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By Thailf Deen
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*Analysis by Helena Cobban**
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By Matthew Berger
UNITED NATIONS - The issue of nuclear disarmament being discussed with new vigour in the halls of the U.N. as the third and final preparatory committee leading up to the 2010 review conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) meets over the next two weeks.
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POLITICS-US: AIPAC Conference Pushes Hard Line on Iran
By Daniel Luban
WASHINGTON - The annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the powerful and hawkish pro-Israel lobby, wrapped up on Tuesday with a speech from Vice President Joe Biden, capping three days that were primarily devoted to the threat of a nuclear Iran.
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LATIN AMERICA: Nuclear Disarmament Back on the Agenda
By Daniela Estrada
SAÑTIAGO - Over the last few days, the Chilean capital has hosted two very different activities that, however, had a common objective: promoting global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.
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Q&A: "Springtime of Hope" Seen for Nuke Disarmament
Thailf Deen interviews JAYANTHA DHANAPALA, former under-secretary-general for disarmament affairs
UNITED NATIONS - When he addressed a massive gathering in the Czech capital of Prague last month, U.S. President Barack Obama made a historic statement pledging that his country will take "concrete steps towards a world without nuclear weapons."
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U.S.: Major Foreign Tests Likely Over Next 100 Days
*Analysis by Jim Lobe**
WASHINGTON - While Barack Obama has clearly improved Washington's image abroad during his first 100 days in office, the next 100 will almost certainly prove much more challenging for the new president's foreign policy.
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US-IRAN: As Obama Engages, Hawks Soften Rhetoric
By Ali Gharib
WASHINGTON - As the White House prepares the ground for direct diplomacy with Iran on a handful of issues, a group of Iran hawks gathered in Washington to discuss their views on how to handle what they describe as a "series of provocative actions" by Tehran beyond its ongoing nuclear development.
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DISARMAMENT: New Promise of a Nuclear-Free World
By Ramesh Jaura
BERLIN - Leading supporters of disarmament see new hope arising from the announcement by the U.S. and Russian presidents that they are willing to replace the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) with a new one.
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At first it was the United States. Then came Russia, China, Britain and France. Everyone wanted their own atomic bombs. While Israel quietly nurtured its nuclear programme, in Asia, rivals India and Pakistan, and most recently North Korea, joined the global nuclear club. Now all eyes are on Iran, which according to the nations that already have these bombs, is hiding this killer science behind the doors of its nuclear energy industry.

95 percent of the nuclear arsenal is owned by the U.S. and Russia. With the arrival of U.S. President Barack Obama, there are renewed efforts to work towards non-proliferation. Are we heading towards a new "spirit of progressive multilateralism" - as British Prime Minister Gordon Brown says? Civil society groups are re-invigorating grassroots efforts towards full realisation of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and promoting a new global and binding nuclear weapons abolition convention. [Read IPS.](#)

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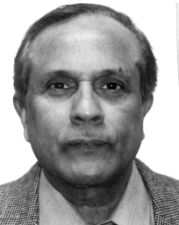
'Civil Society Crucial' For Nuclear Free World

"The path toward nuclear abolition is a long and winding one. But what is vital is that we do not give up the hope that it appears to embody," says SGI office of peace affairs executive director Hirotsugu Terasaki. The lay Buddhist organisation SGI (Soka Gakkai International) is engaged in mobilising "commonsense" perception that nuclear weapons do not provide security. Its president Daisaku Ikeda has launched 'People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition'. Nuclear weapon states will not relinquish their atomic arsenal without being pressured to do so, Terasaki points out. "However, if civil society raises its voice in a clear and incontrovertible call for the abolition of nuclear weapons, the political leaders would not be able to ignore that," Terasaki said in an interview with IDN from Tokyo. - More on pages 18-19



When All Hell Broke Loose

When politically sensitive issues such as racism and human rights are discussed at the United Nations, all hell breaks loose. The usually unflappable diplomats-- minus the traditional striped pants-- go virtually berserk. When the former Human Rights Commission (HRC) was dominated by serial violators such as Libya, Zimbabwe, and China, the members of the UN body were described as inmates taking over the asylum. But left unsaid was whether the HRC was a political asylum or a mental asylum -- or a mix of both, writes veteran journalist Thalif Deen. - More on page 8



Where Are the Arabs?

Many people were happy in Istanbul to see that a UN initiative to reverse the clash between Westerners and Muslims would result in a set of specific projects to promote intercultural dialogue. But they were also surprised by two big absences: the U.S. President Barak Obama, who was in Istanbul but did not address the 'Alliance of Civilizations' II Forum (April 6-7); and the Arabs, who are believed to be key players on this stage, but were notably underrepresented, writes Middle East specialist Baher Kamal. - More on page 10



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Karina Böckmann



Dr. Heike Nasdala



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First Breakthrough on Nuclear Talks



The first breakthrough in ten years appears to have been achieved at the nuclear talks in New York. The world's five recognised nuclear powers - USA, Russia, China, France and Britain - reportedly endorsed on May 15 the review of the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), stressing the importance of nuclear disarmament and treaty's obligations.

This is all the more important as the previous review in 2005 ended in disarray because of disagreement among treaty signers and the absence of a clear agenda of discussion. But organizers of the 2010 review conference said the atmosphere has changed under the administration of President Barack Obama.

"Our delegations reiterate our enduring and unequivocal commitment to work toward nuclear disarmament, an obligation shared by all NPT state parties," the five powers said in a statement to coincide with the conclusion of talks at UN headquarters in New York to prepare for the 2010 meeting.

Zimbabwe's UN Ambassador Boniface Chidyausiku, who chaired the preparatory talks, said Obama has injected a new atmosphere and political good will in nuclear disarmament. Chidyausiku said the preparatory talks agreed within three days on an ambitious agenda for the 2010 conference whereas disputes among the NPT signers in 2005 failed to even agree on an agenda.

The review conference will take place in April 2010 at UN headquarters in New York. "We have a good agenda for the review conference," which would address problems dividing NPT parties, he said.

Obama has called for a world free of nuclear weapons and has urged Congress to support the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). USA and Russia have also agreed to negotiate a new agreement replacing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty dealing with the two countries' nuclear arsenals.

The five nuclear powers said in their statement that they welcome the U.S.-Russian decision on a new START agreement. They called for strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) nuclear safeguards and to ensure their compliance. In particular, the five powers urged respect of Article 4 of the NPT, which supports the rights of countries to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

The mention of Article 4 was in clear reference to the dispute between the five nuclear powers and Iran. Tehran claims its nuclear programmes are for civilian use, but the five powers disagree. "We note our commitment to use the opportunity of the 2010 review conference to preserve international confidence in the treaty and to strengthen it in all its aspects," the statement said. "We urge all NPT state parties to share in this goal and join us in working to ensure a successful and balanced review."

The NPT entered into force in 1970 during the height of the Cold War with severe division among the nuclear powers. Signed by 188 countries, it remains the treaty with the largest number of signers. The treaty urges nuclear disarmament and confides on the Vienna-based IAEA the responsibility to set and monitor nuclear safeguards. But it recognizes countries' rights to possess nuclear energy for peaceful uses.

Ramesh Jaura

Ramesh Jaura
Chief Editor

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A Hundred Days of Shattering Shibboleths

BY JEFFREY LAURENTI

President Obama's own accounting of his first hundred days in the White House -- a journalistic mile-marker ever since the feverish output of Franklin Roosevelt's early months in office -- was telling. He devoted less than a tenth of his 100th day press conference statement to his foreign policy initiatives.

He didn't need to dwell longer -- and not just because the public's interest is understandably focused on the crises at home. What is most striking is that Obama's wide-ranging reversals of conservative policies of unilateralism, intransigence, and denial have gone virtually unchallenged, earning wide applause at home as much as abroad. The audience for the bilious right's fulminations is no wider than its own zealots.

Of course, it was the abject failures of conservative rule that opened the door for Obama. Long, grinding wars for which no one can remember the original justification, the relentless metastasis of violent conflicts from Palestine to Pakistan, and two percent approval ratings among allied publics for U.S. leadership have discredited rightist ideology among all but true believers.

Conversely, the rapturous welcomes accorded Obama in Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America assure the American public that the new president has already dispelled the toxic clouds of the past eight years. Americans take pride in the world's esteem, and for all his modesty Obama has paradoxically stoked that pride.

It is not just liberal internationalists who celebrate Obama's policy departures. Indeed, on some issues these have been his most impatient and disappointed critics. What is more remarkable is the support Obama has drawn from conservative "realists," many of them associated with the elder George Bush's administration two decades ago, whom the bluster and inflexibility of the son's regime had appalled.

To be sure, some traditionalists talk hopefully about Obama's foreign policy "centrism," imagining that his changes are merely rhetorical re-positioning that re-lubricates the machinery of American dominance while masking a substantive continuity of policy with his predecessors'. And it is true that, so far, Obama has not yet had to do political battle with entrenched lobbies at home, much less with obdurate antagonists abroad.

But they should not be too complacent. The president has launched initiatives for change on a breath-taking array of fronts, even if sometimes the first steps are carefully calibrated, and he has not foresworn his commitment to press ahead. Obama told Turks that, just as with a battleship, "moving the ship of state" in a dramatically different direction happens by degrees, not in a sudden destabilizing lurch -- but that he intends it to happen. This suggests a chess player's strategic farsightedness, not reactive incrementalism.

In some areas Obama has already effected substantive change. Incorporation of Ukraine and Georgia into NATO -- a major source of conflict with Russia -- has quietly disappeared from the agenda; so has antimissile weaponry on Czech and Polish soil. After years of conservatives' determined refusal to negotiate reductions in nuclear arsenals, Obama has launched a fast-track rollback with Russia.

The president astonished Washington cynics who openly expected him, post-election, to "pivot to the center" on Iraq, directing senior military officers to fulfil his pledge to withdraw U.S. troops on schedule -- "responsibly" but totally. His first morning in office he made good on his pledge to close Guantánamo and restore the ban on torture, two issues that had deeply corroded American authority.

Obama's reaffirmation of international law and multilateral institutions -- an eye-glazer in Washington's policy salons, but viewed worldwide as the cornerstone of international leadership -- has been central to America's hundred-days rebound, contrasting as it sharply does with his predecessors' marginalization of them. Obama has already put an end to the conservatives' surly isolation of America from the U.N. Human Rights Council, another small-bore stunt of hypocritical moralizing that had only underscored Washington's abdication of moral authority.

The president's extended hand, both metaphorically and literally, has confounded adversaries from Iran to Venezuela who had revelled in bashing Bush's America. In breaking with conservatives' sterile policy of demanding concessions up front from them as a precondition for talking, Obama has opened the way for breakthrough negotiations. His first steps toward relaxation of Washington's fossilized Cuba policy have electrified Latin America -- and even won support of Cuban-Americans.

Even more than with Cuba, Obama has been proceeding methodically and purposefully on Israel and Palestine. Instead of actively subverting a Palestinian government of national unity, Washington now signals it hopes to see one. When newly dominant right-wing parties in Israel refuse to recognize the right of a Palestinian state to exist, Obama unequivocally reaffirms the urgency of the two-state solution. The real tests here, of course, lie in the future.

But while he has pledged U.S. support for the International Criminal Court's prosecution of Sudanese leaders for war crimes, he has not repudiated Bush's disavowal of the U.S. signature on the court's statute. He has shrunk from legal action against the architects of the torture regime, leaving that task to Spanish prosecutors. And his reticence about aggressive promotion of democracy has dismayed many in Washington.

The disappointments among Americans to Obama's left, however, have no more political traction with the American public than does the hysteria on the right. So far, conservatives' outrage has focused on the new president's supposed "legitimation" of such *bêtes noires* as Hugo Chávez. But already the lines of a more sustained attack from the right are clear. Obama is "weak." (War is "strong.") He fudges moral clarity of American virtue against foreign evil. His policies are "Carterite."

For the moment, this dog won't hunt. But Obama's new directions will need to yield tangible outcomes beyond high overseas popularity if America's recommitment to Roosevelt's grand internationalist design is to become irreversible. For that, America's international partners need to commit themselves, urgently, to ensuring that Americans too see Obama's brave vision of a new world a success.

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NATO and Russia Playing Dangerous Games

BY ERIC WALBERG



Eric Walberg writes for *Al-Ahram Weekly*. He can be reached at: walberg2002@yahoo.com.

As Russian troops marched to celebrate the victory over Nazi Germany May 8, NATO troops - 1,300 of them from ten member countries and six "partners"- were beginning their month-long Cooperative Longbow/Lancer war "games" on Russia's southern border.

In deference to Moscow, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Serbia decided not to participate in the NATO exercises, preferring to send their diplomats to Red Square in homage to the untold Russian sacrifice in pursuit of world peace. According to Russian MP Sergei Abeltsev, the NATO decision to hold the drills in Georgia during the WWII Victory Day celebrations was a "total revision of the history of the Great Patriotic War".

The games were greeted by Georgian troops with a coup attempt against their beleaguered President Mikheil Saakashvili, though there is speculation that this was something dreamed up by the Georgian president himself (he has done stranger things, like declaring war on Russia).

This latest bizarre twist, the argument goes, gives him ammunition in his battle with protesters - they have been demanding his resignation for over a month and vow to keep protesting till he is gone. Lucky for Saak, riot police are still loyal to him and broke up an anti-NATO rally by thousands converging on parliament on the eve of the games.

According to Russian Ambassador to NATO Dmitri Rogozin, Saakashvili "has long been aiming to bring Georgia's domestic conflict to the international level. It's for this reason that he shot down our military - to draw us into the August war. It's for this reason that he wanted American marines to come to Georgia, to draw Americans into that war. This man is dangerous for the world," Rogozin said.

"LARGE-SCALE DRILLS" IN THE CARIBBEAN

In support of the U.S. darling, Democratic Senator John Kerry and Republican Congressman David Dreier (note the bipartisan unity) are calling for a free trade agreement with Georgia.

NATO is busy as a bee these days. Apart from its centrepiece, Afghanistan, where deaths of both Afghans and occupiers are increasing daily, and practising for God-knows-what in Georgia, it was recently flexing its naval muscle in neighbouring Turkey, where delegates from 27 countries just wrapped up NATO's annual Maritime Commanders Meeting (MARCOMET 2009).

Its theme this year was "The Future Security Environment - Implications for Navies" and was focused on terrorism, piracy and conflicts deriving from energy and resources issues. No doubt it will be deploying forces on the Horn of Africa soon pursuing those pesky pirates.

Prague has also been a hive of activity. It hosted a meeting of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova) May 7, followed by a summit dubbed "Southern Corridor - New Silk Road of European and Central Asian countries", seeking a non-Russian route for gas imports from Central Asia.

The summit participants included Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Egypt, Iraq and Turkey. The Czech EU official said that after years of wavering, Europe had no time to lose in securing alternatives to Russian gas.

If the intent in all this is to make Russia mad, it is working. On the first day of the Georgian military exercise, Russia expelled two NATO envoys. Rogozin stated that his country would not attend a NATO military meeting planned for that week.

Russian lawmaker Sergei Abeltsev has floated the idea of a response to the NATO move that would entail Cuba

and Venezuela taking part in "large-scale drills" in the Caribbean Sea on July 2. Nicaragua intends to buy Russian aircraft and helicopters for its armed forces, and will be sure to join in.

The battleground between East and West these days thus includes not only Georgia, but the Czech Republic, Poland and the Baltics. Not only is U.S. President Barack Obama continuing Bush's policy of provoking Russia in Georgia, but he made no indication in his first 100 days that he would reverse the planned Star Wars missile bases in the Czech Republic and Poland.

THE IRAN PRETEXT

Fortunately grassroots Czech opposition to the proposed base resulted in the defeat of the conservative government and it looks like the Czech base will not go ahead. Strong opposition in Poland has so far not managed to make a similar political inroad.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov accused the U.S. of using the Iran issue as a pretext to set up its missile shield in Russia's backyard. "The way it is designed has nothing to do with Iran's nuclear programme. It is aimed at Russian strategic forces, deployed in the European part of the Russian Federation," Lavrov told Euronews. "We are being very frank about this with our American colleagues and hope that our arguments are heard. Iran's nuclear programme is a separate issue. We approach it according to a key principal - preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction."

