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WHAT'S NEW

May 6th, 2006

Fuelling Hunger in the Middle East: Biofuel Subsidies Drive Food-Price Inflation



The Regional Media Forum "Fuelling Hunger in the Middle East: Biofuel Subsidies Drive Food-Price Inflation", was held in Alexandria, Egypt, on 17-19 April, jointly organized by the Global Subsidies Initiative, the Library of Alexandria, and IPS - Inter Press Service. The purpose of the Middle East Media Forum was to bring journalists and experts together to analyze and discuss the links between subsidies and sustainable development.

With the focus on the rising cost of food, which has led to mass protests in several countries in the Middle East and North Africa. [Read more >](#)

More about: Global, Globalization and the South, Sustainable development

IPS Africa Appoints New Regional Editor



Inter Press Service Africa has announced the appointment of a new regional editor to manage the continent's editorial services within the global development news agency.

Tema Gyuse, who has extensive experience as a radio producer and trainer, replaces outgoing regional editor Jacklynne Hobbs. Gyuse will oversee freelancers in over 50 African countries as well as bureaus in Nairobi, Kenya and Cotonou, Benin. [Read more >](#)

Imaging Our Mekong media fellowships



It was review and feedback time for the 38 Mekong journalist-fellows, who met in late March at a workshop in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to present their stories, documentaries and photo essays on various cross-border issues about the Mekong region, which has been undergoing rapid economic integration over the last 15 years.

The Mar. 31-Apr 3, 2008 workshop was organised by IPS Asia-Pacific and Probe Media Foundation Inc, partners in the annual Imaging Our Mekong media fellowships that have been held since 2002. [Read more >](#)

Subsidizing the Biofuels Boom: What Consequences for Latin America?



The Regional Media Forum "Subsidizing the biofuels boom: What consequences for Latin America?", held on 27 - 28 March, 2006, at the Incae Campus, Alajuela, Costa Rica, was jointly organised by the Global Subsidies Initiative (GSI), the INCAE Business School, and IPS Inter Press Service Latin America news agency, as part of an ongoing series of GSI regional media forums designed to lead journalists around the world towards a better understanding of the decisive role that subsidies play in key emerging challenges that face policy makers striving for a more sustainable world. [Read more >](#)

More about: Latin America, Projects, Sustainable development

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**"The World Needs a Global Culture of Human Rights"
*Interview with Daisaku Ikeda, President of SGI***

As the United Nations commemorates the 60th anniversary of its landmark Universal Declaration of Human Rights this year, the Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International (SGI) has called for an international conference on human rights education. SGI says the proposed conference should be centered on civil society groups. *SGI President Daisaku Ikeda* points out that traditionally human rights issues have been addressed primarily by governments.



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Letter from Brussels: Fair is Not Easy

From its humble beginnings in the 1950s, the fair trade movement has gone from selling coffee at left-wing political meetings to having whole sections devoted in European supermarkets. After witnessing annual growth rates of up to 40 percent, the sale of fair trade products hit 2 billion euros in 2007. The expansion has not been trouble-free, says *David Cronin*, IPS Correspondent in Brussels.



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Latin America: Back to the Future?

The victory of the former liberation theologian Fernando Lugo in the presidential campaign in Paraguay in April is yet another signal that South America is changing its policies, and has tilted to the Left. Lugo is the last in an already impressive list of political leaders who claim to be either Social Democrats or Socialists: Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Fernando Correa in Ecuador, says *Julio Godoy*, IPS Correspondent.



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Dear Reader,



This issue covers a wide range of themes, with the main story analysing changes in the political landscape in Latin America, particularly Central America. It is in fact the first time that this magazine is focussing on a region that is of critical importance to international relations. The changes the region is undergoing would have appeared impossible a couple of years ago, writes Julio Godoy.

In the column *Die Welt besser verstehen* we report, among others, on how South-South cooperation is developing. A case in point is Brazil's decision to provide agricultural technology to Africa. Other items in the column refer to China's growing interest in bio fuel and the danger it holds to the native peoples around the world.

The opinion column carries an interview with Washington Ochola on the "disconnect" between implementation and development planning. Ochola is one of the authors of the sub-Saharan review produced under the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD).

In another interview Daisaku Ikeda, President of Soka Gakkai International, stresses the need for a global culture of human rights. *"The accumulated experience and wisdom gained by many different countries and peoples working together through the UN is immensely valuable,"* he says.

Window on Europe carries reports from Oslo, Moscow, Sofia and Brussels. Tarjei Kidd Olsen points to the Norwegian hand in a Chinese cargo ship attempting to transport arms to Zimbabwe. Zoltán Dujisin explains how the U.S. is seeking the peaceful way for a military base in the Czech Republic. Kester Kenn Klomegah reports on where migration means trafficking. Claudia Ciobanu probes into where all the workers have gone. In a letter from Brussels, David Cronin writes about the progress made by the fair trade movement and the EU's "EPA charm offensive" to get all ACP countries toe the line.

In another column, eminent development expert Inge Kaul pleads for "a new logic of international cooperation", among others, in the fields of energy and climate security. Globalisation has brought about such a fundamental change in the existing political equations that individual measures do not suffice. She pleads for a 'G-X' instead of a 'G8' that would allow for greater flexibility to face new challenges emerging from a world in a state of flux.

The Media column carries an interview by Thalif Deen with Ernest Corea, a former chair of the Commonwealth Select Committee on Communications and Development, on whether a Global News Agency of the South is viable. *"The great success story of the South, of course, is your own Inter Press Service (IPS) which has stayed the course,"* says Corea.

Enjoy reading! We will be happy to have your feedback.

Ramesh Jaura
Chief Editor

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Brasilianische Agrartechnologie für Afrika

Rio de Janeiro - Brasilien hat sich im Rahmen seiner Süd-Süd-Zusammenarbeit zum Ziel gesetzt, eigene Kenntnisse im Bereich der Landwirtschaft an die afrikanischen Länder weiterzugeben. Anlaufstelle für den Technologietransfer ist das staatliche Forschungsinstitut EMBRAPA in Ghanas Hauptstadt Accra, das dem schwarzen Kontinent die Grüne Revolution bringen soll. Die Bedeutung der afrikanisch-brasilianischen Zusammenarbeit wurde durch die Einweihung neuer Räumlichkeiten von EMBRAPA-Afrika durch Brasiliens Präsident Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva am 20. April unterstrichen. Der Staatschef hält sich derzeit als Teilnehmer der Zwölften UN-Konferenz für Handel und Entwicklung (UNCTAD) in Accra auf, die am 25. April zu Ende ging.

EMBRAPA hatte einen entscheidenden Anteil an der landwirtschaftlichen Erfolgsgeschichte Brasiliens, das seine Agrarproduktion innerhalb von zehn Jahren um 20 Prozent steigern konnte. Das Institut gilt als wichtiges Werkzeug der Entwicklung gerade für die ärmsten Regionen des größten Landes Südamerikas. Brasilien habe sich bereits etliche Empfehlungen des Weltagrarberichts (IAASTD) zu Herzen genommen, versichert Paulo Galerani, der für Afrika zuständige technische EMPBRAPA-Koordinator. Die Mitte April vorgestellte IAASTD-Expertenstudie fordert die internationale Gemeinschaft zu fundamentalen Veränderungen in der Landwirtschaft auf. Um den Anstieg der Nahrungsmittelpreise zu drosseln,

Umweltkatastrophen zu verhindern und Hunger und soziale Ungerechtigkeit zu bekämpfen, müsse sich die Welt von der industriellen Landwirtschaft mit ihrem hohen Energie- und Chemikalieneinsatz verabschieden.

Als Alternative schlägt der Bericht, auf den sich mehr als 400 Wissenschaftler geeinigt hatten und der von Regierungen, UN-Organisationen, Wirtschaft und Zivilgesellschaft bestätigt wurde, eine Agrarwirtschaft vor, die lokales und indigenes Wissen berücksichtigt und ihren Forschungsschwerpunkt auf kleinbäuerliche und ökologisch nachhaltige Anbaumethoden legt. Galerani wies darauf hin, dass EMBRAPA, ein Zusammenschluss von 41 brasilianischen Forschungszentren, enorme Fortschritte in der biotechnologischen Entwicklung vorweisen kann. So seien Agrarchemikalien entwickelt worden, die trotz niedriger Dosierung eine große Wirkung erzielen könnten. Auch habe das Forschungsinstitut, das dem brasilianischen Landwirtschaftsministerium zugeordnet ist, dürre- und krankheitsresistentes Saatgut entwickelt. EMBRAPA, das bereits seit Juli 2006 mit einer Filiale auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent präsent ist, will gerade kleine und arme afrikanische Staaten an den Erfahrungen profitieren lassen, wie sie bereits seine Wissenschaftler im semiariden Nordosten Brasiliens gemacht haben, wo vor allem kleinbäuerliche Familienbetriebe auf weiche Kredite und technische Hilfe angewiesen sind. ■

China setzt auf Biosprit

Peking - Im energiehungrigen China ist der Verdrängungswettbewerb auf den Feldern in vollem Gange. Die Preise für Nahrungsmittel sind dramatisch gestiegen, denn auf immer größeren Flächen werden Mais oder Maniok nicht zum Verzehr, sondern für die Herstellung von Biokraftstoff angebaut. So versucht das Riesenreich, sich von Erdölimporten unabhängiger zu machen und zugleich die Luftverschmutzung in den Griff zu bekommen. Innerhalb der letzten drei Jahre ist China weltweit zum drittgrößten Produzenten von Biotreibstoff geworden, nach Brasilien und den USA. Im Jahr 2006 erreichte die Produktionsleistung der Äthanolmühlen zehn Millionen Tonnen. Sie übertraf damit bereits in einem Jahr die anvisierte Menge von sechs Millionen Tonnen für den 11. Fünf-Jahresplan von 2006 bis 2010.

Die Verbraucherpreise stiegen im März um 8,3 Prozent im Vergleich zum Vorjahr, die Preise für Nahrungsmittel sogar um 21 Prozent. Vor allem die Preissteigerung bei Getreide, dem Hauptrohstoff für die Herstellung von Äthanol, löste auch bei anderen Produkten eine Teuerungswelle aus. Die Entwicklung entspricht genau den Prognosen des Weltlandwirtschaftsrates (IAASTD). Dieser hatte in einer Expertenstudie davor gewarnt, dass der Einsatz von Nahrungsmitteln für die Herstellung von Biokraftstoff deren Preise dramatisch in die Höhe treiben werde.

Die chinesische Führung hat die Produktion von Biotreibstoff aus erneuerbaren Ressourcen in den



Hauptverkehrsstraße in Beijing | Photo: Pixelio

vergangenen Jahren stark gefördert, um den immensen Energiehunger des asiatischen Landes zu stillen und die Abhängigkeit von Energieimporten, vor allem vom Erdöl, zu vermindern. Auch angesichts der starken Umwelt- und Luftverschmutzung, die auch international immer heftigere Beschwerden auslöste, sieht die Regierung in Peking den Biosprit als eine grüne und umweltfreundliche Alternative zu fossilen Energiequellen. Bis zum Jahr 2020 soll ein Fünftel des Energieverbrauchs aus erneuerbaren Energien gedeckt werden. Im Jahr 2006 waren es erst sechs Prozent. ■

Mit Moskitonetzen und Comics gegen Malaria



Insektizidpräparierte Moskitonetze versprechen guten Schutz gegen Malaria | Photo: UNICEF

New York - Jährlich infizierten sich zwischen 350 Millionen und 500 Millionen Menschen mit Malaria. Mit 90 Prozent der Fälle sind die afrikanischen Länder südlich der Sahara besonders betroffen. Sie stehen im Mittelpunkt einer neuen UN-Kampagne gegen die Killerkrankheit. Ziel der am 25. April, dem ersten Weltmalaria-Tag, angestoßenen Aktion ist es, alle afrikanischen Haushalte in Risikogebieten bis Ende 2010 mit effektiven Maßnahmen gegen die Fieberkrankheit zu versorgen. Insbesondere sollen ihnen insektizidpräparierte Moskitonetze zur Verfügung gestellt werden. Sie bleiben etwa fünf Jahre wirksam und töten die Überträgermücke Anopheles, sobald sie mit dem Netz in Kontakt kommt.

Hilfe bedeutet das nicht zuletzt für afrikanische Kinder. Malaria ist für unter Fünfjährige auf dem schwarzen Kontinent bis

heute die Haupttodesursache. Weltweit sterben täglich über 3.000 Kinder an einer Malariainfektion - alle 30 Sekunden tötet die Krankheit ein Kind. Darüber hinaus verursacht Malaria in Afrika Produktivitätsverluste in Höhe von zwölf Milliarden US-Dollar pro Jahr. Nach Angaben des UN-Sondergesandten für Malaria, Ray Chambers, liegen für die nächsten eineinhalb Jahre die finanziellen Mittel für die Beschaffung von 100 Millionen Moskitonetzen vor.

Noch nicht gesichert ist der Ankauf und die Verteilung von weiteren 150 Millionen Netzen vor Ende des Stichtages. Die insektizidgetränkten Netze gelten als besonders wirkungsvolles und leicht zu handhabendes Mittel gegen die nachtaktiven Malaria-Mücken. Schon deshalb setzten die UN bei ihrer neuen Kampagne in erster Linie auf sie. Teil des Programms aber sind auch Sprühaktionen in den Haushalten der Risikogebiete, verbesserte Diagnose- und Behandlungsmöglichkeiten und eine spezielle medikamentöse Hilfe für Schwangere.

Kurz vor dem Start dieser Kampagne ging bei den Vereinten Nationen eine Aufklärungsaktion gegen Malaria ins Rennen. Sie ist 'Summen und Beißen' überschrieben und setzt auf zwei Anophelesmücken in Gestalt von Comicfiguren. Beide geben ihren Zuschauern Informationen über Schutzmaßnahmen gegen Malaria und sind die Hauptdarsteller einer in 20 Sprachen übersetzten Werbespotserie, die kostenlos zur Verfügung gestellt wird. Erfinder der Spots ist Firdaus Kharas, der Chef von 'Chocolate Moose Media' in Ottawa. ■

Entwicklungsfinanzierung lässt Frauen im Stich

New York - Die große Mehrheit aller Armen sind Frauen und Mädchen. Nach Berechnungen der Vereinten Nationen stellen sie 70 Prozent aller extrem Armen. Trotzdem spielt die überall sichtbare Feminisierung der Armut keine Rolle bei den laufenden Diskussionen zur Entwicklungsfinanzierung. Das gilt auch für ein hochkarätiges Treffen, zu dem Mitte April der UN-Wirtschafts- und Sozialrat (ECOSOC) führende Regierungsvertreter und UN-Mitarbeiter zusammenrief. Die Tagung gehört in den Vorbereitungsprozess zur kommenden Konferenz zur Entwicklungsfinanzierung in der Katar-Hauptstadt Doha Ende November - der zweiten großen Zusammenkunft zum Thema. Formal angestoßen wurde die globale Diskussion zur Entwicklungsfinanzierung 2002 im mexikanischen Monterrey auf einer UN-Konferenz, die mit dem sogenannten Monterrey-Konsens endete. Schon in dieser Deklaration sind neben Umweltthemen und den Bürgerrechten auch Genderfragen erwähnt, dies aber nur am Rande. Die Kernthemen des Papiers zur Entwicklungsfinanzierung sind Auslandsinvestitionen und die Handelsliberalisierung.

