

# GO

# Between



**United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)  
Serving the UN system and NGO community since 1975**

## UN UPDATE

### HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ESTABLISHED

The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has ended after more than 60 years of work. It will be formally abolished on 16 June 2006. During a concluding session of the Commission on Human Rights, held on 27 March 2006, UN, governmental, and non-governmental representatives said they looked forward to the Commission's replacement body, the United Nations Council on Human Rights that was established on 15 March by General Assembly resolution A/RES/60/251 after several months of intense negotiations (see Focus Page 19).

### S-G APPOINTS DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has announced the appointment of Mark Malloch Brown, his current Chef de Cabinet, as Deputy Secretary-General. Mr. Malloch Brown assumed his new functions when the Deputy Secretary-General, Louise Fréchette, left office on 31 March 2006.

Mr. Malloch Brown has served as Chef de Cabinet to the Secretary-General since January 2005. In that position, he has worked closely with the Secretary-General and the Deputy-Secretary General on all aspects of UN work, including helping to set out a reform agenda for the United Nations, much of which was endorsed by world leaders at the World Summit in New York last September (see *NGLS Roundup* 124).

Prior to becoming Chef de Cabinet, Mr. Malloch Brown served as Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) from July 1999 to August 2005. During that time, he was also the Chair of the United Nations Development Group, a committee consisting of the heads of all UN funds, programmes and departments working on development issues.

Mr. Annan has also announced the appointment of Alicia Bárcena Ibarra of Mexico as Acting Chef de Cabinet in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

### NEW SPECIAL REP FOR CHILDREN & ARMED CONFLICT

On 7 February 2006, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced the appointment of Radhika Coomaraswamy (Sri Lanka) as his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. She replaces Olara Otunna.

*continued on page 2*

### INT'L YEAR OF DESERTS & DESERTIFICATION

On 1 January 2006, the UN launched its International Year of Deserts and Desertification to raise global public awareness of the advancing deserts, of ways to safeguard the biological diversity of arid lands and to protect the knowledge and traditions of the two billion people affected by the phenomenon.

Desertification and drought cause an estimated loss of US\$42 billion a year from agricultural production, contribute to food insecurity, famine and poverty and can give rise to social, economic and political tensions that can cause conflicts, further impoverishment and land degradation.



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"It is widely recognized that environmental degradation has a role to play in considerations of national security, as well as international stability. Therefore, desertification has been seen as a threat to human security," UNCCD Executive Secretary Hama Arba Diallo said.

Currently, the Convention counts 191 States Parties, making it one of the most representative instruments on environmental protection stemming from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

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### NEW SPEC REP FOR CHILDREN & ARMED CONFLICT (CONT P.1)

Ms. Coomaraswamy, a lawyer by training and currently Chairperson of the Sri Lanka Human Rights Commission, served as Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women (1994-2003). In her reports to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, she has written on violence in the family, violence in the community, violence against women during armed conflict and the problem of international trafficking. A strong advocate on women's rights, she has intervened on behalf of countless women throughout the world seeking clarification from governments in cases involving violence against women.

More information on the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is available online ([www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict](http://www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict)).

### NEW DEPUTY COORDINATOR OF NGLS

Elisa Peter has been appointed as NGLS's new Deputy Coordinator. She is French and has an academic background in environmental sciences and agronomy (Imperial College, London, UK and National Superior Agronomy School, Toulouse, France).

In her latest assignment, Ms. Peter conducted policy research and analysis in the field of international forest policy with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome. This included assisting with the development of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, a voluntary partnership of 14 major forest-related international organizations, institutions and convention secretariats.

She was also involved in assisting FAO Forestry in its dialogue with CSOs. Prior to that, she conducted research with the Swedish Institute for International Affairs on the influence of non-governmental organizations on multilateral environmental agreements and policy processes.

She has ten years of experience working with a wide range of grassroots and global non-governmental organizations.

**NEW SPEC REP ON MIGRATION**

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has announced that Peter Sutherland has agreed to act as his Special Representative to assist in the preparation of the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, to be held in September 2006 (see article page 5).

Mr. Sutherland—a former Attorney General of Ireland, former European Union Commissioner and former Director-General of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the World Trade Organization—is currently Chairman of BP plc.

The General Assembly has requested the Secretary-General “to prepare a comprehensive overview of studies and analyses on the multidimensional aspects of migration and development, including the effects of migration on economic and social development in developed and developing countries, and on the effects of the movements of highly skilled migrant workers and those with advanced education,” while also addressing short-term and seasonal workers within the context of labour movements.”

In order to provide this overview, the Secretary-General will draw on various inputs, including the report and recommendations of the Global Commission on International Migration (see *Go Between 108*), and will benefit from the advice of Mr. Sutherland, as well as other experts during the run-up to the High-level Dialogue (see also Focus Page 24).

**NEW HEAD APPOINTED TO UNEP**

Following the nomination by the Secretary-General, the General Assembly, on 16 March, elected Achim Steiner (Germany) as Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for a four-year term. He replaces Klaus Toepfer who headed the agency since 1998.

Mr. Steiner was the Director-General of IUCN—the World Conservation Union—the world’s largest environmental network with

over 1,000 members including States, government agencies, and NGOs in 140 countries.

He has worked both at the grassroots level and at the highest levels of international policymaking to address the interface between environmental sustainability, social equity, and economic development.

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**S-G CREATES HLP ON UN COHERENCE**

On 16 February, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced the formation of a High-level Panel to explore how the UN system could work more coherently and effectively across the world in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

The Panel, which was called for in the Outcome Document adopted by global leaders at the 2005 World Summit (see *NGLS Roundup 124*), will complete its report by August 2006. The report is intended to lay the groundwork for a fundamental restructuring of the United Nations operational work, complementing other major reform initiatives currently under way at the UN, including the creation of a new Peacebuilding Commission, the newly established Human Rights Council, and the Secretary-General’s proposal for comprehensive management reform (see article below).

The High-level Panel held its first meeting on 5 April in New York. Addressing the Panel, Mr. Annan said that the Panel’s approach should be broad and comprehensive, but that the expectation is that their primary focus would be the UN system’s international development cooperation work. “But while reviewing humanitarian assistance and development related work and structures, the issues of transition to development and peacebuilding should also be looked at. And one of the dimensions which should be reviewed when looking at the environment sector is how to better mainstream it into development decision-making,” he stressed.

*“Today, it is exactly 60 years since the first session of the United Nations General Assembly opened in London.*

*“There have been many changes in the Assembly over the last 60 years. In 1946, there were 51 Member States; now there are 191. In 1946, the agenda centred around the challenges facing the world in the aftermath of World War II. In the 1950s and 1960s, decolonization was a major task.*

*“Throughout the last 60 years, the Assembly has taken landmark decisions on matters in which all humanity has an interest—from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 to the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. And the United Nations has overseen an enormous amount of practical activity to promote development, democracy and human rights; protect the environment; and maintain peace and security.*

*“Now, the Assembly has responsibilities encompassing both old and new threats and challenges in the fields of international security, development and poverty reduction, communicable diseases, human rights, humanitarian assistance, non-proliferation and disarmament and counter-terrorism.*

*“But some defining characteristics have not changed. The General Assembly remains the world’s single universal intergovernmental body. And in September 2005, the largest-ever gathering of world leaders reaffirmed the central role of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the United Nations.*

*“The words of Dr. Zuleta Angel of Colombia, the opening speaker on 10 January 1946, are strikingly relevant today. He said:*

*“The whole world now awaits our decisions, and rightly – yet with understandable anxiety – looks to us now to show ourselves capable of mastering our problems.”*

*“In a world of much uncertainty and mistrust, we need a strong United Nations and an effective General Assembly more than ever. We, the Members of the Assembly, must show that we can respond decisively to the major challenges of the twenty-first century. We must meet the test of international cooperation and multilateralism which the world now faces.”*

*—Statement by GA President Jan Eliasson on the 60th anniversary of the first meeting of the UN General Assembly, on 10 January 2006*

*“Armed conflicts and other forms of strife are still prevalent in Africa, inflicting extensive suffering on millions of people, destroying essential infrastructure and ecosystems, sparking emigration and displacements of people, and hampering economic growth and development. In recent years, the international community has come to recognize that conflict resolution calls for a comprehensive approach in which parties emerging from conflict require assistance not only in negotiating peace agreements, but also in building and consolidating peace. That means providing humanitarian and reconstruction assistance, ensuring security and security-sector reform, promoting good governance, and in the broadest sense demonstrating to people that peace brings real dividends — improvements in their standards of living, in their sense of opportunity, and in the way their societies function.”*

*“The recent establishment of a new United Nations Peacebuilding Commission is an important step in this regard. Too many countries lapse back into violence when efforts to consolidate peace or create stability are weak, or are not sustained. The new Commission is meant to counter this trend, and fills an institutional gap. It will bring all actors to the table in an effort to improve international coherence, and it will try to ensure that attention does not diminish once the media spotlight turns its focus on other crises.”*

*“The United Nations is also strengthening its efforts to promote smooth transitions from war to peace through new planning and coordination mechanisms, such as integrated task forces and integrated missions under the overall coordination of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The appointment of United Nations resident coordinators as deputy special representatives has brought about better coordination among the many entities that make up our country teams, and helped to more effectively bridge the gap between security and development activities.”*

*—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s message to the Tokyo International Conference on African Development on the Consolidation of Peace, 16 February, Addis Ababa*

The Panel is expected to complete its work by the summer, to allow for formal presentation of its recommendations to the next session of the UN General Assembly in September 2006 and possible implementation in 2007. The work of the Panel will be supported by a small secretariat based in New York.

#### **S-G’s REPORT ON MANAGEMENT REFORM**

On 7 March 2006, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented to the General Assembly his report on management reform entitled *Investing in the United Nations: For a Stronger Organization Worldwide* (A/60/692). The Secretary-General said his assessment of the UN was “that in many respects our present regulations and rules do not respond to current needs; and indeed that they make it very hard for the Organization to conduct its work efficiently or effectively.”

The Secretary-General pointed out that current regulations were designed for an essentially static Secretariat, while today more than half the 30,000 civilian staff serve in the field in peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, human rights monitoring and supporting national elections. He urged Member States to undertake a “radical overhaul” of the 60-year-old body’s management structure and practices so that it can carry out the increasingly complex operations demanded of it.

The main focus of the overhaul plan is on transforming the UN into a more efficient and accountable organization in a way that reflects the fact that more than 70% of its US\$10 billion annual budget now relates to peacekeeping and other field operations, up from around 50% of a US\$4.5 billion budget ten years ago. In doing so, the report outlines a number of specific reforms and targeted investments on how to realign staff skills to meet current and emerging organizational objectives; elevate management accountability and performance; upgrade information technology; streamline budget and finance and explore new, more cost-effective ways of delivering services. It also urges the creation of a small, dedicated office within the Secretariat to manage the process of change itself.

Also on 7 March, Mr. Annan spoke to UN

staff about the report and its 23 proposals. Acknowledging staff concerns about proposals for outsourcing and “offshoring”—the practice of using UN staff located in areas where labour is less costly—he said no decisions have been taken. “Certainly, core functions must be done by international civil servants,” he said. “But we would be irresponsible not to explore our options for activities which are not core, and which could be done as well or better elsewhere.”

During the question and answer session that followed, several staff members called attention to their personal situations—some on tenuous contracts, others with extensive field experience—and asked how the report would affect their status. Mr. Annan, joined by Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette, pointed out that the staff complaints illustrated the need for reform and that the report sought to address a number of those very same problems.

The report is available online ([www.un.org/reform/investing-in-un.html](http://www.un.org/reform/investing-in-un.html)).

#### **HIGH-LEVEL MEETING & HEARINGS FOR LDCs**

The mid-term review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, which was adopted in Brussels in May 2001 (see *NGLS Roundup 75*), will be held in the form of a High-level Meeting, tentatively scheduled from 18-19 September 2006 in New York, preceded by three days of preparatory meetings of experts. The General Assembly will also convene one day of Informal Interactive Hearings with Civil Society and the Private Sector on 22 June 2006.

The objective of the informal interactive hearings is to create a space where civil society and the private sector can interact with Member States and offer input into the mid-term review process, which will assess progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action (POA), share best practices and lessons learned, and identify obstacles and constraints to the further implementation of the POA.

The President of the General Assembly will prepare a summary of the outcome of the June hearings that will be fed into the High-level Meeting in September.

More information is available online ([www.un.org/special-rep/ohrlls/ldc/MTR/MTR.htm](http://www.un.org/special-rep/ohrlls/ldc/MTR/MTR.htm)).

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#### HIGH-LEVEL DIALOGUE & HEARINGS ON MIGRATION

A High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development will take place from 14-15 September 2006 at UN headquarters in New York. In its resolution 58/208 of 23 December 2003, the General Assembly decided to devote a High-level Dialogue to International Migration and Development during its 61st session. The purpose of the Dialogue is to discuss the multidimensional aspects of international migration in order to identify appropriate ways and means to maximize its development benefits and minimize its negative impacts. The High-level Dialogue will also have a strong focus on policy issues, including the challenge of achieving the internationally agreed development goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals (see also Focus Page 24).

To ensure the participation of NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector, a Task Force has been set up by the President of the General Assembly to assist in organizing the Informal Interactive Civil Society Hearings, scheduled to take place on 12 July 2006. Their recommendations will be summarized in a document that will be one of the official documents for the High-level Dialogue in September.

More information is available online ([www.un.org/esa/population/hldmigration/index.html](http://www.un.org/esa/population/hldmigration/index.html)).

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#### HIGH-LEVEL MEETING & HEARINGS ON HIV/AIDS

A five-year review meeting on the outcome of the 26th Special Session: Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS will take place from 31 May - 2 June 2006 at UN headquarters in New York. In 2005 the UN General Assembly agreed to convene a High-level Meeting and undertake a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS (see *NGLS Roundup 76*). The meeting will bring together governments, civil society organizations and the private sector.

