



# ASIA AND THE WORLD



Panoramic view of Shinjuku and Mount Fuji taken from Bunkyo Civic Center

Skyline of Mumbai from across Back Bay





# Nuclear Non-Proliferation

# B E Y O N D

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# Poor Judgement and Partisan Attacks Trump Sound Policy

By Ernest Corea in Washington DC

Reports of stocks plummeting and investor confidence diminishing dominated news cycles even as President Barack Obama attempted to reassure fellow-Americans – and the world – that their confidence in the country's continuing strength would endure.



Speaking directly to the White House press corps and projecting his remarks to broader publics, Obama asserted that "markets will rise and fall, but this is the United States of America, and no matter what some agency may say, we always have been and always will be a triple-A country."

That was on the afternoon of Monday, August 8, the first full working day after financial watchdog

Standard and Poor's (S&P) decision the previous Friday (August 5) to downgrade its "long term sovereign credit rating on the USA to AA+ from AAA." S&P followed up its initial action by downgrading the country's two government-supported lending agencies, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

## BAD MATH

The decision was immediately assailed. S&P's competence, knowledge, and good faith were questioned. Its policy makers were called amateurish, stupid, and worse. Their decision was said to be based on false assumptions that invalidated their conclusions.

To begin with, the U.S. was nowhere near defaulting on its debt when S&P reached its decision, and the president had options he could legitimately pursue – including his powers under the 14th amendment to the constitution which deals with the nation's debt – if other processes failed. Thus, the fundamental rationale for a downgrade did not exist.

The initial draft of their report containing the downgrade decision showed that S&P's financial experts needed to go to the bottom of the class and learn some basic math: it contained a \$2 trillion error. No small bananas, that.

When the error was pointed out, S&P cheerfully deleted the figure but went ahead with its decision based on that error. S&P was also roundly criticized for moving against the U.S. almost immediately after it had taken some important steps towards putting its financial house in order whereas the agency had done nothing to eliminate the dreck pushed by big business houses on unsuspecting investors. Those investments caused the recession to begin with.

Robert Kuttner, co-founder and co-editor of *The American Prospect*, wrote: "You have to hand it to Standard and Poor's. Forget their two-trillion dollar math error. The whole idea that these people are evaluating the creditworthiness of the United States is just loony. These are the same people who brought us the crisis, by blessing junk sub-prime loans as AAA securities. And they did so because they were paid as consultants by the same financial scoundrels who created the securities. The last job they deserve is arbiter of the security of Treasury bonds."

## POLITICAL MOVE

Analysts argued, too, that S&P had mixed political considerations with financial assessments when making their decision. S&P did comment caustically on American politics. It said: "The political brinkmanship of recent months highlights what we see as America's governance and policymaking becoming less stable, less effective, and less predictable than what we previously believed."

"The statutory debt ceiling and the threat of default have become political bargaining chips in the debate over fiscal policy. Despite this year's wide-ranging debate, in our view, the differences between political parties have proven to be extraordinarily difficult to bridge, and, as we see it, the resulting agreement fell well short of the comprehensive fiscal consolidation program that some proponents had envisaged until quite recently."

Obama acknowledged, however, that there was much on the political front to cause concern: "...we didn't need a rating agency to tell us that the gridlock in Washington over the last several months has not been constructive, to say the least. We knew from the outset that a prolonged debate over the debt ceiling – a debate where the threat of default was used as a bargaining chip – could do enormous damage to our economy and the world's. That threat, coming after a string of economic disruptions in Europe, Japan and the Middle East, has now roiled the markets and dampened consumer confidence and slowed the pace of recovery."

## TURBULENT TIMES

Obama said he hoped the downgrade would give US politicians "a renewed sense of urgency" in grappling with the U.S. deficit and debt. He urged both political parties to shed their partisanship and commit themselves to seeking solutions to problems that just had to be resolved.

"It is not a lack of plans or policies that is the problem," he said. "It is a lack of political will in Washington, an insistence on drawing lines in the sand. That is what we need to change."

A state of turbulence prevailed in the "market," however, and when the day's trading ended the Dow Jones industrial average had dropped over 600 points, which was said to be "its steepest point loss in a single day since December 2008." Declines were reported elsewhere, as well, with investors showing nervous reactions to what was going on in the U.S. The turmoil rolled over into Asia and Europe. ➔

Meanwhile, gold, which is seen as a safe investment in times of economic uncertainty, jumped to a new record high of \$1,697 an ounce. The price of oil dropped, by contrast, with producers concerned that weak growth in consuming countries would result in reduced demand. And, in a "vote of confidence" as it were, many U.S. investors moved to investments in U.S. Treasury bonds.

### ROUTINE PROCESS

S&P's decision to downgrade the U.S. rating was reached after previously noting their concerns that Congress and the White House could not agree on raising the debt-ceiling while also pursuing a practical plan to reduce debt.

The authorisation required for the country to raise its debt ceiling in response to financial reality used to be a routine process, which did not cause past Republican negotiators to develop visceral, aggression-causing stress.

The debt ceiling was raised 18 times during the presidency of Ronald Reagan (an average of once every five months), four times during the Clinton presidency, and seven times during the eight-years of George W. Bush. Obama's presidency has seen the debt ceiling raised twice before, in 2009 and 2010.

This time, however, the nation's political leaders went right to the edge of a political abyss before they decided to adopt a bipartisan agreement that could have been crafted right at the beginning of what developed into an ugly, partisan process.

The main provision of the agreement, as described by the White House, authorised the president to increase the debt limit by at least \$2.1 trillion, eliminating the need for further increases until 2013; enacted 10-year discretionary spending caps generating nearly \$1 trillion in deficit reduction, balanced between defence and non-defence spending; agreed to establish a bipartisan committee (six Democrats, six Republicans) to identify an additional \$1.5 trillion in deficit reduction, including from entitlements and tax reform. The committee is required to submit legislation by November 23, 2011, and Congress is required to vote on the committee's recommendations by December 23, 2011. [A fact sheet outlining and explaining the details of the agreement may be accessed on Internet.](#)

### SMOKING TEA

Meanwhile, the partisanship that marred negotiations over the debt ceiling and dismayed much of the world has metamorphosed into – yes, unfortunately – partisan bickering over the S&P actions.

Republicans have been quick to blame Obama and Secretary of the Treasury Tim Geithner for S&P's actions, and have done so in the kind of obstructionist terms they continuously direct at "anything Obama." They have also demanded that Geithner be fired. By way of response, Geithner has announced that he will not desert his position, and Obama has accepted the assurance with what appears to be a sense of relief.

Democrats have accused Republicans of causing the problems, as a consequence of their capitulation to the views as stated or surmised of the Tea Party. It was, in fact, suggested that Republicans had not drunk tea but smoked it. Senator John Kerry, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee flatly described the situation as a "Tea Party downgrading."

Kerry added that a bipartisan group of senators were willing to accept "a mix of reductions and reforms in Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid but also recognized that we needed to do some revenue."

Angry political exchanges, with Republicans being the most vituperative and negative, take place at a time when there is considerable evidence to show that intransigence – which was mainly by the Republicans – during the debt ceiling negotiations has revolted the public. Polls demonstrate that a majority of Americans want job creation to take precedence over efforts to cut spending.

The most recent New York Times/CBS News poll found that a whopping "82 percent of Americans now disapprove of the way Congress is handling its job – the most since The Times first began asking the question in 1977, and even more than after another political stalemate led to a shutdown of the federal government in 1995.

"More than four out of five people surveyed said that the recent debt ceiling debate was more about gaining political advantage than about doing what is best for the country. Nearly three-quarters said that the debate had harmed the image of the United States in the rest of the world."



### CONSIDER THIS

Why would Congressional politicians continue to engage in partisan attacks even when they know that this is contrary to public expectations? To seek an answer, let's consider this: in the earliest stages of the Obama presidency, Senator Mitch McConnell, the Republicans' leader in the Senate said that his single most important goal was to ensure that "Obama is a one-term president." He reconfirmed this view during a recent televised interview. "Every active Republican in the country" shared this goal, he asserted. Is that what all the ugly politicking is about?

When the Republicans have chosen their presidential candidate and political battle is joined it would clearly be the objective of each candidate to do his/her damndest to defeat the other.

But when Mitchell publicly espoused his goal of eliminating Obama's presidency at the end of his first term, the 2012 presidential was far down the road. At that time, both parties should have made collaboration and cooperation in the interests of good governance on behalf of the people who elected them their "single most important goal."

That's how democracy works. Mitchell should know that and no doubt he does. Why then did he in association with "every active Republican in the country" want to derail Obama's candidacy for a second term long before they knew how his presidency might develop, who his opponent might be and whether s/he is acceptable to them? Is there a hidden agenda here? Just asking. ■

# Poor Countries Shedding the Yoke of Marginalization

By Mirjam van Reisen in Brussels\*

The African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) is exploring new relationships in order to claim its rightful position in global institutions and act as a spokesperson for the world's poor and less powerful nations.

Global governance is needed more than ever now that the world's problems – higher food prices, climate change, the financial crisis and ensuing economic recession – are increasingly travelling across borders.

The real problem, however, is an unrepresentative global governance system. It means that small, vulnerable and marginalized countries affected by these problems are effectively excluded from governing. The ACP, which represents almost half of the world's states, should by default speak for the world's poor, less powerful nations. Yet the group barely has a say in global governance. The question is, what can the ACP do to claim a stronger voice in global governance?



The ACP is under-represented in global institutions. Global governance through the Group of Twenty (G-20), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations (UN) Security Council is driven by the major industrialized powers. Some regional representative groups function in the World Bank, for instance, but even there the interests of smaller economies are represented by the bigger states.

The G-20 has taken on board some emerging countries since it was announced in 2009 that it would replace the G-8 as the world's main economic council. But marginalized countries, such as the group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), small island states or countries without ports, have no place in it. Most of these are members of the ACP, which has huge potential in trade and investment. But as it stands, the ACP's share in global trade and investment does not do justice to its potential.

## THE ACP DISCOVERS THE BRICS

One of the ways for the ACP Group to gain more independence is by exploring cooperation outside the traditional scope of partners, of which the European Union (EU) is one. Here, too, the group has potential. It is highly diverse and counts several larger, emerging

members that could take the lead in establishing new partnerships. Indeed, the South African ambassador to the EU, Anil Sooklal, has suggested that South Africa should be a channel for ACP concerns in the G-20. In the new global balance of power, by contrast, China and other emerging countries in the G-20 could in fact benefit from giving ACP states a stronger say in global institutions.

But the most significant recent development is the ACP's exploration of potential partnerships with China, other Asian Tigers and the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China). The BRICs should be taken as an example of what ACP countries can achieve, according to Lord Meghnad Desai, emeritus professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

"Look at the last five years. The centre of gravity in the world has shifted sharply to the east, and if you like – to the south. The so-called developing countries were capable of rapid growth. The G-8 is now the G-20, not because of the good heart of the G-8, but because of the achievements of the emerging countries."

ACP countries have already begun forging economic alliances with the new players on the global economic stage, and this at a time when the relationship between the ACP and its traditional partner, the EU, has become strained. The ACP stands to benefit a great deal from partnerships with BRIC countries, but it also needs to protect its own interests. Africa has been particularly active in cooperative ventures with China.

## CHINA IN AFRICA

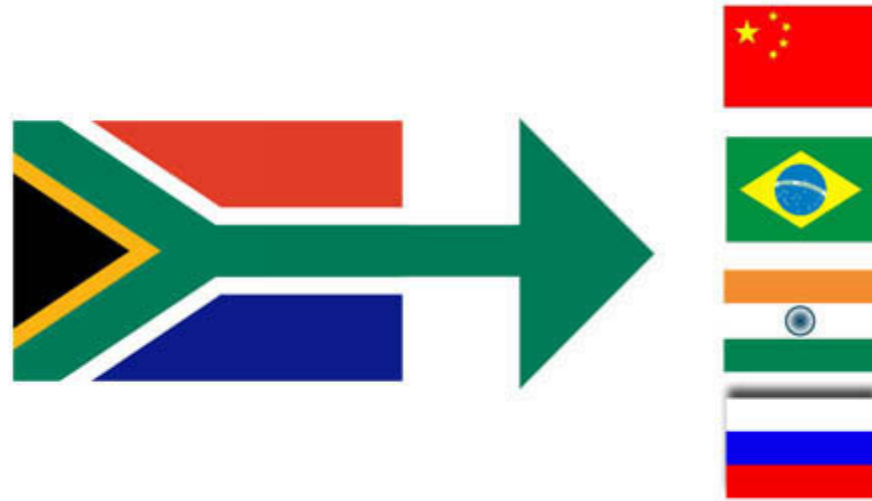
Chinese companies seem to be everywhere in Africa these days, no matter where you go. Chinese purchasing managers buy considerable volumes of oil from Sudan and Angola. They import a great deal of cacao from Côte D'Ivoire (US\$39.7 million in 2001 rising to \$113.5 million in 2005), have bought a US\$5.5-billion stake in South Africa's Standard Bank and made a US\$14 million investment in a mobile phone company in Somalia.

There are an estimated 800 Chinese corporations doing business in Africa, most of which are private companies investing in the infrastructure, energy and banking sectors. About half a million Chinese workers are active in African countries.

To give an impression: when fighting broke out in Libya, China evacuated 33,000 of its workers (mostly road workers) from the country, more than any EU member state. China is now the leading trading partner in Africa, having surpassed former colonial powers such as France and the United Kingdom. Sino-African trade hit the US\$90 billion mark in 2009, more than the US\$86 billion trade with the United States.

The BRIC countries have intensified their relationship with African countries, investing in mining, infrastructure, telecommunications and agriculture. China's African Policy for 2006 aimed to step up diplomatic relations with the African continent, and it was followed by the establishment of the China-Africa Development Fund to support and provide capital for investments in Africa by Chinese companies. ☺





Around that time, Brazil and the four main Africa cotton-producing countries (Mali, Benin, Chad and Burkina Faso) started to fight in the World Trade Organization (WTO) about farm subsidies provided by the EU and the United States.

At the same time, Brazil vexed some ACP countries that were exporting sugar to Europe. Brazil lodged a successful complaint to the WTO against the EU's highly protective sugar market. The EU was forced to open up the market, which significantly reduced sugar prices. Some ACP countries saw their revenues from the European market drop. The EU, incidentally, to soften the effects, helped ACP countries invest in their sugar industry.

