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UN UPDATE

HEARINGS FOR LDCs

Informal Interactive Hearings with Civil Society, NGOs and the Private Sector for the Midterm Comprehensive Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 were held at UN headquarters in New York on 22 June 2006, bringing together Member States and representatives of civil society and the private sector to review progress being made at the five-year point in the implementation of the 2001 Brussels Programme of Action (PoA), share best practices and lessons learned, and identify obstacles to the further implementation of the PoA in the lead-up to the intergovernmental Midterm Review in September (see Focus Page 19).

HEARINGS ON MIGRATION

On 12 July 2006, Informal Interactive Civil Society Hearings on international migration and development were held at New York headquarters, with civil society representatives calling on the United Nations and its Member States to work in a spirit of genuine cooperation with civil society to come up with a comprehensive, global and people-centred policy on migration and development, and to put the "migration puzzle" together, while keeping the human rights of migrants central in the debate (see Focus Page 18).

Ms. AL KHALIFA ELECTED GA PRESIDENT

On 8 June the General Assembly elected

Haya Rashed Al Khalifa of Bahrain as the President of its sixty-first session, which is scheduled to begin on 12 September 2006. Ms. Al Khalifa said that she would continue on the path that the Presidents of previous sessions had paved. In particular, she noted the great efforts of the current President, Jan Eliasson, to advance UN reform, and his achievements in international peace and security, as well as human rights. She also paid tribute to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, saluting his continuous work with Member States to eliminate fear, want and disease and to lay the foundations for reforming the Organization.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN LEBANON

The humanitarian crisis in southern Lebanon remains grave after more than four weeks of conflict. On 11 August, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1701, which called for a full cessation of hostilities in the month-long war between Israel and Hizbollah, and maps out a formula for the phased withdrawal of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) from southern Lebanon. Up to 15,000 United Nations peacekeepers will help Lebanese troops take control of the area. A ceasefire, guided by Security Council resolution 1701 and accepted by both sides, took effect on 14 August.

Responsibility for the management of the overall humanitarian response in Lebanon rests with the United Nations Humanitarian Emergency Coordinator, Jan Egeland. With the ceasefire in place, thousands of people in war-ravaged Lebanon have been moving back to their homes and several UN agencies are providing assistance while at the same time warning the people of the dangers of landmines and other unexploded ordnance. An estimated 10% of all shells, mortars and rockets fail to

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

UN Update		NGO Update	
<i>Hearings for LDCs</i>	1	<i>2006 Reality of Aid</i>	16
<i>Hearings on Migration</i>	1	<i>New Economics Foundation: Debt Relief</i>	17
<i>Ms. Al Khalifa Elected GA President</i>	1		
<i>Humanitarian Crisis in Lebanon</i>	1	Focus Pages	
<i>Advisory Committee on Genocide Prevention</i>	4	<i>Migration & Development: Informal Interactive Hearings</i>	18
<i>UNCTAD: LDC Report 2006</i>	4	<i>Informal Interactive Hearings for Least Developed Countries</i>	19
<i>DPI: Top Ten News Stories</i>	5	<i>ECOSOC High-Level Segment 2006: Decent Work For All</i>	22
<i>UNICEF: A Report Card on Nutrition</i>	6	<i>1st Session of the Human Rights Council: Building Dialogue and Cooperation</i>	24
<i>State of the World's Cities Report 2006/7</i>	6	<i>Inaugural Session of the Peacebuilding Commission: Supporting Countries Emerging from Conflict</i>	26
<i>UNODC: 2006 World Drug Report</i>	7	<i>CSD – 14 Focuses on Energy for Sustainable Development</i>	27
<i>FAO/WHO: Codex Alimentarius</i>	8	<i>95th International Labour Conference</i>	30
<i>FAO: Crop Prospects and Food Situation</i>	9	<i>59th Session of the World Health Assembly</i>	32
<i>Int'l Day of UN Peacekeepers</i>	10	<i>5th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues</i>	34
<i>Global Alliance for ICTs</i>	10	<i>World Urban Forum III: Creating Sustainable Cities</i>	36
		<i>2006 Review Conference for the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons</i>	38
UN/NGO Cooperation		<i>First Steps Towards the Implementation of WSIS</i>	40
<i>UNEP & IUCN: Report on Oceans and Seas</i>	11	<i>Social Forum 2006: The Role of Women in the Fight Against Poverty</i>	42
<i>Combating Sexual Violence</i>	13		
<i>UNFPA & ICM: Supporting Midwives</i>	13	Calendar	44
<i>Agrarian Reform & Rural Development</i>	14		
Other News			
<i>Migrants' Remittances</i>	15		

explode on impact and remain on the ground where only a slight movement can cause them to explode.

The UN Mine Action Response is being implemented through the activation of the UN Framework for Mine Action Planning and Rapid Response, also known as the "Rapid Response Plan (RRP)." Mine Action falls under the Protection Cluster, coordinated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) as the focal point for the mine action response, along with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as participating agencies.

Almost one million people have been internally displaced—more than one-fifth of the entire population of Lebanon. The International Office for Migration (IOM) has established a presence in southern Lebanon in order to facilitate access to both internally displaced people (IDPs) and to migrants still unable to flee the area. The UN is setting up humanitarian hubs in key locations to facilitate and speed up the distribution of aid. Five emergency mobile teams have been sent to the main transit routes by UNHCR and UN workers and are giving out water, blankets, mattresses and other desperately needed items while also trying to assess the peoples' needs and movements.

On 24 July 2006, the United Nations and its partner agencies launched a Flash Appeal for Lebanon for US\$165 million to cover an initial period of response of three months, which will be reviewed during the period of

the appeal. As of 21 August the appeal has been 54% funded, with contributions of more than US\$88.9 million and pledges worth US\$6.9 million received.

As the Logistics Cluster lead agency on behalf of the UN, the World Food Programme (WFP) has established supply routes into Lebanon by air, land and sea, providing free internal transport, storage, and handling of humanitarian commodities for UN and partner NGOs. In addition to the denials of concurrence of safety, the destruction of more than 140 bridges by the IDF and severe damage to roads has crippled WFP's efforts to organize overland transport of relief items.

Noting that economic and commercial activity would resume only after the ceasefire, Zlatan Milisic, WFP Emergency Coordinator in Lebanon, said, "While humanitarian efforts continue to be paramount, aid alone cannot keep the country going."

To help protect the health of women and their families, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is shipping supplies to enable pregnant women to deliver safely, equipment to help ensure safe blood supply in damaged or temporary health facilities, and hygiene kits for displaced women and their families living in temporary shelters. UNFPA is also deploying emergency health specialists to provide technical support and to assist in rapid assessments of longer-term health needs.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), insecurity and damaged infrastructure have interrupted the food supply chain in a country that relies on imports for around 90% of its cereal needs.

What little is produced on the ground is also likely to be affected because some of the crops are in areas where fighting is taking place. FAO had expected Lebanon's total cereal output to reach 145,000 tonnes this year, but said it would probably have to cut that forecast. "These factors combined provide the recipe for a major food crisis," said Henri Josserand, Chief of FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System.

Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has expressed grave concern over the environmental situation unfolding off the Lebanese coast as an oil slick, caused by the destruction of the Jiyeh power utility 30 kilometres south of Beirut, has leaked between 10,000-15,000 tonnes of oil affecting over 140 kilometres of the Lebanese coastline and has spread north into Syrian waters. UNEP has labelled this spill as serious as the 1989 Exxon-Valdez incident in Alaska, and the cost of the clean-up and environmental impact has been estimated to be more than US\$200 million.

An International Assistance Action Plan has been drawn up by experts under the supervision of the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea, jointly administered by UNEP and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). A high-level meeting to finalize the Action Plan was held in Piraeus (Greece) on 17 August to identify short, medium and long-term priorities. According to UNEP, the spill threatens marine species such as bluefin tuna and sea turtles.

While focused on the plight of Palestine refugees within its mandate, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has extended its support to those who need help within the wider Lebanese population by procuring food packages and household items for 10,000 displaced persons across Lebanon. In Saida, Tyre, Beirut and North Lebanon, UNRWA teams provided care for displaced persons who had taken refuge in UNRWA schools.

Further interventions by UNRWA are planned to address immediate health needs by providing emergency healthcare kits and funds to cover hospitalization costs as well as reparation of disrupted water supplies. An UNRWA staff member was killed during an Israeli air strike at the Ein el-Hilweh camp for refugees and IDPs on 14 August, only 90

minutes before the cessation of hostilities took effect.

UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) are providing emergency medicines and supplies as well as chlorine tablets in order to ensure safe drinking water and prevent water borne diseases. They are also ensuring distribution of fortified nutritional packs, micronutrients and oral rehydration solutions. WHO is conducting health assessments with national authorities to identify the most urgent health needs and gaps.

Speaking on 1 August, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, highlighted the difficulties faced in getting emergency aid to those most in need. "According to reports from our monitors on the ground, an estimated 177 children have been killed in Lebanon to date....The guns must stop firing to give all parties time to reflect on the impact of this war on children and to provide the space necessary for the formulation of a political framework to ensure a more permanent peace," she said. Ms. Coomaraswamy said that she plans to report to the Security Council's Working Group on children and armed conflict at the earliest opportunity.

Speaking also on 1 August, UNICEF's Special Representative in the occupied Palestinian territory, Dan Rohrmann, warned that the humanitarian crisis engulfing Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip is on the verge of being forgotten because of the situation in Lebanon, and children are suffering more than most. Gaza's children—estimated at more than 830,000—"are living in an environment of extraordinary violence, fear and anxiety," Mr. Rohrmann said after his visit to Gaza.

UNICEF announced it is stepping up its assistance in health, education, water and sanitation programmes, as well as counselling and activities for adolescents and younger children, across the Gaza Strip.

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Appointments

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has appointed Alicia Bárcena Ibarra of Mexico as his Chief de Cabinet at the Under-Secretary-General level with effect from 1 June 2006.

Since 1 May 2006, Ms. Bárcena Ibarra has served as Acting Chief de Cabinet. She joined the Executive Office of the Secretary-General on 1 February 2006 as Deputy Chief de Cabinet. She previously served as Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and actively promoted the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Previously, she was the Chief of the Environment and Human Settlements Division of ECLAC. Her career has focused on public policies for sustainable development with particular reference to the linkages between environment, economy and social issues. She focused her work on financing for sustainable development.

She previously served as Coordinator of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in charge of a global programme on environmental citizenship with emphasis on the participation of civil society, as well as adviser to the Latin American and Caribbean Sustainable Development Programme in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

She was the Founding Director of the Earth Council in Costa Rica until 1995. The Earth Council is a non-governmental organization in charge of the follow-up of the agreements reached in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992.

On 16 May UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced the appointment of Carolyn McAskie of Canada as Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support.

Ms. McAskie was appointed Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the UN Peacekeeping Operation in Burundi in June 2004. Her previous appointment (1999-2004) was Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator at the UN Secretariat in New York, serving as Emergency Relief Coordinator a.i., for the period 1999 to January 2001. Prior to her appointment with the United Nations, Ms. McAskie had a 30-year career with the Federal Government of Canada, in the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

Africa Day

"Every year, Africa Day offers an occasion to consider Africa's progress, assess its challenges and reflect on its tremendous unfulfilled potential.

"Africa is undergoing enormous political changes. Although destructive conflicts persist, their number has decreased and peaceful democratic governance has taken root in many countries.

"Together with a somewhat improved economic outlook, the continent saw higher inflows of official development assistance and much-needed debt relief. The Group of Eight developed nations pledged to double aid to Africa by US\$25 billion by 2010, while 18 of the most indebted countries have had almost 100 per cent of their external debt cancelled.

"The United Nations will continue to assist the African people as they build on this progress. A new Peacebuilding Commission, the Democracy Fund and Human Rights Council have improved the UN's ability to respond to Africa's agenda, as laid out by the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the African Union. Already, the UN and the AU are working together to strengthen African peacekeeping capacity, and pursue balanced development.

"Amidst the optimism, huge challenges remain. Continued violence in Darfur – despite the recent peace agreement – threatens millions of lives. The situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea remains a source of acute concern, while the conflict in northern Uganda prolongs one of the worst humanitarian tragedies in the world. At the same time, drought haunts the Horn of Africa and parts of southern Africa, and HIV/AIDS continues to inflict a terrible toll on the future of the African continent.

"On this Africa Day, let us renew our pledge to do all we can to help the African people address these issues. Working together, we can realize their vision of a peaceful, prosperous and democratic continent."

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message on Africa Day, observed 25 May

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ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON GENOCIDE PREVENTION

On 3 May, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed seven diverse experts, including Nobel Prize winner Desmond Tutu of South Africa and the former United Nations Force Commander in Rwanda, Romeo Dallaire (Canada), to provide support to his Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and to contribute to the broader efforts of the UN to prevent such massive crimes against humanity.

The Advisory Committee on Genocide Prevention, composed of senior personalities with backgrounds ranging from conflict prevention to human rights, peacekeeping, diplomacy and mediation, will be chaired by David Hamburg, President Emeritus of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and will meet at least twice during this year.

Mr. Annan named Juan Méndez the first Special Adviser on genocide prevention in July 2004 (see *Go Between 102*), with a mandate to collect existing information on massive and serious violations of human rights that could lead to genocide and to bring potential genocidal situations to the attention of the UN Security Council.

Among his activities, Mr. Méndez has made repeated visits to Darfur, resulting in varied recommendations to the Secretary-General and to the Security Council about what needs to be done in the strife-torn region.

On the 12-year commemoration of the Rwanda genocide, Mr. Mendez wrote an Op-Ed published by several European and Asian newspapers in which he stressed that despite international obligations – such as the 1948 Genocide Convention – the global response against genocide continues to fall short of what is required. "We cannot claim to have learned the lessons of the 1994 Rwandan genocide if our action in the face of genocidal violence remains half-hearted. Action is particularly needed in Darfur, where the threat of genocide continues to loom large," he wrote.

Other members of the Advisory Committee include:

- Monica Anderson, of the Department for International, Human Rights and Treaty Law of Sweden's Foreign Ministry;
- Zackari Ibrahim, former Foreign Minister of Nigeria;
- Gareth Evans, President of the International Crisis Group and former Foreign Minister of Australia;
- Roberto Garretón of Chile, former representative for the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Latin America and Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo;
- Sadako Ogata of Japan, former High Commissioner of Refugees, currently co-chair of the Commission on Human Security.

UNCTAD: LDC REPORT 2006

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has launched its *Least Developed Countries Report 2006: Developing Productive Capacities*, which this year focuses on building productive capacities, such as the ability to produce goods and services and the infrastructure and technical know-how for exporting them, in least developed countries (LDCs). The report notes that improving productive capacities promotes economic development and helps to improve the lives of the world's poorest populations.

At the same time, the report notes that in recent years, many LDCs have achieved higher rates of economic growth than in the past and even higher growth of exports and of foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows. However, this is not translating effectively into poverty reduction and improved human wellbeing. The sustainability of growth is fragile as it is highly dependent on trends in commodity prices, aid inflows, trade preferences and weather conditions.

The report also focuses on the need to ensure that aid sent to LDCs ultimately contributes to creating enterprises that can generate employment for citizens of these countries who are leaving rural areas for cities. Without more productive jobs in LDCs, the report states that there will be no foreseeable end to immigration from these countries to the industrialized nations of Europe and North America.

The *Least Developed Countries Report 2006* takes a broad approach to analyzing

the problems faced by LDCs—linking these to wider development issues such as aid effectiveness, poverty reduction and the provision of global public goods. It also reviews progress that has been made towards meeting the objectives of the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries held in Brussels in May of 2001 (see *NGLS Roundup 75*). These analyses will help form the basis of discussions to be held in New York in September as part of the mid-term review of the Programme of Action adopted at the Brussels Conference (see also Focus Page 19 on the Interactive Informal Hearings with Civil Society).

Defining productive capacities as "the productive resources, entrepreneurial capabilities and production linkages which together determine the capacity of a country to produce goods and services and enable it to grow and develop," the report shows that the core processes through which productive capacities develop—capital accumulation, technological progress and structural change—have been very weak in most LDCs. As a result, labour productivity is low and there is widespread underemployment. This is the basic cause of persistent mass poverty in the LDCs.

The report calls for a paradigm shift from a consumption- and exchange-oriented approach to poverty reduction towards a production- and employment-oriented approach. It analyzes three basic constraints on the development of productive capacities in the LDCs—poor physical infrastructure; weaknesses of the domestic private sector and supporting financial systems and knowledge systems; and insufficient demand and thus underutilization of domestic resources and capabilities as well as weak incentives to invest and innovate—and it identifies some key policy priorities to overcome these constraints, including the mobilization of underutilized domestic potentials and a re-balancing of the sectoral allocation of aid.

Least Developed Countries Report 2006 is available online (www.unctad.org/Templates/webflyer.asp?docid=7011&intl=mlD=3881&lang=1&mode=downloads).

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DPI: TOP TEN NEWS STORIES

The United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) has unveiled a new list of "Ten Stories the World Should Hear More About" for 2006. "The media and the UN share an interest in getting information about what is happening in our world to the public," Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, said. "But journalists are often inundated with stories, all competing for their—and the public's—attention. Our aim is to make it easier for them to see that important issues do not fade from the headlines."

The initiative, first launched in 2004, is not meant to be representative of the UN's agenda. As in previous years, the 2006 list covers a spectrum of issues and geographical regions, some of which draw on troubling humanitarian emergencies and conflict situations (such as the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nepal) while others focus on such vital areas as human rights (asylum law and child prisoners) and development (Liberia and water as a shared resource).

While the stories are enumerated from one to ten, their ranking is not a reflection of their relative significance. In this year's list, some stories focus on conflicts that may have been in the media spotlight—but highlight a perspective that does not usually get much play. Although DPI takes responsibility for the final list, it was arrived at following extensive consultation with UN departments, field offices and programmes.

The top ten stories include Liberia: Development challenges top agenda as the nation recovers from years of civil strife; Lost in migration: Asylum seekers face challenges amid efforts to stem flows of illegal migrants; DR of Congo: As the country moves boldly towards historic vote, humanitarian concerns continue to demand attention; Nepal's hidden tragedy: Children caught in the conflict; Somalia: Security vacuum compounding effects of drought; Protracted refugee situations: Millions caught in limbo, with no solutions in sight; South Asian earthquake: Relief effort saves lives, stems losses, but reconstruction tasks loom large; Behind bars, beyond justice: An untold story of children in conflict with the law; From water wars to bridges of cooperation: Exploring the peacebuilding

Appointments

A number of senior appointments have been made at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Maria Francisca Ize-Charrin (Mexico) has been appointed Director of the Operations, Programmes and Research Division. Bacre Waly Ndiaye (Senegal) has been appointed Director of the Human Rights Procedures Division. Mr. Ndiaye previously served as the Director of the New York Office and will be temporarily replaced by Craig Mokhiber. Kyle Ward (US) has been appointed as Chief of the Programme Support and Management Services.

OHCHR: Handbook for NGOs

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has launched a new handbook entitled *Working with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: A Handbook for NGOs*.

The Handbook responds to a widespread need for information and guidance amongst civil society partners on OHCHR work. It aims to provide NGOs with a comprehensive and practical guide to the work of OHCHR, including key information on human rights mechanisms, entry points for NGOs and contact details with a view to assisting NGOs in identifying areas of possible cooperation and partnership with OHCHR. In addition, it can provide valuable information to OHCHR staff in guiding their interactions with NGOs.

Each chapter discusses relevant mechanisms, tools or programmes which NGOs may want to access or utilize, with information on how NGOs can have access and work with these different tools. Wherever possible, active links to the OHCHR website are provided for further information, allowing for regular electronic updates to accompany this framework text.

Efforts are currently underway to ensure the translation of the Handbook into other UN languages and to have it printed in 2007. It is available online (www.ohchr.org/english/about/ngohandbook.htm).

