

Global Good Neighbor "test" for candidates.....3

LATIN AMERICA

Peru: Garcia wins, but do the Peruvian people?.....4
Brazil: Assault vans fuel fear, provide immunity.....5
Latin America: Different kind of trade pact.....6
Andean nations, EU proposed trade alliance.....7
Haiti: Cancel debt without delay.....8
Guatemala: Violence against women.....9
Mexico: Open letter to candidates.....10

ASIA/PACIFIC

Thailand: Buddhist insights and U.S. politics.....11
Burma: Displaced people lack care, protection.....12
East Timor: Young nation suffers violence.....13
Nepal: Maoists, lawmakers reshape government.....14

AFRICA

Africa: The brain drain.....15
Darfur: Situation grows worse.....16
Southern Africa spurns U.S. trade agreement.....17
S. Africa: Fresh start for donors, recipients.....18
Tanzania: The role of the IMF.....19

Recent developments on IMF reform.....20
Proposals for financing for development.....21
Corruption and illegitimate debt.....22
UN: Indigenous youth as prophetic voice.....23
UN Committee Against Torture reviews U.S.....24
UN's Commission on Sustainable Development-14.....25
Christian groups respond to HIV/AIDS review.....26

Resources.....27

MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS:
Peace, Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation
<http://www.maryknollogc.org>

*Maryknoll Sisters
Maryknoll Lay Missioners
Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers*

Marie Dennis — *Director*.....mdennis@maryknoll.org
Judy Coode.....jcoode@maryknoll.org
Yamileth Coreas.....ycoreas@maryknoll.org
Sr. Jean Fallon, MM.....jfallon@mksisters.org
David Kane, MLM.....dkane@maryknoll.org
Rev. Jim Kofski, MM.....jkofski@maryknoll.org
Susan Weissert, MLM.....sweissert@mksisters.org

MOGC Washington
P.O. Box 29132
Washington, D.C. 20017
(202)832-1780 phone
(202)832-5195 fax
ogc@maryknoll.org

MOGC Maryknoll NY
P.O. Box 311
Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545-0311
(914)941-7575 phone
(914)923-0733 fax
ogc@maryknoll.org

MOGC UN Office
777 First Ave., 10th Fl.
New York, N.Y. 10115
(212)973-9551 phone

**Maryknoll Productions
(videos, posters)**

P.O. Box 308
Maryknoll NY 10545
(800)227-8523
salesmwp@maryknoll.org

**TAKE ACTION - Email, call, fax or write
U.S. decisionmakers**

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500
www.whitehouse.gov

Vice President Dick Cheney
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500
vice_president@whitehouse.gov

White House Comment Desk
(202) 456-1111 phone
(202) 456-2461 fax

Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520
(202) 647-6575 phone
(202) 647-2283 fax
www.state.gov

Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301
(703) 695-5261 phone
www.defenselink.mil

Stephen Hadley
National Security Council
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500
(202) 456-1414 phone
(202) 456-2883 fax

Alberto Gonzales
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530-0001
(202)353-1555 phone
AskDOJ@usdoj.gov
www.justice.gov

John Bolton
U.S. Representative to UN
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
(212) 415-4000 phone

Paul Wolfowitz
President
World Bank Group
1818 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20433
www.worldbank.org

Orbis Books
P.O. Box 308
Maryknoll NY 10545
(800)258-5838
orbisbooks@maryknoll.org

Rodrigo de Rato y Figaredo
Managing Director
International Monetary Fund
700 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20431
www.imf.org

Current status of bills:
(202) 225-1772
<http://thomas.loc.gov>

Capitol switchboard:
(202) 224-3121

www.senate.gov
www.house.gov

Due to ongoing security measures, there is a significant delay in delivery of mail to Congressional offices. It is advised that constituents either use email or fax, or send mail to Congresspersons' home offices, rather than to the Washington, D.C. office.

Global Good Neighbor “test” for candidates

Because of the increasingly close interdependence which is gradually extending to the entire world, we are today witnessing an extension of the role of the common good, which is the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. The resulting rights and obligations are consequently the concern of the entire human race. Every group must take into account the needs and legitimate aspirations of every other group, and even those of the human family as a whole. (Gaudium et Spes #26)

As the important mid-term U.S. Congressional elections approach, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is aware of the enormous impact of U.S. elections on the communities where Maryknoll missionaries live and work around the world. These elections are local and national in scope to be sure, but their consequences will quickly affect – even determine – the manner in which the United States of America moves about the world.

Will we recognize the richness and responsibilities of living in a global context?

Will we understand the call to global solidarity? Will we pursue the global common good?

Will we be global good neighbors – or not?

Those will be the stakes – again – as we enter the voting booth.

Each one of us knows well what it means to be a good neighbor. We have ourselves been good neighbors at some times and at other times perhaps we have failed. Neighborly values are very familiar: a commitment to the common good; respect for diversity; appreciation of opinions different from our own; generosity; empathy and compassion; honesty; truthfulness; non-violence; consideration for others; and so on.

As we wrote in our 2004 election guide, “[Maryknoll missionaries] yearn for a world that is peaceful because we have seen with our own eyes the human and ecological cost of war and violent conflict. We yearn for a world where the basic right of every person to a life of dignity is honored and where the rest of creation is valued and its integrity safe-

guarded. We have accompanied too many communities where this is not the reality and we have observed too many political leaders without the vision or the courage to make it so.”

The challenge in the coming weeks and months will be to evaluate candidates for the U.S. Congress according to good neighbor (or perhaps, “common good”) standards. By September 1 the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns will have a new voter’s guide available to help you do so.

A few examples:

- National security – Does a given candidate believe that the security of one person or nation cannot be guaranteed while ignoring or undermining the security and well-being of others; that global solidarity – the commitment to work together with all to seek the well-being of all – should be the defining value of international relations?

- Integrity of creation – Has the candidate demonstrated a commitment to environmental justice and respect for the integrity of creation? How does the candidate propose that the United States become a global good neighbor in the context of global warming?

- Multilateralism – Does a given candidate support the establishment and strengthening of multilateral institutions and agreements that provide for cooperative action in response to major global problems transcending national borders?

- Movement of peoples – Does the candidate believe in the neighborly value of welcome and hospitality, especially to those in need? How does the candidate propose keeping borders humane?

The social order requires constant improvement: it must be founded in truth, built on justice, and enlivened by love, and it should grow in freedom towards a more humane equilibrium. If these objectives are to be attained there will first have to be a renewal of attitudes and far-reaching social changes.

The Spirit of God, who, with wonderful providence, directs the course of time and renews the face of the earth, assists at this development. The ferment of the Gospel has aroused and continues to arouse in human hearts an unquenchable thirst for human dignity. (Gaudium et Spes #26)



Peru: Garcia wins, but do the Peruvian people?

The following analysis of Peru's recent presidential election was written by Fr. Tom Burns, MM, a Maryknoll missionary who has lived and worked in Peru for many years.

On June 4, when the Peruvian people went to the polls to choose between Ollanta Humala and Alan Garcia for the new president of Peru, they went with the attitude of heavily indebted bettors who had to go to the table one last time in a do-or-die attempt to salvage what little they still had. They went, decided on which way to spin the dice, with their hearts in their hands and a prayer on their lips.

In the first election round the voters had rejected Lourdes Flores Nano, the original favorite and the candidate of the right. By rejecting Flores Nano, they rejected the slow death of malnutrition and tuberculosis brought on by the failure of neoliberalism to create jobs and the myth of "trickle down" economics. Paraphrasing Bill Clinton's first presidential campaign claim, the voters' message was, "It's impoverishment, stupid." At this round in the polls, the poor - especially in the south central highlands - clearly rejected their historic economic and racial exclusion. "It is time for serious reform," they said and this is the most important result of this election process: an emerging attitude shared throughout South America.

In the ensuing run off of Garcia versus Humala, it was, as one commentator put it, "a choice between AIDS and cancer." Garcia and Humala are a study in contrasts: former president Garcia is a savvy, veteran politician and an astute, incredibly articulate word crafter (Clinton could learn from him); Humala is a neophyte; retired from the military, he is an outsider who challenges the establishment from the margins of society. The "Commander," as his followers refer to him, promises to put the morally bankrupt and universally discredited political class in its place.

Garcia's image is that of a social democrat and leader of a well organized political party with a clear

ideology while Humala's image is that of an anti-establishment caudillo and head of a loose coalition or movement with a confused ideology. Garcia's first government from 1986-1990 was a corruption-ridden disaster: an accumulated five year inflation of more than two million percent. At the same time, many atrocities occurred during his government in the context of the war with the Shining Path - the Truth and Reconciliation Commission found him politically, if not legally, responsible. (However, they couldn't find the "smoking gun.") While he "talked the talk," he couldn't "walk the walk."

On the other hand, as a cadet Humala studied at the School of the Americas (SOA) and has been accused of torture and disappearances in Madre Mia, in the jungle near Tingo Maria. (His pertinent military files from this time have also disappeared.) Curiously, he and his brother Antauro (a story in

himself) staged a military uprising in the south of Peru just as Vladimiro Montesinos (former president Alberto Fujimori's Machiavelli) escaped with millions towards the north. Montesinos is also an SOA graduate. Humala, however, received his strongest outside support from Hugo Chavez, the democratically elected, left leaning

caudillo president of Venezuela. Paradoxically, this is what did him in. Humala's Peruvian Nationalist Party was defeated by another nationalism: patriotic Peruvians rejected Chavez's interference in their internal affairs and decided to go with Garcia. ("People learn from their mistakes," they said to themselves with a prayer in their hearts as the rolled the dice.) If it weren't for Chavez, it is very possible that Humala would be Peru's new president.

The message of Peruvian voters is clear: We want democratic, economic and social reforms. Both Garcia and Humala are "reformers" with close military ties and with many similarities in their programs; the doubt is whether reform will take place and, if so, will it happen democratically, respecting human rights and with integrity? Only God knows, and the dice have just been rolled. It is, once again, time to pray.



Former president Alan Garcia, above (photo from peru.indymedia.org), won Peru's June 4 presidential election, defeating Ollanta Humala, below (photo from www.peru.com).



Brazil: Assault vans fuel fear, provide immunity

They call it the “caveirão” because of the skulls drawn on its sides. Amnesty International considers it a powerful symbol of the failings of public security policies in Rio de Janeiro. The caveirão, pronounced cav-ey-raow and meaning “big skull,” is the nickname given to a new military-style assault vehicle being used by police forces in Rio de Janeiro. The vehicle is the latest development in the Rio police’s increasingly militaristic approach to drug gangs’ control over the favelas in the hills of Rio. For residents of these neighborhoods, the caveirão has increased already high levels of fear and has accelerated the arms war taking place between police and gangs.