In more recent years, the Brazilian mining giant, Vale, now the largest mining company in the world, expanded operations in five African countries, armed with a strong financial base, which has allowed it to ride out the international financial crisis.

India's investment in Africa has focused on information technology – one of India's leading sectors – and on higher education to build ICT capacities in Africa. The historical and cultural ties between BRIC and African countries appear to be playing a significant role in terms of investment as well. Brazil is investing in Portuguese-speaking countries in Southern Africa, and India is targeting Mauritius and Ethiopia.

### FAIR PLAY

More than China, the governments and companies of India and Brazil are investing actively in their public image. Capacity building and poverty eradication programmes are raising their profile. In line with this spirit of South-South cooperation, former Brazilian president Lula da Silva visited the World Social Forum in Senegal, an international forum focusing on social issues that parallels the World Economic Forum.

India has also put the relationship between trade-for-profit and social responsibility on its agenda. Globalization is affecting the service sector, which is struggling to find a balance between fairness in the labour market and maintaining India's competitiveness. In June 2011, a seminar in Brussels discussed how achieving "a better balance between both would strengthen the poorer sections of the economy, distributing the purchasing power also to workers and families in the now lower income strata".

New investments by BRIC countries in Africa, however, are also being heavily criticized for the land-grabbing from indigenous communities that is occurring for mining, food production and biofuel production. China is also being criticized for causing environmental damage and for extremely poor work and safety conditions, as well as bad trade union practices, which have caused tensions in Southern Africa.

The main difference between trade with BRIC countries and trade with Western countries is that states such as China do not ask questions about politics and human rights. The Chinese simply strike a business deal: no charity, no conditions.

The ACP is opening up more options for South-South cooperation through trade, investment and social policy with the BRICs. The ACP could further expand its influence at the international level by demanding a political voice in the G-20, where the BRICs have secured a privileged position of decision making on finance and economic policy with the G-8, which also affects the poorest countries. The ACP provides a potential channel for smaller countries to have a voice in these meetings. This would be a more inclusive policy in the new forums of global governance, such as the G-20, which at present exclude the poorest and smallest countries. ■

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## How Europe Could Help Plug Oil Spills in Africa

By Jaya Ramachandran

A new study is asking the European Parliament, European Union member states and European civil society organizations to push for regulatory measures targeted at Europe-based companies engaged in oil exploration in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

The study follows on the heels of landmark [UN findings](#) reported on August 4, highlighting the devastating impact of oil spills in the Niger delta over the past five decades, which will take up to 30 years to clean up.

The SSA oil industry, which comprises 13% of global oil production, and accounts for some 7% of the oil imports of the 27-nation European Union, is not only causing severe damage to environment and health but also adversely impacting livelihoods of local communities which largely depend on natural resources for agriculture and fisheries, says the study completed on August 8, 2011.

Titled 'The Effects of Oil Companies' Activities on the Environment, Health and Development in Africa', the [study](#) was requested by European Parliament's Committee on Development. It is authored by Heike Baumüller, Elizabeth Donnelly, Alex Vines and Markus, Weimer on behalf of the [Chatham House](#), a British Institute based in London.

The authors gently remind the [European Union](#) (EU), which is a major importer of SSA oil and hosts international oil companies operating in the region, that it has "both the responsibility and the opportunity to promote greater sustainability and equity in the sector, in particular through engagement with 'new' producers".

"Engagement with 'new' producers will be particularly important to learn from past experiences in other countries and lay the foundation for oil to contribute to national development," says the Chatham House study, adding: "Current efforts to promote greater revenue transparency are an important step that needs to go hand in hand with a push for revenue management and a greater emphasis on preventing trade in oil sourced illegally or from conflict areas."

In 2010, the EU relied on SSA for about 7% of its oil imports, amounting to 314 million barrels worth \$65 billion. Nigeria is the largest source of EU oil imports among the SSA countries, accounting for just over half of their imports, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Nigeria is known to have the seventh largest gas reserves in the world, and is therefore also considered a potentially strategically important supplier to Europe if the industry can be developed. Destinations in the EU include Spain, Germany, France, the UK,

Portugal, the Netherlands and Italy. However, for Angola, the EU market is less important – compared with the U.S. and China – though still sizeable. The main importer of Angolan oil is France.

In 2010, Africa accounted for 13% of global oil production, of which sub-Saharan Africa – the focus of the study – contributed 7.25%. The U.S. Energy Information Agency forecasts highest growth potential to 2035 in SSA Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) members (Nigeria and Angola) and non-OPEC African producers.

SSA OPEC members are expected to increase their oil production most in absolute terms, from 4.2 to 5.3 million barrels per day. The highest relative expansion in oil production is predicted to occur in non-OPEC African producers with an annual average growth rate of 1.2%, above the global average of 0.8%. In North Africa, expansion is expected to be minor.

### CHALLENGING

While oil companies are implementing some measures to address the adverse impacts on environment and health, efforts remain "insufficient", says the report, adding: "CSR (corporate social responsibility) activities are piecemeal and short-term, EIAs (Environmental Impacts Assessment) are insufficiently robust and requirements for accountability and transparency are either not available or not enforced."

Community engagement also remains challenging, giving rise to social tensions and even unrest. "Nigeria can provide useful lessons in this regard and current engagement strategies through the GMOUs (Global Memorandum of Understanding) are worth monitoring to see whether they can also provide a model for other producers," the report adds.

In oil-producing countries, the study says, the main limitation is often not the absence of regulations, but the lack of political will and capacity to implement and enforce them. "Thus, any solution will ultimately have to deal with issues of governance, including increased revenue transparency, more equitable and effective revenue sharing and use, a better balance of power between ministries, and greater citizens' participation."

The study puts forward a number of recommendations that include promoting technology solutions, targeting EU development assistance, enhancing transparency of oil operations, strengthening producer country measures, and building partnerships between the stakeholders. ➔



# The Equator Principles

A benchmark for the financial industry to manage social and environmental issues in project financing

HOME

THE PRINCIPLES

EP TRANSLATIONS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

EP MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

BECOME AN ADOPTING  
INSTITUTION

DISCLOSURE BASED ON EP 10

In particular the study calls for EU-level discussion on disclosure of non-financial information to propose a review of existing non-financial reporting standards to assess how they could best be adapted to the European context and be made compulsory for European companies; and the development of a monitoring standard for CSR activities, including measurement criteria and tools, to ensure positive social and environmental impacts.

## INFLUENCING

It pleads for Influencing oil companies through the banks and funds that finance them by supporting better monitoring and reporting of compliance with existing sustainable lending standards, such as the [Equator Principles](#) – the framework by which banks can manage environmental and social issues in project financing – and the [Principles of Responsible Investment](#), which aim to help integrate consideration of environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues by institutional investors into investment decision-making.

The study also calls for encouraging pension funds in EU member states to apply social and environmental screening of their investments in oil companies, modelled on the [Council on Ethics](#) of the Norwegian pension fund.

The [European Investment Bank](#) is asked to provide loans to African oil-producing countries to enhance economic diversification and development, for example, to - develop modern refineries, LNG (liquefied natural gas) projects and distribution networks for petrol and gas to improve domestic energy supply; and set up health and education projects in oil-producing countries.

The loans should also guarantee micro-lending initiatives in enable local communities to better cope with the negative impacts of oil companies and to benefit from economic opportunities, such as the supply of food to oil operations, as piloted by BP and Chevron in Angola, says the report.

## TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

The study further asks the EU and European companies to promote the development and diffusion of cost-effective, locally usable technologies for encouraging European oil companies, government agencies and higher education and research institutions to develop effective technologies in oil fingerprinting to help reduce oil theft, trace the source of pollution and stop imports of certain oil products, for example, that originates from areas with a poor human rights or environmental record.

The technology, it adds, may be developed with a view to exploring regulatory measures to ensure legality of oil imports that build on EU timber regulations. The report also pleads for monitoring and cleaning up oil spills, including mobile phone-based technology to report oil spills and technology that can be used by local communities to deal with minor but numerous spills.

## DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

The study asks the EU to direct European development assistance to set up independent oil spill response teams and clean up mechanisms in oil producing countries in order to delink the problem and its remediation from the political context and financial constraints.

The EU education funding should be channelled in support of skills and capacity building with a view to economic diversification, in addition to enabling members of oil-producing communities to benefit from direct and indirect employment opportunities provided by the oil sector, to the extent that they are available.

The EU development assistance, say the report, should strengthen local governance through improved administration and by promoting appropriate local elections and decentralisation, as well as by building capacity of local communities to understand and promote their rights.

Further, it should undertake independent scientific surveys of oil-producing regions to establish baseline data, engaging national and local governments, international and national researchers and national civil society groups in the research process. ■





Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research CGIAR

## Farmers and Scientists as Partners against Hunger

By Ernest Corea

Disturbing forecasts of continuing food price increases and the potential for debilitating hunger afflicting the world's poor served as the backdrop to World Bank President Robert Zoellick's exhortations on July 6 at the 40th anniversary celebration of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

Zoellick who has said that high, uncertain and volatile food prices are the single greatest threat facing the developing world, urged members of the CGIAR and the consortium of 15 international agricultural research centres it supports to confront five specific challenges:

- Stand up for science to resist protectionism and opposition to research, in whatever guise these appear.
  - Ensure that developing countries allocate more of their own national budgets to agriculture.
  - Place greater focus on post-harvest research in developing countries that lose billions of dollars to pests and disease both before and after harvests.
  - Increase funding for the CGIAR from \$670 million in 2010 to reach \$1 billion by 2013.
  - Commit to predictable multi-year funding because long-term research cannot be done in a year-by-year process.
- Agricultural research, Zoellick said, is the best ally for those who labour in fields and forests; research and agricultural production are part of "the best anti-poverty program we have."

### PUBLIC GOODS

CGIAR investment in agricultural research represents only 4-5 percent of total investment in this field. So why was it necessary for the head of the world's most influential development-oriented institution to spend time and effort commending the work of the CGIAR and advocating enhanced support for its efforts?

The significance of the CGIAR and the usefulness of the research it supports lies in the fact that no other agricultural research organization devotes itself entirely to the creation of research-based technologies as global public goods freely available to national scientists for adaptation and use in farmers fields. CGIAR funding for public goods agricultural research over the past 40 years has been – and remains – in the form of grants, not loans.

Moreover, the CGIAR maintains a comprehensive collection of over 650,000 samples of crop, forage and agroforestry genetic resources, placed under the authority of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

### WITHOUT FRIENDS

Despite these advantages, the CGIAR and its research centres have not been free of criticism and questioning. These have come from within the CGIAR itself, from developing country scientists and policymakers, civil society institutions in both North and South, and the academic community.

Indeed, a Director General at one of the international research centres commented with a sense of desperation that the CGIAR is "the group with no friends."

That was probably a cry from the heart in response to a precipitous drop in funding. But, wrote a group of CGIAR seniors: "Behind the financial factor, however, there were a number of other uncertainties that reached into the vision, programs, governance, and approach of the CGIAR System...."

The CGIAR is not the first and won't be the last organization to have its weaknesses out on display. These occurred from time to time and were corrected, primarily through the wise counsel and strong leadership of its chairs, all of them Vice Presidents of the World Bank. The change process continues.

At another level, leadership was provided by a CGIAR Director. (A few years after his return to his home country where he holds a senior position in the national research agency, the position was retired.)

The changes and course corrections were obviously effective, because an independent assessment concluded in 2008 that "CGIAR research has produced high returns since its inception, with overall benefits far exceeding costs.

"Estimates of the benefits from CGIAR research since 1989 range from nearly US\$14 billion to more than \$120 billion. Even under the most conservative assumptions, they far outweigh total research expenditures of \$7.1 billion since 1960 (expressed in 1990 dollars)."

With that level of success behind it, is the CGIAR now ready for the major tasks that lie ahead?

### GALLOPING DEMAND

There are more mouths to feed today than ever before, and there will be even more in coming years. The world's population stood at 3.7 billion 40 years ago and is expected to reach 7 billion around the end of October this year.

That number is projected to reach 8 billion by 2025, with many developing countries doubling their populations. The big number projected remains 9.1 billion in 2050. If hunger remains pervasive today what are the chances that it would have been eliminated by then?

The most recent UN report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is less than optimistic on this question. The goal of reducing poverty (the first of the MDGs) by the target date of 2015 can be achieved, it says, but not hunger.

FAO, meanwhile, points out that the number of undernourished people in the world remains unacceptably high at 925 million, or 13.6 percent of the estimated world population of 6.8 billion in 2010. Nearly all of the undernourished are in developing countries.

➔

The publication *Hunger Notes* says that the extent of world hunger today is due mainly to three factors: neglect of agriculture relevant to very poor people by governments and international agencies; the current worldwide economic crisis, and the significant increase of food prices in the last several years.

### RISING PRICES

The *Agricultural Outlook 2011-2020* jointly published by FAO and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) offers the bleak forecast that "over the coming decade real prices for cereals could average as much as 20 percent higher and those for meats as much as 30 percent higher, compared to 2001-10."

"While higher prices are generally good news for farmers, the impact on the poor in developing countries who spend a high proportion of their income on food can be devastating," says OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría.

The UN's annual *World Economic and Social Survey*, taking a more sweeping approach to global food issues, estimated that overall food production will need to increase by almost 100 percent if the population of 2050 is to be adequately and nutritiously fed. This would require annual investments of \$2 trillion to help small-scale farming and to reduce environmental degradation.

Agricultural development is not only about food. Agriculture is a powerful catalyst of development, overall. Unproductive agriculture harms the entire economy. When agriculture flourishes, by contrast, the agricultural dollar ripples through the nation's economy.

Food, however, is an agricultural product that keeps men and women alive. The Bible says that "man shall not live by bread alone" but without bread – or rice, or tortillas, or naan, or dosa, or injera – s/he does not live at all.

That's why the first of the Millennium Development Goals set 2015 as the year by which the world should "halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger." But hunger persists.

### RESEARCH EMPHASIS

So where does research fit into this situation? Research? Surely, that's for white coated eccentrics staring through microscopes at their own little secrets while the real work goes on in farmers' fields. Research, in fact, enriches what goes on in farmers' fields.

