Youth Want Nukes Abolished
Indigenous Peoples in Asia Less Poor
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The Poor Pay but the Rich Rule the World Bank

AID WITHOUT PREJUDICE

“WE URGE NUCLEAR ABOLITION.”
Development

Why G20 Should Go the Whole Hog at June Summit
By Armin Rauch IDN-InDepth News Analyses BONN (IDN) - As the global financial crisis remains far from resolved and the world's major currencies continue a roller coaster ride, a sound and stable global financial system appears to be slipping into the realm of utopia.

The Poor Pay but the Rich Rule the World Bank
By Vimal Maathani IDN-InDepth News Analyses LONDON (IDN) - Rich countries will continue to crushingly dominate the World Bank in spite of recent shifts in countries voting power, which have been described as “historic changes to position the poverty fighting institution for the transformed world emerging from the global crisis”.

Reproductive Health Back on the Agenda
By Richard Johnson IDN-InDepth News Analyses GENEVA (IDN) - More than 550,000 women die each year because of pregnancy and childbirth complications. 99 percent of these deaths occur in developing countries. Because many poor women turn to abortion as a last-resort means of birth control, some 68,000 of them die each year as a result of unsafe abortion. Another 8.3 million suffer temporary or permanent disability.

New Actors in Angola Highlight Old Problems
By Christina Hackenschech IDN-InDepth News Analyses BONN (IDN) - Global changes are felt at country level. The necessity to enlarge the G-8 to a G-20 while trying to address the global economic and financial crisis illustrated clearly the increasingly important position of emerging powers in the global economy. Debates about the implications of these power shifts for global governance structures often overshadow that the diversification.

Angry Diouf Blows a Yellow Whistle
By Santino Colombo IDN-InDepth News Analyses ROMA (IDN) - Jacques Diouf has two years to go before he completes his third six-year term as the head of a United Nations agency that wants to usher in a “world without hunger”. His patience is exhausted and he is angry that on six people worldwide go hungry everyday.

Putting a Hal to Armed Violence
By Indira Srivastava IDN-InDepth News Analyses GENEVA (IDN) - Armed violence destroys lives and livelihoods, breeds insecurity, and hampers prospects for human development. According to the most recent estimates, the total cost of armed violence in non-conflict countries amounts to $163 billion — more than the total annual spending on official development assistance.

Middle East Combats Corruption – To an Extent
By Bernard Schloss IDN-InDepth News Analyses RABAT (IDN) - Despite some positive steps taken by the governments in Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine, under-developed public accountability systems are obstructing efforts to combat corruption, says a new report by the global anti-corruption organisation Transparency International (TI). The report points to an increase in the adoption of national anti-corruption plans and legal frameworks including laws in Palestine that strengthen the independence of the judiciary, drafting of access to information...

A World without Child Labour is Possible
By Juan Somavia IDN-InDepth News Analyses GENEVA (IDN) - This Global Report comes at a critical juncture. Looking back to 2000-05, the world has had to cope with the impact of a financial and economic crisis.

Child Labour Declining But Rather Slowly
By Jeff Wolf IDN-InDepth News Analyses BERLIN (IDN) - A new study warns that efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour around the world are declining, and calls for a “re-energised” global campaign to end the scourge.

Removing Definitional Bias in Global Financial Architecture
By Vimal Maathani IDN-InDepth News Analyses GENEVA (IDN) - Because of the global financial crisis, a number of developing countries and emerging economies are unable to import goods and services as much as required to satisfy the basic needs of their population, reduce poverty and sustain acceptable growth because of foreign exchange shortages even though these are among multilaterally agreed development objectives, notably in the MDGs.

Africa Mulling Over an OPEC for its Minerals
By Babiker Kesheka IDN-InDepth News Analyses NAIROBI (IDN) - Africa, one of the oldest inhabited continents on earth, and the second largest with 30 million square kilometres, is home to over one billion people. It is the world’s richest in minerals, but also the poorest one. Everybody else but Africans has been exploiting its giant resources. Now Africans appear to aim at forming their own cartel of minerals exporting countries.
The Challenge of Moving Fast toward a Nuke-Free World

Gloom-and-doom headlines in the waning days of the 2010 review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) caused many observers to assume that negotiations would collapse in deadlock, but the Final Declaration of the conference was adopted without dissent. Consensus on potentially contentious issues was a significant milestone on the path toward nuclear disarmament. A NPT review conference is held every five years and the previous conference ended in deadlock. At the time, many delegates blamed the collapse of the conference on the previous U.S. administration. “The NPT could not have suffered another failed review conference after 2005 and it is a tribute to the 172 states parties present (out of a total of 190) that they agreed on a document strengthening all three pillars of the treaty – nonproliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy,” said Dr. Jayantha Dhanapala, president of the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs and formerly president of the 1995 NPT review and extension conference, writes Ernest Corea. | More on pages 12-13

The Poor Pay but the Rich Rule the World Bank

Rich countries will continue to crushingly dominate the World Bank in spite of recent shifts in countries’ voting power, which have been described as “historic changes to position the poverty fighting institution for the transformed world emerging from the global crisis”. The developing countries represent over 80 per cent of the world’s population and the Bank’s membership. Almost all of the Bank’s activities take place in those countries. Through loan repayments, they are the main financial contributors to the Bank, writes Nirode Masson. | More on pages 20-21.

Remembering the Three Rio Conventions

The botched UN conference in Copenhagen may prove to be a blessing in disguise by way of correcting the imbalance that has favoured climate change but nearly ignored desertification and biodiversity that are two other centerpieces of the three ‘Rio Conventions’ emerging from the Earth Summit in June 1992. A closer inter-action between the three Conventions may in fact liberate the designated Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Christiana Figueres, from much of the pressure that apparently crushed Yvo de Boer and culminated in his decision to quit the job. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon announced the appointment of Figueres, a Costa Rican national, on May 17, 2010, as the successor of de Boer who was the second Dutch to head the UNFCCC secretariat in Bonn. More on pages 26-27.

Unless specified otherwise all articles in this issue are from www.indepthnews.net
Listening Post Beijing

It has been a great experience to visit Beijing to participate in the Asia Media Summit 2010, jointly organized by the Malaysia-based Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD) and the Chinese State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT).

The overarching theme of the conference on May 25-26 – “creativity, credibility, rights and responsibilities” of the media – could not have been more stimulating. It turned out to be particularly insightful in view of the fact that this was the AIBD’s first conference in Beijing.

Precisely that provocative theme in the Chinese context provided a welcome opportunity to official Beijing to project to participants from Asia-Pacific, Arab countries, Africa, Europe, and North America the image of a modern, vibrant and yet a developing country. They included media managers and working journalists.

The summit’s theme, said Liu Yunshan, director of the publicity department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), reflected “the thoughts and concerns of the media world for its own future as well as the attention and expectations of the international community for media responsibility”.

The CPC’s politburo member Liu explained: “Our media have always been encouraged and endorsed to put social responsibilities in the first place to promote justice, express public opinion, give guidance on hotspots, relieve popular emotions and guarantee supervision by public opinion, whereby people’s rights to information, participation, expression and supervision are guaranteed.”

These remarks have indeed to be taken with a pinch of salt. Because it is an open secret that the editorial independence of “big three” media outlets in China – the People’s Daily, Xinhua news agency and the Chinese Central TV (CCTV), which co-sponsored the Asia Media Summit along with UNESCO and UNEP – is subject to government policy considerations. A foreign journalist working for CCTV however maintained that things are improving.

According to Liu, the Chinese government places “in a more prominent position the development of culture and the cultural industry, giving more emphasis to culture building and growth of the media industry”. This, he said, not only provides new opportunities for China’s radio and TV sector, but also a wider horizon for further international exchanges and cooperation. Significantly, Liu said, China will create conditions to facilitate international exchanges and cooperation in the media sector and dialogues among civilizations.

“It is our hope that on the basis of ‘equality, mutual benefit and mutual success’, media of all countries, Asia-Pacific, in particular, will strengthen cooperation in news communication, human resources, information technology and business operations, exchange experience, seek greater consensus and share each other’s resources.”

Expanding on the theme, Liu’s deputy Wang Taihua said: “While seeking exchanges and practical cooperation with out counterparts in other countries and regions in the spirit of ‘mutual trust, coordination and mutual success’, we make consistent efforts and a unique contribution to increasing understanding and friendship among peoples of different countries, safeguarding world peace and stability and realizing common development.”

Liu left the opening session because of “prior engagements” before UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s message was read out by Kiyo Akasaka, UN Under-Secretary-General for Communication and Public Information. The message pointed out, among others: “Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations works to uphold this right around the world. But in many countries, including in this region (Asia-Pacific), journalists risk intimidation, detention and even their lives, simply for doing their jobs.”

Kiyo Akasaka went on to read from Ban’s message: “In some countries, independent television and radio channels are denied broadcasting right. In others, the authorities impose high taxes on newsprint so that only the wealthy are able to buy newspapers. Elsewhere, the censors monitor internet use and imprison citizen journalists. In every case, it is a denial of fundamental human rights, and an obstacle to social and economic development.”

Ban assured that the UN “stands against the silencing of the media and with those who work to keep the powerful accountable, in every country”. Though the points of criticism expressed in Ban’s message do not apply to China alone, the message clearly pointed the finger also at China.

Ramphal Jaura
Chief Editor
WTO Talks Trapped in an Endless Deadlock

By Martin Khor*

The World Trade Organisation’s Doha Round appears to be stuck in a strategic deadlock, with no end in sight, and little hope for completion in the foreseeable future.

The latest bout of negotiations, a “stocktaking exercise” held in Geneva in the last week of March, ended with no direction and without plans for a further meetings of senior officials from capitals, or for Trade Ministers. The target of finishing the Round by the end of this year was not even mentioned. It has been given up.

The Doha Round started in November 2001 at the WTO’s Ministerial meeting. At that time the developing countries were strongly against a new Round, arguing that they had not even begun to digest the Uruguay Round and its many problems.

So the new negotiations were officially termed the Doha Work Programme, and even informally called the Doha Development Agenda to make it more palatable.

In the nine years since, the development content of the talks has almost entirely disappeared, and the developed countries’ real intentions – to open up the markets of developing countries while protecting their own turf especially in agriculture and in labour services – have come to the fore.

The latest draft texts on how agricultural and industrial imports are to be liberalized are imbalanced. They call on developing countries (except the LDCs) to undertake more real commitments than developed countries.

In particular, the developed countries can still make use of their huge agricultural subsidies which enable the United States’ and Europe’s otherwise inefficient farms and companies to capture markets, including displacing the small farms of developing countries.

But developing countries are asked to cut tariffs of their manufactured goods drastically (for some countries by up to 60 percent) so that most of their new import duties will be below 15 percent. Many economists worry that this will damage the countries’ industrial development prospects as the local firms cannot withstand the competition.

Despite the advantage given by the drafts, the United States is still asking for more. They want some developing countries (China, India and Brazil in particular) to also agree to cut their tariffs on some industries (chemicals, industrial machinery and electronics) to zero.

A senior Chinese official said that China had already made major concessions in the draft texts, and these extra U.S. demands are simply unacceptable, as they would damage or wipe out the most important industries in the countries concerned.

U.S.-based analysts meanwhile note that the U.S. administration faces a Congress and a public that is hostile to the U.S. agreeing to sticking to its own minimal commitments on reducing its maximum level of agricultural subsidies and industrial tariffs. Thus the U.S. is going beyond the draft texts and making even more demands to selected developing countries to open their markets.

The developing countries are calling “Foul” as this goes far beyond the agreed mandate. The U.S. stubbornly sticks to its unreasonable demands, pointing to what its Congress wants. The developing countries counter-argue that they too have their own public to think about, and they won’t accept the destruction of their farms and industries.

So it is a stalemate. At the “stocktaking” held at the WTO, South Africa’s Ambassador Faisal Ismail was perhaps the most eloquent in diagnosing the stalemate. “We find it disconcerting that the U.S. remains the most significant major player in the Doha Round that is unwilling to work on the basis of these multilateral texts. Its major constituencies and business lobbies are demanding more market access commitments from its trading partners, particularly from the major emerging markets,” he said. “This is the main reason for the current impasse in the Doha Round.”

Ambassador Faisal quoted Albert Einstein, that doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results was “madness” and warned that continuing with “business as usual” will risk unraveling over eight years of work. He proposed that the major players stop their mercantilist approach, and adhere to the principles of fairness, sticking to the development mandate of the Round and to agreements already made, and recognise the value of a stable multilateral trade system.

Brazil, on behalf of the G20 of developing countries, said the drafts embody a delicate balance that must be respected, otherwise we will need readjustments of the entire package. “Such readjustments cannot entail additional unilateral concessions from developing countries.”

India said: “There is nothing to suggest that the political constraints that have impeded our progress over the last six months will suddenly disappear.” It urged members to continue with the talks but warned that their purpose “cannot be to meet the unrealistic demands of one or more Members for new or additional market access, but to come to a balanced outcome in line with the development mandate” and added that “a few developing countries cannot be the bankers of the Round.”

The WTO Director General Pascal Lamy said the negotiations would continue with the Chairs leading the process at the WTO. He would also hold meetings. And countries would also hold their own meetings in small groups or bilaterally.

The stocktaking exercise ended with no more plans for senior officials from capitals to meet in Geneva, as they have been doing, nor for any small Ministerial meetings at the WTO. The target set by the G20 Summits, to conclude the Round this year, is dead.

As has often been the case in the chequered history of the Doha talks, the rest of the world is still “waiting for the United States.” Previously the wait was for the U.S. to agree to make some commitments to liberalise its agriculture. Now the wait is for the U.S. to give up its unreasonable demands on others.

