

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

MAGAZINE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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Zoellick's Brave New World
The Responsibility to Protect Obama
Trucking Safe with Ecology in the Pouch
A Youthful Minister from India's Garo Hills



Daisaku Ikeda

LEARNING TO BE HUMAN



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Human Rights



The Silent Death of Life Givers

By Babukar Kashka IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis NAIROBI (IDN) – They give life almost in every way – they deliver generation after generation; they plant seeds and grow crops, feed their families and sell food in rural markets; they bring water and heat and sacrifice themselves for the sake of their people be them newborns, adults or elderly. They save biodiversity – the key source of the future of every living thing. In brief, they develop and maintain the life cycle.



Of 'Good' Terrorists and 'Bad' Terrorists

By Fareed Mahdy IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis ISTANBUL (IDN) – Terrorism and terrorists are two of the most widely and largely used terms now-a-days. But what is the definition of terrorism? According to the U.S. State Department, no one definition of terrorism has gained universal acceptance. However, an often used one is the definition of terrorism contained in Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d). That statute offers the following definitions: "The term 'terrorism' means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant, targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."



Reflecting the Reality of War in Iraq

By Dahr Jamail* IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis ANCHORAGE, Alaska (IDN) – The leaked video of a U.S. military helicopter opening fire on a crowd of people in Iraq is typical of the indiscriminate killing that has gone on since the initial invasion. On Monday, April 5, WikiLeaks.org posted video footage from Iraq, taken from a U.S. military Apache helicopter in July 2007 as soldiers aboard it killed 12 people and wounded two children. The dead included two employees of the Reuters news agency: photographer Namir Noor-Eldein and driver Saeed Chmgh.



Canada 2031 – Toward Unique Diversity

By Suresh Jaura* IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis TORONTO (IDN) – "India is people of one nation celebrating diversity. Canada will be a unique example of diversity - bringing the world together as a nation, says India-born Harinder S. Takhar, Ontario's Minister of Government Services, commenting on the Statistics Canada study."



False Patriotism Jeopardizes Democracy in America

By Ernest Corea IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis WASHINGTON DC (IDN) - Home-grown terrorism – even if only in the alleged planning stages – turns up in the most unexpected places. Michigan, for instance. Here's a state that's better known for its array of lakes, its auto industry, and its Canadian-born governor. It was in Michigan, nevertheless, that a Grand Jury recently issued an indictment against nine members of the Hutaree, a supposedly "Christian" militia who were allegedly planning to "levy war on the U.S."



Plenty of Money for Banks. Not for Fighting Crime

By Bob Namer IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis GEVENA (IDN) - The message is loud and clear: while governments spend billions of dollars in funding banks that caused the current, far-reaching global financial crisis, the UN agency spearheading the global war against trans-national criminal networks as part of an integrated strategy to combat drugs, crime and terrorism is "woefully short of the resources needed".



Kyrgyzstan Uprising May Swamp the Region

By Lee Sustar* IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis (IDN) - The mass revolt that toppled the autocratic president of Kyrgyzstan had its roots in the impoverishment of the mass of the population and growing discontent over repression and human rights violations. Predictably, many commentators in the U.S. press focused on the implications for the U.S. airbase in the town of Manas, a critical part of the supply chain for the U.S. war in Afghanistan. Some pundits have pointed the finger at Russia, which was upset over the pro-U.S. tilt of the ousted Kyrgyzstan President Kurmanbek Bakiyev.



Don't Misuse Past Atrocities for Political Purposes

By Thomas Hammarbeg* IDN-InDepth NewsViewpoint STRASBOURG (IDN) - Gross human rights violations in the past continue to affect relations in today's Europe. In some cases the right lessons have been learned; genuine knowledge of history has facilitated understanding, tolerance and trust between individuals and peoples. However, some serious atrocities are denied or trivialised, which has created new tensions.



Crisis Group Concerned about Sudan's Rigged Elections

By Jaya Ramachandran IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis BRUSSELS (IDN) – The independent International Crisis Group has predicted catastrophic consequences for Sudan if President Omar al-Bashir – who is charged of war crimes – and his party are returned to power in the elections in Darfur April 11-13, which the government in Khartoum is accused of rigging. Amidst threats of a last-minute boycott by the opposition parties, the Crisis Group's latest policy briefing 'Elections in Darfur and the Consequences of a Probable NCP Victory in Sudan' examines

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EDITORIAL
Zoellick's Brave New World 04

COLUMN
Learning to Be Human
By *Daisaku Ikeda* 05

CONSIDER THIS
False Patriotism Jeopardizes Democracy in America
By *Ernest Corea* 06

VIEWPOINT
The Responsibility to Protect Obama
By *Jayantha Dhanapala* 08

INSIGHT
Of 'Good' Terrorists and 'Bad' Terrorists
By *Fareed Mahdy* 09

UNITED NATIONS
Plenty of Money for Banks, Not for Fighting Crime
By *Bob Narmer* 11

DEVELOPMENT
Braving Prejudices to Empower Rural Women
By *Ramesh Jaura* 12

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
Trucking Safe with Ecology in the Pouch
By *Taro Ichikawa* 14

SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION
Seeking Global Governance That Inspires and Unites
By *Ernest Corea* 16

NUCLEAR ABOLITION
Redefine Japan-U.S. Alliance for Global Denuclearization
By *Masayoshi Hamada* 18
Security Challenges Ahead After the Nuke Summit
By *Ernest Corea* 20
Dramatic Arab Appeal for a NuclearFree World
By *Fareed Mahdy* 22
Toward a Modern Nuclear Security Enterprise 23

MIGRATION
Canada 2031 – Toward Unique Diversity
By *Suresh Jaura* 24

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES
A Youthful Minister from India's Garo Hills 25
Parliamentarians Vow Support for Indigenous Peoples 26

ENVIRONMENT
Shrinking Aral Sea Sends Shockwaves
By *Raushan Valikhanov* 27
Oxfam America Falls Prey to GM Temptation
By *J. Chandler* 28

STRAY THOUGHTS
Sarkozy's Difficult Nuclear Heritage
By *Julio Godoy* 30

IMPRINT 31

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The Responsibility to Protect Obama

Not since John F. Kennedy has an American President exuded such grace, magnetism and hope. If Obama fails to achieve his vision for his country and for the world there will be a long wait for another leader of his potential. Obama's success will ensure a better USA and a better world. Sadly however, a diluted Health Reform Act in Congress and a bilateral nuclear arms reduction treaty with the Russians may be all that the first African-American President of the U.S. will have as concrete achievements fifteen months after his inauguration.

His detractors on the Republican right will continue to denounce this as typical of a Presidency that was long on rhetoric but short on action. His supporters will hail him for surviving the welter of awesome problems – perhaps the most challenging for any incoming President. They will cite the success of sparking a modest revival of the U.S. economy after the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression; winding down the Iraqi war; closing down gulag of Guantanamo (not quite) and ending the practice of torture; . . . writes **Jayantha Dhanapala** | **More on page 8.**



Braving Prejudices to Empower Rural Women

IFAD, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, has been making history lately. For the first time since its inception in 1977, the specialised UN agency appointed an African as president and a woman as vice-president. Kanayo F. Nwanze, a Nigerian national, began his term as the fifth president on April 1, 2009 – and appointed **Yukiko Omura**, a Japanese national, as his deputy on February 1, 2010.

The two 'firsts' are significant on their own merit. But Omura is aware that there is something exceptional about her appointment. She brings to the job over 25 years of international professional experience but most of it in the financial services sector – at JP Morgan, Lehman Brothers, Dresdner's Global Markets and Global Debt offices as well as the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) of the World Bank Group. | **More on pages 12-13.**



Redefine Japan-U.S. Alliance for Global Denuclearization

Japan is serving in the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council in April, ahead of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons scheduled for May 2010. Amidst growing momentum toward a world free of nuclear weapons I believe Japan has the moral responsibility to spread word about the harrowing effect of nuclear weapons as the only sufferer of nuclear attacks, and exercise leadership in finding a fundamental solution to the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons programme, which has undermined the global trend toward nuclear disarmament. As the world's only sufferer of nuclear attacks, Japan must tell the rest of the world about the agonizing and harrowing effect of nuclear attacks, incomparable to any other form of weaponry, the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons, writes **Masayoshi Hamada**, member of the House of Councillors in Japan. | **More on pages 18-19.**



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Zoellick's Brave New World



Thirty-three years after the World Bank president Robert McNamara proposed the establishment of an international commission to break the deadlock in North-South relations, his successor Robert B. Zoellick has proclaimed that in the new system triggered by a multi-polar world, North and South are only points on a compass, not economic destinies.

Zoellick is not proposing an independent commission like the one led by Nobel Laureate Willy Brandt. He draws his inspiration from Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of the United States (March 1913 to March 1921). While Wilson wished for a League of Nations, Zoellick pleads for "a League of Networks", which would shape the modern multilateral system.

Such a system would recognize that most governmental authority still resides with nation-states. But many decisions and sources of influence flow around, through, and beyond governments. He adds: Modern multilateralism must therefore bring in new players, build cooperation among actors old and new, and harness global and regional institutions to help address threats and seize opportunities that surpass the capacities of individual states.

Zoellick predicts that modern multilateralism – yet to be shaped – will not be a constricted club with more left outside the room than seated within. It will look more like the global sprawl of the Internet, interconnecting more and more countries, companies, individuals, and NGOs through a flexible network. Legitimate and effective multilateral institutions, backed by resources and capable of delivering results, will form an interconnecting tissue, reaching across the skeletal architecture of this dynamic, multipolar system.

Zoellick's optimism is based on the premise that the global economic crisis has shown that multilateralism matters. Staring into the abyss, countries pulled together to save the global economy. The modern G-20 was borne out of crisis. It showed its potential by quickly acting to shore up confidence. The question now, he says, is whether this was an aberration, a blip?

Zoellick then comes to the crux of the issue – and doubts dampen his enthusiasm: "Will historians look back on 2009 and see it as a singular case of international cooperation or the start of something new? Some now view Woodrow Wilson's attempt to create a new international system after World War One as an opportunity lost that left the world adrift amidst dangers. Will this be a similar moment?"

The danger now is that as the fear of the crisis recedes, he cautions, the willingness to cooperate will too. "Already we feel gravitational forces pulling a world of nation-states back to the pursuit of narrower interests."

This is in stark contrast to the upbeat remarks in the opening paragraphs of his speech: If 1989 saw the end of the Second World with Communism's demise, then 2009 saw the end of what was known as the 'Third World'.

However, poverty remains and must be addressed. Failed states remain and must be addressed. Global challenges are intensifying and must be addressed. But the manner in which we must address these issues is shifting. The implications are profound: For multilateralism, for global cooperative action, for power relationships, for development, and for international institutions.

One could not agree more with Zoellick that "the outdated categorizations of First and Third Worlds, donor and supplicant, leader and led, no longer fit". But the fact is that they are there – alive and kicking. Why? Because, as Zoellick rightly points out, the implications of a world in which there is no donor and no supplicant, no leader and no led, will indeed be profound.

Are the World Bank and its sister Bretton Woods institutions ready to accept Zoellick's brave new world? What about the post-war industrialized nations? They are not blind to the emerging realities. But they are far from willing to accept these. Remember what Brandt wrote in 1983 in foreword to 'Common Crisis', the second report of the Commission he headed: "A new century nears, and with it the prospects of a new civilization. Could we not begin to lay the basis for that new community with reasonable relations among all people and nations, and to build a world in which sharing, justice, freedom and peace might prevail?" Unfortunately, the question marks remain – and there are no signs that they will disappear.

Ramesh Jaura

Chief Editor

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Learning to Be Human

By Daisaku Ikeda*

The smiling faces and laughing voices of children are the true measure of a peaceful and healthy society, much more so than any statistical indices.

In 1996, I visited Costa Rica to attend the opening ceremony for the SGI's 'Nuclear Arms: Threat to Humanity' exhibition, which was being held in the capital, San Jose. With both President Figueres Olsen and former President Arias Sanchez in attendance, a solemn performance of Costa Rica's national anthem began.

Adjacent to the venue was a Children's Museum, and throughout the ceremony we could hear the lively voices of children playing and laughing, calling out to their friends and running around excitedly. The partition between the two venues didn't reach the ceiling, so the noise made by the children resounded through the room unhindered.

Soon my turn came to take the stage. The organisers of the ceremony appeared increasingly concerned as children's heads peered through gaps in the partition, but my heart filled with joy. 'The lively voices and playful exuberance of these children,' I commented, 'is surely a true embodiment of peace. This is the key to overcoming the threat of nuclear arms. This is where hope lies!'

I heard later that the building where the exhibition was being held used to be a prison, but it had been repainted in a bright yellow and converted into a science and culture centre. This reminded me of Victor Hugo's assertion that he who opens the doors to schools closes the doors of prisons.

There is no such thing as a person who is bad from birth; we all have the seeds of goodness within. The work of nurturing these seeds and bringing them to fruition is the purpose of learning and education. Education is not simply the transfer of knowledge, nor simply the development of specific talents. Authentic education is aimed at nurturing the complete personality, including both character and intellect; it is the great enterprise of passing on the fullness of humanity from the past into the future, ensuring its development.

The pioneering American educator John Dewey once stated: 'To the growth of the child all studies are subservient. Not knowledge or information, but self-realisation, is the goal.' Children need to believe in their own potential and soar into the limitless skies as they embrace their mission in life.

It is not just schools and the home that support this; this is a task of the local community and of society as a whole. Based on this belief, I have often called for a reorientation of values: from the idea that education should serve the needs of society to the idea that society itself should be dedicated to the cause of learning.

I am a member of the generation that directly experienced the horrors that result when education is subverted to false aims. When I was young, the militarists who controlled Japan sought to inculcate, not just in schools but through every available means, the idea that offering up one's life in service to the state was the highest path in life. Aged thirteen, I even tried to enrol in the Naval Aviation Corps like many of my friends. But my father, who had already seen my four elder brothers drafted and sent to the front, opposed this so vehemently that I gave up on my idea. Countless precious young lives were sacrificed to an educational system which placed utmost priority on serving the machinery of the state.



Credit:Seikyo Shimbun

My own efforts to create educational opportunities that are solidly focused on the happiness of children grow out of this experience. Regrettably, the postwar Japanese education system was focused on producing foot soldiers useful to Japan's economic growth. This process of forcing children through an education system designed to serve the interests of the state, a system that turns them into means and not ends, is entirely unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue. Instead, we must base education on respect for life and a humane philosophy: the commitment never to build one's happiness on the suffering of others.

A loss of awareness of the interrelatedness and inseparability of our own lives and those of others -human or otherwise-inevitably gives rise to the kind of egoism that underlies the increasing inequalities in society and propels the processes of environmental destruction. There are numerous examples of educational projects that seek to sensitise people to our interrelatedness. For example, as part of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (2005-14), efforts are being made to encourage young people to get out of the classroom and interact with the world. These initiatives, which include community art projects and the revitalisation of local public spaces, enable children to experience their interconnections with the world around them and develop a rich capacity for empathy.

As a civil society organisation and a proponent of ESD, the SGI is engaged in grassroots activities to raise awareness and support the decade. Creating an educational environment that instills a spirit of empathy with other people and with nature would be the greatest treasure today's adults can bequeath to the future.

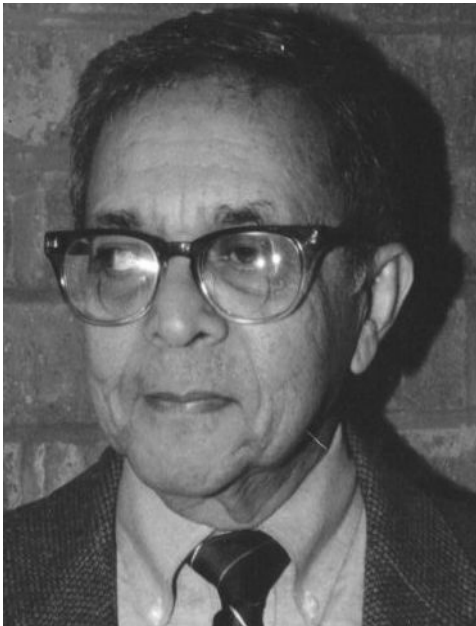
A firm spiritual foundation is the key to constructing an enduring culture of peace. If education flourishes, society, too, will prosper and humankind will advance.