As if the Czech government's anti-Russian conferences and the war games aren't enough, the Czech air force are now "protecting" the airspace of the three Baltic NATO members, the first time that the Czech military's tactical air force has been deployed in a foreign operation since the end of WWII.

The Czech aircraft will be ready to take action in case of a military threat to the Baltic countries and to provide them with help. But what "threat" is there in the Baltics, other than one invented by trigger-happy NATO planners playing yet more war "games" with Russia?

This scheming has not gone unnoticed by Moscow. "We are not afraid of anything, including the prospect of a new Cold War, but we don't want one," Russian President Dmitri Medvedev said recently.

In *The Grand Chessboard* (1997) Zbigniew Brzezinski predicted that the only countries Russia could convince to join a defence pact might be Belarus and Tajikistan. But the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) founded in 2002 in reaction to NATO expansion eastward now includes not only Belarus and Tajikistan, but Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.



Admiral Giampaolo Di Paola, chairman of the NATO Military Committee, concluded a two-day working visit to the Republic of Latvia at the invitation of the Latvian Chief of Defence, Major General Juris Maklakovs.

THINGS LOOK GRIM FOR MOSCOW

It, along with the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), the Russia-Belarus Union State and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) are natural developments by countries concerned about what the US and NATO are really up to. Russian General Leonid Ivashov, vice-president of the Academy of Geopolitical Science, says there is a need "to neutralise the spread of NATO's influence not only to Central Asia but also to East and Southeast Asia," adding that this "won't be of an aggressive or offensive nature; it will be a deterrent."

Relations with the SCO are developing, and just a few months ago, it was reported that the CSTO will have its own Joint Rapid Reaction Force which could be used to protect its members from military aggression, defend critical infrastructure and fight terrorism and organised crime. Russia and Kazakhstan are the key movers in the CSTO and managed to obtain a 25 per cent growth in this year's budget.

There are problems. First, the stand-off between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with the latter inching towards NATO membership in reaction to Russian support for the former. And then there's Uzbekistan. President Islam Karimov was initially very pro-U.S. and anti-Russian, but after being spurned by the West over the brutal suppression of demonstrations in 2005, he quickly made up with Russia and even joined the CSTO in 2006.

However, human rights have never interfered with U.S. strategic thinking in the past, and there are signs that Karimov is flirting with the West once again. He has also signed a military cooperation agreement with Azerbaijan, and is withdrawing from EurAsEC, adding to the confusion.

What Moscow would really like is for Ukraine to join the CSTO. And why not? If such pacts are truly defensive, then this makes perfect sense. What conceivable role does NATO play so far from the Atlantic, except as a forward base for the U.S.? Ukraine in the CSTO would give it clout where it counts - with its big and vital neighbour. Ukraine in NATO can only be a serious cause of tension with Russia. As Egyptians say, "Your neighbour is closer than your mother."

While things look grim these days from Moscow, the EU/NATO machinations are far from yielding results. Euro "partners" Armenia and Azerbaijan are in a state of war; Belarus and Moldova leaders have no illusions about Euro intentions and did not attend the EP fest in Prague, despite the 600 million euros being thrown around. And signs of reaction to NATO's nosiness are setting in.

In a poll by the U.S. government funded International Republican Institute (IRI) only 63 per cent of Georgian respondents back NATO accession, down from the 87 per cent the IRI recorded last September. Keep in mind the bias of an organisation like the IRI and imagine likely statistics if such a poll were carried out by a real NGO like, say, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament or StopNATO. What is telling in the IRI poll is the massive shift away from NATO membership in the past six months.

And then there's Ukraine. The district council of its second largest city, Kharkov, has just called for a ban on all NATO-related organisations and activities pending a nationwide referendum on Kiev's membership in the alliance.

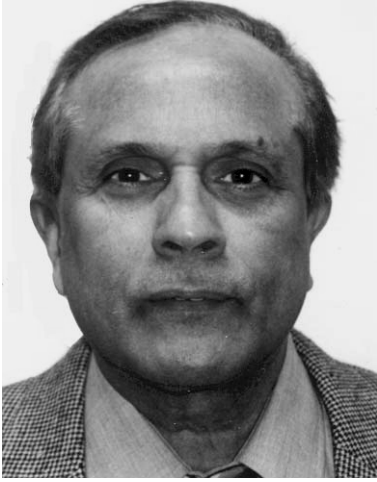
A statement circulated by the council has denounced any violations of Ukraine's bloc-free status. The protest by the deputies followed the opening in April this year of a Euro-Atlantic cooperation (read: NATO) centre at Economics and Law University in Kharkov.

Obama has yet to make any of the hard choices he faces. He caved in to the bankers, and his health plan is being vetted by the health insurance industry to prevent the single-payer system, by far the cheapest and most comprehensive.

He appears to be letting the Bush torturers off the hook and continuing their wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But he can't finesse Russia so easily. Russia will not cooperate on Afghanistan or arms treaties if he continues the foolish and dangerous meddling in Eastern Europe under the pretence of supporting "democracy and freedom".

These games can only be interpreted by Moscow as a replay - hopefully farcical - of the Nazis in Georgia in WWII, which will strengthen their resolve to keep the enemy at bay.

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When All Hell Broke Loose

BY THALIF DEEN

When politically sensitive issues such as racism and human rights are discussed at the United Nations, all hell breaks loose. The usually unflappable diplomats-- minus the traditional striped pants-- go virtually berserk.

When the former Human Rights Commission (HRC) was dominated by serial violators such as Libya, Zimbabwe, and China, the members of the UN body were described as inmates taking over the asylum. But left unsaid was whether the HRC was a political asylum or a mental asylum -- or a mix of both.

At the 2001 anti-racism conference in Durban, South Africa, the US and Israel walked out before the declaration was adopted on the ground that the Jewish state had been singled out for condemnation for its racist policies.

The follow-up conference to Durban, which took place in Geneva April 20-24, did not fare any better. Even before the conference began, several Western states, including the U.S., the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, New Zealand and Australia pulled out of the meeting fearing the worst. Both Israel and Canada declined to participate even in the preparatory meetings, right from the inception months before.

The "sad truth" is that countries professing to want to avoid a reprise of the contentious 2001 racism conference were now the ones triggering the collapse of a global consensus on the fight against racism, said Juliette de Rivero, Geneva advocacy director at Human Rights Watch.

As these Western governments demanded, she pointed out, the negotiated text for last week's Geneva conference did uphold freedom of expression and also avoided singling out Israel. But still, these governments decided to boycott the conference anyway, thereby depriving the political universality the declaration needed.

"DISMAYED" BY THE BOYCOTT

The London-based Amnesty International said it was "dismayed" by the boycott. The fact that these Western states withdrew from the conference also provides them with an excuse: they have no political obligations to respect or conform to the declaration (which condemns all forms of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia).

Stephen Zunes, a professor of political science at the University of San Francisco, was more pointed in his criticism of the Obama administration for refusing to participate in the conference. In boycotting the conference, he said, the Obama administration "demonstrated that just because an African-American can be elected president doesn't mean the United States will be any more committed than the (former) Bush administration in fighting global racism".

Zunes also said that despite claims to the contrary by various right-wing pundits, the final declaration didn't contain any anti-Israel statements or language equating Zionism with racism. The declaration also deleted a call to ban "defamation of religion" which raised concerns regarding restricting free speech. So why the boycott? Was it an attempt to bend over backwards to please the Israelis, who were opposed to the conference right from the beginning?

Meanwhile, the Geneva conference also generated controversy over attacks and counter-attacks by Secretary-

General Ban Ki-moon and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who accused Israel of being a racist state for its continued suppression of the Palestinians.

According to published reports, about 15 to 20 countries, including delegates from UK, France and Finland, staged a walkout to protest the Iranian's president's statement. In a stinging attack on Ahmadinejad, Ban said he "deplored" the use of the Geneva meeting as a platform by the Iranian President "to accuse, divide and even incite".

"This is the opposite of what this Conference seeks to achieve," he said.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay was equally critical of Ahmadinejad, when she faithfully followed in the footsteps of her boss. "I condemn the use of a UN forum for political grandstanding. I find this totally objectionable."

But the Iranians were not going to take the attacks lying down. In a letter of protest, Iran dismissed the two statements as "deplorable, irresponsible and unwarranted." The public lashing of the Iranian president by two senior UN officials is as exceptional as the harsh rejoinder by a member state.

The attacks and counter-attacks have also violated long-standing diplomatic protocol in the world body.

In its protest letter, Iran said both statements "utterly contradict UN well-established norms and practices to the effect that civil servants of the United Nations should at all times abide by the principles of impartiality and refrain from any judgmental remarks about the positions and statements made by the representatives of any member states, specifically if they are heads of state."

Still, when the weeklong conference ended, Pillay sounded politically triumphant.

Despite numerous personal attacks in the media, the high commissioner denied the conference was a "hate fest".

She described the conference as a "strange rough-and-tumble affair full of smoke and mirrors".

But it was very definitely a success," she claimed, pointing out to the outcome document unanimously adopted by 182 countries.

Pillay also implicitly criticised some of the countries that pulled out of the conference, including the United States, "even after agreeing to the draft outcome document."

"I do hope they will come back into the process now," she added. - GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

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

Will U.S. Make a Difference on Human Rights Council?

BY THALIF DEEN

Will the election of the United States to the 47-member Geneva-based Human Rights Council (HRC) make a significant difference to the cause of human rights worldwide, or will Washington be thwarted by the Council's politically-repressive countries accused of being serial abusers?

Both questions will be put to a test when Washington takes a seat on the HRC for a three-year term beginning June 19.

Elizabeth Sepper, UN advocacy fellow at Human Rights Watch, told IPS: "We expect to see the United States bring energy and enthusiasm to the Council's work." She said she was hopeful Washington will be able to build a coalition of rights-respecting countries committed to confronting rights abusers.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, an Asian diplomat told IPS that U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice had rightly pointed out that the HRC may be flawed but it is better to work from within and with other members to improve the existing human rights machinery. "It is not an impossible task. But it will not be easy," he predicted.

On May 12, the 192-member General Assembly elected 18 countries for three-year terms: Belgium, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Norway, the United States, Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Jordan, Mauritius, Mexico, Nigeria, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Uruguay, replacing outgoing members.

FIRST TIME

This was the first time the United States ran for a seat in the HRC since its creation three years ago. The administration of former U.S. President George W. Bush refused to run for a seat on the ground that HRC had lost its "credibility" for focusing primarily on one country - Israel - and ignoring "human rights abusers" such as Burma (Myanmar), Iran, Zimbabwe and North Korea.

But at that time, some UN diplomats suggested that the United States avoided running for fear it would be embarrassingly defeated because of its own dismal human rights record, including the much-publicised abuses in the Guantanamo Bay detention centre and Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

When the United States ran for a seat back in May 2001, it was ousted from the former 53-member UN Human Rights Commission (the predecessor to the Human Rights Council) for the first time since the Commission's creation in 1947.

At May 12 election, Norway garnered the largest number of votes (179) while the United States and China received 167 each, falling behind Jordan (178), Belgium (177), Mexico (175), Kyrgyzstan (174) and Bangladesh (171).

Asked how effective the United States can be in the context of a possibly overwhelming majority of human rights violators holding seats in the Council, Sepper told IPS: "A handful of spoilers at the Council at times have



been highly effective at blocking Council action and persuading others to go along."

Many Council members however are genuinely committed to promoting human rights, she added. "The United States should go to the Council prepared to engage with these countries on pressing situations like Sri Lanka and Somalia," Sepper noted.

The Asian ambassador had a different take on it. The HRC, he said, is not supposed to only include one school of thought on human rights. It has to reflect the diversity of views on human rights. "So, I think it is not fair to criticise anyone as a human rights violator. Such branding doesn't help," the diplomat said.

"All of us have room for improvement in the area of human rights and no one, including countries from the West, can claim to have unblemished human rights records," he added.

Despite appeals by several human rights organisations to vote against "human rights violators", the General Assembly elected several countries that fall into that category, including China, Russia and Saudi Arabia.

The Asian diplomat also said the HRC has been around for three years and has acquired some "bad habits" which will be difficult to discard.

"But, we have no choice but to give it a try. The fact of the matter is that human rights is an important pillar of the UN machinery and if there was no HRC, we would be creating some machinery to deal with this important question of human rights."

The United States, by participating, would have a voice in shaping some of these changes, he said. At the very least, it would be able to make clear its concerns about aspects of the HRC which it deems to be not functioning well.

And these concerns, as well as concerns articulated by other members, could be taken up during the five-year review in 2011.

"Hopefully, we can make some changes then to improve the HRC and the human rights machinery in general," the diplomat said. Sepper said: "Representatives from countries around the world have expressed to me their enthusiasm at the candidacy of the United States and their willingness to work closely with the U.S. in Geneva."

The HRC replaced the Human Rights Commission back in June 2006 and is the only inter-governmental body mandated to promote human rights worldwide.

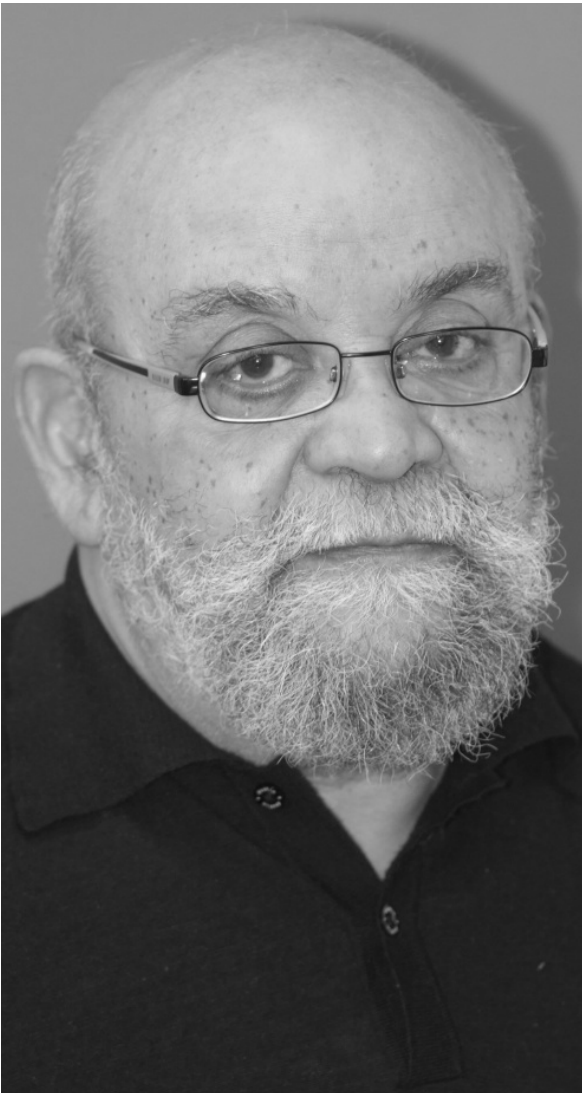
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All articles by Thalif Deen are available at http://labs.daylife.com/journalist/thalif_deen

Where Are The Arabs?

BY BAHER KAMAL

Many people were happy in Istanbul to see that a UN initiative to reverse the clash between Westerners and Muslims would result in a set of specific projects to promote intercultural dialogue. But they were also surprised by two big absences: the U.S. President Barak Obama, who was in Istanbul but did not address the 'Alliance of Civilizations' II Forum (April 6-7); and the Arabs, who are believed to be key players on this stage, but were notably underrepresented.



Obama's absence could somehow be 'explained' by the fact that he fulfilled his electoral promise to pay his first visit to a Muslim-majority country - Turkey in this case. Both in Ankara and Istanbul and during his two-day visit Obama addressed the Arab and Muslim countries with highly encouraging statements, such as that "the United States is not, and never will be, at war with Islam."

