

UN NEWS

REFORM RESOLUTION ADOPTED; DEPUTY SG APPOINTED

On 12 November 1997 the 52nd UN General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 52/12, the first formal response of UN member states to Secretary-General Kofi Annan's report on "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform." (For more information see page 23.) The report, issued at UN headquarters on 16 July 1997, contains a wide range of interrelated actions and recommendations for UN reform and restructuring, including establishment of the post of Deputy Secretary-General. In January Mr. Annan appointed Louise Frechette (Canada) as the first ever UN Deputy Secretary-General. Ms. Frechette has formerly served as Canada's Deputy Minister of National Defence and as an Ambassador to the UN.

KYOTO PROTOCOL AGREED

Over 10,000 representatives of governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and the press attended the Third Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, held from 1-11 December 1997 in Kyoto (Japan). After protracted and difficult negotiations Parties to the convention adopted the Kyoto Protocol, in which developed countries agree to reduce their overall emissions of six greenhouse gases by at least 5.2%. The protocol also establishes emissions trading, joint implementation between developed countries, and a "clean development mechanism" to stimulate joint activities between developed and developing countries. (See the *E&D File*, Vol. III No. 16, January 1998.)

The Geneva office of NGLS has moved. The new telephone number is +41-22/917 2076, and the new fax number is +41-22/917 0049. The postal address and e-mail address remain

NGO DECISION ADOPTED BY GA

Following Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) decision 1996/297, which recommended that the UN General Assembly examine the question of participation of NGOs in all the areas of the UN, the General Assembly has unanimously agreed to request the Secretary-General to produce a report on the existing UN/NGO relationship—both the rules and the practices—throughout the UN system. The report is to be made available by the conclusion of the 52nd session of the General Assembly in September 1998 "for consideration and action by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session." Legal and financial implications of modifications in the current arrangements for NGO participation will also be reviewed, as well as the question of the participation of non-governmental organizations from all regions, particularly developing countries.

ACC DISCUSSES CIVIL SOCIETY

At its second regular session of 1997 on 31 October the Administrative Committee on Coordination—the highest UN administrative committee bringing together the executive heads of UN agencies and chaired by the Secretary-General—discussed, among other things, relationships between the UN system, civil society and the private sector. The conclusions of the meeting noted that while the UN system has a long experience of cooperating with civil society, changing times require that its pattern be deepened and made more systematic and mutually beneficial.

The discussion emphasized that the UN system attaches considerable importance to cooperation with non-state actors; and secretariats of the UN system are encouraged to enhance information exchange on the policies, directives and practices of cooperation with civil society partners in order to identify and build on best practices. The UN system has an important role to play as catalyst at the national level, including supporting governments in the exercise of their responsibilities

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as prime framers of domestic policies and programmes, in dialogue with civil society and the private sector. In order for a conscious up-scaling of existing relationships with non-state actors to achieve the desired objectives, the UN should seek optimal conditions for complementarity in all relevant areas of the system's concerns; and devise appropriate modalities for cooperation to promote and facilitate the contribution of non-state actors to policy and programme development as well as operational activities of the system. In establishing the conditions for more effective partnerships, prerequisites involving issues of legitimacy, representivity, competence, geographical balance, accountability—including financial transparency—and predictability must be addressed, although it is important to ensure that increased cooperation of the UN system with non-state actors at the international level does not diminish interaction with governments.

Relationships with the private sector should be defined by complementarities of interests. As UN system organizations seek to intensify collaboration with the private sector, a number of issues need to be addressed, including compatibility in institutional practices and cultures; the political acceptability of such collaboration in intergovernmental affairs; the possibility of undue influence of special interest groups; and relationships between profit-oriented organizations and non-profit groups in the overall context of partnerships with civil society.

The World Health Organization (WHO) will contribute to the Ottawa Process by assisting afflicted countries to improve the ability of national health authorities to assess the effects of landmines on health. WHO's Plan of Action on Violence and Health will use a public health approach to strengthen governments' ability to discern the nature and size of the landmine problem and develop effective responses.

Specific activities will include developing national surveillance systems on landmine injuries; promoting prevention and awareness measures; developing national standards and programmes for case management of acute landmine injuries; and elaborating national standards and programmes for physical and psychosocial rehabilitation of landmine victims.

UN-NGO OPERATIONAL COLLABORATION

In cooperation with the UN's Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions, NGLS recently hosted an inter-agency consultation on operational collaboration with NGOs. Representatives of 26 UN agencies, programmes and funds participated in the meeting, which reviewed the UN system's experience in this area. The consultation also identified, in the context of UN reform and strengthening partnerships with NGOs, a number of policy, programme and administrative issues that require further work. These include elaboration of the principles that underpin UN-NGO cooperation, updating of guidelines for activities in this area, contributing to an enabling environment for NGOs at the country level, appropriate approaches to NGO capacity-building, and developing more user-friendly administrative and financial procedures. The consultation established task groups to work on these issues, with a first round of reporting back to be completed by March 1998. A report of the meeting is being prepared by NGLS.

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LANDMINES TREATY SIGNED

On 3 December 1997 the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel

Mines and on their Destruction was signed by 121 countries in Ottawa (Canada). Pledges were also made of US\$500 million for assistance in demining. (In 1997, the entire UN system spent about US\$80 million on landmines clearance.)

The convention will formally enter into force once it has been ratified by 40 signatories. States party to the treaty will then have four years to destroy existing stockpiles and ten years to clear all anti-personnel mines. Countries that are not signatories to the convention include the United States, Russian Federation, China, India and Pakistan. They have all expressed support for the humanitarian objectives of the treaty but have advanced security concerns as the primary reason for not being party to it.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who welcomed the convention as a "landmark step in the history of disarmament," said he was proud and privileged to assume the duties of depositary of the convention. "The global alliance that created this convention," he said, "is an alliance made up of individuals and governments, of grassroots movements and global humanitarian organizations. It has, for once, made 'the international community' a living, thriving reality, and not just the hope of a distant future." Mr. Annan acknowledged the leading role to achieve the convention that was played by hundreds of NGOs of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), as well as the important role played by the governments of Canada, Norway, Austria, Belgium and South Africa. "Your success is a welcome reminder that one does not have to be a global superpower to affect the future of international peace and security," he added.

Plans are underway for an "Ottawa II" initiative, which will mobilize coordinated international support for assistance to mine victims and for mine clearing. More than 6000 deminers are employed in UN and UN-supported mine clearance programmes in seven countries. The programmes include mine surveys and mine awareness programmes to reduce casualties, training of local deminers, and the establishment of demining schools.

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CHILD LABOUR CONFERENCE ADOPTS PLAN

Branding the use of child workers a "severe violation" of basic human rights and a threat to global economic and social growth, over 350 delegates at the 40-nation International Conference on Child Labour, held 27-30 October 1997, adopted a global strategy for eliminating child labour.

The conference, held in Oslo (Norway) and organized in collaboration with the International Labour Office (ILO) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), adopted an Agenda for

Action that urges a time-bound programme to eliminate child labour. It calls on nations to give urgent, immediate priority to ending the most intolerable or extreme forms of child labour such as slave and slave-like practices; forced or compulsory labour; the use of children in prostitution, pornography, the drug trade and other forms of dangerous work; and work that interferes with children's education.

Delegates highlighted preventive measures as the most cost effective way to combat child labour. They also urged nations to work "progressively" to eliminate child labour among children of school age and step up global "investment in the human capital from early childhood" such as education and health as tools for economic and social development that can also help reduce the number of working children.

"This Agenda for Action is firmly anchored in reality," stressed Hilde F. Johnson, Minister of Development and Human Rights of Norway, which convened the conference. "Investment in the physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development of children is an ethical, social and economic imperative for all societies." She said poverty reduction strategies are needed to address the root causes of child labour, which is both a consequence and a cause of poverty. "Girls are especially vulnerable," she added.

The plan urges that existing bilateral and multilateral development cooperation programmes be examined to assess their effects on child labour and "where appropriate, in cooperation with the developing countries concerned, adjusting the programmes to ensure better use of resources and a greater impact." The Agenda for Action also calls on nations to participate actively in the development and adoption of a new ILO convention on the most intolerable (extreme) forms of child labour, to be discussed at the 1998 ILO International Labour Conference in Geneva.

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CONVENTION ON HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS

Over 250 delegates from about 100 countries attended the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), held from 20-24 October in Rome, aimed at concluding a convention on international trade in extremely hazardous chemicals and pesticides. The INC was jointly organized by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

"After the success we achieved here in Rome," said meeting chair Maria Celina de Azevedo Rodrigues (Brazil), "a legally binding convention on hazardous chemicals and pesticides is within reach. For the remaining issues to be resolved, we need to concentrate on finding compromises to finalize an agreement."

A legally binding convention should help to manage more safely and ultimately contain trade in chemicals and pesticides such as polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs) and other highly harmful pesticides. The trade in extremely hazardous chemicals and pesticides is currently regulated through the voluntary Prior Informed Consent procedure (PIC) in which 154 countries are participating. As a result of the PIC, 22 harmful pesticides and five industrial chemicals that have been banned or severely restricted in a number of countries should not be exported without the prior agreement of the importing countries.

Governments have now agreed that the substances subject to the PIC will also be added to the convention. Exports of hazardous substances that are nationally banned or severely restricted must be notified in future. The conference also suggested a procedure for developing countries to add to the PIC list more dangerous pesticide formulations causing health problems under conditions of use. Thus it is expected that more industrial chemicals and pesticides will be added to the list.

Many developing countries have reported acute poisoning and even fatalities among farmers because pesticides are not being handled safely. Protective gear is too expensive and in many cases cannot be used under climatic conditions in these countries. The industrialized countries expressed their willingness to provide technical assistance to developing countries to strengthen their capacity for implementing the convention.

The next session of the INC is expected to take place in Brussels in February or March 1998.

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FOOD SUPPLY SHORTFALLS

A near record number of countries are facing shortfalls in food supplies and will need emergency assistance, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report *Foodcrops and Shortages*. The report says El Niño has raised the number of countries with food supply problems to 37—the most since September 1984. In Central America and the Caribbean first season crops have been adversely affected by El Niño, and drier than normal conditions forecast in the months ahead "could affect second season production, raising concern for planting of 1998 main season crops," says the report.

It warns that food and cash crops in the Andean countries are also threatened by El Niño, while northeast Brazil has been hit by a serious drought forecast to worsen over the next few months. "Heavy rains and floods attributed to El Niño have

The World Food Programme (WFP) has appealed for US\$378.2 million to expand its emergency feeding operation in North Korea in order to avert a heightened threat of famine in the country this year.

With agricultural production still crippled by two years of extensive flooding, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was hit last summer by severe drought and tidal waves that, coupled with underlying problems in the economy and agriculture, drastically reduced the harvest. Assuming normal consumption levels, WFP says food stocks could run out as early as April or May.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has appointed Elisabeth Rehn (Finland) as his Special Representative and Coordinator of UN Operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

caused serious crop damage in eastern Africa....[and] threaten crops in several parts of Asia," says the report.

Abdur Rashid, head of FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System, said that "with 37 countries on FAO's warning list, we are seeing the largest number of countries with food problems since 1984, when there were 40 on the list. If El Niño hits southern Africa with force, the number of countries in trouble could rise well above 40."

Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand face reduced crop production because of El Niño-related drought. The food situation in parts of Indonesia is also extremely tight; food security in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is worsening as prolonged drought reduces grain production; and drought has reduced significantly maize output in China.

In Europe the picture is better: 1997 cereal output rose by 4%, reflecting recovery in several of the region's eastern countries. "Widespread rainfall and mild temperatures have favoured winter grain establishment for 1998 crops in western parts," says the report, "but in the southeast cold weather delayed planting and affected crop establishment."

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contribution is being invested to improve the programmes and activities of UNFPA, which recently redesigned its programming process and took concrete steps to improve programme delivery in the field.

Including estimates of pledges to be announced, a total of US\$800 million was pledged to UNDP and about US\$40 million to UNICEF. Pledges worth approximately US\$68 million were received by UNFPA, and about US\$36 million was pledged to other UN trust funds and programmes.

UN'S FINANCIAL CRISIS CONTINUES

Reversing the trend of steadily declining appropriations for United States foreign aid, the US Congress has passed a US\$12.8 billion foreign assistance bill for fiscal year 1998—nearly US\$500 million more than for last year.

However the Clinton administration, which resisted restrictions on family planning funds in the bill, was unable to obtain money to pay US debts to the United Nations and funding for a new financing facility to address global financial crises, to be administered by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The legislation also contains conditions on countries' behaviour in order to obtain US aid.

Projections showed the United Nations finishing 1997 with a negative cash balance of US\$200 million, up from US\$26 million in 1994, with governments providing peacekeeping troops and equipment owed US\$800 million. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan requested the Working Group on the Financial Situation of the UN to reconvene and appealed to member states in November 1997 for guidance on whether to continue the practice of borrowing from the peacekeeping budget to finance the regular budget. He described the practice as "imprudent at best." Mr. Annan said he cannot "assure the prospect of repayment" to member states that have supplied troops and provided material for peacekeeping missions—many of which are developing countries. Further complicating the practice of "cross-borrowing" is the fact that peacekeeping funding is declining and makes up a smaller share of the combined budget than in the past.

A representative of the Group of 77 developing countries said that "without the political will of the major contributor to meet fully and without imposing any conditionalities on its financial obligations, it is very unlikely that the working group would be in a situation to offer suggestions to overcome the current financial predicament of the organization." The European Union said inaction by the United States on its arrears "seriously affects the climate of trust within the organization." Hennadiy Udovenko (Ukraine), General Assembly President, pointed out that many member states "who not only pay their contributions in full and on time, but also provide essential services to the organization, subsidize the non-payment of others, in particular, of the major debtor to the United Nations budget." And UN Press Spokesman Fred Eckhard warned that "the only reason the United Nations is surviving is that our creditors have not demanded payment." He warned that the General Assembly could close

FALLING AID ASSISTANCE HITS POOR

United Nations officials, warning that declines in core resources are hitting the poor the hardest, have called on the international community to reaffirm its commitment to development assistance and multilateral development cooperation. They made the call during a UN pledging conference, held in New York on 4-5 November 1997, where 47 countries and observers announced pledges and 12 made provisional pledges.

James Gustave Speth, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), said the programme's core resources declined by 9% in both 1996 and 1997. The decline is hitting the poor the hardest and will lead to the elimination of valuable initiatives and the wrong signals sent regarding the importance of the United Nations as a development institution. "Most developing countries," he stressed, "still rely on official development assistance (ODA) to combat poverty, and only a few reaped large benefits from increased flows of private financing."

Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), said the international community should redouble its efforts on behalf of children, who must be the centre of development since they are the most important resource for the future.

Hirofumi Ando, Deputy Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), said many industrialized countries recently reduced their financial support for population activities, which could not have come at a worse time: every

"Development aid continues to dwindle in real terms, having hovered at a nominal US\$60 billion in recent years. Aid to the agricultural sector plunged from US\$16 billion in 1988 to US\$10 billion in 1995, though there are welcome signs of a change in direction. The gap between rich and poor can only widen under such conditions, both within and between countries.

...Furthermore, armed conflict and food emergencies continue, the one very often abetting the other. Peace may be a prerequisite for food security, but there can be no peaceful life for populations affected by hunger."

—Dr. Jacques Diouf
FAO Director-General
8 November 1997
FAO Conference, Rome

off the option of cross-borrowing at any time. "That would trigger an immediate cash crisis," he said.

The working group will keep the financial situation of the UN under review, including the issue of borrowing from peacekeeping funds and options for ensuring prompt payment by all member states of their assessed contributions.

UNHCR URGES BOSNIA TO ALLOW MINORITY RETURNS

Sadako Ogata, UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), has urged that ethnic minorities be allowed to return safely to Bosnia and Herzegovina. "I was encouraged [during a three-day visit in November 1997] to see returnees rebuilding their houses, but so far only a fraction of those who lost their homes during the war have returned," she said. Ms. Ogata observed that the ultimate test for the December 1995 Dayton Peace Accord, which ended the four-year civil war in the Balkans, will be whether refugees and displaced people are able to return to their homes in safety. She added that emphasis must be placed on the return of ethnic minorities.

According to UNHCR the war forced some 2.3 million Bosnians to flee their homes. About 400,000 have returned both from abroad and within Bosnia-Herzegovina since the peace accord. But the vast majority have returned to areas controlled by their own minority group. There are still some 700,000 refugees, and another 800,000 remain displaced within Bosnia-Herzegovina; most are unable to return to places where they would be in a minority.

In an effort to boost minority returns, in 1997 UNHCR launched the Open Cities project, which offers international aid to towns where the authorities are committed to ensuring safe return and decent treatment of minorities. Cities that have earned the Open Cities status include Bihac, Busovaca, Gorazde, Konjic, Sipovo and Vogosca.

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HUMAN RIGHTS DECLARATION 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Human Rights Day was observed at the United Nations in New York on 10 December 1997 with a special programme to launch a year of events to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly in 1948.

In a videotaped message Secretary-General Kofi Annan observed that the universality of human rights gives them their strength and endows them with the power to cross borders and defy all forces. US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton stressed the extent to which women are the victims of violence and human rights abuses.

Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, sent a message from Africa that said the day begins a year-long review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, "a time when the United Nations system and all governments seriously assess their successes and shortcomings in living up to the solemn obligations made at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993. I look forward to this year of review leading up to the 50th anniversary of the adoption for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It should be a year of discussion and debate on the continuing relevance of international human rights standards in the international system, in national administration and the work of civil society."

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS DECLARATION

The Governing Body of the International Labour Office (ILO), which met in Geneva on 6-20 November 1997, has decided to place on the agenda of the 1998 International Labour Conference consideration of a "possible ILO Declaration of principles concerning fundamental rights and its appropriate follow-up." The Governing Body, which meets three times annually, instructed the ILO secretariat to prepare, in close consultation with constituents, a draft declaration and a draft follow-up mechanism for submission to the Governing Body at its next session in March 1998.

The specific content of the text and modalities of follow-up will be the subject of further discussions. The declaration is to be based on the principles embodied in the ILO constitution and on the seven "core" ILO conventions related to fundamental rights. These deal with the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively, abolition of forced and child labour, and non-discrimination in employment.

The ILO will now begin drafting language for the declaration in close cooperation with its tripartite constituency of governments and workers' and employers' organizations.

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FAO GOVERNING CONFERENCE MEETS

The governing conference of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) ended its 29th session, held 7-18 November 1997, after agriculture ministers and senior officials reviewed the state of world food and agriculture and adopted the organization's programme of work and 1998-1999 budget. The board, which met in Rome (Italy), also endorsed FAO's TeleFood event aimed at increasing public awareness of food and agriculture issues and raising funds for FAO's Special Programme for Food Security and other grassroots development activities (see *Go Between* 66).

The conference voted a 1998-1999 budget for FAO of US\$650 million, the same as 1996-1997 which forces the

"In the implementation of my functions as High Commissioner [for Human Rights] I would like to reiterate that I do intend to give equal emphasis to economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, and to civil and political rights...In this connection, I believe that it would be farsighted for the international community to also seriously consider offering the same level of protection to individuals in economic, social and cultural rights as that afforded in the political and civil sectors. This may prepare us to better manage the challenges that we will face in the economic and social field in the next century."

—Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights speaking at the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) of the 52nd UN General Assembly 14 November 1997, New York

Enrique ter Horst (Venezuela) has been appointed Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights. He formerly served as the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Haiti.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has launched a special appeal for US\$37 million to help millions of displaced people living in often destitute conditions across the Commonwealth of Independent States. Recipients would include millions fleeing conflict or inter-ethnic tension, entire peoples deported during Stalin's rule who are now returning to their homeland, and asylum seekers from other parts of the world.

organization to absorb almost 4% in increased costs. When adopting the budget, the conference recalled "the importance of concrete action in the field" and "reiterated its support to the Technical Cooperation Programme and the Special Programme for Food Security."

Among other things the conference:

- ▣ adopted guidelines for surveillance and export certification systems to harmonize plant quarantine standards;
- ▣ strengthened the International Plant Protection Convention by taking "into account the need for the development of International Phytosanitary Standards to protect plant health without creating unnecessary impediments to international transportation of plants," as called for in the agreements reached as a result of the Uruguay Round of Trade Negotiations; and
- ▣ endorsed the Programme Against African Trypanosomiasis (PAAT) to combat a major outbreak of what is commonly known as sleeping sickness when it occurs in people.

Many countries reported on actions taken or underway at national level to implement the 1997 World Food Summit commitments, including the preparation of national reports and action plans. In addition Kazakhstan was admitted to FAO during the conference, which brings the organization's membership to 175 countries and one member organization, the European Community.

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UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE CONCLUDES

The 29th session of the General Conference of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), held from 21 October to 12 November 1997, endorsed the organization's ethical mission and its role as the UN's intellectual forum, and adopted its programme and budget.

The conference, attended by 2835 delegates from UNESCO's member states and observers from intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and some non-member states, adopted a nominal zero-growth budget for the next two years. The budget for UNESCO was set at US\$544.37 million.

The organization's activities are structured around four major programmes and two transdisciplinary projects: Education for All Throughout Life; The Sciences in the Service of Development; Cultural Development—Heritage and Creativity; and Communication, Information and Informatics. The projects are Educating for a Sustainable Future, and Towards a Culture of Peace. The conference reaffirmed UNESCO's commitment to give special focus in its programmes to four target groups: women, youth, Africa and the least developed countries. Poverty eradication is also a strategic priority.

Among other things, the conference decided to launch an international consultation on enshrining peace as a human

right; adopted a Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (see below); and adopted a Declaration on the Responsibilities of Present Generations Towards Future Generations.

Member states welcomed plans for UNESCO to hold three world conferences in the next two years: The World Conference on Higher Education (Paris, 1998); the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development (Stockholm, 1998); and the World Science Conference (1999).

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UNESCO DECLARATION ON HUMAN GENOME

Scientists have recently discovered the means to intervene in what had been thought to be untouchable: the genetic heritage of individuals. From *in vitro* fertilization to production of the sheep Dolly by cloning an adult cell, scientific advances have sent tremors through public opinion and scientists. From these ethical concerns arises the need to examine what universal principles should exist in this area.

On 11 November 1997 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted a Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights. The declaration, which is the first international text on the ethics of genetic research, was adopted unanimously by the organization's General Conference.

The declaration's text, which was finalized in July 1997 after four years of elaboration by UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee (IBC), sets universal ethical standards on human genetic research and practices, which balance the freedom of scientists to pursue their work in the field with the need to safeguard human rights and protect humanity from potential abuses.

The declaration establishes limits on intervention in the genetic heritage of individuals and humanity that the international community has a moral obligation not to transgress. It also details the rights of individuals: prior consent to all research, treatment or diagnosis; protection against discrimination based on individual genetic characteristics; confidentiality of genetic information associated with an identifiable person; and the right to "just reparation" for damage sustained as a direct result of intervention affecting an individual's genome.

The freedom of research, affirmed in the declaration as "being necessary to [the] progress of knowledge" and "part of the freedom of thought," is placed in a framework that establishes essential protections. "No research concerning the human genome nor its applications should prevail over the respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and human dignity of individuals or, where applicable, of groups of people," says Article 10, while Article 11 forbids "practices

Her Royal Highness Princess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg has been named a goodwill ambassador for the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Also named as a goodwill ambassador is Kim Phuc, a nine-year old girl in Viet Nam photographed 25 years ago screaming in pain from her burns as she fled a napalm attack on her village. Ms. Phuc, now 34 and living in Canada, spent 14 months recovering from her wounds in a Saigon hospital.

contrary to human dignity" such as reproductive cloning of human beings.

States are primarily responsible for putting the declaration into practice. An ad hoc working group composed of representatives of UNESCO's member states will be formed to advise the UNESCO Director General on the constitution of the IBC and its duties concerning follow-up to the declaration.

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UNIDO GENERAL CONFERENCE MEETS

The General Conference of the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which met from 1-5 December 1997, adopted a 1998-1999 budget for the organization of US\$129.5 million, a 20% reduction in real terms as compared to 1996-1997. The conference, which met in Vienna, also adopted UNIDO's programme of activities clustered around two main areas. The first area covers investment and technology promotion, industrial policy advice, institutional capacity building as well as quality, standardization and metrology; the second will promote environmentally sustainable industrial development strategies, transfer of environmental technologies, development of norms and standards relating to environmental strategies and technologies, and implementation of international protocols, agreements and conventions.

Participants in the conference hailed it as a turning point for UNIDO following a rigorous reform process that has yielded positive results. During the conference Germany announced it will not leave UNIDO as had been suggested one year ago; Switzerland and Denmark pledged significant funds in voluntary contributions to UNIDO projects; some of the world's poorest countries announced payment of their assessed contributions to the organization; and South Africa announced it is considering joining UNIDO.

WORLD FOOD SUMMIT—PLUS ONE

A briefing for NGOs on the status of follow-up to the 1996 World Food Summit was hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) on 12 November 1997 in New York. Representatives from World Hunger Year, New York City-based City Harvest, and FAO were at the briefing to evaluate progress.

When adopting the Rome Declaration on World Food Security, the 186 countries participating in the summit reaffirmed the right of access for everyone to safe and nutritious food, and they resolved to halve by the year 2015 the number of chronically undernourished people in the world, which is over 800 million. The representative of FAO said the organization is emphasizing a country level approach to achieve the goals of the summit. Each government has been asked to provide

by 31 January 1998 a first draft of its National Plan of Action to the Committee on World Food Security. Although FAO will draw primarily on these national reports, it is also calling on NGOs for input and reports on summit follow-up activities, and using case studies of "best practices" and relevant documented experience.

Peter Mann, the International Coordinator of World Hunger Year, emphasized the different perspectives of actors involved in Food Summit follow-up, particularly the division between states and NGOs on economic solutions to global food security problems. He noted that trade liberalization is seen by many governments as a core strategy in elaboration of their national plans of action, while NGOs continue to underscore the negative aspects of such liberalization. Julia Erickson of City Harvest stressed that poverty and hunger exist in the New York City area, where 52% of children are born into poverty. She also said that 96 billion pounds of food are wasted in one year in the United States, 1% of which would feed 450,000 people in the same period.

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HUMAN RIGHTS MEETING DISCUSSES RIGHT TO FOOD

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which held its 17th session from 17 November-5 December 1997 in Geneva, focused its day of general discussion on "the right to adequate food as a human right." Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said the right to food remains the "hidden right;" its fulfillment is a prerequisite for human dignity and sustainable development, yet millions are still denied this right. She said the 1996 World Food Summit, which recognized the right to food as a human right, had invited the committee in collaboration with relevant institutions to better define the rights related to food in Article 11 of the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

A representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said boosting food production above population growth levels is not sufficient but requires action on other issues such as access to resources, poverty alleviation, women's rights and environmental sustainability.

The committee debated the difference that defining adequate food as a "right" rather than a "need" would make in practice. A representative of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) said a "right to food" approach would have a strong accountability dimension, which could make a crucial difference if states are clear about the rights and obligations involved.

Philip Alston, committee chair, said it must be made clear to governments that recognition of a right to food does not

The World Food Programme (WFP) has appealed to the international donor community for US\$9 million in emergency food aid for Cambodians who have fled to Thailand to escape internal fighting. About 55% of the refugees are women, and many have been disabled by landmines.

The funds would cover the cost of locally-purchased rations for 60,000 to 70,000 refugees living in rudimentary camps in Surin Province on the northeast Thai border and in Trat Province on the southeast border.

"As public opinion surveys and mass demonstrations have made absolutely clear, the vast majority of Palestinians and Israelis want a just peace that would enable them to live normally, side by side.

...The United Nations continues to attach the utmost importance to improving the living conditions in the Palestinian territories as an essential accompaniment to the peace negotiations. In this regard, I have been seriously concerned at the steady economic decline in the West Bank and in Gaza, particularly in the light of prolonged closures and other punitive measures. We now need real progress in the fields of employment, health, education and development.

Enormous challenges remain. The deteriorating conditions on the ground have set back some of our efforts. I believe that the international community can, and must, go further."

—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan
International Day of Solidarity with
the Palestinian People
1 December 1997

imply the state should be the direct provider in all situations, nor does it entail unrealistic resource commitments. Asbjorn Eide, Special Rapporteur on the right to food to the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, outlined four levels of state obligations: respect the freedom of individuals to meet their food requirements; protect individuals against actions such as pollution of land and water resources that may undermine their ability to take care of their own needs; assist/facilitate individuals and associations in organizing their food provision; and provide adequate food to individuals when all other avenues have failed. Mr. Eide also said framework laws should be developed to provide procedural "claiming rights" for each of the categories of state obligations.

