russian companies saw a particularly large increase in estimated arms sales in 2012. Of the six Russian companies in the Top 100, all except United Aircraft Corporation saw increases in excess of 20 per cent, and Almaz Antei – with a 41 per cent rise – now stands in 14th place in the Top 100, the highest position taken by a Russian company since data became available in 2002, says the report.

SIPRI data indicate that Russian arms companies continue to maintain high export levels, but the increase in estimated arms sales in 2012 mainly reflects large and growing domestic sales, as part of Russia's \$700 billion 2011-2020 State Armaments Plan. "While there remains widespread scepticism as to whether the aims of the plan can be fully achieved, it is clear that a major increase in Russian military equipment procurement is taking place," the report notes.

"The Russian arms industry is gradually re-emerging from the ruins of the Soviet industry," said Dr Sam Perlo-Freeman, Director of SIPRI's Military Expenditure and Arms Production Programme. "Nonetheless, the industry is still plagued by outdated equipment, inefficient organization and widespread corruption, which will continue to limit Russia's ability to compete technologically with the West."

Iraq withdrawal affects US sales

Turning to the world's largest arms seller, the report says: Sales by the 42 US-based arms producers amounted to 58 per cent of the total arms sales of the Top 100, with 30 companies based in Western Europe making up another 28 per cent of the total. While these companies still accounted for 87 per cent of the total arms sales, the decline in arms sales in these tradition-

al producer regions echoes the decline in military spending, which began clearly in 2011. In particular, the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq at the end of 2011 had a significant effect on a number of companies.

The largest percentage fall in arms sales in the Top 100 in 2012 – by 60 per cent in real terms – was by KBR, which provided logistic support to US forces in Iraq. Sales by companies providing armoured vehicles to US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, including Navistar and AM General, also declined.

"The US arms industry has fallen back somewhat from the heights it reached before the Budget Control Act, when the USA was still embroiled in two wars. But it still enjoys sales and profits that are very high by historic standards," said Dr Perlo-Freeman in a SIPRI press release.

Other significant producers

This year, for the first time, the SIPRI Top 100 includes data for Ukraine. The consolidation of much of the Ukrainian arms industry into a single holding company, Ukroboronprom – whose arms sales increased by 14 per cent in 2012, reaching \$1.44 billion – puts that company clearly in the Top 100 for both 2011 and 2012, says the report.

Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer entered the Top 100 in 2010 and was one of the largest risers in 2012, by 36 per cent in real terms, climbing from 83rd to 66th position in the Top 100 with arms sales of \$1.06 billion.

The growth of the South Korean arms industry continued in 2012 with a 4.2 per cent real increase in arms sales by companies in the Top 100. The total arms sales of Korean companies

in the Top 100 have more than doubled in real terms since 2002.

Companies headquartered in North America and Western Europe continue to dominate the global arms industry: 73 companies in the Top 100 for 2012 are from these regions, and they accounted for 86.7 per cent of the total arms sales of the Top 100.

The total arms sales of the 43 North American companies in the Top 100 (42 from the United States and 1 from Canada) fell by 6.6 per cent in real terms in 2012 and that of the 30 West European companies fell by 3.0 per cent (compared to the same companies in 2011).

Arms sales by companies in the Top 100 from the rest of the world rose by 13.6 per cent in real terms. These companies' share of the total arms sales of the Top 100 is now at its highest level since the start of the current coverage of the Top 100, in 2002.

The Top 100 for 2012 includes companies from 23 countries, the highest number yet. This represents an increasing diffusion of large-scale, corporate arms production around the world, although the dominance of the USA, and to a lesser extent Western Europe, continues largely unchanged.

The SIPRI Arms Industry Database was created in 1989. It contains financial and employment data on arms producing companies worldwide. Since 1990, SIPRI has published data on the arms sales and employment of the 100 largest of these arms-producing companies in the SIPRI Yearbook. [IDN- InDepthNews – February 3, 2014] ❖



Images credit: SIPRI

TRADE

Free Trade Is Not So Free After All

By Julio Godoy*

BARCELONA - International negotiations on so-called “free trade agreements” have always had something surreptitious about them. In the late 1990s, the industrialised countries represented at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) wanted to pass a “multilateral agreement on investment” (MAI) with the alleged goal of facilitating – liberating, so to speak – international investment. But, for all the good that such investment was supposed to bring about across the world, the OECD managed the negotiations in a most clandestine way.

With good reason: Only thanks to the extraordinary work of civil rights activists and journalists, it was revealed that the MAI draft constituted a *carte blanche* for corporations to commit all kind of violations of national legislation on social and environmental matters. MAI would annul national legislation if it were to represent an obstacle to international investment. In other words, the MAI would downgrade environmental and social standards to the lowest common denominator, to sustain international investment. The MAI would also allow international corporations to sue governments which would maintain high environmental and social standards.

These revelations forced the French Socialist government of the time to withdraw its support for such botch, and with it the MAI was apparently dead. Actually, it became a zombie, reappearing once and again, to make civil activists to jump again and again.

These days, the MAI comes as a free trade agreement between the European Union and the United States. Given the quality of environmental and social standards reigning in the promised land of neoliberalism, it is quite understandable that European activists are paying attention to whatever kowtow the EU is ready to perform before the temple of free trade.

The first thing they realized was that European governments say one thing but do quite the opposite. The German ruling coalition of Christian and Social Democrats, for instance, agreed in their official government programme that they oppose genetically modified organisms (GMOs). However, at the European sessions to allow or veto the cultivation of genetically modified maize in the continent, Germany abstained. Since the German vote was crucial to obtain the necessary majority to veto the import of U.S. produced GMOs, its abstention meant that the maize passed a first European hurdle.

The German government has characteristically ignored all protests by environmental activists against the abstention. Angela Merkel’s coalition uses the typically German government method of ‘*aussitzen*’ – to adjourn a decision or debate until the public interest has faded away so that nobody ever cares about the former problem.

Only that the “free trade agreement” with the U.S.A. is a European problem, and people across Europe are watching whatever the European Union does. For instance, the activists at the Corporate Europe Observatory (CEO), a Brussels-based watchdog group that specialises in disclosing the sometimes unlawful relations between European private companies and the EU bureaucracy.

Under the EU’s freedom of information law (FOI), CEO several months ago demanded the European Commission to release documents related to the present negotiations it is carrying out with the U.S. government. But, while the EU Commissioner Karel De Gucht claims that “there is nothing secret” about the EU-US trade talks, the CEO has found that notes of Commission meetings with business “have been heavily censored”.

As the CEO puts it, “The documents show that De Gucht’s officials invited industry to submit wish lists for ‘regulatory barriers’ they would like removed during the negotiations, but there is no way for the public to know how the EU has incorporated this into its negotiating position – or even what has been asked for and by whom – as all references have been removed.”

This is a typical EU method: Whenever it has something to decide, the EU contacts large private corporations and ask for policy formulations. It was so during the 1990s, during the huge campaign of privatisation of public services in Eastern Europe: French private companies such as Lyonnaise des Eaux and Compagnie Generale des Eaux, the main profiteers of privatisation of water services across the world, provide the blueprint for EU policy. It has been so again, during the recent negotiations with India and African countries, on free trade agreements.

Absence of transparency

CEO obtained 44 documents about the European Commission’s meetings with industry lobbyists as part of preparations for the EU-U.S. trade talks – TTIP, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. In a communiqué released mid-February, the group says: “Most of the documents ... are meeting reports prepared by Commission officials. The release of these documents might sound like a generous act of transparency on the side of the Commission, but that is hardly the case.”

On the one hand, the documents arrived almost ten months after the FOI request was tabled. On the other hand, 39 of the 44 documents are heavily censored. Additionally, the CEO says that the “44 documents cover only a fraction of the more than 100 meetings which De Gucht’s officials had with industry lobbyists in the run-up to the launch of the TTIP negotiations.”

It is as if “no notes (were) taken during closed-door meetings with corporate lobbyists from, for example, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the German industry federation BDI, chemical

lobby groups CEFIC and VCI, pharmaceutical industry coalition EFPIA, DigitalEurope, the Transatlantic Business Council, arms industry lobby ASD, the British Bankers Association, and corporations like Lilly, Citi and BMW,” CEO complains.

The group has also complained to the European Commission's top civil servant Catherine Day and demanded the full release of all documents related to meetings with lobbyists on TTIP.

As the group explains, the De Gucht bureaucracy removed



large parts of text, marking them as “non releasable” or “not relevant”, and by 'whitening' or 'blackening' the parts it wants to keep from public scrutiny.

“In some cases, like a meeting with lobbyists from Fertilizers Europe, every single word has been removed from the document,” CEO says.

The EC defends this secrecy arguing that “Release of ... information could have a negative impact on (European industries’) position on the U.S. and other markets. It would therefore undermine the protection of commercial interests of a natural or legal person.”

For the CEO, such arguments “are highly flawed.” It recalls that De Gucht in December 2013 in a letter published in the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, promised that “there is nothing secret about this EU trade deal” and that “our negotiations over the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership are fully open to scrutiny”. Evidently, this is “blatantly untrue,” as the group says. “Not only is the text of the EU's negotiating position secret, the public is even denied access to sentences in meeting reports that refer to the EU negotiating position. This is especially problematic as these are minutes from meetings with industry lobbyists who were clearly given information about the EU's negotiating position in the TTIP talks, unlike the public. “

The group concludes that “Sharing information about the EU's

negotiating position with industry while refusing civil society access to that same information is unacceptable discrimination.” Yes indeed!

Curious, don't you think, that free trade must be discussed behind closed doors, with access restricted to large private companies, and not in the open, as freedom is supposed to mean, and that the hypothetical common good its defenders claim it will bring about must be concealed from society.

This EU behaviour is a disgrace, but it is also routine. For instance, during the recent vote on whether the EU accepts that the genetically modified Pioneer GM maize be cultivated in European territory or not: During the vote, February 11, 2014 a record number of 19 EU countries – out of 28 – declared themselves to be against the cultivation, and only five countries said they were in favour (among them the UK, Spain and Sweden). The rest abstained.

This ratio roughly represents the popular will in Europe: Most people oppose genetically modified agriculture.

And yet, given that four governments, in particular Germany's, abstained, the clear majority against authorising the GM maize still did not have enough weight to reach what is called a 'qualified majority' in the EU's complex decision-making processes. Germany is a case in point: Officially, the German government opposes genetically modified agriculture. It says so in its government programme of November 2013.

But at the moment of truth, Germany abstained, knowing that by so doing it would actually vote for the GM maize. For, as the CEO, again, explains, “abstaining basically translates into being in favour because it prevented a qualified majority from stopping the authorisation.” After the vote, which constituted a sound slap on the face of the majority of people in the EU, Commissioner Tonio Borg admitted that the result meant that the Commission was legally forced to go ahead and authorise the maize.

By the way: the global privatisation of water services supported by the EU in collusion with a couple of private companies, resulted in higher prices, decaying quality, and lack of investment in the services. After some years, communities from Paris to Buenos Aires and Berlin decided it had been a bad idea to privatise the services, and restarted a re-municipalisation of them, in a trend that continues until today.

**Julio Godoy is an investigative journalist and IDN Associate Global Editor. He has won international recognition for his work, including the Hellman-Hammett human rights award, the Sigma Delta Chi Award for Investigative Reporting Online by the U.S. Society of Professional Journalists, and the Online Journalism Award for Enterprise Journalism by the Online News Association and the U.S.C. Annenberg School for Communication, as co-author of the investigative reports “Making a Killing: The Business of War” and “The Water Barons: The Privatisation of Water Services”. [IDN-InDepthNews – February 26, 2014] ❖*

Picture: EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht | Credit: Wikimedia Common

SPECIAL REPORT

UNHRC Comes Under Fire

By Kalinga Seneviratne*

SINGAPORE - UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) head Navi Pillay's current campaign against Sri Lanka over alleged human rights violations – along with similar campaigns against Libya and Syria earlier – could jeopardize the cause of human rights around the world, analysts say.

Pillay released a report in February calling for an international investigation into alleged war crimes when the Sri Lankan armed forces crushed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in a final battle in May 2009.

The Sri Lanka government has also criticized the report for arriving at conclusions in a “selective and arbitrary manner” and ignoring requests from the Sri Lankan government to provide factual evidence to substantiate allegations and to refrain from making general comments.

Sri Lanka's criticism of Pillay is not new. But, commentaries in both mainstream and online media in Sri Lanka indicate a hardening of attitudes in the island state against Pillay's perceived bias and alleged abuse of power as head of UNHRC.

She is said to have got away with it in the international media because the western media apparently tended to believe – and continue to – most of the propaganda put out by the LTTE supporters in the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora over the past 30 years.

At the twenty-fifth session of the UNHRC from March 3 to 28 in Geneva, Pillay's report is due to be officially tabled, and she has refused to entertain a request from the Sri Lankan government that its response to the report be attached as an appendix.

The United States has indicated – supported by EU and India – that they may table a resolution at the meeting to establish an independent international investigation into

alleged war crimes and human rights violations in Sri Lanka, which the government is sure to reject.

“How many of the bullying countries accusing Sri Lanka of crimes against humanity and war crimes have clean hands or a flawless record?” asks Senaka Weeraratne, a Sri Lankan lawyer and international affairs analyst. “What we see today in western dominated international organisations such as the



Sri Lanka's Permanent Envoy in Geneva conveying the Sri Lankan Government's response to Pillay's report stated that the UN High Commissioner's recommendations, “reflect the preconceived, politicised and prejudicial agenda which she has relentlessly pursued with regard to Sri Lanka”, and in a 18-page document pinpointed her double standards accusing her of giving “scant or no regard to the domestic processes ongoing in Sri Lanka”.

United Nations related bodies such as the UNHRC, ICC and the like are proceedings conducted on an Inquisitorial footing i.e. witch hunts aimed at devastating the target country or individual usually of non-European descent thereby perverting the course of justice. No quarter is given to the other party until it submits to the political will of the bullying nations,” argues Weeraratne.

“It is a shameless display of brute power making a mockery of institutional rules and procedures. The targeted country is assumed to be guilty right from the start ruling out any mitigating circumstances. It is virtually a re-enactment of the Inquisition under the auspices of the United Nations rather than the Catholic Church as in the days gone by.”

It is not only Sri Lankans that are complaining about the UNHRC and Pillay’s tactics. Anti-war activists in the West and supporters of the former Libyan regime and that of Syria have also pointed out how these UN agencies, and particularly UNHRC under Pillay, are practicing double standards to promote Western imperial designs.

Veteran Canadian antiwar activist Ken Stone writing for the website ‘Syria 360’ argued in an article written last year that Pillay has abused her power to facilitate western military interference in Libya and Syria to change regimes. He argues that the western media, and CNN in particular, have used interviews with Pillay to promote military intervention in Libya and Syria, where she relates the actions of these regimes to defend their country from rebel forces, to human rights violations and crimes against humanity.

In the name of humanitarian intervention

“Two very useful precedents for illegal, but so-called ‘humanitarian’, intervention by NATO were set by the United Nations in regards to Libya,” argues Stone. “The first was that the doctrine of the *responsibility to protect (R2P)* was successfully invoked, for the very first time, as a legal ground for overriding the fundamental principle of national sovereignty as the basis of international law.”

R2P holds that, if a government cannot protect the human rights of its own citizens, the international community may step in to do so. In the case of Libya, R2P was used to justify United Nations Resolution 1973, the motion that authorized NATO to create a no-fly zone over Libya.

“Resolution 1973 was perverted by NATO within hours into a full-blown military intervention for regime change in Libya that resulted in the deaths of thousands of Libyans, pogrom against black persons resident in Libya, the assassinations of Muammar Gaddafi and members of his family, massive infrastructure damage, the de facto partitioning of the country, and a failed state machine,” notes Stone.

