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Guarding Environment with a Paper-and-Pencil Project

Asia-Pacific already has the largest number of motorized vehicles in the world and if the present trend continues, the region would in the coming years have more automobiles than Europe and North America combined. In Japan alone, the number of vehicles has swelled from 8.12 million in 1966 to 78 million in 2009. Of these 54 percent are passenger vehicles, 34 percent light-duty vehicles, and 8 percent trucks. The rest are motorcycles and buses. At the same time, the number of logistic companies has been rising. "Presently, we have about 60,000 logistic companies, which is a 50 percent increase on the 1990s," said Keiji Endo, General Manager of the Tokyo Trucking Association. **More on pages 12-13**



Music for People Around the World

The depth and dimension of its repertoire is fabulous if not unparalleled: the sublime blend of beauty and music of an opera; the spectacular and dynamic creativity of a ballet; inspiring presentation of classics orchestrated by a magic wand; musicals, jazz, folk music and dance enlivening feelings of joy and happiness. . . . All this is minshu ongaku -- 'music for the people' . . . "We are working to revitalize musical culture worldwide -- to launch a new global Renaissance -- with musical programmes aimed at stimulating the artistic aspirations of tomorrow's creative generations," says Hiroyasu Kobayashi, who presides over the Min-On Concert Association. **More on pages 20-21**



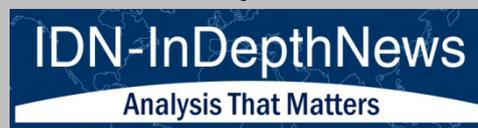
Over 30 Countries Aspire for Nuclear Power

More than 30 countries, which are presently not harnessing energy from the atom, are actively considering embarking upon nuclear power programmes. These include both industrial and developing economies, according to a new report. Italy, Albania, Serbia, Portugal, Norway, Poland, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Ireland and Turkey are among the European countries looking forward to nuclear power programmes. In the Middle East and North Africa: Iran, the Gulf states including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Israel, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Morocco and the Sudan. In west, central and southern Africa: Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Uganda and Namibia. Those aspiring nuclear power programmes in South America are Chile, Ecuador and Venezuela. In central and southern Asia: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Bangladesh. **More on page 23**

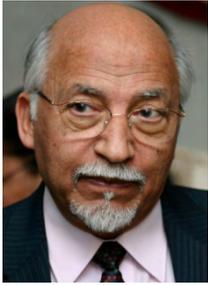


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Billions Suffering from Privatization



Billions of poor people who lack adequate access to healthcare and old-age security are posing a key challenge in developing countries that undertook drastic reforms and privatized social security systems at the behest of the World Bank, IDN reported mid-August quoting a new report by the Washington-based Bretton Woods Project (BWP).

It says that the privatization reforms, which were first launched more than three decades ago, are failing to benefit the majority. But national governments, pressed by local elites, multilateral agencies and global corporate and financial interests, have contributed significant public resources towards enacting the reforms.

What is more, despite having their images tarnished by the global financial crises, international corporate and financial interests are still pushing the increasing 'financialisation' -- the expanding systemic power and scope of finance and financial markets and actors -- of people's lives in developing countries, says the report

authored by Sheena Sumaria.

Social security systems matter as they can impact existing inequalities, and have the potential to transform society where markets are failing to do so. Private systems, in the hands of private finance, are embedded in existing social structures and serve to further marginalise the large numbers of those in poverty.

This is particularly important in today's globalising world in which inequalities between and within countries are widening, and ever increasing numbers of the world's poor only have access to sporadic and informal employment.

After all the liberalisation of trade and the relocation of multilateral health corporations to developing country markets have contributed to the privatisation of health. Several U.S.-based managed-care organisations have entered Latin America and Asia, seeking access to public social security funds.

Over the last three decades, finance has grown rapidly in terms of activities, markets, institutions and profits. By the end of 2008, the global insurance industry held \$18.7 trillion of funds under management, with global insurance premiums at \$4.3 trillion.

Banks and insurance companies earn interest spreads, fees and commissions directly off worker health insurance and pensions contributions, including from the poorest layers of society.

The report examines the role of private financial institutions in the reform process by considering two case studies: private pensions in Chile and private health insurance in Argentina.

In 1981, Chile was the first country to push through private pension reform, serving as a model for other developing countries. However, many private pension fund management companies are in the hands of foreign financial conglomerates.

Chile's largest private pension manager, Provida, with \$36.1 billion under management, is owned by Spain's largest financial institution BBVA. Between 1981 and 2006, Chilean workers contributed approximately \$50 billion from their salaries towards the private pension schemes, of which private pension managers and related insurance companies kept one third as commissions and profit.

In Argentina, says the report, the healthcare reforms enacted in the 1990s have also benefited financial corporations, who have extracted large profits and moved capital outside of the health system and the country.

According to professor Celia Iriart from the University of New Mexico, U.S.-owned private health insurer Exxel Group, used high levels of debt to evade tax, transferred capital from Argentina to foreign private accounts by paying high interest on the junk bonds it issued, and drained government resources by keeping part of the revenue of public hospitals it was managing.

The report titled 'Social insecurity -- The financialisation of healthcare and pensions in developing countries' notes with satisfaction that that problems arising from privatised models of health insurance and pensions have not gone completely unnoticed and those who have been adversely affected by such reforms in developing countries have engaged in public campaigns, protests and social movements.

Ramesh Jaura

Ramesh Jaura

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Obama Seeks New, Post-Combat Page of History

By Ernest Corea in Washington

The crunch of convoys taking U.S. combat troops out of Iraq has been silenced. The sound of silence proclaims (at least for now?) that U.S. combat operations in Iraq have ended.

"We've removed nearly 100,000 U.S. troops from Iraq. We've closed or transferred to the Iraqis hundreds of bases. And we have moved millions of pieces of equipment out of Iraq. This completes a transition to Iraqis responsibility for their own security," President Barack Obama said in a message to the nation delivered from the White House Oval Office on Aug. 31.

The U.S. has "paid a huge price to put the future of Iraq in the hands of its people," Obama added. "We have sent our young men and women to make enormous sacrifices in Iraq, and spent vast resources abroad at a time of tight budgets at home.

"We've persevered because of a belief we share with the Iraqi people -- a belief that out of the ashes of war, a new beginning could be born in this cradle of civilization. Through this remarkable chapter in the history of the United States and Iraq, we have met our responsibility. Now, it's time to turn the page."

SPECIAL SETTING

In choosing to speak from the Oval Office, Obama did what so many of his predecessors had done, elevating the importance of his message to the level he desired by bringing the nation right into the inner sanctum of presidential authority.

This was only Obama's second address to the nation from the Oval Office. His first was on British Petroleum's devastating oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

President Kennedy spoke on civil rights from the Oval Office. From the same location, President Ford told a bemused nation that he would be pardoning President Nixon. President George H. W. Bush announced the launch of what turned out to be a dramatically successful military action in the Persian Gulf.

More recently -- slightly over seven years ago -- President George W. Bush announced the beginning of "shock and awe" in Iraq. Obama's address amounted to standing the Bush strategy on its head, although he was nothing but courteous in his references to his predecessor -- thus, perhaps, driving what remains of his liberal base into yet another frenzy.

They might want to keep in mind this simple juxtaposition. Bush used the Oval Office to announce that he was sending American combat troops to fight in a war of dubious justification. They were deployed to "die for a lie," says political analyst and television commentator Lawrence O'Donnell. Obama used it to announce that combat troops have left the battle zone for home. What a difference.

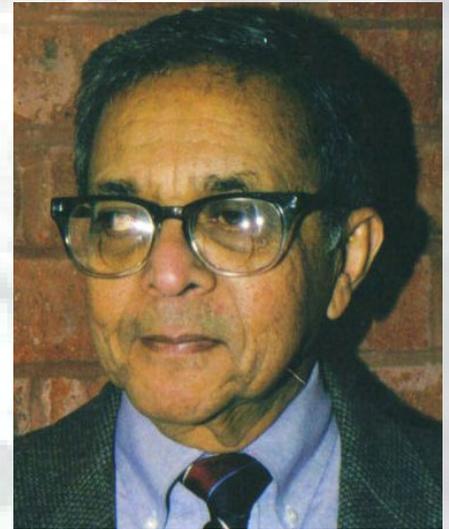
PASSION OVER REASON

Obama's Oval Office message had nothing of the outrage that washed over State Senator Obama's comments on war in 2002. Then, speaking at an anti-war rally in Chicago, he said: "I don't oppose all wars. And I know that in this crowd today, there is no shortage of patriots, or of patriotism. What I am opposed to is a dumb war. What I am opposed to is a rash war.

"What I am opposed to is the cynical attempt by Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz and other arm-chair, weekend warriors in this Administration to shove their own ideological agendas down our throats, irrespective of the costs in lives lost and in hardships borne..... That's what I'm opposed to. A dumb war. A rash war. A war based not on reason but on passion, not on principle but on politics."

The "politics" that concerned Obama at that time and thereafter are captured in this brief summary:

-- Richard N. Haas, president of the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations, wrote in "War of Necessity, War of Choice" that "the first instinct of the president (Bush) was to push the bureaucracy to find a connection between Saddam and the (9/11) attacks. Paul Wolfowitz, then deputy secretary of defense, argued at the Camp David meeting convened on September 14 that the attack was too grand for al-Qaida to have accomplished on its own and that the US should go after Iraq."



-- On Sept. 12, 2002, Bush told the UN General Assembly: "....we have been more than patient. We've tried the carrot of oil for food and the stick of coalition military strikes. But Saddam Hussein defied all these efforts and continues to develop weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The first time we may be completely certain he has nuclear weapons is when, God forbid, he uses one. We owe it to all our citizens to do everything in our power to prevent that from coming."

-- On Feb. 14, 2003, Hans Blix, the head of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) formally addressed the UN Security Council, and through it the world, as follows: "How much, if any, is left of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and related proscribed items and programs? So far, UNMOVIC has not found any such weapons, only a small number of empty chemical munitions, which should have been declared and destroyed."

-- On March. 19, 2003, Bush launched the invasion of Iraq. Up to now, no WMDs have been found in Iraq.

What's done has been done, and cannot be undone. Over 4000 U.S. military personnel died in Iraq. Neither they, nor the huge numbers of Iraqis who perished in the past seven years, can be resurrected. The serious, in some cases permanent, wounds of war suffered by thousands of Americans and Iraqis cannot be wished away. These bitter memories of the past will endure. ☹



Obama speaks to the Nation from the Oval Office to announce the end of America's combat role in Iraq. | White House Photo | Pete Souza

➔ But, let's turn the page, says Obama. His message is of a campaign pledge fulfilled, a milestone reached, and of a moment at which to start moving on.

To emphasize and broaden the reach of his message, the Obama Administration rolled out a public awareness program that reached out to both civilian and military audiences, with major roles at domestic events for Obama himself, Defence Secretary Robert Gates, Press spokesman Robert Gibbs, and other senior White House aides. Vice President Joe Biden was dispatched to Iraq as part of this effort.

Through all these activities, great care was taken to honor the military for their exemplary conduct and their families for the support they provided.

As Obama described it: **"the Americans who have served in Iraq completed every mission they were given. They defeated a regime that had terrorized its people..... Because of our troops and civilians -- and because of the resilience of the Iraqi people -- Iraq has the opportunity to embrace a new destiny, even though many challenges remain."**

Some 50,000 American troops remain in Iraq. They are, presumably, "non-combatant" forces. Can troops deployed far from home in a land where elements of hostility lurk, really be considered non-combatant?

Well, the U.S. troops in Iraq are meant to take on non-combatant responsibilities, training their Iraqi partners and shoring up their preparedness. Their presence gives politicians in Baghdad more breathing space in which to continue arguing over legitimacy, just as their counterparts in Washington DC keep braying at each other.

FACING CHALLENGES

Right now, perhaps, the most infuriating challenge confronting Iraq's leaders is the need for them to learn to read together from the same page.

Iraq's parliamentary election held earlier this year resulted in a stalemate. The party led by former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi,

al-Iraqiyya, secured 91 seats, and the State of Law Coalition led by current Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki secured 89.

Both parties have been hunting for allies, but without success. Until a new government is formed and its legitimacy respected the country will remain politically vulnerable, with its security infirm.

The need for Iraq's political leadership to close ranks is so pressing that an equally urgent effort to reconcile differences should have been expected by now. Perhaps the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops will be an incentive for action.

The U.S., too, faces a major challenge, that of pulling the national economy out of the ditch into which unwise policies had taken it. An economically weak U.S. cannot possibly receive the respect and maintain the strength it requires to fulfill the global responsibilities that circumstances have cast on it.

Obama who inherited the down-in-the-ditch economy from his predecessor has been trying to get it out of there and he referred to the domestic challenge the U.S. faces, while delivering his Iraq-oriented address. He said:

"Unfortunately, over the last decade, we've not done what's necessary to shore up the foundations of our own prosperity. We spent a trillion dollars at war, often financed by borrowing from overseas.

"This, in turn, has short-changed investments in our own people, and contributed to record deficits. For too long, we have put off tough decisions on everything from our manufacturing base to our energy policy to education reform. As a result, too many middle-class families find themselves working harder for less, while our nation's long-term competitiveness is put at risk.....

"And so at this moment, as we wind down the war in Iraq, we must tackle those challenges at home with as much energy, and grit, and sense of common purpose as our men and women in uniform who have served abroad. They have met every test that they faced. Now, it's our turn..... Our most urgent task is to restore our economy....."

That is a greater challenge, with broader and deeper significance, than the bickering politicians in Iraq confront. ■

The Arabs and the Race to Nuclear Hell

By Fared Mahdy in Istanbul

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sounds rather optimistic -- or has chosen to do so: "Recently, we have seen signs of progress on nuclear non-proliferation talks," he said some two weeks ahead of announcing on August 3 that ministerial-level discussions on eliminating the world's nuclear weapons will take place in New York in September. But signals from both the Arab region and the U.S. induce a dramatically different conclusion.

In fact, indications from the Middle East point to an ongoing nuclear race in the region -- the world's most conflictive and the only one not to have a nuclear free zone treaty. Indeed, Latin America and the Caribbean is nuclear free, as is Africa, while sub-regional treaties have also been sealed among Central Asian countries and South-eastern Asian states.

The Middle East is therefore a striking exception in a world willing to head for eliminating atomic weapons, at least according to big nuclear powers' political statements.