The committee discussed a draft Code of Conduct on the Right to Adequate Food, elaborated by the International Human Rights Organisation for the Right to Feed Oneself (FIAN), a pioneering NGO on this issue. Several committee members said implementation of the right to food depends on the mobilization of civil society organizations. However, they noted with concern that most development NGOs, which have focused on food as a basic need, have given little attention and effort to advocating it as a right.

The UK Poverty Coalition of over 140 organizations presented a report, *Poverty Undermines Rights in the UK*, which denounces economic polarization, high levels of poverty in Britain, and the failure of the previous and present governments to develop a national poverty eradication plan committed to at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. Oxfam UK, which represented the coalition at the committee NGO hearing, said the domestic policies of donor governments should be subject to the same degree of scrutiny as are those of governments receiving aid.

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UNDCP: DRUG ABUSE AND TRAFFICKING COSTS

The economic costs of drug abuse have reached more than US\$120 billion per year for OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries, according to Pino Arlacchi, Executive Director of the UN International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP).

According to a new UNDCP report on *Economic and Social Consequences of Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking*, the economic price tag of drugs is endangering not only lives but the economies of some countries. Drug abuse in the United States costs US\$76 billion per year. Tax dollars must be used for drug enforcement, prosecutions, prisons, drug prevention programmes and treatment and health care costs for drug-related diseases such as AIDS. Financial losses incurred from drug-related crimes also comprise a substantial part of the

costs. Each year similar drug-related costs in Germany are an estimated US\$9.6 billion; in the United Kingdom they are US\$3.2 billion; in Australia US\$1.2 billion; and in Canada US\$1.1 billion.

Traffickers in industrialized countries take in one-half to two-thirds of drug profits; less than 10% of the profits remain in the producer countries, which are predominantly developing countries, according to the report. For example Afghan farmers who grow opium poppy receive less than 1% of the total profits; over 2% of the proceeds remain in Afghanistan and Pakistan, while 5% is spent in countries en route to Europe. Traffickers take in 43% of the profits as drugs pass through European industrialized countries, and drug dealers make the remaining 49% of profits in sales to West European consumers.

The report also examines how the drug trade damages the national economies of developing countries. Aside from promoting corruption, drug traffickers in producer countries generally invest their money in conspicuous luxury items such as yachts, villas, flashy cars and arms to support their trade. "What little money that is invested in the economy," said Mr. Arlacchi, "does not lead to sustained economic development." Drug-financed enterprises often eliminate legitimate business competition by using intimidation and violence against competitors. And governments have difficulty making sound economic policy decisions since their markets do not respond predictably due to large amounts of drug money in the economy. For example drug-financed enterprises will not react predictably to changes in interest rates generated by a central bank.

At current levels over 16,000 people die annually from drug abuse in OECD countries. However the actual numbers are much higher because drug-related deaths are often attributed to other factors, such as car and work-related accidents and heart attacks. The calculated cost per heavy drug abuser in OECD countries ranges from US\$20,000 to US\$30,000 per year.

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DEALING WITH EL NIÑO

The United Nations has established a task force for cooperative work on the prevention and preparedness for natural disasters related to El Niño. The task force, whose meetings are being convened by the Secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR 1990-2000), is composed of organizations within and outside the UN system that deal with the scientific aspects of natural hazards related to El Niño and vulnerability and risk management for communities.

The task force, which held its first meeting in Geneva on 18 November 1997, will act as a forum for information exchange and coordination of follow-up actions through its

meetings and Internet discussion forum; produce joint press kits and a publications series; explore options for longer term research; and identify joint actions, including national and regional workshops.

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A briefing on El Niño, organized by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) on 21 November 1997 in Geneva, provided information on the phenomenon. Scientists said El Niño, which may have been occurring over thousands of years, involves extensive warming of the upper ocean in the tropical eastern Pacific lasting three or more seasons. The regional impacts of the 1997-1998 El Niño include significantly increased rainfall across the eastern Pacific, and below-normal rainfall throughout Indonesia and the western tropical Pacific. El Niño-related dryness during June-October 1997 included virtually all of Central America and northern South America. The southern part of western Africa also experienced substantially below-normal rainfall during July-September. WMO has established an El Niño Task Force that issues regular updates on the current El Niño, expected to taper off in April 1998.

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A task force established by the World Food Programme (WFP) will evaluate El Niño's impact in the poorest countries; prioritize and coordinate response strategies; and mobilize resources from donor countries. A key goal will be to ensure cohesive preparedness and response, including dissemination of information.

The task force will also serve as a focal point for the international community and national technical agencies for information on, among other things, food aid needs and port and transport infrastructures. Among other actions, WFP has established a regional office for southern Africa in Mozambique, which together with regional organizations is analyzing the social-economic impact of drought, food needs and areas where populations are likely to be affected.

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UNAIDS LAUNCHES DRUG ACCESS INITIATIVE

The Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS has launched a pilot phase of a UNAIDS HIV Drug Access Initiative, which is a collaborative effort between the public and private sectors to identify strategies to increase access to HIV/AIDS drugs in

developing countries. Under the initiative four developing countries—Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda and Viet Nam—will work to adapt their health infrastructures to ensure effective distribution and use of drugs to treat HIV/AIDS, while participating pharmaceutical companies will subsidize drug purchases.

"Our ultimate goal," said UNAIDS Executive Director Dr. Peter Piot, "is to provide developing countries with proven strategies to improve care and increase access to the newest and most effective drugs. However, in order to evaluate and perfect the approaches we are trying, we must begin with small-scale pilot programmes involving tough decisions to determine the limits of participation. But the alternative is to do nothing."

Many barriers block wider access to HIV/AIDS-related drugs such as insufficient health care structures, the increasing complexity of HIV management and care, distribution channels, lab facilities and health centre technology, cost of treatments, and medical training to support complex regimens.

Pilot countries participating in the initiative will adapt their health care infrastructures and drug distribution systems to the HIV context. In each country a national HIV/AIDS drugs advisory board, overseen by the Ministry of Health, will be set up to devise a coordinated national policy for the provision of drugs and their dissemination, and to set criteria for participation of health centres and patients. A non-profit company will also be set up in each country to act as a clearing house for placing orders on behalf of the government and as an import point for bringing drugs into the country.

Financing for the pilot phase of the initiative will come from a variety of sources including pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies, which will provide HIV/AIDS-related drugs at subsidized prices, and local health ministries and UNAIDS, which will provide US\$1 million for oversight of the health advisory boards and non-profit companies. UNAIDS will evaluate the initiative in each of the pilot countries on an ongoing basis to determine the programme's efficiency, improvements in overall health care delivery, the number of people receiving drugs, the programme's impact on the demand for emergency care, and its impact on HIV/AIDS illnesses and death rates.

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UNAIDS SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION REVIEW

In a review commissioned by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), evidence indicates that sexual health education for children and young people promotes safer sexual practice and does not increase their sexual activity.

"Globally there has been some increase in political commitment and in programmes responding to the right of

"World AIDS Day this year [1 December 1997] focuses on the plight of children, for no child is beyond the reach of HIV. Every day, 1600 children become infected. By the end of this year, one million children under the age of 15 are expected to be living with HIV, more than 95% of them in developing countries.

More than eight million children have lost their mothers to AIDS. Millions more are living with an HIV-positive parent. Even children who are neither infected with HIV nor orphaned by AIDS suffer the social and economic fallout.

...Children may be vulnerable, but they are neither helpless nor beyond help. Children themselves are effective communicators, not only among their peers but within their families. Indeed, education and information are among our most powerful weapons in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

...AIDS is the most publicized disease in the world. But its impact on children has received an inadequate response, and AIDS programmes for children have lagged behind those for adults. On World AIDS Day 1997, let us resolve to do more. AIDS has changed the world for children. We must now change the world for them."

—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan
World AIDS Day
1 December 1997, New York

Soli Sorabjee (India) has been appointed Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Nigeria. The position of Special Rapporteur was established by the Commission on Human Rights in 1997 with a mandate to make direct contacts with the authorities and people of Nigeria.

people to be educated about their health," said Dr. Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director. "but much more needs to be done especially in the area of sexual health. And as this review shows, the quality of these programmes is all important in developing healthy behaviour in order to reduce transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases."

The review, which studied reports on France, Mexico, Switzerland, Thailand, United Kingdom, United States and several Nordic countries, looked at sexual health education programmes and those incorporating education about the prevention of HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus that causes AIDS.

Its main conclusions are:

- Education about sexual health and/or HIV does not encourage increased sexual activity.
- Good quality programmes help delay first intercourse and protect sexually-active youth from sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. Over 20 studies reported that HIV and/or sexual health education either delayed the onset of sexual activity, reduced the number of sexual partners or reduced unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease rates.
- Responsible and safe behaviour can be learned.
- Sexual health education is best started before the onset of sexual activity.

Yakin Erturk (Turkey) has been appointed Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW).

According to the review, while many education programmes produce an increase in the level of information about sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, only high quality education has an impact on behaviour. Effective education programmes have focused curricula, give clear statements about behavioral aims, and feature clear delineation of the risks of unprotected sex and methods to avoid it. They also focus on learning activities that address social and media influences, teach and allow for practice in communication and negotiation skills, encourage openness in communicating about sex, and are grounded in theories stressing the social nature of learning.

Sergio Vieira de Mello (Brazil) will head the new United Nations office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. He formerly served as UN Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees.

UNAIDS says some examples of good practices in this area come from, among other countries, Brazil, South Africa and Uganda. Another example is Zimbabwe, where since 1993 all schools have had compulsory weekly lessons on life skills and AIDS for students aged nine and up. Self-esteem and assertiveness are emphasized in the classroom, and various methods are used to discuss topics such as gender roles and relationships.

UNAIDS is sponsored by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank.

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TARGET SET TO REPLENISH THE GEF

Representatives of 33 countries, who met on 7 November 1997 in Washington DC, have committed themselves to a target of US\$2.75 billion to replenish the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the multilateral fund to help developing countries finance projects to protect the global environment. Negotiations are scheduled to continue at a meeting in February 1998.

Since its establishment as a pilot venture in 1991 and its restructuring in 1994, the GEF has provided US\$1.8 billion and leveraged close to US\$5 billion in co-financing for projects in over 110 countries, according to the World Bank. In the last GEF replenishment, 34 countries pledged US\$2 billion for a four-year work programme. The GEF is a strategic partnership of the Bank, UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). It supports projects in four areas: biological diversity, climate change, international waters and the stratospheric ozone layer.

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MICROCREDIT SUMMIT CAMPAIGN HOLDS BRIEFING

About 80 participants representing NGOs, government delegates and the UN participated in a 17 November 1997 briefing in New York on follow-up activities to the 1997 Microcredit Summit (see *Go Between* 62). The briefing was hosted by the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh and the Friends of Microcredit at the United Nations, an informal group of ambassadors working to better inform member states and promote involvement of the UN system in microcredit programmes.

Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury (Bangladesh) opened the briefing and reported on recent intergovernmental meetings addressing microcredit issues. Sam Daley-Harris, Campaign Director of the Microcredit Summit Secretariat, said that in 1997 15 Microcredit Summit Councils were set up representing foundations, NGOs, corporations, banks, government agencies, educational institutions and microcredit practitioners. Council members are expected to devise and announce an Institutional Action Plan (IAP) within one year of joining a council and outline how they will contribute to fulfilling the summit's goals. The deadline to submit an application to become a member of a council is 10 March 1998.

Rafeeuddin Ahmed, Associate Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), said the UNDP-administered UN Capital Development Fund has been involved in microcredit for over 20 years. While noting significant funding cuts by donors in recent years, he underscored the importance of microcredit in enabling

institutions to reach more poor people. However, he said microcredit should not be a replacement for overseas development assistance. Mr. Ahmed announced a new UNDP initiative entitled MicroStart, which will be implemented in 25 countries; the first operational programme will be in Morocco.

Noeleen Heyzer, Director of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), described the fund's historical relationship to microfinance through the UNIFEM Revolving Fund. Ms. Heyzer, who said that UNIFEM has shifted its emphasis from supplying credit to impacting the designs of credit programmes, emphasized the importance of credit for women as a pathway to greater participation in the public sphere.

Muhammad Yunus, Managing Director of the Grameen Bank, said about one-third of the bank's borrowers have already crossed the poverty line, and another one-third will soon. The bank is currently involved in efforts to create jobs in rural areas to help slow rapid and unsustainable urbanization, as well as to create an enabling environment in which small businesses can thrive.

The first annual Microcredit Summit Meeting of Councils will be held in New York on 25-27 June 1998.

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ILO WORLD LABOUR REPORT 1997-1998

Trade union membership dropped sharply during the last decade to less than 20% of workers in 48 out of 92 countries surveyed, according to the International Labour Office *World Labour Report 1997-1998*.

In 1995 about 164 million of the world's estimated workforce of 1.3 billion belonged to trade unions. Of the countries surveyed, in only 14 did the union membership rate exceed 50% of the national workforce. And in all but about 20 countries membership levels declined during the last decade.

The drop in union membership was sharpest in Central and Eastern European countries, which saw an average decline of almost 36%, much resulting from the end of quasi-obligatory union membership following the breakup of the former Soviet bloc. Union rates in Estonia were down 71%, in the Czech Republic by 50% and in Poland by 45%. Much of the decline in Germany's unionization rate (20% versus 16% in the European Union) is attributable to the drop in former East Germany.

Despite negative trends, the report says the drop in union membership has not translated into a corresponding drop in influence. In most countries trade unions have managed to consolidate their strength in core sectors, enlist constituents in emerging sectors and develop new collective bargaining strategies, often on a global scale.

The largest single increase in trade union membership came in South Africa, where unionization rates rose by 130.8%, with most of the increase coming in the post-apartheid era. Some other countries that saw unionization rates increase were: Bangladesh (58%), Canada (10.7%), Chile (89%) Republic of Korea (61%), the Philippines (69%), Spain (92%), Thailand (77%) and Zimbabwe (54%).

In some industrialized countries the total number of unionized workers decreased only slightly, but the percentage of wage and salary earners in the workforce dipped sharply. This suggests that large numbers of new entrants to the labour market are not being unionized, and the relative numerical importance of unionized labour is decreasing as a percentage of the workforce in most countries.

The international activities of trade unions have expanded greatly, leading multinational corporations in a number of high-profile cases to adopt "codes of conduct" for workers and subcontractors on a global scale. The report says that in many non-democratic developing countries, notably Myanmar, Nigeria and Sudan, union and workers' organizations continue to be in the vanguard of democratic opposition and strong proponents of human rights. In addition, innovative social structures owe much of their inspiration to trade unions; the structures include implementation of works councils in Europe and "social pacts" along the lines of those implemented in Ireland and Italy, which have boosted growth, restrained inflation and reduced unemployment.

