

GO

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United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)
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UN UPDATE

BAN KI-MOON: NEW UN SECRETARY-GENERAL

On 13 October the United Nations General Assembly appointed Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon of the Republic of Korea as the world body's next Secretary-General, to succeed Kofi Annan when he steps down on 31 December 2006.

Addressing the assembled delegates, the Secretary-General-designate, who will be the UN's eighth chief and the second from Asia, pledged to carry out reforms, building on Mr. Annan's legacy.

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NEW HEAD OF WHO APPOINTED

Margaret Chan of China was nominated by the Executive Board of the World Health Organization (WHO) for the post of Director-General, the chief technical and administrative officer of the organization. The nomination was approved by the World Health Assembly on 9 November.

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WFP: NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR APPOINTED

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Director-General Jacques Diouf have announced their appointment of Josette Sheeran (United States) as Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), in succession to James Morris.

Ms. Sheeran currently serves as Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business

and Agricultural Affairs of the US Government where she is responsible for economic issues including development, trade, agriculture, finance, energy, telecommunications and transportation.

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HLP ON COHERENCE RELEASES ITS REPORT

The High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment, released its report, entitled *Delivering as One*, on 9 November, putting forward a series of recommendations to overcome what it calls the fragmentation of the United Nations so that the system can deliver as one, serving the needs of all countries in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed development goals. The Panel, composed of current and former heads of State, high-level political personalities and leaders of development agencies, was appointed in February 2006 by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (see *Go Between 109*) to respond to the 2005 World Summit call for greater coherence in the UN's development-related portfolio (see *NGLS Roundup 124*).

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REPORT OF THE ALLIANCE OF CIVILIZATIONS

"Diverse cultural identities are an integral part of the richness of human experience and as such must be respected and promoted. In particular, traditions and customs play a key role in the development and transmission of modern identity. But the inexorable push toward a 'globalized' world has challenged group identities in many parts of the world, including Latin America, Africa and Asia. The advances of the latter half of the twentieth century

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opened up the possibility that diverse nations and cultures would communicate more easily, negotiate their interests on a more level playing field, and pursue common goals while maintaining their distinctive identities and belief systems. What many feel has emerged instead is an international system that offers the prospect of economic wellbeing for some in exchange for greater conformity and homogenization of cultures, complete with the dislocation of families and communities brought about by urbanization, the negation or appropriation of traditional lifestyles, and environmental degradation. Where communities feel they are faced with marginalization, foreclosed options for the future or even oppression and eradication, some inevitably respond by asserting their primary identities more forcefully," states the Report [paragraph 3.6] of the High-level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations, launched on 13 November 2006 in Istanbul (Turkey).

The Alliance of Civilizations, an initiative set up by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2005 and co-sponsored by the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, sought to

help bridge the gap between Islam and the West (see *Go Between* 108). Through its report, the 20-member High-level Group of the Alliance of Civilizations puts forward concrete proposals for long-term initiatives in order to promote a culture of respect and understanding among Western and Muslim communities.

The 39-page report is structured in two parts: Part I presents an analysis of the global context and of the state of relations between Muslim and Western societies. It concludes with a set of policy recommendations, indicating that certain political steps are pre-requisites to any substantial and lasting improvement in relations between Muslim and Western societies.

Part II of the report reflects the High-level Group's view that tensions across cultures have spread beyond the political level into the hearts and minds of populations. To counter this trend, the Group analyzes and presents recommendations in each of four thematic areas: education, youth, migration, and media.

Main recommendations include:

- Develop a “White Paper” to renew efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;
- Appoint a High Representative for the Alliance by the Secretary-General to assist in defusing cross cultural tensions, build bridges of understanding and create pathways toward reconciliation, especially in times of crisis; and
- Urge leaders and shapers of public opinion to refrain from using inflammatory language and behave responsibly.

The High-level Group held three main meetings throughout the year—in Palma de Mallorca (Spain), Doha (Qatar) and Dakar (Senegal)—as well as a working session in New York. Their work was supported by wide ranging analysis and research conducted and commissioned by the Alliance of Civilizations Secretariat. Their report is available online.

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NEW UN SECRETARY-GENERAL (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

Mr. Ban noted that the road towards peace, prosperity and dignity for all has many pitfalls. “As Secretary-General, I will make the most of the authority invested in my office by the Charter and the mandate you give me. I will work diligently to materialize our responsibility to protect the most vulnerable members of humanity and for the peaceful resolution of threats to international security and regional stability,” he said.

Underlining the efforts to reform the UN, he declared: “Let us remember that reform is not to please others, but because we value what this Organization stands for. We need reform because we believe in the future. To revitalize our common endeavour is to renew our faith not only in the UN’s programmes and purposes but also in each other. We should demand more of ourselves as well as of our Organization.”

The Secretary-General is appointed by the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the Security Council. The Secretary-General’s selection is therefore subject to the veto of any of the five permanent

members of the Security Council.

Although there is technically no limit to the number of five-year terms a Secretary-General may serve, none so far has held office for more than two terms.

NEW HEAD OF WHO APPOINTED (CONT. FROM P. 1)

The procedures for the current nomination and election process were decided following the sudden death of Dr. LEE Jong-wook, WHO Director-General, on 22 May 2006.

Dr. Chan said that as Director-General she would focus on six key issues for WHO: health development, security, capacity, information and knowledge, partnership, and performance.

She emphasized the importance of global health security in her vision of the organization's role: “Health security brings benefits at both the global and community levels. New diseases are global threats to health that also bring shocks to economies and societies. Defence against these threats enhances our collective security.”

WFP: NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (CONT. FROM P. 1)

Prior to her appointment as Under Secretary, Ms. Sheeran served as Deputy United States Trade Representative in the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR).

More recently, Ms. Sheeran was appointed by the UN Secretary-General to the High-level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment (see related article page 1).

HLP REPORT (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

The Panel has developed a set of recommendations based on five strategic directions:

- Coherence and consolidation of UN activities, in line with the principle of country ownership, at all levels (country, regional, headquarters);
- Establishment of appropriate governance, managerial and funding mechanisms to

Appointment

Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka has been re-elected by the General Assembly for another term of four years as Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). Her new term runs until 31 August 2010.

UNESCO: Diversity of Cultural Expressions

As of 8 November, 16 States have ratified the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's General Conference in October 2005 (see Go Between 108). It will enter into force three months after the deposit of the 30th instrument of ratification.

The result of two years of intense negotiations, marked by numerous meetings of independent and then governmental experts, the text seeks to reaffirm the links between culture, development and dialogue and to create an innovative platform for international cultural cooperation. It reaffirms the sovereign right of States to elaborate cultural policies with a view both “to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions” and “to create the conditions for cultures to flourish and to freely interact in a mutually beneficial manner” (Article 1).

It also highlights “the importance of intellectual property rights in sustaining those involved in cultural creativity” and reaffirms that “freedom of thought, expression and information, as well as diversity of the media, enable cultural expressions to flourish within societies.”

With the adoption of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, UNESCO now disposes of a range of standard setting instruments that cover the field of culture fully and on which the organization can base its strategy to defend cultural diversity in all its aspects, and, more specifically, the two pillars of culture: heritage and contemporary creation. Three Conventions – concerning world heritage (1972), intangible heritage (2003), and the diversity of cultural expressions (2005) – provide UNESCO with a framework of action in favour of the defence of cultural diversity.

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

Republic of Montenegro Joins WHO

The Republic of Montenegro has become the World Health Organization's (WHO) 193rd Member State. This follows the Republic of Montenegro's admission to membership in the United Nations on 28 June 2006. The last country to join WHO was the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste in September 2002.

UN Messenger of Peace

On 21 September, the International Day of Peace, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed the renowned cellist, Yo-Yo Ma, as a United Nations Messenger of Peace. Mr. Ma joins nine other Messengers of Peace, individuals who possess widely recognized talents in the field of arts, literature, music and sports who have agreed to help focus worldwide attention on the work of the UN.

Appointing Mr. Ma, the Secretary-General said, "Over the course of your extraordinary musical career, you have demonstrated time and again your dedication to overcoming cultural differences and bridging gaps between nations and generations. Through your music, the message of peace can spread far and wide and influence people around the world to focus on harmony and human dignity."

In 1998, Mr. Ma established the Silk Road Project to promote the study of the cultural, artistic and intellectual traditions along the ancient Silk Road trade route that stretched from the Mediterranean Sea to the Pacific Ocean. The Project seeks to illuminate the heritages of the Silk Road countries and identify the voices that represent these traditions today.

Since 1997, Mr. Annan has appointed nine prominent persons to serve the UN as Messengers of Peace: Muhammad Ali, Vijay Amritraj, Anna Cataldi, Michael Douglas, Jane Goodall, Enrico Macias, Wynton Marsalis, Luciano Pavarotti and Elie Weisel.

empower and support consolidation, and link the performance and results of UN organizations to funding;

- Overhaul of business practices of the UN system to ensure focus on outcomes, responsiveness to needs and delivery of results by the UN system, measured against the MDGs;
- Ensure significant further opportunities for consolidation and effective delivery of "One UN" through an in-depth review; and
- Implementation should be undertaken with urgency, but not ill planned and hasty in a manner that could compromise permanent and effective change.

To address the situation, the High-level Panel proposes that the country-level operations of a large number of specialized agencies, funds and programmes need to be placed under full country ownership, and brought together by the leadership of an empowered resident coordinator appointed independently of any one agency. The country team ideally would operate with a unified budget geared to achieving the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals, supported by a new multi-year MDG Funding Mechanism to ensure adequate and predictable funding.

Supervision of "One UN" Country Programmes would be handled by a strategic Sustainable Development Board, which should eventually bring together the boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). UNDP would relinquish some of its less central programme activities to UN entities already specialized in those areas, but assume an overall leadership role in policy coherence and in supporting the UN country teams. The UNDP Administrator should serve, the Panel proposes, as a UN Development Coordinator reporting to the Sustainable Development Board.

The Panel found that three UN bodies—the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues—are promoting the critical issues of gender equality and advancement for women in an uncoordinated way. Through their report, they urge the formation of a single UN organization, ambitiously staffed and funded, to fulfill these mandates. The new women's body would be headed for the

first time by an Under-Secretary-General—a top ranking official with the clout to lobby for money, make decisions and plan wide-ranging programmes for women.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) must be upgraded and be enabled to coordinate the environmentally related work of at least 20 UN entities, the Panel stresses, noting that there should be later assessment of possible further consolidation. They also posit that the Office of the Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) should take a stronger leadership role in responding to disasters and post-conflict situations, and more closely integrate relief operations with NGOs such as Red Cross and Red Crescent.

To provide a high-level policy forum on global issues facing the international community, the High-level Panel recommends the creation of a Global Leaders Forum, at Summit level.

In response to concern that the entirety of the recommendations may demand too radical a restructuring, Co-Chair and Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said that "the most radical and dramatic thing we can do, is to do nothing. Maintaining the status quo would represent a victory for inertia." He added that "no one facing today's challenges would design the UN system as it currently stands, and to leave it the way it is would mean giving in to short-term national and institutional interests."

The UN system now embraces some 17 specialized agencies and organizations, 14 funds and programmes and 17 secretariat departments and offices. The Panel also recommends that the Secretary-General should establish an independent task force to further eliminate duplication within the UN system and to consolidate UN entities, where necessary, and should report back to the Secretary-General by the end of 2007. The report is available online (www.un.org/events/panel).

NEW EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FOR UNFCCC

Yvo de Boer has been appointed as the new Executive Secretary of the United Nations Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat. A 52-year old Dutch national, he has held a number of government and UN posts. Most

recently, he was Director of International Affairs at the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment. He has been a negotiator at UN climate change negotiations since 1996, and was also a Vice-Chair at the fourteenth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in May 2006. The appointment, announced by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on 10 August, ends many months of speculation over who would succeed the late Joke Waller-Hunter, who passed away in October 2005. Mr. de Boer took up his new post on 4 September 2006.

NEW DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER HUMAN RIGHTS

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has announced the appointment of Kyung-wha Kang (Republic of Korea) as Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights. The appointment is at the Assistant Secretary-General level.

Ms. Kang is currently Director-General of International Organization at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea, with a portfolio that covers a wide range of UN issues, including human rights. She served as Minister at the Republic of Korea Mission to the United Nations from September 2001 to July 2005. She chaired the Commission on the Status of Women for its forty-eighth and forty-ninth session in March 2005, which marked the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for women's advancement and gender equality.

16 OCTOBER: WORLD FOOD DAY

World Food Day, celebrated each year on 16 October, focused this year on "Investing in agriculture for food security" as a way of calling attention to the fact that in spite of the importance of agriculture as the driving force in the economies of many developing countries, this sector is frequently "starved" of investment.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), foreign aid to the sector has fallen dramatically, from a total of over US\$9 billion per year in the early 1980s, to less than US\$5 billion in the late 1990s. Meanwhile, an estimated 854

million people around the world remain undernourished.

Speaking on World Food Day, FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf stressed the role of investment in agriculture to ensure food security: "Increasing the volume of public investment in agriculture but also making it more effective are of absolute necessity." He highlighted the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development, a consortium of 26 development agencies, which seeks to improve donor aid effectiveness and focus action on efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Only investment in agriculture—together with support for education and health—is likely to be able to turn this situation around, FAO stresses, noting that investment in infrastructure in rural areas, especially in water, roads, power and communications, has a crucial role in kindling agricultural growth. If countries get these conditions right, dramatic benefits to agriculture and poor rural households can be expected.

Most of the world's farmers are small-scale farmers. As a group, they are the biggest investors in agriculture. They also tend to have inadequate or precarious access to food themselves. If they can make a profit with their farming, they can feed their families throughout the year and reinvest in their farms by purchasing fertilizer, better quality seed and basic equipment.

A new model for cooperation between the public and private sectors in rural development is evolving, FAO suggests. The model includes new ways to bring together producers and agribusiness; establish and enforce grades and standards; improve the investment climate for agriculture; and provide essential public goods such as rural infrastructure.

One major problem for processors and traders is getting enough quality farm produce in the first place. In this, the public sector can help by promoting cooperatives and "outgrower" schemes, both of which can grow crops or raise livestock to order. Cooperatives are already important players in agriculture and the public sector can support them with legal safeguards, management and business training, and by encouraging the private sector to assist cooperatives in areas such as market information and production technologies.

World Habitat Day

"By the year 2050, some six billion people representing two thirds of humanity will be living in towns and cities. Never before in history has the world witnessed such rapid urbanization. Neither has it witnessed such a swift rise in the absolute numbers of people migrating. The two phenomena—migration and urban growth—are strongly linked, mainly because the majority of people on the move go for the bright lights of the city.

"As we reflect on the theme of this year's observance of World Habitat Day—"Cities, Magnets of Hope"—we must also bear in mind that cities can also be places of considerable despair. Never before has the world witnessed such a large proliferation of urban slums. Today, one billion people, or one of every three urban dwellers, live in slums. If municipalities and governments fail to manage urban growth and migration sustainably, this number is expected to double in the next 30 years.

"Almost everywhere, cities are the destinations for people escaping poverty, conflict and human rights violations, or simply those looking for ways to build better lives. While many migrants head to the North, South-South migration also presents tremendous challenges. Major cities such as Dakar, Jakarta, Johannesburg or Rio de Janeiro, to cite just a few examples, are having trouble accommodating new migrants when so many long-standing citizens are already struggling.

"These and other challenges came into sharp focus at the third session of the World Urban Forum held in Vancouver, Canada, in June 2006. That meeting made it clear that United Nations Member States, along with non-governmental organizations, the private sector and citizens all over the world, need to galvanize their strength as never before in the quest for sustainable urbanization and inclusive cities. On World Habitat Day, I urge all involved to work in partnership to manage one of the key challenges confronting humanity in the twenty-first century."

—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message on the occasion of World Habitat Day, 2 October

Int'l Peace Day

"For some of us, peace is a day-to-day reality. Our streets are safe; our children go to school. Where the fabric of society is strong, the precious gifts of peace can almost go unremarked.

"But for far too many people in the world today, those gifts are only an elusive dream. They live in chains: a climate of insecurity and fear. It is mainly for them that this day exists.

"Twenty-five years ago, the General Assembly proclaimed the International Day of Peace as a day of global ceasefire and non-violence. The United Nations has observed it ever since. It is meant to get people not just thinking of peace, but doing something about it.

"Yet, on this day as on the other 364, violence continues to claim innocent lives. And these last few weeks have seen tragic new escalations of conflict in several parts of the world.

"The United Nations works for peace in many ways. We are doing our utmost to prevent further bloodshed. And we have had some successes.

"States are paying more attention to preventive diplomacy. United Nations peacekeeping missions – and our efforts to support democracy and promote human rights – are making a difference. And individual citizens everywhere, men and women in every society, are working to relieve suffering, and to build bridges between people of different faiths or cultures.

"In fact, there are fewer wars today than in previous decades. But still far too many. Every casualty of conflict is a failure, which reminds us how much more there is to do.

"In that spirit, I call on people everywhere to observe one minute of silence today, in the name of peace. Let us remember the victims of war. And let each of us pledge to do more, wherever we can make a difference, to bring about lasting peace."

—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message on the International Day of Peace, observed on 21 September

Outgrower schemes—subcontracting arrangements in agribusiness—are enjoying a revival and can create local employment and improve farmer incomes. Companies often provide technical assistance, materials and/or financing to local farmers to help them grow a particular product that the company agrees to purchase at a later date.

According to FAO, governments need to enact and enforce rules and regulations that create a safe and predictable environment for private investors. The more detailed and widely-known the standards are, the easier it is for all the players in the sector to conform. Furthermore, public policy and public investment can create an attractive climate to make agriculture a good investment – one where there is good governance and transparent public administration, where there is macroeconomic discipline and stability, and where there is political stability.

More information on the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development is available online (www.donorplatform.org).

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ANNUAL TREATY-SIGNING EVENT

The annual treaty signing event that takes place during the opening of the General Assembly took place this year from 13-19 September and focused on human migration. The treaty event coincided with the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development (see *NGLS Roundup 127*).