In advance of the High-level Meeting, the Secretary-General has released his report, *Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS: Five Years Later*, which examines progress made until the end of 2005. The report is available online ([http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2006/20060324\\_SGReport\\_GA\\_A60737\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2006/20060324_SGReport_GA_A60737_en.pdf)).

A summary report by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has also been released in advance of the Meeting. *Towards universal access: assessment by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS on scaling up HIV prevention, treatment, care and support* assesses the country-driven processes for moving towards universal access.

The UNAIDS report is also available online ([http://data.unaids.org/pub/InformationNotif/2006/20060324\\_HLM\\_GA\\_A60737\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/InformationNotif/2006/20060324_HLM_GA_A60737_en.pdf)).

The main focus of the High-level Meeting is to: review progress in implementing the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, focusing on both constraints and opportunities to full implementation; consider recommendations on how the targets set in the Declaration may be reached, including through the "towards universal access processes;" and to renew political commitment.

One of the major objectives outlined in the resolution (A/RES/60/224) is maximum active participation of civil society during the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) Review Meeting.

On 27 March 2006, almost 800 civil society organizations were cleared by Member States for special accreditation to attend

The President of the General Assembly, Jan Eliasson, was appointed on 27 March 2006 as Foreign Minister of Sweden by Prime Minister Göran Persson. Mr. Eliasson took office on 24 April 2006.

Mr. Eliasson will continue his work in his position as President of the General Assembly. He will be based in New York and return to Stockholm on a regular basis.

Many previous Presidents of the General Assembly have also served concurrently as Foreign Minister, including Mr. Eliasson's predecessor, Jean Ping of Gabon.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has named three new senior officials to head, respectively, its bureaus for Arab States, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa.

The Minister for Human Rights of Yemen, Amat Al Aleem Ali Alsoswa, will leave her post to direct UNDP's Regional Bureau for Arab States. She succeeds Rima Khalaf Hunaidi of Jordan.

Rebeca Grynspan of Costa Rica will be in charge of the agency's Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean. Ms. Grynspan, currently Director of the Sub-regional Headquarters in Mexico of the UN's Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), will succeed Elena Martinez of Cuba.

The current UNDP Chief of Staff, Gilbert Houngbo of Togo, was named Director of the Regional Bureau for Africa. He will succeed Abdoulie Janneh of Gambia. All three will assume their posts at UNDP in the first quarter of 2006.

Worldwide, the number of female members of parliament reached a high of 6,960—or 16.1%—in 2005, according to the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union.

A look at some of the most significant political gains for women in recent months include:

- **Germany** - Angela Merkel became Germany's first female Chancellor. The former scientist, who heads the Christian Democratic Union, is also the country's first leader to grow up in the former East Germany.

- **Liberia** - Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won a runoff election in November 2005 to become Liberia's next leader, as well as the first elected female President in Africa.

- **Chile** - Michelle Bachelet, a Socialist, a doctor and a former political prisoner and exile, became the first woman to be elected President of Chile in January 2006.

- **Afghanistan** - Afghan women increased their voice in national politics when 68 female candidates won seats in the 249-member legislature. A quarter of the seats were reserved for women.

- **Saudi Arabia** - Lama al-Sulaiman and Nashwa Taher won the election to the Chamber of Commerce board in Jiddah.

the review—an unprecedented number. These organizations will be able to join organizations already accredited to ECOSOC and those that will take part as members of national delegations. Their involvement will include presentation slots in plenary, roundtable and panel sessions.

An UNGASS Review Civil Society Task Force has been formed to help support UN organizations in key decisions relating to attendance and participation of civil society organizations during the Review Meeting.

The Task Force will take the lead on shaping the 3-hour Civil Society Hearings being held on 31 May, including format, topics, messages and key speakers. It will also work with broader civil society groupings to identify key civil society speakers for all formal sessions, including the plenary. The Task Force will provide input on the themes for the roundtables and the panel discussions, among other tasks.

More information is available online ([www.unaids.org/en/AIDSreview2006/AIDSReview2006/default.asp](http://www.unaids.org/en/AIDSreview2006/AIDSReview2006/default.asp)). See also Focus Page 18.

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#### THE WORLD'S WOMEN 2005: PROGRESS IN STATISTICS

A UN study on the state of statistics, *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*, analyses statistics from around the world and focuses on how gender sensitive national statistical systems are.

The report, prepared by the UN's Statistical Division, provides a blueprint for improving the availability of data in demographics, health, education, work, violence against women, poverty, human rights and decision making. The report argues that statistics on women not only help to track their status but can also directly improve their circumstances. It recommends that governments gather and publicize more gender-disaggregated data.

The 165-page report also suggests that governments carry out a census every ten

years, and, to improve gender statistics, ensure the viability of an integrated national survey programme, and share information with policy makers and the public in a timely manner so it can be used to good effect.

Out of the 204 countries or areas covered, 26 did not conduct a census in the last ten years (1995-2004). Forty-three per cent of Africa's population was not included in the last round of population and housing censuses. Over 90 countries did not report their births, and roughly the same amount did not report their deaths, through a civil registration system that covered the nation. That meant that only 30% of world's population was residing in areas where births and deaths were registered, while 70% was not.

Fifty three countries did not report their nation's population by sex and age in the last ten years; 66 countries did not report the enrolment of children in primary school by sex and age; 81 countries did not report economic activity by sex and age; 108 did not report unemployment by sex and age; and 152 countries did not report wages by major industry group and sex.

Mary Chamie, Chief of the Demographic and Social Statistics Branch of the UN Statistics Division and lead author of the report, agreed that States need help with gathering and reporting data. "Commitment to the Millennium Development Goals has been a prod to improved statistical collection," she said. "But big gaps in reporting remain, and we want to assist governments and donors to close them," she noted.

The report also addresses violence against women, and points out the existence of very little information worldwide on the issue, as well as controversy on the methods for measuring the extent of the problem. Only about 38 countries – most of them industrial – had information on gender-based violence, and there was a significant lack of information on violence against women in developing countries.

To improve the collection of sex-disaggregated statistics, the report recommends that governments foster dialogue between national statistical offices and stakeholders, such as women's groups, to identify and better understand gender issues.

*The World's Women 2005: Progress in*

Statistics is available online (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/Demographic/products/indwm/wwpub.htm>).

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## ILO: CONVENTION ON MARITIME LABOUR

The International Labour Organization (ILO) held its 10th maritime session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva from 7-23 February 2006 in order to consider a draft convention on maritime labour standards regarding the world's ship-owners, seafarers and maritime nations. The session brought together almost 1,000 participants representing governments, workers and employers from the ILO's 178 Member States. Such maritime sessions are held only every ten years.

During the conference, delegates considered a single framework convention on maritime labour standards that consolidates and updates more than 65 international maritime labour standards adopted since the ILO was founded in 1919. The draft convention sets out seafarers rights to decent conditions of work, on a wide range of subjects, and is intended to be globally applicable, easily understandable, readily updatable and uniformly enforced. It represents the first attempt to create a global instrument for a specific sector of industry.

ILO Director-General Juan Somavia, in his opening remarks, said, "This is a major step forward in assuring better protection of workers, a level playing field for ship-owners and an effective instrument for governments in providing decent conditions to seafarers. In sum, greater clarity, productivity, safety and security for all."

After more than two weeks of negotiations, the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 was adopted on 23 February by a vote of 314 for, with no votes against and four abstentions. The new convention sets out, in plain language, a seafarers "bill of rights" while allowing a sufficient degree of national discretion to deliver those rights with transparency and accountability. The

convention also contains provisions allowing it to keep in step with the needs of the industry, and help secure universal application and enforcement. The Maritime Labour Convention will apply to all ships engaged in commercial activities with the exception of fishing vessels and traditional ships (such as dhows and junks).

"We have made maritime labour history today," Mr. Somavia said. "We have adopted a convention that spans continents and oceans, providing a comprehensive labour charter for the world's 1.2 million or more seafarers and addressing the evolving realities and needs of a sector that handles 90% of the world's trade."

"What's more, we have established a socio-economic floor to global competition in the maritime sector," Mr. Somavia said. "This initiative can also provide the impetus and support for similarly innovative and balanced approaches to addressing the need to make globalization fair in other sectors of the world of work."

The convention is designed to encourage compliance by operators and owners of ships and strengthen enforcement of standards at all levels, including provisions for onboard and onshore complaint procedures for seafarers regarding the ship-owners' and shipmasters' supervision of conditions on their ships, the flag States' jurisdiction and control over their ships.

The convention sets minimum requirements for seafarers to work on a ship and contains provisions on conditions of employment, hours of work and rest, accommodation, recreational facilities, food and catering, health protection, medical care, welfare and social security protection. Among the novel features of the convention are its form and structure with legally binding standards accompanied by directions given by guidelines. Its amendment procedures are rapid and, importantly, it sets out a system for the certification of seafarers' labour conditions.

Bruce Carlton of the US, who chaired the Committee of the Whole, said, "This convention is unique in that it has teeth. What is fundamentally different about this convention is that it is about quality shipping. Beyond improving the working conditions of seafarers, it is also about further marginalizing the bad ship-owners who end up costing the entire industry. This

"Fifty-five years ago, on this day, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide entered into force. Ever since, it has embodied the United Nations' aspiration to prevent massive and serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

"Last year, at the 2005 World Summit, world leaders collectively affirmed the responsibility of each individual State to protect its population from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. Today, as we recall our collective failures in places like Rwanda and Srebrenica, it remains my hope that we may never again be found wanting where so many lives hang in the balance.

"That is why I encourage Member States and non-governmental organizations to work with the United Nations, and with my Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, to develop the Organization's capacity to provide early warning of potential genocidal situations. Simultaneously, the international community's capacity for preventive action must be strengthened, as should its ability to take timely and decisive measures in the face of serious human rights violations that may degenerate into genocide.

—Statement by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the 55th anniversary of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 12 January 2006

*Working with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is launching a programme to provide reintegration assistance to 700 former child soldiers and young people who have been affected by war in the western Afghanistan provinces of Ghor and Badghis.*

*The UNICEF and Italian funded programme will help children go back to school or join vocational training schemes. It will also seek to promote community support for the children by encouraging the participation of immediate family members, community leaders, and Mullahs.*

*Support activities will include self-awareness and self-confidence development through literacy, communication and numeric skill teaching. In addition, IOM and UNICEF will provide psychosocial support through creative work-shops, team sport activities, and personal/interpersonal awareness exercises.*

*A total of six training centres will be set-up by IOM in the provinces of Ghor and Badghis to provide the children with reintegration assistance and to train local community workers.*

*UNICEF estimates that there are a total of 8,000 former underage soldiers in Afghanistan, many of whom have already left the fighting forces informally over the past years. In addition, there are thousands of unassisted war-affected youth who have missed out on many years of education.*

is a very sound economic benefit for the entire industry."

Concluding, Mr. Somavia said that the convention marked a new departure in the pursuit of a fair globalization by making "the rules of the game fair for everybody. At the same time, the market should have the necessary space to perform its key functions for the economy and for society. In the search for solutions it has become more and more evident that there can be no lasting success with purely national solutions to global problems."

The Maritime Labour Convention will come into force after it has been ratified by 30 ILO Member States with a total share of at least 33% of world gross tonnage.

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#### **WORLD HEALTH REPORT 2006**

*The World Health Report 2006 - Working Together for Health, released on 7 April by the World Health Organization (WHO) to coincide with World Health Day, finds that a serious shortage of health workers in 57 countries is impairing the provision of essential, life-saving interventions such as childhood immunization, safe pregnancy and delivery services for mothers, and access to treatment for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. At least 1.3 billion people worldwide lack access to the most basic healthcare. The shortage is global, but the burden is greatest in countries overwhelmed by poverty and disease where these health workers are needed most. Shortages are most severe in sub-Saharan Africa, which has 11% of the world's population and 24% of the global burden of disease but only 3% of the world's health workers. This shortage, combined with a lack of training and knowledge, is also a major obstacle for health systems as they attempt to respond effectively to chronic diseases, avian influenza and other health challenges.*

*The World Health Report 2006 reveals an estimated shortage of almost 4.3 million doctors, midwives, nurses and support workers worldwide. Focusing on all stages of*

*the health workers' career lifespan from entry to health training, to job recruitment through to retirement, the report lays out a ten-year action plan in which countries can build their health workforces, with the support of global partners. It calls for national leadership to urgently formulate and implement country strategies for the health workforce, which need to be backed by international donor assistance. Every country needs to improve the way it plans for, educates and employs the doctors, nurses and support staff who make up the health workforce and provide them with better working conditions, it stresses.*

*"The global population is growing, but the number of health workers is stagnating or even falling in many of the places where they are needed most," said WHO Director-General LEE Jong-wook. "Across the developing world, health workers face economic hardship, deteriorating infrastructure and social unrest. In many countries, the HIV/AIDS epidemic has also destroyed the health and lives of health workers."*

*The World Health Report notes that infectious diseases and complications of pregnancy and delivery cause at least ten million deaths each year. Better access to health workers could prevent many of those deaths. There is clear evidence that as the ratio of health workers to population increases, so in turn does infant, child and maternal survival.*

*"Not enough health workers are being trained or recruited where they are most needed, and increasing numbers are joining a brain drain of qualified professionals who are migrating to better-paid jobs in richer countries, whether those countries are near neighbours or wealthy industrialized nations. Such countries are likely to attract even more foreign staff because of their ageing populations, who will need more long-term, chronic care," said WHO Assistant Director-General Timothy Evans.*

*Nearly 25% of doctors trained in Africa are currently working in OECD countries, said Dr. Evans, referring to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which groups together the world's wealthiest, most industrialized nations. When it comes to African-trained nurses, the figure is 5% or one in 20, he added. "These are very significant numbers, especially when you consider that the existing*

shortages in Africa can hardly support that level of migration," he pointed out.

To tackle this crisis, more direct investment in the training and support of health workers is needed now. Initial costs will be for the training of more health workers, and, as they graduate and enter the workforce, funds will be needed to pay their salaries.