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UNFPA AFRICA DIVISION MEETING

The Africa Division of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) held a regional meeting on 10-14 November in Harare (Zimbabwe), which reviewed:

- implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD);
- reform proposals put forward by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan;
- wavering donor support for population programmes; and
- dwindling financial resource levels.

The meeting also reviewed UNFPA's approach in countries affected by structural adjustment or political difficulties. Weakened national capacity to implement population programmes in these countries is often compounded by HIV/AIDS, which calls for a modification in the structure of reproductive health programmes and the delivery of services.

Dr. Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of UNFPA, said the population needs and resource requirements of the region continue to be a priority for UNFPA and the donor

Workers in agriculture run at least twice the risk of dying on the job as workers in other sectors, according to the International Labour Office (ILO). At least 170,000 agricultural workers are killed each year, and millions more of the world's 1.3 billion agricultural workers are seriously injured in workplace accidents involving machinery or poison by pesticides and other agro-chemicals.

Workers in developing countries are at an especially high risk due to inadequate education, training and safety systems. But even in developed countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States agriculture ranks consistently among the most hazardous industries.

For example in the US farmers and farm workers comprise only 3% of the workforce, but they account for nearly 8% of all work-related accidents. In Italy 9.7% of workers are in agricultural production, but they account for 28.7% of accidents.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) have launched an appeal for US\$35 million to fight poliomyelitis in war-affected countries from Afghanistan to Rwanda. The long-term goal of the appeal is to eradicate polio and rehabilitate immunization services for other diseases in war-affected countries.

The appeal says the global effort to eradicate polio from the world by the year 2000 has shown remarkable progress with the number of reported cases continuing to decline rapidly. But polio remains a significant cause of illness and death in countries with war-related destruction of health infrastructures and insufficient immunization services.

community. Although women and children's health has improved, with slow but steady decline in child morbidity and mortality, it has been hindered by:

- limited access to basic health services for large segments of the population;
- a limited number of trained personnel;
- deterioration of physical infrastructure and lack of basic equipment and essential drugs;
- lack of financial resources for maintenance and operation of existing health facilities;
- growing demands for new services in the face of decreasing resources;
- the unchecked spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS;
- weak or lacking technical and counselling skills of service providers; and
- the poor quality and inadequate staffing of public health facilities.

Dr. Sadik said she is confident that the situation can be improved with relentless efforts and concerted endeavour of all partners. She expressed satisfaction with implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in sub-Saharan Africa, but said that much remains to be done and the process should be accelerated.

Contact: Niagoran Essen, Chief, West and Central Africa Branch, UNFPA, 220 E. 42nd Street, New York NY 10017, United States, telephone +1-212/297 5156, fax +1-212/297 4951.

POVERTY ERADICATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Participants in a Regional Forum on Poverty Eradication in Southern Africa, held 3-6 November 1997 in Midrand (South Africa), urged governments to cut military budgets and redirect resources toward poverty reduction programmes.

The forum, organized by UN Information Centres in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia, adopted a declaration recognizing that although governments have a major role in eliminating poverty, they need help from civil society. The declaration expresses concern about the situation of women, street children and the homeless, and it recognizes that workers, especially farm labourers, are disadvantaged because they lack knowledge of their basic rights and often cannot engage in trade union activities.

The forum programme of action, among other things, encourages the media to prioritize and highlight poverty-related issues and attitudes and cultural beliefs that work against disadvantaged groups. It urges governments and non-governmental and community-based organizations to help establish income generating projects that ensure participation of women, youth and people with disabilities.

The forum appealed to governments of the region to provide assistance to the rural poor, embark on land reforms and distribution to give the poor access to productive land, and

ensure that land tenure systems are "gender-friendly." It also stressed the importance of implementing all United Nations declarations to ensure the involvement of women in development.

The forum, which included representatives of the media, NGOs, academia and the poor themselves, is the second in a series being organized in Southern Africa; the first took place in May 1997 in Windhoek (Namibia).

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UNCTAD AND CBD TO WORK TOGETHER

The secretariats of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have agreed to work more closely together in their research, training and public awareness activities.

The secretariats, which signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in November 1997, will coordinate their activities on incentive measures used at national, regional and international levels to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. They will also work together to develop means to enhance developing countries' capabilities to compete in the emerging market for biological resources and to improve the functioning of this market.

In order to strengthen the exchange of information and experiences between the secretariats, UNCTAD will submit to the CBD clearing-house mechanism detailed information covering the activities, documentation and data of its BIOTRADE Initiative, which seeks to promote investment and trade in biological resource-based products and services. It also encourages initiation of value-adding activities in the area of biological resources and assures their positive contribution to economic growth, as well as the sustainable use and conservation of biological resources.

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WORKSHOP ON CBD ARTICLE 8(J)

Participants in a Workshop on Traditional Knowledge and Biological Diversity, held on 24-28 November 1997, have produced a report to advise the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) about ways it could proceed to further the implementation of Article 8(j) of the convention. Participants in the workshop, held in Madrid (Spain), included over 300 representatives of 62 governments and 148 indigenous and local community groups and NGOs. The report covers, among other things:

- recommendations for elements of a workplan for future elaboration;
- recommendations for actions at the national and international levels;
- the need to establish an open-ended intersessional working group or a subsidiary body;
- mandate, reporting and composition of and participation in the body; and
- collaboration.

Article 8(j) addresses knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. The Fourth Conference of the Parties to the CBD, which will consider the workshop report, is scheduled to meet from 4-15 May 1998 in Bratislava (Slovakia).

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GENDER-BASED PERSECUTION EXAMINED

An expert group meeting, hosted by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University, met in Toronto (Canada) from 9-12 November 1997 to explore the theme of gender-based persecution. Participants discussed:

- the application of international humanitarian law and international human rights standards to gender-based persecution in international conflicts and civil war;
- incorporation of the issue of gender-based persecution into the work of existing international criminal tribunals and the extent to which the question of gender is addressed in the proposed international criminal court; and
- gender-based persecution as a basis for determining refugee status and as an issue to be considered in the protection of displaced and refugee women.

Recommendations of the group aim to refine and expand national and international actions outlined in the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women Platform for Action section on women and armed conflict. The recommendations will be made available to the 42nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which will meet in March 1998, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, and will be used to assist other treaty bodies in their efforts to elaborate the obligations of states Parties.

Contact: DAW, Room DC2-1204, United Nations, New York NY 10017, United States, telephone +1-212/963 8034, fax +1-212/963 3463, web site (<http://www.un.org/dspd/daw>).

GENDER MISSION TO AFGHANISTAN

The situation of girls and women in Afghanistan, which has suffered 19 years of war, was described as "dire" by

participants in an inter-agency gender mission to the country on 10-24 November 1997. "Our conclusion on the situation of women in Afghanistan is that it is a very, very dire one where girls and women are not free to enjoy any of their rights," said Angela King, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women. Ms. King, who headed the mission, observed that the country's lack of central government made it difficult for the UN to interact with authorities. "It does produce a situation where there is a feeling of fear, even in those areas that are relatively stable," she said.

Many areas of the country were visited by participants in the mission, which included representatives of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), World Health Organization (WHO), UN Development Programme (UNDP), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and the government of Norway. They visited UN projects and met with people at schools, refugee camps, prisons and hospitals. Ms. King said these visits allowed the mission to witness directly the difficulties encountered by Afghan women, whose greatest concerns were about poverty and the lack or even absence of education. Women in Afghanistan rank the lowest of 130 countries covered by the UNDP gender development index. Maternal mortality in the country is the world's second highest, and only 4% of girls are literate.

The mission worked on developing a set of pragmatic, field-oriented guidelines addressing gender concerns that can be used by United Nations agencies, donors and NGOs when implementing their programmes, and to establish key indicators to assist agencies monitoring compliance with the guidelines. Endorsed by the UN's Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, this approach is part of the development of a "principle-centred approach" in response to continued restrictions on women's rights in Afghanistan.

Contact: Division for the Advancement of Women, Room DC2-1204, United Nations, New York NY 10017, United States, telephone +1-212/963 8034, fax +1-212/963 3463, web site (<http://www.un.org/dspd/daw>).

FORUM TO REDUCE URBAN POVERTY LAUNCHED

On 13 November 1997 the International Forum on Urban Poverty, a global network to empower the urban poor, was launched in Florence (Italy) at the conclusion of a conference on Governance and Participation: Practical Approaches to Urban Poverty Reduction. The conference brought together 185 representatives of governments, local authorities, United Nations agencies, NGOs, international aid agencies and research institutes from around the world. It was jointly organized by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the municipality of Florence; co-sponsors included Italy and Switzerland.

The forum's main aim will be to influence public opinion and advocate for the adoption of new policies for poverty reduction in urban areas. Habitat estimates that there are one

The Commission on Sustainable Development, briefly meeting on 22 December 1997, has elected Ambassador Cielito Habito (Philippines) as its chair.

Vice-chairs will be Rogatien Biaou (Benin), Marta Galindo (Colombia) and Michael Odevall (Sweden). A fourth vice-chair from the Eastern European Group of States will be elected at a later date.

In January Ambassador Jakaya M. Kikwete, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Tanzania, turned over the chair of the Group of 77 developing countries to Ambassador Ali Alatas, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia.

Klaus Topfer (Germany) has been elected by the UN General Assembly as Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). Mr. Topfer, who is succeeding Elizabeth Dowdeswell, is the second longest-serving minister in the current German government. Among other things, he served as chairman of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development from May 1994-May 1995.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has opened in The Hague (Netherlands) its Coordinating Office for the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities.

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) has opened an office in North America:

Robert Leigh
Chief, UNV Representation Office
in North America
336 East 45th Street
Uganda House (UH715)
New York NY 10017
United States
telephone +1-212/906 3639
fax +1-212/906 3659

billion people living in poverty in cities and towns, the majority in developing countries but with a growing number in the developed world. Most live in housing of such poor quality that their lives and health are under continuous threat.

The forum, made up of a network of organizations representing all sectors of society, will exchange experiences in urban poverty reduction and actively assist initiatives geared to fighting poverty at the local level. Its initial membership will consist of partner groups attending the Florence conference; a coordinating committee will be established in 1998 from among members including national and local governments, local authorities, associations, UN agencies and NGOs.

The guiding principles of the forum's work will be good governance and participation. "It is now widely recognized that the effective participation of the poor in decision making is critical to the reduction of their poverty," said organizers of the Florence conference. "Genuine participation is a key ingredient of good governance, which in turn, is a precondition for adopting effective poverty-reduction strategies in urban areas." The reduction of gender inequalities will also be a key concern of the forum since the majority of the urban poor are female.

Capacity-building or empowerment will be one of the most important elements of the forum's activities, which will include initiatives in urban safety and crime prevention; transport; shelter, employment and the informal city; and child-friendly cities.

Contact: Daniel Biau, Acting Chief, Technical Cooperation Division, UNCHS (Habitat), PO Box 30030, Nairobi, Kenya, telephone +39-55/621234, fax +254-2/624264.

ETHICS IN PUBLIC SERVICE CONFERENCE

Outcomes of participants' discussions at a conference on ethics in public service, held 18-21 November 1997 in Thessaloniki (Greece), included commitment to transparency, accountability and openness; commitment to the rule of law and combating corruption as well as hidden agendas; and emphasis on human resources development and creativity in overcoming obstacles to build a better future for the countries in the region.

The theme of the conference, organized by the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), was Public Service in Transition: Enhancing its Role, Professionalism, Ethical Standards and Values. It brought together senior government officials from 20 member states of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as representatives of major international organizations with activities in the region.

Participants discussed the changing role of the state and the need to reform the public service for new strategic tasks in a complex environment marked by globalization, rapid technological progress and a diversified, increasingly proactive and vocal civil society. The conference aimed to provide a

forum for exchange and an opportunity for sharing information, experiences and lessons learned, as well as exploration of strategies for cooperation on common concerns and challenges. Among other things, speakers emphasized the important role of the state and the value of professionalism and ethics as critical components of civil service reform and modernization.

The conference, arranged by the Division of Governance, Public Administration and Finance of DESA, was co-sponsored by Greece and the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Contact: Elia Armstrong, Division for Governance, Public Administration and Finance, Department for Economic and Social Affairs, Room DC1-936, United Nations, 1 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017, United States, telephone +1-212/963 8381, fax +1-212/963 2916.

MEDITERRANEAN COASTAL MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

An international conference on Education and Training in Integrated Coastal Management: The Mediterranean Prospect will be held in Genoa (Italy) from 25-29 May 1998. The conference will be convened by the International Centre for Coastal and Ocean Policy Studies and is designed to celebrate the 1998 UN International Year of the Ocean.

Discussions will focus on the needs and prospects of implementing and diffusing education and training in integrated coastal management according to guidelines provided by Agenda 21, the programme of action for sustainable development agreed at the 1992 Earth Summit. The conference will consider the Mediterranean Sea as a geographical area of special interest to establish multinational cooperation on this subject, and it will aim to contribute to the development of major UN programmes in the field.

Expected outcomes of the conference include:

- a declaration on education and training in integrated coastal management with special reference to the Mediterranean;
- presentation of university projects and training courses;
- design of technical tools for education and training purposes; and
- a proposal for the establishment of a Mediterranean focal point to network information and materials on integrated coastal management.

Conference sponsors include the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

Contact: Stefano Belfiore, Conference Secretariat, International Centre for Coastal and Ocean Policy Studies, c/o University of Genoa, Department Polis, Stradone di S. Agostino, 37-16123 Genoa, Italy, telephone/fax +39-10/209 5840, e-mail <iccops@polis.unige.it>.

URBANTECH 21 FACILITY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

The UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) of the United States and a group of private companies have established a US\$6 million facility called UrbanTech 21. The companies include Philips Electronics of the Netherlands, Rondeco Scandinavia AB of Sweden and the Philippines Business for the Environment. The fund is expected to generate over US\$100 million in investment for the development, transfer and adaptation of environmentally-sound technologies relevant to climate change.

"This programme seeks to provide developing countries the possibility to improve the life of the poor while at the same time safeguarding their environment," said Anders Wijkman, Assistant Administrator and head of UNDP's delegation to the Kyoto conference. "This will be achieved through mobilizing the private sector in line with Rio's objective of merging development and environmental agendas."