The United Nations Office of Legal Affairs made available for the signing event a collection of 30 treaties covering a broad spectrum of issues concerning refugees, stateless persons, migrant workers and others, including their human rights and security and dealing with such issues as trafficking in persons, food security and ecological migration.

Three new treaties were also featured: the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel (which received 20 signatures,

more actions than on any other single treaty); the UN Convention on the Use of Electronic Communications in International Contracts (Signature by Madagascar); and the International Tropical Timber Agreement (Signatures by Madagascar and Norway).

Eighty-six treaty actions—30 signatures, 50 ratifications (or accessions, approvals, or any other type of consent to be bound), two declarations and four other treaty actions—were undertaken by representatives of 40 States, including six Heads of State or Government and 18 foreign ministers.

More information on the other ratifications and signatures, as well as a Treaty Handbook, is available online (<http://untreaty.un.org/English/treaty.asp>).

UNDEF ANNOUNCES FIRST BENEFICIARIES

The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) has announced its first beneficiaries, awarding grants totalling US\$36 million to 125 projects selected from around the world. The grants were selected from over 1,300 proposals and range from projects aimed at promoting civic education to voter registration, democratic dialogue and access to information. Over 60% of recommended recipients are civil society organizations while UN agencies will receive 24% of the total.

Set up by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in July 2005, the Fund is designed to promote and consolidate new and restored democracies in the areas of elections, human rights, civil society, the media and rule of law. The Fund defined six areas as funding priorities for the initial group of projects: strengthening democratic dialogue and support for constitutional processes; civil society empowerment; civic education, voter registration and strengthening of political parties; citizens' access to information; human rights and fundamental freedoms; and accountability, transparency and integrity.

At least one-third of grants are directed at projects focused on sub-Saharan Africa, and almost four out of every five applications were for projects aimed at one country. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) will receive US\$3.7 million (approximately 10.5%) of which US\$2.5 million will support NGO activities and

US\$1.2 million will be directly executed by UNIFEM.

Another eight projects will be implemented by civil society partners. These include projects to strengthen women's participation in democratic decision making in Cambodia (implemented by the Committee to Promote Women's Political Participation), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (implemented by Femmes Afrique Solidarité), Nigeria (implemented by Alliances for Africa) and Kosovo (implemented by the Women's Peace Coalition). Inter Press Service will implement a programme to encourage gender-sensitive media reporting on elections in Africa, and in Argentina, Fundación Mujeres en Igualdad will support women to organize against corruption. In Chile, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales will monitor government commitments to gender equality and women's rights, and in Morocco, the Consultative Council on Human Rights will promote implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, highlighting the need for stronger protection of women's rights.

The Secretary-General has called on all Member States to support the Democracy Fund and use it as an innovative and flexible mechanism for advancing the United Nations democracy agenda. So far the Fund has received almost US\$50 million in contributions and pledges from 17 Member States.

The Office of the UNDEF works under the aegis of the UN Office for International Partnerships, which provides administrative support services to the Fund. The UNDEF Programme Consultative Group consists of seven representatives from different UN departments, agencies and programmes and provides technical assistance and expert support to the Advisory Board on programme funding criteria and project proposals. Members are the UN Department of Political Affairs; UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations; UN Development Programme; UN Development Group Office; UN Development Fund for Women; UN Office on Drugs and Crime; and the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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5272, e-mail <democracyfund@un.org>, website (www.un.org/democracyfund).

UN PEACEMAKER

On 3 October 2006, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) launched UN Peacemaker, a comprehensive website on peace agreements and their negotiation. The website contains guidance on how to successfully manage a peace process and includes an exhaustive glossary of terms used in peacemaking. It also provides a "peacemaker's toolbox" with links to resources including a handbook for drafting the language of peace accords for those working in peacemaking today.

The site is primarily geared to serve UN peacemakers and their staff as they prepare for negotiations to achieve peace agreements that will provide a basis for sustainable peace. It is also intended to be useful to UN partners actively engaged in peacemaking efforts around the world, including Member States, regional organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations.

The site includes content on peace agreements, selected literature on various substantive peacemaking issues, an extensive legal library containing the legal framework that guides the UN's efforts in peacemaking, as well as links to research centres and other useful resources.

The site also provides insight into the many factors that must be considered when building an appropriate peacemaking strategy and arriving at peace agreements that can stand the test of time. Lessons on peacemaking are gained primarily from interviews with staff and the UN peacemakers themselves. The site does not seek to provide a detailed historical account of peace processes; rather, it attempts to capture important strategic decisions and tactics adopted to manage the peace process.

More information is available online (<http://peacemaker.unlb.org/index1.php>).

UNPFII: CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The United Nations Permanent Forum on

UNODC Toolkit

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has launched a toolkit to help governments, policy-makers, law enforcement agencies and NGOs tackle human trafficking more effectively. It contains practical tools for police and other law enforcement officers such as a checklist to help identify trafficking victims as well guidance on interviewing victims and victim protection.

The toolkit also outlines key aspects of a comprehensive response to human trafficking, such as the need to bring national legislation into line with international standards and strengthen international cooperation in criminal justice, including the extradition of criminals, seizure of assets and confiscation of the proceeds of crime.

UNODC notes that robust international collaboration is essential in fighting trafficking and virtually every country in the world is affected by it. The toolkit aims to help national law enforcement agencies build their capacity to recognize victims, arrest their abusers and deal with both appropriately.

The toolkit addresses questions such as medical, psychological and legal protection, as well as shelter for victims. It suggests ways to deal with the immigration status of victims and measures to facilitate voluntary repatriation and resettlement. It also examines the issue of prevention of human trafficking.

The toolkit is available online (www.unodc.org/pdf/Trafficking_toolkit_Oct06.pdf).

Int'l Literacy Day

"Literacy sustains development: that is the theme of this year's International Literacy Day. It recognizes that higher literacy rates are essential to economic growth, poverty eradication, social participation and environmental protection. It reminds us that literacy is the platform for developing a society's human resources.

"Literacy begins with primary education, and achieving universal primary schooling by 2015 is one of the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, primary education does not reach every child; there are more than 100 million girls and boys who never enroll in school. Even for those who are enrolled, the quality of primary schooling may be so poor that it leads to only a fragile command of basic literacy skills. And while official statistics put the number of illiterate adults at more than 770 million, that figure does not include the millions more who are ill-equipped to deal with everyday needs of learning, understanding and communicating.

"Clearly, in many parts of the world, development has not yet delivered one of its most important outcomes—more literate and better educated populations. At the same time, those societies are being robbed of the crucial tool for development, which literacy represents—a tool that enables people to take advantage of new learning opportunities, respond to changing occupational demands, undertake greater responsibilities, build their way out of poverty and protect themselves against disease—especially HIV/AIDS. Women and girls who are deprived of literacy lack a vital weapon in freeing themselves from inequality and discrimination. As we are reminded by the overall theme of the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), literacy is freedom.

"The precious gift of literacy can sustain development only if it is itself sustained—by post-literacy programmes, further opportunities for education and training, and the creation of 'literate environments' in which literacy can thrive. On this International Literacy Day, let us pledge to step up national and international efforts for improved literacy levels worldwide. Let us give literacy a real chance to transform individuals and societies around the world."

—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message on International Literacy Day, observed on 8 September

Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) is now requesting nominations of indigenous members as the current membership of the Permanent Forum is due to expire at the end of 2007. Nominations are being requested for the three-year period from January 2008 until December 2010 and deadline for submission of nominations is 1 February 2007. Current members who have served the maximum of two terms (six years) as Permanent Forum members cannot be nominated for a further term.

The Permanent Forum serves as an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council with a mandate to discuss indigenous issues relating to economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights. The Permanent Forum holds annual sessions of ten working days each May (see *Go Between 110*).

In considering possible candidates, the principles of geographic distribution, and gender balance should be taken into consideration. In order for nominations to be complete, it is important to provide recent curriculum vitae of the nominees for consideration by the President of the Economic and Social Council. Information about the nominating organization(s) should also be submitted.

More information is available online (www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/members.html).

Contact: Secretariat of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, (DESA), Room DC2 - 1772, New York NY 10017, USA, telephone +1-917/367 5100, e-mail <IndigenousPermanentForum@un.org>, website (www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/index.html).

WHO: NEW WORKING GROUP ON R&D

The World Health Organization (WHO) has established a secretariat on Public Health, Innovation, Essential Health Research and Intellectual Property. The secretariat will convene and facilitate an intergovernmental working group requested by WHO Member States in a resolution at the World Health Assembly in May 2006 (see *Go Between 110*).

The intergovernmental working group, open

to all Member States, will develop a global strategy and plan of action including to provide a framework to enhance research and development into diseases that disproportionately affect developing countries. The strategy and plan of action will be based on the recommendations of the Commission on Intellectual Property Rights, Innovation and Public Health (CIPICH).

From 1-15 November 2006, WHO organized web-based public hearings for interested stakeholders to present their views on how to enhance innovation, research and development to address diseases predominantly affecting poor populations. The hearings preceded the formal discussions of the working group, held from 4-8 December 2006, which discussed a global strategy and plan of action to respond to public health challenges. Contributions from the web-based hearings were fed into the formal discussions.

The World Health Assembly resolution establishing the working group is available online (www.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA59/A59_R24-en.pdf).

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UNCTAD: WORLD INVESTMENT REPORT 2006

The latest edition of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) annual *World Investment Report* focuses on new sources of foreign direct investment (FDI): transnational corporations (TNCs) from developing countries. The study indicates that FDI continued to increase for the second consecutive year, with inflows reaching US\$916 billion in 2005—a 29% increase over the year before. However, FDI in the manufacturing and services sectors declined relative to investment in primary commodities, particularly mining.

Much of this growth was driven by increased investment in developed countries. The UK, the largest recipient of such investment, reaped US\$165 billion in FDI. Regionally, the EU received FDI inflows totaling US\$422 billion—nearly half of the world total. Inflows

of FDI in developing countries reached a record high of US\$334 billion, though they declined as a share of global inward FDI to 36% of the total. South, East, and Southeast Asia continued to account for the bulk of FDI flows to developing countries.

Notably, patterns of investment are shifting, *World Investment Report 2006 (WIR2006)* indicates. While FDI flows used to occur between developed countries only, or from developed countries to developing ones, TNCs from developing countries are now investing in developed and developing countries as well. These firms emerging from developing countries are becoming powerful regional, even global, players, the report finds. According to UNCTAD estimates, FDI between developing countries has grown tremendously over the past 15 years, with total outflows from transition and developing economies increasing from US\$4 billion (1985) to US\$61 billion (2004). Furthermore, the majority of this trading is intraregional, with Asia remaining the key target for FDI flows, followed by Latin American and Africa.

The report examines the implications of this phenomenon as well as its drivers and determinants, i.e., the economic factors and policy developments that lead firms from developing countries to venture abroad. *WIR2006* also discusses the development implications of the rise of these new sources of FDI, along with policy responses, for both home and host developing countries.

As in previous years, the report also presents the latest data on FDI and traces the global and regional trends of FDI and international production by TNCs. It is available online (www.unctad.org/wir).

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ILO: GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT TRENDS FOR YOUTH

The number of unemployed youth aged 15-24 rose over the past decade, while hundreds of millions more are working but living in poverty, according to a report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), entitled *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2006*.

In all regions, youth have higher shares of unemployment and inactivity and lower employment shares compared to adults.

While the number of young unemployed increased from 74 million to 85 million, or by 14.8% between 1995-2005, more than 300 million youth, or approximately 25% of the youth population, were living below the US\$2 per day poverty line.

Working poverty among youth is most alarming for sub-Saharan Africa, the only region that has seen a sharp and continuous increase of the total number of youth working poor at the US\$1 a day level (from 36 million to 45 million between 1995-2005). Extreme working poverty is also still a big problem in South Asia, where almost four out of ten young people work but remain poor. However, the long-term trend has shown some improvement in the region; ten years ago, almost six out of ten young working people were US\$1 a day working poor, which was almost as much as in sub-Saharan Africa.

The ILO report estimates that at least 400 million decent and productive employment opportunities will be needed in order to reach the full productive potential of today's youth. The report also says youth are more than three times as likely to be unemployed than adults and that the relative disadvantage is more pronounced in developing countries, where youth represent a significantly higher proportion of the labour force than in developed economies.

The highest regional youth unemployment rate can be observed in the Middle East and North Africa at 25.7% in 2005. Central and Eastern Europe (non-EU) and CIS had the second highest rate at 19.9%. Sub-Saharan Africa's rate was 18.1%, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (16.6%), South East Asia and the Pacific (15.8%), the Developed Economies and European Union (13.1%), South Asia (10%) and East Asia (7.8%).

Without the right foothold from which to start out right in the labour market, young people are less able to make choices that will improve their own job prospects and those of their future dependents. This, in turn, perpetuates the cycle of insufficient education, low-productivity employment and working poverty from one generation to the next.

Global Employment Trends for Youth 2006 is

Int'l Day on Eliminating Violence Against Women

"Violence against women causes untold misery, harms families across generations, and impoverishes communities. It stops women from fulfilling their potential, restricts economic growth, and undermines development. When it comes to violence against women, there are no civilized societies.

"Last month, I issued an in-depth study which showed that half of humankind lives under this threat—in every continent, country and culture, regardless of income, class, race or ethnicity. This is so, even though we live in a world order where human rights have been recognized in law, and guaranteed in international instruments; even though we have learnt that the enjoyment of human rights is essential to the wellbeing of the individual, the community and the world; even though, at the 2005 World Summit, leaders pledged to redouble efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

"Fighting this scourge requires us to change a mindset which is still too common and deep-seated. To demonstrate, once and for all, that when it comes to violence against women, there are no grounds for tolerance and no tolerable excuses.

"For years, women's organizations and movements round the world have worked tirelessly to take violence against women out of the private domain and into the public sphere—into the arena of State accountability. Many States have enacted and implemented effective laws, and provided comprehensive and gender-sensitive services to victims. And there has also been progress in creating international standards.

"It is time to take these efforts to the next level. We in the United Nations must play a stronger, better coordinated and more visible leadership role. Member States must do more to implement the international legal and policy framework to which they have committed themselves. And all of us must form strong and effective partnerships with civil society, which has such a crucial role to play on this issue at every level."

—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, observed on 25 November

See also Focus Page 29.

Int'l Day for Disaster Reduction

"The theme of this year's observance of the International Day for Disaster Reduction, 'Disaster Risk Reduction Begins at School,' highlights the need to keep our children safe and to involve them directly in our work to strengthen disaster preparedness.

"Children are especially vulnerable to the threats posed by natural hazards. At the same time, they can be powerful agents of change, provided they are well armed with knowledge about how to prepare in advance, how to act on warnings and how to reduce risk at home and in their communities. It is essential, therefore, to make disaster-risk education a component of national school curricula, and to ensure that children understand how natural hazards interact with the environment. Young people should also be included in community risk-mapping exercises, and have opportunities to share experiences and best practices with others, including their peers. School buildings themselves should be fortified, so that they can better withstand the forces of nature.

"Over the last decade, disasters triggered by natural hazards have claimed more than 600,000 lives and affected more than 2.4 billion people, the majority of them in developing countries. Years of development gains have been lost, deepening poverty for millions and leaving them even more exposed to future natural hazards. Now more than ever, we must accelerate our efforts to reduce vulnerability.

"Towards that end, the international community has committed itself to the priorities set out in the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the resilience of the nations and communities. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)—a global system encompassing a broad range of actors—strives to improve coordination and mobilize resources. On this International Day for Disaster Reduction, I call on Governments and all relevant actors—from teachers to businesses to civil society—to respond to the needs of children and all other vulnerable populations in hazard-prone areas."

—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message on the International Day for Disaster Reduction, observed on 11 October

available online (www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/stratprod.htm).

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S-G's STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

On 11 October 2006, the United Nations Secretary-General's *Study on Violence Against Children* was presented to the Third Committee by the Independent Expert appointed by the Secretary-General to lead the study, Paulo Pinheiro. The study, which finds that much violence against children remains hidden and is often socially approved, provides a comprehensive global view of the range and scale of violence against children, including the nature, extent and causes of such violence, and proposes clear recommendations for action to prevent and respond to it.

The study, combining human rights, public health and child protection perspectives, focuses on five settings: the home and family; schools and educational settings; other institutional settings (orphanages, children in conflict with the law); in the workplace, and in the community and the streets. It notes that violence against children includes physical violence, psychological violence, discrimination, neglect and maltreatment. It ranges from sexual abuse in the home to corporal and humiliating punishment at school; from the use of physical restraints in children's homes to brutality at the hands of law enforcement officers; from abuse and neglect in institutions to gang warfare on the streets where children play or work; from infanticide to so-called "honour" killing.

The study argues that the right of all children to be protected from violence does not stop at the door of the family home. Legislation to outlaw and end violence in intimate partner relationships is now common, as societies have vocally rejected violence within such relationships. Children deserve no less protection from the law and violence against them in the home and family must similarly be rejected by society as a whole.

The study is accompanied by a book, *World*

Report on Violence against Children (available in December 2006), which provides a more detailed account of the study. The study was prepared through a participatory process which included regional, sub-regional and national consultations, expert thematic meetings and field visits. Also on 11 October a child-friendly version of the report and an educational kit for children and young people to work against violence, *My Right to be Protected*, were launched.

The study includes contributions from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), and is available online (www.violencestudy.org/a405). See also the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) Civil Society Gateway (www.crin.org/violence).

WHO/UNICEF: REPORT ON WATER & SANITATION

The world is in danger of missing targets for providing clean water and sanitation unless there is a dramatic increase in the pace of work and investment between now and 2015, according to a report from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), entitled *MDG Drinking Water and Sanitation Target - The Urban and Rural Challenge of the Decade*. The situation is becoming particularly acute in urban areas, where rapid population growth is putting great pressure on the provision of services and the health of poor people.

More than one billion people still have no clean water to drink as the international community falls far behind in its plan to halve their number by 2015 (Millennium Development Goal 7). According to UNICEF and WHO, six years after the Goal was set, 1.1 billion people still have no access to safe drinking water and 2.6 billion lack reasonable sanitation. The agencies define clean water as water from a pipe, public tap, borehole, protected dug well, protected spring or rainwater collector.