With the U.S. mired in its own domestic problems, it will be a long wait. So long that the Doha Work Programme, renamed the Doha Round, may unravel or diminish in the global agenda.

* Martin Khor is the Executive Director of the South Centre. This article was first published in the South Bulletin Issue No. 46.
Dignified Debate for Judging a Judge

By Ernest Corea*

Justice John Paul Stevens will be succeeded but he can never be replaced, say his admirers. Originally nominated by a moderate Republican, President Gerald Ford, and supposedly cast in the same mold as that president, Stevens leaves the Supreme Court at the age of 90, his reputation established as its liberal anchor.

President Barack Obama, when formally nominating Solicitor General Elena Kagan to succeed Stevens, said that “of the many responsibilities accorded to a President by our Constitution, few are more weighty or consequential than that of appointing a Supreme Court justice -- particularly one to succeed a giant in the law like Justice John Paul Stevens.”

Obama added that “for nearly 35 years, Justice Stevens has stood as an impartial guardian of the law, faithfully applying the core values of our founding to the cases and controversies of our time.”

Stevens is what many observers consider non-existent at many levels of society: a reasonable and reasoning man.

COMMUNICATOR

Stevens also earned for himself a richly deserved reputation as a communicator, endowed with the skill to present profound thoughts in a language that could never be considered pompous or ponderous. A few examples make the point.

“The most profound statement of the importance of the Court (in my view) comes from the Court itself. In one of its earliest decisions -- Marbury v. Madison (1803) -- the Court struck down as unconstitutional a federal law giving it direct jurisdiction to issue a particular type of order (writ of mandamus). Chief Justice Marshall’s opinion stated in its relevant part:

‘It is emphatically the province and duty of the Judicial Department to say what the law is. Those who apply the rule to particular cases must, of necessity, expound and interpret that rule. If two laws conflict with each other, the Courts must decide on the operation of each.

‘So, if a law be in opposition to the Constitution, if both the law and the Constitution apply to a particular case, so that the Court must either decide that case conformably to the law, disregarding the Constitution, or conformably to the Constitution, disregarding the law, the Court must determine which of these conflicting rules governs the case.

‘This is of the very essence of judicial duty. If, then, the Courts are to regard the Constitution, and the Constitution is superior to any ordinary act of the Legislature, the Constitution, and not such ordinary act, must govern the case to which they both apply.’

“The first sentence of this opinion is inscribed in the wall of the Supreme Court building.”

Empowered by its constitutional authority, the Supreme Court functions as a national arbiter whose decisions have a profound and enduring effect on society.

One of the most far-reaching decisions of the Supreme Court was in the Dred Scott case. The court held that a slave in Missouri who had moved to a free state to gain his freedom continued to be a slave.

The Dred Scott case was one of the contributing factors to the Civil War, and was overturned by the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution.

-- On the Supreme Court’s selection of George W. Bush as president: “Although we may never know with complete certainty the identity of the winner of this year’s presidential election, the identity of the loser is perfectly clear. It is the nation’s confidence in the judge as an impartial guardian of the rule of law.”

-- On the death penalty: “...the imposition of the death penalty represents the pointless and needless extinction of life with only marginal contributions to any discernible social or public purposes. A penalty with such negligible returns to the State is patently excessive and cruel and unusual punishment.”

-- On the separation of church and state: The government must pursue a course of complete neutrality toward religion.

-- On the court’s decision to permit the use of corporate general funds to bankroll election campaigns: The ruling “threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the nation. The path it has taken to reach its outcome will, I fear, do damage to this institution.....While American democracy is imperfect, few outside the majority of this Court would have thought its flaws included a dearth of corporate money in politics.”

EXALTED

Irrespective of the quality and character of a retiring justice and those of an incoming nominee, however, the responsibility of picking a Supreme Court justice can be overwhelming because of the court’s exalted role.

The Supreme Court, consisting of nine judges including a Chief Justice, are all nominated for appointment by the president and confirmed by the Senate. The court draws its authority direct from Article III of the U.S. constitution.

An attorney in private practice when asked for his views on the significance of the Supreme Court replied (by email) as follows:

* The writer has served as Sri Lanka’s ambassador to Canada, Cuba, Mexico, and the USA. He was Chairman of the Commonwealth’s Select Committee on the media and development, Editor of the Ceylon ‘Daily News’ and the Ceylon ‘Observer’, and was for a time Features Editor and Foreign Affairs columnist of the Singapore ‘Straits Times’. He is on the editorial board of IDN-InDepthNews.
More recent Supreme Court cases with enduring societal impact, listed in several surveys, include Brown v. Board of Education, which held that the Constitution required racial integration in the nation’s schools; Miranda v. Arizona, under which law enforcement officers must inform persons they arrested of their Constitutional rights including the right to remain silent and to legal representation; and Roe v. Wade, which declared a Texas abortion law to be unconstitutional.

There should be no surprise caused by presidents attempting to place on the court nominees whose views are compatible with their own; or with factions in the Senate seeking to confirm, or put down, nominees who share their own persuasions.

Bush was responsible for a false war in Iraq, and a chaotic operation in Afghanistan. His policies led to a recession and its partner, the agonies of unemployment. In one respect, however, he was wildly successful, and to his fellow conservatives that aspect of his legacy will outshine and outlast all others.

He placed on the Supreme Court a Chief Justice (Roberts) and a Justice (Alito) who are both considered conservatives in a philosophical sense, and who are both relatively young, thus opening up the possibility that the Supreme Court would have an enduring rightward tilt. For this reason, liberal groups in Obama’s base are disappointed that he did not nominate a more devoutly liberal candidate.

**DIFFICULT**

Obama would have found it exceptionally difficult to identify a liberal jurist of the same caliber as Stevens. Moreover, given the polarization of current congressional politics, a nominee chosen primarily for her/his liberalism would have faced a toxic nomination process.

This would have been “Bork in reverse.” Judge Bork, it might be recalled, was nominated by President Ronald Reagan in 1987 for appointment to the Supreme Court. That nomination faced unrelenting and eventually successful opposition on the assumption that his conservative views were “outside the mainstream.” The vehemence of the opposition to Bork’s nomination led to the emergence of a verb: “to bork”.

Stevens’s views, however much they might have caused rumbling stomachs among conservatives, were never decried as being “outside the mainstream.” Nevertheless, at a time of political tea parties, Alaskan desires to “drill, baby, drill,” commitment to the cult of “hell, no you can’t” in congressional politics, and related phenomena, Obama, as a newspaper columnist described it, “picked a candidate, not a fight.”

**CRITICISED**

Kagan has much going for her. Obama, who considers her “one of the nation’s foremost legal minds,” points out that “she is a trailblazing leader -- the first woman to serve as Dean of Harvard Law School -- and one of the most successful and beloved deans in its history.

“And she is a superb Solicitor General,... the first woman in that position as well. And she has won accolades from observers across the ideological spectrum for her well-reasoned arguments and commanding presence.”

“Elena is respected and admired.... for her temperament -- her openness to a broad array of viewpoints; her habit, to borrow a phrase from Justice Stevens, ‘of understanding before disagreeing’; her fair-mindedness and skill as a consensus-builder.”

President Clinton nominated her to serve as an appeals court judge. This nomination did not move forward. Republicans stalled it, so that the next president could make a new set of judicial nominations.

She has been praised by politicians (“The fact that she has so much practical experience, on a court where it is missing, should be considered an asset.” – Sen. Charles Schumer), practicing lawyers (“She’s highly capable and should be confirmed.” – Miguel Estrada, who was nominated for an appeals court judgeship by Bush), and academics (“Warrants confirmation in a matter of hours.” -- Benjamin Wittes, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution), among others.

She has, as well, been criticized for having no experience as a judge, for being an academic, and for being part of the Obama administration.

**ROBUST**

She was confirmed as Solicitor General last year by vote of 61 to 31. Seven Republicans voted for her. All seven have since said they plan to “re-visit” her record.

Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma has said flat out that he would vote against her. Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama (whose nomination for a judgeship was voted down by the Judiciary Committee in 1986, although the Republicans held a majority in the committee), said that Obama and Kagan “both lacked the depth of experience and practical dealings with the kind of issues you would expect to see in them in high office.’

With such contending views, a robust debate on Kagan’s nomination may be expected. That is the essence of the “advice and consent” process leading to confirmation, and a nominee who comes through the experience gains from it. There is no reason, however, for a robust debate to be anything but honest, fair, and dignified.

But now, consider this: Senator Patrick Leahy, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, who predicts that Kagan will be confirmed, believes that “we have some Republicans who would automatically oppose anybody who was nominated. And the president could nominate Moses the lawgiver”.

Maybe even Hamurabi? Those who distort and disrupt the “advice and consent” process that is derived from the Constitution, denigrate the Constitution itself.

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Youth Want Nukes Abolished – Push for New Convention

By Jamshed Baruah

As senior officials from around the world negotiated in New York an agreement aimed at curbing the spread of nuclear weapons, a close look at the attitudes of the youth in six countries offered a critical insight into the need for spreading word about the culture of peace.

Youth members of Soka Gakkai International, a Buddhist association with 12 million members around the world, asked their peers what they think about nuclear weapons and their abolition.

The survey was conducted between January and March 2010 in advance of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference. It involved 4,362 youth in Japan, Korea, the Philippines, New Zealand, the USA and the UK.

A perplexing aspect of the survey is that within the nuclear states, only 59.2 percent of the American youth – in their teens and up to 30s – were aware that the United States possesses atomic arsenals. And only 43.2 percent of the young people in Britain identified their country as a nuclear power state.

However, the survey also revealed an encouraging facet. Asked whether the presence of nuclear weapons contributes to global peace and stability, 59.6 percent of the youth interviewed, including those from the nuclear states, said ‘no’. Also, 67.3 percent said the use of nuclear weapons was not acceptable under any circumstances.

Only 17.5 percent regarded deployment of atomic arsenals as acceptable as a last resort if a country’s survival was threatened and 6.1 percent to prevent international terrorism or genocide. A total of 59.1 percent said they would feel safer if nuclear weapons were abolished.

Asked which countries possess nuclear weapons, 66.9 percent of those interviewed identified the USA, 48.7 percent Russia, 30 percent China, 19.8 percent the UK and 19.8 percent France.

Fewer respondents were aware of the nuclear weapons possessed by India, Pakistan and Israel, while 40.7 percent thought North Korea had them.

Soka Gakkai student group leader Takahisa Miyao, who organised the survey, said: “Almost 70 percent of respondents said the use of nuclear weapons was not acceptable under any circumstances. This is encouraging for us. Building on the widespread rejection of nuclear weapons by youth is the key to efforts toward their abolition.”

In an E-Mail interview with IDN-InDepthNews, Takahisa Miyao commented on issues related to the survey:

IDN: What in your view is the most significant aspect emerging from the survey?

Takahisa Miyao (TM): For us the most important result was the fact that on the whole some 60 to 70 percent of respondents have a negative attitude toward nuclear weapons. It was also clear that more the people have a concrete and detailed awareness of the threat posed by nuclear weapons, the more strongly do they reject them. This speaks of the importance of informing people about the nature of nuclear weapons as a key to strengthening public opinion for their abolition.

At the same time, there is a segment of respondents who don’t have a strong opinion one way or the other regarding nuclear weapons. Even then, however, if you look at the conditions under which people think nuclear weapons could be used, it is clear that a majority consider them to be in a class of their own, essentially different from conventional weapons. On the other hand, around 10 percent of respondents expressed unease at the prospect of eliminating nuclear weapons and about 30 percent of respondents didn’t know if the abolition of nuclear weapons would be a good or a bad thing.

The results of this survey have deepened our confidence that, by working to raise awareness among the members of our own generation about the horrors of nuclear weapons deployment, we can build robust public support for their abolition.
**IDN**: What do you think should be done to sensitize youth about the need for abolition of nuclear weapons – in countries that have these and others which don’t have these on their territories?

**TM**: Again, one key is to inform people about the real nature of nuclear weapons and the horrific consequences of their use. It is an undeniable fact that, with the passage of time, the collective memory of what happened at Hiroshima and Nagasaki has begun to fade. We have responded by creating a five-language DVD recording the testimonies of nuclear survivors as well as an exhibition on nuclear disarmament and human security, ‘From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit’ which has been viewed in over 170 cities in 23 countries and territories.

The responses have been very encouraging. People who have seen the exhibition have expressed a new awareness of the threat of nuclear weapons and a determination to see them eliminated. People have also expressed a sense of empowerment, confidence that a change in people’s outlook will make nuclear abolition possible. Among the younger members of the Soka Gakkai in Japan are many descendants of hibakusha, nuclear survivors. We want to continue to convey these experiences into the future, building global solidarity among the world’s youth.

Concrete goals are crucial, and we support calls for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC), comprehensively banning all phases of nuclear weapons. Among other things, this is an effective vehicle for getting people to engage with the issue.

In parallel with the opinion survey, the Soka Gakkai youth members in Japan held a petition drive calling for the adoption of an NWC. There are precedents of the treaties banning landmines and cluster munitions, and this helps people develop clear goals and a shared vision of a path to nuclear abolition.

In calling for a similar treaty banning nuclear weapons, we are building the awareness that nuclear weapons should not exist and must be eliminated. Fostering this consciousness in individuals ultimately creates a strong normative consciousness against nuclear weapons in international society as a whole.

In this regard, we are greatly encouraged by the statement made by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon just prior to the opening of the NPT Review Conference expressing his support for a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

We feel strongly that young people have a key role to play in shaping history. The second president of our organization, Josei Toda (1900-58), said that the future is created by the power and passion of youth. As early as 1957 he called for the abolition of nuclear weapons, urging young people to take that as their special mission.