In fact, Jordan and Sudan have openly joined other 10 Arab countries willing to exercise their legitimate right to produce nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

These are: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, and United Arab Emirates.

Together these 12 countries represent over 50 percent of the 22 members of the League of Arab States, and an even higher percentage (over two-thirds) considering that at least five of them -- Somalia, Yemen, Comoros Islands, Djibouti and Mauritania -- appear to be far away from caressing nuclear dreams for now.

DANGEROUS RACE

Such an Arab nuclear race is to be clearly considered extremely dangerous should Western powers' arguments against Iranian nuclear programme hold ground. According to these arguments, the very fact that Tehran pursues atomic energy for civilian purposes implies an evident risk that it may militarize it and start producing atomic weapons.

The logical corollary of Western arguments therefore is that the Arab countries willing to go nuclear would eventually end up developing nuclear weapons.

Three key questions arise:

-- Why do the Arabs want to turn nuclear?

-- Why Europe, the U.S. and its allies in Asia, are pushing the Arabs into such a nuclear race?

-- Has the Iranian nuclear programme been used as an alibi by Arab regimes to run in the atomic race and by the West to encourage them to do so?

ARAB ARGUMENTS

Arab states would have at least four good arguments -- or justifications -- to want to develop their own nuclear capacities.

On the one hand, the sole nuclear power in the Middle East, Israel -- which reportedly possesses over 200 nuclear warheads (equivalent to more than three-folds of Indian or Pakistani atomic arsenals) -- continues to frustrate the international community's efforts to make it join the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

In fact, Israel categorically rejects all demands to lay bare its atomic programme; submit its nuclear facilities to the mandatory inspection of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); join international nuclear disarmament negotiations and accords, and participate in any attempt to declare the Middle East a nuclear free zone.

On the other hand, Arab regimes are under increasing pressure from the U.S. and Europe through their consistent campaign to terrorise the region over alleged Iranian intentions to become a nuclear power.

A third argument is the failure to declare the Middle East a nuclear free zone. In fact, all their demands to liberate the region from these and all other weapons of mass destruction have been systematically falling on deaf ears.

The fourth reason is the big nuclear powers' insistence on offering assistance to whoever wants to go atomic in the region.

In fact, Western nuclear powers, led by France, and closely followed by the U.S. and the United Kingdom, have been systematically casting their "nuclear assistance charm" on all Arab regimes.

In this, they have simply prioritised their commercial interests and power game over their declared good intentions of freeing the world from nuclear threats. Such Western pressure has led Russia to compete with them due to both political and commercial reasons.

GOING NUCLEAR, ALREADY

Consequently, the United Arab Emirates has joined Saudi Arabia on the nuclear road through the Gulf region, with other runners, such as Kuwait and Qatar, already warming their muscles.

At the same time, the uranium-rich Jordan has been involved in discussions with French giant Areva and Japanese firm Mitsubishi to acquire technology to enable it build its first nuclear power plant.

Furthermore, the Jordanian government announced in late July 2010 an agreement with South Korea to launch its first nuclear research reactor.

The Jordanian nuclear plan embodies a first sign of 'rebellion' against U.S. and European policies, as Amman has shown great reluctance to accept Western moves to prevent Jordan from exercising its sovereign right to enrich uranium.

At the same time, France promised assistance to Qatar and Morocco to launch their own nuclear programmes, and Cairo signed last year with Moscow an agreement ensuring Russian enrolment in the setting up of nuclear plants in Egypt.

Now Sudan has also decided to join the nuclear race by announcing on August 22 a plan to build its own reactor.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has shown no real signs of willingness to eliminate the danger of atomic weapons from the face of the Earth, in spite of Barack Obama administration's declared good will of achieving a nuclear free world.

Far from that, U.S. nuclear plans imply that despite its decision to reduce its atomic arsenals, it will keep a minimum of 3,000 nuclear weapons for over a decade, while continuing to modernise its atomic arsenals and aiming at producing a so-called "super nuclear bomb". ☹

In a further step, the U.S. has made it loud and clear that anybody who wants to go nuclear in the Arab region will have to choose between three specific options, which Secretary of State Hilary Clinton has spelt out during one of her frequent visits to the region:

"They can just give in to the threat (from Iran). Or they can seek their own capabilities, including nuclear; or they ally themselves with a country like the United States that is willing to help defend them . . . I think the third is by far the preferable option."

Be it on purpose to reaffirm Clinton's "options" and make it clear how the U.S. is keen about further aligning the Arabs behind its interests, or to just strengthen its role in the region, the fact is that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has decided to open a counter-proliferation centre to combat the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

Its director, Leon Edward Panetta, said on August 18 that the new centre would place CIA operators side by side with the agency's analysts to brainstorm plans to "confront the threat of weapons of mass destruction -- nuclear, chemical and biological".

There is another key factor in such a nuclear race in the Arab region, and that is the consistent campaign by the U.S. and Europe to persuade the world and their own public, that Iranian nuclear programme represents a major threat to their national security and that of the whole planet.

Such insistence in arguing that Iran could well transform its civilian programme into a military to develop atomic weapons -- and use them -- has targeted the Gulf region in particular.

No wonder. It is the single richest oil producing region in the world; its regimes are close "allies" of the U.S. and Europe, and its countries have enough financial resources.

These resources, which have been disproportionately used to fulfil an induced -- if not imposed -- need to regularly purchase Western conventional weapons, are now seen as a great business opportunity to move the 'simple' arms race to a nuclear race.

Paradoxically enough, Tehran has contributed significantly to this game, by reiterating swollen patriotic proclamations.

NUCLEAR TURKEY?

An additional side-effect to the Middle East atomic race induced by the biggest nuclear powers is Ankara's decision to install its own nuclear facilities.

In fact, the Turkish parliament approved on July 13 a bill on an agreement between Russia and Turkey for the construction of Turkey's first nuclear power plant in the coastal town of Akkuyu, in Mersin province.

According to the agreement, which was signed during Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's official visit to Turkey in May 2010, the two countries will cooperate in the construction and operation of the power plant.

A consortium led by state-controlled Russian builder Atom-StroyExport will construct the plant in Akkuyu, which is estimated to cost around 20 billion US dollars. The construction is due to start later this year, and it will generate 4,800 megawatts in four units.

This Turkish nuclear plan gains special relevance in view of the country's doubly important role -- as a key, full member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and as a new, strong player in the Middle East.

All these developments point to a bleak proliferation scenario. Does the UN Secretary-General nevertheless wish to hold on to his optimistic view? ■

New Report Cautions Companies Operating in Israel

A new report has warned that companies with operations and suppliers in Israel, or offshore projects in disputed waters in the region, face the risk of "complicity in human rights violations by state security forces". Besides, terrorism, internal violence and regional instability pose "significant" hazards.

"Security risks for companies with operations, investments and offshore operations in Israel remain of overriding concern," cautions the UK-based risk analyst Maplecroft in its latest country report. "Organisations operating in the country face a high risk of losing personnel and assets due to violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinian militants over the status of the Palestinian territories."

Hamas continues to pose a serious security risk to Israel, primarily from Gaza, says the report, but it is not the only group to do so. "Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades have also been involved in suicide attacks against Israel."

Since "suicide bombings are not necessarily restricted to land", the report asks foreign offshore exploration companies to consider this fact "when investing with Israeli companies in the Mediterranean".

The report underlines the warning by pointing out that: "In June 2010, Israeli officials said that the military had shot and killed four Palestinians wearing diving gear off the Gaza coast. The Israeli military said it believed those on board were planning a terrorist attack."

Maplecroft reflects the risk of violence in Israel in its Conflict Intensity Risk Index, which rates it as "an extreme risk country", and ranks it 25th out of 196. A similar picture is illustrated in the Terrorism Risk Index, where Israel ranks 17th out of 196 as a "high risk" country.

Natural gas reserves in the Mediterranean are described as a source of growing tensions between Israel and Lebanon. In fact, some Lebanese politicians say that the offshore Leviathan gas field may extend into their country's yet-to-be declared maritime zone. The two countries are formally still at war and have not agreed to a maritime boundary.

Furthermore, Lebanon has developed energy legislation to allow it to attract investors to extract fossil fuels in the Mediterranean. Israel, on the other hand, has warned that it would resort to force if necessary to protect what it considers to be its offshore fossil fuel reserves.

Analysing the situation, 'Foreign Policy' (FP) said in a web-posted report on August 17, 2010: "Israel's movement to develop the huge Tamar and Leviathan gas fields -- which could hold as much as 23 trillion cubic feet of natural gas -- has spurred Lebanon's parliament to move forward on a law enabling offshore exploration, which it passed today (August 17)."

FP added: "It is part of long-delayed oil legislation that has been debated for over a decade, but went nowhere due to Lebanon's notoriously fractious politics, government instability, and myriad external distractions. But the gas discovery has galvanized Hezbollah and its allies in the parliament's opposition, including the Amal Party, who pushed the government to pass the laws necessary to prevent Israel from 'stealing' Lebanese resources."

FP went on to say: "For now, any dispute between the two countries is confined to media sound bites and parliament ☺"

chambers. But if exploration and development does get underway, it's not hard to imagine things going badly if the countries' tenuous ceasefire -- following the 2006 hostilities between them -- were to fall apart.

"Eytan Gilboa, a political science professor at Israel's Bar-Ilan University, pointed out to Bassem Mroue of the Associated Press that offshore rigs and other natural gas infrastructure would be attractive targets for Hezbollah or the IDF. Any infrastructural attack would pose not only political or economic risks to both sides, but also potentially severe environmental costs."

Underlining the dimensions of the issue, the offshoreenergy-today.com reported on August 4, 2010 that, according to internal assessments at Noble Energy, the U.S. partner in the Leviathan offshore gas exploration site, the amount of natural gas at the location is about 40 percent larger than what had been reported up to now.

At the beginning of June 2010, Noble reported a 50 percent probability of finding 16 trillion cubic feet of gas in the Leviathan geological formation, but it has since performed further analysis of the seismic tests in the area, and now concludes there is a 55 percent probability of finding 20 to 23 trillion cubic feet of gas, the website informed.

Still to come in the coming weeks, according to industry sources, is the Leviathan partnership's assessment of the chances of finding oil in a stratum beneath the natural gas.

The website went to say that at the annual conference in London of the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange in July 2010, Noble's CEO, Charles Davidson, pegged the chances of also finding oil in deep-sea Mediterranean license areas where Delek and Noble Energy are operating at 10 to 15 percent, but he said it has never actually been examined. It is expected that any exploration drilling in the area will also include a search for oil.

The Maplecroft analysts said that the Lebanon-based Hezbollah has reportedly stockpiled weapons provided by Iran and Syria to use against Israel. They added: The security risk posed by Hezbollah was highlighted during the 34-day war of 2006, when it launched approximately 4,000 rockets -- some deep into Israel.

"Even though Hezbollah and Israel are understandably loath to engage in serious conflict at present, the prospect of another conflagration cannot be discounted given their mutual enmity," said Anthony Skinner, Principal Analyst at Maplecroft.

DISCRIMINATION

The report says that "the Israeli government generally protects the human rights of its citizens but discrimination against Israeli Arab citizens, Palestinians and other religious groups persists".

Maplecroft adds: "Discrimination is also a problem in the labour market and reports of poor working conditions and forced labour among migrant workers represent a risk of potential complicity in the actions of local business partners throughout the local supply chain."

For that reason "companies that operate in Israel also face the potential risk of complicity in the actions of members of the security forces that guard business assets".

International human rights NGOs continue to accuse members of Israel's security forces of serious human rights violations. However, the Israeli military argues that its rules of engagement are within law, strictly regulated and rigorously enforced, states the Maplecroft report.

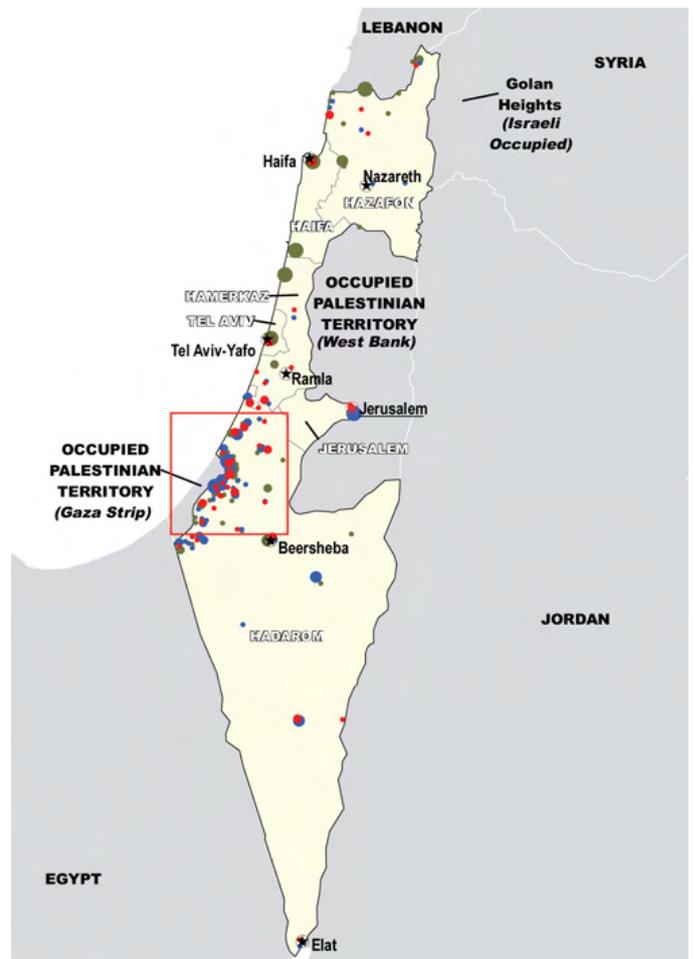
"There is little to suggest that the security and human rights situation will improve in Israel. Previous negotiations between

the Israeli government and Palestinian authorities for a peace settlement have failed and the upcoming talks between President Abbas and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are already fraught with tensions," predicts the report.

In its Political Risk Briefing on Israel, the UK-based analysts provide detailed analysis, innovative sub-national maps, stakeholder viewpoints and key recent events. Comprehensive risk analysis is broken down into individual chapters focusing on: governance framework, political violence, the regulatory and business environment, human rights and society, and an economic overview. ■



www.maplecroft.com



"Security risks for companies with operations, investments and offshore operations in Israel remain of overriding concern," cautions the UK-based risk analyst Maplecroft in its latest country report.