He argues that the first precedent (above) could not have been realized without the fancy legal footwork executed in advance by the nimble Pillay in demonizing Mouammar Gaddafi and his son, Saif, at the UN. “The second precedent, then, was the initiative taken by the UN Human Rights Council, chaired by Pillay, in calling for an international inquiry into violence against civilians in Libya,” he says.

Stone goes on to detail how Pillay has been playing a similar role in appearing in the international media accusing the Syrian government of crimes against humanity and calling upon the ICC to mount a war crimes investigation against President Assad, while ignoring the role played by foreign-funded mercenaries in the civil war. “Humanitarian intervention is a powerful tool in the West, where even people on the ‘left’, who should know better, fall for it,” notes Stone.

Libya is the real tragedy of the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ that has turned into an ‘Arab Winter’. This brings into question the real motives of those International NGOs who promote human rights with an evangelical zeal.

Libya under Gaddafi may have been an authoritarian state in terms of freedom of speech (not any worse than U.S. allies in the region such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and UAE), but, was a success story in human development. In Gaddafi’s Libya, the right to free education for everyone from elementary school right up to university and post-graduate studies at home or abroad were implemented with government subsidies; there was free health care with 1:673 doctor-patient ratio; free electricity for all citizen; interest-free housing loans; and free land for farmers.

Libya had no external debts and its reserves amounted to \$150 billion. Today we have a Libya that is ruled by warlords and terrorists and human rights campaigners are silent about the human rights abuses taking place today in Libya and no one is asking the question what is happening to Libya’s huge financial reserves and its oil? Who is benefiting from it?

What happened in Libya amounts to a war crime for which both NATO and International Crisis Group (ICG) that came up with the R2P formula should be held accountable, analysts say. But, UNHRC is muted about it. Instead, a report will be tabled at the current session titled “Technical assistance for Libya in the field of human rights”.

The report does not discuss accountability issues with regards to human rights in the implementation of the R2P formula nor does it address in any serious manner the problem of the anarchy created as a result of regime change. It assumes that there is a regime in charge, when there is not.

A question often asked by Sri Lankans is why Pillay is not calling upon President George W Bush, Tony Blair, David Cameron and ICG to account for the war crimes USA, UK and NATO forces have indulged in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya?

During her visit to Sri Lanka last year, at a press conference, she said that UNHRC has indeed questioned these countries on certain human rights issues and they have responded. But, what the Sri Lankan journalist didn’t press her on is why she cannot do the same with Sri Lanka, rather than indulge in a public spat and witchhunt?

Opening up old wounds

Most people in Sri Lanka believe that what she is trying to do is to open up old wounds and it is completely counter productive to promoting reconciliation between the Sinhalese and

Tamil communities. Nor is it helping to improve human rights in Sri Lanka, where a government that is threatened by what they see as an international conspiracy to change regime, has cracked down heavily on internal dissent and freedom of expression.

Weeraratne argues that Pillay's methods are harming human rights and increasing the credibility gap of UN agencies in the eyes of the international community (which is not just the U.S., EU and its allies). Instead he argues that UNHRC should adopt the Japanese model of solving a post-war crisis.

"The Japanese approach advocated by the Buddhist Prince Shotoku to use the method of consensus and dialogue, and not allow the accused party to lose face is a far more enlightened approach to resolution of complex human rights issues than the 'burning at the stake' inquisitorial approach of the West" notes Weeraratne.

"It is the employment of double standards and devious methods to achieve ulterior political ends of powerful Western actors that have resulted in the moral collapse of the UN and related agencies."

Prioritising Economic Aspects

"As a result of the financial crisis, the ability of individuals to exercise their human rights and that of States to fulfill their obligations to protect human rights has diminished," noted Bat-Erdene Ayuush, Head of the Right to Development Section at the UN Human Rights Office speaking at a UN Human Rights Commission (UNHRC) panel discussion last year.

But, at its 25th session from March 3 to 28 in Geneva, only two out of about 100 reports tabled, address the economic and development aspects of human rights. Almost all other reports address individual rights specific to countries, rather than collective rights of people.

The international human rights agencies face a serious challenge today, when a new wave of colonialism is gathering steam. Would they act like the Christian missionaries 500 years ago who accompanied the European colonizers and facilitated the exploitation and plunder in the name of "civilizing the natives"?

Pointing fingers at small nations for human rights violations, when the governments are unable to provide for the rising aspirations and demands of their people, while ignoring the

fact that the global economic system hinders it, may make the modern human rights campaigners no different to the old Christian missionaries.

The excessive focus given to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) proclaimed in 1948 over other UN human rights covenants such as International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1966 and the UN Declaration of the Right to Development (UNDRD) adopted in 1986, need to change in this era of globalization and corporate power over national governments.

A new wave of colonialism camouflaged as globalization is today threatening the hard fought freedom of people around the world from European colonialism, that was epitomized by the plundering of their natural and human resources with no recourse to human rights processes. The UDHR's focus on individual rights needs to be balanced with collective rights to development.

In Asia, emanating from its own philosophical groundings human rights have been seen more as a participatory model rather than the western concept of individual rights. Thus, in Asia, there has traditionally been a higher focus given to social and community harmony.

With the advent of the economic crisis in Europe in 2008, these ideas are even espoused there. Aldo Caliari, Director of the Rethinking Bretton Woods Project noted, speaking at the same UNHRC panel as Ayuush, that in the past four years the EU had spent some 4.5 trillion euros – 37% of the EU's GDP – bailing out the financial industry, while government spending



on social protection had been subjected to austerity measures.

“Financial policy and rule making tends to be shockingly removed from public scrutiny - not just from human rights groups, but any public scrutiny. All sectors of society should be able to input into such a process,” he said, adding that a human rights approach to the financial crisis should not be confined to an analysis of impacts and burden allocation but should also look at austerity and financial regulation.

Addressing modern human rights issues

Social ethos that makes it okay for governments to bailout rich bankers who have indulged in criminally fraudulent practices, but, its bad economic policy to subsidise poor hard-working farmers, protect small business and market vendors, and treat migrant labourers as a commodity rather than human beings, are all human rights issues that need to be tackled as a priority on a global scale.

The ICESCR and UNDRD have ideas that could be adopted to address modern human rights issues created by this onslaught of neo-liberal economics. But, interestingly, the U.S. has not ratified both these treaties.

The UNDRD calls on member states to recognize an individual’s rights to work, for fair wages that would ensure a decent living, and a healthy and safe working environment; fundamental right for everyone to be free from hunger; right for everyone to an education; right to proper health standards and so on.

In keynote remarks delivered to an UN Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals in December 2013, UN Human Rights Commissioner Navi Pillay argued that many leaders have abdicated their responsibilities to the current generation.

“Food, water, healthcare, education, housing and access to justice are not merely commodities for sale to the few, but rather they are rights to which all are entitled without discrimination,” she noted, and in an obvious reference to the European economic crisis, Pillay added that, “people have lost confidence in the dominant economic model. They are calling for a new paradigm for development, one that places human rights in the centre.”

The question is whether the UNHRC is doing enough to mobilise the international community to plan a fairer development path? Can they promote this with a passion so that it will attract the attention of the world’s leaders, especially those in richer countries?

UNHRC has often pointed fingers at governments for restricting media freedom, but, it has failed to acknowledge the lack of freedom in the global – mainly Anglo-American media – for access to voices of trade unions and other peoples’ movements that are opposed to the type of neo-liberal economics that Pillay referred to above.

How this global media ridiculed and gave almost no access to

the voices that represented the “Occupy Wall Street” movement at the height of the banking crisis in the USA and Europe is a good example. If their voices were given access to the local and global mainstream media, it would have led to a strong human rights movement worldwide for social justice and a fairer economic order.

Corruption

Corruption is also a very important human rights issue. But this cannot be tackled by pointing accusing fingers at developing country governments or threatening them with sanctions of different kinds. The rich countries have to take some responsibilities and make some sacrifices if this scourge of modern societies is to be controlled.

They have to monitor their investment flows and should not allow their companies to write off commissions (bribes) as business expenses in their tax returns.

They will also have to put stringent monitoring devices into foreigners opening bank accounts, buying real estate and making other investments, and sending their children to universities and expensive colleges, as lot of the money from corrupt politicians and business people in developing countries are being spent or parked safely in the West, and western governments have often welcomed it with open arms.

If such stringent controls could be introduced to stop terrorist funding, why cannot it be adopted to address the scourge of worldwide corruption?

Since UDHR was negotiated and adopted by a United Nations where most countries of Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America did not have the freedom to speak at the time, this is opportune time to bring these voices into the process of reviewing the international human rights instruments.

The over emphasis given to individual rights such as freedom of speech and public demonstrations may have to be balanced with a more consultative model of grassroots participation and dialogue on economic and development issues, that are needed to protect social and community harmony.

This process needs to consider as major human rights violators, those who promote neoliberal economic models that exploits the poor and impact on community harmony. New human rights instrumentalities need to apply to non-government actors as well, especially to huge global corporations.

**Kalinga Seneviratne is IDN Special Correspondent for Asia-Pacific. He teaches international communications at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. [IDN-InDepthNews – March 3, 2014] ❖*

Photo on page 12: Navi Pillay | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Photo on page 14: Eleanor Roosevelt with the Spanish version of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* on Dec 10, 1948 in Paris | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

PERSPECTIVES

Where ‘North’ And ‘South’ Learn From Each Other

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN - The Cuba missile crisis was moving towards a peak when President John F. Kennedy proposed in May 1961 the creation of a Development Centre at the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to bridge the industrialised nations and the developing world. The Centre has meanwhile developed into a forum not only for South-South but also South-North and North-South cooperation, enabling the industrialised countries “to learn from, and maybe import, some of the policy experiences of the South”, says its director Mario Pezzini.



OECD Development Centre Director Mario Pezzini | Credit: OECD

“Such mutual learning will become increasingly important as the interdependence of the world intensifies and the wealth shifts from the OECD region to the larger emerging economies continues,” writes Pezzini in the publication commemorating ‘50 years of Sharing Knowledge’. “This process,” he says, “has created new demands on governments that go beyond growth, which alone does not bring prosperity or progress. One of the major tasks going forward is to help countries translate their increasing capacity for growth creation into social and economic progress on a wider scale.”

Such a forward-looking view apparently emerges from the fact that the Centre is an institution where governments, enterprises and civil society organisations informally discuss questions of common interest. Its Governing Board includes 24 of the 34 OECD countries and 18 developing and emerging economies as full members.

The OECD members of the Development Centre, established by decision of the OECD Council on October 23, 1962 are:

Austria, Belgium, Chile, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

The 18 non-OECD members, comprising developing and emerging economies are: Argentina, Brazil, Cape Verde, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Israel, Mauritius, Morocco, Panama, Peru, Senegal,

South Africa, Thailand and Vietnam.

Of these, countries as diverse Indonesia, Mauritius, Peru, South Africa and Thailand together with five OECD members constitute the Bureau of Ten with Germany in the Chair – offering a valuable forum for South-North cooperation in search of innovative solutions to the global challenges of development.

“At its outset, the Centre sought to help spread the strong economic growth in OECD countries of the post-war boom to the countries in the South – this was the primary goal of development work. In the last half-century, many of these countries have shown strong economic performance, on par with and even exceeding the performance of OECD countries. The magnitude of the accompanying shift in wealth is self-evident. During the 1990s, 12 developing countries achieved growth rates equivalent to double the OECD average. Over 2000-10 that number rose to 83,” notes Pezzini.

No one-size-fits-all

A Professor in Industrial Economics at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines de Paris as well as in U.S. and Italian Universities, Pezzini adds: “Beyond such poignant statistics lies a more nuanced story: there is no single trajectory for pursuing economic growth, no one-size-fits-all solution to development gaps and middle-income traps. The diversity and complexity of successful policies for development demand new analysis of what works and what doesn’t – and in which context. ☺

To inform this analysis, the Centre put in place channels for policy dialogue within the OECD that had hitherto been unimaginable: giving developing countries a direct voice at the table.”

Such statements by Pezzini sound logical, considering that he is the first director of the Development Centre with roots within the OECD where he held several senior management positions before joining the Centre in 2010. He was Deputy Director of the Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate, and prior to that, Head of the Regional Policy Division, covering policy analysis on urban development, rural development, regional competitiveness and public governance.

Underlying this ‘no one-size-fits-all’ approach is the recognition that institutions and geography matter as much as markets. Which means that the same policy implemented in different areas, or in similar places but with different institutional frameworks, will have a different outcome.

A conversation with Pezzini during his visit to Berlin reveals his firm conviction that this situation demands a new thinking on policy-making and recommendations that reflect the context and challenges of implementation.

In the light of this, the Centre serves as a vehicle for developing and disseminating tailored policy recommendations that reflect the specific assets and obstacles of a given country or region. Making reform happen is the Development Centre’s objective.

Venture Philanthropy

The Development Centre published a landmark study in February 2014, titled *Venture Philanthropy in Development: Dynamics, Challenges and Lessons in the Search for Greater Impact*, undertaken by the one-year old Global Network of Foundations Working for Development (netFWD), by way of a first step towards offering an in-depth insight on how foundations working for development are evolving in their search for greater impact.

Introducing the report, Pezzini says: “Although this trend emerged about a decade ago, the prominence of new ways to invest philanthropic capital are now well established and influencing the development ‘galaxy’.

The recent economic crisis confirmed this trend further, with both high net worth individuals and well-established as well as new foundations committing to funding development challenges using innovative tools and approaches such as impact investment, and marginally compensating for governments’ budget cuts in official development assistance (ODA).”

G8 Leaders acknowledged the relevance of impact investment at their 2013 Summit, resulting in the creation of a G8 Social Impact Investment Taskforce.

On its part, the Development Centre has been closely observing and following this movement, given the potential implications for developing countries, particularly as a large share of venture philanthropic flows and innovative business models target developing and emerging economies.

The study offers insights into an innovative and cutting-edge development theme, which is becoming pivotal in the Post-2015 context and in discussions on financing for development. “Beyond being an important contribution aimed at foundations envisioning a similar transformation towards venture philanthropy, its potential also lies in helping bridge the knowledge and cultural gap between foundations and governments,” says, adding: “The latter often lack an in-depth understanding of the philanthropic sector, its drivers, actors and influence.”

Bridging this is particularly timely, in light of the efforts that have taken place since the Accra and Busan High Level Fora to “enlarge the tent” of development cooperation to new actors and move from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness, stresses Pezzini. In that sense, the Mexico Ministerial of April 2014 will be a stepping stone, given that it will be the first time that foundations are invited to the table, he adds. “The study and netFWD more broadly, confirm the role that the OECD Development Centre plays as convener and platform for policy dialogue between development stakeholders.”

Another important report by the OECD Development Centre is the annual *Economic Outlook for Southeast Asia, China and India 2014*, which says that the region will continue to play an important role in global growth. Indonesia is projected to be the fastest-growing ASEAN-6 economy with an average annual growth rate of 6.0% in 2014-18, followed by the Philippines with 5.8%. Real GDP growth in Malaysia and Thailand is projected to increase by an annual 5.1% and 4.9% respectively, led by domestic demand, especially in infrastructure investment and private consumption. Singapore’s economy is forecast to grow by 3.3%. Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam are expected to grow at a robust pace over the medium term.

Commenting the report, Development Centre’s director Pezzini says: “While Emerging Asia has made remarkable economic progress over the past four decades, some of the middle-income developing economies face difficult challenges to sustain their long-term growth and move beyond the middle-income trap. Indeed, success will require fundamental changes in economic structure and further development of the modern services sectors.”

In the “best scenario”, if fundamental changes are applied, China and Thailand could become high-income countries within 20 years. On the other hand, Viet Nam and India will need more than 40 years to reach the high-income group. An important finding of the report is that to grow beyond the middle-income trap, these Emerging Asia countries need to shift away from growth that is driven primarily by factor accumulation. “They should rather embrace growth based on productivity increases driven by improvements in the quality of human capital and innovation.”

