



UN NEWS

UN SECURITY COUNCIL ON CIVIL PROTECTION IN WAR

Canada took up its two-year term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council on 1 January 1999, and in an address to the National Forum on Canada's International Relations, Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy said, "Conflicts within states and increased threats to civilians have greatly increased the risks for individuals in modern conflict situations. One of our priorities as a council member will be to include human security concerns such as peacebuilding and humanitarian issues in council discussions alongside traditional security issues."

Consistent with this emphasis on human security, Canada held two open briefings addressing the plight and protection of civilians in armed conflict when it assumed the presidency of the council for the month of February. (The presidency rotates monthly.)

On 12 February the council heard three reports on the plight of civilians in conflict zones by: Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); and Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. On 22 February the council, which met in an open meeting to consider the protection of civilians in armed conflict, recognized that the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, and between humanitarian workers and peacekeepers, had become blurred.

Many member states expressed concern about the participation of children in armed conflict and called for a minimum recruitment age of 18 for entry into the armed forces. The issue of sanctions was raised, including the

negative effects on children and on society, and the link between conflict and post-conflict situations was emphasized. Measures to be taken include strengthening of the enforcement of humanitarian law, policy measures against child soldiers, restricting small arms, action on mines and the protection of humanitarian personnel.

Contact: For summaries of the meetings see DPI press releases SC/6642 and SC/6646, available on website (www.un.org/News/Press) or contact NGLS in New York.

FIRST ICC PREPCOM MEETS

The first session of the Preparatory Commission for the International Criminal Court (ICC), which met at UN headquarters in New York from 16-26 February, discussed arrangements for ICC operations once a statute to establish the court comes into force.

The statute, adopted by a UN Diplomatic Conference held in Rome in 1998, will come into force after 60 states have ratified it. On 2 February, Senegal became the first country to do so. Seventy-six countries have signed the statute thus far; it will remain open for signature until 31 December 2000.

The work of the first session, chaired by Ambassador Philippe Kirsch (Canada), was conducted primarily in two working groups. The Working Group on Rules of Procedure and Evidence considered proposals submitted by delegations on part 5 of the statute, regarding investigation and prosecution. Three discussion papers were also considered on: determination by the prosecutor to proceed to an investigation; procedures to be followed in the event of an application or review of a decision by the prosecutor not to proceed with an investigation or not to prosecute; and proceedings with regard to confirmation of the charges. A fourth text was drafted on disclosure of evidence, which will serve as a basic document for future discussions. The group deferred decisions relating to the final structure of rules of

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NGLS is pleased to announce that the text of Go Between and its other publications are now available on its new website (<http://npls.tad.ch>).

Judge Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, has announced that she will resign halfway through her second term in November.

Judge McDonald was elected by the UN General Assembly in September 1993 and re-elected in May 1997. She was a strong advocate of establishing closer ties between the Yugoslav Tribunal in the Hague (Netherlands) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) says that in 1998 five Asian countries most affected by the financial crisis experienced an overall decline in foreign direct investment (FDI) of some US\$2 billion, or 12%. However, individual national performances varied greatly.

Inflows into the Republic of Korea and Thailand showed dramatic increases—almost doubling; inflows into the Philippines remained stable; Malaysia showed a decline; and Indonesia suffered divestment for the first time since 1974.

During the last decade, 1998 inflows to the region stood up well, according to UNCTAD. At US\$15.4 billion, these were substantially above the average of flows recorded during the 1991-1995 period (US\$10.8 billion), and a modest US\$2.1 billion below the peaks of US\$17.5 billion recorded in 1996 and 1997.

procedure and evidence, and will attempt to complete work on parts 5, 6 and 8 of the statute at the next preparatory commission session.

The Working Group on the Elements of Crime considered discussion papers on: elements for the crime of genocide in article 6 of the Rome Statute; article 8 concerning war crimes; and suggested comments relating to the crime of genocide. The working group, which also considered a report of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) concerning grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, completed general discussion on genocide and grave breaches of international law and will continue its consideration of elements of crimes at the next session.

In addition to the ICRC input, NGOs presented a number of proposals to the working groups. The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights prepared a working paper on pre-trial rights in the rules of procedure and evidence with the purpose of enhancing the ICC's authority and its practical ability to prosecute and punish crimes defined in the Rome treaty. Regarding elements of the crime, the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice highlighted for inclusion sexual violence as a crime against the person and as an act of genocide; definitions of sexual violence; and coercive circumstances.

The next session of the preparatory commission is scheduled from 26 July-13 August. The third session is planned for 29 November-17 December. The chair has designated Japan's First Secretary Hiroshi Kawamura to serve as contact point for some issues to be discussed by the commission, including the draft text of financial regulations and rules, and rules of procedure of the Assembly of States Parties. Ambassador Cristian Maquieira (Chile) will serve as the contact point for work on: the relationship agreement between the court and the UN; a draft text of basic principles governing a headquarters agreement to be negotiated between the court and the host country; and a draft agreement on the privileges and immunities of the court.

Contact: Website (www.un.org/law/icc/index.htm).

UNCTAD: GLOBAL ECONOMIC RISKS IN 1999

Neither a return to stability in the Asian economies nor the apparent containment of the Brazilian crisis can hide the downside risks facing the global economy in 1999, according to a report on *Global Economic Conditions and Prospects*. The report, prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), warns that another round of financial instability could push an already fragile world economy into recession.

Avoiding such an outcome, it says, requires "vigilance on the part of policy-makers in the industrial countries where there remains considerable scope and freedom for expansionary policy actions." According to the report, the key to a healthy world economy lies with policy makers in the North; efforts to redesign the global financial architecture in light of recent experiences have been hostage to disagreements among the

Group of Seven. Just when developing countries are becoming more vulnerable to international pressures originating in the North, there remains a general reluctance to accommodate their concerns and interests, says the report. It welcomes what it describes as a greater willingness shown by some developing countries to use capital controls in managing short-term capital flows and currencies.

According to the report, room for fiscal expansion remains large in the North; the United States is well placed to use fiscal policy should stronger contractionary forces emerge, and in Japan monetization of debt financing of the budget deficit could accommodate further stimulus.

UNCTAD says a more imaginative approach could include the following:

- debt relief through a rapid write-off of unpayable official and multilateral debt;
- regional aid plans; and
- a direct injection of liquidity through a substantial special drawing rights allocation (funds available from the International Monetary Fund) to developing countries and transition economies.

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UNCTAD/UNDP JOINT PROGRAMME

In September 1998 the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched a joint programme entitled Globalization, Liberalization and Sustainable Human Development. The programme aims to enhance the ability of developing countries, particularly low-income developing countries and countries in transition, to manage their integration into the global economy.

At the global level, the programme will develop a conceptual and operational framework for analyzing the process of integration of developing countries and countries with economies in transition into the global economy, and its relationship with sustainable human development.

A first meeting of experts was convened to that end at UNCTAD in Geneva from 3-5 February. They examined the causal relationships between sustainable human development variables—such as the equitable distribution of growth, poverty alleviation, protection of the environment and the economic advancement of women—and global integration policies in the areas of trade, investment and finance.

At the country level, assessment studies will be undertaken with the participation of "development actors" (government, private sector, research institutions and NGOs) in low-income countries in Africa (Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire,

Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tunisia and Zimbabwe), in Asia (Lao Democratic People's Republic, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam), Latin America and the Caribbean (Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica and Nicaragua), the Middle East (Jordan) and in Uzbekistan, a country in transition. On the basis of the country assessment studies, national workshops will be organized to prepare action programmes.

From 1-12 March UNCTAD staff visited Central American countries that have adopted an alliance for sustainable development as a framework for development policy. Policy-makers, representatives of the private sector and research institutions said they consider the joint UNCTAD/UNDP programme timely for enhancing equitable distribution of growth. The programme has created an awareness of global competitiveness, and policy-makers have begun to take decisions accordingly, they say. Discussions with academic institutions indicate that national competitiveness programmes show weaknesses both at the macro- and micro-policy levels.

A second mission by UNCTAD took place to African countries on 19 March to 7 April for preparatory consultations with UN resident representatives, senior government officials, and representatives of central banks, as well as NGOs and academia.

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UNICEF, UNHCR ON LANDMINES

Although the treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines became binding in March on nations that have ratified it, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) says that a widely-expanded effort is needed to help the treaty bear fruit. The agency has called for universal ratification of the treaty and an international commitment to see that every child in a mined area knows proper safety procedures.

"A giant step has been taken, which shows that the world is more and more reluctant to use these hidden killers," said Carol Bellamy, UNICEF Executive Director. "But the real test lies in seeing that the treaty is fully implemented, that stockpiles are destroyed and that demining proceeds rapidly."

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction was signed in Ottawa (Canada) in December 1997 (see *Go Between* 67). It obligates states ratifying it to "never under any circumstances...use anti-personnel mines; [or] to develop, produce, otherwise acquire [or] stockpile" them and "to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines."

Ms. Bellamy praised the 133 nations that have signed and the 65 nations among them that have ratified the treaty. She said the anti-landmine movement has already had remarkable effects, noting recent reductions in the use of anti-personnel mines and figures from the International Campaign to Ban Landmines indicating that 10-15 million mines have been destroyed from stockpiles. She also noted that the number of countries involved in producing landmines has dropped from 50 to 15. Among countries that have not yet signed the treaty are China, Iran, Iraq, Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United States and Yugoslavia.

UNICEF has been designated within the UN family as the lead agency to educate and advocate on the landmine issue. Educational campaigns have centred on teaching children about the danger of landmines and safety procedures to follow in mined areas.

According to Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the entry into force of the anti-personnel mines convention is a big step toward the safety of refugees returning to former war zones infested with mines, which kill and maim years after the guns fall silent.

"Eliminating the threat of landmines is vital to my organization's work," Ms. Ogata said. She vowed to work with UN agencies, governments and other groups to "wipe the scourge of landmines off the face of the earth."

She said landmines threaten safe return of refugees and displaced persons from Cambodia to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan to Mozambique, northwest Somalia to Western Sahara, and from Angola to Kosovo. "The presence of mines turns daily chores, such as farming, into a life threatening activity," added Ms. Ogata.

UNHCR has earmarked US\$2.5 million this year for mine action to support the return of ethnic minorities to villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is funding mine clearance and mine awareness work in Cambodia, Western Sahara, northwest Somalia, Ethiopia and Djibouti. UNHCR also has a policy of boycotting products of companies that manufacture or sell anti-personnel mines or their components.

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AFRICA REGIONAL COORDINATION MEETING

The first annual Regional Coordination Meeting of the United Nations system in Africa, held in Nairobi (Kenya) in March, brought together representatives of 23 UN agencies working on the continent. The gathering was part of a series of meetings convened to discuss enhanced

Nicaragua announced that its army would destroy 170,000 stockpiled mines in April to comply with the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

The country has destroyed over 50,000 anti-personnel mines since the end of 1998 and 80,000 in the past decade. Over 115,000 mines were laid in Nicaragua during its civil war in the 1980s.

An estimated 400 Nicaraguan civilians have been wounded or killed by landmines from the 1980s until the end of last year.

One year after the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was officially opened for signature at the United Nations, 84 parties (including the European Community) have signed the legally binding agreement.

"This rapid progress is a positive signal that governments are taking climate change seriously," said Michael Zammit Cutajar, the convention's Executive Secretary.

He said that with talks on how to reduce greenhouse gases as cheaply as possible due to conclude late next year, signatories will be well-positioned to quickly complete the process of becoming Parties to the protocol.

The Kyoto Protocol was adopted on 12 December 1997 and opened for signature from 16 March 1998 to 15 March 1999. Governments are now working on a two-year action plan to finalize the protocol's outstanding details so that the agreement will be fully operational when it enters into force sometime after the year 2000.

coordination of activities of the UN system at the regional level.

UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette, who chaired the meeting, said the event was in line with the organization's programme of reforms and was intended to improve coordination and collaboration among entities active in Africa.

Discussions focused on three main questions:

- n What is the vision of United Nations work in Africa?
- n Is there a coherent United Nations approach in implementing the vision?
- n How effective are the coordinating mechanisms?

Participants, noting a proliferation of programmes and initiatives, questioned whether the existing coordinating mechanisms for these programmes are effective. They underscored the need for enhanced coordination and collaboration, at the country as well as the regional and subregional levels. They also stressed the need for periodic review of achievement of the system's commonly agreed goals and objectives for Africa.

The meeting agreed that the vision for UN work in Africa must be shaped and determined by Africa's agreed priorities. Since such priorities are continuously evolving, there is a need for the United Nations system to review and adjust its activities accordingly. However, in view of the existing coordination arrangements and mechanisms, new structures for this purpose should not be created. Instead, existing ones should be used and strengthened as appropriate.

Participants agreed that the United Nations System-Wide Special Initiative on Africa (SIA) could provisionally constitute an appropriate mechanism for coordination of the UN system's work in Africa. The existing SIA sub-themes or clusters would be reviewed and augmented to include other priority areas. This modified mechanism would facilitate sharing information among agencies; establishing goals and identifying priorities; and periodically monitoring achievements of targets.

The UN's Steering Committee on the Special Initiative were requested to prepare a report containing detailed proposals on how it could play this coordinating role. The report, to be prepared in consultation with participating entities, would be submitted to the Deputy Secretary-General for approval. The role of the SIA as the coordinating mechanism would be subject to review after two years.

UNDP FORUM ON AFRICA

The government of Senegal and the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) African Futures project held a Forum on the Competitiveness of African Economies from 3-5 March in Dakar. The approximately 300 participants included 50 African ministers of economy, budget, finance and planning, 150 well-known figures from Africa's political and private business spheres, and economists and academics.

The forum aimed to assist political and economic decision-makers to gain a greater understanding of the problems and challenges posed by globalization. Discussions focused on four themes:

- n the macro-economic framework of competitiveness (such as fiscal and monetary policies, exchange rate issues, public investments, and debts);
- n governance (such as the regulatory framework of the African economies, transparency in procurements, harmonization of business law, the role of parliaments, and the investment code);
- n facets of competitiveness in the business arena (such as seed financing, human resources management, mastering new technologies, and infrastructure and privatization policy); and
- n the external environment (such as multilateral agreements, the World Trade Organization, the Lomé Accords, and regional business alliances).

African Futures is a regional project of UNDP, created in 1992 to assist African countries carry out national long-term perspective studies. It encourages a shared vision of the structural transformations possible through more effective management that includes diverse elements of societies. The project, based in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), operates in 17 African countries.

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SIDS MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE AT FAO

Countries attending the Special Ministerial Conference on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), held on 12 March in Rome by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), adopted a declaration pledging to support sustainable development in small island developing states and to address their particular needs.

"Reaffirming our common determination and strong commitment, expressed during the World Food Summit," says the declaration, "we pledge to pursue our efforts towards the achievement of food security and to implement development policies and programmes which secure the sustainability of agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors in small island developing states."

The conference considered a draft Plan of Action on Agriculture in Small Island Developing States, which is an umbrella programme aimed at helping some 30 SIDS countries and four low-lying coastal states "as the basis for further consideration by appropriate bodies of FAO and other relevant bodies of the United Nations system."

The draft Plan of Action would help implement programmes focusing on five major areas:

- n agricultural trade;
- n intensification and diversification of agriculture;

- n meeting fisheries needs;
- n sustainable management of land, water and forestry resources and environmental protection; and
- n strengthening national institutions.

Conference participants called on FAO to finalize the draft plan of action in consultation with its member countries and submit it to the FAO Council in June. They also requested FAO to submit the plan, once adopted, as FAO's contribution to the UN General Assembly Special Session on SIDS, meeting in New York in September 1999 (see *NGLS Roundup*, December 1998-January 1999).

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GA RESUMES SPECIAL SESSION ON PALESTINE

The UN General Assembly, meeting on 9 February in a resumed session of the Tenth Emergency Special Session on Palestine to consider illegal Israeli action in the occupied Palestinian territory, called for the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to convene a conference on measures to enforce the convention in the occupied territory, including Jerusalem.

The GA, which adopted the resolution (A/ES-10/5) by a vote of 115 in favour to two against (Israel and the United States) with five abstentions (Australia, Bahamas, Cameroon, Romania and Swaziland), recommended that the conference be convened on 15 July at the UN Office in Geneva.

The resolution demands that Israel, as occupying power, accept the *de jure* applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians in time of war to the territories occupied since 1967. It also says that Israel should cease and reverse all illegal actions taken against Palestinians living in Jerusalem.

The resolution expresses grave concern at Israel's suspension on 20 December 1998 of implementation of the 1998 Wye River Memorandum, including negotiations on the final settlement, which should be concluded on 4 May. The resolution reaffirms that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, which have altered or purport to alter the character, legal status and demographic composition of Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied territory, are null and void.

The United States said it voted against the resolution because it prejudices negotiations on permanent status issues and hampers the chances of achieving peace. The US also said that the text, like past resolutions on the matter, politicizes a convention that was primarily humanitarian in nature.