UN Decade to Combat Desertification

By IDN Environment Desk

Call it land degradation or desertification: it is threatening the livelihoods of more than 1 billion people in 100 countries around the world. To raise awareness and mobilize action against this major economic, social and environmental problem of concern, the United Nations has taken a landmark step.

Five UN agencies forged a global partnership by launching the Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification on August 16. The global launch took place in Fortaleza, Brazil, in the State of Ceara, Brazil's semi-arid region, during the Second International Conference: Climate, Sustainability and Development in Semi-arid Regions.

The Decade of events is spearheaded by the Secretariat of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in collaboration with the Department of Public Information (DPI) of the UN Secretariat in New York, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and other relevant UN bodies

The regional launch for Africa was held in Nairobi, Kenya, at the headquarters of the UNEP in partnership with the UNDP. Other regional launches are scheduled to take place in New York, in September, for the North American Region, in the Republic of Korea in October, for the Asian Region, and in November for the European region.

This is keeping in view the fact that no continent, except Antarctica, is immune from desertification. The problem is particularly acute in Africa, which has 37 per cent of the world's arid zones. About 66 per cent of its land is either desert or drylands. The impact is also severe in Asia, which holds 33 per cent of the world's arid zones.

Degraded areas include the sand dunes of the Syrian Arab Republic, the steep mountain slopes of Nepal, the deserts of Australia and the deforested highlands of the Laos. In the Americas there are deserts that stretch from southern Ecuador along the entire Peruvian shoreline and into northern Chile. Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey are all faced with desertification.

The effects of desertification are often felt far beyond the regions where it is occurring. Airborne particles affect cloud formation and rainfall patterns. Dust storms from the Gobi Desert affect visibility in Beijing. Dust from the Sahara has been implicated in respiratory problems in North America and has affected Caribbean reefs.

"Continued land degradation -- whether from climate change, unsustainable agriculture or poor management of water resources -- is a threat to food security, leading to starvation among the most acutely affected communities and robbing the world of productive land," said UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in a statement announcing the launch of the Decade.

"As we begin the Decade on Deserts and the Fight against Desertification, let us pledge to intensify our efforts to nurture the land we need for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and guaranteeing human well-being," he added.

Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, warned that the international community is at a crossroads, and must decide between a business-as-usual approach that will be characterised by severe and prolonged droughts, flooding and water shortages

or an alternative path, that "channels our collective action towards sustainability".

He added that the Decade's message stresses that land is life, "so, we must ensure the drylands, remain productive and working" and that the vision for the Decade is to "forge a global partnership to reverse and prevent desertification and land degradation and to mitigate the effects of drought in affected areas in order to support poverty reduction and environmental sustainability".

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

UNCCD is often regarded as an African convention. Gnacadja said in a recent IDN interview: "Of course Africa has been referred to because Africa is the most vulnerable. Two-thirds of the continent is dryland but it is a global convention, with global scope. 41 percent of the total land mass is drylands and 34 percent of the global population lives in the drylands. Among that 34 percent, one billion are really the poorest among the poor of the world.

"So this is really where we need to change the perception: UNCCD is a global convention, with global scope and of course with global benefits to be delivered. For instance, when you are reclaiming land, land is long-term food security. Food security is not about Africa only. When you are rehabilitating land or improving land cover, it is not only about Africa. So it's a kind of paradigm that requires a paradigm shift. And we are working on this."

While concerns about desertification are growing, it is not all doom and gloom. Efforts have been made to address land degradation and while there have been positive outcomes, more action is needed to arrest and reverse land degradation and creeping desertification worldwide.

IFAD pointed to the experience of Bedouin communities in the Badia rangelands, 10 million hectares in central and eastern Syria, known for its poor soils and low rainfall. After years of severe drought and intensive grazing, the Badia has become badly degraded, but vegetation has been restored in one third of the area, with Bedouin herders working with project experts to draft and implement management plans to determine how many animals should graze in a given area at a given time.

That scheme, just one of numerous success stories, took a three-pronged approach to rehabilitation: resting, re-seeding and planting. "When governments, UN agencies and other partners work together, we can ensure that experiences like those of the Bedouin communities in the Badia rangelands become the rule -- and not the exception," IFAD said.

And yet desertification affects 3.6 billion hectares of land worldwide -- or 25 percent of the Earth's terrestrial land mass. 110 countries at risk of land degradation. 12 million hectares of land, an area the size of Benin, are lost every year. Annual land lost could produce 20 million tons of grain. US\$42 billion in income is lost every year from desertification and land degradation. Established in 1994, UNCCD is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment, development and the promotion of healthy soils. ■

Asia Expects a New Decade in Sustainable Transport

By Taro Ichikawa in Bangkok

A new town of about 150,000 people is expected to sprout every day in the next 20 years in the Asia-Pacific region, increasing the urban population from 1.6 billion to 2.7 billion in 2030. This will also influence mobility patterns and private vehicle usage.

Compared to other regions, Asia and the Pacific already has the largest total number of motorized vehicles in the world. Consequently, the transport sector is emerging as the fastest growing source of global greenhouse gas (GHG) and accounts for 13 percent of GHG and 23 percent of energy related CO₂ emissions.

This, according to the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) in Nagoya, Japan, is undermining human health, urban environmental quality, economic productivity, social equity, and all other aspects of sustainability.

With this in view, the Asian Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Initiative, which is a joint initiative of UNCRD and the Japanese Ministry of the Environment, aims to build a common understanding across Asia on the essential elements of EST and the need for an integrated approach at local and national level to deal with the multi-sectoral environment and transport issues, including GHG emission reduction.

Presently, the participating countries include the member nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Japan, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea and Sri Lanka.

Under the Initiative, the First Regional EST Forum, held in Aichi, Japan, in 2005, resulted in the Aichi Statement, which articulated a comprehensive list of sustainable transport objectives based on 12 major thematic areas.

This Statement provides a basis for the participating countries to regularly report upon progress in reaching the objectives. Subsequently 44 Asian cities signed the 'Kyoto Declaration for the Promotion of Environmentally Sustainable Transport in Cities' endorsing the objectives underlined in the Aichi Statement.

In 2009, the Initiative produced the Seoul Statement 'Towards the Promotion of Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) for a Low-Carbon Society and Green Growth in Asia'. This Statement particularly highlighted the need for regional efforts towards win-win solutions that capture co-benefit considerations in addressing sustainable transport and climate change.

The Fifth Regional EST Forum with the theme 'A New Decade in Sustainable Transport' from August 23 to 25 provided a strategic platform to discuss a range of issues in transport sector and develop a common understanding among participating countries on various sustainable policy options with a specific emphasis to developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

The Forum in Bangkok, Thailand, has been organized by the UNCRD in cooperation with the Thai Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE). Japan's Ministry of the Environment, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP), and the United Nations Centre for Regional Development, with support from various international organizations and donor agencies.

The Forum in Bangkok is addressing a range of relevant issues and participants from around Asia are sharing practical cases under sustainable transport agenda such as building part-

nership and funding mechanisms to make things happen, urban and regional rail development, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), fuel efficiency, and sustainable freight transport.

In view of the fact that the issue of transport and sustainable development, among others, will be considered by the Commission on Sustainable Development in 2011 (CSD 19), the Fifth Regional EST Forum is expected to enhance regional input to CSD-19 which will discuss and address various policy options on transport sector for sustainable development.

The principal output will be a legally nonbinding and the emerging 'Bangkok 2020 Declaration -- Sustainable Transport Goals for 2010-2020', will set forth quantifiable sustainable transport targets for the year 2020. The voluntary targets in the Bangkok 2020 Declaration will be then put forward as a contribution to the CSD-19.

ENERGY

While the transport sector has been an important factor contributing to the remarkable economic growth in Asia, it is the third largest consumer of energy in Asia, and its energy consumption is growing faster than that of other sectors and other regions, which is driven by a rapid increase in motorization and strong transport demands from economic development.

This, according to the UNCRD, has important repercussions not only in terms of energy security for the region, but also air pollution, GHG emissions, traffic congestion, injuries and fatalities due to traffic accidents, freight inefficiencies, greater rural to urban migration, and loss in economic productivity.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002 called upon governments and other stakeholders to implement transport strategies for sustainable development.

These strategies aim to improve the affordability, efficiency and convenience of transportation as well as urban air quality and health and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including the development of better vehicle technologies that are more environmentally sound, affordable and socially acceptable. These also help promote investment and partnerships for the development of sustainable, energy efficient multi-modal transportation systems, including public mass transportation systems.

In line with the commitments made under the JPOI, appropriate policy frameworks, institutional and governance structures, partnerships and financial mechanism are essential for achieving efficient, safe, and low-carbon transport system and services, says the UNCRD.

"There is a need for a wider-scale adoption of integrated transport measures without which the opportunity for a proactive transformation of Asia's transport may be lost over the coming decade," cautions the UNCRD.

An integrated transport strategy includes both incentives for sustainable modes as well as disincentives for private motorized vehicles. It also means that all facets of sustainable transport are developed as a complementary package, including the planning of non-motorized and public transport options in both urban and rural areas, infrastructure for intermodal freight systems, and business models for financially viable operations. ■

Guarding Environment with a Paper-and-Pencil Project

By Taro Ichikawa in Bangkok

Asia-Pacific already has the largest number of motorized vehicles in the world and if the present trend continues, the region would in the coming years have more automobiles than Europe and North America combined.



Keiji Endo, General Manager of the Tokyo Trucking Association addressing Fifth Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Forum.

In Japan alone, the number of vehicles has swelled from 8.12 million in 1966 to 78 million in 2009. Of these 54 percent are passenger vehicles, 34 percent light-duty vehicles, and 8 percent trucks. The rest are motorcycles and buses.

At the same time, the number of logistic companies has been rising. "Presently, we have about 60,000 logistic companies, which is a 50 percent increase on the 1990s," said Keiji Endo, General Manager of the Tokyo Trucking Association. He was addressing the Fifth Regional Environmentally Sustainable Transport (EST) Forum in Asia from August 23 to 25 in Bangkok, Thailand. It was attended by senior government officials from 22 Asian countries and international transportation experts.

The Forum was organized by the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), Thailand's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), Japan's Ministry of the Environment, and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia (UN ESCAP).

Endo pointed out that 99 percent of the companies in Japan own less than 100 trucks, and 76 percent of all the companies are small-scale enterprises owning less than 20 vehicles.

According to the national Automobile NOx /PM Law, aimed at curbing nitrogen oxide and particulate matter emissions, large trucks that are more than nine years old and small ones older than eight years are not allowed to be on the road since 2003, regardless of how many kilometers they have covered. This is part of a rather stringent law that seeks to control emissions from automobiles operated by small and medium-sized companies.

In Tokyo, according to a more stringent regulation, a vehicle older than seven years must either install a diesel particulate matter filter (DPF) or buy a new automobile. Those who violate this regulation are penalized.

As a result of this directive, all measurement stations in Tokyo had confirmed that the pollution level had been improved upon 2005. The air became cleaner and cleaner, and the sky is looking

blue. However, small and medium-sized companies had to pay a heavy price for this regulation. They were forced to buy a costly DPF or a brand new truck. As a result, the membership of the Tokyo Trucking Association suffered a decline of 20 percent. Also the number of trucks had decreased by more than 20 percent since 2003.

'The Revised Energy Conservation Law' is another tool to protect environment. This law obliged trucking companies to regularly report their CO2 emissions. "But small enterprises are not in a position to collect and control such data, particularly as 99 percent of trucking companies are small and medium-sized," said Endo.

ECO-DRIVING

Against this backdrop, the Tokyo Trucking Association decided to start a new project. Environmentally friendly driving called Eco-driving became the centre-piece of the project underlining Corporate Social Responsibility of logistic enterprises for environment.

According to a survey, the practice of Eco-driving resulted in the reduction of nitrogen oxides emissions by 15 percent and CO2 emissions by 20 percent.

The Green-Eco project has four key aspects: sustainability; reasonable costs; accuracy of data collected; and, above all, the activities should be such that drivers are kept motivated.

The practical tools deployed, surprisingly, are not internet-based:

- Posters and stickers for members to share their motivations with each other.
- Writing data in the check list by hand because it is an economic way of record keeping.
- By keeping track of such sheets, each member can easily see improvements of fuel efficiency and reductions in traffic accidents.
- Eco-driving education
- Giving recognition to good drivers as a means of motivation ➡

- Involving managers in the project on an equal footing
- Professional handling of the collected data.
- Seminars for managers seven times a year.

Endo reported that the project had made great strides: member participation has been on the rise every year. In March 2010, over 500 companies and 11,000 vehicles participated in the Green-Eco project.

In addition, fuel consumption was reduced over the past four years -- the fuel saved was equivalent to what would have been used by 500 large-sized tank trucks. The savings were worth some about 880 million Japanese Yen (some 9.53 million U.S. dollars).

The reduction of fuel consumed implied a reduction in 20,000 tons CO2 emissions. Also the number of traffic accidents declined by 40 percent over a period of four years.

"We can say that this Project has made a great achievement not only in terms of national economy but also of the society as a whole," Endo told the Bangkok Forum, adding that the next step would be to benchmark fuel efficiency database for each type of vehicle.

"In Japan, we have many advanced devices to support the practice of Eco-driving, such as Digital Taco-graph or Drive recorders," said.

However, the Green-Eco Project neither requires huge financial investment nor high-tech. All that it needs is a piece of paper called Driving Management Sheet, and a pen to start with -- and all this to protect the environment, reduce fuel costs, bring about a decrease in the number of traffic accidents and foster better communication among company co-workers.

Endo is looking forward to expanding this project to cover whole of Japan. In view of the fact that it is a low-budget and paper-pencil-oriented project, he hopes to find interested parties in other Asian countries too, which might like to gain from Green-Eco experiences in Tokyo.