In order to meet the Millennium Development Goals, infrastructure must be built to provide sanitation services to a further 1.6 billion people and better access to drinking water for another 1.1 billion. From 1990 to 2004, 1.2 billion people

gained improved access to drinking water but this was almost entirely offset by population growth. About 80% of those lacking access live in sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Asia and Southern Asia. The number of people without basic sanitation—toilets that flush into piped sewers or septic tanks, composting toilets or ventilated pit latrines—has fallen by only 98 million since 1990. Sanitation is available to just six in ten people worldwide. The other four in ten “are obliged to defecate in the open or use unsanitary facilities, with a serious risk of exposure to sanitation-related diseases,” the report says.

The report finds that meeting the sanitation MDG will require a doubling of current efforts. A one-third increase in efforts will be needed to meet the MDG drinking water target. But reaching the water and sanitation targets will require much greater efforts by policy makers, funding and training agencies, planning and construction. These solutions must focus on poor and underserved people worldwide, the report stresses.

The report is available online (www.who.int/water_sanitation_health/monitoring/jmpfinal.pdf).

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UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017, USA, telephone +1-212/824 6648, fax +1-212/303 7992, website (www.unicef.org).

FAO/ILO: REDUCING CHILD LABOUR

Reducing child labour in agriculture was the focus of a meeting in Rome in September, bringing together representatives from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other international agricultural organizations to discuss how to coordinate their efforts to address the problem. According to ILO and FAO, worldwide some 70% of child labour is found in agriculture, with many children engaged in forced and hazardous activities.

Child labourers are often obliged to work long hours, use sharp tools designed for

adults, carry loads too heavy for their immature bodies and operate dangerous machinery. Children working in agriculture also risk exposure to toxic pesticides, dusts, diseases and unsanitary conditions. Agriculture is one of the three most hazardous work sectors—along with mining and construction—in terms of work-related deaths and injuries, and this is especially true for children, whose lack of experience or training and still-developing bodies make them particularly vulnerable, ILO notes.

“Some agricultural activities—mixing and applying pesticides, using certain types of machinery—are so dangerous that children should be clearly prohibited from engaging in them,” Parviz Koohafkan, Director of FAO’s Rural Development Division, said. He also pointed out that not all of the work that children do is harmful to their development and wellbeing. “When it comes to subsistence and family agriculture, children’s participation in family farm activities helps them learn valuable skills, build self-esteem and contribute to the generation of household income, which has a positive impact on their own livelihoods,” Mr. Koohafkan said. “So this is a very complex issue which should be looked into case by case to avoid generalization.”

Generating alternative income sources for households may reduce the need for children to work and allow their families to send them to school. Education is an essential prerequisite for reducing poverty, improving agriculture and the living conditions of rural people and building a food-secure world. However, rural children generally have poor access to quality education due to lack of schools, lack of or poorly trained teachers, and irrelevant curricula, or because their families cannot afford the school fees.

The challenge of eliminating of hazardous child labour is particularly daunting in Africa where agriculture is the dominant economic activity, and factors such as persistent poverty and food insecurity, poor education and HIV/AIDS compound the problem.

FAO is working with the World Food Programme (WFP) and NGOs to establish Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools in a number of African countries which are providing HIV/AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children with skills for farming and life and are helping reinforce social cohesion in communities hard hit by

Int'l Day for Older Persons

“In the tenth and final year of my tenure as Secretary-General, after a full career in the service of the United Nations, I have a personal stake in the fate of older persons and the fulfilment of their aspirations. But I am only one of 600 million persons in the world over the age of 60. As people across the globe come to live increasingly longer lives, our entire human family has a stake in encouraging and easing a productive, active and healthy ageing process. The whole world stands to gain from an empowered older generation, with the potential to make tremendous contributions to the development process and to the work of building more productive, peaceful and sustainable societies.

“That is why the theme of this year’s International Day of Older Persons is ‘Improving the Quality of Life for Older Persons: Advancing UN Global Strategies.’ It is a call to all communities to work for policies and programmes that will enable older persons to live in an environment that enhances their capabilities, fosters their independence and provides them with adequate support and care as they age.

“That means ensuring housing, transportation and other living conditions that allow people to maintain their independence for as long as possible, and ‘age in place’—yet remain active—within their own communities. Equally important, it means recognizing and respecting the dignity, authority, wisdom and productivity of older persons in all societies, particularly in their roles as volunteers and multigenerational caregivers. And that, in turn, means promoting a more positive image of ageing.

“On this International Day of Older Persons, I call on Governments, the private sector, civil society organizations and people everywhere to focus on building a society for all ages—as envisioned in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and in line with the Millennium Development Goals and wider global development agenda. Together, we can and must ensure that people live not only longer lives, but better, more enriching, rewarding and fulfilling lives.”

—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s message on the international Day of Older Persons, observed on 1 October

Forest Restoration Information Service

The Forest Restoration Information Service (FRIS) is being developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) with support from the UK Forestry Commission, UK DFID and the School of H.M. King William III and H.M. Queen Emma of the Netherlands Foundation in collaboration with a range of NGOs.

It aims to provide an open-access Internet information service to support forest restoration projects worldwide, including site-scale and landscape-scale efforts; facilitate exchange of knowledge and experience among forest restoration projects, and provide a basis for analyzing factors determining success; and facilitate the prioritization, design and execution of forest restoration efforts by FRIS users.

The FRIS includes:

- Definitions of key terms and concepts in forest restoration;
- Case studies of forest restoration;
- A searchable database of restoration projects and initiatives;
- Maps and datasets; and
- A bibliography of forest restoration publications

More information is available online (www.unep-wcmc.org/forest/restoration/).

CGIAR Virtual Library

The CGIAR Virtual Library is a website from which a user can search the online libraries of agricultural research centres sponsored by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). This website also offers access to other leading databases used by development professionals. These include those of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the London School of Economics, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the Library of Congress, as well as 4,000 online journals. A researcher can find thousands of full-text documents, abstracts, or references related to development, agriculture, hunger, and poverty through the website. More information is available online (<http://vlibrary.cgiar.org/V?RN=197418345>).

HIV/AIDS. Over 35 Life Schools have been set up for orphaned children in Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia and Zambia, targeting a total of around 1,000 young people.

Participants at the meeting agreed that a widespread information and advocacy campaign was needed to draw attention to the problem of child labour in agriculture. The World Day of Action Against Child Labour, held each year on 12 June, will focus in 2007 on child labour in agriculture to raise awareness of the issue worldwide.

Meeting participants included representatives from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme, the International Food Policy Research Institute, the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP) and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF).

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UNEP: STATE OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), a rising tide of sewage is threatening the health and wealth of far too many of the world's seas and oceans. In many developing countries between 80% and nearly 90% of sewage entering the coastal zones is estimated to be raw and untreated.

The pollution—linked with rising coastal populations, inadequate treatment infrastructure and waste handling facilities—is putting at risk human health and wildlife and livelihoods from fisheries to tourism. There is also rising concern over the increasing damage and destruction of essential and economically important coastal ecosystems like mangrove forests, coral reefs and seagrass beds.

These problems contrast sharply with oil pollution, where, globally, levels of oily wastes discharged from industry and cities have been cut by close to 90% since the

mid 1980s. *State of the Marine Environment* notes that progress has also been made in cutting marine contamination from toxic persistent organic pollutants like DDT and discharges of radioactive wastes. Overall good progress is being made on three of nine key indicators, but is mixed for two of them and is heading in the wrong direction for a further four including sewage, marine litter and “nutrient” pollution.

Nutrients, from sources like agriculture and animal wastes, are “fertilizing” coastal zones triggering toxic algal blooms and a rising number of oxygen deficient “dead zones.” New areas in need of urgent attention include declining flows in many of the world's rivers as a result of dams, over-abstraction and global warming; new streams of chemicals; the state of coastal and freshwater wetlands and sea level rise linked with climate change.

Over half of the wastewater entering the Mediterranean Sea is untreated. In Central and Eastern Europe a quarter of the population are connected to some kind of treatment plant but many large cities discharge virtually untreated wastewater. Around 60% of the wastewater discharged into the Caspian Sea is untreated.

In Latin America and the Caribbean the figure is around 85%. In East Asia the figure is close to 90%; in the South East Pacific, over 80% and West and Central Africa, 80%.

In West Asia, among countries like Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, “sewage treatment plants exist in all countries, but the level of treatment varies and capacity is not sufficient to deal with existing loads.” Globally, the report notes that an estimated US\$56 billion more is needed annually to address the wastewater problem.

The report was compiled by UNEP's Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Sources (UNEP/GPA) and can be found online (www.gpa.unep.org/bin/php/igr/igr2/supporting.php).

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GLOBAL BIOENERGY PARTNERSHIP

The Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP), which aims to promote the use of bioenergy, was launched at the 14th Session of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development in May 2006 (see *Go Between 110*) and opened its Secretariat in Rome in September 2006.

Located at the United Nations Food and Agriculture (FAO) headquarters and supported by the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea, the Secretariat's mandate is to facilitate a global political forum to promote bioenergy and to encourage the production, marketing and use of "green" fuels, with particular focus on developing countries.

FAO stresses that given the right technologies, an abundant energy supply could be tapped by converting biomass such as crop residues, grass, straw and brushwood into fuel, while crops like sugar cane, corn and soybeans are already being used to produce ethanol or bio-diesel.

The Secretariat will be the principal coordinator of Partnership communications and activities and will assist international exchanges of know-how and technology, promote supportive policy frameworks and identify ways of fostering investments and removing barriers to the development and implementation of joint projects.

In the short term, the Secretariat will update the inventory of existing networks, initiatives and institutions dealing with bioenergy and identify any gaps in knowledge. It will also assist the partners in identifying and implementing bilateral and multilateral projects for sustainable bioenergy development and support the formulation of guidelines for measuring reductions in greenhouse gas emissions due to the use of biofuels.

The Partnership's overall aim is to respond to the growing need to develop renewable energy sources in the light of high oil prices, global warming and concerns about diminishing fossil fuel reserves.

Current partners of the GBEP are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom, US, China, Mexico, the International Energy Agency (IEA), the UN

Foundation, the European Biomass Industry Association (EUBIA) and FAO.

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FIRST SESSION OF THE IGF HELD IN ATHENS

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF), an outcome of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, held in Tunis, 16-18 November 2005, see *NGLS Roundup 125*), held its first session in Athens from 30 October -2 November 2006, bringing together more than 1,200 participants, including ministers, nearly 90 government delegations and a number of key private sector and civil society representatives to discuss public policy issues relating to the Internet's functioning.

"Internet governance includes more than Internet naming and addressing," Greek Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis said at the opening of the Forum. "It includes significant public policy issues, the management of critical Internet resources, security, safety, as well as other social and economic issues." Mr. Karamanlis said the Forum provided an opportunity for a broad policy dialogue and suggested it should focus on issues such as affordability and availability of the Internet; interconnection costs and security; management of critical resources and technology transfer; multilingualism and local development of software; capacity building and participation of developing countries.

Vint Cerf, saluted as one of the "fathers of the Internet," said that many of the Internet's "problem behaviours"—such as fraud, harassment, illegal copying, material unsuited to children—were international in scope. "These concerns will need to be addressed at local, national and international levels and will call for cooperative technical, political and legal efforts for their solution," he said.

Robert Kahn, the other "father of the Internet," warned against complications arising from diverse and perhaps contradictory policies developed independently around the world. Increasingly, governments and private sector organizations might be called upon to coordinate such

UNEP Partners with Google Earth

A new partnership between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Google Earth offers online viewers images of retreating glaciers and melting ice in polar and mountain areas, explosive growth of cities such as Las Vegas, forest loss in the Amazon, rapid oil and gas development in Wyoming and Canada, forest fires across sub-Saharan Africa and the decline of the Aral Sea in Central Asia and Lake Chad in Africa. These images and much more are being presented in a series of "before and after" satellite images of the changing environment to over 100 million Google Earth users worldwide.

Google Earth – Google's 3D virtual world browser – will feature the UNEP: Atlas of Our Changing Environment, offering satellite images of 100 environmental hotspots from around the world.

UNEP's Executive Director, Achim Steiner, said, "These satellite pictures are a wake-up call to all of us to look at the sometimes devastating changes we are wreaking on our planet. Through spectacular imagery, Google Earth and UNEP offer a new way of visualizing the dangers facing our planet today. By tapping into the global Google community, we are able to reach out to millions of people who can mobilize and make a difference."

More information is available on the UNEP website (www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=487&ArticleID=5350&l=en).

Information on Google Earth is available online (<http://earth.google.com>).

UNEP: Billion Tree Campaign

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is soon to launch a major worldwide tree planting campaign. The Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign encourages people, communities, organizations and governments to enter tree planting pledges on a website (www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign), with the goal of planting at least one billion trees worldwide during 2007. Each pledge can be anything from a single tree to ten million trees.

The inspiration for the campaign came from Professor Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize laureate for 2004 and founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement, which has planted more than 30 million trees in 12 African countries since 1977.

Besides focusing on tree planting and issues of deforestation, the Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign will play a broader symbolic purpose, highlighting issues such as climate change, air quality, integrated water resources management and biodiversity conservation.

The responsibility will lie with the person or organization making the pledge via the campaign website to arrange for the tree planting. All contributing participants will receive a certificate of involvement. They will be encouraged to follow-up via the website so UNEP can verify that the trees have survived. UNEP will work to forge partnerships with existing certification mechanisms, such as the Forest Stewardship Council.

More information is available online (www.unep.org/billiontreecampaign).

policy choices, perhaps on a bilateral basis to begin with, to avoid unplanned and unwanted outcomes.

Reporting on "Domain Name System" and "Root Zone File" management, Milton Mueller, of Syracuse University and the Internet Governance Project, said the panellists and the audience had vigorously aired conflicting views on the political, economic and technical issues raised by management of the "DNS root zone" file.

Markus Kummer, Executive Coordinator of the Forum Secretariat, noted that through all the speeches there had been a common thread expressing recognition of the Internet as the backbone infrastructure of the global information and knowledge society. On the issue of access, Mr. Kummer said the common feeling had been that increasing access remained one of the great challenges facing the Internet community. To address the digital divide, there was a strong feeling that introducing competition, removing blocks to competition and enacting telecommunications sector reform were of fundamental importance.

Speaking at the closing session, Nitin Desai, the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Internet Governance, said the basic message of the first meeting of the IGF was that the Internet should be "accessible, usable and safe for all," noting also that the focus had been very much on equity. The second broad theme, Mr. Desai said, had been freedom, and what some considered being wrongful suppression of freedom of expression, as well as the question of reconciling freedom with issues of digital identity and Internet security.

During the four days of the Forum, several concrete partnerships, dubbed "dynamic coalitions," were formed on issues such as multilingualism, digital identities and an Internet Bill of Rights. The next meeting of the IGF will take place in Rio de Janeiro in November 2007. The Forum will meet in India in 2008 and in Egypt in 2009.

More information is available online (www.igfgreece2006.gr/index.php).

ITU: ICT TRENDS IN LDCs

The International Telecommunication Union

(ITU) has launched a report on ICT/Telecommunication development in the least developed countries (LDCs). The report examines key developments in the information and communication technology (ICT) and telecommunications sector including trends and challenges in the world's poorest countries in the period from 2001- 2005. The findings reveal that considerable progress has been made to bridge the digital divide and that teledensity targets set by the Brussels Programme of Action have been met by 25 of the 50 LDCs.

The ITU report was launched during a special session held during the Midterm Review on implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries for the decade 2001 to 2010 (see also Interview, pages 20-21).

According to ITU, teledensity (the number of telephone lines per 100 people in a region) has more than doubled in the majority of LDCs since 2000. Overall, access to Internet has increased and more interest is on deployment of broadband services in rural areas. By 2005, Internet user penetration caught up with fixed-line penetration in LDCs, providing access to a host of applications, such as e-education, e-health, e-business, e-agriculture, and e-government.

Despite recent progress, LDCs continue to face major challenges. Many established policies and regulations have become obsolete, leading to inefficient and increasingly untenable restrictions and barriers to the development and dissemination of the benefits of internet protocol (IP) convergence. In many LDCs policy changes are required that would provide regulators with flexible tools to implement the transition to new network development opportunities and attract investor financial flows into the sector. The scarcity of ICT infrastructure, the high cost of international bandwidth, the dearth of relevant local content along with the lack of cooperation among development partners and political instability also remain daunting challenges.

More information is available online (www.itu.int/ITU-D/lcd/lcd_projects.html).

Contact: International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Place des Nations, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, telephone +41-22/730 5111, fax +41-22/733 7256, e-mail <itumail@itu.int>, website (www.itu.int).

UN/NGO COOPERATION

UNEP: Africa's Lakes Atlas

Produced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in cooperation with Belgian Development Cooperation, Africa's Lakes: Atlas of Our Changing Environment compares and contrasts spectacular satellite images of the past few decades with contemporary ones.

Africa's Lakes Atlas is an effort to increase local and international awareness of some natural and some human-made changes. The collection of 60 images, 40 photos and 15 environmental maps demonstrates the rapid shrinking of Lake Songor in Ghana, the extraordinary changes in the Zambezi River system beside more familiar images of the near 90% shrinkage of Lake Chad.

Other impacts, as seen from space, include the extensive deforestation around Lake Nakuru in Kenya, dramatic rejuvenation of the Djoudj Sanctuary wetlands in Senegal and farming of scorching hot desert in Toshka (Egypt).

More information is available online: (www.na.unep.net).

UN FOUNDATION & VODAFONE PARTNERSHIP

The United Nations Foundation and the Vodafone Group Foundation (VGF), have announced a five-year plan that offers the latest telecommunications technology to support UN emergency response missions worldwide through funding to Télécoms Sans Frontières (TSF), a humanitarian NGO equipped to deploy rapid response telecom teams within 48 hours of a disaster anywhere in the world. The UN Foundation and VGF will provide approximately US\$2 million to TSF over five years making the teams available in coordination with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

"As demonstrated recently in Suriname and Indonesia, this programme will provide reliable telecom services so responders can more effectively do their jobs and save lives in the first days of an emergency," said Jan Egeland, Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. "This is the kind of successful public-private partnership we need as we confront increasingly

challenging emergencies around the world."