Switzerland, depository of the convention, noted that there was no consensus among states Parties on convening a conference of High Contracting Parties to the convention. It also

said it could not play an active role in convening the conference unless states Parties first define procedures to handle grave violations. Switzerland is undertaking new consultations in this regard with states Parties, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and other organizations.

Israel said that the call for such a conference "was a vulgar distortion of humanitarian law for narrow political purposes." No such conference has been held in the past, it said, and no such conference could have any relevance to the situation in the West Bank and Gaza, where 97% of Palestinians live under Palestinian rule.

The Permanent Observer of Palestine said he hoped the resolution would lead to practical steps, including a conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, to consider means of enforcing provisions of the convention in the occupied territories.

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THREE CICP PROGRAMMES LAUNCHED

Three new global programmes to combat corruption, trafficking in human beings and organized criminal groups were launched in March by the UN's Centre for International Crime Prevention (CICP), based in Vienna (Austria), in the continuing fight against the growth of transnational crime.

"Over the past few years, the enormous growth in international crime has been matched by increasing concern at the international level," said Pino Arlacchi, CICP Executive Director.

The Global Programme Against Corruption, to be jointly developed by CICP and the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Center Institute (UNICRI), will include a global study of corruption. UNICRI will set up an international database containing the study's results, best anti-corruption practices, and international instruments against corruption. A technical cooperation component will assist member states in building or strengthening their ability to prevent, detect and fight corruption. At the international level, the programme will monitor the transparency of public tendering and other areas subject to corruption in participating countries.

To help governments and the international community tackle the growing problems of migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, CICP and UNICRI will launch a Global Programme Against Trafficking in Human Beings. It will focus on the growing involvement of organized criminal groups with smuggling and human trafficking, and promote national and international coalitions among law enforcement agencies, immigration authorities, victim assistance groups and other specialized bodies in combating these practices.

The third programme—Global Studies on Organized Crime—will assess organized criminal groups worldwide and

One year after it began operations the United Nations Foundation (UNF) has announced its third round of investments in UN programmes, bringing total first-year commitments to almost US\$90 million.

In January the UNF board awarded 25 grants among its four programme priorities for total funding of US\$31.7 million. The priorities are population and women, environment, child health, and selected UN causes.

Among projects receiving funding are microcredit programmes of the United Nations Development Programme; implementation by the United Nations Environment Programme of the International Coral Reef Initiative; and support for NGLS information outreach and its work to strengthen participation of NGOs in United Nations conferences.

The world's population will probably increase by three billion people in the next 50 years, according to Joseph Chamie, Director of the United Nations Population Division.

Mr. Chamie, speaking in March at the 32nd session of the Commission on Population and Development, said the increase would be concentrated in less developed regions. Just five countries—China, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan—now account for nearly 50% of the annual growth of the world's population.

In the same 50-year period, the population of the more developed regions will remain essentially unchanged—1.2 billion—while the population of the less developed regions is expected to grow from 4.8 billion to 7.8 billion.

result in information and analysis on emerging transnational criminal organizations. The findings of the programme will allow the CICP to expand its technical cooperation activities and help countries draw up appropriate strategies to combat the problem. One of the programme outputs will be a biennial *World Drug Report on Organized Crime*.

CICP and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme make up the two component parts of the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP). The CICP's main aims, as mandated by the United Nations General Assembly, are to promote international cooperation in crime prevention and control, support the development of criminal justice systems, and assist member countries in crime prevention and criminal justice efforts.

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UNESCO MANIFESTO 2000 FOR PEACE LAUNCHED

The Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence was launched in March in Paris by Nobel Peace Prize laureates and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in March. The launch, including laureates Mairead Corrigan Maguire (Northern Ireland), Rigoberta Menchú (Guatemala) and Adolfo Pérez Esquivel (Argentina), aimed to mobilize a global grassroots movement in favour of peace, solidarity and tolerance.

The manifesto and the movement are part of UNESCO's preparations for the International Year for the Culture of Peace proclaimed for the year 2000 by the United Nations General Assembly.

"The cause of peace today more than ever needs this movement to counter centuries of a culture of force and imposition," said Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO. "At the dawn of this new century and millennium we need everyone to make the transition and new departure for a culture of peace and dialogue, non-violence and tolerance."

The manifesto upholds the values of:

- respect for life and the dignity of every person;
- practising active non-violence;
- sharing time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to end exclusion, injustice and political and economic oppression;
- defending freedom of expression and cultural diversity;
- promoting responsible consumer behaviour; and
- contributing to community development with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles.

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be signed on the UNESCO website (www.unesco.org/manifesto2000).

UNEP TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER WORKSHOP

Businesses and government officials from 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific region participated in a workshop, held in Bangkok (Thailand) from 1-3 March, to discuss lessons learned in technology transfer under the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

The workshop was organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Asia and the Pacific Centre of the Transfer of Technology, and the Centre for Science and Technology of the Non-Aligned and Other Developing Countries. The event provided a forum for technology providers from developed countries to present their perspectives on experiences and lessons learned during implementation of industrial conversion projects that replace ozone-depleting substances with ozone-friendly technologies.

"The world has for the first time experienced technology cooperation under the financial mechanism of the Montreal Protocol," said Ogunlade Davidson, co-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). "This hands-on experience of the private sector and governments in Asia and Pacific will be useful to the Parties of the Climate Change Convention, where such mechanisms are still evolving."

Among other things, participants agreed on the importance of promoting understanding of inter-related issues between the Kyoto Protocol's IPCC and the Montreal Protocol's Technology and Economic Assessment Panel. Technology collaborators stressed the need to assess country-specific customer requirements, training in adapting to new technologies, and the need to exchange information on technology options before making final decisions.

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HABITAT/OHCHR MEETING ON HOUSING

An estimated one billion people around the world are inadequately housed; of these, more than 100 million are homeless. At a meeting held in Geneva from 9-11 March, organized by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, UNCHS (Habitat) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), participants discussed how the two agencies can collaborate on a joint programme to assist member states to implement their commitments toward realization of the right to adequate housing.

The Expert Group Meeting on Practical Aspects of the Human Right to Adequate Housing said obstacles hindering progress to adequate housing include: lack of attention to the right to adequate housing by human settlements and human rights communities; increasing withdrawal of the state and public sector from provision and operation of social services and from the housing arena; and insufficient attention to the social function of housing and the rights of women, and the neglected role of civil society in practice.

The meeting generally agreed with possible action of the joint Habitat/OHCHR United Nations Housing Rights Programme and identified some priorities for the initial stages, including:

- ▢ integrate a gender perspective into all activities of the programme;
- ▢ appoint a special rapporteur on housing rights;
- ▢ adopt the Comprehensive Human Rights Guidelines on Development-Based Displacement;
- ▢ research and publish a compilation of national-level legislation relating to housing rights;
- ▢ develop a monitoring system and assist countries in formulating benchmarks to assess progress in realizing housing rights; and
- ▢ promote cooperation with partners such as civil society organizations, local authorities, bilateral and multilateral donors.

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EQUALITY FOR WOMEN PANEL HELD

Among activities in observance of International Women's Day (8 March), a panel discussion on "Equality for Women" was held 4 March at UN headquarters in New York. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and US First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton were among the speakers.

Mr. Annan said that women, who make up half of humankind, should be equally involved in the work of the United Nations. He said he hoped that the goal of 50/50 gender distribution in the UN secretariat by the year 2000 will be embraced by all member states. The way women are negatively affected by globalization will be at the forefront of challenges confronting the world on the threshold of the new millennium, he observed. Women are usually the first to lose their jobs as governments restructure and companies retrench, they are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed, and they are more likely to suffer financial consequences of family breakups. In this context, Mr. Annan announced that the UN had decided on the issue of staff members in default of court-ordered family support payments to voluntarily deduct the funds owed from the salaries of such staff members and pay it to the spouse and/or children.

Mrs. Clinton emphasized progress the UN has made in advancing women's rights in recent years. She cited the

successful struggle in Nigeria for equal rights to inheritance, the prosecution of rape as a war crime in international criminal tribunals, awareness raising of domestic violence as a crime, and the recognition of women's rights as human rights. Mrs. Clinton stressed that future progress depends not only on human rights for women, but on ensuring that they have the opportunity and right to participate in the economy and government.

SENEGAL BANS FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has applauded the Senegalese Parliament's approval in January of legislation banning female genital mutilation (FGM). Carol Bellamy, UNICEF Executive Director, said the action reflects African women's resolve to end "a cruel and unacceptable practice which violates the right of all girls to free, safe and healthy lives."

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 130 million women and girls, mainly in 28 African countries, have been subjected to female genital mutilation, which causes a range of health problems particularly during childbirth (see *Go Between* 64). Every year more than two million females, ranging from infants a few days old to mature women, undergo the procedure. Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan account for 75% of cases.

UNICEF, WHO and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have supported a global movement to sharply reduce the practice in the next decade, and eliminate it completely within three generations. In Senegal, UNICEF provided financial and communication support to local NGOs that UNICEF says helped spark the movement against female genital mutilation.

However, since the Parliament's decision there has been a backlash from many traditional leaders, especially in northern Senegal. On 11 February InterPress Service (IPS) reported that the new law has undermined local efforts to stop female circumcision; it says women from 31 villages travelled to Dakar to explain why making FGM a crime at this time would not help abolish the practice. The law, according to local activists, is viewed as having been dictated by "outside" forces such as aid organizations and Northern governments, rather than having been presented for local debate.

Many opponents of the procedure decline to use the word "mutilation," preferring to look at it as simply a health problem and supporting a strategy of education over criminalization.

STATE OF THE WORLD'S FORESTS

Forests continue to shrink at a rate of about 11.3 million hectares a year, according to *State of the World's Forests*, published by the United Nations Food and Agriculture

"It is indeed tragic that diplomacy has failed, but there are times when the use of force may be legitimate in the pursuit of peace.

In helping maintain international peace and security, Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter assigns an important role to regional organizations.

But as Secretary-General, I have many times pointed out, not just in relation to Kosovo, that under the Charter, the Security Council has primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, and this is explicitly acknowledged in the North Atlantic Treaty. Therefore, the Council should be involved in any decision to resort to force."

—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan
Statement regarding NATO airstrikes of Serbian military targets
UN headquarters
New York, 24 March

Ingrid Lehmann has been appointed Director of the United Nations Information Service in Vienna (Austria). Ms. Lehmann was formerly Director of the UN Information Centre in Athens (Greece).

Organization (FAO). However, more and more countries seem determined to confront the problem by enacting new logging regulations, setting aside more forests as protected areas, adopting enlightened management practices, and using recycling and manufacturing efficiencies in wood processing.

The report examines trends that could affect forests and the global supply and demand for wood between now and 2010. These trends include the increasing role of the private sector and local communities in forest management, environmentally-sound codes of practice for forest management, growing recognition of the role of forests in moderating climate change, and liberalization of international trade in forest products.

Mary Robinson, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has been awarded the 1999 Erasmus Prize. The award, known as the Netherlands' highest cultural prize, is given to an individual who has made an exceptionally important contribution to European culture, society or social science.

The report says that as population increases and demand for forest products and services continues to rise, good forest management will mean balancing the economic, environmental and other functions of forests. Environmental concerns have led to an emphasis on multiple-purpose management of forests, logging bans or reduced timber harvesting intensities, the adoption of operational guidelines and codes of practice for forest management, and greater reliance on forest plantations as sources of wood.

The report's publication coincided with the opening of the 14th session of FAO's Committee on Forestry, held in Rome from 1-5 March. Participants discussed national forest policies, the global outlook for supply and demand of wood products, and progress on sustainable management of the world's forests.

On 8-9 March national forestry ministers met in Rome for the Second Ministerial Meeting on Forestry to discuss sustainability issues in forestry, global action to address forest fires, and the need for international instruments to support sustainable forest development. They adopted the Rome Declaration on Forestry which, among other things, emphasizes the importance of cross-sectoral approaches to forest management and encourages national, regional and international efforts to increase public awareness of the importance of forests. Participants also discussed a draft *Strategic Framework for FAO 2000-2015*, which highlights the need for countries to implement integrated approaches to sustainable development.

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FAO CONFERENCE ON OVERFISHING

Ministers and senior representatives from some 120 countries expressed concern about "overfishing of the world's major marine fishery resources, destructive and wasteful fishing practices and excess capacity" at a conference in Rome held by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

At the conference, held 10-11 March, governments said that growing illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing including fishing by vessels flying "flags of convenience" are also troubling.

The conference endorsed three new action plans for more sustainable fisheries. The ministers endorsed the new voluntary International Plans of Action for the Management of Fishing Capacity, for the Conservation and Management of Sharks, and for Reducing Incidental Catch of Seabirds in Long-line Fisheries, recently adopted by the FAO Committee on Fisheries (see *Go Between* 72).

All three agreements should be implemented in the framework of the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The voluntary code provides principles and standards applicable to the conservation, management and development of all fisheries. It also covers fish capture, processing and trade of fish and fishery products, aquaculture, management of fisheries within coastal areas and fishery research.

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WORLD BANK RURAL WEEK

Over 400 people including representatives of government and international organizations participated in the World Bank's Rural Week, held from 24-26 March in the US state of Virginia. Discussions focused on, among other things, rural development strategies, privatization, decentralization, access to land and water, and empowerment. Eleven panels addressed issues including agricultural education, rural finance, climate change, hazard management, biotechnology and food safety.

Many participants said political considerations have a significant impact on project implementation and sustainability. They recommended staff training and expertise in political analysis, participatory and interpersonal skills, cultural awareness, conflict management and social assessments.

Concerning the World Bank's approach to political considerations in rural development they suggested, among other things, that the Bank:

- not avoid equity and human rights issues;
- permit staff specialists to address political issues;
- recognize the need for longer time horizons when dealing with political problems; and
- actively promote participatory project preparation, such as through partnerships with NGOs.

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WORLD BANK ASSISTANCE FOR Y2K

The World Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and donor countries such as Canada, Italy, United Kingdom and the United States are attempting to raise awareness about the year 2000 computer problem (Y2K) and mobilize technical assistance and funds to help developing countries. Multilateral development banks and the private sector are also involved in the initiative. The World Bank's Information for Development Programme (InfoDev) has developed an overall Y2K strategy to remedy the most potentially serious disruptions at the turn of the year 2000, and to help governments in its client countries manage the risks.

The Y2K problem stems from the fact that many software and hardware systems use only two digits to identify the year. If not converted by the target date of 31 December 1999, these systems will recognize "00" not as the year 2000, but 1900. Electronic systems based on dates will shut down, produce meaningless or misleading results, or revert to some other date.

The majority of developing countries, even the poorest, have computerized essential services such as power generation, telecommunications, food and fuel distribution, and provision of medical care. The Bank says that a general failure of such systems could endanger the health and security of people in the developing world, and could have serious implications for regional economic cooperation. During a series of international Y2K seminars held by the Bank throughout last year, politicians and computer experts discussed the vulnerability of key sectors such as: electricity sharing arrangements; air traffic control management and safety; customs clearing links; transport networks; telecommunications systems; and regional payments clearing facilities.

The Bank's campaign to help developing countries prepare for the Y2K problem embraces three priorities:

- ▢ raising borrower awareness through InfoDev seminars and the disbursement of small grants, as well as Y2K loans to client countries;
- ▢ securing the Bank's existing loan portfolio from the Y2K problem in conjunction with borrower governments; and
- ▢ ensuring that the Bank's internal computer systems are Y2K compliant and will allow the institution to work without disruption.

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UNAIDS YOUTH CAMPAIGN

Reaching out to children and young people is the most promising strategy for reducing the spread of HIV, but its effectiveness is thwarted by persistent lack of dialogue about

HIV/AIDS according to Peter Piot, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

The 1999 Listen, Learn, Live! World Aids Campaign, launched by UNAIDS in February, aims to raise the level of open communication about HIV, especially among and about those under 25, who comprise more than half of the 16,000 people who become infected each day.

"Working with people under 25 is perhaps the best hope we have today of bringing the epidemic under control," said Dr. Piot. "Yet all over the world, children and young people continue to be in the line of fire of this virus, and we have to ask ourselves why. A big part of the answer is that adults spend too much time telling young people what to do without listening to what they need: affection, close bonds with adults and education about healthy sexuality. In addition, we must speak out and loudly challenge the violence, poverty and discrimination that create huge reservoirs of HIV risk in young lives."

The campaign will encourage communities around the world to engage in open communication and combat harmful cultural attitudes. These include: macho attitudes, which pressure young men to have early, frequent and predatory sex and raise the HIV risk for them and their partners; sexual exploitation; and sexual violence in childhood.

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ECOSOC STATISTICAL COMMISSION

The 30th session of the UN Statistical Commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) met from 1-5 March at UN headquarters in New York. The commission decided to meet on an annual basis to provide "a more flexible and rapid response to emerging and topical developments in international statistics" and to better "carry out its role in following up the statistical implications of the major UN conferences and summits and the agreed conclusions of the high-level and coordination segments of the Economic and Social Council." Government representatives who also attend the commission tend to be directors-general of national statistical offices working in close collaboration with regional commissions.