Day of Families

"The theme for this year's International Day of Families, 'Changing Families: Challenges and Opportunities,' highlights the profound transformations which this basic unit of society has been undergoing in recent years. The average family size has decreased all over the world; young people are getting married at a later age; the average age of mothers at first birth has increased; infant mortality rates have declined; and couples are having fewer children. The traditional, extended family is being replaced by the nuclear family, even as grandparents are living longer and several family generations are living side by side. Alternative forms of union have grown more common, such as unmarried cohabitation, or marriages of migrant workers not living in the same city or country as their spouses. Divorce has increased, accompanied by remarriage, with more and more children living in a family with a step-parent. Significant numbers of both single-parent families and single-person households have emerged, including a rising number of older persons living alone. And the HIV/AIDS pandemic is wreaking havoc on families, often depriving children of their parents, leaving grandparents to care for children.

"Many of these transformations call into question the structure of society as we know it. They require us to work together to adapt, to shape public policy in a way that addresses the needs of families, to ensure that basic services such as education and health are provided to all citizens – especially children – irrespective of their family situation.

"During this time of ongoing change, we need to build an environment that sustains and supports families, while reinforcing the opportunities for fulfilment that a positive family life provides. On this International Day, let us rededicate ourselves to that mission."

–UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message for the International Day of Families, observed 15 May

potential of a shared resource; and Côte d'Ivoire: A strike away from igniting violence amidst a faltering peace process.

The stories are available online (www.un.org/events/tenstories).

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UNICEF: A REPORT CARD ON NUTRITION

More than a quarter of all children under five in developing countries are underweight, many to a life-threatening degree with poor nutrition contributing to about 5.6 million child deaths each year, yet some remedies, such as providing vitamin A, cost just a few cents, according to a report released by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

"Few things have more impact than nutrition on a child's ability to survive, learn effectively and escape a life of poverty," UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman said at the release of the study *Progress for Children: A Report Card on Nutrition*.

"One underweight and undernourished child is an individual tragedy," she said. "But multiplied by tens of millions, under-nutrition becomes a global threat to society and to the economy."

Progress for Children: A Report Card on Nutrition calls for the urgent establishment of a nutrition "safety net" as a central component of national policies to guarantee access to remedies, ranging from vitamin A capsules and iron and iodine supplements to eliminating unsafe feeding practices.

The report notes that the rate of underweight children under five has fallen only slightly since 1990—proof that the world is failing children and still far off track for achieving the UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by 2015, which entails halving the proportion of children who are underweight for their age.

Despite progress in some countries, developing-world averages have dropped just five percentage points in the last 15 years.

Today, 27% of children in developing countries are underweight, around 146 million. Nearly three quarters of these live in just ten countries, and over half in just three countries: Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

The report shows only two regions of the world on track for reducing the prevalence of underweight children: Latin America and the Caribbean, and the East Asia and Pacific region, with rates of 7% and 15% respectively. Progress in East Asia largely has been due to the great leaps taken by China in reducing the rate by an average of 6.7% per year since 1990.

Because the roots of under-nutrition lie in poverty, lack of education and inequality, fighting back will take more than food deliveries, the report says. Unsafe feeding practices and repeated bouts of illness such as diarrhoea and malaria are all major factors depriving children of nutrients.

The report notes that solutions can be as simple as a capsule of vitamin A costing just a few cents delivered during immunization—a programme currently saving around 350,000 lives per year by boosting immune systems. Fortifying staple foods with key nutrients like iron and iodine is a proven way to protect millions of children against damaging deficiencies and developmental delays.

The report is available online (www.unicef.org/publications/index_33685.html).

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STATE OF THE WORLD'S CITIES REPORT 2006/7

A report by the United Nations Programme for Human Settlements (UN-HABITAT), *State of the World's Cities Report 2006/7*, finds that the urban poor suffer from an urban penalty: slum dwellers in developing countries are as badly off if not worse off than their rural relatives.

The report finds that the world's one billion slum dwellers are more likely to die earlier, experience more hunger and disease, attain less education and have fewer chances of employment than those urban residents

that do not reside in a slum. "For a long time, we suspected that the optimistic picture of cities did not reflect the reality on the ground," Anna Tibaijuka, UN-HABITAT's Executive Director, said. "This report provides concrete evidence that there are two cities within one city—one part of the urban population that has all the benefits of urban living, and the other part, the slums and squatter settlements, where the poor often live under worse conditions than their rural relatives. It is time that donor agencies and national governments recognized the urban penalty and specifically targeted additional resources to improve the living conditions of slum dwellers."

The report shows remarkable similarities between slums and rural areas in health, education, employment and mortality. Likewise, it shows how in countries such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Haiti and India, child malnutrition in slums is comparable to that of rural areas. In many sub-Saharan African cities, children living in slums are more likely to die from water-borne and respiratory illnesses than rural children. Women living in slums are also more likely to contract HIV/AIDS than their rural counterparts.

For example, in Ethiopia, child malnutrition in slums and rural areas is 47% and 49% respectively, compared with 27% in non-slum urban areas. In Brazil and Cote d'Ivoire, child malnutrition is three to four times higher in slums than in non-slum areas. In most sub-Saharan African countries, HIV prevalence is higher in urban areas than in rural areas; in Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia HIV prevalence among urban populations is almost twice that of rural populations. In all countries, women and slum dwellers are disproportionately affected, reflecting a general trend in the region.

The report notes that in 2007, for the first time in history, the world's urban population will exceed the rural population. Most of the world's urban growth – 95% – in the next two decades will be absorbed by cities of the developing world, which are least equipped to deal with rapid urbanization. The majority of migrants will be moving to small towns and cities of less than one million inhabitants. Already, more than half of the world's urban population lives in cities of fewer than 500,000 inhabitants, and almost one-fifth lives in cities of between one and five million inhabitants.

As cities grow, so do their slum populations. In many sub-Saharan African cities, the slum population accounts for over 70% of the urban population. Slums in Southern Asia, Western Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa are growing as fast as the urban population in general. Annual slum and urban growth rates are highest in sub-Saharan Africa, 4.53% and 4.58%, respectively, nearly twice those of Southern Asia, where slum and urban growth rates are 2.2% and 2.89%, respectively.

Northern Africa is the only region in the developing world where slum growth rates have declined significantly, largely due to the efforts of individual governments to upgrade slums or prevent their formation. Globally, the slum population is set to grow at the rate of 27 million per year in the period 2000-2020.

State of the World's Cities Report 2006/7 was launched in Vancouver during the Third Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF-III, see Focus Page 36).

It is available online (www.unhabitat.org/mediacentre/sowckit2006_7.asp).

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UNODC: 2006 WORLD DRUG REPORT

According to a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), cocaine consumption in western Europe is reaching alarming levels while opium production in Afghanistan could rise again this year despite a decline in 2005.

UNODC's 2006 *World Drug Report* finds that global opium production fell 5% in 2005 while cocaine production was broadly stable. Seizures of both drugs, especially cocaine, reached record highs. Consumption of cannabis, the most widely used illicit drug, continued to increase while the market for amphetamine-type stimulants stabilized. Africa is growing in importance for transshipments of cocaine and heroin to Europe, the report notes.

UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria

UNODC Kidnapping Handbook

To protect the estimated 10,000 people kidnapped throughout the world every year, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has launched a manual to help States handle the problem, which often results in the death of victims.

UNODC developed the manual to give police officers and policy-makers concrete guidelines on how to respond to kidnappings, building on the contributions of experts from 16 countries and the financial support of the Government of Colombia, where kidnapping of civilians has often been rampant during a long civil conflict.

Identifying different types of kidnapping, including kidnapping for extortion as well as political or ideological purposes, it advises governments on drawing up effective legislation, preventive measures and contingency plans. It also provides practical guidance for senior police investigators, covering subjects such as negotiation, surveillance and intervention options.

UNODC said it has developed a course based on the manual to train experts for countries of the Caribbean and more such training is also planned for Latin America this year.

New UN Member

On 22 June the Security Council recommended to the General Assembly that the Republic of Montenegro be admitted as a Member of the United Nations, adopting resolution 1691 (2006) unanimously.

In a statement read out during a formal meeting by Per Stig Møller, Foreign Minister of Denmark, which holds the Security Council's presidency for the month of June, the 15-nation body noted with great satisfaction the Republic of Montenegro's solemn commitment to uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter and to fulfil all the obligations therein.

UN Committee on Atomic Radiation

"For the past 50 years, the UN Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) has fulfilled effectively and without fanfare the important mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

"The commemoration of this anniversary brings with it a potent reminder of the importance of that work, since it corresponds with the twentieth anniversary of the tragic accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. Not only did it cause contamination across these countries, it caused fear around the world. It also brought home a key point: radiation is silent; we cannot see, smell or touch it.

"Most people's impression of radiation is shaped by their concern about nuclear weapons, augmented by fear of cancer and hereditary damage. In order to gauge radiation levels and protect people, we need dependable scientific information, honestly assessed by the finest expertise. It is precisely in this respect that UNSCEAR has proved its worth.

"For half a century, UNSCEAR has been the trusted world authority on ionizing radiation. From assessing the significance of fallout from nuclear-weapon tests in the 1950s, to studying the effects of radiation on the human genome today, UNSCEAR has always taken an independent and objective approach to its work. On questions that are often highly emotional and political, UNSCEAR's reports are impartial, dispassionate and scientific, and have prompted significant worldwide reductions in radiation exposure.

"We live in a nuclear world, with important nuclear applications in science, medicine and the power industry, but also, regrettably, with the threat of nuclear and radiological weapons. To make sensible decisions on these issues, we have to understand the effects of atomic radiation. UNSCEAR's work will also be essential in meeting the environmental challenges associated with nuclear power."

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message on the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, 30 May

Costa said trends in the global drugs market were moving in the right direction but governments needed to step up their efforts to reduce both supply and demand. "Humanity has entered the 21st century with much lower levels of drug cultivation and drug addiction than 100 years earlier. Even more importantly, in the past few years, worldwide efforts to reduce the threat posed by illicit drugs have halted a quarter-century-long rise in drug abuse that, if left unchecked, could have become a global pandemic," he stressed.

Laos, which until the mid-1990s was the third largest illicit opium producer in the world, slashed opium cultivation by 72% in 2005 and is on the verge of becoming opium-free. "Laos has made spectacular progress which has not received the attention it deserves," Mr. Costa said, while highlighting three key weaknesses in the global drug control situation: heroin supply in Afghanistan, cocaine demand in Europe and cannabis supply/demand everywhere.

In Afghanistan, the world's largest opium producer, the area under opium poppy cultivation fell 21% to 104,000 hectares in 2005, the first such decline since 2001. "Afghanistan's drug situation remains vulnerable to reversal because of mass poverty, lack of security and the fact that the authorities have inadequate control over its territory," Mr. Costa warned. "This could happen as early as 2006 despite large-scale eradication of opium crops this spring."

Some encouraging trends were noted on the coca/cocaine market. Coca cultivation and cocaine production were broadly stable while seizures of cocaine rose to new highs. Global cocaine use declined slightly. Colombia accounts for 54% of coca cultivation globally, followed by Peru (30%) and Bolivia (16%). Most cocaine continues to be used in the Americas, particularly North America, which accounts, with 6.5 million users, for almost half the global cocaine market, the report notes.

After years of increases in the 1990s, the market for amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) is stabilizing, reflecting improved law enforcement and better precursor control. Some 25 million people used amphetamines at least once in 2004, while some ten million used ecstasy. Total ATS production was estimated at 480 tonnes in 2004, which is lower than the peak in 2000. The 2006 World Drug Report devotes

special attention to cannabis, the world's most abused illicit drug. Cannabis was used by an estimated 162 million people at least once in 2004, equivalent to some 4% of the global population age 15-64, and consumption continued to increase.

Mr. Costas warned that cannabis was now considerably more potent than a few decades ago and said it was a mistake to dismiss it as a "soft" and relatively harmless drug. Evidence that cannabis use can cause serious mental illness is mounting. "Today, the harmful characteristics of cannabis are no longer that different from those of other plant-based drugs such as cocaine and heroin," Mr. Costa stressed.

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FAO/WHO: CODEX ALIMENTARIUS

The Codex Alimentarius Commission, a joint initiative of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), ended its latest session on 7 July 2006 by adopting new standards on the maximum allowable levels of a number of key contaminants and food additives in order to protect the health of consumers.

The standards set the maximum allowable amounts of contaminants such as lead and cadmium in certain foods. Lead can cause a wide range of disorders, including anaemia and hepatic and neurological disorders and food can be a major route of exposure. Cadmium can provoke kidney damage after long periods of exposure.

The newly adopted codes of practice will aim to provide guidance to governments on how to prevent and reduce dioxins and aflatoxins in food. Aflatoxins cause liver cancer and dioxins and dioxin-like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are both highly toxic as well as carcinogenic.

New codes of practice for reducing aflatoxin contamination in Brazil nuts, and dioxin and dioxin-like PCB contamination in food and feed will help countries take measures to

protect consumers from exposure to these substances.

Codex also created a Task Force to address the issue of antimicrobial resistance in food of animal origin. The Task Force will have a mandate to develop risk assessment policies and strategies to reduce food safety risks associated with certain uses of antimicrobials in animal production, including aquaculture.

The Commission also addressed several organizational issues during its session. It split the existing Codex Committee on Food Additives and Contaminants because of its large workload and created two new specialized committees, the Codex Committee on Food Additives and the Codex Committee on Contaminants in Food.

China was designated by the membership as host of the Food Additives Committee, and also of the Committee on Pesticide Residues, while the Netherlands was designated as host to the Committee on Contaminants in Food.

The Commission presently meets once a year to review and eventually adopt international food standards, guidelines and recommendations developed by its network of 21 specialist committees that address technical issues associated with these texts. It meets in alternate years in Rome and Geneva.

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FAO: CROP PROSPECTS AND FOOD SITUATION

According to the latest forecast of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), world cereal stocks are expected to decline sharply in 2006, due to a slight decrease in global cereal output and significant growth in utilization.

FAO's *Crop Prospects and Food Situation* report finds that international prices of most

cereals remained firm or rose further in recent months, supported by strong demand and tighter supply prospects. Increased demand is expected to be driven by a recovery in feed use due to a rebound in poultry consumption. In addition, the growing demand for ethanol is likely to boost industrial use of coarse grains, particularly maize, the report said.

While down about 1% from 2005 levels, world cereal output for 2006, forecast at 2,020 million tonnes, would still be the third highest on record and above the five-year average, the report said.

Many countries are experiencing severe food difficulties and require external assistance, however, despite what the report called a "generally satisfactory global food outlook."

Despite improved rains in eastern Africa, emergency food assistance continues to be needed in pastoral areas of the Horn that were severely affected by drought in 2005. In Kenya, prospects for the current main cereal crop are favourable, but in Somalia, the outlook is poor and output is expected to be reduced for the third consecutive year.

In southern Africa, much improved coarse grain harvests were gathered in most countries affected by drought last year, and total import requirements will be sharply reduced. However, output dropped sharply in South Africa, reflecting a large reduction in plantings, and in Angola due to drought in major producing areas.

In Zimbabwe, despite a significant recovery from last year, maize production remains well below requirements. In addition, continuing hyperinflation has left millions of vulnerable people without access to food.

In Asia, bumper wheat crops were gathered in many countries. Early prospects for the main coarse grain and rice crops are generally favourable, following the timely arrival of the monsoon in the main producing areas. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, however, is still facing a large cereal deficit and chronic food insecurity is likely to remain widespread, the report cautions.

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New Wetland Sites

The Ramsar Secretariat has announced that two new wetlands sites have been designated. The Romanian Ministry of Environment and Waters Management designated Lake Techirghiol as that Party's fifth Ramsar site, effective 23 March 2006. The site provides an important roosting place for waterfowl, especially geese and ducks, and its reed beds offer ideal breeding grounds for many bird species. A management plan is expected to be completed in 2006. Meanwhile, Belarus designated its eighth Wetland of International Importance, effective 18 October 2005. Prostyr, a national landscape reserve and important bird area, is located along the banks and floodplain meadows between the rivers Pripyat, Prostyr and Styr, continuing as a transboundary wetland across the Ukrainian border. It is a breeding ground of the globally endangered Aquatic Warbler and an important nesting site during the migration season.

The Secretary-General of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, Peter Bridgewater, signed a memorandum of cooperation (MOC) with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) during his visit to Samoa from 10-11 May 2006. In the three-year long MOC, the two secretariats agree to a number of joint collaborative activities aimed at promoting and strengthening the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources in the Pacific Islands region.

Appointments

The Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Jacques Diouf, has announced senior appointments at FAO. Alexander Muller (Germany) has been appointed Head of the Sustainable Development Department. José Francisco Graziano da Silva (Brazil) is the new Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, based in Santiago (Chile). Jan Erik Heino (Finland) has been appointed the new Head of the Forestry Department.

Security Council

The Security Council has extended, for a period of two years, until 27 April 2008, the mandate of the 1540 Committee established under resolution 1540 (2004), the first international instrument adopted by the Council dealing with weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery and related materials in an integrated and comprehensive manner.

Unanimously adopting on 27 April 2006 resolution 1673 (2006), and acting under Chapter VII of the Charter, the Council also decided that the Committee should intensify its efforts to promote the full implementation by all States of resolution 1540, which required States to refrain from supporting, by any means, non-State actors that attempt to acquire, use or transfer nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their delivery systems.

INT'L DAY OF UN PEACEKEEPERS

On 29 May the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers was observed. Below is UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message for the International Day.

"When the United Nations Security Council established the first peacekeeping mission on this date in 1948, few in the Council chamber could have imagined how far UN peacekeeping would evolve since that time. The days of lightly armed peacekeepers conducting foot patrols along ceasefire lines between sovereign States are long over. United Nations peacekeeping operations are now increasingly complex and multi-dimensional, going beyond monitoring a ceasefire to actually bringing failed States back to life, often after decades of conflict. The 'Blue Helmets' and their civilian colleagues work together to organize elections, enact police and judicial reform, promote and protect human rights, conduct mine-clearance, advance gender equality, achieve the voluntary disarmament of former combatants, and support the return of refugees and displaced people to their homes. In the past year in particular, United Nations police have taken on an increasingly vital role, filling the gap between the role of United Nations military forces and local security institutions that are unable to fully maintain public order in often tense post-conflict environments.

"This invaluable work does not come without risk. More peacekeepers died in the service of the United Nations in 2005 than in any other year in the past decade, with 124 peacekeepers from 46 countries losing their lives to violence, disease and accidents. A further 32 have fallen in the line of duty so far in 2006, including eight Guatemalan soldiers who died while striving to bring peace to the troubled eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Moreover, the number of peacekeepers exposed to risk has increased exponentially, and continues to grow. More than 72,000 uniformed personnel and 15,000 civilians now serve in 18 peace operations administered by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, making the United Nations the largest multilateral contributor to post-conflict stabilization worldwide.

"The demand for United Nations peacekeeping reflects growing confidence in the Organization's ability to calm tensions

and restore stability. This, in turn, is being matched by support from Member States. One hundred eight countries now contribute uniformed personnel, including a 71-nation Mission in the Sudan—the most diverse coalition ever assembled. The leading contributors, by far, are India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, which collectively provide more than 40% of United Nations peacekeepers—and, as a result, have also suffered some of the highest losses.

"With peacekeeping having become a core function of the Organization, and with a greater number of staff joining the many already serving in dangerous field locations, it is essential that they receive more professional and responsive institutional support. We are determined to achieve this through critical management and oversight reforms, and through strict enforcement of the highest standards of conduct and of the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. We are also asking Member States and troop contributors to match our resolve on this critical issue.

"The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission is another important step forward. Through sustained attention to the unique challenges of post-conflict transitions, the Commission will aim to prevent countries from lapsing back into conflict—something we have seen too often, and which has required United Nations peacekeepers to return to countries where peace did not take hold.

"On this International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, let us pay tribute to the men and women from countries across the world who serve selflessly, tirelessly and fearlessly in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Let us remember the heroes who have laid down their lives in lands far from their own in the service of peace. And let us reaffirm our commitment to building a world free from the scourge of war," Mr. Annan concluded.

See also Focus Page 26 on the Peacebuilding Commission.

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR ICTs

The Global Alliance for Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Development, an initiative of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to help promote the

effective use of ICT for development, has announced the members of its Steering Committee and Strategic Council for the first year.