Health budgets will have to increase by at least US\$10 per person per year in the 57 countries with severe shortages to educate and pay the salaries of the four million health workers needed to fill the gap. To meet that target within 20 years is an ambitious but reasonable goal, the report concludes.

Financing this gap will require significant, dedicated and predictable funding from national sources, as well as from international development partners. The report recommends that of all new donor funds for health, 50% should be dedicated to strengthening health systems, of which 50% should be dedicated specifically to training, retaining and sustaining the health workforce.

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## INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND MIGRATION

An Expert Workshop on Indigenous Peoples and Migration, cosponsored by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), was held in Geneva from 6-7 April. The workshop provided an initial mapping out of the intersection between indigenous issues and migration.

The meeting brought together more than 30 participants, including representatives and experts from five of the seven socio-cultural regions of indigenous peoples (Africa; the Arctic and Europe; Asia; Central and South America and the Caribbean; and the Pacific) and representatives from international organizations and permanent missions.

The workshop discussions focused on four

key areas: indigenous peoples as voluntary migrants; indigenous peoples as forced migrants and displaced peoples; the impact of migration of indigenous peoples on indigenous communities; and the impact of migration of non-indigenous populations on indigenous communities.

According to UNPFII, although international migration has moved to the top of governments' agendas, there is little if any information on indigenous peoples and migration or a framework for addressing the phenomenon consistently and systematically.

The outcomes of the workshop included recognition of the importance of indigenous peoples' cultural ties to their lands that may affect their migration. Participants also emphasized the need for indigenous peoples' participation to inform and determine policies that may have a direct impact on their territories and their migration. They also stressed the importance of sharing best practices and lessons learned amongst all stakeholders. The gender perspective and the need for disaggregated data to include indigenous peoples in national statistics were also underscored.

Additional recommendations included effective implementation of international law and an exploration of mainstreaming indigenous issues and migration into development policies. Positive attributes of indigenous migration, such as the use of remittances, the transfer of skills and knowledge, the enhanced status of indigenous migrants abroad, and the increased global knowledge of indigenous peoples through their migration, were also discussed.

The issues paper, *Indigenous Peoples and Migration: Challenges and Opportunities*, will be presented to the UNPFII during its upcoming Fifth Session (15-26 May 2006 at UN headquarters) and will include key conclusions and recommendations from the workshop regarding ways the UN system, other international, regional and national organizations and indigenous communities can collaborate.

The issues paper is available online ([www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/workshop\\_IPM\\_issuespaper.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/workshop_IPM_issuespaper.pdf)).

*Contact: Secretariat of the Permanent*

*The Department of Public Information (DPI) has launched a new website for United Nations press releases and meetings coverage summaries, in English and French ([www.un.org/apps/pressreleases](http://www.un.org/apps/pressreleases)).*

*The new site consolidates and improves access to coverage of intergovernmental meetings, some while still in progress; statements by the Secretary-General; transcripts of the Spokesman's noon briefing; summaries of press conferences; and other United Nations press releases. It also provides search functions for these various resources, dating back to October 1995, as well as links to various news- and media-related sites at UN headquarters and overseas offices.*

*Managed by DPI's Meetings Coverage Section, the website can be accessed directly from the Organization's main website ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)).*

*UN Secretary-General Kofi has announced the appointment of Paul Hoeffel (US) as the Director of the United Nations Information Centre in Mexico City, responsible for Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Cuba. He took up his duties on 1 March 2006.*

*Mr. Hoeffel served as the Chief of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Section in the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), where he liaised with some 1,550 NGOs that are associated with DPI. Among his duties, he coordinated the organization of the annual DPI/NGO Conference. Mr. Hoeffel recently completed a United Nations sabbatical in the Republic of Korea, where he developed a model for partnerships between the United Nations and universities around the world.*

*He is replaced by Juan Carlos Brandt (Venezuela).*

High-seas pirate attacks fell last year amid enhanced vigilance but Iraq emerged for the first time as a new piracy hotspot with the waters off Indonesia remaining the most dangerous in the world, an international watchdog reported. The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) said the total number of piracy attacks worldwide dropped to 276 last year, from 329 in 2004, the lowest number reported to its Piracy Reporting Centre since 1999.

Indonesian waters, with almost 30% of the world's attacks, were the most treacherous despite a drop in attacks to 79, from 94 the year before. Attacks in the notorious Strait of Malacca also fell significantly to 12, from 38 in 2004, prompting the IMB to credit governments for increased patrols aimed at curbing piracy. Attacks also fell in waters off Malaysia, Thailand, Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, Haiti, Nigeria and Guinea, it said. The IMB noted a surge in activity in some piracy-prone regions, especially Tanzania, Vietnam and lawless Somalia, where heavily-armed pirates operated from far out to sea. Iraq stood out "as a new world piracy hotspot," with ten attacks in 2005 after none the year before.

More information is available online: ([www.icccs.org/prc/piracyreport.php](http://www.icccs.org/prc/piracyreport.php)).

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### COP-1 OF THE FCTC

Meeting from 6-17 February 2006 in Geneva, the first Conference of the Parties (COP) to the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) brought together more than 100 countries who agreed to a series of concrete steps that will help move forward the global treaty to its goal of saving lives by curbing tobacco use.

As the second major cause of death in the world, tobacco is now responsible for about five million deaths annually, according to WHO, which estimates that 84% of the world's 1.3 billion smokers live in developing and transitional economy countries. If current smoking patterns continue, it will cause some ten million deaths each year by 2020.

Concrete measures included in the treaty could help save 200 million lives by the year 2050, if a progressive 50% reduction in uptake and consumption rates is achieved. Many measures in the FCTC are time bound. For example, from the treaty's entry into force, countries have three years to enforce health warnings on tobacco products, and five years to implement comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

During its two-week session, COP-1 adopted a number of decisions intended to further strengthen the FCTC since it entered into force on 27 February 2005. It agreed to establish the permanent secretariat of the treaty within WHO with a budget of US\$8 million for its functioning during the next two years, which will be funded through voluntary assessed contributions. It also decided to create working groups that will begin development of protocols (legally binding instruments) in the areas of cross-border advertising and illicit trade. To help

countries establish smoke-free places and effective ways of regulating tobacco products, Parties agreed to develop guidelines (non-binding instruments).

COP-1 decided to establish an ad-hoc group of experts that will study economically viable alternatives to tobacco growing and production, and make recommendations on diversification initiatives for those countries whose economies depend heavily on tobacco production. Parties also agreed to a pilot reporting questionnaire to allow the COP to assess progress made by countries in implementing the treaty's measures.

In February 2007, the first Contracting Parties will submit to the COP initial reports on their progress, specifying what actions they have taken to implement the tobacco control measures established in the treaty. "This is a crucial time for people suffering the consequences of tobacco use," said Yumiko Mochizuki-Kobayashi, Director of the WHO Tobacco Free Initiative. "Tobacco is still the top preventable cause of death. The goal is to see it fall from that position in our lifetime. With continued commitment from Member States, we will achieve that goal."

The WHO's Tobacco Free Initiative says that the most cost-effective strategies to curb tobacco consumption are population-wide public policies, like tobacco advertising bans, tobacco tax and price increases, smoke-free environments in all public and workplaces, and graphic health messages on tobacco packaging.

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### OCHA: NEGOTIATING WITH ARMED GROUPS

As many humanitarian groups in conflict zones trying to provide civilians with food, protection, or safe passage are faced with the daily possibility that they may have to negotiate with armed groups, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has released a handbook, entitled the *Manual on Humanitarian Negotiations with Armed Groups*, to tell them how.

Speaking before the launch of the manual, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Jan Egeland said: "I strongly urge all those engaged in negotiations with non-State armed groups to consult the manual in order to prepare and conduct the dialogue with these groups carefully. We envision that the manual and the companion set of guidelines will become essential guides for humanitarian practitioners in the field," he added.

After research, extensive consultations with key UN units and non-UN humanitarian partners and several field visits, all supported by the Swiss Government, OCHA has produced the manual and guidelines, as well as a CD-ROM version that includes background papers. The project responds to resolutions passed in the General Assembly and the Security Council, OCHA said.

In approaching negotiations, the publication says, humanitarian organizations should build a profile of the armed group's motivations, structure, principles of action, interests, constituency, needs, ethno-cultural dimensions and control of population and territory.

At all stages, humanitarian organizations must ensure that the talks are conducted in accordance with relevant security procedures, it cautions.

Humanitarian organizations must also bear in mind that armed groups may sometimes use their ability to exert force against civilian populations as a bargaining tool, or misuse the negotiations to enhance their position in political talks or to support their claims of legitimacy.

In that regard, an important framework for negotiations is provided by international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and international criminal law, in addition to fundamental humanitarian principles, the manual says.

The manual is available online : ([www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/RURI-6LTL72?OpenDocument](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/RURI-6LTL72?OpenDocument)).

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## UNDP: THE NEW PUBLIC FINANCE

On 28 January 2006 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched a publication during the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos on innovative financial mechanisms that could help reduce the cost of managing global risks and which can be implemented by governments across the world.

*The New Public Finance: Responding to Global Challenges* presents how governments can respond in a more affordable and sustainable way to international challenges such as avian flu, terrorism, and climate change by using creative, incentive-based tools.

The widespread adoption of these approaches could break the cycle of underfunded and inadequate responses to global problems, and foster a new, less crisis-prone globalized world, the report stresses. More affordable, sustainable crisis response would ensure that existing and future development aid could be used more effectively, improving the prospect of reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of halving poverty by 2015, and of sustaining development beyond the target date.

Speaking at the launch, UNDP Administrator Kemal Dervis said: "The growing interdependence between countries and the challenges this brings requires more effective management of globalization—management characterized by new levels of cooperation between public and private actors, between States and global markets."

*The New Public Finance* emphasizes five policy approaches:

- Enhanced risk management to reduce the cost of response to international crises;
- Increased public-private partnerships to leverage private finance;
- An emphasis on incentive-based international cooperation;
- The development of new products for trading on international markets, similar to those for carbon emissions;
- The promotion of a more productive use of

*The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Government of Pakistan have signed a US\$26.5 million loan agreement that will give hundreds of thousands of people living in Pakistan's rural areas access to innovative financial services.*

*The loan from IFAD will help finance the US\$30.5 million Microfinance Innovation and Outreach Programme, meant to support pilot projects that will test new microfinance products and services for Pakistan's rural poor. At least 180,000 households are expected to benefit.*

*IFAD will also work with the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund to develop a variety of new microfinance products and services aimed at reducing debt, minimizing risk and generating income and assets, ranging from livestock insurance, to equity partnerships, to leasing arrangements, and other innovative financing systems.*

*The development programme will also strengthen local lending institutions so they can expand and improve their services throughout rural areas. And it will expand employment opportunities as young graduates gain practical experience by training as interns and then secure employment in local micro-finance institutions.*

*Women's Net, with support from the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA), has produced a handbook for practitioners on information and communication technologies (ICTs) in Africa.*

*The book is aimed at development practitioners and ICT innovators interested in inventive technology applications for social justice and development.*

*It contains ten case studies highlighting innovative and creative ways in which ICTs have been used to promote people-centred development in sub-Saharan Africa.*

*It is a useful guide for positioning non-profit organizations to contribute in meeting select Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other development imperatives through the use of ICTs.*

*For more information and to order the publication, contact: <nomthandazos@osiafrica.org>. The publication will soon be available at [www.osisa.org/index.php](http://www.osisa.org/index.php).*

public revenue, focusing on social returns on investment, locally or globally, rather than expenditures.

"Governments act more and more as intermediaries between the policy demands of global, mobile actors, and those of local, domestic constituencies," Inge Kaul, lead editor, said.

The emergence of this new "intermediary state" is evident in the political debates surrounding outsourcing, labour-market flexibility, and capping harmful emissions. It underlies the added policy emphasis on managing cross-border risks to, for example, prevent an outbreak of avian flu, fight international terrorism, or prepare for violent weather patterns associated with global warming.

"Governments who learn to strategically manage such long-term and financial risks are the ones who will ride out brewing fiscal storms," said the book's co-editor Pedro Conceição.

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#### **IGF CONSULTATIONS: FIRST STEPS**

Consultations on the convening of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) were held in Geneva from 16-17 February 2006 to discuss ways on how to move forward in the organization of the IGF. The Forum was established during the Tunis Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, see *NGLS Roundup 125*).

About 300 participants, representing all stakeholder groups, addressed a wide variety of issues during the consultations, including the IGF's scope of work and substantive priorities, as well as aspects related to its structure and functioning. The aim of the consultations was to develop a common understanding among all stakeholders on the nature and character of the IGF.

While there was an emerging convergence of views on some aspects related to the IGF, there were some open questions that

needed further discussion. Chairing the meeting, Nitin Desai, the Secretary-General's Special Advisor for WSIS, invited participants to reflect on two specific questions: whether there is a need for a multistakeholder group to prepare for the meeting, and which public policy issues the first meeting of the IGF should address.

He pointed out that those taking part in the consultations had reached a general agreement that the management of the Forum would be done jointly by governments, civil society, business organizations and the Internet community.

On other issues, he said, one proposal was to have the IGF address specific management issues, such as SPAM and illegal or malicious acts known as cybercrime, while noting that certain acts, such as sending or posting pornography, might be seen as a crime in one country but not in another. Another proposal was to have the Forum focus on issues of transparency and capacity building, although the IGF has had no decision-making power.

As the two days of consultations on the scope and structure of the meeting concluded, Mr. Desai noted that the inaugural meeting of the Forum is scheduled to take place in Athens (Greece), from 30 October - 2 November 2006.

The Secretariat of the IGF will be headed by Markus Kummer, the former Executive Coordinator of the Secretariat of the Working Group on Internet Governance, which was established by the Secretary-General at the request of the first phase of the Summit, in Geneva in 2003 (see *NGLS Roundup 109*).