The Outlook examines policy insights for China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam that come from the development experiences of other advanced Asian economies such as Japan, Korea and Singapore, thus lending South-South dimension to the study. [IDN-*InDepthNews* – March 23, 2014] ❖

PERSPECTIVES

What November Referendum in Catalonia Would Mean

By Julio Godoy*

BARCELONA - Last December, the Catalanian parliament adopted a resolution that a referendum be carried out in November 2014, to decide whether the region remains part of Spain, or proclaims its independency. To say that the resolution constitutes a major challenge for the central government in Madrid is a euphemism.

Because, on the one hand, the Spanish constitution does not envisage referendums; and on the other, given the present climate of animosity reigning in Catalonia against Madrid, it is likely that a majority of the Catalanian population follows the 'separatists' – I use that term for lack of a better one: Catalonians rallying for independency claim they are nationalists, but that they simply don't feel as Spaniards – among the political leaders and proclaims the region as a new independent state, and thus opens the way for other separatist movements in Spain, such as that of the Basque country. Finally, most Catalonians reject the monarchy and would prefer to ground a republic.

The choice by the majority in the Catalanian parliament of the date (November 9) for the referendum in Barcelona was motivated by strategic considerations: In September, less than two months earlier, Scotland will carry out its own plebiscite on the very same question – should the region remain part of Britain, or adopt independency? Catalanian separatists, led by the region's head of government, Artur Mas, surely hope that the Scottish decision, if favourable to independence, would support the momentum, to finally get rid of Madrid.

A success of both the Scottish and Catalan independent movements would have serious consequences all over Europe: Similar nationalist movements have emerged in recent years in Belgium, in Italy, in France, and even in Germany, and they may feel encouraged by the Catalanian and Scotch separatisms. For the European Union, already battered by the economic crisis that followed the financial meltdown of 2007-2008, such a success would be a major challenge – for it would have to decide whether territories and populations already part of the union, can remain so, but as new member states. This so-called internal expansion of the EU would be a 'novum'; as of today, the EU has experienced the external expansion, that is, already existing states apply for membership and obtain it.

This challenge would add to the dramatic social and economic crisis the EU is suffering, and which has triggered a re-emergence of old nationalistic resentments – mostly against Germany, whose economic success and political influence over the continent is cause of envy; in some cases, as in Finland, France, Greece, and Holland, these nationalist movements have downright xenophobic characters; the EU partici-

pation in the so-called troika, that has imposed harsh neoliberal adjustment policies over half the continent, has aggravated the antipathy the body triggers all over; its incapacity to attenuate the social consequences – especially unemployment – of the crisis, or its collusion with international finance, also alimts nationalisms. The emergence of new states at its core, which may not be part of the EU, would further undermine the dwindling prestige of the bureaucracy in Brussels.



For Catalonia, the independency would also have lasting consequences: It is sure that the Catalanian population even after independency would like to remain part of the EU; but it may well be that the new state would not be accepted in the union – Madrid, for sure, would veto this membership. By the same token, Catalonia would also have to leave the Euro zone. In that case, Catalonia would at once lose the commercial advantages of both bodies, as well as the financial assistance it has

enjoyed from Brussels; it would have to coin a new currency, and its international trade with its natural foreign partners would again suffer of taxes and tariffs, as in the old times. Its citizens would also lose the freedom they enjoy now to travel and settle everywhere within the EU.

Historical and current reasons

What for, then, the Catalanian independency? There are historical reasons for Catalonians to desire to get rid of the supremacy of Madrid: Catalonia existed as independent county under the kingdom of Aragon since the Middle Age and until the early XVIII Century, when the war of Spanish Succession brought about the forced unity of the territories in the Iberian peninsula with the exception of Portugal, with the House of Bourbons, based in Madrid, as head of the monarchy. King Juan Carlos is Bourbon – his controversial lifestyle, and corruption affairs his daughter has been associated with, have undermined whatever legitimacy the monarchy had.

As of today, Catalonians celebrate September 11 as their national day – the date of their defeat in 1714 against the Bourbons. Despite the defeat, and the enormous efforts made by Madrid to obliterate Catalanian culture, the Catalanian anti-monarchist nationalism continued to exist, and it was most evident during the Civil War in the 1930s. Most Catalonians sided with the Republican movement against the Fascist Bando Nacional, led by Francisco Franco. Not coincidentally, the

Franco dictatorship, which ruled Spain since 1939 until the dictator's death in 1975, was most brutal in Catalonia and in the Basque country. It not only prohibited the local languages, and forced Spanish as national language upon these populations; it even went as far as to destroy some jewels of the typical Catalanian architecture that emerged in Barcelona in the late XIX and early XX centuries.

The present economic crisis has potentiated these historical reasons for independency. Catalanians – not only the most radical separatists – rightly see the Spanish fiscal system as a pillage of their resources.

Unbalance

According to official figures, Catalonia is the fourth richest region in Spain, as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. However, Catalonia pays the largest contribution to the Spanish central budget, only after Madrid. To make this unbalance worse, the region's benefit is a relatively low investment from Madrid. In 2009, for example, Catalonia contributed almost 62 billion Euros in taxes to the central budget, but only received public investments for well over 45 billion, amounting to a deficit of 8,5 percent of the Catalanian GDP. This unbalance has been growing since 2007.

On average and excluding money flows from the social security and unemployment systems, Catalonia contributed between 1986 and 2010 19.7 per cent of the revenue of the Spanish administration, but it only received 11.2 per cent of the expenditure of the Spanish Administration

As Elisanda Paluzie, professor of economics at the University of Barcelona, puts it, Catalonia feels as “a cash cow (which) pay(s) Swedish-level taxes in exchange for sub-par public services.”

Dividing lines

Another conflict is the teaching of Catalanian and Spanish as official languages. While Catalonia wishes that the former language be obligatory in its whole territory, and has created so called immersion courses for those Spanish immigrants who only speak Spanish, Madrid insists that Spanish enjoy preponderance in the school teaching.

As in many other conflictive issues, Catalonia has in recent past sought changes in the Spanish state structure, to transform it to a federal state. But Madrid – either the central government or the constitutional court or both – have rejected these reforms, on the basis that they would be illegal or unconstitutional. As if law were not only the normative social consensus resulting from a given political balance.

Madrid's opposition to Catalanian reform attempts has been most of the time simply imprudent. A good example of this irrationality is the essay by the Madrid social scientist Enrique Gil Calvo, who in an op-ed in the El Pais newspaper published December 31, 2013 called Catalanian separatism “an irrational regression”, an “ethnic, self-victimising, anti-Spanish nationalism.” Gil Calvo even compared Catalanian separatism with the German “voelkisch” nationalism of the 1930, “obviously

... without the Nazi criminality.” As the old Latin saying goes: Dear Enrique Gil Calvo, si tacuisses, philosophus mansisses.

Multi-ethnic

Actually, Catalanian leaders have since decades publicly affirmed the multi-ethnic nature of their society. Artur Mas, head of the local government, said in Nov 2007, “Catalonian is whoever feels she is Catalanian, whoever lives in Catalonia, and wants to become a Catalanian. The feeling of affiliation is most important than the administrative status (of a person). In any case, the will to be Catalanian is the most important criteria.”

Furthermore, Spain is in crisis and needs a drastic reform. Spain suffers a rate of unemployment of more than 25 percent. The unemployed among the young reach 50 percent. The national economic crisis – the result of the collusion among banks, real estate speculation, and government corruption – did not lead to prosecuting and punishing banksters, construction moguls, or corrupt officials, but instead in mass expropriations of middle class home owners.

The flagrant multiple corruption cases discovered during the past decade, that mark practically all political parties, unions, and even the monarchy, also show the deep moral decomposition of the Spanish polity. The Monarchy, which played a most exemplar role defending democracy during the attempted coup d'état of 1982, and appeared to have gained recognition in the whole of the country, is now plagued by scandals.

King Juan Carlos (75 year old) has been making the headlines of the yellow press for his love affairs, instead of offering comfort and guidance to a disappointed society. His daughter faces now a trial under the charges of misappropriating public money. The Catholic Church seems to be trapped in the Middle Ages, when Spain was a stronghold of inquisition, and keeps defending untenable positions in social matters. It is as if the sudden liberalism that Spain showed during the 1990s, and that led people think the country was on a sure path to steady development, was a mirage – and the official Spain had returned instead to the extreme mediocrity of the Franco dictatorship.

No wonder then that many Catalanians may want to step down from this corrupt unjust country. It remains to be seen whether the EU would leave them alone.

**Julio Godoy is an investigative journalist and IDN Associate Global Editor. He has won international recognition for his work, including the Hellman-Hammett human rights award, the Sigma Delta Chi Award for Investigative Reporting Online by the U.S. Society of Professional Journalists, and the Online Journalism Award for Enterprise Journalism by the Online News Association and the U.S.C. Annenberg School for Communication, as co-author of the investigative reports “Making a Killing: The Business of War” and “The Water Barons: The Privatisation of Water Services”. [IDN-InDepthNews – February 6, 2014] ❖*

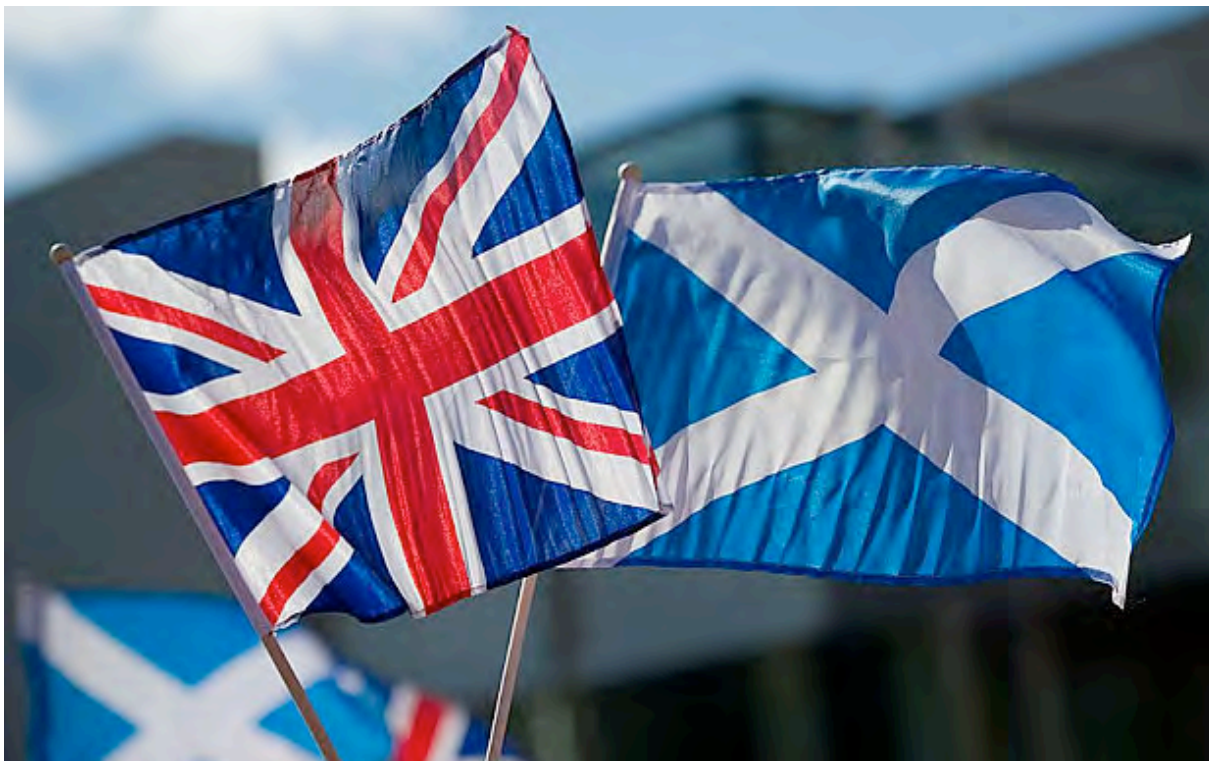
Photo on page 18: Artur Mas, 129th President of the Generalitat de Catalunya | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

PERSPECTIVES

Implications Of Scottish Independence For Development Cooperation

By James Mackie*

BRUSSELS - While the debate on Scottish independence is heating up prior to the referendum in September 2014, it is important to consider what implications an independent Scotland would have for UK and European development aid. While the UK aid would undoubtedly be affected, this new donor country would need to make an effort to minimize the effect on further aid fragmentation.



Scottish independence would lead to more fragmentation of European development cooperation and a major reduction in Department for International Development (DFID) programmes as a result of an estimated GBP 1 billion cut in its budget, yet neither of these two outcomes are really dealt with in two recent reports on what a Yes vote in the 2014 Scottish referendum would mean for development cooperation.

The UK House of Commons International Development Committee (IDC) published its report on the Implications for development in the event of Scotland becoming an independent country on December 19 and a few weeks earlier the Scottish development NGO umbrella Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland (NIDOS) launched its proposals on how to shape a ‘coherent international development policy for Scotland.’

Both reports welcome some key features of a development policy announced in the Scottish government white paper on Scotland’s Future such as a commitment to enshrining in law the international 0.7% ODA/GNI target and a ‘Do No Harm’

commitment to promoting policy coherence for development.

The IDC estimates a GBP 1 billion or 8.3% cut in DFID’s budget on a pro-rata basis of Scotland’s share of the UK population. It quotes the Secretary of State to say that like every Government department ‘we would have to cut our cloth according to the budget we are given’, but it does not go into detail on what this might entail in terms of either DFID’s bilateral programme or its funding to multilateral organisations. Equally while the Committee makes a strong point about how Scotland cannot hope to have as much of a transformational influence as DFID, it says nothing about the possible loss of influence DFID might suffer as a result of such a major reduction in its budget. Of course Secretary of State Justine Greening will still be able to maintain that she expects to continue to meet the pro rata 0.7% target, but such a large budget cut in real terms will nevertheless have consequences.

Rather than focusing on the impact on development the Committee makes a major point about the likely disruption to DFID’s work caused by the need to close its office in Scotland.

This office employs some 550 of DFID's 1,280 UK based civil servants and relocating most of these to England would involve costs and disruption over several years and a 'risk to DFID's staffing structure' that needs to be carefully managed.

Scottish contribution



The NIDOS report on the other hand, focuses on policy recommendations for a new Scottish international development programme. One of its strongest emphases is on policy coherence for development (PCD).

Here it argues that Scotland should aspire to follow Sweden's approach to PCD and it provides a well-informed analysis of the implications such a choice would imply in terms of long-term policy thinking, cross-party political support and regular monitoring and accountability.

It also refers to the EU's biennial PCD report and the importance the European Consensus on Development attaches to PCD. If a new post-independence Scottish government were indeed able to follow such a path this would provide a welcome boost to the promotion of PCD in Europe.

However, although the report does recognise European work on PCD, it remains silent on the wider EU framework for development cooperation that Scotland would be expected to operate in if it continued as a member of the EU. The contextual chapter talks about the global and UN context but says nothing about the EU. Yet if Scotland stayed in the EU then

part of its contribution to the EU budget would be for development cooperation and it would be expected to pay into the European Development Fund.

A sizeable proportion of Scottish Official Development Assistance (ODA) would therefore be channelled through the EU, and Scottish government representatives would be expected to participate in Council working groups overseeing the use of this ODA. There are several EU member states with aid budgets of around Euro 1 billion, similar to what Scotland might have, and around a dozen with less.

There is therefore plenty of small donor experience in the EU from which Scotland could learn in defining a clear vision and role for Scottish development cooperation. Scotland would also be expected to reflect the European Consensus and the more recent Agenda for Change in its own policy.

Although the NIDOS recommendations are not far removed from these two policy statements their relevance to an independent Scotland is not explicitly recognised.

Aid fragmentation

Perhaps the most difficult issue however is the further aid fragmentation that Scottish independence would bring. The continued aid effectiveness debate from the 2005 Paris Declaration has highlighted that global aid delivery is too fragmented and that raises costs for partner countries.