The new facility, launched during COP-3, will help developing countries address local environment and development problems in such areas as waste management, energy and transportation.

UrbanTech 21 will leverage relatively small amounts of seed money into investment resources several times their size by identifying environmental challenges that can be transformed into viable business opportunities. "The merit of having a facility that acts to leverage existing resources is that developing countries will not be obliged to add to their debt burden. It will build the capacities of local private sector and

technological institutions in these countries, and will stimulate the environment in which technological innovation can thrive," added Mr. Wijkman.

Contact: Luis Gomez Echeverri, Public Private Partnerships, UNDP, 1 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017, United States, telephone +1-212/906 5767.

ECOSOC THEMES FOR 1998 SESSION

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which closed its 1997 substantive session on 18 December, has selected three main themes for its discussions in 1998.

The theme for the high-level segment is "Market access: developments since the Uruguay Round, implications, opportunities and challenges, in particular for developing countries and the least developed countries among them, in the context of globalization and liberalization."

The theme for the coordination segment is "Coordinated follow-up to, and implementation of, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action," agreed at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights.

The theme for the high-level meeting of the operational activities segment will be "Advancement of women, implementation of the Platform for Action and the role of operational activities in promoting, in particular, capacity-building and resource mobilization for enhancing the participation of women in development."

United States Under-Secretary of State Tim Wirth has left the State Department to head a foundation launched by Ted Turner that will donate US\$1 billion to the United Nations over ten years. Mr. Wirth, who has become president of the United Nations Foundation, led the US State Department's Global Affairs Office for five years.

"We have four central missions we want to undertake," said Mr. Wirth. "One is to help [UN Secretary-General] Kofi Annan with reform efforts." Others are to "demonstrate really good UN programmes that work: children's health, population, environment, landmine issues;" encourage other individuals to "redefine philanthropy" and donate money to causes like the United Nations; and demonstrate to US citizens the reasons the United States should be involved in the United Nations.

UN AND NGO NEWS

CONGO 20TH ASSEMBLY

The 20th General Assembly of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (CONGO) was held in Geneva from 3-5 November 1997. The opening session received a message from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and was addressed by Mary Robinson, High Commissioner for Human Rights; Katherine Hagen, International Labour Organization (ILO) Deputy Director-General; and representatives of the Geneva and Swiss authorities. Outgoing President Bob Harris noted that CONGO's membership had risen to 236 organizations over the past three years, and that the rule changes to be debated and adopted at the Assembly would enable the Conference to respond more effectively in the new international context by making it more open and inclusive.

The Assembly's substantive debate was on the theme Defining the Future. Panel speakers included Assistant-Secretary-General Gillian Sorensen from the Secretary-General's office, Macha

Levinson of the World Economic Forum, and Jean Freymond of the Centre for Applied Studies in Negotiations.

The Assembly adopted new rules governing membership and procedures of the Conference. It also agreed to change the name to the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations; expand its aims to include fostering "cooperation and dialogue among all NGOs and with groupings of NGOs related to the UN system;" introduce an Associate Membership category for NGOs accredited to UN conferences and treaty bodies and affiliated with the UN Department of Public Information; make provision for establishment of regional committees of the Conference; and it adopted two resolutions on "Defining the Future" and the "Forum of the Millennium."

Dr. Afaf Mafouz of the Arab Lawyer's Union/Society for International Development was elected President of the Conference for the next three years.

Contact: CONGO Office, 777 UN Plaza, 8th Floor, New York NY 10017, United States, telephone +1-212/986 8557, fax +1-212/986 0821.

NGO PARTICIPATION IN UN

NGOs that do not have consultative or roster status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and wish to participate in UN events taking place in the year 2000 should apply now for consultative status with ECOSOC. These events include intergovernmental reviews to appraise and assess the progress achieved in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development.

To receive an application, write to the NGO Section of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). Your completed application must be submitted to DESA by 1 June 1998 in order for the application process to be completed in time for events taking place in the year 2000.

Contact: NGO Section, DESA, Room DC1-1076, United Nations, New York NY 10017, United States, telephone +1-212/963 4843, fax +1-212/963 9248.

"We will continue to work together and will multiply the initiatives in matters such as the struggle against poverty, local production and the sustainable use of resources that have already been carried out in five continents; fundamental human rights, protection of workers' rights and of the 'weak' in our society; a commerce of equality and solidarity, critical consumption and ethical finance; the elimination of all gender discrimination; the fair acceptance of immigrants; cooperation between peoples and between the organizations within society and local authorities; [and] between the operators of an alternative mode of communication.

With our activities we will continue to enhance a 'grassroot globalization' based on the responsible participation of every citizen, local institution—both national and international—that opposes the injustice of the present-day economy and offer concrete solutions."

—Final declaration
Second Assembly of the
UN of the Peoples
13 October 1997, Perugia (Italy)

UNIDO-NGO FORUM

Collective and coordinated action between NGOs at national and regional levels is essential in order to allow NGOs to play a more active role in setting up appropriate policy and institutional frameworks for private enterprise development and to avoid overlapping and duplication of efforts in assisting the micro- and small enterprise sector. These are some of the conclusions of the UNIDO-NGO Forum on the Role of NGOs in Private Enterprise Development, held in Dakar (Senegal) on 5-6 November 1997.

The forum, which discussed NGO contributions to the development of rural micro- and small enterprises in West African countries, was a first step in beginning a policy dialogue with national NGOs, which represent the largest part of civil society organizations working with the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

Participants included over 70 representatives of West African national NGOs, international NGOs, and NGOs in consultative status with UNIDO and the United Nations. They stressed the need for strengthened coordination between governments, the UN, its specialized agencies, other international bodies and NGOs with a view to developing common strategies and establishing a solid and well-defined framework of intervention for the different actors involved in private enterprise development.

Participants also stressed the need for NGOs to play a more active role in implementing the Alliance for Africa's Industrialization, sponsored by UNIDO. Access to sources for financing and credit facilities were mentioned as one of the main obstacles to development of micro- and small enterprises, as well as lack of information on technologies available and on training programmes. Strengthening of institutional capacities of NGOs active in private enterprise development was also considered essential in order to facilitate the transition of micro-enterprises to a small or medium size as well as from the informal to the formal sector, which is the ultimate aim of micro-enterprise development.

Contact: Doris Hribernigg, NGO Coordination, UNIDO, PO Box 300, A-1400 Vienna, Austria, telephone +43-1/21131 5376 or 21131 6412, fax +43-1/21131 75376, e-mail <ngo@unido.org>.

GOVERNANCE, POVERTY AND SOCIAL POLICY

In the context of follow-up to the 1995 World Summit for Social Development, on 12-14 November 1997 the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Harvard Institute for International Development convened an international conference on Governance, Policy Eradication and Social Policy in Cambridge, Massachusetts (United States).

UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth and Jeffrey Sachs, an expert on the economies of the countries of Eastern

Europe and the former Soviet Union, delivered keynote addresses on poverty, the social agenda and democracy. They also shared their views on how countries can deal with poverty by improving the way they are governed and managed. Other speakers represented universities, trade unions, development banks and think tanks such as the Brookings Institute and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Participants discussed ways for governments to raise living standards, improve basic social services and strengthen governance. They said governance that offers greater transparency and accountability, better management and more participation by the public is essential in attempts to eradicate poverty. Panels were held on:

- ▣ alternative governance strategies for social policy—innovations in public, private and NGO sectors;
- ▣ decentralizing decision making and management for social policy;
- ▣ investing in social infrastructure—social development funds and governance;
- ▣ setting the international and national social agenda—the role of the UNDP *Human Development Report*;
- ▣ institutional reform and social safety nets; and
- ▣ uniting research and practice.

Contact: Richard Kollodge, UNDP, 1 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017, United States, telephone +1-212/906 6776, fax +1-212/906 5364.

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ON THE INTERNET

Participants in a seminar on the Role of Internet with Regard to the Provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination have condemned groups that use the Internet to promote racism and hatred. The seminar, held in Geneva from 10-14 November 1997, highlighted the concern of UN member states and NGOs about growing use of the Internet to disseminate racist material.

Participants and panelists, including experts on the use and abuse of the Internet, discussed among other things:

- ▣ monitoring the Internet's content;
- ▣ questions of liability regarding Internet Service Providers (ISP) that act as host computers for offensive material;
- ▣ civil liberties in relation to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- ▣ the feasibility of monitoring the content of the Internet and legal responsibility for offensive material under the convention; and
- ▣ jurisdiction over those who publish such material on the Internet.

Timothy Jenkins, an activist from the United States, stressed the importance of the Internet as an educational tool. The best way of dealing with racism, he said, is by promoting positive examples of race on the Internet. He suggested the United Nations could play an educational role by creating a "super site" on the Internet that would house a collection [or

directory] of all racial information of a positive nature. A report of the seminar is available.

Contact: Alessandra Gaspari, Research and Right to Development Branch, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland, telephone +41-22/917 1924, fax +41-22/917 0212.

SURVEY ON BEIJING CONFERENCE FOLLOW UP

Several years after the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, a global survey by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) has found that 110 governments have drawn up national action plans to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, and 21 more have drafts ready. Of the 187 delegations that attended the conference, 70% now have plans and drafts to advance the political, economic and social status of women and girls. WEDO says this testifies to the commitment of many governments as well as the determination of women's NGOs to make good on the promises made in Beijing. The survey was carried out between May and August 1997 among NGOs and governments of the delegations represented in Beijing.

"There has been greater implementation of paragraph 297 of the Beijing Platform [that asked governments to have national action plans in place by the end of 1996] than of most other provisions of UN conference agreements," said Bella Abzug, WEDO President. "The recognition of the importance of the national action plan by significant numbers of ministers, parliamentarians, mayors and civil society can become a strong rallying point for women's empowerment and make women in every country a serious political constituency."

Out of the 115 assessments made by NGOs in the survey, 76% said their governments are moving forward, while 20% said their countries are standing still either for lack of a plan, absence of implementing mechanisms and resources, or economic and political conditions that work against women's interests. Another 4% reported backward movement for the same reasons.

The overall results of the survey suggest encouraging advances in implementing the Beijing Platform, although they cannot obscure the fact that in many parts of the world concurrent global and national political and economic forces are undermining gains made so far, according to WEDO. The increasing momentum of economic globalization, cutbacks in state-supported social programmes and wars have combined to erode the human rights of large sections of populations, especially the health and living conditions of women and children.

Contact: Bharati Sadasivam, Program Coordinator, WEDO, 355 Lexington Avenue, 3rd Floor, New York NY 10017, United States, telephone +1-212/973 0325, fax +1-212/973 0335, e-mail <wedo@igc.apc.org.>.

WORLD AIDS DAY AFRICA BRIEFING

Some 40 representatives of governments, UN agencies, NGOs and academia attended a briefing on 1 December 1997 about the AIDS situation in Africa, hosted by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the NGO African Action on Aids.

Speakers at the briefing, which also marked International AIDS Day, included Cynthia Eyakuze, a Masters of Public Health candidate at Columbia University in the United States. She said that by mid-1996 nine million children under 15 years old had lost their mothers to AIDS, with over 90% living in sub-Saharan Africa.

She noted that in many developing countries, extended family systems have traditionally provided support for orphans, but in the worst affected communities AIDS, combined with other pressures such as migration, is pushing the family system to the breaking point. Many children orphaned by AIDS are looked after by their grandparents; when these caretakers die, households are often headed by older orphaned siblings.

Ruth Engo, of the United Nations Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and Least Developed Countries (OSCAL), reported on the work of African Action on AIDS, a group that has sponsored 538 AIDS orphans in Benin, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The group, formed in 1991, has opened 15 Centres of Excellence in these countries as well as Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Senegal. Its goal is to provide young people with an education along with creative and constructive activities. In 1997 the first person sponsored by the group entered Makerere University in Uganda.

Contact: Senior Liaison Officer, Special Coordinator for Africa and Least Developed Countries, Room DC1-1048, New York NY 10017, United States, telephone +1-212/963 4780, fax +1-212/963 3892 or African Action on AIDS, 7002 Boulevard East, Suite 12N, Guttenberg NJ 07093, United States, telephone +1-201/854 6569.

WORLD NGO CONFERENCE

A second planning meeting for a World NGO Conference took place in Geneva on 6-7 November 1997. The meeting, which involved a number of NGO representatives and several UN officials, built upon the work of the first planning session, held at the United Nations University (UNU) in Japan in September 1996.

The World NGO Conference, initiated by UNU, is envisaged as an opportunity for NGOs and other organizations of civil society to strengthen their participation in governance, defend the diversity of civil society in the face of forces leading to standardization and uniformity, and contribute to an enabling environment for NGOs to achieve the goals they share with

The Kenya-based Association of Food and Agriculture Journalists (AFAJ) and Rome-based InterPress Service (IPS) have been awarded the Boerma Award for journalism from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The award honours journalists who focus public attention on world food problems.

The Saouma Award for institutional excellence went to the Department of Fisheries in the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock in Bangladesh and to the Infrastructure and Technical Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture in Iran. The award recognizes institutions that have excelled in implementing technical cooperation projects.

FAO has also honoured two field experts, Hon Tat Tan (Malaysia) and Les Clark (New Zealand), with the B.R. Sen Award for field officers who make outstanding contributions in the country in which they are working.

the United Nations, particularly with respect to follow-up to the recent cycle of UN world conferences. The conference will be held in 1999. A third planning meeting will be held in New York in the first half of 1998.

Contact: Tatsuro Kunugi, Osawa, UNU, 1-15-7, Mitaka, Tokyo 181, Japan, telephone +81-422/333178, fax +81-422/333229, e-mail <kunugi@max.icu.ac.jp>.

BAMBOO, RATTAN NETWORK LAUNCHED

An International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) has been established as an independent inter-governmental organization by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) and China. Bamboo and rattan, the

single most important cluster of non-timber forest products in developing countries, contribute over US\$14 billion to national economies each year. According to IFAD, bamboo and rattan-based production systems represent a promising vehicle for rural poverty alleviation. In China, where INBAR will be headquartered, over 400 species of bamboo and 40 species of rattan are found and there are more than 30,000 small and medium-sized enterprises based on bamboo and rattan with a labour force of over 60% women.

INBAR aims to identify, coordinate and support bamboo and rattan research consistent with priorities set by national programmes; build skills and enhance the capacity of national research and development institutions; and promote coordination and cooperation in this field.

Contact: IFAD, Via del Serafico 107, I-00142 Rome, Italy, telephone +39-6/54591, fax +39-6/504 3463.