Obama also emphasised that "our partnership with the Muslim world is critical in rolling back a fringe ideology that people of all faiths reject"; that "America's relationship with the Muslim world cannot and will not be based on opposition to Al-Qaeda", and that "We seek broad engagement based upon mutual interest and mutual respect."

His cherry on the cake came when he said "the United States has been enriched by Muslim Americans. Many other Americans have Muslims in their family, or have lived in a Muslim-majority country. I know because I am one of them!"

Obama encountered leaders of Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities in Istanbul, and visited Haggia Sophia, once a Greek Orthodox basilica and the Blue Mosque.

Therefore, even though physically absent from the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) Forum, Obama sent a strong message to it

What about the absence of Arab and major Islamic countries? Not one single Arab head of State was attended the forum. Only a handful of ministers, notably the Syrian Foreign Affairs minister did.

Amr Mousa, the secretary general of the League of Arab States comprising 22 countries therefore had to carry on his shoulders the whole weight of the Arabs there. No wonder then that when IDN asked him "where are the Arabs?" he had to reply with a simple "But we are here!"

Nonetheless, the Istanbul Alliance of Civilisations II Forum - the first was held in January 2008 in Madrid, Spain, the co-author of the initiative together with Turkey - managed to achieve progress toward a global agenda for intercultural dialogue.

'Civil society' achievement

In Istanbul, grassroots advocates decided to join forces with high-ranking religious and cultural leaders, as well as the private sector.

This 'civil society' achievement reflected the hopes expressed by prime ministers Recep Tayeep Erdogan of Turkey, and Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain, as well as the former prime minister of Portugal and currently the UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilisations, Jorge Sampaio.

"The Alliance Forum is not only about dialogue. It is about dialogue that delivers. It is about concrete, practical projects that make a real difference to the lives of people", Sampaio said.

"The world will not be able to pull out of the current global crisis through economic measures alone. For those measures to be effective in the long term, they need to be complemented by efforts to strengthen the social fabric and build trust and understanding among communities and nations," he said.

This is exactly what happened in Istanbul: a work of the social fabric and peoples.



The key outcomes of the Forum include of a number of new initiatives, such as:

- Global Youth Movement for the Alliance of Civilizations, composed of youth organizations and individuals who make the objectives of the Alliance part of their daily lives through concrete projects and personal commitments,
- The so-called Dialogue Cafe, an innovative technological project aimed at creating a global collective of ordinary citizens, who will explore common interests across divides, and will be encouraged to collaborate on common projects. The project, led by CISCO, will be the first example of a global public-private partnership, involving the business sector, foundations, and universities,
- "Restore Trust, Rebuild Bridges", a cluster of Euro-Mediterranean projects, led by the Alliance and the Anna Lindh Foundation, to be developed by a number of partners, aimed at restoring trust and rebuilding bridges in that region in the wake of the Gaza crisis.
- An initial showcasing of the Alliance Fellowship Program to facilitate meaningful exchanges of young leaders from a number of countries and establish working relationships between them.
- Plural +, a youth film festival focused on migration themes to be launched in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).
- Doing Business in a Multi-cultural World - Challenges and Opportunities, a joint report of the Alliance of Civilizations and the UN Global Compact showcasing a range of best practices and case studies for companies to use in responding to the diversity of today's business environments.
- The launch of Mapping Media Education Policies around the World, a joint publication by the Alliance and UNESCO on media education policies.
- A joint Rapid Response Media Framework developed with the Anna Lindh Foundation and the European Commission to serve the needs of journalists working across the Mediterranean region.
- The Alliance Research Network, launched with 12 universities from across the world, and
- The launch of the Education about Religions and Beliefs Clearinghouse with 12 partners from around the world.

The Forum also featured the Announcement of New National Plans and regional strategies for intercultural dialogue by governments and multilateral organizations in their respective countries and regions such as Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Montenegro, Portugal, Russian Federation, Qatar and Slovenia.

Regional Strategies for East-European countries, the Euro-Mediterranean region and the Ibero-American countries have also been announced.

The Forum also agreed on the establishment of a new set of partnership agreements, which will enable the AoC to leverage networks and competitive advantages of partners in the implementation of its programs.

Seven partnership agreements were reached with the IOM, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Ibero-American General Secretariat, the Anna Lindh Foundation, l'Organisation de la Francophonie, the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries and the Union Latina.

The upshot was that the civil societies - the peoples - are not at war and they take seriously the goal of reducing tensions and promoting cooperation and understanding. What about the politicians? The politicians are just that: politicians!

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Stale Old Wine in New Bottles

BY RAÚL DE SAGASTIZABAL

It is safe to assume that many common people of yore might have believed, with typical end-of-tragedy romanticism, that post-war multilateral institutions heralded the advent of an era of understanding among the human beings, and were the touchstone of a common effort towards a better, fairer world for everybody.

Now, sheer common sense makes us humans recognize that whatever element of truth had involved such vision, something got wrong. Over half a century later, after countless new wars, genocides, poverty, economic inequality, and a thousand other tragedies, we must pronounce such institutions a failure.

Curiously enough, however, the multilateral organizations' websites keep providing us with all too many business-as-usual advice pieces on what we should be doing right now to face the crisis. All sorts of solutions are being offered, including new financial stability funds, new "G"[roups], study commissions, programs, and, of course, indebtedness facilities.



The IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings held in Washington on 25-26 April, ended up with horrifying forecasts.

"Developing countries face especially serious consequences, as the financial and economic crisis turns into a human and development calamity.

It is estimated that an additional 55 million people will be trapped in extreme poverty in 2009. The number of chronically hungry people is expected to climb to over 1 billion this year."

Once again, like in so many other crises, the devastating impact on the real economy - on people - is, sadly enough, just a figure in the statistics.

And once again, like in previous crises, it is said that organization's internal governance and voting power reforms are in the workings, particularly in terms of enhancing voice and participation of developing members.

World Bank President Robert Zoellick is now proposing multilateralism and market modernization. Let us see what he has to tell us in this area:

"LOOKING BACK - TO SEE AHEAD

National governments are drawn increasingly to provide aid with their flag, not through multilateralism that encourages coherence and building local ownership.

Private financial markets and businesses will continue to be the strongest drivers of global growth and development.

We must learn the lessons from the past, as we build for the future."

Well, let us remember. Let us look back to what the international organizations were up to while the current

catastrophe was being brewed.

Note, first, that Reform is being "talked" about for a decade now. In 2001, under the headline "Reforming the International Financial Architecture . Progress Through 2000", the IMF stated: "The financial crises of the past few years exposed weaknesses in the international financial system. In response, the international community is strengthening the architecture of the international financial system to reduce the risk of crises."

Subsequent demands for changes in the organizations include the remarkable 2003 debate between Nobel Prize Joseph Stiglitz and IMF Kenneth Rogoff, with the latter expounding the following views:

"Slammed by antiglobalist protesters, developing-country politicians, and Nobel Prize-winning economists, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has become Global Scapegoat Number One. But IMF economists are not evil, nor are they invariably wrong. It's time to set the record straight and focus on more pressing economic debates, such as how best to promote global growth and financial stability.

However one apportions blame for the financial crises of the past two decades, misconceptions regarding the merits and drawbacks of capital-market liberalization abound."

The fact of the matter is, however, that blame was never apportioned, reforms never came true; protesters fell silent once the crisis was over, and the organizations repositioned themselves until the following failure - today's crash, the worst crisis since the 1930s.

Let us then review what the providers of official development assistance were up to after having learned the lessons from such crises.

COMPLEX AND HARD TO VALUE

Since the innovative financial instruments (asset/mortgage-backed securities, hedge funds, etc.) are the source of the current collective disaster, we have chosen to discuss the active encouragement by the World Bank of capital markets opening to, and use of, such instruments.

The international organizations themselves recognize the fact that such financial instruments are complex and hard to value - or even to supervise "in part because financial markets have gotten extremely interconnected and sophisticated so that it is hard to know who is actually bearing the ultimate risk," and it will be "challenging to find workable, practical ways to correct entrenched incentives and structures both in the marketplace and in regulatory and supervisory systems that have led to a deep disruption of financial intermediation."

So far no one can even discern whether such instruments will ease or deepen the crisis, or whether some time, under a still undefined regulation and supervision framework, help the economies and peoples, or be instrumental to financial speculation.

However, right in the middle of the crisis, the World Bank - after having for a long decade promoted use of such financial products by virtually non-regulated non-bank financial institutions - has hosted a seminar in Eastern Europe to market such financial intermediation model among the region's nations, some of which are amongst the most hardly hit by the crisis and seekers of IMF's emergency loans.

First of all, let us just remind ourselves that the World Bank is a public international organization and a multilateral development bank financed with public monies from the taxpayers of both rich and poor countries. It has 10,000 staff members, and an administrative budget of around 2,100 million dollars a year.

Its mission, under the institution's Articles of Agreement, involves facilitating the investment of capital for productive purposes, promote private foreign investment and finance for productive purposes and the long-range balanced growth of international trade, by encouraging international investment for the development of the productive resources of members and conduct its operations with due regard to the effect of international investment on business conditions in the territories of members.

Let us now review one activity out of several operations as related to structured financial instruments: May 2008 - SME Asset-backed financing instrument: Opportunities in Europe - Bratislava, Slovakia.

"The World Bank's Europe and Central Asia Region, in collaboration with the KfW Bankengruppe (KfW) and the World Bank Institute (WBI), is organizing a two-day conference to raise awareness of asset-backed financing mechanisms available for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Europe.

Asset-backed financing instruments present an opportunity to enhance financing to SMEs, which play a crucial role in Europe but are often credit-constrained. These mechanisms can increase SME financing by converting illiquid and high-risk SME related assets into tradable securities that have the creditworthiness of institutional investors.

They have gained momentum in various parts of the world, often under the impulse of financial authorities, but remain underdeveloped in some parts of Europe. There are clear benefits in the development of asset-backed financing instruments in Europe. They provide additional sources of funding for SMEs, offer new investment opportunities to institutional investors, and help financial institutions manage their balance sheets, liquidity and risks.

However, the recent market turmoil has highlighted the need to adequately regulate and supervise risks while fostering the development of innovative mechanisms. Conference overview: The conference will provide hands-on experience in the development of asset-backed financing mechanisms for SMEs, including supply chain financing solutions, reverse factoring, and the securitization of SME loans and receivables."

FINANCING WITH PUBLIC MONIES



It is hard to understand how fostering - and financing with public monies - a non-regulated risk transfer, perverse incentives-plagued, return-seeking, highly speculative, virtual money manufacturing system - the term was coined by the Brazilian President at the end of the G-20 meeting - has anything to do with the mandate to promote

long term steady growth through productive, development-oriented investments.

If the recent past has taught us anything, and "any" breed of multilateralism can make any sense to the developing world, a lot of things should change, such as public resource discretionary use; intangible program- and project results, huge technical assistance costs; private-sector lending; public disclosure of private sector projects, just to mention a few, and all of which can easily be demonstrated through the approach used in this paper.

The nature of the changes announced remains ambiguous. After all, international organizations voting power refurbishing is tantamount to political power shuffling - an idea apt to elicit some misgivings in the developed world. The developing world, however, has changed. Its weight in the world economy and trade is greater than before, and prompts it to demand greater political power. Four large developing countries - Brazil, Russia, India, and China - expect responses.

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The author, Raúl de Sagastizabal, is an international consultant and an expert on policies and procedures of international public organizations.

Acht afrikanische Staaten bilden Front gegen Malaria

Windhuk - Im südlichen Afrika arbeiten acht Staaten an einem gemeinsamen Schlachtplan gegen die Killerkrankheit Malaria. Die Front soll in einem Jahr stehen, die Fieberkrankheit in vier der Staaten bis 2015 ausrotten und in den vier übrigen Staaten merklich eindämmen.

'Elimination Eight' (E8) ist das Vorhaben unter dem Vorsitz des namibischen Gesundheitsministers Richard Kamwi überschrieben. Es hat ein Frühwarnsystem, einen Mechanismus zur schnellen Antwort und höhere Investitionen in die Malariaforschung ins Auge gefasst. "Wir brauchen die internationale Zusammenarbeit, denn die Malaria kennt keine Grenzen", erläutert Kamwi.

Die besten Aussichten auf einen Sieg über die Malaria haben Botswana, Namibia, Südafrika und Swasiland. Es sind diese vier Staaten, die im E8-Rahmen bis 2015 die Niederschlagung der Krankheit erreichen wollen. Nach Angaben der Weltgesundheitsorganisation (WHO) stehen sie bereits jetzt kurz vor der Ausrottung, leben aber mit der Gefahr eines erneuten Imports. Deutlich schlechter stehen die E8-Bündnispartner Angola, Mosambik, Sambia, und Simbabwe da.

Die Entwicklungsgemeinschaft Südliches Afrika (SADC) verzeichnet für die Region im Süden des schwarzen Kontinents jährlich 30 Millionen Malariainfektionen und rund 400.000 Todesfälle - etwa die Hälfte der weltweit im Jahr registrierten Malariatoten. Zudem ist die Malaria laut

SADC in der Region für 30 Prozent aller ambulanten und 40 Prozent aller stationären medizinischen Behandlungen verantwortlich und belastet die Gesundheitssysteme so ungemein. Auch eine effektive Kontrolle der Fieberkrankheit würde mit beachtlichen Kosten zu Buche schlagen. Für das ganze Afrika südlich der Sahara rechnet der Südafrikanische Medizinforschungsrat (MRC) mit 200 Millionen US-Dollar im Jahr. Die E8-Initiative hat bislang noch keinen Budgetplan erstellt.

Robert Mukuya aus Rundu, einer namibischen Stadt an der Grenze zu Angola mitten in einem der Malariarisikogebiete, gehört zu den vielen Erwachsenen, die die Krankheit nicht mehr loswerden.

"Als Teenager habe ich mich zweimal infiziert aber jedes Mal wieder gut erholt. Nach der dritten Infektion ist die Malaria dann nicht mehr weggegangen", berichtet er. Wenigstens einmal im Jahr kämen die Fieberschübe.

Mukuya gehört zu den glücklicheren Infizierten. Einer seiner Freunde arbeitet bei einem Malariaforschungsinstitut und versorgt ihn kostenlos mit Medikamenten.

"Sobald ich die ersten Symptome verspüre, nehme ich Tabletten. Sie helfen wirklich und reduzieren die Attacke auf einige wenige Tage. Früher hatte ich wochenlang zu kämpfen." Die meisten Namibier haben anders als Mukuya keinen Zugang zu wirkungsvollen Medikamenten wie Malaron. ■

Reiche Staaten begehren Agrarflächen in armen Ländern

Anchorage - In reichen Staaten und Schwellenländern wächst der Hunger nach dem Ackerland armer Regionen. Allein in Afrika und Lateinamerika befinden sich nach Erkenntnissen des internationalen Forschungsinstituts IFPRI bereits zwischen 15 Millionen bis 20 Millionen Hektar Land in der Hand ausländischer Investoren oder stehen kurz vor der Übernahme. Das entspricht einem Viertel der landwirtschaftlich genutzten Fläche Europas.

Wie aus der neuen IFPRI-Studie 'Land Grabbing by Foreign Investors in Developing Countries' hervorgeht, greifen Länder wie China, Südkorea, Indien und die Golfstaaten immer häufiger Agrarland in Afrika ab. Das Geschäft hätten sie sich bereits bis zu 30 Milliarden US-Dollar kosten lassen. Rund ein Viertel dieser Investitionen gehe in die Biotreibstoffproduktion.

China produziert bereits seit zehn Jahren Nahrungsmittel für die eigene Bevölkerung in Kuba und Mexiko. Darüber hinaus befindet sich die Regierung des bevölkerungsreichsten Landes der Welt mit der Demokratischen Republik Kongo (DRC), Sambia, Simbabwe, Tansania und Uganda in Verhandlungen oder hat Landnutzungsverträge bereits in der Tasche. Bestellt werden die Felder auf dem schwarzen Kontinent durch eigens importierte Arbeiter aus China.