New member states joining the EU has regularly meant an increase in the number of donors and Scotland should learn from this.

While it is to be warmly welcomed that an independent Scotland would seek to make a substantial contribution to international development, a new Scottish government would need to think carefully about how to manage this contribution responsibly without causing further fragmentation and higher costs for partners.

Working with a limited number of partner countries as both the current Scottish government and NIDOS are suggesting, is certainly helpful, but even better would be to take the really radical step of avoiding to create a new development agency altogether and instead channelling 100% of Scottish ODA through existing delivery organisations such as NGOs, the UN or the EU.

**Dr James Mackie is Senior Adviser EU Development Policy to the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) based in Maastricht. This article was originally published on ECDPM Talking Points on January 16 and reflects the author's personal view. It is being reposted with slight modifications. [IDN-InDepthNews – January 17, 2014] ❖*

Photo: The writer | Credit: ECDPM

VIEWPOINT

USA Practicing ‘Non-Aligned Strategy’ in Asia

By Chintamani Mahapatra*

NEW DELHI - As territorial and maritime disputes in Asia have sparked regional cold wars, the United States appears to have adopted a non-aligned strategy to navigate in troubled political space of the continent.



Non-alignment as a diplomatic instrument of state craft has been known to American Administrations for centuries. Although the term “non-alignment” was not used, the need of such a strategy was first articulated by first President of the United States – George Washington. In his farewell address, Washington warned against the folly of getting involved in the European entanglements.

In order to keep the U.S. out of European quarrels, controversies and collisions, he pleaded that “Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none; or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the

ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.”

Three centuries later, as the U.S. recognizes the economic and strategic significance of Asia for its national interests, it encounters myriad Asian quarrels and controversies over “sovereignty” issues. Such disputes are “essentially foreign” to American “concerns”.

Turbulence

Turbulence in the Asia Pacific is discernible in Sino-Japanese rivalry over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. The spat over the islands, islets and reefs in the South China Sea between China and five other claimants, such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Brunei threatens to contaminate the

cooperative ties of China with these countries. China-Taiwan conflict remains unresolved despite a series of confidence building measures and rising trade and investment ties.

During the Cold War days, Washington shunned the non-alignment foreign policy championed by India and many others. But the strategic compulsions and economic imperatives of the post-Cold War era have tempted the US policy makers to innovate “non-alignment” strategy and apply in the mini-Cold Wars of Asia.

The U.S. political support to the idea of creation of a ‘Palestinian State’ in the post-9/11 incident and building of pressure on Israel to seriously negotiate peace; Washington’s policy of making India a “strategic partner”, while elevating Pakistan’s status as “major non-NATO ally” during the anti-terror operations in Afghanistan; constructing a rock-solid economic partnership with China, while maintaining defence and security ties with Taiwan; giving lip service to multilateral dialogue for resolution of South China Sea disputes, yet conducting joint research with China for oil exploration in the waters of this sea; refraining from backing Japanese claim of sovereignty over Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, but standing by the U.S.-Japan bilateral alliance treaty are some of the prominent illustrations of American non-alignment.

It is true that non-alignment emerged out of a bipolar power structure in the international system. The two poles, represented by capitalist USA and communist USSR, made it difficult for a large number of newly independent countries to take sides in the Cold War. The enlightened self-interest compelled them to pick out a stratagem that would enable them to seek cooperation with both the rival power blocs.

The hostility to the idea of non-alignment by both Washington and Moscow often posed acute dilemmas for the non-aligned countries.

Since non-alignment was not maintenance of equidistance from the two poles, non-aligned countries’ stances of various cold war related issues were sometimes sympathetic to Moscow and sometimes supportive of Washington. For example, India appeared to have appreciated the US position on the Suez

crisis, but sympathized with Moscow’s approach to the Hungarian crisis in 1956.

The United States in the post-Cold War era has no die-hard adversary. Although there is visible decline of the U.S. influence in world affairs and relative rise of the Chinese power, the PRC is no USSR. Up-and-coming superpower China perceives an emerging new containment strategy of the established superpower, the USA.

American strategic community, on the other hand, senses a Chinese project to push U.S. out of the Asia Pacific. Such mutual mistrust has, nevertheless, not sparked a new cold war. Complex economic interdependence is almost certain to preclude a Sino-US Cold War, though cold confrontation seems to be mounting between the two.

China has responded to America’s Asia rebalance strategy by picking up squabbles with most American allies, such as Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and others. But the non-aligned approach adopted by Washington has resulted in growing Chinese assertiveness and dwindling credibility in the US as a security provider.

The Asian allies of the U.S. doubt, if Washington would protect their interests at the cost of losing business in China. American non-alignment makes China fear less and America’s allies doubt more about the efficacy of alliance treaties.



**Chintamani Mahapatra is professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Centre for Canadian, U.S. and Latin American Studies. He contributed this article to the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) website on February 10, 2014. IPCS claims to be the premier South Asian think tank. This article originally appeared with the*

headline: US in Asia: A 'Non-Alignment' Strategy? [IDN- InDepthNews – March 7, 2014] ❖



“Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none; or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent controversies, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.”

VIEWPOINT

Educating for Sustainable Development

By Hirotsugu Terasaki*

TOKYO - According to UNESCO, ESD (Education for Sustainable Development), is “about enabling us to constructively and creatively address present and future global challenges and create more sustainable and resilient societies.”

The Great Earthquake which shook East Japan in March 2011 served as an important impetus for me to rethink the idea of “resilient societies.” My organization, the Soka Gakkai, mounted major relief efforts soon after the disaster struck. Living in Tokyo, I found that the degree of direct damage was relatively minimal, however, two months after the quake I visited the disaster-stricken areas of East Japan.

Towns there had been entirely engulfed by the tsunami waves and everything was swept away along much of the coastline. I was speechless as I saw the horrifying devastation, which was beyond my imagination.

As head of Peace Affairs for the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), I devoted myself to meeting with as many victims as possible and listening to their experiences so that I could relate them to the outside world.

As I spoke to these individuals and heard their experiences, I came to an important realization. Those who were actively engaged in their community on a daily basis and were working for the betterment of their locality, demonstrating the kind of ideal community involvement encouraged in ESD; I noticed that these people showed powerful resilience in the face of tragedy. There were survivors who were still searching for their missing family members, but willingly taking up the task of helping others.

One individual who provided support to one of the evacuation centers was moved by the inner strength of the evacuees and said, “Disaster victims aren’t people who’re simply in need. Despite living each day in the harshest of conditions, many of them showed care for others and chose to take action to help them.”

For example, when relief supplies were delivered to the center, evacuees took the initiative to ensure that the goods went to the most needy first, instead of demanding equal distribution. At times, they delivered the goods to victims who couldn’t seek shelter in the evacuation center and were stranded in their homes. Some even acted as mediators when conflicts occurred among evacuees inside the crowded shelters.

Three years have passed since this unprecedented calamity. However, the disaster areas are still struggling to find a path toward rebuilding their communities. Survivors are still facing various problems related to employment and housing. And the critical public debate surrounding the issue of nuclear power continues.

Following the quake disaster, I sense that Japanese public awareness is clearly shifting. It’s now placing a higher priority on sustainability. Discussions involving future development of

communities now focus on rebuilding societies that can nurture people-to-people bonds and co-exist with nature, instead of merely focusing on economic and material revival.

“Recovery” efforts must place importance on the revitalization of human beings. Individuals have developed a clear awareness that for that kind of recovery to take place, people-to-people, and people-to-environment relationships need to be given more consideration. Current post-disaster restoration efforts will enable us Japanese to realize the elements that are necessary for strengthening community resilience.

Currently, the young members of the Soka Gakkai are engaged in a project of sharing their experiences of overcoming difficulties in the aftermath of the earthquake and on how this has led to their inner transformation.

We’re engaged in this manner with the confidence that it’s through people sharing experiences of embodying “resilience;” by sharing episodes related to the human spirit that we’ll be able to create more sustainable and resilient societies that ESD aims for.

I myself have always felt the need for ESD because it will benefit humankind into the mid- and long-term future. However, in today’s world where we’re constantly subject to the dangers of sudden deprivation, there’s a need for us to develop the ability to work together beyond national borders in a spirit of shared responsibility for the challenges we face.

One of them is the quality that ESD aims to foster; that is, the ability to perceive things from a comprehensive standpoint and to empathize with others beyond time and spatial differences. This ability is expressed in the fourth principle of the Earth Charter as “Secure Earth’s bounty and beauty for present and future generations.”

Global citizenship education

How are we to foster this ability in our day-to-day educational efforts instead of realizing it after a crisis? I’d like to highlight the idea of “global citizenship education” which is the theme for a later session, and is also mentioned in the global action program following DESD.

For many years now, SGI President Ikeda has proposed educational initiatives aimed at cultivating awareness for global citizenship on the community level.

In 1987, he suggested 4 concrete action areas related to the human values of the environment, development, peace and human rights in an effort to promote education for global citizenship. Furthermore, the SGI has been engaged in grass-roots efforts to raise public awareness over many decades. ➡

Then two years ago at Rio+20, the SGI organized a roundtable discussion. Participants found value and importance in education for global citizenship as a way to break down silos and provide a forum for collaboration. SGI President Ikeda issued his annual peace proposal in which he puts forward that a new program of education for global citizenship be launched in a collaboration between the UN and civil society. He suggests that this happen as a follow-up to the Decade of ESD and incorporate it in the post 2015 agenda.

The new program that's being proposed is similar to the kind of targeted program that was implemented in different countries when the UN's World Program for Human Rights Education was developed during an experimental phase following the UN Decade for Human Rights Education. In that sense, it would be ideal if the following three principles be reflected in the targeted program following the Decade of ESD

- 1) Education that fosters the shared hope and confidence that problems, owing to their human origins, are amenable to human solutions;
- 2) Identify the early signs of impending global problems in local phenomena, and empower people to take concerted action; and
- 3) Education that will elevate the resolve of not seeking one's happiness and prosperity at the expense of others to a shared pledge.

These points are key elements emphasized in the exhibition "Seeds of Hope" which we created in collaboration with Earth Charter International. A part of this exhibition has been shown in the garden here since yesterday.

With the cooperation of our local SGI organizations, this exhibition has been shown in 30 countries around the world. The point of the exhibition is not for the display's creators to attempt to "teach" something from outside to the hosting location, but aims to engage the hosts and visitors to consider local issues and act to bring about improvements on the ground.

For instance, when we opened this exhibition in Brazil in conjunction with the Rio+20 summit, the local SGI-Brazil members adding their own section of 10 panels stands as a good example of this.

Sustainable development is a "grand idea" that is somewhat removed from people's daily lives. The very process of citizens of a given locality introducing examples that they've selected based on their experiences and perspectives and sharing them in an exhibition — this in itself is an opportunity to gain first-hand experience learning about an issue, reflecting on it and being empowered through acting on it.

Finally, as a member of civil society, we hope to continue our efforts to further promote ESD activities and foster global citi-

zens who see the importance of thinking globally and acting locally to tackle the issues of their region.



**Hirotsugu Terasaki is Executive Director of Peace Affairs at the Soka Gakkai International. This Viewpoint is extracted from his remarks at a two-day conference titled 'Ethics for Sustainability: New Perspectives on Leadership, Decision Making and Education', co-organized by Earth Charter International and the University for Peace (UPEACE) at the latter's campus near San Jose, Costa Rica, early February 2014. Leaders in the sustainability field, including Earth Charter Commissioner and former Prime Minister of the Netherlands Ruud Lubbers, Minister of Culture and Youth of Costa Rica Manuel Obregón, ambassadors to Costa Rica from several countries, and representatives from UNESCO and UNDP attended the events. [IDN-InDepthNews – February 22, 2014]❖*



NUKES

Towards A Nuclear-Free Sustainable Global Society

By Ramesh Jaura



SGI President Dr Daisaku Ikeda | Credit: SGI

BERLIN - Describing the disorientation and anarchy in the aftermath of First World War in 1919, the Irish poet W. B. Yeats wrote in his renowned poem *The Second Coming*:

**Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity."**

At a time when, despite the absence of a global war, things appear to be falling apart again, the Buddhist philosopher and educator Daisaku Ikeda does not despair and, in fact, shows the way to “value creation for global change”.

To celebrate the anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) – a Tokyo-based lay Buddhist movement linking more than 12 million people around the world – he has offered “thoughts on how we can redirect the currents of the twenty-first century toward greater hope, soli-

arity and peace in order to construct a sustainable global society, one in which the dignity of each individual shines with its inherent brilliance”. In his Peace Proposal 2014, published on January 26, Ikeda offers specific suggestions focusing on three key areas critical to creating a sustainable global society: edu-

education for global citizenship; strengthening resilience in regions such as Asia and Africa by establishing regional cooperative mechanisms to reduce damage from extreme weather and disasters; and prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons.

Ikeda writes: "In light of the increasing incidence of (natural) disasters and extreme weather events in recent years (as well as severe humanitarian crises caused by international and domestic conflicts), there has been growing stress on the importance of enhancing the resilience of human societies – preparing for threats, managing crises and facilitating recovery."

And this means: Realizing a hopeful future, rooted in people's natural desire to work together toward common goals and to sense progress toward those goals in a tangible way. Ikeda sees this as "an integral aspect of humankind's shared project to create the future -- a project in which anyone anywhere can participate and which lays the solid foundations for a sustainable global society".

Education for global citizenship

Ikeda regards education for global citizenship with a particular focus on young people crucial for a sustainable global society. With an eye on the summit scheduled to take place in September 2015 to adopt a new set of global development goals, widely referred to as sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Ikeda urges that targets related to education be included among these: specifically, to achieve universal access to primary and secondary education, to eliminate gender disparity at all levels and to promote education for global citizenship.

An educational program for global citizenship, the SGI President says, should deepen understanding of the challenges facing humankind; it should identify the early signs of impending global problems in local phenomena, empowering people to take action; and it should foster the spirit of empathy and coexistence with an awareness that actions that profit one's own country might have a negative impact or be perceived as a threat by other countries.

Another area that in his view should be a focus of the SDGs along with education is empowering youth. He suggests three guidelines to be included in establishing the SDGs: for all states to strive to secure decent work for all; for young people to be able to actively participate in solving the problems facing society and the world; and for the expansion of youth exchanges to foster friendship and solidarity transcending national borders.

Youth exchanges, in particular, help nurture friendship and ties that serve as a bulwark against the collective psychologies of hatred and prejudice. As such, the SGI President is of the view that their inclusion in the SDGs would be of great significance.

Ikeda's Peace Proposal 2014 also suggests the establishment of regional cooperative mechanisms to reduce damage from extreme weather and disasters, strengthening resilience in regions such as Asia and Africa. These would function alongside global measures developed under the UNFCCC, he says.

He calls for treating disaster preparedness, disaster relief and post-disaster recovery as an integrated process, and urges

neighbouring countries to establish a system of cooperation for responding to disasters.

"Through such sustained efforts to cooperate in strengthening resilience and recovery assistance, the spirit of mutual help and support can become the shared culture of the region," says an official synopsis of Ikeda's Peace Proposal 2014.

Ikeda suggests that the pioneering initiative for such regional cooperation be taken in Asia, a region that has been severely impacted by disasters. A successful model here will inspire collaboration in other regions, he adds.

A foundation for this already exists in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), which has a framework for discussing better cooperation. He calls on countries in the region to establish an Asia recovery resilience agreement, a framework drawing from the experience of the ARF.

The SGI President further recommends efforts to strengthen resilience through sister-city exchanges and cooperation, which provide an important basis for creating spaces of peaceful coexistence throughout the region. Currently, there are 354 sister-city agreements between Japan and China, 151 between Japan and South Korea and 149 between China and South Korea. Further, the Japan-China-South Korea Trilateral Local Government Conference has taken place annually since 1999 to further promote this kind of interaction.