Education is not something distant from us; our schools, our homes and our communities provide myriad opportunities for strengthening our shared capacity for learning and teaching. The inherent creativity of life is brought to flower by working for other people and contributing to society, striving to learn and take meaningful action. We all have the potential to become wiser and stronger, to bring forth the brilliance that exists in the depths of life. It is up to each of us to demonstrate this truth. - COPYRIGHT IPS ■

* Daisaku Ikeda, a Japanese philosopher and peace-builder, is president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) grassroots Buddhist movement (www.sgi.org) and founder of Soka University and Soka University of America.

False Patriotism Jeopardizes Democracy in America

By Ernest Corea



Home-grown terrorism – even if only in the alleged planning stages – turns up in the most unexpected places. Michigan, for instance.

Here’s a state that’s better known for its array of lakes, its auto industry, and its Canadian-born governor. It was in Michigan, nevertheless, that a Grand Jury recently issued an indictment against nine members of the Hutaree, a supposedly “Christian” militia who were allegedly planning to “levy war on the U.S.”

The main thrust of the indictment was that from around August 2008, the defendants:

“did knowingly conspire, confederate, and agree with each other and other persons known and unknown to the Grand Jury, to levy war against the U.S., to oppose by force the authority of the Government of the U.S. and to prevent, hinder, and delay by force the execution of any U.S. law.”

OPERATIONS

The Hutaree’s planned operations, as outlined in the indictment, were to “commit some violent act to draw the attention of law enforcement or government officials and which would prompt a response by law enforcement.”

The acts that were considered included “killing a member of law enforcement (i.e. police) after a traffic stop, killing a member of law enforcement and his or her family at home, ambushing a member of law enforcement in rural communities, luring a

member of law enforcement with a false 911 emergency call and then killing him or her, and killing a member of law enforcement and then attacking the funeral procession motorcade with weapons of mass destruction.”

These acts were expected to “intimidate and demoralize law enforcement diminishing their ranks and rendering them ineffective.”

The “general concept of operations”, the indictment alleges, also provided for Hutaree members, once such action was taken, to “retreat to one of several ‘rally points’ where the Hutaree would wage war against the government and be prepared to defend in depth with trip-wired and command detonated anti-personnel Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), ambushes, and prepared fighting positions. “It is believed by the Hutaree that this engagement would then serve as a catalyst for a more widespread uprising against the Government.”

(IEDs, it might be noted, have been used against U.S. forces with devastating effect in the Middle East.)

CONFRONTATION

The indictment itself, let alone what else will be made known through “due process,” is a reminder that violence-prone groups have grown recently, posing a continued threat to orderly governance, and good sense.

A report from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) points out that “the number of hate groups in America has been going up for years, rising 54 percent between 2000 and 2008 and driven largely by an angry backlash against non-white immigration and, starting in the last year of that period, the economic meltdown and the climb to power of an African American president.”

Mark Potok, drawing from SPLC figures, writes that “these groups rose again slightly in 2009 – from 926 in 2008 to 932 last year – despite the demise of a key neo-Nazi group.”

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

“At the same time,” says Potok, “the number of what the SPLC designates as ‘nativist extremist’ groups – organizations that go beyond mere advocacy of restrictive immigration policy to actually confront or harass suspected immigrants – jumped from 173 groups in 2008 to 309 last year.”

REAPPEARANCE

“But the most dramatic story by far has been with the anti-government Patriots.

“The militias and the larger Patriot movement first came to Americans’ attention in the mid-1990s, when they appeared as an angry reaction to what was seen as a tyrannical government bent on crushing all dissent.

“Sparked most dramatically by the death of 76 Branch Davidians during a 1993 law enforcement siege in Waco, Texas, those who joined the militias also railed against the Democratic Clinton Administration and initiatives like gun control and environmental regulation.

“Although the Patriot movement included people formerly associated with racially based hate groups, it was above all animated by a view of the federal government as the primary enemy, along with a fondness for antigovernment conspiracy theories. By early this decade, the groups had largely disappeared from public view.”

Last year, however, Potok adds, “a dramatic resurgence in the Patriot movement and its paramilitary wing, the militias, began. Now, the latest SPLC count finds that an astonishing 363 new Patriot groups appeared in 2009, with the totals going from 149 groups (including 42 militias) to 512 (127 of them militias) – a 244 percent jump.”

Sadly, some of the vituperative and bilious prose that sometimes passes for “legitimate political comment” only fuels the anger and hatred on which false patriotism thrives.

TAUNTS

Winston Churchill’s definition of democracy is almost a cliché now, but is worth repeating at times like this. He said: “No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”

Despite its imperfections, whose existence Churchill conceded, democracy provides space for dissenting voices to be heard; for the force of argument, and not the argument of force, to prevail; and for consensus to emerge through negotiations, mutual respect, and compromise.

Within the parameters of parliament, there has always been room for the irreverent and the unusual. Fairly recently in India, the entire Opposition walked out, as a sign of protest against the budget presented by the finance minister. That unorthodox action secured the publicity that the Opposition craved and, with that done, Opposition members of parliament were back, and the budget debate continued.

The British House of Commons is particularly well known for the barbs that fly across the floor. Churchill was an expert at this game, as he showed when he described Prime Minister Clement Atlee as a “modest man who has much to be modest about.”

On another occasion, Churchill had just walked into the House when a Labour parliamentarian, a woman, said to him: “Winston, you are drunk.” He responded: “Yes, and you are ugly. Tomorrow, I will be sober, and you will still be ugly.”

Sharp, on occasion cutting, but how different, from the cruel taunts that filled the chamber during the recent health care debate in the U.S. House of Representatives. One of the nastiest of them, directed at Congressman Bart Stupak (of Michigan), a confirmed opponent of abortion, was “baby killer.” Stupak has since decided to withdraw from politics at the end of this year.

COMBINED

Several trends appear to be coalescing in a way that can enliven political discourse but at the same time is fraught with ominous possibility.

The first of these is concern bordering on wrenching anxiety that President Barack Obama is committed to lurching so much to the left that much of the country’s economic strengths will be eroded. The trend is based on entrenched beliefs.

The second is a considered attempt by the Republican establishment as represented in the Senate and House of Representatives to thwart Obama by opposing almost every proposal he makes, or action he takes. The purpose of this exercise is to keep the party’s rightwing base contented and, over the longer term, to so weaken Obama that he will not be re-elected.

The third is an attempt to undo what was achieved by fellow-voters at the presidential election by intimidating Obama’s supporters into silence and, eventually, inertia. These are people who have questions about the Obama Administration’s policies but do not wish to listen to answers and, if they do listen, reject the answers.

Fairly close to them are the Obama haters who are energized by ingrained prejudice. They will not allow facts to get in the way of their misconceptions; will probably never believe that Obama is an American, and who actually have persuaded themselves that state-funded Medicare from which they benefit is a private sector initiative.

The combination of all elements can turn out to be an explosive mix, particularly because so much of what motivates the noisiest and most virulently active among them is the factor of race.

PROCLAMATION

That race is a critically important issue to the alleged populists was, in effect, acknowledged during a recent blunder by the newly-elected Governor of the state of Virginia, Bob McDonnell.

Under pressure from a section of his supporters, he did what some of his predecessors refused to do; he issued a “proclamation” of Confederate History Month i.e. celebrating the confederate movement that opposed the emancipation of slaves.

Nowhere in his proclamation was there the slightest reference to slavery, thus implying that the proclamation supported the anti-emancipation movement. Had he only forgotten, or did he not believe that, as Frederick Douglas said in 1878: “There was a right side and a wrong side in the late war, which no sentiment ought to consider us to forget?”

Criticised from all over, the governor issued an addendum to his proclamation, acknowledging the part that slavery played in the civil war. And that’s what provided the opportunity for the racist motivation of nay-sayers to be clarified.

So, consider this: The first lieutenant commander of the Virginia Division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, which had in the first place pushed Governor McDonnell into making his proclamation, said of the anti-emancipation confederates in the civil war: “They were fighting for the same things that people in the ‘tea party’ are fighting for now.” ■



Congressional Delegation Visits Civil Rights Memorial



Credit: The International Institute For Strategic Studies

The Responsibility to Protect Obama

By Jayantha Dhanapala*

Not since John F. Kennedy has an American President exuded such grace, magnetism and hope. If Obama fails to achieve his vision for his country and for the world there will be a long wait for another leader of his potential. Obama's success will ensure a better USA and a better world.

Sadly however, a diluted Health Reform Act in Congress and a bilateral nuclear arms reduction treaty with the Russians may be all that the first African-American President of the U.S. will have as concrete achievements fifteen months after his inauguration.

His detractors on the Republican right will continue to denounce this as typical of a Presidency that was long on rhetoric but short on action. His supporters will hail him for surviving the welter of awesome problems – perhaps the most challenging for any incoming President.

They will cite the success of sparking a modest revival of the U.S. economy after the greatest financial crisis since the Great Depression; winding down the Iraqi war; closing down gulag of Guantanamo (not quite) and ending the practice of torture; courageously announcing the vision of a nuclear weapon-free world and taking practical steps to achieve this; announcing a surge of troops for the Afghanistan war with an exit plan; winning the Nobel Peace Prize albeit prematurely; brokering a deal at the Copenhagen Climate Summit and other steps that set a totally different tone to the eight dismal years of neo-conservatism that preceded him.

In sum, Barak Obama cannot walk on water and the USA remains deeply divided about his performance. He is, after all, the President of the USA in a political system that has so many checks and balances that the idealism of one man, even with a Congressional majority, cannot always carry the country with him.

Remember Woodrow Wilson the visionary internationalist who was thwarted by his Senate over U.S. membership of his creation – the League of Nations?

But it is not only the USA which has had mixed reactions to Obama's first year.

There is intense disappointment among the Arabs, especially the Palestinians, despite the impressive Cairo speech building bridges between the USA and the Islamic world. He has failed to make any impact on the Middle East issue (thanks to Netanyahu) and, with his stand on the Goldstone report on Gaza, continues the all too familiar U.S. tilt to Israel.

In Latin America, his reactions to the coup in Honduras were out of step with the region and more in tune with infamous past U.S. policy.

Russia, still nursing past grievances, remains cautious about him despite his putting Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) plans in Eastern Europe on hold and China has been correct but not cordial. Hillary Clinton has excelled in her role as the bad cop but the good cop is AWOL.

So what do we make of Obama the President having entranced the nation and the world as a charismatic candidate?

Clearly we have several Obamas now. There is Obama the Idealist inspiring the jaded U.S. electorate and especially her youth to respond enthusiastically to his call for change with the

confident assertion "Yes we can!"

The world too responded with more hope than faith in a man who was born of an African father and a white American mother from the heartland of the U.S..

A deeply sensitive and caring individual emerges from his moving autobiographical book "Dreams from my Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance". It reveals the young Obama growing up with a single parent in multicultural Hawaii and Indonesia; his problems as an adolescent; his work in underprivileged communities in Chicago and his experience in the citadels of academic excellence in Columbia and Harvard.

Drawing on this, he helped his country confront the race issue honestly.

A second book self-consciously describing his political philosophy after his stellar performance as a speaker at the Democratic Convention of 2004, "The Audacity of Hope; Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream", gives us a glimpse of another facet – Obama the Pragmatist.

Exposed to the real world of the U.S. Senate and the deal making it entails Obama had to build on his slender experience. Elected with a comfortable 52.9 percent of the vote and with a Democrat majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, Obama has nevertheless had to compromise.

Arcane rules in the Senate made him settle for a minimum 60 Senators to avoid the filibuster only to see it disappear after Teddy Kennedy's vacancy in Massachusetts went to the Republicans after a maladroitly run campaign.

Hate mongers among the right wing with their radio talk shows, the Tea Party activists and columnists maintain a daily barrage – some of it nakedly racist. Not even the moderate Republican Congressmen and Senators are ready to extend a hand of co-operation.

Looming Congressional elections in the Fall of this year are a sombre reminder of the Gingrich Revolution of 1994 in Clinton's first term which overturned the Democratic majority in Congress forcing Clinton into the compromises of triangulation.

With a large number of Clinton appointees in the Obama Administration and hangovers from George W. Bush (especially in the Pentagon) Obama is being increasingly seen as falling among several stools.

Great leaders must not only inspire their people to follow great causes; they must also sustain that inspiration whatever the obstacles. There are signs that the political system of the USA is being misused to thwart Barak Obama's lofty plans for a better USA and a better world. People power must prevent that.

- IDN-InDepthNews ■

*Jayantha Dhanapala is a former UN Under-Secretary-General who is currently President of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Pugwash Conferences on Science & World Affairs. These are his personal views expressed in a Viewpoint for IDN-InDepthNews.

Of 'Good' Terrorists and 'Bad' Terrorists

By Fareed Mahdy

Terrorism and terrorists are two of the most widely and largely used terms now-a-days. But what is the definition of terrorism?

According to the U.S. State Department, no one definition of terrorism has gained universal acceptance. However, an often used one is the definition of terrorism contained in Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f(d). That statute offers the following definitions:

"The term 'terrorism' means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant, targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."

"The term 'international terrorism' means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country."

"The term 'terrorist group' means any group practicing, or that has significant subgroups that practice, international terrorism."

For its part, the U.S. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms defines terrorism as:

"The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological."

The United Kingdom's Terrorism Act 2000 says that "terrorism" means "the use or threat of action where the action falls within subsection 2,73 the use or threat is designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public and the use or threat of action is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause."

Meanwhile, since 1994, the UN General Assembly has condemned terrorist acts using the following political description of terrorism: "Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them."

In the light of the above definitions of terrorism, seven major questions impose themselves necessarily and urgently:

QUESTION 1:

Is it possible to plan and implement detailed anti-terrorism strategies and specific, well-defined actions to combat terrorism, while a major planner – U.S. State Department clearly states that no one definition of terrorism has gained universal acceptance?

The same question applies to the contents of major UK reports on terrorism – no precise, unequivocal definition.

In other words, is it possible to set up and carry out specific, defined actions against an unspecific, undefined subject or phenomenon?

QUESTION 2:

Why a definition such as the one of the U.S. Defense Department's ("The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.") has been exclusively applied to certain groups only?

Isn't it true that some big powers have been acting within the exact term of this definition, through the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological?

Wasn't this the case of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia?

Weren't these actions intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of political or ideological goals?

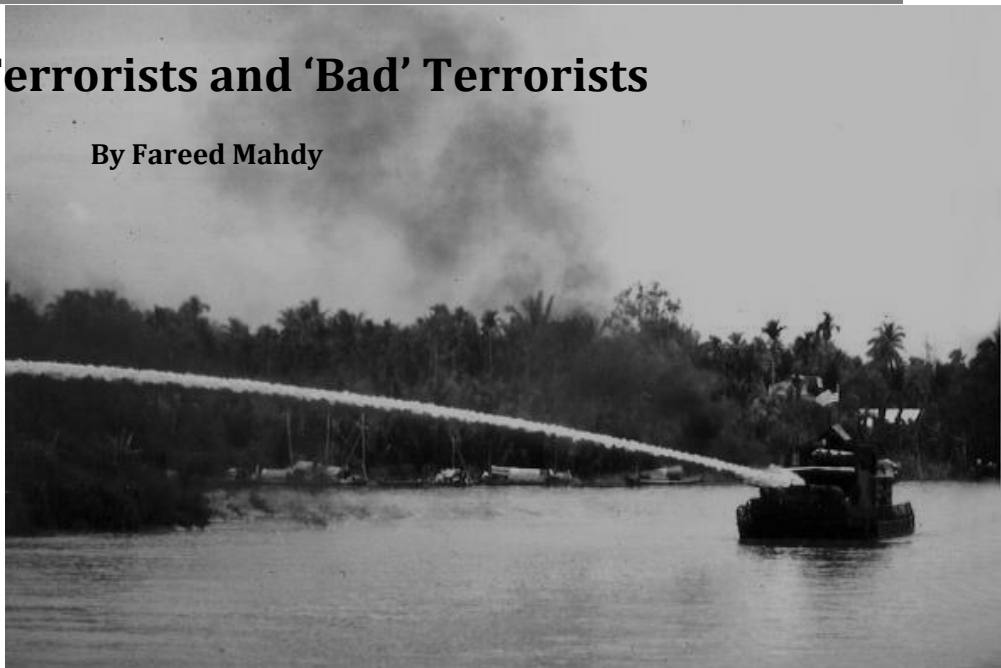
Wasn't this the case of the U.S. and allies' invasion of Afghanistan? And Iraq? Weren't these invasions meant to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of political or ideological goals?