For most people, but again, perhaps especially for youth, nuclear weapons seem very distant, unrelated to their daily lives. We want to counter that through our efforts, working with fellow NGOs and relevant UN agencies, to promote a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

Kenji Shiratsuchi, Chair of SG Youth Peace Conference

**IDN**: What have the youth leaders planned for the NPT Review Conference?

**TM**: As you know, nuclear disarmament is, along with nonproliferation, one of the pillars of the NPT. The nuclear-weapon states have an obligation to pursue good-faith negotiations toward that end. Encouraging this is, of course, one of the motivations behind our drive to collect signatures for an NWC, which we will be presenting to representatives of the NPT Review Conference and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs.

We hope that the Review Conference will mark the start of negotiations toward an NWC. To clear the way, we want to see the negative security assurances – the promise of nuclear-weapon states not to use these weapons against states that don’t possess them – formalized into legally binding commitments.

We also urge the declaration of nuclear non-use regions where nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZ) have yet to be established. We will be carefully following the progress of the conference, together with interested young people around the world.

The NPT Review Conference this year is just one milestone on the path to a world free of nuclear weapons. The threat of nuclear weapons proliferation will not be uprooted until the people of each society clearly and unequivocally voice their rejection of nuclear weapons.

As Buddhists, we will continue to focus on the importance of people’s attitudes and awareness. Whatever the specific outcome of the NPT Review Conference, we will continue our efforts, through dialogue and education, to effect a positive change in people’s consciousness, to spark the inner flame of hope. - IDN-InDepthNews | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
Nukes-Free Future May Depend on Citizen Campaigns

By Thalif Deen*

Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury, a former UN Under-Secretary-general, offered a piece of advice to anti-nuclear activists campaigning for the abolition of nuclear weapons: “Don’t depend on governments - and don’t depend on the United Nations.”

Chowdhury’s scepticism of the world body was implicitly aimed at the five veto-wielding big powers in the Security Council -- the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia -- that are also the world’s five declared nuclear powers.

Speaking at a seminar on the sidelines of the month-long Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) talks here, the former Bangladeshi envoy urged non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to emulate the monumental success of the global campaign to ban anti-personnel landmines.

"I am confident civil society can bring a sea change in the minds of people (as it did in the campaign to ban landmines) in its current efforts to abolish nuclear weapons," he told a gathering of NGOs, including youth members of the Japan-based Soka Gakkai International (SGI).

Kenji Shiratsuchi, chair of the Soka Gakkai Youth Peace Conference who is leading a youth movement actively involved in a global campaign to ban nuclear weapons by 2020, said that a six-nation survey conducted by his organisation concluded most people believe the world would be safer without the destructive weapons.

One important way it can do this is by clearly expressing support for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC), as endorsed in 2008 by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his five-point plan for nuclear disarmament.

The NPT Review Conference, which concluded May 28, was attended by more than 1,500 representatives from 121 NGOs, besides government delegates.

When the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) was formally launched in October 1992, it was dismissed as "utopian" by most of the world’s governments and militaries. But there was such an overwhelming groundswell of support for the campaign that within five years, the international community began negotiating a treaty banning antipersonnel landmines.

"The process that brought about the Mine Ban Treaty has added a new dimension to diplomacy and hope for its wider applicability," says Jody Williams, one of the leaders of that highly successful campaign.

When ICBL was awarded the 1997 Nobel Prize for Peace, the Nobel Committee recognised not only the achievement of the ban, but also the promise of the model created with the ban movement, she said.

Chowdhury (picture above) told IPS: "I continue to strongly believe that nuclear weapons can be totally abolished only through a global movement of NGOs and civil society."

He said people of the world, by raising their voices and by pressuring their governments to support the abolition, can achieve the results that are otherwise not possible in an intergovernmental forum.

There is a need, he pointed out, to create a sustainable foundation for a peaceful and secure world by building a "culture of peace", as called for by the United Nations.

Japan, as the only country which experienced a nuclear holocaust, has the real moral authority to lead the campaign.

"I am encouraged by the fervent calls for nuclear abolition made by the Hibakusha (surviving victims of nuclear bombings in Japan) at the UN’s current NPT review conference, as well as by many Japanese civil society and spiritual leaders, like President Daisaku Ikeda (of SGI), who have energised millions around the world," Chowdhury said.

Of course, the Japanese government needs to come out more categorically in support of the abolition to establish its leadership of the global movement, as the Canadian government did in support of banning landmines, along with civil society, Chowdhury added.

SGI, which has been leading a major anti-nuclear campaign in Japan, initiating the 2007 launch of the People’s Decade for Nuclear Abolition, is a Buddhist association with over 12 million members in 192 countries.

The world’s anti-war activists, including parliamentarians, civil society groups and diplomats, have succeeded in creating international treaties to ban a wide array of deadly weapons: anti-personnel landmines, blinding laser weapons, cluster munitions, dum-dum bullets and chemical and biological weapons.

But “the most iniquitous weapon of all” -- the nuclear weapon -- has continued to escape a treaty aimed at eliminating its use, spread and production.

Asked why a proposed nuclear weapons convention (NWC) has failed to get off the ground, Alyn Ware, global coordinator for Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), told IPS: "The nuclear weapon is both a military and a political weapon."

"It projects power," he said, singling out the world’s five most powerful, and by definition, permanent members of the Security Council -- the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China -- who are also the five declared nuclear powers.

Ware says it is also one of the primary reasons why the four undeclared nuclear powers -- India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea - are holding onto their weapons.

*The writer, Thalif Deen, is Bureau Chief of IPS at the UN in New York.
Still, the longstanding proposal for a convention to ban nuclear weapons has gathered increased momentum at the current month-long NPT Review Conference.

Jayantha Dhanapala (picture on the right), a former UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, told delegates: "We do need a radical change."

"In the same manner as we have outlawed biological and chemical weapons among weapons of mass destruction, and anti-personnel landmines and cluster weapons as inhumane conventional weapons, we need to begin the process of outlawing nuclear weapons," said Dhanapala, president of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

The negotiations for a nuclear weapons convention, he said, "must begin immediately".

The abolitionists, led largely by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), also include scores of anti-war and anti-nuclear activists worldwide: the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, Nobel Women's Initiative, Federation of American Scientists, Mayors for Peace and Soka Gakkai International of Japan.

A Model NWC, drafted by an international consortium of lawyers, scientists and disarmament experts, has been in circulation since 1997 as a United Nations document, and subsequently revised in 2007.

The proposed Convention calls for "the adoption of legally binding, verifiable and enforceable instruments, culminating in a comprehensive prohibition and destruction of all nuclear weapons under effective controls."

Dr. Rebecca Johnson, vice chair of ICAN, told IPS the model NWC is valid as a resource, with many useful ideas for how the technical and legal challenges might be addressed in a nuclear abolition treaty.

She said it was offered as a collection of ideas to demonstrate that a comprehensive treaty is feasible, not a "take-it-or-leave-it" draft for immediate adoption.

"When negotiations begin, they will start on their own terms, but we are confident the diplomats will find our discussions, and even some of our draft text, useful as they seek their own negotiated solutions," Johnson added.

Asked if the proposal will come up before the session of the NPT, she said the 118-member group of Non-Aligned States, who are parties to the NPT, and several individual European countries, as well as Ban Ki-moon, have openly called for some kind of comprehensive treaty.

The call is for a treaty or framework for the total prohibition of the use and deployment of nuclear weapons and to provide for the phased elimination of nuclear weapons -- in other words, a Nuclear Weapons Convention, she added.

"This is most heavily supported by a new call from the non-nuclear countries at this 2010 NPT Conference," she said.

Because of opposition from some, if not all the nuclear-weapon states, it will be a tough challenge to get this support for negotiating a nuclear weapons convention into the final document, Johnson declared.

Still, she noted, there will be some commitment to pursue a comprehensive, treaty-based approach, which is feasible and clearly complements calls for reaffirming the 13 practical disarmament steps adopted by the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Ware said a majority of governments have supported UN resolutions calling for the immediate commencement of NWC negotiations. These include some of the countries that possess nuclear weapons - China, India, Pakistan and North Korea. On the other hand, he pointed out, there are key countries -- most notably the other nuclear weapons states and many of the countries in extended nuclear deterrence relationships with the United States -- that express opposition to such negotiations. (Continued on page 12)
The Challenge of Moving Fast toward a Nuke-Free World

By Ernest Corea

Gloom-and-doom headlines in the waning days of the 2010 review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) caused many observers to assume that negotiations would collapse in deadlock, but the Final Declaration of the conference was adopted without dissent. Consensus on potentially contentious issues was a significant milestone on the path toward nuclear disarmament.

A NPT review conference is held every five years and the previous conference ended in deadlock. At the time, many delegates blamed the collapse of the conference on the previous U.S. administration.

“The NPT could not have suffered another failed review conference after 2005 and it is a tribute to the 172 states parties present (out of a total of 190) that they agreed on a document strengthening all three pillars of the treaty – nonproliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy,” said Dr. Jayantha Dhanapala, president of the Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs and formerly president of the 1995 NPT review and extension conference.

OUTCOME

Dhanapala added that “the newly adopted separation of the Final Declaration into a Review section which was ‘noted’ and a Conclusion and Recommendations part – including a 64-point Action Plan – which was adopted by consensus, augurs well for the future.”

The encouraging outcome of the conference, he said, “is a result of new political leadership in the world and a strong current of global public opinion channeled by civil society organisations. This synergy must grow despite obstacles that may arise so that the goal of a nuclear weapon free world is reached sooner rather than later.”

In Dhanapala’s assessment – an assessment shared by several delegates and observers – “the most significant achievement” of the conference “was the agreement on implementing the 1995 resolution on the Middle East – 15 years later – for which the Pugwash Conference had worked hard, convening a specially focused side event during the conference and lobbying many governments on this.”

“The convening of a conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction and the appointment of a facilitator to consult and prepare the conference with responsibilities after the conference are major steps forward.

The acknowledgement in the document of ‘the important role played by civil society in contributing to the implementation of the resolution’ is an encouragement to Pugwash to continue its efforts.”

Dhanapala, who is a former UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament, pointed out that “while an optimum result on nuclear disarmament was diluted by resistance from nuclear weapon states the action plan is, by common consent, an advance over the 2000 Review Conference document.

(Continued on page 13)

Nukes-Free Future May Depend on Citizen Campaigns

(Continued from page 11)

They claim there are initial steps and fundamental security issues that must be addressed before such negotiations could start, Ware said.

Still, many analysts argue that these initial steps and security issues would be best dealt with in the context of comprehensive negotiations.

A more feasible aim for the NPT Review Conference is to persuade states parties to agree to a preparatory process of a NWC, Ware added.

A working paper submitted to the 2005 NPT Review Conference by Costa Rica and Malaysia calls for the exploration of legal, technical, institutional and political elements required to achieve and maintain a nuclear weapons-free world.

Dr. Natalie J. Goldring, senior fellow at the Centre for Peace and Security Studies at Georgetown University, told IPS: “A nuclear weapons convention is an ambitious goal.” But with U.S. President Barack Obama’s leadership, it could become a reality, she added.

Goldring pointed out that a nuclear weapons convention is a logical means of implementing President Obama’s commitment to nuclear disarmament. “The Obama administration is moving in the right direction, but needs a greater sense of urgency on these issues,” she said.

She said the NPT Review Conference, currently underway, is a chance to reinforce the interlocking commitments of disarmament and nonproliferation. A Nuclear Weapons Convention would help establish the path toward nuclear disarmament.

"It would break the cycle of governments making rhetorical commitments to nuclear disarmament while continuing to develop new nuclear weapons,” she said, noting that said even committing to negotiation of a convention would be a significant step forward.

Goldring said that important components of a nuclear weapons convention would include bans on the development, testing, production, stockpiling, transfer, and use of nuclear weapons.

The staged approach included in model nuclear weapons conventions makes sense, as does the focus on U.S. and Russian arsenals in the early stages, Goldring said.

U.S. and Russian arsenals are by far the largest. Until the U.S. and Russia make significant cuts in their nuclear weapons, there is little incentive for other countries to follow suit, she added. - Copyright © IPS-Inter Press Service ■

This article is is being re-published within the framework of the SGI-IPS media project.
“All state parties are committed to pursue irreversible, verifiable and transparent policies with the objectives of achieving a world without nuclear weapons and nuclear weapon states will implement their unequivocal undertaking to eliminate their nuclear weapons totally.

“The conference noted the UN Secretary-General’s Five-Point Proposal for Nuclear Disarmament, which includes negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention while the nuclear weapon states committed themselves to accelerate nuclear disarmament engaging promptly on a number of specific issues.”

REAFFIRMED

In agreement on other key issues:
- the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was reaffirmed and the conference recognised that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;
- Russia and the U.S. were encouraged to implement the nuclear weapons reduction treaty they signed earlier this year;
- all states were reminded of the need to prevent nuclear proliferation, and “to detect, deter and disrupt trafficking.”
- states which have not yet signed a number of existing agreements that serve as a deterrent against trafficking that includes nuclear terrorism were urged to sign such agreements;
- the importance of Israel joining the NPT regime and placing all its nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards was reaffirmed.
- NPT member states were reminded of the obligation to resolve all unresolved issues in their dealing with the IAEA.

LEADERSHIP

The eighth NPT review conference has ended and in whatever way the clean sheet of success might get ruffled in the future, there is no doubt that the outcome of the meeting was, as Dhanapala has pointed out, a tribute to the current political leadership.

Conference President Ambassador Libran Cabactulan (Philippines) worked indefatigably to craft reasonably robust documents on which consensus could be reached, without the sacrifice of guiding principles. Also hard at work was the current leader of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at the UN, Egyptian Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz who provided his NAM colleagues with enlightened leadership.