It is a simple mathematical fact that when there are more mouths to feed there must be more food with which to feed them. Simply put, this means that productivity must yet again be enhanced.

However, with about a quarter of the world's land already taken over by agriculture, with the world's natural resources continuously under assault, with agriculture sometimes expanding into marginal and fragile land, and with the implications for agriculture inherent in climate change, the task of increasing productivity appears to be more complex, complicated, and challenging than before.

Research, by increasing the world's knowledge of agriculture, lies at the heart of science-based technologies for sustainable agricultural development that can help farmers and their partners to feed and nourish the human family.

"Without agricultural technology," the late Carl Sagan observed, "the earth could only support tens of millions of people, instead of

billions." For this reason, he added, "almost everyone on earth, 99 percent of us, owe the very fact that we're alive and haven't starved to death to the existence of agricultural technology."

That's where research fits in.

### LESSONS LEARNED

In the years ahead, agricultural research will face formidable challenges posed by what has been described above, aggravated by the continuing impact of climate change on agriculture, and perhaps constrained by the diminution of grants funds available for agricultural research because of competing demands from other sectors.

Today's and tomorrow's agricultural scientists could face problems much greater than those faced, for example, in pre-CGIAR days when research-based agricultural technologies created an upsurge of productivity in food crops and saved millions from starvation or death. (That upsurge has been described as the "green revolution.")

In grappling with the current and future crop of problems and overcoming them, some lessons can be drawn from past experience, both within the CGIAR and beyond. In this connection, India's experience is compelling.

India's scientists benefited from political backing at the highest levels. The research effort, making full use of international resources, but involving national scientists, benefited greatly from the level and extent of that support.

The agricultural transformation program was sharply focused. Five crops were chosen for improvement - rice, wheat, maize, sorghum, and pearl millet. These were selected in consultation with farmers, consumers and the small-scale retail sector.

Targets were set for the production and distribution of agricultural inputs and floor prices were announced before sowing commenced. The private sector and external partners, including ODA agencies, were mobilized.

Above all, however, India's farmers were fully engaged. India's farmers, when committed to a cause, are a powerful force as the British colonial administration learned. In the fight against hunger, farmers were no less militant, complementing the pioneering work of scientists.

C. Subramaniam, the Minister of Agriculture at the time, widely remembered as the "father of modern agriculture" in India, put it best. He said: "Indian scientists responded to the challenges in a magnificent way. More than that, the farmers were prepared to take risks, they were prepared to use new varieties. That is how the green revolution became a reality." Looking ahead, too, an integrated farmer-scientist partnership remains crucial. As past CGIAR Chair Ismail Serageldin said during its 25th anniversary celebration:

"Farmers were the first scientists. They carried out the first experiments, asked themselves numerous questions and, through their answers, served as creative providers. So, however high we set our sights, we should never forget that in the distilled experience of farm men, women, and children resides wisdom that has to be integrated within the new science.

"If we fail to do so, we will have to ask ourselves as T. S. Eliot did: Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? And where is the knowledge we have lost in information?" ■



# Droughts Do Not Happen Overnight

By Ramesh Jaura

As the international community struggled to provide all possible assistance to more than 11 million people in Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya – adversely affected by the lack of food and long spell of drought – Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Luc Gnacadja, drew attention to an often ignored fact that "droughts do not happen overnight."



UNCCD emerged from the Earth Summit in June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, along with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). UNCCD was adopted in Paris on June 17, 1994.

While calling on the international community to respond urgently to the unfolding crisis, Gnacadja stressed the need for "effective long term solutions to the root causes of famine in drought prone regions." Such solutions lie in implementation of drought management systems and measures to put a halt to creeping desertification stemming from acute land degradation in drylands.

After all, neither desertification, nor land degradation, nor droughts are God Given. They are triggered by human activities and climate change much of which is influenced by human beings.

A widespread but misguided belief is that drylands are waste lands or marginal lands with low productivity and low adaptive capacity where poverty is inevitable, contribute little to national prosperity and yield no good return on investments, he told a Forum on Human Security in Switzerland on July 15.

The fact is rather that drylands comprise one-third of the world land mass and population, 44% of the global food production system, and 50% of the world's livestock. In addition, dry forests are home to the world's largest diversity of mammals whose survival, literally, hangs on the arid zone forests.

## 'FEED ME TO FEED YOU'

Traditional wisdom has it that dire consequences result from continuously ignoring repeated cries for help by what multiple communities across the globe call 'Mother Earth':

"Feed me to feed you". If not handled with care, land suffers from utter degradation and becomes acutely vulnerable to desertification that does not allow even a blade of grass to grow.

Presently, extreme poverty, increased emissions of harmful greenhouse gases, food insecurity and hunger, instability and crisis, increased water stress, biodiversity loss, and migrations are putting a huge stress on land.

This prompted the UNCCD Executive Secretary to declare, "We are the desert-making species on earth." Gnacadja added: "We are the planet's skin disease." Millions in drylands are being forced to move to more productive land, and this is a major cause of conflict.

It is high time, therefore, to grasp some of the traditional wisdom such as the one enshrined in the Vedas, a large body of texts originating in ancient India some 3500 years ago.

Gnacadja cited one important passage from the Vedas: "Upon this handful of soil our survival depends. Husband it and it will grow our food, our fuel, and our shelter and surround us with beauty. Abuse it and the soil will collapse and die, taking humanity with it."

Presently because of agricultural system being under stress, some 925 million people are going hungry, 80% of them are small holder farmers and landless poor in rural areas. Providing food for an additional 3 billion people by 2050 requires a 70% increase in global food production.

World food prices are expected to continue to be higher in the next decade. According to the International Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, land degradation over the next 25 years may reduce global food production by up to 12% resulting in world food prices as much higher as 30%.

Major drylands specific challenges are: climatic and ecological challenges that limit production; economic challenges such as low investment, poor infrastructure and limited access to market; policy and institutional challenges involving low national priority, poor land and natural resources governance, limited access to knowledge and information; socio-cultural aspects such as nomadic lifestyles; demography, and conflicts in some countries.

## SO MUCH DEPENDS ON SO LITTLE

"So much depends on so little, and we are not really tackling the root causes," Gnacadja rightly pointed out. Humanity must double its food production to feed 9 billion people, as the "vicious cycle of poverty" worsens. Eight out of ten conflicts in the world are in dryland areas.

"We need to take action, but the good news is that people are taking action at a grassroots level. There is land improvement in many dryland areas, because people are striving to adapt. We need to support their efforts." He called for a governance for "holistic management", and a greater focus on "the forgotten billion", the poorest people in the world.

The costs of inaction were far higher than action, the UNCCD Executive Secretary warned. Desertification and land degradation was closely related to the problems of food security, and political stability, a complex mix that all went in to "human security". There are a multitude of reasons to advance the fight against desertification, he said: ☺





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1. Drylands hold the key to future food security.
2. Addressing DLDD (desertification, land degradation and drought) contributes to human security and political stability.
3. We cannot adapt to climate change or mitigate its effects without resorting to SLM (sustainable land management).
4. It will be impossible to protect the planet against the loss of terrestrial biodiversity without addressing DLDD.
5. We cannot protect our forests without addressing the top driver of deforestation: DLDD.
6. It will be impossible to reach the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) without rescuing "the forgotten billion", the poorest among the poor living in dry lands.

Realising the significance of the issue, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said on June 17, 2011, the World Day to Combat Desertification: "We need to reward those who make drylands productive, so they will prosper and others will seek to emulate their example."

It is with this in view that the UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on September 20, 2011 in New York will focus on the theme: 'Addressing DLDD issues in the context of poverty eradication and sustainable development'. The meeting will be attended by heads of government and state from around the world.

Government ministers will discuss ways out of desertification, land degradation and drought at the tenth conference of parties (COP 10) October 10-21 in South Korea. DLDD will also be on the agenda of United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Rio de Janeiro, June 4-6, 2012.

Rio+20 will mark the 20th anniversary of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro, and the 10th anniversary of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. ■



# Palestinians Want UN to Counter 'Peace Process' Flop

By Ernest Corea in Washington DC

On August 16, the Middle East Quartet (European Union, Russia, UN, and the U.S.), directed a cotton-wool soft rebuke at the Government of Israel for its decision to authorize new house-building in Jerusalem and Ariel.

The continued construction of "settlements" reaffirms Israel's unwillingness to engage in negotiations except on its own terms, and constitutes a formidable roadblock on the path to a just and permanent peace between Palestinians and Israelis. To be clear: the placement of the roadblock is deliberate.

Despite these harsh realities, the Quartet said only that it was "greatly concerned by Israel's recent announcements to advance planning for new housing units in Ariel and East Jerusalem." (Concerned: uneasy, solicitous, anxious. Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary.)

Thus, the Quartet went wobbly, and called it a day. The Government of Israel, for its part, has more to think about than an ever so gentle slap on the wrist. It is focused on possible developments at the UN.

## MOVE AWAITED

With the opening of the UN General Assembly's 66<sup>th</sup> session drawing close, the Netanyahu government has been intensifying its efforts to scuttle UN recognition of Palestine's right to self-determination and thereby to postpone the re-emergence of an independent state of Palestine.

Palestinian representatives are expected to make their move sometime between September 13, the scheduled date for the General Assembly's formal opening session and September 21-27 when the "general debate" rolls on. Heads of state or their representatives deliver policy statements during this latter phase.

Palestinians could also seek to table a resolution at a meeting of the Security Council held on the sidelines of the General Assembly session if council members agree.

UN membership of a "new" state seeking admission requires a vote at the Security Council where any one of the five permanent members could block admission with a veto. Palestinians hope that



the U.S. would abstain rather than vote "no". The U.S. would, in fact, be at an advantage if it did not veto a Palestinian resolution, as it would immediately end the humiliating isolation that it shares with Israel on this issue. Israeli-Palestine matters could eventually be considered outside the ambit of domestic American politics.

But, don't hold your breath. Any shift from the status quo is unlikely in America's current pre-election season. For this reason, observers at the UN speculate that the issue will be raised at the General Assembly, where a veto cannot be cast.

Palestine could seek to establish a new role for itself at the UN, having its status changed from "observer" (its current designation) to "non-member state observer." In effect, then, Palestine's statehood would be internationally recognized, with UN membership still to come. A simple majority in the General Assembly could bring about the change.

Whatever form the Palestinian initiative takes, and irrespective of its timing, Israel's "full court press" continues.

## BILLS PAID

Israel's goal at the General Assembly, according to Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon, is "to sway a bloc of anywhere from 50 to 70 countries, including many Western countries such as the U.S., Canada and Europe, to oppose Palestinian unilateralism."

Israeli diplomats, under orders to canvass their interlocutors in the capitals at which they serve, have been particularly active in the U.S.

Eighty-one Congressmen (55 Republicans and 26 Democrats) will visit Israel during their current August recess. That's 20 percent of the House of Representatives membership. A satirical piece currently going viral has suggested that the House might decide to hold all its meetings in Israel as a cost-cutting measure: bills will be paid.

As well, Israel has been embraced by the protective arms of State Department spokespersons who have been at great pains to maintain that the proposed Palestinian move is a "bad idea" and an "ill-advised course."

The notion that the UN should be off limits for discussion of a serious issue that involves security, self-determination, and human rights stands logic on its head. Is this naivete, ignorance, knavery, or a combination of all three? This approach does not do justice to the high standards of professionalism associated with the State Department.

The UN was created precisely because its founders believed that recourse to an international organization could give injured parties redress, create a fair and balanced approach to conflict resolution, protect human rights, and spread peaceability throughout the international community.

And, lest we forget, the state of Israel derives its legitimacy from UN resolution 181 of Nov. 28, 1947. Palestinians seek parallel legitimacy for its statehood from the UN. That is surely a minimalist demand. Why should they be denied this right? ☹





Dr. Hanan Ashrawi

### PEACEFUL SOLUTION

Much has been made, and continues to be made, of the need for a negotiated agreement between Israel and Palestine. The Quartet's recent statement noted that negotiations are the "only way to a just and durable solution to the conflict." When the Quartet met on July 11, however, it did not have the sheet music from which to harmonise a negotiating tune, and lacked the ability to improvise.

The Quartet's failure "to agree on how to get the parties back to negotiations is a sign of the dismal state of affairs in this 20-year process. It also seems to offer up one more reason for the Palestinians to pursue their initiative for recognition at the UN in September," the [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\)](#) organisation commented at the time.

The CMEP assessment is similar to the explanation provided by Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, a highly respected public figure in Palestine and abroad, that seeking UN action is a corrective measure in the face of an "endlessly prolonged peace process that has lost its credibility."

In recent conversations with media representatives she said that during the peace process, "Israel has been allowed to act with impunity, particularly with respect to its continued settlement construction." She added: "We do not want the Palestinians to lose hope."

Ashrawi expressed surprise at Israel's hysterical reaction. She emphasised the obvious point, missed by the Quartet, State Department spokespersons, and the Government of Israel, that the purpose of turning to the UN implies a firm commitment to a non-violent resolution of issues, as enjoined by the UN Charter.

"We are adopting a positive and constructive legal approach by turning to the international community and saying we are a part of you. Any solution has to be based on international law," she

said. "Our right to self-determination is enshrined in the [UN Charter](#)."

### NOVEL SUGGESTION

Efforts to dissuade the Palestinians from seeking to legitimise their statehood through the UN will undoubtedly continue. Arm-twisting, tactical use of blandishments, or procedural manipulation could prevail. Even if a resolution does get tabled at, say, the General Assembly, there is no guarantee that it will be adopted although currently some 130 delegations are believed to support the cause of Palestinian freedom.

A novel proposal has, meanwhile, been made by the Israeli newspaper [Haaretz](#) which has suggested that:

"Israel can improve its status if it takes its fate into its own hands. It can be the first to welcome the establishment of a Palestinian sister-state, wish it luck, hold out its hand in peace and express a desire to discuss borders, refugees and settlements issues, this time on an entirely different level – as two sovereign states..."

"Even if the Palestinians prove a disappointment and even if the move doesn't yield immediate practical results, demonstrating goodwill would help Israel retrieve assets it has long lost in the eyes of the world – a moral standing, good faith and honourable intentions."