One can perfectly argue that most official definitions of terrorism talk about the use of calculated and "unlawful" violence.

But then, aren't the U.S. and allies' using "... calculated violence intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological"?

Or is the use of calculated violence 'lawful' just because the U.S. and the UK, among other Western powers, managed to strap from the UN a 'legal coverage' based on fake information and lies?

Didn't the U.S. president and the UK prime minister admit, publicly, that Iraq did not have such weapons? Any scientific evidence about the alleged close terrorism-related-ties between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan? (*Continued on page 10*)



US riverboat using napalm in Vietnam
Photo: Wikimedia Commons



Peasants suspected of being communists under detention of U.S. army, 1966 | Wikimedia Commons

QUESTION 3:

Does the UN definition, which was adopted with the consent of the U.S., UK and other Western powers, justify the use of chemical weapons?

How to judge the case of the U.S. use of Agent Orange in Vietnam to which 4.8 million Vietnamese people were exposed, resulting in 400,000 deaths and disabilities, and 500,000 children born with birth defects? And the deployment of Napalm by the U.S. – was that “lawful”?

And how to categorize the Israeli bombing with white phosphor on Gaza?

Don't these activities fall under the definition of “unlawful”? Aren't these “criminal acts”?

The UN definition of terrorism is: "Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them."

QUESTION 4:

Weren't the U.S. nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki a “... calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological,” according to the U.S. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms definition?

Can't the U.S. use of drone strikes in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan be defined as calculated use of unlawful violence? They kill hundreds of unarmed civilians.

QUESTION 5:

Don't the Western threats to impose more and tougher sanctions against Iran to punish it for a potential, not-based on any scientific evidence, probable and eventual intention to produce nuclear heads in an unspecified future... don't they fit in the U.S. Defense Department definition: “The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.”

QUESTION 6:

Doesn't the reported possession by Israel of 200 nuclear weapons constitute “Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstance unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them.”? How to characterize that in the light of all the above definitions of terrorism? Is it enough to declare the aim of such weapons as 'deterrent' instead of using the definition of “inculcate fear”?

QUESTION 7:

The final statement by an unprecedented 47-nation nuclear security summit in Washington promised greater efforts to block "non-state actors" from obtaining the building blocks for nuclear weapons for "malicious purposes".

Is such a last-minute differentiation between “state actors” and “non-state actors” enough to legalize Israeli, Indian and Pakistan's refusal to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)?

Isn't refusing to sign the NPT an act of unlawful action by a state?

Isn't it state terrorism, the use of military force and violence against unarmed demilitarized populations, of occupying their lands, demolishing their houses, installing colonies in their place, building separation walls, annexing territories, imposing hermetic siege, showing irreverence toward places of worship, and more – expelling natives from their lands?

A FINAL POINT

All said, there is an aspect that has not been specified in any of the above definitions but that could possibly fit in one or another definition.

It is about that fact that quite often – with or without any solid, scientific evidence – terrorism and terrorists are both tagged with the adjective 'Islamist', a singular word designed to define Islam only.

In fact, no terrorist organization in a 'Christian' European country (Spanish ETA, the German Baader-Meinhof or the Irish Republic Army, among others) has ever been branded as “Christianist”.

Nor has the Haganah – the paramilitary organization active during the British Mandate for Palestine period 1920 to 1948 – which later became the core of the Israel Defense Forces – ever been called “Hebrewist” or “Jewishist”.

Could it be that there are 'good' terrorists and 'bad' terrorists? ■

Plenty of Money for Banks, Not for Fighting Crime

By Bob Narmer

The message is loud and clear: while governments spend billions of dollars in funding banks that caused the current, far-reaching global financial crisis, the UN agency spearheading the global war against trans-national criminal networks as part of an integrated strategy to combat drugs, crime and terrorism is “woefully short of the resources needed”.



In a new 71-page report, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) states this dramatic fact while dealing with every aspect of its activities, from security, justice and integrity to health, research and forensic services.

Currently, “resources available are minute compared to the gigantic menace that we face,” affirms the agency's executive director Antonio Maria Costa in his introduction to the report.

Cutting criminal networks disrupts a range of illicit activities that carve out paths of death and destruction through some of the world's most fragile regions, he adds.

UNODC appealed for “much greater funding”, while stressing how advances in globalization had helped to strengthen trans-national organized crime.

“Taking advantage of innovations in technology, communication and transportation, loose networks of criminals or insurgents can easily link with each other, and also with organized criminal groups that operate internationally.”

MONEY FOR TERRORISTS

These criminal networks smuggle illicit drugs, weapons, natural resources, counterfeit goods and human beings across borders and between continents for the enrichment of criminals, insurgents and crooked officials.

“In some cases, they generate economic profits that support terrorist groups as well,” according to UNODC, which adds that the common thread connecting these malignant webs is trans-national organized crime, which is largely driven by drug trafficking.

“No country can deal with terrorism alone,” the report warns and calls for a comprehensive global response that brings perpetrators to trial in their home countries or through extradition, with no country offering a safe haven to terrorists.

This year the Vienna-based UN specialized agency intends to enhance its focus on knowledge-building in what it calls “specialized areas”. Such areas are all extremely frightening: “nuclear, chemical and biological terrorism, the financing of terrorism, maritime issues and the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes.”

Noting that “organized crime, drug trafficking, corruption and terrorism are tightly intertwined” the report highlights the potentially “catastrophic” effects of trans-national crime on security.

THE PARADISE OF CRIME

“Traffickers have far more resources than States in poor and vulnerable transit areas like the Andes, Central America, the Caribbean, West Africa, the Balkans and Central Asia.”

They use their dirty money to buy political and economic influence, often resorting to bloodshed to assert control, it said, citing

West Africa as a case in point, with the region becoming a key transit hub for smuggling 1 billion-dollars-worth of cocaine from Latin America to a booming market in Europe.

“West Africa is a paradise for organized crime, offering ideal conditions for trafficking contraband: a strategic location, porous borders, weak governance, widespread poverty and extensive corruption,” the report explains.

The region is also a destination for counterfeit medicines and toxic waste and a source of stolen natural resources, particularly oil, and for human trafficking, whether for forced labour or sexual exploitation.

Operating largely with impunity, drug traffickers are breeding widespread corruption and threatening security in the region.

As maritime interdictions of illegal cargo increase thanks in part to the global UNODC Container Control Programme, “traffickers active in West Africa are increasingly taking to the skies. A clandestine fleet of jet aircraft regularly transports cocaine and possibly weapons to West Africa from Latin America.”

THE 420 MILLION CONTAINERS

The crime and drugs agency reports: “The drugs are transported onward for distribution in Europe, but it is likely that the weapons stay in the region. The planes return to Latin America carrying unexamined cargo and unidentified passengers who may be involved in illicit activities.”

UNODC warns that of the more than 420 million maritime containers that move around the globe each year, accounting for 90 per cent of international trade, only 2 per cent are inspected, creating opportunities for crime syndicates and terrorists to use them.

Stressing the need for strong domestic law enforcement, the report cites Somalia, where the absence of an effective central government since 1991 has provoked a surge of maritime hijackings off the Horn of Africa.

“While a few years ago Somali pirates attacked fishing trawlers, today, armed with automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades, they take on oil tankers, cruise liners and cargo ships. On average, they make 1 million dollars per heist,” it noted.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

On human trafficking, with women comprising 80 to 84 per cent of the victims, UNODC says that sexual exploitation accounted for 79 per cent, followed by forced labour with 18 per cent.

But many types of trafficking may be underreported. “Through coercion, deceit or force, they are exploited for their labour, sex or even their organs,” it adds. “Almost every country in the world is affected by this crime against humanity, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination.” ■

Braving Prejudices to Empower Rural Women

By Ramesh Jaura



Yukiko Omura

IFAD, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, has been making history lately. For the first time since its inception in 1977, the specialised UN agency appointed an African as president and a woman as vice-president. Kanayo F. Nwanze, a Nigerian national, began his term as the fifth president on April 1, 2009 – and appointed Yukiko Omura, a Japanese national, as his deputy on February 1, 2010.

The two 'firsts' are significant on their own merit. But Omura is aware that there is something exceptional about her appointment. She brings to the job over 25 years of international professional experience but most of it in the financial services sector – at JP Morgan, Lehman Brothers, Dresdner's Global Markets and Global Debt offices as well as the Multi-lateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) of the World Bank Group.

She had hardly completed her first 100 days as MIGA's executive vice-president, when non-governmental organisations from around the world called into question the World Bank agency's commitment to the poorest countries.

In a letter dated September 24, 2004 members of 90 development, environmental, human rights, indigenous, labour and faith-based organizations from 42 countries called for "urgent and substantial reforms" of the MIGA that they said was "at a critical juncture", adding: "It must re-examine its portfolio and policies or risk becoming obsolete as a development institution."

The reason: "Of the top-ten investor countries in MIGA's portfolio, only one – South Africa – is a developing country; the rest hail exclusively from Europe, the United States, Canada, and Japan."

Things have changed since. In fact Omura is credited with having achieved "historical results" at MIGA – and the MIGA experience is apparently invaluable as she braves latent and sometimes loud scepticism about whether she would manage to contribute to fulfilling IFAD's mandate of "enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty".

The scepticism is grounded on the widespread belief that the World Bank group, her previous employer, is responsible for aggravating poverty that IFAD is striving to fight.

Time will tell. But Omura is convinced that – in addition to the fact that she began her career as a project economist with the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington DC and worked in the infrastructure sector – the tenure at MIGA exposed her to some of the most critical issues that constitute the focus of IFAD.

MIGA's mission is to promote foreign direct investment (FDI) into developing countries to help support economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve people's lives. It does this by providing political risk insurance (guarantees) to the private sector.

"The transition from the World Bank to IFAD has been very smooth and everyone has been extremely welcoming," she tells IDN in a telephone interview. This makes her feel "very much at home" at IFAD. The World Bank experience is providing a good background. She feels that she is able to learn more quickly than when she joined the Bank.

She would like to see IFAD become "much more prominent in the world because I think it is a unique organisation" that really does immensely lot for the rural poor.

Omura firmly believes that as one of the largest sources of development financing for agriculture and rural development, IFAD has a key role to play in bringing sustainable solutions to these issues which are critical to tackle poverty.

As chance would have it, she has joined IFAD at a time when the private sector is becoming an increasingly crucial ally to drive economic growth and to reduce poverty in rural areas of developing countries.

This, she says, was reconfirmed in Davos in January. IFAD was invited to the prestigious World Economic Forum's annual meeting for the first time.

CHALLENGES

Omura knows from her previous work (at JP Morgan and Lehman Brothers) in emerging markets that there are ample profitable, developmentally sound investment opportunities in developing countries.

It is often overlooked that about 500 million smallholder farms provide for 20 percent of world food production and almost 2 billion people comprising one third of humanity depend on what these smallholder farms produce. But the farm households are living on less than two dollars a day.

SMALLHOLDER FARMS

Yet, smallholder farmers have a lot to offer the private sector: a sustainable supply of high quality agricultural produce. The challenge, according to Omura, is to help build the capacity of smallholder farmers and their organizations so that they can deliver what large businesses require and encourage businesses to adapt their models to be inclusive and supportive of small-scale agricultural producers. She hopes that her task would be facilitated by the fact that smallholder farms are often very efficient in terms of production per hectare, and they have tremendous potential for growth. In fact experience shows that helping smallholder farmers can contribute to a country's economic growth and food security.

Agriculture is where two of the most pressing issues of our time – climate change and food security – intersect.

A part of the challenge Omura faces in mobilising resources therefore is to secure long-term investment for the development of the agricultural sector by way of providing the necessary infrastructure like roads, inputs, market linkages and information, and capacity building.

The fact that a woman has been appointed as the IFAD vice-president does not imply that her main task is to empower women. Empowerment of women is Millennium Development Goal three and hence the responsibility of all international organizations. But being a woman, she would surely help IFAD in that respect.

WOMEN'S ROLE CRUCIAL

Women make the world go round: in smallholder farmer areas they grow crops, they buy seed, they sell crops, they cook food, they raise children, and they take responsibility of the money at home. So – using the corporate terminology – in practice the woman is acting like the CEO (chief executive officer), CFO (chief financial officer) and COO (chief operating officer) of a household. This, Omura says, is a good basis while considering rural women's more expansive role of running a businesses.

Irrespective of the size of the farm, agriculture generates business. And every entrepreneur, whether it is a smallholder farmer or a large commercial farmer, needs or wants to make money. That's where IFAD sees its responsibility to transform smallholder agriculture into smallholder businesses.

In fact, IFAD's experience shows that a healthy agricultural sector acts as a multiplier in local economies, leading eventually to higher income and access to more vibrant markets where smallholder farmers can buy and sell their produce. In 2009, some 50 per cent of IFAD projects and programmes had a value chain component involving the private sector.

Since 1978, the Rome-based IFAD has invested over 11 billion U.S. dollars in grants and low-interest loans to developing countries, empowering some 350 million people to break out of poverty. The Fund is a unique partnership of 165 members from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), other developing countries and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The fact that Omura hails from an OECD country could help impart fresh impulses to that "unique partnership".



IFAD Photo by Lou Dematteis
China-Yunnan-Simao Minorities Area Agricultural Development Project.



IFAD Photo by Anwar Hossain | Bangladesh-Grameen Bank Project

Because of her international professional experience too, she knows how to talk to other developed and developing country representatives.

During her forthcoming visits to IFAD projects in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, she will have the opportunity to listen to some of the poorest of the poor, try to understand their concerns and aspirations and act as their interpreter back in Rome and other rich countries' capitals.

Born in Paris, Omura was educated in Japan, the United Kingdom, the Philippines, Switzerland and the United States. She has a Bachelors degree in Economics from London University and a Masters degree in Development Economics and a second Masters degree in Political Economics from Boston University.

- IDN-InDepth NewsPortrait ■

Trucking Safe with Ecology in the Pouch

IDN-InDepth NewsFeature* by Taro Ichikawa

Tokyo - Like the kangaroo pouch pocket that provides a place of shelter for the young after they are born, the truckers of Tokyo's legendary Nagai Transportation Company move their cargo with great care. No surprise therefore that the kangaroo is the logo of the company that celebrates "60 years of good faith and gratitude".

"What we receive is confidence, what we put on our truck is our gratitude (to clients) and what we transport is safety and future of the planet", says Junichi Nagai, the eldest son of Kazumi Nagai who set up the company after World War II (1939-45) in Minato-ku, one of the 23 wards of Tokyo.

Minato district is in fact the origin of the truck industry after WWII along with Chiyoda and Chuo wards.

"As a former military officer, my father understood the importance of logistics and he chose to start a transportation company in the aftermath of the WWII," says the elder Nagai. He currently heads Minato district branch – the largest branch of – the Tokyo Truck Association, which in turn is the largest division of the Japan Truck Association.

In his younger days, he participated in setting up the youth division within the Tokyo Truck Association and was its second chief in succession. "Now you will find youth divisions of the Truck Association in other prefectures, but it was the first of its kind. We engaged in various studies in relation to transportation and public safety as well as volunteer work."

When a great earthquake hit the city of Kobe in 1995, Junichi Nagai mobilized the youth division led by him to drive transport emergency supplies – such as water, tents and other basic necessity goods – to the affected areas. Some 15 members drove back and forth five to six times.

To begin with, the enterprise headed by Kazumi Nagai handled goods that were popular with the ordinary people in the early post war reconstruction phase: chewing gum, liquors, and candies.

In 1953, he obtained a transportation license and established the Nagai Transportation Company (NTC) with three trucks. Four years later, the company began moving the Seikyo newspaper, one of the leading Japanese dailies. In 1961, NTC also began moving the Sports Nippon Newspaper, one of the country's major daily sports newspapers.