A new round of consultations on the convening of the IGF will be held in Geneva on 19 May 2006. They will be open to all stakeholders and will focus on the substantive preparation of the inaugural meeting of the IGF. The consultations will be followed by a meeting of the IGF Advisory Group from 22-23 May 2006.

For further information, see the websites of the WSIS Executive Secretariat: [www.itu.int/wsis/index.html](http://www.itu.int/wsis/index.html) and the IGF Host Country: [www.igfgreece2006.gr](http://www.igfgreece2006.gr).

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**UNDP: ONE LAPTOP PER CHILD**

The US\$100 laptop programme, designed to give children in developing countries access to knowledge and educational tools, came a step closer to realization with the signing of a partnership agreement in Davos on 28 January 2006 between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and One Laptop per Child (OLPC).

Under the Memorandum of Understanding, signed at the World Economic Forum by UNDP Administrator Kemal Dervis and OLPC Chairman Nicholas Negroponte, the project's innovator and director, UNDP will work with local and international partners to design and develop programmes to deliver OLPC technology and learning resources to schools in the least developed countries (LDCs).

“We are delighted to be part of this venture, which has the potential to break through the digital divide between rich countries and poor countries,” Mr. Dervis said. “Though the price of access to knowledge has dramatically decreased in recent years, new technologies remain out of reach for most people in developing countries, especially children, who rarely have access to the educational resources that could enhance their opportunities and lift them out of poverty,” he said.

“One laptop per child is key, making learning more seamless with living, play and family life, versus being limited to school. Teacher preparation is important, in parallel with peer-to-peer and self education,” Mr. Negroponte stressed.

The US\$100 laptop, showcased during Phase II of the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis, (see *NGLS Roundup 125*) is an inexpensive, robust computer, with open-source software, and very low power consumption. It can also be powered by hand cranking. The computers form a “mesh network,” which means that they can talk to each other and several hundred machines can share a single point of access. Corporate interest in the project has been high. After reviewing several bids, OLPC announced in December 2005 that Quanta Computers would manufacture the laptop; and six companies—Google, AMD

(Advanced Micro Devices), Red Hat, News Corporation, Nortel, and Brightstar, have already provided US\$2 million each to fund OLPC and the initial laptop design.

OLPC will first implement the programme in seven countries and the governments will buy the machines to be given cost-free to students in well specified but large pilot projects. In the case of LDCs and poor countries, UNDP will work closely with OLPC and other UN agencies on the ground to assist national governments to deploy the laptops to targeted public schools with a variety of internal and external funding sources.

It is expected that the cost of each laptop will come down over time. Manufacturing will begin when at least five million machines have been ordered and paid for in advance, and the preliminary target is to have units ready for shipment by early 2007.

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**INSTRAW LAUNCHES NEW WEBSECTION**

The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) has launched a new section on its website on gender, governance and women's political participation. The section is intended to open a space for the analysis of the interrelationship between gender, governance and women's political participation.

The section offers a brief background and analytical framework on the theme and a glossary, fact-sheet, annotated bibliography, directory of organizations and other resources, as well as a brief description of INSTRAW's activities related to the theme. It also provides an opportunity for an exchange of experiences from researchers, activists, policy makers and professionals.

More information is available online ([www.un-instraw.org/en/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1015&Itemid=231](http://www.un-instraw.org/en/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=1015&Itemid=231)).

*The Alliance for Conflict Transformation in partnership with Deep vertical (powered by Vivisimo) ConflictAware™ is a new free custom search portal for peace and conflict related issues and one of the premier sites for specialized news in peace and conflict resolution, human rights, international development and related fields.*

*For further details, visit [www.conflicttransformation.org](http://www.conflicttransformation.org) or [www.conflictaware.com](http://www.conflictaware.com).*

On 17 March, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched its International Migration Law Online Database. The online database of international, regional and national migration law aims to provide government officials, researchers, migrants and the general public easy access through the Internet of international migration law.

A large and comprehensive variety of international and regional instruments governing migration in the world have been incorporated in the database. In an effort to facilitate access to national migration legislation, IOM has included migration laws from selected countries in the database. More countries will be added in the coming months.

As part of the development of the database, IOM's International Migration Law and Legal Affairs Department plans to incorporate resolutions and judgments of international and regional bodies, as well as detailed information on the status of ratifications of treaties in the database.

The database can be accessed through the IOM homepage ([www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)) or directly through the link: ([www.iml.iom.int](http://www.iml.iom.int)).

## ICC ELECTS SIX NEW JUDGES

Meeting at UN headquarters in New York on 26 January 2006, the legislative body of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the world's first permanent war crimes tribunal, elected six judges to serve nine-year terms starting in early March 2006. The election considered the need for an equitable mix of countries and gender and a fair representation of the world's principal legal systems.

Five were re-elected from previous terms on the 18-member body: Hans-Peter Kaul (Germany), Erkki Kourula (Finland), Sang-hyun Song (Republic of Korea), Anita Uacka (Latvia), and Akua Kuenyehia (Ghana). Ekaterina Trendafilova (Bulgaria) was elected to a first term.

The 18 judges of the Court have jurisdiction over the most serious international crimes, including genocide, mass murder, enslavement, rape, torture and war crimes. Its jurisdiction complements national courts, which means the Court only steps in when countries themselves are unable or unwilling to investigate or prosecute.

The Rome Statute, the treaty establishing the ICC, entered into force 1 July 2002 (see *Go Between* 96), and the Court's jurisdiction will cover only crimes committed after that date. The Statute allows States Parties as well as the UN Security Council to refer situations to the Court for investigation.

The Assembly, based in The Hague, is composed of representatives of the States that have ratified or acceded to the Rome Statute, currently numbering 100. In February 2003, the Assembly elected the first 18 judges, six for three-year terms, six for six-year terms and six for nine-year terms. Eventually all judges will service nine-year, non-renewable terms.

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## ICJ ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT

On 6 February 2006 Judge Rosalyn Higgins (United Kingdom) was elected President of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) by her peers, making her the first woman to have been elected President of the Court. Moreover, she is the only woman ever to have been elected Member of the Court.

The International Court of Justice, composed of 15 Members, does not have criminal jurisdiction to prosecute individuals. It is a civil tribunal that deals primarily with disputes between States. The ICJ is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, whereas the International Criminal Court is independent of the UN. The ICJ adjudicates disputes between States and gives advisory opinions to United Nations organs and specialized agencies. There are currently ten cases on the Court's docket.

The composition of the Court is now as follows:

Judge Higgins as President; Judge Awn Shawkat Al Khasawneh (Jordan) as Vice President, with 13 judges, including: Raymond Ranjeva (Madagascar); Shi Jiuyong (China); Abdul G. Koroma (Sierra Leone); Gonzalo Parra Aranguren (Venezuela); Thomas Buergenthal (United States of America); Hisashi Owada (Japan); Bruno Simma (Germany); Peter Tomka (Slovakia); Ronny Abraham (France); Kenneth Keith (New Zealand); Bernardo Sepúlveda Amor (Mexico); Mohammed Bennouna (Morocco); and Leonid Skotnikov (Russian Federation).

On 12 April 2006 the International Court of Justice celebrated its 60th anniversary, with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stressing that more must be done to ensure its future through wider acceptance of its jurisdiction on issues ranging from boundary disputes to genocide. "Today, more than ever before, UN Member States are turning to it, not just to resolve land and maritime boundary disputes, or to complain of treaty violations, but also on matters of genocide and the use of force," he said, calling on all States that have not yet done so to consider recognizing its compulsory jurisdiction.

More information is available online ([www.icj-cij.org](http://www.icj-cij.org)).

# Human Rights Council Established

*After several months of negotiations, the General Assembly, on 15 March 2006, adopted resolution A/RES/60/251 that replaces the 60-year-old Human Rights Commission. General Assembly President Jan Eliasson (Sweden), who led the final days of the contentious, months-long negotiations, said, "Today, we stand ready to witness a new beginning for the promotion and protection of human rights."*

The Human Rights Council, to be composed of 47 Member States, will be based in Geneva and will hold at least three sessions per year (including a main session) for a total period of no less than ten weeks. The Council will also be able to hold special sessions when necessary through a request by a Member of the Council with the support of one-third of Council membership. Elections of the first members of the new Human Rights Council are scheduled to take place on 9 May 2006, and the first meeting of the Council will be convened on 19 June 2006.

Negotiations on the Human Rights Council centred on the United States' objections that not enough was done to prevent abusive countries from becoming members of the proposed Council. A key sticking point was the US insistence that members be elected by two-thirds of the 191-nation General Assembly. The US was virtually alone in voting against the Council as only Israel and two Pacific island nations, Palau and the Marshall Islands, joined the US in opposition. Iran, Venezuela and Belarus abstained.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, speaking after the resolution establishing the Council was adopted, said, "Now the real work begins. The true test of the Council's credibility will be the use that Member States make of it. If, in the weeks and months ahead, they act on the commitments they have given in this resolution, I am confident that the Council will breathe new life into all our work for human rights, and thereby help to improve the lives of millions of people throughout the world."

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, also saluted the creation of the Human Rights Council, calling its establishment "a historic opportunity to improve the protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms of people around the world." Ms. Arbour said the Council was more than a "new and improved" Commission on Human Rights. She recalled that in addition to retaining some of the best elements of the Commission, such as the system of independent investigators and the broad participation of civil society, the new body boasted some significant features, including that candidates for membership would have to make commitments on human rights; elected members would be first in line for scrutiny under a universal periodic review of their human rights records; and members that committed gross and systematic violations of human rights could be suspended. Members would also commit to cooperate with the Council and its various mechanisms.

The way members of the Council are to be elected also represented a major improvement over the Commission, the

High Commissioner said. Election to the Council would require an absolute majority of UN Member States: of the 191 members, at least 96 must support a State's membership by secret ballot. This threshold was much higher than the 28 or fewer votes that could get a country membership in the Commission, and would allow countries to block the election of egregious rights violators.

"Fulfilling the promise of the Council will require a change of culture as much as institutional transformation. Countries must demonstrate the political will to put the defense of human rights above narrow interests. Human rights are neither a weapon nor a shield. They are the birthright of all people everywhere. If we lose sight of this fundamental fact, all the work to create the Council and reaffirm the central role of human rights will have been wasted," Ms. Arbour stressed.

The outgoing Commission has been criticized for admitting known human-rights violators into its membership ranks. Ms. Arbour acknowledged the Commission's flaws, but noted some of its accomplishments. These include the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and two international covenants that have come to be known as the International Bill of Human Rights, all of which were adopted by the United Nations in 1948.

"Taken on its own, the creation of the International Bill of Human Rights would stand the test of time as one of humankind's most vital gifts to itself," she said. "But, the Commission has gone much further in the formulation of other core human rights treaties and norms. Standards pertaining to women, children, human rights defenders, as well as violations such as genocide, racial discrimination, torture, and the right to development, to name just a few, are now part of the international framework of protected rights and liberties."

On 6 April, the US announced its decision not to seek a seat on the Human Rights Council. The Bush administration said it would support the new Council financially and work to make it "strong and effective." US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack that the US would probably seek a seat on the Council next year. So far, 34 countries have declared their candidacy to be members of the new Council.

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# State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible

*According to a report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), hundreds of millions of children are suffering from severe exploitation and discrimination and have become virtually invisible to the world. This year's State of the World's Children: Excluded and Invisible explores the causes of exclusion and the abuses children experience and provides a sweeping assessment of the world's most vulnerable children.*

*State of the World's Children: Excluded and Invisible* notes that millions of children disappear from view when trafficked or forced to work in domestic servitude. Other children, such as street children, are visible but are excluded from fundamental services and protection. Not only do these children endure abuse, most are excluded from school, healthcare and other vital services they need to grow and thrive. These children, whose rights to a safe and healthy childhood are exceptionally difficult to protect, are growing up beyond the reach of development efforts and are often invisible in everything from public debate and legislation, to statistics and news stories. The report stresses that without focused attention, millions of children will remain trapped and forgotten in childhoods of neglect and abuse, with devastating consequences for their long-term wellbeing and the development of societies. The report argues that any society with an interest in the welfare of its children and its own future must not allow this to happen.

"Meeting the Millennium Development Goals depends on reaching vulnerable children throughout the developing world," said UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman. "There cannot be lasting progress if we continue to overlook the children most in need—the poorest and most vulnerable, the exploited and the abused."

In the past, UNICEF has reported extensively on how poverty, HIV/AIDS and armed conflict are undermining childhood itself. *Excluded and Invisible* details how these factors, as well as weak governance and discrimination, deprive children of protection from abuse and exploitation. The report finds that children who lack vital services are more vulnerable to exploitation because they have less information on how to protect themselves, and fewer economic alternatives. Children who are caught in armed conflict, for example, are routinely subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence. It is these children—alone and defenseless—who are being ignored.

The report points out that children in four circumstances are most likely to become invisible and forgotten:

## **Children without a formal identity**

Every year, over half of all births in the developing world (excluding China) go unregistered, denying more than 50 million children a basic birthright: recognition as a citizen. Children who are not registered at birth do not appear in

official statistics and are not acknowledged as members of their society. Without a registered identity, children are not guaranteed an education, good healthcare, and other basic services that impact their childhood and future. For example, unregistered children are denied a place in school when birth certificates are required to gain access. Simply put, children who do not have a formal identity are not counted, and they are not taken into account.

## **Children without parental care**

Millions of orphans, street children, and children in detention are growing up without the loving care and protection of their parents or a family environment. Children caught in these circumstances are often not treated as children at all.

- An estimated 143 million children in the developing world—1 in every 13 children—have suffered the death of at least one parent. For children in deep poverty the loss of even one parent, especially a mother, can take a lasting toll on their health, and education.
- Globally, tens of millions of children spend a large portion of their lives on the streets, where they are exposed to all forms of abuse and exploitation.
- More than one million children live in detention, the vast majority awaiting trial for minor offenses. Many of these children suffer gross neglect, violence, and trauma.