Violence in Brazil is an overwhelming reality, especially in Rio. Homicides in Brazil jumped from 13,910 in 1980 to 31,989 in 1995 – an incredible 167 percent increase. Since 2000, Brazil has approached 40,000 homicides every year. The murder rate in Rio in 1994 was 61 per 100,000 people, compared to São Paulo’s 28 and the U.S. rate of 5.5 in 2005. Between 1993 and 1996, one out of 10 homicide victims in Brazil was killed by the police. In Rio, with a population of six million, 358 people were killed by the police in 1995, compared to a total of 385 people killed by police in the U.S. with a population of 280 million. Few believe that the addition of the *caveirão* to the police’s arsenal will improve these statistics.

The *caveirão*, which costs \$62,000, is an adapted van with a turret able to rotate 360 degrees and rows of firing positions running along each side of the van from which up to 12 heavily armed officers can fire at will with no one able to see who is pulling the trigger. The van has two layers of armor and coated tires resistant to punctures. Although it weighs around eight tons it can reach speeds of up to 70 miles an hour. Due to the invisibility of the officers, the *caveirão* allows total impunity for those inside.

Loudspeakers mounted on the vehicles are used to intimidate the population. Residents report announcements like “Children, get out of the street – there’s going to be a shootout” and “We have come to take your souls.” There have been other reports of police swearing and using derogatory language against residents, especially women. Children’s usual

fears of the “bogey man” have been replaced by fear of the *caveirão*. To see a video of translated interviews with children in Rio about the *caveirão*, go to <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/bra-130406-action-eng>.

Between May and September 2005, 11 people were killed by anonymous officers in these vehicles, including an 11-year old boy. Part of Amnesty International’s complaints about the *caveirão* is that police use Belgium-made FAL caliber 7.62 rifles, which are capable of passing through a series of targets – an extra danger in densely populated neighborhoods with flimsy houses.

Many civil society organizations in Rio say that the *caveirão* has accelerated the arms war between the police and gangs. In response to the vehicle, drug gangs have bought sophisticated grenade launchers and high-powered rifles that can penetrate the *caveirões*’ armor. In one *favela*, the police reportedly found a manual showing methods to combat the *caveirão* including special explosives and methods of urban guerilla warfare.

In March 2006, residents and organizations in Rio, concerned about the vans’ increased use, began a campaign against the vehicles. But not everyone opposes the *caveirões*. Supporters of the vehicles include people desperate to try anything to reduce the violence in their neighborhoods, and the police, who point to significant drops in officers being killed (from 44 in 2004 to 17 in 2005). Those in the campaign against the vehicles recognize that the *caveirões* have been able to reduce police mortality, but do not agree that this justifies the increase in cases of deaths, injuries, abuses, impunity, disrespect, and psychological problems (especially in children) that the *caveirões* provoke.

To send a letter to the governor of Rio about the *caveirão*, go to the Amnesty International site at <http://web.amnesty.org/pages/bra-130406-action-eng>, or mail a letter to Exmo. Sr. Governador do Estado do Rio de Janeiro Palácio Guanabara, Rua Pinheiro Machado, s/nº, Laranjeiras, 22238-900 - Rio de Janeiro – RJ, Brasil.

To see photos of the *caveirão*, go to http://odia.terra.com.br/rio/galeria_foto/caveirao/index.asp



Military-styled police vans in Rio de Janeiro

Latin America: Different kind of trade pact

Bolivia, Venezuela and Cuba recently signed an alternative form of trade agreement that differs fundamentally from most agreements being negotiated today. The pact does not seek to reduce government influence in the economy. Instead, it recognizes the important role that government can play in guiding economies to benefit a larger portion of society. It also recognizes differences between countries and promotes endogenous development in the participating nations.

The Peoples' Trade Agreement (PTA) is an extension of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA in Spanish), a similar agreement between Venezuela and Cuba, which was signed on April 29, 2005, exactly one year before the signing of the PTA. Since the signing of ALBA, bilateral trade between Cuba and Venezuela is expected to rise 42 percent to \$1.7 billion. In 1999, that figure was only \$400 million.

Though the PTA is not hundreds of pages long, as are most other trade agreements, it advances even further in lowering tariffs between countries. Each signatory country "will immediately remove tariffs and non-tariff barriers that apply to all imports" from participating countries. Due to the similar size and development of the three countries' economies, they are able to erase tariffs to a much greater degree than in agreements with powerful economies like the United States. In the agreement, the countries agree not only to enhance their trade, but to "elaborate a strategic plan in order to guarantee complementary products that can be mutually beneficial." They also agree to exchange comprehensive technology packages, to work together to eradicate illiteracy in their countries, to promote the development of joint cultural projects, and to allow for the opening of state banks of one country in the territory of another.

The PTA considers the comparative advantages of each country, guarantees the transfer of technology, and looks to improve business opportunities, while prioritizing the preservation of resources, expansion of employment and improvements in the well being of the poorest citizens of each country.

In the agreement, Cuba commits to "provide free high quality ophthalmologic surgeries to all Bolivian citizens lacking the [necessary] financial resources as well as advanced technology equipment in six ophthalmologic centers." In the area of health,

Cuba will also provide 5,000 scholarships over three years in various areas of medicine for Bolivians, as well as 600 medical specialists and 20 field hospitals equipped with surgical facilities, intensive care units, laboratories and other resources. It will also provide training and materials for literacy programs in Spanish and Aymara, Quechua and Guaraní – the three most common indigenous languages in Bolivia, as well as energy-saving technologies that "could yield significant convertible currency."

Venezuela agrees to provide extensive collaboration in the energy and mining sectors, 5,000 scholarships to their universities as well as asphalt and an asphalt mixing plant. Venezuela will "notably increase the imports of Bolivian products, especially those that contribute to the increase of its strategic food reserves." This is an important provision for both countries. Bolivia will face increasing difficulties in exporting to Colombia and Peru if and when they sign trade agreements with the U.S., which would lead to a flood of subsidized U.S. goods into those countries. Sixty percent of Bolivia's soybean exports go to Colombia alone. It also will assist Venezuela, which has encountered difficulties maintaining food supplies in markets around the country. Venezuela will help in the "promotion of endogenous development nuclei" based on its experience of forming cooperatives and worker-owned businesses. Finally, Venezuela pledges \$100 million to finance infrastructure projects and \$30 million for social and productive programs.

For its part, Bolivia agrees to export mining, agricultural, livestock and industrial products as required by Cuba and Venezuela and to "contribute its expertise in the study of native peoples ... recovery of ancestral knowledge in the field of natural medicine and research on natural resources and genetic agricultural and livestock patterns."

Born from the lived experience of the failure of neoliberal economics that create superfluous riches for a few while decreasing overall numbers of jobs and basic services for the poor in Latin America, the PTA and ALBA are the codifications of the desire for a new way to do business. They seek to guarantee the basic rights and decent living standards for people over the rights of corporations to make profits. It is an alternative that is becoming more attractive as the results of other trade agreements like NAFTA, CAFTA, U.S.-Jordan, and U.S.-Chile clearly show

little benefit, or even worsening conditions, for poorer citizens and the environment.

These alternative types of trade agreements are not going to go away any time soon. Ecuador may become the next country to enter the PTA/ALBA, as its negotiations with the United States have failed due to a dispute over oil rights. Venezuela's recent

entry into the Mercosur community should also help to spread these types of trade agreements throughout Latin America. The rest of the world will be watching to see if these agreements are better able to create real growth and development in Latin America. If so, it could be a model that will be repeated in numerous regional agreements.

Andean nations, EU proposed trade alliance

On June 13, leaders of the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) — Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru -- met in Quito to discuss the possibilities of bloc-to-bloc negotiations with the European Union (EU). (Venezuela withdrew its membership in CAN in April after Peru and Colombia signed free trade agreements with the U.S., contending that the bilateral deals undermine CAN's foundation. These pacts have not yet come before the U.S. Congress, and might not be voted on before the November U.S. Congressional elections.)

The CAN countries have a July 20 deadline to evaluate what is needed to start formal negotiations with the EU. If the CAN countries come to consensus, including establishment of a common tariff, talks could get under way in January 2007, and the agreement, which includes political, economic, and trade chapters, would become effective in May 2008.

Following are excerpts from Bolivia's proposal for baseline positions for an association agreement between the CAN and the EU.

"[This agreement] must fundamentally be an Agreement of Complementarity at different levels between the [CAN] and the [EU] in order to find joint solutions to issues of migration, drug trafficking, preservation of the environment, structural problems that create poverty and unemployment, the strengthening of our identities and the empowering and recovering of our States, and the development of authentic democracy which is participative and inclusive of all sectors especially the indigenous peoples who have been excluded for more than 500 years.

"The peoples, human beings and nature, must be the principal beneficiaries of this Association Agreement. We must overcome the practice in which multinational business interests are put before the needs of the population and the environment. Civil society and social organizations must participate actively in the construction of an Association Agree-

ment in order to create a true integration that involves States and the Peoples.

"Political dialogue must be balanced and reciprocal, recognizing that both sides have much to learn, from each other, in issues such as formal, participative and communal democracy. It is crucial to promote an interchange of experiences on issues such as autonomy, decentralization, the fight against corruption, transparency, consensual solutions to conflicts, a culture of peace and integration with sovereignty.

"The fight against drug trafficking is of vital importance for CAN and the EU. Both have to make the maximum efforts to cut the various links in the chain of drug trafficking which includes the laundering of dollars in banks, the diversion of elements and chemicals used to prepare drugs, and the production, transport and commercialization of drugs. Up to now the war on drugs has failed. It is necessary to make a change which involves working with society in order to confront the plague of drugs. ...

"Aid from the EU for CAN should be without conditions that affect the sovereign policies adopted by CAN States. Aid must contribute to overcoming the structural causes of dependency and colonialism which underlie our States. ...

"Migration is a problem which affects the EU as well as CAN. Together we must ... resolve the structural problem of unemployment and poverty which cause hundreds of thousands of Andean citizens to abandon their countries in order to seek some sort of future in Europe. The drama of migration cannot be resolved by police or administrative measures, and must always include caring for the human rights of migrants. It is crucial that aid and trade interchange with the EU contributes towards resolving structural problems of creating permanent and sustainable jobs. ..."

To read the entire proposal, go to the MOGC website at www.maryknollog.org.

Haiti: Cancel debt without delay

The following is excerpted from an article written for the Jubilee USA Network by Mark Schuller, an affiliate at the Faculté d'Ethnologie, Université d'Etat d'Haïti and the Université de Fondwa-2004, and a Ph.D Candidate in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Schuller describes the human face -- and human cost -- to Haiti's debt: "there are only two doctors per 10,000 people in Haiti. Life expectancy is 53 years. ... Twenty three percent of children under five are chronically malnourished, and one in eight die before their fifth birthday. ... [A]n estimated 500,000 children are without access to education, and only 35 percent are able to finish primary school." The original article, with important footnotes, is available at www.jubileeusa.org.