Perhaps the strongest influence, however, was that of a leader who was not even present: President Barack Obama. His groundbreaking speech in Prague over a year ago when he shared with his audience a vision of a nuclear weapons free world has created a trend of public opinion that continues to influence public policy at international gatherings. This might not last long. Indeed, in nut country there is already a backlash developing. Speed is vital, therefore, in following up the good intentions expressed at what was certainly a positive, even historic, meeting in New York.

IDN reported in an analysis by Jamshed Baruah: While the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sounds rather upbeat on the outcome of the NPT Review Conference that wrapped up on May 28, official Washington’s reaction is rather critical of some important parts of the 28-page final document. In a statement issued by his spokesman, in which he called the month-long review conference a success, Ban particularly welcomed the agreement on a process leading to the establishment of a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

“A strong spirit of compromise and cooperation has delivered a significant agreement to build a safer and more secure world,” it said, adding that the action plan lays a solid foundation to further strengthen the treaty and address the challenges that lie ahead.

“The agreement on concrete actions will advance all three pillars of the treaty – disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy,” the statement declared.

The UN Secretary-General “welcomes the firm commitment of the nuclear weapon states to advance their efforts to eliminate all nuclear weapons”, the spokesman said. “He also welcomes the strong commitment of the States Parties to prevent nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism.”

The United States Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, Ellen Tauscher, agrees on that point. A statement posted on the State Department’s website www.state.gov said: “The Final Document of this Conference . . . reflects our collective commitment to uphold and strengthen this cornerstone of the international nonproliferation regime. It also demonstrates our unified resolve to strengthen the Treaty’s three pillars – disarmament, nonproliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy – with the inclusion of recommendations for follow-on actions.”

The statement takes note of the fact that the final document also includes an agreement to hold a regional conference in 2012 to discuss issues relevant to a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems.

“We have long-supported such a zone, but we recognize that essential precursors must be in place for its achievement,” it adds and assures that the U.S. take seriously their commitments with respect to this regional conference, and will work with the countries in the region to create conditions for a successful conference.

“We note, however, that our ability to do so has been seriously jeopardized because the final document singles out Israel in the Middle East section, a fact that the United States deeply regrets,” Tauscher said. A UN media release stated: The final document of the five-yearly review forum calls on Ban and the co-sponsors of a 1995 resolution proposing a Middle East free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction to convene a conference to be attended by all States in the region.

The document specifically reaffirms “the importance of Israel’s accession to the Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) safeguards”, it said.

Israel is not a member of the NPT and does not admit to having nuclear weapons. Three other non-members, India, Pakistan and the North Korea, admit openly to their nuclear arsenals. The U.S. State Department said: “We note further that the final document calls on states to comply fully with the NPT in order to uphold the treaty’s integrity and the authority of its safeguards system.

“In that regard, we recall Secretary (Hillary) Clinton’s statement at the opening of this Review Conference, noting that ‘Iran is the only country in this hall that has been found by the IAEA Board of Governors to be currently in noncompliance with its nuclear safeguards obligations.’ We note that Iran has done nothing to enhance the international community’s confidence in it by its performance in this Review Conference.”
Afghan 'Guantánamo' to be Expanded

By Prakash Joshi

While preparing to close the notorious U.S. prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, President Barack Obama appears to be supporting the expansion of another secretive prison in Afghanistan, according to reports.

In an article posted on May 12, 2010 at wired.com Natan Hodge says, the U.S. military was getting set to expand its controversial detention camp at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan – just as new reports of a "black jail" inside the facility were surfacing.

In a solicitation issued the same day, Hodge said, the U.S. military had put out a request for a contractor to build three new detention housing units next to the existing facility, known formally as the Afghan National Detention Facility at Parwan (Bagram is in the southwest corner of Parwan Province). As of last September, 645 prisoners were held there.

"The cost of the project – which will include construction of one special housing unit and two detention housing units – is projected to run between $10 million and $25 million. The contractor will have approximately nine months to complete the entire project," the report said.

Presumably, these new buildings are in addition to Bagram’s separate and previously clandestine detention facility, revealed by the International Committee of the Red Cross on May 11, 2010.

The Raw Story (rawstory.com) editor John Byrne points out in an article posted on May 13 that Hodge had noted another startling fact: the U.S. is planning to shortly hand over the base, despite the fact that they are going to spend more than $10 million on expanding it.

"Timing here is key: The jail is supposed to be handed over to Afghan control of the place, sometimes called 'Obama's Guantánamo', sometime next year," writes Byrne. Though, Afghan president Hamid Karzai would like to make the hand-off even earlier. Afghan and U.S. officials have signed an agreement to hand control of the Parwan facility to the Afghan ministry of defence, and eventually to its ministry of justice. The transfer may help resolve an issue that has caused a fair amount of controversy for the U.S. military.

"BLACK JAIL"

Back in 2002, notes Byrne, two Bagram detainees died in a prisoner-abuse scandal. And last year, The New York Times reported the existence of a "black jail" at Bagram that was kept off limits to the Red Cross.

The military has maintained that there is no separate facility at Bagram. In a bloggers’ roundtable earlier this year, Navy Vice Adm. Robert Harward emphasized that there were "no black jails" at Bagram, but he did clarify that there was a short period of detention at undisclosed "field-detention sites", where Afghan and U.S. authorities hold individuals to determine who they are and whether they have any actionable intelligence.
"We don’t disclose where those field-detention sites are, because of operation security," Harward said. "They would be targeted. They’d be at great risk. At those field-detention sites, they’re held for a very short period, to determine who they are, their classification, and immediately actionable intelligence. And then, from that point, they’re moved to our detention facility in Parwan."

Byrne writes: "It’s worth emphasizing here that humane treatment of prisoners is considered a cornerstone of effective counterinsurgency. The idea is to prevent further radicalization of detainees, and turning detention facilities into recruiting centers for the insurgency."

In the roundtable, Harward borrowed a phrase from counterinsurgency guru David Kilcullen. The goal is to prevent the "accidental guerrillas" from filling up the facility.

"HE’S A BAD KID BUT HE COULD BE GOOD"

"If that village says, yeah, he’s a bad guy, we’ve just gotten additional intelligence on him and better understanding of the individual," said Harward. "The village may say, hey, he’s a bad kid but he could be good. Well, then maybe he does need a program where we teach him to read or write, and a short incarceration would benefit him and convince him not to be the jihadi, that he was the accidental guerrilla; that there’s options and purpose for him in Afghan society outside of that, and maybe we can give him some skills that will help him."

Monitoring a BBC report on April 15, 2010 from Bagram by Hilary Andersson, Daniel Tencer says in an article for The Raw Story that Bagram prisoners were "moved around in wheelchairs with goggles and headphones on". The U.S. military operates a "secret jail" at an Afghan airbase where prisoners are deprived of sleep and "made to dance" by U.S. troops whenever they want to use the toilet.

The BBC interviewed nine people who say they were held at the facility, known as the "black hole", at the site of the Bagram airbase. The prison appears to be separate from the main Bagram prison, which the U.S. established after the 2001 invasion and which continues to be the target of human rights complaints.

A man identified only as ‘Mirwais’, who says he spent 24 days at the facility, told the BBC that prisoners are routinely subjected to sleep deprivation.

"I could not sleep, nobody could sleep because there was a machine that was making noise," said Mirwais. "There was a small camera in my cell, and if you were sleeping they’d come in and disturb you." "Mirwais said he was made to dance to music by American soldiers every time he wanted to use the toilet," the BBC reported.

RED CROSS HAD NO ACCESS TO THE FACILITY

Witnesses said the lights were kept on in their cells at all times; that the Red Cross had no access to the facility; and most had been beaten by U.S. troops before they were brought there. The BBC report did not address under what circumstances the witnesses found themselves there, or whether any of them were insurgents.

This is not the first time that allegations have been made of a secret facility at Bagram, says Tencer. In November 2009, the Raw Story reported on claims of a secret site at Bagram that was still in operation as of late that year, apparently in contravention of President Obama’s order, upon taking office, to shut down the CIA’s "black sites" around the world.

Three people claiming to be former inmates of the facility told the New York Times "of being held for months after the intensive interrogations were over without being told why. One detainee said he remained at the Bagram prison complex for two years and four months; another was held for 10 months total."

"The secret site appears to be separate from the main prison facility at Bagram, which itself has been the target of complaints from human rights activists. Unlike the Guantánamo Bay facility, prisoners at Bagram are not given access to lawyers," writes Tencer.

IN WHEELCHAIRS

"To this date, no prisoner has ever seen a lawyer in Bagram," lawyer Tina Foster told the BBC. The news organization was given a rare peek inside the main Bagram prison complex, a new facility that replaced an aging one earlier this year:

In the new jail, prisoners were being moved around in wheelchairs with goggles and headphones on. The goggles were blacked out, and the purpose of the headphones was to block out all sound. Each prisoner was handcuffed and had their legs shackled.

Prisoners are kept in 56 cells, which they refer to as "cages". The front of the cells is made of mesh, the ceiling is clear, and the other three walls are solid. Guards can see down into the cells above.

The BBC was told by the military to wear protective eye glasses whilst walking past the mesh cells as prisoners sometimes throw excrement or semen on the guards.

Faced with a lawsuit from the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union), the U.S. military earlier in 2010 released a long-secret list of prisoners at Bagram. The list showed some 645 prisoners being held at the facility, but the BBC now reports that number to be closer to 800, thanks to an increase in prisoner intake likely linked to the increased military effort in Afghanistan in recent months.

"The U.S. military itself has admitted that about 80% of those at Bagram are probably not hardened terrorists," the BBC reports. In March, the Times of London reported that the Bagram facility could be expanded and used as a replacement for the Guantánamo Bay detention centre. The idea is "being considered as U.S. officials try to find an alternative to Guantánamo Bay," the Times said.

Last year, former CBS anchorman Dan Rather said "there is a school of thought" that Bagram is already replacing Guantánamo as the site where terrorist suspects from around the world are to be held.

"Some of the contentions that were made about Guantánamo are starting to be made about Bagram," Rather told MSNBC's Rachel Maddow. "The critical thing is, there is no transparency."

- IDN-InDepthNews | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
Aid Beyond Prejudice and Pride

By Eckhard Deutscher*

"Africa is drowning in aid money." - "Too much aid goes to the private pockets of corrupt regimes and towards a bloated development industry, when much more should be spent on the private sector." - "Aid is a useless distraction given the impact of issues like trade, investment etc on development." - "Aid is not nearly growing quickly enough."

These are some examples of arguments put forward in a critical political and public debate of development co-operation that has intensified as we approach the reference date for substantial aid commitments and get closer to the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals in 2015.

While there are elements of truth in these statements, it is useful to dissect them and look behind often quoted but rarely substantiated ‘facts’.

**AID: DISMAL UNDER-DELIVERY OR FAR TOO MUCH OF IT?**

The recent publication of projections for aid volumes in 2010, the reference year for a range of international aid targets, has drawn considerable attention.

But what was the real story? That is indeed the question, as there are at least two stories that need to be told.

The first story is that the last years were very good and encouraging. Aid volumes have never been higher than they are today. Since 2005, when many donors made substantial aid commitments, Official Development Assistance (ODA) has increased by 25 percent in real terms.

The most recent figures, for 2009, show that there is no reversal, with total ODA recording a small increase. Probably more importantly, however, it increased by a rather significant 6.8 percent in real terms, once we take out debt forgiveness, a big, volatile factor that does not involve direct resource transfers.

Never before have we seen a period of similar sustained increase – and this in a time when all other sources of development finance have shown sharp reversals over the past years.

The second story is that the aggregate targets set for 2010 will not be fully met.

While most donors look set to reach their targets, several are set to miss them. Setting commitment targets creates a powerful motivating force for many countries to increase their ODA. Ambitious commitments do usually translate into major increases – even where these do not fully reach the volumes committed, they may well have a stronger impact on increasing development finance than less ambitious targets that are fully reached.

At the same time, a high level of ‘ambition commitments’ is no excuse for not meeting them – a range of countries have maintained sharp aid increases in line with their commitments, including some hit very hard by the crisis, such as Spain and the United Kingdom.

What they tend to have in common is a well-planned and strategic approach to scaling up their aid.

Countries that did not plan early enough for aid increases tend to have fallen short, and, as a consequence, they now find their credibility called into question. This may affect their wider engagement on other important issues, e.g. climate change financing. Fulfilling commitments made repeatedly at head-of-state level is not an optional luxury.

Future aid commitment targets should include annual rates of increase, so that performance can be checked each year and aid volumes kept at predictable and reliable levels. This is, moreover, not just a question of strategic budgetary planning on the side of donors. Reliable and predictable ODA is essential for making aid effective.

The reason for this is as simple as it is essential: it is not possible to plan and use resources effectively, if there is no way to know what the resources to plan with.

One of the first questions by any serious manager asked to take on a project will be: What is the budget for this? Knowing this is essential. For public policy-making in developing countries, the answer is all too often: There is no way to know what your budget is. Developing countries cannot manage their budgets effectively if aid is unpredictable. Unpredictability of aid comes at a terrible cost for developing countries, and also for taxpayers in donor countries.

What about the arguments of Africa, in particular, drowning in aid money?

Here, some clarification might put things into perspective: First, Africa is the region with the highest development needs, so it is appropriate that this is considered in making aid allocations – as reflected in particular commitments for aid to the continent.

*Eckhard Deutscher chairs the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Development Cooperation (OECD)
The share of ODA to Africa in 2008 stood at 36 percent, roughly the same as the share going to Asia. Second, country programmable aid – the aid that countries can actually work with, was at an average of about USD 29 per capita for Africa from 2005 to 2008.