The Steering Committee, which will provide the Alliance with executive oversight and guidance, is chaired by Craig Barrett, Chairman of the Board of Intel Corporation and the Steering Committee will comprise Walter Fust, Director General, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (government); Datuk Seri Jamaludin Jarjis, Malaysia's Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation (government); Guy Sebban, Secretary-General, International Chamber of Commerce (business); Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Chairman, Talal Abu-Ghazaleh & Co. (business); Titi Akinsanmi, Global Teenager Project, SchoolNet Africa (civil society); Renate Bloem, President, Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (civil society); Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary-General, International Telecommunication Union (international organizations); John Bernander, Director General, Norwegian Broadcasting (media); and Luis Alberto Moreno, President, Inter-American Development Bank (international organizations).

Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs José Antonio Ocampo and Sarbuland Khan, Executive Coordinator of the Secretariat of the Global Alliance and Director of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, are ex-officio members.

The Strategy Council, which aims to provide overall guidance and priority setting, is composed of governments, the private and non-profit sectors, civil society and international organizations. Members of the Strategy Council from the private and non-profit sectors are John Chambers, Chairman,

CISCO (alternate: Art Reilly); Guy-Olivier Segond, President, Digital Solidarity Fund; Michael Nelson, Programme Director, Internet Technology, IBM; Asadullah Shah, Chairman, International Commission on Workforce Development, Pakistan; Khalid Juffali, Vice Chairman, E.A. Juffali and Brothers Co., Saudi Arabia; Pamela Passman, Vice President of Global Corporate Affairs, Microsoft; Eisa al-Eisa, Managing Director/CEO, SAMBA Financial Group; Thomas Ganswindt, President/CEO, Siemens (alternate: Peter Hellmonds); Carlo Ottaviani, President, STMicroelectronics Foundation (alternate: Elena Pistorio); and Anne Cobb, President, Visa International CEMEA.

Council members from civil society include Kamel Ayadi, President, World Federation of Engineering Associations, Tunisia; Rodrigo Baggio, Executive Director, Committee for Democracy in Information Technology, Brazil; Peter Bruck, President, World Summit Award, Austria; Astrid Dufborg, Executive Director, Global E-schools and Communities Initiative (GeSCI); Hiroshi Kawamura, Daisy Consortium, Japan; Janet Langmore, President, Digital Opportunity Trust, Canada; Tracey Naughton, Chair, WSIS Civil Society Media Caucus; Bazlur Rahman, CEO, NGOs Network for Radio and Communication, Bangladesh; Lynn St. Amour, President/CEO, Internet Society; and Lynn M. Wanyeki, Executive Director, African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET), Kenya.

The Council also comprises 30 governments and ten international organizations.

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UN/NGO COOPERATION

UNEP & IUCN: REPORT ON OCEANS AND SEAS

According to a report by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN), swift and wide ranging actions are needed to conserve the world's entire marine

environment amid fears that humankind's exploitation of the deep seas and open oceans is rapidly passing the point of no return.

The report, entitled *Ecosystems and Biodiversity in Deep Waters and High Seas*, argues that the many lessons learnt on

Day for Biological Diversity

"Biodiversity permeates the entire spectrum of mankind's activity and habitation, and is directly linked to the wellbeing of our planet and long-term human progress.

"Yet this vital pillar of life is under relentless attack. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, a four-year undertaking by more than 1,300 scientists, provides clear evidence of the damage being done to our world: Earth's environment has changed tremendously in the last half century. The findings point to the need for decisive action to protect our planet.

"This year's observance, Protect Biodiversity in Drylands, highlights an area in particular need of urgent attention. The degradation of drylands—which constitute 40% of the planet's land surface—is having dramatic effects: some 2,300 species endangered or facing extinction, significant losses in agricultural output, and an economic cost estimated at more than US\$42 billion a year.

Indeed, significant steps to preserve drylands will help determine whether we will achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

"One such step is the need to reverse desertification, a process which not only exacerbates poverty, but is also partly caused by it. This year's biodiversity commemoration coincides with the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. These two complementary observances illustrate the strong links between environmental issues, and highlight the need for a comprehensive and global approach to address these concerns.

"On this International Day for Biological Diversity, let us resolve to do more to protect the biodiversity on which our planet depends. Let us commit ourselves to safeguarding our drylands, and let us work together to achieve the goal of a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss by the year 2010."

—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message on the International Day for Biological Diversity, 22 May

Appointments

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has appointed Jorge Sampaio, the former President of Portugal, as his first Special Envoy to Stop Tuberculosis (TB). Mr. Sampaio, whose appointment was effective 15 May 2006, will work to build heightened awareness of the disease, with the immediate task of encouraging world leaders to strengthen their commitment to tuberculosis control, and to work to reach the Millennium Development Goal of halting and beginning to reverse the incidence of the disease by 2015.

Some 5,000 people die of tuberculosis every day, and more than eight million new cases are detected annually. Mr. Sampaio will lead the call for countries to fund fully and implement the Global Plan to Stop TB 2006-2015, which was launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) earlier this year. The Plan sets out actions required to treat and cure 50 million TB patients, and save 14 million lives.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has also announced the appointment of Jan Mattsson of Sweden as Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), at the Assistant Secretary-General level, effective 12 June 2006.

Mr. Mattsson has served as Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Bureau of Management of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), where he has been a leader of change management and reform. He has also played a leadership role in the High-Level Committee on Management and in the UNDG Management Group.

conserving coastal waters should be adapted and applied right across the marine realm, including in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Achim Steiner, UNEP's Executive Director and until recently IUCN's Director General, said, "Humankind's ability to exploit the deep oceans and high seas has accelerated rapidly over recent years. It is a pace of change that has outstripped our institutions and conservation efforts whose primary focus have been coastal waters where, until recently, most human activity like fishing and industrial exploration took place. We now most urgently need to look beyond the horizon and bring the lessons learnt in coastal water to the wider marine world."

"Well over 60% of the marine world and its rich biodiversity, found beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, is vulnerable and at increasing risk. Governments must urgently develop the guidelines, rules and actions needed to bridge this gulf. Otherwise we stand to lose and to irrevocably damage unique wildlife and critical ecosystems many of which moderate our very existence on the planet," said Ibrahim Thiaw, Acting Director General of IUCN.

With more than 90% of the planet's living biomass—the weight of life—found in the oceans, the report underlines the value of the deep seas and open oceans and highlights how science is only now just getting to grips with the wealth of life, natural resources and ecosystems existing in the marine world. Less than 10% of the oceans have been explored [90% of the oceans remain unexplored] with only one millionth of the deep sea floor having been subject to biological investigations.

The report, launched at the UN Open-ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (UNICPOLOS) which feeds into the UN General Assembly, also highlights the way fisheries, pollution and other stresses such as those arising from global climate change are impacting and affecting the marine world.

"Throughout the oceans, shipping, military operations and seismic exploration have intensified with growing impacts on deep water and high sea ecosystems and biodiversity. The spectre of climate change and its impacts such as ocean warming and acidification underscore the need to reduce direct human impacts, because healthy

ecosystems are better able to respond to changing oceanic conditions," the report's author, Kristina M. Gjerde, High Seas Policy Advisor to IUCN's Global Marine Programme, said.

The report outlines a number of options for the conservation and sustainable management of the deep seas and open oceans, including actions and measures that reflect an integrated approach to oceans management based on "ecological boundaries" rather than just political ones, giving higher levels of protection to vulnerable species like deep sea fish as well as to biologically and ecologically significant ecosystems such as cold water corals and hydrothermal vent communities.

Other steps include the creation of a "precautionary system of marine protected areas" along with improved impact assessments that reflect the full range of possible human activities across the total marine environment. Both approaches are vital to conserve valuable marine biodiversity and to save poorly studied or understood species.

The report also notes that half (52%) of the global fish stocks are fully exploited, and overexploited and depleted species have increased from about 10% in the mid 1970s to 24% in 2002. Around 3.5 million fishing boats use the world's ocean, and 1% of these are classified as large, industrial vessels, which have the capacity to take around 60% of all the fish caught globally. The worldwide value of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) catches is estimated between US\$4.9-9.5 billion. Up to 30% of IUU fishing (US\$1.2 billion) occurs beyond national jurisdiction.

The report is available online (www.unep.org/regionalseas) and (www.iucn.org/themes/marine/index.htm).

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COMBATING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

On 19 June, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other UN organizations and civil society groups announced a joint partnership to tackle sexual violence in conflict and crisis situations around the world that will address not only the threat that sexual violence poses to life and livelihood of survivors, but also the longer-term impact on community and national development.

The joint partnership will build on and strengthen existing collaboration within the UN on the issue, including guidelines developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the primary mechanism for interagency coordination of humanitarian assistance, that brings UN and non-UN humanitarian partners together, as well as the lessons and experience derived from the UN Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women, which UNIFEM manages.

The initiative will be the first to combat gender-based violence that includes joint UN and civil society governing structures and resource mobilization processes. This is intended to help enhance and deepen partnerships, linkages and resources at local, national, regional and global levels to eliminate violence and provide assistance to those threatened by such violence.

Focusing on country-level efforts to combat sexual violence, the partnership will reach out to military and security communities to engage them, work to strengthen prevention through rule-of-law and access to justice, and expand services for survivors in the areas of health, psychosocial support and rebuilding dignity and livelihoods. The partnership will also develop a comprehensive evidence base for action through violence monitoring and tracking systems and dissemination of data analyses.

"The need for stronger collaborative efforts to deal with gender-based violence is extremely urgent," UNIFEM Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer said, speaking at the launch of the partnership. "Ceasefires are violated, and countries can slip back into violence — requiring constant monitoring. The massive and growing rates of sexual violence in conflict and crisis

situations are a clear emergency," she said, "and yet not enough is being done — to prevent violence, assist survivors, or even find out exactly how many women and children are affected."

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UNFPA & ICM: SUPPORTING MIDWIVES

Recruiting midwives, especially in developing countries, could save the lives of five million women and prevent 80 million illnesses from pregnancy or childbirth by 2015, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

"Addressing the shortage of midwives through education, training and deployment to underserved areas would bring us much closer to achieving the Millennium Development Goal of improving maternal health," UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid said in a joint statement with the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) marking International Day of the Midwife celebrated on 5 May.

Evidence shows that midwives are vital to preventing the estimated 529,000 maternal deaths and eight million illnesses that occur each year during pregnancy and childbirth. "In countries as diverse as Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Tunisia, investments in training, recruiting and retaining midwives, as well as in emergency obstetric care, have reduced maternal death rates. The lives and health of many millions more would be saved with greater investments in midwives," the joint statement stressed.

A strong midwifery profession is the key to achieving safer childbirth, and all women should have access to a midwife," said Kathy Herschderfer, Secretary-General of the ICM. "Midwives form the bridge between communities and facilities. They transcend the levels of care within health systems, and are essential to the continuum of care during the childbearing cycle."

UNFPA and ICM are working together to strengthen midwifery capacity worldwide to reduce the high levels of deaths and

indigenous Peoples

Although the vast majority of agricultural workers in the US and Mexico are of Mexican and Central American ancestry, Spanish is not necessarily their common language. Many are from indigenous communities that speak dialects and languages thousands of years old. Patricia Díaz Romo, coordinator of the project Huicholes y Plaguicidas, has announced the availability of pesticide education materials in Spanish and major indigenous languages on the project's website. Viewers may download and freely share a video and its script, nine radio spots, and a primer on human rights available in Spanish and twelve indigenous languages including wixárika (huichol), diidxazá (zapoteco del istmo), and batz'i k'op (tzotzil). See <http://www.huicholesyplaguicidas.org>.

GCAP Month of Action

The Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP), representing more than 150 million people in more than 80 countries, has called for a worldwide month of action this autumn. GCAP aims to build on the energy generated in 2005 to engage the public, put pressure on decision makers, and build momentum for further campaigning in 2007.

The Global Month of Action will kick off on 14 September building up to a global White Band Day on 17 October 2006.

More information is available ^{online} (www.whiteband.org).

disability among mothers and babies. They are cooperating to promote the professionalization of the midwifery practice, to improve national midwifery standards and to help countries scale up community-based midwifery practice.

ICM, founded in 1919, is a confederation of 88 midwifery associations from 75 countries. Its mission is to advance worldwide the aims and aspirations of midwives in attaining improved outcomes for women in their childbearing years, their babies and their families, wherever they reside.

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International Confederation of Midwives, Eisenhowerlaan 138, 2517 KN The Hague, The Netherlands, telephone +31-70/3060520, fax +31-70/3555651, e-mail <info@internationalmidwives.org>.

AGRARIAN REFORM & RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD), held in Porto Alegre from 7-10 March 2006, was jointly organized by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Government of Brazil to explore new development opportunities to revitalize rural communities worldwide. Approximately 900 million people—three quarters of the world's poor—live in rural areas and depend on access to land and other natural resources for their livelihoods. For most of them, a major cause of poverty is the absence of secure rights to land.

The conference, which sought to provide an opportunity to bring agrarian reform and rural development back to the international agenda, brought together 1,400 participants, representing government delegations from 92 countries, NGOs and civil society observers from more than 150 farmer and civil society organizations worldwide. It included an open debate between civil society and governments on agrarian

reform and rural development; an expert panel on agrarian reform, social justice and sustainable development; thematic discussions; a parallel civil society forum; and a partnership fair that sought to highlight progress made in existing projects and partnership initiatives and to present innovative projects that have been successful in implementing reform and development.

To foster constructive dialogue, FAO facilitated national thematic dialogues and case study preparations between civil society representatives and governments in the lead-up to ICARRD. Almost 30 country case studies provided background for discussion during the national dialogues, which further fed into ICARRD preparations.

Five main themes were discussed during the conference: Policies and practices for securing and improving access to land; States and civil society: access to land and rural development and capacity building for new forms of governance; New opportunities for community driven rural development; Agrarian reform, social justice and sustainable development; and Agrarian reform in the context of food sovereignty, the right to food and cultural diversity: "land, territory and dignity."

The expert panel discussion on "Agrarian Reform, Social Justice and Sustainable Development," held on 9 March, saw participants stressing that policy approaches need to be broadened to include new social movements, as well as the need for support for alliance-building that can remedy structural power imbalances and promote broad-based approaches that are flexible and responsive to local and national conditions. Participants emphasized that multilateral institutions need to work directly with social movements from rural sectors, and the need for good governance.

The conference adopted a final declaration that stresses the need to find new and urgent solutions in addressing key rural development and agrarian reform challenges. Through the declaration, governments committed themselves to developing mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation to reinforce processes of agrarian reform and rural

development at national, regional and international levels and to establish mechanisms for periodic evaluation of progress in these areas. They reaffirmed that "wider, secure and sustainable access to land, water and other natural resources related to rural people's livelihoods is essential to hunger and poverty eradication, contributes to sustainable development and should therefore be an inherent part of national policies."

The parallel civil society forum focused on "Land, Territory and Dignity" and was organized around a series of working groups, workshops and plenary sessions to exchange experiences and further elaborate on the principles, recommendations and plans of action for land reform based on food sovereignty.

It brought together more than 300 civil society participants from 210 organizations and 66 countries representing organizations of farmers, landless, agricultural workers, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, artisanal fisherfolk, migrants, women, youth, and NGOs active on human rights and rural development. Many of them also attended the sessions open to the public at the official conference.

The civil society forum produced a final declaration which stresses that new agrarian reform must recognize the socio-environmental function of land, the sea, and natural resources, in the context of food sovereignty, which should be based on the human rights to food, self-determination, indigenous rights to

territory, and the rights of rural peoples to produce food for local and national markets.

The declaration also recognizes the fundamental role of women in agriculture and fishing and in the use and management of natural resources and states that there can be no genuine agrarian reform without gender equity. It demands the implementation of a redistributive agrarian reform which will allow women and youth access to and jurisdiction over land and natural resources and guarantee the representation of women and youth in the decision-making mechanisms concerning management at all levels: local, national and international.

Civil society organizations and UN organizations dealing with food sovereignty, food security agrarian reform and rural development will continue to participate in the implementation process of the ICARRD Principles, including enhanced participation in FAO's technical committees, such as the Committee of World Food Security and the Committee on Agriculture, as well as in other mechanisms to institutionalize social dialogue, cooperation, and monitoring and evaluation of progress in agrarian reform and rural development.

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Aid Workers Network

Aid Workers Network links relief and development field staff to share support, ideas and best practice. Their website is being developed by a team of experienced aid workers to provide a comprehensive resource for busy field workers needing practical advice and proven resources to help with their current work.

The website includes a forum, advice pages, blogs, and an Aid Workers Exchange. Topics range from microcredit to security sector reform, to trauma counselling, to advice to the first time aid worker. Registration is required.

More information is available online (www.aidworkers.net).

OTHER NEWS

MIGRANTS' REMITTANCES

The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration (THP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have published a booklet, entitled *Migrants' Remittances and Development: Myths, Rhetoric and Realities*, which examines the development effect of remittances.

It finds that remittances mainly contribute to the development of local communities, while the effects at the national level have so far been less impressive.

The publication notes that the effects that remittances have on developing countries could be significantly enhanced by encouraging and facilitating increased use of official channels at lower transaction costs and a more productive use of the funds.

While government action is critical in many of these areas, other stakeholders could also play an important role. The business sector, especially banker and other financial institutions, can do much to increase the volume and value of remittances, for example by lowering transaction costs.

CONCORD At Three

Founded three years ago, CONCORD, the European confederation of relief and development NGOs, includes 21 national associations and 19 international networks representing over 1,600 NGOs, which are in turn supported by millions of people across Europe. The latest member to join CONCORD is Women in Development Europe (WIDE), a European network of development NGOs, gender specialists and human rights activists. CONCORD coordinates analysis and debate, organizes political action campaigns, and fights for more and better aid, stronger coherence among policies, and fruitful dialogue between civil society and institutions.

According to CONCORD, its challenge over the next 3 years is to raise the political influence of CONCORD to ensure that the views of NGOs and the voices of the poor and most vulnerable are considered by those taking decisions. Justin Kilcullen has taken over from Frans Polman as the new CONCORD President after being elected on 1 June 2006 for a 3-year term.

A joint European NGO aid report EU Aid: Genuine Leadership or Misleading Figures? has been recently produced under the umbrella of CONCORD and is available online (www.concordeurope.org/download.cfm?media=pdfUK&id=1410).

More information, including the latest issue of the CONCORD Flash, is available online (www.concordeurope.org).

Contact: CONCORD Secretariat aisbl, 10 Sq. Ambiorix, 1000 Brussels, Belgium, telephone +32-2/743 8760, fax +32-2/732 1934, e-mail <secretariat@concordeurope.org>.

The report's author, Bimal Gosh, points out that remittances should not be seen as a substitute for official development assistance, especially for the world's poorest countries. Although remittances can make an important contribution to poverty alleviation, much depends on the extent to which positive multiplier effects of remittances reach poor people themselves.

The full development potential of remittances can only be achieved if receiving and sending countries work together. Developed countries can make a direct contribution to the volume and value of official remittances by improving the opportunities for developing countries migrants' to legally enter their territory

(consistent with the host countries labour market supply and demand), by facilitating capital flows, ensuring developing countries' access to world capital markets and by proactively supporting the migrant sending money home.

Contact: IOM, 17 route des Morillons, CH-1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland, telephone +41-22/717 9111, fax +41-22/798 6150, website (www.iom.int).

The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration, PO Box 13074, 2501 BE Den Haag, telephone +31-70/3026010, fax +31-70/3026070, website (www.thehagueprocess.org).

NGO UPDATE

2006 REALITY OF AID

According to the 2006 Reality of Aid Report, the year 2005 will be remembered as the year of the tsunami, of devastating earthquakes and other natural disasters in which tens of thousands died. But in 2005 as in years previous, many millions of people were devastated by "silent tsunamis" resulting from conflict, systemic human rights violations, and preventable diseases. Over the last three decades, external and internal conflicts have increasingly interconnected with deepening social and economic injustice, undermining both global security and the capacity of countries to achieve sustainable development, the report finds. The population of conflict-affected States today represents a sixth of the population of developing countries and a third of those living on less than US\$1 a day.