Through the Rapid Response Communications Centre, up to four TSF teams will deploy with the UN to natural disasters and humanitarian crises anywhere in the world. These teams of telecom experts will be among the first to drop into emergency areas and will rapidly establish and maintain emergency telecommunication centres that provide UN, NGO and government responders with reliable voice, Internet, fax, and video connections using satellite, WiFi, and GSM equipment. Relief workers rely on these centres for response and relief assessment, logistics, and coordination.

The United Nations Foundation and VGF funded teams have already deployed four times to Suriname, Indonesia, Lebanon and the Democratic Republic of Congo to assist the UN in 2006.

More information is available online: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (<http://ochaonline.un.org>) and Télécoms Sans Frontières (www.tsfi.org).

OTHER NEWS

INT'L DRUG PURCHASE FACILITY UNITAID

On 19 September 2006, Brazil, Chile, France, Norway and the United Kingdom launched the International Drug Purchase Facility (IDPF) UNITAID that will help scale up access to drugs and diagnostics to fight AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis for people who need them most in developing countries. The new initiative is funded primarily by innovative financing mechanisms, such as a solidarity levy on airline tickets, and so far 18 countries have announced plans to support the initiative. In a political declaration, the core group of Brazil, Chile, France, Norway and the UK said the new mechanism would provide regular, predictable and enhanced financing for treatment, in addition to official development assistance (ODA).

Speaking at the launch, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, "UNITAID is a model of its kind for many reasons. It is an approach that can be made to work rapidly. It is flexible, in that more countries can easily join the original members. And it is a lean mechanism which complements the existing global architecture for health, inside and outside the UN system." He noted that the UN system is working closely with UNITAID to support the initiative as it moves forward. The World Health Organization will host the Fund and the Secretariat of UNITAID. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are also actively involved, as well as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.

The core group of countries, acting through the new Geneva-based organization, plan to pool their buying power and have asked

Orphans and Vulnerable Children Toolkit (Version II)

The International HIV/AIDS Alliance and Family Health International have published an updated version of the CD-Rom on supporting orphans and other vulnerable children. It now contains over 650 documents sharing learning and resources from a wide range of organizations.

This toolkit is for use by NGOs, governmental organizations, community-based organizations (CBOs) and individuals working with orphans and other vulnerable children. It is also available on-line (www.ovc.support.net). The on-line toolkit is regularly updated with new information and resources.

The CD-Rom covers the following broad categories: Introduction; Running a Programme; Health and Nutrition; Education; Psychosocial Support; Economic Strengthening; Living Environments; and Children's Rights. Each category has several sections and sub-sections on a wide range of topics concerning community-based support to orphans and vulnerable children. Each section and sub-section has explanatory notes as well as the accompanying resources.

former President Bill Clinton's foundation (the Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS Initiative) to negotiate with drug companies for volume discounts. The plan can help pay for the treatment of 100,000 children with AIDS, and another 100,000 people who have become resistant to antiretroviral AIDS drugs, as well as the treatment of 150,000 children with tuberculosis and 28 million with malaria.

The initiative was welcomed by public health experts, who said long-term financing through dedicated taxes was especially suited for the lifelong treatment of people with AIDS. Other experts warned that the focus on the purchase of medicine and diagnostic tests did not deal with the most difficult obstacles to treatment in Africa: the extreme shortage of health workers and broken-down public health systems.

France is the dominant donor to UNITAID, providing US\$250 million of the US\$300 million for next year, all from an airline ticket tax it began collecting last summer. It is charging 4 euros, about US\$5, for every international economy ticket and 40 euros, about US\$51, for first-class ones. Britain is contributing about US\$25 million next year, drawn from its growing foreign aid budget, an amount that will rise to US\$76 million by 2010, British officials said.

The Facility will work in close cooperation with and eventually rely on organizations that have experience in procurement, price negotiation, shipment and handling as well as monitoring. Its governance structure will be designed so as to combine an effective and expedient decision-making process while assuring adequate and broad participation of all interested parties including international organizations and civil society.

More information is available online: (www.unitaid.eu/sommaire.php3?lang=en).

BUSINESS WOMEN'S INITIATIVE: HIV/AIDS

Lorelei Schroeter has joined the Business Women's Initiative against HIV/AIDS (BWI) as its Executive Director. Ms. Schroeter joins BWI from the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA).

The Business Women's Initiative against

HIV/AIDS (BWI) was formed in 2004 by Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, and Mary Ann Leeper, Chair of the Female Health Foundation.

"We knew that we could not sit idly by while millions of women and girls were dying from HIV/AIDS," said Ms. Robinson. "As society's teachers and caregivers, the increase in HIV prevalence among women is crippling families, educational and health systems and civil society as a whole. As women in positions of power, we have faced obstacles and have overcome them. We knew that we could use this same tenacity to better enable women in the developing world to succeed, to help their families, to help their communities, and to help themselves."

The Business Women's Initiative website features an online catalogue of programmes. The programmes and initiatives in the catalogue are all working to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls in the developing world. The approaches that they take vary. Some focus on a specific strategy—prevention, treatment or care, for example—while many integrate a number of strategies for a more holistic approach. Focus areas include: awareness, care, economic empowerment, gender-based violence, prevention and treatment. The catalogue is available online (www.femalehealth.com/bwi/pdf/BWI_Catalog.pdf).

CSO MANUAL FOR SMALL ARMS CAMPAIGNS

The German Division for Governance and Democracy (GTZ), in cooperation with the Bonn International Center for Conversion, have produced a manual to help civil society organizations take action against small arms. Noting that campaigning needs good planning to be successful, the manual aims to give practical advice to civil society organizations in developing countries on how to plan, organize, carry out and evaluate campaigns related to the misuse and uncontrolled proliferation of small arms.

The manual, *Organising Civil Society Campaigns For Small Arms Action*, is divided into nine chapters:

- Chapter 1 deals with civil society and the

control of small arms and delineates the role of civil society in advancing human security.

- Chapter 2 explains the dynamics of NGO work in small arms control and describes decisive aspects for building coalitions for small arms control, their organization and their management.
- Chapter 3 addresses the issue of planning small arms action and provides concrete steps.
- Chapter 4 introduces essential research methods for civil society campaigns, explains the differences between qualitative and quantitative research, and gives an overview of various types of sampling and interviewing techniques.
- Chapter 5 concentrates on questions of seeking and securing funds for small arms actions.
- Chapter 6 deals with relationships with

the media and outlines different ways of creating awareness in print media, television and radio campaigns, and interpersonal communication.

- Chapter 7 offers guidance on working with government officials and advocacy.
- Chapter 8 elaborates on methods of monitoring and evaluation, which the manual notes as crucial to establishing accountability and credibility for beneficiaries and partners.
- Chapter 9 gives an outlook on future international developments regarding the issue of small arms control.

The manual is available online (www.gtz.de/de/dokumente/en-decosac-NGOManual-2005.pdf#search=%22Organising%20civil%20society%20campaigns%20for%20small%20arms%20actions.%20A%20manual%20for%20NGOs%22).

NGO UPDATE

IUCN APPOINTS NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL

Julia Marton-Lefèvre, an expert in development and conservation issues, has been appointed Director General of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and will assume her duties on 1 January 2007.

Ms. Marton-Lefèvre is the current Rector of the University of Peace in Costa Rica, and has been the Executive Director of Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) International, Executive Director of the International Council for Science, and Vice Chair of the World Resources Institute. She succeeds Achim Steiner, who left to take the Executive Director's post at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in June 2006.

"I am greatly honoured by the opportunity to serve the Union as its next Director General. Nature and conservation are part and parcel of the world's struggle for development, peace and security. I am dedicated to work with the Union's powerful network of 1,000 member organizations and 10,000 experts to demonstrate the importance of conservation to a fairer and greener planet, as a continuation of my life-long dedication to the inter-related issues of conservation, environment, development, and peace and

security," Ms. Marton-Lefèvre said.

The Council of the World Conservation Union appointed Ms. Marton-Lefèvre after a three-month worldwide search process. The Council is the governing body of the Union, made up of 32 Councillors who are elected every four years by the Union's governmental and non-governmental member organizations.

ICBL: LANDMINE MONITOR REPORT 2006

According to a report released by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), more land was demined in 2005 than ever before, but global funding for mine action decreased for the first time, raising concerns about future progress in eradicating mines and efforts to meet the needs of the increasing number of survivors. The *Landmine Monitor Report 2006: Toward a Mine-Free World* reports on the global landmine situation and scrutinizes the implementation of and compliance with the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. It is the eighth annual edition of the report.

The 1,230-page report finds that mine action programmes in 2005 demined more than 740km² of land, an area equal to the size of New York City, and more than in any other

UNFPA and World YWCA: Manual

Empowering Young Women to Lead Change is a resource manual designed to enable young women to prepare and facilitate training on a host of issues that are important to them.

A joint publication of the World YWCA and the United Nation's Population Fund (UNFPA), the manual was developed by young women and contains modules on young women's leadership, economic justice, HIV and AIDS, human rights, peace, self esteem and body image, sexual and reproductive health and violence against women.

Trainings and workshops can be designed using the entire manual or pulling out modules of interest for shorter sessions. It was tested in six countries and was launched at the International AIDS Conference in Toronto (see Focus Page 33). The manuals will be distributed to YWCAs in 122 countries as well as to UNFPA country offices and to organizations working with young women and youth.

The manual is available online (www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/628_filename_empowering-young-women_eng.pdf).

More information on the CD-ROM is available on the International HIV/AIDS Alliance and Family Health International website (www.aidsalliance.org/sw31913.asp).

New Appointment at WWF

Hans Verolme, a Dutch National, has been appointed Director of the World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) Global Climate Change Programme. Prior to this nomination, he was in charge of the climate change programme at WWF US.

"The challenges for the climate are massive and rising," Mr. Verolme said. "The focus of my work will be to further prepare WWF for the task at hand. That is quite a task to be honest. We are seeing the impacts of climate change on our conservation efforts and have gradually increased efforts to strengthen our ability to respond to those changes. We are now actively engaged in some 20 countries in policy campaigns with a focus on the energy sector. In addition to our high-level lobbying we have built bridges with the business community including through strong performance based partnerships. We are now looking ahead at what it will really take from WWF for the world to stay below 2°C of warming."

Hans succeeds Jennifer Morgan, who has been seconded to Third Generational Environmentalism (E3G) where she will lead the organization's energy and climate security work.

year since the start of modern demining in the late 1980s. This included active clearance of a total of almost 145km² of mined areas and 190km² of battlefields. More than 470,000 landmines, including around 450,000 antipersonnel mines, and more than 3.75 million explosive devices were removed and destroyed.

Guatemala and Suriname completed clearance of all mined areas in 2005. Twenty-nine countries still have to meet deadlines set down by the Mine Ban Treaty to clear all antipersonnel mines on their territory by 2009 or 2010. Thirteen are not on track to meet this target, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Mozambique, and Thailand.

"Countries who joined the treaty committed themselves to finish demining in ten years," said Jody Williams, ICBL Ambassador. Ms. Williams shared the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize with the ICBL. "The longer States take to clear these mines, the longer these mines wait in the ground for innocent civilians to step on."

For the first time, *Landmine Monitor* recorded mine risk education (MRE) activities in China, while new projects and activities were recorded in 28 countries. Despite these efforts, reported casualties—which are often less than half of the real number—totalled 7,328 in 2005, an increase of 11% from 2004. Over 80% of new casualties were civilians. The increase was largely due to intensified conflict in countries including Burma/Myanmar, India, Nepal and Pakistan, with Colombia having the highest number of recorded casualties – 1,110.

The number of mine survivors increases each year, and these survivors often have life-long needs. Up to 500,000 people alive today have survived a landmine explosion and millions more continue to live in mine-affected areas.

Landmine Monitor Report 2006 was distributed to governments attending the Seventh Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty from 18-22 September 2006 in Geneva.

Contact: Jackie Hansen, *Landmine Monitor* Project Manager, 1 Nicholas Street, Suite 1502, Ottawa ONT K1N 7B7, Canada, telephone +1-613/851 5436, fax +1-613/244 3410, e-mail <lm@icbl.org>, website (www.icbl.org/lm/2006).

ITUC ESTABLISHED

On 1 November 2006 the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) merged, forming the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which was officially formed at the opening session of its Founding Congress in Vienna. It was preceded by the dissolution congresses of the ICFTU and the WCL. The new ITUC will comprise the affiliated organizations of the former ICFTU and WCL together with eight other national trade union organizations that will for the first time affiliate to a global body.

According to ITUC, the international trade union movement is adapting in order to provide a more united voice of workers' worldwide. "The creation of the ITUC will solidify the trade union movement's capacity at the national and international levels," Guy Ryder, the former General Secretary of the ICFTU and prospective General Secretary of the ITUC, said. "Stronger, we will exert more influence on companies, governments and the international financial and trade institutions. The founding of the ITUC is an integral part of the process of uniting the power of trade unionism," he added.

Willy Thys, the former General Secretary of the WCL, said: "There is no doubt that the ITUC will become an effective countervailing force in a society that has changed enormously, with workers' rights being flouted under the pressure created by the current trajectory of 'race to the bottom' globalisation."

The Founding Congress included addresses by Juan Somavia, the Director-General of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Pascal Lamy, the Director-General of the World Trade Organization, as well as panel discussions on the impact of globalization. The Congress also focused on the adoption of the ITUC's programme and the establishment of regional structures.

The ITUC represents 166 million workers through its 309 affiliated organizations within 156 countries and territories.

Contact: International Trade Union Confederation, Boulevard Albert II 5, 1210 Brussels, Belgium, telephone +32-0/22240210, e-mail <press@ituc-csi.org>, website (www.ituc-csi.org).

WATER INTEGRITY NETWORK

A coalition of international NGOs has created a global anti-corruption watchdog body: the Water Integrity Network (WIN) to help combat corruption in the management of water. Members include the IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre, the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), Swedish Water House (SWH), Transparency International (TI), Water and Sanitation Program-Africa (WSP-AF) and AquaFed.

Launched during the 2006 World Water Week held in Stockholm in August, the network aims to promote good governance

and transparency in the water sector. The network's mandate will include diagnosing problems, proposing solutions, building capacity and monitoring progress. It will coordinate with civil society, public and private sectors, and with news media and governments. The network plans to work through the various chapters of Transparency International around the world.

"At a time when we are talking about increasing investments to expand water supplies and water resources, we also have indications that about 25% to 30% of State budgets on water investments are lost due to corruption," Hakan Tropp, WIN's interim Chairperson, said. Noting that it was only an average figure, (*continued on page 22*)

IICD: Promoting ICTs

The International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) is a non-profit foundation that specializes in information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a tool for development. IICD assists various countries in Africa, Latin-America and the Caribbean to improve development within the fields of education, environment, good governance, health and livelihood opportunities. IICD brings knowledge, innovation and finance together with partners from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Support takes place through assisting local partner organizations to make effective use of ICTs on their own terms, as well as by catalysing lessons learned and knowledge sharing on ICTs by linking local organizations and the international community.

More information about the different country projects is available online (www.iicd.org).

Midterm Review for the Brussels PoA for LDCs

In resolution A/59/244, the General Assembly decided to hold in 2006 the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the decade 2001-2010, adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on the LDCs in Brussels in 2001.

The Programme of Action (PoA) provides a framework for a global partnership between LDCs and their development partners to "accelerate sustained economic growth and sustainable development in the LDCs, to end marginalization by eradicating poverty, inequality and deprivation in these countries and to enable them to integrate beneficially into the global economy." Recognizing the importance of civil society and private sector contributions to the implementation of the PoA, the General Assembly, in a subsequent resolution (A/60/228), requested the President of the General Assembly to convene one-day informal interactive hearings in New York on 22 June 2006 (see *Go Between 110*). The hearings addressed two main themes: "Harnessing partnerships for sustainable development in LDCs" and "Unleashing entrepreneurship to end poverty in the LDCs." Key issues arising from the two thematic sessions ranged from the financing of agriculture and food security, to increasing official development assistance (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.

The High-level Meeting of the Midterm Review was held from 18-19 September 2006 and was preceded by a preparatory meeting of experts from 5-7 September 2006. During the High-level Meeting, Member States adopted a declaration recommitting themselves to meeting the special needs of LDCs. The declaration also stresses that meeting the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals in the LDCs can be achieved in part through the timely fulfilment of the seven commitments of the Brussels Programme of Action. The declaration also invites the Economic and Social Council to continue to ensure the annual review of the implementation of the Programme of Action, taking into account the concrete and quantifiable achievements produced in the realization of the agreed objectives.

Following is an interview NGLS conducted on 1 November 2006 with Anwarul K. Chowdhury, the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS), concerning the Midterm Review.

LDCs Midterm Review: Interview with Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative UN-OHRLLS

On 1 November 2006, NGLS conducted an Interview with Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, concerning the Midterm Review of the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs held in September 2006.

NGLS: What were the main outcomes of the High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the Midterm Review of the Implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for LDCs on 18-19 September?

Answer: I believe that the main message out of the Review was the reiteration of commitment to the full implementation of the Programme of Action—this was very important. After experiencing the first five years of the Programme and gaining knowledge and building on the experience gained, reiteration was essential. I am very happy about it.

The second message was the acknowledgement that positive things have happened in the LDCs: official development assistance (ODA) is up as is foreign direct investment (FDI). There is improved capacity as many of the LDCs are reforming their own internal structures and governance.

However, it also came out, very forcefully, that there are still major obstacles to overcome. A clear message was sent on this point.

Another message was that unless there is full implementation of the goals of the Brussels Programme it will be difficult to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The fifty LDCs have the lowest indicators of progress towards achieving the MDGs therefore making global achievement very hard. The Brussels Programme is imperative to the achievement of the MDGs.

There was also recognition of LDC ownership of the implementation process. The Brussels Programme is unique because it has a set of commitments for the LDCs and a set for the donors. The LDCs have taken this responsibility seriously. Each has submitted a report charting their progress. Regional meetings were held as well. These actions were followed up in Cotonou, Benin, where LDC ministers developed the Cotonou Strategy.