At the session the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), which coordinates the work of UN agencies, funds and programmes, submitted a report of its Subcommittee on Statistical Activities. The report, which recommends that "environmental statistics" refer only to the natural environment, noted that 50 indicators have been developed through a questionnaire coordinated by the UN and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Agenda 21, the action programme adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit, charged governments and international

"They say people [who] live with AIDS die twice: the first time by the society, and [the] second time by the virus."

—Peter Piot
Executive Director
Joint United Nations Programme
on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
Press conference
Bangkok, 2 April

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) maintains an online Compendium of Sustainable Development Indicator Initiatives and Publications. The compendium, jointly funded by Environment Canada, the World Bank and IISD, is a source of information on integrated socio-economic and environmental performance measurement.

To access the compendium or make contributions contact:
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website
(iisd.ca/measure/compindex.asp).

governmental and non-governmental organizations with developing the concept of indicators of sustainable development. In Agenda 21, the UN Statistical Office is charged with supporting the development of indicators in order to "promote the increasing use of some of those indicators in satellite accounts, and eventually in national accounts."

A note (E/CN.3/1999/12) by the Statistics Division to the ACC Subcommittee observed that there are multiple and divergent approaches to environmental indicators and as yet no international standard. Given this experimental stage, the Statistics Division will make efforts at greater dialogue and coordination, but does not foresee a consensus in the short-term.

The commission decided to update the 1993 system of National Accounts, the system by which a nation measures its total output and consumption. The UN has been working to standardize how nations measure national accounts. The Task Force on National Accounts will circulate a draft publication of classifications of expenditure according to purpose, to be piloted by the Statistical Office of the European Communities (EUROSTAT). The new system classifies the functions of government, individual consumption, non-profit institutions and outlays of producers according to purpose. These new classifications may shed additional light on the role of non-profit institutions in the national economy. Among proposals for further work, the task force plans to address national accounts and employment and measurement of the "non-observed" economy.

During the ECOSOC session the Rio Group on Poverty Statistics, convened by Brazil, reported on two recent seminars on poverty statistics organized by Brazil and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The seminars, held from 7-9 May 1997 in Santiago (Chile) and from 13-15 May 1998 in Rio de Janeiro, addressed measurement, interpretation and use of poverty statistics. They also highlighted difficulties in establishing standards for a "poverty line" or "basket of basic needs," and the lack of information. The difference between getting a "head count" of those living in poverty and of poverty statistics was stressed, where "the objective is to establish relations between (poverty) and its causes...such as education, employment, income distribution, demography and the geographical distribution of the population," according to the seminar's conclusions (E/CN.3/1999/15).

The Inter-Agency Task Force on Finance Statistics, convened by the International Monetary Fund, reported on initiatives launched in response to the financial crises in Asia, which it said "had shown the lack of timely statistics that shed light on the vulnerability of countries to changes in the external environment." The task force, which also includes the Bank for International Settlements, European Central Bank, Statistical Office of the European Communities, the OECD, the World Bank and the UN Statistics Division, has been joined by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Paris Club and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Initiatives over the past year include sharing data between participating agencies; collaboration regarding external debt

from creditor source data; and identifying gaps in data needed to analyse the external debt and liquidity positions of countries.

A report by the Secretary General (E/CN.3/1999/9) to the Statistical Commission reviewed progress on demographic, social and migration statistics, including a review of population and housing censuses, gender statistics, human settlements and criminal justice statistics. Country tables from *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics*, updated yearly, are available on the Statistics Division website (www.un.org/depts/unbd/gender/intro.htm). A second website on social indicators (www.un.org/depts/unbd/social/main.htm) disseminates a set of 26 social indicators by sex covering 206 countries. Among other things, the Statistics Division has issued a *Handbook for Producing National Statistical Reports on Women and Men*, an operational guide for national statistical offices and gender programmes in the compilation of gender statistics. The division is working on a classification of time-use to measure paid and unpaid work, including gender-disaggregated data. A trial international classification of activities for time-use statistics is available (www.un.org/depts/unbd/timeuse/inter.htm), and a modified version will be tested by selected countries.

Contact: For a listing of all documents reviewed by the commission see E/CN.3/1999/L.2, available on the UN website (www.un.org/depts/unbd) or from NGLS in New York.

WORLDWIDE USE OF CONTROLLED DRUGS

Trends in the abuse and trafficking of controlled drugs in 1998 included an increase in abuse of stress-reducing drugs and a rise in heroin smoking according to the International Narcotics Control Board, which oversees implementation of United Nations drug control treaties.

Major problems highlighted in the *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 1998* include increased abuse of benzodiazepines ("bennies") and amphetamine-type stimulants, as well as an upsurge in street markets selling these and other mind-altering medicines in developing countries. Benzodiazepine abuse has increased sharply in Europe and other developed countries, where some doctors are prescribing the medication over long periods of time for a questionable array of symptoms. Heroin smoking is on the rise, and cannabis with a high tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content has become popular on illicit drug markets, particularly in North America.

The abuse of amphetamine-type stimulants, particularly "ecstasy," has spread in South America, especially in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay, as well as in the former Soviet Union and West Asian countries.

Use of the stimulant methylphenidate to treat attentional deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) has risen 100% in more than 50 countries. In several nations—Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New

Zealand, Norway, Spain and the United Kingdom—use of the drug could reach levels as high as in the United States, which currently consumes more than 85% of the world total.

The report urges nations to seek out possible over-diagnosis of ADHD and curb excessive use of methylphenidate. Patients being treated with the drug, who were mainly primary school boys at the beginning of the 1990s, now include an increasing number of children, adolescents and adults.

Low supplies of licit mind-altering drugs in developing countries, such as pain-relievers and tranquilizers, have led to “parallel markets,” which cater to both abusers and genuine patients. Drugs on these markets lack official controls, and consumers are given no medical counseling. The report urges governments to ensure that an adequate supply of these drugs pass through controlled channels for medical purposes.

Purer and cheaper heroin on the North American market has led to more smoking of the drug, especially among young people. Much of this heroin is made in Colombia, Mexico and Guatemala using locally grown poppies. Opiate abuse seems to have increased in many countries of West Asia, as well as in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Injection of drugs in these regions is particularly worrying, says the report, since it is a major means of spreading HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

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NARCOTIC DRUGS COMMISSION MEETS

The Commission on Narcotic Drugs, which met 16-25 March in Vienna (Austria), agreed that nations had taken major steps to meet drug control targets set at the June 1998 General Assembly special session on drugs (see *NGLS Roundup*, July 1998).

Building on the special session's momentum, the 53-member commission agreed on several new measures to boost efforts made by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the international community to significantly reduce both the demand and supply of illicit drugs.

A major breakthrough was reached with adoption of an action plan designed to reduce demand for illicit drugs by the special session target date of 2008. The action plan, which supports a firm resolve of the special session to make decreasing

demand as crucial in the fight against drug abuse as eradicating supply, gives UNDCP clear guidelines in demand reduction for the coming years.

When needed UNDCP will assist nations in various aspects of demand reduction, which may include investigating the causes and consequences of drug abuse, setting up national systems to monitor drug abuse problems, and assessing the impact of intervention programmes. Nations will develop programmes to reduce demand, ranging from discouraging initial use of illicit drugs to reducing negative health and social consequences.

The commission also adopted a resolution, sponsored by Colombia, to set up a high-technology monitoring network including ground surveys and remote satellite sensing to strengthen efforts in eradicating illicit narcotic crops. National monitoring of illicit cultivation will form the backbone of an international network to eradicate drug crops. UNDCP will set up a central databank with information supplied by governments on illicit cultivation, and report annually to the commission on progress in eliminating these crops.

The agreement to monitor the crops is part of the action plan drawn up at the special session—the Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development—whereby nations should design monitoring systems for illicit drug crops and report their findings to UNDCP.

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FAO REPORTS ON FOODCROPS

Prospects are good for crops in southern Africa following favourable rains in recent months, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) March report on *Foodcrops and Shortages*. If conditions continue, a recovery in production is anticipated in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Zambia, and a good harvest is in prospect in Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Swaziland. Food supplies are expected to remain tight in Angola due to renewed fighting and in Zambia, where drought reduced production last year.

However, serious concern is mounting over the deteriorating food situation in Somalia. The number of people in search of food and water is increasing, and in many areas renewed fighting has aggravated an already precarious situation.

In Asia the outlook for winter grains is mixed. Drought last year in China affected winter grains. Favourable weather in India will result in a good wheat harvest. A recovery in rice production is expected in Indonesia, while food security in Afghanistan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

An assessment of Tanzania's short rains harvest, the Vuli, estimates that production will be at least 60% lower than last year, increasing concerns that the country's food shortages could worsen in the months ahead.

The Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission, carried out by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP), estimates that Tanzanian farmers will only produce 228,200 metric tons of maize this Vuli season, compared to 568,600 tons last year.

The assessment report says this is because of dramatically reduced rainfall, which discouraged farmers from planting and lowered yields sharply. "The shortfall in current Vuli production," said the report, "and successive poor harvests in parts of the country has significantly increased the number of people that are vulnerable to food shortages."

To meet immediate food needs, the Tanzanian government recently released 10,000 tons of maize from its strategic reserves to assist people most affected.

"When civilians are attacked and massacred because of their ethnicity, as in Kosovo, the world looks to the United Nations to speak up for them. When men, women and children are assaulted and their limbs hacked off, as in Sierra Leone, here again the world looks to the United Nations. When women and girls are denied their right to equality, as in Afghanistan, the world looks to the United Nations to take a stand.

Perhaps more than any other aspect of our work, the struggle for human rights resonates with our global constituency, and is deeply relevant to the lives of those most in need—the tortured, the oppressed, the silenced, the victims of 'ethnic cleansing' and injustice.

If, in the face of such abuses, we do not speak up and speak out, if we do not act in defense of human rights and advocate their lasting universality, how can we answer that global constituency?

Will we say that rights are relative, or that whatever happens within borders shall be of no concern to an organization of sovereign states? No one that I know of can today defend that position. Collectively, we should say no! We will not, and we cannot accept a situation where people are brutalized behind national boundaries. For at the end of the 20th century, one thing is clear: a United Nations that will not stand up for human rights is a United Nations that cannot stand up for itself."

—Kofi Annan
UN Secretary-General
Address to UN Human Rights
Commission
Geneva, 7 April

remains fragile. In Iraq, despite some improvement following implementation of the oil-for-food deal, malnutrition remains a serious problem.

The effects of Hurricane Mitch continue to wreck havoc in Central America; around 400,000 tonnes of maize was destroyed in Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala. No recovery is expected from severely reduced production levels in 1997.

In the Commonwealth of Independent States, the early outlook for 1999 wheat and rye is uncertain. Crops are in reasonable condition in Ukraine, although in the Russian Federation the condition of some two million hectares of the 13 million planted are reported to be poor. The overall food situation remains stable due to a favourable harvest last year and large carryover of stocks.

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WHO EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETS

The 103rd session of the World Health Organization's (WHO) Executive Board, held from 25 January to 3 February in Geneva, expressed concern about the global burden of malaria, which is a significant cause of poverty and suffering especially in the poorest countries. It welcomed WHO's decision to establish the Roll Back Malaria project and noted that it represents a new approach in which all parties are to work in a partnership, united by common goals and consistent strategies.

Among other things, the board adopted a resolution reaffirming WHO's commitment to the global eradication of poliomyelitis by the end of the year 2000, and noted with concern that one-third of the world's population has no guaranteed access to essential drugs. In a resolution on WHO's Revised Drug Strategy, to be considered by the World Health Assembly, the board urges member states to reaffirm their commitment "to taking all necessary concrete measures in order to ensure equitable access to essential drugs." The resolution also calls for the establishment and enforcement of "regulations that ensure good uniform standards of quality assurance for all pharmaceutical materials and products."

While praising the first strategic and results-based budget of the new WHO team, the board asked that further information be given to the World Health Assembly, which will discuss and adopt a WHO budget for 2000-2001 at its next session from 17-25 May.

A groundbreaking framework convention on tobacco control proposed by WHO gathered momentum with a resolution calling on the 191 WHO member states to participate in drafting and negotiating the convention's text. The resolution also recognizes WHO's leadership in the field of tobacco control and its Tobacco Free Initiative (see below).

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WHO TOBACCO CONTROL CONVENTION

Tobacco is a killer and tobacco growers must separate concern for their own livelihood from the public health impact of tobacco, which kills four million people today and could kill up to ten million annually by the late 2020s, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

In March the agency called on tobacco growers to back its efforts to give the world its first public health treaty—the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). "WHO is not against tobacco farmers, but as the world's premier health agency, WHO is committed to addressing the tobacco epidemic," Derek Yach, head of WHO's Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI), told a delegation of the International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA).

The proposed framework convention, the world's first multilateral convention focusing specifically on a public health issue, would deal with a range of tobacco-related issues but would also ensure that individual countries are protected from the impact of multinational tobacco companies.

Richard Tate, ITGA President, said tobacco growers worldwide, but especially in developing countries, are concerned about WHO's global tobacco control initiative, adding that their concerns should not be confused with those of tobacco multinationals.

WHO told the delegation that tobacco multinationals are shifting their focus to developing countries, which will account for 70% of the ten million annual tobacco deaths by about 2020. "WHO cannot simply stand by and count the dead," said Richard Peto, scientific advisor to the initiative. The world's largest analytical study of tobacco deaths shows that in China smoking already accounts for 75,000 deaths a year—this will rise to three million by the time today's young smokers reach middle age.

WHO is exploring the possibility of establishing a high-level panel of economists and farmers to address long-term concerns of tobacco farmers. Seeking a multilateral approach to long-term options for crop substitution, WHO has begun preliminary talks with other UN agencies including the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). It has also started exploratory talks with international donor agencies to assist farmers during the period of transition from tobacco to other crops—this could occur two to three decades from now when demand for tobacco could shrink as a result of good control measures.

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274TH SESSION OF ILO GOVERNING BODY

At its 274th session in Geneva, the ILO Governing Body settled a number of outstanding technical questions related to follow-up of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 1998. The session, held from 4-25 March, also asked the Director-General of the ILO to urgently contact the government of Myanmar regarding a 1998 Commission of Inquiry finding that use of forced labour is pervasive in the country.

Juan Somavia, who was sworn in as the new Director-General of ILO, underlined what he described as the declaration's promotional nature. He stressed its value for "ensuring respect for fundamental rights at work and acting as a powerful spur to national and international efforts to translate economic growth into social equity and employment in countries at all stages of the development path." He promised reinforced ILO technical cooperation for countries working to ratify and implement the fundamental conventions and terms of the declaration.

The Governing Body said it was dissatisfied with the lack of compliance on recommendations of a Commission of Inquiry on "the pervasive use of forced labour imposed on the civilian population throughout Myanmar by the authorities." It asked Mr. Somavia to contact the Myanmar government to find out what measures had been taken in complying with the recommendations, and also offered technical assistance in this matter.

Following a decision reached by the governing body, a US\$481,050,000 budget for ILO activities around the world in 2000-2001 will be formally submitted for approval to the next session of the International Labour Conference, to be held from 1-17 June 1999.

The ILO's programme and budget sharpens the focus of ILO activities by setting out four strategic objectives for the organization at the turn of the next century. They are: promote and realize fundamental principles and rights at work; create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment and income; enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all; and strengthen tripartism and social dialogue.

The Governing Body also held a symposium on the Asian financial crisis. A report prepared for the seminar says unemployment rates have nearly doubled in Hong Kong, China and the Philippines, and registered unemployment has increased up to four times in Indonesia, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, among others. The report, *The ILO's Response to the Financial Crisis in East and South-East Asia: Evolution of the Asian Financial Crisis and Determination of Policy Needs and Response*, says the bulk of job losses are in the modern,

industrial and service sectors of East Asian economies where wages, productivity and working conditions tend to be higher than average. This forces increasing numbers of workers into informal or agricultural sectors, which are already crowded and offer poorer earning opportunities.

The report says that because high levels of retrenchment in the job market are largely uncovered by any form of unemployment insurance, increasing numbers of workers are left to fend for themselves. It warns that as poverty rates increase vulnerable groups, particularly women and migrant workers, are likely to slip into poverty.

Participants at the seminar called for strengthened ILO capacity for economic analysis and a "rapid response" strategy for minimizing social fallout from future crises. Mr. Somavia said establishment of such a capacity is one of his main operational priorities. "The precipitous declines in living standards caused by financial instability need to be addressed with the same vigour, the same effort at containment, as declines in asset values," he said. "The ILO has a distinct role to play in addressing these concerns. In an interdependent but unsettled world economic order, the organization needs to develop its capacity to address unforeseen events and respond to critical situations affecting the world of work."

Participants at the symposium agreed that a common new vision for reform is emerging, which recognizes the importance of democracy as a guarantor of basic human rights, the value of social dialogue for sustaining democracy, and an open policy debate. They said that strengthening systems of social protection should be given the highest priority. Possible measures include introducing unemployment insurance and expanding social assistance schemes to relieve extreme poverty.

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IFAD GOVERNING COUNCIL CONCLUDES

The 22nd session of the Governing Council of the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) concluded on 18 February in Rome after wide-ranging debates on matters affecting the world's rural poor. The session was attended by ministers of finance and agriculture and high-ranking delegates from 126 member countries, plus two UN member countries and representatives from 36 non-governmental organizations.