Gruppen wie die Frauenorganisation für Umwelt und Entwicklung (WEDO), der Verband für Frauenrechte in der Entwicklung (AWID) und auch das europäische Netzwerk der Frauenorganisationen WIDE set-

zen derzeit alles daran, dass die Monterrey-Nachfolgekonferenz in Doha das Ruder herumreißt. Schon auf der jüngsten ECOSOC-Tagung aber ging es in erster Linie um die Krise auf den Finanzmärkten, die steigenden Rohstoffpreise, die rückläufige offizielle Entwicklungshilfe (ODA) und die Folgen des Klimawandels für die ärmsten Länder. Die Feminisierung der Armut spielte eine nur untergeordnete Rolle. "Auch wenn einige Regierungsvertreter von der Notwendigkeit einer Integration der Genderthemen in die Strategien der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit sprachen, so gab es doch keine konkreten Vorschläge", moniert die WEDO-Expertin Nadia Johnson. Auch Cecilia Alemany von AWID kann nur warnen: "Sollte sich die internationale Gemeinschaft in Doha nicht zu einem klaren politischen Bekenntnis durchringen können, werden wir ein weiteres Jahrzehnt verlieren." Nach einem neuen Bericht der Organisation für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (OECD) sind die ODA-Zahlungen zwischen 2006 und 2007 von 0,31 auf 0,28 Prozent der Bruttonationaleinkommen (BNE) zurückgegangen. Nur fünf Staaten - Dänemark, Luxemburg die Niederlande, Norwegen und Schweden - haben das vor über 30 Jahren von der UN-Vollversammlung festgesetzte Ziel einer ODA in Höhe von 0,7 Prozent des BNE dauerhaft erreicht oder sogar überschritten. ■

Biotreibstoffboom bedroht indigene Völker

New York - Die wachsende Nachfrage nach Biotreibstoffen in den Industriestaaten gefährdet die Rechte und Lebensgrundlage der weltweit 370 Millionen Ureinwohner. Schon jetzt führt die erhöhte Nachfrage nach Land für den Anbau von Energiepflanzen dazu, dass immer mehr Indigene Opfer von Menschenrechtsverletzungen und Vertreibungen werden. *"Setzt sich der Trend fort, droht 60 Millionen Ureinwohnern der Verlust ihrer Territorien"*, warnte Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, die Vorsitzende des Ständigen UN-Forums für indigene Fragen auf der siebten Sitzung des Gremiums vom 21. April bis 2. Mai in New York. Der Biotreibstoffboom ist auch ein Faktor für den Anstieg der internationalen Getreidepreise. Würden die reichen Staaten die Biotreibstoffproduktion aussetzen, sanken die Preise für Mais und Weizen in zwei Jahren um 20 respektive zehn Prozent, sagt die Washingtoner Denkfabrik 'Food Policy Research Institute'. Zu einem ähnlichen Ergebnis kommt auch Lester Brown, Vorsitzender des renommierten US-amerikanischen 'Earth Policy Institute': *"Erst wenn die führenden Staaten dafür sorgen, dass sich die Bevölkerung stabilisiert und Getreide nicht in Treibstoff verwandelt wird, kann die Ernährungskrise*

überwunden werden." Schon jetzt hätten vier Milliarden Menschen Probleme satt zu werden, und dennoch steige die Nachfrage nach Biotreibstoffen ins Unermessliche. Brown rechnete in einem Telefoninterview mit IPS vor, dass der jährliche Bedarf an Getreide seit 2005 von knapp 20 Millionen Tonnen auf 50 Millionen Tonnen gestiegen ist. Mehr Land unter den Pflug zu nehmen, würde bedeuten, tropische Regenwälder im Amazonas oder im Kongo zu zerstören. Das Earth Policy Institute fand ferner heraus, dass Wasser zur Bewässerung von Agrarflächen noch rarer ist als die Anbauflächen selbst. Zwischen 1950 und 2000 hat sich die Fläche des bewässerten Landes von 94 Millionen Hektar auf 276 Millionen Hektar fast verdreifacht. Die Fläche an landwirtschaftlich nutzbarem Land geht hingegen jedes Jahr um ein Prozent zurück. Erst kürzlich appellierte das Welternährungsprogramm WFP an die reichen Staaten, auf die gegenwärtigen Nahrungsmittelengpässe mit einer Finanzspritze von 500 Millionen US-Dollar zu reagieren. Der Weltbank zufolge stehen derzeit mindestens 33 Länder vor einer politischen Destabilisierung und vor Konflikten. In einigen Ländern stiegen die Nahrungsmittelpreise um 80 Prozent. ■

Geburtenkontrolle jetzt Männersache in Uganda

Nairobi - In der ugandischen Gesellschaft wird Kinderreichtum mit Sicherheit gleichgesetzt, und Männer, die viele Kinder zeugen, gelten als besonders viril. Ihnen versucht eine Nichtregierungsorganisation (NGO) nun die positiven Seiten der Geburtenkontrolle näher zu bringen. In dem ostafrikanischen Land tickt eine Zeitbombe. Nach Angaben des Statistikamts wird sich die Bevölkerung von derzeit 31 Millionen bis 2025 auf 54 Millionen Menschen erhöhen. Geht man davon aus, dass Ugandas Frauen auch weiterhin durchschnittlich zwischen sechs und sieben Kinder zur Welt bringen, wird Ugandas Bevölkerung bis 2050 auf 117 Millionen Menschen anwachsen. Bisher ist die NGO 'Foundation for Community Development' mit Sitz in der Hauptstadt Kampala die einzige Organisation im Lande, die Männer für das Anliegen der Familienplanung gewinnen will. *"Männer reagieren fast immer gleich, wenn es um Fragen der Sexualität geht. Sie versuchen das Thema zu wechseln"*, berichtet Amon Mulyowa, der Programmmanager der Organisation. *"Wenn ich ihnen dann auch noch sage, dass männliche Stärke weniger durch die Zahl als durch die Lebensqualität der Kinder zum Ausdruck kommt, ist das Murren besonders groß."*

Mulyowa zufolge bedarf es längerer Gespräche, bis er Männern erläutern kann, wie sie zur Familienplanung beitragen können. Dass auch in Uganda Söhnen ein höherer Wert als Töchtern beigemessen wird, erschwert seine Arbeit. Denn die Hoffnung auf einen Sohn veranlasst Mädcheneltern dazu, immer mehr Kinder in die Welt zu setzen. Der Bevölkerungsaktivist selbst ist Vater zweier Mädchen. Er wird von vielen bedauert, weil er keinen Sohn hat,



Photo: UNESCO

der ihn beerben könnte. *"Selbst meine Freunde machen sich lustig. Für sie muss ich erst noch ein richtiger Mann werden."*

Kein Wunder also, dass es in Uganda und anderen ostafrikanischen Ländern nicht üblich ist, dass sich Männer sterilisieren lassen. Eine Vasektomie wird in dem ostafrikanischen Land mit dem Verlust der Männlichkeit gleichgesetzt. Familienplanungsprogramme können sich in Uganda auch deshalb nur schwer durchsetzen, weil sie keinen Rückhalt bei der Regierung finden. Obwohl sich Staatspräsident Yoweri Museveni mit seiner Rolle im Kampf gegen HIV/Aids international einen Namen gemacht hat, ist er in Sachen Geburtenkontrolle kaum aktiv. ■

No Bolt From the Blue



By Ramesh Jaura

Kenya, before the rain
 Photo: Barbara Weightman,
 University of California
 www.conceptcaching.com

Not long ago the public focus was on the impending disastrous consequences of climate change. Now it is on the spectre of hunger in the low-income countries around the world. The difference, though, is that scientific studies have sensitized the public over the past several years to the devastation that climate change might cause. However, hunger 'revolts' have surprised many. Yet, they are not like a bolt from the blue. They are man made, a consequence, among others, of the neglect and underinvestment that the agricultural and rural sectors have suffered over the past 20 years.

Having ignored these crucial sectors all these years, the World Bank titled its 2008 World Development Report (WDR) 'Agriculture for Development'. Published last October, it calls for greater investment in agriculture in developing countries and says that agriculture must be placed at the centre of the development agenda if the goals of halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 are to be realised.

Advocating a new 'agriculture for development' agenda, the WDR points out that for the poorest people, GDP growth originating in agriculture is about four times more effective in reducing poverty than GDP growth originating outside the sector.

The rationale behind investing in agriculture is obvious: While 75 percent of the world's poor live in rural areas, a mere 4 percent of official development assistance goes to agriculture in developing countries. In Sub-Saharan Africa, a region heavily reliant on agriculture for overall growth, public spending for farming is also only 4 percent of total government spending and the sector is still taxed at relatively high levels.

Also the United Nations would appear to have taken note of the impending crisis when it started knocking on the door. On April 22, a UN spokesperson referred to a "silent tsunami" that threatens to plunge more than 100 million people on every continent into hunger. Josette Sheeran, executive director of the UN World Food Programme (WFP), noted: "This is the new face of hunger - the millions

of people who were not in the urgent hunger category six months ago but now are."

This situation has arisen not only because there is not enough food but because the prices have skyrocketed and the poor cannot afford to buy even the minimum amount they need.

World prices for basic commodities such as cereals, cooking oil and milk have risen steadily since 2000, but have escalated dramatically since the developing financial crisis in the U.S. began to bite in 2006. Since the start of 2006, the average world price for rice has risen by 217 percent, wheat by 136 percent, corn by 125 percent and soybeans by 107 percent.

Much of the international speculation in food commodities takes place on the Chicago Stock Exchange (CHX), where a number of hedge funds, investment banks and pension funds have substantially increased their activities in the past two years. Since January of this year alone, investment activity in the agricultural sector has risen by a quarter at the CHX, and, according to the Chicago firm Cole Partners, involvement by hedge funds in the raw material sector has trebled in the past two years to reach a total of 55 billion dollars.

The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Luc Gnacadja, has pointed to another significant aspect. The best arable land for the agricultural use constitutes only 11 percent of the earth surface, which only ensures the food for 6.3 billion people today and 8.2 billion predicted in 2030, he says. FAO forecasts that a 50 percent growth is required in food production by 2030, but arable land are shrinking due to desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD).

Indeed, a long-term strategy to address food crisis must include an increase in land ecosystems productivity. Also agriculture must be given a priority through pro-poor policies in view of adaptation to climate change.

VOICES OF THE SOUTH | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

'Between Implementation and Planning, There is a Disconnect'

Interview with IAASTD Contributor Washington Ochola by Kwamboka Oyaro

Accounting for about a third of the gross domestic product in sub-Saharan Africa, agriculture clearly plays a significant role on the continent. But, figures only tell part of the story. A review of Africa produced under the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) notes that agriculture is also "woven into the fabric of most societies and cultures in the region." In addition, the sector requires urgent attention if it is to help Africa move beyond the malnutrition and poverty that define existence for many of its inhabitants. The IAASTD throws light on ways in which this might be done. During the three-year undertaking, agricultural knowledge across the board was evaluated to help determine how the sector can be managed more effectively.

Five regional reports, including the survey for sub-Saharan Africa, and a synthesis document were produced by the hundreds of contributors to the assessment, which sought the views of governments, civil society, the private sector and academia. The findings of the IAASTD were formally presented early April. Washington Ochola is one of the authors of the sub-Saharan review, and also a senior lecturer in sustainable agriculture and rural development at Egerton University, east of Nairobi. IPS East Africa correspondent Kwamboka Oyaro talked to him.

IPS: What were the main challenges faced in compiling the assessment for sub-Saharan Africa?

Washington Ochola: There were challenges in sustaining both individual and institutional commitment to the process. People got committed substantially because of their interest in sustainable agriculture for development. While governments (in developed nations) supported our colleagues from the West, we got our financial support from donors and this affected full participation of experts, particularly from Africa: they had other commitments. We also had a conflict of professional ideas because we come from different professional backgrounds - social economists, soil scientists, extension of technology transfer experts etc; we perceive various aspects of agricultural science differently. We also define terminologies differently. But we worked together and came up with a common glossary.

Science's own dynamism was a big challenge. New research findings keep coming up. The process took three years and we kept monitoring new ideas and harmonising. Ours was not the only assessment taking place at the time and we kept tabs on what was happening to avoid duplication. Accessing contentious and inconclusive scientific aspects such as

the use of bio-fuel was intricate; there is a conflict between agricultural crop production for food or for bio-fuel. This is still unresolved in regard to which direction technology will drive production.

IPS: The assessment notes that there have been successes concerning agricultural knowledge, science and technology. Which of these are most significant?

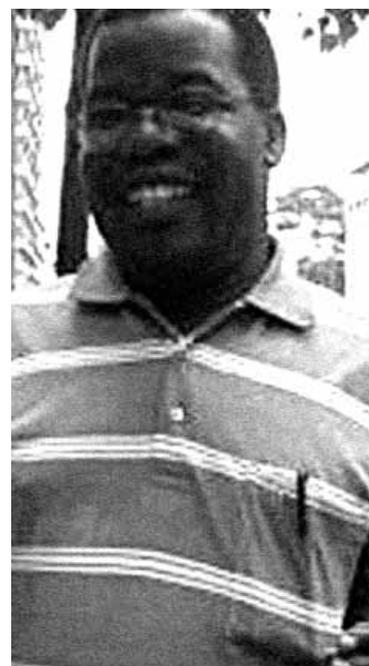
Washington Ochola: Egypt is a good example of where local level knowledge has been used for intensive agricultural production. Despite its harsh climatic conditions, the country has been able to harness and successfully use the Nile basin for agriculture. In Botswana, communities along a river delta have come up with local management strategies which encourage intensive production and at the same time protect the environment. There are other success stories in Congo and Uganda where agricultural knowledge and technology are helping farmers to beat the effects of desertification, crop failure and HIV/AIDS.

IPS: The assessment indicates that the traditional method of implementing findings has been effective for large cash crop operations, but less so for smaller, diversified farms. Why is this?

Washington Ochola: This is because the small-scale farmers have unique circumstances: many of them lack resources and deal with a number of enterprises within their small farms. The traditional approach to extension work is better suited for single commodity or cash crops. The cash crop farmer benefits through economies of scale while the small-scale farmer will need several experts to deal with the various crops and animals, which is more expensive. For example, a farmer with a lot of diversified, intensive farming on a small scale will have to get in touch with extension workers for each of his or her independent enterprises such as cows, chicken, beans, cassava, maize or any other, while the large-scale farmer will deal with only one expert with information on commodity research, development, production increase and marketing. Technologies are also...disseminated to designated large scale farmers. They are able to purchase the technology.

IPS: How, then, should the traditional methods of putting research findings into operation be changed?

Washington Ochola: We need diversification, integration and a multi-sectoral approach to extension work. This will enable small-scale farmers to access new developments immediately instead of waiting for the expert in that area to explain in the future.



Washington Ochola
Photo: IPS

"The World Needs a Global Culture of Human Rights"

Daisaku Ikeda, President of Soka Gakkai International, talks to Thalif Deen

As the United Nations commemorates the 60th anniversary of its landmark Universal Declaration of Human Rights this year, the Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International (SGI) has called for an international conference on human rights education. A non-governmental organisation (NGO) with over 12 million members in some 190 countries, SGI says the proposed conference should be centred on civil society groups. SGI President Daisaku Ikeda admits that traditionally human rights issues have been - and should be - addressed primarily by governments. *"But efforts cannot stop there,"* he said. *"Ultimately, we need to establish a global culture of human rights, one that is shared by all people and which is rooted in the realities of people's daily lives,"* said Ikeda, who is also a Buddhist philosopher, author and peace proponent. Asked if his home country would support such a proposal, he said: *"Yes, I would certainly hope that Japan and other governments would extend political support to such a conference. At the same time, I have high expectations for the role to be played by civil society."*

In an interview with IPS UN Bureau Chief Thalif Deen, Ikeda said that a number of governments have brought up the issue of human rights education before the Human Rights Council in Geneva and expressed interest in such a conference. *"While this kind of support is very welcome, I think it is important that the essential nature of the conference as a civil society initiative not be lost,"* he added. In his annual 2008 "peace proposals" released in January, Ikeda has also called for concrete international commitments on several global issues, including nuclear disarmament, de-militarisation, elimination of poverty and hunger, empowerment of youth, and the protection of the environment. Excerpts from the interview follow.

IPS: Although the Cold War ended about 20 years ago, the world is still grappling with a growing number of conflicts within nations and between nations. Why has the international community, and particularly the United Nations, failed to bring lasting world peace?