A pair of cherry blossom trees named "Nagai Meoto Zakura (Nagai husband and wife cherry blossom trees)" have been planted at the headquarters of the Seikyo Newspaper, a longtime client of Nagai Transportation Company.

In 1969, the company – which now has 70 employees between 26 and 70 years, average age being 48 – was incorporated and Junichi Nagai, the current president, joined the company. "Since my father was president, it has been our policy to take care of all employees who have worked for us. All through 60 years, we have never fired any employees. And, if an employee is 70 and would like to continue to work, he can answer phones or do something he easily can."



Kazumi (Left) and Shizue Nagai (Right)
Credit: Nagai Transportation Company

Though NTC does not have an employees' union, in conformity with Japan's labour laws, every year the management makes agreement with a representative of the majority of employees over working conditions and submits the relevant documents to the Labour Standards Inspection Office.

The work accord regulates, for example, cases where employees might be asked to work more than eight hours a day and on a holiday. "We take pride in our absolute compliance to laws, which is our company's tradition," says NTC president Nagai, "and inform our workers about the company's financial situation at least twice a year."

There is a legal system to protect the employees' rights but to what extent a company translates it into practice is a different matter, says Hiroshi Nagai, NTC's executive director. "In fact it is not common for a transport enterprise like ours to abide by the legal system both in letter

and spirit. But we have realized for a long time a 40-hour, five day week."

As part of corporate social responsibility, the Nagai Company also provides unemployment, health and workers' compensation insurance, in addition to old age pension. In all this, as in Germany and most other European countries, the additional costs are borne 50-50 by the employer and employees.

*This is the first in a series of special IDN features on 'Corporate Social Responsibility: Transportation and Environment'.

Strict adherence to prevailing laws has qualified NTC for G-mark and Green Management Certification. The latter was established for the trucking business in October 2003. Since 2003, the Japan Truck Association has been evaluating and making public the safety record of trucking companies.

This is intended not only to help make it easier for customers to choose companies with a better safety record, but also to raise awareness among all trucking companies of the need for improving safety.

The Nagais have been awarded both the G-Mark and Green Management Certifications, retaining it since 2003.

The Green Management Certification is issued by the Foundation for Promoting Personal Mobility and Ecological Transportation (abbreviated as 'Eco-Mo Foundation') to encourage people to drive with ecology in mind. Since 2003 it is being given to the transport enterprises such as truckers, and since 2005 to buses and taxis for implementing friendly to environment specific programmes.

After 50 years of establishment, Nagai Transportation Company's high level of service of Safety and Reliability was recognized by the Eco-Mo Foundation.



Credit: Nagai Transportation Company (NTC)



Junichi (Left) and Hiroshi Nagai(Right) Credit: NTC

A 2009 survey covering about 4,000 truck companies that are members of the Tokyo Truck Association and some 400 non-members revealed that that 28 percent of the truckers are not providing social or health insurance to employees. This enables them expand their profit margins – sometime with the connivance of employees who prefer to save their share of social insurance contributions, ignoring their long-term interests.

There are 63,122 truck companies in Japan – 55.4 percent own 10 or less trucks and 21.7 percent between 11 and 20. As of 2009, 11,276 truck companies (17.9 percent of the total) had been awarded G-mark.

While the elder Nagai is vice chairperson of the traffic safety association of Mita part of the Minato district, the younger Nagai engages in similar activities organizing traffic safety schools for children, distributing traffic safety brochures, and standing at traffic junctions with a flag for pedestrians. Such volunteer activities fetch certificates of merits from police pre-

fectures, each of these being counted as 2

points in G-mark appraisal. A truck company is required to obtain over 80 points to get a G-mark certificate and Nagai Transportation Company scores 90 to 92 points including two points which comes from certification of merit from police stations.

As in Europe, in addition to traffic safety, fuel efficiency and environmental protection linked to that are important issues. The Nagais attach great importance to fuel efficiency. Smart driving such as gentle acceleration and braking has helped improve fuel economy: now 8.3 kilometres per litre of fuel instead of 5 kilometres a litre is a significant advance.

Also, all company trucks are now equipped with an aircraft black box style "drive recorder" that collects data on accelerations, velocity, angular velocity, global position, avoidance manoeuvres of the driver and so on. Moreover, these recorders can record a video of the driver's view by means of a CCD camera. The drive-recorder was developed and validated by means of impact tests, driving tests and real crash tests. The drive-recorder is now available for use as an aid in precise accident reconstruction.



The Nagai Transportation Company underscored its commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility when it started working on green management in 1998 – a few months after the Kyoto Protocol to combat global warming was adopted in December 1997 at the United Nations climate change conference in the Japanese city of Kyoto.

Junichi Nagai recalls that this required a lot of persuasion of the company's employees, and also some additional work for them and the management.

While the drivers were required to record on paper their driving behaviour, the management evaluated the sheets, discussed the results recorded and worked on proposals to further improve. Meanwhile, employees have got used to this extra effort, and realize how important their contribution is to reducing greenhouse gases that contribute to global warming. - Copyright IDN-InDepthNews ■



Drive Recorder System | Credit: NTC

Seeking Global Governance That Inspires and Unites

By Ernest Corea



Two acronyms in the alphabet soup of world affairs received heightened attention in mid-April when IBSA and BRIC met in Brasilia to review past performance, assess present needs, and work out their plans for the future.

Both meetings were scheduled to take place at the summit level. Although nature intervened to some extent, when an earthquake in China compelled President Hu Tinjaο to cut short his BRIC engagement and rush back home, both meetings provided yet another reminder to the established economic and political order that new forms of cooperation and collaboration among nations have emerged and are growing. Where that will eventually take the peoples of the countries involved is yet to be seen.

IBSA and BRIC differ in membership, structure, and objectives. Both, however, appear to be united in their commitment to core principles, and in their optimism about the effectiveness and impact of their efforts.

ISSUES

The India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) was formed in 2003, “to contribute to the construction of a new international architecture, to bring their voices together on global issues and to deepen their ties in various areas. IBSA also opens itself to concrete projects of cooperation and partnership with less developed countries.”

IBSA sees itself as “an instrument for connecting India, Brazil and South Africa at all levels, aiming not only to increase these countries projection on the international scene but to strengthen the relations among themselves.”

In addition to regular consultations among heads of state and government, foreign ministers meet periodically, and working groups involving a variety of players, including academics, businessmen, journalists, and parliamentarians, seek opportunities for identifying programs of common interest and working on practical forms of collaboration.

As well, IBSA has established a fund for alleviating poverty and hunger to which each member country contributes \$1million a year.

BRIC, as the acronym suggests, brings together Brazil, Russia, India, and China in a consultative group that focuses much of its attention on economic issues. The current international affairs legend is that the acronym was coined by the authors of a Goldman Sachs report.

The Goldman Sachs report raised the possibility that the economies of these four countries would together outpace those of the existing “top tier” rich countries by 2050. Given the current discomfiture of Goldman Sachs, speculation about that parentage might not be particularly popular in BRIC countries.

Whoever coined the term, the four-member group has grown increasingly articulate on a range of economic, social, and trade issues.

STRUCTURE

Although IBSA has three members to BRIC’s four, the IBSA summit in Brasilia had a longer final communiqué: 45 pages as compared with BRIC’s six.

Broadly speaking, both communiqués attempted to break out of the conventional wisdom, and to seek ways in which international institutions and practices could be made to serve the need of the world’s people and not only those seated atop the commanding heights of global governance or economic power.

There were several common features in the final documents, including support for sustainable development, a plea for reform of the UN to make it more effective and representative, and a plea as well for timely re-casting of the structure of Bretton Woods institutions to eliminate their “legitimacy deficits” and increase their effectiveness.

IBSA was particularly forceful on UN reform, stating with clarity the obvious need to drag the Security Council into the 21st century. The council, it urged, should be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership, and it should provide opportunities for greater representation from among representatives of developing countries – the vast majority of the world’s people.

Both BRIC and IBSA were unequivocal in reaffirming the “pressing need to foster and strengthen cooperation regarding the regulation and supervision of all segments, institutions and instruments of financial markets.”

The two important events for the ‘Global South’ – the India-Brazil-SouthAfrica (IBSA) and the Brazil-Russia-India-China (BRIC) summits – will have great resonance for the future shape of South-South cooperation, says Rathin Roy, director of the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), based in Brasilia.

IPC-IG is a joint project between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Brazil to promote South-South Cooperation on applied poverty research. It specialises in analyzing poverty and inequality and offering research based policy recommendations on how to reduce them.

IPC-IG, which is directly linked to the Poverty Group of the Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP and the Government of Brazil, has been closely involved in a number of the activities associated with the two summits on April 15-16, 2010, especially the organisation of the ‘Academic Forum: A Policy Dialogue’ for the IBSA gathering.

Roy’s derives his optimism from the fact that the first decade of the 21st century has been marked by the intersection of three debates that previously had been conducted in separate domains with limited interaction.

Traditionally, the debate on global economic governance has been situated in the G-8 and in discussions associated with the governance of the World Bank Group, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), says Roy.

Unlike some regional and special interest groupings that are disturbed by the role the Group of 20 (G20) can play on the world scene, BRIC – whose members are all members of G20 -- “welcomed the fact that the G20 was confirmed as the premier forum for international economic coordination and cooperation of all its member states.”

Describing G20 as “broader, more inclusive, diverse, representative and effective” than “previous arrangements,” BRIC called on “all its member states to undertake further efforts to implement jointly the decisions adopted at the three G20 summits.”

BRIC urged that G20 should be “proactive and formulate a coherent strategy for the post- (financial) crisis period,” asserting that it stands “ready to make a joint contribution to this effort.”

IBSA made a strong pitch for the Human Rights Council whose work it commended. It proposed that human rights law be strengthened particularly in relation to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance. This is a goal that no nation, big or small, can oppose in good conscience.

Also in the broad area of human rights, IBSA emphasized the importance of access to medicine, an issue of particular relevance to developing countries.

PARTNERSHIP

IBSA emphasized South-South cooperation as “a partnership among equals” that should be “guided by the principles of respect for national sovereignty, national ownership and independence, equality, non-conditionality, non-interference in domestic affairs and mutual benefit.

Presumably, these characteristics are to be found in the operations of the IBSA Facility Fund that has so far brought direct benefits to Haiti, Palestine, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Burundi, and Cambodia.

IBSA will also undertake the development of satellites that will “address common challenges in climate studies, agriculture and food security.” They will be deployed to promote space programs among the three member countries.

For the first time, IBSA foreign ministers met their colleague from the Palestinian National Authority, Riad Al-Malki, and pledged their support for the creation of a Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders.

IBSA and BRIC, like other similar groups, be they regional, sub-regional, or only compatible, are the product of an effort to change international relationships so that they might reflect current realities and not those carried down from the past.

Hence, for instance, the determination within such groups to advocate change in the structure of the UN Security Council, and voting rules in the Bretton Woods institutions, or the “affirmative action” program that delivers the leadership of the World Bank to the U.S. and of the IMF to Europe.

Currently, BRIC countries represent 40 percent of the world’s population, close to 15 percent of global GDP, and almost 13 percent of international trade. The IMF has estimated that in a few years BRIC will account for over 60 percent of global economic growth. Should not they and IBSA members as well, be empowered to exercise international influence in keeping with their strengths?

As World Bank president Robert Zoellick said on the eve of the Bank’s Spring meetings, although not referring directly to IBSA or BRIC, economic progress in developing countries has

“profound implications” for global cooperation, multilateralism and the work of international financial institutions.

“Economic and political tectonic plates are shifting,” Zoellick said. “We can shift with them, or we can continue to see a new world through the prism of the old.”

Zoellick’s sentiments are similar to those expressed by many developing country leaders, but this time they are coming from the other side of the trough.

RELIANCE

President Lula of Brazil, approaching the end of his presidency (which is subject to term limits) is blunt about the need for changes in the global system, and the responsibilities that countries such as the members of BRIC and IBSA can undertake.

“The international scene is cluttered with old problems, even as new ones emerge,” says Lula. “Neither the BRIC members nor any other countries are able to face them alone. In the past, unilateralism has led to impasses, if not human catastrophes, such as Iraq.

“In today’s world we must therefore rely increasingly on each other. For that to happen we must forge a more representative and transparent system of global governance that can both inspire unity of purpose and revitalize the collective will to seek consensual solutions. In this journey toward a new world, the BRIC countries are committed to working together to fulfill our responsibilities.”

There is much to commend in this perspective. There are, however, other pressing matters that also need attention. As Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said, speaking for himself and without in any way detracting from Lula’s position: “India’s greatest challenges are at home.” Did somebody whisper “the voice of reason”? - **IDN-InDepthNews** ■



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Chinese President Hu Jintao at the BRIC summit in Brasilia on April 15, 2010. Photo: PTI

Redefine Japan-U.S. Alliance for Global Denuclearization

By Masayoshi Hamada*



Japan is serving in the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council in April, ahead of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons scheduled for May 2010.

Amidst growing momentum toward a world free of nuclear weapons I believe Japan has the moral responsibility to spread word about the harrowing effect of nuclear weapons as the only sufferer of nuclear attacks, and exercise leadership in finding a fundamental solution to the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons programme, which has undermined the global trend toward nuclear disarmament.

As the world's only sufferer of nuclear attacks, Japan must tell the rest of the world about the agonizing and harrowing effect of nuclear attacks, incomparable to any other form of weaponry, the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons, and the need to establish an international code of morality that nuclear weapons are nothing but absolute evil, so as to ensure human security.

CODE OF MORALITY

Nuclear disarmament cannot be achieved by merely wiping away all existing nuclear weapons, because the human race has already acquired the knowledge to produce them. In order to achieve "irreversible" nuclear disarmament, it is essential to establish an international code of morality on the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons, substantiated by the notion that they are an absolute evil.

Is it possible to establish an international sense of morality that would even convince fundamentalist terrorism organizations to stay away from developing nuclear arms? The only possible answer would be to make people "feel with their heart", rather than "understand in their head", the harrowing truth about nuclear weapons. Achieving this is our nation's moral responsibility as the sole sufferer of atomic bombings. Such a campaign can be carried out through the process of advocating and expanding the signatories to the Nuclear Weapons Convention.

Some diplomats may question the effectiveness of having countries that have no nuclear weapons, rather than nuclear powers, sign the Nuclear Weapons Convention. Yet the Model Nuclear Weapons Convention (revised version), submitted to the United Nations by Costa Rica in 2007, defines not only state responsibilities, but those of individual persons, regardless of nationality.

It should be noted that the signatories to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (Oslo Process), which the New Komeito Party lobbied the Japanese government to sign, may have just 10 of all cluster munitions around the world, but that the Convention has effectively denied some countries the possibility of acquiring cluster munitions in the future.

What's more, the establishment of the "international code" has provided a major driving force for initiating debates on the inclusion of cluster munitions ban in the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), which would cover countries that have not signed the cluster munitions convention, such as the United States, China, Russia and India.

Of equal importance is the mechanism for preventing countries from becoming isolated.

Campaigns for nuclear disarmament must be accompanied with economic assistance, cultural exchange and other measures to eliminate propagators of negativity, such as poverty and discrimination, so as to achieve human security.

NORTH KOREA

The international community has expressed concerns that North Korea and Iran may dampen the global trend for a nuclear weapons-free world. Yet, many western nations tend to place priority on dealing with Iran. As a fellow nation in East Asia, Japan should exercise leadership in addressing the issue of nuclear weapons development in North Korea.

Why does North Korea pursue nuclear arms development? That is because it sees the U.S. nuclear capacity, which has been present for the last 50 years, as a major threat. Even after the removal of nuclear weapons from South Korea in 1991, the U.S. military has continued to carry out drills involving long-range missiles, designed to target North Korea.

In the Six-Party Talks joint statement issued in September 2005, the United States affirmed that it has no intention to attack or invade the DPRK with nuclear or conventional weapons. Yet, the CONPLAN 8022 contingency plan, drawn up in 2003 under the Bush administration, refers to pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons on Iran as well as North Korea. It should be noted that the plan has not been cancelled, even after 2005.