By way of comparison, average health expenditure per person in OECD countries between 2000 and 2006 stood at USD 2824, more than 100 times in Africa. Or if we take education, in 2006, OECD countries spent on average USD 7840 per student a year. The point is not to suggest that these amounts are excessive or should be reduced – they clearly reflect necessity, importance and public demand for these key services – but to give a sense of the amount of aid resources on a per capita basis that are actually available for financing development.

AID AND CORRUPTION

Corruption is clearly a big problem for development. This is true everywhere, in all regions of the world, and in countries at all income levels.

It is also obvious that big mistakes were made in the past, in terms of supporting kleptocratic regimes, in terms of failing to deal with conflicts and predatory actors. Much of this happened in a different geo-political context, when there was a cold war which set real agendas for major world actors in a way that was hardly compatible with political and economic development.

Is corruption an issue for aid today? Unfortunately, yes.

Are we learning lessons how to confront the problem? Again, yes.

Will it be possible to prevent instances of corruption completely? No. Corruption must never be tolerated, but even in the best-governed countries, there are instances of corruption. Is aid the biggest concern when it comes to corruption?

No. In fact, development co-operation is a key instrument in the fight against corruption, and a key priority for essentially all donors. The real challenge in terms of money lies in other areas, where there tends to be much less transparency, scrutiny and due diligence, such as in extractive industries.

But tackling corruption is not just a question in which area it is most rampant, or where the highest amount of money is involved. It is essential to have a good appreciation of the various dimension of a very complex challenge.

Corruption will not be reduced merely through conditionality of aid or by a fixation on controlling their aid inputs to the last dot. For one, this would fail to take into account the supply side of corruption, including from donor countries.

Until a couple of years ago, Western companies were happy to pay bribes in developing countries as a normal cost of doing business, which was tax deductible back at home.

At another level, it is important to understand that it is not the solution for donors to avoid and work outside the country systems - this actually undermines further domestic capacity and accountability in the developing countries.

Rather, to address corruption, it is important to support the countries’ own capacities, processes and stakeholders in the fight against corruption. This means not just focusing on government, but working with political parties, parliament, the judiciary, media and civil society. This, rather than mere transfer of funds from government to government, is indeed the reality of today’s development co-operation.

Before denouncing aid, those who really care about fighting corruption in developing countries should ask themselves how donors could support this struggle in the absence of development co-operation.

GOVT AID VS. PRIVATE SECTOR-LED DEVELOPMENT

One answer put forward is to simply avoid the problem by focusing on the private sector instead of working with the government.

After all, there is no doubt that the key driver of wealth creation is the private sector. It is the market economy on which the success and wealth of OECD countries relies. A stronger emphasis on productive capacity and private sector led growth is essential, because this enhanced economic capacity is also the foundation to promote social and human development goals.

So why not cut out aid to governments and just focus on the private sector?

The answer is that the first condition for private sector led growth is the existence of an effective state that can provide political stability and drive economic and social achievement as the basis for a decent life for its whole population.

If we look at today’s world, we see that where such states have emerged, often with considerable aid support, development has usually flourished, the importance of aid has declined over time and the private sector has become the driving force of growth and increasing well-being. But what is the situation in the many countries where weak capacity or insufficient political cohesion and social consensus mean the de facto absence of such effective statehood?
they into place in a way that is self-sustainable. This is a difficult, long-term process with lots of uncertainty.

YOU DON'T 'DO' OR 'DELIVER' DEVELOPMENT

The 'aid effectiveness agenda' provides a framework for 'donors' and developing countries to work together in the most effective way possible. There are essentially two dimensions to do so.

First, the donor-recipient dimension. How can partnership be designed to support an enabling environment for development through a capable, accountable state that is committed to development and responsive to the needs of development stakeholders?

Underlying it is the basic understanding that donors cannot 'do' or 'deliver' development, but that this process has to be owned and achieved by the people and countries themselves. Hence the central importance of ownership and alignment as well as mutual trust and commitment expressed by the principle of mutual accountability.

Second, the donor universe dimension. There are many donor stakeholders in development. Clearly, the wealth of experience and resources that these diverse actors bring and make available for development is very welcome, as all have valuable contributions to make.

However, we need to be conscious of the fact that providing development assistance in and to other countries has externalities. These may be small for any individual actor. But together, this has also led to the creation of a complex international system of institutions and organizations.

Different institutional approaches and the self-interest that are innate to all organizations, have resulted in ever-increasing transaction costs, fragmentation, duplication and inefficiencies of development co-operation efforts to an extent that they have become a real burden for many poor countries.

The aid effectiveness agenda is sometimes referred to as a governance framework for development co-operation. We can indeed look at it in this way. This can then lead to the question whether there should be such a thing as a governance framework.

My answer is: yes. Because without such a governance framework, markets fail. We saw the clear and devastating effect of this in the financial market crisis.

The failure in the 'development co-operation' business is not that inefficient organisations or approaches disappear. Rather, it is that development outcomes suffer. This is because the provision of development co-operation is not subject to normal market discipline. Supply is not automatically defined by demand.

Rather, the nature of aid is such that it is largely defined by the supply-side, in the form of political support and processes on the donor side. This does not mean that there is not much demand, or need -- it is clear that aid resources are very scarce if seen against the development challenges in this world.

Yet, there is nobody who claims the current international aid architecture is not fragmented and inefficient: This is the outcome of non-regulation. There are currently some 249 bilateral assistance programmes and 263 multilateral programmes.

While it is important to acknowledge that the transfer of resources may not be the primary mandate of most of these institutions, many of which provide technical assistance or serve a norms-setting purpose, nobody any longer has a grasp of the entire system.

Moreover, while there is broad agreement on the need for less fragmentation, the opposite has happened, as number of the interventions has tended to increase more sharply than overall ODA, so that the value of aid transactions -- projects or programmes -- has actually fallen.

This is the result of non-regulation and of competition gone wrong, because it was too much competition of development institutions for their own business model or interest area, rather than for their supposed clients. This system stopped long ago corresponding to country needs and realities.

Again, the aid effectiveness work has a crucial role in re-calibrating the way the system works. But much remains to be done, and development institutions stand to generate enormous value added by simplifying and reforming organizational structures, instruments and procedures; greater synergy and coherence among bilateral and multilateral assistance; and a more effective division of labour among institutions.
DEVELOPMENT IS ABOUT MORE THAN AID

At the same time, it is clear that development, and the impact of OECD countries and other major economies on the development prospects of partner countries, is about more than aid. Developed country policies in areas seemingly not related to development, such as food safety and banking regulation, can actually have a profound impact on the production and finance systems of developing countries. In some cases, this impact be more significant than aid itself.

Sometimes, this is turned into an argument against aid:

Because the impact of development co-operation can often be outweighed by the negative impact of other rich-country policies on development, what is the use of development co-operation?

Why bother about it and invest so much money?

In a strange blurring of lines, incoherent policies of donor countries are thus implicitly turned into a criticism of development co-operation. The problem with this reasoning is that it takes the existence of bad policies as an argument against doing something about them. It is like saying that there is no point in environmental protection, because pollution is linked to our economic activity and lifestyles, and protection would impose a cost on them. Rather than questioning what we do on the basis of bad practice or habits in other areas, we need to expose the true cost and deal with their negative externalities on our policy objectives and instruments.

It is essential that decision makers are well informed so as to assess relevant policy options before taking decisions that may, directly or indirectly, affect developing countries. This makes policy coherence an essential part of effective governance – in all administrations.

What we need to recognize is that development co-operation has a key political role in identifying and dealing with other policy areas that are incoherent with our development efforts, and offset the value of aid.

If we take, as we should, development results as the yardstick for the success, donors will have to deal much more with factors beyond their direct operational remit, and often beyond their control.

The development community must become involved in a wider array of policies and activities that have a bearing on poverty and the effectiveness of their co-operation, moving beyond the sphere of traditional development partnerships to work on these broader issues together with other government departments and policy portfolios. This will be a crucial factor for achieving development results in poor countries.

This is not anything but an easy task. It is far from clear that fully coherent policies in all circumstances are actually feasible. What is clear, however, is that incoherent policies are bad policies. They are, by definition, inefficient and ineffective, and a waste of taxpayers’ money, no matter which policy objective takes priority.

LOOKING AHEAD

A better general understanding of development co-operation in our domestic political systems – and in the public – is fundamental. Poverty is the ultimate systemic risk. It is the breeding ground for the proliferation of terrorism, armed conflict, environmental degradation, cross-border diseases and organised crime.

Development commitments need to be centered squarely in this global context. In a volatile world facing the threats of environmental disasters, increasing competition for scarce resources and increasing global interdependence of economies and markets, failure to deliver the benefits of globalization, especially in developing countries, risks undermining global stability.

Development is a challenge cannot be overcome with the tools of aid alone. But development co-operation is central to the solution to this global challenge.

- IDN-inDepthNews | GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES ■

[Ekhard Deutscher has been the Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) since January 2008. The DAC is a unique international forum where donor governments and multilateral organisations – such as the World Bank and the United Nations – come together to help partner countries reduce poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.]
The Poor Pay but the Rich Rule the World Bank

By Nirode Masson

Rich countries will continue to crushingly dominate the World Bank in spite of recent shifts in countries’ voting power, which have been described as “historic changes to position the poverty fighting institution for the transformed world emerging from the global crisis”. The developing countries represent over 80 per cent of the world’s population and the Bank’s membership. Almost all of the Bank’s activities take place in those countries. Through loan repayments, they are the main financial contributors to the Bank.

In view of this, says a leading London-based think-tank, World Bank’s legitimacy continues to be inhibited. Inadequate reform limits the Bank’s capacity to serve the interests of developing countries, and violates democratic principles. The ‘Breton Woods Project’ (BWP) points out that high-income countries are set to hold onto over 60 per cent of voting power across the World Bank Group for at least the next five years. Middle-income countries – including global powers such as India, China and Brazil – are stuck on only around one third of the votes. Low-income countries languish on just 6 per cent, averaged across the different arms of the World Bank.

"No further reform is on the table for the next five years, so voting shares will stagnate at these inequitable levels until at least 2015," says BWP. There are plans to develop a formula to calculate voting shares in IBRD (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) and IDA (International Development Association), which would take into account countries’ economic weight, donations to IDA, and contributions to the Bank’s ‘development mission’.

"However, the latest reforms have set a worrying precedent. They placed a heavy emphasis on economic weight (75 per cent), followed by countries’ contributions to IDA (20 per cent) – both criteria which favour rich countries. The development element was accorded a derisory five per cent, and was also partly defined by IDA contributions,” the BWP analysts explain.

DECADES TO GO

Nor does the Bank show any sign of adopting robust definitions of developed or developing and transition countries (DTCs). On the contrary, it says that, “changing the DTC definition before reaching equitable voting power would complicate measuring the achievement of that important objective”.

At the current rate of change, it will be decades before developing countries, home to the vast majority of the world’s population, even have parity of vote with developed nations, adds the analysis. "This pitiful path condemns the World Bank to illegitimacy and ineffectiveness as an institution mandated to combat poverty."

An alternative to this approach is to heed the call of the civil society groups for equal voting shares for developed and developing countries in the short term.

"This should be accompanied by a timetable for rapid further reforms, based on a formula that reflects democratic principles and has at its heart the Bank’s development mandate," says the BWP.

"Also vital is an end to the outdated practice of some countries having permanent seats on the Bank’s board, where European countries are particularly over-represented. These steps would put the World Bank on a far stronger footing to support development."

The Bank says that developing and transition countries will gain 3.13 per cent of the voting shares at IBRD, bringing them to 47.19 per cent. It claims that this represents a total shift of 4.59 per cent since 2008.

IBRD offers finance to middle-income countries. Voting shares are determined by countries’ economic weight, their contributions to IDA, and a commitment to move over time to ‘equitable voting power’ between developed countries and developing or transition countries.

Extra votes are being issued to certain countries in return for those countries making extra contributions to the Bank’s capital. A closer look shows that the category of developing and transition countries, which is based on the World Economic Outlook by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), includes 16 countries that the Bank classifies as high-income economies. Among them are Saudi Arabia, Hungary and Kuwait. These 16 countries together hold over 5 per cent of the vote. In reality then, high-income countries will cling onto almost 61 per cent of the vote, with middle-income countries getting under 35 per cent, and low-income countries on just 4.46 per cent.
The 78 countries actually eligible to borrow from IBRD will have only a third of voting power (34.1 per cent). Compare that to the more than one quarter of votes held by the 27 countries of the European Union. China and South Korea will gain more than half of the total transfer, while African countries will have a mere 0.19 per cent more.

**The biggest winners:** China (1.64%), South Korea (0.58%), Turkey (0.55%), Mexico (0.5%), and Singapore (0.24%). South Korea and Singapore are both high-income countries, and Mexico and Turkey are upper middle-income countries.

**The biggest losers:** Japan (-1.01%), UK (-0.55%), France (-0.55%), US (-0.51%), and Germany (-0.48%).

An important arm of the World Bank is IDA, which provides grants and concessional loans to the poorest countries. 79 countries, with a total population of 2.5 billion people, are eligible for IDA funding.

No new voting shares have been created for IDA. However, not all countries had taken up the full voting shares available to them, because to do so requires a financial contribution to the Bank. Four donor countries provided funds to enable poor countries to take up some of those previously unused shares, the BWP points out.

The Bank groups IDA member countries into ‘Part I’ or ‘Part II’. Part I comprises 26 wealthy countries, and the 143 Part II members are a mix of high-, middle- and low-income countries, including Saudi Arabia, South Korea and Israel.

The Bank claims that ‘Part II IDA members’ voting power has increased to 45.59%, as of March 2010. This represents very significant progress, up from 40.1% at the start of voice reform discussions in April 2008.”