Daisaku Ikeda: Obviously, the United Nations has its limitations, and there is much criticism of it. But the

fact remains that the UN is the only standing forum for dialogue about global issues in which virtually all the countries on Earth participate. This is why I have always urged in my proposals that the UN be placed at the centre of efforts to construct a peaceful world. We must absolutely avoid repeating the tragedy of global war, such as occurred twice in the 20th century. In such fields as refugee relief, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding, the UN has been the site of quiet and largely unrecognised efforts toward the creation of what might be called a global safety net. The loss of these functions would greatly increase the suffering of people around the world. Some years back, when I met with then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, we discussed the fact that, relative to the expectations and burdens placed on it, the UN receives only the most minimal support. In other words, the UN is not by nature a powerless institution. Rather, what is weak is the will of the international community to work through the UN to resolve problems. And this lack of will impacts the ability of the UN to function. For my part, I have tried to contribute to creating a better, more stable environment for the UN by urging the various world leaders with whom I have met to offer the UN greater support. This is also the reason why my peace proposals highlight what the UN has achieved and suggest new ways for working through the UN system.

The members of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) have been cooperating with UN agencies and other NGOs to raise awareness on issues relating to disarmament and the environment and to promote an ethic of global citizenship. Our stance is not that of bystanders, watching to see whether the UN will succeed or fail. Rather, we want to focus on developing a deeper sense of responsibility - what can and should we do to enable the UN to function effectively? Gandhi said that goodness travels at a snail's pace. Just lamenting the UN's shortcomings or becoming cynical about the harsh realities of the world achieves nothing. What matters is the steady effort to build the kind of people's solidarity that will be a consistent source of support for the UN's activities. The accumulated experience and wisdom gained by many different countries and peoples working together

The accumulated experience and wisdom gained by many different countries and peoples working together through the UN is immensely valuable.

her through the UN is immensely valuable. I am convinced that, centuries from now, this will be seen as the greatest treasure our generation bequeathed to humanity.

IPS: How imperative is a dialogue among nations to end the increasing fanaticism and intolerance in the world today?

Daisaku Ikeda: It is impossible to contain, much less resolve, the threats posed by extremism and intolerance through hard power such as military force. On the other hand, just the willingness to talk, especially if it is limited to one side, will not lead to an immediate solution. Life is not that simple. The fact is that there are cases where it seems that there is no dialogue partner, or that the burdens of the past make dialogue impossible. But, however justified it may appear, resort to violence and force ultimately resolves nothing. The hatreds of one generation are reproduced in the next, and the conflict becomes more deeply entrenched and prolonged. Unless we can break these cycles of hatred and vengeance, the roots of violence will remain. I believe that, as challenging as this may be, persistent and courageous efforts at dialogue are the only way to overcome extremism and intolerance among peoples.

IPS: How confident are you that some, or most, of the objectives you spelled out in your peace proposals can be achieved in the next decade or during this generation?

Daisaku Ikeda: The second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, who passed away 50 years ago this year, often said that his commitment was to eliminate "misery" from the human lexicon. I regard Mr. Toda as my mentor in life and the determination to realise his dream underlies my own efforts. These proposals are part of that work. There are hundreds of millions of people in the world who suffer from the impact of wars and conflict, poverty and hunger, environmental destruction.

My proposals are based on the desire that such people will be empowered to transform and overcome the sufferings in their lives. I am neither a politician nor a policy specialist. I am sure there is much lacking in my proposals. I continue to write and issue these proposals in my capacity as a private citizen in the hope that they will help deepen the debate on critically important issues and aid the search for a way out of our present quandary. And there are a number of ideas, such as the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, that have been realised in cooperation with fellow NGOs and relevant UN agencies. I have a very deep faith in the capacities of young people. I believe there is nothing young people cannot do - no reality they cannot change - if they set their minds to it. In writing these proposals, my greatest hope, my determination and commitment is to sow the seeds of change in young people's hearts.



Norwegian Hand in Arms Ship

By Tarjei Kidd Olsen in Oslo

An internationally condemned Chinese cargo ship attempting to transport arms to Zimbabwe is partially insured by a Norwegian company. This may be illegal, according to Norwegian law. A company spokesman has condemned the transport, adding that they did not know the ship was carrying weapons. The Chinese-controlled An Yue Jiang is reportedly carrying three million rounds of munition, 1.500 rocket-propelled grenades and 2.500 mortar rounds destined for President Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe, where the political opposition alleges increasing violence against the party and its supporters following disputed March elections. An Yue Jiang was anchored off the port of Durban for four days until Mar. 8, when a South African court refused to allow the ship to transport the weapons across the country to Zimbabwe and ruled that the cargo should be confiscated. The ship left before law officers acted on the order, and was rumoured to be heading for Angola or Namibia, which are being pressurised by the United States not to allow the ship to dock.

Zambia's President Levy Mwanawasa has said he hopes no African country accepts the ship, in order to avoid further destabilising the situation in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's justice minister Patrick Chinamasa has told reporters Zimbabwe has a right to buy weapons if it wishes to do so. Norwatch, a corporate ethics news service published by Norwegian NGO Fremtiden i våre hender, has revealed that Nor-

wegian marine insurance company Assuransforeningen Skuld sold An Yue Jiang's shipping company, the Chinese state-owned COSCO, a so-called third party insurance for the ship in 2003. The insurance covers damages caused by the ship to third parties. *"We do not appreciate that our members transport this type of cargo, and would like to distance ourselves from it completely,"* Skuld's executive vice-president Eric Jacobs told IPS.

No insurance for illegal cargo

Jacobs points out that the insurance is for the ship and not for the cargo itself, and says the company was not aware it had insured the boat until it was notified by TransArms, a U.S. NGO monitoring arms transfers. *"We don't know where the five or six thousand ships we insure are at any one time, or what they are transporting, as that would be an impossible task and is at any rate not part of our remit,"* Jacobs said. The company is looking into possible courses of action. *"We are looking into the legality of the transport. Our insurance policy adheres to international law, and to the agreement between us and them which adheres to Norwegian law. If the cargo is illegal, then our insurance is certainly not valid,"* Jacobs said. While the cargo is legal according to Chinese law, Jacobs points out that the South African court ruled against it. *"This may be relevant for our insurance policy, but we have not seen the court judgement yet,"* he commented, adding that the com-

pany has asked COSCO for the ship's transportation documentation in order to investigate whether the cargo adheres to the guidelines for the insurance. Jacobs says that Skuld does follow ethical guidelines, but that they also have to adhere to the legal aspects of their contract with COSCO. *"Even though morally and emotionally we might want to do more and do it faster, we cannot cancel this insurance before we have a clear picture of the legal situation, and I think the shipping company should also be allowed to put its side of the story,"* he said.

It is possible for Skuld to cancel An Yue Jiang's insurance even if the contract has not been broken, but this requires that COSCO is notified well in advance, while circumstances will likely decide the fate of the ship imminently. An expert at Norway's Oslo Peace and Research Institute (PRIO) believes that Skuld's insurance of An Yue Jiang may be illegal according to Norwegian law. According to a clause in Norwegian arms export rules it is illegal for companies to assist in arms deals between foreign countries without special permission from the Norwegian foreign department.

According to Norwegian Initiative on Small Arms Transfers (NISAT) research assistant Hilde Wallacher at PRIO, the rule may apply in this case as the transaction is occurring between China and Zimbabwe, and not between Norway and another country.

U.S. Seeks the Peaceful Way for Military Base

By Zoltán Dujisin in Prague

Photos P. 12-13: Wikipedia News



NATO countries have given cautious support to U.S. plans to extend its missile defence system to Eastern Europe, just as Washington is working hard to fulfil Russia's conditions to agree to its construction. The U.S. wants to extend its missile defence system (MDS) to Eastern Europe by building a radar in the Czech Republic and a missile base in Poland that will allegedly protect Europe from missile attacks by 'rogue' states in the Middle East. At their last meeting as heads of state, U.S. President George W. Bush and Russian President Vladimir Putin met in Sochi, Russia, on Apr. 6 to discuss the U.S. base, among other issues. Bush promised to try to integrate Russia into the global missile defence shield project "as an equal partner to the U.S.", although similar attempts at cooperation between the two sides have failed in the past.

Lack of missile defence capacities

This was in the wake of the Bucharest North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) summit Apr. 2-4, in which the organisation gave cool support to U.S. plans, welcoming the possibility of eventually integrating the U.S. shield into the alliance's defence structures. Nick Witney, senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, told IPS that Europe does not seem worried about the questionable effectiveness and costs of the project and that Washington could have appeared

worried European allies by assuring an agreement with Moscow would be reached. "There might have been assurances as there is a growing sense the Russians are getting reconciled with the base. The U.S. has made a series of concessions on the system, and might have linked it to other issues, such as Russia's accession to the World Trade Organisation." NATO currently lacks missile defence capacities but is carrying out feasibility studies. With the extension of the system, "NATO only has to worry about covering the south-eastern corner of Europe," Witney said.

In its present shape, the MDS runs against NATO's principle of collective and indivisible security, as it would only protect north-western Europe from a hypothetical missile attack. "It won't be a big bill for the alliance, and given the fact the majority of the investment will be done by Washington it is easier for Europeans to support the project," added the former chief executive of the European Defence Agency in Brussels. Russia and the U.S. could come to an agreement under which the radar station and the missile launchers would remain inactive until the hypothetical Middle Eastern threat materialises.

But Russia feels Washington's confidence-building measures are not addressing the real issues, such as what prevents the U.S. from upgrading the base into a larger, possibly nuclear infrastructure in the future. Moscow, convinced that the

new elements in the MDS are aimed against it, is asking Washington to clarify under which conditions the U.S. plans to deploy the Eastern European base, and if it plans to build more deployment areas elsewhere. Experts point out that if Russia agrees to the construction of the base, it will have a long list of demands for Washington. Otherwise, should the facilities be built in Eastern Europe, Moscow could take "measures of a military, technical nature," in the words of Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov.

Measures of a military nature

Military officials in Moscow have repeatedly stated Russia would consider the new facilities military targets, against which even nuclear weapons could be deployed if necessary. The U.S., in spite of Polish and Czech resistance, is apparently offering Russia the possibility to conduct inspections on the missile facilities, and technical monitoring of the base. But Czech and Polish politicians refuse to accept a permanent presence of "Russian troops" in their countries, and would only agree to occasional inspections which they say should be reciprocated by Moscow. Due to the presence of Soviet troops in Czech and Polish territory until 1989, for most of the public and politicians a permanent Russian presence in a military facility is unacceptable.

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Where Migration Means Trafficking

By Kester Kenn Klomegah in Moscow

New efforts have been launched to curb human trafficking across Russia and the ex-Soviet republics. The Moscow office of the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) is implementing a programme 'Prevention of Human Trafficking' jointly financed by the European Commission, the U.S. State Department and the Swiss government. Aurelius Gutaszkas, a Lithuanian legal expert together with experts from the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the IOM are adapting features of counter-trafficking legislation in the European Union to bridge gaps in Russian law. "The project aims at complementing the efforts of the authorities and the civil society, and to enhance prosecution and the criminalisation of trafficking," Alberto Andreani, programme coordinator for prevention of human trafficking at the Moscow IOM office told IPS.

Government action not enough

At their annual meeting in Moscow last November, members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a loose organisation of ex-Soviet republics (excluding the Baltic states Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) signed an anti-trafficking cooperation programme to last until 2010. But Elena Govorina from the Angel Coalition, a Moscow-based non-profit organisation that tracks human trafficking in Russia and the region, says government action is still not enough to fight the fast growing problem. And there have been few attempts to study the social conditions that give rise to human trafficking, she

said. "There is a wide array of factors that make post-Soviet states a breeding ground for human trafficking and sexual exploitation. We think that some serious governmental structure should raise this issue. But little can be done without administrative instruction from a government agency," Govorina told IPS.

Konstantin Romodanovsky, head of the Federal Migration Service in Moscow, told a meeting of senior officials from migration agencies and interior ministries in the Commonwealth of Independent States that according to United Nations estimates, 20 million migrants pass through the region every year. "Russia serves as a main transit country from Asia to the European Union, and it (Russia) has a significant amount of internal trafficking from smaller towns and villages to regional city centres, both for labour and sexual exploitation," Lauren McCarthy from the University of Wisconsin who has researched human trafficking in Russia and the ex-Soviet republics for three years, told IPS. The situation differs across the post-Soviet states, she said. Some of the richer countries like Russia and Kazakhstan tend to be attractive destinations for people looking to migrate for employment. And many people look to leave poorer countries like Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The wish to migrate is then exploited by traffickers. Moldova and Ukraine have had particularly serious problems with the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation.

In 2005, the ILO estimated that about 2.4 million men, women and children are trafficked worldwide, of which at least 200,000 are trafficked to and within tran-

sition countries (including the CIS countries). ILO researchers believe that this is a conservative estimate. According to qualitative research in CIS countries, trafficking for forced labour (other than forced prostitution) is the main form of trafficking in the region, in particular central Asia. Migrant workers are most exploited in construction, agriculture, trade and informal economic activities. Law enforcement responses, however, tend to focus on sex trafficking which often involves young women trafficked to Western Europe, the Middle East and Russia.

Reintegration of victims

Many countries in the region have adopted national action plans against human trafficking, Beate Andrees, spokesman for the ILO special action programme to combat forced labour told IPS by email. Ukraine, for example, has already adopted the third action plan. The current version focuses on prevention and reintegration of victims through labour market measures. Georgia and Ukraine have allocated significant funds for implementation of such action plans. But in many countries effective action has not been taken due to lack of state funding, and of coordination among different states. To address this, the ILO has begun a new project in conjunction with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) to develop regional communities to prevent human trafficking. The programme covers Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan.

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Where Did All the Workers Go?

By Claudia Ciobanu in Sofia

Worried about the possibility of a slow-down in economic growth because of labour shortages, Eastern European countries have started taking measures to bring their workers back home, and attract foreign labour. But such government interventions can only have a marginal effect. As a result of massive workers' migration to Western Europe, countries like Romania and Bulgaria are confronted with labour shortages in many sectors of the economy. Construction workers are most needed in both countries. Labour shortages are also particularly serious in tourism in Bulgaria and in the textile industry in Romania, while both countries have been losing medics and teachers.

Only in 2007, around 2,000 medics have left Romania in search of better pay. A primary school teacher in Bulgaria barely makes 200 euro monthly, less than a quarter of what she could earn working as a waitress in neighbouring Greece. On Apr. 12-13 the Romanian Ministry of Labour organised a job fair in Castellon de la Plana, Spain, to persuade Romanian workers that employment opportunities in their home country are now lucrative enough for them to return. A similar fair was held in Italy in February. Spain and Italy are the foremost destinations for Romanian migrant workers.

While official figures place the number of Romanians in Spain at 600,000, unofficial estimates go as high as one million. Another million Romanians are said to be living in Italy. According to the National Block of Trade Unions, the total

number of Romanians working abroad reached 3.4 million in 2007, representing 15 percent of the country's population of 21.5 million. A similar scenario unfolds in Bulgaria, where the Bulgarian Academy of Science calculated that around one million people have sought work abroad since 1989. Labour migration and low birth rates have caused the population of this country to shrink from 8.9 million to 7.5 million over the past two decades. The main destinations for Bulgarians heading abroad are Germany, Greece, Italy and Spain.

Labour migration and low birth rates have caused the population of this country to shrink

On Apr. 12, Bulgarian Labour Minister Emiliya Maslarova concluded a one-week visit to Vietnam, whose main purpose was the signing of an inter-governmental memorandum aimed at bringing Vietnamese workers to Bulgaria. According to the Bulgarian Construction Chamber, Bulgaria will be short of 20,000 construction workers in 2008, and employers in the sector are interested in hiring Asian labour. Unemployment rates in Romania and Bulgaria have almost halved since the early 1990s. In March, the unemployment rate was 6.7 percent in Bulgaria and 4.3 percent in Romania.