In Madagaskar hat der südkoreanische Konzern 'Daewoo Logistics' 1,3 Millionen Hektar Land gepachtet. Vorgesehen ist der Anbau von Mais und Ölpalmen, die, wie IFPRI betont, eine wesentliche Rolle in den politischen Konflikten des Landes spielen und in diesem Jahr den Rücktritt der Regierung mit verursacht haben.

In Erwartung lukrativer Geschäfte hat sich der britische Investor 'Cru Investment Management' im bitterarmen Malawi großflächig mit fruchtbarem Agrarland eingedeckt.

Im Südsudan sicherte sich der US-amerikanische Investmentbanker Philippe Heilberg mit Hilfe eines berüchtigten Warlords 4.000 Quadratkilometer Pachtland. Und Berichten zufolge plant die Regierung von Kongo-Brazzaville, weißen Farmern aus Südafrika zehn Millionen Hektar Land zur Bewirtschaftung zu überlassen. Saudi-Arabien wiederum hat zahlreiche Farmlanddeals mit Pakistan ausgehandelt, während Katar Agrarland in Indonesien, auf den Philippinen, in Bahrain, Kuwait und Burma besitzt.

"Die Zahl der Abkommen dürfte angesichts der vielen unkontrollierten privaten Geschäfte deutlich oberhalb der IFPRI-Schätzung liegen", meint Devlin Kuyek von der in Barcelona ansässigen internationalen Nichtregierungsorganisation GRAIN. Er wirft den reichen Ländern vor, in neokolonialer Manier Böden, Sonne und Wasser der armen Länder auszubeuten, um die Versorgung der eigenen Bevölkerung zu sichern. Hinter der Auslagerung der Nahrungsmittelproduktion in arme Länder vermutet Kuyek auch den Wunsch vieler Staaten, sich von den großen multinationalen Nahrungsmittelkonzernen unabhängig zu machen. Problem sei jedoch, dass Agrarland seit der Weltfinanzkrise und dem Niedergang der internationalen Erdöl- und Rohstoffpreis als Kapitalanlage gehandelt werde. Dass die zwei größten Schweinefleischproduzenten in China inzwischen dem Investmentunternehmen 'Goldman Sachs' gehören, mache Viehzüchter und Bauern zu Abhängigen.

Noch schlimmer dürfte es den Hunderten Millionen Kleinbauern, Hirten und Ureinwohnern gehen, die keine formellen Landtitel besitzen. Sie laufen Gefahr, von ihrem Land vertrieben zu werden. "Ausländer erkennen Gewohnheitsrechte nicht an", meint dazu die IFPRI-Wissenschaftlerin Ruth Meinzen-Dick. ■

Nicaragua will Rundumalphabetisierung feiern

Managua - Für den 19. Juli hat sich Nicaraguas Regierung etwas Besonderes ausgedacht. An diesem Tag, wenn die Sandinisten den Sturz der Diktatur von Anastasio Somoza vor 30 Jahren feiern, soll ein weiterer Kampf gewonnen sein: die Alphabetisierung von mehr als 772.000 Erwachsenen, unter ihnen über 400.000 Frauen.

Was vielversprechend klingt, haben Frauenverbände mit Zurückhaltung zur Kenntnis genommen. Sie werfen Staatspräsident Daniel Ortega vor, Bildungsbemühungen und -erfolge an die große Glocke zu hängen, um von seiner frauenfeindlichen Politik abzulenken.

Tatsächlich sorgte der ehemalige Rebellenchef Ortega nach der sogenannten Sandinistischen Volksrevolution, die den Somoza-Clan 1979 nach 43 Jahren von den Schalthebeln der Macht entfernte, für einen Rückgang der Analphabetenrate von 52 auf 12,9 Prozent. Nach Angaben des Nationalen Instituts für Entwicklungsinformationen waren 2005 nur noch 500.000 der damals rund 5,3 Millionen Nicaraguaner des Lesens und Schreibens unkundig.

Die jüngsten Pläne des ehemaligen Guerillaführers sollen die Analphabetenrate bis Juli auf fünf Prozent drücken. Das reicht aus, um von der Weltkulturorganisation UNESCO als vollständig alphabetisiert anerkannt zu werden. Wie Nicaraguas Bildungsminister Miguel De Castilla erklärte, setzt die Regierung seit Anfang 2007 auf ein Heer von 54.000 Freiwilligen, um ihr Ziel zu erreichen. 90 Prozent dieser ehrenamtlichen Lehrer sind unter 30 Jahre

alt, 60 Prozent von ihnen Frauen, die bereits fast 434.000 erwachsenen Nicaraguanern das Leben und Schreiben beigebracht haben.

Zu ihnen gehört die 40-jährige Lorena Castillo aus Chontales, einem Dorf 139 Kilometer nordwestlich der Hauptstadt Managua. Dort, wo sich patriarchale Denkmuster bis heute halten, wurde Castillo auf ein Leben als Frau und Mutter vorbereitet - kein Grund für die Familie, sie zur Schule zu schicken. Doch inzwischen hat sie den Unterricht nachgeholt. "Ich habe meinen ersten Brief geschrieben", berichtet sie stolz. "Bald kann ich sogar Zeitung lesen."

Mit der nationalen Bildungskampagne will Nicaragua auch seinen Verpflichtungen bei der Umsetzung der UN-Millenniumsziele (MDGs) zur Armutsbekämpfung nachkommen. Die Entwicklungsziele von 2000 verlangen unter anderem, dass allen Menschen bis spätestens 2015 zu Grundschulbildung verholfen wird.

"Es geht nicht allein darum, Frauen und Männern das Lesen und Schreiben beizubringen", meint dazu Minister De Castilla. "Eine gebildete Person hat größere Möglichkeiten, der Armut zu entkommen."

Eine Aussage, die Elba Rivera aus eigener Erfahrung bestätigen kann. Die Lehrerin war 17 Jahre alt, als sie erstmals einen Stift zur Hand nahm. Inzwischen kann sie einen Universitätsabschluss und einen Hochschulabschluss in Deutschland vorweisen. ■

China rennt in Kambodscha offene Türen ein

Sisophon, Kambodscha - Chem Hout sitzt in einem Café an einer belebten Straße von Sisophon, einer Stadt im Westen Kambodschas, und wartet auf den Schulbus, der ihm den Sohn nach Haus bringt. Der Neunjährige besucht eine bilinguale Schule, an der er Chinesisch lernt. "Wir müssen zwar Schulgebühren zahlen", sagt der Vater, der in der Nähe eine Imbissbude betreibt. "Doch ich mag die Chinesen und möchte, dass mein Sohn ihre Sprache kennt. Ich hoffe, er kommt mal nach China."

Seinen Wunsch erklärt der kambodschanische Vater mit dem wachsenden Einfluss der Volksrepublik. Darüber hinaus merkt er an, dass die besten Kliniken am Ort von Chinesen geführt werden. Gerade in den ländlichen Gebieten ist die chinesische Präsenz unübersehbar. Während japanische und südkoreanische Investoren ihr Geld in der aufstrebenden Hauptstadt Phnom Penh lassen, fließen Investitionen und Hilfgelder aus China ins kambodschanische Hinterland.

"Eine bemerkenswerte Entwicklung, auch wenn sie im Grunde an die Zeiten anschließt, in denen chinesische Händler Kambodschaner mit Agrarerzeugnissen belieferten", meint dazu Lao Mong-hay, kambodschanischstämmiger Chinese und ehemaliger Leiter des Khmer-Instituts für Demokratie in Phnom Penh. Die Khmer hätten China immer als freundlichen Riesen betrachtet. Ihre negativen Gefühle hätten sie in der Regel für Vietnam, den Nachbarn im Osten, aufgespart.

Doch auch China spielte in der kambodschanischen Geschichte eine düstere Rolle. Peking unterstützte in den 60er Jahren Pol Pot und seine Rebellen und verhalf ihnen zur Errichtung eines Terrorregimes, dem von 1975 bis 1978 ein Viertel der kambodschanischen Bevölkerung zum

Opfer fiel. Selbst als die vietnamesischen Truppen die Khmer Rouge 1979 entmachteten und in den Dschungel zurücktrieben, konnten diese auf die Unterstützung Chinas zählen.

Aus Furcht, Vietnam könnte sich mit Hilfe der damaligen Sowjetunion in Indochina breit machen, hatte die Volksrepublik die Khmer-Rouge-Rebellen zu Kämpfern ausgebildet und mit Waffen, Nahrung und anderen Hilfsmitteln versorgt.

Laut Lao Mong-hay, derzeit Berater der Asiatischen Menschenrechtskommission, ließ China der Bewegung mindestens zwei Milliarden US-Dollar zukommen, die Hälfte nach der Vertreibung von Pol Pot und seinen Schergen, als deren Verbrechen längst ruchbar geworden waren.

Bisher hat keine offizielle chinesische Zeitung über die laufenden Gerichtsverfahren gegen fünf ehemalige Khmer-Rouge-Führer berichtet, die nach 30 Jahren im März in Phnom Penh eröffnet wurden. Erwartet wird, dass sich die Menschenrechtsprozesse bis 2012 hinziehen.

Der berüchtigtste Angeklagte ist der ehemalige Cheffolterer Kaing Guek Eav alias 'Duch', der für die Misshandlung und Ermordung von bis zu 14.000 Männern, Frauen und Kinder im Folterlager S-21 in Phnom Pen verantwortlich gemacht wird. "Die Annahme, dass China die Khmer Rouge in ihrer Binnenpolitik unterstützt hat, ist nicht richtig", sagt Zhang Xizhen, Wissenschaftler am Institut für Internationale Studien an der Pekinger Universität. Der damals kranke Ministerpräsident Zhou Enlai habe aus einer Klinik vergeblich versucht, die Roten Khmer davon abzuhalten, dieselben Fehler zu begehen wie China während der Kulturrevolution (1966-1976). ■



Quelle: Wikipedia Commons

The Momentum Builds Up

BY RAMESH JAURA

"We committed our two countries to achieving a nuclear free world." Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and U.S. President Barack Obama announced on April 1 in London. Though they did not mention any deadline, the two leaders' joint statement was significant. Not only because Russia and the United States possess about 95 percent of nuclear weapons, but also because the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) signed by Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan in 1991 is the last of its kind and expires end of this year.

In a major policy speech in Prague on April 5, Obama spelt out the steps necessary to achieve a nuclear free world. These include: strategic U.S. arms reductions together with Russia in the course of this year; strengthening of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the U.S.; engagement with Iran and others as well as offers of cooperation aimed at dissuading them from taking an undesirable course of action.

However, the very day President Obama delivered that speech, North Korea, launched a missile - in contravention of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718, thus posing a serious challenge to East Asian regional peace and stability. Japan expressed great concern. "North Korea's nuclear development, coupled with its missile development, is posing a serious threat not only to East Asia but to the entire international community," Japan's foreign minister Hirofumi Nakasone said.

Having suffered nuclear catastrophes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan knows the horror of nuclear devastation from its own experience. Realizing a world free of nuclear weapons is therefore Japan's long-cherished hope. To that end, Japan has been actively engaging in nuclear disarmament diplomacy.

Consistent with its approach, Japan urged nuclear powers April 27 to reduce their stockpiles of nuclear weapons as a step toward a nuclear free world. In a speech entitled 'Conditions towards Zero - 11 Benchmarks for Global Nuclear Disarmament', Foreign Minister Nakasone put forward an 11-point initiative for promoting global nuclear disarmament.

Japan plans to propose these benchmarks at the 2010 NPT Review Conference and foster a favourable environment for a successful conclusion of this Conference. Meanwhile, the foreign minister hopes that the International Commission on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament, which is co-chaired by former Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi and former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans, will draw up a set of realistic, action-oriented proposals that will guide all countries toward a world free of nuclear weapons: The commission's final meeting is scheduled to be held in Hiroshima this autumn.

"In order to realise a world free of nuclear weapons, it is necessary that while nuclear weapons-holding states engage in nuclear disarmament, the entire international community adopts and complies with universal norms for disarmament and non-proliferation," Nakasone said. He pleaded for restrictions on ballistic missiles capable of delivering a nuclear warhead. - VOICES OF THE SOUTH | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

Conditions Towards Zero

BY JAYA RAMACHANDRAN

Japan has proposed a resolution for the total elimination of nuclear weapons to the United Nations General Assembly every year for the past 15 years and has otherwise been engaged in active nuclear disarmament diplomacy. In a move to take advantage of the growing momentum toward a nuclear free world, Japan's Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone has put forward an 11-point initiative for promoting global nuclear disarmament.

The significance of the "11 benchmarks for global nuclear disarmament" tabled on April 27 needs to be viewed against the backdrop that although Japan developed into a major economic power after World War II, the country has maintained its three non-nuclear principles of not possessing, not producing and not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons. This policy is based on the fact that Japan is the only country to have experienced the nuclear devastation. It has strictly committed itself to concentrating on the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The 11 benchmarks are:

1. Leadership of and Cooperation between the United States and Russia: The U.S. and Russia will lead the world toward a new security order by holding comprehensive bilateral strategic dialogues to conclude a successor treaty to START 1 at an early date, further reduce nuclear warheads, build mutual confidence regarding missile defence and strengthen the framework for controlling nuclear weapons and material.
2. Nuclear Disarmament by China and Other Nuclear Weapons-Holding States: It is vital for the promotion of global nuclear disarmament that these countries take nuclear disarmament measures, including the reduction of nuclear weapons, while enhancing transparency over their arsenals. They must freeze the development of nuclear weapons and missiles and other delivery vehicles that would undermine the momentum toward nuclear disarmament while the United States and Russia are making nuclear disarmament efforts. The nuclear disarmament efforts made by Britain and France over the past several years should be further enhanced.
3. Transparency over Nuclear Arsenals: The nuclear weapons-holding states should work together to nurture a new concept of "culture of information disclosure". They should make regular and sufficient information disclosure concerning their own nuclear arsenals, such as the numbers of nuclear weapons, excess nuclear fissile material and delivery vehicles.
4. Irreversible Nuclear Disarmament: Japan welcomes nuclear disarmament measures so far taken by some nuclear weapons states, such as the dismantlement of nuclear warheads, nuclear testing sites and facilities to produce fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes, and urges nuclear weapons-holding states that have not yet taken such irreversible disarmament measures to implement them.
5. Study on Future Verification: Japan welcomes the initiative of the United Kingdom and Norway to conduct technical research on the verification approach.
6. Ban on Nuclear Tests: Japan hopes that the U.S. will ratify the CTBT treaty before the 2010 NPT Review Conference. On its part, it will plead with China, India, Pakistan and other countries whose ratifications are necessary for the treaty's entry-into-force for their early ratification of the CTBT. It will provide technical training for seismology experts from relevant countries. Furthermore, Japan calls for a moratorium on nuclear tests, pending the entry into force of the CTBT.
7. Ban on Production of Fissile Material for Nuclear Weapons Purposes: Japan favours immediate negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, which bans the production of highly enriched uranium and plutonium that are used for nuclear weapons. It pleads for a moratorium on the production of fissile material for weapon purposes pending the conclusion of this treaty.
8. Restrictions on Ballistic Missiles: Japan supports the globalization of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty between the U.S. and Russia, and the EU's move to propose a treaty to ban short- and intermediate-range-ground-to-ground missiles.
9. International Cooperation for Civil Nuclear Energy: Japan undertook an initiative, called "3S", referring to safeguards, nuclear safety, and nuclear security and is striving to make the importance of "3S" an international common understanding. In cooperation with the IAEA, Japan will host an international conference in Tokyo this autumn on nuclear security related to Asian countries, particularly those introducing nuclear power plants.
10. IAEA Safeguards: Japan believes that it is important to enhance transparency over the activities of individual countries by ensuring that all countries using nuclear energy for peaceful purposes do so in compliance with the highest level of IAEA safeguards, specifically, Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements and the Model Additional Protocol. With this in view, Japan is promoting the universalisation of those measures. It will continue to share knowledge and experience in this regard with other countries.
11. Prevention of nuclear terrorism: To prevent nuclear terrorism, it is essential to enhance the management of not only nuclear power plants and related nuclear fuel cycle facilities but also the control of all nuclear and radioactive material. Japan welcomes President Obama's proposal to make new international efforts to strengthen the control of nuclear material and host a 'Global Summit on Nuclear Security'. Japan will cooperate with the United States in efforts to bring this global summit to a successful conclusion. - VOICES OF THE SOUTH | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

'Civil Society's Role Crucial' For a Nuclear Free World

RAMESH JAURA INTERVIEWS HIROTSUGU TERASAKI



SGI office of peace affairs executive director Hirotsugu Terasaki

"The path toward nuclear abolition is a long and winding one. But what is vital is that we do not give up the hope that it appears to embody," says SGI office of peace affairs executive director Hirotsugu Terasaki.