A closer look shows however that excluding high-income countries in Part II (Bahamas, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Hungary, Israel, South Korea, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Trinidad and Tobago), only 4.3 per cent of voting power at IDA has actually been transferred to developing countries. Low-income countries gained just 3.32 per cent.

High-income countries still have over 61 per cent of the votes, middle-income countries have under 28 per cent, and low-income countries have only 11 per cent. The very countries that IDA is meant to serve have the least representation.

Eleven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have actually suffered a decline in their relative voting power. Bangladesh has lost more than the UK.

**The biggest winners, says the BWP,** are the Philippines (0.42%), Zimbabwe (0.34%), Algeria (0.26%), Moldova (0.25%), and Ethiopia (0.24%). Only half of the ten countries that gained most are low-income countries.

**The biggest losers:** the US (-1.47%), Japan (-1.09%), Germany (-0.69%), Italy (-0.34%), and France (-0.29%).

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) is the private-sector arm of the World Bank Group. Voting power at the IFC is supposed to broadly reflect countries’ IBRD shareholdings, but historically the IFC has been even more heavily dominated by wealthy countries. Reforms have been implemented through an increase in basic votes to all shareholders and an optional, additional contribution to the IFC’s capital.

The Bank’s claims that developed countries’ share of the vote is said to have fallen from 66.59 per cent to 60.52 per cent, with developing and transition countries’ share rising from 33.41 per cent to 39.48 per cent.

Once again, however, the use of the ‘developing and transition’ country category is misleading. High-income countries have given up less than 5 per cent of their voting share – falling from over 70 per cent to 66.24 per cent. Middle-income countries will gain just over 3 per cent, putting them on 30.59 per cent.

The 0.71 per cent increase for low-income countries will give them a share of only 3.09 per cent. 46 rich countries will maintain two thirds of voting power at the IFC, leaving just one third for 136 poorer countries. This vast under-representation is particularly inappropriate given that investing in the poorest countries and ‘frontier’ regions is a priority for the IFC.

**The biggest losers:** US (-2.63%), Germany (-0.58%), France (-0.54%), UK (-0.54%), and Italy (-0.36%).

**The biggest winners are:** China (1.28%), Brazil (0.62%), Saudi Arabia (0.56%), Russia (0.43%), and India (0.43%). None of the ten countries gaining most is a low-income country; four of the top ten (Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Kuwait and Japan) are high-income countries. – GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
Indigenous Peoples in Asia Less Poor

By Jaya Ramachandran

Indigenous peoples are among the poorest of the world, who suffer from higher poverty, lower education, and a greater incidence of disease and discrimination than other groups of the society. But they are benefitting from the “rapidly declining” poverty rates in Asia, which hosts an overwhelming majority of them.

A new study has found that “overall and indigenous poverty has declined significantly in China, India and Vietnam”. On the other hand, Latin America, and to some degree Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States, “show a sticky persistence of poverty rates” for indigenous peoples.

In Vietnam, almost two-thirds of the population was poor in 1993. By 2006, only 16 percent of the population was classified as poor. “However, progress in reducing poverty was unequal; the poverty rate fell by over 80 percent for the non-indigenous, but only by 40 percent for the indigenous. The same pattern appears in India,” says the World Bank study: Indigenous Peoples, Poverty, and Development.

The study, released at the Ninth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) April 19-30, 2010 in New York, offers a “global snapshot” of a set of indicators for Indigenous Peoples vis-à-vis national demographic averages. It also considers in detail how social conditions have evolved in seven countries around the world – in Central African Republic, China, Congo, Gabon, India, Laos and Vietnam – during 2005-2010, the first half of the UN’s Second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples.

"This is the first book that systematically documents poverty for Indigenous Peoples outside of the Americas, New Zealand, and Australia,” said Cyprian Fisiy, World Bank Director for Social Development.
SOME MAKING PROGRESS

"The most encouraging news from the study is that some countries are making progress in poverty reduction for Indigenous Peoples. We now know that poverty rates have declined substantially among Indigenous Peoples in Asia."

The study shows how success in some Asian countries at achieving sustained growth and poverty reduction has helped their Indigenous Peoples to achieve better poverty, health, and education outcomes. A poverty gap still persists, however, between indigenous and non-indigenous populations, and while the gap is narrowing in China, it is stable or widening in most other countries.

STRIKING

"The contrasting results for Asia, where indigenous poverty rates have been falling, against the stagnating poverty rates earlier documented in Latin America, are striking," said Gillette Hall, co-author of the study. The report provides both an imposing overview of basic statistics across indigenous groups, and a series of in-depth country chapters. Large scale household surveys or census data were used to document poverty and other socio-economic trends such as in health and education among Indigenous Peoples in the countries analyzed.

Combined with earlier case studies for five Latin American countries – ‘Indigenous Peoples, Poverty and Human Development in Latin America,’ (Hall and Patrinos 2006) – the new study offers a set of detailed results for almost 80 percent of the world’s indigenous population.

ELIMINATING POVERTY GAP

"The study’s findings suggest that widespread and sustainable growth and poverty reduction play key role in eliminating the indigenous poverty gap. This means that policymakers might want to focus first on poverty reduction, which should benefit vast segments of indigenous populations. After that, targeted intervention addressing specific sources of disadvantage can be undertaken to reach those among indigenous populations who need a special lift," said Harry Anthony Patrinos, co-author of the study.

Patrinos said the status of indigenous peoples from Latin America, compared to that of indigenous peoples in Asia, had changed little in recent years, raising questions about the benefits of targeted initiatives, such as bilingual education programmes, which was popular in that region.

Patrinos, a lead education economist at the World Bank, said there had been some rise in school enrolment levels among indigenous peoples in Latin American countries with a policy of bilingual education. However, without control groups, it was not possible to attribute that rise to bilingual schooling. Asked to comment specifically about Mexico, Patrinos said there was no evidence that bilingual education had contributed to improved income gains among indigenous peoples in that country, although it was possible that it had improved school enrolment levels within that population.

However, he praised Mexico’s cash transfer programme, whose beneficiaries included indigenous peoples, saying it had probably contributed to their increased access to schools and other social services, such as health care. But, there was no way to tell if the quality of schooling received by indigenous pupils was adequate, and unless it improved, the income gap between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples would likely persist. He added that Mexico now had a policy of allowing parents from indigenous communities to participate in the design of school programmes, where they were given funds and special materials, which he said was promising. Bolivia had a programme modelled on the Mexican programme.

LESS TARGETED PROGRAMMES

By contrast, Asian countries such as China, India and Viet Nam relied less on targeted programmes, preferring the adoption of strategies aimed at the economic growth of entire regions, he said. Poverty rates declined more rapidly in those countries compared to Latin American nations, indicating that, perhaps, there were merits to pursuing broad-based policies. Asked to explain why poverty tended to persist among indigenous peoples around the world, Patrinos cited one popular theory – that indigenous people had a history of being dispossessed of their land. But, he quickly added that household surveys, on which the World Bank study was based, were “not the best instruments” to examine such issues.

HARD TO DETECT

He said discrimination against indigenous peoples was also hard to detect, although crude statistical techniques did exist to measure it. For example, a study conducted five years ago in Latin America had shown that between one quarter to a third of the difference in income between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples could not be explained through education level or other observable measures; and, thus, was attributed to discrimination.

That mystery factor had diminished over time, which raised hopes that well-designed education programmes and other social services could help reduce the income gap between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. Patrinos said the study’s findings pointed to the value of placing the needs of indigenous populations at the centre of poverty reduction strategies, and also called for more disaggregated data. And, while it was important to promote widespread and sustainable economic growth, better designed programmes targeting indigenous people were also needed.

ACT NOW

The authors of the study say that, as the global community looks for ways to meet the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) of halving the share of people in poverty by 2015 from its 1990 level, it cannot afford to ignore the plight of Indigenous Peoples. Although they make up only 4.4 percent of the global population, they account for about 10 percent of the poor – with nearly 80 percent of them in Asia.

Turning the situation around will require widespread and sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction, along with well designed programmes that target Indigenous Peoples.

– GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
Supporting Developing Countries to Green Their Industries

By Ernest Corea

The eco-disaster in the Gulf of Mexico – caused by a lethal explosion on an oil rig operated by British Petroleum (BP) – has destroyed lives, disrupted livelihoods, and created potentially long-lasting threats to a swath of ecosystems.

Kandeh K. Yumkella, UNIDO Director-General

The extent and duration of the eco-disaster continues to be the subject of speculation. In fact, each of the principals involved, when they appeared before a congressional committee here, was clear and confident only on one point: the disaster was the “other guy’s” responsibility.

What can be said with certainty is that it is a massive disaster and an agonizing tragedy. It also provides a real-life warning of the dangers inherent in continuing with efforts to satisfy the appetites of unsustainable economic activity without turning to alternate and sustainable forms of production.

At the same time, it served as a saddening but appropriate backdrop to the issues raised and the points made at a recent “roundtable” on a different kind of economic activity: green industry.

DESTRUCTIVE

The green industry roundtable which took place in New York, when the UN Commission on Sustainable Development was in session as well, was cosponsored by the Government of the Philippines and UNIDO (the United Nations Industrial Development Organization), so it was not surprising that the subject of green industry came up during a televised interview on the program Russia Today featuring UNIDO’s Director General Kandeh Yumkella. The programme’s anchorman raised the issue when introducing Yumkella to his viewing audience. He said that the disaster has “reminded us just how destructive human industrial activity can be for the natural environment”.

The interview explored some of the perceived tensions between development and environmental vigilance. Throughout, Yumkella was persistent in his support for sustainable production. The same support was emphasized during the New York roundtable on “green industry for a low-carbon future” which was, in fact, a follow-up to an earlier Asia-centered event.

DECLARATION

In September 2009, the Philippines Government together with UNIDO, UNEP, UNESCAP and ILO convened the “International Conference on Green Industry in Asia: Managing the transition to resource-efficient and low-carbon industries,” in Manila, the first such conference in the region.

Its main outcome was the adoption of the (non-binding) Manila Declaration “which outlined initiatives to develop green industry in the region.” Its key message was that “a low-carbon and resource-efficient pattern of industrial development in the rapidly industrializing economies of Asia will be key to sustaining economic growth, competitiveness and preservation of the region.” The Declaration was accompanied by a Framework of Action. Signatories to the Declaration stated their “determination” to “establish policies, regulatory and institutional frameworks, where appropriate, which are conducive to shifting towards resource-efficient and low-carbon industries, consistent with the sustainability principle.”

On this basis, they would intensify their efforts to achieve “green growth” – by taking “concrete actions toward improving the efficiency of energy, raw material and water use in the production process.” They sought the support of UNIDO and UNEP in this effort.

At the New York roundtable, the focus was on taking stock of activities undertaken since the Manila conference, and of looking at future possibilities and prospects in practical terms.

Speakers and participants included representatives of both sponsors as well as of the public and private sectors, international organizations, and UN member nations. George Assaf, an Oxford-educated economist with many years of international experience, who is UNIDO’s representative to the UN, served as moderator.

INTERMITTENT

A brief Q and A recorded in the inaugural edition of a UNIDO publication “Making It”, asks the question: “Is there a business case for sustainability?” The answer is a counter question: “Is there a business case for ruining the planet?”

There can be no ambiguity in the response to that. Of course, there can be no acceptable “case” for despoiling our planet, our home, although unfortunately men and women have been doing this with reckless abandon down the years.

To some extent that trend is abating, and the process of change has been accelerated, although in intermittent spurts.

One such spurt occurred when President Barack Obama signed a presidential memorandum directing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to create “a national policy to increase fuel efficiency and decrease greenhouse gas pollution from medium- and heavy-duty trucks for model years 2014-2018.”

Currently trucks consume more than two million barrels of oil every day, and average 6.1 miles per gallon. Obama also called for an extension of the national program for cars and light-duty trucks to Model Year 2017 and beyond.

While support for cleaner industry and, overall, cleaner, greener economies in all their aspects is developing, it would be unrealistic to shrug off the resistance to moving away from profligate use of natural resources.
ADVOCACY

The Brookings Institution recently pointed out, for instance, that “the transition to a low-carbon economy will be the most difficult political and economic transaction in history”; requiring “nothing less than a revolution in our sense of civic responsibility.”

Each act of “green advocacy” and each actual act of greening helps to build up momentum for that essential change. To help in the process, Assaf has devised a compelling case for green industry, a five-point encapsulation that he shared with the round table and in other conversations. The five points:

- Green industry while making good environmental sense, makes good business sense as well; green of industry (in developing countries) requires a broader follow-up beyond Asia, with green industry going upscale and mainstreamed;
- Implementation of the green industry concept needs a lot of capacity building and training and a significant change to new, cleaner and more resource efficient technologies.
- Financing arrangements, such as those managed by the IFC (International Finance Corporation), are essential to the development of green industry.
- Green industry has global relevance and resonance. As the concept is valid all over the world, UNIDO will promote it in other regions (i.e. beyond Asia) among all who have need of this type of support and approach.
- Within that framework of ideas, the New York roundtable addressed some of the practical approaches that might be taken to make green industry an universal reality.

FINANCE

One of the issues that came up at the roundtable itself and during “corridor talk” was finance for greening programs in developing countries which are already cash-strapped. Representatives of the corporate sector and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) which have already provided funding for green industry were confident that the funds would be forthcoming.

A corporate sector spokesperson suggested that the private sector would support greening activities as a matter of practical necessity: if it did not invest now, it would lose opportunities to benefit from trends that would only gather strength. The argument might have been presented as “get in, make profits; keep out, no profits.”