NGO NEWS

William Canny has been appointed Secretary General of the International Catholic Migration Commission.

CONFERENCE ON NGO AID ASSISTANCE

On 3-5 November 1997 a conference on NGOs in Aid: A Reappraisal of 20 Years of NGO Assistance was held in Bergen (Norway) by the Chr. Michelsen Institute and the Center for Development Studies of Bergen College. The conference, one of the largest on NGOs ever held in Scandinavia, brought together about 150 participants from almost 30 countries.

Participants discussed the following questions, among others:

- What are NGOs, and why do they increasingly get involved in development assistance and humanitarian assistance?
- What are the characteristics and comparative advantages of NGOs, if any?
- Are NGOs a driving force in a "new international system" characterized by distinct borders and with specific internal functional systems of distribution of resources, power and language?
- What challenges do NGOs face, and what are their contributions to development and democracy?

Contact: Centre for Development Studies, University of Bergen, Stromgt. 54, N-5007 Bergen, Norway, telephone +47/55 58 93 09, fax +47/55 58 98 92.

CONSUMERS INTERNATIONAL WORLD CONGRESS

About 500 consumer activists from 108 countries attended the 15th Annual World Congress of Consumers International (CI), held in Santiago (Chile) from 3-7 November 1997. The theme of the conference was Empowering Consumers for the 21st Century: Consumers in Civil Society.

Participants discussed, among other issues, biotechnology, the information superhighway, sustainable consumption, and the interaction between consumer and development policy.

The congress adopted a resolution on environment and sustainable consumption, which calls on industry, governments and international agencies to work toward mandatory targets for major sustainable reductions in greenhouse emissions and to promote investment in renewable resources and policies that influence demand. CI will also work to support environmental protection and promote trade policies that do not permit environmental standards to be used as trade barriers.

During the congress Adolfo Singer, President of the Latin American Parliament (*Parlatino*), announced that a regional Consumer Defence Code had been adopted by its Consumer and User Defence Commission. Although not legally binding, the new code provides a legal framework and guidelines for the region's governments. Other consumer leaders announced the formation of the International Society of Consumer Affairs Officials (ISCAO), a network made up of individual consumer affairs officials to encourage a cooperative approach to solving consumer problems.

In addition, a joint research and information programme between CI and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) was announced as part of UNCTAD's expanded mandate to work with civil society on matters of competition and consumer protection. And the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), which plans to sign a memorandum of understanding with CI, will continue to work with the consumer movement to extend the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection to sustainable consumption and other areas.

Contact: CI Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Casilla 9653, Santiago, Chile, telephone +56-2/335 1695, fax +56-2/231 0773, e-mail <consint@entelchile.net>, web page (<http://www.consumersinternational.org>).

BACK TO THE FUTURE CONFERENCE

An Earth Summit follow-up conference entitled Back to the Future, held in Montevideo (Uruguay) from 10-12 November 1997, brought together representatives of youth groups and networks as well as small-scale farmers and producers, mainly from developing countries. The conference was convened by REDES, Friends of the Earth (FoE) International, FoE-Uruguay, and *Red Juvenil Latinoamericana por un Desarrollo Sustentable* (REJULADS). Participants discussed:

- conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and food security;
- ecological economics, job creation and redistribution; and
- education and participation for sustainable societies.

The conference was based on work developed by the Friends of the Earth International Programme on Sustainable Societies and the REJULADS programme on Youth, Sustainability and Democracy.

The conclusions of the conference, whose objectives included elaborating proposals for the construction of sustainable societies, will be used as the basis for contributions to international fora scheduled to take place in 1998. These include meetings related to the Convention on Biodiversity, the Fifth Biennial Conference of the Society of Ecological Economics, the Second Summit of the Americas, and the sixth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

Contact: *Silvia Ribeiro* or *Karin Nansen*, REDES–Amigos de la Tierra Uruguay/FoEI, Avenida Millan 4113, 12900 Montevideo, Uruguay, telephone +598-2/356265, fax +598-2/381640, e-mail <redesur@chasque.apc.org> or *Cesar Marchesino*, Oficina Facilitadora, REJULADS, Avenida Millan 4113, 12900 Montevideo, Uruguay, telephone +598-2/372455, fax +598-2/381640, e-mail <rejulads@chasque.apc.org>, web site (<http://www.chasque.apc.org/redesur/BackToTheFuture/index.html>)

PEOPLE'S SUMMIT DURING APEC MEETING

NGOs, trade unions and other organizations convened a People's Summit from 17-24 November 1997 to overlap with the summit meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) held 24-25 November in Vancouver (Canada). NGOs, which focused on the environmental, social and human rights implications of the liberalization agenda of APEC, said its narrow focus on economics in isolation from the political, social and human context of people's lives does not address a range of issues including

governance, democratization and human rights. They also said APEC discussions of strategies and targets for investment, tariffs and infrastructure development should take into account the real conditions of people's lives, livelihoods and environment, as well as prospects for their improvement.

APEC, which formed in 1989, is a forum for economic and technical cooperation of 18 countries. In 1994 it adopted a non-binding target of borderless trade and investment by the year 2010 for developed economies, and by 2020 for others. The economies of APEC members account for two-fifths of the world's population, nearly half of its merchandise trade, and half of global gross national product. APEC members are officially referred to as economies rather than countries, which allows members to sidestep controversial political discussions.

More than a dozen meetings were convened at the People's Summit, including a two-day Women's Conference Against APEC, roundtables on peasants and on the links between economic liberalization and the media, a forum on sustainability issues, a panel on the financial crisis confronting many Asian countries, and several workshops on human rights, including a Workers' Rights Tribunal.

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ROUNDTABLE ON EMERGING TRADE ISSUES

On 27-28 November 1997 representatives of NGOs, governments, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and academic institutions discussed key issues and challenges for developing countries in trade and investment. The roundtable, which covered the themes of WTO rules, market access and new issues, was organized in Geneva by the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) and the Centre for International Trade, Economics and Environment of the Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) of India.

During the session on WTO rules some participants suggested the WTO, through its mandatory dispute settlement mechanism, is the most advanced system to protect developing countries against "power politics." They argued that the WTO is the only "multipolar" framework with enforcement powers in a "unipolar" world led by the United States. Others said power dynamics in the WTO are largely determined by the size and strength of the different players' markets, which up until now has prevented developing countries from being part of either pole. And despite the apparent neutrality of WTO's dispute settlement mechanism, they said developing countries lose out to interests that can afford the high legal costs of disputes. Discussions also focused on the WTO agreement on trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPS). Many participants

The 1997 Right Livelihood Award has been given to five people from four continents for their contributions to a sustainable future for humanity.

The award, known as the Alternative Nobel Prize, has been presented to: Joseph Ki-Zerbo (Burkina Faso) for a lifetime of scholarship and activism; Mackle Schneider (France) and Jinzaburo Takagi (Japan) for their struggle to rid humanity of the threat posed by the manufacture, transport, use and disposal of plutonium; Michael Succow (Germany) for his commitment to establishing nature conservation reserves; and Cindy Duerling (United States) for her efforts to combat the risks that toxic chemicals pose to human life and health.

Adrienne Germain has been named President-Elect of the International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), which is based in New York.

said TRIPs are the result of the lobbying power of multinational companies and play against the interests of developing countries. One participant cited the example of barriers the agreement places on developing countries' ability to access cheaper pharmaceutical products.

The session on new issues led to debate on the linkages between trade and environment. Participants differed on whether trade liberalization policies could cause a "race to the bottom," whereby countries erode their environmental standards to keep up with foreign competition. Prof. Jagdish Bhagwati of Columbia University in the United States, who said environmental NGOs want linkages with trade "because that is where the action is," argued that this reflects a lack of confidence among NGOs in their power to influence domestic policies where environmental standards are set.

Some participants expressed concern with current negotiations on a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). They said the agreement would give additional rights to international investors at the detriment of labour, consumer and environmental interests.

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UK NGOS MOBILIZE ON EUROPEAN UNION

British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND) and the United Kingdom Platform of the NGO Liaison Committee to the European Community are collaborating to coordinate development education initiatives, media work and advocacy during the UK presidency of the European Union from January to June 1998. The initiative, which will run until September 1998, aims to raise public awareness in the UK of the importance of the EU in international development, the role and nature of EU policy and institutions, and the potential for civil society to influence policy. It is also designed to deepen public understanding through events, media briefings and publications; and to influence the public and decision makers on the UK's input into EU decision making as it affects developing countries.

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CAMPAIGN IN US PROMOTES CITIZEN ACTION

A campaign entitled Giving Voice to Your Heart has been launched by a coalition of 800 non-profit organizations in the United States. The campaign, which was unveiled at the recent annual meeting of the Washington DC-based

association Independent Sector, will focus on promoting philanthropy, and non-profit and citizen action in the United States.

Independent Sector developed the campaign to build public awareness of charitable organizations and their role as advocates for those they serve. The campaign is also designed to address concerns of US citizens about non-profit accountability and advocacy efforts, as well as to boost recognition that non-profit groups are a distinct and crucial part of society. Independent Sector is developing an action plan and resource kits that local groups can use to promote the campaign.

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ECONOMIC HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

The FoodFirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) has launched a campaign entitled Economic Human Rights: The Time Has Come, which aims to organize a US Congressional hearing to review the human rights implications of increasing poverty and hunger in the United States, and to educate citizens about these issues.

The campaign, which is being launched to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has three objectives. They are to:

- build a national network of groups working on food, human rights, hunger, homelessness, labour and poverty to work toward implementation of the declaration's economic, social and cultural human rights provisions in the United States;
- create a political climate in which the media pays greater attention to violations of human rights in the country; and
- call for a Congressional hearing on domestic violations of the declaration and push for US implementation of economic, social and cultural human rights.

According to FoodFirst, one-fifth of all children in the United States live in families with incomes below the poverty level and face the threat of hunger. Citizens living in poverty increased from 11.6% in 1970 to 14.2% in 1994. "Austere welfare policies, deep cuts in social safety nets, insufficient job creation policies, [and] inadequate health care and childcare support programs are all economic human rights violations in disguise," said Anuradha Mittal, Policy Director at FoodFirst.

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REGIONAL NEWS

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DECLARATION

The Fifth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development, held from 5-11 November 1997 in the Philippines, examined social development goals set at a regional meeting held prior to the 1995 World Summit for Social Development (WSSD).

The ministerial conference, organized by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and hosted by the Philippines government, provided an opportunity to assess progress toward implementing the regional Agenda for Action on Social Development plan in the context of the WSSD Programme of Action.

The Manila Declaration adopted at the close of the ministerial conference acknowledges progress and continuing efforts made by many countries in the region toward poverty alleviation, expansion of employment and social integration. However, it notes with concern "the vulnerability of many economies in the region to widening trade deficits, mounting foreign debt repayments, currency crises and economic slowdown, which have serious implications for social progress and cohesion."

Resolutions adopted at the conference include measures to ensure that the region's poor can enter the new millennium free from hunger, ill health, illiteracy, unemployment, discrimination and exclusion; and measures to increase the level of resources for social development aimed at improving the quality of life of all people.

Intermediate targets, to be reached by the year 2000, include reducing absolute poverty and infant mortality to half their 1990 levels; achieving life expectancy of 65 years at birth, and for countries and areas experiencing high mortality rates achieving life expectancy of 60 years at birth; and providing access to basic education for at least 80% of the population.

NGOs participating in the ministerial conference challenged governments to show more political will in addressing social development issues. Over 100 NGOs recommended a Priority Plan to the Year 2000 and called for the eradication of absolute poverty by the year 2010. They urged the business sector to accept responsibility to contribute to social development in countries where it operates. And they proposed:

- n adoption of a legally enforceable code of conduct to govern the sector's social and environmental impacts;
- n adoption of specific cooperative measures to restrict and discourage excessive speculative activities in international financial markets; and
- n adoption of a Tobin-style tax (a 0.5% tax on speculative capital movements, which would yield some US\$1.5 billion a year).

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LATIN AMERICA CONFERENCE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Prevention and treatment of domestic violence must be included on the political agenda of Latin America and the Caribbean not only as a human rights issue but as a concern for economic development, according to speakers at a conference on Domestic Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean: Costs, Policies and Programs.

Four hundred participants from 37 countries attended the conference, held on 20-21 October 1997 in Washington DC, including representatives of government agencies, NGOs and international institutions. The conference aimed to raise awareness about the severity of the problem of domestic violence in the region, and the need for urgent action by governments and international agencies.

"Development is an issue that goes beyond economic growth," said Enrique Iglesias, President of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). "It includes social justice, the consolidation of democracy, human rights and all that affects the quality of life. We will not have high quality economic and social development, nor will we really have respect and peaceful co-existence, if we are not capable of eliminating the roots of violence." IDB co-sponsored the conference, along with the Pan American Health Organization, Inter-American Commission of Women, Institute for Civil Society and Isis International.

Conference organizers said 25% to 50% of women in Latin America and the Caribbean suffer domestic abuse, and the results of a Gallup poll show that about 30 million women in the United States have suffered domestic violence at one time or another.

US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton told participants that domestic violence against women is one of the most serious and devastating human rights violations in the Americas. "We do not believe that violence against women is simply cultural," she said. "We believe it is simply criminal." She stressed that now is the time to "teach a new generation of families that the rules have changed: that raising a hand in violence will not be tolerated."

Panel discussions focused on, among other things:

- n the prevalence and consequences of domestic violence including its link with poverty;
- n human, health and economic costs of domestic violence; and

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) says prospects are good for continued growth in most non-Asian industrialized countries, although the forecast is tentative as a result of recent financial crises in Asia.

The OECD area, which includes European industrialized countries, North America, Mexico, Japan and South Korea, grew by about 3% in 1997 and is expected to continue at about the same rate in 1998 before falling to about 2.5% in 1999.

US President Bill Clinton says he wants to increase the number of Peace Corps volunteers serving abroad to 10,000 by year 2000, a jump of over 50% from the current level.

In January President Clinton said he will ask Congress to boost Peace Corps funding by US\$48 million, its largest increase since the 1960s.

policy lessons in health, labour markets and domestic violence treatment.

A panel of international journalists exchanged views and experiences on coverage of domestic violence and offered suggestions on how the media may be more useful in dealing with the issue.

In March 1998 the IDB plans to organize a seminar in Cartagena (Colombia) that will offer a framework to develop policies and instruments interested governments can use to deal with the issue of violence. IDB also plans to incorporate projects to combat domestic violence in programmes to finance the development of Latin America and the Caribbean in the areas of health, judicial reform, education and modernization of the state.