[On] May 14, former president René Gracia Préval was inaugurated as Haiti's new elected leader, ending the over two years of transition that many people in Haiti remember as one of the worst periods in their lives. Over and over again, the international community has stated their desire to help Haiti begin anew, with a clean slate. A month before, the World Bank announced that Haiti would be entering into their debt cancellation process, what they call HIPC [Highly Indebted Poor Countries]. This is a good first step. But Haiti's future development, not to mention justice, demands more: a full and immediate debt cancellation, without conditions.

Haiti's debt should be canceled for many reasons. First and foremost, it is unjust. Haiti's first century-long debt was exacted by the former colonial power to repay slaveholders for their losses. And much of Haiti's current debt went to feed the brutality of the Duvalier dictatorships. Rather than use their influence to stop the abuse, international organizations kept the money flowing to Haiti's unelected leaders, knowing it was not reaching Haiti's people, and when Duvalier left, these organizations chose to hold Haiti's people responsible.

Next, to put it simply, debt kills. Rather than invest in education, the environment, or health care, Haiti's people are forced to repay a debt they did not ask for or benefit from. I have visited once-functioning clinics in poor urban neighborhoods and in small mountain towns abandoned because of a lack of funds. And debt undermines democracy and na-

tional sovereignty, forcing democratically-elected leaders and citizens to follow debt repayment or specific economic policies imposed by international organizations. Debt structures the relationship with foreign powers, keeping Haiti under foreign control, even if there weren't a multinational force.

Finally, Haiti's people have more than paid for the debt, in terms of actual payments and in terms of Haiti's extreme underdevelopment. But despite promises made to annul billions of dollars of debt for 18 low income countries at the 2005 G8 summit in Gleneagles, canceling Haiti's debt was not even considered. Because debt is often an extremely technical conversation, in which only trained economists tend to participate, this paper is a primer for those of us who are motivated by humanistic concerns to be able to understand, and therefore to participate.

On January 1, 1804, for the first and only time in world history, a slave revolt ended slavery, severing colonial ties and creating the world's first independent black nation-state. Two hundred years after this heroic event, Haiti is still paying for it. On April 17, 1825, over 21 years after former slaves won their independence, a royal decree offered France's recognition of Haiti, but at a price. The accord, which Haitian President Jean-Pierre Boyer signed, demanded that Haiti pay 150 million francs. Having just recovered from a revolution and a generation of civil warfare, the Haitian government was bankrupt, so the Haitian government took out a loan from a French bank, thus starting Haiti's long-term debt...a primary barrier to Haiti's development....

This was intensified during the 29-year father-and-son Duvalier dictatorship. On December 5, 1980, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) gave Jean Claude Duvalier, "Baby Doc," \$22 million in aid. James Ferguson notes that: *Within weeks \$20 million of this amount had been withdrawn from the Haitian government's account; of this, the IMF stated, \$4 million had gone directly to the VSN [the tontons macoutes, a paramilitary organization responsible for as many as 30,000 killings in the Duvalier period], while the remaining \$16 million had seemingly disappeared into Duvalier's various personal accounts. ...*



Photo by Fr. Joe Towle, MM, courtesy of Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

While in 1970, Haiti's debt was \$40 million, by 1987, the first full fiscal year after the Duvaliers left, it was \$844 million, 60 percent of the amount owed in 2004. The debt service alone Haiti owed from 1987 to 2005 was \$779.04 million. ... Currently, Haiti's total external public debt is more than \$1.4 billion. ... In the past several years, Haiti's debt service has been more than \$50 million per year. ...

In April, Haiti was added to the list of "HIPC eligible" countries for the World Bank and IMF. This is a good first step. But it is only the first of many steps in a process. To achieve full debt cancellation in the HIPC program, a country has to go through a process of being in "decision point" whereby the country has to follow an IMF staff monitored pro-

gram, and submit a "Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper." Once these procedural steps have been taken, the country has to have demonstrated progress on these plans. The earliest Haiti's people could see debt cancellation is in 2009 – by which time Haiti's people will be deprived of over \$220 million that could have gone to education, health care, environmental, or HIV/AIDS prevention funding that will go instead to service Haiti's debt.

Faith in action:

Join the Jubilee USA Network in working for immediate, unconditional cancellation of Haiti's debt. Go to www.jubileeusa.org.

Guatemala: Violence against women

During the last five years, more than 2,000 women have been brutally murdered in Guatemala, but only 14 cases have received judicial sentences. Courageous women's organizations and supportive international NGOs are enlightening the complexity of this problem and are leading the demands for effective justice from local authorities. The following article is written by Jose Henriquez, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

Even if all these murders were taking place in a context of general violence, the patterns of brutality permit them to be described as gender violence. In fact, the term "femicide" is already being used nationally and internationally. According to the Guatemalan National Civil Police (PNC), between 2002-2005 murders of women increased 110 percent. In 2005 over 600 women were killed, many of them showing signs of torture and extreme brutality. And from January to May 2006 the death toll rose above 150. Most of the victims were young women, between the ages of 14 and 25, from shanty towns or poor areas on the outskirts of the nation's capital.

Civil society organizations and women's groups are making important contributions to understand and face this dreadful problem. *Sobrevivientes*, a group of survivors of rape and violence, recently issued a report which makes a simile between actual murders and counterinsurgent operations against women within the civil war period. Sadly, some organizations which have publicly denounced this violence have been threatened and suffered intimi-

dations with patterns that suggest involvement from organized crime groups.

Meanwhile, in response to pressure and international human rights organizations' surveillance, last March the Guatemalan government instated the Commission to Address Femicide, aimed to implement effective mechanisms to prevent and punish those crimes. Similarly, the PNC created a special section called Women's Homicides. Despite these positive achievements, such units have not been given the necessary resources to achieve their goals.

Gender violence is part of the general violence affecting the country that authorities have not been able to address. A report from the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women in 2005 denounced the impunity involved in this situation "as authorities fail to investigate cases, and prosecute and punish perpetrators," and clearly stated that "security and justice institutions have not responded adequately." Vice President Eduardo Stein has publicly admitted limits of the government to control violence. Statistics from Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo highlight that during the first five months of the year, 1,672 people have been murdered.

Local authorities, backed up by media coverage, tend to identify these deaths as gang-related. As a result, most crimes are shown as a consequence of the delinquent activity of the murdered persons. Notwithstanding, a recent report from the Human Rights Ombudsman concludes that most security-related national problems derive from the failure to successfully implement the Peace Accords, and high-

lights social cleansing practices in which state agents have possibly participated. Extended possession and use of weapons, the proliferation of private security agencies and militarization of public security are noted as key components of the violent panorama.

Recently, more than 100 members of the U.S. Congress expressed deep concern for the brutal killings of women in Guatemala and urged the Department of State to publicly support efforts for the protection of women and human rights defenders in that country. In a letter to State Department Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Thomas Shannon, the legislators requested U.S. diplomatic efforts to “encourage the Guatemalan government to allocate adequate support and resources for the protection of victims of attacks, as well as witnesses, friends and family members.” The Members also stated that “despite the specific commitments by the Guatemalan government to protect the lives of women and human rights defenders, increased violence against women, men and children in Guatemala is fast spiraling out of control”; they

also underlined that “prosecution of these crimes is almost nonexistent, and consequently the attacks on women have become more frequent and brutal.”

The Special Rapporteur’s document cited above asked the government to adopt measures to “end impunity for violence against women through legislative, investigative and judicial reform” and to “provide protective and support services to women facing actual or a risk of violence.” The Rapporteur also encouraged civil society groups “to act in unison to pressure the Government to investigate and prosecute cases of violence against women” and “to build awareness throughout Guatemala regarding women’s human rights.”

For more information see the Amnesty International Report “No protection, no justice: Killings of women in Guatemala,” <http://www.amnesty.org/>, and the Report on Guatemala from the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G05/108/17/PDF/G0510817.pdf?OpenElement>.

Mexico: Open letter to candidates

On June 27, an open letter to Mexico’s presidential candidates was published, signed by 67 civil society organizations from Mexico and the U.S. The letter urged candidates to improve the security situation for women in Mexico immediately by taking concrete measures while in office. The groups asked for public pledges before the presidential election, scheduled for July 2. Following are excerpts:

“We, the undersigned, call upon the next Mexican government to make the prevention, punishment and eradication of violence against women, and specifically the waves of murders and mutilation of women in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, and elsewhere in Mexico, a national priority.

“Therefore, we urge you to publicly commit to take these concrete steps to prevent and punish violence against women in Mexico while in office.

“We expect all presidential candidates to publicly accept the following pledge ...

“1. To make the prevention, punishment and eradication of murders and mutilation of women in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, and elsewhere in Mexico a national priority;

“2. To set up and ensure full cooperation with

an independent interdisciplinary team of experts to investigate the murders of women in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, and in the rest of Mexico, with the aim of contributing to efforts by ... prosecutors to bring the perpetrators of those crimes to justice;

“3. To create a national toll-free number to allow for the reporting of gender-based and sexual violence to an independent monitoring force, and to allow for anonymous reporting for such crimes;

“4. To step up violence prevention programmes and policies, including early warning mechanisms and the reinforcement of security in dangerous or isolated areas;

“5. To coordinate and amplify efforts at the federal, state and municipal levels to improve such basic services as lighting in marginal areas and zones that have been associated with security risk; security with respect to transportation; the paving of roads in marginal areas—and to allocate the funds necessary to provide such services;

“6. To ensure that Attorney General offices guarantee free legal support in providing access to justice and to all legal guarantees of protection for the victims of violence and the relatives of murdered and abducted women and girls;

“7. To insist that all public officials act with due diligence to take all appropriate steps within their mandate to contribute to the prevention, punishment, and eradication of the murder and mutilation of women and girls in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, and elsewhere in Mexico;

“8. Promote mechanisms to investigate and sanction public officials who violate their duty to prevent and denounce cases of violence against women.”

To see the entire statement plus signatories, go to Human Rights Watch’s website at www.hrw.org

Thailand: Buddhist insights and U.S. politics

U.S. political strategists could possibly benefit from Buddhist ideas like those of Thai activist Sulak Sivaraksa. Politics, he says, “is about changing society or the world, about disrupting the unjust order, for instance.” Sivaraksa is director of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists in Thailand.

Good governance, Sivaraksa says, is often confused with mere dialogue and tolerance of diversity, seeking consensus or providing stability and security. But he says that politics is also about social engagement and might even be disruptive, adding that it should affirm compassion and nonviolence.

“(G)overnance without politics becomes unreflective or unthinking, and a ‘post-political’ order is therefore oppressive and dominating,” Sivaraksa says. “If the ultimate objective of governance is simply to uphold security and stability, then its human cost would be horrific. ... (T)he war on terror thus becomes the war of terror.

“Another instance of ‘post-political’ governance is the rush to mindless development along capitalist-consumerist lines without regard to environmental degradation and life ...” he says. “As long as [we say] ‘I shop, therefore I am,’ there will be no alternative because we will be able to talk only about cars, long vacations abroad, houses, and so on. But if we say ‘I breathe, therefore I am,’ then there will still be a place for thought, for politics, for nonviolent social engagement.”