The Cotonou Strategy is LDC led and owned. A key element is that it includes a follow-up chart that identifies the entities of the UN system that contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Brussels Programme. This is a concrete step because now UN entities can't say that they didn't know. The Strategy hasn't been formally endorsed by the General Assembly, but the resolution A/Res/61/1 does make reference to it. We are taking it as a mandate to follow-up on the Cotonou meeting within the UN.

On Friday, 27 October, the Chief Executive Board (CEB) met under the Secretary-General and I made a presentation of the Review. I proposed formalizing an inter-agency consultative group for the Brussels Programme for the next five years. Our first meeting will be on 3 November and we plan to convene every couple of months subsequently.

We have agreed that there should be a formal reporting mechanism with each agency to their governing bodies regarding their progress and role in the achievement of the Programme. This is major advance within the UN system.

NGLS: What has been the role of civil society in pushing forward the cause of the LDCs?

Answer: From the moment I came on board, I decided that we will take NGOs and civil society as partners for our office and the full implementation of the Brussels Programme.

We follow implementation in four tracks: one, the LDCs themselves and their development partners; two, the UN system; three, multi-lateral organizations outside the UN; and, four, civil society and the private sector.

Civil society has always been a part of our work. NGOs have a major role to play at both the national and global level to support the implementation of the Programme. At the national level, NGOs are spearheading the effort—and are often ahead of their own governments on many issues. Meanwhile, at the global level they act as advocates for the LDCs.

One NGO our office works closely with is LDC Watch. They watch the progress of implementation from a civil society perspective. We held a joint forum with LDC Watch, which is one specific and useful collaboration that comes to mind.

We have also organized events and forums with NGOs in New York and Geneva to highlight the need for collaboration and hear the voice of NGOs.

I also believe that the contribution of NGOs for the Review was wonderful. The Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly were particularly good. I regret that we didn't get as many NGOs from the LDCs as we expected or wanted. This was partly due to a lack of money to pay for their travel and partly due to the difficulty that many invited participants had in obtaining a visa. However, many that couldn't participate in person sent inputs in writing. The summary of the Hearings is available as an official UN document and contributed to the

outcome of the Review.

In July we held a civil society forum in Geneva, for which we are particularly grateful to NGLS Coordinator Tony Hill and NGLS for organizing.

Another regret is that we couldn't get an NGO representative at the High-level Meeting. I hope that in the future this will be possible. There is no general rule regarding this, the decision has to be taken at each individual meeting.

Now, NGOs can organize at home and help us prepare and act on this idea of a global advocacy campaign that came out of the hearings.

NGLS: There are five years left to achieve the goals spelled out in the Brussels Programme. What are the main obstacles/challenges to implementation?

Answer: The main challenge continues to be how effectively we can put the LDC agenda at the core of UN action on development.

Commitments at UN meetings come in many forms but there needs to be a culture in the system so that everyone believes that the 50 LDCs need priority attention. The world can't move ahead with these 50 countries lagging behind. We have to realize: let us make the socio-economic arena a level one with the developed world. Statistics show that many LDCs are doing well—once given a level playing field. But this is something LDCs don't generally have.

The second challenge is the LDCs themselves. They must internalize the commitments made at Brussels. The five-year Review shows that they have done a lot. But, as they become more capable of handling more things they need to live up to their commitments. LDCs should recognize that they have accomplished a lot and feel good. The donors should realize that their support has helped.

NGLS: What opportunities will there be for civil society engagement in the work of the international community in the LDCs?

Answer: We are doing a few things next year in this regard. We will consult with NGOs and your office, NGLS, to think of the best way to organize another NGO Forum. We are also working with the NGO Committee on Sustainable Development in the organization of some other events.

We are going to start collaborating with the national focal points in the 50 LDCs. We are going to bring them in for a workshop and one of the things we will ask them is to brief us on the role of NGOs in their countries. We will ask, "What is the status of your collaboration with NGOs?"

We are going to engage some of the bigger international NGOs or regional ones that have good networks to aid local NGOs. We would like them all to focus their work on the LDCs.



And then there is the Global Advocacy Strategy that I have been mentioning. Our awareness raising and information sharing needs to be intensified. Our efforts need more zest. We are preparing an outline of the campaign right now. Input from NGOs has been received and in the campaign we will work with NGOs as a full partner.

On 25 October we launched a global media compact. We are going to engage the media in the LDCs to try to get them to focus on the Brussels Programme. We will try to encourage them to ask questions, raise awareness and help hold leaders accountable. We have identified 50 major newspapers from the 50 LDCs to do this.

We have received good support from northern NGOs. NGOs that push for international trade reform have been helpful and supportive.

We are advocating on two major trade issues. The first is aid for trade. The main focus should be the LDCs, and they should be integrated into the existing World Bank framework. The second is the current WTO process of membership. Eight or nine LDCs are still out of the WTO—they should have a "fast-track" opportunity to join. The two newest members are LDCs, but it is such a grueling process. LDCs do not have the capacity or ability to conform to many of the rules. And by not being a member they cannot take advantage of the benefits of membership. The WTO should fast-track the LDCs and simplify the process. We need civil society's support in this effort.

We will continue to work with NGLS, LDC Watch and others in all of our work. Civil society is a vital partner in the support of our efforts to promote the Brussels Programme and assist LDCs.

Gender Reporting Toolkit

The Commonwealth Press Union has put together a toolkit on Gender for Journalists. The toolkit is designed to help journalists in the newsroom to understand the term "gender" and to adopt the best practice when writing about gender issues. The toolkit is for those organisations who collect human rights news and disseminate the same, as well as for those who prepare annual reports or compilations from news sources.

The toolkit is available online (www.cpu.org.uk/cpu-toolkits/gender_reporting/index.html).

he stressed the numbers could vary from country to country—going lower or higher depending on the degree of corruption and mismanagement.

At the grassroots level, he said, the poor have been forced to pay bribes to connect to water pipes or to water tankers. But there was also increased high-level corruption both in procurement and infrastructure development, resulting in misallocation of scarce economic resources.

Noting that both "petty corruption" and "grand corruption" exist, a 37-page report produced by the Water and Sanitation Programme Africa states that "petty corruption" involves a vast number of officials who abuse public office by extracting small bribes and favours while "grand corruption" involves the misuse of vast amounts of public sector funds by a relatively small number of officials.

Tackling Corruption in the Water and Sanitation Sector in Africa says these corrupt practices take the form of abuse of resources, such as theft and embezzlement from budgets and revenues; corruption in procurement resulting in overpayments and failure to enforce quality standards; administrative corruption in payment systems; and corruption at the point of delivery.

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YUNUS/Grameen Bank Share Nobel Prize

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2006, divided into two equal parts, to Bangladeshi economist Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank he founded for their pioneering use of micro-credit loans that help large population groups find ways to break out of poverty. The Nobel Committee also noted that development from below also "serves to advance democracy and human rights."

Through Mr. Yunus's efforts and those of the bank he founded, poor people around the world, especially women, have been able

to buy bread ovens, sewing machines or desperately needed items to get ahead. Grameen Bank has been a source of ideas and models for the many institutions in the field of micro-credit that have sprung up around the world.

The success of the Bank has had ripple effects in numerous developing countries, including India, and has been a source of ideas and models for the many institutions in the field of micro-credit that have sprung up around the world, helping to bring micro-credit to the forefront of discussion in development finance. The Grameen Bank has grown over the years with around seven million borrowers in over 70,000 villages. Almost all the borrowers (around 97%) are women.

Mr. Yunus said he would use part of his share of the US\$1.4 million award money to create a company to make low-cost, high-nutrition food for the poor. The rest would go toward setting up an eye hospital for the poor in Bangladesh, he said.

More information is available online (www.grameen-info.org).

2006 RIGHT LIVELIHOOD AWARDS

Chico Whitaker Ferreira, a driving force behind the creation of the World Social Forum (WSF), has been announced as the winner of the 2006 Right Livelihood Award. The 2006 Right Livelihood Awards, often referred to as the alternative Nobel Prizes, honour pioneers for justice, truth and peacebuilding from North America, South America and Asia.

Mr. Whitaker Ferreira, a Roman Catholic activist from Brazil, won the honorary award "for a lifetime's dedicated work for social justice that has strengthened democracy in Brazil and helped give birth to the World Social Forum, WSF, showing that 'another world is possible.'" Legendary US whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg and Indian Dalit champion Ruth Manorama were also named winners.

Right Livelihood Awards founder Jacob von Uexkull, a Swedish-German professional philatelist and former member of the European parliament, said, "The recipients demonstrate how individual courage, even in the face of powerful interests and

repression, can bring about remarkable changes.”

The prize money of two million Swedish Kronors (US\$275,000/220,000 Euro) will be shared between three recipients who were elected amongst a total of 73 nominated candidates from 40 countries.

Daniel Ellsberg, a Pentagon official who leaked secret information in 1971 that revealed how the US Government misled the public about the Vietnam War—the so-called Pentagon Papers—was awarded for “putting peace and truth first, at considerable personal risk, and dedicating his life to inspiring others to follow his example.”

Following Mr. Ellsberg’s “whistleblowing” that helped end the Vietnam War, he was arrested and indicted on 12 counts of felony, though the courts dismissed the case in 1973.

Mr. Ellsberg founded the Truth-Telling Project, which started with an op-ed in *The New York Times* in the run-up to the Iraq War. It was launched in September 2003 with a letter signed by 11 former officials. It was a “call to patriotic whistleblowing” and has given rise to the National Security Whistleblowers Coalition, which now includes more than 60 former officials from national security agencies.

The other recipient, Ruth Manorama, was honoured as the “sub-continent’s most effective organiser of and advocate for Dalit women of India.” Ms. Manorama, a Dalit herself, said she has spent many decades working to achieve equality for Dalit women in India, also sometimes referred to as the “untouchables.”

Dalit women in India, constituting half of the approximately 200 million Dalit population, and 16.3% of the total Indian female population, not only suffer from oppression as a result of class and caste, but from gender inequalities resulting from patriarchy, Ms. Manorama said.

The prize money was also shared by the well known poetry festival, the Festival Internacional de Poesía de Medellín, which has helped build peace in the Colombian city Medellín, one of the most violent cities in the world.

More information is available online (www.rightlivelivelihood.org/index.htm).

PROTECTING DISPLACED WOMEN AND GIRLS

The Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children has released a report on ways to mitigate widespread violence against displaced women and girls as they collect firewood. Despite the known dangers, these women and girls must collect wood to sell or cook with in order to survive in conflict situations around the world. The report outlines a number of practical solutions that could save thousands of women and girls from being attacked.

“Every day, millions of displaced women and girls must collect firewood for their families in dangerous conditions, and are at risk of rape, assault, abduction, theft, exploitation and even death,” says Women’s Commission Executive Director Carolyn Makinson. “They have no choice—it’s a matter of survival. It’s time for the international community to take coordinated action to address this problem.”

The report, entitled *Beyond Firewood: Fuel Alternatives and Protection Strategies for Displaced Women and Girls*, addresses alternative fuel options, firewood collection techniques and other protection strategies that should be used in displaced and refugee situations worldwide.

At the start of a new emergency, a lead agency should coordinate all fuel-related activities—in consultation with displaced women—to provide food that needs little cooking and to consider the direct provision of fuel to families. In addition, transportation to firewood collection sites and/or regular patrols of the routes should be enacted.

At the same time, alternative technology should be considered, such as fuel-efficient stoves, solar energy or briquettes. Such stoves can reduce firewood consumption by up to 80%. Any fuel or technology should be evaluated for medium- to long-term use and take into account safety, locally available materials, sustainability and cost.

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Hairdressers Fighting AIDS

Zimbabwean hairdressers will offer counselling and condoms to their clients as part of an innovative programme to reduce HIV infection, backed by a £20 million grant from the British Government. The donation will help fund a five-year campaign to reduce new infections by increasing testing and encouraging safer sex.

The grant will go to the non-governmental group Population Services International (PSI), which also gets funds from the US. The grant will enable the campaign to increase its condom sales from 160 million to 250 million.

More than 1,000 hairdressers have been trained to give advice to their clients about sexual matters and to sell male and female condoms. “The salons are conducive environments where women can feel free to speak about HIV-related issues. Our hairdressers are very enthusiastic about the positive social role they can play,” said Yasmin Madan, of PSI in Harare.

Last year more than half of all female condoms were distributed through the network of 700 beauty salons in low-income areas. The demand in Zimbabwe for female condoms has increased by 240% since 2001. It is one of few countries with a successful female condom programme.

Zimbabwe has one of the world’s highest HIV rates, with one in five adults estimated to be infected. Of these, 80% are unaware of their status. The campaign aims to provide testing and counselling for 800,000 people. It also offers support groups for those who test positive.

Human Development Report 2006— Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis

This year's Human Development Report 2006—Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis focuses on the relationships between the three and the reasons behind them. The report contains two parts: the first part looks at water for life as a basic human right, while the second part looks at water for livelihoods, noting that water is a "silent crisis." Yet unlike wars and natural disasters, this global crisis does not galvanize concerted international action, the report warns.

"Delivering clean water, removing waste water, and providing sanitation are three of the most basic foundations for human progress," says the *Human Development Report 2006 (2006 HDR)*. But 1.1 billion people do not have access to water, and 2.6 billion do not have access to sanitation. "'Not having access to clean water' is a euphemism for profound deprivation. It means that people walk more than one kilometre to the nearest source of clean water for drinking, that they collect water from drains, ditches or streams that might be infected with pathogens and bacteria that can cause severe illness and death."

There are several themes in the *2006 HDR*, including the crisis in water and sanitation; water for human consumption; the sanitation deficit; water, vulnerability and risk in the management of water resources; water and agriculture; and the management of transboundary waters. *2006 HDR* emphasizes that achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) very much depends on strengthening water governance at local, national, regional and global levels. The report estimates the total additional cost of achieving the MDG on access to water and sanitation—to be sourced domestically and internationally—at about US\$10 billion a year, which it also notes represents less than five days' worth of global military spending and less than half what rich countries spend each year on mineral water.

The human-development gains would be immense, stress the authors. The report shows that closing the gap between current trends and the MDG target on water and sanitation would save more than one million children's lives over the next decade and bring total economic benefits of about US\$38 billion annually. The benefits for sub-Saharan Africa—about US\$15 billion—would represent 60% of its 2003 aid flows.

Noting that there are 4,900 child deaths per day (1.8 million children per year) due to diarrhoea that could be prevented with access to clean water and a toilet, the report stresses that a number of main imperatives be made. First, make water a human right—and mean it: "Everyone should have at least 20 litres of clean water per day and the poor should get it for free," the report says, advocating for all governments to go beyond vague constitutional principles in enabling legislation to secure the human right to a secure, accessible and affordable supply of water. Second, draw up national strategies for water and sanitation: Governments should aim to spend a minimum of 1% gross domestic product (GDP) on water and sanitation,

and enhance equity. Third, support national plans with increased international aid: The report calls for an extra US\$3.4 billion to US\$4 billion annually, noting that development assistance has fallen in real terms over the past decade.

Developing a global action plan is also crucial for success that would focus fragmented international efforts to mobilize resources and galvanize political action by putting water and sanitation firmly on the development agenda.

According to the report, there are huge disparities in the prices that people pay for water and the poor pay more for clean water. People living in urban slums typically pay 5-10 times more per litre than people living in high-income areas. In sanitation, the poorest two-fifths of households in the world account for more than half the global deficit. Furthermore, the public-versus-private debate on water is not helping the poor, *2006 HDR* argues. "The debate over the relative merits of public and private sector performance has been a distraction from the inadequate performance of both public and private water providers in overcoming the global water deficit."

According to the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI), released as part of the *2006 HDR*, the gap between the richest and poorest countries in the world is growing, as human development in sub-Saharan Africa stagnates and progress in other regions accelerates.

The HDI statistics reveal that life expectancy in sub-Saharan Africa is actually lower today than it was three decades ago. In the 31 countries at the bottom of the list, 28 of which are in sub-Saharan Africa, a person can hope to live on average only 46 years, or 32 years less than the average life expectancy in countries of advanced human development, with 20 years slashed off life expectancy due to HIV/AIDS.

The combined income of the 500 richest people in the world now exceeds that of the poorest 416 million people. One of the central human-development challenges ahead, the report stresses, is to diminish tolerance for the extreme inequalities that have characterized globalization since the early 1990s.

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International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Delegations drafting the first Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, under negotiation since 2001, have agreed on 11 articles, covering issues ranging from personal mobility to liberty and security of the person to participation in political and cultural life, marking a major shift in the way the world's 650 million people with disabilities are treated.

On 25 August 2006, the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities adopted the draft International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. The content of the new convention, which has been forwarded to the General Assembly for adoption, views persons with disabilities as active members of society from whom persons without disabilities can learn and develop. A number of the articles contained in the convention are listed below.

Article 1 identifies the purpose of the convention “to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.”

Article 2 includes a definition of “discrimination on the basis of disability” which includes a “denial of reasonable accommodation” within its scope. It defines “reasonable accommodation” as meaning “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Article 3 identifies the underlying principles of the convention which can roughly be grouped as follows: respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy and human diversity; non-discrimination and equality; participation and inclusion in society; accessibility; and respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities.

The convention includes the full range of rights—civil, cultural, economic, political and social—of persons with disabilities. Article 4 on General Obligations recognizes that economic, social and cultural rights in the convention are subject to progressive realization.

Article 6 highlights the fact that women and girls are subject to multiple discrimination and places obligations on the State to combat this and to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women. Article 7 on children requires “the best interest of the child” to be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children and ensures children a right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them in light of their age and maturity. Preambular paragraph (n) includes “indigenous” as well as “age” as categories of discrimination. Article 28 on “Adequate standard of living and social protection” requires States to ensure access to social

protection and poverty reduction programmes, including to the aged with disabilities.

In situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, both the preamble and Article 11 recognize the importance of respect for human rights for persons with disabilities. Preambular paragraph (s) bis includes a specific reference to situations of “foreign occupation.” Given the link between armed conflict and increase in disability—both physical, sensory as well as psychosocial—the inclusion of obligations on States to respect the rights of persons with disabilities in such situations is significant.