Economic growth rates stand at around 6 percent in both countries, but such growth rhythms are unsustainable, one of the reasons being the labour short-

age. *"Bulgaria lost many of its skilled workers in the early period of transition (from state socialism to market economy), and over the past two-three years, it has also been losing unskilled labourers,"* Venelin Boshnakov, professor at the University of National and World Economy in Sofia told IPS. *"Some sectors of the economy simply die out because employers cannot find workers to hire. This will affect the growth of our economy."*

According to the global market research institute Euromonitor, increased labour costs in Eastern Europe over the last years discourage foreign investors, thus eroding economic growth. Between 2006 and 2007, labour costs have increased by 21.5 percent in Romania and by 17.8 percent in Bulgaria. But Vesselin Mintchev, economist at the Bulgarian Academy of Science, considers increased costs of labour a good sign, arguing that higher salaries and better working conditions are the only means to keep workers at home. According to Mintchev, one of the first measures the governments in this region should take is to increase the minimum wage. *"Signing agreements to bring a couple of thousand Asian workers to Bulgaria sounds like cynicism to me,"* Mintchev told IPS. *"It serves the interests of the rich in this country, because it is a way to make sure that some companies who lobby the government get the labour they need. But this does not solve the general problem of labour shortages."*

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Fair tradw offee farmer in Guatemala
Photo: www.uniterro.org

Letter from Brussels Fair Is Not Easy

By David Cronin

From its humble beginnings in the 1950s, the fair trade movement has gone from selling coffee at left-wing political meetings to having whole sections devoted to its fruit and chocolate products in European supermarkets. The last five years have been especially buoyant; after witnessing annual growth rates of up to 40 percent, the sale of fair trade products hit 2 billion euros in 2007. Yet the expansion has not been trouble-free. In 2005, Nestlé brought out a brand of coffee called Partners, bearing the widely recognised fair trade logo. One of the world's most boycotted companies, the Swiss multinational has long been accused of aggressively marketing its baby milk products in a way that has discouraged mothers in poor countries from breastfeeding. The World Health Organisation has estimated that 1.5 million infants die each year because they are given milk products mixed with unclean water, rather than breast-fed. Nestlé's chairman Peter Brabeck-Letmathé has dubbed as "extremists" those who advocate that access to water should be recognised as a universal human right.

Fair trade and ethical standards

Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO), which bands together groups responsible for awarding fair trade certificates, admits lessons have to be learnt from the Nestlé episode. "It was a surprise for the full (fair-trade) movement," its spokeswoman Gelkha Buitrago told IPS. "It created a lot of controversy." Nonetheless, she defends the granting of fair trade labels to firms whose overall con-

duct has come under fire from anti-poverty activists. "We don't endorse companies," she added. "We put labels on practices, and we try to guarantee that they fulfil ethical standards." FLO believes that fair trade sales have brought benefits to more than 1.4 million small-scale producers in poor countries. The core principles behind fair trade are that producers are paid a stable minimum price, so that they are not completely at the mercy of volatile markets, that conditions of labour are good, and that the environment is respected.

Over the past year, fair trade has become increasingly mainstream, particularly in Britain. Sainsburys, a leading supermarket chain, has decided that all its bananas should be fair trade. Its rival Co-Op has followed suit for the tea and coffee that it sells. Meanwhile, Tate & Lyle has announced the biggest ever switch from conventional products to fair trade for a British firm. By the end of 2009, it hopes that 100 percent of its retail branded sugar will be fair trade. This should provide Belize, the Central American country where the sugar is being sourced, with a so-called social premium worth two million pounds (4 million dollars) in the first year, according to the company. Both the successes and the challenges for the fair trade movement were debated at a conference held in Brussels Apr. 16. It was organised by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), a European Union-financed body promoting farming in Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

One problem facing the fair trade movement is that companies are increasingly using labels other than the recognised

fair trade one to claim that they adhere to high social or environmental standards. Despite the confusion that a proliferation of different labels can cause, it is unlikely that the European Union will introduce binding rules for fair trade certification. Liselotte Isaksson, a European Commission official dealing with trade and development issues, said that the EU executive regarded labelling schemes as private initiatives. "It wouldn't be appropriate or beneficial for the Commission to try and regulate in this area," she argued.

Anja Osterhaus, coordinator of the Fair Trade Advocacy Office in Brussels, stressed that the fair trade movement is actively involved in lobbying for a more just system of international commerce. "We campaign against the practices of multinationals but we also constructively engage with companies that want to change," she said. Stephanie Barrientos from the University of Manchester questioned how sincere major retail outlets are in promoting fair trade. "Some supermarkets do have a genuine commitment," she said. "Others are just jumping on the bandwagon." Christopher Wunderlich from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development suggested that greater research is needed on fair trade. Information is often based "on anecdotes or just case studies," he said.

Aim for fairness

Mamadou Outtara from the Association of African Cotton Producers in Mali urged more efforts to ensure that money made from fair trade sales reaches the poor. "If we look and see what consumers pay and

EPAs have been attacked by anti-poverty campaigners, employers, farmers and many governments in Africa.

what reaches the producer, there is room for improvement," he said. *"We have got to aim for fairness."* Still, he said that the development of the fair trade cotton sector in Africa has helped find jobs for women and young people. In Mali, 40 percent of organic fair trade cotton producers are female. The combined production of fair trade cotton for Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal and Cameroon rose from 1,300 tonnes in 2005 to 8,000 tonnes last year. Some 23,000 producers are involved.

EPA charm offensive

After attracting a steady flow of criticism for its handling of trade talks with Africa, the European Commission has gone on something of a charm offensive lately. It has, for example, launched a website dedicated to highlighting any favourable comments that are made about the economic partnership agreements (EPAs) it is negotiating with some of the world's poorest countries. This follows the realisation by Brussels officials that the way EPAs have been attacked by anti-poverty campaigners, employers, farmers and many governments in Africa has sullied the Commission's reputation. One official has gone so far as to describe the talks as a *"public relations disaster"* for the Commission. Efforts to project a more positive image appeared to bear some fruit mid-April when Peter Mandelson,

the European Union commissioner for trade, hosted a seminar on the EPAs. Although it was jointly organised with the European Parliament, many of whose members have previously been scathing towards Mandelson, he was given a comparatively easy ride. However, this may have been largely due to a stroke of luck. The African representatives who addressed the meeting hailed from Mozambique and the Ivory Coast, both of which concluded EPAs before the December 2007 deadline on which the Commission had insisted. Both participants refuted claims that regional integration in Africa had been harmed by the terms of the accords that were rejected by many of their neighbours. Helmuth Markov, chairperson of the European Parliament's international trade committee, said that governments which have been opposed to the suggested EPAs chose not to take part.

While 78 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries had been involved in the trade talks, so far EPAs have been reached with just 35 of them. With the exception of the EPAs with 15 states in the Caribbean, all of the deals have been labelled as interim and are mainly confined to trade in goods. Mandelson defended efforts being made by the Commission to continue negotiations on the EPAs with a view to extending their scope so that they cover the liberalisation of services, as well as rules on competition and investment. One common *"misunder-*

standing", he said, is that Europe is *"trying to impose our rules on developing countries."* Following consultations with ACP governments, the Commission has drawn up a list of what it hopes to achieve with each region involved in the EPA talks. For seven countries belonging to the Southern African Development Community (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania), the aim is to conclude a deal on services liberalisation, competition and public procurement within the next three years. Uncertainty surrounds whether such deal would also extend to South Africa, as it already has a free trade agreement with the EU. For the East African Community (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi), the aim is to conclude a deal relating to services, food safety, competition, investment and intellectual property. No deadline has yet been set.

For other Eastern and Southern African countries, the Commission is eyeing a deal relating to the rules of origin (which deal with the use of imported ingredients in the manufacturing of goods or processing of food), services, competition, intellectual property and agricultural trade. And for both West and Central Africa, the aim is to conclude deals on services, competition, investment, public procurement and intellectual property by the end of this year.

IPS | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■



Photo: Market in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe | Photo: Lothar Henke - Pixelio

Latin America: Back to the Future ?

By Julio Godoy

The victory of the former liberation theologian Fernando Lugo in the presidential campaign in Paraguay in April is yet another signal that South America is, at least in the names, changing its policies, and has tilted, for the time being, to the Left. Lugo is the last in an already impressive list of political leaders who claim to be either Social Democrats or Socialists: Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Fernando Correa in Ecuador, to mention only the most visible among them, who have won a string of presidential elections since the late 1990s. A list of political leaders which appears to leave the regional superpower, the United States, increasingly isolated in the continent. For, other than in Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and maybe Costa Rica, no other Latin American government can be considered an unconditional ally of Washington.

The tilt to the Left in South America is reflected in numerous policy initiatives, which break with the recent past, during which the application of the policy recipes of the so-called Washington Consensus had become a state-doctrine. To give but one example, South American countries have created the Bank of the South as a counterweight to the traditional hegemony of the international financial institutions based in Washington. A similar process, at least in the nominal sense, is occurring in Central America, the Latin American region where the U.S. power was felt at the most in the 1980s, when the isthmus was ravaged by bloody civil wars between left-wing guerrillas inspired by the Cuban revolution, and right-wing dictatorships financed, trained, and armed by the U.S. governments.

In late 2006, in Nicaragua, former Sandinista revolutionary commandant Daniel Ortega conquered power again, this time winning an unlikely victory in the presidential elections. Alvaro Colom, a self-proclaimed Social-Democrat, is ruling Guatemala since January 14 - in a country where in the late 1970s and

early 1980s, all attempts to build a Social Democratic party were killed, literally speaking, by the army and its death squads. And in El Salvador, another Central American country known for the brutality of its political traditions against left-wing politicians, opinion polls suggest that a former guerrilla leader, Medardo Gonzalez, might well win the presidential elections scheduled for March 2009.

Corruption and lack of concern

All these nominal changes in the leading political personnel in Central America would have appeared impossible a couple of years ago. Since the end of the civil wars in the mid 1980s, the three above mentioned Central American countries ravaged by civil wars have been ruled by right-wing governments characterized by their corruption and lack of concern for the utter social injustice that provoked the wars in the first place. The consequences of this right-wing hegemony could hardly be worse: Not only have the regional economies grown at a very modest pace since the mid 1980s, the distribution of income and numerous other social indicators have also deteriorated in the last 20 years. According to the UN Development Programme, in 2007 Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Honduras counted as the countries with the worst social standards in the Western hemisphere, as measured by the Human Development Index. Only Haiti ranked lower than the four Central American countries. And only Costa Rica ranked among the most developed Latin American countries.

This means that more than 20 years after the end of the civil wars, the new Central American leaders have to master in the future the unresolved social and economic challenges of the past, such as low growth, social injustice and a high growth of population. The situation is compounded by the grip the Colombian drug cartels exert upon many state institutions such as justice, police and local administrations, the ran-



South American countries have created the Bank of the South as a counterweight to the traditional hegemony of the international financial institutions.

dom violence that continues to affect the societies at large, the numerous youth gangs, also known as maras, the refusal of local economic elites to accept social change by consensus, and the incapacity of the state institutions, in part due to corruption, in part because of lack of resources, to perform their most elementary functions, as education and health, even in a perfunctory way. And, on top of it, the unchanged power structures, which drain the governments' capacities to implement social change, fulfil the people's expectations, and modernize the states' institutions.

The toughest challenge is probably being faced by the new Guatemalan government, in office since January. To begin with, the Colombian cocaine cartels have permeated practically all Guatemalan state institutions. According to consistent reports by the U.S. foreign ministry and the Drugs Enforcement Agency since 1999, up to 80 percent of all cocaine entering the United States passes through Guatemala. This traffic is only possible thanks to the complicity of local military, police, and municipal authorities, and of members of the local economic elite, including banking executives and landowners, with the cocaine dealers. An example: In a process involving the traffic of hundreds of tons of cocaine through Guatemala to the U.S. being litigated in a court in New York since several months, the main offenders are José Armando Llort, former CEO of the Guatemalan state-owned bank Crédito Hipotecario Nacional (CHN), Marco Antonio Lara Paiz, former executive of the Guatemalan branch of the defunct U.S. energy giant ENRON, and the landowner Byron Berganza.

The hidden powers

Former president Alfonso Portillo and numerous of his closest aides have also been accused of involvement in the misuse of the CHN as money laundering machinery for the cartels, as well as several high-ranking military officials, including general Francisco Ortega Menaldo, and colonels Jacobo Salán Sánchez, and Napoleón Rojas. These military officers, and others, appear repeatedly in international reports on crime in Central America, including the 2007 report by the UN office on drugs and crime, which described the above mentioned officers as *"the hidden powers that run the country."* This report notes that Guatemala has *"one of the lowest judges to population ratios, despite having high levels of crime."* No wonder, then, that only two percent of crime cases are resolved by the local justice and police departments. This reign of impunity forced the government that ruled Guatemala until Jan 2007, to urge the international community to create an independent commission formed by foreign prosecution experts to fight

against this failure of the local justice and police. This is the so-called CICIG, which started working short after the new government of Alvaro Colom took office earlier this year.

Another major challenge the governments in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua face, is dealing with youth criminality. Given that these countries' economies did register only a very modest growth since 1980 - the most performing economy, that of El Salvador's, grew from 2,432 U.S. dollars per capita that year, to 5,049 U.S. dollars in 2003; just for comparison purposes, the per capita income of Malaysia went up from 2,900 U.S. dollars to 13,317 U.S. dollars in the very same period - the demographic growth continues to put downward pressure on the overall social situation, especially through youth unemployment, and, hence, criminality. Then youth sees crime as a more lucrative activity than, say, collecting scraps in the mountains of garbage that surround the regions' major cities.

Economic ties with the U.S.

In addition, the U.S. policy of expulsion of illegal immigrants has inundated the Central American countries with hundreds of thousands of unqualified youth, many of them born in California and other U.S. federal states, and with a criminal past there. They form the core of the maras - ruthless criminal youth bands, involved in drugs dealings, kidnappings, and assassinations. Again, the inefficient police and justice departments, and the lack of social programmes aimed at integrating this youth into productive social activities, do not suggest that the governments will be celebrating great successes in this area. Add to that the regional economic dependency from the U.S. economy. Through bilateral free-trade agree-



Brazil's president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (left) and Chile's president Michelle Bachelet | Photo: www.spanish-safe-democracy.org

The spectre of revolution has disappeared in the turmoil of global geopolitics, but the risk of a social explosion provoked by poverty and hunger continues to loom in the horizon.

ments, all the Central American countries have reinforced their economic ties with the U.S. Now, the waves of recession that is most likely already affecting the U.S. economy will probably batter the Central American economies as well, which continue to rely on the exports of commodities and basic materials, textiles, and very few industrial goods marked by low local content, and on tourism.

Only the steady flow of remittances that illegal immigrants working in the U.S. send back home has helped these countries to survive the past two decades without a real social explosion. In all cases, again with the exception of Costa Rica, the remittances represent these countries' highest source of foreign currency. The fact that the money goes directly to the immigrants' families has contributed to improve the standards of living in rural areas, especially in what concerns children nutrition, education, and the quality of homes. Again for reasons of comparison: While the Guatemalan annual state budget amounts to some 5.3 billion U.S. dollars, the Guatemalan immigrants working illegally in the U.S. sent home last year almost 4.2 billion dollars. The ratio of remittances to the state budgets is similar in other Central American countries.

Lack of resources

These figures reveal another important handicap of the Central American states: Their traditional lack of resources to pay for elementary redistribution of income through basic services, as education,

health, infrastructure, and security; not to speak of more sophisticated state functions, such as the conception and implementation of an industrial policy aimed at diversifying the local production, to, among other goals, increase the local added-value of manufactured goods. In general, the tax burden in Central America is around 10 percent of the gross national product (GNP), and is mostly fed with indirect taxes, paid by consumers, with very low tax burden upon income. In developed countries, the tax burden roughly represents between 30 and 45 percent of GNP. This low tax burden reflects the consistent refusal of the Central American economic elites to financially contribute to solve their countries' most pressing social problems. This refusal is based, among other arguments, on the assumption that direct taxation hinders economic growth, but goes against the findings of new development studies, such as those of Valpy FitzGerald, from the Oxford University in Britain. FitzGerald has shown that direct taxation in Latin America has a barely significant negative relationship to economic growth. That is, growth is thus largely independent of tax rates.