Sivaraksa spoke earlier this year in Thailand at the Asian Colloquium on Harmony through Reconciliation, organized by the Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences – Office for Human Development.

Sivaraksa suggests that tension and conflict can arise when people fail to recognize their interdependence. “Vengeance, hostility, and militarism adhere to the very opposite condition – invulnerability, the dream of the superpower,” he says. “We can only be invulnerable at the expense of our humanity. The State often fuels these divisions in the name of

invulnerability or absolute security. Enemies and evil are seemingly everywhere.”

He expresses concern over Thailand’s Emergency Decree, declared in July 2005 following violence in several Muslim-majority provinces in the south (see *NewsNotes*, July/August 2005 and September/October 2005). The decree “is not really a new law, but rather a suspension of the law,” he says, alleging it provides for inadequate judicial supervision of arrests and detentions, among other provisions.

“(T)his climate of unaccountability and impunity sets in [motion] a relation of violence between the governor and the governed,” he says. “It opens the avenue for ‘preemptive strikes’ against the designated enemies of the State. Who are the enemies? How do we detect the enemies? Here ethnic or racial profiling comes into play. The enemy, however remotely, looks ‘Indian, Arab or Muslim.’”

Thailand’s Emergency Decree was modeled after the U.S. Patriot Act, he says, adding that “something that is legal may nonetheless be morally indefensible or outright violent. After all, the Emergency Decree operates by the security paradigm, and not the paradigm of justice – hence the suspension of the law.”

The challenge of governance, Sivaraksa says, “is to make this relation of violence and this lawless power visible – to demystify its logic and make it reveal its violent nature or excessiveness through compassion and nonviolence.” He calls for “a threefold transformation of greed into generosity, of hatred into compassion, and of delusion into wisdom. These are the ‘miracles’ of Buddhism.”

“Good governance is opposite to domination, which is a relationship of violence,” Sivaraksa says. His three Buddhist “miracles” could conceivably help make even U.S. policies more generous, compassionate and wise while “disrupting the unjust order” – nonviolently.

Burma: Displaced people lack care, protection

Burma is home to as many as one million internally displaced persons (IDPs). They are among an estimated 25 million in 49 countries who have been forced from their homes by armed conflicts and human rights violations. Meanwhile, Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were drafted 10 years ago, but they continue to languish at the UN, still awaiting formal action.

In contrast to refugees, the UN describes IDPs as persons who, as a result of persecution, armed conflict or violence, have been forced to leave their homes but who remain in their own country. The number of IDPs has risen sharply from an estimated 1.2 million in 1982. Meanwhile, the number of refugees has decreased from 17.8 million in 1992 to 9.2 million in 2004.

The number of IDPs has grown in part because of the difficulty in crossing international borders. “Neighboring countries are unwilling to accept mass, or even small, exoduses of people due to the issues related to refugees ... and the related financial burden,” according to Burma Issues.

“Furthermore, countries are concerned about internal conflicts overflowing onto their soil and the possibility of anti-government groups using ‘safe havens’ (such as refugee camps) to launch their resistance movements,” the publication adds. Those who do reach a neighboring country are often confined to camps – such as Burmese who flee to Thailand – where they receive little international attention and limited protection (see *NewsNotes*, November/December 2005).

“There are no legal instruments or institutions specifically designed to protect IDPs,” Burma Issues says. “While the Universal Declaration of Human Rights applies to everyone, refugees have added protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol. The same obligation to protect and assist internally displaced persons does not exist.”

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement were drafted in 1996 as a framework to protect IDPs. The 30 articles were presented to the Human Rights Commission in 1998, but they have yet to be

put forward to the UN General Assembly. Consequently, observance of the principles is voluntary.

The principles call on national authorities to meet IDPs’ basic needs including food, water, shelter and health services. However, displacement often results from conflict with non-state actors, development projects or persecution by a state against its own people.

The principles also provide that, if a state shirks its responsibility, the international community should step in to aid IDPs. “As it is often the state governments that cause displacement, they are usually unwilling to bring international attention onto the humanitarian crisis within their borders – including accepting or facilitating assistance,” according to Burma Issues. “Some states, such as the Burmese junta, even deliberately prevent international organizations from accessing displaced people.”

IDPs’ living situation often poses a humanitarian crisis. As the Burmese junta seeks to extend its military control, villagers flee their homes for the jungle to escape government troops. The constant threats of military attack, food insecurity, injury or illness pose major obstacles to survival. In addition, the military destroys farm land and stores of food and plants landmines to block villagers’ return. Malnutrition and illness among IDPs is rife.

In the absence of state action on behalf of IDPs, non-governmental organizations try to advocate for them. Nevertheless, it is extremely difficult for the displaced to organize themselves and present a unified voice, living as they do in extremely rudimentary conditions.

A coordinated international effort is overdue. The UN should take the initiative and promote wider compliance with the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. This could be done by reintroducing the principles as an international convention for ratification by individual UN member states, or by submitting them to the General Assembly for a majority vote.

Until strong action is taken, the junta in Burma is likely to continue to encroach on ethnic lands, conduct large-scale exploitation of natural resources and undermine local cultural cohesion.



A displaced mother and her family in the Burmese jungle. Photo from www.burmaissues.org

East Timor: Young nation suffers violence

East Timor, born in sorrow four years ago after throwing off its colonial master, Indonesia, is mourning dozens of its citizens once again. Recent unrest, sparked by the dismissal of hundreds of striking soldiers, resulted in at least 30 deaths. Another 1,000 residents of the capital of Dili fled their homes for the safety of makeshift refugee camps.

East Timor suffered 24 years of occupation after being annexed as Indonesia's 27th province in 1975. The world stood by as upwards of 200,000 East Timorese – one-third of the territory's 1975 population – were killed by Indonesian security forces or died of starvation and disease. In 1999 the East Timorese voted overwhelmingly for independence in a UN-supervised referendum. Indonesian

troops and Timorese pro-Indonesia militias responded by destroying most of the island nation's physical infrastructure (including three-quarters of its buildings) and killing an estimated 1,400 persons.

Half the size of Connecticut, East Timor became independent on May 20, 2002. A UN nation-building team of 11,000 troops and civilians was sent to assist in its transition. However, the UN mission was subsequently reduced each year. In May 2005 the team was downgraded from a support mission to a political mission, and fewer than 400 UN workers remained in East Timor this year.

Meanwhile, the East Timor government organized its armed forces. Senior officers were appointed from the guerrilla movement that had fought Indonesia for independence; most of these were from the eastern part of the country. Recruits, on the other hand, were drawn mostly from the west. Soon complaints of discrimination began.

In January 2006, about 400 westerners in the armed forces signed a petition alleging discrimination and poor working conditions. Two months later Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri, who was born in the east, dismissed 600 western soldiers, or about 40 percent of the armed forces. Clashes ensued involving some of the disgruntled soldiers, made worse by gangs that terrorized Dili. Australia dispatched some 2,200 troops to help restore security.



Map of Timor from www.zmag.org

The East Timor and Indonesia Action Network (ETAN, www.etan.org) says the recent clashes could be due in part to a climate of impunity. "The Timor-Leste [East Timor] government and the international community should heed the Timorese people's cry for justice for crimes committed during the quarter-century Indonesian occupation ..."

ETAN says. "We cannot but wonder if international and Timorese failures to ensure justice have led some in Timor-Leste to believe that their own use of violence would be met with similar impunity...."

"We urge the international community and the UN, especially the Security Council, to work with Timor-Leste to complete the nation-building and development tasks to which it has already committed," ETAN says. "Security Council members should favorably consider the Timor-Leste government's request for a special UN office until after next year's presidential and parliamentary elections. These national elections, the first in independent Timor-Leste, will help determine if democracy has staying power in this new nation."

Rich natural resources would seem to portend a bright future for East Timor, but they have also been a source of tension with the country's powerful neighbor Australia (see *NewsNotes*, January/February 2005). "Australia bears special responsibility for Timor's underdevelopment by refusing to return revenues totaling billions of dollars from the disputed petroleum fields in the Timor Sea ..."

ETAN says. "Australia should not view its current assistance to Timor-Leste as a favor to be repaid, but instead as a partial repayment for the debt Australia owes the Timorese people for its help during WW II and for Australia's deep complicity in Indonesia's invasion and occupation."

Hopefully the young nation of East Timor will be able to resolve its internal differences peacefully and advance its political and economic development. Meanwhile, traditional wisdom augurs well for East Timor's future: A child born in sorrow will be a happy child.

Nepal: Maoists, lawmakers reshape government

About 1,000 mostly silent observers were on hand when Nepal's King Gyanendra took part in a religious festival June 2 in Kathmandu. The public appearance was the king's first since Parliament curtailed his royal powers weeks earlier. Elsewhere in the nation's capital, the Maoists whom Gyanendra and his predecessor had fought for a decade called a rally that attracted an enthusiastic crowd of 180,000. The disparity in numbers underscored the major changes that seemed to be under way in Nepal.

The two events occurred in a welcome atmosphere of calm. Following weeks of civil unrest, Gyanendra had announced April 21 that he would call Parliament back into session, ending 14 months of direct rule (see May/June *NewsNotes*). Lawmakers quickly moved to strip the king of his legal immunity, his exemption from paying taxes and his authority over the 90,000-strong army.

References to "His Majesty's government" became simply "the Nepal government," and the name of the Royal Nepalese army was changed to the Nepal Army. Lawmakers also called for Nepal, officially a Hindu nation, to become a secular state. About 85 percent of the country's 28 million people are Hindu.

Amidst all the signs of political transformation, however, perhaps the most welcome change would be an end to Nepal's 10-year insurgency, which has claimed some 13,000 lives and disrupted the country's economy.

Gyanendra fired his prime minister in February 2005, saying he needed to clamp down on corruption and stamp out the country's communist insurgency. In April of this year, seven opposition parties launched a general strike to demand that the king restore democracy. At the height of the demonstrations, more than 100,000 protesters defied a curfew as they took to the streets and faced police armed with batons, tear gas and rubber bullets. At least 17 protesters died, and hundreds were wounded.

After three weeks of demonstrations, Gyanendra

acceded to protesters' demands. "We return the executive power of the country to the people," he said. "A meaningful exercise in democracy must be ensured with the activation of representative bodies through elections as soon as possible."

The Maoists joined forces with the seven opposition parties after lawmakers asked the army to return to barracks and agreed to hold elections to an assembly to redraft the constitution – which could scrap the monarchy altogether. The Maoists declared a three-month unilateral ceasefire to facilitate the writing of a new constitution.

The country's previous monarch, King Birendra, introduced popular democratic reforms including parliamentary elections, a new constitution and freedom of the press. After 1990 a proliferation of non-governmental organizations and rural schools taught a generation of youth how

to read and write – and become political. The king and the crown prince were assassinated in 2001, and Birendra's younger brother Gyanendra ascended to the throne.