Ikeda strongly proposes a Japan-China-South Korea summit to be held at the earliest to initiate dialogue toward this kind of cooperation, including cooperation on environmental problems. "The 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015, should serve as an impetus for further talks to explore the modalities of concretizing such cooperation," says Ikeda.

For a world free of nuclear weapons

The SGI President argues: "Natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunami are characterized by the fact that, while it may be possible to lessen their impact, it is impossible to prevent their occurrence. "This is in sharp contrast to the threat posed by nuclear weapons, whose use would wreak devastation on an even greater scale than that of natural disasters but which can be prevented and even eliminated through the clear exercise of political will by the world's governments."

In light of this, Ikeda regards the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons backbone of a sustainable global society. He argues that the Final Document of the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference and the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons held in Oslo, Norway, in March 2013 have helped encourage efforts by a growing number of governments to place the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons at the centre of all discussions of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Since May 2012, these governments have repeatedly issued Joint Statements on this topic, and the fourth such statement, issued in October 2013, was signed by the governments of 125 states, including Japan and several other states under the nuclear umbrella of nuclear-weapon states. ☺

Ikeda stresses the shared recognition that nuclear weapons fundamentally differ from other weapons, that they exist on the far side of a line which must not be crossed, and that it is unacceptable to inflict their catastrophic humanitarian consequences on any human being. This recognition, he says, holds the key to transcending the very idea that nuclear weapons can be used to realize national security objectives.

The SGI President reiterates his call for a nuclear abolition summit to be held in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 2015, the seventieth anniversary of the atomic bombings of those cities.

He hopes in particular that representatives of the countries that signed the Joint Statement on the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons, as well as representatives of global civil society and, above all, youthful citizens from throughout the world, will gather in a world youth summit for nuclear abolition to adopt a declaration affirming their commitment to bringing the era of nuclear weapons to an end.

Parallel with this, he makes two concrete proposals. The first is for a nuclear weapons non-use agreement. This, in his view, would be a natural outcome of placing the catastrophic humanitarian effects of nuclear weapons use at the centre of the deliberations for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, and it would be a means of advancing the implementation of Article VI of the NPT under which the nuclear-weapon states have committed to pursuing nuclear disarmament in good faith.

Ikeda argues that the establishment of a non-use agreement, in which the nuclear-weapon states pledge, as an obligation rooted in the core spirit of the NPT, not to use nuclear weapons against states parties to the treaty, would bring an enhanced sense of physical and psychological security to states that have relied on the nuclear umbrella of their allies, opening the way to security arrangements that are not dependent on nuclear weapons.

His second specific proposal is to utilize the process that is developing around the Joint Statements on the humanitarian

impact of nuclear weapons use to broadly enlist international public opinion and catalyse negotiations for the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons.

“It is important that we remember that even a non-use agreement is only a beachhead toward our ultimate goal – the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons. That goal will only be realized through accelerated efforts propelled by the united voices of global civil society.”

The SGI President points out that the world has “moved from an era in which the danger arose from the existence of conflict to one that is made dangerous by the continued existence of nuclear weapons”.

He adds: “The intense confrontation of the Cold War provoked a sense of crisis, giving rise to a stance of mutual deterrence in which the two sides threatened each other with nuclear arsenals of unimaginable destructive capability.”

“In contrast, today it is the continued existence of nuclear weapons in itself that gives rise to insecurity, pushing new states to acquire nuclear weapons while leaving existing nuclear-weapon states convinced of the impossibility of relinquishing these arms.”

Yet another sound argument for doing away with nuclear weapons is that global economic crisis that began six years ago has eroded the fiscal standing of virtually every national government. And yet the global cost of maintaining these increasingly inutile weapons is an astonishing US\$100 billion a year.

Subsequently, more and more people are coming to see nuclear weapons as a burden weighing down national finances rather than an asset that enhances national prestige. “In light of all these factors,” says Ikeda, “the motivation of the nuclear-weapon states to take proactive steps to reduce the threat posed by the continued existence of these weapons should increase.” [IDN-InDepthNews – March 19, 2014] ❖

Ikeda regards the prohibition and abolition of nuclear weapons backbone of a sustainable global society. He argues that the Final Document of the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference and the Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons held in Oslo, Norway, in March 2013 have helped encourage efforts by a growing number of governments to place the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons at the centre of all discussions of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

NUKES

Three Conferences To Focus On Nuclear-Free World

By Jamshed Baruah

BERLIN - As tension mounts in relations between the U.S. and Russia on Ukraine amid apprehensions of a nuclear fallout, three international conferences scheduled for April 2014 have acquired added significance in promoting efforts towards nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.



A former South Dakota intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) site, now a Cold War Museum | Credit: london.usembassy.gov

The first in the series is a meeting of foreign ministers on April 11-12 in Hiroshima, nearly two months after the Second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Mexico.

It will be followed by an inter-faith conference organised by the Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International (SGI) on April 24 in Washington. From April 28 to May 9 the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will hold its third session at the United Nations in New York.

The PrepCom is purported to prepare for the Review Conference in terms of assessing the implementation of each article of the NPT and facilitating discussion among States with a view to making recommendations to the Review Conference.

The NPT, which entered into force in 1970 and was extended indefinitely in 1995, requires that review conferences be held every five years. The Treaty is regarded as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Promoting a world without nuclear weapons is also the objective of the Hiroshima ministerial meeting, which is part of the

Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), backed by a coalition of states with Japan and Australia taking the lead.

The coalition came into being in an effort to help implement the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, adopted by consensus.

Composed of Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, the NPDI has issued a series of declarations concerning the pace of NPT negotiations and the need to swiftly move on both non-proliferation and disarmament.

At its ministerial meeting in the Hague in April 2013, the NPDI resolved to "actively contribute to the work of the PrepCom including by submitting, for further elaboration by all State Parties, working papers on reducing the role of nuclear weapons, non-strategic nuclear weapons, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty (CTBT), the wider application of safeguards, nuclear weapons-free zones and export controls as well as an update of last year's working paper on disarmament and non-proliferation education".

The resolution added: "We also firmly believe that universal-

zation and early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are essential steps to achieve nuclear disarmament. We welcome the ratification of the Treaty this year by Brunei Darussalam and Chad, bringing the total of ratifications to 159. . . . We appeal urgently to all countries that have not yet become Parties, in particular to the remaining eight States listed in Annex II of the Treaty, to sign and ratify the CTBT without further delay.”

Further: "The Nuclear Weapon States have a particular responsibility to encourage ratification of the CTBT and we call on them to take the initiative in this regard. Pending the entry into force of the Treaty, we call upon all States to refrain from nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions.”

‘Three Preventions’ and ‘Three Reductions’

The importance of the Hiroshima ministerial conference was underlined by Japan’s Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida in a speech at the Nagasaki University on January 20, 2014. Kishida was born in Hiroshima, the first city to have been victimized by the first nuclear bomb ever deployed.

Kishida said, ‘Three Preventions’ and ‘Three Reductions’ were the centerpiece of Japan’s “basic thinking towards a world free of nuclear weapons”.

The former are: “(1) prevention of the emergence of new nuclear weapon states, (2) prevention of the proliferation of nuclear-weapons-related materials and technologies, and (3) prevention of nuclear terrorism.”

They constitute: “(1) reduction of the number of nuclear weapons, (2) reduction of the role of nuclear weapons, and (3) reduction of the incentive for possession of nuclear weapons.”

Interfaith conference

Implementation of such measures calls for active participation of the global civil society, says SGI President Daisaku Ikeda. “Where there is an absence of international political leadership, civil society should step in to fill the gap, providing the energy and vision needed to move the world in a new and better direction.”

“I believe that we need a paradigm shift, a recognition that the essence of leadership is found in ordinary individuals - whoever and wherever they may be - standing up and fulfilling the role that is theirs alone to play,” he adds.

Ikeda writes in his 2013 Peace Proposal: "It is necessary to challenge the underlying inhumanity of the idea that the needs of states can justify the sacrifice of untold numbers of human lives and disruption of the global ecology. “At the same time, we feel that nuclear weapons serve as a prism through which to bring into sharper focus ecological integrity, economic development and human rights – issues that our contemporary world cannot afford to ignore. This in turn helps us identify the elements that will shape the contours of a new, sustainable society, one in which all people can live in dignity.”

Against this backdrop, an interfaith conference, initiated by SGI in Washington – the seat of the U.S. Administration and

Congress – is of great importance.

Third PrepCom

Of crucial significance is the third PrepCom for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT. Hiroshima and Nagasaki will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings in 2015. This and the G8 Summit in 2015 would, according to SGI President Ikeda, be an appropriate opportunity for an expanded summit for a nuclear-weapon-free world, which in his view should include the additional participation of representatives of the UN and non-G8 states in possession of nuclear weapons, as well as members of the five existing NWFZs – Antarctic Treaty, Latin American NWFZ (Tlatelolco Treaty), South Pacific NWFZ (Rarotonga Treaty), Southeast Asia NWFZ (Bangkok treaty), and African NWFZ (Pelindaba Treaty) – and other states which have taken a lead in calling for nuclear abolition.

Addressing the opening of the 2014 session of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament (CD) on January 21 in Geneva. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon that there has been no breakthrough yet. “The pervasive cycle of pessimism in this body must still be overcome or else the CD will be overtaken by events,” he said.

Sharing his thoughts on a possible way forward, the UN chief said that while the CD continues to seek the path towards renewed disarmament negotiations, it is important that it develop treaty frameworks and proposals through structured discussions. “Laying such a foundation for future negotiations would be a concrete first step towards revalidating the relevance of the Conference,” he noted, adding that he hopes the body can make good progress before this spring’s third preparatory meeting for the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

The vital significance of the third PrepCom is underlined by the fact that Egypt decided to withdraw from the second session in April 2013, in protest against “the continued failure of the conference” to implement a 1995 resolution to establish a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East. Egypt’s Foreign Affairs ministry highlighted that the decision to postpone a conference to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East violated the decision made in the 2010 NPT conference to hold the conference in 2012. The ministry added that this “may affect the credibility of the NPT system”.

The conference was originally scheduled to take place in 2012, but was postponed by the four sponsors, the UN, the United States, Russia and Britain because not all states in the region – Israel above all – has not agreed to attend.

In its statement the ministry accused “some of the parties to the NPT, as well as some non-state parties” of hindering the establishment of the conference. It added that Egypt has sought the establishment of a nuclear weapon free zone since the launch of the initiative at the United Nations in 1974. It called on the member states of the treaty, the UN, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the international community to uphold their responsibility in implementing resolutions.

[IDN-InDepthNews – March 15, 2014] ❖

NUKES

Parliaments Want A Nuclear-Weapon-Free World

By Jamshed Baruah



IPU/Giancarlo Fortunato

GENEVA - More than 163 parliaments from around the world, constituting the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), have adopted a landmark resolution urging parliaments to “work with their governments on eliminating the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines” and to “urge their governments to start negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or package of agreements to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world”.

The resolution, *Toward a Nuclear Weapon Free World: The Contribution of Parliaments*, adopted on March 20 also implores parliaments to “use all available tools including committees to monitor national implementation of disarmament commitments, including by scrutinising legislation, budgets and progress reports” and promote and commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on September 26.

The resolution, adopted after 12 months of consultations and negotiations, further asks parliaments to work together with their governments and civil society to build momentum for a constructive Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in 2015, ratify and implement existing non-proliferation and disarmament treaties and agreements, including the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, Convention on Nuclear Terrorism, IAEA nuclear safeguards agreements and the Action Plan from the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and

strengthen existing nuclear-weapon-free zones as well as support their expansion and the establishment of new zones, especially a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The Resolution also welcomes the first conference in Oslo (Norway) and the second in Narayit (Mexico) on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, and the emergence of other multilateral approaches and initiatives including the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Taking Forward Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament Negotiations. It also encourages parliamentarians to engage in multi-party networks like Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) in order to support effective parliamentary action.

Alyn Ware, PNND’s Global Coordinator says in a web posted statement: “This resolution demonstrates the growing understanding by parliamentarians that their responsibilities extend beyond those of their political parties and national positions to

a shared obligation to the global common good and the security of future generations. Parliamentarians from non-nuclear countries, nuclear-armed countries and countries under extended nuclear deterrence doctrines came together to challenge governments to emerge from behind their complacency or cloaks of nuclear deterrence, and to act resolutely to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.”

The issue of nuclear weapons was chosen by the IPU, from among a number of key security issues, as its focus for peace and security for 2013-2014, due to the importance of this topic for human survival.

Destructive effects

“On-going efforts by a few States to develop nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them threaten regional and global peace and security,” said Blaine Calkins from Canada, one of the co-rapporteurs of IPU Standing Committee on Peace and International Security which facilitated the drafting, deliberations and adoption of the resolution.

PNND Co-President Saber Chowdhury from Bangladesh, who also served as the President of the IPU Standing Committee for the past four years, introduced the resolution by quoting the historic conclusion of the International Court of Justice that “the destructive effects of nuclear weapons cannot be contained in time or space”.

“Parliamentary action worldwide should aim to eliminate the concept of *nuclear deterrence* once and for all,” said Yolanda Ferrer from Cuba, the other co-rapporteur of the IPU Standing Committee.

“It encourages the perpetual possession of nuclear weapons and justifies the use of huge sums to modernize nuclear arsenals, funds that could be invested to solve the most pressing problems facing the world’s population, such as hunger, poverty and unhealthy living conditions.”

“Parliamentarians can play a key role in moving governments to implement their shared commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons,” said Calkins. “Among other things, they can: hold governments to account and ensure compliance with commitments and responsibilities under the NPT; convince governments to accept new commitments, mechanisms and responsibilities as required; and, mobilize public opinion and civil society to demand faster and deeper action.”

The IPU published in cooperation with PNND a Handbook in 2012 that comprehensively outlines good policies and practices that can be pursued to complement governmental efforts in non-proliferation and disarmament, said Calkins. “It is precisely by pursuing such work and partnering with governments and civil society that parliamentarians can ensure that the aspiration of a world free of nuclear weapons will finally be realized.”

PNND and the Swiss Foreign Ministry co-hosted a parliamentary roundtable at the IPU Assembly following the adoption of the resolution, to discuss the humanitarian imperative and the cooperative security framework for a nuclear weapon free world.

The roundtable focused on effective actions parliamentarians could take in their parliaments, using examples of exemplary practice from the Handbook, as well as actions they could take in regional bodies such as the Parliamentary Assemblies for NATO and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. It also focused on key priorities from the IPU resolution on which parliamentarians and the IPU should follow-up, particularly the start of negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention – possibly by a like-minded group or through a UN resolution – and the renunciation of nuclear deterrence including through an increased focus on cooperative security mechanisms and approaches as the best alternative. [IDN- InDepthNews – March 21, 2014] ❖



Credit: Whitney R. Harris World Law Institute

NUKES

NATO and Russia Caught in New Nuclear Arms Race

By Julio Godoy*

BERLIN - The U.S. government is unofficially accusing Russia of violating the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, by flight testing two-stage ground-based cruise missile RS-26.



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Although the U.S. government has not officially commented on the alleged Russian violation of the INF, which prohibits both countries to producing, testing and deploying ballistic and cruise missiles, and land-based missiles of medium (1,000 to 5,500 kilometres) and short (500 to 1,000 kilometres) range, high ranking members of the government in Washington have been leaking information to U.S. media, in a moment of particular tense relations with Moscow.

In 1987, after years of negotiations, both the NATO and the then Soviet Union agreed to destroy and to stop production of all missiles and related weapons, for instance the U.S. Pershing Ib and Pershing II and the BGM-109G Gryphon arsenals. Moscow, on its part, eliminated the whole SS missile series, including the SSC-X-4, in 1987 its most modern, land-based cruise missile with a nuclear warhead.

According to a report by the New York Times, the tested missile RS-26 aims at filling “the gap left in the missile potential of Russia as a result of the limitation of INF.” The newspaper also indicated that mid-January, the acting Assistant Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller informed the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) of the U.S. data.