Discussions focused on, among other things, replenishment of IFAD's resources, IFAD projects around the world, progress of the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty, and the Global Mechanism of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. The mechanism, which is housed at IFAD, has begun the task of mobilizing funds to combat land degradation. IFAD, drawing on its experience of a special

Juan Somavia, the new Director-General of the International Labour Office (ILO), took office on 4 March, marking the first time a representative of the South has headed the organization.

Mr. Somavia, the ninth Director-General of the ILO since its founding in 1919, was elected by the ILO Governing Body on 23 March 1998.

"We have agreed internationally to promote open societies and open economies," he said. "That consensus will not hold if real benefits for ordinary people and their families are not put into the equation. I am proud of what the ILO stands for. The Nobel Prize in 1969 acknowledged its contribution to peace. I have the responsibility to modernize and help steer the tripartite structure to make ILO values prevail in the new global realities."

The United Kingdom will increase its annual contribution in 1999 to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children's Fund.

The UK's core contribution to UNDP will be the equivalent of US\$58.3 million at the current exchange rate, an increase of 17% over its 1998 contribution. The UK also committed to providing at least the same amount for 2000 and 2001, in recognition of UNDP's new funding strategy and development of a results oriented, multi-year funding framework.

Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen (India) has become a Distinguished Advisor on Human Development to UNDP. Professor Sen was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics last year for research that has changed the way governments approach human development, hunger and famine. He has been closely associated with UNDP and its Human Development Reports for more than a decade.

programme for sub-Saharan African countries affected by drought and desertification, plans to invest around US\$100 million a year in projects to raise agricultural productivity in dryland areas.

Summing up the session, Fawzi Al-Sultan, IFAD President, said the council had agreed to establish a consultation to review resources that IFAD will need for its future work. This will consist of representatives from 46 IFAD member countries. Mr. Al-Sultan warned that if the fund does not receive at least the same level of resources as now, it will have to "drastically reduce" its support for projects to help the rural poor.

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UNDP SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FACILITY

Sixteen corporations have joined discussion with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to establish a Global Sustainable Development Facility, which would fund investment projects to help poor countries meet social, environmental and human development goals.

The companies include AT&T, Dow Chemical Corporation and Owens Corning (United States), ABB Group (Sweden/Switzerland), Novartis (Switzerland), Cutlors Corporation (Finland), Rio Tinto (United Kingdom) and electric utility RWE (Germany). The facility would create a partnership between UNDP and the private sector aimed at meeting both corporate investment objectives and the development goals of the agency. Corporations participating in dialogue with UNDP about the facility must contribute US\$50,000 to underwrite the costs of the dialogue. The rules of engagement for a future operational phase are still being developed.

However, the facility has been criticized by corporate watchdog groups. Joshua Karliner, Executive Director of the Transnational Resource and Action Center (TRAC), said that he fears "these global corporations care more about 'greenwashing' their own tarnished public images than about meeting the pressing needs of the world's poor." The needs of poor communities around the world, he added, "constantly conflict with corporate goals. Corporations often use child labour, obstruct trade unions, and engage in practices that destroy natural resources and pollute poor communities."

Eimi Watanabe, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of the Bureau for Development Policy, said in March that the initiative would get corporations to work with the UN to create projects and investments that uphold universal labour, environmental and human rights standards, including the right to be free of poverty.

"The breakthrough we are aiming for is to demonstrate that it is possible for corporations to meet these standards, improve the lives of poor people and to be profitable," said Ms. Watanabe. "The reality of globalization is that corporations

with their resources can have so much more impact—positively and negatively. We are trying to find the positive way."

In a 17 March letter to NGOs critical of the initiative James Gustave Speth, UNDP Administrator, invited dialogue with them about their concerns and the initiative's operational phase.

GUATEMALA COMMISSION PRESENTS REPORT

On 25 February Guatemala's Historical Clarification Commission released *Memories of Silence*, a report on human rights violations committed during the country's 36-year armed conflict. The civil war ended in December 1996 with a UN-brokered peace accord signed by representatives of the government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG). The conflict claimed more than 150,000 lives and 50,000 "disappeared people," leaving 200,000 orphans, 40,000 widows, 45,000 refugees and one million displaced out of a population of approximately ten million.

The report documents 8,000 murders, disappearances, cases of torture and other offenses. It does not, however, provide names of perpetrators who have been identified and cannot be used to bring legal action. The decision to create the commission was part of an accord on clarification of atrocities committed during the civil war, signed on 23 June 1994 by the Guatemalan government and the URNG in Oslo (Norway). The commission was set up in late July 1997 and charged with investigating and elucidating human rights violations and violence connected with the war, and recommending measures to promote peace and national harmony.

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Alvaro de Soto, who received the report in Guatemala City, delivered a speech on behalf of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. "One of the strengths of the Guatemalan peace process," according to Mr. Annan, "is its development of a comprehensive concept of the requirements of national reconciliation. At the core of this concept is the idea that all sectors of society should have the opportunity to rebuild, together, a more just and more equitable society and a more efficient State to serve it, drawing the right lessons from mistakes of the past....The report of the Clarification Commission can be no substitute for justice. But its widespread dissemination throughout Guatemala will allow for analysis, public debate and private contemplation of the chain of events and responsibilities that brought such tragedy to recent Guatemalan history. In order to ensure that events such as those that befell Guatemala in the last decades are never repeated, they must become part of the nation's history and culture. Public awareness of Guatemala's heritage, together with the Commission's recommendations, will help strengthen the reform process to which the country aspires and the Government is committed through implementation of the peace accords."

Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF), also praised the publication of the report, which found that children were killed, abducted, forcibly recruited as soldiers, illegally adopted and sexually abused during the civil war. UNICEF, in collaboration with the German Technical Cooperation Agency, provided technical support to the commission in collection and analysis of information on the impact of armed conflict on children.

Contact: For a summary of the report, see website (www.hrdata.aas.org/ceh).

INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL FOR LAW OF THE SEA

Hearings began on 8 March in Hamburg (Germany) for the first case ever brought before the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. The case deals with a dispute between Guinea and St. Vincent and the Grenadines over the arrest of an oil tanker. Both countries are party to the Convention on the Law of the Sea and have submitted to jurisdiction of the tribunal.

The articles of the convention under dispute concern sovereign rights with respect to the living resources in a nation's exclusive economic zone—particularly fishing rights (article

297, paragraph 3a). In October 1997 Guinea arrested an oil tanker flying the flag of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which was allegedly refuelling fishing vessels in Guinea's exclusive economic zone. Guinea claims that the vessel was connected with smuggling and violated its custom laws. The actual arrest took place outside of Guinean territory; Guinea claims it was "in hot pursuit" as authorized by the convention. The ship's master was arrested, and the boat forced to discharge oil valued at US\$1 million.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines claim that refuelling fishing vessels does not violate sovereign jurisdiction in the exclusive economic zone; there was no "hot pursuit;" Guinea failed to notify them of reasons for the detention; and it failed to set bond for release of ship and crew within the mandated time. St. Vincent and the Grenadines also assert that a ship involved in refuelling outside of Guinea's 12-mile territorial waters (but within its economic zone) is not subject to local customs and contraband laws. Until a verdict is reached, Guinea has been ordered to refrain from enforcing judicial measures taken against the ship and its crew.

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UN AND NGO NEWS

VISION 2020 CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

The World Health Organization (WHO) and a broad coalition of international, non-governmental and private organizations have launched a global initiative entitled Vision 2020: The Right to Sight. The objective of the initiative is to eliminate avoidable blindness, which affects 40-45 million people worldwide, by the year 2020. "Blindness represents a serious public health, social and economic problem for our Member States," said Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General of WHO. "Up to 80% of global blindness is avoidable: it either results from conditions that could have been prevented or can be successfully treated with sight restored."

Five conditions have been identified as immediate priorities within the framework of the initiative: cataract, trachoma, onchocerciasis, childhood blindness, and refractive errors/low vision. Under Vision 2020, major concerted international efforts will be made in areas such as:

- ▢ advocacy and resource mobilization;
- ▢ joint planning and strengthening of national capacities through human resource development; and
- ▢ the transfer of appropriate technologies to developing countries.

The initiative will emphasize training of mid-level personnel who are the backbone of national programmes for the prevention of blindness; the transfer of technology to

developing countries is another important element of the initiative.

Vision 2020 will be implemented through four five-year plans, the first one starting in 2000. The choice of countries is to be regionally prioritized on the basis of the burden of blindness and available resources.

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NGO BRIEFING WITH GROUP OF 77

At an NGO briefing with the Group of 77 and China, hosted by the Department of Public Information on 4 February in New York, incoming G-77 chair Ambassador Samuel Insanally (Guyana) addressed the theme of Challenges for 1999 and Beyond.

Mr. Insanally, who said the key issues for G-77 nations are economic, cited the need for a global reallocation of resources if real development is to take place. "The current ideology of globalization," he said, "certainly doesn't make the cause of development an easy one." He added that there is a divergence of views on globalization within the developing

Multi-drug resistant tuberculosis is on the rise, with eight million new cases of TB every year, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). TB remains the single biggest killer of young women and kills as many women as all combined causes of maternal mortality.

Still, only 16% of the world's infectious TB sufferers receive WHO's recommended TB treatment, known as DOTS (direct observation treatment, short-course). To meet the challenge, WHO has launched a Stop TB Initiative in partnership with the World Bank, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and a coalition of NGOs.

Stop TB's founding partners are the American Lung Association, the American Thoracic Society, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the USA, the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD), the Royal Netherlands Anti-Tuberculosis Association (KNCV), the World Bank and the World Health Organization.

world, and stressed the need for a new global financial architecture, more attention to the growing gap in incomes, and the necessity of a new development strategy. He noted the sharp decline in official development assistance (ODA) for developing countries and said some critical issues are low on the UN agenda, including the role of transnational corporations in the global economy. For example, he said, previous negotiations brought the UN close to signing an accord on transnational behaviour but this is not currently being addressed.

According to Mr. Insanally there are "cracks" in the current development paradigm, and Northern NGOs can play an important role in a concerted agenda with the G-77 in challenging the present system. He welcomed future collaboration with NGOs, noting that the Guyanese Mission to the UN has a long-standing policy of cooperation with them. "There's a multiplier effect—we bolster our own resources with NGO help," he said. "Sometimes governments are fearful of NGOs, particularly those with transnational might and resources. Guyana invites environmental and women's NGOs as part of the official Guyanese delegation to begin to bridge the gap of suspicion. NGOs should actively meet with delegations to work to earn the confidence of governments. There needs to be an effort on both sides to build this relationship."

Mr. Iqbal Haji, Chief of the Poverty Eradication, Employment and Youth Branch of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), told participants that "the world is gripped by an ideology that is not conducive to development. The push for market forces, competition and private enterprise is a misleading conceptual framework for the development of the South. We cannot accept globalization as the framework for discussion. The real issues for people in the South are agriculture, industrialization, infrastructure, health and education."

He noted that economic growth has steadily declined over the last 30 years. "We can't talk about education for all," he observed, "without economic growth, albeit environmentally sensitive and socially progressive growth." Mr. Haji noted that it is in the long-term interest of Northern industrialized nations to help bring developing nations out of poverty. "Global prosperity and stability," he said, "depend not on more arms but on lifting billions of people out of poverty, educating them and giving them jobs." Mr. Haji observed that South-South sub-regional collaboration will be a key strategy for developing nations in responding to the forces of globalization.

He also noted with concern what he described as progressive weakening of the UN's role in economic issues. "Human rights, environmental and social issues need to be balanced with an emphasis on technology, trade and agricultural commodities," he added. In challenging the emphasis of some Northern NGOs, he said decreased consumption in the North will not contribute to development unless there is a transfer mechanism for redistribution.

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CONFERENCE ON AGEING HELD AT UN

By 2020, 1.4 billion persons in the world will be over 60 years old, an increase of 240% since 1980; the fastest growth will be in developing countries. By 2025, worldwide average life expectancy will reach 73 years, a 50% improvement on the 1955 average of 48 years. Although longevity is an indicator of a nation's progress and development, few nations are prepared for a rapidly growing older population.

As a contribution to the 1999 International Year of Older Persons, the UN held a conference in New York from 10-11 February on Caring Communities for the 21st Century: Villages and Cities for All Generations.

The event, which included a Global Video Conference on Ageing, highlighted increased longevity as one of humankind's greatest achievements, with improved health, hygiene and nutrition extending most life spans despite diseases such as AIDS.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appealed to governments to plan for the long-term for their growing ageing populations. "Developing nations where the majority of older people live," he said, "are coping with the graying of their societies and will have to set aside substantial resources and ensure that public health and social services are up to the task."

He identified two other priority areas for planning for the long-term:

- ▢ the situation of older women, who are more likely than men to be poorer in old age and more likely to face discrimination; and
- ▢ contributing to healthy lifestyles and lifelong learning, among other things, during earlier phases of a person's life, which contribute to an active old age.

The video conference, held 11 February to coincide with the meeting of the Commission for Social Development, was one of a series of events to mark the International Year of Older Persons. The event was sponsored by the Non-Governmental Committee on Aging in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the Department of Public Information (DPI).

During the video conference representatives of six countries—Chile, China, Egypt, Kenya, Sri Lanka and Switzerland—presented issues related to ageing of their populations and identified priorities for action in the next century to meet their needs.

Contact: NGO Committee on Aging, 49 West 45th Street, New York NY 10036, United States, telephone +1-212/398 3175, fax +1-212/869 8042 or International Council for Caring Communities Inc., 24 Central Park South, New York NY 10019, United States, fax +1-212/759 5893, e-mail <iccc@undp.org>.

As the 106th US Congress convenes, NGOs in Washington DC are preparing advocacy plans aimed at improving the relationship of the United States with the UN, and eventually securing payment of the country's longstanding arrears to the UN. The US came close to losing its vote in the General Assembly last year, pursuant to provisions regarding arrears in Article 19 of the UN Charter (see *Go Between* 72).

A coalition of "payment-advocacy" groups will spend US\$12 million over the next two years to persuade the United States Congress to pay US\$1.3 billion in dues and arrears to the UN. The US-based A Better World Fund is joining with the United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA), the Emergency Coalition for US Payment of UN Arrears, the Business Council for the United Nations, and the US Council for International Business to educate and inform Americans about the importance of UN programmes and activities.

In 1998 the US Congress approved payment of a percentage of US arrears, but President Clinton vetoed the legislation because of unrelated restrictions tacked onto the bill by abortion opponents, which would have prohibited US funding to international family planning programmes. At that time, President Clinton noted that US law prohibits the use of federal funds to pay for abortion abroad and for lobbying on abortion issues. Organizers of the arrears campaign say they will seek to remove the abortion language from the legislation, or at least reach a compromise over the language.

According to UNA-USA, the arrears are relatively small when considered in context of the US budget. The association said that payment in full, on time and without burdensome conditions represents the country's legal obligations, and would be preferable to fostering a "worsening relationship with our allies and other members of the world community." UNA also stressed that failure of the US to honour its financial obligations is negatively impacting its ability to influence policy in the United Nations.

All US international affairs funding totals less than 1% of the federal budget and, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the US ranks last of 21 countries in the percentage of its gross domestic product contributed to official development assistance.

Despite the million dollar figures in the Clinton administration's request for contributions to the UN system, the totals represent only about one-tenth of 1% of the US federal budget. For this reason, many NGOs have expressed concern at the extent to which they said the funding is "micro-managed" by conservative members of the Congress.

NGOs based in the US contend that reform the Senate Foreign Relations Committee has demanded from the UN has

been undertaken and remains a high priority with UN leadership.

UNA-USA says that the 1996-1997 budget and the current 1998-1999 budget have been at zero nominal growth, meaning that there are no additions and no adjustments made for inflation or currency exchange rate fluctuations.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has also publicly committed to reducing the secretariat's administrative costs by one-third and channelling these resources into development programmes.

On 11 February Steve Dimoff, UNA Vice-President, and other national and international NGOs met in New York to discuss the way the UN-US relationship is perceived among US congressional representatives in Washington.

Mr. Dimoff outlined how US contributions to the UN are determined, noting that while the President takes the initiative in foreign relations, Congress has "the power of the purse" and thus determines the degree of participation in international organizations.

Mr. Dimoff said the desire to reduce the US assessed contribution from 25% to 20% of the UN's regular budget is one of the main obstacles.

Other obstacles include:

- a lack of understanding in Washington of "consensus-based budgeting" at the UN;
- a "crisis of confidence" in international organizations in general;
- conditions on arrears payments set by abortion opponents; and
- a gap between UN and the US Congress perceptions about "reform." (To the United States, he noted, UN reform equals reduction.)

Mr. Dimoff stressed that success in bridging the gap between US and UN positions is not just about getting arrears paid, but about sensitizing the country's Congress to the UN's importance. He noted that recent polling activities and other events that NGOs have undertaken have been valuable in raising consciousness.