Even in Japan, people arguing against nuclear disarmament cite the "nuclear deterrent" as an option for countering the threat of nuclear attacks from North Korea. However, what we must aim for is to convince North Korea to withdraw the weapons programme, thus keep it as a nuclear-free state, rather than driving it to become a nuclear power, then trying to convince it not to use the capability. Even if North Korea does not succeed in developing nuclear arms, continuation of the nuclear program will maintain concerns over the proliferation of weapons technology. In order to achieve global nuclear disarmament, it is essential to achieve the cancellation of their nuclear program at an early stage.

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Furthermore, North Korea would pose an immeasurable threat once it becomes a nuclear power. Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger wrote in his book 'Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy' that "...a power possessing thermonuclear weapons is not likely to accept unconditional surrender without employing them...."

Meanwhile, North Korea has recently sent renewed signals of its readiness to move toward resolving the nuclear development issue. Firstly, in the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue conference convened in California in October 2009, the attending foreign affairs official from North Korea reportedly delivered a powerful message that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula requires not only the resolution of North Korea's nuclear development programme, but also further progress in the relationships between North and South Korea, and between Japan and North Korea. On January 11, 2010, North Korea's foreign affairs spokesperson officially proposed talks with the United States to work toward a peace treaty.

As long as North Korea presses ahead with its nuclear program, lifting sanctions against the country is out of the question. However, it may be possible to discuss the U.S.-DPRK peace treaty under the Six-Party Talks' working group on a Northeast Asia peace and security mechanism.

It would seek the denuclearization of Northeast Asia parallel to the process of persuading North Korea to abandon its nuclear development programme. In fact, I am convinced that exercising leadership in such negotiations would firmly set the tide toward fundamentally resolving the deadlock in the Six-Party Talks and building a "nuclear weapons-free world".

REDEFINING THE JAPAN-U.S. ALLIANCE

The International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND), initiated by the Japanese and Australian governments, released a report in Tokyo in December 2009. The highlight of the report detailing the Commission's action agenda was the reference to the "sole purpose" declaration, which represents a declaration by nuclear-possessing states that the sole purpose of retaining the nuclear weapons they have is to deter others from using such weapons against them.

This is much more than a simple "declaration". Expectations are high that the declaration could be the first step toward actualizing denuclearization, by providing a philosophical foundation for drastic nuclear arms reduction, and leading to the cancellation of the emergency deployment of nuclear weapons. This would significantly mitigate the risk of incidental nuclear attacks.

A debate on the need for nuclear deterrent based on the presence of specific threat to Japan holds the key to determining whether Japan should accept the Sole Purpose declaration.

It is the view of the United States that it does not need to use nuclear weapons as deterrent against the anticipated use of biological and chemical weapons, which is the primary threat from North Korea.

The United States maintains that the threat of retaliation with conventional weapons is a sufficient deterrent for North Korea's use of biological and chemical weapons on Japan, as stated by former Defence Secretary William Perry in October 2009 and by assistant Defence Secretary Wallace Gregson in February 2010.

The U.S. National Science Foundation has maintained that:

1. The use of nuclear deterrents against the threat of biological / chemical weapons would facilitate the ease of nuclear proliferation;

- 2. The treaties for banning the use of biological / chemical weapons should be tightened to control such weapons;
- 3. Such a threat can be controlled with international pressure including pressure from the United Nations; and
- 4. Conventional weapons of the United States are more reliable than the use of nuclear deterrents.

In fact, informed sources say that the United States did not have the option of using a nuclear weapon against Iraq's use of chemical weapons during the Gulf War in 1991.

Among the five nuclear-armed states, China is the only country that has made a no-first-use declaration. Therefore, China's anticipated threat to other countries comes from its overwhelming stockpile of conventional weapons.

Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger asserted in his book ('Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy', Harper & Brothers - 1957, p.167) that the United States would not use a nuclear deterrent against a nuclear power that has intercontinental ballistic missiles, saying that the U.S. President would not offer 50 U.S. cities in exchange for West Europe.

Former director general of the Foreign Ministry's International Information Bureau, Ukeru Magosaki points out that the greatest deterrent would be achieved through deepening mutual economic and cultural dependence with China.

China relies on the supply of quality components and materials from Japan in achieving the world's largest trade surplus. Magosaki insists that China would exercise restraint as any disruption to the supply would cause confusion to its economy.

During the Soviet days, Russia held an overwhelmingly large arsenal of conventional weapons, and made a "no-first-use" claim about its nuclear weapons. However, the claim was withdrawn in 1993. The country's new military doctrine, released on February 5, 2010, clearly states its right to the first use of nuclear weapons.

If the U.S. nuclear umbrella is not an effective deterrent to other nuclear powers, as warned by Kissinger, then the threat of Russia's first use of nuclear weapons can be most effectively countered by creating a tide of international support for "Sole Purpose declaration" and "no-first-use declaration".

– IDN-InDepth News Viewpoint ■

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As long as North Korea presses ahead with its nuclear program, lifting sanctions against the country is out of the question. However, it may be possible to discuss the U.S.-DPRK peace treaty under the Six-Party Talks' working group on a Northeast Asia peace and security mechanism.

Security Challenges Ahead After the Nuke Summit

By Ernest Corea

The Nuclear Security Summit convened by President Barack Obama attracted 47 high-level participants – over 30 of them heads of state or government – who collectively agreed on several small but important steps on the path towards global safety from a “rogue” nuclear attack. This could be mounted by “non-state” sources or by a state that does not observe the rules.

“The agreement of 47 nations to specific steps to safeguard nuclear materials and technology has to be welcomed especially in averting the dangers of nuclear weapon proliferation and non-state actors acquiring them,” says Ambassador Jayantha Dhanapala, who presided over the 1995 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review and Extension Conference. Formerly the UN Under-Secretary General for Disarmament (1998-2003), he is President of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, and Jennings Randolph Senior Visiting Scholar, U.S. Institute of Peace.

“Norms with regard to this had already been established by the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials and Nuclear Facilities and its Amendment. The problem of nuclear terrorism had also been addressed by the Security Council Resolution 1540 and the International Convention for the Suppression of Nuclear Terrorism,” Dhanapala added.

“Unfortunately,” he pointed out, “not all the 47 countries participating in the Washington Summit have signed and ratified the two conventions I have mentioned. We must also remember that the problem really lies with nuclear weapons for which there are neither wrong hands nor right hands”.

The assessment that the real problem lies with the continued existence of nuclear arsenals is consistent with Obama’s view, as stated in his speech of April 2009 in Prague where he articulated a commitment “to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.”

Security from the theft or loss and use of nuclear material is but one segment of the broader search for a nuclear weapons free world to which men and women of peace aspire.

OBLIGATION

The U.S. is considered a potential target of a “rogue” terrorist attack because Al Qaeda has openly said that it considers the acquisition of material for a nuclear weapon a prime obligation.

Other countries are also vulnerable to such attacks. Imagine, for example, the extent of destruction that would have been caused had the Mumbai terrorists possessed a “suitcase nuclear bomb.”

More than 18 cases have already been recorded of highly enriched uranium or plutonium being lost or stolen. Over 2000 tons of plutonium and highly enriched uranium exist in several countries, some of which have no safeguards against theft.

With those stark realities in mind, summit participants agreed that “nuclear terrorism is one of the most challenging threats to international security, and strong nuclear security measures are the most effective means to prevent terrorists, criminals, or other unauthorized actors from acquiring nuclear materials.”

So the goal of the nuclear security summit was to start moving towards a regime in which materials that can be used to manufacture a nuclear device are protected to the fullest extent possible.

Obama told a news conference at the conclusion of the summit: “I said this morning that today would be an opportunity for our nations, both individually and collectively, to make concrete commitments and take tangible steps to secure nuclear materials so they never fall into the hands of terrorists who would surely use them.

“This evening, I can report that we have seized this opportunity, and because of the steps we’ve taken -- as individual nations and as an international community -- the American people will be safer and the world will be more secure.”

An official summary of the summit communiqué sets out its highlights. The communiqué:

- Acknowledges the need for all vulnerable nuclear material to be secured in four years;
- Proposes that focused national efforts be made to improve security and accounting of nuclear materials and that regulations concerning plutonium and highly enriched uranium be strengthened;

- Seeks to consolidate stocks of highly enriched uranium and plutonium and to reduce the use of highly enriched uranium,

- Promotes universality of key international treaties on nuclear security and nuclear terrorism;

- Notes the positive contributions of mechanisms like the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism to build capacity among law enforcement, industry, and technical personnel,

- Calls for the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to receive the resources it needs to develop nuclear security guidelines and provide advice to its members on how to implement them,

- Seeks to ensure that bilateral and multilateral security assistance would be applied where it can do the most good, and

- Encourages the nuclear industry to share best practices for nuclear security, at the same time making sure that security measures do not prevent countries from enjoying the benefits of peaceful nuclear energy.

In addition to the communiqué, the summit produced a work plan, and a reference guide to the work plan.

INITIATIVES

The summit also provided participating governments with the opportunity to announce initiatives some of them had already taken, or would be taking. For instance:

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton signed an update to a 2000 agreement calling on each country to dispose of 34 metric tons of weapons-grade plutonium by burning it as fuel in nuclear reactors. Additionally, Russian President Medvedev re-confirmed plans to close a plutonium production reactor.

Ukraine announced that it would give up its 90-kilogram stock of highly enriched uranium and convert its research reactors from highly enriched to low-enriched uranium. It intends to accomplish these goals by 2012.

Canada informed the meeting that it would be returning a large amount of spent highly enriched uranium fuel from its medical isotope production reactor to the U.S.; championing the extension of the G8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction; funding highly enriched uranium removals from Mexico and Vietnam; hosting and funding a World Institute of Nuclear Security best practices workshop in Ottawa; and providing \$100 million in new bilateral security cooperation with Russia.

India made known its decision to establish a Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership, to create and disseminate the knowledge required for nuclear security.

Chile, Kazakhstan, and Vietnam agreed to dispose of highly enriched uranium used in civilian facilities.

This is only a representative sampling. Taken together, undertakings of specific action by individual governments suggest that the momentum towards nuclear security has actually begun.

NON-BINDING

Critics will undoubtedly argue that the main outcome of the summit is merely a non-binding communique, and therefore hardly worth the drafting effort.

Others have already complained that the summit neither discussed nor agreed on action against Iran whose nuclear enrichment program they consider the greatest potential source of nuclear insecurity.

It could also be said that clandestine nuclear stockpiles, such as that said to be

possessed by Israel, were not addressed and that Obama, in fact, glided away from the question when it was raised at his news conference.

The fact that participation at the summit was selective – selected by the U.S. Government – and not universal, will also be seen as having weakened the event.

SUPPORTIVE

These are significant issues and will continue to be raised. The fact that a non-binding communiqué came out is not really a crippling infirmity, however, because even “binding” agreements are known to be broken. Moreover, a communiqué signed by over 30 heads of state and government cannot be easily shrugged off.

On the other side of public opinion, meanwhile, there have been a number of supportive assessments such as the comment from former Senator Sam Nunn, a genuine expert on nuclear matters and for many years a supporter of nuclear disarmament: “we are now closer to cooperation than catastrophe.”

Britain’s foreign secretary (minister) David Miliband, said that the summit had successfully broken “a culture of cynicism” about matters connected with nuclear issues.

Daryl Kimball, Executive Director of the Arms Control Association, and Peter Crail, a Nonproliferation Analyst at the association, said “the summit was also able to point out that this risk of nuclear terrorism is a shared one and is not just a threat to the U.S.” They called on the “U.S. Congress to fully support programs aimed at enhancing nuclear security

around the globe and combating illicit nuclear trafficking”.

AGENDA

For Obama, the nuclear security summit was one more action point to be marked off on an agenda leading towards the goal of total nuclear disarmament that he set out in his Prague speech of April 2009. He reaffirmed that goal during a visit to Japan in a “Joint Statement toward a world without nuclear weapons.”

A year after that initial exuberance of a Prague Spring, the U.S. Government has sought to nurture more of that spirit. The U.S. issued a redesigned “Nuclear Posture Review” that reduces dependence on nuclear weapons while committing itself to strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; signed a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with Russia that reduces the number of strategic arms on both sides; and convened the nuclear security summit. Next comes the NPT Conference in May 2010.

Two years from now, a nuclear security summit will be held in South Korea. The extent to which the promises and hopes of 2009 and 2010 – in their full dimensions -- have been fulfilled by all parties, or are approaching fulfilment by 2012, will show whether the world is ready for nuclear disarmament, including nuclear security, or whether the great hopes and initiatives of today are the great disappointments of tomorrow.

- IDN-InDepthNews ■



Chinese President Hu Jintao (fourth row front) poses for a group photo with other world leaders during the Nuclear Security Summit at the Washington Convention Center in Washington, April 13, 2010 | Xinhua/Li Xueren

Dramatic Arab Appeal for a Nuclear-Free World

By Fareed Mahdy

ISTANBUL (IDN) - Call it perfect timing or a sheer historical coincidence; be it because they feel caught between the Israeli nuclear hammer and the Iranian might-be atomic anvil or just because they truly want it, the fact is that the leaders of 22 Arab countries have launched an unprecedented massive and pressing call to free the world from nuclear weapons.

During their summit in Sirt, Libya, Arab leaders had to deal with a heavy agenda centred on the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, Tel Aviv's ongoing challenges to the world community and its progressive violation of international law by further building colonies on occupied territories and East Jerusalem as well as the Darfur conflict, the threatening instability in Yemen, the Somali drama and, above all, the need for more coherent, collective Arab policies, among other key issues.

Nevertheless, they devoted an important chapter to nuclear concerns. In fact, the rulers of some 350 million people living in the oil wealthiest and most conflictive region on Earth have issued a clarion call at the end of their 22nd summit in Libya, for a nuclear free world.

NUCLEAR FREE, NOW

Specifically, in their final declaration on March 28, 2010 following the two-day meeting, the Arab leaders "reaffirmed that all Arab countries that are signatories to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) demand the international community to undertake immediate actions to free the world from nuclear weapons."

The summit declaration stressed the need "to translate international initiatives aimed at eliminating nuclear weapons from the world into concrete, binding and time-tabled programmes".

The Arab leaders also underscored that progress towards achieving this goal "requires, as a first step, the 'universalisation' of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty".

This strong Arab stand was spelt out few days after the announcement of U.S.-Russia agreement to reduce their nuclear arsenal by 30 percent, which is due to be sealed on April 8 in Prague, and shortly ahead of the Nuclear Security Summit, scheduled on April 12-13 in Washington, as well as the NPT review conference May 3-28 in New York.

With an eye on the later, the Arab declaration reaffirms "the importance of respecting the rights of NPT member states to possess and develop nuclear technologies for peaceful use, rejecting any restrictions to these rights under any argument".

ATOMS FOR PEACE

This position is in line with that of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which in a nutshell tantamounts to: Nuclear Power 'Yes' – Nuclear Proliferation 'No'.

It also fits in the growing interest shown by several Arab countries, including the oil-rich ones, in developing nuclear power for peaceful use. The U.S., UK, France, and Russia, among other industrialised countries, have been encouraging this trend in Arab countries and some of them have already signed substantial commercial deals to install nuclear plants in a number of Arab states.

The oil-rich United Arab Emirates, for instance, announced in October 2009 its decision to build nuclear reactors on its soil. This unleashed a frenetic, politically backed competition be-

tween giant corporations from France, U.S., Japan and South Korea, to win the 40 billion dollar bid for this project

At the same time, the French government has reportedly promised assistance to Qatar and Morocco, to launch their own nuclear programmes. Egypt and Jordan were reported to be heading for building nuclear plants. Also Saudi Arabia announced plans to develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes.

NUCLEAR ISRAEL

Back to the Arab declaration, the Arab leaders demanded that the NPT review conference "adopt clear decisions and build up practical measures to make the Middle East a nuclear-free region".

Israel, the sole nuclear power in the Middle East with reported 200 nuclear weapons, has systematically refused to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

On this issue, the Arab leaders warned that "Israel insistence on refusing to join non-proliferation treaty and submitting its nuclear facilities to the full guarantees system of the International Atomic Energy Agency, will lead the region to an arms race of dramatic consequences".

In this regard, and coinciding with the Arab declaration, the Jerusalem Post daily reported on the same day, March 28, that the Israeli government will present "no concessions" at the nuclear security summit in Washington in April regarding its policy of maintaining "ambiguity" around its nuclear weapons, according to an Israel military official.