The 2006 Reality of Aid Report analyzes the impact of policies and actions of the international community, and in particular of aid donors, on the rights, needs and interests of populations affected by conflict. It also advocates key messages relating to the performance of aid donors from a unique perspective of civil society in both donor and recipient developing countries. Part I of the report provides a political overview that explores to what degree donors have adjusted their mandates for international cooperation and diverted aid resources to foreign policy and global security interests. Part II focuses on Africa while Part III looks at Asia and the Pacific and Part IV considers

Latin America. Part V includes OECD thematic reports and Part VI provides a selection of world aid and donor reports.

"Reports by NGOs from both sides of the globe in this Reality of Aid Report attest, this global security agenda influences development cooperation to a large degree. On one hand, the debate has emerged as to what legitimate role or value donor security interests have in its ODA [official development assistance] policy. On the other hand, in countries currently involved in conflict there is prominent concern regarding aid diversion by recipient governments and the respect for rights of the poor caught in the armed conflict," the report states. There are a number of individual reports inquiring into complicated issues such as the role of donors in countries they have designated as "fragile or failing States" or "difficult partnerships," and the difficult conditions to uphold the rights of the poor for genuine poverty reduction.

In his introduction to the report, Antonio Tujan Jr., Chair, Reality of Aid, states, "The issues of security, conflict and the war on terror present life-and-death challenges to development cooperation. While issues and circumstances appear varied, there are strong common voices that emerge from these reports:

- In the context of conflict, development cooperation must be even more clearly guided by binding obligations under international human rights instruments and agreements and must be the framework for

building improved donor coherence;

- Democratic national actors, including local civil society, are the owners and drivers for the resolution of conflict and people-centered approaches to security must be strengthened;
- The integrity of aid for poverty eradication must be protected; and
- All avenues for promotion of peace must be exhausted and the UN system reformed for effective democratic multilateral resolution of conflict.

"As militarism grows in response to an increasingly unstable world and threatens instead to take the world into greater instability and war, the rights of the poor need to be championed as we work together for peace and development," Mr. Tujan writes.

2006 Reality of Aid stresses that aid remains an important tool for peace operations, as donors work to prevent conflict, to strengthen governance and to rebuild war-torn societies. "While there is no doubt that humanitarian assistance still plays a key role in shaping donor responses to crises, the focus of this report is on issues of international security, conflict prevention, governance and peacebuilding, in relation to donors' ODA." The report finds that donor-supported peace initiatives have expanded dramatically over the past ten years. In doing so, they often confronted difficult obstacles, whether self-imposed or arising from the conditions of complex post-conflict societies.

Most disconcerting, the report finds, is the shrinking policy space available to citizens in developing countries demanding that their governments pursue poverty-oriented development, particularly if such policies are seen to be a threat to Northern interests.

The report is available online (www.realityofaid.org/roareport.php?table=roa2006&id=1).

The *Reality of Aid* project brings together more than 40 civil society networks working in the field of international cooperation in the 22 donor countries, in Asia, the Americas and Africa.

Contact: Secretariat, *The Reality of Aid*, 2nd Floor, IBON Center, 114 Timog Avenue, Quezon City, Philippines, telephone +632-425/1387, e-mail <roasecretariat@ibon.org>, website (www.realityofaid.org).

NEW ECONOMICS FOUNDATION: DEBT RELIEF

The New Economics Foundation (NEF) is proposing a five-year plan to alleviate the national debt of the poorest countries. The organization, which characterizes itself as an "independent think-and-do tank," has released a publication titled *Debt Relief as if People Mattered: A Rights-based Approach to Debt Sustainability*. Author Steve Mandel proposes a system of debt cancellation based on the amount of revenue a government can be expected to raise without creating more poverty as well as meeting the basic needs of its citizens. He proposes no taxation of people already living below the poverty level.

The report also recommends raising the poverty line to US\$3 a day rather than the US\$1 to US\$2 currently being used by the World Bank and others. Using this and other criteria, Mr. Mandel calculated which countries would need 100% debt cancellation and which could do with debt reduction to a sustainable level. Billions of dollars in debt would be wiped out under this proposal.

NEF acknowledges that the numbers are huge, but argues that if the richest countries had simply met their aid pledges each year beginning back in 2000, the debt could have already been wiped out: "If the world's richest countries honoured their aid commitments for just five years, all unsustainable debt of the poorest could be written off to such a degree that the basic health and education needs of the world's poorest people could be met."

People's basic human rights to food, shelter and a sustainable way of life will only be attained when developing countries obtain debt relief, the report notes.

The report is available online: (www.neweconomics.org/gen/z_sys_PublicationDetail.aspx?PID=223).

Contact: New Economics Foundation, 3 Jonathan Street, London, SE11 5NH, UK, telephone +020-7820/6300, fax +020 7820/6301, e-mail <info@neweconomics.org>, website (<http://www.neweconomics.org/gen>).

OneWorld.net

OneWorld.net is an internet community of over 1,500 organizations from across the globe that aims to promote sustainable development, social justice and human rights. The website includes partner news, guest editorials, special reports, and information on different campaigns. The OneWorld Partner Directory allows viewers to search OneNet partners' sites by name, country, type of organization, field of interest, languages, and joining date. Its most recent partner is the Albanian Youth Model for United Nations, a youth non-profit organization.

More information is available online (www.oneworld.net).

Migration and Development: Informal Interactive Hearings

The General Assembly's Informal Interactive Hearings with Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organizations and the Private Sector on International Migration and Development were held on 12 July at UN headquarters in New York, providing NGOs, civil society and the private sector an opportunity to interact with Member States and exchange ideas and best practices as part of the preparatory activities for the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development which will take place in September.

The Acting President of the General Assembly, Cheick Sidi Diarra (Mali), presided over the hearings and in his opening remarks stated, "It is crucial to dialogue and engage with non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector as they are knowledgeable and are the real development partners." Deputy Secretary-General Mark Malloch Brown praised civil society for its role in the GA hearings, suggesting that the high level of civil society mobilization at the recent hearings held on HIV/AIDS had led to a resolution dealing with issues that Member States would have "skirted around for reasons of delicacy, protocol and just a reluctance to tackle socially difficult issues" if not for the pressure of civil society. Mr. Malloch Brown described the Secretary-General's proposed global forum on migration and how it would allow governments to establish a common understanding based on the best evidence in the area of migration policymaking.

The hearings were split into four segments on three topics concerning international migration and development: Segment 1, Promoting a comprehensive rights-based approach; Segments 2 and 3, Challenges for social and economic policies for sending and receiving countries; and Segment 4, Policy responses – Promoting the building or partnerships, capacity building and the sharing of best practices. Speakers from NGOs, CSOs and the private sector gave short speeches which were followed by interventions from Member States and other NGO, civil society and private sector spokespersons. The speakers gave overarching statements defining the issues and setting the foundation for dialogue. "Migrants are not just economic entities or units of labour. We are human beings, with families, with social natures, roles, contributions to make and rights. We must beware purely economic or utilitarian approaches to human beings," John Bingham, International Catholic Migration Commission, said. "Labour migration is now regarded as a global issue," said Austin Fragomen, representing the private sector, adding, "Recognition that globalization of the economy and particularly trade in services depends upon mobility of labour." Jacqueline Coke-Lloyd, Jamaican Employers Federation, suggested that "Migration is just the culmination of a union that took place long before the physical passage of one person from one country to another" and that migration can be a force that benefits Member States.

Other speakers used their time to make policy suggestions. Chukwu-Emeka Chikezie, a citizen of the United Kingdom

representing the African Diaspora, suggested that Member States apply tax relief on remittances to aid in international development while including migration issues in all development strategies and North-South bilateral negotiations on cooperation. Sajida Ally, Migrants Rights International, expressed her support for the idea of a new "forum" or "consultation process" on migration, which was proposed in the Secretary-General's report, but was seriously concerned with the absence of NGO, civil society and private sector representation in the process.

Ninety-two Member States attended and many intervened during the hearings giving statements or interacting with speakers.

Spokespersons from a wide array of NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector gave short interventions along with the Member States. Don Flynn, Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, used his time to rally against "temporary migration schemes" that have high entry costs for migrants that encourage them to bend or break the rules in order to recover losses. Philip Rudge, The Hague Process on Refugees and Migrants, expressed his support for the consultative forum and hoped it would highlight the great opportunities for North-South cooperation on migration issues. Mr. Rudge also added that it was time to find the role of the private sector since it had the potential to contribute greatly to migration policies.

In his closing summary, the Acting President of the General Assembly stressed the need to promote a social High-Level Dialogue, where the interests of women, young people and children are taken into account. He added that he hoped the proposed consultative forum would strengthen capacities, promote the use of best practices, recognize professional migration as a necessary global phenomenon and encourage Member States to enact legislation on illegal migrants that ensures their protection and rights.

The hearings will be covered in more depth in a forthcoming *NGLS Roundup*.

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Informal Interactive Hearings for Least Developed Countries

Informal Interactive Hearings with Civil Society, NGOs and the Private Sector for the Midterm Comprehensive Global Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 were held at UN headquarters in New York on 22 June 2006, bringing together Member States and representatives of civil society and the private sector to review progress made in the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action.

Opening the hearings, General Assembly President Jan Eliasson (Sweden) reminded participants of the urgency to act now in order for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to be able to make progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the targets of the Brussels Programme of Action (PoA) for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2001-2010 (see *NGLS Roundup 75*). He stressed the importance of the continuous engagement of civil society in the implementation of the PoA and the establishment of multistakeholder partnerships to fight extreme poverty.

The President of the Group of LDCs, Simon B. Idohou (Benin), noted that civil society organizations and the private sector are key actors in the fight against poverty: the private sector through the development of innovative poverty reduction approaches such as micro-credit schemes or through private investments, job creation and wealth generation, and NGOs through their watchdog and awareness raising functions.

Anwarul Chowdhury, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) stated that he was confident that the insights and recommendations brought by civil society would greatly benefit the process of the midterm review. Poverty remains on the rise, with 100 million more people forecast to join in the next decade the ranks of the 370 million already living in abject poverty in the LDCs.

Arjun Karki, President of LDC Watch, stressed that global targets for poverty eradication and sustainable development can not be met unless there is a clear global focus on the special constraints, concerns and potential of the LDCs. Twelve percent of the world's population live in LDCs, and, if the MDGs are not achieved in LDCs they will probably not be met worldwide, he pointed out, noting that inequality has only increased. Pro-poor and pro-people perspectives need to be adopted in reports and policies, he said, emphasizing that development is not about need, but about basic human rights, as adopted by the General Assembly twenty years ago in its Declaration on the Right to Development.

Deputy Secretary-General Mark Malloch Brown stated that the hearings were part of an innovation in how the UN works with civil society and a way to foster greater civil society impact. He pointed out that LDCs have an advocacy gap and can't always state their case in an international forum.

Therefore, civil society can champion issues important to LDCs. He encouraged dynamic participation by civil society noting that the UN can only be strengthened by a more powerful dialogue with civil society.

First Session

The first session, "Harnessing partnerships for sustainable development in the LDCs," began with participants delivering statements of five minutes. Christophe Djossou, National Youth Council of Benin, spoke about the need for LDCs to involve youth in their official delegations to UN meetings, in order to facilitate involvement of young people in international decision-making processes. He also underlined the importance of reshaping education systems and health services provision in LDCs, noting that well educated and healthy young people are a vital force in helping to implement the PoA over the coming years.

Olive Towey, EUROSTEP/Concern World Wide (Belgium), spoke of the responsibility of industrialized countries to facilitate development in LDCs and the necessity for strong civil society advocacy work in the North and in the South in order to help countries meet those responsibilities. She made three recommendations, namely for LDCs to develop fair and transparent, people-centered policies; for industrialized countries to ensure that sufficient resources are made available, including for strengthening civil society in the LDCs; and for all actors to develop public-private partnerships for the development of LDCs.

Titumir Rashed Al Mahmud, Unnayan Onneshan (Bangladesh), spoke of the importance of building domestic productive capacities to make globalization work for LDCs. Although preferential market access and special and differential treatment of LDCs have been the cornerstone of the Brussels PoA and the Doha and Millennium Declarations, it is primarily the economies of the developed countries which benefit from globalization, he stressed. Goods originating from LDCs are taxed with high tariffs and the relative inability of many of the LDCs to compete on the world market, as well as in their own domestic markets, is reflected in rising food import bills, with current projections for LDC dependence on food imports increasing at least until 2015. Measures need to be taken to ensure remunerative commodity process and the stabilizing of commodity trade, he said.

Richard Mulindwa-Kavuma, *Weekly Observer* (Uganda), reminded participants of the important role of civil society in mobilizing resources for the poor and marginalized. He

further stressed that a delicate balance needs to be struck between meeting the needs of the poor and encouraging entrepreneurship. Business transactions need to be made quicker and easier for the poor, for instance through the provision of mobile telecommunication services in rural areas, while basic social services such as water provision and health care should only be handed over to profit-driven businesses with extreme care.

Vincenzo Aquaro, CEO of Formit Servizi S.p.A. (Italy) – a leading company in information and communications technologies (ICTs) – spoke of the potential contribution of ICTs towards the achievement of the goals of the PoA and encouraged donor countries to support open-sources technologies and software for use in LDCs.

Kehinde Adesola Osinowo, Association for Reproductive and Family Health (Nigeria), stressed that LDC governments and NGOs need to work together to enhance partnerships. As NGOs are not politically motivated, they can therefore be more effective. Noting that sexual and reproductive health issues are culturally sensitive, she said NGOs can help governments with evidence-based projects.

Reynaldo Jimenez, Vivat International (US), urged governments to develop a bottom-up approach to address issues affecting primarily the poor, i.e. education, decent work, access to health care and clean water. Economic growth in LDCs can become a reality through debt cancellation, increased official development assistance (ODA), innovative sources of financing (such as an airfare tax) and policies which would increase market access for LDC products in developed countries. More transparency and democratic control of both national and international financial institutions are a pre-requisite for sustainable development, he stressed.

The floor was then opened up for interactive discussions. Sidi Malimit, of the Association de la Defense des Droits de la Femme et des Enfants (Mauritania) reminded participants that 80% of the world's population live in developing countries. Tackling the population situation in LDCs implies a reduction of adolescent fertility rates. In spite of efforts, these countries still continue to have population growth problems, she noted, highlighting the essential role of women in decision making. Mr. Karki stressed the need for partnerships and funding for groups to advocate for LDCs, while pointing to the lack of political will among developing nations to foster stronger civil societies in LDCs. Mr. Idohou pointed out that economic growth in LDCs does not alleviate poverty. He stressed the need for alternative strategies so that economic growth leads to employment and poverty reduction.

Member States highlighted the importance of ICT and youth partnering for development and the need for more financial resources. The representative of Malawi pointed to the enormous potential of tapping into the wealth of natural resources present in many LDCs to promote economic

growth. With proper governance structures in place, LDCs would be able to get out of the poverty trap, he stressed.

Second Session

The session, "Unleashing entrepreneurship to end poverty in the LDCs," began with selected participants delivering statements of five minutes. Filippo Veglio, World Business Council for Sustainable Development (Switzerland), stated that business cannot succeed in societies that fail; it is poverty and inequalities that cause instability that in turn prevent economic growth. Therefore, some companies are convinced that business practices can lead to sustainable development even in LDCs. He outlined three core principles for successful businesses in LDCs: the need to focus on core competencies; building partnerships with complementary stakeholders; and localizing suppliers and services to promote growth throughout the communities. At the same time, a favorable investment climate is a prerequisite for the success of these projects.

Patricia Cisse, Africa Investment and Business Advisors (Senegal), said the essential role of the private sector with regard to poverty reduction must be focused on ethical practices that ensure the survival of development goals. Moreover, corruption must be removed at all levels, and a cultural, economic, social, political and environmental approach is required. She suggested that international companies can share their expertise to support projects led by women and people with disabilities, while partnering with local people as well.

Hellen Grace Akwii, African Women's Economic Policy Network (Uganda), said the classification and categorization of LDCs weakens their ability to develop. More than food aid, there is a need for "food sovereignty" through the liberalization of food production in favor of local farmers. It is the North, she contended, who applies agricultural subsidies, ignores the division of labour, and establishes import quotas and other discriminatory regulations.

Fatchima Djibrilla Noura, Association of Nigerian Scouts of the Environment (Niger), noted that it is easier to prevent crises than to reverse them. In Niger, women constitute more than 50% of the population and their daily heavy household duties prevent them from contributing to the development of their communities. Therefore, it is necessary to facilitate their tasks by providing them with closer sources of water, grain mills, alphabetization programmes, micro-credits, out-of-season crop growing, etc.

Motarilavao Hilda Lini, Turaga Nation (Vanuatu), said Vanuatu is one of the five LDCs in the Pacific and is a small island vulnerable to natural disasters. Although it became an independent nation in 1980, it has not yet reached its goal of economic self-reliance due to lack of good governance. Ms. Lini noted that 80% of the population lives in rural areas and "only" US\$2.5 million are required to mobilize the rural economy and self-sustainability; yet, no ODA has reached these areas.

Babacar Ndao, Fongs/Action Paysanne, ROPPA (Senegal), representing a network of farmers throughout 12 countries of West Africa, stressed that agro-business should be regarded as an opportunity for growers, not as a means to “kill” smaller enterprises. He highlighted the need for an inclusive model that allows families to work, to strengthen their expertise and increase overall production. In Africa it is necessary to increase the supply of food and, while the UN provides food to some families through the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food security has not yet been achieved.

Roma Stibravy, International Chamber of Commerce (ICC, US), noted that the integration of developing countries and LDCs into the world economy remains a challenge to the global community. The ICC has consistently called for the successful conclusion of the Doha Round, including issues of greater market access for developing and least developed countries. The ICC has also worked with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in regard to trade facilitation and the modernization of procedures for greater efficiency. Ms. Stibravy stressed the great need for policies that can “create an environment conducive to a vibrant private sector in countries with large pools of poverty and high unemployment.”

Following the statements, the floor was again opened for an interactive discussion. The representative for the Netherlands stressed the importance of “bringing the reality from the ground” while preparing for the midterm review of the Decade’s PoA, and poverty reduction, employment, trade and investment continue to be the main concerns. The representative from Norway noted that his country has given access to LDCs’ products since 2002, thus increasing employment opportunities and economic growth in these countries.

Berenice Heloo, Society for Women and AIDS in Africa, stressed that women are not targeted by poverty-reduction strategies. By directing resources towards households, she said, girls can be enabled to study, have safe sexual practices and do not fall into the poverty cycle. By empowering women, she noted, their families, communities and countries are empowered.

Shomik Chaudhuri, Institute for International Social Development, stated that self-help groups, such as micro-enterprises should work towards meeting the MDGs. There is a need for micro-credits, market acceptance and an ethical education that helps eradicate corruption.

Erol Kekic, Church World Service, emphasized the need to include internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the discussion since they represent a large part of the population in many LDCs and may also contribute to the “unleashing of entrepreneurship.” For that purpose, IDPs require legal and physical protection. Edward Emery, World Information Transfer, expressed the need for a joint effort in promoting entrepreneurship, environmental and health issues as well

as the protection and support of vulnerable groups such as women and children. Mr. Mulindwa-Kavuma called on Member States to remember that economic growth and entrepreneurship do not necessarily reduce poverty or produce human development. Moreover, privatization may allow governments to neglect its role as service provider. For that reason, governments must be careful not to put private interests above those of the poor.

Closing Session

During the closing session, Mr. Chowdhury presented a summary of the key issues from the two thematic sessions, ranging from the financing of agriculture and food security, to increasing ODA and employment opportunities, to the need for good governance, and the need for ethical development in the private sector with a poverty-reduction dimension, amongst many others.

In his closing statement, the GA President accentuated the need to identify the structural causes that perpetuate poverty in order to address them realistically. He mentioned that amongst the lessons learnt from these hearings is the need to create more job opportunities, to allow for greater and better access to markets, and to promote the empowerment of women. He concluded by saying: “If we fail to reach the goals and targets of the Brussels Programme of Action in the next five years, we shall have failed the hundreds of millions of people stuck in absolute poverty in the world’s poorest countries. To do so would not only be immoral, but it would undermine global efforts to achieve international peace and security. I therefore hope that today’s hearings will be an important step towards galvanizing efforts at all levels to tackle the challenge of poverty in the LDCs.”