The lay Buddhist organisation SGI (Soka Gakkai International) is engaged in mobilising "commonsense" perception that nuclear weapons do not provide security. Its president Daisaku Ikeda has launched 'People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition'.

Nuclear weapon states will not relinquish their atomic arsenal without being pressured to do so, Terasaki points out. "However, if civil society raises its voice in a clear and incontrovertible call for the abolition of nuclear weapons, the political leaders would not be able to ignore that," Terasaki said in an E-Mail interview with IDN from Tokyo.

Excerpts from the interview follow.

IDN: Nuclear disarmament as a significant step towards elimination of nuclear weapons drew the focus of an international conference of the World Political Forum on April 16-17 in Rome. Does the peace initiative discussed at the conference fit into the framework SGI President Ikeda has advocated?

Hirotsugu Terasaki: The fact that leaders of various countries, including those from the United States and Russia, the two nuclear powers who faced off during the Cold War, gathered to engage in discussions over abolition of nuclear weapons is in itself historic and signifies a change in the tide of the times. We sense a surge in momentum toward abolition of nuclear weapons. However, this surge is still not significant enough. What is critical right now is to heighten and reinforce this momentum. Vital to that end, together with the political process and technical discussions among experts, is the mobilization of the public opinion of civil society to push that momentum forward.

The political process can become deadlocked in front of a political hurdle. However, a policy emerging from and endorsed by the people has the power to surmount such hurdles. Without popular grassroots

support, it will be impossible to achieve the truly daunting task of nuclear abolition. I think this was my most striking impression from participating in the World Political Forum (conference). In that sense, it is extremely significant that the conference reconfirmed that, while the political process is of course crucial, it is also critical to reinforce the voices of the grassroots in order to realize a world free of nuclear weapons. This is the point that our president, Daisaku Ikeda, has been consistently advocating - the involvement of ordinary citizens of the world. In this spirit, he proposed a People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition and various activities in support of that initiative.

IDN: Only three representatives from civil society were present at the WPF conference in Rome. Amidst this reality, what do you think should be the role played by the civil society toward nuclear abolition?

Hirotsugu Terasaki: It is deeply regrettable that participation by civil society seemed to be limited this time. However, public support for nuclear abolition is gaining momentum, as was reflected in a poll conducted last year in 21 countries, including the nuclear-weapon states, showing an average 76 percent of respondents favoring an international agreement to eliminate nuclear weapons. This "commonsense" perception of the ordinary people is civil society's greatest asset and it is imperative that this perception be reflected in the policymaking of the international community.

Those in political power are prone to be concerned with maintaining that power. In the same fashion, once a country has developed nuclear weapons, it will not find it easy to relinquish them. Although there have been cases in the past where states have abandoned their nuclear development programs, it may be unrealistic to expect the current nuclear-weapon states to let go of their nuclear weapons based purely on moral and ethical reasons.

However, if civil society raises its voice in a clear and incontrovertible call for the abolition of nuclear weapons, the political leaders would not be able to ignore that. What would drive this civil movement is the moral issue pertaining to the use of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are the most inhumane of all weapons, with the destructive force to wipe out countless lives in an instant; they deliver absolutely no benefit to human security. Not only are nuclear weapons clearly unethical from the standpoint of human destruction, they are inherently valueless, offering no solutions to poverty or other human security challenges. When citizens deeply awaken to this truth, I am certain that a groundswell of public opinion for the abolition of nuclear weapons will arise.

Sensing the increasing importance of generating public opinion at the grassroots level, SGI has been engaged in an ongoing effort to educate citizens and speak to their human conscience through exhibitions and seminars. Recently, we have employed the power of visual media, creating a DVD recording the testimonials of hibakusha or atomic bomb victims from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In 2007, we began activities to support the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition, and have recently launched a website for that purpose.

We will continue our efforts to call forth and strengthen this commonsense perception toward nuclear weapons throughout the world's citizens, and help heighten international public opinion toward their abolition, working together with other like-minded NGOs around the world to this end.

IDN: How is the Soka Gakkai in Japan involved in the ICNND (International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament)?

Hirotsugu Terasaki: We believe the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament is an extremely important initiative which is gaining support from civil networks in Australia and Japan. The Soka Gakkai Peace Committee is endorsing this initiative to reinvigorate international efforts, and will reinforce its efforts to ensure wider support.

The Soka Gakkai Peace Committee has been actively participating in exchange forums with Japanese NGOs hosted by the co-chair of ICNND, Yoriko Kawaguchi. At the first forum in December 2008, the Soka Gakkai emphasized the need to use the kind of language ordinary citizens can relate to in order to mobilize public opinion toward nuclear abolition.

IDN: Has the Soka Gakkai International worked with organizations of other religious faiths on the issue of nuclear abolition? If so, what kind of activities?

Hirotsugu Terasaki: Nuclear abolition - and the larger issue of peace building - are common goals shared by all humanity regardless of religious background. The SGI is keen to work with any group or organization in order to build popular momentum toward these goals. Our president, Daisaku Ikeda, has engaged in ongoing dialogue with leaders and scholars of diverse religious faiths and cultures in an effort to promote mutual understanding amongst different peoples concerning the common challenges facing humankind.

IDN: The NPT Review Conference is scheduled to take place in 2010. What is SGI's strategy to ensure the success of that critical gathering? How will it collaborate with other organizations or governmental institutions?

Hirotsugu Terasaki: First of all, we wholeheartedly welcome the recent rounds of discussions between the United States and Russia toward nuclear disarmament. It will be vital to hold further rounds of talks with the leaders of the other nuclear-armed states joining in and the UN Secretary-General also participating. It is also necessary to put into force a more comprehensive treaty, a Nuclear Weapons Convention that would also outlaw development and testing of nuclear arms.

The Model Nuclear Weapons Convention has been officially circulated as a document of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Since UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon is keen to push this initiative forward, I believe we should take advantage of this opportunity.

As I mentioned earlier, civil society must play its part, generating international public opinion to support such an initiative. It is therefore important that NGOs redouble their efforts toward that end and that a powerful civil society network be formed. Since the SGI has a broad-based international network, we would aim to contribute by acting as one of the core links in this network.

IDN: In Prague, U.S. President Barack Obama pledged that his administration will take concrete steps toward a world without nuclear weapons. Do you think this commitment was triggered by the global recession from the recent financial crisis? Or do you think the statement is stemming from his personal commitment and aspiration?

Hirotsugu Terasaki: It's not for me to speculate as to President Obama's underlying motivation - the international climate or his own personal ideals. Although some cynics may find President Obama's speech "unrealistic," the fact is that for the president of a nuclear superpower to express such a resolute commitment is in itself quite epochal. Certainly there is a widely held perception that he is a powerful advocate of racial harmony and global peace. The path toward nuclear abolition is a long and winding one.

- IDN-InDepthNews | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■



SGI vice-president Hiromasa Ikeda at the WPF conference with Global Security Institute's President Jonathan Granoff on his left and former German foreign minister Genscher (right in picture) | Picture: Italy's Foreign Ministry

With Base Camps To the Mountain-Top

BY RAMESH JAURA

A world without nuclear weapons is no longer viewed as a perception belonging to the realm of dreamers or even mad-caps. It is very much a realistic possibility provided those in possession of nuclear weapons and fissionable materials soon decide to negotiate a series of multilateral and unilateral measures.

This was the upshot of an international conference April 16-17 in Rome that was joined by the who's who of the dis-

armament world. The consensus, despite diverse views expressed by more than 70 former and current government officials and experts from over 20 countries from six continents, was that the nuclear weapon states must deeply reduce their stockpiles.

"Full compliance with disarmament and non proliferation treaties, first and foremost the NPT, is an essential condition of real progress towards the achievement of our stated goals," Foreign Minister Franco Frattini of Italy that co-sponsored the conference said summing up the results. The announcement made in London on April 1 by the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and the U.S. President Barack Obama on their willingness to replace START with a new Treaty was of crucial relevance, he said. "It will give new impetus to disarmament and arms control and certainly strengthen our common effort for a successful outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Other nuclear powers should follow the lead of the U.S. and Russia," Frattini said giving a gist of the consensus reached.

Since Russia and the United States possess about 95 percent of the nuclear weapons of the world, the London statement - "We committed our two countries to achieving a nuclear free world" - all seems set to pave the road to a nuclear weapons free world. But the fact is that the road is littered with multiple obstacles, warned former Mikhail Gorbachev, leader of the now defunct Soviet Union between 1985 and 1991 who signed the START together with the U.S. President Ronald Reagan.

Gorbachev, who presides over the World Political Forum (WPF), urged the U.S. and Russia work towards removing the hurdles. "Unless we address the need to demilitarize international relations, reduce military budgets, put an end to the creation of new kinds of weapons and prevent weaponization of outer space, all talk about a nuclear weapon free world will be just inconsequential rhetoric," Gorbachev told the 'Conference on Overcoming Nuclear Dangers'.

WPF serves as a meeting point for cultures, religions, political leaders and civil society - an open forum where analysis of the issue of interdependence provides a framework for the building of a New World Political Architecture. The conference was organised by the WPF, an international NGO founded in Piedmont (Italy) by Gorbachev, in cooperation with the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI).

Co-chaired by philanthropist and CNN founder Ted Turner and former U.S. Senator Sam Nunn, NTI is governed by an expert and influential board of directors with members from the United States, Russia, Japan, India, Pakistan, China, Jordan, Sweden, France and Britain. In view of the complexity of issues involved on way to nuclear abolition, the idea of a "base camps" leading up to the nuclear-free mountaintop was mooted.

Such base camps and supportive measures in other areas of arms control and security cooperation can help usher in a world free of nuclear weapons, said a joint statement by Gorbachev, Schultz, and Italian Foreign Minister Frattini. The statement emerging from the conference says, there is a growing recognition - both inside and outside of governments - of the need to embrace the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and the urgent steps necessary to overcome the nuclear dangers.

"The current shift towards nuclear abolition in the international political arena, where such a vision has so far been seen as unrealistic, provides a vital opportunity, Hirotsugu Terasaki, executive director of peace affairs of the Tokyo-based Buddhist association Soka Gakkai International (SGI) said.

Collaborating with international antinuclear movements such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) initiated by International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), the organisation launched the People's Decade in September 2007. "The aim of the People's Decade is to increase the number of people who reject nuclear weapons. Ordinary citizens and civil society must be the protagonists," Terasaki said.

SGI was one of just three civil society organisations that took part in the Rome conference; the other two being the 'Italian Peace Roundtable' - the network which unites more than 1500 civil society organisations and Local Authorities - and the 'Global Security Institute' (GSI).

"We have a situation where chemical weapons and biological weapons are condemned universally but nuclear weapons, which are even more horrific than biological or chemical, are allegedly acceptable in the hands of nine countries (Britain, France, Russia, China, Canada and the United States as well as India, Pakistan and North Korea). This is incoherent and unsustainable," the U.S.-based GSI's President Jonathan Granoff said in a brief interview. "The only solution is to either allow all countries to use these terrific devices - clearly unacceptable - or to universally ban them," he said.

Welcoming the idea of setting up "base camps" and charting out from their the course of reaching the summit (a nuclear free world), India's former foreign secretary (top official of the external affairs ministry) and disarmament expert Lalit Mansingh said in an interview: "The idea emphasises the complexity and difficulty of achieving the task of zero nukes, that is, a total elimination of nuclear weapons." - IPS | InDepthNews | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

Norway Seeks a New Push

By Ramesh Jaura

Norway's foreign affairs minister Jonas Gahr Støre has called for giving new priority to nuclear disarmament that has been assigned to oblivion since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall not only brought to an end the division of Berlin but also paved the way for unification of Germany and the end of the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. "Good governance and human rights took priority over disarmament because the nuclear threat was perceived as having disappeared," the minister told IPS.

"With the new U.S. Administration there is a momentum to move the disarmament process forward," Støre said. "It is not often you see a U.S. President calling for steps to reach a world free of nuclear weapons."

The world is at a crossroads now, he said. On the one hand nuclear disarmament needs are pressing because the non-proliferation challenges are compelling. On the other hand opportunities and possibilities are perhaps greater than they have been for a decade, Støre said.

Earlier, speaking at the opening of an exhibition on nuclear abolition Apr. 15 in Oslo's city hall, Støre said his country would exert all its influence to move nuclear disarmament to centre stage.

Together with Germany, Norway raised this at the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit earlier this month in Strasbourg (France) and Kehl (Germany), Støre told IPS. The NATO declaration of Apr. 4 emphasises that "arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation" will continue to make an important contribution to peace, security, and stability.

NATO allies reaffirmed that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains important and that they will contribute constructively to achieving a successful outcome of the 2010 NPT review conference.

Opening the exhibition titled 'From a culture of violence to a culture of peace: transforming the human spirit', Norway's former prime minister Kjell Magne Bondevik said: "We must never forget that the NPT does not give the five nuclear weapon states (Britain, France, Russia, the U.S. and China) the right to retain their special status indefinitely."

Bondevik said a five-state summit for nuclear disarmament with the participation of the UN Secretary-General should be convened regularly to draw up a roadmap of specific measures to fulfil their disarmament obligations.

"Non-proliferation and disarmament must only be steps towards the only meaningful goal - a world free of nuclear weapons," he said.

Bondevik was prime minister 1997 to 2000, and from 2001 to 2005, making him the Nordic country's longest serving non-Socialist prime minister since World War II. In January 2006 he founded the Oslo Centre for Peace and Human Rights that he has been heading since.

Bondevik said it was promising that there were signals of new talks between the U.S. and Russia - which between them account for 95 percent of the world's nuclear arsenal - on a new legally binding agreement to replace START 1 (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) that expires in December this year.

Bondevik's remarks were in line with those of Daisu Ikeda, president of the Tokyo-based Buddhist association Soka Gakkai International (SGI) that has members in 192 countries and territories.

SGI, which organised the exhibition together with five leading Norwegian civil society organisations, considers the NPT review conference next year crucial to nuclear disarmament as a first step towards nuclear abolition.

The exhibition that is open until Apr. 22 is supported by No to Nuclear Weapons (NTA), Norwegian Physicians Against Nuclear Weapons (NLA) affiliated with the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, the Norwegian Pugwash Committee, the Norwegian Atlantic Community (NAC) and the United Association of Norway.

SGI vice-president Hiromasa Ikeda said the exhibition was intended to "set out the broad vision of a culture of peace, predicated on the concept of human security, and to encourage people to take action towards its realisation."

"The current shift towards nuclear abolition in the international political arena, where such a vision has so far been seen as unrealistic, provides a vital opportunity," SGI office of peace affairs executive director Hirotsugu Terasaki told IPS. Good faith efforts on the part of the nuclear weapon states are essential if confidence in the NPT is to be restored, former Norwegian Prime Minister Bondevik told IPS. "Only then will it be possible to win the trust of countries outside the NPT regime and obtain commitments on freezing and dismantling nuclear weapons development programmes."

The current financial crisis may facilitate the disarmament process, said Steffen Kongstad, director-general at Norway's foreign affairs ministry.

"The public may start questioning the spending of billions of dollars to maintain a fleet of weapons which is envisioned never to be used," Kongstad told a seminar accompanying the exhibition. "The mere existence of these weapons represents in itself severe security challenges. One cannot distinguish between good or bad nuclear weapons," he said.