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OECD CONVENTION TO COMBAT BRIBERY

Member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have adopted a Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions. The convention, signed in Paris in December 1997, is the culmination of two years of work in the OECD on the problem of making bribery of foreign officials a crime.

The convention was adopted by the 29 OECD member countries at a three-day negotiating conference in November, as well as by five non-member countries: Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile and the Slovak Republic. Participants in the conference said they are confident that the convention sets forth a standard for effective national laws to criminalize bribery of foreign public officials in international business transactions and that it will serve as a basis for effective international judicial cooperation. They confirmed the importance they attach to monitoring and evaluation procedures agreed in the convention, and they called for intensified efforts by the OECD to promote it and a 1997 Revised Recommendation with a view to encouraging non-signatories to adhere to these instruments.

Convention articles include sanctions, jurisdiction, enforcement, money laundering, extradition and monitoring.

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OECD MEETING ON STAKEHOLDERS IN DEVELOPMENT

On 13-14 January the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and the Development Centre, both of the Organisation

for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), jointly hosted a meeting on Stakeholders in Development: Government-NGO Dialogue on the 21st Century Partnership Strategy.

The meeting built upon the 21st Century Partnership Strategy adopted in 1996 by the OECD Council at Ministerial Level, and the on-going dialogue between the DAC and NGOs on the NGO-published *Reality of Aid* annual report (see *Go Between* 66).

Among the themes addressed by the meeting were:

- progress in implementing the partnership strategy;
- donor coordination and policy coherence;
- relations between donor governments and non-governmental organizations in the OECD region; and
- the state of public support for international development.

Over 70 participants from donor governments, NGOs and the broad development community participated in the meeting in their personal capacity. A further meeting will be held in 1999.

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NGO/GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON MAI

Representatives of 47 NGOs from 23 countries met with government officials currently negotiating the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The informal consultation, held in Paris on 27 October 1997, enabled NGOs to express their concerns about the negative social and environmental implications of the agreement that they said in its present form conflicts with international commitments such as Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda, which OECD member countries have already made.

A joint statement signed by 29 NGOs describes the draft Multilateral Agreement on Investment as "completely unbalanced. It elevates the rights of investors far above those of governments, local communities, citizens, workers and the environment."

A number of NGOs are planning a public campaign on the MAI. Government negotiators are trying to conclude the agreement in time for the next OECD Ministerial Meeting in April 1998.

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General Assembly Endorses Actions for UN Reform

On 12 November 1997, the 52nd UN General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 52/12, the first formal response of UN member states to Secretary-General Kofi Annan's report on "Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform" (see Go Between 65). The report, issued at UN headquarters on 16 July 1997, contains a wide range of interrelated actions and recommendations for sweeping UN reform and restructuring.

The adoption of resolution 52/12, which does not contain dramatic new reform measures, marked the completion of the first stage of consideration of actions and recommendations of the Secretary-General. "Actions" are measures that fall within the purview of the UN Secretary-General, while "recommendations" are proposals that must be decided by UN member states. It was also an important political signal for the ongoing process of reform. "The resolution," said Mr. Annan, "affirms that the General Assembly and the Secretary-General are working in partnership to bring about the 'quiet revolution' that I announced on 16 July."

Complex Negotiating Process

The resolution is the result of a complex negotiating process carried out in a series of informal plenary sessions, in which a delicate balance was sought regarding the respective powers and obligations of member states and the Secretary-General. "There can be no question of attempting to shift the center of gravity for decision-making on mandates out of the hands of Member States," said Ambassador Ahmad Kamal (Pakistan). "It is for the Member States to determine and ensure the strategic coherence and direction in the work of the Organization, just as it is for the Secretariat to ensure the best possible servicing and the timely submission of documentation and reports which would enable the Member States to do so."

Mr. Annan said he undertook the actions "in order to improve the managerial capacity and operational responsiveness of the Secretariat so as to better serve Member States. These actions are directly relevant to my task of managing the Secretariat, and expeditious treatment of them is essential if the momentum of reform is to be sustained."

Budgetary Implications To Be Considered

Resolution 52/12 calls upon the UN Secretary-General to "take full account" of the views of member states in implementing actions proposed in the report and stresses that the actions will be implemented "with full respect for the relevant mandates, decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly, including in particular the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2000." The resolution also notes that the budgetary implications of actions for reform proposed by the Secretary-General will be considered in the context of the proposed programme budget for 1998-1999 (subject to member states' approval) and "affirms that programmatic implications of relevant actions will be considered in conjunction with related recommendations."

Actions in the Reform Report

Some of the actions in the report have already been implemented; others have "programmatic implications" and will be examined in conjunction with related recommendations; and some with financial implications are under consideration in the Fifth (Administrative and Budgetary) Committee.

The 29 actions contained in the report include:

- n establishment of a Senior Management Group to assist the Secretary-General with the reform process and establishment of a strategic planning unit to identify emerging global issues and trends;

- n grant authority to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in peacekeeping operations over all UN entities in the field;
- n designate the Department of Political Affairs as the UN focal point for post-conflict peace-building;
- n establish a new Department of Disarmament Affairs, to be headed by an Under-Secretary-General;
- n establish a substantive Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) secretariat in the newly-consolidated Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA);
- n review activities in the macroeconomic area of DESA and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD);
- n merge the Centre for International Crime Prevention and UN International Drug Control Programme to form a new Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention;
- n establish a single UN office of funds, programmes and UN Information Centres at the country level under the Resident Coordinator;
- n establish an Office for Development Financing;
- n strengthen and restructure the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat);
- n discontinue the Department of Humanitarian Affairs and establish an Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator headed by an Under-Secretary-General;
- n consolidate the human rights secretariat under the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights;
- n participation of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in every stage of the UN's activities in actual or potential conflicts or post-conflict situations that have a human rights dimension;
- n organize a series of gatherings involving eminent leaders of different sectors of civil society and the Secretary-General;
- n designate an NGO liaison officer in all substantive departments of the UN;
- n consult with the Advisory Committee on Coordination (ACC) on establishing a jointly-funded inter-agency enterprise liaison service;
- n improve mechanisms for continuing the dialogue between representatives of business and the United Nations;
- n prepare a programme for the management of human resources in the UN;
- n further reduce administrative and overhead costs; and
- n simplify procurement and human resource management processes. ○

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The report of the Secretary-General, *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*, is available online at (<http://www.un.org/reform/track2.htm>). Additional reform documents can be found online at (<http://www.un.org/reform/refdoc.htm>).

UNHCR: Displacement Will Rise, But Few Will Find Refuge

A new report from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) says that unless concerted action is taken, more people will be forced to abandon their homes around the world but fewer will find safe refuge. Go Between summarizes the main findings of The State of the World's Refugees: A Humanitarian Agenda, which examines the plight of refugees worldwide.

The report says life has never been tougher for the 22 million refugees and people protected by UNHCR. Despite fewer wars between states, the changing nature of war and communal conflict is driving more and more people from their homes. Although ten million refugees have returned to their countries since 1990, many new groups have been forced to flee, and the number of internally displaced continues to rise. "Increasingly, they have nowhere to run," says UNHCR. "In many parts of the world, people who have taken refuge in another country have been harassed, attacked and even forced to go home against their will."

Civilians are being targeted more than ever before in the estimated 35 civil wars or communal conflicts now raging worldwide. In some conflicts the primary objectives include expelling or dispersing large sections of the community. In certain regions, refugees have been pushed from country to country, fleeing fighting or attacks. And safety during asylum is under greater threat with more assaults on refugee camps, rape of refugee women, and forced recruitment of men and boys.

Slamming the Door in Refugees' Faces

Meanwhile, rich and poor nations have become united in their determination not to accept refugees, according to the report. "Governments are increasingly slamming the door in the faces of those seeking asylum," says UNHCR, "regarding them as political, social or economic threats....The five million people who requested asylum in Western Europe, North America and Australasia over the past decade have faced an array of different measures intended to prevent or deter people from seeking refuge."

The report says this in turn influences poorer nations' attitudes to asylum seekers. "When the very countries responsible for establishing the international refugee regime begin to challenge its legal and ethical foundations," it says, "then it is hardly surprising that other states, especially those with far more pressing economic problems and much larger refugee populations, have decided to follow suit."

Repatriation With No Guarantees

With donors emphasizing the need for "quick fix" solutions for refugee emergencies and poor nations reluctant to host people long-term, UNHCR says it is facing more and more pressure "to support repatriation that is neither strictly voluntary nor strictly safe. A large proportion of the world's recent returnees have been repatriated under some form of duress."

Such attitudes mean that millions of people are being returned to nations still suffering conflict and instability, with no guarantee that they may not have to flee again. "The international regime of refugee protection," says UNHCR, "painstakingly developed since the beginning of the 20th century, is now under unprecedented pressure."

More People Internally Displaced

As refugee numbers drop, the number of internally displaced continues to grow. The report says the global population of internally displaced is about

25 to 30 million people. These people, who remain within the borders of their own country, have been forced to abandon their homes and leave their usual place of residence because of persecution, armed conflict or violence.

Although the international community is focusing more on the internally displaced, the report says such aid has in some instances been used as a pretext to obstruct the flight of people whose lives are in danger, limit their right to asylum, and return them to conditions of danger. "The mere fact that they have not crossed a border means that these people's needs are sometimes completely ignored," says UNHCR. "Unlike refugees, the displaced often have no access to international assistance. They are not protected by international refugee law."

People Without a State

The State of the World's Refugees also highlights the plight of millions of people who are stateless or whose nationality is disputed. Some, such as the estimated three million Palestinians worldwide, have been stateless for decades after being displaced by war. However over the past few years there has been a significant increase in the number of people made stateless. Millions have lost their nationality since the beginning of the 1990s due to the redrawing of borders or the introduction of new citizenship laws.

The world's interest in the problem of statelessness has grown as a result of recent events in the former Communist bloc. But the report says large populations of stateless people can also be found in parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle East, many of them living in conditions of acute insecurity. The report describes how the international community, wary of intervening politically, is increasingly expecting aid agencies to provide solutions to such complex humanitarian problems. But the tools available to humanitarian agencies are limited. "However proficiently such agencies are managed and coordinated," said Sadako Ogata, High Commissioner of UNHCR, "they cannot bring civil wars to an end, oblige states to respect the human rights of their citizens or bring a halt to the deliberate displacement of civilian populations."

Plan of Action

The report's suggested plan of action to counter forced displacement includes steps to eradicate poverty; promote human rights and democracy; and strengthen peacebuilding operations in wartorn societies. It also proposes ways to ensure that those responsible for forcing millions from their homes are brought to account.

"The challenge of the 21st century," said Ms. Ogata, "will be to ensure the security of people. Unless people feel secure in their own homes, the security of states will continue to be threatened." ○

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HIV/AIDS Epidemic Worse Than Previously Thought

Infection with HIV, the human immunodeficiency virus that causes AIDS, is far more common than previously thought, according to a report released by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World Health Organization (WHO). The Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic, published to coincide with World AIDS Day on 1 December 1997, says over 30 million adults and children are now believed to be living with HIV infection—one in every 100 sexually active adults worldwide.

About 2.3 million people died of AIDS in 1997—a 50% increase over 1996. Nearly half of those were women and 460,000 were children under 15 years old. But the full impact of the epidemic in terms of AIDS mortality is only just beginning: if current transmission rates hold steady, by the year 2000 the number of people living with HIV/AIDS will soar to 40 million. "The more we know about the AIDS epidemic, the worse it appears to be," said Dr. Peter Piot, UNAIDS Executive Director. "We are now realizing that rates of HIV transmission have been grossly underestimated—particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where the bulk of infections have been concentrated to date."

UNAIDS and WHO now estimate that 5.8 million people were infected in 1997 at a rate of 16,000 new infections every day. This includes 590,000 new infections among children, which brings the total number of children under the age of 15 living with HIV/AIDS to 1.1 million. Because over 90% of people with HIV live in the developing world, where there are few facilities for voluntary testing and counselling, UNAIDS estimates conservatively that nine out of ten HIV-positive people have no idea they are infected.

Unprecedented Infection Rates in Sub-Saharan Africa

In sub-Saharan Africa an alarming 7.4% of all those aged between 15 and 49 years are now thought to be infected with HIV. Southern Africa continues to be the worst affected area. By early 1997 it was estimated that 2.4 million South Africans were living with HIV. In Botswana the number of adults infected with HIV has doubled over the last five years, now reaching 25% to 30% of the adult population. In 1996 in Zimbabwe infection was estimated at one in five adults.

In very badly affected countries such as these, the development gains achieved over the last few decades are already being wiped out by the epidemic. Life expectancy in Botswana, which rose from under 43 years in 1955 to 61 years in 1990, has now fallen to late 1960s levels. Already one-fourth more infants are dying in Zambia and Zimbabwe than would be the case if there were no HIV. With current trends, Zimbabwe's infant mortality rate can be expected to rise 138% by the year 2010 because of AIDS, and its under-five mortality rate by 109%.

Asian Infection Rates Lower, But Numbers Are Large

In Asia, where the epidemic is more recent than in Africa, only a few countries have developed sophisticated systems for monitoring the spread of HIV. In India infection rates at under 1% of the total adult population are still low by the standards of many countries, although they are over ten times higher than in neighbouring China. While surveillance in India remains patchy, between three and five million people are living with HIV, making India the country with the largest number of HIV-infected people in the world. In China up to 200,000 people were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 1996, and some estimates indicate this figure may have doubled by now.

In southeast Asia the picture is mixed. It is bleakest in Cambodia, where in the most recent monitoring surveys one in 20 pregnant women, one in 16

soldiers and policemen, and one in two sex workers tested HIV-positive. Myanmar and Viet Nam are also seeing a rapid spread of HIV. In contrast, sustained prevention efforts in Thailand are continuing to produce evidence of a fall in new infections, especially among sex workers and their clients—the groups that account for the majority of about 750,000 persons currently infected in the country.

Latin America and the Caribbean: A Window of Opportunity

In this region the HIV/AIDS epidemic is taking a heavy toll, especially on men who have sex with men and injecting drug users. There is increasing evidence of spread among the poor and less educated as well as among women. Although infection rates in pregnant women are still comparably low, they have reached levels of 1% in Honduras, more than 3% in Porto Alegre (Brazil) and over 8% in Haiti. "AIDS is now one of the leading causes of death among young men in significant parts of this region," said Dr. Piot. "However, there is still an important opportunity to be grasped here to slow the spread of HIV into the rest of the population. This can be done if special attention is given to the HIV prevention needs of poor and marginalized communities."