Side Event

The Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund (VGIF) presented a side event entitled “Forging Funding Partnerships with the LDCs” in conjunction with the Interactive Hearings for the Least Developed Countries. The side event attracted a variety of representatives from NGOs based in the LDCs, in addition to two high level representatives from Benin and the Central African Republic. The presentation detailed VGIF’s 37-year-history of providing seed money for projects to improve the lives of women and children in developing countries. Past projects were highlighted along with discussion on the funding process.

More information on VGIF and its application procedure is available online (www.vgif.org).

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ECOSOC High-Level Segment 2006: Decent Work For All

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) opened its 2006 substantive session on 3 July in Geneva with a three-day high-level segment working under the theme "Creating an environment at the national and international levels conducive to generating full and productive employment and decent work for all, and its impact on sustainable development" that sought to highlight proposals for cutting poverty and providing new hope to the world's working poor.

The high-level segment—which brought together ministers and high-level policy makers, UN programmes and agencies, experts in economic and employment issues, and civil society representatives—was designed as a series of roundtable dialogues clustered around the themes of employment and decent work. The opening plenary session, held under the theme "Working out of Poverty," explored how the international community could support efforts to integrate productive employment and decent work into sustainable development agenda as a way of helping to move forward the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The issue of decent work—dignified work that allows people to properly support themselves and their families—has gained momentum since last year's World Summit where world leaders resolved "to make full and productive employment and decent work" a central objective in national and international policies (see *NGLS Roundup 124*). The Secretary-General's report to the high-level segment (E/2006/55) addresses the key aspects of the structural challenges of employment creation and argues that the achievement of the commitments made by world leaders requires the reconciliation of the current focus on economic growth with social and environmental outcomes. The report stresses the need for countries to make the political commitment to achieve full and productive employment and integrate this goal into national development and growth strategies. The international community, the report adds, must also adopt this goal and pursue it through macroeconomic and trade policies taken at the global level.

High-Level Segment

The session opened its high-level segment with addresses by ECOSOC President Ali Hachani (Tunisia) and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mark Malloch Brown.

Addressing the Council, Mr. Hachani said ECOSOC was well placed to advance integration and coordination of efforts towards implementation of the development agenda. The Council needed to verify how it could contribute to the work of the UN, including in the context of natural catastrophes and humanitarian crises. Mr. Malloch Brown said the Council had always been the United Nations' principal body for advancing policy, and today it had the MDGs, which were an opportunity for the Council to rally around a concrete set of achievable goals and targets. It was up to the Council to have these benchmarks and the broader UN development agenda to motivate its work.

Shaukat Aziz, Prime Minister of Pakistan, said the existence of

poverty in the midst of global prosperity was undeniably the most serious challenge confronting the world today. There was no greater challenge to humanity or to the international order than the failure to realize the United Nations' vision of promoting "better standards of life in larger freedoms."

Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of Norway, said the United Nations was not only an arena for norms and common solutions to common problems, but also an agent for peace, development, human rights and dignity at the country level. The most radical decision one could make about the United Nations and how it should be organized was to decide that one would not change it.

Juan Somavia, Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), said the world was facing a global jobs crisis that called for a global response. Prevailing policies in the last decades had tended to consider job creation as an outcome of macro policies, rather than a specific objective in itself. Yet, when problems emerged and crises appeared, labour was the main adjustment factor, he stressed.

High-Level Policy Dialogue

Following the opening session, a policy dialogue was held on developments in the world economy and international economic cooperation with heads of financial institutions. Acting as moderator, José Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, noted that the *World Economic Survey's* recent findings provided new and meaningful insights in light of the more recent debates on economic development, and advanced a strategy for reducing international economic divergence, centred on an assertive but flexible agenda for domestic development, facilitated by international cooperation and rules that guaranteed the appropriate policy space for developing countries.

Introducing the Secretary-General's report, Mr. Ocampo said the goal of "full employment" had been one of the central concerns of the UN since its inception and was enshrined in the Charter. The challenges of achieving and maintaining full and productive employment clearly required a fairly comprehensive approach at both the national and international levels.

Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), said the upswing of the world economy had brought about a major improvement in the living standards and the employment situation of hundreds of millions of people in developing countries, however, this undeniable economic

success should give rise to caution regarding possible negative repercussions of a major imbalance in the global economy.

Valentine Rugwabiza, Deputy Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), said if they were unable to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion this year, the chances of a global deal on the scale envisaged by the Doha Round would be impossible for the foreseeable future. Developed countries would lose an opportunity to reform policies that distorted and constituted a barrier to global trade and global growth, and developing countries would lose a once in a generation opportunity to open world markets for their exports and to redress imbalances in global trade relations.

Francois Bourguignon, Chief Economist and Senior Vice-President of the World Bank, said the gap in the MDGs was often pronounced, and that vigorous and ambitious national development strategies should be formulated in low-income countries. Reinhard Munzberg, Special Representative of the International Monetary Fund to the United Nations, said actions to bring about a gradual reduction in balances were needed. The most effective way that the Fund could help low-income countries achieve their development goals was by focusing on policies and economic institutions that were critical to economic and financial stability and growth, and that fell within its core competencies.

Membathisi Mdladlana, Minister of Labour for South Africa, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said the UN could help Member States develop the correct labour rules and regulations at the local and national level. But those were unlikely to have a lasting improvement in achieving sustainable development unless there was also a conducive international environment for creating productive employment and decent work for all. Walter Fust, Director-General of the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, said the quality of employment was linked to respect for framework conditions in the economic, social and environmental fields. The main role of the State was not to create employment but to establish conditions that promoted full productive employment and decent work for all.

Ministerial Declaration

Following three days of intense discussions, ECOSOC concluded its high-level segment by adopting a Ministerial Declaration on the attainment of full and productive employment and decent work. Through the declaration, ministers reaffirmed that, "Opportunities for men and women to obtain productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity are essential to ensuring the eradication of hunger and poverty, the improvement of the economic and social wellbeing for all, the achievement of sustained economic growth and sustainable development of all nations, and a fully inclusive and equitable globalization."

The declaration—which recognizes that full and productive employment and decent work for all encompasses social protection, fundamental principles and rights at work as well

as social dialogue—outlines the steps that countries can take, individually and collectively, to create more productive employment opportunities. It also maps out a series of initiatives with governments and other institutions to consider the employment impact of policies and to ensure coherence of policies, inviting "all relevant actors, including the Bretton Woods Institutions and other multilateral banks, to join our efforts" to implement the declaration.

"This move presents the extraordinary opportunity to mainstream the goal of full and productive employment and decent work for all into the regular activities of all relevant UN organizations," said Mr. Somavia. "This can set in motion a process of policy dialogue within the multilateral system—including the Bretton Woods Institutions—to stimulate the necessary policy convergence behind this global goal agreed to at the 2005 UN Summit."

NGO Forum

Meeting from 29-30 June in Geneva, the Civil Society Forum to the ECOSOC high-level segment, organized by the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO), brought together representatives from 450 NGOs. The Forum was organized around the six clusters of the high-level segment and included more than 20 workshops. Recommendations from the Forum were forwarded to the high-level segment.

Through their recommendations, the Civil Society Forum called on ministers to recognize that "despite existing mechanisms, such as ODA [official development assistance] and corporate philanthropy, effective sustainable solutions remain to be found for full decent employment, we respectfully recommend the establishment of a high-level expert working group to develop a plan for the implementation of a sustainable basic income for all people. Such a plan could include, for example, the 'Sustainable Basic Income for All,' or the 'Universal Safety Net Plan' models and other relevant world plans, for a more humane economic world order." Civil society also urged "all governments and sectors of society, such as employers, trade unions, transnationals and other civil society actors, to encourage ethical and sustainable investments. Good governance requires the recognition that all people, rich and poor, are stakeholders in our present and common future, through taxation, personal investment, social insurances, pension systems and other safety nets."

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1st Session of the Human Rights Council: Building Dialogue and Cooperation

The Human Rights Council held its inaugural session from 19-30 June 2006 in Geneva, bringing together its 47 members to address a number of issues, including the situation of human rights in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine; support for the Abuja Agreement; avoiding incitement to hatred and violence for reasons of religion or race; the human rights of migrants; and the role of human rights defenders in promoting and protecting human rights.

Pursuant to GA resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006 that established the Human Rights Council, all mandates, mechanisms, functions and responsibilities of the Commission on Human Rights, including the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, were assumed, as of 19 June 2006 by the Human Rights Council. During the two-week session, the new body addressed a range of issues, exchanged views with special procedures representatives, the Sub-Commission and treaty bodies, and held substantive debates on the implementation of GA resolution 60/251. The Council also discussed a number of reports by Working Groups, including on the effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action; the Right to Development; the elaboration of an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the elaboration of a Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; and the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The session also discussed how to set up the modalities of the universal periodic review mechanism, which would review the situation of human rights in all countries, and the review of the mandates and mechanisms which it inherited from the former Commission on Human Rights. Finally, the Council discussed its programme of work for its future sessions and debated the issue of dialogue and cooperation around human rights, which included human rights education and learning, advisory services, technical assistance and capacity building.

Opening Ceremony

UN General Assembly President Jan Eliasson (Sweden) said the United Nations now had a Council that was built on cooperation and dialogue, yet principled and strongly anchored in human rights law. It was a Council that would review all Member States' fulfilment of their human rights obligations, thereby ensuring equal treatment of all, he stressed. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the Council's work should mark a clean break from the past, which should be apparent in the way it developed and applied the universal periodic review mechanism, and also in its willingness to confront hard issues and engage in difficult discussions when these were necessary to remedy or to prevent human rights violations.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour said great hopes had been placed in the new Council,

which should herald the way to a new period of affirmation of the ideals and standards of human rights, towards a period that would ensure their effective implementation. When national protection systems failed, the task of the Council was to acknowledge and respond to the despair or the outrage generated by abuse, inequity, and discrimination. It was uniquely positioned to redress the shortcomings of the past, as it was empowered to devise the means that would prevent abuses, protect the most vulnerable, and expose perpetrators.

General Segment

Speakers welcomed the creation of the Council and stressed that it should distinguish itself from its predecessor in its methods of work and by dealing with human rights violations in transparency, impartially and without double-standards and selectivity. Other speakers considered the establishment of the Council as a milestone in progress towards the objective of reforming human rights to make them a pillar of the United Nations.

During the review of the mandates and mechanisms that the Council had inherited from the former Commission on Human Rights, speakers said the special procedures system was an indispensable mechanism of the United Nations for the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide and formed part of the backbone of the system of international human rights protection. They were critical for monitoring the observance of human rights standards and in addressing the most serious human rights violations. Speakers urged caution in reform so as not to end up with more fragile, less representative instruments.

Among suggestions for the reform, many speakers called for a transparent process of consultation using both formal and informal processes in order to reach consensus, saying that the process should benefit from the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders. A number of speakers stressed that the mandates of all special procedures needed to be extended for one year without distinction of any kind. In particular, many speakers raised the issue of the Sub-Commission's role, urging that this be maintained.

The Council welcomed the entry into force on 22 June 2006 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

On 29 June, the Human Rights Council adopted by consensus the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and recommended that the General Assembly adopt the treaty at its forthcoming session. The treaty aims to prevent and punish the crime of enforced disappearances, estimated to amount to 40,000 cases from 60 countries. Speakers said the treaty would help to strengthen the international regime for protecting human rights and freedoms, and would help to eradicate the crimes of kidnapping, hostage taking, and terrorist acts.

Also on 29 June, the Council adopted by a roll-call vote of 30 in favour to two against and 12 abstentions a resolution on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that had been negotiated for 11 years and recommended that the General Assembly adopt the non-binding declaration which creates legal standards and rules that would ensure respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples.

Also adopted by consensus was a resolution on the Open-ended Working Group to draft an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Council agreed to extend the mandate of the Working Group for a period of two years. The Human Rights Council adopted, again by consensus, a resolution on the right to development, endorsing the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the Working Group on the Right to Development at its January 2006 session, which looked at global partnerships for development; existing partnerships and mutual commitment; Millennium Development Goal 8; and the right to development. The Council renewed the Working Group's mandate for one year.

The Council also adopted without a vote a decision on the extension of all mandates, mechanisms, functions and responsibilities of the Commission on Human Rights, in which the Council extended exceptionally for one year, subject to review, the mandates and the mandate-holders of all the Commission's special procedures, as well as the procedure established in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1503.

By its decision 2006/102, the Human Rights Council extended the Sub-Commission exceptionally for one year, setting out the limits of the Sub-Commission's final session, which was mandated to start on 31 July 2006 for a period of up to four weeks. The Council also directed the Sub-Commission to give priority at its final session to preparing two documents—a paper on the Sub-Commission's record, giving its own vision and recommendations for future expert advice to the Council; and a detailed list, describing the status of all the Sub-Commission's ongoing studies as well as an overall review of its activities—for submission to the Council in 2006.

The Council also decided that the Working Groups and the Social Forum of the Sub-Commission (see Focus Page 42) would be convened to hold their annual session in

accordance with the current practices in order to contribute to the paper that the Council had requested the Sub-Commission to prepare. Established in 1947, the Sub-Commission comprises seven regular Working Groups on Minorities; on Contemporary Forms of Slavery; on Indigenous Populations; on Transnational Corporations; on Administration of Justice; on guidelines on the promotion and protection of human rights when combating terrorism; and on Communications.

Special Session on Occupied Arab Territories

On the last day, the President of the Council, Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba of Mexico, said that, following a request signed by 21 of the 47 Member States of the Council, a Special Session on the situation of human rights in Palestinian occupied territory would be held.

The Council adopted a resolution (by a vote of 29 in favour, 11 against and five abstentions) in which it demanded that Israel end its military operations in the occupied Palestinian territory; expressed grave concern at the detrimental impact of the current Israeli military operation on the already deteriorating humanitarian conditions of the Palestinian people; urged Israel to immediately release the arrested Palestinian ministers, and members of the Palestinian Legislative Council; and decided to dispatch an urgent fact-finding mission headed by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory.

Special Session on Lebanon

The Human Rights Council held a second Special Session which addressed the situation in Lebanon. Held on 11 August, the session adopted a resolution, approved by a vote of 27 to 11, with eight abstentions, that strongly condemned the grave Israeli violations of human rights and breaches of international humanitarian law in Lebanon and decided to urgently establish and immediately dispatch a high-level inquiry commission to the region.

The Council said the high-level commission should include eminent experts of human rights law and international humanitarian law who should: investigate the systematic targeting and killings of civilians by Israel; examine the types of weapons used by Israel and their conformity with international law; and assess the extent and deadly impact of Israeli attacks on human life, property, critical infrastructure and environment. The Council requested the commission to report back to it no later than 1 September 2006 on progress towards the fulfilment of its mandate.

The second regular session of the Council will be held from 18 September to 10 October 2006.

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Inaugural Session of the Peacebuilding Commission: Supporting Countries Emerging from Conflict

On 23 June, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan opened the inaugural session of the Peacebuilding Commission, a new advisory body tasked with helping fragile countries make the difficult transition from war to peace. "The international community now has at its disposal a unique intergovernmental body: the first devoted specifically to peacebuilding. This new Commission will aim to provide more sustained, more coordinated and more focused support to countries emerging from conflict."

"We have seen an unacceptable number of peace agreements disintegrate within five years after the end of a civil war, with countries lapsing back into deadly conflict," he told the panel's 31-member standing Organizational Committee. "As we have just seen in Timor-Leste (East Timor), undue haste to disengage from a transitional situation can result in reversals and a need to redeploy, at great cost to all, particularly the helpless civilian victims," he added.

Mr. Annan warned that peacebuilding involved more than just preventing renewed fighting and securing physical reconstruction. A core task was to build effective public institutions within constitutional frameworks and the rule of law as war-affected populations often raised their hopes for new, more equitable governance arrangements, only to see exclusionary social, economic and political structures left untouched, perpetuated, or inadvertently strengthened.

Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller, whose country chaired the Security Council in June, said Burundi and Sierra Leone, two African countries emerging from years of civil strife, were chosen as the first to receive assistance from the panel at their request. The Commission's role will be to supplement UN peacekeeping operations and provide a means for regional players, donor nations, troop contributors and international monetary organizations to coordinate their efforts. Liberia and Haiti may also be future candidates for help from the commission, which is assisted by a small UN secretariat office headed by Canada's Carolyn McAskie, the former UN special representative for Burundi.

"Peacebuilding is about liberating people from the conflict trap and laying the foundation for sustainable development," said Ismael Gaspar Martins (Angola), who was elected as the Commission's first Chairman. He said the Commission featured the innovation of close involvement and cooperation with the countries concerned in order to inspire ownership in the overall process, and would include the involvement of a broad spectrum of local-level actors, particularly women and youth.

General Assembly President Jan Eliasson (Sweden) said

that victims of conflict had often had very little choice but to place their fate in the hands of the international community. There had been an awareness of the gaps in the international community's response to countries in post-conflict situations, but donors had not found efficient ways to link emergency relief with reconstruction, institution-building, reconciliation and development. "The United Nations has been successful in ending wars, but building sustainable peace has proved much more difficult," he said.

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) President Ali Hachani (Tunisia) said the Commission would mark a turning point for countries struggling to manage the difficult road to recovery from war to peace and lay the ground for sustainable development. ECOSOC had long stressed the need for the joint consideration, with the other major UN organs, of situations of international concern or importance, and had been integral in the development of Ad Hoc Advisory groups on African Countries Emerging from Conflict – Burundi and Guinea-Bissau – as well as on Haiti. He said that the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission was not an end in itself, but only the first step in an overall effort whose success would be first seen, and ultimately judged, in the field.

James Adams, Vice-President of the World Bank, and Reinhard Muzberg, Special Representative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), also addressed the meeting. Mr. Adams said a 2003 World Bank report had laid out the close links between development and conflict. Where development failed, countries were at risk of being caught in a "conflict trap": violence wreaked havoc on the economy, exacerbated poverty and social distress, and increased the risk of future conflict.

More than one billion poor people were either directly affected by civil wars, or at high risk of being so in the foreseeable future, he said, noting that 80% of the world's 20 poorest countries had suffered a major war in the past 15 years. Since the 1990s, some six million people in Africa had lost their lives and more than 15 million had been displaced. In turn, physical infrastructure had been destroyed, while institutional capacity and social capital

had been lost, a flight of financial and human capital and an average 2.2% loss in annual growth per conflict-affected country. The death toll from conflict-induced economic dislocation, epidemics and insecurity was much higher, he stressed.

The Organizational Committee adopted its draft rules of procedure, with the understanding that those rules would be further developed at future meetings. It also adopted its provisional agenda, and elected as Vice-Chairpersons Carmen Maria Gallardo Hernandez (El Salvador) and Johan L. Løvald (Norway). The Commission agreed to reconvene within the month to continue consultations and to consider the Security Council's request to provide advice on the situations in Burundi and Sierra Leone.

The Organizational Committee is made up of 31 member countries: seven from the Security Council (including permanent members); seven from ECOSOC, giving particular consideration to those that have experienced post-conflict recovery; five out of the top ten financial contributors to the UN budgets including voluntary contributions to UN agencies and programmes and the Peacebuilding Fund; five out of the top ten providers of military personnel and civilian police to UN missions; and

seven additional members, to redress remaining geographical imbalances and include countries with post-conflict experience, to be elected by the General Assembly.

On 10 May 2006, the General Assembly decided that its seven seats for this year would be distributed among the five regional groups as follows: two seats for African States; one seat for Asian States; one seat for Eastern European States; three seats for Latin American and Caribbean States; and no seats for Western European and other States. The text also specifies that this year's elections would set no precedent for the future, and that the distribution of seats would be reviewed annually, on the basis of changes in the membership in other categories of members, in order to give due consideration to the representation of all regional groups. On 16 May 2006, the General Assembly elected Chile, El Salvador, Jamaica, Egypt, Burundi, Fiji and Croatia to the Committee.

On 12 May 2006, ECOSOC elected Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Poland, Brazil and Belgium to the Organizational Committee.

More information is available on the Peacebuilding Commission website (www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding).

CSD - 14 Focuses on Energy for Sustainable Development

The fourteenth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-14), held at UN headquarters in New York from 1-12 May 2006, brought together over 70 ministers, Member States, representatives from intergovernmental organizations and more than 700 representatives from Major Groups in an attempt to identify long-term energy solutions that can fuel global development and reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, which will help form the basis for next year's CSD meeting, which seeks to adopt specific policy decisions.