In March coalition members sent a letter to Congressional leaders of both the Democratic and Republican parties, warning that the 1997 Congressional Balanced Budget Act's budget authority for payment of the US debt expires in October 2000. "If Congress does not utilize this budget authority by appropriating funds for UN arrears this year," the letter says, "it will be significantly more difficult to gain funding in the future."

Contact: A Better World Fund, United States, telephone +1-212/501 1900 or UNA-USA, 1779 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 610, Washington DC 20036, United States, telephone +1-202/462 3446, fax +1-202/462 3448, e-mail <jcohen@unausa.org.org>, website (www.unausa.org).

Despite improvements of cash inflow, the United Nations is still facing financial difficulties, according to Joseph Connor, Under-Secretary General for Management.

Mr. Connor told the UN Administrative and Budgetary Committee in March that for the first time in four years, the organization is borrowing less from peacekeeping funds to cover regular budget activities, and cash balances are higher.

The changes are mainly due to increased payments by the United States. However, Mr. Connor said the country still owed 76% of all unpaid regular budget assessments at the end of 1998.

In 1995 unpaid regular budget assessments were US\$564 million; at the end of last year they were US\$417 million, with the deficit in the regular budget down.

Still, "we have no capital, we have no reserves, we borrow from some member states to make up for the income we do not get from other member states," Mr. Connor said.

NGO NEWS

Sithembiso Nyoni, Zimbabwe's Minister of State and Parliamentary member, has been presented the InterAction Humanitarian Award for her leadership in support of NGOs and the people they serve.

In addition to positions in government, Ms. Nyoni has continued her involvement with the Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP), which she founded in Zimbabwe in 1980. ORAP has been internationally recognized as one of the most prominent institutions dealing with development and the empowerment of disadvantaged families.

Moustapha Niasse (Senegal) has been appointed Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Congo peace process, as part of an effort by the UN to try to help stop the fighting between the government and rebels.

Mr. Niasse was Foreign Minister of Senegal. His role as envoy will be to sound out African leaders to determine the UN's role in promoting a settlement and to ascertain the level of practical support African nations are willing to give. UN officials have suggested that international peacekeepers may be needed to monitor a cease-fire.

DEMOCRATIZING GLOBAL FINANCE

Over 300 representatives from NGOs and activist groups, as well as academics and parliamentarians from around the world gathered in Bangkok (Thailand) on 23-24 March to discuss strategies to counter the growing power of global finance over the fate of national and regional economies. The conference on Economic Sovereignty in a Globalizing World: Creating People-Centred Economics for the 21st Century, was hosted by the Bangkok-based international NGO Focus on the Global South. Participants examined a range of options to strengthen democratic forms of economic governance at the local, national, regional and global level.

Many speakers insisted that financial globalization has drastically reduced the capacity and/or willingness of national governments to pursue development policies aimed at protecting and promoting the economic, social and environmental rights of their citizens. Instead, they said governments' policy choices are increasingly held hostage to the demands of financial markets that favour only the elites and, under circumstances of widespread indebtedness, to the tight fiscal and monetary squeeze typically accompanying rescue packages from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Most participants agreed that an immediate strategic priority should be to "create spaces" for more autonomous decision-making by governments at various levels, in a manner that would be democratically informed by human rights principles, sustainability and social development objectives. These would entail a combination of measures, including: the right of nations to impose capital controls in the interest of economic sovereignty; Tobin-type taxes on speculation; the creation of regional monetary funds to counter the powers of what participants described as a *de facto* G-7 controlled IMF; cessation of current initiatives in various fora aimed at capital account liberalization; ensuring that all international economic policy-setting fora conform with UN treaties, particularly in the areas of human rights and the environment; and an end to linkages between debt relief and structural adjustment conditions. Participants also discussed reform efforts they believe are needed in other multilateral and regional arrangements, including the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

In a final communiqué, a majority of conference participants said the IMF should take full responsibility for the "failures of the institution" and called for the resignation of the fund's entire senior management. They also called for a two-year review of the WTO's impact on jobs, the environment and the poor, adding that there should be no new negotiations until the review is completed.

A detailed review of discussions and proposals made at the conference will be presented in a forthcoming *NGLS Roundup*.

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CONFERENCE FOR PEACE IN CONGO

A Conference on Durable Peace and Democratic Development in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), held in Montreal (Canada) from 29-30 January, was sponsored by the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development in collaboration with a coalition of Congolese organizations based in Canada. These included the National Council of Development NGOs of Congo (CNOGD), Collective of Solidarity for Democracy in Congo-Kinshasa (CSD-CK), and African Association for the Defence of Human Rights in Congo/Kinshasa.

The conference aimed to: enhance the contribution and participation of internal and external civil society and non-violent democratic forces in the peace negotiation process for achieving respect for human rights and democratic development in Congo; provide an opportunity for frank and constructive dialogue between representatives of internal and external civil society, non-violent political parties, the Congolese government and armed opposition groups; and sensitize the government and people of Canada to the situation in the DRC.

About 100 participants representing internal and external Congolese civil society, political parties and organizations, churches, observers from the Canadian government, Canadian and African NGOs, and African states attended the conference. Workshops focused on themes such as: cease-fire, peacekeeping and deployment of peacekeeping forces; preliminary conditions for the creation of a democratic space; transitory democratic institutions and the conditions for their establishment; and permanent democratic institutions.

Conference participants recommended, among other things:

- inclusion of democratic forces and civil society at the negotiating table during upcoming talks between the Congolese government and rebel forces;
- liberation of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, and non-restrictive liberalization of political party activities;
- establishment of a truth commission on economic and war crimes and massive violations of human rights; and
- deployment of an international peacekeeping force of approximately 12,000 troops and implementation of an international observer mission to supervise withdrawal of foreign troops and to oversee the process of establishing a national republican army and democratic institutions.

In addition, participants identified two arenas for lobbying and political pressure both inside and outside the country: continuing the campaign of civil society and pursuing a full-scale revitalization of political parties in order to achieve peace and democratic renewal; and pursuing lobbying efforts and an education and sensitization campaign aimed at governments and international institutions.

Participants called on UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the Security Council, the Organization of African Unity, the Commission of the European Union, and various heads of state to play a more vigorous role in the rapid return of peace and the democratic process in the DRC.

The conference was part of an international campaign to bring peace to the DRC, which began with civil society meetings in November 1998 held in Kinshasa and Switzerland, and a January 1999 meeting in Antwerp (Belgium).

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OXFAM CAMPAIGN ON EDUCATION

Across the world, 125 million primary school-aged children will not attend class today, or this year. Another 150 million will leave school without basic literacy skills. *Education for Now: Break the Cycle of Poverty*, a report by Oxfam International as part of a new campaign on education, says the international community's goal of having every child in primary school by 2015 will not be met based on current trends.

"Oxfam's report found what every parent knows," according to Oxfam. "Education is critical to our children's future. And giving every child basic education is critical to the future of families, towns, nations and continents. With the political will and US\$8 billion more a year, we can keep the promise of primary education for all. But as the global economy depends more on knowledge and skills, the cost of illiteracy is rising."

The report, which draws on original research as well as government statistics to rank nations on their success in providing education to all, details the impact of global debt, the East Asia financial crisis, and international financial institutions' policies on providing education. It also examines broad disparities in education within countries. It says that two-thirds of the children out of school are girls, and by 2015 three-fourths of the children out of school will be in sub-Saharan Africa, the only region where the number of unschooled children is growing.

An estimated US\$8 billion per year in additional education spending over the next decade—the equivalent of four days' global arms spending—would put every child into primary school, according to the report. It proposes a detailed global action plan including increased debt relief and aid to poor

IN DEDICATION TO INGRID WASHINAWATOK

Ingrid Washinawatok, an internationally prominent indigenous rights activist and representative to the United Nations International Working Group on Indigenous Rights, was murdered in early March in Colombia along with indigenous rights activists Terry Freitas and Lahe'ena'e Gay. The three had been visiting the Uw'a, an indigenous people of about 5,000 living in the Arauco region of Colombia, who are opposed to oil exploitation on their lands. The deaths took place in the context of a civil war that has engulfed the region.

Ms. Washinawatok, age 41 and a member of the Menominee Nation in Wisconsin (United States), was Executive Director of the Fund for Four Directions, a New York foundation that supports Native American culture. Among

Ingrid Washinawatok was one of many women remembered in a global videoconference (see NGLS Roundup, May 1999) held on International Women's Day, 8 March, at the United Nations in New York.

On 9 March Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, condemned the brutal murder of the three indigenous human rights activists and called for a full investigation.

She recalled that Ms. Washinawatok was well-known to the international community for her active defence of indigenous rights and reaffirmed her office's determination to protect the human rights of the world's indigenous peoples.

nations, changes in International Monetary Fund policies to protect education spending during economic crises, and increased investment in education and changes in national policies by developing countries.

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ICRC PEOPLE ON WAR PROJECT

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has launched a People on War Project to increase awareness of the rules that exist for people's protection in wartime, and to encourage discussion of humanitarian law in the context of modern-day conflict.

The objectives of the project are to give a voice to people affected by war; increase public awareness and support for humanitarian rules; enlarge the constituency of international humanitarian law; stimulate far-reaching debate; and contribute in drafting an humanitarian agenda for the early 21st century. These objectives will be achieved by, among other things, worldwide consultations and surveys until August 1999; questionnaires, focus groups and individual interviews in countries affected by war; and debates and seminars on international humanitarian law and humanitarian work.

A world wide web forum will provide a virtual space for broad debate encompassing the public, experts, NGOs and the media on possibilities for the application of international humanitarian law. The debate can be followed on the web (www.di90.org); participants can also send e-mail messages <forumdih@di90.org>. The ICRC website offers a direct link under the heading "international humanitarian law."

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Jacques Jobin (Canada) has been appointed Director of the International Union of Local Authorities (ILU), based in the Netherlands. Mr. Jobin formerly served as Director of the International Office of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

The ILU is the oldest and largest network of local governments and their national associations. Its membership, spread over 116 countries, represents more than 100 associations and, both direct and indirectly, thousands of local governments worldwide.

OTHER NEWS

A US\$10.4 million environmental improvement project to clean up the Rio de la Plata and restore its ecosystems has been launched with funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Global Environment Facility (GEF).

The Rio de la Plata, a major river in Argentina and Uruguay, has been degraded largely due to industrial and municipal sewage from urban centres of both countries.

The project will develop a strategic action programme to help restore the river to environmental health, assist in strengthening national environmental institutions, and fund local capacity building and public awareness programmes in environmental protection.

Economic growth rates of 5% or more will be achieved by seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa in 1999, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, based in the United Kingdom.

It forecasts impressive growth performances in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi, Mauritius, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda.

"Sub-Saharan Africa will have more countries among the world's 20 fastest-growing than any other region," said the unit, "more as a result of weak or negative growth in emerging markets rather than inherently strong growth in Africa."

WTO ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SYMPOSIA

Several hundred representatives of government, international institutions, NGOs, business associations, academia and trade unions took part in two high level symposia on trade and environment, and trade and development, hosted by the World Trade Organization (WTO) on March 15-18.

The symposia, held in Geneva, provided an opportunity for frank exchanges between civil society, governments and inter-governmental institutions on issues such as:

- linkages between trade and environmental policies and regimes;
- the development role and impact of trade and investment liberalization;
- reasons for or against entering into a new round of multilateral negotiations further to the third WTO ministerial conference, to be held in Seattle (United States) from 30 November to 3 December 1999; and
- the nature and content of any possible future round.

The symposia revealed that there are still major disagreements among both governments and civil society organizations on these issues. During the environmental symposium, many developing countries spoke against the inclusion of environment in future trade negotiations as proposed by some developed country governments and environmental NGOs, particularly if this would mean legitimizing the use of trade sanctions to improve environmental standards and performance in less developed countries. They said that developed countries have not fulfilled their pledges made at the 1992 Earth Summit in terms of North-South financial and technology transfers. Some speakers argued in favour of "triple win" measures, which simultaneously further trade liberalization, social equity and environmental protection. Others said "win-win" solutions apply only in certain cases, such as elimination of tariff peaks and escalation or removal of certain export subsidies. They said it makes little sense to focus exclusively on these without addressing cases of conflict between trade and environment objectives, and cited as the most obvious example conflicts between trade-related intellectual property rights of transnational corporations and the biodiversity rights of small farmers and indigenous peoples.

During the symposium on trade and development, a number of developed countries associated themselves with the United Kingdom's proposal that the next round of negotiations should be a "development round," which would seek to address the development concerns of developing countries. Many developing countries said the expected benefits of the Uruguay Round agreements had not materialized, or appeared to be skewed in favour of the major trading nations. Many highlighted the need to undertake a thorough impact assessment of past

agreements, and some questioned the advisability of rushing into a new round according to the agreed timetable. Others suggested that if developing countries do not accept to enter a new round of trade liberalization, they may face increased protectionism from developed countries, particularly the United States.

A growing number of NGOs are calling for a moratorium on future negotiations that would be used to undertake a detailed impact assessment of existing agreements on marginalized communities, development, democracy, environment, health, human rights, labour rights and the rights of women and children. Some of the organizations, many of which were involved in the international NGO campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), met at a strategy meeting held after the high level symposia and have committed themselves to engage in an international campaign against a "millennium round" in the run-up to the third WTO ministerial conference.

A more detailed overview of issues related to the WTO high level symposia will be covered in a forthcoming *NGLS Roundup*.

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AFRICAN FOREST SUMMIT

At a Forest Summit on 16 March in Yaoundé hosted by Cameroon President Paul Biya, five African heads of state signed the Yaoundé Declaration, which contains plans to protect vast tracts of forest in the Congo Basin of Central Africa.

At the summit chaired by HRH Prince Phillip, President Emeritus of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Gabon, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville and Equatorial Guinea joined Cameroon in signing the declaration.

The agreement includes establishing a new trans-border conservation initiative between Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville and Gabon to protect more than 3.5 million hectares of forest; and endorsing an existing tri-national network of protected areas between Cameroon, the Central African Republic and Congo-Brazzaville, which covers more than one million hectares of forest.

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32nd Commission on Population and Development

The 32nd session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) met at UN headquarters from 22 March-1 April. It also served from 24 March-1 April as the preparatory committee (PrepCom) for the General Assembly special session from 30 June-2 July for review and appraisal of implementation of the Programme of Action (POA) of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

The CPD met first in a condensed two-day session, chaired by Robert Louis Cliquet (Belgium), to consider the theme "population growth, structure and distribution, with special emphasis on sustained economic growth and sustainable development, including education." World demographic trends and patterns of international migration were also examined. The commission concluded its abbreviated session with the adoption of two resolutions. A text on population growth, structure and distribution (E/CN.9/1999/L.4) requests the UN secretariat's Population Division to continue research on this subject including levels, trends, determinants, consequences and policies. The resolution emphasizes that the division's research should help governments compare experiences and understand the factors underlying changing demographic circumstances. A resolution on special themes for the CPD in the years 2000-2004 (E/CN.9/1999/L.5) was also approved. It reaffirms that "population, gender and development" should be the special theme for the 33rd CPD session in the year 2000, and that the theme for the 34th session will be "population, environment and development."

PrepCom

The PrepCom, chaired by Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury (Bangladesh), met in plenary from 24-26 March to hear statements from 45 countries and 24 international and non-governmental organizations on preparations for the GA special session. An informal working group met throughout the PrepCom to negotiate the proposals for key actions for further implementation of the POA. Despite numerous late night sessions, the PrepCom was unable to finish its work in the time allotted and extended its session by an additional day. It still did not complete its negotiations, however, and is expected to meet in a resumed session from either 17-20 May or 24-29 June.

A working paper containing draft proposals for key actions drawn from the Secretary-General's report on the subject (E/CN.9/1999/PC/4) served as the basis for negotiations at the PrepCom. Delegates completed the sections on: population and development concerns; gender equality, equity and empowerment of women; and most of the section on reproductive rights and health. Some paragraphs remain in brackets due to a lack of consensus.

The section on population and development outlines key actions related to population, economic development and the environment; changing age structures and ageing of the population; international migration; internal displacement and migration; population development and education; and data systems including indicators. The gender equality, equity and empowerment of women section reaffirms the importance of achieving gender equality, equity and women's empowerment and identifies areas that require emphasis or strengthening. These include: promotion and protection of women's human rights; empowerment of women; gender perspectives in programmes and policies; and advocacy for gender equality and equity. The reproductive rights and reproductive health section contains proposals for key actions on reproductive health including family planning and sexual health; ensuring voluntary quality family planning services; reducing maternal mortality and morbidity; prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted

diseases including HIV/AIDS; and promoting adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

Delegates were unable to complete the sections on partnerships and collaboration, and the mobilization of resources. The background section also remained incomplete, although the need to respect national sovereignty and cultural and religious values, an important aspect of the ICPD consensus repeatedly emphasized by several countries during the PrepCom, will be reiterated.