But it would appear that a lot of persuasion is needed in Japan itself, particularly at various government levels. While the country's Ministry of Environment, which encouraged him to present the project at the Bangkok Forum, would appear to be supportive, other relevant government ministries have yet to learn to appreciate the Green-Eco project. ■

This is the third in a series of special IDN features on 'Corporate Social Responsibility: Transportation and Environment'. The first two features are available at: <http://www.indepthnews.net/news/news.php?key1=2010-07-14%2021:03:34&key2=1> and <http://www.indepthnews.net/news/news.php?key1=2010-04-17%2010:41:56&key2=1>



Mr. Keiji Endo (left front), Mr. Masaaki Watahiki (right front) and Delegation of Tokyo Trucking Association at EST Forum Bangkok



UNCRD

United Nations Centre for Regional Development



Neither Pity nor Charity

With only five years left until the 2015 deadline to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on world leaders to attend a summit in New York on 20-22 September 2010 to accelerate progress towards the MDGs.

Coming amid mixed progress and new crises that threaten the global effort to halve extreme poverty, "the summit will be a crucially important opportunity to redouble our efforts to meet the Goals," he said, referring to the targets adopted at the UN Millennium Summit of 2000, aimed at slashing poverty, hunger, disease, maternal and child deaths and other ills by a 2015 deadline. "Our world possesses the knowledge and the resources to achieve the MDGs," the Secretary-General stated in his report to the UN General Assembly on 12 February 2010 in preparation for the September summit. "Our challenge today is to agree on an action agenda to achieve the MDGs."

The MDGs are the highest profile articulation of the internationally agreed development goals associated with the UN development agenda, representing the culmination of numerous important UN summits held during the previous decade, including summits on sustainable development, education, children, food, women, population and social development.

They are the world's quantified, time-bound targets for addressing extreme poverty, hunger and disease, and for promoting gender equality, education and environmental sustainability. They are also an expression of basic human rights: the rights of everyone to good health, education and shelter. The eighth Goal, to build a global partnership for development, includes commitments in the areas of development assistance, debt relief, trade and access to technologies.

The Secretary-General's report says that during the past decade, the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs have led to unprecedented commitments and partnerships reaffirmed in successive summits and meetings, including the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development at Monterrey, Mexico, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the 2005 World Summit in New York.

During this same period, the public and their Governments have also had to contend with new unanticipated challenges. Some have been specific to countries or regions, while others have been global, such as the food and economic crises of the last three years. "Our challenge today is to agree on an action agenda to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

With five years to go to the target date of 2015, the prospect of falling short of achieving the Goals because of a lack of commitment is very real. This would be an unacceptable failure from both the moral and the practical standpoint. If we fail, the dangers in the world -- instability, violence, epidemic diseases, environmental degradation, runaway population growth -- will all be multiplied," warns the report.

It adds: "Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals remains feasible with adequate commitment, policies, resources and effort. The Millennium Declaration represents the most important collective promise ever made to the world's most vulnerable people. This promise is not based on pity or charity, but on solidarity, justice and the recognition that we are increasingly dependent on one another for our shared prosperity and security." ■

Not Much Reason to Rejoice

When heads of government and state meet at the UN in New York from September 20-22 to review progress, assess obstacles and gaps, and agree on concrete strategies and actions to meet the eight MDGs by 2015, they will not have much reason to rejoice.

Giving an overview of The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010, released on 15 June 2010, Sha Zukang, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, says: "Though progress has been made, it is uneven. And without a major push forward, many of the MDG targets are likely to be missed in most regions. Old and new challenges threaten to further slow progress in some areas or even undo successes achieved so far."

The significance of Sha's assessment lies in the fact that he heads the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which is responsible for the follow-up to the major United Nations Summits and Conferences and services the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council as well as the vast majority of its functional commissions and expert bodies. He also convenes the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs, the UN Secretariat's network for joint planning and initiatives on development.

Sha, a Chinese career diplomat, refers to specific aspects MDGs without mincing words. The most severe impact of climate change, he points out, is being felt by vulnerable populations who have contributed least to the problem. The risk of death or disability and economic loss due to natural disasters is increasing globally and is concentrated in poorer countries.

Sha refers to an often ignored aspect, saying that armed conflict remains a major threat to human security and to hard-won MDG gains. Large populations of refugees remain in camps with limited opportunities to improve their lives. In 2009, 42 million people had been displaced by conflict or persecution, four fifths of them in developing countries.

The number of people who are undernourished has continued to grow, while slow progress in reducing the prevalence of hunger stalled -- or even reversed itself -- in some regions between 2000-2002 and 2005-2007.

About one in four children under the age of five are underweight, mainly due to lack of food and quality food, inadequate water, sanitation and health services, and poor care and feeding practices.

An estimated 1.4 billion people were still living in extreme poverty in 2005. Moreover, the effects of the global financial crisis are likely to persist: poverty rates will be slightly higher in 2015 and even beyond, to 2020, than they would have been had the world economy grown steadily at its pre-crisis pace.

"Gender equality and the empowerment of women are at the heart of the MDGs and are preconditions for overcoming poverty, hunger and disease. ➔



Global Partnership Not yet in Sight

But progress has been sluggish on all fronts -- from education to access to political decision-making," the UN Under-Secretary-General warns. Because achieving the MDGs will also require increased attention to those most vulnerable, policies and interventions will be needed to eliminate the persistent or even increasing inequalities between the rich and the poor, between those living in rural or remote areas or in slums versus better-off urban populations, and those disadvantaged by geographic location, sex, age, disability or ethnicity. Other points in Sha's incisive overview of the report, which should draw the focus of the civil society and media, are:

- In all developing regions, children in rural areas are more likely to be underweight than urban children. In Latin America and the Caribbean and parts of Asia, this disparity increased between 1990 and 2008.

- The gap between the richest and the poorest households remains enormous. In Southern Asia, 60 per cent of children in the poorest areas are underweight compared to 25 per cent of children in the richest households.

- In developing regions overall, girls in the poorest 20 per cent of households are 3.5 times more likely to be out of school than girls in the richest households and four times more likely to be out of school than boys from the richest households.

- Even in countries close to achieving universal primary education, children with disabilities are the majority of those excluded.

- Maternal health is one of the areas in which the gap between rich and poor is most conspicuous. While almost all births are attended by skilled health personnel in the developed countries, less than half of women receive such care when giving birth in parts of the developing world.

- Disparities in access to care during pregnancy are also striking, with women in the richest households 1.7 times more likely to visit a skilled health worker at least once before birth than the poorest women.

- Lack of education is another major obstacle to accessing tools that could improve people's lives. For instance, poverty and unequal access to schooling perpetuate high adolescent birth rates, jeopardizing the health of girls and diminishing their opportunities for social and economic advancement.

- Contraceptive use is four times higher among women with a secondary education than among those with no education. For women in the poorest households and among those with no education, negligible progress was seen over the last decade.

- Only about half of the developing world's population are using improved sanitation, and addressing this inequality will have a major impact on several of the MDGs. Disparities between rural and urban areas remain daunting, with only 40 per cent of rural populations covered. And while 77 per cent of the population in the richest 20 per cent of households use improved sanitation facilities, the share is only 16 per cent of those in the poorest households.

However looking beyond as things look like today, he sets an eye on 2015, adding a positive note: "The Millennium Development Goals are still attainable. The critical question today is how to transform the pace of change from what we have seen over the last decade into dramatically faster progress." He adds: "The experience of these last ten years offers ample evidence of what works and has provided tools that can help us achieve the MDGs by 2015." he adds. With this in view, the MDG summit in September should be an opportunity for world leaders to translate the evidence into a concrete agenda for action. ■

A 'global partnership for development', which is the eighth goal of the Millennium Declaration 2000, appears far from attainable five years ahead of the target date, according to a UN report.

An important plank of the global partnership is official development assistance (ODA), which remains well below the United Nations (UN) target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for most 'donors'. In 2009, the only countries to reach or exceed the target were Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.

The largest givers by volume in 2009 were the United States, followed by France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Japan.

2010 is a milestone for European Union members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In 2005, DAC-EU member states agreed to reach a collective total of 0.56 per cent of GNI in net ODA in 2010, with a minimum country target of 0.51 per cent.

The UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2010 finds that some countries will achieve or even surpass that goal: Sweden, with the world's highest ODA as a percentage of GNI (1.01 per cent), is followed by Luxembourg (1 per cent), Denmark (0.83 per cent), the Netherlands (0.8 per cent), Belgium (0.7 per cent), the United Kingdom (0.6 per cent), Finland (0.56 per cent), Ireland (0.52 per cent) and Spain (0.51 per cent).

But others are unlikely to reach the target: ODA as a percentage of GNI is estimated at between 0.44 and 0.48 per cent for France, 0.40 for Germany, 0.37 for Austria, 0.34 for Portugal, 0.21 for Greece, and 0.20 for Italy.

This year is also special for DAC-EU ODA givers because it represents the midpoint between their 2005 commitments and the 2015 target date for meeting the 0.7 per cent GNI target.

Aid concentrates increasingly on the poorest countries, with the least developed countries (LDCs) receiving about a third of donors' total aid flows. In 2007-2008, out of an average total of \$71.6 billion of bilateral ODA that was allocated for specific purposes, \$15.2 billion focused on achievement of MDG 3 (third Millennium Development Goal) -- the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.



AFRICA SHORT-CHANGED

In 2009, net disbursements of ODA amounted to \$119.6 billion, or 0.31 per cent of the combined national income of developed countries. In real terms, this is a slight increase (of 0.7 per cent) compared to 2008 even though, measured in current U.S. dollars, ODA fell by over 2 per cent -- from \$122.3 billion in 2008, says the UN report.

If debt relief is excluded, the increase in ODA in real terms from 2008 to 2009 was 6.8 per cent. If humanitarian aid is also excluded, bilateral aid rose by 8.5 per cent in real terms, as aid givers continued to scale up their core development projects and programmes. Most of the increase was in new lending (20.6 per cent), but grants also rose (by 4.6 per cent, excluding debt relief). At the Gleneagles Group of Eight (G-8) Summit and ➔



the UN World Summit in 2005, donors committed to increasing their aid. Many of these pledges were made in terms of a share of gross national income (GNI). Based on expectations of future GNI, these pledges, combined with other commitments, would have lifted total ODA from \$80 billion in 2004 to \$130 billion in 2010 (at constant 2004 prices).

However, the slowdown in economic growth since 2008 has reduced the previously expected level of GNI in the developed countries and the dollar value of the commitments for 2010 to around \$126 billion (at constant 2004 prices).

"Moreover, the economic slowdown has put pressure on government budgets in the developed countries. While the majority of the initial commitments remain in force, some large donors have reduced or postponed the pledges they made for 2010. On the basis of current 2010 budget proposals and the lower GNI forecasts, according to the UN, total ODA for 2010 is projected to be \$108 billion (at 2004 prices).

The shortfall in aid affects Africa in particular. At the 2005 Gleneagles Summit, G-8 members projected that their commitments, combined with those of other donors, would double ODA to Africa by 2010.

Preliminary data for 2009 show that bilateral ODA to Africa as a whole rose by 3 per cent in real terms. For sub-Saharan Africa, bilateral aid increased by 5.1 per cent in real terms over 2008.

"It is estimated that Africa will receive only about \$11 billion out of the \$25 billion increase envisaged at Gleneagles, due mainly to the underperformance of some European donors who earmark large shares of their aid to Africa," says the UN report.

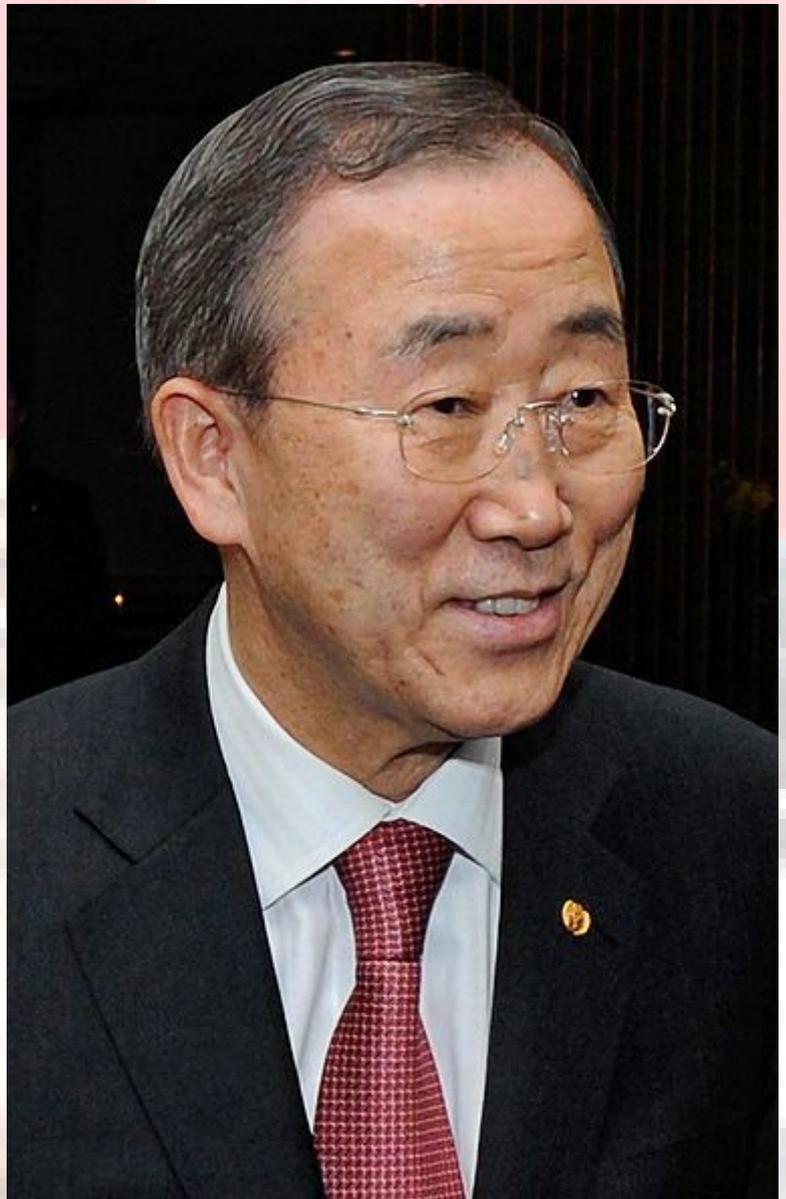
This report shows how much progress has been made since the Millennium Declaration ten years ago. Perhaps most important, it shows that the Goals are achievable when nationally owned development strategies, policies and programmes are supported by international development partners.

At the same time, it is clear that improvements in the lives of the poor have been unacceptably slow, and some hard-won gains are being eroded by the climate, food and economic crises.