## **Children in adult roles**

The report argues that children who are forced into adult roles too early miss crucial stages of childhood development. Hundreds of thousands of children are caught up in armed conflict as combatants, messengers, porters, cooks, and sex slaves for armed groups. In many cases they have been forcibly abducted.

- In spite of laws against early marriage in many countries, over 80 million girls across the developing world will be married before they turn 18 – many far younger.
- An estimated 171 million children are working in hazardous conditions and with dangerous machinery, including in factories, mines and agriculture.

**Children who are exploited**

Shut away by their abusers and held back from school and essential services, children who are the victims of exploitation are arguably among the most invisible. Their lives and numbers are virtually impossible to track.

- Some 8.4 million children work in the worst forms of child labour, including prostitution and debt bondage, where children are exploited in slave-like conditions to pay off a debt.
- Nearly 2 million children are used in the commercial sex trade, where they routinely face sexual and physical violence.
- Every year, it is estimated that millions of children are trafficked into underground and illegal worlds where they are forced into dangerous and degrading forms of work, including prostitution.
- A vast but unknown number of children are exploited as domestic servants in private homes. Many are excluded entirely from going to school, suffer physical abuse and are underfed or overworked.

The report also asserts that children who live in “fragile States”—countries that are unable or unwilling to provide basic services for their children—are virtually invisible. Discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity or disability also factors into the exclusion of children. For example, discrimination shuts millions of girls out of school and blocks critical services for children from ethnic minorities and indigenous groups. An estimated 150 million children live with disabilities globally, many without opportunities for education, healthcare, and nurturing support because of routine discrimination.

*State of the World’s Children 2006* argues that the world must go beyond current development efforts to ensure that the most vulnerable children are not left behind. Governments bear primary responsibility for reaching out to these children, and must step up their efforts in four key areas:

- **Research, monitoring and reporting:** Systems to record and report on the nature and extent of abuses against children are essential to reaching excluded and invisible children.
- **Legislation:** National laws must match international commitments to children, and legislation that fosters discrimination must be changed or abolished. Laws to prosecute those who harm children must be consistently enforced. For example, weak law enforcement perpetuates the climate of impunity that surrounds the rape of children.
- **Financing and capacity building:** Child-focused budgets and the strengthening of institutions that serve children must complement laws and research.
- **Programmes:** Reform is urgently required in many countries and communities to remove entry barriers for children who are excluded from essential services, for example, eliminating the requirement of a birth certificate to attend school.

The report also outlines concrete actions that can be taken by civil society, the private sector, donors and the media to help prevent children from falling between the cracks.

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 Engendering the Global Agenda: The Story of Women and the United Nations (2002)

Voices from Africa : NGO Responses to HIV/AIDS (2001)  
 The NGLS Handbook of UN Agencies, Programmes, Funds and Conventions Working for Sustainable Economic and Social Development, (2000)  
 Intergovernmental Negotiations and Decision Making at the United Nations: A Guide by UN-NGLS (2003)

**Write to or e-mail NGLS to receive these publications in printed form or download them from the NGLS website.**

# Global Epidemic Update 2005: A Focus on HIV Prevention

*AIDS has killed more than 25 million people since it was first recognized in 1981, making it one of the most destructive epidemics in recorded history. AIDS claimed 3.1 million [2.8-3.6 million] lives in 2005; more than half a million were children (570,000). The total number of people living with HIV reached its highest level: an estimated 40.3 million [36.7-45.3 million] people are now living with HIV. Close to five million people were newly infected with the virus in 2005.*

According to the annual report by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO), entitled *Global Epidemic Update 2005*, there is new evidence that adult HIV infection rates have decreased in certain countries and that changes in behaviour to prevent infection—such as increased use of condoms, delay of first sexual experience and fewer sexual partners—have played a key part in these declines. The joint report also indicates, however, that overall trends in HIV transmission are still increasing, and that far greater HIV prevention efforts are needed to slow the epidemic. *Global Epidemic Update 2005* focuses this year on HIV prevention.

Kenya, Zimbabwe and some countries in the Caribbean region all show declines in HIV prevalence over the past few years with overall adult infection rates decreasing in Kenya from a peak of 10% in the late 1990s to 7% in 2003 and evidence of drops in HIV rates among pregnant women in Zimbabwe from 26% in 2003 to 21% in 2004.

Several recent developments in the Caribbean region (in the Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Dominican Republic and Haiti) give cause for guarded optimism—with some HIV prevalence declines evident among pregnant women, signs of increased condom use among sex workers and expansion of voluntary HIV testing and counselling. Despite decreases in the rate of infection in certain countries, the overall number of people living with HIV has continued to increase in all regions of the world except the Caribbean.

According to the report, the steepest increases in HIV infections have occurred in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (25% increase to 1.6 million) and East Asia. But sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the most affected globally—with 64% of new infections occurring here (over three million people).

“We are encouraged by the gains that have been made in some countries and by the fact that sustained HIV prevention programmes have played a key part in bringing down infections. But the reality is that the AIDS epidemic continues to outstrip global and national efforts to contain it,” said UNAIDS Executive Director Peter Piot.

## Impact of HIV Treatment

The report recognizes that access to HIV treatment has improved markedly over the past two years. More than one million people in low-and middle-income countries are now living longer and better lives because they are on antiretroviral treatment and an estimated 250,000 to 350,000 deaths

were averted in 2005 because of expanded access to HIV treatment.

Commenting on the potential enhanced impact of integrating prevention and treatment, the 2005 report emphasizes that a comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS requires the simultaneous acceleration of treatment and prevention efforts with the ultimate goal of universal access to prevention, treatment and care. “We can now see the clear benefit of scaling up HIV treatment and prevention together and not as isolated interventions,” said WHO Director-General LEE Jong-wook. “Treatment availability provides a powerful incentive for governments to support, and individuals to seek out, HIV prevention information and voluntary counselling and testing. Effective prevention can also help reduce the number of individuals who will ultimately require care, making broad access to treatment more achievable and sustainable.”

## Future challenges for strengthening HIV prevention

New data show that in Latin America, Eastern Europe and particularly Asia, the combination of injecting drug use and sex work is fuelling epidemics, and prevention programmes are falling short of addressing this overlap. The report shows how sustained, intensive programmes in diverse settings have helped bring about decreases in HIV incidence.

The report notes that, without HIV prevention measures, about 35% of children born to HIV positive women will contract the virus. While mother-to-child transmission has been virtually eliminated from industrialized countries and service coverage is improving in many other places, it still falls far short in most of sub-Saharan Africa. Levels of knowledge of safe sex and HIV remain low in many countries even in countries with high and growing prevalence. In 24 sub-Saharan countries (including Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda), two-thirds or more of young women (aged 15-24 years) lacked comprehensive knowledge of HIV transmission.

Finally, weak HIV surveillance in several regions including in some countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and North Africa is hampering prevention efforts and often means that people at highest risk are not adequately covered or reached through HIV prevention and treatment strategies.

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# State of the World's Refugees

*According to a report by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of refugees in the world—currently 9.2 million—has fallen to the lowest level in 25 years but new challenges have left the international system for dealing with human displacement at a pivotal point.*

*The State of the World's Refugees: Human Displacement in the New Millennium* examines the changing dynamics of displacement over the past fifty years. The challenges include the plight of tens of millions of internally displaced people (IDPs); widespread confusion over migrants and refugees; and tightened asylum policies and growing intolerance.

In his foreword to the report, High Commissioner Antonio Guterres notes that inter-State conflict is less prevalent today than internal strife and civil war, resulting in fewer refugees crossing international borders but more displaced within their own countries. Although the world's estimated 25 million internally displaced people do not fall under the 1951 Refugee Convention, they are in urgent need of help.

"People who would otherwise seek safety in neighbouring States are more frequently compelled to remain within the borders of their own country, most often in similar conditions as refugees," Mr. Guterres wrote, noting that internal displacement is the international community's "biggest failure" in humanitarian action. "Two long-running conflicts in Africa—the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan—alone accounted for an estimated 7.5 million internally displaced people in 2005."

*The State of the World's Refugees* notes, however, that the UN is beginning to make discernible progress toward helping the internally displaced, including a UN decision last year assigning sectoral responsibilities to specific agencies (see *Go Between* 108).

"UNHCR's role in the new division of labour is pivotal because it is focused on protection, the biggest gap in the system," the report says. "UNHCR is at a critical juncture in its 55-year history, having agreed to substantially expand its role to encompass the internally displaced. For the first time since the end of World War II, a comprehensive regime is being designed to address the needs of the forcibly displaced on both sides of the border."

Millions of refugees and asylum seekers have over the past five years benefited from international protection and from repatriation, integration in first-asylum States, or resettlement to third countries. More than four million have gone home to Afghanistan and hundreds of thousands more to Angola, Sierra Leone, Burundi and Liberia. South Sudan, struggling to emerge from two decades of civil war, could see more than four million internally displaced and refugees return in the next few years.

But ensuring that the uprooted can go home and stay home requires sustained international attention, from the return phase to reconstruction and long-term development, the report notes. Bridging gaps in that process is crucial in preventing states from sliding back into another cycle of violence and displacement. Development plays a key role in ensuring that peace and economic recovery can take root. The report also examines the plight of millions of refugees for whom no solutions are in sight. There are at least 33 such protracted refugee situations involving groups of at least 25,000 people who have been in exile for five years or more. They accounted for 5.7 million of the world's 9.2 million refugees.

"The majority of today's refugees have lived in exile for far too long, restricted to camps or eking out a meagre existence in urban centres throughout the developing world," the report says. "Most subsist in a state of limbo..."

"In the past few years, asylum issues and refugee protection have become inextricably linked with the question of international migration, particularly irregular migration," Mr. Guterres said before the report's launch. "Untangling the two means timely protection interventions to detect those in genuine need."

"UNHCR does not intend to become a migration agency. But migration requires our attention – to be vigilant of its effects on the right to asylum. While UNHCR recognizes it is the prerogative of States to control their borders and manage migration, such measures should not preclude the right of those in real need to adequate procedures in accordance with international law."

The number of international migrants has been estimated at more than 175 million, with asylum seekers and refugees comprising only a very small proportion (see also *Focus* Page 24). "In public opinion, there has been a blurring of illegal migration and security problems with asylum and refugee issues," the High Commissioner said. "This demonstrates the importance of combating intolerance and challenging the notion that refugees and asylum seekers are the agents of insecurity, rather than its victims."

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# 50th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

*The 50th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York from 27 February - 10 March 2006, concluded its annual meeting by adopting a number of resolutions concerning women's economic, political and social rights. Specifically, the 45-member Commission called for international institutions and governments worldwide to ensure equal participation of women in decision making and to take actions to enhance their role in development.*

During its two-week session the Commission focused on two main themes: "Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work;" and "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels."

## General Discussion

During its general discussion, a number of participants stressed that access to education was crucial for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women and could lead to gains in other areas such as employment, and economic and political participation. Equal access to education, said Thailand's representative, not only provided women with life opportunities, but was also a critical life-saving investment. While poverty and lack of education impeded women's participation in decision making, the representative of the International Council of Women noted that the main stumbling block to equal participation in decision making continued to be discriminatory cultural norms. Even in industrialized countries, there were too few women representatives in political decision making, she said.

Susana Rivero (Uruguay) stressed that translating international commitments into practice was the only way to improve the quality of life of women. Every woman was entitled to live free of violence in both public and private life. Another issue was the feminization of HIV/AIDS in all regions of the world.

Sheila Sisulu, World Food Programme (WFP), said women were the guardians of food security for most families around the world. For over ten years now, WFP had been working at every level—policy, practice and advocacy—to ensure that women not only had equal access to food, but also food aid that helped to empower them.

Marcela Villarreal, UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said that 75% of world's poor—or 900 million people—lived in rural areas and depended on agriculture for their livelihoods. In all regions of the world, women made substantial contributions to agricultural production. Land was a key social and economic asset, crucial for maintaining cultural identity, political power and participation in decision making. Equality in the access to and ownership of land must be at the centre

of all national and international development policies, Ms. Villarreal stressed.

Evy Messell, International Labour Organization (ILO), said that while the growing proportion of women in the labour force had been a recent trend, women still faced many obstacles to equal opportunities and treatment in the world of work. Gender-based discrimination persisted practically everywhere and at all levels, she noted. In the formal economy, labour markets remained highly segregated, with many women caught in traditionally "female" jobs that tended to be more low-status, insecure, unsafe, poorly paid and without opportunities for advancement than those held by men. In addition, women were disproportionately concentrated in the informal economy with 60% or more of female workers in developing countries in informal employment outside of agriculture and without the protection of international labour standards.

## Gender Dimensions of International Migration

On 2 March, a High-level Panel on the Gender Dimensions of International Migration was held, which provided the Commission with an opportunity to examine the multidimensional aspects of international migration from a gender perspective and provide inputs to inform the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, being held in New York from 14-15 September 2006. Participants acknowledged that gender permeated every aspect of migration, including the decision to migrate, the process of migration and its consequences.

The Deputy Director of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Ndioro Ndiaye, said governments should foster sensitivity towards the cultures of migrants, while ensuring that all cultural and customary practices that negatively affected the rights of women were eliminated, including through specific legislation. Governments had the tools, but were often lacking the political will to ensure that migration, and in particular labour migration, was governed by human rights, rather than only economic factors, she said.

Irena Omelaniuk, World Bank, said trafficking was a forced labour and development issue and that women were most affected by trafficking. While it was not always the poorest that were trafficked, the majority did come from low-income, socially deprived circumstances.

She focused on south-eastern Europe, where the transition to market economies had not been accompanied by comprehensive social security policies, leaving many women and ethnic minority groups to become the “new poor,” and highly vulnerable to trafficking. Trafficking in persons was redirecting the benefit from the migrants into the pockets of traffickers. The global profit from trafficking was estimated at between US\$7 billion to US\$10 billion a year, although in the end it was hard to say exactly what the figure was, as it was a phenomenon that occurred under the radar, Ms. Omelaniuk said.