Opposition of the economic elites

FitzGerald has also proven that, even assuming that a negative correlation may run between direct taxes and growth, doubling direct tax burden from 5 to 10% of GDP would only reduce growth by 0.4 percent. *"This is surely an acceptable price for the welfare gain,"* FitzGerald says. Similar conclusions have been reached by researchers at the International Monetary Fund, especially by Parthasarathi Shome. The low tax burden in Central America, and the stubborn opposition of the economic elites to increase it by new governments, confirms the old dictum that says that even if elections are a condition for democracy, it is not a sufficient one.

In the late 1970s, this insufficiency of nominal democracy in Central America, and the brutal intolerance to alternative political forces aimed at changing the patterns of income distribution, paved the way for the civil wars of the 1980s. This time, the spectre of revolution has disappeared in the turmoil of global geopolitics; but the risk of a social explosion provoked by poverty and hunger continues to loom in the horizon. A democratic change must also represent an effective change in the balance of power in order to really allow elected governments to tackle the urgent problems of their societies. Otherwise, elected governments will continue to fail in facing the challenges of the past - and the new ones, even more difficult to master.



Bolivia's President Evo Morales (left) and Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez | Photo: www.spanish-safe-democracy.org

Massaker ungesühnt

Druck auf Staatsanwaltschaft in Guatemala

Von Inés Benítez in Guatemala-Stadt | Deutsche Bearbeitung: Oliver Scheel

In Guatemala warten Opfer und Überlebende des Bürgerkrieges von 1960 bis 1996 und ihre Angehörigen auf die Umsetzung von drei Urteilen, die der Interamerikanische Gerichtshof für Menschenrechte (CIDH) der Organisation Amerikanischer Staaten (OAS) in den letzten Jahren verhängt hat. In den Resolutionen von 2001, 2002 und 2004 ist die Regierung angehalten, die Verantwortlichen für drei Massaker an der indigenen Bevölkerung zu identifizieren, strafrechtlich zu verfolgen und rechtskräftig zu verurteilen. Bekannt sind die Verbrechen unter 'Villagrán Morales und andere', 'Bámaca Velásquez' und 'Plan de Sánchez'. *"Der guatemaltekische Staat hat seine Schuld gegenüber den Opfern des Bürgerkrieges nicht beglichen"*, sagte Marcela Martino vom unabhängigen Zentrum für Gerechtigkeit und internationales Recht (CEJIL).

Eine Friedensvereinbarung aus dem Jahre 1996 hatte den 36-jährigen Bürgerkrieg zwischen den Rebellen der 'Nationalen Revolutionären Einheit Guatemalas' (URNG) und den Regierungstruppen beendet. Während des Konflikts wurden etwa 200.000 Menschen, in der Mehrheit Ureinwohner, ermordet. Eine Wahrheitskommission fand heraus, dass etwa 90 Prozent der Verbrechen auf das Konto der Armee und ihrer paramilitärischen Helfershelfer ging. Mario Minera, Leiter der Menschenrechtsorganisation 'Zentrum für legale Aktion für die Menschenrechte' (CALDH) beklagte *"die fehlende Bereitschaft der Staatsanwaltschaft, die Verantwortlichen zu bestrafen"*. Gerade durch das Massaker in Plan de Sánchez in der nördlichen Provinz Alta Verapaz, bei dem im Juli 1982 268 Menschen starben, sei das Recht auf Leben auf das Schlimmste verletzt worden.

Untersuchung ausgeblieben

Eine Untersuchung des Verbrechens, *"für das definitiv Ex-Diktator Rios Montt verantwortlich ist"*, habe nicht stattgefunden, kritisierte Juan Francisco Soto vom CALDH-Programm für Gerechtigkeit und Versöhnung. 1982 und 1983, in jenen zwei Jahren, die Rios Montt an der Macht war, wurden die meisten Verbrechen an der indigenen Bevölkerung begangen. Im Juli 2006 erließ ein spanisches Gericht internationalen Haftbefehl gegen Rios Montt und sieben ehemalige Mitglieder seiner Regierung. Zur Last gelegt werden ihnen Folter, Genozid und Staatsterrorismus. Initiatorin dieser Aktion war die indigene Menschenrechtsaktivistin Rigoberta Menchú, die 1992

den Friedensnobelpreis erhielt. Aus der Anklageschrift geht hervor, dass 83 Prozent der Bürgerkriegsopfer Angehörige der ethnischen Maya und 17 Prozent Mestizen waren. Viele der Opfer waren zuvor von ihren Peinigern gefoltert worden. Der 'schmutzige Krieg' trieb damals 1,5 Millionen Menschen in die Flucht. 45.000 Menschen gelten bis heute als 'verschwunden'. In 667 Massakern wurden 430 Dörfer von der Landkarte getilgt.

Hoffen auf neuen Staatschef

Die guatemaltekischen Menschenrechtsaktivisten und Überlebenden hoffen nun auf den seit Januar amtierenden Staatspräsidenten des zentralamerikanischen Landes, Álvaro Colom. *"Es wird Zeit, dass Maßnahmen ergriffen werden, damit die Generalstaatsanwalt endlich ihren Verpflichtungen nachkommen kann"*, so Martino. Auch im Zuge der beiden anderen Resolutionen 'Villagrán Morales und andere' und 'Bámaca Velásquez' steht eine Bestrafung der Täter noch aus. Bereits 1999 hatte der CIDH in einem Urteil festgehalten, dass der Staat Guatemala gegen die Amerikanische Menschenrechtskonvention verstoßen habe. Im Fall (Efraín) Bamaca Velásquez geht es um die Entführung, mutmaßliche Folter und Ermordung des gleichnamigen URNG-Kommandanten. Er wurde 1992 von Militärs verschleppt und ermordet. Der andere Fall nimmt Bezug auf die Entführung, Misshandlung und Ermordung von vier jungen Leuten 1990 durch die Sicherheitskräfte und einen weiteren Mord an einem Freund der Opfer wenige Tage später in Anwesenheit von Zeugen.

Martino wirft der Staatsanwaltschaft vor, den internationalen Gerichten wichtige Informationen vorzuenthalten. Immerhin wurde 2003 ein Nationales Ausgleichsprogramm ins Leben gerufen, das über einen Jahresetat in Höhe von 40 Millionen Dollar verfügt und mit einer Vielzahl von Maßnahmen den Opfern und deren Angehörigen hilft. Weil es aber kein nationales Register über die Opfer gibt, fehlen exakte Angaben über die genaue Anzahl derjenigen Menschen, die entschädigt werden müssen. Viel wichtiger als die Reparationszahlungen ist den Angehörigen der Bürgerkriegsopfer aber, dass die Schuldigen endlich zur Rechenschaft gezogen werden. Am 25. Februar, dem 'Tag der Würde der Bürgerkriegsopfer' sagte Colom die Öffnung der Nationalen Archive an.

IPS | KOMMUNIKATION GLOBAL ■

*"Wo sind die Kinder?"
Demonstration in Guatemala für
die im Bürgerkrieg verschwundenen
Familienangehörigen
Photo: Terre des Hommes*



Railway Station in San José,
Costa Rica | Photo: UNESCO

'U.S. Crisis Will Affect Growth, Exports, Tourism' in Costa Rica

Interview with Francisco de Paula, Central Bank President

The possibility of a recession in the United States is already causing repercussions in Costa Rica, where exports and the value of real estate in tourist areas are expected to contract, according to the president of the country's Central Bank, Francisco de Paula. Like several other Latin American countries, Costa Rica has signed a Free Trade Agreement with the United States, its main trading partner, but the treaty's entry into force depends on the Costa Rican parliament's approval of certain complementary laws. Costa Rican officials will have to take measures to weather the turbulence of international financial markets, triggered by the bursting of the U.S. housing market bubble. However, Costa Rica may not be as severely buffeted as other Central American countries, because of the "diversification" of its economy, de Paula said in an interview with IPS correspondent Daniel Zuera.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson admitted last week that the U.S. economy is going through a phase of "sharp decline", although he avoided the word "recession", which has already been used by a number of private sector analysts. The U.S. Federal Reserve lowered its interbank lending interest rate from an annual three percent to 2.25 percent in an attempt to reinvigorate the economy. The markets, according to experts, were hoping for an even larger rate cut.

IPS: How does this affect the Costa Rican economy?

Francisco de Paula: The crisis does affect us. There are already some signs, shall we say, of slowdown. It will be very difficult to avoid its effects, from the point of view of external demand. Fortunately we are in a position to face it, as we have ample reserves. It would be unrealistic to think that we could escape the effects of such a complex situation. Demand for our export products will fall, and we shall have to see what the impact is on the tourism industry. There is a potential element of compensation, in that U.S. tourists are finding it very difficult to travel to Europe or Asia because of the depreciation of the dollar. There could be a change in direction of tourist traffic, and Costa Rica is well-positioned to attract visitors. But another concern is that, if the recession bites deep, many people in the U.S. may decide to postpone their vacations. One question is how much that might affect real estate markets, and especially construction, in coastal areas in Costa Rica.

IPS: Will Costa Rica have to follow the Federal Reserve policy of cutting interest rates?

Francisco de Paula: We are within the U.S. economic sphere of influence, although we have different rhythms, levels and priorities. The United States is more concerned with growth than with inflation. For us, it's the reverse. But our interest rates policy cannot be divorced from that of the

We have the vulnerabilities of any Central American economy: dependence on imported oil and on certain commodities which have risen in price and hit us hard.

United States. The Federal Reserve's decisions directly affect us.

IPS: How would you describe the performance of the Costa Rican economy?

Francisco de Paula: In the past few years it has performed very encouragingly, with strong growth. In 2007 the economy grew by 6.8 percent, and by 8.8 percent in 2006, with a dynamic export sector and a high proportion of foreign direct investment, which have financed the country's needs for foreign currency reserves. The fiscal situation has improved. We predict economic growth of about 3.8 percent in 2008. In 2007 the open unemployment rate was 4.6 percent, the lowest in recent years. Poverty fell by three percentage points and now affects 16.7 percent of the population. I see a dynamic economy, with growth in several sectors, and which is not powered by a strong price increase in a single commodity, as in the case of other countries in the region.

IPS: What is the main concern?

Francisco de Paula: Inflation, which is still high. The forecast for 2007 was an eight percent rate, but by year-end, inflation stood at 10.8 percent. We have the vulnerabilities of any Central American economy: dependence on imported oil and on certain commodities which have risen in price and hit us hard. We import 100 percent of our wheat, and bread is a staple food. The impact of commodity prices prevented us from meeting the Central Bank's inflation targets. Last year we were on target for eight percent annual inflation until August, but in the last four months heavy external shocks knocked us off course.

IPS: Your predecessor, Eduardo Lizano, used to say that the Costa Rican economy "does the doggy-paddle," because it doesn't drown, but it barely keeps its head above water. Has it branched out into a more elegant swimming style?

Francisco de Paula: The "doggy" has been doing a lot of practising. We can take some important decisions. The exchange rate system's transition process is difficult. In October 2006 it changed from a system of mini-devaluations to one of exchange rate bands, with the goal that our currency, the colón, will eventually float freely with respect to other currencies. There were some temporary hitches, but the transition will allow the economy to make much more progress. The improvement in public finances, especially in tax collection, will help a great deal. But there is still much to do, for example in tax reform.

IPS: How well have the exchange rate bands succeeded, and when will the colón be freely floated?

Francisco de Paula: It has been quite a change for us, because previously we had 22 years of the mini-devaluation system. The transition was smooth. Floating the colón is part of a project to control inflation, a different way of setting monetary policy. One of the requirements is that the exchange rate be flexible. Flexible exchange rates are not an aim in and of themselves, but are one of the instruments we need in order to change the way we implement monetary policy, and to achieve better success in lowering inflation, which is our main concern.

IPS: Is the present boom due to the inflow of speculative capital? How might that affect the country?

Francisco de Paula: It's very difficult to measure. Our estimate is that 1.88 billion dollars entered the country in 2007 as foreign direct investment. That more than covered the deficit in the current account of our balance of payments. Of course, there is always concern about the volume of capital of a more speculative nature, which generates "bubbles" of demand, especially consumer demand.

One of the issues that concerns me is the growth of credit in the private sector, especially over the past year. We must be careful, because that could lead to situations like the one we are seeing in the United States, with a crisis resulting from a strong expansion of sub-prime mortgage lending, and consumer spending financed by credit cards.

IPS | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■



The President of Costa Rican Central Bank Francisco de Paula Gutierrez (left) and Chile's Leonardo Hernandez Tagle take part in the inauguration ceremony of the XLIV Meeting of Central Bank Governors of the American Continent in Montevideo 17 May 2007

Verschiebung der Kommunalwahlen in Nicaragua löst Unruhen aus

Von José Adán Silva in Managua | Deutsche Bearbeitung: Silke Graefinghoff

Photo: Pixelio

Die Entscheidung des Obersten Wahlrates, die für November geplanten Kommunalwahlen in drei Bezirken der Autonomen Region Nordatlantik (RAAN) zu verschieben, hat zu Unruhen in den betroffenen Gemeinden geführt. In der Region leben vornehmlich Angehörige der Miskito und anderer indigener Völker. Die Frage des Wahltermins spaltet die indigenen Gemeinschaften. Der Oberste Wahlrat hatte am 4. April beschlossen, die Gemeindewahlen in Puerto Cabezas, Waspan und Prinzapolka auf April nächsten Jahres zu verschieben. Sein Vorsitzender Roberto Rivas Reyes begründete die Entscheidung mit den durch den Hurrikan Felix im September angerichteten Schäden. Diese seien so schwerwiegend, dass sie die Durchführung der Wahlen in den drei Bezirken unmöglich mache.

RAAN ist eine von zwei autonomen Regionen an der Atlantikküste Nicaraguas. Hier, wo die Armut am größten ist, lebt der größte Teil der Ureinwohner. Die meisten Mitglieder gehören dem Volk der Miskito an. Darüber hinaus ist die Region Heimat von Mayangna, Rama, Kreolen, Garifuna und Mestizen. Hurrikan Felix hatte die Region im September mit einer Windgeschwindigkeit von bis zu 260 Stundenkilometern überrollt. Er hinterließ 253 Tote und rund 200.000 Obdachlose. Nach Regierungsangaben wurden mehr als 20.000 Häuser, 57 Kirchen, 102 Schulen und 43 Gesundheitszentren zerstört. Es stünden somit nicht genügend öffentliche Gebäude als Wahllokale zur Verfügung, lautet das Argument des Wahlausschusses. Auch eine Fraktion der Miskito-Organisation 'Yatama' hatte die Verschiebung der Wahlen aus eben diesem Grund gefordert. Doch die Organisation ist in sich tief gespalten. Ein Flügel unterstützt die linksgerichtete Nationale Sandinistische Befreiungsfront (FSLN), die seit Januar 2007 die Regierung stellt. Der andere Flügel besteht aus Anhängern der rechtsgerichteten Oppositionspartei Liberale Allianz Nicaraguas (ALN).