In view of this, when heads of government and state meet at the United Nations in New York from September 20-22 to review progress, assess obstacles and gaps, and agree on concrete strategies and actions to meet the eight MDGs by 2015, they will not have much reason to rejoice. – IDN ■



Eminent Personalities Galvanize Support



The United Nations is leaving no stone unturned to galvanize action toward achieving by 2015 the global anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In run-up to a gathering of heads of government and state at the UN in September 2010, Secretary-General has set up an advocacy Group of eminent persons.

A "real collection of superheroes in defeating poverty" has been chosen to serve on the Group, co-chaired by Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero.

The "superheroes" include two Nobel Peace Prize laureates – the Bangladeshi pioneer of microcredit Muhammad Yunus and the Kenyan environmental activist Wangari Maathai – as well as former Chilean president Michelle Bachelet and businessmen and philanthropists Bill Gates and Ted Turner. ➔



Also participating are Jeffrey Sachs, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the MDGs, and Ray Chambers, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Malaria.

Qatar's First Lady, Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser, and the former Mozambican First Lady Graça Machel have also been named as advocates, along with former General Assembly president Jan Eliasson and Philippe Douste-Blazy, the UN Special Adviser on innovative financing for development.

The other members are: Stine Bosse, the chief executive of TrygVesta Group and the chairman of Børnefonden (the Children's Fund); Dho Young-Shin, the chairman of the UN World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) Sustainable Tourism for Eliminating Poverty Foundation; Julio Frenk, the former Mexican health minister and the Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health; Akin Adesina, the Vice-President of the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa; and Hiromasa Yonekura, the chairman of the Japan Business Federation.

Distinguished personalities from China, India and the United Kingdom "will also join the group soon", Ban said in an announcement on June 23, 2010.

Speaking to the 'UN News Centre', Chambers said that "it's a privilege to join such an accomplished group of leaders who have the experience and ambition to ensure that all MDGs remain on track at this critical juncture".

He added that "from our experience with malaria, we know that achieving the MDGs is within sight, and by coordinating our efforts and sharing best practices, we will maximize the likelihood that all eight Goals will be met by 2015."

The MDGs, which include targets for slashing poverty, boosting school enrolment rates, improving maternal health and increasing access to clean water and decent sanitation, were devised at the Millennium Summit in New York in 2000.

The latest UN assessment report on efforts to reach the Goals shows that there has been mixed progress in the developing world. Extreme poverty is falling rapidly but maternal health and sanitation are lagging and there are still large gaps between rich and poor, men and women, and urban and rural communities.

In another move toward achieving the MDG targets, meeting at a United Nations forum, leaders from the private sector, civil society and the creative world have underscored the critical role played by broadband networks in spurring global development. In what is being described as "private gathering" in Geneva, the Broadband Commission for Digital Development conferred on July 11, 2010 on how to deploy the networks worldwide to accelerate progress towards the MDGs with a 2015 deadline.

Chaired by Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Carlos Slim Helú, Mexican businessman and one of the world's wealthiest people, the body will deliver its conclusions to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on September 19, 2010 at an official side event of the high-level gathering on the MDGs in New York.

Serving as the joint vice chairs of the 30-member Commission are Hamadoun Touré, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), and Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

"The global deployment of broadband networks will be as powerful a transformational force for the 21st century as the progressive installation of electricity networks was in the first decades of the 20th century," Touré said.

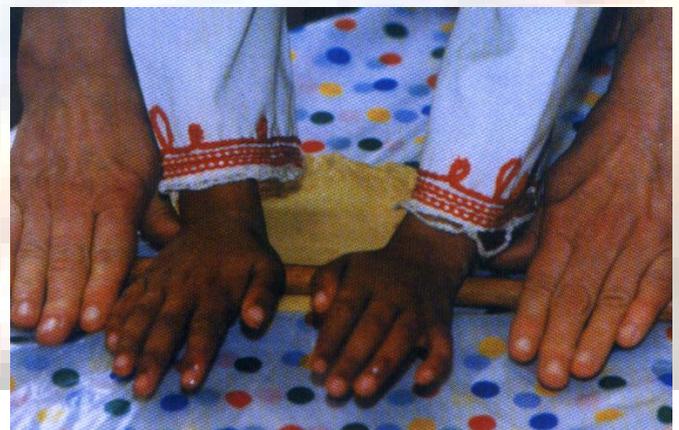
"Just as connection to the power grid is now seen as a basic element of social and economic empowerment, so ubiquitous connectivity to broadband networks will be vital to the ongoing development of every nation worldwide," he added.

Bokova stated that the latest information and communication technologies (ICTs) have created new opportunities to create, preserve, disseminate and use information.

"We aim to go further, towards the construction of inclusive knowledge societies in which people can transform information into knowledge and understanding that empowers them to improve their livelihoods and contribute to their social and economic development," she said in a message to the July 11 meeting.

Other members of the Commission include Richard Branson, Founder and Chairman of the Virgin Group; Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute and Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General; and Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Managing Director of Grameen Bank.

Also during the soccer World Cup in South Africa, world's biggest sporting event, community festivals, television shows, posters, electronic games, multimedia campaigns and even a new song, the Millennium Development Goals were under the spotlight. – IDN ■



Useful links

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>

<http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml>

<http://www.youtube.com/undp#p/c/6AEB539449ADB4>



Child Labour Flourishing in Fast Growing Economies

By Eleonore Meyer

Nearly 160 million kids aged between five and fourteen are trapped in child labour world wide. They are everywhere but invisible, toiling as domestic servants in homes, labouring behind the walls of workshops, hidden from view in plantations, handling chemicals and pesticides in agriculture, working in mines, or operating dangerous machinery.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in Sub-Saharan Africa around one in three children -- 69 million are engaged in child labour. In South Asia, they number 44 million. A new report finds that child labour related risks are mounting in the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China -- also known as the BRICs countries.

The study by the Maplecroft risk analysts based in London analyses the most recent events, reports and published raw data to offer a detailed overview of the child labour situation in the BRICs. It is intended "to enable business and investors to identify potential supply chain and investment risks arising from child labour in the world's fastest growing economies".

Of the four countries, India has the most challenging environment for business relating to child labour, as it is ranked 1/196 countries in Maplecroft's Child Labour Index. The country has the highest number of child workers in the world, says the report released on August 16.

It says that estimates from national and international NGOs place the figures of child workers in India between 60 and 115 million. On the other hand, latest official government figures estimate 16.4 million child labourers between the ages of 5 and 14.

Of those, approximately two million are thought to work in "hazardous industries", including mining, ship breaking and manufacturing or are trafficked and exploited in the sex industry, the Maplecroft report says.

However, the Press Information Bureau of the Government of India said in a media release on August 16, 2010: "As per 2001 census, the total number of children working in various occupations including hazardous occupations in the country was 1.26 core (12.60 million).

"As a result of various welfare measures taken by the Union Government and the State Governments coupled with stricter enforcement of the provisions of the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 the number of working children has declined to 90.75 lakh (9,075 million), as estimated by National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) in 2004-05."

India's Minister of Labour and Employment Mallikarjun Kharge gave this information in reply to a question in the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) on August 16. He said the Government of India has adopted a multi-pronged strategy for eradication of child labour as follows:

- A legislative action plan in form of Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986.
- Project-based action plan in areas of high concentration of Child Labour under National Child Labour Project Scheme.
- Focus on general development programmes for the benefit of the families of Child Labour.

These measures had yielded positive results in eradication of child labour, the Minister said.

CHINA

China is rated "extreme risk" in all of Maplecroft's labour rights and protection indices with the risks for child labour, trafficking and discrimination increasing. Key findings of the report point towards the highest prevalence of child labour violations in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors of China.

"Human rights abuses associated with suppliers within the textile and electronic sectors are of particular concern following a recent cluster of suicides that occurred in a Foxconn factory based in the country," states the report.

"Child labour in the manufacturing sector is hard to identify. It often occurs down the supply chain when production is outsourced to home-workers," said Professor Alyson Warhurst, CEO of Maplecroft. "This means that companies need to be especially diligent when it comes to auditing their supply chains. But they also need to be cognisant of the implications for children of taking them out of work where schooling is inadequate and families live in poverty."

BRAZIL

According to the report, child labour in Brazil is prevalent in the informal, agricultural and manufacturing sectors. In 2008, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that 58.7% of child workers between 5-14 years old worked in agriculture. Children working in this sector are particularly vulnerable to accidents, often involving agricultural chemicals and machinery.

The latest available statistics from the Brazilian government point out, according to Maplecroft, that in 2006 there were 273,000 accidents involving child labourers. Maplecroft's labour protection risk indices show that working conditions are worsening in Brazil.

RUSSIA

Business in Russia is not immune from the risks associated with child labour, as the country is ranked 75/196 and "high risk" in Maplecroft's Child Labour Index. While an overall estimated figure on children working is unavailable, the Federal Labour and Employment Service (FLES) found over 10,000 child labour law violations in 2008.

These children often received little pay and were discovered in dangerous working conditions in the industrial and agricultural sectors. The report also states that risks associated with working conditions in Russia are growing. The report offers a detailed analysis about child labour in each of the BRIC countries, which provides companies with an understanding of where child labour risk exposures may lie within their supply chains. ■



Expanding Middle Class Promises Huge Growth to Asia

By Clive Banerjee

With a burgeoning middle-class growth in developing Asia, the region is set to be at the forefront of worldwide consumption in 2030, when it is expected to spend \$32 trillion. This will signify a steep rise on 2008 and amount to about 43 percent of the global consumer expenditure, says a new report.

Developing Asia includes: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Viet Nam.

In 2008, consumers in those countries spent about \$4.3 trillion -- in 2005 purchasing power parity dollars -- which was nearly a third of private consumption in the "rich man's" Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.

According to the report from the Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB), the five countries with the largest middle class by population shares are Azerbaijan, Malaysia, Thailand, Kazakhstan, and Georgia; the five smallest are Bangladesh, Nepal, Laos, Uzbekistan, and India.

Yet, in absolute size, India's middle class is very large compared to other countries given its massive population. Only in the People's Republic of China is the middle class larger.

The lower-middle class constitutes the predominant share of the middle class in most of developing Asia, with the exception of relatively affluent countries such as Azerbaijan, Malaysia, and Thailand.

In China, the daily consumption expenditure of more than half of the middle class is in the lower \$2 to \$4 bracket, while in South Asia's Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Pakistan, the vast majority of the middle class (75 percent or more) falls into this group. With the exception of Malaysia and Thailand, the population share of the upper-middle class is miniscule in most of Asia's developing countries.

The report also indicates that Armenia, China, and Viet Nam have made the greatest progress in increasing the population share of the middle class in recent years, with the share of the middle class in the total population increasing 60 to 80 percentage points.

However, in absolute numbers, China stands significantly above every other country. It added more than 800 million people to the middle class during 1990 and 2008 and increased aggregate annual middle-class spending by more than \$1.8 trillion.

India comes a second, with 205 million joining the middle class and \$256 billion in additional middle-class annual expenditures.

VILLAGE ENTERPRISES

The ADB finds that Township and Village Enterprises (TVEs) in the People's Republic of China -- a term in use since 1984 referring to enterprises owned by rural entities, individually or collectively -- have grown to become an important factor

in the development of the rural middle class. Without TVEs, the rural middle class in China would be small even today, despite the rapid economic growth of the past three decades, according to the report.

TVEs promote middle class growth in several ways, explains the report. First, they generate a significant share of GDP (Gross Domestic Product), particularly rural GDP. In 2008, the value-added of TVEs amounted to CNY8.41 trillion, 71 percent of the rural economy or 28 percent of national GDP. Many TVEs are also engaged in processing and marketing of agricultural products, facilitating farmers' access to market, and permitting them to specialize in certain products, thus helping raise incomes.

Second, TVEs provide jobs, employing 155 million, or 29 percent of the rural labor force by 2008, up from 28 million farmers and 9.2 percent in 1978. Productive jobs are crucial for poverty reduction and formation of the middle class. TVE job creation has helped expand the arable land/farming population ratio, allowing farmers to achieve economies of scale and increase income.

Third, TVEs represent a major source of local government revenue, helping to fund local infrastructure and social development, both of which are crucial for expansion of the middle class. Over the last three decades, TVE investment in rural infrastructure, building construction, and research and development has amounted to CNY432 billion (1 Chinese yuan = \$0.147284 at current rates). Many TVEs also donate funds for establishing rural schools and health facilities.

Fourth, TVEs offer a platform for the formation and development of entrepreneurs, themselves a core component of the middle class. Finally, TVE growth has brought about a boom in small towns and cities, which in turn has promoted service industry growth.

POVERTY REDUCTION

ADB Chief Economist Jong-Wha Lee says: "Even though the Asian middle class has significantly lower income and spending relative to the Western middle class, its growth in expenditures has been remarkable and its absolute levels are commanding."

Defining the middle class in Asia as those consuming between \$2 and \$20 per day, the report found that in 2008, Asia's middle class had risen to 56 percent of the population -- or nearly 1.9 billion people -- up from 21 percent in 1990.

The report points out that strong economic growth in Asia over the past two decades has been accompanied by significant reductions in poverty as previously poor households have moved into the middle class.

Between 1990 and 2008, spending in Asia increased almost three fold, compared to marginal increases in all other regions, including developed countries. "As a result, consumption expenditures by developing Asia are now second only to developed countries," states the report, published in a special chapter of 'Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2010', the flagship annual statistical publication of the ADB. ■

Music for People around the World

By Taro Ichikawa in Tokyo



Hiroyasu Kobayashi, President and Head of the Min-on Music Museum



A Performance in the 'A Musical Voyage along the Silk Road' series

The depth and dimension of its repertoire is fabulous if not unparalleled: the sublime blend of beauty and music of an opera; the spectacular and dynamic creativity of a ballet; inspiring presentation of classics orchestrated by a magic wand; musicals, jazz, folk music and dance enlivening feelings of joy and happiness.

All this is *minshu ongaku* -- 'music for the people' -- which the Min-On Concert Association has on its agenda to help enrich people's lives, widen their horizon to transcend the barriers of nationality, race and generation, following the maxim: Music awakens people to the dignity of humanity.

The underlying mission of Min-On was spelt out by its founder Dr. Daikoku Ikeda, an eminent Buddhist leader, writer and philosopher: "Music speaks directly to the heart. This response, this echo within the heart, is proof that human hearts can transcend the barriers of time and space and nationality. Exchanges in the field of culture can play an important role in enabling people to overcome mistrust and prejudice and build peace."