This innovative suggestion would enable the two states to take on contentious issues on the basis of parity, not as oppressor and oppressed. Events of the kind that have caused death and bloodshed in the Sinai and in Gaza these past days could be forestalled. The region as a whole would benefit. An unlikely prospect, nevertheless. ■



## UN Will Count 194 Members If Palestine Gets In

By Bernhard Schell

The outcome of Palestinian National Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' plans to achieve full membership for the state of Palestine in the United Nations in September is far from certain in the face of strong U.S. and Israeli reservations. But the Palestinians remain upbeat.

The resolve of Palestinians to have Palestine become the 194th member of the UN was underlined by Nabil Shaath, a Palestinian politician, a peace negotiator and member of the PLO's rival Fatah party's central committee.

Shaath told the Chinese news agency Xinhua on July 30 that the decision to approach the UN and demand recognition of the state of Palestine as a full member of the organization "will be so helpful to the Palestinian cause in all cases no matter what the consequences are."

"Applying to the UN will be fruitful and would at least show the international support to our legitimate rights and our sovereignty on our land. This is really very positive and so important for us and for our just cause," Shaath said.

However, the German news agency DPA said in a report July 29 that prominent Hamas leaders have firm views on the attempt by Palestinian President Abbas to get the UN to recognize a Palestinian state based on the pre-1967 borders, before Israel captured the West Bank from Jordan.

"Just nonsense," DPA quoted Mahmoud al-Zahar, a prominent Hamas member in Gaza said. "A Palestinian state means land, people and authority. And now, what is the border of Israel? Israel has had many borders in the last 30, 40 years. What border are we going to speak about?"

The approach to the UN, he said, was a 'political scam.' He was equally unequivocal on the so-called two-state solution, which aims at an Israeli state and a Palestinian state existing side by side. "We are not going to recognize Israel. That is very simple. And we are not going to accept Israel as the owner of one square centimetre because it is a fabricated state," the news agency quoted al-Zahar.

But Palestinian officials have assured in several media reports that they do not intend to unilaterally proclaim a state as they did in Algiers in 1988, nor will they seek recognition from the UN as a whole. Instead, they will continue to work for endorsement on a state-by-state basis, while applying for membership in the global body.

"Approaching the Security Council would be the only way for the Palestinians to gain full membership in the UN. But officials in Ramallah have indicated that they might also consider seeking General Assembly backing for an upgrade from their current observer status to that of a non-member state," a report stated. ☺



Such an upgrade would allow the Palestinians to join all the UN agencies, including the World Health Organisation, the child welfare agency UNICEF and the world heritage body UNESCO. It could also provide an alternative for the Palestinians if the United States vetoes its bid for membership in the Security Council, as Washington has already threatened to do.

#### PLO REPORT

Earlier, PLO's negotiations affairs department (NAD) said in a report released last week of July that 122 UN member states had already recognized Palestine's statehood. The study titled *Road for Palestine Statehood - Recognition and Admission* says that Palestine has met all the conditions for forming an independent state enshrined in the 1933 Montevideo Convention, which states the rights and duties of countries.

PLO has obtained flanking support from the global campaign organisation *Awaaz* with nearly 10 million members around the world. *Awaaz* – meaning Voice in several European, Middle Eastern and Asian languages – is close to collecting the targeted 750,000 signatures online for recognition of Palestine as independent state.

According to the PLO report, the right of the Palestinian people to an independent, sovereign state has awaited implementation for sixty-four years. It is a debt owed by the international community to the Palestinian People that is long overdue.

"When the British government sought to terminate its mandate in Palestine, the international community, through the United Nations, recommended a solution to the conflict between immigrant Jewish communities and the indigenous Palestinian Arabs," PLO's NAD states. The study report says the solution contained in UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (II), called for the creation of two states. "Today, however, it is only one state, the State of Israel, that exists and is a full member of the UN. The Palestinians, who have suffered decades of displacement, disposessions, and the systematic denial of their national and human rights, have yet to realize their independent state," the report says..



In 1988 the PLO declared the establishment of the State of Palestine over the territory occupied by Israel in 1967 – the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. "By limiting our national aspirations to 22% of the Palestinian people's historic homeland, the PLO made an historic compromise in the interest of peace. Palestinian concessions over land have been painful but they have been honoured," the report adds.

It says that since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993, the international community has repeatedly affirmed that the only formula for peace in the region is the two-state solution, which requires the establishment of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state.

"More recently in 2009, the international community endorsed the Palestinian state-building plan, which concludes in September 2011 and later recognized that Palestinians are indeed ready for statehood. Now it is time for Israel and the inter-

national community to honour commitments made to us by recognizing the State of Palestine on the remaining 22% of our patrimony and admitting Palestine to the UN as a full member," adds the report.

PLO's NAD reports that the State of Palestine has met all prerequisites to statehood listed in the Montevideo Convention. "The permanent population of our land is the Palestinian people; its right to self-determination has been repeatedly recognized by the UN and by the International Court of Justice in 2004.

"Our territory is recognized as the lands framed by the 1967 border, though it is occupied by Israel. We have the capacity to enter into relations with other states and have embassies and missions in more than 100 countries.

"And the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Union have indicated that our institutions are developed to the level where we are now prepared for statehood. The State of Palestine also intends to be a peace-loving nation, committed to human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the principles of the United Nations Charter," explains the report. ■



# Atomic Test Ban Crucial to Nuke Free World

By Taro Ichikawa in Tokyo

When the world commemorates the International Day against Nuclear Tests for the second time on August 29, it would have reasons to rejoice at the progress made toward a nuclear-weapon-free world, and at the same time take note of roadblocks ahead before that goal is achieved.

A significant reason to be delighted, as the UN points out, is that in the meantime, the Southern hemisphere of the planet has already become almost entirely one nuclear-weapon-free zone by virtue of regional treaties.

These are: the Treaty of Rarotonga, covering the South Pacific, the Treaty of Pelindaba, spanning Africa, the Treaty of Bangkok covering Southeast Asia, the Treaty of Tlatelolco, straddling Latin America and the Caribbean and the Antarctic Treaty. Since March 2009, the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia has entered into force – the first such instrument situated entirely north of the Equator.

The significance of the International Day against Nuclear Tests is underlined in the UN General Assembly unanimously adopting resolution 64/35 on December 2, 2009, its preamble stating that "every effort should be made to end nuclear tests in order to avert devastating and harmful effects on the lives and health of people" and that "the end of nuclear tests is one of the key means of achieving the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world."

Since the International Day against Nuclear Tests was first declared, there have been a number of significant developments, discussions and initiatives relevant to its goals and objectives. For this reason, the situation is rather complicated, as aptly explained by Akio Suda, Japan's Ambassador to the stalemated Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva on July 28 at a UN conference in Matsumoto.

The Matsumoto gathering from July 27 to 29 was organized by the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) through its Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. Some 90 participants from Governments, academia and think tanks, international and non-governmental organizations, as well as the media attended the Conference. Unlike other UN conferences, it was open to the public "as a way to raise general awareness of and support for disarmament and non-proliferation".

The overarching theme of the Conference, which has been hosted by Japan since 1989, was: 'Urgent and United Action towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World'. Issues to be addressed included the implementation of the Action Plan of the 2010 NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) Review Conference; nuclear disarmament measures by nuclear-weapon States; the prospects of negotiation of a fissile material cut-off treaty; taking concrete steps towards the negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention; as well as the role of civil society in peace and disarmament.

Enhancing nuclear safety and security was also high on the Conference's agenda, especially in the wake of the recent accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. A special session was devoted to peace and disarmament education, including discus-



sions with high school students on the importance of promoting peace and security through disarmament efforts.

## JAPAN'S OFFICIAL VIEW

Explaining Japan's official view on central themes of the conference, Ambassador Suda said: "When we talk about where we now stand concerning nuclear disarmament, we can list several important and positive

movements over the past two or three years. The momentum seems to be high towards a world free of nuclear weapons. With this momentum, we should certainly intensify our discussions on the process of nuclear disarmament towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons."

At the same time, he warned: "We have to look at the reality. Besides some progress in nuclear weapons free zones and CTBT (Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty) ratifications, there has been very little movement in multilateral nuclear disarmament since, say, the Prague speech more than two years ago or the NPT Review Conference last May."

Suda told the Conference that "in the process of reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear weapons, to ban the production of the basic materials for nuclear weapon purposes, a cut-off provides a firm and indispensable basis for further disarmament."

But the CD in Geneva is deadlocked precisely on the issue of Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT) as Pakistan maintains that it is discriminatory and goes as far as to benefit its neighbour India. And yet, Suda said, FMCT will have significant impact: There will be no further nuclear proliferation among states outside the NPT. "It will reduce structural discrimination under the NPT, by obliging nuclear-weapon states of, at least, banning the production and receiving verification thereof."

Further, FMCT "will lay a firm legal basis for the continuous reduction of the total number of nuclear weapons in the world by making the disarmament process irreversible. Once nuclear possessing states reduce their stockpiles of fissile materials voluntarily or by any reason, they cannot go back to the prior level."

## U.S. PERSPECTIVE

Pointing to reasons for rejoicing, Ambassador Susan F. Burk, Special Representative of the U.S. President for Nuclear Non-Proliferation said the May 2010 "NPT Action Plan's 64 actions and its decision on the Middle East represent a set of follow-on actions whose implementation promises to strengthen the Treaty."

On disarmament, she pointed out, the New START Treaty has entered into force and implementation is well underway. "The U.S. is committed to continuing a step-by-step process to reduce the overall numbers of nuclear weapons, which would include the pursuit of a future agreement with Russia for broad reductions in all nuclear weapons – strategic, non-strategic, deployed and non-deployed." ➔

Another positive development was meeting of the P5 (UN Security Council's permanent members U.S., Russia, China, France and Britain) in Paris on June 30-July 1 to work together in pursuit of their shared goal of nuclear disarmament, including engagement on the steps outlined in Action 5, as well as reporting and other efforts called for in the Action Plan. This was a continuation of discussions begun in London in 2009. "In order to ensure that these conferences evolve into a regular process of P5 dialogue, we agreed to hold a third conference in 2012," Burk said.

She assured that the U.S. remains committed to securing ratification of the CTBT, and is engaging the U.S. Senate and the American public on the merits of that treaty. Washington is also continuing to work with partners to move forward on FMCT negotiations.

In support of the peaceful uses agenda, in December 2010 the IAEA Board of Governors approved a proposal authorizing the Agency's Director General to establish an IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) administered and controlled low-enriched uranium bank as a fuel assurance for Member States in the event of disruption of the fuel supply to their peaceful programs.

According to Burk, the United States also has been working closely with the IAEA to implement the Peaceful Uses Initiative, towards which Washington will contribute \$50 million before the 2015 NPT Review Conference. It has already funded more than \$9 million in projects with involvement from more than 80 countries. While Japan and South Korea have agreed to contribute to the Initiative, the U.S. is actively seeking other partners.

President Barack Obama's Special Representative for Nuclear Non-Proliferation said the U.S. was committed to a successful Middle East conference as envisaged in the NPT Review Conference's Action Plan: "A first step is naming a conference host state and facilitator, which we aim to do in the very near future. Together with the United Kingdom and Russia, the United States has held extensive consultations with states in the region on how we can ensure a successful conference in 2012."

In an obvious attempt to avoid possible disappointments, Burk said: "The success of the conference and similar efforts cannot be imposed from outside. It will depend on the willingness of the regional states to help build an atmosphere conducive to constructive dialogue on all relevant issues."

## YOUTH FORUM

Following on the footsteps of the UN Conference, 900 youth from Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Okinawa held a forum at the Peace Hall of the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum. The youth of the Soka Gakkai availed of the opportunity to officially launch a peace declaration on July 31, calling for increased efforts by civil society toward the goal of the abolition of nuclear weapons. The declaration advocates that the 2015 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference be held in Hiroshima and Nagasaki so



that world leaders will see for themselves the reality of the effects of nuclear weapons.

The declaration states: "Nuclear weapons are an 'absolute evil' which fundamentally threaten humanity's right to exist, and their abolition is an indispensable element for building a culture of peace." It affirms that nuclear weapons are against international humanitarian law, and calls for a conference to be convened toward the preparation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention which would ban them comprehensively, at the earliest opportunity. The declaration builds on ideas expressed by Soka Gakkai International (SGI) President Daisaku Ikeda in his annual peace proposal for 2011.

At the forum, Nobuyuki Asai, chair of the Soka Gakkai Youth Peace Conference, also presented to Tomihisa Taue, Mayor of Nagasaki, more than 57,000 paper cranes made by Thai people who viewed SGI's antinuclear exhibition 'Transforming the Human Spirit: From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace,' shown in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture of Thailand in 20 venues throughout the country up to February 2011.

Mayor Taue welcomed the Soka Gakkai's initiatives, saying, "It is not sufficient for the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to speak out against nuclear weapons. We need the voices of many like-minded people from around the world. To receive these cranes from the people of Thailand is truly encouraging."

Other guests attending the forum included Masato Oya, president of the Nagasaki Institute for Peace Culture, and Masahito Hirose, official of the Nagasaki Testimonial Society, as well as representatives of other civil society groups active in advocacy toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Representatives of the Soka Gakkai youth peace committees and young women's peace committees from Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Okinawa have been meeting in August almost every year since 1989 to hold commemorative and awareness-raising events. They have also conducted numerous surveys over the years, tracking attitudes toward the threat of nuclear weapons.

Soka Gakkai, a lay Buddhist association with over 8 million member households in Japan, has a 50-year track record of efforts toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. In 2007, it launched the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition initiative in order to help galvanize global grassroots support toward this goal. ■



# Why Nukes Cast No Shadow on Indian Psyche

By Jayita Sarkar in New Delhi\*



In the wake of the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal of 2008 allowing India to engage in civilian nuclear trade, protest movements have emerged in several sites chosen for the construction of new nuclear power plants. India is aiming to establish at least thirty nuclear reactors and derive a quarter of its electricity needs from nuclear energy by 2050.

With the establishment of the Atomic Energy Research Committee in 1946 and adoption of the Atomic Energy Act in 1948, India had proceeded rather early on the path of atomic energy.

Yet, two aspects related to the atomic energy programme are striking – first, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and subsequently the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) have failed to match their own estimates of electricity production; and second, there has been little public debate on these failures. Public awareness of even the nuclear tests of May 1998 and the "peaceful nuclear explosion" of May 1974 is strikingly low.