Asked whether UNIDO would take a direct interest in promoting foreign direct investment (FDI) or Official Development Assistance (ODA) to support green industry, Assaf responded that “countries with clear and consistent macro-economic and industrial policies -- which include environmental issues -- will be more attractive to FDI and ODA. In these cases, UNIDO plays only a catalytic role.

“Inasmuch as green industry promotes sustainable development, wealth and job creation, it will also be attractive to external financing and support. UNIDO’s programmes of investment promotion and Investment and Technology Promotion Offices can be very valuable support in this regard.”

EFFICIENCY

Of course, much of the industry in developing countries comes from or is derived from industrialized countries. This might suggest that developing countries will find the transition to green industry difficult if not, in some cases, almost impossible unless industrialized countries go green themselves.

An African representative pointedly said that African countries did not wish to repeat the mistakes made by industrialized countries.

“Yes,” said Assaf, when the question was raised with him, “this is a factor but not an overwhelming obstacle. With the right support and business climate, enterprises in developing countries can leapfrog industrialization and production technologies. To produce in an efficient and clean way is not dependent on your location; it depends mainly on the effectiveness and efficiency of management and technology used in a company.”

UNIDO and UNEP with support from the Governments of Switzerland and Austria have set up National Cleaner Production Centres which seek to provide developing countries with the know-how and skill required to accelerate the greening process. Thirteen centres have been established in Africa and the Arab region, seven in Asia and the Pacific, thirteen in Europe and Central Asia, and 12 in Latin America.

These centres, already active in advocacy, training, industry demonstrations, policy advice, technology transfer, investment and institutional development, could well turn out to be the main instruments of green industrialization in developing countries.

For, as UNIDO’s Heinz Leuenberger pointed out at the round table, the main requirement for moving into green industry is “not about writing reports but of doing work on the ground.”

WORTHWHILE

UNIDO appears well suited to supporting developing countries on this path, continuing to focus on “awareness raising and information dissemination, providing guidance to countries and developing the green industry concept further, collecting baseline data and monitoring progress, implementing pilot projects, and expanding the concept to other developing regions of the world -- especially Africa.”

This is a heavy schedule, no doubt, but it represents a worthwhile effort to help developing countries reach out toward prosperity -- one green industry after another.
Remembering the Three Rio Conventions

By Ramesh Jaura

The botched UN conference in Copenhagen may prove to be a blessing in disguise by way of correcting the imbalance that has favoured climate change but nearly ignored desertification and biodiversity that are two other centerpieces of the three ‘Rio Conventions’ emerging from the Earth Summit in June 1992.

A closer inter-action between the three Conventions may in fact liberate the designated Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Christiana Figueres, from much of the pressure that apparently crushed Yvo de Boer and culminated in his decision to quit the job.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon announced the appointment of Figueres, a Costa Rican national, on May 17, 2010, as the successor of de Boer who was the second Dutch to head the UNFCCC secretariat in Bonn. Figueres has been a member of the Costa Rican climate change negotiating team since 1995. She represented Latin America and the Caribbean on the Executive Board of the Clean Development Mechanism in 2007, and was then elected Vice President of the Conference of the Parties 2008-2009.

She served as Director of International Cooperation in the Ministry of Planning in Costa Rica, and as Chief of Staff to the Minister of Agriculture. She was also the Director of Renewable Energy in the Americas (REIA) and is founder of the Center for Sustainable Development of the Americas (CSDA).

“As I take on my new responsibilities at the helm of the secretariat, I will have two immediate priorities: to work with the Secretary General to strengthen trust in the process, and to support the Danish and Mexican COP Presidencies as well as all other Parties in the preparation of a successful COP16 in Cancun,” said Figueres, 53, responding to her nomination.

2010 being the UN International Year of Biodiversity, a closer interaction between the UNFCCC and the UN Conventions on Biological Diversity (CBD) and to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) would help put into perspective the significance of the close linkage between the three Rio Conventions.

The UNCCD secretary Luc Gnacadja and CBD’s Ahmed Djoghlaf have developed a joint programme of raising global awareness about this year of biodiversity. They will not only release a joint statement but have also been collaborating on a number of activities throughout the year.

“We are working to launch a Land Day at the CBD’s global conference (October 18-29, 2010) in Nagoya in Japan. After all, eight out of 25 global ‘biodiversity hotspots’ are in the drylands. That’s why we have carefully chosen and crafted our theme for awareness raising. Enhancing soils anywhere enhances life everywhere. This is at the core of the work on biodiversity,” Gnacadja said in an interview with IDN.

LINKAGES

Underlining the link between desertification and climate change, he said: “When there are a lot of voices calling for zero net forest degradation – in the context of climate change – it will be impossible to reach such a target if we don’t aim at having zero net land degradation. Because, where is the pressure on forest coming from? It is coming from land being degraded, and people looking for new land. Then they go for deforestation. So one is closely linked to the other. In other words, if we say that we want to preserve the forest we must make better use of the land under management and we must attach importance to reclaiming or rehabilitating the degraded land.”

Pointing to yet another connection, the UNCCD executive secretary said in an IDN interview in February: “Unfortunately – as in Copenhagen – whenever the potential that has now been clearly established by science, potential of the land and the soil not only to address adaptation but also to mitigate climate change, is brought up in the context of the REDD programme (on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) or NAMAs (Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions) there are a number of big players who bracket it. And I believe that the challenges in Copenhagen were mainly challenges of lack of trust between the players.”

Gnacadja made yet another important point when he said: “The human face of climate change is to be seen in the drylands. People are already dying due to the impact of climate change in drylands, because of prolonged droughts that are followed by sudden rain and flood. Because of severe degradation of land, some people are starving, some of them are dying, and others are migrating.”

In run up to a fresh round of climate change talks at the UNFCCC headquarters in Bonn, from May 31 to June 11, reports said that a United Nations study expected to be published in July at a conference in London, would underline that the case for saving species is ‘more powerful than climate change’.

The London Guardian newspaper recalled that the global public interest in climate change was triggered by the ‘Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change’, a 700-page report released for the British government on October 30, 2006 by economist Nicholas Stern, chair of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics.
The Stern Review claimed that the cost of limiting climate change would be around 1%-2% of annual global wealth, but the longer-term economic benefits would be 5-20 times that figure. “The UN’s biodiversity report – dubbed the Stern for Nature – is expected to say that the value of saving ‘natural goods and services’, such as pollination, medicines, fertile soils, clean air and water, will be even higher – between 10 and 100 times the cost of saving the habitats and species which provide them,” reported the newspaper on May 17, 2010. "We need a sea-change in human thinking and attitudes towards nature: not as something to be vanquished, conquered, but rather something to be cherished and lived within," the report’s author, the Deutsche Bank economist Pavan Sukhdev, told the Guardian.

REPORTS TO COME

In fact, Sukhdev provided a glimpse of the new report in November in the ‘TEEB – The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity for National and International Policy Makers – Summary: Responding to the Value of Nature 2009’. Further two TEEB reports on for local policy makers and administrators and business respectively will be published in mid-2010. The final findings of the complete TEEB study will be presented in October 2010 at the CBD COP10 (10th conference of parties to the UN Convention for Biological Diversity), in Nagoya.

TEEB was launched in 2007 by Germany and the European Commission in response to a proposal by the G8+5 Environment Ministers (Potsdam, Germany) to develop a global study on the economics of biodiversity loss. This independent study, led by Sukhdev, is hosted by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with financial support from the European Commission, Germany and the UK, more recently joined by Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden. In May 2008, the TEEB Interim Report was released at the Convention on Biological Diversity’s COP9. This paved the way for the series of further TEEB reports.

One of the key messages highlighted in that document was the inextricable link between poverty and the loss of ecosystems and biodiversity. It showed how several Millennium Development Goals were at risk due to neglect and deterioration of these aspects of our natural capital.

The second phase of TEEB work is divided into five interconnected strands. These include the Report on Ecological and Economic Foundations (parts of which were published online in September 2009) and four targeted end-user reports that build on this baseline.

BIODIVERSITY CRISIS

This group of reports offers tailored insights and advice for national and international policy makers, local and regional administrators, businesses and consumers and citizens. The September 2009 report said: “Losses in the natural world have direct economic repercussions that we systematically underestimate. Making the value of our natural capital visible to economies and society creates an evidence base to pave the way for more targeted and cost-effective solutions.”

“We are facing a biodiversity crisis even though we are major beneficiaries of nature’s multiple and complex values.” Examples are: Forests store carbon, provide timber and other valuable products and shelter species and people. Wetlands purify water and offer protection against floods. Mangroves protect coasts and their populations by reducing the damage caused by storms and tsunamis. Coral reefs provide breeding grounds for fish, leisure and learning for tourists and scientists.

LOSS OF SPECIES

The list of benefits provided by nature is vast, added the report. Yet species are still being lost and nearly two thirds of ecosystem services have been degraded in just fifty years (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) 2005). “We have become only too familiar with the gradual loss of nature – this ‘death by a thousand cuts’ of the natural world. Our natural capital is being run down without us even knowing its real worth,” the study noted. It pointed out that the cost of these losses is felt on the ground but can go unnoticed at national and international level “because the true value of natural capital is missing from decisions, indicators, accounting systems and prices in the market”.

‘ECOSYSTEM SERVICES’

‘Ecosystem services’ – the benefits we derive from nature – are a useful concept to make these benefits more explicit. They form a key building block of the new approach we urgently need to manage natural resources, the document added. The report makes a strong plea for investing in natural capital arguing that it supports a wide range of economic sectors and maintains and expands options for economic growth and sustainable development. Such investments can be a cost effective response to the climate change crisis, offer value for money, support local economies, create jobs and maintain ecosystem benefits for the long term. “Many more economic sectors than we realize depend on natural capital. We can all appreciate the importance of healthy biodiversity and ecosystems for primary production like agriculture, forestry and fisheries. Yet natural capital also contributes significantly to manufacturing and the service economy,” says the report.

A close look at the September 2009 reveals that the final UN report to be released in October 2010 will provide fresh impulses for treating the three Rio Conventions as complementary and mutually reinforcing – far-removed from competing with each other as the money-spinning FCCC, the poor ‘African’ CCD and the exotic CBD. – GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

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Why G20 Should Go the Whole Hog at June Summit

By Ramesh Jaura

As the global financial crisis remains far from resolved and the world’s major currencies continue a roller coaster ride, a sound and safe global financial system appears to be sliding into the realm of utopia.

But resignation will not remedy the present situation. In run up to two important June summits in Canada, Transparency International is therefore urging the world’s major economies to “place efforts to enhance integrity, transparency and accountability at the very front of all planned actions . . . to set the global economy on a solid and sustainable path to recovery”.

Only by doing this can public confidence be secured and the work to reduce corruption across the world strengthened, says TI, the global coalition against corruption.

SHERPAS

Addressing the G8 and G20 Sherpas – senior officials in-charge of the spadework ahead of summit meetings – TI points to increasing evidence that has come to light in recent months showing that fraud and corruption contributed to the financial crisis and have been a major cause of the serious decline in public confidence in both financial services firms and those that regulate them.

G8 is an acronym for the world’s eight major industrial economies since the end of the Second World War (1939-45) – including the United States, Canada, Russia, Japan, Britain, France, Italy and Germany – and G20 for 20 economies that collectively comprise 85 percent of global gross national product, 80 percent of world trade (including EU intra-trade) and two-thirds of the world population.

In addition to the G8 and the EU, G20 include countries from Africa (South Africa), Latin America (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico), East Asia (China and South Korea), South Asia (India), Southeast Asia (Indonesia), Southwest Asia (Saudi Arabia), Europe (Turkey), Oceania (Australia), and the 27-nation European Union.

TI is drawing attention to the fact that corruption in all its manifestations continues to take a vast toll. A case in point is the illicit transfer of funds from developing countries through offshore financial centres dwarfing the amounts provided in official development assistance to low-income countries.

DON’T DELAY

At their third summit in Pittsburgh in September 2009, the G20 underlined “that the current crisis has a disproportionate impact on the vulnerable in the poorest countries”. They also recognised their “responsibility to mitigate the social impact of the crisis to minimise long-lasting damage to global potential”.

With this in view, TI Chair Huguette Labelle urged the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors ahead of their meeting in Washington in April 2010 to act without any delay: “The time to act is now. It is two years since the onset of the financial crisis and the critically needed reforms to protect the general public from fraud must be fully implemented. The current scandals underline the need for better oversight and efficient law enforcement.”

The G20 should implement the financial regulations they outlined – at their first summit in Washington in November 2008 – as the main structural solutions to averting future crises, Labelle said, adding that the complexity involving new regulations needed on derivative trading, hedge funds, “too big to fail” institutions or prudential standards should not be a cause for any delay.

Regulatory bodies should continue to strengthen the transparency of all financial products marketed to investors, ensure clear requirements for comprehensive disclosure, and prevent abuses of off-balance sheet instruments. Individuals as well as companies should be sanctioned for fraud.

“Lack of corporate governance, weak ethics and poor regulation was at the heart of the financial crisis. This should not be allowed to happen again. Any corporate communication to investors and to the general public should be designed to inform them, and not to purposely sell weak products or publish dressed up quarterly figures,” the TI Chair added.

The urgent need for the G20 to make integrity a crucial issue in global financial reform, is indeed underlined by the fact that, according to the World Bank, in 2009, the financial meltdown directly prevented 50 million people in the developing world from escaping abject poverty.

KEY RESPONSIBILITY

“The G20 has a key responsibility to lead in ensuring greater accountability, transparency and integrity,” says Berlin-based TI’s director of Global Programmes, Christiaan Poortman.