Another mandate of Min-On is to offer all people the opportunity to enjoy the world's finest music and performing arts at affordable prices.

Perhaps the largest private, non-profit performing arts promoter of its kind in the world today, Min-On is supported by 1.2 million individuals countrywide who pay 500 Yen (approx. US\$5) a year to become "contributing members". Unlike most other foundations in Japan and elsewhere that rely heavily on public grants or corporate donors, Min-On depends entirely on membership fees.

Min-On also sponsors the Tokyo International Music Competition and organizes free concerts for schools.

The Min-On Culture Centre in the heart of Shinjuku Ward of Tokyo's commercial and administrative centre, houses the Min-On Music Museum with a library containing over 120,000 LPs and CDs, 45,000 music items and about 30,000 reference books. The museum also has on display a collection of antique pianos and music boxes, and folk instruments from around the world.

Since its inception in 1963, Min-On has been creating opportunities for the performing arts to build bridges between people and to give tangible form to the desire for world peace. Registered as an independent and incorporated foundation in 1965, it has since grown to become one of Japan's largest private cultural exchange institutions.

"We are working to revitalize musical culture worldwide -- to launch a new global Renaissance -- with musical programmes aimed at stimulating the artistic aspirations of tomorrow's creative generations," says Hiroyasu Kobayashi, who presides over the Min-On Concert Association.

All this tempts observers to describe Min-On as Tokyo's Met. The Met, as the Metropolitan Opera Association of New York City is widely known, is America's largest classical music organization, which annually presents some 220 opera performances. But Min-On is in fact tremendously more than the Met.

103 COUNTRIES

Over a span of more than four decades, Min-On has engaged in international cultural exchanges of music, dance and performing arts with 102 countries and regions, and expanded the circle of friendship around the world, says Kobayashi. The figure will go up to 103 this autumn when the National Ballet of Cameroon performs at the invitation of Min-On.

Min-On has played a major role in introducing Japanese culture, presented by leading musical and theatrical groups, to other countries. These overseas tours, which have featured regular cooperation with the Jeunesses Musicales de France (JMF) and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), aim to enhance appreciation of Japanese culture overseas and contribute to mutual exchanges.

Min-On launched 'A Musical Voyage along the Silk Road', a ten-part series featuring performers from Iraq, India, China, the former Soviet Union, Mongolia, Turkey, Egypt and Syria, in 1979. It concluded in 2007. The series restarted in 2009 with joint performances by the artists from Egypt, Greece and Uzbekistan. It has been indeed an ambitious undertaking, given that less than one percent of Japanese are known to have expressed an interest in folk music and dance.

Min-On also brought the Teatro alla Scala from Milan in 1981, the first world-class, full-cast opera from Europe ever to perform in Japan. In 1999, following successful tours by dancers and musicians from Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa, it kicked off the ongoing

'A Musical Voyage Across Africa' series with a 25-concert tour by an Ethiopian dance troupe. The series continued with groups from Zambia in 2001 and from Morocco in September 2003. The Min-On Concert Association has also been a Japanese pioneer in world music recordings, when it began making studio recordings of artists during their Japan tours.

Min-On has sponsored music competitions for young conductors from around the world. It has treated some 1.2 million Japanese schoolchildren to free performances by artistes invited over the past 30 years.

Min-On music library, open to the public, houses one of the most extensive collections in Japan.

Min-On also sponsors the Tokyo International Choreography Competition, which was inaugurated in 1991 and is one of the very few competitions of its kind in the world. The competition brings together dozens of choreographers and dance groups from around the world and provides a unique stage for the young performers of the future.

UNPARALLELED

"No other organization in Japan has engaged in as far-ranging music promotion activities as Min-On," says Kazushi Ishida, music critic and chair of a national composers' association. "Indeed, it may not have an equal in the entire world."

"We have invited artists from 102 countries but I presume that many people in Japan may not be in a position to spot out at least 50 countries such as Lebanon and Jordan on the world map," Hiroyasu Kobayashi, who presides over the Min-On Concert Association, tells IDN.

He gives an example: "I received complaints from concert ticket agencies when we decided to invite artistes from a Middle East country. They said that very few people know about the country and all they hear is about civil war. They assume that there cannot be any culture of music in such a country. How can Min-On expect people to buy tickets to see arts and cultural performances from such a country?"

Looking back over the past 34 years, Kobayashi recalls many examples: "I have witnessed that after people spend two hours watching a so-called 'questionable' groups perform (a performance lasts two hours in Min-On programmes) something changes in their minds. In fact, many audiences gladly fill in questionnaires after witnessing a performance."

He has often come across comments like: "I have learned for the first time in my life that there exists such a wonderful artistic culture in this country" and "I want to visit this country some day".

Min-On has also helped bring about better understanding among artistes from countries that otherwise are in a state of conflict with each other. "We invited artistes from the Middle East which at the time of Iran-Iraq war included groups both from Iran and Iraq," recalls Shigeyuki Kohzuma, acting director of the Min-On Music Museum.

He adds: "Since artistes came through government-to-government arrangements, initially there was unfriendliness between them. However, as they spent time together on many stages and trips throughout Japan, we were pleased to see that something inside them gradually changed and by the time they performed together on the stage at the end of the tour, we could see a bond of friendship and respect as fellow artists transcending national animosities."

Min-On has furthermore invited groups from four countries in Central America. Kohzuma says he was surprised to learn that in spite of their geographical proximities, they had never visited each other. But in Japan they had an opportunity to meet each

other, develop friendships and mutual respect as artists. "This was the beginning of mutual exchanges and friendship after coming back to their respective countries."

Min-On has invited artistes from conflict-ridden countries as well. "A good aspect of bridging their performance with Japanese ordinary citizens particularly



children and youth is that students wrote letters to us asking for our advice regarding what they could do to support people in those countries," says Kobayashi, president of Min-On.

Children who came to learn about a particular conflict-ridden country through its musicians, who visited schools, prompted them to know more about the country and its people and develop respect for their music -- and even personal feeling of friendship and sympathy toward the artistes, when they saw gruesome images of the conflict on TV.

SHARING PAIN

Yet another example is what a high school girl wrote after meeting members of the Ethiopian national dance troupe and school students in Ehime Prefecture: "I admit that I knew next to nothing about Ethiopia until today. But from now on, I'll be following the news closely to see what happens in that country. If it's good news, I'll be happy for them. But if it's not -- and they suffer from famine or war, for example -- their pain will become my own."

Kobayashi is proud of Min-On's attempts to raise audiences' interest in people other than themselves. "I feel desensitization to the situation and needs of others is really the key danger facing us today."

From the responses that Min-On gets through the questionnaires it distributes, it is clear that Japanese audiences are generally moved and impressed by their exposure to alien cultures. For groups from developing countries, too, it is a source of pride to be able to demonstrate the richness and beauty of their culture, rather than always being seen as a disadvantaged people.

"Cultural exchange of this kind is extremely precious as it is based on mutual respect and appreciation," says Yukio Yamaguchi, director of public relations for Min-On. "It creates a vital awareness that no one culture is superior or inferior to another. It dissuades us from being parochial and prejudiced about people in other countries and their cultures."

Min-On plans to continue widening the scope of its activities, confident that its role is an important one in today's world. "Cultural exchange is a gradual, unsung process that may appear circuitous, but it is actually the surest path to mutual understanding and peace," concludes Kobayashi. "We've seen for ourselves what this process can achieve, and it has never failed to inspire and sustain us in our task." ■

Visit <http://www.min-on.org>

World Heritage List Reviewed and Expanded

By Maria Luisa Vargas in Brasilia



List.

The Committee's decision was guided by the fact that in March 2010, fire almost completely destroyed the Muzibu Azaala Mpanga building, the main structure at the site which contained four royal Buganda tombs. The property, an outstanding example of an architectural style developed by the Buganda Kingdom since the 13th century, will be reconstructed.

The Committee also decided to remove the Galapagos Islands from the List of World Heritage in Danger. The Galapagos Islands, which have been called a unique "living museum and showcase of evolution" were inscribed on the Danger List in 2007 because of threats posed by invasive species, unbridled tourism and over-fishing.

The Committee found that significant progress had been made by Ecuador in addressing these problems. It welcomed the Government's continuing efforts to strengthen conservation measures, especially in dealing with introduced species.

The List of World Heritage in Danger aims to raise international support for the conservation of World Heritage Properties.

Chaired by João Luiz da Silva Ferreira, the Minister of Culture of Brazil, the Committee inscribed 21 new sites on the World Heritage List raising the number of properties of "outstanding universal value" to 911 in more than 150 countries. Three countries, Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Tajikistan, had sites added for the first time.

The Committee consists of representatives of 21 of the States Parties to the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, elected by the General Assembly of States Parties to the Convention.

The Committee's current members are: Australia, Bahrain, Barbados, Brazil, Cambodia, China, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, France, Iraq, Jordan, Mali, Mexico, Nigeria, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, and United Arab Emirates. Some of the places on the World Heritage List are household names, such as the Acropolis, Easter Island, Machu Picchu and Victoria Falls.

Other places are perhaps more surprising, including Auschwitz Concentration Camp in Poland (inscribed in 1979) and Japan's Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome, inscribed 1996). Such World Heritage properties are not only tangible signs of human culture, but symbolic representations of human nature: of cruelty, courage, and hope for peace on Earth.

Among the new sites inscribed are: The Thang Long Imperial Citadel in Viet Nam that became the 900th site to be inscribed on UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) World Heritage List. The Citadel was built in the 11th century by the Ly Viet Dynasty, marking the independence of the Dai Viet. It

was constructed on the remains of a Chinese fortress dating from the 7th century and stands on drained land reclaimed from the Red River Delta in Hanoi.

Also gaining recognition is the historic monuments of Dengfeng in China. Mount Songshang is considered to be the central sacred mountain of China. At the foot of this 1,500 metre high mountain, close to the city of Dengfeng in Henan province and spread over a 40 square-kilometre circle, stand eight clusters of buildings and sites, including three Han Que gates -- remains of the oldest religious edifices in China -- temples, the Zhougong Sundial Platform and the Dengfeng Observatory.

In Tajikistan, the Sarazm, which means "where the land begins", is an archaeological site bearing testimony to the development of human settlements in Central Asia, from the 4th millennium BCE to the end of the 3rd millennium BCE. The ruins demonstrate the early development of proto-urbanization in this region. The centre of settlement, one of the oldest in Central Asia, is situated between a mountainous region suitable for cattle rearing by nomadic pastoralists, and a large valley conducive to the development of agriculture and irrigation by the first settled populations in the region. Other sites inscribed in Brasilia include:

At Turaif District in ad-Dir'iyah in Saudi Arabia:

This property was the first capital of the Saudi Dynasty, in the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, north-west of Riyadh. Founded in the 15th century, it bears witness to the Najdi architectural style, which is specific to the centre of the Arabian peninsula. In the 18th and early 19th century, its political and religious role increased, and the citadel at at-Turaif became the centre of the temporal power of the House of Saud and the spread of the Wahhabi reform inside the Muslim religion. The property includes the remains of many palaces and an urban ensemble built on the edge of the ad-Dir'iyah oasis.

Australian Convict Sites:

The property includes a selection of 11 penal sites, among the thousands established by the British Empire on Australian soil in the 18th and 19th centuries. They are located on the fertile coastal strip from which the Aboriginal peoples were then forced back, mainly around Sydney and in Tasmania, as well as on Norfolk Island and in Fremantle. They housed tens of thousands of men, women and children condemned by British justice to transportation to the convict colonies.

Each of the sites had a specific purpose, in terms both of punitive imprisonment and of rehabilitation through forced labour to help build the colony. The property presents the best surviving examples of large-scale convict transportation and the colonial expansion of European powers through the presence and labour of convicts.

Jantar Mantar in India:

The Jantar Mantar, in Jaipur, is an astronomical observation site built in the early 18th century. It includes a set of some 20 main fixed instruments. They are monumental examples in masonry of known instruments but which in many cases have specific characteristics of their own. Designed for the observation of astronomical positions with the naked eye, they embody several architectural and instrumental innovations. This is the most significant, most comprehensive, and the best preserved of India's historic observatories. ■

Over 30 Countries Aspire for Nuclear Power

By Jutta Wolf

More than 30 countries, which are presently not harnessing energy from the atom, are actively considering embarking upon nuclear power programmes. These include both industrial and developing economies, according to a new report.

Italy, Albania, Serbia, Portugal, Norway, Poland, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Ireland and Turkey are among the European countries looking forward to nuclear power programmes. In the Middle East and North Africa: Iran, the Gulf states including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Israel, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria, Morocco and the Sudan. In west, central and southern Africa: Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Uganda and Namibia.

Those aspiring nuclear power programmes in South America are Chile, Ecuador and Venezuela. In central and southern Asia: Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Bangladesh. In Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. In East Asia: North Korea.

"Despite the large number of these emerging countries, they are not expected to contribute very much to the expansion of nuclear capacity in the foreseeable future -- the main growth will come in countries where the technology is already well established," reports the World Nuclear Association (WNA).

"However, in the longer term, the trend to urbanisation in less-developed countries will greatly increase the demand for electricity, and especially that supplied by base-load plants such as nuclear. The pattern of energy demand in these countries will become more like that of Europe, North America and Japan," WNA adds.

The report classifies the more than 30 countries according to the extent their nuclear programmes or plans have progressed:

Power reactors under construction: Iran.

Contracts signed, legal and regulatory infrastructure well-developed: UAE and Turkey.

Committed plans, legal and regulatory infrastructure developing: Vietnam, Jordan and Italy.

Well-developed plans but commitment pending: Thailand, Indonesia, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Poland, Belarus and Lithuania.