ARAB AND WORLD CAMPAIGNING

The issue of achieving a nuclear-free Middle East is not new. In fact, Egypt launched 36 years ago an active campaign aiming at the establishment of a "nuclear free Middle East".

In 1990, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak revitalised the Egyptian initiative through a new, larger plan to declare the Middle East a "weapons of mass destruction free region", including nuclear weapons.

The Egyptian initiative has drawn support from most Arab countries and has been reaffirmed by Amre Musa, Secretary General of the League of Arab States, representing all the 22 Arab countries, who continue to repeat: "It is a must to free the Middle East of nuclear weapons."

The Arab support for the nuclear free Middle East initiative has gathered added strength particularly in the Gulf Arab countries in the wake of the U.S., Israel, and Europe alleging that Iran intends to build nuclear weapons.

Moreover, during a Washington summit between Mubarak and U.S. President Barack Obama in August 2009, Egypt categorically rejected a U.S. offer to guarantee defence of the region against atomic weapons through an extended 'nuclear umbrella' and as part of a comprehensive Middle East peace plan.

The plan did not specify whether Israel would dismantle its nuclear arsenals.

Toward a Modern Nuclear Security Enterprise

Transformation of the U.S. atomic weapons complex into “a modern, sustainable 21st century nuclear security enterprise” forms the nucleus of President Barack Obama’s agenda manifested in the new START Treaty, he and Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev signed in Prague on April 8.

The new nuclear security enterprise will cost the taxpayer \$7.6 billion per year by fiscal year 2015. Additional \$9.9 billion are expected to be spent on missile defense in 2011, almost \$700 million more than in the fiscal year 2010.

A twenty-first century nuclear security enterprise is regarded not only critical to maintaining the U.S. nuclear deterrent, but also essential to supporting a number of other nuclear security missions, including nuclear nonproliferation, nuclear counterterrorism, emergency response, and support to the intelligence agencies.

With this in view, the U.S. will invest in “revitalizing the intellectual infrastructure that serves as the foundation of our capabilities in addition to recapitalizing an outdated physical infrastructure,” according to a 67-page official briefing book released to coincide with the ‘Prague spring’.

The task to “maintain and enhance the safety, reliability and performance of the United States nuclear weapons stockpile,” in addition to broader nuclear security missions, enjoins by law on the Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).

“The President’s budget request for NNSA for fiscal year 2011 reflects the Administration’s commitment to the Nation’s nuclear deterrent and the Nuclear Security Enterprise that enables it. The President’s budget includes more than \$7 billion for Weapons Activities and associated infrastructure, up 10 percent from fiscal year 2010,” the ‘New START Treaty U.S. Senate Briefing Book’ points out.

A joint product of the U.S. Departments of State and Defense, the publication spells out the budget request:

Increased funding for directed stockpile work by 25 percent to ensure the safety, security and effectiveness of the nuclear weapons stockpile, including:

- full production of the W76-1 to extend the life of the warhead for an additional 30 years;
- a life extension study for the B61 gravity bomb to extend its service life, enhance its safety and use control features, and ensure compatibility with modern aircraft;
- a study to explore future options to maintain the W78 warhead; and
- continued maintenance, surveillance and certification for all weapons systems.

The budget request also envisages increased funding for science, technology and engineering by more than 10 percent to ensure the ability to assess and certify the stockpile without underground nuclear testing utilizing advanced scientific capabilities, including the world’s fastest

supercomputers, and stepwise development of the predictive framework capability.

The Obama administration plans to re-invest in the scientists, technicians and engineers “responsible for a successful stockpile stewardship and management program and recapitalization of the physical infrastructure, including major long-term construction projects to replace aging facilities that house essential capabilities for plutonium and uranium”.

Obama also plans to sustain and augment stockpile stewardship and management investments into the future, with funding for these programmes increasing steadily, to \$7.6 billion per year by fiscal year 2015.

“Through these investments, NNSA’s Nuclear Security Enterprise will ensure a highly specialized and trained technical workforce, committed to maintaining the U.S. nuclear deterrent through safe and security operations and stewardship of the environment, while leveraging their capabilities to address cross-cutting national security mandates through scientific innovation,” states the briefing book.

The briefing book vigorously points out that the New START Treaty does not contain any constraints on testing, development or deployment of current or planned U.S. missile defense programmes or current or planned U.S. long-range conventional strike capabilities.

– GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

(Continued from page 22)

On the other hand, 10 Arab countries situated in Africa, who are members of both the League of Arab States and The African Union, are parties to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone, which entered into force in July 2009.

These are: Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia, Sudan, Chad, and Tunisia.

In addition, some outstanding Arab personalities have joined the worldwide campaign launched by 100 international figures for the abolition of nuclear weapons, known as ‘Global Zero, for a World Without Nuclear Weapons’.

Queen Noor of Jordan, for instance, has been actively campaigning for the abolition of nuclear weapons, within the Global Zero initiative.

In this regard, the Jordanian queen affirmed: “The sheer folly of trying to defend a nation by destroying all life on the planet must be apparent to anyone capable of rational thought. Nuclear capability must be reduced to zero, globally, permanently. There is no other option.”

Meanwhile, the world has been witnessing a growing number of active international campaigning for the elimination of all nuclear weapons from the face of the Earth.

The initiatives range from civil society and grassroots organisations to Nobel Laureates and city mayors – such as Tadatoshi Akiba, Mayor of the City of Hiroshima, which together with Nagasaki continues to suffer the atrocious consequences of U.S. nuclear bombs during World War II – as well as world religious leaders among so many others.

One of these is the Soka Gakkai International – a Japanese Buddhist organisation with 12 million members around the world – that promotes peace and has launched an active international campaign aimed at abolishing nuclear weapons.

Among numerous international personalities campaigning for a nuclear-free world is Jayantha Dhanapala who presided over the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, and was UN under-secretary-general for Disarmament Affairs from 1998-2003. – GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

Canada 2031 – Toward Unique Diversity

By Suresh Jaura*

"India is people of one nation celebrating diversity. Canada will be a unique example of diversity - bringing the world together as a nation," says India-born Harinder S. Takhar, Ontario's Minister of Government Services, commenting on the Statistics Canada study.

The 78-page study, titled Projections of the diversity of the Canadian population 2006 to 2031, predicts that by 2031, "between 25 percent and 28 percent of the population could be foreign-born. This would surpass the proportion of 22 percent observed between 1911 and 1931, the highest during the twentieth century. About 55 percent of this population would be born in Asia."

Nearly one-half (46 percent) of Canadians aged 15 and over would be foreign-born, or would have at least one foreign-born parent, up from 39 percent in 2006. Between 29 percent and 32 percent of the population – up to 14.4 million people – could belong to a visible minority group.

"Canada is like a table with the four legs supporting top," says Jim Karygiannis, MP since 1988, in seventh term, from Scarborough Agincourt, East of Toronto, with large concentration of ethnic voters, adding: "The first leg is the First Nations people, the second and third legs are the French and English founding nations and the fourth leg consists of the different waves of immigrants.

"As immigrants, whether our ancestors came with the early explorers, landed at Pier 21 in Halifax between 1928-1971 or arrived today at Terminal 1 at Lester B. Pearson International Airport, we brought our traditions, cultures, faiths and good and bad habits with us," says Karygiannis.

Over the years, the face of Canada has changed many times. Today, it reflects the multi-faith and multi-racial makeup of Canada. No matter where future immigrants come from, Karygiannis (of Greek origin) believes that the Canadian values of peace, justice, tolerance and compassion will continue to prevail.

Canada's population was estimated at 33,930,800 as of January 1, 2010, with more than 18.4 percent born outside Canada. More than 13 million immigrants have come to Canada in the past century including over 9 million in the last fifty years.

According to the May 16, 2006 Census, Canada had a higher rate of population growth (5.4 percent) than any other G8 country between 2001

and 2006. The population growth of the United States was second with 5.0 percent. Two-thirds of Canada's population growth was attributable to net international migration, while the U.S. population growth resulted mostly from natural increase, as fertility was higher in the United States than in Canada.

Explaining the purpose and methodology of the study, Statistics Canada said the goal of this study, mandated by three federal departments for key policy planning and programs, was to assess what could be the ethno-cultural diversity of the Canadian population by 2031.

As for the methodology applied, considering the many variables reflecting the ethno-cultural diversity – visible minority groups, religious denomination, generation status, mother tongue, place of birth – to be projected, a micro simulation model for population projections was used.

The projections, including many annex tables, were made accessible to the Canadian public free of charge. The three funding partners have also access to detailed tables for policy planning.

Results of the projections have many social and economic implications. Those are not discussed in the analytical document produced by Statistics Canada and released on March 9, 2010, as it is not the role of Statistics Canada to do so.

Implication touch base with planning the needs of a changing population, social and economic integration, multiculturalism, social cohesion, employment equity, and labour market integration, geographic distribution of the population, among others.

"It has some policy implications in terms of racism and discrimination," Winnipeg Sun quoted Andre Lebel, a Stats Canada demographer who co-authored the study. "It could also be used to improve the integration of specific groups or provide better access to the labour force."

Lebel said he and his colleagues considered immigration, birth and mortality rates, as well as internal migration, when making their population projections.

The study does not try to collate these projections with the social, educational, economic, inter-religious issues arising from these projections. The study focuses on key results and the analysis is neutral, limited to explanations of demographic components at play to understand the trends.

As for an impact of the study on Canada's immigration policy, Statistics Canada spokesperson suggested Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), one of the funding partners of the study, would be the right source to contact.

The study has aroused great interest in broad sections of the Canadian society, as underlined by responses Globalom Media agency – with IDN-InDepthNews as its journalistic flagship – received from government ministers, members of federal parliament, provincial legislators and community leaders from what Statistics Canada terms as the "visible minority group". Detailed responses are documented in a special supplement of this monthly magazine. – GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

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A Youthful Minister from India's Garo Hills

IDN-InDepth NewsPortrait

She can easily pass off as a university student. Not only because she is rather young-looking and unpretentious but also because she is dressed so simple that you would not associate her with the keynote speaker at the opening of the Asia-Pacific Regional Seminar on 'Indigenous Peoples, Climate Change and Rural Poverty'.

But she is indeed Agatha Sangma, minister of state for rural development in the Government of India, headed by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh.

While you feel embarrassed for not recognizing her, she is unruffled and says: "I am used to it." Indeed she is – since she entered the lower house of parliament (Lok Sabha) in May 2008 at the age of 27 in a bye-election from her father's constituency of Tura in the West Garo hills in the small northeastern state of Meghalaya, literally meaning the Abode of Clouds.

Her father, Purno Agitok Sangma – a veteran political leader – remained a member of the Lok Sabha for eight terms spanning some 40 years. He held several important ministerial posts in the Government of India, and was Lok Sabha Speaker – president of the lower house of parliament – before deciding to quit national politics.

Agatha Sangma was re-elected to the Lok Sabha in the April-May 2009 countrywide polls.

Her brothers James and Conrad are also in state politics; her sister Christie is the only one who has not entered politics.

The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians for Population and Development (AFPPD) invited her as a keynote speaker because she belongs to the scheduled tribes as recognized in India's Constitution, and holds the portfolio of rural development in India's union cabinet – both qualifying her to speak about indigenous peoples and alleviating poverty in rural areas.

Agatha Sangma grew up in an intensely political atmosphere – like Indira Gandhi, the daughter of the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, though in post-Independence India.

Indira Gandhi served as prime minister for a total of 15 years – three consecutive terms from 1966 to 1977 and for a fourth term from 1980 until her assassination in 1984. She was India's first, and to date only, female prime minister.

Agatha Sangma does not see any parallels between herself and Indira Gandhi.

Though, a gentle pride creeps in, when in her keynote address she refers a couple of times to "my government", a phrase that one would not expect to hear from a minister of state, elaborating the government's policy and actions for the benefit of the indigenous peoples or scheduled tribes.

Agatha Sangma holds M.A. degree in Environmental Management from Nottingham University in the UK, Diploma in Cyber Laws; Diploma in Corporate Laws, Diploma in Human Rights Laws, and Diploma in Securities and Investment Laws.

She is a keen student of Machiavelli – a sixteenth century Italian philosopher and writer, who is considered one of the main founders of modern political science. Like the versatile Leonardo da Vinci, renowned as painter and sculptor, Machiavelli is on the one hand considered a good example of the 'Renaissance Man' whose expertise spans a significant number of different subject areas.

On the other, however, one would tend to link Machiavelli with his political treatise 'The Prince' which – rightly or wrongly – has come to symbolize the methodical exercise of punishment-and-reward tactics in politics to preserve power and status quo.

Time would tell where and how Agatha Sangma will deploy the tactics of 'The Prince'. But the fact is that she knows how to bring to bear her point of view from behind the scene.

When the Asia-Pacific parliamentarians discussed the 'draft statement of commitment' on March 26, the second day of the AFPPD regional seminar in the Philippine capital, she saw to it that the "Adivasi, scheduled tribes, hill tribes, national minorities, among others" were not referred to as "other names" by which the indigenous peoples around the world are known.

Agatha Sangma has a point there. Though the UN has not adopted an official definition of "indigenous", the widely accepted view is that indigenous peoples are those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at the time when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived. The new arrivals later became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.

This, she says, is not the case in India. But there are about 82 million people in India "who are among the most vulnerable and are known as Scheduled Tribes" of which she is a part. She belongs to the Garo tribe.

Most of the scheduled tribes reside in forested areas and about half of them live below poverty line. They are grouped into about 700 tribes. Among these tribes there are some still at pre-agricultural stage, and are known as 'Primitive Tribe Groups' (PTGs). Now they have been identified 'Most Vulnerable Tribal Groups' (MVTGs). Like in other parts of the world, these tribes are dependent on forest based natural resources for their survival.

"In India, we respect their culture, traditions and ethos," she tells Asia-Pacific parliamentarians and media. She points out – in a tender rhetorical style – that since the days of India's first Prime Minister Nehru, "we have adopted the 'Panchsheel principle' which basically means development of these tribes as per their own wisdom and ethics, without imposition of outside culture and influence".

That Agatha Sangma should evoke Nehru who died sixteen years before she was born, is far from self-evident. In fact, there is a growing tendency among those in her age-group to ignore at best a critical phase of post-Independence India through which Nehru skillfully steered the country.

Others, however, criticize Nehru for representing, to some extent, the *moral conscience* of thinking humanity, and aspirations of the newly independent countries without being in a position to back these up with the necessary strength that neither India nor other Asian countries possessed in a world caught in the fever of the cold war. ■





The concerns of the indigenous peoples, at the heart of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), are considered of vital significance by parliamentarians of the countries of Asia-Pacific. The region hosts some 70 percent of the indigenous peoples, who are among the poorest of the world and often the most marginalized and disadvantaged in their countries.

Asia-Pacific parliamentarians therefore intend to set up a 'Standing Committee on Indigenous Peoples' within the Bangkok-based Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD).

In a statement at a two-day gathering in Manila, they said the Standing Committee would ensure the well-being of the indigenous peoples and see to it that policies and programmes concerning their rights are implemented.

They called upon fellow parliamentarians in Asia-Pacific to support them in seeking and organizing dialogues with indigenous peoples in their own countries and communities.



The Manila gathering concluded March 26, 2010. Officially called the Asia-Pacific Regional Seminar on Indigenous Peoples, Climate Change and Rural Poverty, it was joined by UNPFII chairperson Vicky Tauli Corpuz and India's minister of state for rural development, Agatha Sangma.

Sangma.

Parliamentarians from Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam participated.

A close look at the Manila 'statement of commitment' indicates that the proposed Standing Committee of parliamentarians would provide decisive flanking support to Corpuz in achieving the objectives the UNPFII is tasked with.

The proposed Standing Committee will be the third within the AFPPD, which already hosts the standing committees on 'the status of women' and on 'population and food security'.

Based in the Thai capital, AFPPD is a coordinating body of national committees of parliamentarians on population and development and parliamentary committees dealing with population and development issues.

In the eight-point Manila statement, the parliamentarians agreed to encourage other parliamentarians in Asia-Pacific to promote the effective implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples adopted after insistent spade-work in 2007, and other international human rights instruments.