Kongstad cautioned against complacency despite some helpful signs from the U.S. and Russia. "We know that the nuclear lobby is still strong in key countries. We must also recognise that there are other actors than the U.S. in the game."

Political pressure from voters, the civil society and academics is essential in order to achieve tangible results, he said. This worked with the Mine Ban Convention in 1997 and the Convention on Cluster Munitions last year.



Norway's foreign minister Jonas Gahr Støre (right) talking to journalist Jaura (left) at SGI exhibition in Oslo.

"Springtime of Hope" For Nuclear Abolition

Thalif Deen interviews Jayantha Dhanapala
Former UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs

When he addressed a massive gathering in the Czech capital of Prague last month, U.S. President Barack Obama made a historic statement pledging that his country will take "concrete steps towards a world without nuclear weapons."



That speech, which included a call for a new strategic arms reduction treaty with Russia and an end to nuclear weapons testing, will resonate throughout a two-week meeting of a preparatory committee for the 2010 review conference on the four-decade-old Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which deals with halting the spread of existing nuclear weapons

technology, dismantling nuclear arsenals, and the right to peacefully use nuclear technology.

Jayantha Dhanapala, one of the world's foremost authorities on nuclear disarmament, currently in New York to attend the meeting which concludes May 15, is cautiously optimistic about the state of the nuclear world.

"We are certainly in a springtime of hope after the dark winter of discontent in the disarmament field," said Dhanapala, a former U.N. under-secretary-general for disarmament affairs and president of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs.

In an interview with U.N. Bureau Chief Thalif Deen, he said the rhetoric of the Prague speech by President Obama will have to be matched by action on the issues identified.

"At the same time we must not underestimate the opposition to these actions, and civil society should support the [U.S.] president while other countries - especially the nuclear weapon states - must also play their own role in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation," Dhanapala said.

In his Prague speech, Obama warned that while the Cold War between the United States and Russia has disappeared, the thousands of nuclear weapons have not.

"No nuclear weapon war was fought between the United States and the (former) Soviet Union, but generations lived with the knowledge that their world could be erased in a single flash of light," he added.

Obama has also pledged to pursue U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and to put an end to the testing of nuclear weapons.

Dhanapala said the Obama administration and its supporters "must work hard to make the case for ratification in the U.S. Senate, which will require 67 senators voting for it."

This interview is part of an IPS project to strengthen public awareness of the need for nuclear abolition, sponsored by Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a Buddhist association with members in 192 countries and territories.

Excerpts from the interview follow.

Q: Do you think there will be any breakthrough on CTBT or fissile ban in a changed environment?

JAYANTHA DHANAPALA (JD): While U.S. ratification will provide a major impetus, let us not forget that eight other countries must either sign or ratify the treaty for it to enter into force.

The main reason why the CTBT was always regarded as a litmus test for nuclear disarmament was because with no test explosions, new generations of nuclear weapons, new designs and new capabilities were effectively halted. Any bargain which undermines this would be a Faustian one, which will be rejected by the disarmament community.

On the fissile material ban, the U.S. policy shift on seeking a verifiable treaty should open the way for the Conference on Disarmament to start negotiating a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) at long last.

Q: Will there be any significant developments in advancing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)?

JD: The NPT is an inherently discriminatory treaty which is not sustainable as long as unequal obligations are cast on non-nuclear weapon states vis-a-vis nuclear weapon states, and the latter are allowed to retain their weapons.

Every five years the nuclear weapon states wake up at the time of the Review Conference and seek to paper over the cracks among the parties.

In 2010, the Review Conference faces fresh challenges because of the unresolved problems over North Korea and Iran, the conclusion of the Indo-U.S. nuclear co-operation deal and the failure of the nuclear weapon states to reduce and eliminate their weapons.

The new atmosphere created by the Obama administration with specific steps taken in the next year may help avert the disaster that took place in (the Review Conference in) 2005 (over a proposed agenda).

Q: What of the ultimate goal of a nuclear weapons-free world?

JD: The incrementalist approach of those who see global zero for nuclear weapons as a mirage-like "ultimate goal" is increasingly being challenged by those who want a Nuclear Weapon Convention negotiated to outlaw nuclear weapons in the same way that biological and chemical weapons were delegitimised.

The former approach will only lead to more proliferation and greater dangers of terrorist groups acquiring nuclear weapons. The Nuclear Posture Review planned by the Obama administration must make a doctrinal change so that we eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in national security leading to global security without these weapons.

- IPS | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

Non-Proliferation Back on Agenda in Latin America

BY DANIELA ESTRADA IN SANTIAGO

The Chilean capital hosted two very different activities early May that, however, had a common objective: promoting global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The first regional meeting of the independent International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) took place in Santiago May 1-3, with the support of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO).

The members of the ICNND met with Chilean President Michelle Bachelet May 4. The president also met on Apr. 28 with Spanish activist Rafael de la Rubia, spokesperson for the World March for Peace and Nonviolence, which will visit 300 cities in 90 countries between October 2009 and January 2010. De la Rubia told the press in Chile that the global march will set out on Oct. 2 from Wellington, New Zealand and will end on Jan. 2, 2010 at the foot of Mount Aconcagua in Argentina. A group of activists will make the complete three-month 160,000-km march, which will include smaller marches by demonstrators along the way. "Marches will be held in every city," de la Rubia explained. "In one place, it will be three kilometres, in another, seven or 15. The rest will be bus, boat or train rides."

Bachelet was the first head of state to explicitly declare her support for the World March for Peace and Nonviolence. The question of nuclear disarmament has gained a new international prominence in recent months.

The presidents of the United States and Russia - which have 95 percent of the existing 26,000 nuclear warheads - released a joint statement on Apr. 1 committing themselves to restart negotiations on a new treaty that would limit and reduce the number of U.S. and Russian nuclear warheads.

Politicians, experts and activists agree that the change in administration in the United States opened up new possibilities for making effective progress towards gradual nuclear disarmament. That is precisely the aim of the World March for Peace and Nonviolence and the ICNND, a high-level initiative launched by the Australian and Japanese governments in September 2008 to revitalise global disarmament efforts.

THE TREATY OF TLATELOLCO

The ICNND is co-chaired by former Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans and former Japanese foreign minister Yoriko Kawaguchi. Australia is a large global supplier of uranium, and Japan is the only country to have suffered a nuclear attack (the atomic bombs dropped by the U.S. on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.)

The ICNND commissioners include former Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000), former Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (1981, 1986-1989 and 1990-1996), former U.S. defence secretary William Perry and former Chinese United Nations ambassador Wang Yingfan.

The commission, which plans to publish a report at the end of the year, decided to hold its first regional meeting in Latin America because of the region's "political and

moral leadership" in the area of nuclear disarmament, Gareth Evans said in the Chilean capital.

The world's first nuclear weapon free zone was established in Latin America and the Caribbean in 1967, under the Treaty of Tlatelolco. All 33 countries in the region are parties to the Treaty, which was reaffirmed in 2003. The other nuclear weapon free zones are Africa, Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. Because of its leadership in that area, Evans urged Latin America to play a more active role in the debates on the next Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to be held in May 2010.

The 2010 NPT review conference should strengthen several aspects of the treaty, especially the compliance verification process, Evans, co-chair of the ICNND, told IPS. An appropriate mechanism is required to bring a country before the U.N. Security Council and to achieve a swift response, in case a country is doing something that it should not be doing, under the treaty, he said. He also called for expanding the institutional capacity of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and providing it with more resources.

In Evans' view, nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and the expansion of nuclear energy are issues that need to be tackled together, because the lines separating them are blurry. It is not possible to get very far on non-proliferation without serious commitments on disarmament, said Evans, who stressed the importance of getting the nuclear states to sign a serious commitment in 2010.

The ICNND's short-term agenda - for the next four years - also includes ratification and implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the completion of negotiations for a draft fissile material cutoff treaty in Geneva. It would also be important to resolve the specific problems of Iran and North Korea, said Evans.

Although he acknowledged that it is a "very ambitious four-year agenda," the former Australian foreign minister said that with the political momentum generated by the new U.S. leadership, "I think much more is possible." The ICNND hopes that nuclear weapons will have been reduced to a minimum in the world by 2025. Evans, who has visited each of the world's nuclear-armed nations, said the strong support for the commission is "quite interesting," because there have been many previous commissions and many previous reports.

The co-chair of the ICNND said he believes that if the commissioners are able to produce a report that is pragmatic and realistic, that takes into consideration the political and security problems of countries and does not only speak in abstract terms about grandiose visions, and that has dates, targets and action plans, the initiative could be "quite influential."

Because these issues are complex and difficult, the pressure has to come from three directions, said Evans: first, from up above, from the United States and Russia, because they have 95 percent of all existing nuclear weapons. Nothing will happen without leadership, he stressed. - IPS | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

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German Peace Movement Gathers Momentum

BY JULIO GODOY

It is indeed an irony of history. The U.S.-led NATO's decision to station nuclear weapons across Western Europe gave birth and clout to the German peace movement. Thirty years later, it is back in the news, this time vigorously campaigning for U.S. President Barack Obama's proposals.

The German Peace Movement acquired a mass character when NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) took a double-track decision in Washington in December 1979, offering its rival military bloc Warsaw Pact a mutual limitation of medium-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, combined with the threat that in case of disagreement NATO would deploy more middle range nuclear weapons in Western Europe.

Following the NATO decision to station 572 nuclear warheads (Pershing II and cruise missiles) thousands of nuclear munitions were deployed on West German territory alone, all targeting cities and civil and military facilities across the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. At the same time, West German territory was itself one major target of the Soviet SS-20 nuclear missiles, some of them stationed in East Germany.

In the years that followed, especially in the early 1980s, hundreds of thousands of West German citizens regularly protested against NATO and against the deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons in the country. But nobody among the German peace activists would have believed that one day they would share views on nuclear disarmament with a U.S. president.

In a speech in the Czech capital Prague April 5, Obama pleaded for a world free of nuclear weapons. He called the thousands of atomic weapons spread across the world "the most dangerous legacy of the Cold War.

To achieve a global ban on nuclear testing, my administration will immediately and aggressively pursue US ratification of the comprehensive Test Ban Treaty," Obama said. "So after more than five decades of talks, it is time for the testing of nuclear weapons to finally be banned," he added.

Marching in Obama's slip stream this Easter, thousands of Germans took again to the streets. On Good Friday, in the country's financial capital Frankfurt alone, some 20,000 people came together to call for nuclear abolition. In dozens of other German cities also demonstrations took place. The Easter marches have been traditionally the yearly climax of the peace movement.

In Frankfurt, psychoanalyst Horst-Eberhard Richter, co-founder of the German bureau of the International physicians for the prevention of nuclear war (IPPNW), told peace marchers: "The peace movement comes back not to demonstrate against Obama, but to support him. Then the reversal of the global nuclear intimidation and towards the construction of a human peace policy is such a big step forward, that it needs support from the entire world."

In an interview with this correspondent, Jens-Peter Steffen, of the IPPNW, said that Obama's call for nuclear disarmament would "help the boost the popularity of our demands."

The IPPNW, founded in 1980 by U.S. and Soviet cardiologists concerned with the horrors of a nuclear war, is a worldwide grouping with some 60 national medical organi-

zations, which campaigns for the abolition of all nuclear weapons. The IPPNW German bureau has some 8,000 members and is the largest peace organisation in the country.

The NATO double-track decision of 1979, conceived in Washington under U.S. president Jimmy Carter, and implemented under President Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, made the West German territory home to thousands of nuclear warheads. Given that Germany was also the target of Russian and French middle-range nuclear weapons, the possibility of a nuclear war being fought on the country's territory raised awareness among ordinary Germans of the obliterating dangers of such arsenals.

When the German government of the time, led by the Social Democratic (SPD) chancellor Helmut Schmidt, ratified the NATO double-track decision, and allowed for the deployment of nuclear war heads on German territory, hundreds of thousands of Germans marched throughout West Germany to denounce the deadly logic of the nuclear arms race.

In 1981, during the so-called Easter March, more than 300,000 people in the then West German capital Bonn peacefully protested against the double-track decision. Soon after, Chancellor Schmidt who had lost support for the decision in his own party was removed in a constructive vote of no-confidence in the German Bundestag. The conservative Christian Democratic Union's (CDU's) Helmut Kohl took over as Chancellor.

The SPD spent 16 years in the opposition, its share of electoral power enduringly mined by the emergence of the Green party, itself rooted in the peace movement. When U.S. President Reagan visited Bonn in 1983, half a million Germans took to the streets of Bonn, to show their discontent.

FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

But since the fall of the Berlin Wall and end of the Cold War, especially during the late 1990s and early 2000s, the German peace movement appeared to have reached terminal exhaustion. After German unification and the dismantling of the Soviet block, the horrors of nuclear war might have appeared to many as a phantom of a distant past. In those years, Easter marches were negligible demonstrations, without any influence whatsoever in national politics.

And yet, Germany continued to be home to dozens of nuclear warheads - it still is. Although the exact dimension of the nuclear arsenal deployed in Germany remains classified, the German bureau of the IPPNW estimates that some 20 nuclear bombs of the type B61 are still stored in Buechel, a military base located some 500 kilometres southwest of Berlin, near the border with Belgium and Luxembourg. Buechel has the capacity to store up to 44 nuclear warheads. Some 1,700 German soldiers learn there the handling of this arsenal, in the framework of the so-called nuclear sharing policy, the NATO's policy of nuclear deterrence, which involves member countries without nuclear weapons of their own in the planning for the use of nuclear weapons by NATO. Other than Germany, Belgium, Italy and the Netherlands host U.S. nuclear weapons.

According to IPPNW, all in all, there some 300 U.S. nuclear bombs spread across European NATO members. Each of these bombs can have a detonation power of up to 170 kilotons - for comparison, the bomb that destroyed the Japanese city of Hiroshima in August 1945, and killed up to 200,000 people, had a detonation power of 12.5 kilotons.

Meanwhile, the present Russian nuclear arsenal might consist of up to 7,000 middle-range nuclear warheads, although some 5,000 of these bombs are considered useless. All these middle range nuclear weapons, both the NATO's and the Russian, are completely unregulated and vulnerable to theft.

Even though this year's Easter peace demonstrations were in Germany by a far cry smaller than those of the 1980s, the marches, thanks to Obama's nuclear abolition plans, represented a rebirth of the movement. So much, that even mainstream German politicians, who until recently saw nuclear sharing as a permanent fact of life, are discovering the charm of nuclear disarmament.

German foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, SPD's is one of them. In interviews with German media, Steinmeier urged the U.S. government to include the nuclear weapons deployed in Germany in its disarmament plans. "These weapons are obsolete," Steinmeier told the German weekly *Der Spiegel*.

Last December, in a report for the U.S. defence ministry, a U.S. expert commission concluded that the B61 nuclear bombs deployed across Europe are "useless, military speaking". The commission also underlined the disproportionate costs associated with maintaining this nuclear arsenal ready for use.



GOVERNMENT DIVIDED

Despite Steinmeier's straightforward words in favour of nuclear disarmament in Germany, the German coalition government appears divided on the issue. Chancellor Angela Merkel, a Christian Democrat, said last March during a debate in the German parliament, that her government continues to adhere to the nuclear sharing policy, because it "would guarantee the German government influence in the NATO in the particularly sensible subject" of nuclear weapons policy.

On yet another recent occasion, during the Munich security conference early February, Merkel said that "we ... adhere to the principle of the nuclear deterrence." German observers believe that in this matter Merkel's party, the CDU, follows the argumentative line defined by the country's military command.

In fact, along with the co-ruling SPD, all opposition parties, left and right, in the German parliament (Bundestag) support the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from German territory: Both the Green party, which has its roots in the peace movement of the 1980s, and the Left Party plead for nuclear disarmament. So does the Liberal Democratic Party (FDP, after its German name).

In fact, immediately after Obama's speech in Prague, FDP leader Guido Westerwelle urged the German government to "start negotiations with the NATO to withdraw the nuclear weapons from our territory. These weapons do not belong here," Westerwelle said in an interview with German public television.