NGO Perspectives

NGOs were strongly divided on philosophy and perspectives throughout the PrepCom. This led to parallel women and youth caucuses and daily news publications. These divisions were primarily among NGOs that wanted to deepen the ICPD commitments to women's reproductive rights and reproductive health, and NGOs that focused on opposition to contraception and abortion. These differences were also reflected in the views of member states. Some NGOs felt that an emphasis on population/reproductive health and the lack of POA implementation in the area of development during the past five years had made the ICPD consensus more vulnerable to single-issue groups.

Arrangements for NGO Participation in the GA Special Session

With regard to accrediting NGOs to the special session, delegates agreed to invite NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and those already accredited to the ICPD and/or the PrepCom. In addition, "other interested NGOs including those who have applied for ECOSOC consultative status" seeking accreditation to the special session will be "examined by a committee composed of the Bureau of the PrepCom and the Secretariat (by 14 May 1999), which will make appropriate recommendations to the PrepCom at its resumed session for a decision" provided that specified information accompanies the request.

The PrepCom agreed that "given availability of time, and bearing in mind GA resolution 51/467, a limited number of NGOs may make statements in the general debate, subject to approval of the special session. The GA President is requested to ensure that such participation is on an equal and transparent basis, taking into account the diversity of NGOs." Statements by NGOs in the general debate will be limited to five minutes. A related provision was also agreed for the participation of NGOs to make statements in the ad hoc committee of the whole of the special session.

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For CPD and PrepCom documents see website (www.undp.org/popin/unpopcom/32ndsess/official.htm).

For government and NGO speeches, see website (www.undp.org/popin/unpopcom/32ndsess/state.htm).

For background information and documents for ICPD+5, see website (www.undp.org/popin/icpd5.htm) or (www.unfpa.org/icpd/icpdmain.htm).

1999 World Water Day: "Everyone Lives Downstream"

Today 20% of the world's population in 30 countries face water shortages; the figure will rise to 30% of the world's population in 50 countries by 2025, according to the United Nations on World Day for Water, observed 22 March. Go Between summarizes some issues, problems and UN initiatives related to water issues.

The theme of the 1999 World Water Day is "Everyone Lives Downstream," meant to convey that problems in one part of a watershed, or even in a country abroad, can affect people great distances away.

At any given time, says the UN, an estimated one-half of people in developing countries are suffering from diseases caused either directly by infection through the consumption of contaminated water or food, or indirectly by disease-carrying organisms (vectors) such as mosquitoes that breed in water. These diseases include diarrhea, dengue fever, infection by intestinal worms, malaria, river blindness and trachoma.

Clean, safe water can be brought to the 1.4 billion people around the world without it for as little as US\$50 per person, which can prevent many of the 3.35 billion cases of illness and 5.3 million deaths caused each year by unsafe water.

Water Wars?

The amount of fresh water on the planet is finite—less than a million cubic kilometers. That was enough in 1700 when less than a billion people shared the planet, and in 1900 when some two billion people were alive. Now there are more than six billion people, and the freshwater supply is stretched to the limit. By 2025, the same amount of water must feed an additional three billion people. The populations of water-short countries, today estimated to be 550 million, are expected to increase to one billion by the year 2010. Water shortages will be especially adverse for agriculture, which takes 70%-80% of all available freshwater in the world.

A future war over water is a distinct possibility, according to Klaus Töpfer, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Executive Director. For this reason UNEP advocates monitoring worldwide reserves of drinking water, establishing cooperative agreements on the use of water, and economic instruments to stimulate new technologies to promote water conservation.

In the coming decades, accelerating environmental pressures could transform the very foundations of the international political system. There are at least 25 million environmental refugees today, to be compared with 22 million refugees of the traditional kind. They are mainly located in sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian sub-continent, China, Mexico and Central America. The total may well double by the year 2010, as increasing numbers of impoverished people press ever harder on their already degraded environments, including water resources.

Thirsty Cities

Thirsty cities impart a severe environmental impact on water resources, both by exploitation of fragile freshwater reserves and unacceptable disposal of wastes and toxic substances.

UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, UNCHS (Habitat) have launched a project to assist African cities to manage water more effectively. The Managing Water for African Cities Project, funded by the

United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP), will address the issue of water conservation and demand management, as well as protection of resources from the effects of urbanization.

The project has three components: an information and awareness campaign to sensitize all stakeholders on the need to conserve precious resources; a water demand management programme, which will demonstrate the benefits to be gained from progressive water tariffs, low-cost water saving technologies and repairing of leaks; and a component on protecting water quality through effective policies and planning in areas such as effluent treatment and discharge from all polluting sources.

Irrigation Can Help Fight Hunger and Poverty

Irrigation can make a significant contribution to reducing poverty and hunger, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in a report published on World Water Day. Low-cost, locally produced irrigation technology such as pumps, hose and drip systems could help produce more food and create jobs and income opportunities for the poor. Irrigated agriculture provides 40% of world food production, according to FAO. Around 60% of the extra food required to sustain a world population of about eight billion by 2025 must come from irrigated agriculture. Rainfed agriculture alone will not be able to keep up with the growing need to feed more people.

Small-scale irrigation could help farmers to "grow more crop per drop," according to FAO. Indirectly, they could benefit from a more secure food supply, lower food prices, better nutrition and more water for domestic use. The poor tend to spend a high proportion of their income, between 50%-80%, on food consumption and water. By extending small-scale irrigation, increased employment can be created. In Bangladesh, for example, groundwater irrigation has increased employment in agriculture between 1985 and now by around 250%. In Kenya and Zimbabwe, irrigation creates a steady income for small farmers.

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The report on Poverty Reduction and Irrigated Agriculture was produced by the International Programme for Technology and Research in Irrigation and Drainage (IPTRID), which is managed by FAO. See website (www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/agricult/agl/iptrid/).

Governments Postpone Adoption of Biosafety Treaty

Officials from 138 governments suspended talks in Cartagena (Colombia) on 24 February when they were unable to finalize the text of a legally binding protocol on reducing risks related to the transboundary movement of living modified organisms (LMOs). Go Between summarizes the contentious issues and background to the protocol.

In Cartagena governments discussed the risks that biotechnology may pose for biological diversity and human health, its socio-economic implications for developing countries, and the relevance of the precautionary approach to biosafety. The precautionary approach means that in cases where there are perceived threats of serious or irreversible damage, cost-effective measures should not be postponed for lack of full scientific evidence.

The international community is pursuing a biosafety protocol under the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity to ensure, among other things, that living modified organisms are only transported into countries with their "advanced informed agreement." Exporters would have to make sure that recipient countries have the opportunity and capacity to assess risks involving modern biotechnology.

"Biotechnology can contribute enormously to human well-being, but it poses potential risks," said Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). "For this reason, the global community will continue to work on establishing a legally binding biosafety regime."

Talks Stalled

A group of countries—led by the United States and including Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile and Uruguay—refused at the last minute to sign the treaty, which was a compromise for both factions at the talks. In particular, there was disagreement over the proposed scope of the treaty's regulatory powers: some wanted to restrict the definition of LMOs to organisms intended for introduction into the environment, while others argued for a broader definition that would include agricultural commodities and products of LMOs. Since the United States has not ratified the convention, it only had observer status at the conference.

Environmental Damage and Socio-Economic Impacts

Another contentious issue at the conference was liability: if LMOs enter the environment and cause damage, who pays? Also unresolved was how to minimize the potential of socio-economic impacts such as the competitive decline of traditional crops faced with LMO imports. Yet another question relates to the protocol's relationship to the World Trade Organization and its various subsidiary agreements.

"There were two compromises that we were not prepared to make," said Rafe Pomerance, deputy chief of the US delegation. "One is to tie up trade in the world's food supply. The second is to allow this regime, without a lot of deliberation, to undermine the World Trade Organization trading regime."

Yet according to Ritt Bjerregaard, European Union Environment Commissioner, the United States and its allies "wanted an agreement without any genuine environmental credibility. It would have excluded agricultural commodities, resulting in a liberalizing of trade without proper protection of developing countries."

NGOs also criticized what they described as attempts to block or water down the protocol, and they warned of genetic pollution on an unprecedented scale. "Biotech companies are very keen to push genetically engineered organisms and products on the South," said Chee Yoke Ling, environmental lawyer and member of the Third World Network. "But the threats posed by the technology to the environment, health and livelihoods of farmers are too high in the midst of great uncertainties and absence of regulatory rules."

Background to the Protocol

The protocol has been negotiated by an open-ended ad hoc working group on biosafety, which held its first meeting in 1996 and its sixth and final one from 14-22 February in Cartagena. The working group concluded its work on 23 February and passed the unfinished text to the extraordinary session of the Conference of the Parties (COP), which is the convention's ultimate authority. The session, which will be resumed later, will be responsible for finalizing and adopting the protocol text.

LMOs include various food crops that have been genetically modified for greater productivity or nutritional value, or for resistance to pests or diseases. Common examples include tomatoes, grains, cassava, corn and soybeans. Seeds for growing crops are particularly important because they are used intentionally to propagate or reproduce LMOs in the environment. Together these agricultural LMOs form the basis of a multi-billion dollar global industry. Pharmaceuticals derived from LMOs form the basis of an even larger industry.

The Convention on Biological Diversity, adopted in May 1992, entered into force in December 1993. There are currently 175 Parties to the convention, whose article 19.3 provides for Parties to consider the need for the modalities of a protocol setting out procedures in the field of safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms that may have an adverse effect on biodiversity and its components.

Growing Public Concern Over Biotechnology

The biosafety talks reflect growing public concerns about the potential risks of biotechnology. Many countries with modern biotechnology industries have domestic legislation. However there are no binding international agreements covering LMOs that cross national borders because of trade or accidental releases.

Another concern is that many developing countries lack the technical, financial and institutional means to address biosafety. According to UNEP, they need greater capacity for assessing and managing risks, establishing adequate information systems, and developing expert human resources in biotechnology.

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

The 20th session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) met from 19 January-5 February at UN headquarters in New York. Go Between summarizes the recommendations of the 23-member expert group, which monitors implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

The session adopted a report that includes recommendations to seven countries for improving the status of women. The recommendations were based on consideration of initial reports of Algeria, Kyrgyzstan and Liechtenstein, and subsequent reports presented by China, Colombia, Greece and Thailand.

CEDAW also devoted time to finishing new general recommendations on article 12 of the convention, which says that compliance with the article is central to the health and well-being of women. It requires states to eliminate discrimination against women in their access to health care services, particularly in the areas of family planning, pregnancy, confinement and during the post-natal period.

The session's general recommendations said states Parties should: include in their reports reference to particular health performance standards used by them to monitor the provision of quality health care to women; include information on how measures taken by them comply with health performance standards adopted by CEDAW; and identify and provide information on the most serious problems adversely affecting women's health and health-related human rights in their reports. In so doing, states Parties should collaborate with professional health associations and health-related NGOs.

The committee also recommended that states Parties make efforts to include statistical information disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity and geographical location, and to report on allocation of resources to women's health in relation to overall resources allocated to health. States Parties were also asked to report on implementation of the critical area "women and health" in the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women.

CEDAW further recommended that states Parties: place a gender perspective at the centre of all policies and programmes affecting women's health; involve women in the planning, implementation and monitoring of such policies and programmes and in the provision of health services to women; remove all barriers to women's access to health services, education and information, including the area of sexual and reproductive health; prioritize the prevention of unwanted pregnancy through family planning and sex education; and reduce maternal mortality rates through safe motherhood services and prenatal assistance. The committee recommended that when possible legislation penalizing abortion should be revised in order to withdraw punitive measures for women who undergo abortion.

Throughout the three-week session, committee members expressed concern that many of the 163 states Parties to the convention had not paid enough attention to the impact of global and regional trends on women's equality. Particular concern was expressed about the prevalence of patriarchal structures and deep-seated prejudices that perpetuate discrimination against women and impede implementation of the women's human rights treaty.

Angela King, the UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, said another area of interest during the session was the convention's impact on national legislation. There have been more and more cases of women using the convention to change their national laws, she said, and the lives of ordinary women on the street. Ms. King cited an example in Botswana in which a woman had won a case regarding the right of a child to inherit from the mother.

Ms. King cautioned, however, that despite strides in national legislation that can be seen in national reports examined during the session, a great gap still exists between what is *de jure* and what is happening in reality.

Country Reports

At the core of the committee's review of the China report were efforts to overcome historical oppression of Chinese women amid lagging economic and social development. The urban-rural gap was stressed, as were accounts relating to restrictions on the exercise of freedom of religion. The committee, which also heard the first report from Hong Kong, focused its attention on three major issues: the need for essential machinery to steer policy on implementation of the convention and the Beijing Platform for Action; structural obstacles in the electoral system to equal participation of women in the legislative council; and the extent of reservations entered to the convention concerning religious denominations and the rights of indigenous women to property in the New Territories.

The report stressed alarming levels of poverty, together with widening income gaps between urban and rural populations of Colombia. Colombia noted that these factors have exacerbated violence of every kind. CEDAW, which examined these issues along with corruption in public administration, pointed to an urgent need for alternative models of development involving the entire population.

The committee commended Liechtenstein for its accession to numerous regional and international human rights instruments, as well as for its rapid progress in achieving *de jure* gender equality. However it noted that there had been little effective translation of these advances into all aspects of life.

Regarding the report from Greece, CEDAW expressed concern about marital rape and the flow into the country of women migrants, who are being exposed to trafficking and prostitution.

CEDAW, which noted that the recent financial crisis had affected Thailand's economic and social development, urged the government to ensure that the crisis does not hinder efforts to enhance the status of women. Concern was also expressed about the status of women migrant workers, cross-border trafficking in women and girls, and forced prostitution and the commercial sex industry.

The report on Algeria drew attention to the dichotomy prevalent in the Arab-Muslim world between constitutional law and the Islamic Family Code. CEDAW

expressed concern about the country's many reservations to the convention, and the way religious principles and cultural practices in Algeria had been used to justify why Algerian women had not kept pace with overall advances in society. The committee expressed deep concern about the large number of women who have been murdered, raped, abducted and subjected to serious abuses by terrorist groups in recent years.

CEDAW commended Kyrgyzstan for ratifying the convention without reservations. It recommended that the government focus on all forms of gender-based violence and strengthen measures to prevent violence and support victims. It expressed concern about the classification of lesbianism as a sexual offence under the country's Penal Code, increasing prostitution and trafficking in women.

NGOs Address Pre-Session Working Group

At its 18th session in 1997, CEDAW agreed (decision 18/1) that its pre-session working group would meet with representatives of national and international NGOs that wished to present information on states Parties whose periodic reports were being presented to the committee. The pre-session working group for the 20th CEDAW session met with NGOs on 12 January concerning China, Colombia, Greece and Thailand. It also met during the 20th session on 20 January to receive information on Algeria, Kyrgyzstan and Liechtenstein.

NGOs prepared "shadow reports" on five of the reporting countries on the basis of independent information and research. The contributions of International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP), Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, and the Centre for Reproductive Law and Policy, among others, were singled out for praise by the CEDAW chair.

In addition IWRAP, which held its annual meeting on 20 January in New York, convened an NGO consultation on article 5 of the convention to develop strategies for addressing the adverse impact of culture and tradition on the enjoyment of human rights of women.

Background

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the most comprehensive, legally binding treaty on women's human rights, has been ratified or acceded to by 163 states as of 15 January 1999. The convention entered into force on 3 September 1981. Article 1 defines discrimination against women as: "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

Countries that have ratified or acceded to the convention are legally bound to put its provisions into effect. They also commit to submit national reports on measures taken to comply with their treaty obligations. An initial report is required within one year of accession, and periodic reports at least every four years.

Future Sessions

The pre-session working group for the 21st session of CEDAW is scheduled to take place in New York from 7-25 June 1999. CEDAW will meet with representatives of specialized agencies and bodies of the UN as well as national and international NGOs wishing to provide country-specific information to states Parties whose reports are before the committee.

The 21st session of CEDAW, which will take place in New York from 28 June-2 July, will consider: initial reports of Belize, Georgia and Nepal; the second

periodic report of Ireland; second and third periodic reports of Chile; and the third and fourth periodic reports of Spain and the United Kingdom.

CSW Adopts CEDAW Optional Protocol

Following four years of negotiations, an optional protocol to CEDAW (E/CN.6/1999/WG/L.2 and L.3) was adopted on 11 March by an open-ended working group of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The CSW adopted the optional protocol the following day in the final meeting of its 43rd session.

The optional protocol will be forwarded as a recommendation to the Economic and Social Council and the UN General Assembly, to be adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by states. It will enter into force three months after the date of deposit of the tenth instrument of ratification or accession with the UN Secretary-General.

The optional protocol contains: a communications procedure allowing women, individually or in groups, to submit complaints about violations of the convention by their governments; and a procedure allowing CEDAW to initiate its own inquiries into alleged grave or systematic violations of the convention in countries that are Party to the optional protocol. It will also provide an avenue for women to obtain remedies for breaches of their human rights.

Ms. King described the development as "particularly timely" since 1999 marks the 20th anniversary of the convention's adoption. She noted that adoption of the optional protocol fulfils one of the commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action, and she urged governments to "use this solemn occasion to commit to achieving a second essential goal of the Platform—namely the universal ratification of the convention by the year 2000." She urged states that have not ratified the convention to benefit from momentum created by work on the optional protocol and to do their utmost so that "we may celebrate the new millennium with an explicit and visible commitment by all states to the human rights of women."