According to a poll conducted in 1999 in 108 parliamentary constituencies by the Delhi-based Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), 65 per cent of the population surveyed had heard of the Kargil conflict between India and Pakistan and yet 54 per cent of the same population had not heard of the nuclear tests that preceded it.

The threat of nuclear weapons do not really cast a shadow on the psyche of the Indian masses and debates on a nuclear deterrent against Pakistan or India's relation with the non-proliferation regime remain restricted largely to the urban elites. The only atomic contact that could have touched the lives of people throughout the country is electricity-generation through nuclear plants – a task which the AEC/DAE has famously failed to perform.

## NUCLEAR AWARENESS



Credit: Joe Athialy

With the beginning of "nuclear renaissance", the masses are increasingly coming in contact with the nuclear establishment in the form of nuclear power plants. Protests are emerging at sites like Jaitapur in Maharashtra where six nuclear reactors are scheduled to be built. Similarly, in Gorakhpur, Fatehabad, one can see a certain "nuclear awareness" on the part of the protesters. Yet, it must also be admitted that these protests are case-specific with land acquisition by the government as the people's main source of anguish.

While the nuclear disaster in Fukushima has put more wind in the sails of groups like the Konkan Bachao Samiti (KBS) in Jaitapur and the Gandhian National Alliance of People's Movement (NAPM), there is yet to emerge a comprehensive anti-nuclear or peace movement in India as was seen in Europe in the 1980s with groups like the UK-based Campaign for Nuclear

Disarmament (CND) and the European Nuclear Disarmament (END). It is, however, true that a nuclear threat does not configure as strongly for the Indian public as it was for a Europe threatened by superpower missile-deployment at the height of the New Cold War.

In India, the protests against nuclear power plants, which are essentially protests against land acquisition, are often politicised by the involvement of groups like the Shiv Sena and the Left parties as in the case of the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project (JNPP). It is alleged that the Shiv Sena is struggling to win back its support base in the Konkan region and is therefore encouraging the protests. ➔

\*Jayita Sarkar is Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi for the summer months of June-August 2011 as part of the ongoing National Strategy Project and IDSA's Nuclear Cluster. She is a doctoral candidate at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, holds a Masters in Sociology from the University of Paris IV-Sorbonne and another in International Relations with specialization in Peace and Conflict Studies from Jadavpur University in Calcutta. This article first appeared on [http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/AnIndianAntiNuclearMovement\\_jsarkar\\_280711](http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/AnIndianAntiNuclearMovement_jsarkar_280711)





The banner for the 10th Anniversary National Convention of the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP) is displayed. It features a large white peace symbol in the center, with the text "TOWARDS A NUCLEAR WEAPON FREE WORLD" written across it. Above the symbol, it says "10th Anniversary National Convention" and "CNDP". Below the symbol, it says "December 9-12, 2010" and "New Delhi". The banner is held up by several people in a dark setting.

**Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP)**

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Thus, it is difficult to classify these protests as a 'peace movement' or even as a nuclear abolitionist call. It is surprising that despite the long and twisted nuclear history of India, there is till date only one dedicated anti-nuclear journal in the country, namely Anukti, which has been in publication for the last two decades.

Yet, there are actors calling for an end to nuclear weapons in the country. These actors do not belong to grassroots organisations but are prominent citizens' groups like the Delhi-based Parmanu Bomb Virodhi Andolan (PBVA), journalist-activists like Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, loosely formed groups like the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP) and international NGOs like Greenpeace. Greenpeace India launched its anti-nuclear campaign after the adoption of the Nuclear Liability Bill in 2010, and is calling for a phase-out of India's nuclear programme. Besides, immediately after Pokhran II, some scientists formed the group Indian Scientists Against Nuclear Weapons (ISANW) with the goal of disseminating information related to the dangers of nuclear weapons.

#### NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY

It would nevertheless be unrealistic to expect India to forego either nuclear weapons or nuclear energy. Both are here to stay and a nuclear rollback is unlikely despite the horrors of Fukushima and Chernobyl. It is a moot point whether there is an anti-nuclear peace movement in India or the protests against nuclear power plants are merely against land acquisition.

But it is imperative that the Indian nuclear establishment and the DAE ensure transparency and demonstrate responsibility towards the wider public. The DAE has always shrouded itself in secrecy, protected by the Atomic Energy Acts of 1948 and 1963 and the Official Secrets Act of 1923.

However, as nuclear energy is set to touch upon more and more lives in the country whether in the form of electricity or in the form of loss of land for atomic power projects, the department

has to bring about greater clarity and transparency in its operations, especially on issues concerning nuclear safety, disaster management, environmental issues, estimated building and running costs of the nuclear plants and other relevant information.

The department's annual report is difficult to decipher for non-specialists. If information is made available, it should also be made intelligible to the people. It is to be noted that even the elites opine that information available on nuclear matters is insufficient. According to a poll conducted in 1996, only 13 per cent of the elites polled believed that they had enough information on nuclear matters.

Science and scientists generally possess a high degree of respectability in India. While corruption touches upon almost every aspect of public life, it is believed that the scientific establishment does not experience much corruption or if it does at all it is fairly low.

In a country, therefore, where the atomic enclave is led by nuclear scientists directly under the control of the Prime Minister and where the society is in awe of the miracles science can deliver, a comprehensive anti-nuclear movement runs the risk of being construed as anti-science. Being anti-science is synonymous to being irrational and anti-modern – the epithets of backwardness that the colonial power had used against the natives and as a result the adjectives that post-colonial India was in a rush to give up as it proceeded on its path to development through scientific progress and self-reliance. This is the dilemma that affects above all the "rational and individualistic" middle classes – the missing component in India's anti-nuclear movement.

Thus, as plans are sanctioned for the construction of nuclear power plants and as farmers rush to save their lands from state acquisition, an anti-nuclear movement would be far from a take off. It would remain largely a marginal movement with some sporadic spurts depending on the issue at hand, the site in question and the political parties involved. ■

# Pakistan Rock Firm Against New Nuclear Treaty

By J. C. Suresh in Toronto\*

Pakistan is standing like a rock in the surf resisting growing international pressure to endorse a global treaty that would ban production of fissile material used as fuel for nuclear weapons. Reiterating its adamant opposition, Pakistan has warned that it would boycott any process to negotiate a U.S.-backed treaty outside the deadlocked UN Conference on Disarmament (CD), the sole negotiating forum for multilateral disarmament.

Stung by U.S. refusal to enter into similar nuclear deals as signed with neighbouring rival India, Pakistan is accusing Western nuclear powers of practising discrimination, and appears far from inclined towards lending an attentive ear to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon either, who is keen to break the persistent stalemate in the CD.

Ban has suggested at a General Assembly meeting in New York the appointment of a panel of eminent persons, the creation of an ad hoc committee of the General Assembly or a United Nations conference to help break the deadlock.

Addressing the UN General Assembly meeting in New York on July 27, 2011 which coincided with the 23rd UN Conference on Disarmament Issues in Matsumoto, central Japan, Ban said: "We meet in the midst of a growing crisis of confidence."

The General Assembly followed up on a high-level meeting of the Conference on Disarmament and Multilateral Disarmament Negotiations in 2010. "For too long the United Nations multilateral disarmament machinery, in particular the Conference on Disarmament, has failed us," Ban said.

Set up in 1979 as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, the CD predominantly focuses on ending the nuclear arms race and promoting nuclear disarmament, prevention of nuclear war, and prevention of an arms race in outer space, among other things.

"If differences persist, we could consider the appointment of a high-level panel of eminent persons, as I have suggested. Alternatively, States could conduct negotiations in an ad hoc committee of the General Assembly or a UN conference," the UN Secretary-General said.

He stressed that the international community must never abandon multilateralism, saying that in addressing disarmament, the goal is not to advance the preferences of the few, but the common interests of all.

"If the CD remains deadlocked, the General Assembly has a responsibility to step in. [ . . . ] The CD should not be held perpetually hostage by one or two members. Concerns should be addressed through negotiations. The world expects progress. Let us defer no longer. Let us put an end to this long cycle of stagnation," he added.

## U.S. BACKS BAN



Rose Gottemoeller | Credit: Carnegie Endowment

Ban is backed by the United States. Assistant Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller said in a U.S. State Department release on July 27: "At a time when significant progress has been registered in other areas of arms control and disarmament, it is all the more disappointing that a single state has prevented the CD from again taking its place on the disarmament stage and undertaking negotiations to reach that long overdue objective."

Gottemoeller added: "The preference of the United States is to negotiate the FMCT within the Conference on Disarmament. We welcomed the initiative of Australia and Japan to organize serious technical FMCT discussions on the margins of the Conference on Disarmament this year. The activity proved to be productive, substantive and collegial. But this does not obscure the central fact that the CD remains blocked and we are no closer to FMCT negotiations today than we were two years ago."

Planning is under way for the five permanent UN Security Council member nations and "other relevant partners" to further discuss the matter before the UN General Assembly convenes in September, she pointed out.

Gottemoeller said "a panel of 'eminent persons,' the CD itself, or some others" might further assess potential reforms to the Conference on Disarmament, as well as suggest possible changes to the UN Disarmament Commission in New York.

Potential considerations, she said, could include "how to provide for continuity on an agreed CD work from year to year, such as automatic rollover of an agreed program of work"; "how to protect national security interests while preventing

abuse of the consensus rule"; and "whether expansion of the CD would improve CD efficiency, and how to reflect universal disarmament goals in deliberative and negotiating bodies, while maintaining their efficacy and assuring that states' security concerns are respected and protected". ➔



**"NOTE OF CAUTION"**

Responding to the UN Secretary-General and the U.S., Acting Pakistani Ambassador Raza Bashir Tarar struck a "note of caution" against taking negotiations for the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) outside the 65-member Conference, asserting that "Pakistan will not join any such process nor would it consider accession to the outcome of any such process". In a statement consistent with the view Pakistan has maintained over the previous two years, Tarar argued: "These policies, by sacrificing international non-proliferation goals at the altar of power and profit, have accentuated the asymmetry in fissile material stocks in our region."

Regrettably, those policies continued and had found no opposition amongst the members of Nuclear Supplier Group, which, he said, comprised of some of the most ardent supporters of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and strongest critics of "lack of progress in the CD".

Tarar said while major powers debated options for reforming the CD or even abandoning what they regarded as a dysfunctional body and blamed the rules of procedure, which, by requiring consensus on all decisions, effectively gave all states a veto power that allowed any of them to halt progress, the real reason for the conference's dysfunction was the lack of political will by some nuclear states to negotiate in a fair and balanced way.

"The problems faced by the Conference on Disarmament are not of an organisational or procedural nature," he said, adding that there was a clear pattern of negotiating only in the interests of the most powerful states.

The conference, he said, "cannot negotiate through cherry-picking issues that some states consider ripe," pointing to what he described as "a clear pattern of negotiating only those agreements that do not undermine or compromise the security interest of powerful states". He cited as examples, the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).



Acting UN Pakistani Ambassador Raza Bashir Tarar

**TAKE A STAND**

The same could be said of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), Tarar said. Now, after having developed "huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons, as well as stocks of fissile material", which could be converted quickly into nuclear warheads, those major powers are ready to conclude a treaty that will only ban future production of fissile material, since they no longer need more of it. "This approach," the Pakistani diplomat stressed, was "cost free" for them as it would not undermine or compromise their security.

For those reasons, Pakistan was compelled to "take a stand" against nuclear selectivity and discrimination. "No country can be expected to compromise on its fundamental security interests for an instrument that is cost-free for all

other concerned countries," he said, recommending several steps that must be taken in order to create an "honest and objective approach" to revitalising the disarmament machinery.

Those included, among other, consideration of several critical issues by the conference in an equal and balanced manner, with nuclear disarmament at the top of that agenda, and elaboration on a legally binding instrument on negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon states, Tarar said.

If endorsed, the FMCT would strengthen nuclear non-proliferation norms by adding a binding international commitment to existing constraints on nuclear weapons-usable fissile material. It would ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It would not apply to plutonium and HEU for non-explosive purposes. It would also not apply to non-fissile materials, like tritium, and it would not address existing stockpiles. ■



# A 'New Gandhi' Challenges India's Neo-Liberal Elite

By Amaresh Misra in Lucknow\*



Till a chubby, fragile, ageing Gandhian Anna Hazare reminded India the power of mass movements, several myths about political action had built up, especially since the beginning of the liberalisation era in the early 1990s. The media today would like to see itself as the harbinger of the revival of the Indian street. But this same media, over the past two decades was painting an entirely different picture.

Time and again commentators and columnists used to remind us that since economic liberalisation pumped in capital in the Indian market and society, the era of mass protests and people oriented politics is over. We were told with repeated emphasis that what politics needs is deft management and gloss, not the dust and heat of streets, alleys and villages.

The organizing skills of an advertiser, the smooth English of party spokespersons, the economist's approach towards political issues, the administrative approach towards people's issues, the technocratic juggling of numbers, the bureaucratic interpretation of constitutional issues was considered more important than a direct feedback from people and their socio-economic life.

It is only the bureaucratic-technocratic-economist-managerial mindset that could have stopped enquiry into a simple issue like the Batala House encounter (police action Indian Mujahideen terrorists), as it would "lower the morale of the police"; it is again the same mindset that would think of sending the army to combat Maoism in Chattisgarh and Central India; politicians of yore would have laughed at clichés mounted by contemporary political honchos as the ABC of politics tells you that in a Parliamentary democracy what the electorate wants is more important than administrative issues like police morale – and you do not send armies to resolve contradictions with your own people.

It is again the technocratic-bureaucratic-economist-managerial mindset that seeks to deal with a political tactic like fast unto death with arguments like the "Parliament is sovereign", it is "people vs. Parliament", "Anna Hazare should talk to the standing committee", and the like. The Indian constitution begins with the line "we the people"; it does not say "we the Parliament". It should have been obvious to all that according to the Indian constitution, sovereignty rests with the people, and the Parliament represents them.

Moreover, simple political logic would tell you that in a democratic country like India, it is undemocratic to curb mass initiatives with conditions. When a political party applies for permission for a mass rally or meeting in any Indian district, does the district magistrate or the police ask for the number of people the party purports to bring to the ground, the exact issues it is going to raise, how, why and the like? Has any political person of any party heard of such absurdity?