As part of improved financial regulation, which should be a key priority and implemented in a far more transparent and accountable manner, TI is suggesting: - Comprehensive cross-border regulations to mandate stronger corporate governance in financial services companies with particular reference to all aspects of risk management, greater accountability of boards of directors, and the disclosure of financial products offered by firms to their clients.
THREE POINTS

- A single, understandable set of global accounting standards for asset valuation in financial services firms.
- Regular reporting by supervisory authorities of the condition of institutions that pose systemic risks because of their size of leverage.
- Measures to prevent conflicts of interest between credit rating agencies, auditing firms, financial firms and the public sector.
- Publication by the multilateral institutions with lead responsibilities for financial reform and regulation – the Financial Stability Board (FSB), the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, the International Monetary Fund – of regular, comprehensive reports on transparency and disclosure in banking securities and insurance regulations in the G20 countries.

These multilateral institutions should also adopt procedures to ensure full transparency and accountability by their management, TI says. Though the need for transparency on the part of the IMF is often not considered a priority, it is of critical significance in view of the social devastation it has caused in the 1970s and 1980s in the developing countries.

'BRETTON WOODS PROJECT'

The London-based 'Breton Woods Project' notes in a paper published on May 11, 2010: "The IMF launched a review of its mandate in January 2010, with two background papers and a narrow public consultation period ending May 15, 2010. The decades old development crisis and the recent financial crisis have both shown that the international financial architecture is failing to deliver equity, sustainability, and justice."

The paper argues that the IMF needs to fundamentally rethink its role, and return closer to its original purpose, focussing on three key areas: reform of the international monetary system; surveillance over the policies of systemically important countries; and providing rapid access, conditionality-free finance to countries facing crisis. "The Fund must become more even-handed in its surveillance, and focus on improving and adding teeth to its multilateral surveillance of systemically important countries," says the Bretton Woods Project’s paper.

"Developing countries have long complained that the IMF has no ability to make non-borrowing rich countries consider the external impact of their domestic policies, but frequently rebukes developing country borrowers over domestic political choices. This was borne out in the recent Independent Evaluation Office report on the IMF’s relations with members," the paper points out.

COUNTER MONEY-LAUNDERING

TI is also calling on the G-20 to take further concrete steps to counter money-laundering and facilitate asset recovery in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), including sanctions against non-cooperative tax havens.

TI's Global Programme director Poortman is of the view that the G20 should take leadership in implementing UNCAC and commit itself to on-site reviews with civil society participation and full publication of country reports.

Poortman argues: "Corruption is the single most important obstacle to poverty reduction and sustainable development.”

To demonstrate accountability and credibility to citizens, he urges the G20 "to follow the ground-breaking G8 example and introduce a reporting mechanism that includes annual progress updates on anti-corruption commitments, with consistent and specific indicators and benchmarks for future progress”.

Considering that the G20 is not a monolithic bloc, it will require considerable inter-action based on sincerity and mutual trust between the group of eight countries and the EU on the one hand and the 11 emerging economies on the other, before TI's recommendation is translated into reality.

Old 'New' Britain (Continued from page 30)

THE TRUTH

By 2010, the truth about old “new” Britain is so evident, that even those who were once blinded by the lame lights of neo-liberalism can no longer ignore it.

Another British economist, Paul Collier, observed that “the last decade of British growth was completely illusionary”. Yet another British economist, Robert Skidelsky, of world reputation for his biographic work on John Maynard Keynes, complained that “during the last ten years, the market of collateralised debt obligations in the City of London was the most important economic sector in Britain.”

Collateralised debt obligations! The junk bonds responsible for the present financial catastrophe in the first place! Skidelsky concluded: The British economic collapse is the failure of an ideology – that of radical market liberalism – and not only of its implementation. Even Adair Turner, the head of the Financial Service Authorities, now dares to say that “some of the activities which went on in the trading rooms of some banks in the run up to the financial crisis (are) socially useless.”

With British sarcasm, Turner went on to point out that “the argument that (financial innovations and credit derivatives) created great allocative efficiency benefits via market completion was hugely overstated.”

In the face of the evidence, Lord Turner could have been more straightforward and say that financial innovations and many bank activities are social and economic noxious. At least he concluded that Britain “need(s) to challenge radically some of the assumptions of the last 30 years”, which have been "deep-rooted drivers of financial instability”.

A most tardy wisdom, indeed. For, Britain was for many years the living example that the great poison of deregulated capitalism is as much about volatility as it is about inequality. As a London commentator put it recently, deregulated capitalism “is … destructive of the social fabric, ratcheting up unemployment, destroying neighbourhoods, provoking tensions which feed into political extremism and violence.”

Rather a late condemnation of a system that left many on the sidelines during the mendacious years of Thatcherism and ‘Blairism’.

– GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES □
Old ‘New’ Britain

By Julio Godoy

Critics of post-modernism say that this “condition”, as David Harvey once aptly put it, is marked by the aim of “having the best possible narrative” of history. That is, for post-modernity the content of the historical analysis is no longer interesting – it is the words that you use for it that count.

If this is true, then the spin doctors around Anthony Blair were convinced, albeit mediocre, post-modernists when they re-baptised their party “new” Labour and used similar pedestrian prefixes to re-name good old Britain. It was 1997. Britain was still ruled by the Thatcherites, without the Iron Lady. Judging by the policies applied by the “new” Labour government, what Peter Mandelson – “the prince of darkness”, as friends and foes called him, for good reasons – and other spin doctors had in mind at the time was the continuation of Thatcherism by other means.

APPALLING CHILD POVERTY

Among the few doubters were institutions like UNICEF and Save the Children, which documented the level of child poverty: The proportion of children living in poverty grew from one in ten in 1979 to one in three in 1998. Today, 30 per cent of the children in Britain live in poverty. The country has one of the worst rates of child poverty in the industrialised world. The majority (59 per cent) of the poor children live in a household where at least one adult works. Some 57 per cent of the poor children also live in a household headed by a couple. That is, poor British children are poor in spite of growing up in intact families.

All this was known to those who wanted to know. Anthony Blair, for instance.

In a speech in 1999, he had promised to eradicate child poverty by 2020. He even called it “our historic aim – that ours is the first generation to end child poverty for ever”. The government would, he promised, “break the cycle of disadvantage so that children born into poverty are not condemned to social exclusion and deprivation”.

Gordon Brown later echoed the same sentiment, describing child poverty as “a scar on the soul of Britain”. Busy with lying about Iraq, Blair and Brown abjectly failed to heal the scar on the British soul. By 2008, that is, just before the global financial crisis hit London, nearly four million children were living in poverty in “new” Britain. For this and many other reasons, Tony Judt was right when he called Blair “the garden gnome in the English park of oblivion”.

Other sceptics were Mike Brewer, Luke Sibieta, and Liam Wren-Lewis, authors of a study released in 2008 by the Institute for Fiscal Studies on social justice in Britain, which in a clinical way showed the social disarray caused by Thatcherism.

On the one hand, they measured how the ‘Gini coefficient’ evolved since 1979 – jumping from 0.25 then to 0.35 by 2005. That is, within 16 years, Britain had become an unequal society. The other side of child poverty was the high concentration of wealth. Brewer et al. also documented this enormous concentration of wealth with other figures.

“In 2004-05,” they wrote, “there were ... 422,000 very rich adults with before-tax incomes between £100,000 and £350,000 in today’s prices. There were also about 47,000 very, very rich individuals with incomes above £350,000 in today’s prices – about 31 times the income received by the average taxpayer in Great Britain in 2004-05.” Income inequality, they concluded, is currently at its highest levels since the late 1940s.

(Continued on page 29)
Enabling Poor Rural People to Overcome Poverty

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized agency of the United Nations, was established as an international financial institution in 1977 as one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference. The Conference was organized in response to the food crises of the early 1970s that primarily affected the Sahelian countries of Africa. The conference resolved that “an International Fund for Agricultural Development should be established immediately to finance agricultural development projects primarily for food production in the developing countries.” One of the most important insights emerging from the conference was that the causes of food insecurity and famine were not so much failures in food production, but structural problems relating to poverty and to the fact that the majority of the developing world’s poor populations were concentrated in rural areas.

IFAD is dedicated to eradicating rural poverty in developing countries. Seventy-five per cent of the world’s poorest people - 1.05 billion women, children and men - live in rural areas and depend on agriculture and related activities for their livelihoods. Working with rural poor people, governments, donors, non-governmental organizations and many other partners, IFAD focuses on country-specific solutions, which can involve increasing rural poor peoples’ access to financial services, markets, technology, land and other natural resources.

IFAD’s activities are guided by the Strategic Framework for IFAD 2007-2010: Enabling the rural poor to overcome poverty. IFAD’s goal is to empower poor rural women and men in developing countries to achieve higher incomes and improved food security.

Objectives
IFAD will ensure that poor rural people have better access to, and the skills and organization they need to take advantage of:
- Natural resources, especially secure access to land and water, and improved natural resource management and conservation practices
- Improved agricultural technologies and effective production services
- A broad range of financial services
- Transparent and competitive markets for agricultural inputs and produce
- Opportunities for rural off-farm employment and enterprise development
- Local and national policy and programming processes

All of IFAD’s decisions - on regional, country and thematic strategies, poverty reduction strategies, policy dialogue and development partners - are made with these principles and objectives in mind. As reflected in the strategic framework, IFAD is committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the target to halve the proportion of hungry and extremely poor people by 2015.

Working in partnership to eradicate rural poverty
Through low-interest loans and grants, IFAD works with governments to develop and finance programmes and projects that enable rural poor people to overcome poverty themselves. Since starting operations in 1978, IFAD has invested US$10.8 billion in 805 projects and programmes that have reached more than 340 million poor rural people.

Governments and other financing sources in recipient countries, including project participants, contributed US$15.3 billion, and multilateral, bilateral and other donors provided approximately another US$9.5 billion in cofinancing. This represents a total investment of about US$24.8 billion, and means that for every dollar IFAD invested, it was able to mobilize almost two dollars in additional resources.

IFAD tackles poverty not only as a lender, but also as an advocate for rural poor people. Its multilateral base provides a natural global platform to discuss important policy issues that influence the lives of rural poor people, as well as to draw attention to the centrality of rural development to meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

IFAD Membership in IFAD is open to any state that is a member of the United Nations or its specialized agencies or the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Governing Council is IFAD’s highest decision-making authority, with 165 Member States represented by a Governor and Alternate Governor and any other designated advisers. The Council meets annually. The Executive Board, responsible for overseeing the general operations of IFAD and approving loans and grants, is composed of 18 members and 18 alternate members. The President, who serves for a four-year term (renewal once), is IFAD’s chief executive officer and chair of the Executive Board.

The current President of IFAD is Mr Kanayo Nwanze, who was elected for a four-year term in 2009.

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GLOBAL EVENTS

Conferences
3 – 28 May 2010, UN Headquarters
2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)
The 2010 Review Conference is expected to consider a number of key issues, including universalization of the Treaty, nuclear disarmament, including specific practical measures; nuclear non-proliferation, including the promoting and strengthening of safeguards, measures to advance the peaceful use of nuclear energy, safety and security, regional disarmament and non-proliferation; implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East; measures to address withdrawal from the Treaty, measures to further strengthen the review process, and ways to promote engagement with civil society; in strengthening NPT norms and in promoting disarmament education, research, conferences, meetings and events.

Meetings and Events
UN Headquarters
General Assembly - 64th session
Preliminary meetings, events, and major thematic debates from the 64th session of the UN General Assembly.
19 – 30 April 2010, UN Headquarters
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
The theme of this year’s session is Indigenous peoples: development with culture and identity, articles 3 and 32 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
26 April – 7 May 2010, UN Headquarters
Committee on Information, 32nd Session
Its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979, the General Assembly decided to maintain the Committee to Review UN Public Information Policies and Activities, to be known as the Committee on Information.
3 – 14 May 2010, UN Headquarters
Commission on Sustainable Development

IDN-InDepthNews
Analysis That Matters

Corporate Social Responsibility
Tracking Safe with Ecology in the Pouch
Like the kangaroo pouch pocket that provides a place of shelter for the young after they are born, the truckers of Tokyo’s legendary Nagai Transportation Company move their cargo with great care. No surprise therefore that the kangaro is the logo of the company that celebrates “80 years of good faith and gratitude”. Read in Japanese at http://www.gc-council.org/indindepthnews.net

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

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

Former Prime Minister of Japan GC COUNCIL ADVISOR
Mr. Toshiki Kaifu, who served as Prime Minister of Japan from August 1989 to November 1991, has accepted our invitation to join the Advisory Board of Global Cooperation Council. Other members of the Board include Dr. Roberto Savio, Chair World Social Forum’s Commission for Communication, President Emeritus of Inter Press Service - Italy, and Dr. Inge Kaul who served at the UNDP from 1991 to 2005 in different capacities.

A BAD START TO THE NEW CENTURY BY ROBERTO SAVIO
* Sadly one would have to agree that the first decade of the new century is not a cause for optimism. Not only have we not solved the problems that we had, other even more difficult ones have been added to the list.

THE NEXT FINANCIAL CRISIS IS JUST A MATTER OF TIME BY ROBERTO SAVIO
U.S. Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner’s rejection of the European request for regulation of bank executive bonuses has given rise to various interpretations: some cite President Barack Obama’s need to avoid more confrontations with the American right wing, others point to the influence of the historical bond between the U.S. and the UK, the only European country to defend financial corporations.

Agriculture - Key to Food Security and Climate Change
IFAD President Kanayo F. Nwanze
Agriculture is the key link between the two burning issues of feeding a growing population and preserving the planet we live on.” says IFAD President Kanayo F. Nwanze. It is crucial, therefore, that the deal expected to emerge from the landmark climate change conference Copenhagen recognises that connect, Nwanze says in an email interview with IDN-InDepthNews and Global Research's -- a knowledgeable

Visit www.gc-council.org to know more about us.
E-Mail: contact@gc-council.org