The insurgency, meanwhile, had an estimated 7,000 full-time fighters and perhaps 25,000 militia supporters. However, many observers said the fighting had degenerated to a military stalemate. The insurgency further impoverished the country's population, of whom nearly one-third live below the poverty line. Life expectancy is 60 years.

As the current political process continues to unfold, the Maoists accused the government of going back on its promises. Chief Maoist negotiator Krishna Bahadur Mahara charged that the government planned to revive local council bodies, which had been dissolved. He also protested the mobilization of the army in Kathmandu, alleging it violated the 25-point peace agreement between the Maoists and the Seven-Party Alliance.

For the time being, however, the political developments in Nepal offer hope to a people who had grown weary of war and fearful for their future.



Nepalese prayer flags

Africa: The brain drain

Following is an edited article by Dr. Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, general-secretary of the Pan African Movement, Uganda and co-director of Justice Africa, was first published in Pambazuka News (256) as "Africa Day: Who Says Slavery Is Dead?" It was recommended to NewsNotes by Maryknoll Sr. Janice McLaughlin in Zimbabwe, who writes, "The brain drain is one of the biggest barriers to development on this continent. Young men and women have distorted views of life 'overseas' from the western media and yearn to go to the land 'flowing with milk and honey.' Even when the reality is less than that, they don't want to go back 'home.'"

[Dr. Abdul-Raheem writes:] "... One has heard or read many horror stories about detentions, forceful removals, and deportation of Africans accused of being 'illegal immigrants' or failed asylum-seekers, almost always from one European country or the other. Most people are not likely to encounter this directly. In February this year I came face to face with the inhuman way it is done....

"I was traveling to Nigeria with a former radical lecturer, mentor to several generations of Nigerian students and intellectuals, Dr. Patrick Wilmot. In 1988 he was kidnapped by security officials of the IBB regime (government of Ibrahim Babangida) and forcibly removed from Nigeria, a country in which he had lived for almost two decades Wilmot was happy to be returning to a country from which he was deported

"At the back of the plane was a young Nigerian man, definitely not more than 25 years old, sandwiched between two bully-built white British police/immigration officers and handcuffed to both of them....[T]he removal police were trying their best to calm down the howling young man as they would 'calm' an aggressive dog or cat. On his part he was just crying, howling, swearing, and whining like a trapped animal. It was so dehumanizing and I felt humiliated for him and for Africa. Even sadder still was the general indifference of most of the other largely Nigerian passengers....

"Here was Dr. Wilmot, happy to return to a country from which he was unceremoniously thrown out, on the same flight with a young man being unceremoniously returned home. One got the impression that if he was left unshackled he could attempt to jump out of the plane. He wanted to be

anywhere but home.

"How bad can it be that a young man who should have his whole life ahead of him should be so frightened of going back home? What kind of society have we created where our young people see no hope in remaining in Africa and would do anything to leave it? We are even beginning to give value to poor jobs, bad pay and immigrant insecurity by gleefully talking these days about how important 'remittances' are to the welfare of Africans trapped in poverty at home. This actually makes it imperative for many people to devise even more desperate means to opt out of Africa in order to become Western-Union lifesavers to their families. Some countries are now even trying to launder that exploitation as part of Overseas Development [Aid]! Some of our own organizations in the name of Diaspora initiatives are directly or indirectly offering justification for this by looking only at the 'contribution' that remittances are playing instead of at the wider conditions and the long term negative impact of whole communities dependent on handouts.

"We do not tell the truth about the degradation, racism and exploitation

"These horror stories about immigration are repeated everyday across Africa and the world. Some of our own governments, despite being responsible for the economic and political conditions that make many Africans leave home, even connive in the routine humiliation in their forcible return from different countries in Europe. Some of them are willing to accept payments from European countries in exchange for taking fellow Africans (not necessarily their citizens) who are deported from Europe....

"In spite of the humiliations many more people from across this continent will do anything to get a visa to go to the West and if that fails, anywhere else but Africa. Many years ago I had written about this phenomenon and suggested then that were a slave ship, properly labeled, to appear in any port city in Africa, people would rush into it proclaiming that they were fit to be slaves! It is worse today; we are in many ways financing our way into slavery both at home and globally...."

Pambazuka News is a pan-African electronic weekly newsletter, providing commentary and in-depth analysis on politics and current affairs, development, human rights, refugees, gender issues and culture in Africa. See <http://www.pambazuka.org/>

Darfur: Situation grows worse

After the Sudanese government and the main Darfur rebel group signed a peace agreement on May 1, Bishop Thomas Wenski, chair of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Committee on International Policy, urged the sustained engagement of the international community to take full advantage of this historic opportunity. This is still essential, as the situation in Darfur is growing more and more serious.

Nearly three years into the crisis, the Save Darfur Coalition says that the humanitarian, security and political situations in Darfur continue to deteriorate: atrocities continue, people are still dying in large numbers of malnutrition and disease, and a new famine is feared. According to the World Food Program, the UN and the Coalition for International Justice, 3.5 million people are hungry, 2.5 million have been displaced, and 400,000 people have died in Darfur thus far.

In early June, Africa Action reported that the partial peace deal signed in Abuja on May 5 by the Sudanese government and one of the rebel groups from Darfur was already unraveling, amid new violence and in the absence of effective implementation mechanisms. A UN Security Council resolution passed on May 16 authorized the deployment of a technical assessment team to plan for a possible future UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur, but Khartoum's opposition stalled the visit until mid-June. Meanwhile, thousands of people were displaced by new violence, and the humanitarian crisis in Darfur and eastern Chad threatens massive loss of life with the imminent arrival of the rainy season.

Despite a broad international consensus around the need for a UN peacekeeping operation in Darfur, such a mission has yet to be authorized or initiated. The government of Sudan is still dictating the pace and the extent of the international response to this crisis. The Bush administration continues to express its commitment to peace in Darfur, but, according to Africa Action, its policies have yet to achieve an improvement in the situation on the ground, and the genocide continues.

In June the UN Security Council met in Khartoum to underscore support for the new peace agreement and to seek the Sudanese government's support for a UN mission in Darfur. The African Union (AU) and the Arab League had both expressed official support for such a UN mission.

Africa Action and others concerned about Darfur urge the following steps to address the pressing security needs in Darfur:

- The U.S. and other members of the UN Security Council must exert and sustain maximum pressure on the government of Sudan to overcome its objections to a UN peacekeeping force and to pave the way for the rapid authorization and deployment of such a force to bolster the Darfur peace agreement and to provide security on the ground.
- The U.S. must engage in every diplomatic effort necessary to secure the support of all members of the UN Security Council for the rapid deployment of a robust peacekeeping operation in Darfur.
- The U.S. must introduce and secure passage of a new Security Council resolution authorizing a UN peacekeeping operation for Darfur with a Chapter VII mandate to enforce the cease-fire, protect civilians and humanitarian operations, and oversee the security arrangements of the peace agreement.
- The U.S. must provide all necessary financial and diplomatic support to ensure that this UN mission in Darfur comprises at least 20,000 troops, possesses all requisite logistical capacity, and is deployed to the region to reinforce the AU mission in Darfur by early fall at the latest.
- The same resolution must authorize the immediate re-hatting of the AU mission in Darfur as a UN force, providing the AU troops with international authority and support, with a more robust mandate to protect civilians and enforce the cease-fire, and with new financial and logistical support to strengthen their efforts until a larger UN operation is deployed, of which they will form a core component.
- The U.S. must provide significant resources and logistical assistance to the AU mission and to the future UN peacekeeping operation in Darfur. The U.S. must continue to provide generous support to humanitarian assistance programs throughout the region to meet the urgent needs of the people.

Faith in action:

Communicate your concerns about Darfur to President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Urge them to act based upon the above suggestions. Go to www.savedarfur.org/faith for resources prepared by the Save Darfur Coalition for communities of faith. Plan a prayer service or educational event about the situation in Darfur for your parish.

Southern Africa spurns U.S. trade agreement

The Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), which originated in 1889, is one of the oldest formal trading blocks and includes Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland. The American Friends Service Committee has followed closely negotiations for a United States-Southern Africa Customs Union free trade area (U.S.-SACU FTA), which began in June 2003. In mid-April, the SACU countries rejected the U.S. "one-size-fits-all" model agreement. An AFSC article on the subject follows. For additional information see www.afsc.org.

From the U.S. government's point of view, the U.S.-SACU FTA would provide access to the important South African markets and counter the South Africa-European Union (EU) agreement signed in 1994. From the SACU country governments' point of view, the FTA would expand the preferential treatment they began to receive in 2000 as part of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) that is due to expire in 2015 and increase foreign direct investment. However, gaining increased access to the largest market in the world comes with costs that could outweigh the benefits.

As a customs union, the SACU countries have a special arrangement that combines all revenue from tariffs on goods imported into the union, creating an important source of income for the smaller countries. This will be lost if tariffs to imports from the U.S. are eliminated.

Although the talks are currently going nowhere and to date the text has been a total secret, based on the experience and precedent of U.S. free trade agreements, the U.S. will accept nothing less than an aggressive trade pact like those accomplished with other countries. Looking at both the U.S.-Chile FTA model (relevant to South Africa) and the CAFTA model (relevant to the four less developed countries) helps us anticipate what will be included. Because if the FTA negotiations were to move forward again in the future, it would be based on these seriously flawed agreements, the following issues are of major concern and have caused some of the standoff in negotiations:

Despite the need to offset the economic legacy of apartheid, South Africa could lose the right to enforce programs like the Black Economic Empowerment initiative, which asks that companies doing business in South Africa grant equity ownership to

non-white business partners and appoint black executives to company boards.

Despite the importance of reinforcing the very young democracies in the region, this process of negotiating trade agreements in total secret renders democratic discussion impossible.

Under an "investor-state" clause SACU country governments could be sued directly by foreign investors who charge that public-interest laws cause lost potential future profits. Such cases would be tried before secret, ad-hoc international tribunals.

Despite the basic human right to fresh water for drinking and sanitation, SACU countries could lose the right to keep water a public good and exclude it from being privatized under the services agreement.

Despite the growing emphasis on competing through the use of cheap labor and sweatshops rather than trying to improve productivity, SACU countries will only be required to enforce existing labor laws no matter how inadequate they are.

Despite the tragic need in Southern Africa for affordable medicines for a range of life-threatening illnesses, SACU countries could be subject to more restrictive provisions for producing, importing and exporting these medicines than already exists at the WTO-level.

Despite the important role of traditional knowledge of medicinal and other local plants, the SACU countries could lose community rights to biological resources and farmers' historic prerogatives to access, save, use, exchange, and develop seeds, plants, and crops.

Despite the importance of non-bioengineered crops exported to the EU market, the SACU countries could lose the right to refuse imports of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to protect their own crops that are vital to their farmers' livelihoods, rural development, and food security.