Verfeindete Gruppen

In Bilwi, der Hauptstadt des Bezirks Puerto Cabezas, lieferten sich beide Fraktionen erbitterte Straßenschlachten. Eine Gruppe von Demonstranten besetzte den Flughafen, eine andere belagerte die Zufahrtstraßen. Zugleich gab es Plünderungen von Geschäften, das Rathaus wurde angegriffen und staatliche Fahrzeuge angezündet. Beide Fraktionen nahmen Angehörige der jeweils anderen Gruppe gefangen. Die Geiseln wurden gefesselt, geschlagen und halbnackt in den von der jeweiligen Gruppe besetzten Straßen zur Schau gestellt. Die Nationalpolizei entsandte darauf hin rund hundert Polizeibeamte aus Managua in das Unruhegebiet. Ihren

Angaben zufolge wurden 13 Personen verletzt und 17 weitere festgenommen. *"Wir sind ein Volk, das von Armut, Hunger und Hurrikans geplagt ist. Die Kirchen und Schulen haben keine Dächer, und die Straßen sind unpassierbar. Wie kann man von den Leuten verlangen, unter solchen Bedingungen zur Wahl zu gehen?"* erklärte der Indianerführer und Parlamentsabgeordnete der FSLN, Brooklin Rivera. Auch Präsident Daniel Ortega hatte sich für die Verschiebung des Wahltermins ausgesprochen.

Der jüngste Streit ist nicht der erste seiner Art. Bei den Gemeindewahlen im Jahr 2000 hatte der Oberste Wahlrat Kandidaten der Yatama die Teilnahme untersagt, was schon damals zu Ausschreitungen geführt hatte. Yatama hatte daraufhin den Staat Nicaragua vor der Interamerikanischen Kommission für Menschenrechte verklagt und im Jahr 2005 Recht erhalten. Die Kommission sah in dem Wahlverbot eine Verletzung der politischen und der Menschenrechte der Ureinwohner.

Ausbeutung der indigenen Ressourcen

Osorno Coleman, Führer der liberalen Fraktion der Yatama, die für die Beibehaltung des Wahltermins im November ist, warf der FSLN Wahlmanipulation aus 'wirtschaftlichen Interessen' vor. *"Präsident Ortega und seine Leute machen in der Region Geschäfte. Sie wissen, dass sie, wenn sie die Wahl verlieren, nicht weiterhin mit den öffentlichen Ressourcen der RAAN Handel treiben können"*, sagte Coleman in einem IPS-Interview. Der Miskito-Führer ist seit langem ein erbitterter Gegner der Sandinisten. In den 80er Jahren hatte er auf Seiten der 'Contra', einer von den USA unterstützten Rebellenfraktion, gegen die damals ebenfalls von Ortega geführten sandinistische Regierung gekämpft. Auch andere Vertreter der Miskito werfen der Regierung die Ausbeutung ihrer natürlichen Ressourcen vor. *"Die Regierung hat Konzessionen für den Kahlschlag von Tausenden Hektar Wald an Firmen aus den USA und China vergeben. Gegenwärtig verhandeln sie mit Venezuela über die Ausbeutung der Erdölvorkommen"*, weiß Minerva Wilson zu berichten, die sich für die Rechte der indigenen Gemeinschaften in den Gemeinden Waspan und Prinzapolka einsetzt. Die Regierung hat dem Vorwurf bisher nichts entgegnet. Sie räumt aber ein, dass der Wiederaufbau der Region bisher nur langsam vorangekommen sei da es hierfür an Geld fehle. Erst Anfang April hatte Nicaragua den Internationalen Währungsfonds (IWF) um zusätzliche 30 Millionen Dollar Wiederaufbauhilfe für die durch den Hurrikan am meisten verwüsteten Gebiete gebeten.

IPS | KOMMUNIKATION GLOBAL ■

Staatsanwälte im Hungerstreik in Honduras

Von Thelma Mejía in Tegucigalpa | Deutsche Bearbeitung: Heike Nasdala

In Honduras wollen 25 Staatsanwälte mit einem Hungerstreik vor dem Parlamentsgebäude die Entlassung des Generalstaatsanwalts Leónidas Rosa und seines Stellvertreters Omar Cerna durchsetzen. Die Anwälte werfen Rosa und Cerna vor, Korruptionsprozesse gegen Spitzenvertreter der honduranischen Politik und Wirtschaft zu verschleppen. Wegen derselben Vorwürfe mussten 2005 die Vorgänger von Rosa und Cerna - Ovidio Navarro und Yuri Melara - ihren Hut nehmen. Von der Neubesetzung ihrer Posten mit Rosa, einem Vertreter der oppositionellen Nationalpartei (NP), und Cerna von der regierenden Liberalen Partei (LP) hatte sich das Parlament eine Verbesserung des schlechten Rufes der Generalstaatsanwaltschaft versprochen. Der rund 30-tägige Hungerstreik, an dem unter anderem der Präsident des honduranischen Verbandes der Staatsanwälte (AFH), Víctor Fernández, teilnimmt, zeigt, dass von einer erfolgreichen Imagekorrektur keine Rede sein kann.

Forderung gegen die Verfassung

Die Staatsanwälte hatten 2005 keine Einwände gegen die Ernennung von Rosa und Cerna, halten sie heute aber für irregulär. Auch verweigern sie dem honduranischen Parlamentspräsidenten, Roberto Micheletti, dem Leiter einer parteienübergreifenden Delegation, die mit den Demonstranten verhandelt, jedes Entgegenkommen, obwohl Micheletti sich für eine Prüfung der von den Streikenden verlangten Verfahren ausgesprochen hat. Der Parlamentspräsident wiederum argumentiert, die geforderte Entlassung von Rosa und Cerna sei verfassungswidrig. Erst im März 2009, wenn auch die Wahlen zur neuen Regierung anliefen, habe das Parlament unter anderem über die Neubesetzung der entscheidenden Posten bei der Generalstaatsanwaltschaft und beim Obersten Gerichtshof zu entscheiden. *„Eine Demokratie basiert auf Rechten und Pflichten. Wir sind in den Dialog mit den protestierenden Staatsanwälten eingestiegen und werden ihre Forderungen berücksichtigen, aber wir können nicht gegen Verfassung und Gesetz handeln“*, heißt es in einer Stellungnahme von Micheletti.

Mittlerweile fordern einige der streikenden Staatsanwälte nicht nur die Absetzung von Rosa und Cerna, sondern auch die Auflösung des Parlaments. *„Dieses Parlament ist keine Volksvertretung. Es steht auf der Seite der Mächtigen und deckt ihre Korruption“*, moniert Jari Dixon, einer der Streikenden. Ihre Vorwürfe finden Rückhalt bei Ureinwohnergruppen, der nationalen Widerstandsbewegung CNRP und

einigen Kirchenvertretern. Täglich erhalten die streikenden Staatsanwälte in ihrem Zelt vor dem Parlament Besuch von Sympathisanten, die sich auf eine Protestliste gegen die Korruption eintragen.

Für Wirbel sorgte unlängst, dass Staatspräsident Manuel Zelaya bei den Streikenden erschien, ihnen seine Unterstützung versicherte und sich sogar für einen Rücktritt seines Parteikollegen Cerna aussprach. Dass schließlich auch die PL-Vor-



Honduras' Generalstaatsanwalts Leónidas Rosa
Photo: www.gjo.gov.tw

sitzende Patricia Rodas diese Äußerungen bekräftigte, hat Zweifel an der Authentizität des Hungerstreiks laut werden lassen und die Opposition auf den Plan gerufen. Sie beschuldigt den Staatspräsidenten jetzt, er strebe eine zweite Amtszeit an, obwohl die Verfassung eine Wiederwahl verbietet. Analysten halten das Verhalten von Zelaya zumindest für unklug. Unterdessen wird die honduranische Presse der Parteinahme bezichtigt, und evangelikale Sekten nutzen die Gunst der Stunde, um eine Art symbolischen Exorzismus zu betreiben. Stapelweise verbrennen sie Zeitungen. Zugleich verbarrikadieren Straßenblockaden das Haus des Generalstaatsanwalts und den Zugang zum Parlament.

Warnung vor Anarchie

In einem Gespräch mit IPS sagte Rosa, er sei bereit, auf alle Forderungen der Streikenden einzugehen, solange er damit auf legalem Boden bleibe. Der honduranische Menschenrechtsombudsmann Ramón Custodio rät derweil dringend zur Wahrung der Rechtsstaatlichkeit und warnt, von einem Ausbruch der Anarchie werde allein die Unterwelt profitieren. Er denkt dabei unter anderem an die Drogenbarone, die aus Honduras einen Narco-Staat machen wollen.

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Energie- und Klimasicherheit sichern

Von Inge Kaul

Photo: Pixelio

Wir wissen, dass Nicht-Handeln, nicht auf die gegenwärtigen Herausforderungen im Energie- und Klimabereich zu reagieren, enorme Konsequenzen mit sich bringen kann - Wachstumsverlust, Armut, Verteilungskonflikte, verstärkte und neue Flüchtlingsströme und, möglicherweise, Kriege. Über diese Auswirkungen ist viel bekannt, viel bereits geschrieben und diskutiert worden. Es gibt auch zahlreiche Lösungsvorschläge. Nur, an praktisch-politischen Antworten, tatsächlichen Veränderungen mangelt es. Warum?

Ein wichtiger Grund scheint zu sein, dass sich unsere Ideen und Konzepte von Sicherheits- und Außenpolitik noch nicht voll an die heutigen Realitäten, an die gegenwärtige Ära der Globalisierung angepasst haben. Sie reflektieren noch weitgehend die Logik, die die Außenpolitik der Staaten während der Ära relativ geschlossener nationaler Grenzen kennzeichnete, nicht aber die heutige interdependente Welt, die neuen globalen Fragen, zu denen auch Energie- und Klimasicherheit gehören, auch nicht die neuen globalen Macht-konstellationen, die sich unter anderem aus der Entwicklung von Ländern wie Brasilien, Indien, China und Südafrika ergeben haben.

Stippvisite bei G-8-Gipfeltreffen

Energie- und Klimasicherheit sowie die effektive Lösung vieler anderer globaler Fragen erfordern in Anbetracht dieser neuen Realitäten einen außenpolitischen Paradigmenwechsel. Sie verlangen nach internationaler Zusammenarbeit, die Interdependenz akzeptiert und damit auch die Tatsache, dass das eigene nationale Wohlergehen heute oft besser durch Win-win-Strategien zu maximieren ist - durch Strategien, die von allen Staaten mitkonzipiert werden und internationale Kooperation für alle Beteiligten sinnvoll und attraktiv machen - und nicht durch Strategien, die darauf ausgelegt sind, einigen Akteuren kurzfristige nationale Vorteile zu

sichern, anderen Nationen Lösungen aufzuzwängen, oder andere Nationen "großzügig" mit an den Tisch zu bitten, etwa als O(Outreach)-5 zu einer Stippvisite bei G-8-Gipfeltreffen. Energie- und Klimaprobleme (sowie auch globale Gesundheits- oder auch Finanzprobleme) können selbst in den mächtigsten Ländern nicht allein durch nationale Politikmaßnahmen gelöst werden. Sie bedürfen der Kooperation anderer Staaten und oft der Kooperation fast aller Menschen - eine Herausforderung, die sich nur dann bewältigen lässt, wenn alle freiwillig mitmachen, weil es sich lohnt und dem langfristigen Wohlergehen dient. Wie aber wäre ein solcher außenpolitischer Paradigmenwechsel zu erreichen? Die folgenden Maßnahmen erscheinen prioritär:

1. Statt G-8-Erweiterung und Outreach Gründung einer neuen G-X

Zur Akzeptanz einer neuen Kooperationslogik kann es auf zwei grundsätzlich verschiedenen Wegen kommen: "Leadership" und eine realistisch-visionäre Politik ist eine Möglichkeit, die Erfahrung einer tief greifenden Katastrophe, die zu neuen Einsichten zwingt, die andere Möglichkeit. Nehmen wir an, wir bevorzugen den ersten Weg. Es stellt sich dann die Frage, in welchem Leadership-Forum sich die heutigen Staats- und Regierungschefs auf eine neue Kooperationslogik - die Befolgung von Win-win-Strategien - einigen könnten. Die G-8, selbst in erweiterter Form, d.h. mit O-5-Partizipation, scheint nicht der beste Rahmen zu sein. Interdependenz bedeutet, dass wir, die Länder der Welt, in der Tat alle in dem berühmten "selben Boot" sitzen. Wir sind aufeinander angewiesen und mithin gleich in unserer Interdependenz.

Es gibt ressourcen-reiche Länder, denen ihre Ressourcen wenig nützen, weil sich der Schlüssel zur Lösung vieler globaler Fragen in den Händen der problem-reichen Länder befinden. Und es gibt

Zur neuen Logik von internationaler Kooperation

neue ressourcenreiche Länder, deren Stimmen und Interessen heute oft nur ungenügend gehört und berücksichtigt werden und die deshalb auch nur zögernd zum Mitwirken an Lösungen bereit sind. Notwendig wäre mithin die Gründung einer neuen Leadership-Gruppe, nennen wir sie vorläufig G-X, die klein genug wäre, um direkte Aussprache auf höchster Politikebene zu gestatten, die dezidiert handeln könnte, aber auch repräsentativ genug wäre, um Legitimität zu besitzen. Die G-X wäre das globale Forum, in dem sich die *"world leaders"* über die großen globalen Probleme verständigen könnten - wohlwissend, dass sie ihre gegenseitige Unterstützung brauchen und damit auch ein *"give-and-take"*.

2. Von G-X-Worten zu Taten:

Die Gründung von themenspezifischen Gs

Obwohl die meisten globalen Fragen Interdependenz involvieren, brauchen sie einen eigenen, themenspezifischen Ansatz, weil sie jeweils unterschiedliche Akteure mit unterschiedlichen Interessen und Präferenzen einbeziehen. Mit anderen Worten, unsere bisherigen Organisationsprinzipien und Institutionen müssten ergänzt werden. Zusätzlich zu sektoralen Einteilungen (z.B. in die Ministerien für Landwirtschaft, Industrie, Erziehung, Gesundheit, Finanzen etc.) und territorialen Einteilungen (z.B. in Städte, Provinzen, Staaten und Regionen) müsste es in Zukunft auch themenspezifische Einteilungen und Abgrenzungen geben - etwa für die Bereiche Klimasicherheit, Energiesicherheit, Aidskontrolle, Finanzstabilität und

Terrorismusbekämpfung. Genauer gesagt, um Win-win-Strategien für jedes dieser vordringlichen globalen Probleme auszuhandeln, wäre es nützlich, für die politische Begleitung der Implementierung von G-X-Beschlüssen thematisch orientierte Leadership-Gruppen zu etablieren, die Politikoptionen skizzieren, Handlungsbereitschaft versichern und darüber wachen, dass relevante multilaterale Gremien und Organisationen Resolutionen und Bekundungen von Reformabsichten in praktisch-politische Maßnahmen umsetzen und tatsächliche Veränderungen herbeiführen. Diese thematischen Gs könnten auf Ministerebene arbeiten. Genauer gesagt, es wäre wünschenswert, mehrere Sicherheitsräte zu etablieren. Der jetzige UN-Sicherheitsrat wäre der Rat zur Förderung und Garantie von territorialer Sicherheit. Um dem heutigen erweiterten Sicherheitsbegriff Rechnung zu tragen, wäre es jedoch notwendig, weitere Sicherheitsräte einzurichten, in denen die jeweils relevanten Hauptakteure vertreten wären. Man könnte u.a. an Sicherheitsräte für globale Gesundheit, Ernährungssicherheit, Klimastabilität und Energiesicherheit denken.

3. Anpassung nationaler Politikinstitutionen an die Globalisierung

Was für die Neuordnung der internationalen Gremien und Politikforen gilt, gilt natürlich auch, wenn nicht sogar noch mehr, für nationale Politikinstitutionen. Zu überprüfen wäre, inwieweit die Gruppierung parlamentarischer Ausschüsse bereits themenspezifisch organisiert ist. Welcher Ausschuss des deutschen

Die Globalisierung hat die gegenwärtigen Politikverhältnisse so grundlegend geändert, dass Einzelmaßnahmen nicht ausreichen.

Die fundamentalste Innovation des neuen Multilateralismus allerdings wäre, diesen Multilateralismus tatsächlich multilateral - und also gemeinsam - zu konzipieren.