Despite the vocal majority of political leaders, the withdrawal of the NATO nuclear weapons from German territory is not expected to be discussed in the Bundestag this year. In their coalition government pact, the SPD and the CDU specifically agreed that this withdrawal would not be proposed to vote in the Bundestag. But the government's mandate is coming to an end - and activists for disarma-

ment hope that the subject would form the core of the campaign towards the general elections scheduled for next September.

IPPNW's Steffen told this correspondent that Steinmeier's sudden public position in favour of nuclear disarmament is already part of the electoral campaign - Steinmeier is the SPD chancellor candidate. "Numerous opinion polls have shown along the years that a consistent, large majority of German voters of some 75 percent support the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from the country," Steffen said. Obviously, Steinmeier wants to politically benefit from this popularity of nuclear disarmament.

Despite the growing likelihood that the NATO nuclear weapons shall be withdrawn from German territory, the German peace movement is aware of the difficulties facing nuclear disarmament worldwide. "Countries like Pakistan, India, North Korea and Israel, which possess the nuclear bomb, can only be persuaded to renounce it through global, difficult negotiations, under leadership of the United Nations," Steffen said.

"To that end, a new international nuclear disarmament pact is needed, and the UN appears to be the only body capable of leading negotiations towards this end, and carrying out an effective monitoring of disarmament," Steffen said. Such a treaty should include the nuclear arsenals of the five members of the UN Security Council - other than the U.S. and Russia, France, Britain and China are officially nuclear powers.

The Leftist German opposition wants the European Union to support Obama's call for nuclear disarmament by declaring itself a "nuclear weapons free zone," as Wolfgang Gerhcke, in charge of foreign policy in the Bundestag group of the Left party, put it.

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Donors Asked To Honour ODA Commitments

BY GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES MONITORING UNIT



The International Commission on Climate Change and Development has urged donors to honour their ODA commitments. The final report presented to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki moon on May 14 in New York by Gunilla Carlsson, Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation and Chair of the Commission said, local ownership is key and that new and additional money for adaptation is needed together with effective global funding mechanisms to help people adapt to the already visible effects of climate change.

Fighting poverty and fighting climate change are the ultimate issues of our time. They are inseparable and have to be addressed together, Carlsson said. Emphasizing that context matters, the Commission

has studied climate change impacts in vulnerable environments in different parts of the world. Cambodia, Mali and Bolivia have different exposure to climate risks; they have different political and governance characteristics; hence they will require different solutions to adapt to climate change effects.

For the poorest communities the priority is to build people's *adaptive capacity* and resilience - their ability to manage risks and shocks. In richer environments, adaptation will emphasize technical measures that might not have been necessary without climate change. In practice, each country will require a mix of human and technical measures - the challenge will be to get the balance right.

Institutions have a crucial role to play everywhere. They mediate resources and services, through them needs are expressed and accountability exercised. "We cannot continue to work in silos and with the gaps between institutions that so often prevent coordinated and coherent action. Climate change affects all sectors - we must consequently work across all of them," according to Carlsson.

Most importantly, climate change actions, development planning and disaster risk reduction must come together. This requires that they are led from the highest political and organizational level.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE REPORT

The Commission calls for the mobilization of new and additional climate adaptation money now, but not at the expense of ongoing development programs. By additional, the Commission means additional to the commitment of 0,7 percent of GNI for ODA. The concept of additionality applies to the raising of funds but does not prescribe how new funds must be spent.

Priority should be given to the most vulnerable countries - African and small island states in particular. "We must support existing National Adaptation Programs of Action as entry points to long term integrated plans and strategies. Because the creation of new mechanisms might delay essential action, the Commission recommends a two-step approach to mobilizing new and additional funds for adaptation in developing countries," says the Commission.

As a *first step*, donors are urged to immediately mobilize 1-2 billion dollar to assist vulnerable, low-income countries that already suffer from climate change impacts.

In a *second step*, countries must agree on a mechanism with democratic and efficient governance, and the neces-

sary flexibility to cater for the variety of needs. At the national level, countries must be able to receive and allocate funds from multiple sources with a minimum of transaction costs. And local government and organizations must have access to the resources they need.

The Commission finds the current proliferation of financing mechanisms for adaptation problematic; it creates a coherence problem and puts pressure on the management capacity of developing countries. No further vertical funds should be created for adaptation.

While more work is required to better estimate adaptation needs, there are promising options proposed to raise funds. Some could bring between 5 and 15 additional billion dollar a year - which is in the lower range of estimated needs, says the Commission

Since its launch by the Swedish government in late 2007, the 14-person commission has met with governments and citizens struggling with the effects of climate change in Cambodia, Mali, and Bolivia. It will issue policy recommendations on how to strengthen resilience of vulnerable communities and countries, establish appropriate institutional and financial architecture for adaptation, and mobilize new financial resources.

Developing countries are particularly exposed to the impacts of droughts, floods and wind storms as well as longer term changes in ecosystems. International negotiations have focused on reducing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere--with little success. Although all efforts must continue to reach agreement on implementing GHG limits, this work cannot blind governments to the need to begin to adapt to changing climate systems right now, the Commission said.

"Adaptation is more than 'climate proofing,'" said Jonathan Lash, a member of the commission and president of the World Resources Institute. "It will require resources far beyond existing official development assistance, but it is a moral and strategic necessity."

The recent Bangladesh Adaptation Strategy for responding to natural disasters sets an interesting example, the Commission said. "People at risk need democratic and political institutions to listen to their needs and concerns," Carlsson added. "In the age of climate change, the institutions of accountable and responsible government are more important than ever."

The Commission determined that knowledge of local impacts is still largely in the form of hypotheses and scenarios. While greenhouse gas reductions are measurable, it is more difficult to determine the success of adaptation and requires much more cooperation between institutions in different fields. These institutions can no longer be reactionary, as was the case after the food and financial crises of 2008. Also, existing institutions must be made as effective as possible rather than adding to the already proliferating array of institutions. ■

'Don't Despair, Africa!'

BY RAMESH JAURA

The financial crisis that has sent economies reeling the world over is beginning to adversely affect Africa, threatening to plunge many people back into poverty and thwarting efforts to meet the target of halving the share of the population living on less than one dollar a day by 2015.

But there is no reason to despair, says Louis Kasekende, chief economist of the African Development Bank (AfDB). This is because Africa is better placed to weather the crisis than it was ten years ago.

"Asian and Latin American emerging markets have become increasingly important trade and development partners (of Africa), which also reduces the continent's vulnerability to the economic performance of OECD countries," says Javier Santiso, director and chief development economist of the Development Centre of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The Development Centre, comprising 33 OECD countries and 9 non-OECD members, perceives itself as a forum for dialogue between the developing and emerging economies and their development partners.

The new report titled African Economic Outlook (AEO) was released May 11 simultaneously in Berlin and Paris. It has been published jointly by AfDB, the OECD Development Centre and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa with support from the European Commission.

Following half a decade of more than 5 per cent economic growth, the continent can look forward to only 2.8 per cent in 2009, less than half of the 5.7 per cent expected before the crisis. But the authors of the report anticipate growth rebounding to 4.5 per cent in 2010.

The report covering 47 African states notes that many countries have undergone prudent macroeconomic reforms in the past few years. These have strengthened fiscal balances and reduced inflation to single-digit levels. Many have also benefited from substantial debt relief, with the result that debt service/export ratios are low in most countries.

The report expects growth in oil-exporting countries to fall to 2.4 per cent this year compared to 3.3 per cent for the net oil importers. The collapse of commodity prices and plummeting demand from OECD countries will have an adverse effect on Africa's budget balances, with the regional budget deficit predicted to be around 5.5 per cent of GDP (gross domestic product) compared to a surplus of 3.4 projected in the AEO report one year ago.

The report also finds that while official development assistance (ODA) increased in 2008, there are concerns over downward pressure on donor aid budgets due to the ongoing economic crisis.

For most of the 1970s and 1980s, growth in Africa was largely constrained by internal factors. But reform combined with a favourable external environment to enable Africa enjoy half a decade of growth rates above 5 per cent.

The financial crisis has now become an economic crisis; it has eroded benefits accumulated over the years of reform, says the report. Using an updated methodology, the African Economic Outlook reports that only a handful of African countries are on track to meet the target of halving the share of the population living on less than one dollar a day by 2015.

"However, we should not despair," says Kasekende, "The decade of reform has introduced efficiency in macroeconomic management and made African economies more competitive. Countries should therefore desist from implementing policies that restrain further integration of the



AfDB Chief Economist Louis Kasekende

continent into the global trading and financial environment."

The report's regional overview reveals that economic growth in Southern Africa registered at 5.2 per cent in 2008, down from 7 per cent in 2007. It is expected to slow dramatically in 2009 to 0.2 per cent before recovering to 4.6 per cent in 2010.

Average GDP growth in North Africa is expected to improve slightly from 5.3 per cent in 2007 to 5.8 per cent in 2008. It is then expected to slow significantly in 2009, to 3.3 per cent before increasing to 4.1 per cent in 2010. All North African countries will grow more slowly in 2009, due to cutbacks in oil production and tourism receipts, says the report.

Real GDP growth in West African countries is projected to slow to 4.2 per cent in 2009, from 5.4 per cent in 2008 and 2007, before strengthening to 4.6 per cent in 2010. Projections for 2009 indicate a slowdown in Nigeria's growth rate to 4 per cent, as a result of the OPEC quota on oil production and declining investment..

In 2008, average GDP growth in the seven countries of Central Africa registered at 5 per cent, up from 4 per cent in 2007. In 2009, GDP growth is expected to slow sharply to 2.8 per cent and increase to 3.6 per cent in 2010. Reduction in demand for oil and minerals will undermine growth in resource-rich countries, forecasts the report.

The average growth rate for East Africa is projected at 7.3 per cent in 2008, down from a very strong 8.8 per cent in 2007. The region's performance is expected to slow to 5.5 per cent in 2009 and remain about the same in 2010.

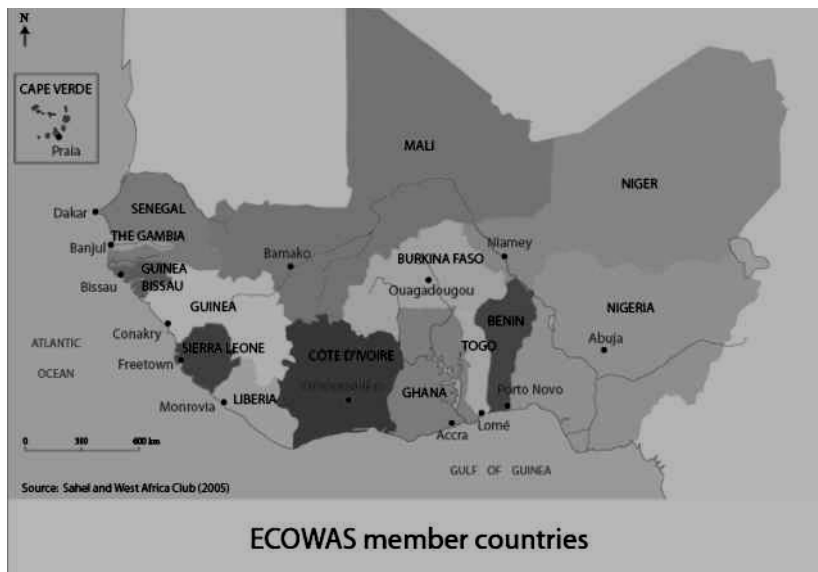
Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda - which were the fastest growing economies in East Africa in 2008 - are projected to maintain moderately robust growth in 2009 and 2010 because demand for their major agricultural and horticultural exports is less sensitive to the effects of the crisis. But Burundi, The Comoros, and Seychelles are would continue to stagnate; the latter two experiencing depressed tourism due to the global recession and, in the case of The Comoros, civil unrest.

Growth in Djibouti, which registered at 5.9 per cent in 2008, is projected to accelerate in 2009 and 2010 to about 6.6 per cent in this period. Kenya is expected to exhibit strong growth in 2009 (5 per cent) due to the recovery of domestic demand following the sharp slowdown in 2008.

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15 Staaten Afrikas bekämpfen gemeinsam Arbeitslosigkeit

VON FULGENCE ZAMBLÉ | DEUTSCHE BEARBEITUNG: GRIT MOSKAU-PORSCH



Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire - Weil sie aus eigener Kraft der hohen Arbeitslosigkeit in ihren Ländern nicht Herr werden, wollen die 15 Mitgliedsstaaten der Westafrikanischen Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft (ECOWAS) mit vereinten Anstrengungen Wirtschaft und Investitionen in der Region ankurbeln.

Auf einer Konferenz in der in der Nähe von Abidjan gelegenen Hafenstadt Grand-Bassam in Côte d'Ivoire erarbeiteten die Arbeits- und Finanzminister einen von allen gebilligten Fünfjahresplan zur Schaffung neuer Arbeitsplätze. Über die Gesamtkosten des Plans ist nichts bekannt.

Wegen der geringen Verdienstmöglichkeiten in der Region haben 60 Prozent der Bevölkerung der ECOWAS-Länder, zu denen auch Afrikas wichtigster Erdölförderer Nigeria gehört, pro Tag umgerechnet weniger als einen US-Dollar zum Leben. Die übrigen Mitgliedsländer sind

Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, die Kapverden, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone und Togo.

Die in der ECOWAS für Arbeit und Gendern gleichheit zuständige Kommissarin Adrienne Diop stellte fest: "Die Hindernisse, die mehr Beschäftigung im Weg stehen, sind in allen Mitgliedsstaaten gleich: ein niedriges Bildungsniveau, geringe Kompetenz, hohe Arbeitslosigkeit und Unterbeschäftigung, ein umfassender informeller Sektor und die zunehmende Arbeitsemigration. Nur mit diesem düsteren Bild vor Augen können wir daran gehen, das Übel der Arbeitslosigkeit erfolgreich anzupacken."

An dem Konzept mit seinen zwölf Programmpunkten hatten Vertreter der Gewerkschaften, der Unternehmerverbände und der Zivilgesellschaft mitgearbeitet. Mehr Geld soll in die kompetente Ausbildung der Arbeitsuchenden gesteckt werden, damit vor allem junge Leute besser für den Arbeitsmarkt gerüstet sind.

In einem Gespräch mit IPS erklärte der senegalesische Arbeitsmarktexperte Babacar Cissé: "Was wir heute benötigen sind stabile, das Wirtschaftswachstum tragende Unternehmen sowie ein tatkräftiger Unternehmergeist. Viele unserer jungen Leute stecken voller Initiativen, doch niemand unterstützt ihre Vorhaben finanziell oder materiell. Das muss sich unverzüglich ändern."

Er berichtete, in Senegal habe die letzte statistische Erhebung zur Arbeitssituation junger Menschen 2001 stattgefunden. Damals hatte die Jugendarbeitslosigkeit bei 51 Prozent gelegen. 87 Prozent der jungen Leute hatten entweder keine berufliche Qualifikation oder fanden wegen ihrer schlechten Schulbildung keinen Job. "In den vergangenen Jahren hat sich die Situation weiter verschlechtert. Doch auch wenn die wirtschaftlichen Schwierigkeiten in der derzeitigen Finanzkrise größer werden, lässt sich in Sachen Arbeitslosigkeit etwas erreichen, sofern die Regierungen den jetzt beschlossenen Plan rasch in die Tat umsetzen", sagte Cissé.

Seine nigerianische Kollegin Jessie Okpuno, in deren Land fast 35 Prozent der Jugendlichen arbeitslos ist, schlug vor, in sämtlichen ECOWAS-Ländern Ausbildungszentren einzurichten und den Schulunterricht auf technische und wirtschaftliche Schwerpunkte zu konzentrieren. "Auf diese Weise lässt sich die Integration auf dem regionalen Arbeitsmarkt verbessern", betonte die Expertin.

Sie berichtete, Nigerias Bundesregierung habe im März einen Dringlichkeitsplan verabschiedet, der in diesem Jahr elf Millionen Menschen zu einem Arbeitsplatz verhelfen soll. "So kann etwas gegen den Kinderhandel und die starke Abwanderung nach Europa getan werden", meinte Okpuno.