On April 18, it was reaffirmed that the SACU countries have rejected a "comprehensive" FTA that would have included all economic sectors, and worked from the same template the U.S. has used for trade agreements in Latin America, Southeast Asia, North Africa and the Middle East. In particular there was dispute over wanting to protect the Black Economic Empowerment initiative as well as reluctance to adopt the "negative list" approach in the services negotiations, which would require liberalization of services not specifically excluded by the

state party. Instead, discussion appear to be heading down a path of a “joint work program” that could look like the U.S.-Swiss Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum that was developed when free trade talks collapsed between the countries on agriculture subsidies. This is a victory because the U.S. has been

unwilling to set a precedent of an agreement that is less aggressive than CAFTA and the recent U.S.-Peru agreement.

For resources on the U.S.-SACU FTA from a SACU country perspective visit the Trade Law Centre for Southern Africa, <http://www.tralac.org>

S. Africa: Fresh start for donors, recipients

Below is a recent AfricaFiles article describing the Southern Africa Development Community's new deal with its International Cooperating Partners. For information see www.sardc.net/.

Southern Africa has struck a new deal with its International Cooperating Partners (ICPs) as this region of more than 230 million people makes steady progress towards establishing a common market by 2015. The Windhoek Declaration on a New SADC-ICP Partnership, adopted on April 27 at the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Consultative Conference in Windhoek, Namibia, provides for a fresh start in the donor-recipient relationship between the regional body and its ICPs.

The Declaration will guide future cooperation between SADC and the ICPs by establishing an institutional structure for dialogue on political, policy and technical issues, and improve coordination of efforts between the two parties to ensure more effective development cooperation. It will also ensure alignment, harmonization and streamlining of operational procedures, rules and other practices in the delivery of development assistance to SADC, and guarantee synergies and complementarity of support provided at national and regional levels.

SADC Executive Secretary Tomaz Augusto Salomão said the new partnership framework will create an environment for more and better aid for greater development impact in the SADC region. “The objective ... is to contribute towards the achievement of the SADC Common Agenda: ... promoting sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development through efficient productive systems; deeper cooperation and integration; good governance; stronger capacity and participation of stakeholders; and durable peace and security,” said Salomão.

The ICPs pledged their continued support for southern Africa and noted that the challenges for

SADC were to ensure provision of “renewed leadership” and to assume greater ownership of regional programs and projects. Irene Freudenshuss-Reichl, director-general for development at the Austrian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, announced that the European Union (EU) has a new development policy, the European Consensus on Development, which defines the values, objectives, principles and modalities of EU development aid. Under the new policy, EU member states have resolved to increase national aid budgets to at least 0.7 percent of gross national incomes (GNIs) of the respective countries by 2015. The intermediate target is to have aid budgets accounting for 0.56 percent of national GNIs by 2010.

Half of this aid increase will come to Africa, said Freudenshuss-Reichl. The 14-member SADC group has set the target of becoming a free trade area (FTA) by 2008 and a customs union by 2010, with the ultimate objective of transforming into a common market by 2015. Baledzi Gaolathe, chairperson of the SADC Council of Ministers and Botswana's Minister of Finance and Development Planning, noted that, despite individual disparities in economic performance, southern Africa was making steady progress in achieving regional integration. Driven by the need to rapidly reduce poverty and achieve sustainable levels of development, he said the SADC region had embarked on a number of economic reforms, “which are already producing some tangible results.”

Average real GDP growth for the region was 4.1 percent in 2004, up from 3.2 percent in 2003, he said. Two thirds of the countries in the region have single digit inflation rates.

... Key areas of cooperation agreed at the [Windhoek] conference were: the establishment of the FTA, customs union and common market; support for infrastructure development in the transport, energy and communications sectors; food security; HIV and AIDS; human resources development; and peace, political stability and security in the region.

Tanzania: The role of the IMF

The Tanzania Social and Economic Trust (TASOET) has released a briefing paper looking at the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Tanzania. The briefing paper highlights the failure of the IMF's current lending program – the second Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) – to reduce poverty or provide meaningful growth and calls for a thorough evaluation of the IMF's role in Tanzania. The PRGF is the IMF's concessional loan facility for low-income countries like Tanzania. PRGF related loans carry an annual interest rate of 0.5 percent, repayable over 10 years with a five and half year grace period.

TASOET notes, for example, that though certain economic sectors like mining, construction and manufacturing have seen dramatic growth in recent years, agriculture, which employs 71 percent of Tanzanian workforce, has not. Tanzania will not take up another PRGF loan, but will relate to the IMF through a Policy Support Instrument (PSI).

The PSI was introduced by the IMF in October 2005. It enables the IMF to continue to influence the policies of low-income countries that do not want—or need—IMF financial assistance. The PSI provides a mechanism for the IMF to signal to donors, multilateral development banks, and markets the Fund's endorsement of a member's policies.

When it was introduced, critics of the IMF called the PSI “as potentially damaging to impoverished countries as the debt burden itself.”

According to TASOET, under PRGF-funded programs launched in the year 2000, Tanzania registered positive macroeconomic achievements. By so doing it created an economic environment conducive to poverty reduction efforts. For instance, real GDP growth averaged 6.7 percent in 2005 up from 4.7 percent in year 1999. The inflation rate averaged four percent in 2005 down from 15.5 percent in 1999. Foreign exchange reserves averaged eight months of imports in 2005 up from 4.2 months of imports in 1999.

But, also according to TASOET, the PRGF is a facility for poverty reduction, not a strategy for

poverty reduction. As a facility it is supposed to create a viable environment within which a facilitated country can find it easier to formulate and implement strategies for poverty reduction.

One of the key emphasis of PRGF in low-income countries is “market-oriented policies” and “private-sector led growth.” This emphasis has led to positive macroeconomic indicators at a national level for many countries, including Tanzania. But at the same time these positive macroeconomic indicators have not yielded the needed results on reducing poverty levels, especially in rural areas.

Sectors of the economy which have benefited from the ongoing macroeconomic stability are mining, manufacturing, trade, hotels/restaurants and construction. But, economic growth in the agriculture sector has been slow, so the majority of Tanzanians have not been positively impacted by the national macroeconomic gains.

Another area which the PRGF has not yielded a positive result is the value of the Tanzania currency. Since the introduction of the PRGF in early 2000 the Tanzania shilling has been progressively losing its value as compared to key international convertible currencies. From the perspective of a poor person, devalued currency means eroded purchasing power.

TASOET recommends that the government involve key stakeholders in a process of evaluating PRGF performance in relation to poverty reduction and that, in preparing the PSI, a viable participatory method also be used.

The grip of the IMF on the economic direction of Tanzania will not change very much after the PRGF expires in August this year. But the PSI comes at a time when a new government is running the country. Thus far, it has demonstrated strong leadership in rallying the people behind national poverty reduction efforts. TASOET and others monitoring economic trends in Tanzania are hopeful that preparation of the PSI will involve all key stakeholders and become a truly national Policy Support Instrument that is aligned with the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, Tanzania's second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).



Photo by Marie Dennis

Recent developments on IMF reform

Opinions on reform of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are widely diverse, ranging from those who want the Fund to return to its origins to those who wish the Fund to disappear. Serious doubts exist about the efficacy of IMF programs. Its initial functions included financial, monetary and exchange rate policies. Over time it adopted roles involving debt cancellation, good governance and technical assistance, and moved from mainly a monetary institution to one with developmental objectives. The following article was written by Jose Henriquez, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

It is commonly acknowledged that IMF lost credibility during the Asian financial crisis in 1997 and has not fully recovered. After the crisis, many Asian countries (including China and India) stopped asking for loans from the Fund, and other countries, such as Argentina, Brazil and Indonesia (three main debtors to the Fund), decided to pay off their debts before their due dates in order to free themselves from what they believed were policies that fomented poverty. These decisions fed a major crisis, since during the past 20 years the IMF's budget relied on debt payments from so-called developing countries and not from rich countries that prefer money from capital markets. Debt payments and interests might drop from US\$3.19 billion in 2005 to US\$1.39 billion in 2006, down to US\$635 million by 2009.

Some critics believe the IMF is having an identity crisis and showing itself incapable of adjusting to the new global economy. In 2004, the IMF's 60th anniversary, directors agreed to reflect on the future direction of the Fund; the managing director's report on the Fund's medium-term strategy in 2005 brought together many elements of those discussions. The report underlined how the IMF needs to adapt to globalization processes qualitatively and quantitatively different to ones in the past and set some priorities; however, according to the Bretton Woods Project, it is "short on specific proposals for reform implementation and lacked commitments for improved democratic functioning or strengthened surveillance of large industrial countries."

Last April, the International Monetary and Financial Committee of the Board of Governors of the IMF asked for concrete proposals to be presented at the IMF and World Bank's annual meeting, to be

held this October, on ad hoc quota increases to reflect important changes in the weight and role of countries in the world economy. But no major or structural changes are expected. Despite claiming governance as one of its priorities, the IMF is not considering a new voting system nor improved representation on the executive board to enhance the voice of low-income members.

Ironically, the director's report states that in recent years important events occurred and challenged membership of the Fund; these events "ha[ve] raised deep concerns over fair quotas and voice, straining the legitimacy of the institution." Participation and democratization are very critical issues because they are closely related to power, yet, at the end, no matter the arguments, the U.S. still holds 17.5 percent of the votes and the combined European Union members 32 percent. And those who hold the power dictate the rules.

Accountability, transparency and the abolition of strict conditionality are often demanded as elements of the Fund's reform and are part of stretch and shrink negotiations with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but it seems the IMF is avoiding a real dialogue. Sometimes the official discourse seems to change, yet real policies do not.

NGOs are not alone asking for reform. In 2000, a Congressional International Financial Institution Advisory Commission voted unanimously that the IMF "should restrict its lending to the provision of short-term liquidity. The current practice of extending long-term loans for poverty reduction and other purposes should end." Earlier this year, the G24, an alliance of developing countries, released its spring communiqué urging the IMF "to do more to identify and promote effective responses to risks to global economic stability, including from global imbalances, currency misalignments, and financial market disturbances."

Also important to consider but not sufficiently explored within the IMF reform agenda is its relationship with other international institutions, especially with the specialized agencies of the UN of which it is part. It will be important to envision how a reformed IMF should fit within the current United Nations' system reform process.

For more information on IMF reform visit: www.choike.org, www.brettonwoodsproject.org and www.iie.com.

Proposals for financing for development

The idea of taxes as additional sources for financing development was included in the Monterrey Consensus in 2002, although it was not new: In 1996, staffers from the UN Development Program published a book in which they proposed an international tax on currency transactions, the so-called Tobin tax. For many, the publication opened the discussion on global taxation. The following article is written by Jose Henriquez, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

The original objectives of the now-called Currency Transaction Tax (CTT) were to reduce short-term speculation and to increase national policy autonomy. Later, the idea of being a means to finance development was added. Although the CTT has been politically challenged and even attacked by the finance community, its approval by the French and Belgian parliaments has demonstrated that it is feasible to introduce it.