Parlaments oder welche deutsche Regierungsbehörde befasst sich etwa mit den multisektoralen, vielschichtigen und von vielen Akteuren getragenen Aspekten der Energie- und Klimasicherheit? Wer entscheidet, was am besten national, was regional (z.B. auf EU-Ebene) und was vorzugsweise international zu machen wäre? Wer erstellt Kosten-Nutzen-Rechnungen darüber, ob sich Kooperation auf der Basis von Win-win-Strategien lohnt? (Und in den meisten Fällen würde sie sich lohnen und sogar die effizienteste Politikoption darstellen.)

4. Zur Zukunft des Multilateralismus: Wie soll ein "UN-System 3.0" ausschauen?

1939 setzte US-Präsident Roosevelt eine Studiengruppe ein, die sich mit den Konturen des UN-Systems befasste. Wäre es nicht an der Zeit, ein ähnliches Projekt noch einmal zu starten? Die Globalisierung hat die gegenwärtigen Politikverhältnisse so grundlegend geändert, dass Einzelmaßnahmen nicht ausreichen. Die vorhergehenden Empfehlungen gehen zwar vielleicht in die richtige Richtung, sie bedürfen aber der Einbettung in ein neues Gesamtsystem. Wenn wir den Völkerbund als UN 1.0 ansehen und die jetzige UN als Multilateralismus 2.0, dann wäre es jetzt an der Zeit, über das zukünftige System des Multilateralismus nachzudenken, über die UN 3.0 - eine UN für das Zeitalter der Globalisierung. Eine zentrale Herausforderung an den neuen Multilateralismus besteht darin, die Grundprinzipien des internationalen Zusammenlebens neu zu durchdenken. Die Hauptnorm bislang ist die der kollektiven Sicherheit: der Nicht-Verletzung nationaler Staatsgrenzen.

Seit kurzem hat sich eine zweite grundlegende Norm dazugesellt: die der *"responsibility to protect (R2P)"*. Sie bedarf noch weiterer Diskussion und gemeinsamer Interpretation. Derzeit bezieht sich dieses Prinzip nur auf den Schutz grundlegender Menschenrechte und die Verhinderung von Völkermord. Sollte es sich nicht auch auf die Verantwortung souveräner Staaten beziehen, die Grenzen der Natur zu respektieren? Eine weitere Frage an den neuen Multilateralismus wäre, ob wir mit den natürlichen Grenzen wie mit den ter-

ritorialen Grenzen verfahren sollten und sie anerkennen, aber auch zu überwinden versuchen. Die blockierenden Auswirkungen der Ländergrenzen auf Wirtschaft und Entwicklung sind durch den technologischen Fortschritt und durch Liberalisierungsmaßnahmen weitgehend überwunden worden. Die Grenzen der natürlichen Umwelt könnten vielleicht in ähnlicher Weise überwunden werden - durch eine aktive Forschungs- und Technologiepolitik, vornehmlich im Energie- und Klimabereich. So wie die ökonomische und politische Liberalisierung würde eine solche Politik nach grenzüberschreitender Harmonisierung verlangen - nach *"deep integration"*. Die fundamentalste Innovation des neuen Multilateralismus allerdings wäre, diesen Multilateralismus tatsächlich multilateral - und also gemeinsam - zu konzipieren. Es gibt heute keine Siegermächte mehr, es gibt nur noch interdependente Staaten. Deshalb sollten alle effektiv mitdebattieren, und deshalb werden von internationaler Kooperation heute auch mehr und mehr Win-win-Lösungen verlangt.

"Responsibility to protect"

Vielleicht könnte es sich die G-X ja zum Ziel setzen, eine Debatte über die Zukunft des Multilateralismus und die Grundzüge eines neuen UN-Systems anzustoßen. Es gibt bereits viele Einzelschritte zur Förderung der Energie- und Klimasicherheit. All das ist wichtig, wird aber, wenn überhaupt, nur sehr langsam zu einem wirklichen politischen Durchbruch führen und Katastrophen effektiv bannen helfen. Der Hauptvorschlag dieses Beitrags ist es, Energie- und Klimasicherheit in eine neue moderne Politik der internationalen Zusammenarbeit zu integrieren - in einen neuen Multilateralismus, der auf einem erweiterten Begriff der kollektiven Sicherheit basiert, die globalen Machtverschiebungen der letzten Jahrzehnte akzeptiert und die Logik von Win-win-Kooperation unter den Bedingungen der Interdependenz erkennt.



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Kommentare und Anmerkungen zu diesem Beitrag können gerichtet werden an: inge-kaul@t-online.de. Wir geben den Text einer Rede wieder, den Frau Kaul auf einer Veranstaltung der Bundestagsfraktion von Bündnis 90/Die Grünen hielt.

Armutsbekämpfung zu geringen Kosten

Von Mario Osava in Rio de Janeiro | Deutsche Bearbeitung: Heike Nasdala

Photo: UNESCO

In Lateinamerika haben sogenannte 'Conditional Cash Transfer'-Programme (CCT) zur Armutsbekämpfung große Erfolge zu verbuchen. Inzwischen setzen über zwölf Staaten in der Region auf die vergleichsweise preiswerte Hilfe, die an Empfänger direkt ausgezahlt wird, sofern sie bestimmte Bedingungen erfüllen und aktiv an der Verbesserung ihrer Lage mitarbeiten. Besonders viele Menschen profitieren von dieser Art der Direkthilfe in Brasilien und Mexiko. Die brasilianische Initiative 'Familien-Zuschuss' erreicht 11,1 Million verarmte Haushalte, die mexikanische Kampagne 'Gelegenheiten' fünf Millionen. Die chilenische Kampagne 'Solidarität' kommt demgegenüber nur 290.000 Familien zugute, das kolumbianische Programm 'Familien in Aktion' sogar nur 1.500 Haushalten. *"Der typische Empfänger der direkten und mobilisierenden Hilfe ist ein armer Haushalt auf dem Land mit einem weiblichen und indigenen Vorstand"*, erläutert Verónica Silva, Leiterin des chilenischen Sozialschutzsystems.

Armut um 35 Prozent gesenkt

Die 2002 angelaufene chilenische Solidaritätskampagne wendet sich zu 40 Prozent an Familien in ländlichen Gegenden. Dort lebt das Gros der Armen, zu denen 2000 5,6 Prozent der chilenischen Bevölkerung zählten. Ziel der Direkthilfe ist es, die Familien so zu stärken, dass die monatlichen staatlichen Zuschüsse über zwei Jahre sukzessive von 28 US-Dollar auf acht Dollar gesenkt werden können. Nach Weltbankangaben geht die Rechnung auf. Dem internationalen Finanzinstitut zufolge hat die Kampagne Solidarität in der chilenischen Bevölkerung die extreme Armut um 18 Prozent und die Armut um 35 Prozent senken können. Auch das seit 2003 existierende brasilianische Programm Familien-Zuschuss, das bedürftige Haushalte mit zwischen 10,5 und 100 Dollar im Monat unterstützt, wenn die Kinder der Familie zur Schule gehen, geimpft, regelmäßig ärztlich betreut und gut ernährt werden, hat große Erfolge eingebracht.

Zusammen mit anderen Sozialprogrammen, die schon seit den 90er Jahren laufen, konnte der Familien-Zuschuss die Kluft zwischen Arm und Reich in den Jahren zwischen 1995 und 2004 um 21 Prozent verkleinern. Zwischen 1993 und 2006 ist der Anteil der Brasilianer, die unterhalb der Armutsgrenze leben, von 35,3 auf 19,3 Prozent zurückgegangen. Allein 2006 fanden in dem mit 188 Millionen Einwohnern größten lateinamerikanischen Staat 5,8

Millionen Menschen den Weg aus der Armut. Auch fiel in den Jahren 1993 bis 2006 die Armut in ländlichen Gebieten von 63,7 auf 40,9 Prozent. Dazu trugen allerdings auch die Pensionen bei, die in Brasilien selbst Arbeiter im informellen Sektor erhalten. 7,7 Millionen Feldarbeiter im Ruhestand beziehen heute eine Altersrente in Höhe des gesetzlichen Mindestlohnes von 245 Dollar im Monat. Der Familien-Zuschuss geht zu 30,8 Prozent an Familien auf dem Lande, wo 18 Prozent der brasilianischen Bevölkerung leben und die Armut besonders groß ist. Das Programm verschlingt dabei nicht mehr als 0,7 Prozent des Nationaleinkommens. In Pombal, einer armen Stadt mit 33.000 Einwohnern im nordostbrasilianischen Bundesstaat Paraíba, nehmen 3.710 Familien die Hilfe in Anspruch. Sie hat einige 100 Haushalte so gestärkt, dass sie mittlerweile auf die Unterstützung nicht mehr angewiesen sind.

"Fortschritt und Gelegenheiten"

In Mexiko lief 'Fortschritt', das erste konditionierte Direkthilfeprogramm, 1997 an - nach der Wirtschaftskrise der Jahre 1994 und 1995. Sein Nachfolger ist das Projekt 'Gelegenheiten'. Zwischen 2000 und 2006 ging der Anteil der Armen in Mexiko von 53,6 auf 42,6 Prozent der Bevölkerung zurück, auch sank die Kindersterblichkeitsrate um elf Prozent. Zu verdanken ist dies der Direkthilfe, die sich zunächst an 300.000 Familien richtete und heute fünf Millionen Haushalte in 96.000 marginalisierten Regionen unterstützt. Die Empfänger leben zu 86 Prozent in ländlichen Regionen. Dass trotz der inzwischen besseren Lebensbedingungen auf dem Lande die Abwanderung gerade der jungen Menschen nicht abreißt, führen Experten wie der Sozialberater Santiago Fernández auf die hohe Attraktivität der Städte und der USA zurück.

In Kolumbien erreicht das 2001 angelaufene Programm 'Familien in Aktion' zwar nur 1.500 Haushalte mit Zuschüssen für Bildung und Ernährung in Höhe von 8,5 bis 27 Dollar im Monat, aber auch diese Hilfe wirkt segensreich. Sie richtet sich insbesondere an Mütter, die in dem über 40-jährigen Bürgerkrieg vertrieben wurden. *"Die Hilfe fiel vom Himmel"*, sagt Fernando Parra, der mit seiner elfköpfigen Familie im Jahre 2001 das südliche Department Huila verlassen musste. Er ist heute einer der Gemeindeführer in Ciudad Bolívar, einem Armenviertel der Hauptstadt Bogotá, wo viele der Vertriebenen des Bürgerkrieges untergekommen sind.

Is a Global News Agency of the South Viable?

Interview with Ernest Corea by Thalif Deen

When the tart-tongued prime minister of a Southeast Asian nation was once asked what the leading newspapers were in his country, he remarked rather cynically: "We don't have any leading newspapers because all our newspapers are misleading." They were "misleading", he explained, because the local newspapers were forced to depend on Western news agencies for their coverage of global events, mostly lacking a Third World perspective. Moreover, he said, the mainstream Western media rarely focused on issues relevant to developing nations, including poverty, hunger, population, health care, children, gender empowerment and the environment. As a result, there has been a longstanding demand for strengthening national news services and regional news agencies in developing nations - leading perhaps to the creation of a global network of news agencies of the South. But how far is this viable? At the 2005 World Summit on the Information Society, held in Tunisia, the 130-member Group of 77 (G-77), the largest single coalition of developing nations, expressed strong support for a Plan of Action to strengthen information and communications technologies (ICTs) in developing nations, and to promote the use of information and knowledge for the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. A G-77 expert group meeting is scheduled to take place in Antigua and Barbuda next week to discuss ways to strengthen South-South cooperation, including in the fields of media and communications.

Ernest Corea, a former chair of the Commonwealth Select Committee on Communications and Development in London and principal author of the committee's two reports, admitted that several attempts were made in the 1960s to set up news and feature services reflecting mostly the views of developing nations, and responding to their people's needs. "A number of national and regional news agencies still survive in Africa, Asia, and Latin America," said Corea, formerly Sri Lanka's ambassador to the United States and a one-time foreign affairs columnist, editorial writer, and foreign news editor of the Straits Times in Singapore. "But most efforts at building up transnational news /features services

reflecting the perspectives of the global South - such as DEPTHNEWS, Gemini News Service, and the Non-Aligned News Agency Pool - failed," he said.

In an interview with IPS U.N Bureau Chief Thalif Deen, Corea also said the reasons for failure included governmental intrusion, inadequate resources and constraints on news reporting, including censorship and intimidation in several developing countries, and lack of support from editors and managers in the South. "It is too early to assess the newly-created Non-Aligned News Network (based in Malaysia). The great success story of the South, of course, is your own Inter Press Service (IPS) which has 'stayed the course'," he added. Excerpts from the interview follow.

IPS: Why should an alternate news service succeed now when it failed earlier? Would the explosion of new technology, including the Internet and online websites, which did not exist in the 1960s and '70s, help in the creation of any news / feature services now?

Ernest Corea: Conceptually, yes, using the Internet should give a professional news / feature service a broad spread. In practice, however, the imbalance in access to the Internet challenges the concept. For example, "World Development Indicators 2007" shows that Internet users per 1,000 people in the following countries are: Afghanistan 1, Argentina 83, Bangladesh 81, Belgium 458, Botswana 34, Brazil 195, Central African Republic 3, Germany 455, U.S. 630.

IPS: Since some countries, particularly in Africa, are lagging far behind other developing nations, particularly in Asia, don't you think it would be imperative to improve information and communications technologies, including access to the Internet, before launching alternate news services?

Ernest Corea: Yes, modern information technologies should be used as poor people's tools for empowerment, and not only as a preserve of the affluent.

IPS: Do you think the creation of a global news agency of the South or a network of news agencies of the South is viable? Or is it more practical that, for starters, there should be a concerted effort to build up



"Communications are an essential component of development." - Ernest Corea

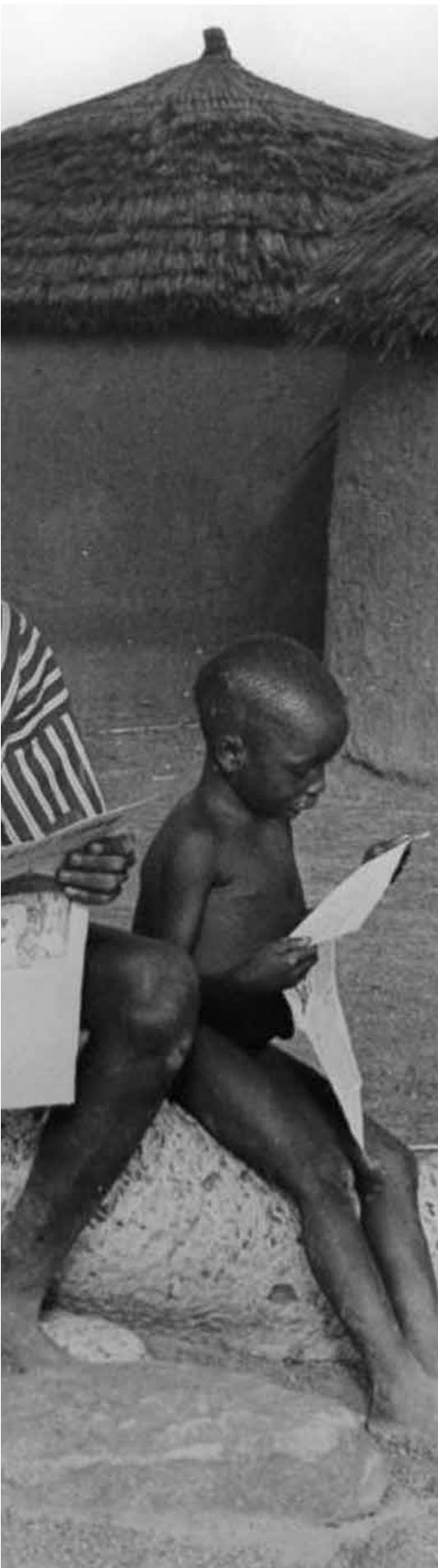


Photo: UNESCO

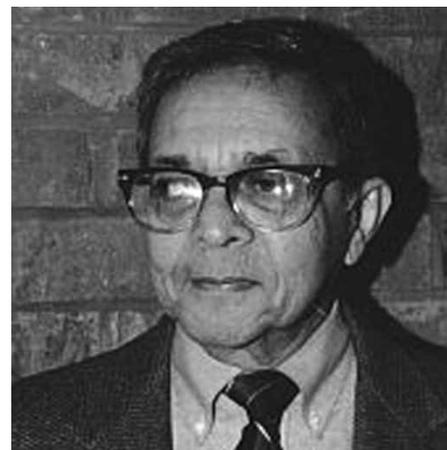
South-South cooperation, including training and capacity building, among news agencies and newspapers in the developing world?