U.S. military experts, such as Dan Blumenthal and Mark Stokes of the American Enterprise Institute, say that the main Russian problem with the INF is that China is not bound by it and continues to build up its own Intermediate-Range forces. In a comment for the Washington Post, Blumenthal and Stokes wrote that “Moscow has already threatened to pull out if China does not sign the treaty.”

If the U.S. reports are true, the Russian tests would confirm what numerous peace and anti-nuclear weapons activists have been warning about since several years, that the NATO and Russia are engaged in a new nuclear arms race, despite all the

bilateral talk about disarmament.

For the NATO has also been “filling the gaps” of its nuclear capability, in particular with the ongoing plan to “modernise” its arsenal of B61 nuclear weapons, stationed all over Western Europe.

Additionally, practically all nuclear states, including India, Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan have at one time or other in recent years improved their arsenal on middle range rockets and nuclear weapons.

The formidable B61 arsenal stationed in Europe is a remnant of the Cold War. The actual number of such weapons of mass destruction is a top military secret, but some 20 of these are reported to be deployed in Germany, in the military basis near the village of Buechel, in the southwest of the country. Another undetermined number, up to 200 such weapons, are deployed in Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey, all members of the NATO.

According to the NATO, or, rather, to the U.S. government, the modernisation of this nuclear arsenal is necessary given the archaic character of the B61 weapons. They are so-called dumb or “gravity” weapons, to be dropped from war planes over target zones, and be guided by a radar that, according to U.S. senate hearings, was constructed in the 1960s and originally designed for “a five-year lifetime”.

Dropping such dumb nuclear weapons from an airplane would mean that, even in case they operate as expected, vast areas would be obliterated from the face of the earth.

Additional dangers

The old B61 nuclear bombs manifest several additional dangers, especially for the own NATO armies and European popu-

lations: In 2005, a U.S. Air Force review discovered that procedures used during maintenance of the nuclear weapons in Europe held a risk that a lightning strike could trigger a nuclear detonation.

In 2008, yet another U.S. Air Force review concluded that “most” nuclear weapons locations in Europe did not meet U.S. security guidelines and would “require significant additional resources” to bring these up to standard.

All these risks were confirmed during several hearings at the U.S. congress late last year, and during which military officials explained the range of modernisation the B61 arsenal is expected to go through.

Officially, the U.S. government has dubbed this modernisation of the B61 arsenal “a full-scope Life Extension Program (LEP)”, as Madelyn R. Creedon, assistant secretary of defence for global strategic affairs, told a session of subcommittee of the House of Representatives last October. [Read more: <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=747337>]

During the session, Creedon described the B61 as “the oldest warhead design in the U.S. nuclear stockpile, with several components dating from the 1960s.”

She added that its modernisation “will meet military requirements and guarantee an extended service life coupled with more affordable sustainment costs; and it will incorporate the upgrades that (the National Nuclear Security Administration) NNSA deems mandatory to provide a nuclear stockpile that is safe, secure, and effective. During the same hearing, General C. R. Kehler, head of the U.S. strategic command, told the representatives what many peace activists have been saying since years, but the NATO always and only until recently denied.

“The average B61 is over 25 years old, contains antiquated technology, and requires frequent handling for maintenance,” Kehler said. “Only through extraordinary measures has this aging family of weapons remained safe, secure and effective far beyond its originally planned operational life.”

If the schedule for the modernisation is to be respected, the new B61-12 weapons will be ready by 2020, and the programme would have cost at least eight billion U.S. dollars, according to the NNSA’s current estimate.

However, as the Centre for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, a Washington, D.C.-based, non-partisan research organisation, has pointed out, an independent U.S. Defence Department assessment found that the actual cost could be higher than \$10 billion. At this price, the LEP will cost \$25 million per bomb. The Centre recalls too, that the Ploughshares Fund complained that at this cost each refurbished B61 will be worth more than its weight in gold.

According to critics of the LEP, the modernisation won’t mean only “a life extension programme”, but instead a formidable increase of the weapons’ capabilities.

Hans M. Kristensen, director of the Nuclear Information Project at the Federation of American Scientists, and one of the

most distinguished civil experts on nuclear weapons, says that new features of the weapons contradict early pledges by U.S. authorities that the LEP “will not support new military missions (n) or provide for new military capabilities.”

However, new information about the LEP indicates precisely the contrary.

“The addition of a guided tail kit will increase the accuracy of the B61-12 compared with the other weapons and provide new warfighting capabilities,” Kristensen says. “The tail kit is necessary, officials say, for the 50-kilotons B61-12 (with a reused B61-4 warhead) to be able to hold at risk the same targets as the 360-kilotons B61-7 warhead. But in Europe, where the B61-7 has never been deployed, the guided tail kit will be a significant boost of the military capabilities – an improvement that doesn’t fit the promise of reducing the role of nuclear weapons.”

For comparison, the ‘Little boy’ nuclear bomb with which the U.S. destroyed on August 6, 1945 the Japanese city of Hiroshima had an explosive yield of between 13 and 18 kilotons. The ‘Fat man’ bomb that destroyed Nagasaki three days later had a yield of up to 22 kilotons.

During the October 2013 hearings at the U.S. House of Representatives, it became also clear that B61-12 would replace the old B61-11, a single-yield 400-kiloton nuclear earth-penetrating bomb introduced in 1997, and the B83-1, a strategic bomb with variable yields up to 1,200 kilotons.

For Kristensen, “The(se) military capabilities of the B61-12 will be able to cover the entire range of military targeting missions for gravity bombs, ranging from the lowest yield of the B61-4 (0.3 kilotons) to the 1,200-kiloton B83-1 as well as the nuclear earth-penetration mission of the B61-11.”

Such upgrading of the destruction capabilities would make the new arsenal an “all-in-one nuclear bomb on steroids, spanning the full spectrum of gravity bomb missions anywhere.”

Most problematic

This extraordinary improvement of the B61 arsenal’s mass destruction potential is the most problematic, for the European governments concerned, in particular in Germany, have since at least 2009 openly expressed their wishes to dismantle the weapons.

In reaction to the historic speech U.S. president Barack Obama made in the Czech capital Prague in April 2009, where he called the nuclear weapons spread across the world “the most dangerous legacy of the Cold War”, the Berlin government of the time argued in favour of the dismantling the archaic B61 stationed on German soil.

In what it was called “an unprecedented statement”, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Social Democratic German foreign minister of the time, called for the withdrawal of the U.S. nuclear weapons deployed in his country. In April 2009, only days after Obama’s speech in Prague, Steinmeier told the German magazine *Der Spiegel* that “the (B61 nuclear) weapons are militarily obsolete today” and promised that he would take

steps to ensure that the remaining U.S. warheads “are removed from Germany.”

In the two years that followed, the next German conservative government, represented by its new foreign minister Guido Westerwelle, continued to make the case for dismantling the B61 arsenal. Like his predecessor Steinmeier, Westerwelle, serving for the Christian Democratic-Liberal ruling coalition, made the arguments of the anti-nuclear weapons activists his own, and recalled that such arsenal is in many ways obsolete, for it was conceived to be used in conjunction with other armament that itself is out of use, and it aimed at an enemy – the Soviet bloc – that had ceased to exist.

On March 2010, a large majority of the German parliament, the Bundestag, passed a resolution unequivocally demanding the withdrawal of the “U.S. nuclear weapons from German soil.”

But both Steinmeier and Westerwelle failed at convincing the NATO in general, and the U.S. government in particular, to follow. Instead, they had to kowtow before the fait accompli decided in Washington, that the B61 arsenal be modernised to become, to again use Hans Kristensen’s aptly description, an “all-in-one nuclear bomb on steroids.”

Steinmeier is again foreign minister, but he long ago ceased to discuss the matter in public. He may have “gotten shell-shocked by the pushback from the old nuclear guard in NATO,” as Kristensen said of Westerwelle on the same ques-

tion.

At least, Steinmeier less than two years ago signed a declaration by a group of German parliamentarians representing all political parties, in which they insisted that the U.S. nuclear arsenal be removed from Germany. In the declaration, Steinmeier, at the time leader of the social Democratic parliamentarian group, and colleagues accused the then ruling conservative Christian Democratic-Liberal coalition of having failed at reaching the same goal. “Worst still: By now it seems as if the government has said goodbye to this goal.”

The same accusation can be made this time against Steinmeier, again German foreign minister: He has not lived up to his own conviction, that the NATO nuclear weapons must be removed from European soil. The new NATO-Russia crisis caused by the turmoil in Ukraine will certainly help him to argue his change of mind.

**Julio Godoy is an investigative journalist and IDN Associate Global Editor. He has won international recognition for his work, including the Hellman-Hammett human rights award, the Sigma Delta Chi Award for Investigative Reporting Online by the U.S. Society of Professional Journalists, and the Online Journalism Award for Enterprise Journalism by the Online News Association and the U.S.C. Annenberg School for Communication, as co-author of the investigative reports “Making a Killing: The Business of War” and “The Water Barons: The Privatisation of Water Services”. [IDN-InDepthNews – March 6, 2014]. ❖*

Photo below: Russia and USA measure their missiles | Credit: pravda-team.ru



NUKES

Africa Asked To Address Nuke Proliferation Risks

By Jaya Ramachandran

STOCKHOLM - African countries, which are party to the 1996 African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty of Pelindaba and already contribute a significant share of the uranium used in the peaceful nuclear industry worldwide, have been asked to develop “a full understanding of their extractive industries, to avoid the risk that uranium will be supplied from unconventional sources – for example, as a by-product of other mining activities”.

Such potential hazards can be addressed by making proper and up-to-date physical security arrangements at the sites where uranium is being mined and while it is being transported, says a new study by SIPRI, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Uranium production is an important part of the African economy, with Niger, Namibia and South Africa creating up to 18% of the world's annual production. Many African countries produce uranium or have untapped uranium ore deposits.

The study titled *Africa and the Global Market in Natural Uranium - From Proliferation Risk to Non-proliferation Opportunity* points out that little attention has been paid to the limited, but not negligible, nuclear proliferation risks associated with the mining of uranium. As the global market for uranium changes and as more African countries become uranium suppliers, there is a need for them to be vigilant of those risks.

Authored by Ian Anthony and Lina Grip, this is the first study to look at the proliferation risks associated with uranium extraction in Africa and to suggest practical ways in which African states can act to mitigate them.

The authors argue that, “as countries of proliferation concern achieve proficiency in uranium conversion and enrichment, restricting easy access to uranium could be one part of a comprehensive and integrated approach to non-proliferation across the nuclear fuel cycle”.

International cooperation

Officially known as the SIPRI Policy Brief, the study recommends international cooperation by initiating dialogue with converters and suppliers of enrichment services. In particular, it says, uranium-supplier countries, perhaps working in cooperation with each other, should initiate a dialogue with converters and suppliers of enrichment services to better understand how those actors meet their legal obligations and manage proliferation risk.

“A potential framework would be to invite converters and enrichment service providers to participate in special sessions of regional or subregional meetings that are already being organized by African nuclear regulators,” says the policy brief, adding: “Another potential framework would be to make contact with, for example, the Nuclear Suppliers Group to explore the opportunities for dialogue on specific subjects relevant to proliferation risk management.”

Those discussions, the authors suggest, could take up the questions: What are the legal obligations of converters and enrich-

ment service providers? How do they understand those obligations? What procedures are in place to make them effective? What procedures exist in countries that have nuclear weapons to ensure separation of civil and military activities?

Initiate dialogue

The study also stresses the need to initiate dialogue with uranium suppliers located in nuclear weapon-free zones. It argues: As African countries increasingly explore commercial uranium supply arrangements with countries in Asia and the Middle East, it will be important to develop a common understanding among uranium-supplier countries about how they interpret their obligations under current nuclear weapon-free zone treaties.

Although the language related to conditions for supply in the nuclear weapon-free zone treaties is similar or, in some cases, identical, their parties nevertheless seem to reach different conclusions about whether or not commercial agreements with, for example, India can be implemented with acceptable levels of risk.

An international conference could bring together uranium suppliers (current and anticipated) to discuss their interpretations of treaty obligations, with the final objective of a harmonized approach to conditions for supply, says the study, and pleads for discussing at the regional level current practices for key proliferation risk management policies and practices

“African countries engaged in uranium supply could benefit themselves and each other through regular discussion on the subject of how they manage proliferation risk. This can also be a valuable opportunity for information sharing and the development of standards tailored to specific conditions found in Africa,” the policy brief says.

It notes that special sessions of the regular meetings already taking place in the context of, for example, the Treaty of Pelindaba, the network of African nuclear regulators and on arms control under the umbrella of the African Union could offer opportunities to convene such discussions.

Proliferation risks

“A topic that could be taken up at an early stage of such meetings is the need for a comprehensive understanding of uranium supply from Africa, taking into account the unconventional sources. A joint analysis and a comprehensive picture of unconventional sources of uranium in Africa would be a valuable outcome from discussions,” authors of the policy brief say. ☞

A second topic that could be taken up at an early stage, they suggest, is assessing proliferation risks that may arise out of uranium supplied for non-nuclear purposes.

The study further proposes convening the group of uranium suppliers and prospective uranium suppliers at periodic meetings to discuss proliferation risks and risk mitigation. At present, there is no forum where uranium suppliers meet to discuss proliferation risk management. Most African uranium-supplier countries participate in the IAEA Annual Conference.

“This could be a good opportunity to convene as many uranium-supplier countries as possible for an annual discussion of current tendencies and developments of mutual interest,” says the study. Examples of issues that could usefully be included on the agenda of such meetings include exchange of information on current practices in, for example, administration of safeguards, national implementation of physical protection obligations and effective export controls.

Meetings of this kind would be an opportunity to inform uranium-supplier states of the latest developments in guidance and principles of best practice on, for example, conditions to attach to permits, conditions for granting licences, physical protection, and safe and secure transport. [IDN-InDepthNews – January 10, 2014] ❖

The study titled *Africa and the Global Market in Natural Uranium - From Proliferation Risk to Non-proliferation Opportunity* points out that little attention has been paid to the limited, but not negligible, nuclear proliferation risks associated with the mining of uranium. As the global market for uranium changes and as more African countries become uranium suppliers, there is a need for them to be vigilant of those risks. Authored by Ian Anthony and Lina Grip, this is the first study to look at the proliferation risks associated with uranium extraction in Africa and to suggest practical ways in which African states can act to mitigate them.



Koeberg nuclear power station | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

NUKES

‘Now Is The Time’ For Middle East Nuclear-Free Zone

By Jaya Ramachandran

BERLIN - The eminent Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has revived the issue of a Middle East nuclear weapon-free zone (NWFZ), first proposed in 1962. Discussions on the subject have been frozen since the last quarter of 2012, when a planned United Nations conference on the region came to naught in the face of Israel’s opposition.

In fact, if further proliferation is to be prevented in the Middle East, and regional security enhanced, “now is the time to convene the conference mandated by the 2010 NPT Review Conference,” says Tariq Rauf in an essay posted on the SIPRI website.

“The process for establishing a NWFZ in the Middle East will not be easy,” he cautions, “but the experience of other regions with such zones suggests that political will and leadership are crucial.”

NWFZs have already been established in Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, South East Asia, Africa and Central Asia, with a view to reducing the role of nuclear weapons in international security and preventing the emergence of new nuclear-weapon states.

“These established NWFZs are of particular relevance to an examination of the material obligations to be included in the verification regime of a future NWFZ in the Middle East,” states Rauf.

He is of the view that a Middle East NWFZ would require the dismantlement of Israel’s nuclear weapon capabilities under international verification. “Compliance by states with CSAs (Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement) will also need to be assessed,” he adds.

He recalls: “The 2010 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) agreed that the United Nations Secretary-General, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States should convene a conference in 2012, to be attended by all states in the Middle East, on establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons, and other weapons of mass destruction, in keeping with the mandate of the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.”

However, in November 2012 the USA unilaterally announced that it would not be convened due to the situation prevailing in the region.