Among items debated during final negotiations on the optional protocol was article 2, regarding whether communications to CEDAW may be submitted on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals and whether this may be done without their consent. Many NGOs that tracked progress of negotiations on the optional protocol argued that such communications should be allowable without consent.

They said large numbers of women worldwide have no means to submit petitions due to poverty and legal illiteracy. Many women also cannot seek redress for fear of retaliation and unfair treatment, because discrimination and violence against them are so much a part of social structures.

As adopted article 2 permits communications to be submitted by or on behalf of individuals or groups of individuals "with their consent unless the author can justify acting on their behalf without such consent." Many NGOs remain concerned that such justification may be hard to prove to the satisfaction of states Parties concerned.

The chair of the Open-Ended Working Group of the UN Commission on the Status of Women affirmed the importance of article 17, which does not permit reservations to the optional protocol—to the satisfaction of NGOs that had advocated strongly on this point.

Contact: UN Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations, Room DC2-1204, New York NY 10017, United States, fax +1-212/963 3463, e-mail <daw@un.org>, website (www.un.org/womenwatch).

Ad Hoc Intersessional Working Groups Prepare for CSD-7

The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) Intersessional Ad Hoc Working Groups (ISWGs) met from 22 February-5 March in New York. The ISWG on sustainable consumption and production patterns and on tourism met during the first week, and the ISWG on oceans and seas and on sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) met during the second week.

CSD-7 chair Simon Upton (New Zealand) told delegates that the commission is trying to revitalize its decisions and make them action-oriented. To avoid long and fruitless negotiations, delegations were invited to produce two types of documents at the meetings: a co-chairs' summary of their discussions including minority positions, and draft elements for CSD decisions as the basis for discussion at CSD-7. The CSD-7 will also serve, among other things, as a preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly on SIDS, to be held in September in New York.

The ISWG on sustainable consumption and production patterns and tourism was co-chaired by Navid Hanif (Pakistan), and Sandor Mozes (Hungary). The elements for a draft CSD decision on consumption and production suggested that the commission continue to focus on four priority areas: policy development and implementation; natural resource management and cleaner production; globalization; and urbanization. Delegates commented that unsustainable patterns include adverse environmental impacts arising from excess consumption of natural resources, particularly in the developed countries; and unemployment, poverty and under-consumption of basic goods and services, particularly in developing countries. The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities between North and South was affirmed. Many said governments should ensure minimum standards of consumption for poor people.

The co-chairs' summary of discussion on tourism noted that it is a major engine of growth in many developing countries and contributes to employment and income generation. Yet, they said, unsustainable tourism can introduce negative social, cultural and environmental changes. The "possible elements for a draft CSD decision" calls on governments, Major Groups and the UN system to address a number of tasks including: promotion of sustainable tourism development that increases economic and educational benefits while maintaining the cultural and environmental integrity of the host community; development of a definition and indicators of sustainable tourism; and an assessment of existing voluntary measures by the private sector. In the discussions, concerns were raised by many Southern nations about the need for financial and technical assistance, while the United States noted that this should be undertaken within existing resources. The G-77/China, reflecting the concern of some oil-producing nations, said not all delegations agree that fossil fuel consumption is the conclusive cause of climate change. It also expressed concern about universal environmental standards, codes of conduct and target-setting, and avoiding potentially negative effects on developing countries' access to markets. The European Union emphasized the importance of citizen education, private/public partnerships, and economic incentives for sustainable development.

The NGO Tourism Caucus expressed concern about emphasis on development of the tourism industry. It challenged the assumption that this will bring economic benefits for all. Instead, the caucus said, the focus should be on ensuring a good quality of life for all people within a healthy environment.

The ISWG on oceans and seas and SIDS met from 1-5 March, led by co-chairs Alan Simcock, Head of the Marine, Land and Liability Department, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (UK) and Ambassador John Ashe

(Antigua and Barbuda). Key elements of the debate on oceans and seas were overfishing and eliminating land-based sources of ocean pollution. The draft proposal notes that action on oceans and seas should be taken on the basis of "polluter-pays" and ecosystem approaches, as well as the best available scientific knowledge. Major challenges, it said, include national and regional level capacity-building and action to implement global and regional agreements. Action on several suggestions on international coordination of oceans and seas issues was postponed until CSD-7.

The ISWG also met as a preparatory body for the five-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, adopted at the 1994 Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The Draft Co-chairs' Proposal on the CSD's Contribution to the Special Session on SIDS noted considerable efforts by SIDS to meet the priorities of the Programme of Action. The proposal, which says that effective financial support from the international community is an important supplement to SIDS efforts, addresses the cross-cutting issues of sustainable development strategies, capacity-building, finance, globalization and trade liberalization challenges and opportunities, technology transfer, and the need for a vulnerability index. Sectoral issues include climate change, climate variability and natural disasters; energy; freshwater resources; coastal and marine resources; and tourism.

NGOs from small island developing states that addressed the ISWG said they were disappointed with what they described as the lack of results due to inadequate resources, the misuse of existing resources, unsustained follow-up, and a lack of political will. They noted the urgency of the task—as oceans rise, islands disappear. The NGOs, which also expressed concern about what they described as the negative impact of the World Trade Organization and structural adjustment policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank on SIDS economies, called for meaningful participation of SIDS in the WTO and cancellation of SIDS' external debt.

Donors and island nations held a meeting in New York from 24-26 February aimed at seeking ways to improve development financing for islands. Island delegates said financing must be addressed with new resolve if this year's special session is to give a needed boost to the Barbados Programme of Action. Over 300 project proposals were presented by island nations to the meeting, and donors offered the possibility of new support. Donor delegates suggested that mobilization of funds could be improved through better national and regional coordination, partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental groups, and better domestic policies. They urged island nations to prioritize proposals and seek better methods to measure results.

Contact: Zehra Aydın-Sipos, Major Groups Focal Point, Division for Sustainable Development, United Nations, Room DC2-2262, New York NY 10017, United States, telephone +1-212/963 8811, fax +1-212/963 1267, e-mail <aydin@un.org>, web site (www.un.org/esa/sustdev).

Preparations for Forum on Financing for Development

In December 1997 the General Assembly set in motion the convening of a high-level, international, inter-governmental forum on financing for development before the end of 2001 (GA Resolution A/52/179). Resolution 53/173 affirms the creation of an ad hoc working group of the assembly, which will recommend to the 54th GA the "form, content, and agenda" of the international consultations. Go Between summarizes the preparations.

The General Assembly also requested its Second Committee (Economic and Financial) to organize briefings or panel discussions to support the task of the working group. At the GA's request, the Development Policy Analysis Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DPAD/DESA) undertook a survey of stakeholders for their views on major issues that could be relevant to an intergovernmental consultation on financing for development.

The second session of the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group on Financing for Development, held 16-19 March at UN headquarters, reviewed mobilizing domestic resources for development; mobilizing international private financial flows for development; international financial cooperation for development; trade and financing for development; and external debt (bilateral, multilateral and commercial). In its third session, held from 5-8 April, the working group addressed innovative sources of financing; governance of the international monetary, financial and trade systems; and the interrelationship between major elements and other special topics.

As part of this process, the Second Committee held a panel discussion on 15 March with representatives of Deutsche Bank, Lehman Emerging Markets Group, the Center of Concern, and the Fifty Years is Enough Coalition. One business panellist cited financial debt restructuring, bankruptcy and foreclosure laws, and transparency in corporate affairs as elements needed to restore investor confidence in the Asian region. Another encouraged an exchange of ideas and a strengthened partnership between the marketplace and the public sector. One panellist suggested that some regulations are needed on capital flows.

Two panellists, speaking from the perspective of civil society, said debt cancellation is key to addressing global poverty and inequity; they also spoke of growing mobilization of the Jubilee 2000 campaign (see *Go Between* 63) around the world. One speaker rejected the "failed neo-liberal economic model that puts profits before people," and noted the crisis is not of the last 18 months but a systemic crisis.

In a paper distributed at the panel, Marina Durano of the Center of Concern said that nations "can no longer pursue their development goals alone, separate from the world economy." She stressed the need for strong, sustained domestic resource mobilization for economic and political independence, which can only be achieved in a global environment characterized by debt cancellation, equal treatment of capital and labour, promotion of greater South-South trade and financial flows, and greater equality in international power relationships.

Also on 15 March the vice-chairs of the working group on financing for development invited NGOs accredited to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to share their views on financing for development. NGO representatives, who said they appreciated the invitation, observed that the debt problem of developing countries needs to be addressed comprehensively along the lines of the Jubilee 2000 campaign. Debt

cancellation, not debt rescheduling is required, and present approaches including the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative are "too little, too late." They added that middle income countries also need debt reduction.

A World Council of Churches representative observed that debt reduction linked to conditionality requires debtor nations to "renounce control of their economic sovereignty. This undermines accountability by debtor governments to their people, which in turn erodes local democratic institutions."

Several others said the debt burden should not be borne only by the borrowing country and, within that country, by groups such as the poor who were not involved in the initial transaction. It was suggested that a new social dimension be built into the global financial architecture, which would measure debt sustainability in terms of a country's ability to provide an acceptable level of well-being to its population.

There was concern that current actors in the global financial system are not the appropriate players to discuss a new financial architecture, given that the "old model" had failed and that these institutions should be held accountable. Several NGOs felt the institutions should be made more democratic, accountable and transparent. They also expressed concern about financial flows that do not contribute to investment including speculative capital, environmentally unsound investments, and resources lost to corruption. One NGO, which noted that 2001 is the Year of Volunteers, emphasized that local volunteer work is an important part of the overall pool of resources for development purposes.

Others mentioned the importance of bank underwriting of microcredit schemes, while noting that local initiatives continue to need outside support. One NGO raised its concern that agreements reached at the recent cycle of global conferences had not been followed by allocation of resources to translate them into practice. Also highlighted was the need to address the human impact of forces such as globalization that are beyond the control of individual states and members of society.

Contact: Harris Gleckman, Development Policy Analysis Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, Room DC2-2162, New York NY 10017, United States, telephone +1-212/963 4690, fax +1-212/963 1061, e-mail <ffd@un.org>, website (www.un.org/esa/analysis/ffd/) or the NGLS office in New York. A fact sheet on financing for development and copies of UN documents described here are available upon request from NGLS in New York.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is supporting an e-mail distribution list to facilitate information exchange on financing for development. To be placed on the list, send a message to <enb@iisd.org>.

ECOSOC Convenes in New York Under New President

In the February organizational meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), newly elected ECOSOC president Ambassador Francesco Paolo Fulci (Italy) outlined a plan to enable the council to become "what it was meant to be: the primary UN body to deal with economic and social issues of the family of nations and peoples."

In a speech on 20 January Mr. Fulci said, "Poverty is indeed our main enemy...poverty inflicts almost incurable wounds on human dignity. To eradicate poverty is not simply a noble moral imperative. It is also a critical strategic objective to bring about stability, stimulate productivity and opportunities, and ultimately help us create a better world."

Organizational Session

Key points on the 1999 ECOSOC agenda identified by Mr. Fulci included "restoring a clear identity for ECOSOC....[It] should aggressively pursue its coordination role for economic, social and related issues within the UN system; should streamline and revitalize its committees; and should utilize the Internet to disseminate information." Mr. Fulci said poverty eradication will be the central theme of the council's work this year.

At the annual ECOSOC substantive session in Geneva in July, the high-level segment will be devoted to the role of employment and work in poverty eradication, and the empowerment and advancement of women. The operational activities segment will also focus on poverty eradication and capacity building. Mr. Fulci challenged governments to produce an action-oriented document for the July meeting, no longer than two pages, on immediate steps to eradicate poverty, describing it as "an ECOSOC manifesto against poverty, which is the main enemy of humanity." Under the agenda on regional cooperation, the council will address "economic and social issues arising out of the Asian economic crisis: a regional perspective."

Regarding the relationship between the Security Council and ECOSOC, Mr. Fulci cited article 65 of the United Nations Charter, which describes the support ECOSOC may provide to the Security Council upon its request. He noted that the article has so far remained dormant. "Peace and security on the one hand," he said, "and humanitarian assistance, sustainable development and human rights on the other, are inextricably linked. Let us find some workable mechanisms."

On 18 February Mr. Fulci sent a letter to the president of the Security Council noting that Security Council resolution 1170 (1998) on the causes of conflict and promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, as well as the presidential statement of 24 September 1998 on the situation in Africa, both stress the need for the UN system including the GA and ECOSOC to consider appropriate action in response to comprehensive recommendations set out by the Secretary-General in his report on the subject (see *Go Between* 69 and 72). He also cited resolution 1212 (1998) referring to Haiti, which invites UN bodies and agencies, especially ECOSOC, to contribute to designing a long-term programme of support for Haiti. Mr. Fulci wrote that he was "seeking...advice whether such invitation should be interpreted as a formal request in accordance with the second part of article 65 of the Charter, and, if this is the case, what concrete contribution the Security Council expects from the Economic and Social Council."

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, addressing ECOSOC in his capacity as chair of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), discussed how the UN should work in the context of an ever-more globalizing world. He observed

that ECOSOC is beginning to function "truly as a council" and cited the importance of several initiatives in 1998, including a high-level dialogue with the Bretton Woods Institutions and a special session to promote a coordinated UN response to global conferences.

Dialogue with the Bretton Woods Institutions

As part of its "revitalized" role, ECOSOC has recently initiated increased cooperation with the Bretton Woods Institutions. For the first time in United Nations history, in February ECOSOC members met with World Bank President James Wolfensohn and Bank Executive Directors who visited UN headquarters in New York. Mr. Fulci, in opening remarks to the meeting, highlighted what he described as profound consequences of the financial crisis and new challenges it poses for the international community and institutions. Mr. Wolfensohn affirmed that the UN and World Bank share a common set of values with the objective of eradicating poverty within a sustainable environment. He noted that the Bank has benefitted from the work of UN world conferences and values set forth by the UN Secretary-General, such as his comments to corporate leaders in Davos (Switzerland) from 29 January-1 February.

Mr. Wolfensohn also presented his Proposal for a Comprehensive Development Framework, a draft text for discussion first circulated on 21 January to World Bank directors and staff. The framework calls for a balance between "financial balance sheets and human, social and environmental balance sheets in development policy." A central theme is the need for coordination of development policy and assistance by all multilateral and bilateral donors, which must be led by the recipient country itself. The World Bank plans to pilot the Comprehensive Development Framework in 12 countries over the next 12-18 months, and has invited the UN and other donors to participate in shaping it. The first two pilot countries will be Bolivia and Ghana. He underscored the importance of leadership within the context of a comprehensive development plan. He said there is concern about rivalry and suspicion among staff of diverse institutions "on the ground;" one of the goals of the framework is to build a better partnership based on trust.

During the dialogue with the World Bank, several developing countries raised the issue of external debt. One noted that progress made in eradicating poverty had been eliminated because of demands for debt repayment. In response, a Bank official affirmed the need for more progress on debt relief by the year 2000, including making terms more flexible and involving more countries. Mr. Wolfensohn said he welcomed the recent German initiative to broaden the scope and flexibility of debt relief. Concerning where discussions of a "new financial architecture" should take place and what sort of international agreement might be expected regarding a regulatory agency, it was noted that talks are taking place in dozens of relevant fora and that the Bank is eager to participate in them.

Contact: For further information see website (www.un.org/esa/coordination/ecosoc). For summaries of the meetings see DPI press releases ECOSOC/5811, 5812, 5813 and SG/SM/6885 at website (www.un.org/news/press) or contact NGLS in New York.

The Right to Food in Theory and in Practice

This book, published by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, examines the right to food and the obligations it entails for governments, civil society and the international community. It discusses different approaches to solving the problems of hunger and summarizes specific measures being taken by governments, international bodies and NGOs to ensure food for all.

Available from: FAO, Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, I-00100 Rome, Italy, fax +39-06/5705 3152, website (www.fao.org).

UNDP Publications**Understanding International Migration: A Sourcebook**

This sourcebook provides information on the United Nations and International Labour Organization Conventions on Migrant Workers. It is also a tool for networking between organizations involved with migration issues and members of the media, NGOs and individuals interested in migrant worker issues. The book, an introduction to some of the main issues that impact the lives of migrant workers, contains the text of relevant international instruments.

Available from: The Asia Partnership on International Migration (APIM), c/o Asia Pacific 2000, (see address and fax below), e-mail <apim@tm.net.my>, website (www.apim.apdip.net).

Our Cities, Our Homes: An A to Z Guide on Human Settlements Issues

This reference book includes key documents developed during various UN and civil society fora, glossaries of important terminologies, information sources and a directory of key stakeholders working on urban-related issues.

Available from: Asia Pacific 2000, UN Development Programme, Wisma UN Block C, Complex Pejabat Damansara, Jalan Dungun, Damansara Heights, 50490 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, fax +60-3/253 2361, e-mail <umpap@po.jaring.my>, website (www.undp.org/undp/fomys).