## ECONOMIC DISPARITIES IGNORED

The truth is that the bureaucratic-technocratic-economist-managerial mindset got its social sciences wrong. In effect, it tried to erase the study and discourse of liberal arts and political economy in the public arena. When statistics like 70% Indians earning only 20 Rupees (less than half-a-dollar) a day came out, it remained just that: a figure. There was little debate-discussion within government or the new post-liberalisation intellectual circles about the political implication of the statistics – that behind these numbers lies the suffering, agony and simmering rage of people who breathe and think and who are likely to see through the economic disparities created by the new economic policies introduced in the early 1990s.

The same bureaucratic-technocratic-economist-managerial approach was visible in the debate over the Sacchar Committee report (on the social, economic and educational status of the Muslim community of India). Again statistics ruled the roost. The fact that for the dominant minority, these statistics hid a long history of neglect, pain and suffering – and that this minority would react politically – did not become a matter of avid debate: a sort of warped 'statisticalization' of hard reality became the norm on other pressing issues of farmers, massive corruption in implementation of NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), and similar problems.

Worse, political leaders with a bureaucratic-technocratic-economist-managerial mindset were encouraged by all parties – especially Congress and BJP. This led to BJP's defeat in 2004 and the now the Congress stands at a crucial crossroads.

## PRO-POOR POLICIES THROWN OVERBOARD

The greatest tragedy of the Congress has been that party managers did not allow a hard-boiled, rugged, real-world Indian politics, commensurate with the pro-poor policies of Congress President Sonia Gandhi (widow of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Indira Gandhi's son) and Rahul Gandhi (the grandson of Indira Gandhi), to prosper. Congress managers smothered their own baby. They torpedoed the agenda and political vision of their own leaders.

If backed by popular-hardboiled politicians, linked to ground realities, Sonia Gandhi's pro-poor policies would have led to a Congress tsunami in the Hindi-heartland, a revival seen only in the Indira Gandhi days. But the managerial approach forced disconnect with the people. It encouraged all sorts of shady 'broker-dalaal' elements to flourish and take over the reins of the party at the state and district level, eclipsing mass leaders representing the poor and the middle classes. ➡ Image above: Anna Hazare | Credit: anna-hazares.blogspot.com

\*Amaresh Misra is Convener, Anti Communal Front, Uttar Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee.

This unholy alliance between managers and dalaals (brokers) actually epitomizes Indian political culture, beyond any single party. This alliance fails to understand mass dynamics. It, for instance failed to see that the past twenty years of economic reforms have created a new desire for political reforms.

### CORRUPTION

In the pre-liberalisation era, the Indian society, following the mixed economy logic, was plagued more by nepotism, the 'sifarish', rather than the 'rishvat' (bribe) culture. Films of the 1970s, which railed against sifarish, are enough to prove the point. Barring the top layer of establishment, money as such did not play such a big part; in the post-liberalisation era, the amount of money pumped into the economy increased ten-fold; privatisation created a scope for crony capitalism, and corruption became related directly to capital generation.

Corruption which was mainly restricted to certain sections of the government sector, extended to the corporate sector, the bureaucracy, judiciary, lower levels of the Police establishment, the stock market, education, health, each and every government office, the banking sector, aviation, and the political class.

Hoarding, illegal trading and the black market, which constituted the underground of the 1970s, entered the mainstream. The life of the common man became unbearable. A new class of employees earning between 8,000 Rupees and 25,000 Rupees did emerge to create a new, huge market. But by 2006-2007, this class began to feel the pinch of crony capitalism, as rents, prices of medicines, health and basic middle classes facilities like transport, petrol, diesel, gas prices skyrocketed.

The line between politics and business, politicians and criminals, became blurred. Politics was seen increasingly as consisting of money-media-muscle power. The concept of 'masses' and mass power in the political equation disappeared. This was really incredible – because India, unlike many Third World countries, has a flourishing Parliamentary Democracy.

Several times over the past 64 years, Parliamentary Democracy has saved India from upheavals as it allowed mass representatives to be elected. For the first time, especially by 2000s, people started feeling that dalaals-corporate representatives, English speaking charlatans and criminals have seized and taken over the only avenue left to people: the Indian Parliament.

This was the last straw. This is why people did not buy the logic that Parliament is a distinguished enough forum to frame bills and laws. Through Anna, Indian people have given the message that they no longer trust the Parliament. This is very much a constitutional-democratic and not an anti-democratic, anti-constitutional fascist urge.

### THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT

With 14% members accused of serious crimes including rape and murder, the Indian Parliament is in a serious state of crisis. What the people on the streets want is not an abrogation of post-Independence Parliamentary Democracy, but a revival of its most hallowed traditions through sweeping and radical reforms. These may include everything from the 'Jan Lokpal bill' (citizens' ombudsman bill) to the right to recall MPs (Members of Parliament) to electoral reforms and the like. Political reforms are bound to lead to corporate reforms and reforms in the judiciary as well.



The hope and energy that the Anna movement has generated, the new democratic space for mass movement that it has created, will outlive Anna and the present surge. Politics abhors vacuum – it had become commonplace for commentators to say after 2009 elections that politics will forever revolve around money-media-muscle axis, that corporatisation of politics is here to stay and that mass politics is now dated.

Now, the Anna movement shows that post-liberalisation right wing commentators have themselves become dated. They are out of touch with the aspirations of a new, working middle class that wants a clean society and a clean government for now. If its aspirations are not met, this class will soon gravitate towards a concept of people's power – only an astonishing level of apolitical glibness can say that no Muslim-Dalit-OBC (other backward classes) face adorns Anna's movement.

Well, Anna himself belongs to the OBC Mali caste of Maharashtra (comprising of people belonging to specialist cultivator of flowers, vegetables etc. in the Indian state of Maharashtra). And the current movement is already finding a path towards villages. Indian peasantry and the rural poor face their own, harrowing levels of post-liberalisation corruption. They too want reforms and a new land acquisition bill fulfils just one of their many aspirations. The combination of urban and rural discontent can create an explosive revolutionary situation in India. New players from amongst the people will emerge and take over the reins of politics.

As of now, the BJP-RSS are hopelessly out of touch with reality. Left parties too have yet to polish their old class concepts and grasp the new reality unfolding before their eyes. Regional parties have their limitations. The Congress can still lead this revolution – but only by adopting its agenda, reshuffling the top party leadership, revamping the dalaal-managerial culture, and creating a new, pro-people leadership.

The youth involved in the Anna movement have already raised the cry for Rahul Gandhi to stand with the people. Any hardening of stances, and giving the mike to apolitical English speaking spokespersons, would be fatal both for the Government and the Congress party. ■

# China Alone Abides by Commitments to World's Poorest

By Raúl de Sagastizabal in Montevideo\*



organization) and many of the smaller and poorer countries, the so-called 'least developed countries' or LDC.

The latter include, for example, Haiti, devastated by the earthquake and cholera, and several African countries affected by famine and drought.

The WTO agreed, back in 2001, to grant to the LDC a special and differential treatment, which includes a more flexible and faster mechanism to open the markets of developed countries and/or developing to products from LDCs and technical assistance to help them increase their production and trade.

To date, unfortunately, after ten years of negotiations, such commitments have yet to be translated into practice.

Reporting on July 26 informal meeting of its Trade Negotiations Committee, which oversees the negotiations in all topics, WTO reported: ". . . ambassadors from WTO member countries said they regret that the membership will not be able to agree on a package that would have had at its core a number of issues concerning least developed countries – the so-called LDC-plus package, agreed as an 'early harvest' ahead of the rest of the Doha Round.

"Some now argued that the meeting should still strive to agree on the core least developed country issues ('LDC only'), without the additional subjects that were previously seen as possible candidates for agreement in December. Others preferred to focus on what to do afterwards, which would include least developed country issues as well."

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EMBASSY OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA IN THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

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China helps least developed countries with concrete actions

2011/05/16

Source: WJC

Addis Ababa, May 12 (WJC) - China said here on Wednesday that the least developed countries have become its priority in providing foreign aid, while providing them with assistance without political preconditions.

The statement was made by Chinese Vice Minister of Commerce Fu Ziyang at the 5-day UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which started in Addis Ababa on Monday till Friday.

Fu said that the share of China's aid to LDCs in its total foreign aid stood at 40 percent in 2009 and exceeded 50 percent in 2010.

The Chinese government has provided economic and technical assistance to 46 LDCs, covering nearly 1,000 projects in such sectors as industry, agriculture, culture and education, public health, communications, electricity, energy, transportation and public utilities, he said.

China also contributed an additional 50 billion U.S. dollars to the IMF, with an explicit request that the fund should be used first and foremost to the LDCs.

Meanwhile, China has reduced and canceled debts to relieve the burden of recipient countries and promote their sustainable development.

Since 2000, the Chinese government has announced six debt reductions or exemptions for matured interest-free loans owed by LDCs and heavily indebted poor countries.

By the end of 2010, China had signed debt relief protocols with 50 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific region. Some 423 matured debts were canceled, including 23.8 billion RMB (about 36.6 billion U.S. dollars) debts owed by 44 LDCs.

"These measures have mitigated the financial pressure and accelerated the poverty alleviation process of the related countries," he said.

The Chinese official said that China has also opened up market, increased imports and helped enhance LDCs' trade capacity. Now, China has provided zero-tariff treatment to most imported goods from relevant LDCs.

## PARALYSIS

The statement quoted WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy, who chairs the Trade Negotiations Committee: "What we are seeing today is the paralysis in the negotiating function of the WTO, whether it is on market access or on the rule-making."

He added: "What we are facing is the inability of the WTO to adapt and adjust to emerging global trade priorities, those you cannot solve through bilateral deals."

The July 26 meeting reflected two positions among the membership:

- To concentrate on the non-Doha Round part of the Ministerial Conference's agenda and on how to proceed with the Doha Round after the conference, believing that striving for a small Doha package at the conference will "suck the oxygen" from the other two issues
- To add some decisions for least developed countries to the other two issues.

The core least developed country issues are duty-free, quota-free (DFQF) access for their exports to richer markets, simpler rules for determining when products come from LDCs, a waiver exempting LDCs from making commitments in services trade, and extra cuts in subsidies and trade barriers in cotton.

The WTO recognizes as LDCs those countries which have been designated as such by the United Nations. There are currently 48 least-developed countries on the UN list, 31 of which to date have become WTO members.

The 31 LDCs members of the WTO are: Angola, Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the, Djibouti,

Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.

Twelve more least-developed countries are negotiating to join the WTO: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Laos, Liberia, Sao Tomé & Principe, Samoa, Sudan, Vanuatu and Yemen.

Some speakers warned the trade negotiating committee that the WTO's credibility is being undermined by the inability to reach agreement on Doha Round issues and on decisions that would benefit the world's poorest countries, and by the "soap opera" of the Doha Round. But they acknowledged that the objections some countries have raised against each of the proposals for an "LDC-plus" package make agreement on the package impossible, and that members' opinions also diverge on how to deal with the least developed countries' issues. ➡

\*Raul de Sagastizabal is an international analyst and consultant, expert in international organizations. He writes mainly about global affairs.



"The so-called red lines came from both developed and developing countries," one ambassador observed, referring to negotiators' inability to move beyond particular points. "It became clear to use and to others that an early harvest package was not happening and was not going to happen," another said.

#### WITH OR WITHOUT A DECEMBER PACKAGE

WTO reported: "One country, China, said that with or without a package in December (2011), it will honour its commitment to the least developed countries made at the 2005 Hong Kong Ministerial Conference by expanding duty-free, quota-free access for their exports from 60% of products to 95%."

Considering the little impact it would have on the developed world and emerging economies, or even on large developing countries, with or without crisis, opening their markets to LDCs, and the benefit that would accrue to the latter, it was expected that the members of the WTO would finally fulfil this year what they decided from long ago. However, as

WTO affirmed, only one country, China, which joined the WTO in December 2001, will fulfil its commitments to the LDCs.

That China buys U.S. Treasury bonds, or debt of European countries is part of the economic and trade policies being implemented by the Asian giant for several reasons and several concerns. These include the desire to preserve its reserves in dollars and Euros, and contribute to global financial stability that the world is seeking to return to, and pave the path of growth for all, including China's economy.

But that China declares that it will fulfil its commitments to the world's poorest regardless of what other WTO members do, relates neither to its monetary possessions nor to its concerns or economic interests. It is, in fact, a clear sign of China's new leadership role in the world. China is lending a hand to the world's poorest, and setting an example for the global rich.



Tiananmen Square | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

#### BACKGROUND

It would be worthwhile recalling what the 2001 ministerial meeting of WTO in Doha stated in paragraph 42 of the declaration adopted on November 14:

"We recognize that the integration of the LDCs into the multilateral trading system requires meaningful market access, support for the diversification of their production and export base, and trade-related technical assistance and capacity building. We agree that the meaningful integration of LDCs into the trading system and the global economy will involve efforts by all WTO members. We commit ourselves to the objective of duty-free, quota-free market access for products originating from LDCs.

"In this regard, we welcome the significant market access improvements by WTO members in advance of the Third UN Conference on LDCs (LDC-III), in Brussels, May 2001. We further commit ourselves to consider additional measures for progressive improvements in market access for LDCs. Accession of LDCs remains a priority for the Membership."

The WTO Ministerial Declaration adopted on December 2005 in Hong Kong, stated in paragraph 47:

"We reaffirm our commitment to effectively and meaningfully integrate LDCs into the multilateral trading system and shall continue to implement the WTO Work Programme for LDCs adopted in February 2002. We acknowledge the seriousness of the concerns and interests of the LDCs in the negotiations as expressed in the Livingstone Declaration, adopted by their Ministers in June 2005. We take note that issues of interest to LDCs are being addressed in all areas of negotiations and we welcome the progress made since the Doha Ministerial Declaration as reflected in the Decision adopted by the General Council on 1 August 2004.

"Building upon the commitment in the Doha Ministerial Declaration, developed-country Members, and developing-country Members declaring themselves in a position to do so, agree to implement duty-free and quota-free market access for products originating from LDCs as provided for in Annex F to this document."