It would provide significant revenues as well. The German foundation Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) estimates the tax could raise up to US\$60 billion a year. The French-Belgian move is nevertheless more suggestive than substantial because a CTT cannot become really effective unless it is accepted by the European Union as a whole.

This year, a Ministerial Conference on Innovative Financing for Development convened in Paris. Instead of getting caught up in the controversy on traditional instruments of external finance such as Official Development Assistance (ODA) or international trade, the initiative chose a very flexible approach, focusing exclusively on generating additional sources and aiming to implement financing mechanisms that would not require consensus of all multilateral actors. This marked a roadmap for future international taxation schemes. In fact, "international" in these initiatives does not mean that it is necessary for a world institution to manage the funds but rather indicates that the initiatives are implemented simultaneously by many countries (which remain sovereign to decide the use of revenues) and that incomes are to serve global concerns.

The conference set an agreement for a tax on air tickets to be implemented by 13 countries from the North and the South in the near future. Funds raised by the new solidarity tax will support the ongoing fight against pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, tubercu-

losis and malaria in the poorest countries and will be paid into a global health fund. FES estimates that if all rich countries endorsed this tax, revenues would add up to US\$40 billion a year.

Furthermore, other proposals are being considered by concerned academics and civil society organizations. One of them is an international tax cooperation to fight tax evasion. Revenues lost by evasion in developing countries may be equivalent to the sums needed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). If this loss could be tackled, the revenues could approach US\$50 billion. Moreover, proposals such as taxes on arms exports, carbon dioxide emissions, pollution and profits of multinational corporations are in ongoing discussion or are in a path to be implemented.

Additional resources are not only taxes. A proposed International Finance Facility (IFF) is a temporary mechanism to frontload the commitments made in Monterrey by issuing bonds in international capital markets, backed by binding commitments of donors to provide regular payments to the facility. Revenues could come from initiatives as the global lottery for development and the use of Special Drawing Rights (an international reserve asset created by the IMF) as well.

Despite the actual emphasis on revenues, governance of the new funds, ownership, and aid effectiveness might become more important in the future.

International NGOs, while supporting actual initiatives, have underlined some principles they consider fundamental to link global taxes and the achievement of MDGs, including: 1) resources should be raised by compulsory taxes and not voluntary contributions, 2) the incremental nature of taxes must be compulsory, and 3) taxation rates must be high enough to supply new and significant resources. Others have also stated that these resources should empower local consensus on development instead of responding to donor's plans.

"We have the opportunity in the coming decade to cut world poverty by half ...," the UN Millennium Project Report stated. "The practical solutions exist. The political framework is established. And for the first time, the cost is utterly affordable... All that is needed is action."

For information visit: www.fes-globalization.org, www.currencytax.org/index.php and globalpolicy.igc.org/socecon/lotax/general.

Corruption and illegitimate debt

In the year since World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz took office, he has made the issue of corruption a World Bank priority. In a recent article, excerpted below, Gail Hurley from Eurodad (European Debt and Development) responds to the questions: "How comprehensive, consistent and effective are the plans and actions behind the talk about corruption? And how far can the Bank really go with this agenda, in particular where the Bank itself has been the cause of corruption, and odious and illegitimate debts, in the past?"

“It appears as though the Bank’s focus on anti-corruption looks set to continue. In February, the World Bank, in cooperation with other multilateral development banks and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), agreed to create “a framework for preventing and combating fraud and corruption.” It is to be ready for the Bank/Fund Annual Meetings in September in Singapore. On a recent trip to Indonesia, President Wolfowitz presented a “long-term strategy” for using the Bank’s money and expertise to help developing countries rid their governments of bribe-taking and other dishonest practices. A key component will be the deployment of anti-corruption teams in many World Bank country offices. At the World Bank’s 2006 Spring Meetings, Wolfowitz correctly acknowledged that “for every bribe-taker, there is a bribe-giver, and often, that comes from a developed country” and any thorough approach to corruption must examine corruption by companies and individuals in the North, not just the South

“The story presented so far however focuses very much on the “corruption of today” and plays scant attention to the “corruption of yesterday.” Remarkably absent from the anti-corruption strategy presented by officials so far is any critical examination of the Bank’s lending practices to poor countries in the past. The World Bank has over the years been involved with and lent to some of the world’s most notorious and despised regimes such as Mobutu Sese Seso of Democratic Republic of Congo and Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines. Bank documentation at the time of these transactions, or published shortly afterwards, confirms that many Bank officials – at both country-level and in Wash-



ington, D.C. – were perfectly aware of the nature of the regimes in place and that many loans were simply transferred into the bank accounts of the dictators and their generals. It was plain therefore that they did not reach the poor or foster economic development. Despite their odious and illegitimate nature most of these debts continue to be serviced today, at the expense of essential investments in poverty reduction and economic development

“One World Bank shareholder which is taking action on this is Norway. It is one of the first Northern countries to open dialogue on odious and illegitimate debt and to call for an international focus on this critical issue. Firstly, Norway has asked the World Bank to undertake a study of odious and illegitimate debt and has put money aside to support this research (reportedly US\$20,000). Secondly, Norway’s Development Minister Erik Solheim has committed to more closely examine the illegitimate debts claimed by Norway, notably those incurred through the Shipping Export Credit Campaign of the 1970s

“The World Bank – and other bilateral and private creditors – should take a leaf out of Norway’s book and take a critical look at the past. The Bank in particular has no excuse: Norway has put aside money to support research into this issue and it would seem to fit logically and perfectly within the anti-corruption theme that Wolfowitz is so keen to take forward. Indeed Wolfowitz must recognize that any comprehensive approach to corruption must necessarily involve a frank and open critique of past Bank lending practices leading to the cancellation of debts found to be odious and illegitimate.

“Cancellation of odious and illegitimate debts has the power to transform the lives of the world’s poor as well as foster reform of an international financial architecture skewed in favour of creditors. Developing countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Philippines, Indonesia and others continue to service debts of highly questionable origin when the benefits of debt cancellation have been clearly recognized”

For Gail’s full article and additional information see the Eurodad website: <http://www.eurodad.org/>.

UN: Indigenous youth as prophetic voice

In May, the Fifth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was held at UN headquarters in New York City. Serving as an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), a principal organ in the United Nations system, the Permanent Forum strives to provide a platform for indigenous peoples to state their concerns and recommendations and to facilitate conversation between indigenous peoples, member states, and the UN system. The following article was written by Benjamin Smyth, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, who represented Maryknoll at the Indigenous Forum in May.

The fifth session, entitled “The Millennium Development Goals and indigenous peoples: Redefining the Millennium Development Goals,” inaugurated the plan of action of the Second International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples and emphasized the importance of indigenous participation in the defining and achievement of indicators of well-being. Several themes permeated the statements made by indigenous peoples and their organizations, including their right to free, prior and informed consent on decisions and developments affecting their communities, their right as sovereign peoples to intellectual property and cultural rights, the protection of their children and environment, and an overarching support for the adoption of the Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the General Assembly.

During the 10-day Forum, young indigenous leaders and delegates from all over the world participated in the development and strengthening of the recently launched Indigenous Youth Caucus, which, as a body, formulated two statements that were read during the forum’s sessions. The Youth Caucus participants, through their proactive involvement in the Forum, formed a prophetic reminder to the assembly that the youth have the most to lose and the most to gain in the survival of their traditions and peoples. The following are excerpts from one of the statements drafted by the Indigenous Youth Caucus; it was read during the session by Maryknoll Affiliate Victor Maque from Peru.

“... Our history and heritage are being lost to assimilation. This results in a generation that no longer identifies their indigenous roots that lies beneath them due to the inadequate educational

practices and principles. Without this indigenous historical knowledge we face continual discrimination against us from non-indigenous people. ...

“We recommend that member states uphold promises made that quality education be made possible in the mother tongue. Intercultural education that is sensitive to indigenous holistic world views, languages, traditional knowledge and other aspects of our cultures should be included in all programs of education for indigenous peoples. Integrating indigenous learning systems and knowledge in formal and informal education for indigenous peoples should also be of consideration in developing curriculum. Special emphasis should be placed on the training and education of teachers at all levels to become more indigenous-sensitive.

“... We support the full implementation of CEDAW [Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women] and propose a particular reference to the vulnerability of indigenous women and youth. We also recommend such measures that will enable international communities coming together ... to expedite those who commit crimes of human trafficking and exploitation to be prosecuted within their own national borders. This allows a developed State that may be more capable of prosecuting perpetrators to relieve ... States where the crime was committed of such things as case volume, incapacity or inability. ...

We recommend that member states work closely with the indigenous peoples and language consultation agencies to clarify all official documents ... and make them available in the indigenous languages that make up each member States. We ask that these formal documents be sensitive to indigenous identification and be reflective of the groups that do exist in each State. ...

“Unfortunately for indigenous peoples, there isn’t a protected endangered list as there is with animals to save us. But we, the contributing members of the Permanent Forum, can begin the process to stop this extinction of our people. Indigenous peoples of the world should not have to succumb to finding that the only time the world will properly take notice of their presence is in a history book once they are gone.”

For more information on the Forum, go to the MOGC website or visit <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/index.html>.

UN Committee Against Torture reviews U.S.

In May, the United Nations' Committee Against Torture convened in Geneva to review the compliance of several states, including Peru, Georgia, Guatemala, Qatar, Togo, South Korea, and the United States, with the UN's Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. For the United States, this was its second fourth year periodic report and was attended by high level officials from the Departments of State, Defense, Homeland Security, and Justice who responded to a number of questions from the Committee on its compliance, domestic and foreign, with the Convention Against Torture. The following article was written by Benjamin Smyth, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

In its recent review of the U.S., the UN Committee Against Torture recognized the U.S.'s advancements, such as the enactment of the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003, the section of the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005 which "prohibits cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment and punishment of any person, regardless of nationality or physical location, in the custody or under the physical control of the State party," and the intended adoption of a new Army Field Manual for intelligence interrogation.

The Committee, however, paid particular attention to the U.S.'s detention and interrogation techniques that the Bush administration has defended as necessary in winning the "war on terror" and bringing justice to those who commit acts of terrorism. Under article two of the Convention Against Torture it makes it clear that "no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture."

In its conclusions and recommendations, the Committee made several significant statements including its insistence the United States should:

- Close all secret prisons and detention centers, including Guantánamo.
- Hold accountable all senior officials, both military and civilian, who condone and/or prescribe acts of torture and abuse committed by themselves or their subordinates.
- Recognize the Convention Against Torture as universal, applying to all U.S. personnel living abroad,

even during a time of war.

- End its practice of transferring detainees to countries that have had a record of torture and human rights abuses.