Freshwater Biodiversity: A Preliminary Global Assessment

This report, published by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), identifies priority areas for conservation to retain the diversity of fish, molluscs and crustaceans, which are key sources of food. Published to encourage nations to tackle freshwater issues in their national action plans for biodiversity, the report emphasizes the scale of the problem and provides guidelines on taking action.

Available from: WCMC, 219 Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DL, United Kingdom, fax +44-1223/277136, e-mail <info@wcmc.org.uk or >, website (www.wcmc.org.uk).

Modes of Action Used by Humanitarian Players:**Criteria for Operational Complementarity**

This study aims to provide a clear understanding of precisely where humanitarian work begins and ends. It does this by providing a classification of the different means of action used by humanitarian players, and how this can be used to provide complementarity between them for the benefit of victims they serve.

Available from: International Committee of the Red Cross, 19 avenue de la Paix, CH-1202 Geneva, Switzerland, fax +41-22/733 2057, website (www.icrc.org).

Nongovernments: NGOs and the Political Development of the Third World

This book provides an overview of the composition and types of NGOs that have emerged in recent years. It describes the influence they have had on political systems throughout the world and the ways they work in different cultural and political settings.

Available from: Kumarian Press, 14 Oakwood Avenue, West Hartford CT 06119-2127, United States.

Networking for Development

This book provides a comprehensive survey and synthesis of networking issues and offers practical advice for people involved in networks. Part one discusses the benefits and problems of networking, and sets out guidelines for successful networking with examples from a range of development networks. The second part illustrates these points more fully with a detailed case study of networks in Africa.

Available from: International Forum for Rural Transport and Development, New Premier House, 2nd Floor, 150 Southampton Row, London WC1B 5AL, United Kingdom, fax +44-171/436 6880, e-mail <ifrtd@gn.apc.org>, website (www.gn.apc.org/ifrtd).

Unequal Freedoms: The Global Market as an Ethical System

This book is a guide to the theory and practice of the global market designed for direct applicability to everyday life. It examines human needs, national debts and environmental crises as well as issues of the global information economy, and consumerism and citizenship. The book also contains subsections describing alternative economics structured to serve rather than consume and exploit.

Available from: Garamond Press, 67 Mowat Avenue, Suite 144, Toronto, Ontario M6K 3E3, Canada, fax +1-416/516 0571, e-mail <garamond@web.net>.

Legislative Guide: Domestic Violence Against Women

This guide provides information on how the governments of 17 countries address the crime of violence against women and protect the rights of women within family relationships. It discusses the role of the UN in advancing the status of women, and promotes the framework for model legislation set forth by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights special rapporteur on violence against women. The guide is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Japanese, Korean and Mandarin.

Available from: Soroptimist International of the Americas, Two Penn Center Plaza, Suite 1000, Philadelphia PA 19102-1883, United States, telephone +1-215/557 9300, fax +1-215/568 5200, e-mail <program@soroptimist.org>, website (www.soroptimist.org).

Development with a Human Face: Experiences in Social Achievement and Economic Growth

This book presents retrospective studies of ten developing countries that have demonstrated successful health and educational development over the last 30-40 years, despite low incomes. The countries succeeded, according to the author, because they invested in education, health and other basic services that boost national human development.

Available from: Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, United Kingdom, fax +44-1865/556646, e-mail <book.orders@oup.co.uk> website (www.oup.co.uk) or Orders Department, Oxford University Press, 2001 Evans Road, Cary NC 27513, United States, fax +1-919/677 2673, e-mail <humanres@oup-usa.org>.

Developing Essential Drug Policies: A Guide for NGOs

This guide gives practical reasons to adopt an essential drugs policy and provides a step-by-step approach for NGOs developing such a policy, based on the World Health Organization's Essential Drugs Concept. The guide also contains a list of organizations working in the field as well as additional resources.

Available from: Health Action International-Europe, Jacob van Lennepkade 334T, 1053 NJ Amsterdam, Netherlands, fax +31-20/685 5002, e-mail <hai@hai.antenna.nl>, website (www.haiweb.org).

A Human Rights Approach to Development

This publication advocates the use of human rights principles and legal norms as a coherent framework for poverty elimination and the achievement of

sustainable improvement in the quality of life of poor and socially-isolated people. This approach promotes the use of development cooperation to assist partners to secure the realization of all human rights.

Available from: *Rights and Humanity*, 65A Swinton Street, London WC19NT, United Kingdom, fax +44-171/278 4576, e-mail <pop3.poptel.org.uk>.

Economics and Policy Issues of Climate Change

This book assesses economic and social aspects of climate change in the 1995 report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The critiques and rejoinders contained in the book aim to put the strengths and weaknesses of the IPCC conclusions in a clearer perspective, and to identify priorities for further research. The book seeks to bridge the gap between analytical specialists on one hand, and decision-makers and their technical advisors on the other.

Available from: *Michael Tebo*, Public Affairs Manager, *Resources for the Future*, 1616 P Street NW, Washington DC 20036-1400, United States, e-mail <tebo@rff.org>, website (www.rff.org).

Upsizing: The Road to Zero Emissions

This book examines how the adoption of the zero emissions concept not only radically reduces pollution and waste but can contribute significantly to the generation of income and jobs, especially for those who need them most: the rural poor in developing countries.

Available from: *Greenleaf Publishing*, Aizlewood Business Centre, Aizlewood's Mill, Nursery Street, Sheffield S3 8GG, United Kingdom, fax +44-114/267 9403, e-mail <greenleaf@worldscope.co.uk>, website (www.greenleaf-publishing.com).

Living with Disaster

In this booklet, people affected by disasters speak of the impact of natural disasters on their lives and explain measures they are taking to make themselves more secure in the future. The interviews took place in Bangladesh, Colombia, Peru, the Philippines and Zimbabwe. A series of four ten-minute videos of the interviews, also entitled *Living with Disasters*, is available.

Available from: *Information Officer*, *Intermediate Technology*, Bourton Hall, Bourton-on-Dunsmore, Rugby CV23 9QZ, United Kingdom, fax +44-1788/540270, e-mail <itdg@org.uk>, website (www.oneworld.org/itdg).

The A-Z of World Development

This reference book, which aims to give easy access to key concepts and ideas related to development, has over 600 entries on a wide range of topics. The entries, listed alphabetically, are illustrated with charts, diagrams and photographs.

Available from: *Jo Lateu*, *New Internationalist*, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, United Kingdom, fax +44-1865/793152, e-mail <jol@newint.org>.

Citizens: Strengthening Global Civil Society

This report provides information on the status of civil society worldwide and outlines the challenges and opportunities for citizen action.

Available from: *CIVICUS*, 919 18th Street NW, Third Floor, Washington DC 20006, United States.

Water Watch: A Community Action Guide

This book provides important facts on water, emphasizes the importance of wetlands, and presents a step-by-step guide to map out watersheds and conduct a field study. It highlights simple projects that can be undertaken by community-based organizations and school groups, and includes practical hints on how to make best use of water resources.

Available from: *WaterWatch Asia*, 120 Armenian Street, 10200 Penang, Malaysia, fax +60-4/263 3970, e-mail <lubisksn@tm.net.my>.

Corporate Media and the Threat to Democracy

The information superhighway has opened countless new channels for media, but few opportunities for controlling the channels. This book, which traces the emergence of what it describes as the global media monopoly, says that public participation in communications policy-making is necessary for democracy.

Available from: *Seven Stories Press*, 632 Broadway, 7th Floor, New York NY 10012, United States, fax +1-212/995 0720.

UN Treaty Databases

The UN Treaty Series (UNTS) is a collection of treaties and international agreements registered, filed, recorded with and published by the UN secretariat since 1946. The collection, available online, currently contains over 30,000 treaties and related subsequent actions registered up to December 1986. The UNTS is currently being expanded at a rate of about 60 new volumes per year. The Multilateral Treaties Deposited with the Secretary-General, which provides information on the status of 486 major multilateral instruments, covers a range of subject matters including human rights, disarmament, commodities, refugees, environment and the law of the sea. The publication reflects the status of these instruments as member states sign, ratify, accede or lodge declarations, reservations or objections.

To register for online access to these databases, contact: *UN Treaty Collection Registration*, telephone +1-800/253 9646 (within the United States) or +1-212/963 8305, fax +1-212/963 3489, e-mail <subscriptions@un.org>, or website (www.un.org/Depts/Treaty/howtoreg.htm).

World Bank Listserv on Social Capital

The World Bank's Social Capital Thematic Group has launched "Let's Talk," an e-mail discussion group dedicated to social capital and development.

To subscribe to the discussion group, go to website (www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/list).

Conflict Prevention Newsletter

This newsletter, now available online, is a quarterly publication of the European Platform on Conflict Prevention and Transformation, a network of European NGOs involved in the prevention and/or resolution of violent conflicts in the international arena. The purpose of the newsletter is to facilitate the exchange of information and experience among participating organizations as well as to stimulate cooperation, coordination and input from others working in related fields.

Website: (www.oneworld.org/euconflict/publicat/newslett.htm).

ID21 Development Research Site

The Institute for Development Studies at Sussex University in the UK has established the Information for Development in the 21st Century (ID21) development research reporting service, an online selection of the latest and best UK-based development research. The online service offers hundreds of summaries of problem-solving work on critical development dilemmas around the world, drawing information from 40 top UK research centres, conference papers and unpublished reports, and research by aid and development agencies, NGOs and research consultants.

Website: (www.id21.org).

Humanity Development Library for Sustainable Development and Basic Human Needs CD-ROM

This CD-ROM contains six magazine series and the text of 480 books and reports from around 50 humanitarian and development organizations. The subjects covered include agriculture, appropriate technology, health and sustainable development.

Available from: *Global Help Project*, Oosterveldlaan 196, B-2610 Antwerp, Belgium, e-mail <humanity@innet.be>, website (www.oneworld.org/globalprojects).

DISARMAMENT

- ▣ Disarmament Commission, 3-14 May, New York
- ▣ Conference on Disarmament
 - 2nd part, 10 May-25 June, Geneva
 - 3rd part, 26 July-8 September, Geneva
- ▣ Ad Hoc Group of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction
 - 15th session, 28 June-23 July, Geneva
 - 16th session: 13 September-8 October, Geneva
- ▣ Group of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, 3rd session, 26-30 July, New York

ECOSOC/GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- ▣ Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, June, New York
- ▣ Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), substantive session, 5-30 July, New York
- ▣ 54th UN General Assembly, 7 September-December, New York

FOOD ISSUES

- ▣ Committee on World Food Security, 25th session, 31 May-4 June, Rome
- ▣ FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission, 23rd session, 28 June-3 July, Rome

HUMAN RIGHTS

- ▣ Committee Against Torture, 23rd session, 8-19 November, Geneva
- ▣ Human Rights Committee
 - 66th session, 12-30 July, Geneva
 - 67th session, 18 October-5 November, Geneva
- ▣ Commission on Human Rights, Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, Working Group on Indigenous Populations, 17th session, 26-30 July, Geneva
- ▣ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 55th session, 2-20 August, Geneva
- ▣ Commission on Human Rights, Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, 51st session, 2-27 August, Geneva
- ▣ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 21st session, 15 November-3 December, Geneva
- ▣ Commission on Human Rights, Open-Ended Working Group on Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 5th session, November, Geneva

Rights of the Child

- ▣ Committee on the Rights of the Child
 - 21st session, 18 May-4 June, Geneva
 - 22nd session, 20 September-8 October, Geneva

POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

- ▣ Quinquennial Review of the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action (ICPD+5), 30 June-2 July, New York

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- ▣ Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives (WSSD+5), 1st substantive session, 17-28 May, New York
- ▣ International Labour Office (ILO) General Conference, 87th session, 1-17 June, Geneva

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Commission on Human Settlements

- ▣ 17th Commission on Human Settlements, 5-14 May, Nairobi

Climate Change Convention

- ▣ Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA)
 - ▣ Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI)
 - ▣ Ad Hoc Group on Article 13
- The above meetings will take place on 31 May-11 June, Bonn.

Global Environment Facility (GEF)

- ▣ NGO Consultation, 16 November, Washington DC
- ▣ GEF Council Meeting, 17-19 November, Washington DC

International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR)

- ▣ ECOSOC Special Session on Natural Disaster Prevention, July, Geneva

Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

- ▣ SIDS+5: Special Session of the UN General Assembly, September (2 days), New York

TRADE, FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Conference on Trade And Development (UNCTAD)

- ▣ Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Competition Law and Policy, 7-9 June, Geneva
- ▣ Commission on Enterprise, Business Facilitation and Development, 4th (and final) session, 19-23 July, Geneva
- ▣ Commission on Trade in Goods and Services, and Commodities, 4th (and final) session, 20-24 September, Geneva
- ▣ Commission on Investment, Technology and Related Financial Issues, 4th (and final) session, 4-8 October, Geneva
- ▣ Trade and Development Board, 46th session, 18-29 October, Geneva (preparatory process for UNCTAD X)

World Trade Organization

- ▣ Third Ministerial Conference, 30 November-3 December, Seattle

WOMEN

- ▣ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), 21st session, 7-25 June, New York

OTHER MEETINGS

- ▣ Meeting of the States Parties to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, 19-28 May, New York
- ▣ World Conference on Science, 26 June-1 July, Budapest

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

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GUEST EDITORIAL

**NAFIS SADIK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND**

NGOs from countries north and south, east and west, industrial and developing, helped forge the Programme of Action at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo. The NGO community has been active ever since in turning the ICPD agreements into achievements on the ground. In 1999, we are reviewing progress and looking forward to the next five years of implementing the programme. NGOs are again a central part of both review and implementation. Increased partnership has been a feature of the last five years. In today's climate of globalization, privatization, resource scarcity and the down-sizing of social sector programmes, the realization has sunk in that neither government nor the private sector working alone can meet basic human and social needs. The whole of civil society must commit itself to the task.

Two crucial understandings are key to the process of securing this commitment: first, that social and human development, not just economic growth, is the object of national policy; and second, that NGOs represent key actors and interests in civil society. They as much as the private sector must be involved in framing and implementing development policy as partners of government.

In putting the ICPD Programme of Action to work, NGOs can act as advisers, lobbyists, advocates, watchdogs and monitors, educators and trainers, support groups, implementers and innovators. On this basis we have seen NGO-government collaboration produce results in many countries. NGO involvement in project execution has grown steadily, for example, in delivering reproductive health information and services to the rural and urban poor. They have been instrumental in helping develop appropriate policies for other groups, such as adolescents. NGOs are also helping to test new approaches that can be used by larger public programmes, and helping to train both government and non-governmental staff. NGOs can boldly go where governments fear to tread. Issues such as reproductive rights, sexual health—especially adolescent reproductive health—are sensitive and deeply personal questions as well as national policy issues. NGOs in touch with their respective constituencies can represent their interests and ensure that policy and practice respond.

Coalition-building strengthens NGOs and helps mobilize resources and action. In UNFPA's recent survey of national activities, 44 reported that civil society has taken major action; NGOs in 28 of these countries formed a coalition or network under a common theme of women's rights, youth or reproductive health. Many countries cited examples of civil society initiatives such as mobilizing resources, undertaking advocacy activities and strengthening human resource and institutional capacities. For example, in Nicaragua 120 NGOs have gathered since June 1997 to discuss governmental policies that affect women. The National Coordinating Organization of NGOs has been formed, linking 120 organizations with the principal objective of setting criteria, and creating consensus and presenting coherent responses to the government.

The profit-oriented private sector is accepted as a crucial partner in achieving the goals of the ICPD. The private sector is already involved in reproductive health care in many countries including operating clinics, undertaking social marketing, and providing information through mass media; examples of their activities can be found across all regions including Mali, Morocco, Nepal and Zimbabwe.

Adolescent reproductive health continues to be one of the most neglected and difficult areas in which we all work. It is becoming more visible, partly as a result of advocacy by young people themselves. There is a discussion in every country regarding the nature and extent of information and services to be provided, and at what ages. All countries now recognize the need to protect the reproductive health of adolescents; they are overcoming an initial reluctance and recognizing the overwhelming importance of the issue. The national discussion on adolescent reproductive health must involve young people themselves, their parents, teachers and religious figures, as well as political leaders at national and community levels. Only through dialogue can countries accommodate society's values and young people's needs in a fast-changing world. NGOs will be critical to the success of that dialogue.

One of the pressures driving countries toward action is simply that there are more young people than ever before—nearly 1.2 billion worldwide, the largest generation the world will ever see. Nearly 900 million are in developing countries. Threats to their reproductive health include unwanted pregnancies, death in childbirth, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS, sexual violence, incest and female genital mutilation. We must ensure the protection of adolescents, especially women, from violence, unwanted sexual contact and its consequences. We need to focus on gender equality and equity; and we need to stress male responsibility in the family, in the community and in national leadership.

In the past five years NGOs have shown their unflagging determination to continue the work begun at ICPD; their dedication is manifest in countless new and more effective programmes in the areas of education, women's empowerment, male involvement and adolescent reproductive health, to name a few. Their work should never be taken for granted; governments, international organizations and the private sector must do their part to ensure a full and productive collaboration. Together we can increase the participation of civil soci-