Since 2004, under the 14-year post-World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) work programme adopted at CSD-11 (see *NGLS Roundup 102*), CSD meets annually in two-year "Implementation Cycles," and each cycle includes a "non-negotiating" Review Year and a Policy Year. As the first year of the second two-year implementation cycle, CSD-14 sought to review progress on energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere and climate change amid heightened concerns over energy security and the growing demand for energy resources. Another issue that figured prominently is the persistent poverty that impedes many low-income countries in gaining access to modern and cleaner energy services, including electricity. CSD-14 sought to identify constraints and obstacles and possible approaches to overcoming a number of these issues, which will shape deliberations at CSD-15.

CSD-14 included opening and general statements, as

well as a multistakeholder dialogue; thematic and regional discussions; a day on Small Island Developing States (SIDS); and a high-level segment. CSD-14 produced a Chair's Summary that sought to capture the key points from the opening and general statements, focusing on lessons learned, obstacles and constraints, means of implementation, and the challenges ahead.

In his opening address, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs José Antonio Ocampo called on delegates to address the needs of the 2.4 billion people who lack modern energy services as well as concerns over energy security exacerbated by high prices. "The central task before us is to identify constraints and barriers that must be addressed by the international community," on the highly interlinked issues of energy, air pollution, industrial development and climate change.

Energy use is expected to increase by 50% over the next

25 years, and two-thirds of that increase is expected in developing countries. The World Bank estimates that an investment of US\$300 billion a year is needed to meet the needs of people in developing countries through more efficient and cleaner sources of energy.

Energy for sustainable development emerged as the dominant theme over the two weeks with participants widely acknowledging that energy, industrial development, air pollution and climate change had a critical bearing on sustainable economic growth and development. Participants highlighted the need to approach CSD-14's themes in an integrated manner and strongly urged that addressing environmental degradation, together with eliminating poverty, was a "contemporary imperative."

Thematic Discussions

Thematic discussions, held during the first week, were based on two reports by the Secretary-General on the review of progress in implementing Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Action (E/CN.17/2006/2) and on progress made in relation to CSD-14's four themes (E/CN.17/2006/3), as well as reports from the UN Regional Commissions. Interactive discussions on these topics were held among Major Group representatives, experts and government officials.

During the discussion on "Access to energy services," several delegates highlighted the need for multistakeholder and community involvement in energy services and shared their experiences on national electrification and clean energy initiatives, with a number of them stressing the importance of context-specific solutions based on the needs of different groups. A representative from the European Union (EU) said basic access to safe energy should be a development priority. Similarly, a representative from India emphasized the need to remove political and legal barriers to achieve energy for all. A representative from Norway underscored the value of energy sector reform, while representatives from Workers and Trade Unions cautioned against the privatization of energy markets.

On the theme "Enhancing energy efficiency," many speakers shared their experience of good practices at the national level, including industry partnerships, transportation initiatives, information exchange, and end-use efficiency.

The discussion on the "Increased use of renewable and advanced technologies" saw several delegates noting the importance of developing and investing in renewable technologies given the rising cost of fossil fuels. Other countries, including representatives from India and Saudi Arabia, maintained that renewable technologies could only complement—not replace—fossil fuel use. Representatives from the Scientific and Technological Community noted that renewable energy costs will

decrease as markets grow, while Workers and Trade Unions highlighted the generation of new jobs.

On the theme "Advancing industrial development for poverty eradication," a number of delegates noted the role of the private sector in driving industrial growth while Ogunlade Davidson, University of Sierra Leone, said that most attempts to accelerate industrial development are not appropriate in countries with per capita gross domestic product (GDP) below US\$5,000. The European Community called on the CSD to send a clear message to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on full and productive employment and supported equal standing for trade and environmental agreements.

In the session on "Integrated approaches to addressing air pollution/atmosphere," Walter Shearer, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), said policy and regulatory frameworks for air pollution control are weak in many countries. Stressing that health concerns are a major driver for change, Carlos Corvalan, World Health Organization (WHO), advocated inter-sectoral approaches to detrimental energy practices. Michael Walsh, Executive Council of the Clean Air Initiative, said many developing countries lack air pollution controls. He proposed focusing on implementing emissions standards in industrializing countries.

During the discussion on "Inter-linkages between climate change and sustainable development," Jonathan Pershing, World Resources Institute, described the importance of integrating climate change into national economic, industrial, agricultural, and natural resource planning. Rajendra K. Pachauri, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), recommended a global risk assessment, and called attention to the projected impacts on the poor.

On the theme "Investing in energy and industrial development," a representative from Germany said the current CSD cycle is key to launching a strategy for achieving improvements in energy efficiency. The EU called for constructive ways to engage the private sector in renewable energy development and urged CSD to promote the integration of the energy dimension into national sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies. Ivory Coast and others voiced pessimism regarding renewable and clean energy investments in Africa and mentioned problems with attracting advanced technologies.

The discussion on "Enhancing means of implementation through cooperation" saw experts highlighting the need to incorporate gender analyses in energy studies, with some describing the disadvantages endured by women and girls in their household and rural energy roles. A number of delegates expressed concern over the institutional, economic and political barriers facing

women in accessing clean and safe energy.

Multistakeholder Dialogue

The multistakeholder dialogue on the role of Major Groups took place on 3 May. During the discussion, Local Authorities, echoed by South Africa, called for national-level support for their GHG mitigation role through, among other things, decentralized energy infrastructure. Indigenous People, supported by Canada, called for the replication of participatory projects, and rights-based approaches in Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects. Farmers called for supportive research and incentives.

Business and Industry invited others to learn from their commitment to efficiency, while Women noted the links between gender, equity and development, citing the potential for women to adopt energy entrepreneur roles. The Scientific and Technological Community supported nuclear power while noting the need to address waste disposal, safety and proliferation. Conversely, Women and NGOs called for a phase out of nuclear technology.

High-Level Segment

More than 50 ministers attended the high-level segment held from 10-12 May, which consisted of three high-level dialogues on "Making a Difference" with leaders of business and international financial institutions, UN agencies, and Major Groups. In addition, three high-level interactive discussions on "The Way Forward" were held, focusing on addressing barriers and constraints to sustainable development and providing guidance on issues which should be taken up by CSD-15.

Addressing the high-level segment, the Secretary-General described the multiple risks associated with the world's deeply entrenched reliance on fossil fuels and the despair of those who lack access to modern energy services. The Secretary-General challenged developed countries to help developing countries double their electricity generation capacity using cleaner technologies.

During the discussion with Major Groups, a unified statement was delivered on behalf of NGOs, Trade Unions, Women, Youth, and Indigenous Peoples that noted that sustainable development is not "sustained economic growth, but aims to meet the basic needs of all people within the carrying capacity of the planet."

Additionally, NGOs noted the impact of rising oil prices on the poor, called for the removal of subsidies, objected to the proliferation of nuclear and large hydro power and criticized what they called "token references" to corporate social responsibility. Women recalled previous commitments made at CSD-9 and WSSD to support women's involvement in decision making.

Major Groups

CSD-14 hosted more than 700 Major Group participants

representing 134 organizations. Major Groups include Women; Children and Youth; Indigenous People; Local Authorities; Workers and Trade Unions; Business and Industry; the Scientific and Technological Community; and Farmers. Attendees participated during the Session as panel experts, assisting and contributing to the high-level segment and actively participating in the thematic discussions. Under CSD-11 decisions were made to include at least two Major Groups' interventions per thematic session (leading to a total of 86 oral inputs by the Major Groups).

Additionally, civil society groups held caucuses under the banner of their respective Major Groups or relevant subject themes such as education or energy. These caucuses served as organizational sessions where participants discussed pressing issues and prepared collective statements.

The Women's Major Group united around a number of concerns, including the need to include women in energy policy decision-making and the need for "engendered" energy policy. The Education Caucus noted the importance of education as a cross-cutting theme and continued its effort to be recognized as a Major Group.

Many civil society participants expressed frustration with the intense focus on energy and economic matters which they viewed as a detriment to the other themes. Others expressed concern over what they called "an overwhelming presence" of the corporate sector citing examples like the portion of the high-level segment devoted solely to leaders of business and international financial institutions. Many also felt that given the current global political and economic climate, the energy debate could be much sharper and more divisive during the policy cycle at CSD-15.

CSD-15 will take place at UN headquarters in New York from 30 April - 11 May 2007 and will be a "Policy Year" to decide on measures to speed up implementation and mobilize action to overcome obstacles and constraints for implementation of actions and goals on energy for development, air pollution/atmosphere, climate change and industrial development.

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95th International Labour Conference

The 95th International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO), held from 31 May - 16 June 2006 in Geneva, brought together Heads of State and Government, ministers of labour and representatives of workers and employers to discuss a wide range of issues, including child labour, occupational safety and health, technical cooperation activities, the employment relationship, and labour inspection, among others.

During the 95th International Labour Conference, delegates from the 178 Member States adopted a new Promotional Framework Convention on Occupational Safety and Health and an accompanying Recommendation, which aim to lower the toll of work-related injuries and diseases which are estimated to cause some two million deaths each year. The Conference also adopted a series of standards and measures addressing health and safety of workers and flexible working arrangements.

The ILO estimates that some 6,000 workers die each day as a result of work-related accidents or illness. The new measures will promote the development of a "preventative safety and health culture" through the elevation of occupational safety and health high on national agendas by launching national occupational safety and health programmes, as well as the promotion of safer and healthier working environments through preventive measures.

Delegates also adopted an international labour Recommendation on the Employment Relationship, which proposes the formulation and adoption of national policies on effectively establishing the existence of an employment relationship and on the distinction between employed and self-employed workers; combating disguised employment relationships and ensuring standards applicable to all forms of contractual arrangements.

Addressing the conference on 5 June, ILO Director-General Juan Somavia provided an overview of ILO issues and concerns and presented the report, *Changing Patterns in the World of Work* that provides a global perspective on the main features of the transformation of work and the challenges this presents for the goal of decent work for all (see section next page).

Mr. Somavia pointed out that more than 400 million new jobs will be required over the next decade to keep pace with growth of the labour force, mostly in developing countries, through policies replacing jobless growth with "job-rich" growth. He also noted that some 80% of the world's work force live in developing countries.

"That job creation challenge comes on top of the pressure of a continuing large scale shift out of agriculture and rural areas towards cities, pushed by poverty and pulled by the hope of a better job," Mr. Somavia said. "The global economy is not delivering enough decent jobs that people need. Despite the many benefits of globalization, we see again and again how the dignity of work has been devalued. Economic optimism for some is matched with profound social pessimism for many. This is why we must put in place policies that replace jobless growth with quality, 'job-rich' growth."

Mr. Somavia cited the service economy as a "major growth area for employment," adding "this is linked to another virtually global phenomenon—skill shortages side-by-side with rising unemployment. The hardware of

the new technologies is spreading much faster than the human software of manager and worker skills to make full use of its potential." Among other challenges facing the global economy is the need to come to terms with an aging population, discrimination, migration and the fact that six out of ten workers in the world lack social protection, he stressed.

Mr. Somavia noted that the adoption of the new maritime Convention in February 2006 (see *Go Between 109*) was the most recent example of growing support for the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. He also cited the final outcome statement of the UN World Summit in September of last year (see *NGLS Roundup 124*), in which 150 global leaders agreed to place full and productive employment and decent work as a central objective of relevant national and international policies.

The ILO's Decent Work Agenda was discussed at the High-Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in Geneva from 3-5 July (see Focus Page 22). "We can mainstream these issues within the UN system," Mr. Somavia stressed.

On 7 June, the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, addressed delegates, calling for urgent action for peace and development in her country. Facing an unemployment level that has risen to an estimated 85%, Ms. Johnson Sirleaf stressed that Liberia requires immediate support to create sustainable conditions for peace and development. She added that youth facing "unemployment and idleness... have a propensity for social disenchantment. For us, employment is synonymous to peace." She cited child labour, human trafficking, women's empowerment and labour relations as areas of priority in her country.

Speaking on 8 June, Oscar Arias, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, said, "Decent employment lies at the heart of peace," and called for concrete measures to ensure a fairer globalization and an initiative to reduce spending in the arms race.

"There exists a fundamental link between decent employment and peace, between work and the defense of human dignity. The right to work is a fundamental right, and without respect for fundamental rights, peace can be no more than a dream," he stressed, adding, "It is no coincidence that some of the gravest threats to peace and democracy today originate in countries with high unemployment and underemployment."

President Arias called for effective and concrete strategies at the national and the international level to make the creation of decent jobs a reality, and referred to the need to invest in education and foster free trade between nations. "Nothing prevents the creation of decent jobs like indecent education," he said. "The educational catastrophe of today is the economic catastrophe of tomorrow." Mr. Arias acknowledged that upgrading systems of education requires the allocation of additional resources, but above all the political will to do

so. He said that it was "shameful" that poor nations buy more and more arms and strengthen their armies to supposedly protect the population.

Mr. Arias called attention to the "Costa Rica Consensus" through which mechanisms are initiated to forgive debt and give international financial support to developing nations that invest more and more in education, health and housing, and less and less in soldiers and weapons, saying, "It is time that the international financial community reward not only those whose spending is orderly, as it has done till now, but also those whose spending is ethical," he stressed.

Changing Patterns in the World of Work

Changing Patterns in the World of Work describes recent trends and future prospects in what it calls an emerging global labour market. "Change provides welcome opportunities for more rewarding and satisfying work and a better life," the report says. "For others, change is worrisome, closing off rather than opening up chances for improving living and working conditions."

Among the report's findings:

- Hundreds of millions of new jobs will be needed over the next decade and economies will have to create on average more than 43 million new jobs each year in order to reduce global unemployment, which reached 192 million people in 2005—its highest level ever—up from 157 million in 1995.
- The impact of HIV/AIDS will be increasingly decisive in many countries as the epidemic, which hits people of working age hardest, is expected to cause an estimated total loss of some US\$270 billion by the year 2020 in some 41 countries hardest hit by the disease.
- During the last decade, youth employment rates increased globally from 12.1% to 13.7%. In 2005, young people in developing regions were 3.3 times more likely to find themselves unemployed when compared to adult workers. In the developed world, youth were 2.3 times more likely to be unemployed than adults.
- The number of people aged 60 years and over is growing faster than all other age groups. Labour force participation rates for women and men above 50 years of age have increased worldwide.
- The services sector went up as a share of global employment from 34.4% in 1995 to nearly 39% in 2005. This is close to the 40% share of the agricultural sector. The industrial sector has a 21% share.

The report identifies four major forces that are interacting to drive change in workplaces and labour markets: the development imperative, stemming from the urgent need to reduce poverty and inequality within and among nations; a technological transformation imparted by the diffusion of new means of information processing and communications; an intensification of global competition following trade and financial liberalization as well as a dramatic reduction of transport and communication costs; and a shift in political thinking regarding labour markets.

The report stresses that there is a major transformation in the world of work with the potential for creating opportunities for all working men and women to have a decent job. "Technological progress, if applied in ways

that promote inclusion rather than exclusion," the report says, "could increase productivity and make material poverty history within a generation."

"The main means for ensuring an inclusive character to the growth of the global economy is the way in which work and labour markets are organized and governed. Recent history is however disturbing," says the report. "The employment intensity of growth has slipped back globally."

The report is available online (www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc95/pdf/rep-i-c.pdf).

Child Labour

On 12 June the World Day Against Child Labour was observed with delegates discussing the new ILO Global Report entitled *The End of Child Labour - Within Reach*, as well as a special event that highlighted the progress made in eliminating child labour in countries like Brazil, Tanzania and Turkey.

The End of Child Labour - Within Reach, finds that the number of child labourers globally fell by 11% over the last four years, while that of children in hazardous work decreased by 26%. The report indicates that in 2004 there were 218 million children trapped in child labour, of whom 126 million were in hazardous work. Although the participation of girls in child labour and hazardous work is on a par with that of boys in the youngest age group (5-11 years), boys predominate considerably at older ages in both categories. However, for the age group of 5-14 years, the decline in hazardous work was even steeper – by 33%. Latin America and the Caribbean are making the greatest progress – the number of children at work has fallen by two-thirds over the last four years, with just 5% of children now engaged in work. The least progress has been made in sub-Saharan Africa, where the rates of population growth, HIV/AIDS infection and child labour remain alarmingly high.

ILO notes that an important aspect of these positive trends relates to ILO standards and ratification of Conventions Nos. 138 and 182. Many ratifications have been accompanied by concrete action against child labour. Political commitment, through the adoption of coherent policies in the areas of poverty reduction, basic education and human rights, is also central to the progress, both past and present, made by countries in combating child labour, the report indicates.

The report is available online (www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/about/globalreport/2006/index.htm).

Conclusion

Speaking at the conclusion of the conference, Mr. Somavia said the meeting had "set standards for the 21st century which are relevant and applicable for countries all over the world and at all stages of development" and had provided "a strong mandate to engage fully in the process of renewing our multilateral system, confident in the recognition we have as 'the decent work agency.'"

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59th Session of the World Health Assembly

The World Health Assembly (WHA) met in Geneva from 22-27 May, bringing together more than 2,200 representatives from the World Health Organization's (WHO) 192 Member States, NGOs and other observers to discuss infant and young child nutrition; HIV/AIDS; polio eradication; sickle-cell anaemia; smallpox eradication and the destruction of variola virus stocks; prevention of avoidable blindness; international trade and health; tobacco control; and intellectual property rights.

The World Health Assembly opened on 22 May under a sombre note as it immediately followed the unexpected death of the WHO Director-General, Lee Jong-wook. Opening the formal proceedings of the Assembly, the Minister of Health of Spain, Elena Salgado, paid tribute to the late leader, and hundreds of delegates signed books of condolence, adding to hundreds of tributes and messages which came in from people around the world.

A special session of the Executive Board on 23 May appointed Anders Nordström, previously Assistant Director-General for General Management, as Acting Director-General until a new Director-General is appointed and takes office. Dr. Nordström remembered Dr. Lee's determination to see polio eradication completed. "In his memory, and in honour of all that he stood for, let us commit with absolute dedication to see that goal quickly accomplished."

Other decisions during the session concerned the fight against HIV/AIDS – another hallmark of Dr. Lee's tenure – as well as infant and child nutrition; control of sexually transmitted diseases; and the training of health workers, among other topics.

Application of the International Health Regulations

On 26 May, delegates agreed to begin implementing parts of the International Health Regulations, including provisions which relate directly to avian influenza and to the threat of a human influenza pandemic, such as rapid and transparent notification, support to countries that request it in investigating and controlling outbreaks, and providing essential information including recommendations for control measures. Following the approval last year of a new set of International Health Regulations (IHR 2005, see *Go Between 107*), this year's Assembly agreed to start implementing – on a voluntary basis – some of these new rules a year early. IHR (2005) will enter into force in June 2007 (WHA59.2).

Polio Eradication

The Health Assembly adopted a resolution (WHA59.1) urging the remaining polio-endemic countries to intensify immunization campaigns in the final push to interrupt transmission of the poliovirus. The resolution also calls on all countries to respond rapidly to imported poliovirus, and on WHO to provide technical advice on planning for a post-eradication world.

Nutrition and HIV/AIDS

The World Health Assembly adopted a resolution (WHA59.11) requesting countries to include nutrition an integral part of the overall response to HIV/AIDS by identifying nutrition interventions for immediate integration into HIV/AIDS programmes. Food and good nutrition are immediate and critical needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. The Health Assembly also supported WHO to develop a five-year-plan to help achieve universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment by 2010.

Scaling Up the Health Workforce

In response to the worldwide shortage of health workers, the Health Assembly adopted a resolution (WHA59.23) on the rapid scaling up of the health workforce. In addition, a new alliance – the Global Health Workforce Alliance – was launched during the Health Assembly to tackle the worldwide shortage of nurses, doctors, midwives and other health workers.

An adequate health workforce is defined by WHO as at least 2.3 well-trained health care providers available per 1,000 people and balanced in such a way as to reach 80% of the population or more with skilled birth attendance and childhood immunization.