In Annex F, the developed-country members asked developing countries members in a position to do so to join them and committed themselves to the following:

Provide duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis, for all products originating from all LDCs by 2008 or no later than the start of the implementation period in a manner that ensures stability, security and predictability.

Members facing difficulties at this time to provide market access as set out above shall provide duty-free and quota-free market access for at least 97 per cent of products originating from LDCs, defined at the tariff line level, by 2008 or no later than the start of the implementation period. ■



Farmers try to dig wells on a drought field in Qianxi County, southwest China's Guizhou Province, July 28, 2011. Serious drought hit Guizhou in July, affecting more than 29 cities and counties. Local government has been taking measures to fight drought. (Xinhua/Ou Dongqu)



A villager worries at the field in Weizhai village of Linquan Township, Qianxi County, southwest China's Guizhou Province, July 29, 2011. The severe drought hit 9 counties and cities in Guizhou Province in July, 2011 due to hot and dry weather. (Xinhua/Ou Dongqu)

## China Unprepared for Climate Disasters

By Taro Ichikawa



Chinese president Hu Jintao (R) plants corn with local farmers in central China's Hubei Province during his trip to the province from May 31 to June 3, 2011. (Xinhua/Huang Jingwen)

China has been fighting two prolonged dry spells and the ongoing floods that have caused havoc in central and eastern parts of the country this year. The second spell of drought in the Yangtze River basin was followed by devastating floods with an enormously adverse economic impact.

A total of over 36 million people are reported to have been affected, at least 355 killed and with direct economic losses of nearly US\$6.5 billion, according to Xinhua.

This affirms crux of a message a recent Asian Development Bank (ADB) study sought to convey: "China has a stunningly agile disaster response system but not a corresponding system of risk reduction and management. In other words, China does not prepare for climate-related disasters; it only reacts to them."

This was underlined by Zhang Qingfeng, principal water resources specialist at ADB, and Melissa Howell Alipalo, a staff consultant to ADB water and environment operations in an article in 'China Daily' on June 28, 2011. They are co-authors of a forthcoming book, 'Drying Up: What to do About Drought in the PRC'.

They warn that if China does not focus its plans to reduce the risks and impact of natural disasters, "droughts and floods will continue to cause even greater economic loss."

The authors point out that at the height of the Yangtze basin drought, 3.5 million people suffered water shortage and cargo shipping was suspended on a 224-kilometer stretch in the middle and lower reaches of the river.

The rain that followed came as a relief to people and the parched land in the Yangtze basin, but it also caused deadly landslides in parts of Guizhou and Hunan provinces. Torrential rain and floods have affected 13 provinces, killing almost 100 people and destroying about 27,000 houses. The economic impact is only beginning to be assessed now that the early rice planting season is likely to be affected.

The drought in the northern plains in 2000 was the worst in recent history and cost 47 billion yuan (\$7.26 billion) in direct economic loss. The drought in Southwest China last year cost 1.4

billion yuan. In June 2010, 27 provinces were hit by floods that caused a direct economic loss of 142.2 billion yuan.

The costs of relief efforts are less well known, but they included hardship allowances, donations by Chinese citizens, and the cost of stabilizing food production and prices.

### THREE FACTORS

The two ADB experts say: Such natural disasters will continue to plague the country because of three human and ecological factors. First, the Yangtze River delta region is climate sensitive, for it lies between subtropical and temperate climate zones. From 1951 to 1978, the region was hit by at least one flood or drought or both every two years. Droughts usually occurred in the mountainous areas of the region and floods in the plains. ➡





BEIJING (Xinhua) -- President Hu Jintao has urged local government officials to treat drought relief in rural areas as an "urgent task" as he wraps up a four-day inspection tour in central China's Hubei Province.

Second, according to the national climate change assessment, global warming will increase the frequency of floods and droughts in the region. One of the most striking features of climate change is its impact on the monsoon, which has changed the precipitation pattern. The rainfall pattern in South China has changed, resulting in more floods and making the northern parts more vulnerable to droughts.

Third, ecological degradation has reduced the resilience of ecosystems against the impact of climate change and increased the risk of natural disasters. According to the State Forestry Administration's first large-scale national lake and wetlands survey, more than 1,000 natural lakes and wetlands have disappeared since 1949 and 1.3 million hectares of lake area have been reclaimed for agriculture or urban development.

Zhang Qingfeng and Melissa Howell Alipalo say, the growing risk of floods in the central and lower Yangtze River region is partly because floodplains have been usurped for farming, increasing silt deposits in the river.

"Natural hazards like droughts and floods cannot be prevented," they argue, "but we can lessen the damage they cause." Most local governments seem to have missed the opportunity to guard against the impact of natural hazards. The lack of a comprehensive national policy requiring local governments to guard against natural hazards like droughts and floods has aggravated the situation, they add.

### REACTIVE MODE

Last year, the ADB completed two studies on drought and flood management for China, which said the country's drought management strategy is "stuck" in a reactive mode. China's flood and drought management strategies are similar. They react to emergencies and limit their response until after an emergency has been declared.

The ADB experts say that greater risk assessment, proper monitoring and an early warning system would greatly reduce the response time and cost – and in turn reduce the damage and rebuilding costs.

Presently, China does not have a separate disaster risk management agency. Instead, risk management responsibilities are divided among several agencies, which are brought together through strong central control. The country thus "reacts" to natural hazards instead of focusing its policy and directing its resources to determine disaster cycles.

ADB experts advise China to extend focus of disaster management to six-step risk management: early warning, monitoring and forecasting; risk assessment; risk mitigation; impact mitigation and emergency responses; recovery, evaluation and contingency planning; and stakeholder participation and public education and awareness.

"An integrated approach is critical to creating reserves and enabling ecosystem service to function during droughts and floods and to devise long-term plans," they say, adding: "A forthcoming joint publication by ADB, the Ministry of Water Resources and Guiyang city explores a 'holistic pathway', using optimal infrastructure, risk management, ecosystem conservation and integrated river basin management."

In China, where climate change is creating unpredictable weather patterns – and thus more droughts and floods – regulating the services provided by ecosystems is important for adapting to climate change and reducing the risks of natural disasters. Examples of such services include climate and water regulation, protection from natural hazards, water and air purification, carbon sequestration, and disease and pest regulation, ADB experts argue. ■





Japan's Soka Gakkai's Peace Committee director Kimiaki Kawai addressing UNHCR INGO Gathering in Geneva | Credit: SGI

## Faith Injects Hope in Crisis Situations

By Karina Böckmann

Whether it goes down in the history of the United Nations as a milestone or not, the world body's "refugee agency" UNHCR has taken a significant step by acknowledging that when natural disasters and violent conflicts uproot entire communities and hope is slipping away, faith is the last straw at which the displaced and the forlorn clutch.

For the first time in its 60-year history, the UN agency availed of its three-day 2011 annual consultations with NGOs in Geneva to focus one full day on the activities and experiences of Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) from around the world.

The purpose, said the UNHCR, was "to develop a better understanding and appreciation of the nature, scale and impact of FBOs' efforts to provide protection," and "to consider how UNHCR and International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) might improve partnerships with local and national FBOs that build on their protection strengths."

With this in view, the opening panel on June 28 drew together four national FBOs working in conflict and disaster-affected countries in different regions, from different faith backgrounds – Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist – to consider what strengths faith based organisations have in protection and what protection roles they are best placed to play given their unique community relations.

The panel was joined by Humanitarian Forum Indonesia's director Hening Parlan, Sudan Council of Churches, Emergency Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Agency (ERRADA) director Dr. Kediende Akec, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society/South America regional director Enrique Burbinski, and Japan's Soka Gakkai's Peace Committee director Kimiaki Kawai.

Explaining the rationale, the UNHCR argued in a background paper handed out to participants: "While faith plays a major role in the lives of those at risk or those affected by conflicts and disasters, Western humanitarianism has been largely shaped by secular values, which tends to overlook or downplay the influence of faith, or worse still, treat faith with scepticism and caution, delegitimising the role of faith outside the domain of private belief."

It added: "Faith, however, not only runs deep in the veins of conflict and disaster affected communities, but it plays a major role in their lives. It helps people cope with trauma; it validates their humanity and informs their decisions, and it offers guidance, compassion, consolation and hope in their darkest hours."

### EMPOWER SURVIVORS

The UNHCR further argued: "Whether in the midst of popular uprisings or natural disasters and violent conflicts around the globe – from Pakistan and Afghanistan to Sudan, Somalia, Burma and the Philippines – faith and local faith-based organisations play a critical role in the protection of affected communities." ➔



This view is shared by Hirotsugu Terasaki, executive director of the office of peace affairs of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), who accompanied Kawai to the UNHCR annual consultations: "FBOs are in a strong position to contribute to empower surviving people to engage themselves in relief activities which makes them effective and sustainable."

The Buddhist organisation, backed by its members throughout Japan, was quick in emergency response to the March 11 unprecedented quake of magnitude 9, followed by a record-high tsunami approximately 30 minutes after the earthquake. The tsunami damaged the nuclear power plant in Fukushima Prefecture causing the meltdown and subsequent problems.



Credit: SGI

Kawai told over 200 participants in the UNHCR's opening panel that as of June 22, the death toll had reached over 15,000, with more than 7,000 still missing, and over 110,000 living in shelters or temporary housing.

"Many villages and towns of the affected region have been completely destroyed," he said, adding: "As of June 5, as many as 390,000 individuals volunteered for relief activities. So did a range of groups including religious organisations. My organization is among them. A large number of Soka Gakkai members live in the affected region itself, and we have community centres in most of the towns."

In an interview during a visit to Berlin on way to Tokyo, Terasaki said, he had visited the disaster-affected areas in the Tohoku region. "On that occasion, I heard so many SGI members who have been affected by the disaster say how much they were encouraged by SGI President Ikeda's messages sent to them such as no hardship can destroy the treasure of the heart. I think the unique role FBOs can play and contribute is the power of encouragement firmly grounded on/that they can provide based on their views on life and the spiritual values."

Kawai told the UNHCR annual consultation participants that local chapters of Soka Gakkai Japan had carried out relief activities to respond to the most urgent needs. The organisation's community centres served to provide evacuees with shelters and relief supplies.

"Forty-two of the centres in the Tohoku region as well as in Ibaraki and Chiba Prefectures accommodated about 5,000 people. Some members' homes were also used to accommodate local evacuees and as relay points for distributing relief supplies," Kawai informed.

Soka Gakkai also provided relief supplies to general evacuation shelters. "Our community-based network facilitated these relief activities for the people too who were not directly hit by the disaster, but whose living conditions were highly affected in this complex and insecure environment. Great needs were apparent, due to the complete destruction of infrastructures in many populated areas."

#### 'TRIPOD'

It is an open secret – revealed also during the UNHCR consultations with FBOs – that there are often tensions between Christian and Muslim faith based organisations. Asked whether a Buddhist organization like SGI could play a role in bridging the two for a common cause, Terasaki did not rule out such a possibility.

He said, the question reminded him of what SGI President Ikeda once said: "When there are complicated historical backgrounds, there are cases at times where one on one dialogue is difficult. In such cases, by adding one more party, it will make a 'tripod' serving as a foothold for dialogue. In all senses, Buddhism exists by dialogue and teaches the value of creatively coexisting beyond differences."

From that viewpoint, he said: "I believe SGI can contribute to fertilizing fora for dialogue. I think this year's UNHCR annual consultation with NGOs offered a good opportunity enabling various FBOs including SGI to interact and find new perspectives from each other. What is important is to continue creating such opportunities for dialogue to deepen discussion."

All the more so, because as UNHCR chief António Guterres said on June 28: "Since the beginning of the year, we have witnessed a multiplication of crises, many of them totally unpredicted, with a significant impact on the displacement of people. But (at the same time) old crises seem to never die."

He was referring to the recent conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, current uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East as well as the instability in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan. ■



## Japan Responding Creatively To Crisis

By Daisaku Ikeda

Japanese Buddhist philosopher, peacebuilder and president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI)

The human spirit has a truly remarkable capacity – the ability to generate hope from the most devastating of crises. This ability to create value can be seen in the response to the earthquake that struck Japan on March 11.

Following the earthquake and tsunami, there has been a tremendous response from people throughout the world in the form of aid and relief, as well as countless outpourings of support, both material and psychological. The Japanese people will never forget this heartfelt response: as we embark on the long path to recovery, it will be with a consciousness of our debt of gratitude to the boundless goodwill of people from all around the world.

The British historian Arnold J. Toynbee is known for his theory of challenge and response. "Civilisations," he wrote, "come to birth and proceed to grow by successfully responding to successive challenges." This struggle to face new challenges is surely certain to persist so long as human history continues.

Confronted by a disaster of unimaginable scale, the Japanese people are searching for ways to get back on their feet and discover appropriate responses to a series of interlinked problems. Indeed, the greater these challenges, the greater the potential to find creative responses that will inspire people everywhere and contribute to the sum of human wisdom.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of such responses is rooted in the strength of human community.

Many of the stories of near-miraculous survival following the earthquake and the tsunami were made possible only through neighbours supporting one another. Furthermore, during the days and weeks after the disaster when the essential lifelines of communications, water, electricity, and gas were disrupted, it was the mutual support of local communities and neighbourhood associations that helped meet the needs and provide a vital human connection for survivors.

I personally know of many individuals who have nobly dedicated themselves to helping others and working toward the recovery of their communities, freely sharing what meagre resources they had and pouring their energy into assisting others, often despite having lost their own loved ones, homes, and livelihoods. One can only be moved to admiration by the sparkling core of humanity that shines through at such times of crisis.

We saw countless such acts of selfless cooperation at our Soka Gakkai community centres in the affected regions, which we opened as evacuation centres immediately after the earthquake.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, when the transportation network linking the affected area with Tokyo was severely disrupted, volunteers in Niigata on Japan's northwestern coast were able to deliver relief supplies using circuitous alternative routes. These volunteers hail from areas that had themselves experienced major earthquakes in 2004 and 2007, and thus were painfully aware of the needs of the survivors. They worked full-out

preparing essential supplies such as drinking water, rice balls and other emergency food supplies, generators, fuel, and portable toilets, and were able to deliver them in the shortest possible time. I've been told that these volunteers were motivated by a sense of gratitude for the assistance they had received at the time of the Niigata earthquakes: "So many people helped us then, this time it was our turn to do what we can."