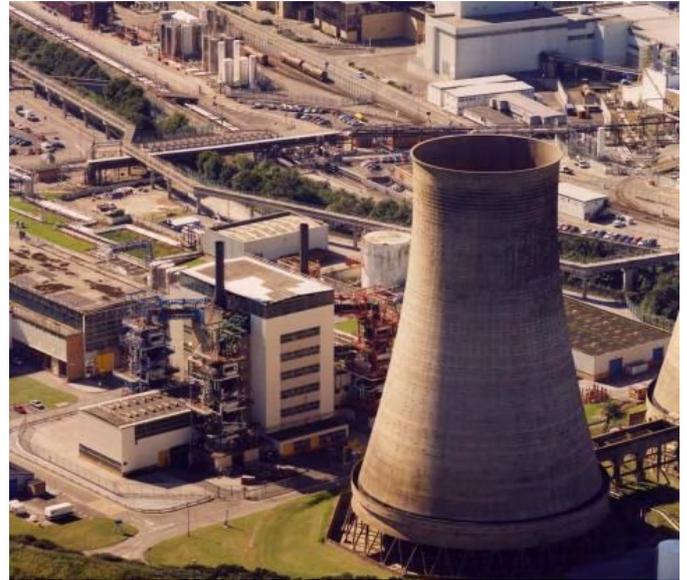
Developing plans: Saudi Arabia, Israel, Nigeria, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Morocco and Chile.

Discussion as serious policy option: Namibia, Mongolia, Philippines, Singapore, Albania, Serbia, Estonia and Latvia, Libya, Algeria and Azerbaijan.

Officially not a policy option at present: Australia, New Zealand, Portugal, Norway and Ireland.

In all countries, governments need to create the environment for investment in nuclear power, including professional regulatory regime, policies on nuclear waste management and decommissioning, and involvement with international non-proliferation and insurance arrangements, says the report.

Institutional arrangements vary from one country to another. Usually governments are profoundly involved in planning. In developing countries financing and operation are core issues. As



Calder Hall nuclear power station in the United Kingdom was the world's first nuclear power station to produce electricity in commercial quantities. - Wikimedia Commons

emerging nuclear nations lack a strong cadre of nuclear engineers and scientists, construction is often on a turnkey basis, with the reactor seller assuming all technical and commercial risks in delivering a functioning plant on time and at a particular price.

Alternatively the seller may set up a consortium to build, own and operate the plant. As the industry becomes more international, new arrangements are likely, including public-private partnerships, predicts the report.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has published a small book *Considerations to Launch a Nuclear Power Programme* in 2007, which addresses the issues involved in a country deciding upon and implementing a nuclear power program. In particular it looks at those considerations before a decision is made, before construction starts and subsequently. It then briefly covers twelve factors for consideration, says the report.

According to the IAEA in mid-2010, about 60 countries were at some stage of considering nuclear power, 12 were actually preparing a nuclear power programme, and 20 new countries expected to have nuclear power on line by 2030.

The IAEA also sets out a phased 'milestone' approach to establishing nuclear power capacity in new countries. Broadly, it underlined three milestones:

-- Pre-project phase 1 (one to three years) leading to knowledgeable commitment to a nuclear power programme, resulting in establishment of a Nuclear Power Program Implementing Organisation (NEPIO). This deals with the programme, not the particular projects after phase 2.

-- Project decision-making phase 2 (three to seven years) involving preparatory work after the decision is made and up to inviting bids, with the regulatory body being established. In phase 2 the government role progressively gives way to that of the regulatory body and the owner-operator. ➡

-- Construction phase 3 (seven to ten years) with regulatory body operational, up to commissioning and operation.

The WNA report points out that North Korea (officially known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea – DPRK) generated 34 TWh in 2002 and 19 TWh in 2003, 71 percent from hydro and 29 percent from fossil fuels. Per capita consumption in 2002 was 1364 kWh. Recent estimates suggest that operable generating capacity is 2000-3000 MWe.

TWh or Terawatt-hour refers to getting power at a capacity of 1 terawatt for one hour. A terawatt-hour per year means the equivalent amount of power sometime within the period of a year.

In 1985, it brought into operation a small gas-cooled, graphite-moderated, natural-uranium (metal) fuelled 'Experimental Power Reactor' of about 25 MW (thermal) at Yongbyon. It exhibited all the features of a plutonium production reactor for weapons purposes and produced only about 5 MWe as an incidental feature.

North Korea also made substantial progress in the construction of two larger reactors designed on the same principles, a prototype of about 200 MWt (potentially 50 MWe) at Yongbyon, and a full-scale version of about 800 MWt (potentially 200 MWe) at Taechon.

In 1999 a contract to build two 1000 MWe light-water reactors was signed as part of an international deal to dissuade North Korea from its weapons programme. The agreement was between the Korean Energy Development Organisation (KEDO), the international organisation in charge of the project, and the South Korean utility KEPCO, bringing technology to build a nuclear power plant which is not amenable to misuse.

KEDO was set up following the 1994 agreement involving the USA to head off the production of weapons plutonium from the small gas-graphite reactor and to provide much needed energy - in the short term fuel oil, but eventually electricity.

KHNP is the prime contractor for KEDO which was starting to build the two reactors at Kumho in North Korea. If completed, these would have been the last basic KSNP units commissioned. In 2005 South Korea offered 2000 MWe from the grid to North Korea.

Construction of the reactors under KEDO was suspended late in 2003, and this suspension was renewed in 2004 and 2005. The KEDO board terminated the project in May 2006. Most of the fabrication of steam generators, pressure vessels and other equipment for both reactors was complete, and the parts were in storage. This equipment belongs to KEPCO and is likely to be sold off to other nuclear projects, including South Korean export ones.

North Korea is not currently considered as having serious intentions to deploy nuclear power for electricity.

North Korea was a party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapons state, but it delayed concluding its safeguards agreement with the IAEA, and in April 2003 it withdrew from the NPT. In October 2006 it exploded a nuclear device underground.

In February 2007 North Korea agreed to shut down and seal the Yongbyon reactor and related facilities including reprocessing plant within 60 days and accept IAEA monitoring of this, in return for assistance with its energy needs. Further assistance would follow the irreversible disabling of the reactor and all other nuclear facilities.

In May 2009 it exploded another nuclear device underground, more successfully, that is, the yield was apparently in line with probable design, unlike the test in 2006, says WNA. ■

China to Have its First Nuclear City Soon

By R Kim

Preparations are at an advanced stage for building China's first Nuclear Power City in the coastal city of Haiyan, on the Yangtze Delta. The construction of the Nuclear City is expected to "start soon", according to the World Nuclear News.

The Nuclear Power City will be built some 118 kilometers (70 miles) southwest of Shanghai and close to the cities of Hangzhou, Suzhou and Ningbo, lying midway along China's coast, where several nuclear power plants have been constructed or are planned, the World Nuclear News (WNN) says quoting the Nicobat Group, the leading China nuclear resource for U.S. nuclear companies entering the Chinese market.

China will reportedly spend some \$175 billion over the next ten years on developing the 130 square-kilometre Haiyan nuclear industrial park in Zhejiang province, which is entitled to all the preferential benefits granted to national economic and technological zones and national hi-tech industrial zones.

In Zhejiang province itself, there are currently five nuclear power reactors in operation and two under construction at Qinshan. There are also two reactors under construction at the Fangjianshan plant. By 2014, when all nine units should be in operation, electrical generating capacity will total some 6300 MWe, says the Nicobar Group.

In addition to the nuclear power plants, Haiyan hosts the headquarters of 18 leading Chinese nuclear equipment suppliers as well as branch offices of all the major Chinese nuclear design institutes and construction companies.

In March 2010, China National Nuclear Corporation (CNNC) launched its nuclear power base -- 'China Nuclear Power City' -- in Haiyan. In April, the Zhejiang provincial government signed a "strategic energy cooperation agreement" with China Guangdong Nuclear Power Corporation (CGNPC). The conceptual design of the Haiyan Nuclear City has been completed in Beijing, reports WNN.

In July, local and provincial officials met to formally endorse the project and to finalize the location, scope and industries involved. Detailed engineering and construction preparation work was expected to start almost immediately.

CNNC and the Zhejiang government plan to accelerate the construction of the nuclear components centre and training centre in Haiyan. The central area of the industrial park and the exhibition centre was to be launched first in July 2010. Enterprises in the industrial park will enjoy priority for bidding quota, bidding training, qualification guidance and specific purchasing with CNNC.

The Nuclear City is expected to have four main areas of work: development of the nuclear power equipment manufacturing industry; nuclear training and education; applied nuclear science industries (medical, agricultural, radiation detection and tracing); and promotion of the nuclear industry.

The Haiyan Nuclear City website said that it has been inspired by the Burgundy region of France, which successfully became an industrial centre for the French nuclear industry. Several small and medium sized French nuclear-related companies moved to Burgundy to actively participate in the global market. ☺

WNN said that a group of 30 members from the French-China Electricity Partnership (PFCE) and the French Nuclear Industry Association (GIIN) visited Haiyan on August 12, seeking opportunities for cooperation and investment projects for some 52 French suppliers to Electricité de France (EdF). They signed a letter of intent for promoting cooperation in nuclear related industry with the local government.

SHOWCASE

Meanwhile, the World Nuclear Association (WNA) and WNN are collaborating to gather and showcase innovative architectural proposals to "stimulate creativity in improving the appearance of nuclear power plants". The architectural proposals should be designed to "convey the technological and professional excellence that inheres in nuclear power and the profound opportunity this technology offers for a global clean-energy future".

Submissions to the first annual WNA-WNN Design Showcase will be considered by a special awards panel composed of business and policy leaders, and selected proposals will be prominently featured in a permanent section of the WNN website.

The brief is to create a graphic vision of a nominal 1000 MWe reactor with one cooling tower that is both attractive and also practical in engineering and cost terms. Entrants are asked to submit three high resolution views of their design, along with a short explanation of the design philosophy. Submissions should be made electronically to gordon@world-nuclear.org by December 1, 2010.

WNN says: "Advances in the technology and management of nuclear power have secured the role of this leading source of low-carbon energy for the coming century. But excellence within a nuclear power plant seldom extends to the plant's exterior appearance. Far too often nuclear facilities are housed in bleak industrial structures that express little of the excitement and value of the technology inside, let alone the human element of a highly skilled workforce."

Commenting on the showcase, WNA head John Ritch said, "The nuclear industry may always face a measure of public concern simply because its technology involves powerful, mysterious and unseen forces. But what the industry can certainly control is what the public does see. By expressing the modernity and precision of nuclear power today, architectural artistry could, with little or no effect on cost, help to foster increased public appreciation of a technology that is not only admirable but crucial to our world's future." ■

Huge Support for South Korea's Nuke Energy Ambitions

By R Kim

South Korea is set to become a major world nuclear energy country exporting technology. The support for the atomic power industry is huge and rising in the wake of the country's successful bid to construct four APR1400 reactors in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), for which it bagged a U.S. dollar 20 billion contract.

Nuclear energy is a strategic priority for South Korea and capacity is planned to increase by 56 percent to 27.3 GWe by 2020, and then to 35 GWe by 2030. Today 20 reactors provide almost 40 percent of South Korea's electricity from 17.7 GWe of plant.

According to the 'JoonAng Daily' newspaper, in a survey by the Korean Nuclear Energy Foundation, a research body of the Knowledge Economy Ministry, 88.4 percent of 800 Koreans asked for their views said that the development of the nuclear industry is necessary. 61.1 percent said they would favour constructing more reactors in South Korea. 31.1 percent would not oppose a plant being built near where they live.

An earlier poll taken before the UAE deal showed that 84.6 percent of respondents thought that the nuclear energy industry is necessary, 54.6 percent were in favour of more reactors and 26.4 percent approved of plants in their neighbourhood.

The Korean Knowledge Economy Ministry commented: "The recent survey shows that exporting nuclear power plants is not only beneficial to the Korean economy, but it also raises the interest and trust of the Korean public in the overall nuclear industry."

"Korea's nuclear power export industry should be seen as a net growth engine and the government will continue to promote awareness among the public," the government ministry added.

Nevertheless, some public concerns obviously remain; the current survey also revealed that only 53.6 percent of respondents thought that radioactive materials were being safely stored.

Nevertheless, the South Korean Ministry of Knowledge Economy declared in January 2010 that it aimed to achieve exports of 80 nuclear power reactors worth U.S. dollar 400 billion by 2030, in the course of becoming the world's third largest supplier of such technology, with a 20 percent share of the world market, behind U.S. and France or Russia.

"Nuclear power-related business will be the most profitable market after automobiles, semiconductors and shipbuilding," it said, adding that: "We will promote the industry as a major export business."

The South Korean industry aims to be 100 percent self-sufficient by 2012, with no residual intellectual property constraints. Following the UAE sale, it is marketing to Turkey, Jordan, Romania and Ukraine, as well as South East Asian countries. In addition to exporting reactors, it also plans to enter the 78 billion U.S. dollar market for the operation, maintenance and repair of reactors, according to the World Nuclear News (WNN).

Nuclear activities in South Korea were initiated when the country became a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1957. The Atomic Energy Law was passed the following year. In 1959 the Office of Atomic Energy was established by the government. The first nuclear reactor to achieve criticality in South Korea was a small research unit in 1962.

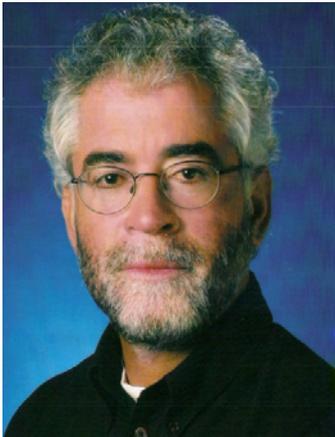
Ten years later the construction of the first nuclear power plant was begun. It started up in 1977 and achieved commercial operation in 1978. After this there was a burst of activity, with eight reactors under construction in the early 1980s.

South Korean energy policy has been driven by considerations of energy security and the need to minimise dependence on current imports. The government's policy is to continue to have nuclear power as a major element of electricity production. ■



Bridge to Nowhere - Road to Disaster

By Julio Godoy



Practitioners of realpolitik would not claim they are poets, very much in the way that they do dismiss they are utopians. As former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt, neither a poet nor utopian, once famously put it: If you have visions, you better go to the optician. In any case, stay out of politics.

Such a maxim is valid for the realpoliticians' diction: Their message must be clear, free of impenetrable lyricisms or rhymes. In other words, the least you can expect from real-

politicians is that their language, per definition supposed to be matter-of-factly, has at least some discernible relation to reality, and is neither wishful thinking nor full of stock phrases. Nor, God forbid, propaganda.