Article 12 of the working text reaffirms that persons with disabilities have the right to recognition everywhere as persons before the law.

Article 24 recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to education and it requires States to ensure inclusive education, which seeks to ensure that the general education system has the necessary capacity to incorporate people from diverse backgrounds. This includes persons with disabilities, but also persons from diverse cultural, ethnic and other backgrounds.

While many of the articles apply and clarify existing rights to the situation of persons with disabilities, other articles identify the principal measures that States should take to ensure the conditions necessary for the enjoyment of these rights. These provisions include: awareness-raising (Article 8), accessibility (Article 9), personal mobility (Article 20), habilitation and rehabilitation (Article 26), statistics and data collection (Article 31) and international cooperation (Article 32). Other articles also identify positive measures to be adopted by States Parties to ensure an enabling environment for the enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The convention also includes articles not mentioned above, such as: the right to life (Article 10); access to justice (Article 13); liberty and security of the person (Article 14); freedom from torture (Article 15); freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse (Article 16); protecting the integrity of the person (Article 17); liberty of movement and nationality (Article 18); living independently and being included in the community (Article 19); freedom of expression and opinion (Article 21), among others.

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Second Session of the Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council opened its second session on 18 September, addressing a number of issues and hearing from the thematic Special Procedures on a wide range of topics. The session considered the follow-up of decisions and resolutions made during the first session. Almost 50 resolutions were tabled, and, on 6 October, the Council suspended its second session until 27 November, when it began its third session.

The second session got underway with a message from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and an address by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, as well as a series of statements which addressed the situation of human rights in a number of countries.

In his message, read by Ms. Arbour, Mr. Annan stressed to the Council that they would be discussing two vital elements of the Council's work: a new Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism and the strengthening of the Special Procedures. Noting that reaching agreement would not be easy, he called on Member States to foster an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual respect.

In her own remarks, Ms. Arbour said migration was a pressing issue of international concern on which progress was urgently needed, and that violence, depravation and human rights abuses triggered migratory flows to the real or imagined lands of plenty. But such factors played an even greater role in the forced flight of people within countries devastated by conflict, or in their desperate exodus to neighbouring States that were likely unable to provide them with minimal security, she warned.

During the three-week session, the Council heard from the thematic Special Procedures on the following topics: racism and racial discrimination, people of African descent, migrants, internally displaced persons, minorities, indigenous peoples, extrajudicial and summary executions, enforced disappearances, children in armed conflict, gender issues and the status of women, violence against women, trafficking in persons, torture, arbitrary detention, the independence of judges, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of expression, human rights defenders, the right to health, toxic and dangerous products and waste, housing, food, poverty, sale of children, economic and structural reform, mercenaries, education, transnational corporations, and human rights and counter-terrorism measures.

The Council also considered the reports of country-specific Special Rapporteurs and Experts, including Belarus, Somalia, Cuba, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Cambodia, Haiti, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Sudan and Liberia.

The follow-up of decisions and resolutions taken at the first session and during the first and second special sessions (see *Go Between 110*) were discussed during the session, as was a follow-up report by the Special Rapporteur on the

situation of human rights in the Palestinian occupied territories. On 15 November, a third special session was held on the subject and Member States decided to dispatch a high-level fact-finding mission to Beit Hanoun.

The Council also heard the progress report of the intersessional open-ended intergovernmental Working Group which it established to develop the modalities of the UPR mechanism (tasked with reviewing the situation of human rights in all countries); and the progress report of the Working Group on the implementation of operative paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution A/60/251 to review, and where necessary improve and rationalize, all mandates of its Special Procedures, expert advice, and a complaint procedure inherited from the former Commission on Human Rights, and this within one year. A number of Member States stressed that the UPR should promote cooperation and emphasized that the objective should be to increase the capacity of the State to address human rights situations within the country. Several governments stressed that the UPR should complement the work of the treaty bodies.

In a decision adopted by the Council on reports of mechanisms and mandates, the Council decided to transmit the views of the Sub-Commission on Promotion and Protection of Human Rights on the Human Rights Council's future system of expert advice to the Working Group established pursuant to Human Rights Council decision 2006/104.

Meetings of the 1503 procedure, during which the Council considers the situation of human rights violations in certain countries behind closed doors, were also held. The Council discussed the situation of human rights in Iran, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and decided to end its consideration of the situation in Kyrgyzstan under this procedure.

On 19 September, the Council took up the issues of forced disappearances, minority issues, and the fundamental freedoms of indigenous people. The Independent Expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall, stressed that exclusion, discrimination and racism directed at ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups continue to fuel social unrest in every region of the world. Minority rights and policies of inclusion and equality play a vital role in promoting political and social stability, she said, adding that discrimination against ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities is often linked to disproportionate levels of poverty in those communities. Representatives from more than 30 countries and groups, including Amnesty International, also spoke during the day's

discussions.

In later debates, the Council began discussing reports covering extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the human rights of IDPs. Walter Kalin, Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of IDPs, said three elements are required to ensure the full protection of their rights: a strong normative framework, political will and the capacity to protect.

Speaking on 20 September, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Yakin Erturk, highlighted the problems faced by women in Russia, Iran, Mexico, Afghanistan and Sudan's Darfur region. She noted that the situation for women in Afghanistan remained dramatic, and severe violence against them was all pervasive while throughout Darfur, a surge in sexual violence continued.

On 21 September, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Manfred Nowak, warned that most States have not taken the necessary legislative measures to ensure that law enforcement officials get the message that torture constitutes a serious crime which can never be justified. This failure contributes to a climate of impunity and a lack of awareness, which in turn constitutes one of the major reasons that torture persists in many countries and regions of the world, Mr. Nowak stressed.

On 22 September the Council concluded discussion on incitement to racial and religious hatred. Mehr Khan Williams, Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, called for the Council to work on how to promote tolerance among cultures and examine whether its strategy on racism and xenophobia was sufficiently detailed to tackle the complexity of the issues involved. She said it would also be useful for the UN's Special Rapporteurs, unpaid independent human rights experts, to elaborate on these areas.

In another session, the Council discussed a number of reports by its Special Rapporteurs. Paul Hunt, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, said that right was one of the most extensive and complex human rights in the international code, highlighting that neglected diseases had been affecting the poorest people in the poorest communities. Jean Ziegler, Special Rapporteur on the right to food, said the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on reducing hunger would not be met by their target date of 2015 and while there had been progress in the world, he said the World Trade Organization (WTO) created malnutrition through its decisions.

Speaking on 23 September, Martin Scheinin, Special Rapporteur on the protection and promotion of human rights while countering terrorism, indicated that five "current trends" in fighting the global scourge of terrorism risk violating human rights. These trends consisted of States:

resorting to the notion of "terrorism" to stigmatize political, ethnic or other movements they simply did not like; questioning or compromising the absolute prohibition of torture and of all forms of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment; going beyond the criminalization of incitement to commit serious crime, by penalizing the "glorification" or "apology" of terrorism, or the publication of information that "could be useful" in the commission of acts of terrorism; justifying tightening immigration controls by the risk of terrorism; and the issue of terrorism largely replacing drug-related crime as the primary public justification for extending the powers of the police, coupled with the abandonment of many of the traditional safeguards.

On 4 October, a number of NGOs spoke before the Council on the two reports of its Special Procedures on their missions to Lebanon and Israel as well as other issues, such as the rights of gays and lesbians, the right to water and the defamation of religions.

The representative of Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, in a joint statement with Earthjustice, International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, Foodfirst Information, Franciscans International, Human Rights Advocates and International Commission of Jurists, said that more than a billion people lacked the most basic water supply and 10,000 people died each day due to diseases caused by a lack of clear water and sanitation.

The implementation of the right to water had important practical benefits. It emphasized the need to prioritize available resources on people without basic access to water and on the most vulnerable and marginalized communities. It confirmed that water was a legal entitlement, rather than a mere charity or commodity. The right to water would also empower communities to be fully consulted and to participate in decision-making processes affecting them, the statement stressed (see related article page 24).

The President of the Council, Luis Alfonso de Alba of Mexico, said in his concluding statement that more than 40 reports had been heard. A large number of resolutions had been submitted, compelling the Council to continue its work throughout November, and this was an indication of delegations' interest in substantive matters, even during the first phases of the new body, he said, stressing that better working methods were required in order to be able to deal with each and every subject.

On 6 October the Human Rights Council suspended its second session until 27 November, when it took up the draft proposals that it did not have time to consider. The third session will continue through 8 December 2006.

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State of World Population 2006: Women and International Migration

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), women currently constitute almost half of all international migrants worldwide—95 million. Yet, despite contributions to poverty reduction and struggling economies, it is only recently that the international community has begun to grasp the significance of what migrant women have to offer. It is only recently too that policymakers are acknowledging the particular challenges and risks women confront when venturing into new lands.

This year's *State of World Population Report, A Passage to Hope: Women and International Migration*, examines the scope and breadth of female migration, the impact of the funds they send home to support families and communities, and their disproportionate vulnerability to trafficking, exploitation and abuse. It was launched a week before the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held at UN headquarters from 14-15 September (see *NGLS Roundup 127*).

The most prevalent "push" factors for female migration abroad include family reunification, marriage, unemployment, low wages, poverty, limited social and economic opportunities and refugees.

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, UNFPA Executive Director, speaking at the report's launch said, "There is an urgent need for stronger cooperation between countries to make migration more safe and fair. And there is a dire need for greater action to address the lack of opportunities and human rights violations that lead many women to migrate in the first place."

Human Trafficking

A Passage to Hope shows that female migration can lead to terrible human rights violations, such as human trafficking. Restrictive immigration policies that limit opportunities to migrate safely can fuel the desperation that drives millions of women and girls to entrust their wellbeing and, in some cases, their lives to unscrupulous traffickers who misrepresent themselves as legitimate labour recruiters.

The report notes that human trafficking represents the third largest illicit trade after drugs and gun smuggling. Unlike both, however, trafficking victims remain an ongoing source of "revenue" to be exploited over and over again until they are too ill or too worn out to continue. The report calls for greater cooperation between and within countries to bring traffickers to justice and to provide services and human rights protection for trafficking victims.

Domestic Work

Currently, domestic work remains one of the largest sectors driving international female labour migration. However, *State of World Population* notes, labour laws rarely protect domestic workers, nor do they permit them to organize. This leaves millions dependent on employers for their continued legal presence in the host country, in addition to housing, food, and wages. The isolated nature of domestic work,

coupled with official neglect and a dearth of appropriate labour protections, can relegate domestic workers to virtual slavery.

Brain Drain

Another manifestation of female migration is the massive outflow of nurses from the developing world to industrialized countries. Ageing populations, coupled with a shortage of nurses and doctors in host countries, is fuelling demand, while crumbling health systems and poverty in developing nations is driving supply. The yearly exodus of 20,000 highly qualified nurses and doctors from Africa, or "Brain Drain," is worsening an already grave situation for a region ravaged by HIV/AIDS, malaria and high numbers of maternal and child deaths.

Forced Migration

In 2005, there were approximately 12.7 million refugees in the world, roughly half of them women. Though forced migration entails risks for all involved, women and girls face particular hazards—during flight, while seeking temporary refuge and once they are re-settled. Of the 773,500 individuals seeking asylum globally, women are underrepresented, as gender-related claims of persecution are often ignored.

In conflict situations, armed militias often target women and girls for rape. Survivors of gender-based violence may face long-term injury, unwanted pregnancies, sexual dysfunction, post-traumatic stress disorders and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

Noting that migration is a very complex issue, the report stresses that gender plays a key role in shaping the migration experience, and the minimum standard to which any migration policy should be held is whether it advances human rights and gender equality.

In addition to the main report, UNFPA also launched *Moving Young*, a special companion volume that explores the topic of migration through the words of migrant youth. The report brings to life, through first-person accounts, the issues raised in the *State of World Population*. The youth report, a new initiative, will become a joint annual report.

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Secretary-General's In-depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women

On 9 October 2006, the Secretary-General's In-depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women (A/61/122/Add.1) was presented to the General Assembly. Mandated by GA resolution 58/185 in December 2003 and prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the study identifies ways to close the gap between States' obligations under international norms, standards and policies and calls for efforts to eradicate violence against women to become a higher priority at the local, national and international level.

The Secretary-General's report finds that violence against women persists in every country in the world as a pervasive violation of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality and as long as violence against women continues, real progress towards equality, development and peace cannot be made.

The roots of violence against women lie in historically unequal power relations between men and women and pervasive discrimination against women in both the public and private spheres, the report suggests, noting that patriarchal disparities of power, discriminatory cultural norms and economic inequalities serve to deny women's human rights and perpetuate violence.

The different manifestations of such violence and women's personal experiences are, however, shaped by factors such as ethnicity, class, age, sexual orientation, disability, nationality and religion. There are many different forms of violence against women—physical, sexual, psychological and economic. Some increase in importance while others diminish as societies undergo demographic changes, economic restructuring and social and cultural shifts. Some forms, such as international trafficking and violence against migrant workers, cross national boundaries.

Women are subjected to violence in a wide range of settings, including the family, the community, State custody, and armed conflict and its aftermath. Violence constitutes a continuum across the lifespan of women, from before birth to old age and cuts across both the public and the private spheres. The most common form of violence experienced by women globally is intimate partner violence. Also widespread are harmful traditional practices. Within the community setting, femicide (gender-based murder of women), sexual violence, sexual harassment and trafficking in women are receiving increasing attention, and the high incidence of violence against women in armed conflict, particularly sexual violence including rape, has become progressively clearer.

Violence against women has far-reaching consequences for women, their children and community and society as a whole. The report notes that States have an obligation to protect women from violence, to hold perpetrators accountable and to provide justice and remedies to

victims. This requires "clear political will, outspoken, visible and unwavering commitment at the highest levels of leadership of the State and the resolve, advocacy and practical action of individuals and communities."

The report finds that the lack of political will is reflected in inadequate resources devoted to tackling violence against women and a failure to create and maintain a political and social environment where violence against women is not tolerated. There is also a need to engage men more effectively in the work on preventing and eliminating such violence, and to tackle stereotypes and attitudes that perpetuate male violence against women.

States should take urgent and concrete measures to secure gender equality and protect women's human rights, the report urges, noting that strong institutional mechanisms are required at national and international level to ensure action, coordination, monitoring and accountability. Furthermore, ending impunity and ensuring accountability for violence against women are crucial to prevent and reduce such violence.

The report notes that the exercise of leadership at all levels is essential and must involve all sectors (including politicians and government officials, opinion formers, business leaders, civil society organizations and community leaders) and include a comprehensive and systematic response. Sustained action, backed by strong, dedicated and permanent institutional mechanisms are also essential and States should build on the work done by NGOs, scale up and institutionalize it and share experiences with other countries, the report recommends.

Further, States should allocate adequate resources and funding to programmes to address and redress violence against women. Strengthening the capacity of States to collect, process and disseminate data on violence against women should also be a priority in order to inform policy and strategy development. Sectors such as justice, health, housing and education are critical in assisting women who survive violence to access effective legal, health and social services, as well as enhancing prevention work.

The Secretary-General's report is available online (www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw).

UNHCR: 57th Session of the Executive Committee

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) held the 57th Session of the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the High Commissioner's Programme in Geneva from 2-6 October 2006 to review and approve the agency's programmes and budgets and to discuss a number of Conclusions, one that focused on women and girls at risk and another on the issue of statelessness. ExCom was preceded by three days of Annual Consultations with NGOs, which brought together over 320 NGO representatives.

In his opening statement, UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres commented on a number of internal and external challenges and UNHCR's position in relation to these. He outlined six commitments UNHCR is faced with and spoke of the agency's engagement as a partner in the new cluster approach by the UN system and the broader international community to help internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide.

Outlining the first commitment, Mr. Guterres stressed the need to strengthen UNHCR's identity as a protection agency. "That identity, as I said last year, should inform everything we do. At a time of rising intolerance, fuelled by security concerns and confusion in public opinion between migrants and refugees, we are bound first to preserve asylum and rebuild trust in asylum systems.... We must be vigilant and remain a voice of reason and tolerance." He also noted that protection was at the centre of UNHCR's efforts to reduce statelessness and was also at the centre of the new emphasis given to UNHCR's engagement in relation both to internal displacement and the migration-asylum nexus.

The second commitment was to make UNHCR a predictable and fully-engaged partner in the new cluster approach to situations of internal displacement. In December 2005 the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) endorsed a cluster-based mechanism to address gaps in the humanitarian response to IDP and refugee situations. UNHCR is the designated "cluster" lead in three areas of conflict-induced displacement: emergency shelter, camp coordination and management, and protection. Each cluster lead has accepted to be the agency of "first port of call" and "provider of last resort" within this sector/cluster. The new arrangements came into force on 1 January 2006 and are being piloted in 2006 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Liberia and Somalia. It is estimated that nearly four million IDPs, out of an estimated global total of 24 million, are to be found in the four pilot countries. The cluster approach is also being used in Lebanon and Côte d'Ivoire.

The High Commissioner stressed that for the new approach to be effective, it must be flexible and adapted to reality on the ground; that its framework

should be light and non-bureaucratic; and that it be based on the understanding that all humanitarian actors, including the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the NGO movements, need to be effectively engaged in the process as full strategic partners that think, plan, and act together.

The third commitment was to effectively address the protection concerns in mixed population flows, or the migration-asylum nexus. He emphasized that UNHCR did not intend to become a migration management agency but that the office's role was to help create the environment where refugees could be detected and granted access to asylum procedures and fair treatment of their claims.

The fourth commitment included a stronger emphasis on solutions with particular focus on the sustainability of returns and the enhanced role of resettlement, two of the main concerns of Convention Plus, which have been mainstreamed in the office (see *Go Between 94 & 100*).

The fifth commitment he said was to re-establish a quick, agile and flexible emergency response capacity, noting that over the past year UNHCR emergency teams were active in Lebanon, Timor Leste and the valleys of northern Pakistan. He noted that UNHCR's emergency response abilities are being strengthened and that the quick and efficient deployment of expert staff and relief material almost anywhere in the world has been a hallmark of UNHCR. "By 2007, our target is to be able to respond to an exodus of 500,000 people."