**Resolutions**

The Commission reached consensus on a number of resolutions and agreed conclusions late on the final day, leaving insufficient time for the formal closing. Member States then reconvened on 16 March to adopt the official documents. The Commission adopted several resolutions, including a unanimous resolution urging the immediate release of all women and children taken hostage in armed conflict. The resolution stresses the need to end impunity and the responsibility of all States to prosecute those responsible for war crimes.

After intense negotiation, the Commission was able to adopt a resolution on the HIV/AIDS pandemic and women that urges governments to strengthen initiatives that would increase the capacities of women and adolescent girls to protect themselves from HIV and infection.

In another resolution, the Commission demanded that Israel comply fully with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Conventions in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and children. The text called on Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties.

Acting by consensus, the Commission called for reporting on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, and also called for “further study of the advisability” of designating a special rapporteur to examine legislation that discriminates against women.

The Commission adopted a resolution on its future organization and methods of work that aims to strengthen the connection between policy recommendations and implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Beijing+5 outcome document (see *NGLS Roundup 122*). Starting next year, each session of the Commission will consider only one priority theme from the Platform and the +5 outcome document in order to reduce the time spent on negotiations.

A resolution on proposals for a multi-year Programme of

Work for CSW 2007-2009 was also adopted. For the next three years the priority themes will be “The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child” (2007); “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women” (2008); and “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS” (2009).

The 51st session of CSW will be held from 26 February to 9 March 2007.

**Civil Society at CSW**

A wide range of parallel events were organized by NGOs for the 50th session of the CSW, including caucuses, workshops, roundtables and panel debates.

As part of discussions undertaken during the 50th session, women’s organizations expressed their disappointment that the women’s equality agenda and women’s machineries are not being addressed as a central part of the UN reform programme. In an open letter to the UN Secretary-General and Member States, dated 6 March, the Center for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL), Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom repeated a call they made at the 2005 World Summit held in September 2005 (see *NGLS Roundup 124*) for UN systems and mechanisms to be significantly strengthened, upgraded and resourced in order to advance gender equality at international and country levels. The open letter was endorsed by more than 240 women from over 50 countries and by numerous international and regional organizations.

Noting that the new High-level Panel on UN system-wide coherence in areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment has only three women out of 15 members, the open letter urges “that additional women be added to the panel and that gender equality issues be explicitly considered under each theme. Furthermore, the panel should be mandated to hold consultations with civil society groups, especially those working on women’s rights, in order to ensure consideration of the impact on women of any proposed reform.”

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# 44th Session of the Commission for Social Development: Taking Stock

*The 44th session of the Commission for Social Development was held in New York from 8-17 February 2006. The session sought to examine progress made during the first UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), and reviewed relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups, particularly older and disabled persons.*

“We are at a major turning point in human history,” Clare Short, Member of Parliament of the UK, said at the opening session of the Commission for Social Development, noting that, for the first time ever, the world was capable of reducing poverty and improving the lives of people. The inequality of the world—with 20% of people living with material plenty while one billion remained abjectly poor—was unsustainable, she said. As the poor of the world urbanized and saw clearly how others lived, they would not be willing to tolerate the suffering and poverty they currently endured. “And thus if we want our civilization to survive, we have to learn better to share our knowledge, technology and capital to make the world more equitable both between and within nations.” Such a world could not be built, she added, without a stronger, more representative and effective UN.

Commission Chairperson Javier Loayza Barea (Bolivia) said that, as the current session reviewed the Decade, it must consider the lingering reality that more than a billion people were immobilized by poor health, illiteracy and lack of adequate shelter and employment opportunities, and many more continued to bequeath to their children lives of social exclusion, powerlessness and discrimination—the very situations that created ripe conditions for conflict and instability.

A panel discussion held on 8 February on the review of the Decade highlighted the particular struggle of sub-Saharan Africa against poverty in Africa. Poverty, noted Judith Mbula Bahemuka (Kenya), was pervasive, gender-based and largely a rural phenomenon. Statistics showed there were more poor people today than in the 1980s or 1990s. That meant that either the growth in gross domestic product (GDP) had not been commensurate with population growth or that GDP growth was attributable to people who were already out of the absolutely poor bracket. The rich were getting richer and the poor, poorer. For many in Africa, achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) would just be a pipe dream, she stated.

The Commission also held a dialogue with its Special Rapporteur on Disability, Sheikha Hessa Al-Thani, who reported that the lack of adequate, accurate information and statistical data on the size, needs and barriers facing persons with disabilities represented one of the biggest challenges for those working on policy and decision making. Disability and the concerns of persons with disabilities was still one of the most neglected issues on the agendas of international development organizations, she stressed.

## General Discussion

The general discussion began on 9 February to look at progress made in poverty eradication in the past ten years with several speakers noting it as slow and uneven, cautioning that without greater, more concerted efforts, internationally agreed poverty-

reduction targets would not be met, leaving the world's poor to face even greater uncertainty, social exclusion and economic deprivation.

Describing the obstacles to social development—including the effects of natural disasters, HIV/AIDS, conflict and continuing inequities in the global economic system—the representative speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 developing countries and China (G-77/China) regretted that the need to strengthen social capital in poor communities, including through formal and informal networks, had not been adequately stressed. The representative of Bangladesh noted that economic growth was necessary, but not sufficient, for poverty eradication and that many developing countries lacked the resources to escape the poverty trap. “Asymmetric globalization” had further marginalized the poorest of the poor. For the least developed countries, duty- and quota-free market access, official development assistance (ODA) and financing for development were categorical imperatives.

On 10 February the Commission focused on the situation of vulnerable segments of society, including youth, persons with disabilities and older persons. Discussions focused on preparations under way for the five-year review and appraisal of the 2002 Madrid Plan of Action, adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing (see *Go Between 90*). Elderly persons were the most marginalized and poorest group in society, the representative of the NGO HelpAge International said, pointing out that more than 10% of those living on less than US\$1 a day were over 60. Now, more than ever before, the voice of older persons must be heard so that international commitments and policies included their concerns, she stressed.

On the issue of young people, Johan Schölvinnck, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development, said that, in the case of sub-Saharan Africa, the need to work with young people was clear. It was estimated that over 102 million young people in sub-Saharan Africa lived on less than US\$2 a day. The region also had the second largest number of undernourished young people, accounting for 25% of the global total. The issue of youth poverty in Africa was also inextricably linked to youth employment, with 21% of the youth population in sub-Saharan Africa unemployed. That was the second highest youth unemployment rate in the world, exceeded only by the Middle East and North Africa, where youth unemployment was 25.6%.

With young people between the ages of 15-24 comprising more than 1.2 billion of the total world population, a representative of the World Youth Alliance said it only followed that young people had the most to gain from the eradication of poverty and the implementation of social development policies.

**Resolutions**

On 17 March, the Commission suspended its 44th session after adopting, without a vote, five texts concerning its working methods (E/CN.5/2006/L.5); the social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD, E/CN.5/2006/L.6); ageing (E/CN.5/2006/L.2); youth employment (E/CN.5/2006/L.3); and the proposed convention on the rights of disabled persons (E/CN.5/2006/L.4).

**Working Methods of the Commission**

Beginning with its 45th session, the Commission's work will be organized in a series of two-year action-oriented implementation cycles, including a review and policy segment. This exercise was prompted by the General Assembly's (A/RES/57/270B) call to each of the functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to examine their methods of work and recommend new effective ways of pursuing the implementation of the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits. It was also decided that the outcome of the Commission's review session would be in the form of a chairperson's summary, done in consultation with other Bureau members, and that the policy segment will have a negotiated outcome with action-oriented strategies. The theme for the 2007-2008 review and policy cycle will be "Promoting full employment and decent work for all," taking into account its interrelatedness with poverty eradication and social integration.

**NEPAD**

Submitted by the Group-77/China, "The social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development" provides an update of agreed language from the Commission's 2005 resolution on the implementation of the social dimensions of NEPAD (see *NGLS Online Roundup*, April 2005) and contains three new elements. It includes a paragraph that encourages the further integration of indigenous and traditional knowledge systems in poverty eradication efforts. Another new paragraph requests the Commission to support African countries in raising awareness of the social dimensions of the New Partnership, which had primarily focused on economic objectives. An additional paragraph reaffirms the importance of specific social groups in areas that represent the social dimension of the problems Africa experiences.

**Ageing**

Adopting the resolution on modalities for the first review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing, the Commission decided to start the first cycle of review and appraisal in 2007 at its 45th session to focus on the challenges and opportunities of ageing, and to allow Member States to have a first count of the measures taken since the adoption of the Plan in 2002. The Commission endorsed "Addressing the challenges and opportunities of ageing" as the global theme for the review and appraisal and agreed to conclude it in 2008 at its 46th session.

**Youth Employment**

Recognizing that young people face rising unemployment, poverty and illiteracy, as well as the social consequences accompanying these issues, the resolution, "Promoting youth employment," recommends that ECOSOC urge governments to consider youth employment as integral to their overall strategies for development and collective security, and to give renewed attention to the Millennium Declaration commitment concerning decent and productive work for

young people as key to achieving the MDGs.

**Disabilities**

The resolution entitled "Comprehensive and integral international convention to protect and promote the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities" requests ECOSOC to invite Member States and observers to continue to participate actively and constructively in the Ad Hoc Committee negotiating the draft convention, and requests the Commission to continue to contribute to the process of negotiation, bearing in mind its area of expertise and the positive impact of a convention in promoting an inclusive approach to social development.

On 22 March the Commission for Social Development concluded its 44th session with the adoption of its draft report (E/CN.5/2006/L.1). The Commission decided to transmit the Chairperson's summary of the panel discussion on the priority theme, "Review of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) to the coordination segment of ECOSOC's 2006 substantive session. It also adopted the draft provisional agenda and documentation for its 45th session.

**Civil Society Forum**

A Civil Society Forum was held on 7 February, organized and co-sponsored by the UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs (DESA), the NGO Committee for Social Development, and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. The Forum sought to identify and examine issues addressed during the 44th session, prepare the NGO Declaration to the Commission that was delivered at the opening session on 8 February, strategize how NGOs would work together, and provide networking opportunities for NGOs with similar concerns.

Noting that poverty is multidimensional, NGOs at the Forum, through their declaration to the Commission, called for the implementation of practical sustainable poverty reduction strategies that benefit all and urged governments to act now to keep the promises they have already made. They also urged a systemic approach to poverty eradication that responds to the prevailing lack of access by addressing the underlying social, economic or political barriers. They recommended that Member States implement economic development models informed by social justice that ensure the right to sustainable livelihood and decent work, right to education and health care, right to a safe and secure environment, and right to economic participation. NGOs also called for decisive strategies that place people at the centre of development, and requested that governments design and implement effective outreach programmes to ensure that those marginalized in their countries are actively involved in the design and carrying out of programmes that ameliorate their life situations.

The NGO Declaration is available online ([www.un.org/esa/socdev/ngo/csocd44/documents/NGODeclaration44thcommission.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ngo/csocd44/documents/NGODeclaration44thcommission.pdf)).

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# 39th Session of the Commission on Population and Development: International Migration in Focus

*With the number of international migrants standing at 191 million and their remittances at US\$226 billion, the Commission on Population and Development devoted its 39th session to international migration and development, meeting from 3-7 April at UN headquarters. The session will contribute to the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, to be held at the UN from 14-15 September 2006.*

Given the migration-development nexus, the time was ripe for a sober, frank and constructive discussion on international migration and its contribution to development, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Jose Antonio Ocampo, said at the opening of the annual session. He pointed to the contribution of enterprising migrants in countries of destination, growing importance of workers' remittances to countries of origin, and the social and cultural enrichment of both sending and receiving countries.

Perhaps more than any other issue, migration put into stark relief the enormous social, political, economic and cultural transformations occurring in a world divided by excess and need, Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), said. The international migration landscape had changed dramatically over the last decade. Growing gaps between rich and poor, an expanded global economy, geopolitical transformations, wars, and ecological disasters had profoundly impacted people and their desire to leave their homeland. Migration was a development issue, Ms. Obaid stressed. For industrialized countries, immigration helped to ease the pressure brought by a declining population and a dwindling tax base; and for developing nations, migration relieved unemployment and population pressures.

Although demography was not destiny, it certainly shaped it, the Director of the Population Division, Hania Zlotnik, said. For example, for at least a decade now, high-income countries had been experiencing labour shortages in certain sectors of their economies, particularly in those where jobs could not be exported. Consequently, as overall employment rose during the boom years of the 1990s, so did migration. Whether authorized or not, workers from developing countries were taking the jobs that did not find takers in developed countries at going wages. Some low-income countries, particularly small island States and African countries, were having difficulties delivering basic services because of the high emigration of their skilled workers, she pointed out.

In the discussions that followed, South Africa's representative, on behalf of the Group of 77 developing countries and China (G-77/China), said that the

relationships between international migration and development were numerous and extremely complex. The current era of increased global economic integration, quicker and cheaper transport, high mobility of people, and information and communication technology provided a new context, and, if well managed, migration had the potential to be "an enabler" of improved and integrated global, regional and national development strategies. Steps should be taken to reduce transfer costs of the migrant remittances to developing countries and train unskilled workers to offset the loss of skilled persons from developing countries.

The following days of discussions centred on the most pressing issues in migration, follow-up actions to the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and national experiences in international migration. Describing Botswana's experience, the representative said as a small country of some 1.7 million people, Botswana had experienced a mixture of both good and bad in terms of migration. As his country was one of those most affected by HIV/AIDS, the migration of health-care professionals, who had been trained at cost, had severely strained Botswana's national resources. The international community must address that issue with a greater sense of urgency and unity of purpose, he stressed.

Explaining the phenomenon of brain drain, Papa Owusu-Ankomah, Ghana's Minister of the Interior, said his country's public sector health service had also suffered significant losses through external migration to the US, UK, South Africa and the Arabian Gulf. Some three million Ghanaian workers lived outside Ghana, with about one-third of them residing in Europe and North America. Indeed, more Ghanaian doctors worked outside Ghana than inside the country, and Ghana had also lost some 50% of its professional nurses.