The Alliance will start the Fast Track Training Initiative to quickly increase the number of qualified workers by mobilizing direct financial support for training institutions, setting up partnerships between schools in industrialized and developing countries for exchanges of faculty and students, and nurturing academic leaders in developing countries with the support of experts from around the world.

The initial partners include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Canadian International Development Agency, the European Commission, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization, the Global Equity Initiative at Harvard University, the International Council of Nurses, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Thai Ministry of Public Health, Physicians for Human Rights, the World Bank and WHO.

Blindness Prevention

In adopting the resolution "Prevention of avoidable

blindness and visual impairment" (WHA59.25), the World Health Assembly called for intensified action to halt and reverse the rise in avoidable blindness in the world. In 2002, more than 161 million people were visually impaired, of whom 37 million were blind.

Global Health Agenda

The Assembly adopted a ten-year framework outlining the strategic direction for health partners across the globe that includes a situation analysis of the state of global health and seven priority areas for action, called "The Global Health Agenda." These include building global health security, promoting universal coverage for HIV/AIDS treatment, addressing the determinants of health, and strengthening health systems. WHO will use the Global Health Agenda as the basis for engaging with partners to address the critical gaps in improving people's health, in particular that of the poor.

Intellectual Property Rights

To improve access to medicines, vaccines and diagnostics for people in developing countries, the World Health Assembly agreed to establish an intergovernmental working group to draw up a global strategy and plan of action based on the recommendations of the Commission on Intellectual Property Rights, Innovation and Public Health (CIPIH) established by the WHA in 2003 (see *Go Between* 98).

The ten-member independent Commission was mandated to collect data and proposals from the different actors involved and produce an analysis of intellectual property rights, innovation, and public health, including the question of appropriate funding and incentive mechanisms for the creation of new medicines and other products against diseases that disproportionately affect developing countries. Its report, released on 3 April, contains about 50 recommendations

for making improvements in the current situation but does not call for substantive changes to the existing patent system.

CIPIH spent two years drawing up proposals on the contentious and hard-fought issues of access to medicines in poor countries. Controversy over deaths from HIV/AIDS, which has become a treatable disease in the rich world, was behind the setting up of the Commission under the former Swiss President Ruth Dreifuss.

The 228-page report urges international drug companies to reduce prices and ease patents on medicines to poor countries and calls for rich countries to avoid requiring the strengthening of patent protections as a condition to joining international trade agreements when it limits access to medications in poor countries. Further, the report recommends that developing countries use their ability to issue compulsory licensing and override patent rights when necessary.

The report is available online (www.who.int/intellectual-property/en/index.html).

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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.

5th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

The Fifth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) was held in New York from 15-26 May 2006, bringing together indigenous peoples' representatives, Member States, UN officials and NGOs to focus on focus on key developmental concerns through this year's theme "Millennium Development Goals and Indigenous Peoples: Redefining the Goals." It also launched the Programme of Action of the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People.

The Forum, made up of 16 independent experts, eight of whom are nominated by governments and eight directly by indigenous organizations in their regions, began with the launching of the Programme of Action for the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, which seeks to further strengthen global cooperation for the achievement of indigenous peoples' goals in the areas of culture, education, health, human rights, the environment and social and economic development. The end of the Second Decade in 2015 coincides with the year benchmarked for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Forum included a discussion of the main theme—Millennium Development Goals and Indigenous Peoples: Redefining the Goals—and a series of dialogues with the main stakeholders, including indigenous peoples, UN agencies, and governments. A thematic discussion on Africa was also held. The plenary session of the second week addressed ongoing priorities and themes; indigenous children; youth; women; data collection; and free, prior and informed consent.

Opening the session by noting that the work on the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples had finally wrapped up in February 2006 after 11 years of work, the Forum's Chairperson, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (Philippines), said that the creation of a set of legal standards at the international level would ensure respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples, estimated to number 370 million worldwide. She hoped that the draft would be adopted by the General Assembly before the end of the year.

Special Theme

Addressing the special theme of the session devoted to the MDGs and indigenous people, several speakers focused on the need to redefine the Goals with special emphasis on full participation of indigenous people. Milialani Trask, representative of the Indigenous Caucus, said such a review would require taking a hard look at systematic racism, discrimination and non-recognition of indigenous peoples' human rights. Political, social and environmental injustices perpetuated poverty among the world's indigenous people. The "one-dollar-a-day" parameter did not begin to adequately measure poverty in the world's vast and varied indigenous communities, she stressed, and it did not show whether there was adequate education, health-care coverage or even

food and clothing for indigenous people. Speakers also expressed deep concern over the fact that the MDG process did not take into account the real situation of indigenous people, which included the lack of voice in political systems, the lack of recognition of their collective rights, their removal from ancestral lands, and their lack of access to basic infrastructure and social services. It was pointed out that making up less than 5% of the world's population, indigenous peoples comprised 15% of the world's poor.

Dialogue with UN Agencies

During the panel discussion that featured representatives from nearly 20 UN agencies, funds and programmes and other development partners, speakers stressed that indigenous peoples must be fully empowered to play their role in achieving the MDGs, as well as the broader goals of the UN in the areas of peace, human rights and sustainable development. A representative of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) noted that while there were arguments that the absence of data on HIV prevalence rates among indigenous communities might lead to neglect or invisibility, on the other hand, collection of such data might fuel stigma and discrimination. UNAIDS had identified several key areas where the Forum could help make a difference, including working with relevant UN agencies and partners in developing a set of resources highlighting effective approaches and best practices of HIV prevention and AIDS care in indigenous communities.

The representative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said that, for UN entities, as well as other intergovernmental organizations, further inter-agency cooperation and coordination was necessary to provide more data and channel more resources for case studies and other research on indigenous peoples and their communities. Sharing information was particularly important, in order to study the nexus between indigenous peoples and migration in such areas as displacement, preservation of languages and cultural identities and the elaboration of culturally sensitive policies.

The Role of Governments

On 17 May, the Forum focused on the role of governments in the advancement of indigenous peoples' rights, with several speakers expressing hope that the anticipated adoption of the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous people this year—one of the objectives of the First Decade—would serve as a blueprint for establishing genuine partnerships for the

promotion of their rights.

The representative of New Zealand, who also spoke on behalf of Australia and the US, said that any attempt to put that draft forward for endorsement in the UN would be disingenuous and irresponsible. It lacked consensus and, endorsement of that text, which many States could never live up to, would be a gross disservice to indigenous people. Among the provisions lacking consensus, he listed text articulating self-determination for indigenous peoples, which, in his opinion, were inconsistent with international human rights law.

New Zealand's statement elicited a strong reaction from several of the Forum's members, who insisted on the need to recognize the rights of indigenous peoples at the international level, and said that the failure to adopt the draft would represent a serious setback. One expert said that the world's indigenous peoples should have representation at territorial levels. The draft had been shaped by those who understood the importance of land, territories and resources to indigenous people. Now was the time to leave political views behind and move forward and adopt the text.

Ongoing Priorities and Themes

Opening the discussion on 22 May, Rodolfo Stevenhagen, Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples, told the Permanent Forum that the "health of the world was being severely challenged," from the Arctic Circle to the Amazon jungle, because of the unsustainable use of natural resources and the destruction of woodland and aquatic habitats. The obvious impact was being felt by the indigenous people living in, and dependent on, those resources, especially medicinal plants and flora, which were being devastated by air and water pollution. The "implementation gap" was one of the main obstacles standing in the way of human rights by indigenous groups, he said, noting that, on the one hand, some legislation was not always consistent with other laws, which tended to be enforced with a greater priority.

A number of participants noted that cut off from resources and traditions vital to their welfare and survival, and with the disruption of their traditional ways of life by waste dumping, strip mining, overfishing, and rapid urbanization, the draft declaration reinforced the rights of indigenous peoples to the protection of their cultural property and identity, as well as the rights to education, employment, health, religion, language and more. It also protected the right of indigenous peoples to own land collectively.

Indigenous Women and Children

On 23 May, the Forum took up the precarious situation of indigenous women and children, with speakers calling on governments to devote resources and target legislation, policies and services to support indigenous families, as well as provide culturally appropriate education and health care, to help end the routine discrimination, sexual exploitation and violence indigenous women and youth faced.

Representatives of indigenous groups and tribal communities emphasized that improving the lives of indigenous children was crucial not only for their own health and wellbeing, but for the overall future of indigenous peoples. As for indigenous women—often the most disadvantaged and marginalized group in any country—the participants made a strong call for the equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all individuals, both men and women.

Conclusion

Concluding on 26 May, the Forum recommended the adoption of the draft declaration by the General Assembly during its 61st session. In her closing remarks, Ms. Tauli-Corpuz said that eventual adoption was "crucial" because that would provide the framework for a real partnership to be forged between governments and indigenous peoples. On 29 June 2006, the 47 members of the Human Rights Council adopted the draft declaration by a vote of 30 in favour, 12 abstentions and 2 against (3 absent). (See also Focus Page 24.)

In a text focusing on the session's theme (E/C.19/2006/L.2), the Forum noted that many indigenous people were concerned that developed countries treated the MDGs as a matter of foreign policy, relevant only to international aid programmes. The Forum urged developed countries to adopt national processes to implement the Goals, with "the full and effective" participation of their indigenous communities, and strongly encouraged all States to provide disaggregated data on health and social welfare indicators, to understand where indigenous societies stand in the process. The text also laments the absence of information on issues such as economic marginalization, migration, the spread of HIV/AIDS, and the "staggering prevalence" of diabetes in indigenous societies. Recognizing that the MDGs do not address the specific needs of indigenous peoples, through another text (E/C.19/2006/L.3/Add.2) the Permanent Forum urges States to urgently collect disaggregated data and adopt culturally sensitive indicators to monitor the implementation of the Goals among indigenous peoples.

Through a text containing recommendations on indigenous women, children and youth (E/C.19/2006/L.3), the Forum recommends that appropriate UN agencies take immediate action to review and monitor the situation of indigenous women and girls, and provide comprehensive reports on violence, particularly sexual violence in the context of armed conflict. The text also recommends that the Secretary-General, in his study on violence against women, address the situation of indigenous women and girls, whose suffering is based not only on gender, but also on ethnicity and culture.

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World Urban Forum III: Creating Sustainable Cities

The Third Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF3), convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and the Government of Canada, was held in Vancouver from 19-23 June. It brought together almost 10,000 participants from over 100 countries representing governments, UN agencies, civil society, urban professionals, local authorities, the private sector and others to examine rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies and policies, and to help move forward the international urban agenda.

Held every two years, the Forum this year worked under the theme "Sustainable Cities – Turning Ideas into Action" and included dialogue and special sessions, 13 roundtables and over 160 networking events that explored issues surrounding sustainable urban development. WUF3 also marked the 30th anniversary of the first UN Conference on Human Settlements.

In a message read on his behalf, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated that over the past three decades the world has become more urbanized, congested and polluted, and less equitable, with more than half of the developing world's urban population living in slums. Highlighting links between opportunities and deprivation, he called for scaling up efforts to make the planet more just, equitable and sustainable for all its inhabitants.

UN-HABITAT Executive Director Anna Tibaijuka in her opening statement suggested that the failure to achieve urban sustainability has been due to a lack of political support for proper urban planning. She underscored the Forum's central role in engaging civil society in the UN-HABITAT process.

Noting that most population growth in the next 25 years will take place in the cities of the developing world, Noli de Castro, Vice-President of the Philippines, highlighted connections between urban poverty and the struggle for democracy, and underscored the role of WUF3 in addressing slum upgrading, housing finance, gender issues and realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Plenary sessions held from 20-22 June addressed the three sub-themes of social inclusion and cohesion; partnership and finance; and urban growth and environment. Speaking during the session on social inclusion and cohesion, Alphonso Jackson, Secretary of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, advocated home ownership as a means of improving the strength and safety of cities and as key to financial security, social engagement and higher education. Conversely, he said homelessness has a devastating effect on urban areas.

Jockin Arputham, President, National Slum Dwellers Federation of India, outlined actions taken by slum dwellers to improve their situation, called for stopping forced evictions, and advocated community-based development and genuine cooperation between the

developed world and slum dwellers.

Lindiwe Sisulu, South Africa's Minister of Housing, noted that many of the poor are excluded from services they need and marginalized by unemployment and illiteracy. Poverty affects 80% of the urban population in the developing world and urbanization of the poor is accelerating at a rate most governments cannot manage.

The session on partnership and finance saw participants discussing the impact of cities as engines for growth in developing countries and the positive role urbanization could play. Also emphasized was the role of partnerships and the need for innovative and timely financing.

Mohammad Yousaf Pashtun, Afghanistan's Minister of Urban Development, outlined sustainable urban development challenges and efforts to rebuild urban infrastructure after 25 years of war in his country. He stressed that cities have a central role to play in Afghanistan's transition from a post-conflict emergency situation to stability, and called for the achievement of sustainable peace and development through partnerships with the international community.

Robert Williams, Deputy Mayor of Georgetown, Guyana, noted that cities cannot be vibrant without engagement at all levels and that partnerships are not an option but a requirement for the development of cities. He stressed the need to move away from traditional sources of financing to meet the increasing costs of urban management, and called for direct negotiations between international financial institutions and municipalities to fast-track loans and grants for urban development.

The plenary session on urban growth and environment looked at planning for sustainable urbanization, including the need for networks of stakeholders to address sanitation, transportation, "smart" growth, water and the environment.

Eveline Herfkens, Executive Coordinator of the UN Millennium Campaign, stressed that it is essential to attack the roots of poverty in working towards sustainable development. She said the MDGs represent a global deal requiring local level implementation and that the past mistake of the donor community has been to view the poor only as clients, as opposed to partners, of development. Ms. Herfkens called for keeping promises made at the highest political level.

Participants commented on cities being at the forefront of the major health and nutrition challenges, and the challenge of cities in developing countries addressing violence, sanitation, and unemployment.

The Ministers' Roundtable, held on 19 June, focused on three themes: the role of governments in urban sustainability; the potential for partnerships; and the importance of linking national governments' international agendas to the local level. Ministers highlighted measures taken to meet urban sustainability challenges within their countries, with many supporting decentralization, civil society engagement, and the development of a common system by which to measure sustainability, poverty and urbanization. Participants agreed that government has a strong role to play in providing guidance, funding and capacity building for local authorities in their sustainability efforts, and for securing tenure of social housing.

The discussion on linking national governments' international agendas to the local level drew a wide range of comments, including on the advantages of administrative decentralization in efforts to achieve the MDGs, and housing as the most important issue in countries emerging from conflict. It was acknowledged that countries face different as well as common challenges, and that solutions should be shared.

A large number of other roundtables were also held. The Parliamentary Roundtable provided parliamentarians with the opportunity to discuss legislative initiatives surrounding human settlements, urban development and affordable housing, through two segments: a retrospective of the past 20 years regarding urban legislation, and a consideration of emerging priorities and future policies in support of urban sustainability.

Several parliamentarians stressed differences among countries in the utilization of various tools, including centres of expertise for regional development; the consolidation of municipal self-government; waste management; and environmental assessment. In looking to the future, participants urged raising urban poverty as a political priority, and directing foreign aid towards slums. Delegates proposed the creation of a fund to support housing and urban development in African countries.

The NGO Roundtable, working under the theme "Assets and Struggles: 30 Years After Vancouver Habitat Forum," focused on producing recommendations to UN-HABITAT around several themes. On forced eviction, participants noted the importance of NGO work in supporting community-based initiatives to strengthen monitoring and increase security of land tenure, solidarity and local action.

On privatization, participants pointed out that market forces were currently part of the problem and not the solution. Some participants suggested that WUF

discussions had yet to adequately address the protection of the rights of displaced people, and that civil society should demand good governance with respect to this.

On involving local people in all aspects of post-disaster reconstruction, participants urged government accountability in the financing of disaster relief.

The Private Sector Roundtable discussed how the private sector can contribute to urban sustainability. Suggestions included: providing management expertise and cost control; building social housing; and working with government to create market mechanisms to encourage investment in social housing.

The Women's Roundtable focused on the theme "Empowering the Millennium Development Goals: Grassroots Women Meet the Challenge." Several participants remarked that many women's groups work towards meeting the MDGs without knowing it. They also shared initiatives ranging from dialogue with local authorities to a national anti-poverty campaign, and emphasized proper parenting as an important tool against crime and violence. One participant called for meaningful engagement of aboriginal women in policy development and implementation.

The Youth Roundtable underscored youth's potential to contribute to solving urgent global problems. Participants identified a range of barriers to youth leadership and ways to overcome these, including through: North-South partnerships; art, culture and sports; education and training; and the media.

Noting the dire realities for youth in developing countries with respect to education, health and employment, and their exposure to drugs, HIV/AIDS, violence, home eviction, and child labour, several developing country participants called for more opportunities to share experiences and for youth in the North to support hope and effect change in the South. One panellist said the message should be kept simple to garner the political will to push forward a positive youth agenda.

The Third World Urban Forum concluded with a call for strengthening partnerships for urban development, as well as with a growing recognition of the need to address the underlying causes of urbanization in order to achieve the vision of sustainable human settlements for all.

On the final day, participants took part in a special session providing insight on the emerging issues from WUF3 that could be tabled at WUF4, scheduled to be held in Nanjing (China) in 2008.

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2006 Review Conference for the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons

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 26 June-7 July 2006. It sought to identify and put in place more precise guidelines and mechanisms to address the obstacles to implementing the 2001 Programme of Action (PoA).

The Programme of Action (PoA), which was adopted by all Member States in 2001, requires Member States to collect and destroy illegal weapons, curb their trafficking, regulate the activities of brokers and impose import and export controls (see *NGLS Roundup 80*). Since its adoption, the PoA has stimulated a wide range of initiatives at the national, regional and international levels, with more than 50 countries strengthening their laws to control the illegal trade in guns, including pistols, assault rifles, machine guns and other light weapons (estimated to cause 60%-90% of all deaths in conflicts every year). In 2005, small arms alone were responsible for the deaths of over half a million people—10,000 per week. The global trade in small arms is worth about US\$4 billion a year, of which one-fourth, or US\$1 billion, is considered illegal, according to the annual report *Small Arms Survey*, an independent research project at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva.

The Conference opened with the election of its President, Sri Lankan Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam. In his message, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stressed twice that "[T]his Review Conference is not negotiating a 'global gun ban,' nor do we wish to deny law-abiding citizens their right to bear arms in accordance with their national laws." Noting that continued proliferation exacerbates conflict, sparks refugee flows, undermines the rule of law and spawns a culture of violence and impunity, Mr. Annan said, "Our energy, our emphasis and our anger is directed against illegal weapons, not legal ones. Our priorities are effective enforcement, better controls and regulation, safer stockpiling, and weapons collection and destruction. Our targets remain unscrupulous arms brokers, corrupt officials, drug trafficking syndicates, criminals and others who bring death and mayhem to our communities, and who ruin lives and destroy, in minutes, the labour of years."

Voicing hope that participants would agree on measures to strengthen the implementation of the PoA, General Assembly President Jan Eliasson (Sweden) stressed, "The importance of this Review Conference cannot be overstated. We must maintain the momentum generated by the 2001 Conference. We must ensure that the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons remains high on the agenda of the United Nations."

Difficult Negotiations

During the negotiations, a number of Member States, UN agencies and civil society representatives presented their

perspectives on what they thought the final outcome document should include. The representative of Nigeria said the Review Conference should make far-reaching recommendations to end the illicit exploitation of diamonds, timber, crude oil and other natural resources—a practice that has fuelled weapons proliferation, insecurity and instability in his and other African nations, while robbing them of resources essential for development. The meeting should also recommend a common standard for end-user certification, stockpile management and security of illegal small arms and light weapons (SALW).

The representative of the Republic of Moldova said that Member States should agree to make legally binding the provisions of the recently adopted international instrument on weapons tracing, which should also cover peacekeeping operations and ammunition. They should also negotiate a legally-binding accord on arms brokering. He suggested that the guidelines developed at the mid-April Nairobi meeting within the Transfer Controls Initiative (launched by the UK in 2003) could serve as a blueprint for global guidelines that reflected States' existing responsibilities under international law.

Kathleen Cravero, Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said that, in their final outcome document, Member States must include comprehensive, development-oriented commitments that reflected the global community's increased knowledge and new consensus on the links between armed conflict and human development. Otherwise, the document risked being seen as irrelevant by millions worldwide whose daily lives were compromised by gun violence.