The sixth commitment he mentioned was reform and the structural and management change process in order to make the organization more flexible, effective and results-oriented, based on a thorough review and reform of its procedures and structure.

Noting that "refugees are the raison d'être of the UN refugee agency," the High Commissioner, in concluding, said the agency was "a partner capable of answering new and increasingly complex challenges in a globalized context. But always, unrelenting in our efforts to reach more people in need of protection. Protection is the heart of our mandate and it must remain the soul of our organization."

Conclusion on Women and Girls at Risk

During its 57th session, ExCom adopted a Conclusion on the identification of women and girls at risk, which outlines prevention strategies and individual responses and solutions and further recommends that UNHCR include a more detailed elaboration of these issues in the UNHCR *Handbook on the Protection of Women and Girls*.

The Conclusion notes that forced displacement can expose women and girls to a range of factors which may put them at risk of further violations of their rights. Identification and analysis of the presence and severity of these different factors can help determine which women and girls are at heightened risk and enable targeted responses.

The Conclusion states that recommended preventive strategies to be adopted by States, UNHCR, other relevant agencies and partners may include the identification, assessment and monitoring of risks and calls for the provision of disaggregated data by sex and age; ensuring registration on an individual and ongoing basis for refugees and promoting mechanisms to identify the internally displaced; and to strengthen protection monitoring of individuals by working with the community, among others. It also calls for incorporating gender issues into early warning mechanisms, alerts and contingency plans, conducting a rapid situation analysis at the start of a new emergency and integrating gender-based risk analysis into inter-agency assessments.

Conclusion on Statelessness

The Conclusion addressing statelessness urges UNHCR to continue to work with interested governments to engage in or to renew efforts to identify stateless populations and populations with undetermined nationality residing in their territory, in cooperation with other UN agencies within the framework of national programmes, which may include processes linked to birth registration and updating of population data.

The Conclusion also calls on States to facilitate birth registration and issuance of birth or other appropriate certificates as a means to providing an identity to children and to consider examining their nationality laws and other relevant legislation with a view to adopting and implementing safeguards, consistent with fundamental principles of international law, to prevent the occurrence of statelessness which results from arbitrary denial or deprivation of nationality. It notes that statelessness may arise for a number of reasons, including restrictions applied to parents in passing on nationality to their children; denial of a woman's ability to pass on nationality; and deprivation of nationality resulting from discriminatory practices, among others.

On reducing statelessness, it urges States to give

consideration to acceding to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and encourages States to actively disseminate information regarding access to citizenship, including naturalization procedures, through the organization of citizenship information campaigns with the support of UNHCR.

Annual Consultations with NGOs

UNHCR's Annual Consultations with NGOs were held from 27-29 September, marking the 30th anniversary of the establishment of UNHCR's NGO Unit. The 2006 Consultations brought together over 320 participants to focus on four main themes; Durable Solutions; UN Reform (including the role of UNHCR for IDPs); ExCom Conclusions; and the Asylum/Migration Nexus.

The Consultations were broken down into two plenary sessions, regional sessions, and roundtable sessions on topics such as the new cluster approach in situations of internal displacement, the challenges of returns, collaboration in addressing gender issues, and children's protection in humanitarian reform, among several others. Nicholas Van Praag, Division of External Affairs, UNHCR, pointed to the need to strengthen NGO partnerships in the field, for increasing joint advocacy efforts, and two-way communication and dialogue.

In discussions on the new cluster approach for IDPs, several participants noted that relations between UN and NGO partners were a key element of the approach and that better leadership, collaboration and coordination mechanisms were needed. As the cluster approach is so recent, participants said it was too early to judge the validity of the process. A number of NGOs cited the lack of consultation between NGOs and the agencies on the ground and a lack of coordination between the cluster themes, as well as the lack of common understanding on the cluster concept and the role of cluster leaders. It was also stressed that national NGOs needed to be on board as equal partners, particularly in decision making and planning.

During the discussions on ExCom Conclusions, NGOs explored how they could take a pro-active role in ensuring that the Conclusions are implemented and that they are operational. One Conclusion focused on the issue of statelessness, with an estimated 11 million stateless people spread throughout the world, many of them in protracted situations. NGOs stressed the need to identify stateless populations and to assist States to better identify and profile stateless persons, which would require precise data recording.

Some NGOs called for the need for systematic birth recording—noting that combined efforts of UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were necessary—as well as the need to review and amend as necessary national legislation on citizenship at birth. They called for collaboration between governments,

international and national NGOs, UNHCR and other UN agencies. Other issues raised in connection with statelessness were the linkages between globalization, insecurity, ethnic consciousness and human trafficking.

The session on women and girls at risk emphasized the continuing rape, sexual abuse and exploitation of displaced women and girls. Participants stressed the need to dispel a number of myths surrounding gender based violence through staff training and by programmes which encourage better communication between service-providers and refugee women. Participants also said that it was essential to end impunity for perpetrators and women and girls should be involved in the design and provision of services for women and girls at risk. The importance of community involvement was stressed and the need for closer and more effective partnerships between UNHCR, NGOs and refugee communities.

Through their Statement on International Protection to the ExCom, NGOs noted that the Conclusion on women at risk is strongly operational and provides a blueprint for effective responses to individual women and to communities. They called on governments to ensure that refugee women and children have access to a range of appropriate protection measures, with a commitment to providing resources, including medical and psych-social services, to ensure the implementation of the Conclusion.

On the asylum/migration nexus it was pointed out that migration flows are mixed with refugees and migrants and the situation was becoming more complicated because of increasing restrictions on borders. A number of NGOs spoke on the negative branding of migrants, in many cases as "terrorists," and how the public is not exposed to the migration debate in political arenas. Poverty, debt, conflict and unfair sharing of resources were listed as some of the key causes of migration. In the NGO submission to ExCom's general debate, NGOs expressed their concern over the erosion of protection and adequate access to asylum and noted a disturbing trend among a wide range of States to block UNHCR and NGOs access to sites where refugees and asylum seekers might be located to prevent them from identifying people of concern and coming to their aid.

Erika Feller, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, also addressed the issue of mixed flows in the context of stepped up border control, irregular arrivals, human rights concerns and refugee protection. Making reference to the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development held in September (see *NGLS Roundup 127*), she noted that development is more than economic growth; it is the full enjoyment of human rights, including those detained.

Ms. Feller outlined a ten-point action plan at the field

level to help respond to mixed movement of people: including closer cooperation and coherence among all key partners (governments, IGOs, NGOs, civil society); data collection and analysis to understand the root causes in transit countries; protection sensitive entry management; reception arrangements; mechanisms for profiling the arrivals before they get into an asylum system and referral; differentiated processes and procedures; solutions for refugees; addressing secondary movements; return arrangements for non-refugees and alternative migration options; and information strategy.

She noted the need for enlarging asylum space on mixed flow issues and for further cooperation at all levels, and, concluding, called for true strategic partnerships with NGOs.

Addressing the closing session, the High Commissioner said the dialogue between UNHCR and NGOs must be a dialogue between equals and that would be the only element which makes the partnership meaningful. He noted that UNHCR's mission now goes beyond its mandate, especially in light of IDPs and protection linked with complex migration flows. He also pointed to the erosion of the institution of asylum in many societies and highlighted the need for a strong coalition of right-minded people to fight against the general rejection of refugees. Further, there was a need for advocacy and concrete measures as there was a tendency for international law not to be respected and unfair bilaterals were taking place. He stressed that international law must come first.

Returning to UNHCR's mandate, he said there was a new key area to address: statelessness, and how it embodies an enormous limitation of human rights. He also stressed the moral obligation to protect IDPs as they remain in their country and are not covered by UNHCR's mandate. On the migration/asylum nexus, he noted that UNHCR was not a migration agency but as there were more mixed flows, including migrants moving illegally, legitimate refugees, trafficked women, unaccompanied minors and various people needing protection, he said UNHCR must enter the migration debate.

NGOs also drafted an NGO Submission to the General Debate (www.unhcr.org/ngo-consultations/ngo_statement_general_3oct06.pdf) and an NGO Statement to the agenda item on international protection (www.unhcr.org/ngo-consultations/ngo_statement_protection_5oct06.pdf).

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XVI International AIDS Conference: Time to Deliver

The XVI International AIDS Conference, organized by the International AIDS Society (IAS) and the AIDS 2006 Toronto Local Host, was held in Toronto from 13-18 August 2006, bringing together an estimated 26,000 people, including experts, activists, policy makers, health providers and caregivers to cover a wide range of issues, working under the theme "Time to Deliver."

During the week, high-profile guests, leaders from governments, the science sector, civil society, people living with HIV, youth and women's groups, UN officials, business, the private sector and the entertainment sector came together to focus on potential new tools in the fight against AIDS and ways to rapidly intensify global HIV prevention efforts.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his message to the conference—delivered by the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Peter Piot—said, "It's time to deliver because this is a pivotal moment. After an unconscionably late start that cost tens of millions of lives and tore apart hundred of millions more, the world's response has finally gained real strength."

Giving the plenary address entitled, "AIDS: The Next 25 Years," Dr. Piot called for a long-term, sustained response to AIDS. "We must acknowledge that long-term sustainability does not mean five or ten years, but twenty-five years and more. We must anticipate the future in our planning and action because for generations to come ours will continue to be a world living with HIV. Faced with this exceptional crisis, we have no choice but to act in exceptional ways," he said.

A number of plenary sessions were held, including Taking Stock: Current Challenges in the Global Response; Prevention: Proven Approaches and New Technologies; Advancing Treatment and Universal Access: A Report on State-of-the-Art and Progress; and Time to Deliver: The Price of Inaction. AIDS 2006 also saw a wide range of satellite events, symposiums (on topics such as HIV, Gender and Development), poster discussions, skills building and learning from practice sessions, as well as oral abstract presentations.

Throughout the week a number of speakers made it clear that many of the tools needed to prolong the lives of those with HIV/AIDS and stem the tide of new infections already exist but are not yet fully utilized, either because affordable drugs are still beyond the reach of the world's poor or because religious, ideological or cultural beliefs remain a barrier to condom use and needle-exchange programmes for injection drug users.

The need for a microbicide which women could use to protect themselves against infection, the use of AIDS drugs to block infection, and the possibility that wider use of circumcision could reduce infections among men were also discussed at length, as well as the potential of a new class of AIDS drugs called integrase inhibitors.

During the conference, UNAIDS joined with governments, civil society, treatment activists, and private sector representatives to call for "out of the ordinary partnerships" to intensify HIV prevention efforts and mobilize an alliance for HIV prevention. Representatives from the International Council of AIDS Service

Organizations (ICASO), the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), the governments of India and Sweden and Merck pharmaceuticals outlined the concept of "uniting for HIV prevention" at a press conference on 14 August.

Speaking at the high-level session on leadership on 14 August, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) called attention to the linkages between gender and HIV and AIDS, with Executive Director Noeleen Heyzer urging the international community to step up the delivery on gender equality to reverse the feminization of the AIDS pandemic. She urged governments to create spaces for women's participation in the shaping of HIV/AIDS policies and plans.

Youth organizations were very active during the conference and wanted youth representatives to be part of the discussion when politicians planned their prevention programmes. They stressed the importance of reaching and educating young people before they become sexually active.

Conclusion

During the closing session, speakers called for government accountability, political and religious leadership, a stronger civil society and better coordination between international organizations. Other speakers called for more training of health workers in developing countries to deliver antiretrovirals and provide preventive services. There was a repeated call for long-term financing. Several speakers noted that in spite of the progress over the last 25 years, there was no room for complacency.

Noting that it was one of the last speeches he would make at an international conference in his role as UN Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa, Stephen Lewis insisted the tragic spread of HIV cannot be halted until gender inequality is righted. His speech covered 16 points, ranging from the need to increase measures for the prevention of mother to child transmission, to the increasing lack of decent nutrition, to testing and counselling, and stepping up treatment efforts. "Treatment is keeping people alive. Treatment is bringing people hope...We cannot let the process slow."

In closing, he noted that as he leaves his post as Special Envoy at the end of the year, "I have asked that my successor be an African, but most important, an African woman."

More information on the XVI International AIDS Conference is available online (www.aids2006.org).

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53rd Session of the UNCTAD TDB: Charting the Way Forward

The Trade and Development Board (TDB) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) held its annual meeting from 27 September - 2 October and 10 October 2006 in Geneva to finish a three-part mid-term review—so called because it came two years after UNCTAD's last quadrennial conference in Sao Paulo—and will guide work leading to the next one, UNCTAD XII, scheduled to take place in Ghana in 2008.

The TDB, which brings together 191 Member States, reviewed progress on the Sao Paulo Consensus—the adopted conclusions of UNCTAD XI in 2004, which set out several principles and objectives on development strategies, improving productive capacity, and ensuring that developing countries gain from international trade (see *NGLS Roundup 115*). The meeting also looked at ways of strengthening the three pillars of UNCTAD: research and analysis; consensus building; and technical cooperation.

The 53rd session also included three sessions of high-level policy dialogue with the theme “UNCTAD, development, and the way forward,” which featured a number of sub-themes: globalization for development; coherence for development between national development strategies and international economic processes; UNCTAD, the UN reform process and development.

On 27 September, the TDB conducted an in-depth review of developments and issues in the post-Doha work programme after negotiations on it were suspended in July 2006. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Supachai Panitchpakdi, opened the meeting, followed by an address by Pascal Lamy, Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO). An interactive debate was then held with participants expressing concern about the resumption of negotiations and stressing that there was little room for complacency. An opportunity remained for concluding the Doha Round in 2007 if an early resumption took place between November 2006 and March 2007, participants stressed. Several participants noted that agriculture was a major stumbling block in negotiations and called on Member States to put forth the necessary political will to overcome this barrier.

During the TDB, ministers and trade officials also debated the idea of policy space that had emerged from UNCTAD XI and the discussions surrounding it. Member States were able to agree on language referring to the importance of policy space to developing countries, and the report adopted at the end of the 53rd session stated that “it is for each government to evaluate the trade-off between the benefits of accepting international rules and commitments and the constraints posed by the loss of policy space. It is particularly important for developing countries, bearing in mind development goals and objectives, that all countries take into account the need

for appropriate balance between national policy space and international disciplines and commitments.”

The TDB also stressed the importance of good governance and policy coherence for sustainable development, specifically pointing to democratic institutions, market-oriented policies, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. It called on UNCTAD to “contribute to increasing coherence for development between national development strategies and the international monetary, financial and trading systems.”

UNCTAD, Development and the Way Forward

A high-level policy dialogue was held on 4 October. Opening the policy dialogue, Mr. Supachai said that countries not being helped by burgeoning international trade and financial flows need increased foreign aid and investments aimed at improving the basic resources of production, from natural and human resources to financial and physical capital, including infrastructure. He stressed it was also necessary to strengthen managerial and entrepreneurial skills in developing countries and to bolster the Aid for Trade programme, which aims at helping such countries take advantage of export opportunities.

Bernard Makuza, Prime Minister of Rwanda, said UNCTAD must play an even greater role to support those economies that haven't yet found a solid footing in the modern age. The “old Third World” no longer exists, Mr. Makuza said; it has divided into three groups—those countries that have undergone sustained economic growth and are catching up with the developed world; those developing more moderately; and those still struggling to participate effectively in globalization.

Kamal Nath, Minister of Trade of India, called development a “shared responsibility.” Recent statistics showing rapid world economic growth “hide a number of worrying features which the world can only ignore at its peril,” he said. “Some of the danger signals are already evident—continuing protectionism in developed countries and turbulence in energy markets are only a few examples.” He called for the Doha Round of world trade negotiations to “deliver on the agreed development dimension,” noting there was a need for greater emphasis on capacity building and technical assistance to enable smaller developing countries to participate meaningfully in the negotiations.

Paula Lehtomäki, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development of Finland, saying part of her address was on behalf of the EU, told the meeting that trade opportunities should not be treated as zero-sum games but regarded as win-win arrangements; that market access is not enough to improve poorest countries' integration into world trade; and that the problem should be approached through increased development finance for trade and productive capacities combined with domestic reforms and improved international trade rules.

UNCTAD, the UN Reform Process and Development

The high-level policy dialogue on "UNCTAD, the UN Reform Process and Development" was held on 6 October. During the dialogue, panellists and a number of delegates agreed that UNCTAD's role in tackling development issues, particularly in the areas of trade and investment, should be enhanced. The purpose of the UN reform exercise was not to undermine UNCTAD but to strengthen it, they suggested.

Concerning the three main pillars of UNCTAD's work, they suggested that for research and analysis, UNCTAD should play a greater role in the UN's efforts to improve global economic governance; boost its analysis of the linkages between international trade, monetary and financial issues; and provide a holistic view of the global economy from a development perspective. For consensus building, UNCTAD should become a platform for negotiating international agreements drawing on its past experience, which could include international commodity agreements and the Global System of Trade Preferences (GSTP). For technical cooperation, UNCTAD should enhance and demonstrate the impact of its work in the field.

In the areas of financial architecture and Aid for Trade, participants agreed that UNCTAD should contribute actively to work on a new international financial system and play a greater role in the UN financing for development process.

Hearing with Civil Society and the Private Sector

On 22 September 2006, the third annual hearing with representatives from civil society and the private sector was held, offering a platform for civil society and private sector representatives to express their view on issues before the TDB meeting.

In order to encourage dialogue, the hearings were structured around three sets of questions: 1) How can UNCTAD be more effective, and how can UNCTAD enhance its political engagement in the context of global governance? 2) Has trade been the best means for development, and how can countries best meet their employment objectives? 3) What is the role of the development of productive capacities and its importance in poverty reduction, and why is the present aid system in Africa not working?

Concerning the first set of questions, a number of participants noted that UNCTAD had an important contribution to make both in the field of economic analysis and in facilitating interpretation and understanding of international agreements and provisions and related economic effects. They emphasized that UNCTAD should continue to be a forum in which developing countries could express their needs and concerns. Participants also noted that stronger interaction with civil society would help UNCTAD identify ways to translate political solutions into concrete actions.