The representative from the Philippines described a similar trend in his country, noting that "push and pull" factors contributed to the brain drain phenomenon. Greater opportunities for growth, significantly higher pay, better working and living conditions abroad, continued to draw more and more Filipino health-care practitioners. In turn, the situation challenged the domestic demand for

health professionals and the quality of the delivery of local health care.

Working to reduce the “crippling incoherence” of migration policy on development, the representative of Guyana, on behalf of the Rio Group, stressed the urgent need for a multilateral framework to maximize the benefits of migration and minimize its negative consequences. The most pressing issues to be addressed included safeguarding the social, labour and human rights of immigrants regardless of their migratory status, moving from brain drain to “brain circulation,” and building national capacity to manage migration systems.

Nowadays, women were increasingly migrating as the main economic providers for their households, the Director of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), Carmen Moreno, said speaking on 5 April. Women constituted 49.6% of global migratory flows, though the proportion varied significantly by country and could be as high as 70%-80% in some cases. The “feminization of migration” had also produced specifically female forms of migration, such as the commercialized migration of domestic workers and caregivers, the migration and trafficking of women for the sex industry, and the organized migration of women for marriage. In the developed world, the combination of women’s increased participation in the workforce and the failure to develop family-friendly labour policies and childcare options had led to a strong demand for migrant women. Migrant women had become central to women’s freedom in the developed world, but their contribution was undervalued, Ms. Moreno stressed.

Speaking on 6 April, Peter Sutherland, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative on International Migration and Development, said international migration was one of the great pieces of unfinished business of the multilateral system and one of the great challenges of the century, and it was a test of the United Nations and the Commission to meet that challenge. Mr. Sutherland said the Commission’s putting together a resolution as a precursor for the GA’s High-level Dialogue on International Migration in September that did more than repeat what had already been agreed was the beginning of that test. If Member States failed to meet the challenge, the debate would be a fractious circle of discussion of past issues, he warned. Multilateralism would itself be challenged on the issue, and it would become a question as to whether the future would be that of unilateral or bilateral discussion, interregional or international discussion, or no discussion at all.

While migration was good for development, the development impact of migration could be much stronger, Sweden’s representative said. For that, greater policy and programme coherence was needed. To maximize its development impact, migration must contribute to

improve labour standards and better wages, and not the opposite. That required regulated migration, supported by international human rights frameworks that protected migrants, especially women and children. Irregular migration must be reduced. If high-income countries needed labour, they should be ready to pay for it. It was not only about managing migration – it was about human rights and values.

According to the *Report on World Population Monitoring* (E/CN.9/2006/3), released in early April, the number of international migrants in the world reached 191 million in 2005, up from 175 million in 2000. Four out of ten migrants, or roughly 76 million, live in developing countries, and nearly half of global migrants are women. The report discusses in depth both the detailed figures and the potential effects of migration on the world community and takes special note of the economic benefits and drawbacks of migration on both sending and receiving countries.

The Report of the Secretary-General “Monitoring of population programmes, focusing on international migration and development” (E/CN.9/2006/4) focuses on the impact on development of the brain drain, brain gain, brain circulation, remittances, the diaspora, and return migration. The report considers important elements that have potential for policy intervention that can enhance positive development impacts and mutually beneficial solutions for countries of both origin and destination as well as for the migrants themselves. It also discusses barriers to, and opportunities for, such policy intervention.

Both reports, released to inform the discussions in the run-up to the High-level Dialogue in September, are available online ([www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/comm2006.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/comm2006.htm)). More information on the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development is also available online ([www.un.org/esa/population/hldmigration](http://www.un.org/esa/population/hldmigration)).

On 7 April, the Commission also took up a review of its working methods, focusing on the following issues: the nature of the Commission’s outcomes; the inclusion of new and emerging issues on its agenda; the organization of a multi-year work programme and its possible organization into a series of two-year cycles; and the Commission’s contribution to the work of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Unable to reach consensus on a number of resolutions, the Commission suspended its 39th session and will reconvene at a later date.

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## 4th World Water Forum

*The 4th World Water Forum, held in Mexico City (Mexico) from 16-22 March 2006, brought together almost 20,000 participants representing governments, UN agencies, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, academia, business and industry, indigenous groups, youth and the media.*

The 4th World Water Forum's main theme, "Local actions for a global challenge," was addressed through five framework themes: water for growth and development; implementing integrated water resources management (IWRM); water supply and sanitation for all; water management for food and the environment; and risk management. The Forum included over 200 thematic sessions.

More than one billion people currently have no access to safe drinking water, and an estimated 2.7 billion people, or one-third of the world's population, will face major water shortages by 2025.

Opening the Forum, Cristóbal Jaime Jáquez (Mexico), Co-Chair of the Forum, emphasized the strategic importance of water to national security, the need for a long-term vision on water management, and the need to create a new water culture that enables people to face water and development challenges based on cooperation and tolerance. Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council (WWC) and also Co-Chair, stressed that lack of access to safe drinking water and poor water quality are unacceptable, and that the right to water is indispensable to human dignity. He outlined major challenges for global water systems, including demographic growth, deforestation, soil degradation and climate change.

### Framework Themes

#### **Water for Growth and Development**

Luis Alberto Moreno, President of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), introduced the theme, stating that in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), investments, especially in sanitation, are an urgent priority. He said changes in economic and political systems pose administrative and financial challenges, and advocated universal access to water, combined with the promotion of efficient use; mechanisms to solve water-related conflicts; efficient financial structures to ensure reasonable prices for local communities; and subsidies to ensure maintenance of water infrastructure to limit water waste.

During the discussions that followed, participants discussed the need to promote regional sustainable development for the benefit of marginalized communities; blend traditional skills with modern techniques; and promote the use of project assessment. Participants urged the use of efficient mechanisms to halt the depletion of major sources of water and stressed the need for local communities to play a primary role in water planning. Taking into account the needs of youth was also stressed.

#### **Implementing IWRM**

On 18 March, participants addressed integrated water resources management (IWRM) and almost 40 IWRM thematic sessions were held throughout the day. Introducing the theme, Katherine Sierra, World Bank, stressed that development that either undermines the environment or is socially unacceptable cannot be called development. Noting that water-related disasters receive significantly more attention than the world's chronic water problems, she stressed poor countries' vulnerabilities and called for increased investment in water control and development, combined with institutional development and community involvement. Stressing that all investments must be supported by robust regulatory systems and involve all stakeholders, she identified good governance as essential.

A number of participants stressed the need for poverty alleviation as the ultimate goal of IWRM; participation of all stakeholders, including local water partnerships to promote top-down and bottom-up information exchange; regional awareness workshops; strengthening the legal basis for basin management, including enforcement measures; capacity building; and alternative private sector sources of funding. Mainstreaming a gender perspective and addressing conflict prevention and resolution were also identified as essential elements for IWRM.

#### **Water Supply and Sanitation for All**

Speaking on 19 March, UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) Executive Director Anna Tibaijuka expressed support for the Forum's focus on local actions, saying that water and sanitation conflicts have to be resolved at the local level. She cited urbanization as a core public issue in gross neglect, and noted that the MDG targets are not being met. She further stressed that the water supply and sanitation crisis has to be viewed as a crisis of governance, and urged sound policies and country-level poverty reduction strategies to reflect the MDG targets on water, sanitation and human settlements.

During the thematic session on civil society perspectives on securing the right to water, several cases of indigenous and local groups' struggles against privatization of water services and popular campaigns for integrated sustainable water plans were presented. Many CSOs called on the governments of the world to assume a commitment to guarantee that every human being has the right to clean, sufficient and accessible water. To achieve this, they stressed, a resolution must be

promoted at the United Nations that would strengthen the right to water and penalize violations of this principle.

During the session entitled “Public-private controversy in water and sanitation: lessons in light of the MDGs’ requirements,” panelists drew attention to a number of issues, including weaknesses in the regulatory ability of States vis-à-vis the private sector, leading to difficulties in follow-up and to non-compliance with legislation; problems regarding lack of transparency in decision making and operations; unfair bidding practices; and inequitable, profit-oriented policies.

**Water for Food and the Environment**

The theme of “Water for Food and the Environment” was discussed on 20 March with participants debating a range of issues, including agricultural productivity; water challenges and perspectives in megacities; rooftop rainwater collection; flood management; and leakages in water infrastructure. Several participants stressed the importance of technology and raising awareness about water conservation.

Louise Fresco, UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), argued that there can be no solution to water issues without tackling agriculture and poverty. She noted that agriculture is the most important user of water and that 70% of the world’s poor live in rural areas, thus depending on agriculture. Arguing that agriculture can keep pace with the world’s demographic growth and that agricultural productivity is dependent upon water availability, she predicted that the 70% increase in global food production required to meet the demands of the world’s growing population can be done with only a 14% increase in water use.

In the discussion that followed, participants addressed using wastewater for irrigation and financial schemes to facilitate this; the need to address indigenous peoples’ interests; linking land and water resources management to prevent deforestation and land degradation; and reducing farmers’ risks in the face of globalization.

**Risk Management**

During the discussions held on risk management, various phenomena which affect climate scenarios were discussed. Participants stressed the importance of partnerships at the community level; community-based and participatory initiatives that integrate climate change concerns; community participation in disaster prevention measures to ensure public awareness; mobilizing vulnerable local communities; and short-, medium- and long-term hydrological participatory planning.

**Ministerial Segment**

The Forum concluded with a Ministerial Conference held from 21-22 March, with over 135 ministers and high-level officials adopting a Ministerial Declaration. The Declaration, adopted on 22 March, reaffirms the crucial

importance of water for sustainable development and highlights the need to include water and sanitation as priorities in national processes, particularly national sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies.

The Declaration also reaffirms commitments made to achieve the internationally agreed goals on IWRM and access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, and the decisions of the 13th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-13) on policy options and practical measures to expedite implementation in water, sanitation and human settlements; increasing resources for developing countries to achieve the internationally agreed goals; and improving governance, enabling environments and regulatory frameworks, which adopt a pro-poor approach with active involvement of all stakeholders.

**Civil Society at the 4th World Water Forum**

Civil society was active around the Fourth World Water Forum in a number of parallel events that included workshops, strategy meetings, cultural events and a rally on International Water Day, observed on 22 March. On 15 March, civil society groups hosted an international symposium entitled “Public Water for All” ahead of the opening of the 4th World Water Forum. The symposium included numerous water managers who shared their experiences of successful public utilities in order to help “debunk the myth” that private sector participation is needed to improve access to clean water and sanitation in developing countries. Their perspectives were intended to provide balance in the debate on the provision of water, in contrast to continued calls for privatization and other forms of private sector participation. They also offered concrete examples of how public-public partnerships are providing new models for the transfer of expertise and best practices on a non-profit basis.

The Mexican civil society coalition COMDA (Coalición de Organizaciones Mexicanas por el Derecho al Agua), together with international organizations, organized the International Forum in the Defense of Water from 17-19 March in order to discuss improvements to public water delivery. Sessions emphasized the recognition and enforcement of the human right to water delivered by publicly managed utilities, and urged governmental support for the development of public-public partnerships.

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*See also the IISD Reporting Services coverage of the 4th World Water Forum ([www.iisd.ca/ymb/worldwater4](http://www.iisd.ca/ymb/worldwater4)) and the COMDA website ([www.comda.org.mx](http://www.comda.org.mx)).*

# **PrepCom for the 2006 Review Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons**

*The Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2006 Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects was held in New York from 9-20 January 2006. It sought to lay the groundwork for the 26 June-7 July 2006 conference that will review the 2001 Action Programme against Illicit Trade (see NGLS Roundup 80).*

Opening the conference, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Nobuyasu Abe, said that while significant progress had been made in combating the illicit small arms scourge, those weapons remained a massive problem—killing, maiming and threatening individuals daily, and destabilizing States and regions and hampering their development. The PrepCom Chair, Sylvester E. Rowe (Sierra Leone), said that an assessment of what had and had not been done was needed. He encouraged the Committee to design a forward-looking strategy for further action.

The PrepCom consisted of a general exchange of views from 9-12 January; statements by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations on 12 January; and interactive thematic debates from 13-19 January that aimed at identifying key issues for inclusion in the outcome of this summer's review. During the general exchange of views, broad agreement emerged that the goal of both the preparatory process and the Review Conference was not to renegotiate or open the 2001 Programme of Action (PoA)—considered to be politically, but not legally binding—but to identify those measures that could be agreed upon to complement or enhance it.

Noting that there was nothing “small or light” about those weapons, or their collective impact on people throughout the world, Canada's representative said there were more than 600 million small arms and light weapons (SALW) in circulation and, in 2005 alone, those weapons were instrumental in the deaths of more than half a million people, or 10,000 people per week. The vast majority were civilians, and at least a third were struck down in countries at peace. On behalf of the European Union, Austria's speaker suggested that delegates focus on the crucial areas where significant obstacles to full implementation remained, such as transfer controls, including end-user certification, marking and tracing, brokering regulations, ammunition and the integration of small arms measures into development assistance.

Sri Lanka's representative said new approaches were needed to make non-State actors accountable for the human rights violations resulting from small arms use. He also highlighted the conscription drives by non-State actors in which children were removed against their will from schools, welfare centres and makeshift camps and turned

into combatants. Pakistan's representative stressed that the causes of war were even more important than the instruments of war. The demand for weapons would remain strong so long as conflicts festered and solutions to their underlying causes were not addressed.

During the second week of the PrepCom, efforts intensified to evolve a set of recommendations for the upcoming Review Conference. On 13 January a series of interactive thematic debates began on the six “clusters” of issues ranging from international cooperation and assistance (Cluster IV) to confidence building, transparency and the need to engage civil society (Cluster V).

The morning discussion, held on 13th of January 2006, focused on the human and humanitarian, socio-economic and other dimensions of the illicit arms trade (Cluster I). A non-paper of the Committee Chairman suggested several “indicative issues” to be discussed, including: creating yardsticks for measuring progress; additional programmes States could establish to promote “arms for development” projects; whether the implementation strategy could address “civilian-on-civilian” gun violence; victims' suffering; and a role for the new Peacebuilding Commission in strengthening the Programme of Action, among others.