Drug Use Drives HIV in Eastern Europe

Drug injection accounts for the majority of the 100,000 new infections estimated to have occurred in Eastern Europe in 1997. In Ukraine, where around 70% of infections have been in drug users over the last three years, some 25,000 cases of HIV infection have been reported so far, half of them in 1997. Officials estimate there are about 350,000 regular drug users in Russia, many of them sharing injecting equipment.

AIDS is Falling in the Industrialized World

In North America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand, newly available antiretroviral drugs are reducing the speed at which HIV-infected people develop AIDS. In Western Europe evidence suggests that new AIDS cases will drop by around 30% in 1997 compared with 1995 before the treatment became available. In the United States newly-published figures indicate that the first-ever annual decrease in new AIDS cases occurred in 1996.

Some Progress Achieved

Dr. Piot told the UNAIDS governing body, which met in Nairobi (Kenya) from 16-18 November 1997, that a number of countries have successfully begun to expand their response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic beyond the health sector. And UNAIDS has made progress in promoting important methods of preventing HIV/AIDS, such as the female condom, which gives women a valuable extra option to protect themselves against sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. ○

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Malnutrition is a Vast and Persistent Peril, Warns UNICEF

Malnutrition contributes to nearly seven million child deaths every year—more than any infectious disease, war or natural disaster according to the 1998 State of the World's Children Report released by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). But the report, published in December 1997, also discusses recent breakthroughs and dramatic improvements through community action that bring hope to the struggle against malnutrition.

Where it does not kill, malnutrition can leave victims physically maimed, intellectually impaired and suffering from a weakened immune system. "The persistence of malnutrition has profound and frightening implications for children, society, and the future of humankind," said Carol Bellamy, UNICEF Executive Director. "Yet this worldwide crisis has stirred little public alarm, despite substantial and growing scientific evidence of the danger."

While there have been dramatic reductions in malnutrition in some parts of the world, the overall number of malnourished children is on the rise. Half of all children under the age of five in South Asia and one-third in sub-Saharan Africa are malnourished, as well as millions in industrialized countries.

Silent and Invisible Emergency

Malnutrition is not only a "silent emergency" but a largely invisible one, according to the report. Three-fourths of the children who die worldwide of causes related to malnutrition are described by nutritionists as "mildly to moderately malnourished" and show no signs of problems.

Starvation of the kind arising from famines, war and other catastrophes, although covered by world media, is responsible for only a tiny part of the worldwide nutrition crisis. "Malnutrition is not a simple matter of whether a child can satisfy his or her appetite," said Ms. Bellamy. "A child who eats enough to avoid immediate hunger can still be malnourished. Good nutrition relies on a combination of adequate nutritious food, good health services and proper care for both pregnant women and children."

Malnutrition can take a variety of forms that contribute to each other, such as protein-energy malnutrition and deficiencies of iodine, iron and vitamin A. Malnutrition is chiefly a consequence of disease and inadequate dietary intake. But the report says many more elements are involved, including discrimination against women, which results in women eating last and least, and denial of the educational opportunities that would empower them to better care for themselves and for their children.

Malnourished women who become pregnant give birth to children who are already malnourished and whose ability to contribute to society as adults is diminished. Babies with low birthweights have IQs that average five points below that of healthy children. And women who are physically stunted—the long-term result of their own low birthweight, a poor diet and repeated illness—are more likely to die in childbirth, especially because of obstructed labour. While malnutrition has long been recognized as a consequence of poverty, it is increasingly clear that it is also a cause.

Recent Breakthroughs Bring Hope

Recent breakthroughs in nutritional science could have undreamed of benefits, not only for the general healthy development of children, but also in helping to limit and even prevent some major killer diseases.

"We now believe that good nutrition could be a key element in the fight against some of the world's greatest health challenges, including maternal

mortality, malaria and even HIV/AIDS," said Ms. Bellamy. "And there is growing evidence that better nutrition in early childhood and during pregnancy may reduce the burden of heart disease, and other chronic and degenerative ailments, later in life."

One of the most exciting discoveries is the power of vitamin A, which is found in foods such as eggs, butter and whole milk. Studies show that deaths from diarrhoea can be reduced by 35% to 40% if children are given vitamin A supplements. Other research shows that vitamin A could halve the number of deaths among children suffering from measles.

Simple, Low-Cost Nutritional Supplements

Supplements of vitamin A and zinc may also boost children's resistance to malaria, which kills 600,000 children each year. And zinc supplements seem to have a remarkable effect in reducing the toll of diarrhoea and pneumonia in poor countries. According to UNICEF such simple, low-cost nutritional supplements could be one of the most significant new public health interventions for the late 1990s.

Many such measures are already saving and improving lives. In 1997 the lives of at least 300,000 children were saved by vitamin A supplement programmes in developing countries. Over 35 countries now routinely provide vitamin A supplements with immunizations or as part of health campaigns. UNICEF estimates that more than half of all young children in countries where vitamin A deficiency is known to be common received vitamin A capsules in 1996, compared to about one-third in 1994.

Dramatic Improvements through Community Action

The report also offers many examples of dramatic improvements in overall malnutrition through community action. In Tanzania severe malnutrition virtually disappeared and the lives of thousands of children were saved as the result of a community-based growth monitoring initiative. The initiative enabled parents to assess the nutritional well-being of their children and to take action for better child health. Common elements in all such success stories include committed political leadership and the involvement of communities themselves, especially women, in tackling their own problems.

But much more needs to be done to reduce the global toll of severe and moderate nutrition. The report says governments in poor and rich countries must show leadership and commitment to combat malnutrition and must provide funding to mount and support actions that can be implemented by communities themselves. The price of inaction is high—countless millions of children who are intellectually disabled, physically stunted and especially vulnerable to disease. ○

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International Co-operation for Habitat and Urban Development: Directory of Non-Governmental Organizations in OECD Countries

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), NGLS, UN Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), and the Research and Technology Group have compiled this directory of 1777 non-governmental organizations in 28 OECD countries active in the fields of habitat and urban development.

Available from: *OECD Publications, 2 rue André-Pascal, F-75775 Paris Cedex 16, France, fax +33-1/45 24 85 00.*

Industrial Development Global Report 1997

The major part of investments into industrial development of developing countries and transition economies comes from local sources, according to this annual report published by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). It says loans from the domestic banking sector are the most important source of formal financing for industrial investment in those economies. The report, published in English, French and Spanish, also notes that demand for long-term financial resources has been increasingly met by domestic equity markets in a growing number of middle- and high-income economies.

Available from: *Public Information Section, UNIDO, Vienna International Centre, PO Box 300, A-1400 Vienna, Austria, fax +43-1/21131 6881, e-mail <unido-pinfo@unido.org>, web site (http://www.unido.org).*

The State of Food and Agriculture 1997

This edition of FAO's annual report on current developments in world agriculture discusses forests in a global context, raising women's productivity in agriculture, and global climate change abatement policies. The report focuses on Angola, Bangladesh, Egypt, Mozambique and Peru and also contains an overview of developments in Eastern and Central Europe and agricultural reforms in the Russian Federation. It comes with a diskette

containing data in English, French and Spanish on agriculture, fisheries and forestry for several countries.

Available from: *Food and Agriculture Organization, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, I-00100 Rome, Italy.*

Building to Last: The Challenge for Business Leaders

This book argues that it is no longer sufficient for industrial companies to improve their environmental performance by, for example, reducing emissions; they will also have to integrate sustainability into the core of their business strategy. The publication, designed to be a practical guide for senior managers, examines the ways in which businesses can adopt principles of sustainability. It also discusses how businesses can cope with new environmental challenges and monitor their performances.

Available from: *Earthscan, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9JN, United Kingdom, fax +44-171/278 1142, e-mail <earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk>.*

European Local Government Database

This database of local government officers in Europe has been enlarged to incorporate all European Union member countries as well as Norway, Switzerland and ten Central and Eastern European countries. The database contains over 49,000 entries of local government officers and covers more than 14,000 authorities in 27 countries.

Available from: *Newmedia Publishing, 71 Bondway, London SW8 1SQ, United Kingdom, fax +44-171/820 8354, e-mail <100615.2361@compuserve.com>.*

UN Chronicle Web Site

The *UN Chronicle*, a publication of the United Nations Department of Public Information, is now available on the Internet. The site contains details about individual issues with links to selected articles and images.

The site can be accessed at (<http://www.un.org/pubs/chronicle>).

UN DAYS AND WEEKS

- ☐ United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace, 8 March
- ☐ International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 21 March
- ☐ Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling Against Racism and Racial Discrimination, week of 21 March
- ☐ World Day for Water, 22 March
- ☐ World Meteorological Day, 23 March
- ☐ World Health Day, 7 April
- ☐ World Book and Copyright Day, 22 April
- ☐ World Press Freedom Day, 3 May
- ☐ International Day of Families, 15 May
- ☐ World Telecommunications Day, 17 May
- ☐ World No-Tobacco Day, 31 May
- ☐ International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression, 4 June
- ☐ World Environment Day, 5 June
- ☐ World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, 17 June
- ☐ International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, 26 June
- ☐ International Day of Cooperatives, first Saturday of July
- ☐ World Population Day, 11 July
- ☐ International Day of the World's Indigenous People, 9 August
- ☐ International Literacy Day, 8 September
- ☐ International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer, 16 September
- ☐ International Day of Peace, third Tuesday of September

- ☐ World Maritime Day, last week of September
- ☐ International Day of Older Persons, 1 October
- ☐ World Habitat Day, first Monday of October
- ☐ World Post Day, 9 October
- ☐ International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, second Wednesday of October
- ☐ World Food Day, 16 October
- ☐ International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17 October
- ☐ United Nations Day, 24 October
- ☐ World Development Information Day, 24 October
- ☐ Disarmament Week, 24-30 October
- ☐ International Day for Tolerance, 16 November
- ☐ Africa Industrialization Day, 20 November
- ☐ Universal Children's Day, 20 November
- ☐ World Television Day, 21 November
- ☐ International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, 29 November
- ☐ World AIDS Day, 1 December
- ☐ International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December
- ☐ International Day of Disabled Persons, 3 December
- ☐ International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development, 5 December
- ☐ Civil Aviation Day, 7 December
- ☐ Human Rights Day, 10 December
- ☐ International Day for Biological Diversity, 29 December

UN YEARS AND DECADES

- ☐ Third Disarmament Decade, 1990s
- ☐ International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, 1990-1999
- ☐ United Nations Decade of International Law, 1990-1999
- ☐ International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, 1990-2000
- ☐ Fourth United Nations Development Decade, 1991-2000
- ☐ Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa, 1991-2000
- ☐ United Nations Decade Against Drug Abuse, 1991-2000
- ☐ Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa, 1993-2002

- ☐ Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002
- ☐ Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, 1993-2003
- ☐ International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, 1994-2004
- ☐ UN Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004
- ☐ UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, 1997-2006
- ☐ International Year of the Ocean, 1998
- ☐ 50th Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, 1998
- ☐ International Year of Older Persons, 1999

GUEST EDITORIAL
KOFI ANNAN
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Five years ago, when I was Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, an incident occurred in Somalia that taught us—both in the United Nations and in the NGO community—a lesson about the importance of understanding each other well.

With the United Nations Operation in Somalia came the first mandate of a peacekeeping operation to include the protection of humanitarian workers. On one occasion the NGOs—40 of them—decided to have a picnic on the beach at Mogadishu. When the NGO workers were attacked there, they asked for the protection of United Nations peacekeepers. The UN commander's first reaction was: "Why didn't they tell me they were going to do this?"

When I told the story last September to the 50th annual conference bringing together non-governmental organizations and the United Nations Department of Public Information, it was to illustrate a cultural gap between NGOs and the UN that is rapidly and happily disappearing. And I said then that if the global agenda is to be properly addressed, a true partnership between NGOs and the United Nations is not an option; it is a necessity.

Over the past 50 years, the relationship between the organization and NGOs has changed beyond all recognition. Back then, the governments of UN Member States were virtually the sole actors in the international process; non-governmental organizations were seen as supporters, allies, and mobilizers of public opinion in favour of the goals and values of the UN Charter.

Today, NGOs are often on the ground before the international community gives the UN a mandate to act. They are indispensable operators in areas ranging from demining to human rights, from health care to refugees. And they are seen not only as disseminators of public information or providers of services, but as shapers of public policy.

The participation of NGOs in shaping goals and norms acquired true meaning with the global conferences of the 1990s. From the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development at Rio in 1992 through to the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework on Climate Change at Kyoto last December, tens of thousands of organizations were involved, from global to local level, in identifying priorities and issues and in finding ways to address them.

Yet despite the growing manifestations of an ever more robust global civil society, the United Nations has been inadequately equipped to engage it and make it a true partner in our work. And so when I took up the position of Secretary-General and embarked on a quiet revolution to reform the UN, enhanced cooperation with NGOs formed a crucial theme in my proposals. This stemmed from a recognition that our common work will be more successful if it is supported by all concerned actors of the international community.

Under my reform proposals, approved by the General Assembly and now being implemented, all substantive departments of the United Nations are designating an NGO liaison officer to facilitate access to the organization. At the country level, where appropriate, the UN system is creating more opportunities for tripartite cooperation with civil society. Training programmes for United Nations staff will include a component dedicated to cooperation with civil society. This will be reflected in the curricula of the United Nations Staff College.

I am now hosting a series of gatherings involving eminent leaders of different sectors of civil society, NGOs among them. And in the year 2000, alongside the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations, NGOs will be holding a Millennium Forum that will provide an excellent opportunity to further cement our relationship.

As we move towards the end of the decade, NGO agendas are focusing increasingly on ways to implement the goals reached at the conferences of the 1990s. But I hope you will also continue to share with us your vigilance in identifying future needs and priorities; for in a world where change is an essential condition of life, these will continue to evolve.

This changing world of open borders and new actors presents us with new challenges. Not all effects of globalization are positive; not all non-state actors are good. There has been an ominous growth in the activities of drug-traffickers, gun-runners, money-launderers and exploiters of young people for prostitution. These forces of "uncivil society" can be combated only through global cooperation, with the help of civil society. This is the challenge I hope you will help us meet now.

Above all, I hope that you will continue to set your sights high. You have only to look at the International Campaign to Ban Landmines—the driving force behind the treaty to ban the production, stockpile, export and use of these abominable weapons—to see that there are no limits to what civil society can achieve in partnership with governmental and intergovernmental actors. And it is often those single-minded enough to