Of vital significance to the indigenous peoples are also multilateral environmental agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The statement rightly points out that the indigenous peoples are not just victims of climate change but can also provide some of the solutions to climate change because of their traditional knowledge systems and practices on maintaining the integrity of the diverse ecosystems in their territories.

However, it is necessary to introduce policy reforms and draft legislations so that the indigenous peoples' rights are respected and conditions are created for their full participation in tackling climate change as well in decision-making processes aimed at reducing poverty.

In view of this, the parliamentarians committed themselves not only to draft new legislation where necessary but also to implement existing "policies and regulations which will lead towards the empowerment of indigenous peoples, help build their capacities and to respect and promote their individual and collective rights and their development with culture and identity."

The rationale behind the commitment is that the indigenous peoples comprise around 370 million of the world's total population, and many of them still live in the most fragile ecosystems and are highly dependent on nature for their survival, cultures and identities.

Besides, out of the world's remaining 6,000 languages, 4,000 are spoken by indigenous peoples, thus providing significant contribution to the cultural diversity of in the face of globalization that is making menacing inroads into the cultural identities around the world.

Against this backdrop, the Manila statement affirms that the indigenous peoples are "equal to all others". It highly appreciates the contributions of the diversity and richness of their civilizations and cultures as well their values of mutual reciprocity, harmony with nature, collectivity and solidarity and their indigenous knowledge systems and practices on natural resource management.

The regional seminar in Manila was co-organized by the Philippine Legislative Committee on Population and Development Foundation (PLCPD) with funding from the Rome-based International Funds for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized agency of the United Nations.

The statement not only acknowledged IFAD's support but also welcomed the adoption of the IFAD policy of engagement with indigenous peoples which, it said, should be used as a base guideline for designing and implementing development projects with the indigenous peoples.

IFAD's strategic framework identifies indigenous peoples as an important target group because they face economic, social, political and cultural marginalization in the societies in which they live, resulting in extreme poverty and vulnerability for a disproportionate number of them. To reach them requires tailored approaches that respect their values and build upon their strengths.

According to Farhana Haque-Rahman, chief of IFAD's media relations, special events and programmes, the Fund's targeted and participatory approach to grass-roots rural development and its experience in empowering poor people and communities, give it a comparative advantage in working with indigenous peoples, even in the most remote rural areas.

AFPPD director Shiv Khare said the impulse to focus on the indigenous peoples had been given by IFAD. The Forum is tasked with informing, educating and motivating parliamentarians on the linkages between increasing population and issues such as reproductive health, family planning, food security, water resources, sustainable development, environment, ageing, urbanization, migration, HIV/AIDS, and gender equality. ■

Shrinking Aral Sea Sends Shockwaves

By Raushan Valikhanov

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's flying tour of the Aral Sea area has highlighted the woes caused by one of the greatest environmental catastrophes ever recorded. He witnessed the shocking sight when he flew over it on April 4, 2010.

The view underscores the need for collective action to save the planet's resources, he said in Nukus, the sixth-largest city in Uzbekistan, and the capital of the autonomous Karakalpakstan Republic with a population of 260,000.

Lying between Kazakhstan in the north and Karakalpakstan in the south, the Aral Sea was once the world's fourth largest inland sea. It is now a quarter of the size it was 50 years ago.

The Aral Sea roughly translates as 'Sea of Islands', referring to more than 1,500 islands that once dotted its waters. Humans have made use of the waters of the Aral basin for thousands of years, borrowing from its two major rivers: the Amu Darya, which flows into the Aral Sea from the south; and the Syr Darya, which reaches the sea at its north end. As the 20th century began, irrigated agriculture in the basin was still being conducted at a sustainable level, according to knowledgeable sources.

The Aral Sea's problems began in the 1960s and 1970s with the diversion of the main rivers that feed it to provide for cotton cultivation in arid Soviet Central Asia. The surface of the Aral Sea once measured 66 100 square km (25 521 square miles).

By 1987, about 60 per cent of the Aral Sea's volume had been lost, its depth had declined by 14 m (45 feet), and its salt concentration had doubled, killing the commercial fishing trade. Wind storms became toxic, carrying fine grains of clay and salts deposited on exposed sea floor. Life expectancies in the districts near the sea are significantly lower than in the surrounding areas.

The sea is now some 25 percent of the size it was 50 years ago and has broken into two parts, the North Aral Sea and the South Aral Sea.

Re-engineering along the Syr Darya River delta in the north will retain water in the North Aral Sea, thereby drying the South Aral Sea completely, perhaps within 15 years, knowledgeable sources say.

"It was shocking," Ban told reporters in Nukus after a helicopter tour of the area with Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan, the latest stop on his visit to Central Asia.

"It is clearly one of the worst environmental disasters of the world... It really left with me a profound impression, one of sadness that such a mighty sea has disappeared," he stated.

The Secretary-General said that, standing on the shores of a vanished sea, he could not see anything except a "cemetery of ships marooned in the sand."

As a result of the disaster, people are getting sick, the land is poisoned, and storms blow dust and salt as far as the North Pole.

"It was a vivid testament to what [...] happens [...] when we waste our common natural resources, when we neglect our environment, when we mismanage our environment."

Speaking later at an official dinner in the capital, Tashkent, the Secretary-General noted that the aerial tour reminded him of flying over Africa's Lake Chad in 2008. "It, too, has shrunk to a small fraction of its former size, with disastrous effects on millions of people.

First Russian boats on the Aral Sea. Sketch by Taras Shevchenko, 1848



"I think this is a collective responsibility, not only for the nations of Central Asia but the whole world," he said. "I was very encouraged by what I learned. All the measures the Government is taking to deal with the effects of the disaster."

Ban voiced appreciation for the international fund for saving the Aral Sea which was initiated by the five leaders of Central Asia, and pledged the UN's assistance for their efforts.

"We should become better stewards in managing the environment," Ban stated. "We must deliver this Planet Earth to our succeeding generations, so that they can live in a more hospitable, in a more environmentally sustainable way.

"That is a moral and political imperative," he stressed.

The ecosystem of the Aral Sea and the river deltas feeding into it has been nearly destroyed, not least because of the much higher salinity. The land around the Aral Sea is also heavily polluted, and the people living in the area are suffering from a lack of fresh water, as well as from a number of other health problems.

The receding sea has left huge plains covered with salt and toxic chemicals, which are picked up, carried away by the wind as toxic dust, and spread to the surrounding area; the population around the Aral Sea now shows high rates of certain forms of cancer and lung diseases, as well as other diseases. Crops in the region are also destroyed by salt being deposited onto the land.

The United Nations has estimated that the sea will essentially disappear by 2020 if nothing is done to reverse its decline.

The destruction of the Aral Sea ecosystem has been sudden and severe, according to the Aral Sea Foundation. Beginning in the 1960s, agricultural demands have deprived this large Central Asian salt lake of enough water to sustain itself, and it has shrunk rapidly.

Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and other Central Asian states use this water to grow cotton and other export crops, in the face of widespread environmental consequences, including fisheries loss, water and soil contamination, and dangerous levels of polluted airborne sediments.

The devotion to irrigated agriculture had other direct effects as well, according to the Aral Foundation. Much ecologically sensitive land in the river deltas was converted to cropland, and pesticide use was heavy throughout the Aral basin, resulting in heavy contaminant concentrations in the sea. Over irrigation caused salt buildup in many agricultural areas.

By the beginning of the 1990s, the surface area of the Aral had shrunk by nearly half, and the volume was down by seventy-five percent. A host of secondary effects began to appear. Regional climate became more continental, shortening the growing season and causing some farmers to switch from cotton to rice, which demanded even more diverted water. ■

Oxfam America Falls Prey to GM Temptation

By J. Chandler

"I never resist temptation because I have found that things that are bad for me do not tempt me": this citation from George Bernard Shaw's *Apple Cart* does not hold true for Oxfam America.

In its quest of long-term solutions to poverty, hunger, and social injustice, the eminent organization has set "a very dangerous precedent" by endorsing agricultural biotechnology as a viable solution for resource poor and subsistence farmers in developing countries.

The U.S. branch of Oxfam is "being used by the industry in their struggle to force the adoption of GM crops in spite of strong global resistance," according to the Oakland Institute and six farmers and biodiversity organizations from around the world.



The Oakland Institute, headed by Anuradha Mittal, engages in three main areas of interrelated program work: bringing a social and economic human rights lens to organizing and policy work, reframing the debate on security, and building strategic alliances to strengthen popular struggles nationally and internationally.

In an open letter, the seven organizations say: "We hope Oxfam America will retract its stance on biotechnology and join the global farmer, environmental, and justice movements united around the world calling for an end to corporate domination and contamination of our food."

The non-governmental organizations that have joined the U.S.-based policy think-tank are: African Center on Biodiversity (South Africa), Bharatiya Krishak Samaj/Indian Farmers Association (India), Center for Food Safety (U.S.), Coordination Nationale des organisations Paysannes CNOP/National Coordination of Peasant Organizations (Mali), Grassroots International (U.S.), and Thamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam/Farmers Association Of Tamil Nadu (India).

"We deemed necessary to write because of a recently released book, *Biotechnology and Agricultural Development: Transgenic Cotton, Rural Institutions and Resource-Poor Farmers*, which

appears very biased in favor of transgenic crops and contradicts the findings of major assessments and research," says the open protest letter to Jeremy Hobbs, Executive Director of Oxfam International, and Ray Offenheiser, President of Oxfam America.

"Also Oxfam America appears to be positioning itself as a 'good broker' for independent research on Bt cotton in West Africa with support from the Gates Foundation," the letter of April 12, 2010 points out.

The book reports on the outcome of an Oxfam America project funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. Edited by Robert Tripp, it assesses the socio-economic impacts of genetically modified cotton on smallholder farmers in India, China, Colombia, and South Africa. "Although the book alleges its neutral stance on biotechnology, it appears very biased in favour of transgenic crops," says the letter.

Its conclusion "transgenic crops offer enormous possibilities" not only contradicts several major assessments conducted by the International Assessment of Agriculture, Science, Technology and Development (IAASTD) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), it also ignores a significant body of natural and social science literature on the topic, the seven signatories to the letter say.

As colleagues who share the principles of Oxfam's mission to "influence the powerful to ensure that poor people can improve their lives and livelihoods," the seven organizations are "deeply troubled that the study and its scientifically questionable (at best) conclusions, falsely support practices that hinder rather than help efforts to save lives, end poverty, and promote social justice".

The letter adds: "The publication betrays the vibrant global movement that is demanding a more ecologically sustainable and socially just agriculture, free from corporate control,"

In reviewing the publication the seven organizations find it problematic for the following reasons, which they elaborate upon in this letter:

- False advertising on appearing neutral while endorsing GM crops;
- Incomplete research using selective information to arrive at a pro-GM conclusion;
- Its focus on GM crops as a solution to help resource-poor and subsistence farmers climb out of poverty.

VEILED ENDORSEMENT

The book claims its neutral stance on Bt cotton and purports that the study is "located outside the polarized debate". The editor states strongly up front that "The narrow focus will not allow sweeping judgments certifying that transgenic crops are good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate." Yet judgment about the benefits of Bt cotton is pervasive throughout the book.

Conclusive statements lauding Bt cotton are made, such as, "Transgenic cotton producing insecticidal toxins is a highly effective technology in the battle to control pest damage to cotton," and "the technology has proven generally successful in providing additional protection against several important cotton pests."

Each chapter features sweeping claims, such as that provided for the Chinese case study: “Bt cotton has made a significant contribution to Chinese cotton production... the new technology provided effective pest control and allowed farmers to increase their productivity.”

According to the book, in South Africa “research has clearly shown that the Bt cotton technology works.” The authors conclude that in India “Bt hybrids contribute to cotton productivity.”

Although the chapter on Colombia takes a more measured approach by positing that “it is not possible to attribute all of the productivity gains of Bt growers to the transgenic technology but it would certainly appear that it has made a positive contribution to those who have been able to use it.”

None of the above can be characterized as being neutral. Furthermore, review of a very limited volume of existing data on the topic to draw its conclusions is not neutrality, but rather indicates a clear bias, states the letter.

SELECTIVE DATA

The book omits critical empirical data and analysis that would otherwise lead to a widely different conclusion about the alleged productivity and success of Bt cotton. Also the findings within each country case study are contradictory.

The book cites the Makhathini Flats experience in South Africa as the model example which “has been hailed as proof that GM crops can benefit smallholders in Africa.”

Most informed observers know well that Makhathini Flats is considered a Potemkin village for the biotech industry whose lobbyists swoop down in delegations to visit a handful of carefully nurtured farmers with scripts extolling the wonders of Bt cotton.

The book claims, “The majority of the literature has reported impressive adoption rates and positive economic returns.” How the authors arrived at such a sweeping claim of Bt cotton’s success is baffling.

The study ignores significant scientific findings that arrive at a substantially different outcome. According to a five-year study of farmers in Makhathini Flats conducted by Biowatch South Africa, the majority of small-scale farmers did not benefit from Bt cotton.

In fact, in their drive to purchase Bt cottonseeds – which are double the price of conventional seed – farmers amassed on average \$1,322 in debt. Of the 36 farmers studied, only four made a profit, whereas 80 percent defaulted on their loans.

Another study published in 2006 in the academic journal *Review of African Political Economy* found that widespread adoption of GM technology in the Makhathini Flats was the result of limited choices for farmers. The adoption rate was high in the first years because farmers had no other option – one company provided both credit and seeds.

Although Bt cotton was supposed to reduce farmers’ dependence on pesticides, the study found that this was not the case due to the emergence of secondary pests, like jassid.

Ignoring these findings, the book based on Oxfam’s project concludes “Research has clearly shown that the Bt cotton technology works and that both large-scale and smallholder farmers can benefit.”

The chapter on China cites a 2002 and 2004 study (Huang et al) that found that “farm-level surveys in northern China show that the adoption of Bt cotton has raised cotton yields and allowed farmers to reduce their insecticide use.”

The authors, however, fail to include findings from a major 2006 Cornell study jointly conducted with the Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy and Chinese Academy of Science. The team of

researchers included Per Pinstrup-Andersen, the 2001 Food Prize Laureate and former Director General of IFPRI.

The Cornell study found that seven years after the initial commercialization of Bt cotton in China, the profits enjoyed by Bt cotton growers quickly diminished due to the emergence of secondary pests.

Another finding was that Bt cotton farmers spent more on secondary pest control as their conventional counterparts: \$16 per hectare for Bt growers, versus \$5.70 per hectare for non Bt farmers.

By 2004, Bt cotton growers earned 8 percent less than their counterparts because GM seed cost triple the amount of conventional seed. It is also worthy to note that even before adoption of Bt cotton, pesticide use among Chinese farmers was already quite high in China, which does not bode well for current rates.

In the case of India, the study omits other findings that counter its conclusions. The authors write, “The introduction of Bt cotton has coincided with increasing cotton yields and production in the past few years.”

Summary of the book states, “although Bt cotton contributes to yield increases, its original purpose was to lower the requirements for insecticide use...The Bt growers spray less frequently than the non-Bt growers for bollworm... the Bt growers make somewhat fewer total insecticide applications and use a considerably lower quantity of insecticides....”

In the first week of March, biotech agriculture giant Monsanto admitted to the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) of India, that field monitoring of the 2009 cotton season showed that pink bollworm has developed resistance to its genetically modified (GM) cotton variety, Bollgard I, in Amreli, Bhavnagar, Junagarh and Rajkot districts in Gujarat.

This admission verified 2004 findings of the scientists at the Central Institute of Cotton Research in India who warned of the risk of pest resistance to Bt varieties in a paper published in the Indian Academy of Science publication. The authors established a theoretical model to predict resistance development in bollworms due to overuse of the cry1Ac gene.

In a recent report submitted to Jairam Ramesh, India’s environment minister before Monsanto’s admission, K.R. Kranthi of the Central Institute for Cotton Research had cautioned that bollworms are developing resistance.

The report also warned that not only has Bt cotton been rendered ineffective, it has also led to detection of some new pests never before reported from India, which are causing significant economic losses.

Two reputable Indian publications, *The Hindu* and *India Today*, recently established that cotton productivity dropped from 560 kg lint per hectare in 2007 to 512 kg lint per hectare by 2009.