Considering whether trade has been the best means for development, concerns were expressed about the challenge that globalization and trade liberalization represented for employment and working conditions, and improvements were still needed in both quantitative and qualitative terms, particularly with reference to decent working conditions and employment for women and young people.

Regarding the role of development of productive capacities and poverty reduction measures, participants pointed out that the link between trade and poverty reduction was not conclusive and that the benefits from trade in developing countries and LDCs accrued to only a few economic actors. Participants stated that many small farmers and micro and small enterprises did not participate in international trade flows because of lack of economies of scale, poor managerial skills, obstacles raised by safety and quality standards in developed-country markets, and inability to market their products.

The importance of Aid for Trade was underlined, and questions were raised about when and how this issue would be further clarified and through which channels this aid would be conveyed. However, participants suggested that the basic issue was not considered to be aid for trade but fair trade and to what extent governments shaping globalization would be ready to go to in terms of lifting trade barriers. Developing countries needed to identify, prioritize and address their supply-side constraints. The issue of aid was of particular importance for Africa, which remained marginalized in the international economy, they stressed. Aid should lead to wealth creation, human resources development and reduction of poverty in order for the continent to move from being a source of raw materials to industrialization.

Participants emphasized that UNCTAD could become a more effective vehicle for building productive capacities, enhancing political engagement in the context of global governance, and achieving poverty reduction for the developing countries if it reinforced its role in encouraging FDI inflows and building a vibrant and competitive private sector, especially in Africa. Efforts should be made to encourage FDI inflows to countries emerging from conflicts in order to enable them to rebuild their productive capacities and achieve rapid, sustained and

broad-based growth for development and poverty reduction.

Trade and Development Report 2006

Trade and Development Report 2006: Global Partnership and National Policies for Development finds that if international measures are not taken to reduce global trade imbalances, financial crises will develop. It argues for greater autonomy—“policy space”—for developing countries to set their economic and development priorities. Such space, the report notes, has been curtailed in the last few decades by global free-market economics and by the conditions imposed by multilateral financial organizations.

It stresses that a global partnership for development, as stipulated in Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 8, will be incomplete without an effective system of global economic governance. Such a system should take into account the specific needs of developing countries. At the same time it should ensure the right balance between sovereignty in national economic policy-making on the one hand, and multilateral disciplines and collective governance on the other.

The report finds little evidence of a looming major financial crisis, comparable to the Asian or Latin American crises of ten years ago. It notes that many developing countries are now less vulnerable to big shocks because they have stabilized their exchange rates at low levels and are running sizeable current-account surpluses and accumulating large amounts of dollar reserves. The report also refers to recent economic gains in developing countries, mainly achieved through high levels of export growth, debt relief, and also through rising remittances sent home by migrant workers.

TDR2006 is available online (www.unctad.org/en/docs//tdr2006_en.pdf).

Doubling Aid: Making the “Big Push” Work

According to UNCTAD's new report *Economic Development in Africa 2006: Doubling Aid: Making the “Big Push” Work*, aid to Africa not only should be

doubled, as now agreed to by many donors, but most of it should be distributed multilaterally, perhaps by a United Nations fund independent of political pressures. It also recommends that funding be channelled to countries' general budgets so that their legislatures can best decide how to spend it. Further, funding to Africa should be released in predictable tranches over a long-term period and should be more focused than it currently is, the report notes.

The report finds that such an arrangement would replace the current chaotic system in which too many agencies—some bilateral, some multilateral—are “pushing too many development projects that sometimes compete with each other, often do not match recipients' development goals, are costly to administer, and frequently leave African governments confused and stymied by their numerous rules and conditions.”

In recent years, the international community has begun to turn its attention to the quality of aid, however *Economic Development in Africa 2006* worries that the “right balance is still not being struck.” It notes that while aid flows have on average risen sharply since their low point in the late 1990s, much of this rise has been accounted for by debt relief and with a handful of what some critics call “aid darlings” receiving much of the increased flow.

UNCTAD notes that its examination of successful experiences—for example, East Asia in the 1950s and 1960s and Ireland from the early 1970s, enjoyed much larger aid flows than have most African countries—indicates that increased aid can give a “big push” to the region, sparking a virtuous circle of higher rates of savings, investment and economic growth as a route to a permanent reduction in poverty.

The report is available online (www.unctad.org/en/docs/gdsafrica20061_en.pdf).

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Peacebuilding Commission Holds Initial Country-Specific Meetings

On 20 December 2005, the Security Council and the General Assembly adopted joint resolutions 1645 and 60/180, establishing the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission tasked with helping fragile countries make the transition from war to peace. The first country-specific meetings, focusing on Sierra Leone and Burundi, were held from 12-13 October 2006.

As part of a series of reforms in the UN, a number of peacebuilding entities have been created and are becoming operational. The Peacebuilding Commission was established to address a gap within the UN and global system by providing

a coordinated and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and facilitating dialogue amongst key actors. A Peacebuilding Support Office will manage operations and guide the overall direction of the Commission. A Peacebuilding

Fund, launched on 11 October 2006, aims to help war-ravaged countries rebuild State institutions after conflict, and act as a “kick-start” for longer term donor investment in recovery efforts. So far Member States have already contributed and pledged around US\$140 million to the Fund out of a target of US\$250 million. The United Nations Development Programme will manage the Fund.

Both country-specific meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission were held to discuss “Consolidating Peace-Critical Issues” and “National Action-International Support.” The Commission gathered representatives from various sectors of each country, from government to civil society to international organizations, as well as delegates from Member States. A day prior to the meeting, the Commission held a briefing with non-governmental organizations to discuss peacebuilding priorities.

Sierra Leone

On 12 October 2006, the Chairman of the Commission, Ismael Abraão Gaspar Martins of Angola, led the discussion of the first country-specific meeting, bringing together a range of actors involved in Sierra Leone. Solomon E. Berewa, Vice President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, identified four main areas of concern: youth employment, capacity limitations, infrastructure development, and security.

Noting that while there are encouraging signs of progress in the country, such as the growth rate of 7% over the last three years, many challenges still remained, Mr. Berewa stressed. He pointed out that Sierra Leone has a young population with over 60% of the country's population below the age of 35 and a vast majority of those were unemployed, where unless they could be given hope, they could resort to crime and other anti-social activities. Weakness of capacity also pervaded all areas of the economy, encouraging corruption, he said, expressing high hopes that the Commission's deliberations could produce concrete results in helping to reinforce the country's peace.

The Network on Collaborative Peacebuilding-Sierra Leone (NCP-SL), representing civil society groups in the country, noted that it has established a number of recommendations that could help prioritize the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. They include: implementation and dissemination of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommendations and the Poverty Reduction Strategy PRS; skills training for youth and economic empowerment for women; strengthening the capacity of national civil society organizations (CSOs) and public institutions; the establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; and strengthening effective collaboration between and among governments and CSOs in the Mano River Basin.

The discussions were guided by a conference room paper (PBC/2SIL/CRP.1) that covers the effects of the civil war in Sierra Leone as well as the existing strategic frameworks for recovery. Delegates from Member States made further suggestions about the work in Sierra Leone, offered help, and encouraged a multi-sectoral approach and priorities identified

included the consolidation of democracy of good governance, justice and security sector reform, social and youth empowerment, employment and capacity building. Summarizing the discussions, Mr. Martins invited the Government of Sierra Leone to present an outline of strategies and plans at the next country-specific meeting, which would take place before the end of the year. The Commission decided to request the Secretary-General to put Sierra Leone under consideration for funding from the Peacebuilding Fund.

Burundi

The Peacebuilding Commission's discussions on Burundi were led by the Vice-Chairman, Johan Løvald of Norway, with a similar format to that of the previous day's session with Sierra Leone and a conference room paper (PBC/2/BUR/CRP.2) provided the framework. Seeking to bridge the “relief to development” gap and ensure recovery after more than a decade of violence, the meeting sought to identify a number of challenges. Among the key priorities, speakers listed good governance; strengthening the country's capacity and socio-economic recovery; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants; human rights; implementation of the ceasefire agreement; transitional justice; and security sector reform.

The strategic priorities identified by civil society organizations in Burundi include capacity building; human rights and transitional justice; management of public goods; promotion of a permanent social and political dialogue between all actors; and the creation of a planning coordination framework.

The Commission heard from Nureldin Satti, acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Burundi, noted that peace consolidation was a long-term process and the dynamics required sustained international support. Pedro Alba, the World Bank's Country Director for Burundi, said the Commission could bring donors together around specific thematic areas to ensure coordination of efforts, targeting of resources, and monitoring of progress. It could also mobilize donors not currently involved in Burundi.

Speakers in the afternoon debate on national action and international support addressed the need to ensure a culture of peace, stressing that reconciliation had to be discussed in parallel with economic and social development. Also discussed were victim empowerment, quick-impact projects, the need to establish a national truth and reconciliation commission, health, education, the link between land disputes and return of refugees, and the role of the media, among others.

Since both Sierra Leone and Burundi were declared eligible for the Peacebuilding Fund, the disbursement process can begin once approved by the Secretary-General. The Commission is expected to meet again in the near future to discuss more country specific issues.

More information is available online (www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding).

59th DPI/NGO Conference: “Unfinished Business”

The 59th DPI/NGO Conference, held at UN headquarters in New York and organized by the Department of Public Information (DPI) in cooperation with associated NGOs, brought together over 2,000 NGOs and civil society representatives to look at ways of implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to spotlight strategic partnership-building—with UN agencies and each other—to help ensure human security and sustainable development for all.

An annual three-day meeting ahead of the opening of the General Assembly, the 59th DPI/NGO Conference aimed to build on what has already been accomplished by greater NGO, private sector and civil society participation in many of the debates taking place at the UN, including informal interactive hearings convened by the General Assembly President during the past two years (see *Go Between* 110 and *NGLS Roundups* 123 & 127). The conference included plenary sessions, six interactive roundtables, and 30 workshops featuring the participation of civil society, UN officials, government and private sector representatives.

“We need your voices, we need your contributions,” General Assembly President Jan Eliasson (Sweden) said in his opening remarks, welcoming NGOs as partners working with the UN for the basic pursuit of life and dignity for all. Keynote speaker Álvaro García Linera, Vice-President of Bolivia, speaking on behalf of Bolivian President Evo Morales, urged civil society representatives to press their home governments, particularly in the north, to stop perpetuating the centuries-old, “one size fits all development” myth. Addressing the conference via live video-link, he said that development was not something that belonged to only one social group or tribe, adding that it was time to do away with mechanisms that sustained discrimination, marginalization and even neo-colonialism, which would require comprehensive debates and discussions between governments and their peoples.

Hans Blix, Chairman of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, spoke during the panel discussion held on 6 September entitled “Moving development forward: Accountability, Transparency, Equitable Trade Policies.” He stressed that many NGOs “spoke in a direct way” to promote and defend common global needs and values, and that they were doing great work in demanding facts and transparency, and in waking the world up to the reality that the process of arms control and disarmament had stagnated. Thus, they rendered invaluable service by critically examining information and government action—and inaction—in that regard.

Three roundtables were held on 7 September. During the roundtable “Science and Technology for Education,” participants noted the importance of improving widespread access to education. The discussion during the roundtable “Emerging Approaches to Health Care, including Gender-based HIV and AIDS” focused on the correlation between violence against women and girls, the feminization of poverty and higher HIV/AIDS infection rates among women

and girls than men and boys in some countries. The roundtable on “Human Security: Responsibility to Protect and the Peacebuilding Commission,” saw NGOs invited to be the partners of States, and sometimes their critics, in ensuring adherence to the concept of the responsibility to protect, especially in terms of genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

On 8 September a roundtable entitled, “Civil Society and Global Partnerships for Development,” brought together Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, President of the 61st General Assembly, Joe Donnelly, Caritas Internationalis; Jan Eliasson; and Shamina de Gonzaga, Special Advisor on NGO relations, Office of the President of the General Assembly.

Opening the panel, Mr. Eliasson noted that NGOs were good at dealing with real situations and they were also good at transmitting early warning signals. NGOs had a global outlook and were advocates, and, while they were friends of the Organization, they were not “uncritical.” NGOs should live up to their ideals and the Organization should respect their independence and integrity, he stressed.

Pointing to NGO participation at the recent High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS, where civil society had imparted “incredible energy” to that meeting (see *NGLS Roundup* 126), as well as the recent meeting on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (see *Focus* Page 25), Mr. Eliasson said such participation was helping the Organization to remain anchored in the needs of the people around the world.

Noting that civil society had made a significant contribution to the UN's evolution, Ms. Al Khalifa said the UN would only achieve its goals with NGO participation and partnership. The world had witnessed civil society's efforts in times of crises, where NGOs represented a strong voice and remained key partners in delivering humanitarian service in the most remote and difficult places. However, to allow the UN's partnership with NGOs to become more effective, more work needed to be done in terms of implementation, she stressed, which was particularly true in terms of achieving the MDGs, Ms. Al Khalifa said, indicating that she would maintain an open dialogue with the NGO community.

Mr. Donnelly noted that for a partnership to be real, it must be mutual and participatory and must go beyond

mere words. Furthermore, NGOs needed to speak openly, and the UN's unfinished business called on each member of civil society to be bold and not apologize.

A second roundtable discussion held on 8 September focused on the "Commitment to Reducing Extreme Poverty and Hunger." Opening the panel, Dumisani Nyoni, Simile Institute, Organization of Rural Association for Progress, said poverty was a failure of systems—economic, environmental or social—and until the international community honestly and comprehensively addressed systemic failures, abject poverty would continue to exist. In his opinion, the MDGs did not adequately address systemic problems and the challenge for civil society was to ensure the Goals addressed grassroots specificities and created opportunities to lift people up and repair damaged socio-economic systems.

On ways developing or least developed countries could scale up their poverty alleviation structures, Alvaro Umaña, Inter-American Development Bank, said such countries had three main ways to change their socio-economic conditions: through loans and debt relief, trade and international cooperation. With that in mind, he called for more creative thinking, particularly promoting expanded credit by "debt swap;" softer loans or performance based initiatives. He said he hoped the international community would recognize that many of the world's poor were in a unique situation because they lived in middle-income countries that did not qualify for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative or other international assistance programmes. Those populations needed more attention and dedicated source of help, he stressed. He called for more ethical spending and suggested that countries that reduced their military spending could receive expanded international assistance.

Salil Shetty, Director of the United Nations Millennium Campaign, spoke of the urgent need to step-up global efforts to reduce poverty and hunger, calling for increased aid and enhanced political will to ensure that a real difference was made on the ground. The world had both the resources and the know-how to eradicate poverty and extreme hunger, but, it was necessary for national governments to keep their promises. At the same time, it was necessary to catalyze civil society to create greater awareness of the Goals.

Roundtable six on "Promoting Respect for Cultural Diversity in Conflict Resolution" was moderated by Carol Rittner, Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Richard Stockton College. Ms. Rittner opened the debate by recalling the need to distinguish between what divides and what unites men and women from different cultures, especially during a conflict. Susan Collin Marks, Search for Common Ground, said it was urgent to take into account cultural diversity in conflict resolution processes. She said that respecting differences was essential, even though activists were often inclined to describe humanity with a

"one man" perspective. A good way to resolve conflicts would be to have a preliminary contact allowing identification of the common cultural elements of the various protagonists and use them to bring them closer together.

Juan Carlos Brandt, Chief of the DPI/NGO Section, moderated the panel discussion entitled "The Role of the Media and Communications Technology in Achieving the Millennium Development Goals." Therry Moses Genesis, Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications of Liberia, said the conference had given his country a chance to highlight the enormous challenges it faced—from raging unemployment, rising HIV/AIDS rates, and widespread gender inequality. Finishing the "unfinished business" of achieving the MDGs could only be accomplished with partnerships between the new Liberian Government, the international community, civil society and the media. He urged conference participants to begin sensitizing their respective governments to the idea that media and communications technology were an integral part of development and should be given priority as such.

The closing session of the conference provided the moderators of the roundtable discussions that had taken place earlier an opportunity to present brief summaries of those talks.

In his closing and also farewell remarks as his last address to the annual DPI/NGO Conference, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that much of what he had achieved as Secretary-General was made possible by NGO support and involvement. "From debt relief and disease to good governance and human rights, the global NGO revolution—a revolution driven by citizens the world over—has helped move the global agenda and given new life and new meaning to the idea of an international community. More and more, the initiative in taking action to improve the human conditions comes from voluntary groups such as yours.

"Looking ahead, I see a civil society role with virtually no limits, but one which gives you solemn obligations to your constituents. You wield growing influence, but you must wield it responsibly.

"I see a United Nations that celebrates the non-governmental revolution—the power of the global citizen—as the best thing that has happened to our Organization in a long time," Mr. Annan concluded.

The transcript of the Secretary-General's speech and further information on the conference is available online (www.unngodpiconference.org).

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• **Disarmament**

Conference on Disarmament, first part, January-March (8 weeks), Geneva

• **ECOSOC**

Economic and Social Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, 22 January-2 February, New York

Economic and Social Council, organizational session, 6-9 February, New York

• **Human Rights**

Committee on the Rights of the Child, 44th session, 15 January-2 February (3 weeks), Geneva

Human Rights Council, 4th session, 12 March - 6 April, Geneva

• **Peacekeeping**

Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group, 5 February - 2 March, New York

• **Population and Development**

Commission on Population and Development, 40th session, 9-13 April, New York

• **Social Development**

Commission on Social Development, 45th session, 7-16 February, New York

• **Sustainable Development**

Intergovernmental preparatory meeting for the 15th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, 26 February- 2 March, New York

15th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-15), 30 April - 11 May, New York

• **Women**

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 37th session, 15 January-2 February, New York

Commission on the Status of Women, 51st session, 26 February- 9 March, New York

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Debating NGO Accountability, by Jem Bendell

This Dossier attempts to define organizational accountability and looks at NGO accountability in relation to international development assistance and global governance. It also examines new regulations and initiatives on NGO accountability, including voluntary mechanisms, as well as donor accountability. Finally, it offers a broader perspective, suggesting that democracy and human rights should be placed firmly at the centre of the debate about NGO accountability.

Debating NGO Accountability is available online (www.un-ngls.org).

For a hard copy version, please send an email to ngls@unctad.org.

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