Rauf points out that all states of the Middle East region except for Israel are parties to the NPT and have undertaken to accept comprehensive IAEA safeguards. Arab states of the Middle East maintain that the establishment of a NWFZ would contribute to the conclusion of a peace settlement in the region.

However, Israel takes the view that a Middle East NWFZ, as well as other regional security issues, cannot be addressed in isolation from the establishment of a lasting peace and stable regional security conditions.

These issues, according to Israel, should be addressed within

the framework of a regional multilateral security and confidence-building process, says Rauf, an internationally respected authority on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues and currently the director of SIPRI’s arms control and non-proliferation programme. From 2002 to 2011 he headed the Verification and Security Policy Coordination Office at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In that capacity he dealt with high-priority verification cases involving Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, South Korea and Syria. He was also the Alternate Head of the IAEA delegation to NPT conferences from 2003 to 2010, and the IAEA Liaison and Point-of-Contact for a number of multilateral control regimes and United Nations Security Council committees.

Rauf writes: “Effective verification is an important measure of arms control agreements that aims at creating confidence between states.

In the Middle East, with a legacy of fear and mistrust, the creation of such confidence would require verification arrangements that are far-reaching and comprehensive. NWFZs are of relevance not only to the parties directly involved, but also to states bordering the region and to the wider international community.”

According to Rauf, this underscores the need for a verification regime that creates the necessary confidence among the parties to the NWFZ agreement and in the international community at large.

“Verification arrangements under existing NWFZ agreements, which provide for international inspection through the IAEA and for regional structures that may be invoked in specified circumstances, can be replicated in a NWFZ in the Middle East in order to help meet both regional and global concerns,” he adds.

Safeguards

Rauf is of the view that in a NWFZ in the Middle East, each state party would be required to conclude and bring into force a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement with the IAEA. “In a non-nuclear-weapon state with a CSA in force with the IAEA pursuant to a NWFZ agreement and the NPT, any undeclared reprocessing or enrichment would constitute a clear violation of the provisions of the CSA.”

The eminent expert considers the verification of nuclear fuel cycle activities essential in order to ensure their exclusively peaceful use. This is because technologies that enable the enrichment of uranium and the separation of plutonium are regarded as sensitive because they can be used to make both fuel

for nuclear power reactors and the generation of electricity, and nuclear weapons.

According to Rauf, the cost and effort required in the application of IAEA safeguards at declared reprocessing plants can vary from almost no cost for decommissioned or abandoned facilities to continuous inspection costing tens of millions of dollars.

The SIPRI expert adds: “Reprocessing operations normally involve the release of gaseous fission products into the atmosphere and the release of particulates, some of which are deposited at significant distances from the facility.”

It is possible to detect clandestine plants through enhanced information analysis, complementary access and environmental sampling. But the safeguards approach for an enrichment plant will also depend on the operational status of the facility, he adds.

“The methods used to detect undeclared enrichment plants are essentially the same as for undeclared reprocessing. Enrichment operations normally result in the release of aerosols – especially at locations where connections to the process piping are made, but also through the plant ventilation system. These aerosols may not travel very far, and thus environmental sampling is only likely to be effective close to such facilities,” writes Rauf.

According to him, the difficulty in finding emissions from clandestine enrichment plants is further compounded by advances in enrichment technology that greatly reduce the size of plants and reduce their electrical power requirements.

The SIPRI expert assures that verification measures applied in a Middle East NWFZ would benefit from a system that parallels the existing strengthened IAEA safeguards system based on CSAs supplemented by an Additional Protocol.

Such measures are designed to track all nuclear material in use in a state taking account of current and future technological developments, which may help increase the level of assurance of non-proliferation provided by safeguards practices. In addition, they provide increased assurances with respect to the detection of undeclared facilities and fissile material.

The SIPRI expert concludes that in order to provide states party to a NWFZ in the Middle East with a level of assurance analogous to the assurance provided by the IAEA under comprehensive safeguards agreements, the verification system would have to apply to the entire nuclear fuel cycle in those states and be geared to the detection of undeclared production facilities and nuclear material, through the supplementary verification tools provided by an Additional Protocol.

[IDN-InDepthNews – March 2, 2014] ❖



The Dimona Reactor Dome Credit: Mordechai Vanunu

LATIN AMERICA

NATO Interested in Colombia

By Peter Tase*

MILWAUKEE, Wisconsin - Over the last two years, the Colombian government has given high priority to diplomatic efforts meant to shore up its immediate security situation, actively pursuing bilateral, trilateral and multilateral agreements with various governments in the region and beyond.

Colombia occupies a strategic position in the western hemisphere: it has a large territory connecting North America with the South, and it has enormous shores on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. This geostrategic advantage allows Colombia to act as a gate of entry for South America, and its network of seaports processes a large volume of commodities and other shipments coming in and out of the United States and Europe on a daily basis.



Bogota is also trying to position itself as an important hub in terms of regional defense, boosting its domestic military training and capacity building for fighting drug trafficking networks, terrorism, and other sources of transnational crime.

These capacity building programs include military training, and intelligence and technology sharing agreements with various countries such as Costa Rica, Ecuador, Chile, Canada, Israel, the United Kingdom, Spain, France, and Korea. Official working relationships have also been established with the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Cooperation with the United States plays a large role in Colombia's overall security outlook. In addition to a local DEA presence in Bogota, the United States has also supported Colombia in its risk management efforts, the transformation of its armed forces, and the war against drug traffickers and organized crime. Under Washington's guidance, the Santos government has taken a leading role in the region as a country

with a vast experience in matters of security.

Colombia and the United States have also signed an agreement to establish an overall assistance and cooperation plan covering four countries: Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Panamá. In 2013 alone, there have been over 25 training activities that have trained 43 members of the security forces of these Central American countries.

Colombia and NATO

In early 2013, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos proposed to establish closer military relations between his government and NATO. His public statement, made in early 2013, raised many eyebrows in the upper ranks of the Bolivarian anti-imperialist cluster of Latin American countries, many of whom are also very vocal in UNASUR.

Evo Morales, Bolivia's president and one of the most outspoken proponents of Bolivarianism, expressed a high level of concern and called Santos' action a "provocation and a threat" to Bolivarian countries like Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Nicaragua.

According to Colombian Defense Minister Juan Carlos Pinzón, Bogota "was not looking at an actual membership in NATO, but was merely planning to sign a deal with NATO boosting cooperation in human rights, military justice, and the training of troops."

For Dr. Odeen Ishmael, Guyana's Ambassador to Kuwait, "Colombia's proposed association with NATO has raised genuine concerns. During her June 6 press conference in Quito, Ecuadorian Defense Minister María Fernanda Espinosa, joined by her Brazilian counterpart Celso Amorim, stated that both nations want more information, since they belong to a cooperative area in South America, and it is very important that regional countries discuss these things."

Despite some regional concerns, the Colombian vice minister of defense was the first ever Colombian high-ranking official to attend NATO's meeting in Monterrey and the only Latin American official in attendance.

According to Vice Minister Diana Quintero, "[Colombia] has approached NATO in order to be one of its global allies and this invitation is in response to NATO's goal of sharing good practices and experiences with other countries." Quintero stated that "NATO is not only a military organization, but it is a community with the best practices in defense budgeting, military doctrine and training."

On the other hand, Colombian pragmatism is evident in its

participation in UNASUR and the South American Defense Council. The Ministry of Defense has participated in the tenth conference of defense ministers of the Americas (CDMA) and has led discussion in relation to information exchange, citizen security training, and it has also held conferences with Interpol and MERCOSUR.

Regional Contributions

From 2005 to mid-2013, Colombia has trained 17,352 military staff from approximately 47 countries in various areas of assistance, particularly in the war against drugs, crime prevention, and organizational development. In 2012 alone, Colombia trained 3,362 people from 25 countries, including Panama (1170 trainees); Ecuador (500); Guatemala (323); Mexico (194); Costa Rica, (189); Peru (169); Honduras (125); and Argentina (108).

Together with Colombia, Canada has also been an important partner for Central American countries. An integrated security cooperation agreement was signed between both countries,

with the objective of strengthening defense capacity for the governments of Guatemala and Honduras in order to combat trans-border and organized crime. Thanks to this program, in 2013 there have been 24 training activities from which 536 members of the armed forces were trained. Additionally, Colombia’s Defense Ministry has signed cooperation agreements with Italy, United States, Germany, Ecuador and Panama.

**Peter Tase is a contributor, freelance journalist and a research scholar of Paraguayan Studies and Latin American Affairs in the United States; he is the founder of Paraguay Economic Forum in Milwaukee, United States. Educated at the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee and Marquette University, Tase is the author of "Simultaneous Dictionary in Five Languages: Guarani, English, Italian, Albanian and Spanish" and "El Dr. FEDERICO FRANCO y Su Mandato Presidencial en la Historia del Paraguay." This article originally appeared on Geopoliticalmonitor.com with the headline Colombia Looks to NATO and Beyond in Regional Defense.*

[IDN-InDepthNews – January 09, 2014] ❖



Photo on page 40: Credit: Wikimedia Commona

Photo above: Defense Minister Pinzón Bueno and NATO Deputy Secretary General Credits:MercoPress

ICT

Operating In A Changing Environment

By Kalinga Seneviratne*

BANGKOK - The information and communication technology (ICT) sector is undergoing a period of major transition, changing the way we communicate with each other. These technologies are introducing new players to the industry, challenging traditional business models and regulatory frameworks.

IDN's Kalinga Seneviratne spoke to Dr Rohan Samarajiva, a former telecom regulator in Sri Lanka, at the ITU Telecom World 2012 event in Bangkok in November 2013. Samarajiva is a professor of Communication and Public Policy at Ohio State University in the U.S. and the founding Chair of [LIRNEasia](#) (Learning Initiatives on Reforms for Network Economies Asia), an ICT policy and regulation think tank active across emerging economies in South and South East Asia, and the Pacific. He was its CEO until 2012.



Dr Rohan Samarajiva | Credit: LIRNEasia

Seneviratne: *When radio and television came, the concept of public service broadcasting (PSB) arrived and in most countries the government became the only investor in the sector and thus monopolized the airwaves. Today, with the arrival of ICTs, the argument is that governments should not play a role in this sector, especially as operators and content providers. Do you agree with this view?*

Rohan Samarajiva: I have been a former regulator and never worked for private sector in my life, even in the U.S. I taught at a State University. We have done this experiment before, having government supply telecom services (and) it has been (an) absolute miserable failure. It is only when institutions like World Bank stopped giving governments money, and instead gave money to reform sectors and allowed competition to come in, that there is this explosion not only about mobile telephony, but also in fixed telephony. Governments should play a regulatory role and multiple private entities should provide the services, both infrastructure and applications and contents over the infrastructure.

Seneviratne: *Shouldn't governments come in as regulator of contents, since there are issues related to cybersecurity, and*

also certain contents accessed by children, etc?

Samarajiva: . . . for long telecom (industry) was talking about pipes. We didn't care what went through the pipes, but regulated the pipes ... when I was a telecom regulator, I didn't think of myself as engaged in contents regulation. (But) now people are talking about someone needing to look at contents. We have to first look at the fundamental basis of regulation. One is in infrastructure industry, drinking water, transport, electricity, and telecom where we have very imperfect competitive markets and where market fervor has to be controlled. That is the basis of telecom regulation. So everything comes from that economic logic.

The second logic is what you find in banking and insurance – if you are in insurance which is going to give me money in 20 years how do I know if this company is still there in 20 years? That is a different kind of regulation. When it comes to contents it's a very different area and we have seen how governments, instead of trying to do good through contents regulation, have done bad.

Then you have to ask the question how to minimise the chances of them being bad. There you have to develop a coherent

basis ... based on negative externalities . . . children for example cannot enter into contracts and what contents are suitable for them or not. So we've had certain regulation for that ... it needs to be more technological regulation, rather than some bureaucrat seated in an office and deciding what website is suitable or not.

Seneviratne: *At ITU there was this controversy on the alleged attempts to regulate the Internet (see <http://www.indepthnews.info/index.php/global-issues/1264-battle-for-internet-control-looms-over-itu-meet>). How do you see the issue now?*

Samarajiva: I was commenting on the specific area, which was about charging for contents. The proposal was made by the European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (ETNO).

They couldn't get it through their own countries but managed to get it through African and Middle Eastern groups. But their language failed, hopefully I like to think the language was essentially saying that any network that supplied to a mother network had to pay for it.

This sounds innocent enough, but what it really means is, you sitting here in Bangkok send a small amount of data asking for a YouTube video. That's a small data query to US, but the response will be a large amount of data that would come from US to the Thai network that you are connected through, so that you will see that video.

The question is, why US network should pay the Thai network for something that you as a customer of the Thai network asked for. It doesn't seem logical.

It's not only illogical, it's outright harmful in the sense that US network – or nobody knows where these networks are, YouTube can be anywhere in the world – and that network would say: why do you pay for this?

Even if it is feasible, YouTube will say: This man in Thailand is a poor man; he is not giving me advertising revenues, Thailand is not a very profitable advertising market for me, I will not be bothered. They will cut off Thailand from YouTube.

That is what you call the Balkanisation of the Internet. I took a very personal angle to it, because back in 1985, I came back after my PhD and was trying to develop a consulting business

in Sri Lanka. I feared running a knowledge based business sitting in a Third World country because of lack of information. The way you work as knowledge producers has completely transformed as a result of the Internet. Part of that is because the Internet allows seamless and mostly free access to enormous amount of information that is out there.

This proposal would have stopped all that, because to take all that information behind pay-walls where we will have to pay with credit cards or it could have balkanized us, where entire regions would have been excluded from free contents. And the worse part of it is that my own information, because I run a think-tank and as a principle everything we produced is free of charge on our website, we don't know even where we park this information, we park it anywhere where we can buy service base. What will happen is, I will have to pay to get my own information if this proposal went through. That's why we fought it. We were very happy it was defeated.

Seneviratne: *YouTube and Google use our contents for free and make billions of dollars. Shouldn't they pay contents providers something?*

Samarajiva: I have a colleague Nalaka Gunawardena who does a lot of videos of what we do. We pay him for making the video. It's quality development journalism (and) we could keep them on DVDs and decorate our walls or whatever. Instead, we put it on YouTube and we are always impressed by the fact that somebody allows us a platform to put our information on so that any user, who would like to use our information, could retrieve it under his or her condition, and someone has given a free facility to do so. Way I look at YouTube is that, which is, why the hell are they spending money to help me to put my information?

You put to me a different question - why they don't pay me money to take my information? This is a complete business model issue ...Google's business model around YouTube (is that) they are monetising 10 to 15 percent of the contents that a lot of people watch, which can be accompanied by advertising. They have figured it out and let them do that. We didn't figure it out. If I wanted to get advertising revenues from my videos, I can put it on my website and if I can attract large numbers that come to mine through YouTube, I can make some advertising revenue too. So I don't see a problem. I put it out there willingly and anytime I can take it off.