Vor allem müsse jedermann einsehen, dass die Regierungen ihre Pläne nicht aus eigener Kraft durchsetzen können, betonte der Arbeitsmarktexperte Bernard Ahissou aus Benin. Einheimische Unternehmer, aber auch internationale Investoren müssten die Regierungsbemühungen unterstützen, betonte er.

"Nicht zu jedem Preis", erklärte dazu Moustapha Bakayoko, der Chef des ivoirischen Unternehmerverbandes mit Sitz in Abidjan. Er sagte IPS: "Die zahlreichen Steuerlasten sowie die derzeitige Krise sind nicht dazu angetan, die Geschäfte zu beflügeln. Wenn die Regierungen das einsehen, müssen sie uns bei der Beschaffung von Arbeitsplätzen unterstützen, damit Millionen Familien den Weg aus der Armut finden."

"Ohne die Einbeziehung der Arbeiter und ihrer Anliegen geht gar nichts", erklärte Mathurin Agnissan, Vertreter einer freien Gewerkschaft in Côte d'Ivoire. "Die meisten Regierungen treffen ihre Entscheidungen, ohne vorher diejenigen zu konsultieren, die davon betroffen sind. Es ist schon fast normal, dass der erwünschte Effekt ausbleibt", kritisierte der Gewerkschafter. "Das Gelingen unseres Plans hängt vom politischen Willen jedes ECOWAS-Mitglieds ab", betonte der ivoirische Arbeitsminister Hubert Oulaye. "Wir Minister kennen die erforderlichen Bedingungen", betonte er. Um den Fünfjahresplan zu finanzieren, müssen die Regierungen vor allem ihre Investitionen in den Arbeitsmarkt erhöhen. Ebenso unverzichtbar ist die steuerliche Entlastung von Unternehmern, die für neue Jobs sorgen. - IPS EUROPA | KOMMUNIKATION GLOBAL ■

Hochkonjunktur für erneuerbare Energien in Brasilien

VON FABIANA FRAYSSINET | DEUTSCHE BEARBEITUNG: SEBASTIAN VOSS

Rio de Janeiro - In Sachen erneuerbare Energien ist Brasilien ein Musterland auf dem amerikanischen Kontinent. Haben sich die Staaten der Region gerade auf ihrem fünften Gipfel in Trinidad und Tobago das Ziel gesetzt, bis 2050 die Hälfte ihres Energiebedarfs aus erneuerbaren Quellen zu decken, so gewinnt Brasilien heute schon 75 Prozent aus Wasserkraft.

Die Regierung von Präsident Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will das gute Ergebnis noch toppen, gleichzeitig aber auch mehr Öl und Erdgas fördern. Außerdem soll die Äthanol-Produktion ausgeweitet werden - für den ohnehin großen Eigenbedarf des umstrittenen Fahrzeugtreibstoffs, aber auch für den Weltmarkt.

Für Umweltminister Carlos Minc will mehr Wasserkraftwerke bauen, anders als in der Vergangenheit aber dafür sorgen, dass das Amazonasgebiet unangetastet bleibt. Die Standorte sollen so ausgewählt werden, dass weniger Land in den Stauseen versinkt. Stattdessen sollen Unterwasserturbinen zum Einsatz kommen, die effizienter arbeiten. In zwei Jahren schon könnten die ersten derartigen Kraftwerke ans Netz gehen und jeweils 50 Millionen Megawatt liefern.

Außerdem ist die Regierung bereit, verstärkte in andere erneuerbare Energien zu investieren: in Biodiesel, der aus Palmen, Sonnenblumen oder Erdnüssen gewonnen wird, und vor allem in Äthanol aus Zuckerrohr, dem wichtigsten Treibstoff Brasiliens.



Präsident Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva
Wikimedia Commons

BIOTREIBSTOFFE KONTRA UMWELT?

Dem Vorwurf, für die Produktion der Energiepflanzen würden Wälder etwa am Amazonas abgeholzt, tritt die Regierung mit dem Argument entgegen, die Zuckerrohranbau würden vorrangig Brachflächen und minderwertiges Land genutzt.

90 Prozent aller brasilianische Neuwagen können sowohl Äthanol als auch herkömmlichen Spirit verbrennen. Dem Verband der Zuckerrohrindustrie UNICA zufolge, deckt Brasilien schon heute 16 Prozent seines Energiebedarfs mit Äthanol, der Ausstoß des Treibhausgases CO₂ sei seit 2003 um 50 Millionen Tonnen zurückgegangen.

Kritiker weisen jedoch darauf hin, dass Zuckerrohr für Äthanol und Lebensmittel um dieselben Anbauflächen konkurrieren. Der forcierte Anbau des Energielieferanten könne zu Lebensmittelengpässen und Preissteigerungen führen. Zweifel gibt es auch an dem Nutzen der so genannten Biotreibstoffe für die Umwelt. Der Internationale Rat für Wissenschaft ICSU warnt vor einem Anstieg der Erderwärmung. So steige durch den Anbau von Zuckerrohr in Brasilien oder Mais in den USA der Ausstoß von Distickstoffoxid. Die vermehrte Abgabe dieses Treibhausgases an die Atmosphäre wiege den positiven Effekt des Verbrennens von Biotreibstoffen mehr als auf.

Zusammen produzieren Brasilien und die USA 70 Prozent des weltweit hergestellten Äthanol. Die Regierung da Silva strebt eine Jahresproduktion von über 23 Milliarden Liter an. Fünf Milliarden sollen in den Export gehen. Bei Biodiesel sind 3,3 Milliarden Liter Jahresproduktion bis 2010 angepeilt.

Selbst der staatliche Ölkonzern PETROBRAS ist ins Biotreibstoffgeschäft eingestiegen. Die Produktion soll ausgeweitet und die Forschung intensiviert werden. Der Konzern hat drei neue Biodiesel-Raffinerien und will bis 2013 640 Millionen Liter im Jahr liefern können. Unter Einschluss des Äthanol-Geschäfts sollen dafür im gleichen Zeitraum 2,8 Milliarden Dollar investiert werden.



BRASILIEN WILL GLOBAL PLAYER WERDEN

PETROBRAS-Präsident José Sergio Gabrielli will die Exporte steigern, um Brasilien zu einem der wichtigsten Lieferanten auf dem Weltäthanolmarkt zu machen. "Wir haben in diesem Land 40 Jahre Erfahrung mit Äthanol und haben gesehen, dass dieser Biotreibstoff keine Gefahr für die Lebensmittelversorgung darstellt - im Gegenteil, die Lebensmittelproduktion konnte gesteigert werden", so seine Position.

Die Anbauflächen auf geeignetem Land seien ausgebaut, die Arbeitsbedingungen verbessert worden. Nach Regierungsangaben wird nur ein Prozent des Agrarlandes für den Anbau von Zuckerrohr genutzt.

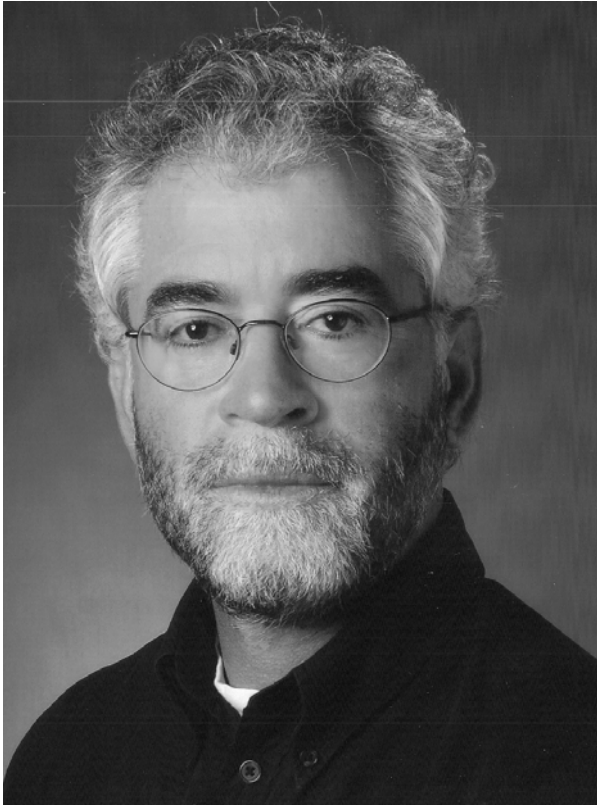
Die Euphorie bei den Biotreibstoffen bedeutet aber nicht, dass Regierung oder PETROBRAS auf die Förderung von Öl oder Erdgas verzichten wollen. Die Produktion der fossilen Brennstoffe soll sogar ausgebaut werden. Neu entdeckte Vorkommen tausende Meter unter dem Meeresboden haben die Hoffnung geweckt, dass bis 2020 die Jahresproduktion von bisher 1,9 Millionen Barrel auf 3,1 Millionen gesteigert werden kann.

Zur Verarbeitung sollen bis 2020 fünf neue Raffinerien gebaut werden. "PETROBRAS soll nicht nur einer der wichtigsten Rohölexporteur, sondern auch von Ölprodukten werden", so Konzernpräsident Gabrielli. Der für Energie zuständige Minister des brasilianischen Staates Rio Grande do Norte, Jean Paul Prates, sieht darin einen völlig neuen Ansatz, ganz anders als der von Ölförderern wie den arabischen Staaten oder Venezuela. "Zuerst geht es darum, unseren Energiebedarf zu decken und nur den Überschuss zu exportieren. Das reicht aus, um den Wohlstand des Landes zu sichern."

- IPS EUROPA | KOMMUNIKATION GLOBAL ■

The Wordy War on Speculation

BY JULIO GODOY



During the last couple of months, the governments of the industrialized countries of the world appear to be fighting a serious war against tax havens, supposedly as part of the global efforts to eliminate the roots of the present, devastating financial crisis. The rationale behind this fight is simple: Because the tax havens do not allow any controls, and serve as harbours to hedge funds and other speculative capital tools, they have contributed to spread the so-called toxic financial transactions, and therefore to the present financial instability.

But there are several reasons to doubt the seriousness of the industrialized world. For one thing, the fight against the tax havens has been so far only a long and yet futile war of words. Since 1989 the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and its associated Financial Action Taskforce on Money Laundering (FATF) have developed numerous tools and strategies to compel tax havens to obey some basic rules. However, the governments of the industrialized countries, all officially represented at the OECD and at the FATF, have been at best witness, at worst obstacles to these efforts.

This is particularly the case of the U.S. and Britain, which during the early 2000 firmly opposed the creation of a serious set of rules for tax havens. Even immediately after the terror attacks of Sept 2001, when the OECD and the FATF dubbed their campaign against tax havens "a fight against terrorism financing", the governments of George W. Bush and Anthony Blair actively defended tax havens as contributors to economic growth and prosperity, despite their obvious involvement in laundering of criminal money. At the time, the largest European countries, which today boast about their ef-

forts to seal off tax havens, watched discretely from the sides.

On the other hand, the OECD and FATF never disposed of a serious arsenal to fight against tax havens. The best both organisations could do to intimidate tax havens was to black list them as "non cooperative territories and jurisdictions." You do not need much fantasy to imagine the shivers the tax havens' leaders - let's say Jean Claude Juncker of Luxembourg, or Prince Albert of Monaco, to name but two - suffered of at the mere idea of seeing their countries on that ominous black list. Ironies apart, that the amount of money stacked away in tax havens across the world grew by ten during the last eight years is a measure of the success - rather, the lack thereof - of this battle against tax havens.

Another indicator of the OECD's futility is the black list itself: In the year 2000 the organisation and the FATF blacklisted 15 countries, jurisdictions, and territories for not co-operating in the fight against tax evasion. By October 2008, that is, at the time when the financial crisis was already ravaging the whole world, the famous black list was blank.

Even though it is obvious that the OECD and the FATF could not go this way any further without becoming definitively laughable, they have actually took the next steps to that end: This March, the OECD concocted two lists, one black and one grey. The black one included dozens of countries and territories that do not apply any rules to prove the legitimate (or, for that matter, illegitimate) origins of the capitals hidden away in their banks. The grey one listed countries conspicuously called "financial centres" - strangely enough, the OECD member countries that operate as tax havens were in this list.

As of April 2, the black list was again empty. Instead, the OECD formulated new four categories to qualify tax havens. The fourth category, "Jurisdictions that have not committed to the internationally agreed tax standard", include only four countries: Costa Rica, Malaysia, Uruguay and the Philippines. These four are, so to speak, the only black sheep in a world apparently inhabited by honest financial operators. Conspicuous tax havens such as Jersey, the Isle of Man, Luxembourg, Monaco, Belgium, Liechtenstein, Austria, Switzerland - all of them member countries (or territories under their jurisdictions) either of the European Union or of the OECD, or both - are listed as "jurisdictions ... committed to the internationally agreed tax standard, but have not yet substantially implemented" or simply as "financial centres". Some others, such as the U.S. state of Delaware and the city of London, are not even mentioned by the OECD. And that its tortuous wording tries to conceal the fact that the international agreed tax standard, despite all its hopeless inadequacies, is still not being applied there should go without saying.

So much for the war of words against tax havens. But now, to come to the major reason to doubt the seriousness of the fight against financial instability: While it is true that tax havens did play a role in the speculative bubble that gave birth to the financial crisis, they actually represent but the second step in the process. Speculation is possible because of the deregulation and lack of costs of capital flows in industrialized countries - that you can transfer money from one place to another across the planet by the touch of a computer key and practically without controls and costs. That the governments of the industrialized world continue to avoid this subject can not be consequence of their ignorance, but of their complacency and complicity with the speculators. - GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■



GLOBAL EVENTS

GLOBAL FINANCIAL COLLAPSE:
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TOWARD A NUCLEAR FREE WORLD

The third preparatory committee (PrepCom) meeting for the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) takes place at the UN in New York May 4-15 against a background of increasing calls for progress on nuclear disarmament and measures to strengthen the Treaty. The NPT was concluded in 1968 and entered into force on March 5, 1970. It is the founding document of multilateral non proliferation endeavours. Ahead of the PrepCom,

Japan that has suffered nuclear catastrophes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, has urged nuclear powers to reduce their stockpiles of nuclear weapons as a step toward a nuclear free world since Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and U.S. President Barack Obama announced on April 1 in London that they had "committed our two countries to achieving a nuclear free world".

Though they did not mention any deadline, the two leaders' joint statement was significant. Not only because Russia and the United States possess about 95 percent of nuclear weapons, but also because the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) signed by Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan in 1991 is the last of its kind and expires end of this year.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION



WANTED A SECOND 'DELIVERING AS ONE' INITIATIVE

The international discourse on foreign aid has in recent years been dominated by the theme of harmonization and coordination of aid efforts sometimes also referred to as 'Delivering as One'.

This discourse has shown that nationalism is still deeply entrenched in industrial countries and affects even matters like foreign aid procedures; and this, although the current multiplicity of donor approaches has since long been recognized as detrimental to aid efficiency and effectiveness. It allows global poverty with all its ill-effects to persist, including ill-effects of often worldwide reach. Neither donors nor recipient countries really benefit from the present diversity of delivery, accounting and reporting practices. And yet, even major international conferences such as the 2008 Accra meeting have come and gone - without much noticeable progress towards harmonization. [Read more](#)

GLOBAL COOPERATION COUNCIL (Nord-Süd-Forum) e.V.

advocates dialogue for international understanding and interaction for change in the interest of a genuine worldwide cooperation. It was founded under the name "Nord-Süd-Forum" on February 25, 1983. The newly emerging world calls for a departure from the entrenched patterns of thinking. Instead of clinging on to enforcing military security, for example, there is need to help usher in global human security.

Precisely this is what the Global Cooperation Council endeavours. While serving as a platform for dialogue, it facilitates within the framework of HumAN Development Services - HANDS - an exchange of practical experiences. Thereby we are supported by several institutions and organisations as well as committed individuals, on whom we could always rely since the inception of the North-South-Forum, the precursor of the Council.

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