Some speakers questioned whether such items as poverty and health were appropriate concerns for the PrepCom and the review process. The US representative said that those issues were “tangential” to the main purpose, namely to address illicit small arms trafficking. However, many speakers heatedly asserted that the humanitarian aspect of the small arms problem was very much a part of a review of progress in eradicating the illicit small arms scourge.

A number of topics were debated during the afternoon discussion, including: ratification of legally binding instruments; illicit brokering; end-user certificates; non-State actors; export/import control; and compliance with UN sanctions regimes.

Stressing that the UK attached particular importance to the issue of transfer controls, its representative noted that since 2003 many States had supported a regional partnership focused on effective controls over SALW

through a number of regional and international workshops. That process, known as the Transfer Controls Initiative, had helped States to build from the bottom up in articulating guidelines that reflected their security concerns. The essential principle had been established in 2001, but since then, it was increasingly clear that that was one part of the Action Programme that would benefit from further elaboration.

Several speakers stressed the need to respect the Security Council-imposed arms embargoes, including the US representative. While stressing that the US continued to oppose measures limiting trade in small arms and light weapons to non-State actors, the US representative said that a repressed, non-State group defending itself against a government-imposed genocide should be able to receive such assistance. The US also strongly opposed measures to restrict civilian possession, which, he said, fell outside the Review's mandate. Also pressing for strict adherence to Council-imposed arms bans, Switzerland's representative said the question centred on how best to link the problem of tracing those weapons with the major work of the UN, such as in the Security Council and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

From the EU's perspective, cracking down on the illegal small arms trade crucially deepened the ability to systematically track weapons from their point of manufacture or importation to the point where they were diverted to illegal markets. Despite distinct national and regional progress since 2001, 80% of the Member States still had no national regulation to control brokering and, thus, were not in conformity with their commitment under the action plan. Also, given that illicit brokering was cross-border in nature, a set of global standards was needed to combat that, the representative stressed.

On diversion from legal to illegal trade, Nigeria's speaker, on behalf of the African Group, said that very little attention had been given to the supply side of the problem. The supply of the illicit small arms trade could be tackled by controlling illicit arms flows from the source through the establishment of a global mechanism to ensure the imposition of sanctions on arms manufacturers and suppliers, or on governments diverting arms into illicit networks, particularly to non-State actors. Unless those actors were held to account, there could be no progress. The most effective means of curbing the demand for illicit small arms, however, were measures to prevent conflict. Further, in affected States, the exploitation of natural resources channelled funds into the illicit small arms trade.

Further discussions were held on norms, regulations and administrative procedures (Cluster II) and excessive accumulation, misuse and uncontrolled spread (Cluster III). Stressing the need to ensure the security and safety of ammunition stockpiles, the representative of Austria, on behalf of the EU, said that stockpile management was an important means to block one of the most damaging

channels for acquiring illicit weapons and ammunition. She stressed that the intensity of conflicts could be diminished significantly by interrupting the influx of ammunition and by drying up the stream of its illegal delivery. Surplus ammunition was diverted from military stockpiles into zones of instability where it fuelled conflicts. Ill-managed ammunition stockpiles threatened the population since those damaged the environment and risked explosion.

Speaking on 17 January, Canada's representative noted that US\$25 million a year was dedicated to fighting the SALW scourge, while some US\$600 million was spent annually to combat a single weapon—anti-personnel landmines—which killed 20 times fewer people. The speaker suggested there was much to be gained by looking at the Ottawa Convention (Mine Ban Treaty). The 148 States Parties had voluntarily assumed hard targets and deadlines on destruction of stockpiles and mine clearance. The treaty also obliged countries to provide technical and financial support to others.

Post-conflict developing States were grappling with implementation, Sierra Leone's representative said, stressing that implementation of the Action Programme could only be accomplished through concerted international effort and commitment. Sierra Leone had made progress in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and community arms collection and destruction that had been further strengthened by the "arms for development" initiative of his government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which ensured an arms-free community, where weapons, both licensed and unlicensed, were exchanged for community development programmes. Countries with porous borders, however, remained vulnerable to weapons flows and former combatants, he stressed.

Several speakers noted that NGOs deepened discussions on the illicit small arms trade. Japan's speaker said that the participation of those with relevant expertise should be encouraged. India's representative said that, similar to civil society's mobilization of the mine ban movement, the small arms issue was exemplified by civil society engagement. Those groups had contributed much to broadening understanding of the core issues and implementing the Programme of Action at the community level.

On the issue of follow up (Cluster VI), Austria, on behalf of the EU, supported consolidating the review process and reporting around biennial meetings. Spacing meetings at 2-year-intervals could help reduce "reporting fatigue" and give States the chance to provide information that is focussed on substance rather than quantity. Argentina's representative urged the Review Conference to go beyond the context of the biennial meetings. Several steps could be taken, including a review of implementation by using the reports of the biennial meetings as the basis. The areas where the greatest difficulties had been encountered could be identified and progressive measures could be adopted,

he stressed. Two possible outcomes of the upcoming review were a political declaration and an agenda for action.

After two weeks of discussions and a wide divergence of views, States, failing to agree on how best to take action on the proliferation of weapons, were unable to reach consensus on a final draft outcome to forward to the Review Conference. Strong resistance from the US (on ban of transfer of weapons to non-State actors; measures that would constrain legal trade and legal manufacturing; and the imposition of domestic regulations or restrictions on civilian ownership and use of SALW) and a number of other countries held up negotiation on several issues.

In light of the adoption of just a few texts of an organizational nature to be handed over to the five-year review in June, Ambassador Rowe warned that there was “a long, long way to go” in combating the illicit small arms and light weapons scourge. He said that, from what he had seen in the past two weeks, delegations still did not realize the gravity of the problem or the urgency of the action that was required to defeat it. What had been achieved and what had not been achieved in this session should be measured against the human dimension of that danger. He hoped that when the Review Conference began in June that everyone would have that “yardstick” in the backs of their minds.

Rebecca Peters, Director of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), said, “It is tragic that the many progressive governments have not stood up to the minority of States preventing any further controls on the movement of guns around the world. The majority of countries have already put a lot of time and effort into protecting men, women and children from gun violence. If they allow this to happen at the next meeting in June, it will be a betrayal of the millions of people whose lives are blighted by guns.”

**Other Views**

On 12 January, intergovernmental groups, representatives of civil society and trade associations presented their views. A representative from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said that without a global regulatory framework, unscrupulous arms brokers could continue to facilitate illicit weapons transfers into conflict areas where persistent and grave violations of international humanitarian law occurred, by taking advantage of loopholes and inconsistencies in national and regional laws and control mechanisms. To be effective, efforts to prevent the illicit arms trade should include measures to regulate the activities of those who often orchestrated such transfers.

Expressing their hope that NGOs would be able to participate fully both in the PrepCom and the Review Conference, member organizations of IANSA made presentations covering Clusters I, II and III. In their

introductory statement, IANSA noted that NGOs lend a unique and necessary role by bringing expertise and diverse perspectives to the small arms process. Grassroots organizations encounter the devastating effects of small arms in their communities on a daily basis, and they are particularly skilled at highlighting the human element to this problem.

In their statement on sustainable development and small arms control, they called for a number of recommendations:

- States should prohibit transfers of SALW where their likely misuse would hinder the sustainable development in the recipient State or their neighbours.
- Armed violence reduction programmes should be fully integrated into development frameworks.
- International financial institutions should support the inclusion of armed violence reduction programmes in poverty reduction strategies.

Offering some insight on the issue from the “legal” brokering community, the representative of FAIR Trade Group, a trade association of firearms importers, expressed concern that the proposed efforts to combat illicit brokering would have too broad a scope and as a result have an unintentional negative impact on legitimate international trade. It must be kept in mind that most of the international trade in firearms was for the civilian hunting and sport shooting market, he stressed.

**Side Events**

Two meetings were held outside of the main conference—a breakfast meeting of governments who support the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and a lunchtime debate on international controls on the arms trade.

At both meetings, governments spoke on the need for action to reduce the easy availability of weapons. The Kenyan Government made a strong plea to the international community to address the supply of weapons that fuel conflicts and genocide in the East African region. A representative from the Chilean Government spoke passionately about the problem of arms in his country where one in every two households owns a gun.

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*The Control Arms Campaign is jointly run by Amnesty International, IANSA and Oxfam. More information is available online ([www.controlarms.org/index.htm](http://www.controlarms.org/index.htm)).*

•**ECOSOC**

Economic and Social Council, Substantive Session, 3 - 28 July, Geneva

•**Health**

World Health Organization (WHO) World Health Assembly, 59th session, 22 - 26 May, Geneva

General Assembly Comprehensive Review of and High-level Meeting on the Progress Achieved in Realizing the Targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, 31 May - 2 June, New York

•**Human Rights**

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 15 - 26 May, New York

Committee on the Rights of the Child, 42nd session, 15 May - 2 June,

Geneva Human Rights Council, 19 - 30 June, Geneva

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 69th session, 31 July - 18 August, Geneva

Commission on Human Rights, Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, Working Group on Indigenous Populations, 31 July - 4 August, Geneva

•**Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly**

Civil Society Hearings for the GA Comprehensive Review on the Progress

Achieved in Realizing the Targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, 31 May, New York

Informal Interactive Hearings with Civil Society and the Private Sector for the mid-term review of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001- 2010, 22 June, New York

Informal Interactive Hearings with Civil Society and the Private Sector for the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, 12 July, New York

•**Labour**

International Labour Organization (ILO), General Conference, 29 May - 15 June, Geneva

•**Small Arms and Light Weapons**

United Nations Conference to Review Progress made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in all its Aspects, 26 June - 7 July, New York

•**Women**

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, thirty-fifth session, 15 May- 2 June, New York

*NGLS is an inter-agency programme of the United Nations system that facilitates dialogue, cooperation and constructive engagement between NGOs and the UN system. The NGLS mission statement, endorsed by its then governing body, the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), states: "The Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) promotes dynamic partnerships between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. By providing information, advice, expertise and support services, NGLS is part of the UN's efforts to strengthen dialogue and win public support for economic and social development."*

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G U E S T E D I T O R I A L  
**SUPACHAI PANITCHPAKDI, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF UNCTAD**  
**UNCTAD – THE TASKS AHEAD**

*It has been over six months since I took over as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). My experience with the organization so far has reconfirmed my conviction that it has a key role to play in helping developing countries to overcome asymmetries in the international economic system and to integrate into the world economy in a way that will help them achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).*

*In the 42 years since its establishment, UNCTAD has worked towards this goal in a variety of ways, ranging from assisting developing countries in their trade negotiations to helping them modernize their customs procedures and providing them with software packages to manage their foreign debt. It further works to diversify the economies of countries that are dependent on the export of commodities and raw materials and helps countries to attract foreign direct investment and maximize its development gains. These and other actions make a real contribution to the development prospects of poor countries.*

*But if UNCTAD is to continue to fulfil its core mission and its responsibility to the developing countries, we must ensure that our assistance meets the real needs of these countries in the evolving world economy. We must make our work more effective, so as to produce more visible results on the ground. I am committed to doing both, and believe that UNCTAD should strengthen its work in two areas in particular.*

*The first is South-South cooperation. One of the most encouraging dynamics of the world economy today is that developing countries as a group are an increasingly important player in international trade. From a 24% share of world trade in 1990, by 2004 their share had risen to 33%. While the majority of their exports continue to go to the rich countries of the North, some 43% is destined for other developing countries. This South-South trade is expanding faster than any other trade flows – at about 11% per year. And it is the spectacular growth achieved by some large developing countries, particularly in Asia, that is allowing many smaller countries to benefit from increased exports of commodities and products that are in great demand in these growth centres. Similar trends are apparent in international investment flows.*

*What all this means is that developing countries stand to gain more than ever before from mutual cooperation. By lowering tariffs and other market access barriers among themselves, for example, they can expand their export opportunities. This can be a very useful complement to their efforts to achieve greater market access in the North, where progress is often slow. In addition, regional cooperation can make it easier for countries of the South to invest in much-needed infrastructure to facilitate trade – infrastructure that is often too costly to be borne by one country alone. Similarly, there is great scope for regulatory cooperation between developing countries to create viable transport linkages, such as paved roads, and to simplify customs procedures. In the coming months, UNCTAD will strengthen its programmes to boost South-South cooperation so that developing countries can benefit more fully from their new prominence.*

*A second highly promising area of our work involves science and technology. Unless developing countries acquire the capacities to make use of advanced science and technology and develop it further, they will be unable to produce higher value-added goods (such as electronics), which are also usually more profitable. While this area has long been sidelined in the development debate, economists are now rediscovering the crucial role played by science and technology in allowing developing countries to achieve the MDGs. There is also a need for greater coordination between the public and private sectors to better align research priorities with development needs. Until very recently, about 90% of research and development (R&D) spending on pharmaceuticals went to diseases that affect only 10% of the world population. For pharmaceutical companies, unfortunately it makes better economic sense to invest in developing anti-obesity drugs than in drugs to combat malaria, which kills one African child every 30 seconds.*

*This gap between the profit motive and the public good can be addressed by governments if they provide better incentives for R&D through tax breaks, grants and subsidies. Better policies are also needed to coordinate with the private sector, which often plays a prominent role in providing required new technological infrastructure, such as mobile telephony and Internet access. Science and technology further plays a substantial role in reconciling economic growth with environmental sustainability. Thus, developing countries have every reason to embed science and technology in their development strategy. UNCTAD can assist them in improving science education, building national innovation systems, strengthening links between the private sector and research institutes and designing appropriate incentives.*

*In these and other areas of our work, we intend to continue our dialogue with all stakeholders, including civil society, which has a lot of ideas on how UNCTAD can best deliver its products and contribute to development and prosperity.*