Dominique Buff, Head of the Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to the UN, said the commitments made in the 2001 PoA were too general, making it difficult to assess progress and determine adequate implementation in a given area. The Review Conference should provide more precise guidelines for fulfilling and building on existing commitments. The ICRC proposed that the outcome document acknowledge the commitments of States Parties to the Geneva Conventions to make international humanitarian law the fundamental criteria for assessing decisions on arms transfer.

Patricia Lewis, Director of the United Nations Institute for

Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), noted that research funded by the EU and the United Kingdom had illustrated the need to integrate development and humanitarian assistance into European small arms initiatives. Research in Central Europe, Africa and elsewhere had revealed the importance of women's participation in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. She also proposed that taxes paid by legal arms producers and brokers be set aside to fund such programmes, weapons collection and survivor assistance, and thus lend a hand to governments.

After days of negotiations, delegates were unable to reach consensus on a political declaration meant to reflect their consensus on the most serious threats and the best way to fight the illegal trade in small arms, thus failing to provide the General Assembly with either a mandate to conduct a further review in five years, or guidance on future implementation of the PoA.

One sensitive area centred on follow-up measures to implementation. The US delegation, which included members of the National Rifle Association, insisted that there was no need for any further international review conference on the issue of illegal gun trade, noting that instead that such meetings should be held at regional levels. However, a vast majority of delegates supported the view that the issue needs attention at the global level and there was widespread support for a call to hold a similar conference five years from now.

A number of nations refused to disclose the extent of their small-arms trade, and were unwilling to discuss restrictions on ammunition and national gun ownership, selling weapons to non-state actors and tracing weapons back to their original seller.

In spite of the failure of the conference to reach consensus on the political declaration, Member States planned to raise many of the same issues in the UN Disarmament Committee—where consensus is not needed for agreement—to begin preparing a treaty that would make law out of many of the global principles supported by non-governmental groups, such as an NGO proposal for tightening controls on international arms transfers. At its heart is a promise to make sure that countries do not sell weapons to buyers who could then pass them on illegally. Although this proposal won support from 115 governments, a number of countries, including India, Pakistan, Russia, Cuba and Iran, obstructed it.

Asserting that the real victims of the outcome were the millions of people around the world dying daily from small arms violence, Finland's speaker, on behalf of the European Union, said he "deplored the lack of progress on the priority areas," as well as on issues such as the role of civil society, civilian possession, gender issues, stockpiles management, man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS), and the human rights aspects of the illicit use of small arms.

Delegates from Guatemala, Japan, Australia, France, Pakistan and many countries also expressed their dissatisfaction with the final outcome of the meeting, though they all voiced their hope that the international efforts against the illicit gun trade would continue.

Rebecca Peters of the London-based International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) accused governments of letting a few States "hold them all hostage and to derail any plans which might have brought any improvements in this global crisis."

International civil society groups, such as Amnesty International, Oxfam and IANSA, said they were unhappy with the final results of the meeting. "More than 12,000 people have been killed in the world since this conference began," said Anthea Lawson of IANSA. "It's ludicrous that they have missed the opportunity to save millions of lives." Civil society representatives said they were particularly concerned about omissions of references to human rights, development and gender issues in the document.

Closing the two-week session, the Conference President said that an agreed final document had been "within grasp", but, ultimately, it had been impossible to conclude it. In the final analysis, however, the PoA had remained an enabling framework that empowered States, global and regional organizations, and civil society to work for its full and effective implementation. Its validity and effectiveness remained undiminished; it was a living document. In the action plan, the international community shared a common blueprint of what needed to be done and how to achieve the objectives, Mr. Kariyawasam stressed.

The *Small Arms Survey 2006: Unfinished Business* offers new and updated information on small arms production, stockpiles, transfers, and measures, including a review of the International Tracing Instrument. This year's thematic chapters examine issues such as the demand for weapons, small arms and security sector reform, and the economic costs of small arms use. It also features case studies on small arms violence in Papua New Guinea and Colombia, armed groups in West Africa, and the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda. The final chapter—Angry Young Men—considers why young men account for the lion's share of global small arms violence. The *Survey* is available online: (www.smallarmssurvey.org/files/sas/publications/yearb2006.html).

Contact: Conventional Arms Branch, Department for Disarmament Affairs, Room S-31701, United Nations, New York NY 10017, USA, telephone +1-212/863 3768, fax +1-212/963 1121, website (www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/index.html).

More information on the Transfer Controls Initiative is available online: ([www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/rc.wp.1%20\(E\).pdf](http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/rc.wp.1%20(E).pdf)).

First Steps Towards the Implementation of WSIS

Both phases of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) called for implementation and follow-up to build an inclusive development oriented information society. A number of initiatives have been put into place to facilitate the implementation process, including multistakeholder meetings on the WSIS Action Lines and the Internet Governance Forum. A World Information Society Day has also been created.

World Information Society Day

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), held in Tunis in November 2005 (see *NGLS Roundup 124*), adopted the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, which recognizes that there is a need to build more awareness of the Internet. It specifically called upon the UN General Assembly to declare 17 May World Information Society Day. On 27 March 2006, the General Assembly adopted resolution A/RES/60/252 proclaiming 17 May as annual World Information Society Day to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of the Internet and other information communications technologies (ICTs) can provide and to accelerate the pace of development.

The first World Information Society Day was commemorated on 17 May 2006 in Geneva and also marked the inception of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in 1865. For the occasion, the first ITU World Information Society Award was presented to the President Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade, and Muhammad Yunus, Managing Director of Grameen Bank, Bangladesh, for their contributions that have furthered the cause of building a more inclusive and equitable information society.

Mr. Wade was instrumental in the creation of the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF), which serves as an innovative financial mechanism of a voluntary nature that aims to provide digital opportunities for the developing world. The Geneva-based DSF also aims to bridge other divides, such as gender, that deny the benefits of development to the less privileged and vulnerable. By harnessing local resources and looking at the difficulties afflicting poor and remote communities, the Fund's work is complementary to that of major financial institutions and multilateral development agencies.

Receiving the award, Mr. Wade said, "[A] better balanced, more harmonious information society should be founded on widespread access to computer tools, to ensure that those countries which now lag behind in this area will not be permanently marginalized. The aim of the Digital Solidarity Fund is to make it possible for everyone to be connected, listen in, make their voices heard and keep pace with our ever-changing world," adding, "For our peoples, the mass dissemination of information and communication technologies represents an appointment

with history that we cannot fail to keep."

Mr. Yunus helped pioneer microcredit for the rural poor in Bangladesh. The provision of wireless payphone service in the rural areas of Bangladesh has also helped empower a new class of women entrepreneurs. Accepting the award, Mr. Yunus said that the poor women in the Grameen network are now considered so reliable as business partners that they are being inducted not only to sell airtime but also to sell telephone connections for new subscribers. "ICT can change the face of the poor dramatically," he said. Outlining the various ICT initiatives that have spun off from the Grameen Bank concept such as Grameen Software, the Grameen ICT training company, and others, he called for a "social stock market" to bring entrepreneurs and social investors into contact to solve the problem of availability of investment funds.

Series of WSIS-related Events

A series of events were held from 9-19 May related to the implementation of the 11 WSIS Action Lines (see *NGLS Roundup 109*), with Geneva being the venue for several steps being taken towards implementation and follow-up action. As specified in the Tunis Agenda, ITU along with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have taken the lead to facilitate implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action. Moderators/facilitators of WSIS Action Lines, including ITU, UNESCO, UNDP, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), have held multistakeholder meetings to take the implementation process forward.

More information on the series of events related to the implementation of WSIS Action Lines is available online: (www.itu.int/ws/2006/events/index.html).

Action Line Facilitation Meetings and the respective final reports of the meetings are available: (www.itu.int/ws/implementation/meetings.html).

A listing of WSIS Action Line Facilitators and Focal Points is also available: (www.itu.int/ws/implementation/)

facilitators.html).

UN Group on the Information Society

The United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS), established by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan at the request of the WSIS Summit and in consultation with members of the UN system Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), held its inaugural meeting on 14 July 2006 at ITU headquarters in Geneva, bringing together high-level representatives from 22 UN agencies. ITU Secretary-General Yoshio Utsumi served as chairperson to facilitate the process. UNGIS will serve as an interagency coordinating mechanism within the UN system to implement the outcomes of WSIS. The group will strive to create coherence and synergies aimed at resolving substantive and policy issues, avoiding redundancies and enhancing the effectiveness of the system while raising public awareness about the goals and objectives of the global information society.

The Group agreed on a work plan in which it would concentrate its collective efforts each year on one or two cross-cutting themes and on a few selected countries. During the first year, UNGIS will be chaired by ITU, with UNESCO, UNDP and the World Health Organization (WHO) acting as vice-chairs.

More information is available online (www.ungis.org).

Meeting of the IGF Advisory Group

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has established an Advisory Group to assist him in convening the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), a new forum for a multistakeholder dialogue on Internet governance. The Group includes 47 members from government, the private sector and civil society, including the academic and technical communities, who represent all regions of the world.

Chaired by Nitin Desai, the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the IGF is an outcome of the Tunis phase of the WSIS in November 2005. In the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, governments asked the Secretary-General to convene the Forum, giving it the mandate to discuss the main public policy issues related to Internet governance, in order to foster the Internet’s sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development. Governments have called for the Forum to be convened in an “open and inclusive process.” Accordingly, the Advisory Group aims to carry out its work in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, and will seek to make the best possible use of electronic working methods, including online consultations.

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Advisory Group met in Geneva from 22- 23 May with the main task of preparing the substantive agenda and programme for its first meeting to be held in Athens in late October 2006.

The Group agreed on a number of recommendations for the agenda, the programme and the structure and format of the first meeting, and the recommendations have been forward to the Secretary-General who was mandated by the second phase of the WSIS to convene “by the second quarter of 2006, a new meeting for a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue.” The meeting will be held over four days from 30 October – 2 November in Athens and the overall theme of the meeting will be “Internet Governance for Development.”

The Advisory Group recommended that a number of broad themes be addressed: openness; security; diversity and access, while capacity building will be a cross-cutting priority.

Useful Websites:

Internet Governance Forum Secretariat (www.intgovforum.org/index.htm)

IGF Host Country (www.igfgreece2006.gr)

Promoting the Multilingual Internet

ITU and UNESCO convened the Global Symposium on Promoting the Multilingual Internet as a follow-up of WSIS Phase II from 9-11 May 2006 in Geneva. The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society highlights the importance of multilingualism for bridging the digital divide and identifies ITU as taking the lead role in the implementation of information and communication infrastructure, ITU/UNESCO for access to information and knowledge, and UNESCO for cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content.

The symposium examined issues which are highlighted in paragraph 53 of the WSIS Tunis Agenda, including: 1) options for advancing the process for the introduction of multilingualism in a number of areas including domain names, email addresses and keyword look-up; 2) options for implementing programmes, also in cooperation with other appropriate organizations, that allow for the presence of multilingual domain names and content on the internet and the use of various software models in order to fight against the linguistic digital divide and ensure the participation of all in the emerging new society; and 3) options for strengthening cooperation between relevant bodies for the further development of technical standards and to foster their global deployment. In addition the symposium reviewed technical solutions and current experiences, identified open issues and discussed a roadmap for further steps to promote multilingualism on the Internet.

Contact:

WSIS Executive Secretariat, International Telecommunication Union, Place des Nations, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, telephone +41-22/730 6039, fax +41-22/730 5933, website (www.itu.int/wsis/).

Social Forum 2006: The Role of Women in the Fight against Poverty

The 2006 Social Forum of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights was held in Geneva from 3-4 August, addressing the theme "The fight against poverty and the right to participation: the role of women." The Forum included a number of panels and debates, in particular on the feminization of poverty and women's empowerment.

Operating within the framework of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, the two-day Forum brought together representatives from international organizations, social movements, grassroots organizations, NGOs and academic experts. It provided an opportunity for a number of actors not often represented at the UN to present their concerns on issues surrounding poverty. Established in 2002, the Forum has been taking place annually, expect in 2003.

In her opening remarks, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mehr Khan Williams, underlined the important role played by the Social Forum in providing an opportunity to discuss the impact of poverty and destitution on the realization of human rights among representatives of the most vulnerable groups, civil society, States and intergovernmental organizations. She reminded participants that this year's topic focused on the poorest of the poor. This theme must be analysed in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially Goal 1 (Eradication of poverty) and Goal 3 (Gender equality and empower women), as gender equality is crucial for their achievement, she stressed.

Ms. Khan Williams emphasized that the Social Forum has a privileged role in hearing views from civil society and the possibility to contribute to the shaping of the vision and recommendations on the future of expert advice to the Human Rights Council. She reminded participants that the views raised during this Forum would also contribute to the discussion on the review of the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty.

The Chairperson of the Forum, José Bengoa (Chile), reminded participants that, while poverty is a topic present in most international debates, rarely is it analyzed in relation to human rights as it is in the Social Forum. The growing gap between poor and rich people, both in developing and developed countries, the unequal distribution of wealth and increasing rural poverty are all concerns of particular interest to Forum members.

The Social Forum consisted of five sessions, two plenary and three panel sessions. The first day of the Social Forum was dedicated to the theme of women and poverty.

Session 1 focused on the feminization of poverty: causes, effects and solutions. Chin-sung Chung (South Korea) presented a working paper on the "challenges of

women's participation in policies and strategies to combat poverty and extreme poverty." The concept of the feminization of poverty takes into account quantitative and qualitative indicators, such as income poverty and deep-rooted institutional barriers respectively. Ms. Chung reminded participants that the participatory approach to development requires the enjoyment of other human rights, such as the right of association and assembly, freedom of expression and right to information.

Participation is also hindered by the breach of human rights, particularly by violence against women, she stressed. An enabling environment for women's rights is therefore essential to achieve poverty reduction. Following the presentation three panellists representing grassroots organization in India, Eritrea and Guatemala examined the theme of the panel, drawing on their personal experiences and presenting cases and projects from their respective countries. Panellists included Kalyani Menon-Sen (Jagori, India), Tsegga Gaim (National Union of Eritrean Women, Eritrea), Ana Maria Olmedo Ramos (Fransicans International Guatemala) and Joanna Koch, UN representative (Associated Country Women of the World). During the general debate that followed, several speakers expressed their support for focusing on the root causes of poverty, including culture and tradition. In relation to this, the representative of International Instruments for Indigenous Continental Women of the Americas brought to the attention of the participants that indigenous women often suffer a triple discrimination for being women, poor and indigenous.

Session 2 explored "women, employment, and empowerment through participation," with the four panellists—gender specialists from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Bank, the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)—focusing on different aspects of empowerment through participation, including employment, development projects, political participation and indicators for measuring the gender gap.

Mary Kawar (ILO) stated that the core of empowerment lies in women's ability to control their own destiny and as a consequence women need to have equal access to rights, resources, capabilities and their application. Ms. Kawar underlined that there are two approaches to employment: one privileging an equity approach (which addresses inequalities and ensures that policies and

actions do not exacerbate the situation of women in the labour market) and another promoting an efficiency approach (which addresses the special needs of women to ensure their fulfilment in the work environment). In both approaches women must be considered as actors and agents, not as recipient and beneficiaries.

Edith Ballantyne, former Secretary-General of the WILPF, questioned why, despite the international conventions and declarations on human rights, the social and economic environment for fighting poverty has not been successfully changed and, moreover, why poverty and the gap between rich and poor is increasing. She recalled that empowerment, both of men and women, in order to bring about changes to their condition must be the focus in fighting poverty. She also underlined the importance of empowerment to end poverty, especially as women are those most affected by increasing poverty. She placed a special emphasis on increasing women's participation to overcome poverty and to address the topic with a comprehensive approach which challenges the socio-economic system. Other panellists were Teresa Genta-Fos (World Bank) and Saadia Zahidi (WEF).

The plenary discussion of Session 3 provided participants with an opportunity to look forward by looking at the conclusions that had been drawn and the recommendations that had been made. During the general debate that followed, participants and panellists discussed measures that contribute to gender equality and proposed, among others, promotion of sound national social and economic policies, implementation of international human rights standards related to women; furthermore they addressed cultural and traditional practices, promotion of women participation at the decision-making level and wider access to education and training.

Recommendations included that all international, national, and local level actors committed to fight poverty focus on eliminating the root causes of poverty and feminization of poverty. The Social Forum recommended that States increase women's access to information and accept direct and transparent accountability for achieving equality and women human rights. States that have not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol are urged to do so. The Social Forum also recommended that States take substantive measures to promote and ensure women's rights. Furthermore, the Social Forum called on States to remove the deep-rooted structural barriers and human rights violations against women that impede the effective participation of women and their empowerment. In particular, measures should target women's participation in private, social, and public life.

Session 4 included a discussion of the draft guiding principles on "Extreme Poverty and Human Rights: the

right of the poor," which was prepared by the ad-hoc expert group on the need to develop guiding principles on the implementation of existing human rights norms and standards in the context of the fight against extreme poverty. Yozo Yokota, member of the ad hoc expert group, presented the draft guiding principles and outlined the four assumptions of the document. First, the ad-hoc expert group decided to apply a rights-based approach to poverty and extreme poverty, which implies that the duty bearers need to take immediate measures to ensure that all people enjoy human rights. Secondly, as stated in the Vienna Declaration, the expert group applied a holistic approach to human rights, recalling their universality, indivisibility, interdependence, and interrelatedness and consequential reflection on the lives of persons living in poverty and extreme poverty. Thirdly, the expert group felt that the poor should own the processes and freely participate in formulating and implementing solutions in the fight against poverty. Lastly, they stressed the importance of adopting measures and mechanisms to ensure that rights are enforced. Representatives of two NGOs active in the field in the fight against poverty, Thierry Viard (ATD Quart Monde) and Peter Prove (Lutheran Word Federation), commented on the draft guiding principles.

Session 5 included a plenary discussion on "Vision and recommendations for expert advice to the Human Rights Council: The Future of the Social Forum." During the discussion, participants discussed the future role of the Social Forum in light of the newly established Human Rights Council. The Forum members, representatives of States, and civil society participants expressed a consensus concerning their vision for the future of the Social Forum and all highly recommended that the Human Rights Council preserve the mandate of the Social Forum. They recognized that the Social Forum is a unique mechanism that plays a special and indispensable role in the United Nations human rights system and, therefore, merits continuation. In particular it was recognized that its main added values to the system, which consists in providing an opportunity for directly dialoguing with the poor and most vulnerable people, should be maintained. Furthermore it was recognized that, as also stated in Resolution 2005/8, the current reform of the United Nations should take into account the contribution of the Social Forum as a space for dialogue that can be found nowhere else in the United Nations human rights system.

Contact: Secretariat of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, OHCHR, Palais Wilson, 52 rue des Pâquis, CH-1202 Geneva, Switzerland, telephone +41-22/917 9328, fax +41-22/917 9011, website (www.ohchr.org/english/issues/poverty/sforum.htm).

• **Children**

Committee on the Rights of the Child, 43rd session, 11 - 29 September, Geneva

• **Department of Public Information**

59th Annual DPI/NGO Conference, Unfinished Business: Effective Partnerships for Human Security and Sustainable Development, 6-8 September, New York

• **Disarmament**

States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, 18-22 September, Geneva

• **General Assembly**

General Assembly, 61st session, 12 September - December, New York

• **Human Rights**

2nd Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, 18 September - 10 October, Geneva

Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Fifth Session, 30 October - 3 November, Geneva

• **International Criminal Court**

Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Budget and Finance Committee, 9 - 13 October, The Hague

• **Least Developed Countries**

General Assembly, High-Level Meeting on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, 18-19 September, New York

Preparatory Expert Meeting for the High-Level Meeting on the Midterm Comprehensive Review, 5-7 September, New York

• **Migration**

General Assembly High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, 14-15 September, New York

Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Fifth Session, 30 October - 3 November, Geneva

• **Refugees**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Executive Committee, 57th session, 2-6 October, Geneva

UNHCR-NGO Pre-EXCOM Consultations, 27-29 September, Geneva

• **Trade and Development**

UNCTAD, Trade and Development Board, 53rd session, 25 September - 6 October, Geneva

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