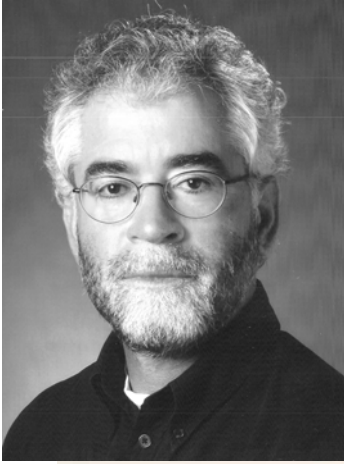
While the Oxfam study found that “Bt growers make somewhat fewer total insecticide applications and use a considerably lower quantity of insecticides,” the two Indian publications reported an increase in pesticide expenditure by cotton farmers from Rs. 597 crore in 2002 to Rs. 791 crore in 2009.

The chapter on Colombian farmers’ experiences with GM cotton concludes “it has made a positive contribution to those who have been able to use it.” This conclusion, however, is not backed by the data presented by the authors.

For one, if Bt cotton was so successful, then why did the percentage of land devoted to Bt cotton production drop from 70% in 2005 to 40 percent by 2009? The Oxfam study admits that GM seeds did not save “farmers significant investment in insecticides,” but claims that “the technology’s principal advantage appears to be its yield enhancement.” ■

Sarkozy's Difficult Nuclear Heritage

By Julio Godoy



French president Nicolas Sarkozy complained at an international conference March 8-9 in Paris that costs had become a decisive factor in the business of nuclear power plants. Therefore, he said, international organisations should think about subsidising the construction and operation of nuclear power plants in developing countries.

Sarkozy had two reasons to grumble: one immediate and the other general. Last year, the French nuclear power plant constructor Areva, together with the French electricity monopolist EdF, the oil giant Total and two other companies, had lost the battle for a juicy contract to build four reactors in Abu Dhabi to the South Korean competitor Kepco. The reason: Kepco is cheaper than Areva.

For the French nuclear industry complex, the defeat in Abu Dhabi was an affront. During 2009, several safety agencies around the world – in Britain, Finland, and even in the French homeland – have complained that the newest generation of pressurized water reactors which Areva is building are technically not safe enough.

But in general Nicolas Sarkozy's reasons for complaint lie in the costs of the technology. Several studies on the economic feasibility of nuclear power plants – even by institutions not known for their opposition to nuclear energy, such as the Citibank – have estimated that the financial and technical risks involved in the construction and operation of nuclear reactors are too big to be

supported by private companies.

As the Citibank bluntly put it last fall: "Three of the risks faced by developers — construction, power price, and operational — are so large and variable that individually they could each bring even the largest utility company to its knees financially. This makes new nuclear a unique investment proposition for utility companies."

A similar conclusion was reached by a French economist working for the state-owned monopolist EdF: Costs and risks of construction and operation of nuclear power plants are so high that they simply made investments in such projects unattractive for private business.

Investors would have to wait some 25 years to see some return for their money – if at all. In contrast, alternative energy sources, such as gas, were cheap, safer, and could be built in a fraction of the time needed for pressurized water reactors.

In other words: If governments really want nuclear power, they ought to put taxpayers' and consumers' money on the table, and demand endurance from them – and impose the business risks upon their shoulders. Now that's capitalist trade by the book, isn't it?

In the face of such facts, Sarkozy's calls for international organisations to subsidise the construction of nuclear power plants in developing countries are simply cynical. For they intend to put taxpayers' money at risk to finance a superfluous, extremely dangerous industry, in which France has since decades already invested incredible amounts – and is still waiting for the dividends.

France's well known dependence on nuclear power can be illustrated with a few figures: On average, every fourth French nuclear reactor is at any given time out of operation. The country generates 80 percent of its electricity with nuclear reactors. But because they are so fragile and prone to breakdown, France is forced time and again to import electricity.

In addition, the monopolistic position of nuclear power has blocked the development of renewable energetic sources, such as wind and sun. While Denmark, Germany, Spain, and other European countries have become leaders in the field, France is still a developing country in those sectors.

But the nuclear French heritage goes beyond such shortages. France's hunger for uranium has caused environmental and

public health catastrophes at home and abroad: Numerous cases – above the national average – of leukaemia among children have been repeatedly reported in regions near French nuclear power plants, as in Flamanville, on the country's north-western Atlantic coast.

But the catastrophes have taken place most of all abroad. In Niger, for instance, according to environmental and local activists drinking water in villages near the uranium mines exploited by the French state owned AREVA, and even roads, are contaminated with radioactive material. France has also been exporting radioactive waste from its nuclear power plants to Russia, to Siberia, where it is "stored" open air, with no concerns whatsoever on the environment or the public health.

Similar findings have been made in Germany, in the U.S., and in Britain – in practically every country using nuclear power. Some ten years ago, I visited an open air deposit for nuclear waste in the U.S. Corroded barrels containing nuclear waste were "stored" near a river, just "protected" by barbed wire. Police patrols would drive by once and again, to chase the adventurous – most of whom were environmental activists, or curious innocent guys like me.

In Germany the infamous "interim storage" of Asse, which contains 126,000 barrels with radioactive waste, is on the brink of collapse. The decontamination of the venue might cost up to four billion euros – in addition, the government has to find yet another "interim storage" for the nuclear rubbish. The same goes for the "final storage" of Gorleben – by now environmental and local activists have shown that the choice of the place in the 1980s was based only on political considerations and not on geological or safety arguments.

To add absurdity to the offence: Because of the French government's follies, the country is now in dire need of nuclear power. It has no alternatives – at one time or another, the government in Paris suspended research on all other energetic sources. French engineers were the first to study thermosolar technology – but they suspended all work on it arguing that it was not required. Now thermosolar power plants elsewhere are en vogue and considered the key to the future.

– GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

Enabling Poor Rural People to Overcome Poverty



The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized agency of the United Nations, was established as an international financial institution in 1977 as one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference. The Conference was organized in response to the food crises of the early 1970s that primarily affected the Sahelian countries of Africa. The conference resolved that "an International Fund for Agricultural Development should be established immediately to finance agricultural development projects primarily for food production in the developing countries". One of the most important insights emerging from the conference was that the causes of food insecurity and famine were not so much failures in food production, but structural problems relating to poverty and to the fact that the majority of the developing world's poor populations were concentrated in rural areas.

IFAD is dedicated to eradicating rural poverty in **developing countries**. Seventy-five per cent of the world's poorest people - 1.05 billion women, children and men - live in rural areas and depend on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods.

Working with rural poor people, governments, donors, **non-governmental organizations** and many other **partners**, IFAD focuses on country-specific solutions, which can involve increasing rural poor peoples' access to financial services, markets, technology, land and other natural resources.

IFAD's activities are guided by the **Strategic Framework for IFAD 2007-2010: Enabling the rural poor to overcome poverty**.

IFAD's goal is to empower poor rural women and men in developing countries to achieve higher incomes and improved food security.

Objectives

IFAD will ensure that poor rural people have better access to, and the skills and organization they need to take advantage of:

- Natural resources, especially secure access to land and water, and improved natural resource management and conservation practices

- Improved agricultural technologies and effective production services

- A broad range of financial services

- Transparent and competitive markets for agricultural inputs and produce

- Opportunities for rural off-farm employment and enterprise development

- Local and national policy and programming processes

All of IFAD's decisions - on **regional, country** and **thematic strategies**, poverty reduction strategies, **policy dialogue** and development partners - are made with these **principles** and objectives in mind. As reflected in the strategic framework, IFAD is committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the target to halve the proportion of hungry and extremely poor people by 2015.

Working in partnership to eradicate rural poverty

Through low-interest **loans and grants**, IFAD works with governments to develop and finance programmes and projects that enable rural poor people to overcome poverty themselves.

Since starting operations in 1978, IFAD has invested US\$10.8 billion in 805 projects and programmes that have reached more than 340 million poor rural people.

Governments and other financing sources in recipient countries, including project participants, contributed US\$15.3 billion, and multilateral, bilateral and other donors provided approximately another US\$9.5 billion in **cofinancing**.

This represents a total investment of about US\$24.8 billion, and means that for every dollar IFAD invested, it was able to mobilize almost two dollars in additional resources.

IFAD tackles poverty not only as a lender, but also as an advocate for rural poor people. Its multilateral base provides a natural global platform to discuss important policy issues that influence the lives of rural poor people, as well as to draw attention to the centrality of rural development to meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

IFAD Membership in IFAD is open to any state that is a member of the United Nations or its specialized agencies or the International Atomic Energy Agency. The **Governing Council** is IFAD's highest decision-making authority, with 165 Member States represented by a Governor and Alternate Governor and any other designated advisers. The Council meets annually. The **Executive Board**, responsible for overseeing the general operations of IFAD and approving loans and grants, is composed of 18 members and 18 alternate members. The President, who serves for a four-year term (renewable once), is IFAD's chief executive officer and chair of the Executive Board. The current President of IFAD is **Mr Kanayo Nwanze**, who was elected for a four-year term in 2009.

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GLOBAL EVENTS

Policy Dialogue on Development Cooperation

Members of the DAC met with a range of other providers of development co-operation for a South-South-Policy Dialogue in Mexico City September 28-29. At the event, which was hosted by the Mexican Foreign Ministry, participants from several Latin American countries exchanged views on the common goals of their international co-operation, compared lessons drawn from their diverse approaches to co-operation and discussed the potential of more joint work.

Demand for such dialogue is stronger than ever. At last year's United Nations Development Co-operation Forum (New York), participants expressed the need for all providers of development co-operation to arrive at more widely agreed development co-operation practices and objectives. Recognising the important contribution to development by middle-income countries and providers of South-South co-operation, the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action encourages all providers of co-operation to work together to improve the effectiveness of their efforts.

Discussions in Mexico revealed common ground about the goals of development co-operation. Promoting poverty reduction and economic growth – and supporting partner countries in times of crisis – remain the highest of priorities. And new goals, such as the provision of global public goods and addressing climate change, are of increasing concern to all.

Participants also agreed broadly on the principles that would be needed to achieve these shared goals. First and foremost, they stressed the importance of partnership. Latin American countries, for example, emphasised that their co-operation was horizontal, based on mutual benefits and shared learning with their partners. DAC members told of their efforts in developing true partnerships with aid recipients, spurred by the recognition that aid could only be effective if its recipients had real ownership of their development policies and processes. In line with the principles of partnership and ownership, participants agreed that supporting partner countries in developing their capacities to manage the development process was a

NEWS - FEATURES - ANALYSES



FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN GC COUNCIL ADVISOR
Mr. Toshiki Kaifu, who served as Prime Minister of Japan from August 1989 to November 1991, has accepted our invitation to join the Advisory Board of Global Cooperation Council. Other members of the Board include Dr. Roberto Savio, Chair World Social Forum's Commission for Communication, President Emeritus of Inter Press Service - Italy, and Dr. Inge Kaul who served at the UNDP from 1981 to 2005 in different capacities.



A BAD START TO THE NEW CENTURY
BY ROBERTO SAVIO *

Sadly one would have to agree that the first decade of the new century is not a cause for optimism. Not only have we not solved the problems that we had, other even more difficult ones have been added to the list.

THE NEXT FINANCIAL CRISIS IS JUST A MATTER OF TIME
BY ROBERTO SAVIO

U.S. Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner's rejection of the European request for regulation of bank executives' bonuses has given rise to various interpretations: some cite President Barack Obama's need to avoid more confrontations with the American right wing, others point to the influence of the historical bond between the U.S. and the UK, the only European country to defend financial corporations.

PROMOTE CULTURE OF PEACE - MAKE WARS DETESTABLE
BY ROBERTO SAVIO

While the war in Iraq triggered massive demonstrations across the globe, the ratcheting up of the number of troops in Afghanistan has generated no more than brief debates in parliaments. Obviously the intervention in Afghanistan if far more "legitimate" than the invasion of Iraq based as it was on false assumptions about the existence of weapons of mass destruction.

'JAPAN HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE A CONSTRUCTIVE GLOBAL PLAYER'

TARO ICHIKAWA INTERVIEWS NEW KOMEI PARTY CHIEF NATSUO YAMAGUCHI – Japan should play an active role in supporting efforts toward a nuclear weapons free world, without jeopardizing its close and trusted relations with the United States, says Natsuo Yamaguchi, president of the New Komei Party, the country's third largest political party that has promoted and pursued initiatives to enhance peace and protect the vulnerable in Japanese society since 1964. Against the backdrop of its close and "vital" relations with the U.S. and growing understanding with China, dating back to more than three decades, Japan has the potential to act as a bridge between the United States and China as the two countries move towards confidence-building, avers the 57-year old Yamaguchi.

WHO IS AFRAID OF 'HUNGER REPORTS'?

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



'LET US MAKE NUCLEAR ABOLITION A REALITY'



A world free of nuclear weapons is no longer a utopia. There is more than one reason to believe that it is a concrete possibility, says Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Buddhist association, Soka Gokai International (SGI). "In recent years, we have seen important, groundbreaking examples of humanitarian ideals surmounting military logic and narrowly defined national interests to bring new disarmament accords into existence," says Ikeda explaining the rationale behind his optimism. [READ MORE](#) | [READ MORE-1](#) | [ARABIC](#) | [GERMAN](#) | [SPANISH](#)

OBAMA SEEKS UN BACKING FOR NUKE-FREE WORLD

When Barack Obama chaired a summit meeting of the Security Council Sept. 24 – a historic first for a U.S. president – his primary motive was to push for his ambitious, long-term agenda for "a world without nuclear weapons". A resolution adopted unanimously by the 15 members of the U.N.'s most powerful political body expressed grave concern about the threat of nuclear proliferation and the need for international action to prevent it. [READ MORE](#) | [SPANISH](#)



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION



'AGRICULTURE KEY TO FOOD SECURITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE'

IFAD President Kanayo F Nwanze. "Agriculture is the vital link between the two burning issues of feeding a growing population and preserving the planet we live on," says IFAD president Kanayo F Nwanze. It is crucial, therefore, that the deal expected to emerge from the landmark climate change conference in Copenhagen recognises that connect, Nwanze says in an e-mail interview with [IDN-InDepthNews](#) and [Global Perspectives](#) – a journal for international cooperation.

PARLIAMENTARIANS URGE GREATER EFFORTS ON LAND DEGRADATION

BY UWE HOLTZ - [IDN-InDepthNews](#) | [Global Perspectives](#)



TOWARDS A GREEN ECONOMY

Several initiatives are under way to move toward a global green economy, most of these associated with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and supported, among others, by Germany and the EU Commission. But private investors from industrialized and emerging economies are also actively involved. [Read more](#)

SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

Developing nations are faced with huge economic and financial problems and need funds and technical cooperation from Europe and the United States. But this is only one aspect of reality. They have meanwhile acquired a high profile in world economy and in global decision-making - thanks due to increasing South-South cooperation. [Read more](#)

WALK THE DEVELOPMENT TALK

A new report finds that Germany's overall commitment to development is fair to middling. Europe's economic powerhouse ranks 12th among the 22 'donor nations' in the Commitment to Development Index (CDI) 2009, authored by the Washington-based 'Center for Global Development'. The Index is designed to encourage donor countries to adopt policies that are more likely to promote development across a broad range of issues, which define their relationships with poor countries. [Read more](#)

CLOSER TO NUCLEAR ABOLITION

Since U.S. President Barack Obama pledged to usher in a nuclear free world this April in Prague, the movement for abolishing atomic weapons has gathered momentum. The UN Security Council's special session on Sep. 24 is not only historic but also a milestone on the long road toward the ambitious goal. [Read more](#)

COUNTDOWN TO COPENHAGEN

Whether Europe and the United States like it or not, negotiations in run up to the UN climate change conference this December in Copenhagen leave no doubt that the only global deal developing countries are prepared to consider must include commitments from developed nations to immediate emissions mitigation, more financial assistance, and to giving developing nations greater control of global climate institutions. [Read more](#)

GOOD BYE, U.S. DOLLAR?

Brazil, China, India and Russia – backed by France – have all questioned the dollar's future as a global reserve currency, a status it has enjoyed since inheriting it from sterling last century.