The suffering caused by a major earthquake can be truly staggering. But wherever such tragedies have struck in recent years – the Sumatra earthquake and Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, the Sichuan earthquake in China in 2008, the Haiti earthquake of 2010 – a sense of human solidarity has emerged, a community of brave and dedicated citizens determined to help each other. Such actions, and the spirit behind them, are truly awe-inspiring. I know I am not alone in seeing in this a genuine goodness that flows from the very heart of our humanity.

Obviously relief operations mounted by the authorities must be central to rescue and reconstruction activities. But at the same time, it is well documented that it is often the cooperative actions of local communities that can deliver a critical lifeline to people who have been worst impacted and remain vulnerable.

As reconstruction efforts continue, the spiritual aspect of care and support becomes ever more crucial, and it is the human network of individuals interacting, treasuring, and encouraging each other every day at the grassroots level that plays the key role in this. In that sense, genuine solidarity among people can provide a foundation for the kind of human security that cannot be shattered even by the direst of calamities.

Our response to the disaster must be to create enduring value out of tragedy. This means coming to a deeper understanding of the true nature of human happiness. This in turn will reshape the way humankind envisions the future in all its aspects, including the critical area of energy policy.

Just as the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986 forced a rethinking of many issues, the accidents at the Fukushima nuclear power plant are having a profound impact on people's views and attitudes the world over.

Although the concrete options available to each country will vary, there can be no doubt that a new current in human history is being born. This is seen in the aggressive promotion of renewable energy sources, the development of energy-efficient technologies and the more careful management of resources generally.

Reaching the goal of a sustainable society will require that we embrace a way of looking at the world – a system of values – that can rein in the runaway excesses of human greed, wisely redirecting these impulses toward higher purposes.

I hope that we will develop a response to the present disaster that pulls together humanity's wisdom as we seek the recovery of our livelihoods, the recovery of our society, the recovery of our civilisation, and underpinning all of these, a robust recovery of the human heart. (COPYRIGHT IPS) ■



# When Social Responsibility is Not Just a Buzzword

By Taro Ichikawa

Corporate social responsibility is not just a buzzword for Isao Mizuno. It is a commitment he and his 95 employees translate into practice day in and day out. Mizuno is the president of Chiyoda Unyu, a transportation company in western Tokyo.

Since 2002, they have been supporting a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Japan, which is engaged in a reforestation project in some 5,100 kilometres away Nepal. Chiyoda Unyu workers collect empty milk packages, considered as recyclable waste in Japan, and bring these to the company. Chiyoda Unyu forwards these to an NGO which sells these to a recycling company, and supports with the proceeds tree planting projects at the feet of the Himalayas.

Isao Mizuno took charge of the company at the age of 33 – in the wake of his father Tsutomu Mizuno passing away in 1986. Founded in 1953, the same year as Isao was born, Chiyoda Unyu transports heavy trucks, passenger cars, and household goods. It also manages logistics centres and auto part stores.

Before following in his father's footsteps, Isao Mizuno graduated from Keio University in 1975, when Japan was in the throes of an economic depression in the aftermath of oil crisis. He continued his studies at the Keio University business school for another year, before joining Ito Yokado, a major retailer in Japan. He worked there for six years, mostly at the headquarters, also serving as secretary for the company's founder Masatoshi Ito for two years.

Isao then moved on to Hino Motors where he learnt for four years all aspects of automobile sales. During this period, he established personal relations with co-workers, which proved to be a great asset for Chiyoda Unyu after he started working for his father in 1986 who asked Isao take care of the company in view of his deteriorating health.

Father Tsutomu had entered into an agreement with the Hino Motors group in 1956, three years after he set up Mizuno Rikuso (company name was changed to Chiyoda Unyu with this agreement), which enabled it to consolidate capital in exchange for accepting two board members from Hino Motors. Since then, Chiyoda Unyu has developed into an affiliated company of Hino Motors group. In 1990, Hino Motors, Ltd held a ceremony to present a letter of appreciation to Chiyoda Unyu to commemorate the occasion of Chiyoda Unyu purchasing 500th truck from Hino Motors.



Isao Mizuno, President of Chiyoda Unyu



## SAFETY FIRST

With the welfare of the company at heart, the prerequisite for which is the welfare of its employees, Isao Mizuno regards 'safety first' for his employees as an essential component of corporate social responsibility. "I believe a company is obliged to undertake every possible effort to help drivers minimize human errors even if those measures may cost a fortune for the company," he tells IDN.

He adds: "The behaviour of TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company) in relation to the recent Fukushima nuclear disaster affirms my view that there is no such thing as 'sufficient' when it comes to safety measures. No matter how hard you keep working on safety measures, one accident could ruin your reputation."

"We are handling huge and expensive merchandise," he adds. "Although we have insurance for these operations, an accident can cause a huge damage as costs of those vehicles are very high ranging up to 70 million yens (Euro 615,550) per a vehicle."

Isao Mizuno recalls that between six and seven years ago, several accidents occurred while transporting merchandise vehicles. Though Chiyoda Unyu trucks carrying cargos such as auto parts were equipped with digital taco graphs allowing the company to grasp driving patterns of its drivers, large vehicles which the company's drivers transport from factory to dealers are clients' vehicles and not equipped with digital taco graphs.

## 'SATETY RECORDER'

"Fortunately, I found a wonderful device called 'safety recorder' by Datatec. Unlike digital taco graph which has to be fixed in a truck, safety recorder is a portable device which can be charged with electricity through cigar lighter socket. It is equipped with five sensors to detect driving pattern as well as GPS, and the installed software would show your driving performance in the form of points (full points: 100) on a pentagonal graph," says Isao Mizuno.

Though the device was rather expensive, he purchased 440 pieces and required each driver of the company and of subsidiary companies to use this portable device when they transport merchandized vehicles and cargos (if their vehicles are not equipped with digital taco graphs). He then introduced seven grade evaluation systems (from higher rank to lower rank: A, B, C, D, E, F and N). "We eliminated N about two years ago and have meanwhile almost eliminated F; in other words, the overall driving skills have been improved." ➔



Transporting new trucks



Carrying trucks on super-seized truck

He adds: "Every month, I put up on a wall a list of top 30 drivers who scored highest points and every six months I award best drivers with certificates of commendations and prizes to give them incentives for safer driving. This grade/point system is applied to all subsidiary companies so that I can grasp average points monthly of each company."

To begin with, some drivers passively resisted the introduction of 'safety recorders' as they felt uncomfortable to be monitored by a third party on their driving pattern. They would make such excuses as "I forgot to insert a memory card," or "I forgot to plug it in".

But Isao Mizuno was convinced that he had to make it a norm to use the device to prevent traffic accidents. The tide turned when some drivers started to score 100 points even on long-distant driving such as between Tokyo and Hiroshima (700km).

Other drivers would say "if he can do it, I can do it too". So they started competing for better scores, and for their own safety. Because the device is equipped with GPS so that the record shows where and at what speed the driver was driving. These objective records protect a driver in case of an accident.

Isao Mizuno also introduced an alcohol detecting system at five business branches in Japan. The system is connected with a computer with a web camera so that the face of a driver, his name, result of the test as well as his blood pressure is recorded and can be viewed through online connection.

This also serves as roll call for all drivers on operation throughout Japan through these five business offices. In this way, the management can grasp the health condition (for example, determine that a driver is not under the influence of alcohol) of drivers on a daily basis. Introduction of the alcohol detecting system also cost the company "a fortune" but "I believe that it is a worthwhile investment to minimize accident which means protecting our drivers as well as reputation of our company," says Isao Mizuno.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Chiyoda Unyu obtained ISO 14001 in 2002 and has been awarded three times so far (every three years). "Our company was probably the first trucking company to obtain ISO 14001 in western Tokyo," said Isao Mizuno, apparently filled with pride.

Chiyoda Unyu was the first company to carry mass transportation of merchandise trucks and cars on super-seized carriers. From early 1960s, manufacturing of automobiles skyrocketed in Japan and this necessitated transportation system to be greatly upgraded. It was in that period that sizes of super-sized carrier trucks got bigger and bigger and some ground transportation companies including Chiyoda Unyu introduced trailers.

Even the Railroad Company newly introduced special double-deck cargo compartment capable of carrying 12 cars in 1965. Some shipping companies also introduced special purpose vessels for cars. In 1972, Chiyoda Unyu found that the volume of middle sized merchandized cars commissioned by Hino Motors would exceed its existing ground transportation capacity and after consulting with them started transporting them by sea.

The merit of sea transportation is that Chiyoda Unyu could bring those merchandized cars without driving them for a long distance (thus merchandize value remains high) and those cars were free from risks of road traffic accidents. As of 2011, Chiyoda Unyu has contracts with 15 shipping companies for 25 sea routes and transports about 5,000 vehicles by sea every month.

### COMMUNICATION

Isao Mizuno has not only been attaching priority to safety of his employees but also actively promoting communication with them and the local community. For the former, he organises barbecue parties and year-end feasts inviting also families of employees. For the latter too he has been engaged in multiple activities: Since 1992, Isao has been receiving local students by way of informing them about social aspects of his business.

Besides, since 2003, he has been actively involving his company in supporting spring festival held around Hino city central park and city hall by opening a stall to sell shoes, providing a truck as a stage for performance and speeches and making and setting up sign boards, and boxes to collect separated trash – flammable and non-flammable, bottles, cans as well as pet-bottles. Isao also lets his company actively participate in cherry blossom festival held at Hino Motors Hino factory grounds by opening a stall to sell shoes and noodles. ■



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## STORM HITTING GLOBAL ECONOMY AND MARKETS



By Raul de Sagastizabal\*  
IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis

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## HOW ZENAWI 'WEAPONIZES' FAMINE IN ETHIOPIA



By Alemayehu G. Mariam\*  
IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis

"Why are Ethiopians starving again? What should the world do and not do?" These are the two enduring questions Time Magazine of December 21, 1987 asked in a cover story. The reply in short was couched as a question: "Is the latest famine wholly the result of cruel nature, or are other, man-made forces at work that worsen the catastrophe?" Something that should strike as déjà vu 24 years later.

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**VIDEO: 'THE SHINING SOCIETY'**

IPS Japan-Global Cooperation Council initiative with former Prime Minister of Japan Toshiki Kaifu >>>

**African Women in Europe Victims of Human Trafficking**

**INFORMED ANALYSIS**

**Five Reasons Why Israel Should Back Nuclear Weapons Ban**

**North Korea and the Voyage to a Nuke-Free World**



**Forward To The Future In Quest Of Global Security**. Europeans are finding it hard to keep their heads above water

as tidal waves of an overwhelming desire for participation in governance pound at the Arab shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The challenge thrown down by Arab uprisings is however only one front in the uphill battle for achieving "security for the global world". Is there a European answer to that challenge?

**Osama's Gone, Questions For Pakistan Remain**



**The Five BRICS Build an Alliance, U.S. Need Not Fear**

**Benghazi Revolt Seems to Come in Handy for NATO**

**China Accuses U.S. Of Hypocrisy and Rights Violations**

**Call For Banning Radioactive Weapons Gathers Momentum**



**INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

**'Get Ready for Development Cooperation in the Middle East'**

By J. Brian Atwood\*  
PARIS (IDN) - Spreading demand for change in the Middle East and North Africa has Western governments scrambling to calculate appropriate diplomatic



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**SOME ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS' VIEWS OF THE WORLD**

**ROBERTO SAVIO**



**TOSHIKI KAIFU'**



**LUC GNAGADJA**



**A. K. CHOWDHURY**



**Strengthening Public Awareness For Nuclear Abolition**

The Global Cooperation Council has launched a special website as part of a media project of [Inter Press Service](#) news agency and [Soka Gakkai International \(SGI\)](#), a Buddhist association based in Tokyo.

Some personalities who have been interviewed, have contributed their views or whose views have been incorporated in articles as part of this project are:



Daisaku Ikeda



Sergio Duarte



Tibor Toth



J. Dhanapala



**Japan Responding Creatively to Crisis**

The human spirit has a truly remarkable capacity -the ability to generate hope from the most devastating of crises. This ability to create value can be seen in the response to the earthquake that struck Japan on March 11, writes Daisaku Ikeda, a Japanese Buddhist philosopher and peacebuilder and president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), in a column for IPS.

**'Abolish Nukes in the Middle East and Beyond'**

As 'people power' topples one Arab regime after another, confronting the international community with an unprecedented volatile situation, an eminent Buddhist leader is urging the world's major powers not to lose sight of the compelling need to bring about a nuclear-weapons-free Middle East as one of the crucial steps towards nuclear abolition. Complete elimination of all atomic weapons -- and not just nuclear disarmament -- with the civil society playing a significant role, is the only absolute guarantee against the threat of nuclear weapons, according to Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Buddhist organisation. [GERMAN](#) | [JAPANESE TEXT VERSION PDF](#)

**Nuclear Disarmament Has a Future**

The United Nations is keen to counter growing skepticism about nuclear disarmament really happening and culminating into a nuke free world. According to the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, Sergio Duarte, the peoples and countries of the world are not willing to hang on to nuclear weapons and put at risk all that has been accomplished in building international interdependence. [JAPANESE TEXT VERSION PDF](#)

**World Closer To Enforcing Treaty Outlawing Nuclear Explosions**

Interview of Tibor Tóth, CTBTO Executive Secretary  
Almost 190 countries around the world have reaffirmed the critical importance of enforcing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1996. The treaty outlaws all atomic explosions in all environments, for military or civilian purpose. Though the CTBT has yet to enter into force, it has been ratified by 153 countries and enjoys almost universal membership of 182 signatory states. "Bringing the Treaty into force is the obvious and logical next step to take and with

**NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:** The Global Cooperation Council held its annual meeting on April 15, 2011 and elected a new Executive Committee for the next two years.

Global Cooperation Council has set up a **Media Task Force** in order to strengthen its media network, with veteran journalist and Sri Lanka diplomat, **Ernest Corea** as president.



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**DEVELOPMENT WATCH**

This website has been launched by Global Cooperation Council as an independent watchdog to monitor reliable and critical information on international development cooperation.

**THE GLOBAL SOUTH**

It was launched as an independent monthly e-Journal for Global Interdependence in 1999 as a humble contribution to making Internet an