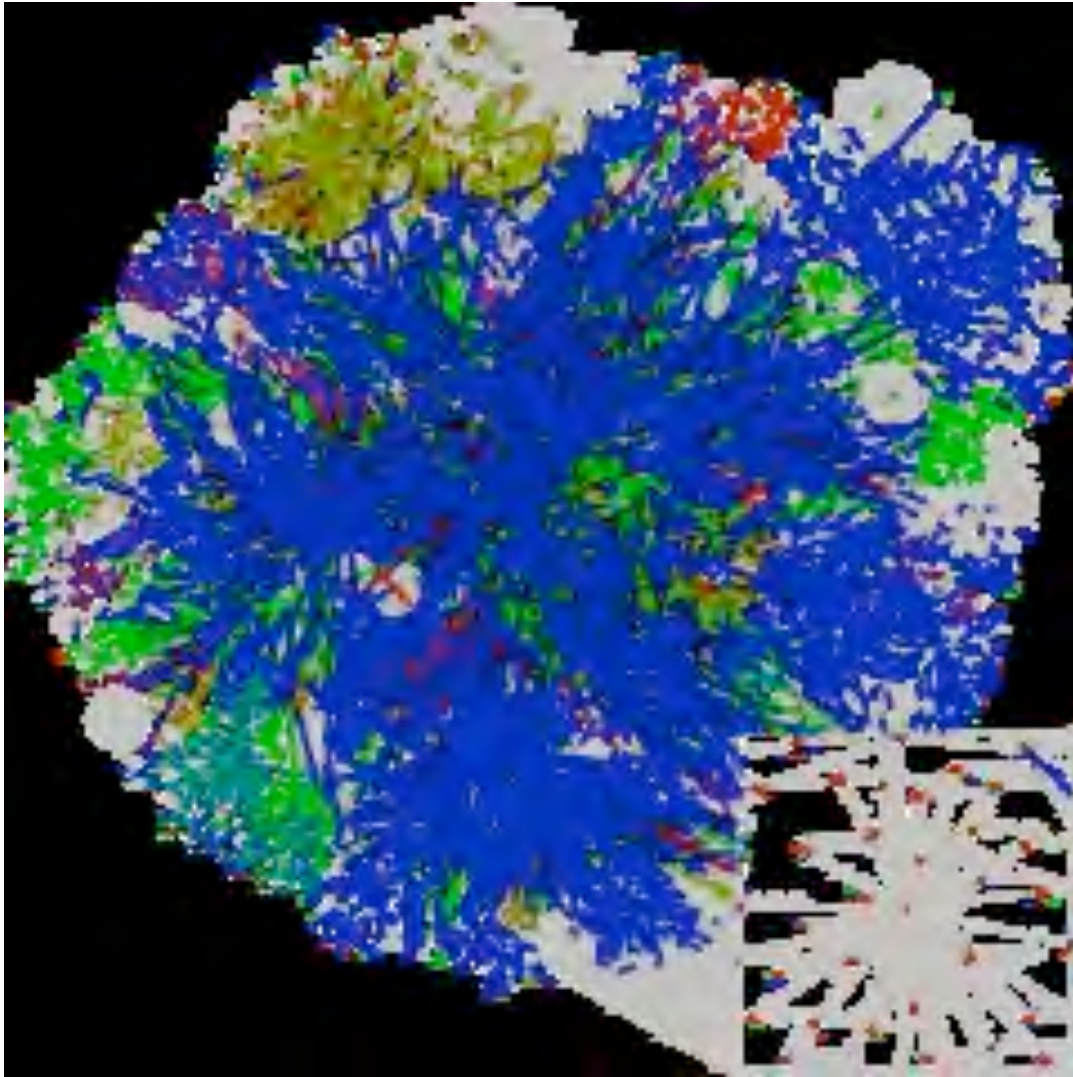
**Kalinga Seneviratne is IDN Special Correspondent for Asia-Pacific. He teaches international communications at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. [IDN-InDepthNews – January 05, 2014]❖*

“It is only when institutions like World Bank stopped giving governments money, and instead gave money to reform sectors and allowed competition to come in, that there is this explosion not only about mobile telephony, but also in fixed telephony. Governments should play a regulatory role and multiple private entities should provide the services, both infrastructure and applications and contents over the infrastructure.”

ICT

Arab World Needs High Speed Internet For Social Inclusion

By Bernard Schell



Credit: Wikimedia Commons

ABU DHABI - Internet is known to have played a crucial role in the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ aimed at overthrowing autocratic regimes and ushering in opportunities for majority of the people to shape their own future. Now a new World Bank report reveals that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) countries lag behind other regions in use of a technology that is as crucial as the steam engine was as a driving force behind the Industrial Revolution.

But there is no need to despair. “The Middle East and North Africa region has been the cradle of science and technology and can again use modern technology to address the contemporary problems faced by the region,” says Inger Andersen, World Bank Vice President for the MENA region.

“We at the World Bank Group are committed to working closely with all countries in MENA to improve access and quality of broadband internet connection.”

This is because the demand for widespread access to broadband internet, a key driver of economic growth, job creation,

and social inclusion, has never been greater, says the report titled *Broadband Networks in the Middle East and North Africa: Accelerating High Speed Internet Access*. Open competition and policy and regulatory changes could transform the region into a global leader in high speed internet, says the report which is the latest on the MENA region.

The report launched on February 6, 2014 highlights how broadband drives economic development and is core to the competitiveness of nations. However, high speed internet penetration is low in MENA compared to emerging regions in Europe and Asia, it adds. ☺

The report examines the regulatory and market bottlenecks that are hampering the growth of the Internet in these and other MENA countries: the five North African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Libya, Tunisia); the six Mashreq countries (the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and the West Bank and Gaza economy); the six Gulf countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates); and Djibouti and the Republic of Yemen.

“With the exception of Gulf countries, where internet access is available to broad segments of the population, in many countries of the Arab world fewer than a quarter of households have access to this essential tool,” says the World Bank. “Millions of people cannot afford internet services and are therefore excluded from the information revolution that is shaping the modern world.”

The report finds that in Morocco and Tunisia, low-income households would need to pay about 30 to 40 percent of their income to afford fixed or mobile broadband services. In Yemen, the poorest 40 percent of the population would need to spend over half of their income for mobile high speed internet. In Djibouti, the cost of fixed and mobile broadband can cost a multiple of a monthly income of the poorest 60 percent of the population.

“The Arab world is facing slower economic growth and high unemployment especially among young people and women,” says Carlo Maria Rossotto, World Bank ICT Regional Coordinator in the MENA region and co-author of the report. “Broadband can radically change the socio-economic prospects for the region and contribute to higher growth and shared prosperity.”

The study is a "first" in terms of assessing the endowments of untapped fiber optic networks belonging to energy, electricity and transport utilities, and their potential contribution to the development of affordable Internet services. If used more optimally, these networks could boost broadband access, including in rural areas, says a World Bank media release.

It continues: “With 49,000km of fiber optics deployed by Algeria Telecom and over 20,000km owned by utilities, Algeria stands out as a potential regional leader. Also, Libya has extensive fiber optics networks owned by oil and gas companies that can play an important role for internet development.” The report highlights policy recommendations for MENA countries

eager to engage in broadband sector reform. These recommendations include boosting local competition between different telecom service providers to allow them to offer broadband to a larger number of people using new platforms. It pleads for exploring new models of public private partnerships, which in the view of its authors would increase the efficiency of operating and expanding broadband networks at a local level. Sharing unused fiber optic cables among utility networks would also reduce the cost of new broadband deployment and increase the resilience of existing networks, says the report.

“Moreover, the provision of incentive structures could significantly improve the feasibility of rolling out broadband services to underserved areas. For example, introducing incentives in the real estate industry could ensure that high speed internet is provided to newly built neighborhoods and buildings. Additionally, implementing policies to increase the provision of high speed internet in rural and underserved areas could promote digital literacy and stimulate greater economic opportunities and social inclusion,” says the World Bank report.

According to the media release, “the World Bank Group is committed to helping countries reduce extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity. The Bank views access to information and communication technology as essential to achieving transformative change.” Rossotto assures:

“Investing in broadband networks could create thousands of new jobs in infrastructure, while at the same time, developing a platform for broad-based, knowledge-driven employment in the region.”

The report re-emphasizes the important contribution that broadband Internet can make and assesses the status of existing infrastructure in at least 18 MENA countries. While there is significant potential across the region, however, the take-up of broadband Internet has been slow, and the price of broadband service is high in many countries, says the report.

In large part, this is seen to stem from market structures that, too often, reflect the past when telecommunications were treated as a monopoly utility service. The report finds that there are gaps in infrastructure regionally with no connectivity between neighboring countries in some cases. Similarly, the report finds, there are gaps within countries exacerbating the (digital) divide between rural and urban areas.

[IDN-InDepthNews – February 10, 2014] ❖

“Moreover, the provision of incentive structures could significantly improve the feasibility of rolling out broadband services to underserved areas. For example, introducing incentives in the real estate industry could ensure that high speed internet is provided to newly built neighborhoods and buildings. Additionally, implementing policies to increase the provision of high speed internet in rural and underserved areas could promote digital literacy and stimulate greater economic opportunities and social inclusion,” says the World Bank report.

THE LAST PAGE

Mysterious Disappearance of Flight MH370

By Ernest Corea

The disappearance of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH370 which took off from Kuala Lumpur bound for Beijing on March 8 and, up to the time of writing, has not been seen nor heard from after a routine “good night” from the co-pilot to air traffic controllers brought Malaysia unexpectedly into the glare of public interest.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak announced on March 24 that MH 370 had crashed into the Indian Ocean, leaving no survivors. This premature (if realistic) assumption enraged family members of those traveling on MH370. (Najib’s advisers should remind him of the old saying: “Never assume. It makes an ass of you and me.”)

Some relatives of passengers on board MH370 reacting to Najib’s announcement “demanded” that the Malaysian Government should “tell the truth.” Others insisted that Malaysia should “produce” the missing aircraft and passengers. Clearly, Najib’s “rush to judgment” was premature, coming as it did while the international search for the missing aircraft was continuing.

The timing and the finality of Najib’s comment suggested that Malaysian authorities were insensitive to the emotions of family members whose loved ones were travelling on the ill-fated flight. Of the 239 people on board 153 were Chinese and their family members no doubt remember past eruptions of ethnic violence in Malaysia. Others feared that Najib’s statements meant the search for MH370 would be called off. Najib himself had to be under great stress when he spoke.

Malaysia has prospered under a series of effective political leaders. Now, with growing criticism of a bewildered response to a human tragedy, Najib would do well to sit down in a quiet corner of his office and “drop a thousand.” He could contemplate how former Prime Minister Tun Razak would have handled the situation. Razak laid the foundation for Malaysia’s economic growth. He was Najib’s father.

The Bush-Clinton rivalries of the past have largely been subsumed by the personal bonds and mutual respect that have grown between the two political families. The two ex-presidents --George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton – worked together to help renew and rebuild areas affected by the disastrous Southeast Asian tsunami. From that time onward, the two families have grown close. How will they react if the next contenders for the US presidency are Jeb Bush (former governor of Florida and a brother of the disaster known as George W.) and Hillary Clinton?

Although the next US presidential elections are not due until 2016, would-be contenders are lining up for inspection by party fund-raisers, like cattle being examined by would be buyers. On the Republican side, party “elders” are doing their best to persuade Jeb Bush to be their standard bearer. While he has many pluses he also has a formidable minus: his family name is Bush. Despite this, party leaders are convinced that he is their best hope of regaining the White House when President

Barack Obama’s term ends.

For the Democrats, Vice President Joe Biden says he will, run but he is likely to be knocked down in the Democratic party’s primaries. US media have transformed him from a man of gravitas, and a senator who showed an exceptionally deep awareness of US foreign policy imperatives into a gaffe-prone bungler.

Democrats appear to be convinced that all they have to do is wait until Hillary Clinton puts her reading and writing projects aside and announces that she is willing to run for president. Her supporters are setting up the machinery to sustain her. They appear to be convinced that Hillary Clinton has simply got to announce that she willing run, and the presidency will be hers. It is precisely this variety of arrogance in Hillaryland that helped propel Obama to the White House.

Cameroon has begun a new post-graduate program involving mathematical and scientific research for the continent’s outstanding students, reports IDRC (the Ottawa-based International Development Research Centre). The program is part of the network maintained by the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences – Next Einstein Initiative (AIMS-NEI. This is the fourth such institute in the AIMS-NEI network.

More from IDRC: “AIMS-NEI centres host respected lecturers from around the world to provide rigorous science and technology training to students. The training is designed so graduates can provide homegrown solutions to development problems facing the continent. “Since 2004, 560 students have completed the program and 80% of graduates have gone on to Master’s and PhD programs in Africa and abroad.”

Despite threats of violent retribution by the Taliban, some 7 million voters went to the polls in Afghanistan to cast their votes for the country’s next president, who will succeed President Hamid Karzai. Results will not be known for several weeks when all the votes will reach a central tallying center and the votes are counted. When the results are known, Afghanistan will experience its first transfer of presidential power through the ballot.

**The writer has served as Sri Lanka's ambassador to Canada, Cuba, Mexico, and the USA. He was Chairman of the Commonwealth 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'. He is Global Editor of and Editorial Adviser to IDN-InDepthNews as well as President of the Media Task Force of Global Cooperation Council.*

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LOCAL KNOWLEDGE VITAL FOR GLOBAL EXPERTS

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By Pranab Bardhan* | IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis

BERKELEY (IDN |Yale Global) - For quite some time the economic development profession has gone global in a rather grandiose way. Those quick with pronouncements on global development issues get the maximum attention, rise to the top of the profession, and may even get to hobnob with international celebrities and philanthropists.

The premium has been on finding global patterns in fighting poverty – in promoting comprehensive development strategies meant for a broad range of countries, with the Washington Consensus or alternatively the so-called Beijing Consensus – and pronouncing overarching policy judgments on the hot issues of the day on a global scale, including austerity or stimulus, free trade, capital flows, global inequality, migration, intellectual property rights, the development NGO movement and the like.

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'WE CAN, AND MUST, END POVERTY'

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By Erik Solheim* | IDN-InDepth NewsDocument

While the international community has learned much about what works in terms of reducing poverty, and the world is on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of halving the proportion of people whose income is less than USD 1.25 a day, it is far from achieving the overarching MDG goal of eradicating extreme poverty. Subsequently, "getting to zero" remains a challenge in the face of the intractable difficulties of reaching those mired in extreme poverty, says the OECD Development Co-operation Report (DCR) 2013, which explores what needs to be done to achieve rapid and sustainable progress in the global fight to reduce poverty. But Erik Solheim, a former Norwegian Minister of International Development, and current Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee, insists in an Editorial to the Report that 'We Can, And Must, End Poverty'.

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SWEDEN COMMENDED FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AID

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By Richard Johnson | IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis

PARIS (IDN) – At a time when international development cooperation does not draw public focus, a new report highlights Sweden's significant contribution to assisting countries in need of money they cannot afford to muster on capital markets. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Sweden provided USD 5.24 billion in official development assistance (ODA) in 2012. This amounted to 0.99 percent of its gross national income (GNI) – in excess of the United Nations' target of 0.7 percent of GNI.

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'DE-COLONIZE DEVELOPMENT GOALS'

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By Manuel Montes* | IDN-InDepth NewsViewpoint

GENEVA (IDN) - The big attraction of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), or at least the first seven of these, was their near universal acceptability. It mobilized both resources and politics, nationally and internationally, in pursuit of reducing poverty, hunger, gender inequality, malnutrition and disease.

Since they were introduced, the excitement over the MDGs fully occupied the space for development thinking. The MDG discourse – in international agencies and in national settings – appears to have crowded out the basic idea that development is about economic transformation.

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES – INTERNATIONAL EDITION
MAGAZINE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
A PRODUCTION OF GLOBAL COOPERATION COUNCIL
in cooperation with IDN-InDepthNews | Analysis That Matters
WWW.GLOBAL-PERSPECTIVES.INFO
ISSN 2190-0671 (PRINT) • ISSN 2190-068X (INTERNET)
PERIODICITY IN 2013: FOUR ISSUES
PUBLISHER: GLOBALOM MEDIA GmbH
Marienstr. 19-20 • D-10117 Berlin | E-Mail: rjaura@global-perspectives.info
Global Editors: Ernest Corea & Ramesh Jaura

ASIA-PACIFIC BUREAU:
2-10-6-103 Igusa | Sugunami-ku | Tokyo 167-0021 | Japan
WASHINGTON BUREAU | Mr. Ernest Corea
8512 Forrester Boulevard | Springfield, Virginia 22152
NORTH AMERICA BUREAU:
GLOBALOM MEDIA | Division of 751061 Ontario Inc.
33 Lafferty Street, Toronto, ONT M9C 5B5, CANADA
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