Ernest Corea: This is another version of the "chicken and egg" question. Capacity building and institution building are both important. Let me ask myself: Is a transnational news-features agency of the South necessary? Yes. The best North-based transnational news and features outlets write or broadcast with understanding and skill. They are, however, conflict-oriented - "if it bleeds, it leads", as former U.N. Under-Secretary General for Communications and Public Information Shashi Tharoor once said - and they neglect coverage that is of specific significance to Southern readers / listeners / viewers.

They also neglect trends in developing countries, as opposed to "breaking news", and they are not committed to enabling Southern countries to understand each other better and learn from each other's experiences. Would such a service be viable? Yes, if it is adequately funded to maintain professional staff in all departments, if governments do not attempt to control it, and if media establishments in the South are committed to using it. An alternate source of information is always an asset. Does such a source already exist? Yes, at the risk of embarrassing you, let me say it's your own IPS. Helping to develop IPS further as a global, South-oriented service should be a great South-South project.

IPS: As you know, the Group of 77 which emerged from the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has been strongly identified with development issues. Do you think it should also focus strongly on communications?

Ernest Corea: To begin with, communications are an essential component of development. Moreover, the G-77 was long convinced that the South was, by and large, shoddily treated by the international news services and Northern media in general. In May 1974, a G-77 initiative resulted in the U.N. General Assembly adopting a *Declaration of the Establishment of a New International Information Order* (NIIO). Subsequently, at the General Con-



Ernest Corea | Photo: IPS

ference of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in October 1980, the G77 tabled a "Declaration on a New International Information Order" which called for the elimination of imbalances and inequalities in the dissemination of news and the removal of internal and external obstacles to a free flow of news. The Doha Plan of Action endorsed at the Second South Summit held in Doha, Qatar in June 2005, emphasised the importance of increasing human and institutional capacity in developing countries for information communications technologies.

IPS: What was the result of the UNESCO Declaration?

Ernest Corea: The initial outcome was a riposte from U.S. media. Time carried a full-page commentary under the headline "The Global First Amendment War". Of the 88 percent of U.S. newspapers that commented editorially on the UNESCO conference, 87 percent opposed the Declaration, and 27 newspapers suggested that the U.S. should leave UNESCO if it attempted to implement the Declaration. Subsequently, a group of 100 media representatives from 21 Northern nations, including the U.S., adopted the "Declaration of Talloires" (France) which urged UNESCO to "abandon attempts" to follow through on the Declaration. Finally, UNESCO, which was the Declaration's "implementing agency", gave up the task which it was not suited to undertake in the first place. International bureaucrats have no place in newsrooms.



Photo: UNESCO

An Alternative Voice

Gambian Journalists Launch Online Radio

By Barbara Skerath

People in The Gambia are no longer cut off from uncensored information. A group of ten Gambian media practitioners based in Dakar and Banjul have launched an online radio - the first of its kind in the region - that focuses on issues affecting the lives of Gambians inside and outside the country. Radio Alternative Voice (Radio AVG - www.radioavg.com) offers programmes in English, Mandingka and Wolof and wants to serve as an alternative means of communication enabling people to make informed choices on the political, economic, social and cultural development of The Gambia.

The Radio AVG project is meant to monitor and report on human rights issues in The Gambia and promote respect for a free flow of information and opinion. Amie Joof, General Coordinator of the project and a well-known journalist from The Gambia now living in Dakar, says: *"This is like a dream come true! I am excited about the online radio and I hope it gives more voice to Gambians. We cannot continue to live in a country where divergent views cannot be expressed."* In order to reach out to the Gambian communities, especially

those without internet access, programmes will be relayed by local radio stations in Senegal whose signals reach The Gambia. The programme will also be downloaded onto CDs and tapes for free distribution across the country. In The Gambia, where adult illiteracy is 52 percent and only a minority can afford to buy newspapers, radio is still the most accessible source of information.

Freedom of expression is non-existent

Until 1970, when the first private radio station in Africa was set up in Banjul, the government-owned Radio Gambia was the only radio station in the country. In the meantime, numerous private FM stations have been established in the country. Presently, there are six of them (excluding Citizen FM and Radio Sud which were closed down by the government) plus four community radio stations. Most private stations are based in and around the capital and their signal can hardly reach beyond a few kilometres outside Banjul. For fear of being closed down, they almost exclusively

play music and rarely disseminate local news bulletins. The only news that can be heard throughout the country are those broadcast by the national broadcaster, Radio Gambia.

Since the introduction of the National Media Commission Bill in 1999 subjecting journalists to a regime of threats and restrictions, the media situation in The Gambia has deteriorated at a fast rate. Freedom of expression is virtually non-existent. As a result of frequent arrest and detention and the arbitrary closure of their media houses, most Gambian journalists have either quit, left the country or resorted to self-censorship. Indeed, after the closure of both Citizen FM and Sud FM, apparently for carrying critical news about the government, all remaining private radio stations have virtually steered away from politics or anything that would put them on a collision course with the government. Print media also are treading softly, particularly since the brutal murder of Deyda Hydara, co-owner and managing editor of The Point newspaper in December 2004. An increasing crackdown on independent media followed in 2006 when nume-

rous Gambian journalists, including the Director of the Independent newspaper, Madi Ceesay, were arrested and detained without charge. Since then, many journalists have gone into hiding or exile in Senegal or elsewhere, thus further undermining the independent media in the country. In view of the current political atmosphere in The Gambia which is characterized by unlawful detentions, closures and burnings of media houses, eavesdropping by security agents, suppression of information and a general sense of fear, a group of Dakar-based journalists with their counterparts in Banjul felt it necessary to provide the Gambian people with an alternative means of accessing information that is impartial and independent.

As it is, the vast majority of people in The Gambia rely on state-controlled media outlets and have almost no chance to learn what is really going on in their country. They do not know, for example, about forthcoming food shortages or the

extent of the AIDS pandemic, about economic developments and their human rights. Radio Alternative Voice seeks to fill the gap by giving a voice to the voiceless and by sharing information that would not only create awareness, but also build support for empowerment and attitudinal change. The project aims to monitor human rights issues in The Gambia and wants to promote dialogue and public debate on the future of the country. It also wants to provide space for civil society organizations to project their activities and encourage people to take part in them.

Dialogue and public debate

Feedback received to date from both Gambians and non-Gambians is very positive. Apparently, people have long been waiting for an alternative and uncensored source of information. The government in The Gambia has kept

quite so far. According to Amie Joof, *"our colleagues in The Gambia have not been questioned or harassed yet... but it is a wait-and-see situation. We do not expect any negative feedback from the government because we are simply doing our job as journalists."*

Radio AVG is part of the ongoing campaign for the defence and promotion of freedom of expression and press freedom in The Gambia. The project is initiated in partnership with International Media Support (IMS), Network of African Freedom of Expression Organisations (NAFEO), Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), Network Media Programme of the Open Society Institute (OSI), Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), Africa Regional Office, Foroyaa and Inter Africa Network for Women, Media, Gender Equity and Development (FAMEDEV).

FAMEDEV | KOMMUNIKATION GLOBAL ■

Report Slams Culture of Impunity

By Haider Rizvi in New York

For journalists across the world, last year was the deadliest in more than a decade, according to the U.S.-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), which monitors violations of press freedom. Launching its annual report, *"Attacks on the Press"*, at a news conference, the group charged that governments in many countries were becoming increasingly hostile to journalists. *"There has been no prosecution in 85 percent of cases,"* said Dave Marash, a noted television journalist. *"This is creating a very dangerous situation for journalists."* CPJ urged U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to press member countries to respect press freedom. *"He must send a signal to member states against impunity,"* Marash added. CPJ research shows that as many as 65 journalists were killed last year for motives directly connected to their work. These numbers are up from 56 deaths recorded last year. The group is still investigating another 22 deaths to determine whether they were work-related.

32 journalists died in 2006

According to CPJ, 1994 was the worst year, when as many as 66 journalists were killed. Most of those who died that year were working in conflict zones such as

Algeria, Bosnia and Rwanda. The report describes Iraq as the *"deadliest"* country in the world for the press. For the fifth straight year, Iraq remains the most dangerous place for media workers. Its 31 victims account for nearly half of the 2007 toll. The group said many journalists who lost their lives in Iraq, including Washington Post reporter Salih Aldin, who died in Baghdad from a single gunshot wound to the head, were victims of targeted killings. The analysis shows that 24 deaths in Iraq last year were plain *"murders"*. Unidentified gunmen, suicide bombers, and U.S. military activity pose serious risks to journalists. All but one of 31 journalists killed were Iraqi nationals. According to CPJ, the 2007 toll in Iraq is *"consistent"* with that of 2006, when 32 journalists died.

The report describes Somalia as the second-deadliest country for the media in 2007, with seven journalists killed. *"Horrific violence in Iraq overshadowed the increasingly deteriorating environment for the media in Somalia,"* said CPJ's executive director Joel Simon. According to CPJ, deaths spiked in Africa, from two in 2006 to 10 last year. In 2007, two journalists were killed in Eritrea and one in Zimbabwe. *"While accepting accolades from Western donors, repressive leaders in Ethiopia, the*

Gambia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have cracked down on critical media, shuttering newspapers and putting journalists in jail," the report says.

Unsolved killings spread fear

Beneath the terrible numbers, the group's research also shows some positive developments. There were no murders of journalists in Colombia - the first time in more than 15 years. Also, for the first time since 1999, there were no work-related killings of journalists in the Philippines. Worldwide, according to CPJ, murder remains the leading cause of work-related deaths for journalists. The group said seven in 10 deaths which occurred in 2007 were murders. The rest were either combat-related deaths or a result of dangerous assignments. Last November, CPJ launched a global campaign against impunity to seek justice in journalist murders. The campaign focuses on the Philippines and Russia, two of the deadliest countries for the press over the past 15 years. Despite recent convictions in both countries, the impunity rate in each remains at about 90 percent. *"Unsolved killings spread fear and self-censorship, crippling the work of the media,"* said Simon. *"We need to break the cycle by bringing the killers of journalists to justice."*

In every region of the world, journalists who produced critical reporting or covered sensitive stories were silenced, said Simon, noting that in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, five journalists were killed for their work. In Pakistan, Muhammad Arif of ARY and two other journalists lost their lives as a result of suicide bombings. The report recalls how millions of people around the globe watched the apparently deliberate murder of Japanese photographer Kenji Nagai by Burmese troops during the crackdown on antigovernment demonstrators in Rangoon. No apparent moves have been made to bring his killer to justice. It also mentions the assassination of Turkish-Armenian editor Hrant Dink outside his newspaper office in Istanbul, which sent shock waves through the Turkish press and the international community. In Kyrgyzstan, ethnic Uzbek journalist Alisher Saipov was shot and killed at close range, and in Peru, popular radio commentator Miguel Pérez Julca was gunned down in front of his family.

Hundreds of cases of media repression in dozens of countries

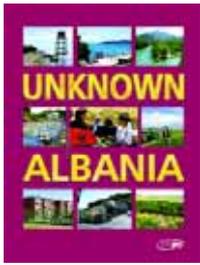
Nepal, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Haiti, Honduras, and Russia also made the list of places with journalist fatalities. Five journalists are classified as missing, three of them in Mexico. The 350-page report documents hundreds of cases of media repression in dozens of countries and regions, which include China, Russia, Central Asia, Latin America and the Arab world. *"In all these countries, powerful figures have developed a wide range of innovative approaches that accumulatively represent a soft authoritarianism that is spreading in many regions of the world,"* said Simon.

The research shows that the rate of imprisonment of journalists is also on the rise. Before the 2001 terror attacks on the United States, it was 81, but since then the annual average has been around 129. Simon and his colleagues said they believe that increased international pressure could help effect a change in the behaviour of repressive governments, many of which escape legal repercussions for attacks on the press. *"Impunity is the single threat facing journalists today,"* said CPJ board member and CNN international correspondent Christiane Amanpour. *"Murder, after all, is the ultimate form of censorship."*

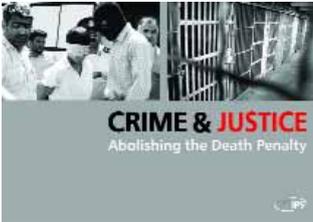


Young newspaper hawkers in Madagascar | Photo: UNESCO

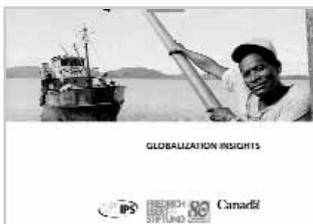
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Albania remains Europe's last "unknown" country - in part, because it is not an easy tourism destination. UNDP Albania is working closely with the Government of Albania, in particular with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports and the National Tourism Organization to implement the country's eco and cultural tourism strategy. UNDP is assisting the Government to create the right circumstances for tourism-driven development. This publication compiles all articles that have been written by independent journalists from the IPS European network and disseminated through IPS website, in special publications, newsletters and by way of translations among others into Dutch, German and Spanish.



CRIME & JUSTICE is a product of the Death Penalty Abolition Project supported by the European Union. It records the voices of many of those who play a key role in this fast-moving journey towards a death-penalty-free world. In doing so, IPS has been guided by the purposes and principles contained in the Charter of the United Nations, the universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the child. CRIME & JUSTICE, 206 pp, 2007, ISBN 978-300-023519-1.



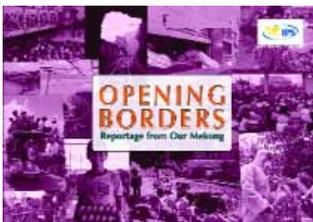
GLOBALIZATION INSIGHTS is a compilation of exclusive reports from 25 countries by journalists from Asia, Africa and Latin America. The project sought to provide insights into the workings of globalization in the villages, towns and cities the writers come from. A joint project of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and IPS-Inter Press Service Europa, it was funded by the Stiftung. The book appeared in May 2005.

GLOBALIZATION INSIGHTS, 112 pp, ISBN-4-89892-376-2.



VOICES OF THE SOUTH ON GLOBALIZATION is a monthly newsletter intended to inspire a meaningful North-South Dialogue by raising awareness for global interdependences and by offering a forum for voices of the south in the globalization debate. Each edition of VOICES OF THE SOUTH ON GLOBALIZATION presents short analyses from a southern perspective on one particular issue of the globalization process. VOICES OF THE SOUTH ON GLOBALIZATION is published by IPS EUROPE with financial support from the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

More information: www.ipseurope.org/voices_of_the_south_on_globalization.html



THE OPENING BORDERS Reportage from our Mekong' (237 pp, 2008), the fifth book in the Imaging Our Mekong series, is now off the press. The phrase 'OPENING BORDERS', which appears in this book's title, also describes what the 21 journalists whose work appears here were doing while reporting on issues that link at least two countries in the Mekong Region. Whether it is writing about the Kunming-Hai Phong railway, delving into perceptions by young Vietnamese and Cambodians of each other's countries, or analysing the impact of border economic zones, they sought to open their own news borders - by looking at the other side of issues, going beyond usual national perspectives, and stepping far beyond familiar territory and languages. More Information: www.ips.org



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