In addition, as Human Rights Watch pointed out in its May 19 article on the UN review, the Committee also requested that the U.S. report back to it in a year regarding the changes and advancements it has made towards meeting the Committee's recommendations. These include the recommendations that the U.S.'s prison in Guantánamo be closed and that all detainees captured in the fight against terrorism be registered. The Committee went on to insist that the U.S. end its practice of "diplomatic assurances," where an individual is transferred to a country with known records of torture and with only a simple, unenforced promise of protection. Furthermore, the Committee reiterated its concern for some of the prison conditions within the United States, including the practice of housing children in adult jails, the condition and isolation of prisoners in many of the "supermax" prisons, and the continued use of lethal injection as a means of execution.

The conclusions of the UN Committee Against Torture echo the call to action and accountability that many individuals, groups, and organizations have been tirelessly lobbying for from the U.S. government, CIA, and military personnel. For many torture survivors, the effects the experiences linger with them for the remainder of their lives. For them, the images in the media of masked prisoners and snarling guard dogs are only a reminder of their own personal experiences of torture.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is a participating member of the newly formed National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT). Through efforts of organizations such as Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition and NRCAT we hope the U.S. and the world will realize that torture, in the words of Pope John Paul II, "causes humiliation and suffering to the victim and degrades the tormentor." For suggestions for taking action visit the following websites: Pax Christi USA www.paxchristiusa.org, Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition www.tassc.org, the National Religious Campaign Against Torture www.nrcat.org, or Human Rights Watch www.hrw.org.

UN's Commission on Sustainable Development-14

The 14th annual session of the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-14) was held May 1-12 in New York City. Created in December 1992, the CSD's role is to guarantee follow-up of the Earth Summit (held that year in Brazil), and to monitor and report on implementation of the Earth Summit agreements at the local, national, regional and international levels.

According to the CSD website, during the course of CSD-14, more than 700 representatives from 134 nongovernmental organizations and other major groups identified obstacles, constraints, challenges and opportunities for the way forward in the following four areas: energy for sustainable development; industrial development; air pollution/atmosphere; and climate change. Participants reported on and shared their results-oriented activities in the form of case studies, lessons learned, and best practices.

In order to assure broad public participation in the efforts towards sustainable development, the CSD recognizes nine "major groups" of civil society: women, children and youth, indigenous people, NGOs, local authorities, workers and trade unions, farmers, business and industry, and the scientific and technological communities.

This 14th session of the CSD was the first year of the second implementation cycle; the 15th session is scheduled for April 30 to May 11, 2007, at the UN in New York. During the second year of the second implementation cycle, the Commission will base its deliberations on the conclusions of CSD 14 as expressed in the Chairman's paper. CSD-15 will be preceded by an intergovernmental preparatory meeting which will take place February 26 to March 2, 2007.

JoAnne DiSano, director of the UN Division for Sustainable Development, said, "Progress in reducing air pollution ... and ozone depletion has occurred because governments, businesses, and non-governmental organizations have taken these challenges seriously." For CSD-14, the director said the problems that need immediate attention are: "1.6 billion people who don't have access to electricity and 2.4 billion who still use firewood or dung to cook and

heat"; the need for "reliable and clean energy for industrial and economic development"; and the need to implement solutions now in order to address climate change.

Several of the participating major groups brought a different take on the issues that require immediate attention and implementation, and many urged nations to face the seriousness of Earth's ecological crisis. The NGO, indigenous, youth and women's major groups were allowed to present several brief statements which spoke about the need for renewable energy and local, sustainable projects. The representative of the Pacific Island states spoke comprehensively about dealing with the Earth's overstressed ecological systems, which is an urgent concern in that region.

In contrast, the business and industry major group held the podium for two days, and met with government ministers between sessions. Large corporations and international financial institutions were enabled to present big dams, nuclear energy and mega projects as *the* solution, all of which were criticized by many major groups as being environmentally destructive and among the causes of global warming.

One major group that directly challenged the ministers and representatives was the youth group. In its May 11 statement, the youth group said, "Implementation does not mean passing responsibility to the market. Successful implementation requires equal opportunity and collaboration among stake-holders under the guidance of governments." The statement ended with the youth group asking delegates to please stand if they have children. The youth group then asked those who were standing, "Having read the chairman's summary, do you think that this document gives hope for your children in 20 years? Here is the urgency in CSD-14. The future is more than a legacy; it is our lives."

The question that remains is: Will this message get to the nations that will represent earth's inhabitants at the next policy making session, CSD-15?

Go to the CSD website at <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/index.html> to read statements and documents from the 14th session.



Christian groups respond to HIV/AIDS review

From May 31-June 1, 2006, 25 years after the first documented cases of AIDS, more than 140 UN member states and 800 civil society groups met in New York City to assess progress made since 2001 and to chart a course for global AIDS treatment and prevention through 2010. The following statement was released in conjunction with this recent meeting; it was signed by the Maryknoll AIDS Task Force; the United Church of Christ's Justice and Witness and Wider Church Ministries; Church World Service; the Episcopal Church; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; and the United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society.

As U.S. Christian organizations represented at the five-year review of the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS), we commend world governments for gathering to renew their commitments to the fight against the HIV and AIDS pandemic worldwide. [O]ur faith communities recogni[ze] that AIDS represents one of the greatest challenges to God's will for creation, and one of the greatest threats to our common humanity. In particular, we are grateful for the willingness of the U.S. delegation to engage the voices of civil-society organizations at this meeting. We ... applaud the U.S. Global AIDS Administrator's announcement of a plan to continue this engagement as we move forward in shaping U.S. HIV and AIDS policy.

We join other[s] in expressing deep concern that the promises ... in the 2001 UNGASS declaration have not been met and that the pandemic continues to escalate. While the new Political Declaration represents an important renewal of the commitment by member states to the fight against HIV and AIDS worldwide, we believe it continues to fall short in several areas. In particular, we believe that the new Declaration could have been much stronger in establishing concrete and internationally recognized targets for prevention, education, treatment and care and recognizing the special needs of specific vulnerable populations.

Our concern about the strength of the new Political Declaration in these areas is informed both by our experience as advocates in the U.S. for the strongest possible national policy on AIDS as well as our history of implementing HIV/AIDS programs with our partner Churches in the developing world. It is vitally important that international strategies

reflect the strongest possible proven methods for fighting this deadly pandemic.

That said, we recognize that political declarations alone will not enable us to eradicate HIV/AIDS. Rather, the fight will be won or lost based on the concrete steps of member states and civil society in keeping the promises that have already been made. Civil-society groups, including churches, are called to intensify our own capacities and programs to address the pandemic. ... We call on U.S. policymakers to:

- Scale up significantly the U.S. contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria and work with other governments to do the same;
- Expand the scope of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) both through the regular addition of new focus countries and extension of the program's lifespan;
- Remove all restrictions on U.S. HIV/AIDS funding that hinder the fullest range of evidence-based prevention strategies;
- Comply with U.S. law that requires at least 10 percent of all U.S. global HIV/AIDS funding be directed to orphans and vulnerable children, and implement a strong comprehensive strategy for the use of this funding; and
- Invest in strengthening health systems in economically impoverished countries in order to build the human capacity and infrastructure needed to treat and eradicate AIDS.

Finally, ... we believe that for future meetings, the international community should invest adequate resources to involve civil-society groups at an earlier stage and promote transparency. These hallmarks of our democratic tradition would produce stronger outcome documents. The Political Declaration is strongest in the areas shaped by inclusive and transparent collaboration. HIV and AIDS affect all of God's children, and thus, all must have a stake and a voice in its eradication.

While there are very real and sometimes overwhelming challenges to the world's effort to eradicate HIV and AIDS, we remain filled with great hope at what can be accomplished through our common efforts. As one of history's great campaigners against the disease, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, has said: "Goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death; and victory is ours through him who loves us."

Resources

- 1) **Church Toolkit for Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking:** Churches for Middle East Peace, a Washington, D.C.-based coalition of 21 churches and agencies, has prepared a toolkit comprising documents, websites and other resources on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The effort is aimed at helping local churches plan activities in awareness-building, education and advocacy. The resources – for worship services, workshops, panel discussions and other events – include a timeline on the Arab-Israeli conflict, advocacy tips, and information on the Christian community in the Holy Land. Educational materials are provided on a two-state solution, a shared Jerusalem, the separation barrier and settlements. Background and websites for Arab and Jewish peace groups both in the Holy Land and in the U.S. are also included. The toolkit can be found at http://www.cmep.org/Toolkit/Toolkit_home.htm.
- 2) **Faith in Public Life: Lifting Up Voices for Justice and the Common Good:** This new website offers many resources, including communications and organizing tools, in support of the U.S. faith community. Faith in Public Life offers tools, strategic services and informational resources to strengthen the effectiveness, collaboration, and reach of faith movements sharing a call to pursue justice and the common good. Faith in Public Life has had the honor of supporting dozens of groups, including the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, Sojourners, Catholic Alliance for the Common Good, the Progressive Faith Blog Conference and CrossWalk America. This is an exciting time in the revitalization of collective and diverse faith voices working for justice and the common good. Faith in Public Life exists to ensure those voices are seen and heard in the U.S.'s public square. Feel free to contact the staff of Faith in Public Life at admin@faithinpubliclife.org with any questions about its work or the communities it serves. <http://www.faithinpubliclife.org>
- 3) **Dying to Live:** This video, produced the Center for Latino Spirituality and Culture at the University of Notre Dame, is a profound look at the human face of the immigrant. It explores who these people are, why they leave their homes and what they face in their journey, and exposes the places of conflict, pain and hope along the U.S.-Mexico border. It is a reflection on the human struggle for a more dignified life and the search to find God in the midst of that struggle. Go to http://www.nd.edu/~latino/units/dying_video.htm for more information, or contact the Center for Latino Spirituality and Culture, University of Notre Dame, 250B McKenna Hall, Notre Dame, IN 46556.
- 4) **The climate of poverty: facts, fears and hope:** This new web-based resource from Christian Aid UK explores the crisis of climate change and its threat to the development goals for billions of the world's poorest people. A clear danger exists that recent gains in reducing poverty will be thrown into reverse in coming decades. A staggering 182 million people in sub-Saharan Africa alone could die of disease directly attributable to climate change by the end of the century. Many millions more throughout the world face death and devastation due to climate-induced floods, famine, drought and conflict. "The climate of poverty: facts, fears and hope" is a five-chapter downloadable report; despite its emphasis on action within the United Kingdom, its background information is useful for everyone. Not only does it present the sobering facts, but it also offers the vision of a different future – a revolution in development thinking that could see poor regions using renewable energy to power a new, and clean, era of prosperity. Go to <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk> and click on "in depth" on the upper menu to find a selection of its reports, including "The climate of poverty: facts, fears and hope."
- 5) **SOA Watch Vigil 2006:** This year's vigil to close the School of the Americans/WHINSEC will be held November 17-19 at Ft. Benning, GA. An organizing packet is available for free on the SOA Watch website. It contains information about what to expect at Ft. Benning, logistical information to assist your trip planning, media, legislative, fundraising and outreach tips and resources, and flyers you can reproduce and use in your community. Go to <http://www.soaw.org> to download the packet.