But once and again you come across realpoliticians' wordings and you wonder. For instance, the present German ruling coalition -- formed by the Christian Democratic Union and the Free Democratic Party, none of their leaders poets or utopians -- declared in its government programme of last fall nuclear energy to be a "bridge technology" indispensable "until the time when it can be reliably replaced by renewable energy". The metaphor was supposed to pave the way for the prolongation of the life-span of the nuclear power plants, and for the reversal of their phasing out, adopted ten years ago by the former Green-Social Democratic government.

The idea is not wrong. Until renewable energetic sources can meet the total demand of electricity in a country such as Germany, another dependable source is necessary. Nuclear power is already here, and if, and this is a big if, though, if you count out the environmental pollution and security risks associated with it, is a clean source, at least compared to coal and oil.

This idea was already present in the phasing out of nuclear energy, as decided by the Green-Social Democratic government ten years ago. This phasing out foresaw that the country's most modern nuclear power plants continue to operate until 2021, when they reach 32 years of operation. In the mean time, Germany was supposed to invest massively in renewable sources -- what it did -- to prepare the way for the nuclear-free years after 2021.

It is thanks to these twin decisions -- the phasing out of nuclear power and the massive investment in wind and solar energy -- that Germany shut down some of the oldest nuclear power plants, and at the same time boosted the supply of clean energy. In other words, and to use the "bridge technology" metaphor: In terms of energy policy, the phasing out of nuclear power does not leave Germany in the middle of nowhere.

It is also indisputable that much more is needed to connect our nuclear times with those nuclear-free to come -- to begin with, more installed capacity in solar and wind energy and biomass and the like, and, more important, the renewal of the grid, which, under the present conditions, cannot manage the fluctuations typical of renewable sources. Practically all energy experts say that smart grids are the missing link between the wind and sun energy and the steady, sufficient supply of electricity.

Another important pillar of the bridge towards a nuclear-free energy supply is education: Consumers -- in private households, in the

industry, in the transport sector, in one word we all -- have still to learn that, environmentally speaking, the best energy is the one we do not consume.

BLIND ALLEY

But, despite all the right connotations of the "bridging technology" idea, in the months gone past since the German government issued its programme, its leaders have become prisoners of the semantics of their own wording.

For some of its members, close allies of the nuclear lobby, nuclear reactors may run for as long as possible. For them, the bridge must be quite long -- a contradiction in more than one sense, not only in statics and engineering.

In fact most expertises and experiences show that nuclear power crowds out other sources, especially renewables. Nuclear power also hinders the development of the smart grids, indispensable for the future. In that sense, nuclear power is not a bridge, but a blind alley.

Furthermore, nuclear power forces upon society insurmountable, or at least unacceptable challenges: The pollution it causes, from its very beginning to its very end, and the security risks it represents, both in the environmental, technical, and economic aspects, and in its geopolitical implications.

The exploitation of the uranium mines in Niger illustrates the first environmental downside of nuclear energy. Niger, the world's third-largest exporter of uranium, faces radioactive pollution in big, highly populated areas surrounding the uranium mines.

The pollution goes beyond the physical world -- it pervades the country's politics, and has helped to corrupt these. Who is the main beneficiary? Areva, the world's largest nuclear corporation, partly owned by the governmental French Atomic Energy Commission. A neo-colonial power, so to speak.

At the other end of the uranium exploitation is the disposal of radioactive waste, relentlessly produced in nuclear power plants. Because nobody knows what to do with it, operators apply the most crude measures to pretend they are disposing of it.

France either piles it up in fragile stores, or sends some of it to Russia, where it is deposited open air in the vast prairies of Siberia. Germany has been since decades searching for a so-called Endlager, a final storage zone. But in vain.

In between, nuclear power plants can break down, as all human-made devices do. To name just a few examples of nuclear accidents: Chernobyl in the Soviet Union, Three Miles Island in the U.S.A., Forbach and Civaux in France, Monju in Japan, all in our lifetime. It has happened, it will happen again.

You also have the financial risks: As the Olkiluoto nuclear power plant in Finland proves it, construction of nuclear reactors is most tricky. The plant, under construction since May 2005, was supposed to start operations as late as mid 2009.

But numerous technical difficulties have delayed the project until at least 2012, and its construction costs have doubled, triggering a bitter judiciary quarrel on who is going to pay for them, between the Finnish operator and the French constructor -- Areva again. Areva has made provisions for write-down for at least 2.7 billion euros, from the original 3.3 billion projected in its accounts.

As for the geopolitical issues: Nuclear power plants constitute a temptation for terrorists. And last but not least: Nuclear power supports the proliferation of the material for the bomb. For all these reasons, nuclear power is at least a bridge to nowhere, at worse a road to perdition. -- **GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■**



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Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Best viewed with Acrobat 7.0 and later versions.

Nuclear Abolition News and Analysis

Moving to a Safer World with a Million Pleas Campaign

Nuclear Abolition News | IDN
 Neena Bhandari
 IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis

SYDNEY (IDN) – As the threat of nuclear annihilation becomes more real than ever before, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Australia has launched a 'Million Pleas' campaign, emphasising the urgency to rid the world of these weapons. [P]



"The Million Pleas campaign gives a face and a voice to the issue of Nuclear weapons and the urgency for total disarmament and abolition of these weapons. People do want to see a complete abolition of N-weapons, but they don't necessarily have a way of getting the message across to world leaders. Through this initiative, they can," says ICAN Australia's Campaign Director and Executive Officer, Dimity Hawkins.

▶ [READ MORE...](#)

Kazakhstan Leads Battle to Ban Nuclear Testing

Nuclear Abolition News | IPS
 By Megan Iacobini de Fazio

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The first International Day against Nuclear Testing will be marked on August 29 by festivities in Astana, Kazakhstan and major cities around the world, with the goal of raising awareness of the importance of banning nuclear tests and to educate people on the catastrophic effects past tests have had on human beings and the environment.

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IDN GLOBAL NEWS

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- [Moving to a Safer World with a Million Pleas Campaign](#)
- [UNDP Preparing Recovery Plans for Pakistan](#)
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- [Environment Group Fumes at UN Report on Nigeria Oil Spills](#)
- [Guarding Environment with a Paper-and-Pencil Project](#)

The Arabs and the Race to Nuclear Hell



Nuclear Abolition News | IDN
 By Fareed Mahdy
 IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis

ISTANBUL (IDN) - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sounds rather optimistic – or has chosen to do so: "Recently, we have seen signs of progress on nuclear non-proliferation talks," he said some two weeks ahead of announcing on August 3 that ministerial-level discussions on eliminating the world's nuclear weapons will take place in New York in September. But signals from both the Arab region and the U.S. induce a dramatically different conclusion. [P] [ARABIC](#)

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Peace Signals from U.S. Nuclear Footprint Sites

Nuclear Abolition News | IDN
 By Ramesh Jaura
 IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis

History is in the making with two sites where the United States left its indelible nuclear footprints – the Bikini Atoll in the Marshall archipelago and Japan's legendary city of Hiroshima – sending new signals. [P] [ARABIC](#) | [ITALIAN](#) | [JAPANESE PDF TEXT VERSION](#)

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Launched by

IDN-InDepthNews
 Analysis That Matters

in partnership with the

GLOBAL COOPERATION COUNCIL
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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

BEYOND NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION

A Monthly Newsletter for Strengthening Awareness of Nuclear Abolition

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GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
 MAGAZINE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION
 INCORPORATING KOMMUNIKATION GLOBAL
 A PRODUCTION OF GLOBAL COOPERATION COUNCIL
 in cooperation with IDN-InDepthNews | Analysis That Matters

WWW.GLOBAL-PERSPECTIVES.INFO
 ISSN 2190-0671 (PRINT) • ISSN 2190-068X (INTERNET)
 PERIODICITY: 12 ISSUES A YEAR
 INCLUDING NOVEMBER-DECEMBER COMBINED ISSUE.

PUBLISHER: GLOBALOM MEDIA GmbH
 Marienstr. 19-20 • D-10117 Berlin
 CHIEF EDITOR: Ramesh Jaura
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 33 Lafferty Street, Toronto, ONT M9C 5B5, CANADA

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Annual Subscription: Europe 40 Euro
 Canada: 65 CAD | Asia-Pacific: 60 USD | 12000 JPY
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GLOBAL EVENTS

Conferences

UN Headquarters
General Assembly - Sixty-fourth Session
Plenary meetings, events, and major thematic debates from the 64th session of the UN General Assembly.

2 – 27 August 2010, Geneva
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, seventy-seventh session

2 – 27 August 2010, UN Headquarters
Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, twenty-sixth session
9 August – 24 September 2010, Geneva
Conference on Disarmament, third part

16 August – 3 September 2010, Vienna
Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, Working Group B and informal/expert meetings, thirty-fifth session

16 – 20 August 2010, Vienna
United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, fifty-seventh session

23 – 27 August, Geneva
Meeting of experts of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

30 August – 3 September 2010, UN Headquarters
UNDP and UNFPA, Executive Board, second regular session

7 – 9 September 2010, UN Headquarters
UNICEF Executive Board, second regular session

13 – 17 September 2010, Nairobi
Open-ended Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Expert Group on Forest Financing

28 June – 23 July 2010
UN Headquarters
Economic and Social Council Substantive Session 2010
The 54 members of ECOSOC will gather in New York for the Substantive Session, and will participate in the High-level Segment, 28 June-2 July; the Coordination Segment 6-8 July; the Operational Activities Segment, 9-13 July; the Humanitarian Affairs Segment, 14-15 July; the General Segment, 16-22 July.

12 – 30 July 2010, UN Headquarters
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 46th session

Advisory Board Members' View of the World

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AMBASSADOR ANWARUL K. CHOWDHURY

The Global Cooperation Council now has an Asia-Pacific Chapter in Tokyo



Former UN Under-Secretary General Joins Advisory Board:
Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, former Under-Secretary-General and High Representative of the United Nations has joined the Advisory Board of Global Cooperation Council. Accepting the invitation, he writes: "I look forward to supporting and contributing to the efforts of the Global Cooperation Council to promote genuine international cooperation based on equality and fairness as essential elements of an increasingly globalizing world."



UNCCD Executive Ssecretary Joins GC COUNCIL Advisory BOARD

Mr. Luc Gnacadja, Executive Secretary of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, has accepted the invitation of the Executive Committee of the Global Cooperation Council to join the Council's Advisory Board. UNCCD is along with the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) the outcome of the Earth Summit June 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN GC COUNCIL ADVISOR

Mr. Toshiki Kaifu, who served as Prime Minister of Japan from August 1989 to November 1991, has accepted our invitation to join the Advisory Board of Global Cooperation Council. Other members of the Board include Dr. Roberto Savio, Chair World Social Forum's Commission for Communication, President Emeritus of Inter Press Service - Italy, and Dr. Inge Kaul who served at the UNDP from 1981 to 2005 in different capacities. Mr. Toshiki Kaifu, assumed the office of the President of the World Federalist Movement of Japan on April 6, 2010. [JAPAN: PRIDE AND CAUTION](#)

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Guarding Environment with a Paper-and-Pencil Project

Asia-Pacific already has the largest number of motorized vehicles in the world and if the present trend continues, the region would in the coming years have more automobiles than Europe and North America combined.

Overcoming Hazards - Striving for greater Safety

Nowadays they are trucking hazardous cargo. They carry fine chemicals and ethanol, imported by trading companies, to client factories in Tokyo and surrounding five prefectures, known as the Kanto area. But there is a long and exciting human story behind today's Goshō Transportation Company. The short of the long story is that before Yoshio Emori founded Goshō in 1969, its predecessor Emori Oil Co. Ltd was running 27 gas stations in Saitama and Tokyo.

Trucking Safe with Ecology in the Pouch

Like the kangaroo pouch pocket that provides a place of shelter for the young after they are born, the truckers of Tokyo's legendary Nagai Transportation Company move their cargo with great care. No surprise therefore that the kangaroo is the logo of the company that celebrates "60 years of good faith and gratitude". [Read in Japanese at http://www.polydot.indepthnews.net](#)



Redefine Japan-U.S. Alliance for Global Denuclearization

By Masayoshi Hamada* IDN-InDepth News/Viewpoint TOKYO (IDN) – Japan is serving in the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council in April, ahead of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons scheduled for May 2010. Amidst growing momentum toward a world free of nuclear weapons I believe Japan has the moral responsibility to spread word about the harrowing effect of nuclear weapons as the only sufferer of nuclear attacks .

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

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

WHO IS AFRAID OF 'HUNGER REPORTS'?

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

OUR MEDIA NETWORK



DEVELOPMENT WATCH

IPS DEUTSCHLAND

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Confronting the Bliss of Ignorance about Africa

Somalia hit the top of the chart for the third consecutive year when the 2010 Failed States Index was recently unveiled by Foreign Policy magazine and the Fund for Peace. Several African states followed Somalia in the first 20 listed. They are considered the worst failures. The index was compiled on the basis of 12 criteria: demographics, refugees, illegitimate governance, brain drain, public services, inequality, group grievances, human rights, economic decline, security forces, factionalised elites, and external intervention.

Rendezvous with Planet Earth

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity. And we all have a rendezvous with Planet Earth this year. In order that as many of us as possible feel encouraged to make it to the venue at the right point in time, the United Nations has launched some of the most innovative initiatives.

The Brave New World of Robert Zoellick

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

Aid Beyond Prejudice and Pride

By Eckhard Deutscher* IDN-InDepth News/Special – Part 1 PARIS (IDN) – "Africa is drowning in aid money." "Too much aid goes to the private pockets of corrupt regimes and towards a bloated development industry, when much more should be spent on the private sector." "Aid is a useless distraction given the impact of issues like trade, investment etc on development." "Aid is not nearly growing quickly enough." These are some examples of arguments put forward in a critical political and public debate of development co-operation that has intensified as we approach the reference date for substantial aid commitments and get closer to the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals in 2015.



You Don't 'Do' or 'Deliver' Development

By Eckhard Deutscher* IDN-InDepth News/Special – Part 2 PARIS (IDN) – The 'aid effectiveness agenda' provides a framework for 'donors' and developing countries to work together in the most effective way possible. There are essentially two dimensions to do so. First, the donor-recipient dimension.

'Climate Change Kills People in Drylands'

- UN Assistant Secretary General Luc Gnacadja (IDN) - "Enhancing soils anywhere enhances life everywhere," says UN's top official Luc Gnacadja, who is tasked with combating land degradation and drought – not only in Africa, the most vulnerable continent, but all along the drylands belt running from Latin America through Sahel and Asia. [Read more](#)



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